



Mountmellick Library

NEW LIBRARIES FOR MOUNTMELICK & BALLYLINAN

Mountmellick Library and Art Gallery, the latest new library in County Laois, was officially opened on 20th May, 2010 by John Moloney T.D., Minister with Responsibility for Disability & Mental Health.

The new Library incorporates renovation of the old Courthouse and a new extension to the rear and side of the building. The design concept was developed to provide a library space of contemporary character while preserving the essential essence of the original building.

Situated in the Courthouse in O'Moore Street, the new Library and Art Gallery is placed in an ideally accessible and very central location within walking distance of schools, residential areas and shops.

A tea/coffee facility and seating area is located within the Library and a large dedicated Art Gallery leads off the first floor learning area. A programme of monthly art exhibitions has been arranged by the library staff to facilitate local, regional and national artists to display and sell their works.

Mountmellick Library Opening Hours

Tuesday: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & 2.00 to 7.30 p.m.
 Wednesday: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & 2.00 to 5.30 p.m.
 Thursday: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & 2.00 to 5.30 p.m.
 Friday: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & 2.00 to 5.00 p.m.
 Saturday: 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

Once you become a member of Laois Libraries (joining at the library of your convenience) you can then use your card in all the branches throughout the county. The maximum number of items you can have out at any one time is 8. Since opening in May, the Library has been very busy, registering over 1,000 members and issuing over 20,000 items.

Please contact Triona Kenny at (057) 8644572 for further information.



An Cathaoirleach Cllr James Daly, County Manager, Peter Carey, Public Representatives, Laois County Council Staff, Local Clergy and Local Residents at the opening of Ballylinan Library.

(See Page 4 for more details)



*Cllr James Deegan,
Cathaoirleach.*

We are delighted to welcome the publication of the 2010 edition of the 'Our County' newsletter, which provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the progress made by Laois County Council over the past year.

The completion of the M7 / M8 Motorway from Portlaoise to Cullahill was a major boost for the county and indeed the region.

Obviously there will be huge benefits to Laois in terms of accessibility, economic development and profile in the years to come.

Further progress on critical infrastructure was achieved with the completion of the Portlaoise Main Drainage Scheme (€40 million) together with various water supply scheme improvements. The continued advancement of key infrastructure will facilitate the future growth of our county and provides the opportunity for inward investment.

Laois County Council continued its commitment to a customer centred approach with the provision of new library facilities in Mountmellick and Ballylinan. Work has also commenced on the Stradbally Arts/Community

Centre and the Knockmay Community Services Centre. Our policy is to maintain a proactive approach to quality of life issues for all our communities in spite of the challenging economic circumstances in which we operate.

The promotion and development of tourism in County Laois also remains a priority and the Council has provided leadership and support for major festivals and events such as the Rose of Tralee Regional Finals, the Magnet Festival, the Electric Picnic, the National Sheep Shearing Competition, the International Golf Challenge and the Gordon Bennett Vintage Car Rally. The success of these events continues to improve with obvious benefits for the local economy.

Once again, we would like to acknowledge the co-operation and commitment of the staff and the elected members of Laois County Council. It is imperative, particularly in these very difficult economic times, that we continue to work in partnership with other public agencies, local community organisations and the business community to improve and promote the well-being of all the people in County Laois.



*Peter Carey,
County Manager.*

SUMMER ARTS PROGRAMME 2010

The 2010 Summer Arts Programme, organised by the Arts Office, Laois County Council, was very successful with over 250 young people taking part in week long workshops in different Arts practices. Artist Patricia Bennett devised a wonderfully creative project in Emo National School from 5th to 9th July, with lots of colourful works of art created by the participants. The second week was very busy with art workshops happening in St. Francis School in Portlaoise with Conor Brennan and art in the Mountmellick Development Association with artist Siobhan Keogh, as well as creative writing for young people in Portlaoise with writer Jean O'Brien.

The third and fourth weeks of the programme included Dance, Art, Pottery and Kindermusic. Dance artist Suzanne McCabe held dance workshops in Knockmay N.S. with a group of enthusiastic young people from the area and pottery artist Edel O'Keefe worked in St. Francis school, where the young pottery artists designed and produced some wonderful pots, vases and plaques in clay. Kindermusic tutor Helen Spencer also worked in St. Francis School, Portlaoise from 19th to 23rd July, with a group of very young children to give them their first introduction to music and music making.

The final week was held in Durrow as part of the 'Howya Festival', with pottery workshops by local pottery artist Fionnuala O'Connell and in keeping with the theme of the festival, some of the participants designed their own pottery scarecrow to add to their collection of work. The children attending all the workshops had great fun and learned lots of new and creative skills along the way.

Midland Masterclasses

This is the third year that this initiative has been run by the Arts Services in Laois, Longford, Westmeath and Offaly and it was developed in response to the professional needs of visual artists, musical enthusiasts, dancers, writers and performers right across the midlands. Running from August to October, the programme includes master classes in Sculpture, Portraiture, Dance, Music, Performance, Photography and Web design.

A brochure with a full list of the courses in Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath is now available from the Arts Office at (057) 8674342/44 or it can be downloaded from our website www.laois.ie.



The Sport and Leisure Section of Laois County Council delivered many successful events and activities during 2010. Most notable were:

Play Provision

Croí na nÓg playground, named by Zoe Doheny, was opened in 2010 at Kiln Lane, Mountrath. The playground was designed to accommodate children up to 12 years of age, with some fantastic features, including a multi unit play area with a variety of elements. A sand play area has been incorporated into the playground and many features are fully accessible to children with a disability.

The Multi-Use Games Area on site is suitable for basketball, soccer, tennis and volleyball and has given a new lease of life to the area.



Opening of Croí na nÓg playground in Mountrath

The facilities are open every day during daylight hours and it is hoped that all play facilities will continue to bring fun and enjoyment for many years to come.

National Bike Week

This week long event was held from 13th to 20th June and included events such as the Abbeyleix Spoke Project with Abbeyleix Tidy Towns and Laois County Council. In this event, primary school students in Abbeyleix cycled out to Abbeyleix Estate and back to Fr. Breen Park for fun activities which included slow bike race, balancing on a wedge and many more.



Other events during National Bike Week included Family Fun Cycles, Stage 1 of Raleigh Around Ireland and a Laois Cycling Club Time Trial. Safety played a big part with a Workshop in Portlaoise Leisure Centre, including Portlaoise Community Gardai Cycling Challenge and bike checks.

As part of the School Road Safety Programme, Abbeyleix South National School participated in a workshop featuring information cycling safely and how to carry out checks on bikes to make sure they are safe.

Laois County Council / FAI Football In The Community Programme

The main elements of the Laois County Council/ FAI Football In The Community Programme are:

- Community Football Programmes
- Soccer Tots Programme
- Football In Schools
- Late Night Soccer
- Womens/Girls Soccer
- Women's Soccer Leisure League
- Football For All



Soccer Tots Programme

Water Safety Awareness Week 2010

During Water Safety Awareness Week, the Annual Conference was held in Portlaoise from 21st – 23rd April. Demonstrating our commitment to Water Safety Awareness, Laois Water Safety ran a schools programme, visiting 26 schools to raise awareness of safety around water. The main aim of the presentation was to give the children a safety message about swimming and water safety during the summer holidays.

Laois Water Safety held their annual presentation of Water Safety Certificates in Portlaoise Leisure centre.



Stradbally Boys National School

Both Arthur Drennan, President of Laois Water Safety and Ann Marie Maher, Laois Water Safety Officer, congratulated everyone on their achievements and reiterated the importance of safety around water throughout the summer months.

Tourism Networking Event

The Tourism Networking Event, organised by the Tourism Officer and the Board of Laois Tourism, was held in the Portlaoise Heritage Hotel in November, 2009.

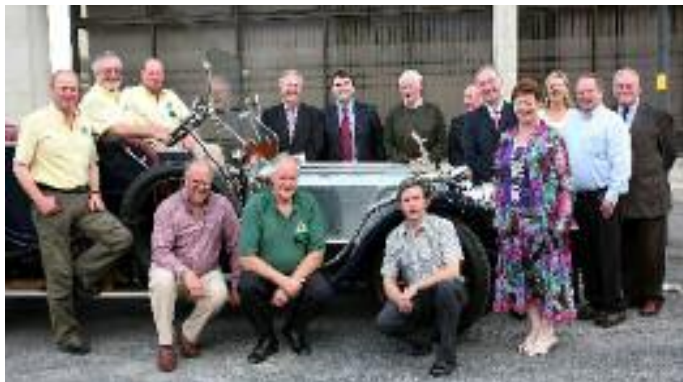
It was fully supported by a number of agencies, such as Laois County Council, Laois Partnership Company Ltd., Laois Enterprise Board and Fáilte Ireland.



The key motivational speaker at the event was Sean Gallagher, entrepreneur and also a well-known 'Dragon' from RTE'S series 'Dragon's Den' (pictured above with Peter Carey, County Manager and Honor Deevy, Laois County Council Tourism Officer). The Networking Event was very well attended by the tourism trade.

Gordon Bennett Irish Classic Car Run 2010

The Gordon Bennett Irish Classic Car Run 2010 took place over the June Bank Holiday weekend.



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. The Gordon Bennett Festival is now an important component of the Rose of Tralee Regional Festival in Portlaoise.

Rose of Tralee International Regional Finals 2010

30 Irish Roses participated in this event hosted in Laois over the June Bank Holiday weekend. This year also had an international dimension, with 6 Roses from the U.K. and 4 Roses from the U.S. The Gala Rose Parade was organised by the Tourism Officer and parade committee and attracted large numbers to Portlaoise. Schools and community groups from all over Laois participated.



All Ireland and International Sheep Shearing Championships

The All-Ireland and International Sheep Shearing Championships took place in June

Laois Tourism Website

Laois Tourism have redesigned and are marketing the new look Laois Tourism website. Apart from the excellent new imagery on the site, the website has improved the accommodation section, added an inclusive events calendar, latest news section, Dunamais Arts listings, interactive map as well as other useful tools. Check out www.laoistourism.ie for all information on tourism in County Laois.

Laois Tourism Bunting

Laois Tourism also provides festival bunting which can be obtained from the Board of Laois Tourism for festivals and events taking place in County Laois. The bunting has already been used for the Rose of Tralee International Regional Finals, Abbeyfest and Durrow 'Howya' Festival, among others.

For further details, please contact Honor Deevy, Tourism Officer, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise. Tel: (057) 8674324
Email: hdeevy@laoiscoco.ie

LIBRARY NEWS (continued from Page 1)

Ballylinan Library was officially opened on 9th April, 2010 by Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Cllr James Daly. The library, which was situated in the Health Centre in the village, was relocated to new premises in Gracefield Shopping centre in Ballylinan in February, 2010.

The new library is fully automated and has a fantastic selection of new library stock for children and adults. The

Library has PC's for public internet use and printing facilities. For further details contact Niamh Boyce at (059) 8625007.

Ballylinan Library Opening Hours

Monday: 3.00 to 5.00 p.m. & 6.00 to 8.00 p.m.
Wednesday: 3.00 to 5.00 p.m. & 6.00 to 8.00 p.m.
Friday: 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.
Saturday: 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

Laois Takes Pride in Our Place in 2010

Following on from the major success celebrated by Camross Village and Riverview Apartments, Portlaoise, in the 2009 competition, Laois County Council proudly supports the entrants in this year's All-Island National Pride of Place Competition, hosted by Co-operation Ireland.

Pride of Place is an initiative of Co-operation Ireland, a cross-border organisation which aims to recognise the efforts of local people to create pride in their area and to celebrate the vital contribution that community groups make to society. The competition, now in its eighth year, focuses on people coming together to shape, enhance and enjoy all that is good about their area. Laois's entrants this year are:

**Mountmellick Christmas Tree Committee
(Population over 2,000 Category)**

**Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary (SCJM),
The Green, Stradbally (Housing Estates Category)**



The Christmas Tree Project entails massive community co-operation and commitment in the construction and preparation for its annual 'switch-on' night. The community also benefits from a visit by Santa Claus, facilitated by the committee, bringing toys for the under 10's of the communities of Mountmellick, The Rock and Clonaghadoo.

The SCJM was formed in 1946, primarily to provide services to women with epilepsy, but later broadened their services to help people with intellectual disabilities in the midlands area.

The senior citizens are not forgotten either. Free fuel is delivered by the committee annually to older people in the wider community during the Christmas Season.

The overarching principle is to make people's lives better, by providing person centered solutions to enhance their lives. The project at The Green, Stradbally has enabled people with an intellectual disability to live and participate in the local community, with an extensive garden which provides a 'rus in urbe' setting.

LAOIS JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

DWANE TRAVELLER ENTERPRISE CENTRE

The purpose of the Joint Policing Committee is to provide a forum where a local authority and the senior Garda Officers responsible for the policing of that area, with the participation of the Oireachtas Members and Community representatives, can consult, discuss and make recommendations on matters affecting policing. Items discussed include Crime Prevention, Community Alert/Neighbourhood Watch/Business Watch/Hospital Watch, Community Policing (local community Gardai across the county/community policing unit in Portlaoise), Traffic/Road Safety and Drugs Awareness.

The Dwane Traveller Enterprise Centre opened for business on 19th April, 2010. The primary objective of the Centre is to provide Traveller men in County Laois with the opportunity to learn new skills, which might lead to more employment and enterprise opportunities. The Centre is funded and supported by a number of local agencies and groups including; Laois County Council, HSE, Laois Partnership Company, Laois VEC, FÁS, Department of Social Protection, Laois Traveller Action Group and Portlaoise Men's Traveller Group.

Laois County Joint Policing Committee held its first Annual Public Meeting on 20th September, 2010 in Áras an Chontae. Mountmellick Town Policing Committee held its Annual Public Meeting on 30th September in Civic Offices, Mountmellick. The Portlaoise Town Council Joint Policing Committee meeting was held on 7th September.

The Centre is currently focusing on creating items from recycled waste wood. Items for sale include Craft Items (lamps, mirrors, clocks, etc); Garden Furniture (wooden benches, trellis, fencing) and Pet Supplies (dog kennels, bird boxes). All of these items are very competitively priced and finished to the highest standard.

These meetings were open to members of the public and all were welcome. Submissions were invited by individuals or groups in advance of the meetings and notice of how to make these submissions was published in the local press.

The Centre is open for business and visitors are welcome. For further information contact Maeve Daly at (087) 6911903 or madaly@laoiscoco.ie. The Centre is also open to donations of waste wood (subject to suitability).

Pride in Laois: Putting Litter in its place

Clean up Laois Week took place in April, 2010 and hundreds of people and school children took to the streets throughout the county to clean up their estates, streets and communities. This year, approximately 38 tonnes of waste was collected (some of which was illegally dumped waste) by 93 registered groups. In total, €13,000 was spent on 'Clean Up Laois Week' activities, including the distribution of litter pickers, gloves and bags to groups and the correct legal disposal of the collected material by the Environmental Enforcement Officers.



Laois County Council staff team up with the PAL (Portlaoise Against Litter) Committee and the Laois Ethnic Minority Support Group to put litter in its place

Now in its 7th year, Clean Up Laois Week is one of Laois County Council's largest anti-litter campaigns and complements An Taisce's National Spring Clean month. However, the Environment Section encourage anyone with information on illegal dumping/littering to contact us on our freephone litter hotline 1800 323232 throughout the year. All information received is treated in the strictest confidence. Promotional materials, such as car tidy bins and trolley token keyrings, are available free of charge from the Environment Section.

Community Action Programme

This programme sees the Council's Environment Section working closely with two communities on a long term sustainable approach to reducing litter pollution in their areas. Now in its third year, the villages of Timahoe and Attanagh receive regular visits and are assessed based on the presence/absence of litter. Both villages receive support and advice, as well as anti-litter material, which is distributed throughout the community. The success of this programme is demonstrated by the consistently high marks scored by both villages, who receive many cleanliness ratings of over 90%. People living in the vicinity of these villages are encouraged to help out as 'many hands make light work'. The Tidy Towns group welcomes new volunteers all year round!

Making a Clean Sweep!

The annual Litter Challenge, organised and judged by the Environment Section, saw some friendly rivalry between 7 towns and 13 small/large villages who took on the fight against litter in their local communities. There were many highlights throughout the 12 week competition, including Ratheniska village achieving maximum marks (400/400)

and 18 litter free designations for Borris-in-Ossory, Ballacolla, Errill, Clough, Coolrain, Emo, Killasmeestia, Ratheniska and Spink.

Details of the overall winners, runners up and most improved areas during the course of the competition are as follows:

Overall Winners

Borris-in-Ossory (Town), Errill (Large Village), Ratheniska (Small Village)

Overall Runners-up

Portarlinton (Town), Ballacolla & Ballylinan (Large Village), Killasmeestia (Small Village)

Most Improved During Competition

Mountrath (Town), Ballinakil & Ballyroan (Large Village), Coolrain (Small Village)

All participating groups will be invited to an Awards Night in October to celebrate their achievements in this and other environment projects.

Avoid a sticky situation – Chew it and Bin it!

Laois County Council was selected and participated in the last two years in the national Gum Litter Taskforce Campaign to change attitudes and behaviour among a minority of gum users who throw chewing gum on the streets rather than disposing of it in a proper manner.



This campaign was highlighted at a local level by distributing appropriate merchandise and highlighting awareness with the help of the ad mobile, local papers and billboard advertising.



Incorrect disposal of chewing gum is litter and anyone who throws it on the ground can be fined €150. So to avoid the fine - apply for your free Stubbi today!

One side of the pouch contains papers for wrapping chewing gum and storing it until it can be emptied in a nearby bin. Contact the Environment Section on (057) 8674322 if you require further details on the combination cigarette/chewing gum pouch.

Paws & Think - It could be your shoe one day!

Did you know that when your dog does its business, it becomes your business? Not only is dog waste very unpleasant and a public health issue, it is also litter when it is not cleaned up from footpaths and in our parks. As a result, Laois County Council encourages all dog owners to clean up after their pet. The Council have invested in various measures to reduce dog fouling. Dog fouling bins have been installed in various parks and green areas around the county and signage has also been erected along popular dog walks around several towns, creating awareness of this litter offence.



Local ISPCA Dog Warden, Tristan Blundell, as well as Laois County Council and the Portlaoise Against Litter Committee are promoting the Council's 'Responsible Dog Ownership' booklet and have distributed many copies to date. Also, the Council have a quantity of biodegradable bags available to make cleaning up after your dog a bit easier. Please contact the Environment Section for further details.

Is Your Butt Worth €150!

Through litter surveys and local competitions carried out, cigarette butts are regarded as the main causative factor of litter on our footpaths/kerblines, especially in the core of our towns and villages. Most public bins now incorporate a cigarette ashtray and the majority of business premises susceptible to cigarette related litter (i.e. public houses) provide customers with free standing/wall mounted ashtrays. Laois County Council's Environment Section encourages smokers to 'kick the habit' and dispose of their butts correctly by providing combination 'Stubbis' free of charge. 'Stubbis' are soft reusable compact pouches with a fireproof lining that fit neatly into a pocket or bag, allowing users to extinguish cigarettes, locking in odour and to dispose of butts in a safe and responsible manner.

Food Waste Regulations, 2009

From 1st July, 2010, the Regulations promote the segregation and recovery of food waste in the

commercial sector. These Regulations impose obligations on producers of food waste, such as state buildings, restaurants and cafes, hot food outlets, canteens, hotels and larger guesthouses, supermarkets and other food retailers, to segregate food waste and make it available for separate collection (brown bin collection).

Small businesses that produce less than 50kg of food waste per week are exempt from complying for one year (to 1st July, 2011). Waste Enforcement Officers have hosted seminars for the commercial sector regarding their obligations under these Regulations. Anyone who has concerns relating to how they treat food waste should log on to www.stopfoodwaste.ie or contact the Environment Section of Laois County Council at (057) 8674319 or via our website at www.laois.ie.

Waste Bye-Laws

From 1st July, 2010, the Midlands Local Authorities introduced Waste Bye-Laws in designated towns. These Bye-Laws outline that householders must segregate their food waste from the other types of waste that they produce as this is sent for composting (a separate bin is provided by the authorised waste collectors). In addition, domestic customers of Kyletalesha Landfill must separate their food waste before using the facility.

This change is necessary in order for Laois County Council to comply with a revised EPA Landfill Licence which took effect from 1st July, 2010. Spot checks at the landfill will be carried out to ensure compliance. Compostable bags must be used to dispose of food waste in the adjacent Recycling Centre at Kyletalesha Landfill. These bags can be purchased at the vending machines located at the Landfill and at Áras an Chontae.

More Photos from Clean Up Laois Week



This year's Heritage Week ran from 21st to 29th August and was a great success. With events all over the county attended by both young and old alike, 2010 was the best year ever in the celebration and exploration of our built, natural and cultural heritage. Highlights of the week included a number of unusual events in the county's libraries as follows:

The Reptile Village Conservation Zoo visited [Mountmellick](#) and [Mountrath Libraries](#) on 24th August. Participants got to see and hold some amazing reptiles and amphibians, such as boa constrictors, leopard tortoise, caiman crocodiles, frilled dragons and South African bull frogs. This hugely popular event gave the young people a better understanding of wildlife, nature, the world around us and our place in it, helping to show participants exactly what conservation is all about. Participants even got to hold some animals which they would normally only see on television or in books.

A children's workshop on How to Draw Wildlife, by wildlife author and artist Gordon D'Arcy, was held in [Portlaoise](#) and [Mountmellick Libraries](#) on 24th August. The workshop used art to teach about wildlife, ecology, folklore and special places.

Michael Moylan, of Irish History Live, brought his very popular historical re-enactment show back to the libraries of Laois again this year, bringing the past to life for the children of [Rathdowney](#), [Durrow](#), [Mountmellick](#) and [Abbeyleix](#).

In addition to special Heritage Week events, many of the county's [Museums and Heritage Sites](#) had special open

days. Laois is lucky to have a number of very high quality museums, which deserve our support all year round. These include Donaghmore Workhouse Museum, the Irish Fly Fishing and Game Shooting Museum, Mountmellick Museum, Durrow Courthouse Cultural Centre & Durrow Bygones Museum, Abbeyleix Heritage House and the People's Museum, Portarlinton.

In addition, we are lucky to have a number of State owned heritage sites in the County, including Emo Court, Heywood Gardens and the Rock of Dunamais and of course all of these are open to the public year round as well as holding special events during Heritage Week. Heritage Week is co-ordinated by the Heritage Council with support from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Fáilte Ireland.



*Learning about the wildlife of Laois during Heritage Week
Photograph - Michael Scully*

For further information, please contact Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer, Laois County Council, Tel: (057) 8674348, (087) 6624865, E-mail: ccasey@laoiscoco.ie

COMHAIRLE NA nÓG 2009

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

Over the years, the Comhairle has proven to be very worthwhile event, with students from schools across the county meeting, integrating and discussing topics of relevance for young people in today's world.



This year, the students discussed the main issues affecting young people in Laois, such as safe places to hang out, how the current economic climate is affecting young people and their families and issues surrounding

racism and physical, mental and emotional health in young people.

Issues raised by young people at the Comhairle Day were highlighted by Laois Youth Council during the next few months to the relevant agencies in the county as represented on Laois County Development Board.

On the day, five more students were elected on the Youth Council representing the 12 to 15 age group and these five delegates from the Youth Council represented Laois at Dáil na nÓg, which took place in Dublin in February, 2010. Laois Youth Council (also known as Comhairle) meets a number of times a year, working on a programme of issues raised by young people at the Annual Comhairle na nÓg meetings. These issues include:

- Youth & Recreational facilities for young people.
- Road safety for young people.
- Development of mental/emotional health services for young people in Laois.

For further details on Comhairle, contact Georgina Ireland, Community & Enterprise, Laois County Council at (057) 8674336 or gireland@laoiscoco.ie.

Comhairle na nÓg AGM 2010 takes places in October.

MAJOR EMERGENCY EXERCISE



Ariel view of fictional accident at Togher Roundabout



View of fictional accident from Abbeyleix Road

An Inter-Agency Major Emergency exercise, involving the three Principle Response Agencies i.e. Laois Local Authorities, An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive, was held in Portlaoise on 23rd April, 2010.

The exercise involved the participation of approximately 100 personnel from all three Principal Response Agencies.

Laois Local Authorities supplied the 'On Site' co-ordination facilities which accommodated staff from the Local Authority, An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive at the fictional emergency site.

Additionally, the five rooms currently allocated to Major Emergency Management in Áras an Chontae

accommodated the Local Co-ordination Group and the support teams of the three Principal Response Agencies.

A fictional exercise scenario, involving an overturned chemical tanker, a high occupancy passenger coach and multiple cars, was used on the day of the exercise.

The fictional scenario and pictures were created by Laois County Fire and Rescue Service. These were distributed on the day of the exercise to the participants at Togher Roundabout, the site of the fictional Major Emergency.

The exercise then proceeded to allow the three Principle Response Agencies to practice providing an effective and co-ordinated response in the event of a Major Emergency.

HEALTH & SAFETY

43 people were killed in workplace accidents in 2009, which is the lowest figure on record since modern records covering all workplaces began.

The figure is the lowest following the extension of health and safety legislation to cover all workplaces brought about by the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 1989 (subsequently replaced by the SH&WW Act, 2005).

While the figures have been welcomed by the Minister for Labour Affairs, Dara Calleary, T.D., as showing a positive trend, he expressed some reservations, saying that "43 families spent the holiday period mourning the loss of a family member in a workplace accident".

There is, he said, no room for complacency, but the reduction in workplace fatalities is encouraging and great credit is due to the Health & Safety Authority (HSA),

employers and employee representatives who continue to work collaboratively towards greater workplace safety. The most dangerous sectors continue to be agriculture, in which 11 people were killed, and construction, in which 10 were killed. The next most dangerous sector was transport and storage, in which 7 people were killed.

The remaining deaths occurs in the following sectors: fishing, quarrying, public order, education, forestry, manufacturing, retail, accommodation/food services, professional/technical activities, administrative/support activities, healthcare and other service activities.

Over the next three years, the Health & Safety Authority (HSA) is seeking a 10% reduction in the annual average fatality rate and a 5% reduction in the injury rate. They are the performance indicators on which the success or failure of its new three-year Strategy will be judged.

It should be borne in mind that the vast majority of fatal accidents could easily be prevented by implementing good safety practices in the workplace. Taking a few simple steps such as planning the work activity, not taking shortcuts, maintaining and using the correct plant and equipment etc. can greatly reduce the risk of accidents.

It is important to remember that thinking and acting safely does not stop when you finish work, as many of us conduct high risk activities in our everyday lives, ranging from driving, gardening and DIY to playing contact sports. In addition, we need to be vigilant against the risk of fire in our home so the message clearly is to -

Put Safety First by simply Thinking and Acting Safely at all times.

LAOIS CIVIL DEFENCE

Laois Civil Defence was recently awarded a Certificate in recognition of their contribution to the vital work of the Chernobyl Children's Project International (CCPI), by Adi Roche, Executive Director CCPI.



The Civil Defence arranged transportation for terminally ill children to visit the Barretstown Camp in County Kildare. The Camp is a very specialised holiday centre, which takes children from all over Europe with serious illnesses to enjoy a holiday.

Since the establishment of CCPI, over 20,000 children have been brought to Ireland for much needed recuperative holidays.

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 include First Aid, Search & Rescue, Fire Fighting and Emergency Response.

Training centres are located at Stradbally, Durrow and Mountmellick. If you are interested in the above and are aged between 16 and 65, contact the Civil Defence to find out more at (057) 8664106 or lpreston@laoisccoco.ie.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Laois Community Forum celebrates Community Contribution in Laois

Laois Community Forum hosted its first Annual Community Awards Evening in February, 2010 in Portlaoise Parish Centre. The Awards were organised to celebrate the huge contribution made by community and voluntary groups to life in County Laois.



*Overall Winners - Clonaslee Laois Hospice
'St Stephen's Day Walk' Committee*

The winner and runners up of the Community Forum Awards Scheme 2009 were announced on the night. Clonaslee Laois Hospice 'St Stephen's Day Walk' Committee were overall winners, and runners up were Portarlinton Active Retirement 'Happy Hearts' Group, and Woodenbridge Paddlers Canoe Club.

Mental Health Awareness Evening

"Work well, Live well, Be well" was the theme of an awareness evening held by Laois Community Forum in Portlaoise Parish Centre on 17th May, 2010, to highlight the importance of 'Minding Our Mental Health'. The feedback from this evening was very positive and worthwhile.



John Moloney T.D., Minister with Responsibility for Disability & Mental Health, addresses the Awareness Evening

This positive feedback was enhanced by the suggestion by Minister John Moloney that other Community Forums across the country organise and support similar mental health awareness events to highlight the issue. Laois Community Forum is proud to have set a precedent in this regard.

LAOIS LOCAL DRUGS NETWORK COMMITTEE

Laois Local Drugs Network continues to create a greater awareness about the problem of drug misuse through local and relevant initiatives. Activities throughout the year included drug and alcohol awareness education training for youth workers, publication and distribution of cards and flyers with contact numbers for the relevant services and supports in the Midlands and the hosting of a drug awareness week in June, 2010.

Family Support workers continue to assist the public with supports to families who may be experiencing problems with drugs in their families. This service is available in Portarlinton and Portlaoise.

WESTERN AREA OFFICE

Laois County Council's Western Area Office has moved from the Courthouse in Borris-in-Ossory to The Old Barracks, The Square, Rathdowney. The administration of the Council's services in the following towns is dealt with by the employees who are attached to the Western Area:

Abbeyleix, Attanagh, Ballacolla, Ballinakill, Borris-in-Ossory, Camross, Castletown, Coolrain, Durrow, Errill, Mountrath, Rathdowney and Shanahoe.

Services provided in the Western Area Office include all queries to do with Roads & Water Services, including Well Grants, Water Connections, Sewerage Connections and Road Opening Licences.

Please note that payment for the above services must be made in Áras an Chontae. The Western Area Office can be contacted during office hours at (0505) 48360.

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

REMEMBER - YOU CAN'T VOTE IF YOU ARE NOT ON THE REGISTER

The Draft Register of Electors 2011/2012 is published on 1st November. If you want to have a vote, it is up to you to ensure that you are included on the Register. You can check if you are on the current Register at your local Post Office, Garda Station, Health Centre or Library, on-line at www.checktheregister.ie or by contacting the Corporate Affairs Department of Laois County Council.

If you are not included on the Register you can make a claim for inclusion on the 2010/2011 Register up to 25th November, 2010. To qualify for inclusion you must be 18 years of age or reach 18 years by 15th February, 2011, be ordinarily resident on 1st September, 2010, at the address at which you wish to be registered and ensure that you are not registered as an elector at any other address.

Application forms are available at your local Post Office,

Garda Station, Health Centre or Library or on request from Corporate Affairs Department at (057) 8664247 or (057) 8664105, by e-mail to register@laoiscoco.ie, by fax to (057) 8622313 or downloaded at www.laois.ie.

Special voting arrangements exist for Electors who are ordinarily resident in a hospital or nursing home and Electors who have a physical illness or physical disability and who wish to vote from home. Electors who may not be able to attend a Polling Station due to circumstances of occupation/education can also apply for inclusion on the Postal Voters list.

Application forms for inclusion on the Postal and Special voters lists are also available from Corporate Affairs and must be completed and returned on or before 25th November, 2010.

ON-LINE SERVICES

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

These include:

- **Planning On-line** - View planning applications and their associated documents.
- **Check the Register of Electors** to see if you are registered to vote.
- **Renew and browse for Library books online.** The libraries also provide a range of free on-line reference services.
- **View Laois County Council Publications.**
- **View our Latest News.**

- **A range of application forms** for many services are available to download.

- **Credit Card Payments On-line** – Renew your Motor Tax, Top up your Landfill keyfob, Pay Traffic fines, Litter fines and Fire Charges, Purchase a Composter and/or Trailer Cover.

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

Sleaty Road, **Graiguecullen** Tel: (059) 9165960
1 Park Lane, **Portarlinton** Tel: (057) 8636533
The Old Barracks, The Square, **Rathdowney**
Tel: (0505) 48360

FIRE SAFETY AT HOME

Fires happen and unfortunately some can have fatal consequences. The majority of fire related deaths in Ireland occur in the home. Having a working smoke alarm in your home could save your life.

Please make sure that your home has a working smoke alarm and check it regularly.

**In the event of a fire - Get Up, Get Out, Go to the Assembly Point,
Get the Fire Brigade Out, Stay Out**

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Don't miss this amazing opportunity to purchase your dream home



**Maryborough Village
Portlaoise**

3 Bedroom Semi Detached

€99,000

Tel: (057) 8664123

E-mail: affordable@laoiscoco.ie

www.laois.ie

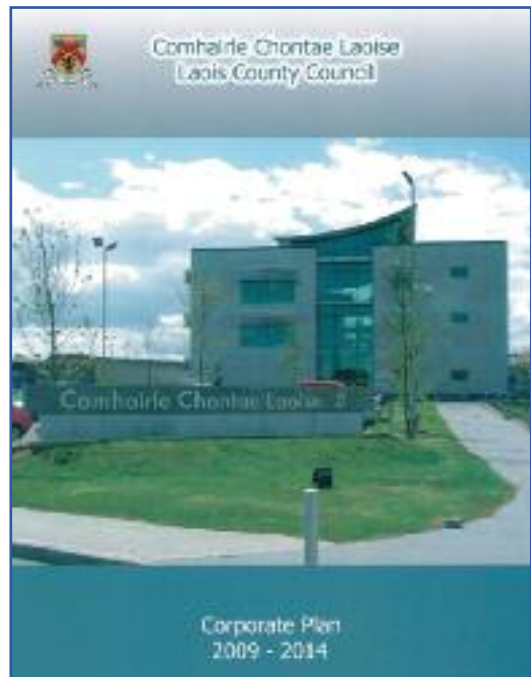
CORPORATE PLAN 2009 - 2014

Laois County Council's Corporate Plan 2009 - 2014 was adopted by the Members of the Council at their meeting in December, 2009.

This Corporate Plan was prepared following consultation with employees, elected representatives, community, voluntary and environmental interests, external stakeholders and other public bodies operating at local level and provides the framework for the implementation of a coherent strategy for the development of our county for the next five years.

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

The Corporate Plan can be viewed at www.laois.ie.



SCÉIM NA GAELIGE 2009 - 2012

Dhearbhaigh an t-Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta scéim Teanga na Gaeilge ullmhaithe ag Údarás Áitiúla Laoise agus a tháinig i bhfeidhm ar an lú Nollaig, 2009, ar feadh tréimhse 3 bliana. Tá an scéim le fáil ar ár líonláithreán www.laois.ie.

Tuigeann Údarás Áitiúla Laoise go bhfuil de cheart ag ár gcustaiméirí gnó a dhéanamh linn ins an teanga is rogha leo agus tabharfar gach áis dóibh ina gcuid caidrimh linne, chomh fada agus is féidir, bíodh sé sin trí mheán na Gaeilge nó trí mheán an Bhéarla. Ceann de phríomh aidhmeanna le Scéim na Teanga seo a dheimhniú go

bhfuil caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge níos airde mar gurab í an chéad teanga oifigiúil na Tíre seo í.

Tá foireann feidhmiúcháin ionadaigh ar gach réimhse feidhmiúcháin den Chomhairle. Forbrófar plean cur i bhfeidhm ag an bhfoireann mar aon le sceideal na mbeart atá riachtanach chun go slánófaí gealltanais na Scéime.

Más mian leat teagmháil a dhéanamh as Gaeilge leis an gComhairle, cuir ríomhphoist chuig gaeilge@laoiscoco.ie

Tá cóip den fhoilseachán seo ar fáil fresin as Gaeilge on Rannóg Gnóthaí Corparáideacha ag (057) 8664105 no ríomhphoist corpaffairs@laoiscoco.ie