

THINK GREEN - Please Recycle after use

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Portarlington Leisure Centre



Portarlington Leisure Centre during construction

Following major refurbishment, the former Portarlington Swimming Pool is set to open its doors in November, 2007 to launch the next phase of providing for the leisure needs of the community and visitors to Portarlington.

With an inviting modern design, Portarlington Leisure Centre comprises two swimming pools, sauna & steam room, village changing, cafe area, gymnasium & classes studio. The centre will be available for *pay as you go* usage and Membership which will allow people to choose the payment method which best suits their intended usage level.

The opening hours of the centre and programming of activities will ensure that the centre is available for: *pay as you go* customers, members, private groups, community groups, schools etc.

The new centre will provide a health/fitness element as well as a major social outlet to the community. Fitness Classes as a group activity will help to maximise both elements of our provision. Sean Quirke, a former Manager of Bridge House leisure centre, Tullamore is the General Manager and looks forward to maximising the usage of the facility by the community of Portarlington.

Portlaoise Leisure Centre

Following major refurbishment, the former Portlaoise Swimming Pool, is set to open its doors mid November, 2007.

The modern design of Portlaoise Leisure Centre will comprise three swimming pools, sauna and steam room, large changing village and group changing rooms, cafeteria and healthy living area, Large Indoor soft play area and party room, 3 meeting rooms and 5000sq ft of Health Club and Aerobic Studio. There is a UEFA approved synthetic soccer pitch with floodlights and a full size grass pitch. Completing the look is the largest outdoor play park in the Region. The centre will be available as a *pay as you go* usage and Membership which will allow people to choose the payment method which best suits their pocket.

The Centre will provide health / fitness element as well as a major social outlet for the community and region alike.

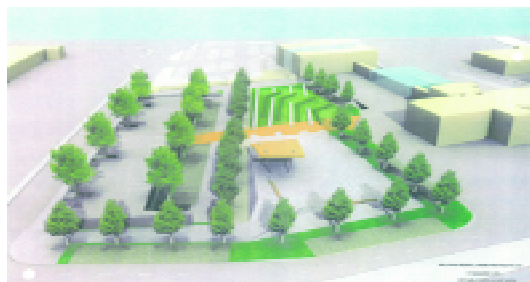
It is envisaged that approximately 25 - 30 classes will be on offer per week delivered by the highly skilled and qualified fitness professionals.

Mark Roberts, a former international athlete with experience of working in major facilities both in Ireland and abroad, is the General Manager, and looks forward to maximising the usage of the facility by the community of Portlaoise.



Portlaoise Leisure Centre during construction

Civic Plaza



Artist impression - Civic Plaza, Portlaoise

Work has commenced on the restructuring and landscaping of the open green area adjacent to Áras an Chontae. It is hoped that this will provide a much needed visual focus to the central pivotal location within the newly emerging civic and commercial hub of Portlaoise.

Significant parking capacity will be provided as part of this project, and the visually integrated manner of the project will serve to enhance the civic nature of the area rather than detract from it. The dual use approach will provide clear benefits for the entire community.

The car park will be a split level two deck structure with some parking spaces provided utilising the existing ground level, recess ground parking levels and upper deck parking spaces. The open civic space is designed to accommodate open air events and will include permanent and semi-permanent canopy structures. One additional feature of the Civic Plaza is the proposed introduction of computer- controlled water jet features.



Message from the Cathaoirleach

As Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, I am delighted to be associated with this issue of "Our County".

Laois County Council provides such a wide range of services in the community and this publication illustrates just some of the ways in which we are working to improve and enhance our county to benefit all our citizens.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of my fellow elected members of the Council and the hard work of the employees, all who are involved in delivering for you an efficient and effective service.

It is our aim to continue to improve and achieve the highest standards in our service provision and your comments are always welcome. You can contact the Council by phone, in writing or via our website at www.laois.ie

Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh taitheamh as an nuachtlitir seo.

John Moran,
Cathaoirleach

Accessing the Laois website from Mobile Devices

Did you know ...
that you can now access all information on the
www.laois.ie website
on your mobile phone and multimedia device?



Aerial view - Portlaoise Western Circular Clonminam Link Road

Message from the County Manager



Is mór an t-áthas a chuireann se orm mar Bhainisteoir Chontae an eagrán seo de 'Our County' a chur i bhur láthar arís.

Once again this year, the publication of Our County is an opportunity to update the people of Laois about developments and initiatives being undertaken by Laois County Council.

The Council has played a major role in the delivery of social infrastructure as part of our Social Inclusion Strategy and works in partnership with communities through the community fora process and a huge capital programme is being advanced including two leisure complexes in Portlaoise and Portllington, a number of libraries, playgrounds, sports and community facilities. These projects will make significant contributions to the quality of life in County Laois. The County is also progressing very well in terms of economic development and tourism.

I want to thank the community representatives for their dedication and their work around the County and to assure them of our continued support and co-operation. I also want to pay tribute to the elected members and the Council's employees, who meet many challenges posed by a rapidly changing working environment.

I hope that you will take the time to read this publication and to participate actively in the development of our County.

Peter Carey
County Manager

Portlaoise Western Circular Clonminam Link Scheme

Construction is currently underway on the Portlaoise Western Circular Clonminam Link Scheme. This scheme includes the construction of 0.83 kilometres of a single carriage roadway together with a 25 metre skew bridge spanning the main Dublin/Cork rail line. Construction of this scheme which includes the new bridge over the main Dublin railway line will cost €5.5m. The scheme commenced in September 2006 and will be completed in 2007. When complete, the entire section of the Portlaoise Western Circular Route from the Abbeylax Road (R922) to the Mounmellick Road (N80) will be open to traffic. This orbital route will be classified as a Regional Route – route number R914 and advance directional signing will be completed as part of the contract.



"Finding Portlaoise – Urban Artistic Interventions"

The Arts Office are calling on your help to make this event as inclusive and participatory as possible and we welcome your involvement. "Finding Portlaoise- Urban Artistic Interventions", a series of creative events involving artists, residents and business people of Portlaoise town. The streets of Portlaoise will be infused with a creative pulse from the 3rd to the 10th October, with many live art events as well as community based initiatives. It is envisaged that through artistic interventions this project will draw awareness to and highlight the many changing facets of urban living in Ireland today, while concentrating on people and place specific to Portlaoise. All groups and or individuals who would like to participate in this art in urban context week are welcome to submit their expression of interest by way of letter to the Arts Office, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, County Laois or by email to: artsoff@laoiscoco.ie

Laois School of Music

Opened for it's 7th year of tuition in September, 2007. Based in Portlaoise College, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, the School of Music has become a centre of excellence for music education in Laois. Tuition is available on Piano, Violin, Cello, Guitar, Drums, Flute, Clarinet, Voice, Brass and Kindermusic. Plans for the coming year include the hosting of the Irish Association of Youth Orchestra AGM and Conducting Masterclass and a collaboration with the Intermediate Orchestra of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin. For further information contact Co-ordinator Nuala Kelly, The Arts Office, Laois County Council. Tel No. - 057 8674345 or email: artsoff@laoiscoco.ie .



Members of Laois School of Music Orchestra

Patrick Kavanagh Workshops

Following workshops in Stradbally National Schools in May 2007 with writer Denise Curtin a beautiful book of poetry has been published titled "O commemorate me where there is water, canal bank water preferably"....This book will be launched to coincide with the installation of the Patrick Kavanagh seat near the canal in Vicarstown, (organised by the Laois Patrick Kavanagh Appreciation Society). A limited number of copies of the book will be available to the public following the launch.

Public Art

Laois County Council have commissioned the Artist Rory Breslin, Fauleen, Co Mayo to provide and install a piece of sculpture under the *Per Cent for Art* Scheme to commemorate James Fintan Lalor and it will be sited to the front of A ras an Chontae, Portlaoise. This figurative work made from bronze and stone is due to be completed by the end of 2007. *Per Cent for Art* public Art commissions are also currently being developed and will be installed in early 2008 in the following venues. Portlaoise Leisure Centre: will comprise of an interactive sculpture(s) to be sited in the outdoor playground at the Leisure Centre. Portarlinton Leisure Centre: will comprise of an internal stained glass feature to be sited internally at the Leisure Centre

Writer in Residence



Laois Writer in Residence Caroline Barry

The Arts Office, Laois County Council are delighted to announce that the new Writer-in-Residence for County Laois is Caroline Barry from Tyrellspass, County Westmeath. Caroline began her residency in September for a period of six-months.

Special focus for the residency is writing with younger people and Caroline will work with schools, emerging writers, community groups and local organisations that are involved in and interested in writing. Please contact the Arts Office, if you have any ideas, events or projects that may be of interest to the writer-in-residence during her Residency.

Social Housing

Laois County Council are continuing its commitment to provide housing for those who are not in a position to provide it for themselves through a range of social housing options, including the Building Programme. In August and September this year, 40 houses at Cullenwood, Mountmellick and 12 houses in Clodiagh Way Clonaslee were officially opened. A total of 136 houses have been completed to date in 2007 and work is ongoing at various schemes around the County including Portarlinton, Camross, Mountrath, Errill and Clonaslee. Private Sites at Castletown have also been advertised for sale and some site are still available. Sites will also be advertised shortly in Ballyroan. Contact 057 8664083 for further details.



Social Housing units at Clodiagh Way, Clonaslee

Affordable Housing in Laois

The Affordable Housing scheme allows lower-income house purchasers the opportunity to buy newly constructed homes and apartments where property prices have created an affordability gap. These properties are then offered for sale to eligible purchasers at cost price and, accordingly, at a significant discount from the market value of comparable houses in the area. First-time buyers are discovering that this is by far the best route to gaining a foothold on the property ladder.

Types of Affordable Housing

There are two types of Affordable Housing :

Type 1:

These are houses provided under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme.

Type 2:

The second type of Affordable Housing refers to properties which are acquired under part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Who is Eligible?

In order to qualify for Affordable Housing, an applicant must be:

In need of housing and whose income satisfies the income test outlined below,

Or

A person whose application for local authority housing has been approved by the local authority,

A local authority tenant or tenant purchaser who wishes to surrender his/her dwelling to the local authority and buy a private house or

A tenant for more than one year of a dwelling provided by a voluntary body under the rental

subsidy, who wishes to surrender his/her present house to the voluntary body and buy a private.

Single income household – Max in the previous tax year €40,000

Double income household – Main earners income X 2.5 plus second income X 1 must not exceed €100,000

N.B. Your repayments can not exceed 35% of your net monthly income

Eligibility under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000

The eligibility criteria under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 is based on the following:-

If your income would not be adequate to meet repayments on a house suited to your accommodation needs (subject to Section 93(3) and to regulations made by the Minister, if any, under Section 100 (1) (b) of the Act) as the yearly payments would exceed 35% of your net annual income (i.e. gross income less PAYE and PRSI)

Eligibility is specific to each house and it is necessary to know the price of the house in order to decide on eligibility.

NB. Affordable Houses will only be offered to persons in employment who have the means to repay any loan offered to them.

COMING SOON AFFORDABLE HOUSES & APARTMENTS

ABBEYLEIX
CASTLETOWN
ERRILL
MOUNTMELICK
PORTLAOISE
RATHDOWNEY

BORRIS-IN-OSSORY
CLONASLEE
GRAIGUECULLEN
MOUNTRATH
PORTARLINGTON
STRADBALLY

Map It

The 'Map It' service is an exciting new initiative launched on our site over the past few months.

This area of the site allows users to view a range of services (bringbanks, hospitals, Council buildings, schools, etc.), that are available in the County through a graphical mapping interface.

Try it at <http://www.laois.ie/maps/>

New Area Office in Portarlinton

We are delighted to announce that the Eastern Area opened a Civic Office in Portarlinton on the 25th May 2007. The office which opens to the public on Fridays from 9am -1pm and 2pm - 5pm offers a range of services including on-line payment facilities, enquiry services, access to application forms and engineering clinics. Meeting rooms are available to other sections who may wish to run clinics or meet customers/developers in the area.

The office is conveniently located in the Community Centre adjacent to the impressive new swimming pool & leisure centre currently under construction.

FIRE IN THE HOME

Fires happen and unfortunately for some have fatal consequences. In 2005, 41 people in Ireland died from fires. This compares to 35 people in 2004.

In 2005, 38 out of 41 fire related deaths occurred in the home. These 38 fatalities occurred in 35 premises. In only 6 of these cases could it be established that there was a working smoke alarm present.

It is extremely important that every house has a working smoke alarm.

In the event of a fire DIAL 999 or 112

**Check your smoke alarm regularly
SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES!**

awarded to Richard Blake, RBHL and work commenced in July,2006. The new fire station was handed over to the Fire Service in March,2007. The cost of the project was €815,000.

New Fire Station in Abbeyleix

In 1991, the Fire Station in Abbeyleix was relocated to the ground floor of the Market House in the town. The first floor continued as Abbeyleix Library serving Abbeyleix and the surrounding area.

It was decided that the library facilities should be extended and modernised to meet current needs and that this would best be done in the Market House by utilising the entire building. This involved a major upgrade to the Market House.

At the same time, it was recognised that more modern facilities were needed for the Fire Service and preparations began for the relocation of Abbeyleix Fire Station to a new site on the approach road from Portlaoise.

A design team was approached consisting of Pat Fitzpatrick Ltd, Architect, Michael Turley & Associates, Quantity Surveyors and J.V. Tierney & Co., Electrical & Mechanical Engineers. The design brief was for a two bay fire station with washrooms, muster bay, lecture room and BA maintenance facility. Training facilities, including a ladder tower, underground water storage tank, hydrants and drill yard were also to be provided.

Consequent to the public tender procedure, the contract was



Abbeyleix Fire Station

Tourism – Some of the main events over the Summer

A number of high profile events took place over the Summer months in Laois. Although the weather this Summer put a damper to (and led to a cancellation of) a lot of festivals in the country, most of the events in Laois went ahead....



One of the biggest festivals in Laois this year was the World Fleadh. It took place from August 6th to August 12th in a custom

The World Fleadh

built festival village in the host town of Portlaoise. Marquee performances, 13 ceili's, music, song and dance master classes, workshops and demonstrations, a scheduled session trail encompassing 20 venues, a world food and craft fair, two festival clubs and a variety of other fringe entertainments to cater for all tastes and ages, all took place in Portlaoise. Over 600 performers took part in the festival over the seven days and nights of scheduled performances.

The festival showcased the excellent venues and central location that Portlaoise has to offer for a festival such as the Main Stage at the CBS grounds, the Town Stage at Fitzmaurice Plaza, the Dunamais Arts Centre, Sky Venue, Egans etc. The Festival highlighted to other event organisers the easy access of these venues to each other and the fact that Portlaoise is the ideal event centre to host National Festivals in Ireland. It was great to see names such as Katie Melua, Deacon Blue, the Proclaimers, Duke Special, Carlos Nunez among others taking to the stage in Portlaoise. Gigs during the week in Egans, Sky Venue and the Dunamais also attracted large numbers of festival goers. Supported by Laois County Council.

The International Garden Festival

The International Garden Festival took place from June through to September. This is a first for Ireland, and was a showcase for contemporary and inspiring garden design. The venue was Emo Court, in the heart of Ireland, and it featured 15 very different contemporary gardens, all fully maintained for the duration of the festival so that returning visitors can see how they mature and change through the season. Fringe events took place during the festival – over the August weekend, a number of family events and entertainment took place. Over the coming weeks, TV3's Gardening expert, Peter Dowdall is present to give his expertise. Also on Sept 9th, visitors will have an opportunity to sample the delicious food from an eclectic mix of ethnic and Irish producers, growers and farmers. Garden Tours were available and of course, tours of Emo Court House are also available to the end of September. Make sure you take a visit to the beautiful Tea Rooms at Emo Court as part of your visit. For more details, contact the Information Hotline 1850 456 456 or view www.igf.ie.



Electric Picnic

Now in its fourth year, the Electric Picnic, Ireland's only Boutique Music Festival returned on 31st August and the 1st and 2nd September 2007. Sold out almost immediately, this festival is ever growing in popularity and attracts visitors from all over the world.

This year's highlights included The Beastie Boys doing their first Irish show in over a decade, the recently reformed Iggy And The Stooges - their only UK/Ireland performance this year, a rare live outing by the wonderful Bjork; ex-Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker and a hark back to 1980s punk-pop with The Jesus And Mary Chain.



The Seve Trophy

The Seve Trophy pits Europe's leading players in a team match play event between Continental Europe and Great Britain & Ireland. The event was played at The Heritage, a course that Seve co-designed,

between 27-30 September when Europe's next Ryder Cup Captain, Nick Faldo, came up against Seve as opposing non-playing captains in the Seve Trophy.

Clean Sweep Across the County!

6 towns and 16 villages decided to team up to clean up in the now annual county wide competition which tackles the anti social behaviour of littering. Judges visited each of the 22 participating towns and villages once a week, over a 10 week period, and awarded marks on the presence and absence of litter.

13 Villages achieved Litter Free status in the Competition (Ballacolla, Ballylinan, Ballyroan, Castletown, Clonaslee, Errill, Timahoe, Luggacurren, Pike of Rushall, Raheen, Ratheniska, Shanahoe and Spink) as well as 1 town, Borris-in-Ossory.

Winners in the Competition:

Town Winner: **Borris in Ossory**
Town Runner Up: **Durrow**
Large Village Winner: **Errill**
Large Village Runner Up: **Ballacolla**
Small Village Winner: **Spink**
Small Village Joint Runner Up: **Ratheniska & Luggacurren**

Make Cents from Talking Rubbish

Laois County Council has a new information booklet called 'Make Cents from Talking Rubbish' which provides householders with essential information on how to reduce, reuse and recycle in County Laois. This booklet will be a valuable tool for all householders who are interested in reducing their waste line.



Backyard Burning

Traditionally, Hallowe'en is associated with many customs including trick or treating, eating barnbrack (and if you're lucky finding a ring inside the cake) and playing hallowe'en games.

Another tradition is to light bonfires. According to Irish legend, if you dropped some of your hair into the bonfire, you would later dream of your future loved one. However, over the years, this 'tradition' has changed and people now use the hallowe'en bonfire to burn rubbish and hazardous waste like tyres, paint cans etc. But, the uncontrolled burning of these items is extremely bad for the environment and extremely dangerous for your health.

No-one wants to ruin the fun associated with Hallowe'en but the Environment Section of County Council wants everyone in Laois to Think Green Space, Not Fire Place!

Muck is Magic!

Did you ever wonder what to do with all the bits of left over fruit and vegetables that you have? These items can all be turned into a rich fertiliser by the magic of composting! Composting is an extremely natural process and not only is very good for the environment but is very good for your pocket as it reduces the amount of waste going into landfill and therefore, can reduce your waste bill!

Full details on how to turn spoil into soil can be obtained from Ann-Marie Kelly, Environment Awareness Officer on 057 867 4331 or by emailing amkelly@laoiscoco.ie.



Competition

To be in with a chance to win one of 3 household waste management kits (worth €100) consisting of:

**3 Urba Plus 40ltr stackable units,
1 Household Hazardous Waste Storage Box,
1 Compost Bin & 1 Kitchen Caddy,
1 Trailer Cover**

Just answer the following question:

What are the opening hours of Kyletalesha Landfill & Portlaoise Recycling Centre?

Send your answer, along with your name, address and contact number to Ann-Marie Kelly, Environment Awareness Officer, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois. Alternatively, email amkelly@laoiscoco.ie with these details. Closing date for entries is Friday, 30th November, 2007

www.laois.ie

A site for everyone

This website has been designed so that it is accessible to people of all abilities.

This means that people with hearing, sight or physical disabilities will be able to use the site. To achieve this level of accessibility, the site was designed to the World Wide Web Consortium's accessibility standards as well as using tools such as Browsealoud that reads the content of the site to you.

Laois Biodiversity Action Plan

Laois County Council is taking part in a national project to prepare Local Biodiversity Plans for each county, with the help of the Heritage Council.



Orchid-rich grassland near Stradbally

As part of Ireland's commitment towards implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Irish government published the National Biodiversity Plan in April 2002. This Plan sets out a series of actions that are intended to pro-

mote and assist in the conservation of Ireland's biological diversity, at a national and local level. One of the requirements of the National Biodiversity Plan is the production at local level of County Biodiversity Action Plans, which would highlight the importance of local biodiversity, the threats it faces and outline actions to be taken at local level to conserve and raise awareness of biodiversity.

The Laois Plan is being prepared by the Laois Heritage Forum, and the draft is due to be ready by November 2007. Comments and suggestions are welcome from members of the public, individuals and groups. If you have comments to make on the future of Biodiversity in Laois, or would like more information about the Biodiversity Action Plans, please contact the Heritage Office, Laois County Council - phone 057-867 4348, e-mail ccasey@laoiscoco.ie, www.laois.ie/heritage.

Addressing poverty and social exclusion in Laois



Cllr. John Moran, Cathoirléach officially launches the Laois Local Anti-Poverty Strategy in June 2007

Laois County Council has taken a leadership role in addressing social exclusion in the county. It is one of the first local authorities in the county to develop a Local Anti Poverty Strategy for its county. The strategy was developed in partnership with the agencies and organisations which are members of the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group of Laois County Development Board, including statutory agencies such as FAS, the HSE and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. A Steering Committee, chaired by the County Manager, Mr. Peter Carey was set up to oversee the process of developing the strategy. This committee included local representatives, members of Laois County Community Forum and representatives of groups who frequently experience social exclusion, such as people with disabilities and persons parenting alone.

The development of the strategy involved extensive consultation throughout the county. It looks at who is most likely to be affected by poverty and sets out to address the issues which will increase the risk factors for those particular groups. The range of groups considered

included isolated older people, young people at risk and those who are educationally disadvantaged. The strategy also considered particular themes including the negative impact of money lending on low income families. A recurring theme of the strategy was the need for enhanced information services for vulnerable groups.

The process of implementing the strategy will take place over the next few years. It is hoped that it will have a positive impact in the county.

In tandem with this process, Laois County Council has looked at its own services to ensure that these also address disadvantage and are inclusive. It has developed and will implement an internal social inclusion strategy on a section by section basis.

Copies of these strategies are available from:

Yvonne Murphy

Tel: 057-86-74336, email: ymurphy@laoiscoco.ie



Attention Students!

The Higher Education Grants Scheme

Laois County Council grant aids eligible students who undertake full time degree courses in approved Third level institutions in the State and certain Third level institutions in other E U. Member States.

The Higher Education Grant is a means tested grant which is based on the total reckonable income to the applicants household. A candidate shall be at least 17 years of age on 1st January, 2008.

Application forms and full details including the 2007 Scheme are available from the Higher Education Grant Section, Corporate Affairs Department at 057-8664105/8664137, or by emailing corpaffairs@laoiscoco.ie.

You can also download from our Website <http://www.laois.ie/YourCouncil/Departments/CorporateAffairs/HigherEducationGrants/>



Have you a Voice in Forthcoming Elections and Referenda?

The 2008/2009 Draft Register of Electors is currently being prepared. You can check if you are included on the current Register of Electors by logging onto www.checktheregister.ie and click on Laois County Council. Copies of the current Register are available in all Post Offices, Garda Stations, Libraries, Health Centres and Courthouses in Laois. You may apply for entry onto the Specials Voters List if you are living in a hospital, nursing home or similar institution and you are unable to vote at your polling station due to a physical illness/disability.

Applications forms are available on request from the Corporate Affairs Department at 057-8664247/8664094 or by emailing register@laoiscoco.ie. Forms can also be downloaded from our website www.laois.ie.

The Draft Register of Electors is due for Publication on 1st November, 2007.

Remember, if you are not registered, you cannot vote

Libraries

On 29th May 2007, a new library in Mountrath was officially opened by the Chairman of Laois County Council, Cllr Michael Lalor.

The 220 sq. metre library is of significant educational, cultural and recreational benefit to the town. It is centrally located on Shannon Street and provides a wide range of services including books, audio books, foreign language books, internet, newspapers/magazines, music CD's, DVD's, online Ordnance Survey historic maps, etc. The library has already become a centre of activity in the town with over 600 registered members since opening day.

The chairman also launched the five-year Library Development Plan 2007-2011 which proposes further new libraries in Abbeyleix, Mountmellick, Portarlinton and Portlaoise. The plan also sets out objectives to deliver socially inclusive services as well as links with other agencies in the county and outside.

In January a new Mercedes Sprinter delivery van was purchased by the County Council for the library service to deliver book-stocks from headquarters to branch libraries in a more

expeditious manner than before. The delivery van was fully grant-aided by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.



Ms. Norma McDermott, Chairperson of An Comhairle Leabharlanna officially opens the new library in Mountrath - May 2007

Rare Moth found during Heritage Week Bog Walk



Young visitors to Windsor Bog in Coolrain, Co Laois were very excited to find a large pink and purple caterpillar during a guided walk organised by Coillte as part of the celebration of Laois Heritage Week, in August this year. "We found a giant worm" was the cry that went up as the beast, measuring over four inches long and an inch thick, was carried through the group for inspection.

The animal turned out to be the larva of a Goat Moth, only ever recorded in Ireland in County Kerry. This moth gets its name from the strong odour given off by the caterpillar, which has been compared to the smell of a goat.

Heritage Week, takes place in August each year, is a national celebration of all the best of our local built and natural heritage. It is co-ordinated by the Heritage Council with the support of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. It is very significant that this rare element of Ireland's biodiversity was found in Laois during Heritage Week. We hope that this will encourage many other people to get out there and explore their local areas - you never know what you might find!

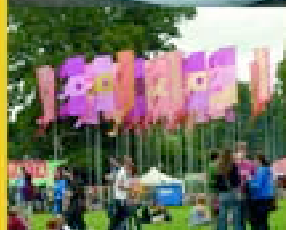


so different, so near

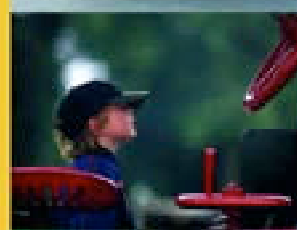


WELCOME TO COUNTY LAOIS

THE EVENT CENTRE OF IRELAND



- Electric Picnic
- Laois Walks Festival
- National Steam Rally
- Budweiser International Golf Challenge
- Castletown Set Dancing Festival
- Durrow Carnival Weekend
- Ossory Agricultural Show
- Gordon Bennett Irish Classic Car Run
- International Garden Festival
- Festival of the Mountain—Rosenallis
- Noel Duggan Memorial Vintage Classic Show
- Clonaslee Show
- Seve Trophy
- Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival
- Slieve Bloom Walks Festival
- The World Fleadh
- Round Tower of Timahoe Festival
- Vintage Rallies
- Parades
- Other Small Festivals
- Point to Point Racing, Stradbally
- Heritage Week



www.laois.ie

www.laoistourism.ie



Portlaoise Main Drainage Scheme

The Portlaoise Main Drainage Scheme involves the provision of an upgraded Sewer Network and new Pumping Stations in Portlaoise. It also includes the construction of a new Wastewater Treatment Plant which will cater for the development of Portlaoise into the future. The Main Drainage Network Contract is progressing well with approximately 16,100m of new foul and storm sewers constructed to date. The project is due to be completed by the end of 2007. The Main Drainage Treatment Plant Contract commenced in January 2007. A new access bridge over the River Triogue and Ridge Road realignment is currently under construction. A new administration building and Laboratory will be completed by the end of October. The Treatment Plant is scheduled for completion in January, 2009.



Heath & Safety

ROADWORKS - You may have noticed an increased number of road closures relating to roadworks of late when travelling through Laois and other counties. These new systems of work are as a direct result of some high profile road traffic accidents throughout other local authorities over the last number of years. In September of 2005, amid increasing concern about the adequacy of warning signs and temporary speed limits at roadworks, the Health & Safety Authority sent investigators to 104 sites across 29 of the main local authorities. Following these inspections, the H.S.A. wrote to all local authorities after highlighting safety concerns at sites directly under the Councils control. Significant concerns over poor traffic management at non-national roadworks sites operated by many local authorities and in particular, problems with signage were identified by the H.S.A. Report which was published at the end of 2005. The majority of Councils have agreed to change their management of roadworks and Laois County Council is no exception. Laois County Council feels that the safety of all road workers and road users e.g. cyclists, motorists, pedestrians is of paramount importance. However, as we all fall into one or other of the above mentioned categories, a system which largely depends on road closures may inconvenience us from time to time. This inconvenience is a small price to pay as it will afford road workers a safer working environment and in addition, it will lead to a reduction in the time taken to complete roadworks which can only prove beneficial to all concerned in the long term, so the message is to

BE PATIENT AND DRIVE SAFELY.

Water Metering Project

The Government's National Water Pricing Policy requires the charging of non-domestic consumers of water services. Local Authorities are now required to meter all non-domestic water supplies and to charge these consumers with the full cost of supplying water used and treating wastewater produced by them.

Laois County Council's Water Services Department has undertaken the installation of meters to all non-domestic users. The final phase of this metering project is now underway. The meter measures the amount of water supplied to all non-domestic premises. Installation of the meters is currently in progress in Mountmellick and Portlaoise will follow. During the works, the Council will endeavour to keep disruption to a minimum. Metering will allow all customers to be charged on the basis of water used – the less you use the less you pay.

CIVIC PLAZA - In recent weeks you will have noticed a substantial restructuring and landscaping of the open green area adjacent to Aras an Chontae. It is hoped that this will provide a much needed visual focus appropriate to the central pivotal location within the newly emerging civic and commercial hub of Portlaoise. As part of this restructuring, significant additional parking capacity will be provided and the visually integrated manner of the project will serve to enhance the civic nature of the area rather than detract from it. The dual use approach will maximise the beneficial use in a manner which consolidates its central civic role within the urban structure of Portlaoise providing clear benefits for the entire community. The car park will be a split level two deck structure with some parking spaces provided utilising the existing ground level, recess ground parking levels and upper deck parking spaces. The open civic space is designed to accommodate open air events and would include permanent and semi permanent canopy structures to enhance its visual impact. One additional feature of the Civic Plaza is the proposed introduction of computer controlled water jet features. While this development may have some adverse impact on employees based in County Hall and Laois County Council employees visiting County Hall, it is felt that it will be well worth it to endure the inconvenience in the short term for the long term benefit to all.

Laois Civil Defence

Laois Civil Defence is a volunteer-based organisation where its 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:

Casualty: provision of a first-aid and ambulance service.

Rescue: Urban rescue, open country search for missing persons with Laois having the only K 9, H.R.D. search and rescue dog within the organisation, and water based search and recovery.

Auxiliary Fire Service: Pump and ladder drills, pumping floodwaters and supply water to the Community.

Warden Service and Radiation Monitoring: Radiation detecting and monitoring.

Welfare: Provision of hot meals, drinks and psychosocial support.

Communications: Operation of two independent radio systems.

Portlaoise Enterprise Centre

The Board of the Portlaoise Enterprise Trust, in partnership with Laois County Council, are delighted to announce that the new Portlaoise Enterprise Centre is now open for business! The primary objective of Portlaoise Enterprise Centre is to foster an innovative approach to providing practical supports and a high standard of mixed commercial accommodation for Start-Up Businesses in the greater Portlaoise area. In summary, it is envisaged that local entrepreneurs with a new business concept will be given an opportunity to put into practice their vision within a supported framework and under the practical guidance and assistance of the management and directorship of the Enterprise Centre. Located in the Clonminam Industrial Estate, the purpose built Enterprise Centre has a total area of 21,200 square feet and provides a mix of office accommodation and incubator units for fledgling businesses at favourable rates. The anchor tenant in the Enterprise Centre is the Laois County Enterprise Board who has been in situ since March last. Please contact us at 057 86 61800 or by email at info@pec.ie for further information. Alternatively, you can write to John Doris, Manager, Portlaoise Enterprise Centre Ltd., Clonminam Industrial Estate, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, outlining your own background, your business idea, and what plans you have for establishing and growing that business in the coming years.

www.laois.ie

Do it on-line

Do you know that you can avail of many on-line services through the Laois County Council website?

These include:

- * Payonline- Parking fines, Motor Tax Renewal, Landfill keyfob, Composter and more.
- * Planning online- View planning applications and their associated documents.
- * Application forms are available to download from our website.
- * Check the Register of Electors to see if you are registered to vote.
- * Renew and browse for library books online.
- * View current jobs and download requirements, application forms and supporting documentation.

Kids Zone Competition

The 2007/2008 Schools programme is now in full swing. Ann-Marie Kelly, Environment Awareness Officer is available to visit all schools and educational facilities in the county to discuss how they can become more environmentally friendly.

To be in with a chance of winning our competition, please answer the following question:

**How many green schools
are in Co Laois?**

*Email your answer to amkelly@laoiscoco.ie to
Ann-Marie Kelly, Environment Awareness Officer,
Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois by 30th November, 2007.
Prize details are also given at the following url:*

Visit www.laois.ie/environmentandwater/environmentawareness/