

Minister Peter Burke,
Minister of
Enterprise, Trade and
Employment launched
a new EnergyCloud
project in Offaly with
Amazon Web Services
(AWS) and Offaly
County Council



The Paris 2024 Olympians were honoured at a Civic Reception jointly hosted by Offaly County Council and Offaly Sports Partnership

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Proposed 60km/h speed limit on the R400, Rhode – CLOSING DATE **Friday 24 January 2025**
- Daingean Active Travel Scheme Part 8 - CLOSING DATE **Friday 28 February 2025 at 12 Noon**

Climate Action Environment Water & Transportation

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Action

On 9th December 2024 Peter Burke, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Employment launched a new EnergyCloud project in Offaly with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Offaly County Council. The Climate Action initiative as contained within the Offaly County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, was announced as part of an ongoing collaboration between not-for-profit EnergyCloud Ireland and Amazon Web Services (AWS). This program will enable 300 families in the Midlands to receive free tanks of hot water from surplus renewable energy via the installation of an EnergyCloud enabled smart device. The device uses surplus renewable energy, which would otherwise be wasted to heat immersion tanks.

The first homes will be delivered in collaboration with Offaly County Council. Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council, Cllr Audrey Hennessy Kennedy said 'Offaly County Council are delighted to be part of this EnergyCloud Initiative, which connects the innovative technologies in our Tullamore Decarbonisation Zone with our stated aims in our Climate Action Plan to use surplus renewable energy to help those in energy poverty across the whole county'.

Litter Management - Engagement with Local Voluntary Groups on Litter Management

There were 17 litter picks carried out by local voluntary groups facilitated by Offaly County Council in the month of December 2024. A total of 1,140kg of litter was collected and processed. This brings the

overall tonnage of litter collected from January to December to 33 tonnes.

A total of 312 litter collections by local voluntary groups took place in 2024, supported by Offaly County Council's Environment Section. During the month of January, this information will be promoted on social media to thank the public for all their hard work and co-operation in managing litter in their area.

Environment Complaints

Summary of Complaints Received by Environment Section for December 2024 and investigated - Total number of 44 complaints.

Category	Number
Abandoned Vehicles	3
Air Pollution	1
Control of Dogs	7
Control of Horses	0
Litter Control	39
Noise Pollution	0
Waste Enforcement	4
Water Quality	0
Building Control	0
Total	54

Burial Grounds - Cemetery Committees

We are currently working with 20 cemetery committees across the County including two new committees that were formed in 2024. We have paid out 27 grants over the course of 2024 totalling €47,334.00 targeted at supporting the day-to-day maintenance of our cemeteries. This funding has been used to assist in the delivery of the dashing of cemetery walls, removal of old trees and replacement with a new native based hedge and the purchase of equipment. The Climate Action, Environment and Rural Water

section welcome engagement from groups that are currently maintaining their local cemetery or planning on forming a committee to do so with the view to potential grant funding in the future.

St. Mary's Cemetery, Edenderry

The main contract work for the extension to St. Mary's cemetery has been completed and will provide an extra 300 burial spaces. The completion of the remaining landscaping works will take place over the coming months.

RURAL WATER SERVICES - Capital

Applications for capital funding from the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2024 to 2026 (MARWP) were submitted to the Rural Water Unit, Dept of Housing, in April 2024. The Rural Water Unit have recently announced their decision (November 2024) on a portion of the grants and we have advised the Group Water Schemes of those decisions.

All projects that were submitted were reviewed and passed Stage 1 of the application process. Stage 2 of the application process involves consideration by the RWU's Expert Panel for consideration. We are currently awaiting the expert panel's decision on the remaining grants, predominately made up of measures relating to water conservation, leakage reduction and prevention.

Subsidies

Offaly County Council paid a total of €1,069,594.00 in subsidy support to 15 group water schemes IN 2024.

Grants

Information and grant application forms for Well Grants, Domestic Lead Remediation Grants, and Domestic Waste Water Treatment are available on

www.offaly.ie or from the Climate Action, Environment and Rural Water section by contacting 057 9357403.

Veterinary - Control of Dogs

In 2024 we cared for over 214 dogs in the dog shelter. 15% of these dogs were reclaimed by their owners, 15% were rehomed by the Care of Dogs Team and the remaining 70% were rehomed through animal rescue charities.

The Control of Dogs team has also dealt with 90 complaints in 2024, including dog licence issues, straying dogs and dealing with dangerous dogs. The team has also assisted An Garda Siochana with regard to the delivery of their services.

Dog Shelter

In late 2023 we received notification of grant funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development to assist with the costs associated with the upgrade works to the dog shelter through the Department's Dog Control Support Initiative. The funding has been used for –

Replacement of wooden and steel doors in the Dog Shelter



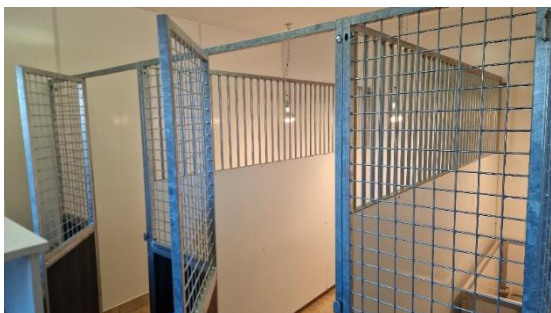
Improving site security and public safety by erecting palisade fencing and extending the public pathway and fitting pvc panels to viewing area



Increasing the time that the dogs can have outdoor play by subdividing the playing areas with mesh fencing



Upgrades to 3 whelping areas to accommodate bitches and pups in more suitable accommodation, including heat lamps, whelping crates and a pvc finish



Improved vet's room and isolation area and new water and wastewater supplies



Control of Horses

Offaly County Council processed 15 complaints in 2024 with no associated animal seizures

Veterinary Inspections

From 1st January 2025, the Food Business and Veterinary Inspection function will be transferring from Local Authorities to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Offaly County Council's Shared Service Agreement for Veterinary Services with Westmeath County Council ceased on the 31/12/24.

TRANSPORTATION

Corporate Fleet Management

Offaly County Council received delivery of its 3rd velocity patcher in December. The addition of this 3rd vehicle means that each Municipal District now has its own assigned velocity patcher. The deployment of this vehicle will further strengthen and improve our road maintenance approach while also providing additional Health and Safety and Carbon Reduction improvements.



Birr North Distributor Road

Offaly County Council signed contracts for the construction of the Birr North Distributor Road on the 11th of December 2024. The successful contractor Kenny Plant and Civils Ltd are scheduled to commence works onsite in January of 2025 with a proposed 7-month construction timeline.



This scheme will provide a strategically important new section of road and active travel infrastructure linking the N52 and the R439 Birr to Banagher that will

- relieve congestion in Birr Town by providing an alternative to the existing route through the town, assist in the decarbonisation of the town centre and further improve air quality
- provide better access to the National Road Network and enhances both Rural and Regional Connectivity,
- open up zoned development lands and promote compact growth and permeability
- provide improved access to both primary and secondary schools within the vicinity of the scheme through the provision of Green, Safe, Sustainable cycling and walking infrastructure
- assist in promoting the tourism potential offered by Birr's historic and unique Georgian town centre.

Winter Service Plan 2024/2025

Our winter Service Plan commenced in October 2024. This service is managed by the Roads Department and the service is delivered from the Tullamore Machinery Yard and Birr Depot. There are 4 duty Engineers rostered across the season who assess real time data from the Road Networks in order to establish whether treatment is required and the associated rate of spread of rock salt.

R400 Peat Pilot

The R400 Peat Pilot project was opened to live traffic on Friday the 20th of December and provides approximately 1.8km of fully reconstructed Regional Road Network across Peatlands. Phase 2 of the Peat Pilot will commence onsite in early Q3 of 2025 subject to Department of Transport approvals.

Housing & Integration

To assist us in streamlining the delivery of Housing Services we encourage the use of the following email addresses:

Service	Email Address
HAP Enquiries	hap@offalycoco.ie
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans	homeloans@offalycoco.ie
Housing Inspections – HAP, Leased, Private, etc.	standards@offalycoco.ie
General Enquiries, Maintenance Issues, etc.	housing@offalycoco.ie
RAS & Leasing Enquiries	RAS@offalycoco.ie
Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme	HousingAidGrants@offalycoco.ie
Anti-Social Behaviour	ASB@offalycoco.ie

Housing Update

- There are 552 on the Social Housing Support List at the end of December 2024.
- A further 473 active tenancies are currently being supported under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme, 6 signed up for HAP and 6 exited from HAP in December.
- At the end of December 40 single people and 15 couples/families were being supported in emergency accommodation.
- Number of maintenance requests received for month of December was 356.
- Total of housing stock at end of December was 2217.
- Social Housing Assessments (SSHA) 2024 is complete. All relevant approved applicants on Offaly County Council's Social Housing Support List, using the current address provided by the applicant were written to and completed forms were

due for return by **Friday, 30th August 2024**. The summary of needs has been completed and returned to the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Housing Capital Programme Update

- Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 no. Older Person's dwellings) – Complete
- Circular Road, Daingean (9 units) – Complete.
- Raheen, Clara development (38 units) – Complete.
- Dargan Drive, Chancery Lane (20 Units) – Part 8 approved in May 2022. Stage 3 to be submitted to the Department once ESB lines on the site are undergrounded.
- Circular Road, Daingean, Site 2 (10 Units) – at Part 8 planning (public consultation)
- Group Housing, Croghan Road, Birr (4 Units): Stage 4 approval was granted on 21st November 2023. Completion Q1 2025
- Sycamore Drive, Ballycumber (10 Units) – Tender Stage

Approved Housing Bodies Schemes

- Respond Housing: 77 Units under construction @ Kingswood, Ardan Lane with completion in Q4 2024 & Q1 2025 (33 Units completed)
- Sofia Housing: 37 Units with Stage 2 approval @ Presentation Lands, Portarlinton. Planning Granted in November 2023. Stage 3 (permission to go to tender submitted in Q4 2024
- Sofia Housing, 17 Units @ Clonamore, Tullamore – Complete

Turnkey Developments/Part V

- Turnkey & Part V: Bog Road, Portarlinton, 33 units – Complete
- Part V: Silverbrook, Tullamore, 15 Complete, 5 remaining
- Part V: Redwood, Tullamore, All 11 Units complete

- MacGregol, Birr, 6 Units – 2 Part V units Complete & 4 Turnkey Units Complete
- MacGregol, Birr 12 Units – 5 Complete

Retrofit Programme

In deciding on a works programme, local authorities are urged to choose a mix of properties across a range of BERs to allow for homes which need significant expenditure to be balanced out by those needing lesser spend so as to achieve the overall average cost of €34,000 per property. A BER rating of B2 must be achieved.

- 37 Units complete in 2024 (9 over department target)

Community Development Programme

- Estate Management Funding for Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore Municipal Districts have been agreed at Municipal District meetings.
- Housing Liaison Officers are continuing to support established resident committees and engaging with new groups and communities in an effort to support them to establish committees and thereby support the development of their community.

LAND USE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Development Management

	To end Dec 2024	To end Dec 2023	Total 2023
Planning Applications	735	695	695
Extensions of Duration Applications	12	20	20
Warning Letters and (Enforcement Notices) issued	71 (36)	181 (73)	181 (73)

The number of Planning Applications received in 2024 increased by 6% on the number received in 2023, this demonstrates the benefit of the online Planning Application System to the citizen in Offaly.

During the month of December 2024, the following large planning applications were received:

24/60479 Lumcloon Energy Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) two new capacitor containers ii) one new inverter container placed on an existing concrete slab, Coolcor, Rhode, County Offaly
24/60485 Derrycarney Solar Limited	The proposed development includes the construction of the following: (i) two new independent power provider (IPP) buildings, (ii) two new electrical transformers, (iii) additional air insulated switchgear (AIS) including four new 110kV bays, Lumcloon, Cloghan, County Offaly
24/60489 Clara Water Ltd.	Partial "change of use" from existing Leisure Centre to a Water Bottling Facility. Clashawaun, Clara, Co. Offaly, R35T0V2

24/60492 Bord na Mona Energy Limited

The development of a recreational shared cycle and walkway on Bord Na Móna lands within the townlands of Cloncraft or Bloomhill, Clonascra, Ballyduff, Clonaderg, Doon Demesne, Lackagh Beg, Lackagh More, Cormore and Corbeg, Corbane, Ballydaly, Kilcolgan Beg, Turraun, Leabeg, Leamore, Oughter, Derrymore, Bunakeeran, Lumcloon and Broughal County Offaly

24/60502 Ardnaranla Hospitality Ltd

Change the use of the existing stables to accommodate 8 no. tourism self-catering short term let apartments at ground level. Shean, Edenderry, Co. Offaly, R45 Y978

Forward Planning - Draft Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan 2025-2031

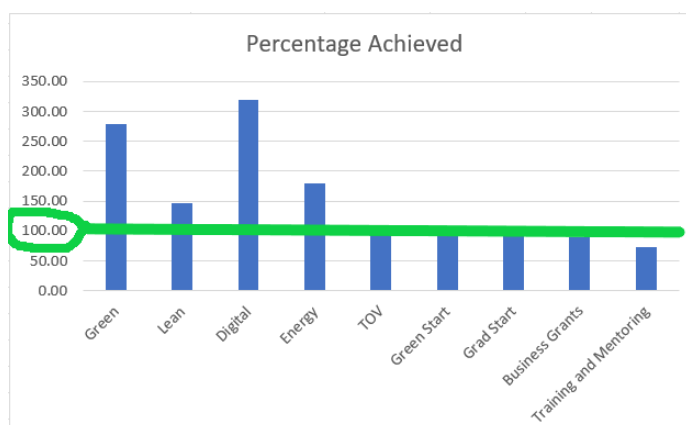
The Draft Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan and accompanying documents remained on public display throughout December (until January 2nd) with submissions accepted either online or to the offices of Offaly or Laois County Councils.

Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT)

Work continued on the preparation of the Final RZLT Map 2025 (due to be published by 31st January 2025) and the Draft RZLT Map 2026 (due to be published by 1st February).

Get in touch!

The Local Enterprise Office Offaly team has had a record-breaking year, significantly boosting the sustainability and growth of entrepreneurs and SMEs in County Offaly. LEO Offaly's efforts have not only increased employment and digitalisation but also contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing waste and resources and implementation of sustainability measures. With grant supports, businesses have explored export markets, created new jobs, and expanded operations. Hundreds have been trained in diverse areas, from social media to accounting, fostering networks and collaborations. We are excited to continue this great work in 2025.

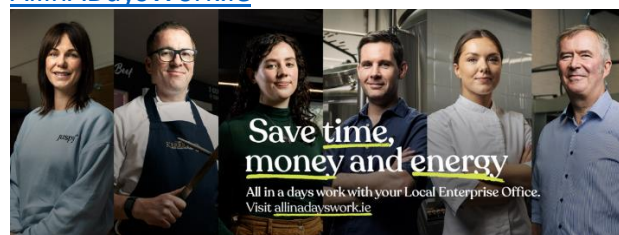


We ended the year with a reminder that we are here to help with business ideas to develop or boosting efficiencies in existing businesses. We can help navigate through the opportunities and challenges of business start-up and growth and can help to build a sustainable business. We have a large number of training programmes and workshops scheduled for the start of the year and look forward to engaging with new and existing clients in Offaly.

The All in a Day's Work campaign will continue in 2025 which is focused on highlighting the supports that will enable small businesses to make significant changes to the way they work that will help them now and in the future. It aims to help

businesses to Save Time, Money, and Energy with supports which include the Lean for Business, Digital for Business and Green for Business programmes, all of which enable small businesses to become more competitive and productive in how they work.

More information is available here: AllinADaysWork.ie



Digitalisation can unlock new opportunities for innovation and growth, starting today

Digitalisation is the use of digital technologies to transform a business' internal processes and can provide new opportunities to improve business competitiveness, customer service provision, and efficiency.

Step 1: LEO Offaly are encouraging business owners to take a [free 5-minute assessment today](#) to reveal how 'digitally ready' their business is and receive your bespoke digital scorecard with advice, recommendations and supports that can help businesses to take the next step towards digitalisation.

Step 2: Apply for [Digital for Business](#) – a consultant will be appointed to work with the business on developing a digitalisation strategy to include recommendations on changes.

Step 3: With the Digital for Business Report, apply for the [Grow Digital Voucher](#) for grant support towards implementing the digitalisation plan recommendations.

Grow Digital Voucher

Grow Digital Voucher offers small and medium-sized businesses with up to 50 employees financial support to embrace digital technology.

- Funding: Of up to €5,000 to invest in software and training/IT configuration.
- Boost Efficiency: Streamline operations and enhance productivity with new digital tools.
- Reach New Customers: Expand your reach and connect with a wider audience online.
- Stay Competitive: Bridge the digital gap and compete effectively in today's marketplace.

Lunch & Learn series with LEO Offaly

The first in a series of Lunch & Learn sessions was held in Ferbane Business & Technology Park on 3rd December. 12 businesses from the Ferbane area attended and engaged with the LEO Offaly Team. Future sessions will take place throughout 2025 starting in Clara in February.

Upcoming Business Breakfast - Unlocking the Potential of AI for Business Growth

Join the LEO Offaly Team on 30th January for a Business Breakfast where Muireann Fitzmaurice, MarketingCoach.ie will provide insights into how AI can enhance business efficiency, improve customer experiences, and support decision-making with practical tools and strategies tailored to your industry.

Unlocking the Potential of AI for Business Growth

Gain insights into how AI can enhance business efficiency, improve customer experiences, and support decision making with practical tools and strategies tailored to your industry.

LEO Offaly Business Breakfast

30th Jan 2025 - 8.00 am - 10.00 am

The Bridge House Hotel, Tullamore

Local Enterprise Office

AI in Action: Practical Tools and Strategies for SMEs

Explore how AI drives business growth through reliable case studies.

BOOK NOW LocalEnterprise.ie/Offaly

Lunch & Learn

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

with the Local Enterprise Office Offaly

- Grant Aids ✓
- Green/Lean/Digital ✓
- Mentoring ✓
- Training ✓
- Exporting ✓
- Networking ✓

Come to our **FREE** Lunch and Learn event to learn information about Local Enterprise Office services and to ensure that Offaly businesses can avail of the range of supports and opportunities open to their business.

Ferbane Business & Technology Park

12:30 - 1:30 pm on Tuesday, 3rd December

www.LocalEnterprise.ie/Offaly

SCAN ME

UPCOMING EVENTS LEO OFFALY

JAN 13	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS COURSE (EVENINGS)	
	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS DAY COURSE (IN PERSON)	JAN 16
JAN 22	HOW TO USE CANVA TO DESIGN EYE-CATCHING GRAPHICS	
	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS COURSE (DAY)	JAN 28
JAN 30	UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF AI FOR BUSINESS GROWTH	
	HOW TO USE TIKTOK FOR MARKETING (BEGINNERS)	FEB 5
FEB 12	SMALL BUSINESS ACCOUNTS	
	HOW TO USE CHAT GPT TO IMPROVE YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING	FEB 19

WWW.LOCALENTERPRISE.IE/OFFALY

Community, Culture and Emergency Services

Local Community Development Committee



Offaly LCDC held its monthly meeting on 12th December 2024. Agenda items included the LECP Implementation Plan 2024-2025, Dormant Accounts Fund 2024 Allocation to support LGBTI+ Community Organisations, Healthy Offaly Projects Update, LEADER Programme 2023-2027 update (OLDC).

The Schedule of Meetings for 2025 was agreed and funding opportunities available to communities and individuals were detailed to members.

Community Recognition Fund 2024 (Window 3)

A fund of €300,542 was launched on 16th December 2024 under the final window of the Community Recognition Fund 2024. Applications must be submitted online by the deadline of **4pm on Friday, 10th January 2025**. Full details are available at www.offaly.ie/community-recognition-fund-2024-window-3/. All PPN registered groups have been informed of the fund. The minimum level of funding for an individual project under this fund is €50,000.

The Community Recognition Fund was first introduced in 2023 to recognise the huge efforts made by communities in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries. Through the 2023 allocation, funding of €636,206 was allocated for some 27 projects in Offaly. Based on the continued impacts on communities, the Department of Rural and Community Development allocated a further

€1,055,308 to Offaly under the Community Recognition Fund 2024.

Of this fund, €702,000 was allocated in 2024 to 11 projects under Window 1 in the following locations: Tullamore (4), Birr (2), Banagher (3), Edenderry (1), Geashill (1). Under Window 3 (this call), proposals from the following areas will be prioritised:

- Portarlington
- Clara
- Daingean

Funding under Window 2 has been combined with Window 3 in the amount of the remaining €300,542 which is being allocated in January 2025. Priority will be given to projects which are in towns with significant numbers of new arrivals and to communities that have not yet received support via the Window 1 allocation. The applications will be assessed by an evaluation committee and shortlisted.

These shortlisted applications will be submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development at the end of January 2025 for their approval. We anticipate that the Department will notify us of the successful applications in March / April 2025 and we will contact successful projects then. All approved projects under CRF 2024 must be completed no later than 1st October 2026.

Public Participation Network

Policy and Social Inclusion were the main focus areas for Offaly PPN in December.



Funding stream information was presented to the LCDC membership at the

December meeting and the information distributed via email to the LCDC members.

The Midlands PPN Region was represented by Bridie & Linda Dowling at the National Civic Forum for dialogue between the State and the Community & Voluntary Sector, which took place at Dublin Castle on Wednesday, 4th December 2024.

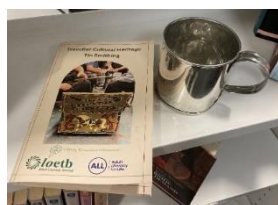
The Theme: "Joint Delivery for Better Outcomes. This event provided an opportunity for the Community and DRCD sections to engage on opportunities and showcase projects undertaken in collaboration with a number of stakeholders.



Offaly PPN held its end of year Secretariat meeting and Christmas Dinner in The County Arms Hotel Birr on December 11th 2024.

Discussions took place on the Key actions for the 2025 PPN Workplan. These include high focus on the Secretariat as three long standing members will be stepping down in 2025 and work will need to happen early in the year on replacements. Training for the Secretariat and the range of new PPN Reps on Boards and Committees including the SPC is a priority for 2025.

Offaly PPN attended the Traveller Integration event in the Hazel Hub Tullamore. The focus was on Health and Wellbeing supports for the Traveller Community. A range of agencies and support services were in attendance. The



PPN also attended a Traveller Cultural Heritage event in Tullamore Library.



The Older Persons Christmas Party was held in Tullamore on Dec 10th. This is an annual collaboration between the PPN, The Gardai, OLDC and Tullamore Credit Union.



Great support from Transition Students from Tullamore schools ensured the afternoon was a great success.

The final Newsletter and funding stream information of the year were distributed to all members in December.

ARTS OFFICE

The 2025 Youth Arts Commissions - Deadline for Proposals February 2025

The 2025 Youth Arts Commission call-out is currently advertised with a deadline in February 2025. The Youth Arts Commissions enables artists to work with youth groups and communities to develop projects that will enable engagement between professional artists and young people (13+), facilitated by youth organisations, youth leaders and schools. The goal being to build secure relationships with relevant partners for the development of Youth Arts in the county. The voice of the young people is a priority for this programme.

Mini Movies Programme 2025 – Deadline for Proposals January 2025

Offaly County Council Arts Office is currently seeking proposals/quotations from Professional Film Facilitators for the delivery of a six-day programme of film workshops to schools in Offaly. The programme will consider either animated or live action. Mini Movies are both action and stop motion short movies created by children and young people.

Since 2012 Offaly County Council Arts Office has funded a professional film artist to work with three schools in Offaly over several days. The result are mini movies which are then screened at the OFFline Film Festival in Birr. The Mini Movies are can also be viewed on [Offaly Arts Youtube](#). This year we have selected and contacted 3 rural schools: Rhode (NS) Kilcormac College, (secondary) and Geashill (NS) as potential project participants.

FilmOffaly For The Cure

Post-production on **For The Cure** (Our Film Award Winner for 2024) has been taking place. We are expecting to see a first edit for feedback when we return to the office in the New Year.

FilmOffaly 2025 Award

At the end of January we will be launching the **FilmOffaly Short Film Award** for 2025. As part of this we are holding a launch night at Esker Arts, Tullamore on 29th January. Since its inception in 2009 the award has



fostered creative

filmmaking and compelling cinematic storytelling – all shot entirely in Offaly.

During the evening there will be screenings of previous award winners, many of which have gone on to win accolades on the film festival circuit. There will also be an opportunity to hear more about the award, and a chance to network afterwards. We're especially keen on organising regular meetups for the Offaly filmmaking community and hope this will be the first of such events.

We also sent out a questionnaire to a selection of previous award winners to get their feedback. Those who got back to us shared some good suggestions for how to improve the award. We will be looking at the feedback and seeing what we can incorporate into this year's plans.

FOCUS 2024

We attended FOCUS 2024 at the Business Design Centre in London on 10 & 11th December. FOCUS is a trade event for anyone involved in the creation, production and promotion of on-screen entertainment with guest speakers, panels and presentations.



We were invited to attend as part of Screen Ireland's delegation (pictured). We were there to encourage and pitch to screen professionals to base their projects in Ireland (in our case hopefully Offaly!)

This was a valuable opportunity to meet and learn from fellow film offices in

Ireland, and other commissions based around the world. We came away from the festival having had lots of conversations, a few potential leads and some good marketing ideas from other film commissions.

Although the main purpose was to network with fellow screen professionals, our attendance there helped us to achieve a valuable goal in making sure all the forward-facing elements of FilmOffaly (such as website and social media) were all thoroughly up to date.

Funding Opportunities

Offaly County Council Arts Office has opened its application process for a variety of grants offered to professional artists, communities, and festivals for 2025.



Offaly County Council Arts Office offers a number of grant schemes to assist in the development and promotion of the Arts across the county. The grants include the Arts Acts Grants 2025, the Festival Arts Scheme 2025 and the Professional Artists Support Award 2025.

The Arts Acts Grants are community based and designed to support Offaly voluntary arts organisations, schools, drama & musical groups, town bands, voluntary community groups intending to host arts events, performances, or projects taking place in Offaly in 2025.

The Festival Arts Scheme is designed for festivals taking place in Offaly in 2025 that

are either dedicated arts festivals or have a strong professional arts element to the festival.

The Professional Artist Support Award offers a support scheme for professional artists in developing their arts practice over a number of categories.

Collaborations

Business Development Report – OFFline Animation Residency

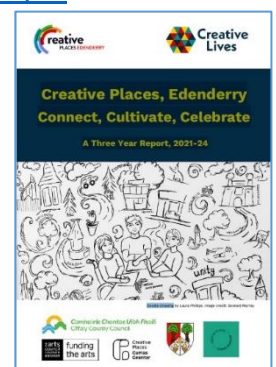
The OFFline Animation Residency in Birr is a unique support for animation artists in Ireland. It was established and launched in 2017, and the first Residency commenced in 2018. The Residency offers the opportunity to spend a six-month period in Birr and is managed by OFFline Film Festival which was established in 2010. The Residency also includes opportunities for mentoring and networking, and opportunities for engaging with the local community, particularly with young people. Following its successful delivery between 2017 and 2022, it is a timely moment to develop a business plan and build on the strengths and learnings from the programme so far. A call out for tender to conduct research and compile business development report has been advertised and a successful contractor will be selected in January 2025.

Creative Places Edenderry

www.creativeplacesedenderry.ie

In November 2024 Creative Places Edenderry published its Three Year Report which reflects on the first three years of the Creative Places, Edenderry Project, the theme of which was Connect, Cultivate, Celebrate.

Creative Places, Edenderry works with people of all ages and



backgrounds to create a richer, more inclusive, and more cohesive creative community in the town and surrounding areas. Over the course of the first three years of the project (2021-2024) there have been creative opportunities for professional artists, non-professional artists, community groups, and individuals.

Creative Places, Edenderry, a project funded by the Arts Council, led by Creative Lives in partnership with Offaly County Council Arts Office and Edenderry Municipal District was awarded a 4th year of funding by the Arts Council and goes from strength the strength hosting an array of different arts-based activities, workshops and events in a wide range of art forms including Visual Arts, Music, Poetry, Playwriting, Creative Movement; Dance; Ceramics; Drama; Radio, Photography.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Public Art Commission: Esker Arts in collaboration with Lough Boora



Offaly County Council Arts Office announced a call to professional artists for proposals for a public art commission for Esker Arts, in conjunction with Lough Boora Sculpture Park. Deadline for the first stage submission is 3 January 2025. Offaly's Arts Office are seeking proposals that will demonstrate how artist(s) will work collaboratively with communities of both Esker Arts and Lough Boora Sculpture Park. Offaly County Council is looking for an imaginative project that demonstrates an innovative approach, enabling creative dialogue between stakeholders and communities, while representing best practice within the realm of public art practice.

Lough Boora Sculpture Park

The Arts Office funded by Creative Ireland and supported by Bord na Móna have commissioned a new maintenance programme for Lough Boora Sculpture Park to take place through 2024-2025. Artist Michael Burke, Sculpture Works, has carried out a review and report and works having been taking place throughout the summer.

Edenderry Library and Arts Base

The Arts Office continues to work in close collaboration with the county librarian in the development of plans for a multi-purpose Arts space and Artist's Studios to be incorporated into the planning of the new library for Edenderry including the audience and participant development as part of the Creative Places Edenderry project.

HEALTHY OFFALY



Work continued in December in contacting all Healthy Offaly implementing partners to submit their financial and progress report information. Once all financial and progress reporting information has been received, the task will commence on uploading the documents and expenditure claims to Pobal online portal. This is a time-consuming process and will take several weeks in January to complete. Another item of note was an update given to the Offaly LCDC and the progress of year 2 of Healthy Offaly's actions.

The Healthy Ireland Coordinator, Dermot Egan requested approval from the LCDC to proceed with a 'No Smoking' initiative that has shown to be successful nationally. It is well known that there is a growing momentum to tackle the habits of smoking and vaping in Ireland. Statistics from the HSE show that in Ireland just over 3 in 20

people smoke. Tobacco Free Ireland aims to reduce this to 1 in 20 by 2025. Two of the main goals in this plan are to:

- protect children and make smoking seem less normal
- offer help to quit tobacco use.

In May 2018, HSE's Tobacco Free Ireland (TFI) Programme held a conference at Farmleigh House, Co. Dublin for World No Tobacco Day. It had a variety of external partner agencies who are advocates for tobacco control. They held workshops to figure out how partner agencies can discourage tobacco use for the next generation. **'Not Around Us'** was one of these projects. **'Not Around Us'** is about promoting an environment where it is easier for those who smoke and vape to quit, and stay quit, and to help de-normalise smoking/vaping for the next generation. The purpose of the campaign is:

- Assisting in helping to protect children and young people from second-hand smoke exposure.
- Contribute to the de-normalisation of smoking and vaping for children and young people.
- Reduce the environmental nuisance, cost of cleaning and damage that discarded tobacco products create.
- Signpost to HSE QUIT services.

The project has grown exponentially in the intervening years with Clare, Wexford, Limerick, Meath and Galway Local Authorities rolling out the campaign in their counties. Healthy Offaly would like to spearhead the rollout of the **'Not Around Us'** campaign in the county.

As the primary focus of the campaign is awareness the installation of **'Not Around Us'** signage in key targeted areas where adult and children congregate would be a critical component of the project. From

fact-finding discussions had with Healthy Ireland Coordinator counterparts in other local authorities, it is envisaged the project would take place in three stages. Specially branded 'No Smoking/Vaping' signage with relevant QR codes would be installed in playgrounds in year 1, Sports Clubs in Year 2 and Schools and Youth Facilities in year 3. A working group would first have to be formed with key HSE, LOETB, Healthy Offaly and Offaly County Council Environment Section and Municipal District personnel. It is recommend setting aside funding of €5,000 for year 1 of the project. The Healthy Ireland Coordinator will work closely with our HSE Healthy Offaly Subcommittee partners. The bulk of the work in year 1 is the working group identifying the playgrounds to install the signage and to procure and install the signs.

A second proposal put to the LCDC was a request for approval for a new Healthy Offaly action whereby a 2024 implementing partner, Offaly Athletics would receive an award of €11,000 to roll out fully supervised and coached couch to 5k programmes for 10 weeks early in the new year to 10 athletic clubs in Offaly. The twice weekly sessions monitored by club coaches will target the exact demographic of persons exhibiting sedentary behaviours and those highlighted during our consultation exercise over two years ago at the outset of Round 4. Couch to 5K programmes have been listed among the examples of best practice to encourage an increase in physical activity in the WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA).

SPORTS



Offaly Sports Partnership would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Cormac Izuchukwu on his selection to the Irish Senior Rugby Union (15s) team. Cormac is the first man from Offaly to be capped at this level.

Sport 4 Empowerment Volleyball Blitz

Hosted in St Mary's Youth Centre bringing together members of Edenderry Volleyball Club and social volleyballers from Tullamore, including a number of international protection applicants. 48 participants took part in the event; and David Mc Caffrey, Sport 4 Empowerment Officer with Offaly Sports Partnership is supporting the social volleyball group in Tullamore to affiliate to Volleyball Ireland



Civic Reception

Offaly County Council supported by Offaly Sports Partnership, recognised the outstanding sporting achievements of

Offaly athletes at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. Athletes recognised included:

- Megan Armitage - cycling
- Shane Lowry - golf
- Megan Burns - rugby 7s
- Grainne Walsh - boxing
- Jordan Conroy - rugby 7s
- Josephine Healion – para cycling
- Darragh Kenny – showjumping
- Nicole Turner – para swimming

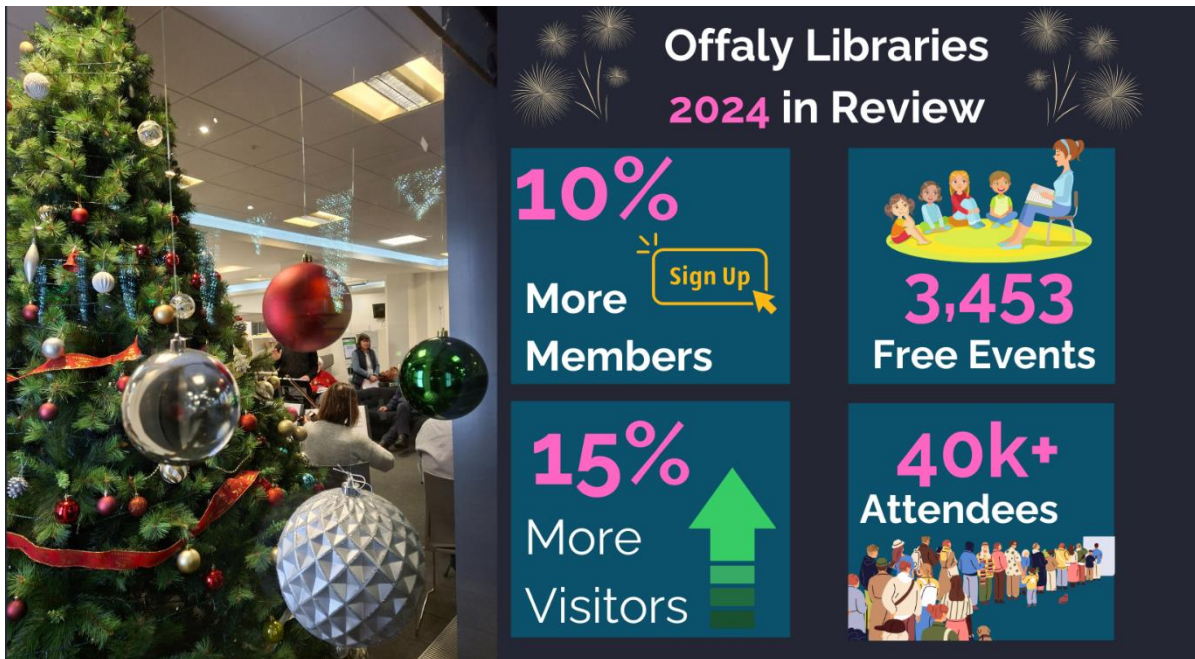
Ongoing delivery

- physical activity programmes in each of our three sports hubs, Daingean, Mucklagh and Ballycumber.
- the Community Sports Development Programme including pickleball for adults and o50s boccia
- the HER Moves programme in two secondary schools catering for 150 female students designed to inspire and support more teenage girls to be active
- the Sport 4 Empowerment programme including FITs (Friendship, Integration and Teamwork through Sport) in Banagher; and a water-based programme supporting the development of swim, kayak and lifesaving skills for adults in international protection accommodation

Offaly Sports Partnership would like to extend its thanks to our management committee, the various funders and our numerous tutors for their work in supporting the delivery of our programmes in 2024.

For more information on the work of Offaly Sports Partnership, check out www.offalysports.ie or our social media feeds on Facebook, X and Instagram

LIBRARY SERVICE



Family Time at your Library



A wonderful programme of events was on offer for families this December under the banner of Family Time at your Library, a Right to Read initiative.

Storytimes, craft sessions and festive concerts are just a few of the wide variety of events which took place across the county in our library branches.



Students from Ard Scoil Chiarán Naofa teamed up with Clara Active Retirement group for an Intergenerational Table Quiz at Clara Library in December. **50 attendees** took part in the event which returned by popular demand.



Edenderry Library offered a Teen Craft session for TY students from Oaklands Community College, where they created some beautiful Mini Book Baubles and Bracelets. Local musical groups also visited our libraries during December to host lunchtime and evening concerts for our patrons.

Our libraries hosted **180 free events** during December with a total **attendance of 3,565!**

Family Time at Your Library Integration Events

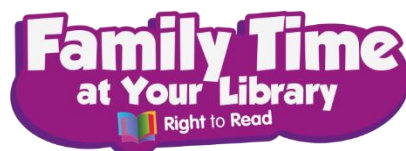
Our library staff were delighted to be invited to various events organised through OLDC, CYPSC and the Integration Team for families living in Direct Provision and IPAS centres.

Tullamore Library staff visited with families at the Charleville Centre during December where we showcased our bi-lingual stock and offered story times.



In partnership with CYPSC, the team also visited Ukrainian families at Geashill Community Centre on Friday, 13th December.

Birr Library staff joined the festivities on Saturday, 14th December with Christmas stories and a portable sensory space displaying some of the library sensory toys for residents to enjoy.



Christmas Crafting with LOETB

Throughout December, the LOETB facilitated Christmas Craft mornings at Birr, Clara, and Kilcormac Libraries.



Participants made paper stars and trees, as well as wool crafted Santas, and were delighted to take home their hand made decorations.

First Fortnight: Promoting Positive Well-Being at Offaly Libraries

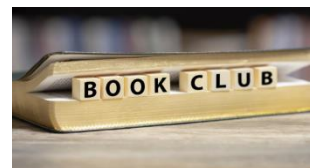
[First Fortnight](#) aims to make the beginning of each year synonymous with **mental health awareness**, by challenging prejudice and ending stigma around mental health issues.



It runs for **the first two weeks of January** and library branches are displaying recommended book titles to **support mental wellness** in children, young adults and adults. Our colleague, Claire, also shares her blog on First Fortnight featuring a selection of useful and inspiring books. You can read it [here](#).

2025 New Year's Resolution Suggestion: Join a Book Club!

Did you know that we have **12 Book Clubs** that meet at various Offaly Libraries?



Library staff are always happy to **help source and select books** to suit all ages and tastes. If you would like to join any of our existing clubs, [please check out the details for each here](#).

Alternatively, should you wish to **establish your own book club** in one of our libraries please get in touch by emailing askthelibrarian@offalycoco.ie and we will be happy to help!

Staying Connected Digital Literacy Classes

We welcome the return of Staying Connected digital literacy classes, delivered through LOETB at various library locations beginning this January:

Birr Library:

Tuesday,
14th Jan

Clara Library:

Wednesday,
15th Jan

Kilcormac Library:

Thursday,
16th Jan



Bookings for Tullamore's Sensory Room are open for 2025 via our [online reservation system here](#) and the Sensory Space at Edenderry Library can be booked by phoning 046 97 31028.



All are welcome to visit the Sensory Space at Birr Library during regular opening hours.

Booking is advised and [contact details for each library can be found here](#).



More information on **Sensory Offaly**, including our **Sensory Book**, **Sensory Equipment collections** and **Sensory Room facilities** [can be found here](#).

More Accessible and Digitally Inclusive Spaces

Sensory Offaly at Offaly Libraries

Offaly Libraries are proud to have met the needs of **2,686 users of our Sensory Spaces** last year.



In June 2024, **Birr Library** joined Tullamore and Edenderry in offering a Sensory Space, complete with soft furnishings, sensory lighting and a rotation of stock from our Sensory Toy Collection.



Since April 2022, the total number of visitors to our Sensory Spaces is now **over 6,000!**



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

In 2024, Offaly Libraries received €13,333 DRCD Dormant Account Funding, allowing for ICT upgrades to public devices, making our public libraries more accessible and digitally inclusive places for all.

Tullamore Central Library has installed powerful iMac desktop computers, now available in the Reading Room.



Each of our libraries is now equipped with Handheld Magnifiers and Desktop Magnifiers to aid those with visual impairments.



In 2022, our libraries also installed Hearing Loops at each branch to help visitors using hearing devices.

Offaly Libraries will continue to pursue more opportunities to enhance our accessible technologies and features during 2025.

International Lego Day, Tuesday 28th January



As part of our STEAM programme, we are looking forward to celebrating **International Lego Day**, Tuesday 28th January with special after school Lego Free Play sessions. Did you know? Godtfred Kirk Christiansen patented the original 2x4 LEGO brick on this day in 1958.

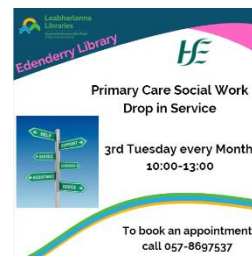
Happy 65th birthday to the humble LEGO brick!

Our Lego Free Play sessions have proven hugely popular with families. In fact, more than **2,310**



children participated in 2024!

Primary Social Care Drop In Service at Edenderry Library



Edenderry Library will host a drop-in Social Worker Clinic, starting Tuesday 21st January and continuing the 3rd Tuesday of every month thereafter.

Those who wish to attend can book an appointment by phoning 057 86 97537.

Access Local & National Newspapers on Borrowbox!

[Borrowbox](#) now offers free access to local and national



eNewspapers, as well as eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines, all from one convenient, user friendly app! ePress titles include; The Offaly Independent, Irish Independent and Sunday Independent, Westmeath Examiner, Herald, Sunday World and Ireland's Own, as well as a broad range of regional and local titles.

[Find out more about the Borrowbox app](#) here or drop in to your local library where our friendly staff will help get you set up.

Sign up for our Library Newsletters

A quick reminder that the best way to keep up to date with all library programmes,



developments and new services is via [Offaly Libraries Newsletter](#) and by [following our social media channels](#).

Currently we have **10,000+** subscribers to the general newsletter and **134** teachers subscribed to the school newsletter.

[Click here to subscribe!](#)

Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive

Finance

Revenue Account Grant Income & Payroll Summary to 31 December 2024

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL	Full Yr Budget 2024 €m	Preliminary Value to December 2024 €m	% Year To Date
Payroll costs	35.68	35.50	99.5%
Grants and Subsidies Income	50.31	67.13	133.4%

OCC to 31 December 2024

	<u>Rates</u> €m	<u>Rents</u> €m	<u>Loans</u> €m
Opening Balance Jan 1, 2024	2.58	0.64	0.04
Net Invoices & Adjustments, waivers	16.14	8.79	0.51
2024 Cash Collected to 19 of December*	16.15	8.93	0.51
Closing Balance December 31, 2024	2.57	0.50	0.04
<u>2023 Cash collected to December 31st</u>	14.95	8.02	0.56
% Collection at this point in 2023	108%	111%	90%

*Cash posting to year end 31st December ongoing at time of report

Bank Overdraft to 31st December 2024

	-	-	% YTD
Number of days Overdrawn in Bank year to date	27		7%
Bank Interest and non conforming charges to 31 December 2024 YTD (estimate)			€18,435
Bank Administration and transactional charges to December 31 2024, YTD (estimate)			€67,223