

OCTOBER
2020



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

#Do: Baill Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí

To: Each Member of Offaly County Council

Tuairisc mhíosúil bainistíochta a bhreithníú i gcomhair tionóil mí Samhain

Monthly Management Report for consideration at the November 2020 Monthly Meeting.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS:

A schedule of Chief Executive Orders is included with the Council Agenda.

FINANCE:

Finance Report– Appendix 1

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WORLD REMEMBRANCE DAY FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS

Council buildings across Ireland will light up for road safety as part of this year's World Remembrance Day for Road Traffic Victims on **Sunday 15th November**. Members of the public are being asked to join in and shine a light in their window on the evening of Sunday 15th November between 7pm and 8pm to remember those in their community who have died on the roads.

COVID-19 MICRO-ENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE AND IRISH BUSINESS DESIGN CHALLENGE

Closing date 13 November 2020.

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS SINGALONG

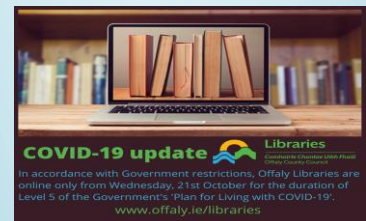
Our Christmas preparations are underway with a special **12 days of Christmas singalong** with Noel O' Farrell – starting 13th December, join us on [Offaly Libraries Facebook](#) page each morning for a Christmas singalong- there will be old favourites and twists on modern classics

REPORT AT A GLANCE

CLÁR 2020

Offaly County Council received an allocation of €99,000 under CLÁR 2020 from the Department of Rural and Community Development on 2nd November 2020 for Croghan Community Centre Public toilets and sewerage works (€49,500) and Boora Sensory Garden (€49,500).

Level 5 of the Plan for Living with COVID-19



In line with the Government's decision for the country to move to Level 5 of the Plan for Living with COVID-19 for six weeks, Offaly Libraries ceased Contact and Collect services and reverted to online services only from Wednesday, 21st October. Offaly Libraries continue to provide access to extensive free digital resources and online programmes during this period.

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PLANNING

	To end Oct 2020	To end Oct 2019	Total 2019
Planning Applications	535	514	628
Extensions of Duration Applications & Assessments	4	11	12
Warning Letters and (Enforcement Notices) issued	7(2)	8(1)	14 (6)

Planning Administration

The review process of Offaly County Council Draft Development Contribution Scheme 2021 – 2025 has commenced. Publication will commence a six-week submission process extending from 6th November to 18th December 2020 where submissions in writing can be accepted.

Forward Planning

The last date for receipt of submissions on the draft Offaly County Development Plan was 7th October 2020. 196 submissions were received. A Chief Executive report will be prepared on these by early January 2021 for the elected members' consideration.

REGENERATION

Rural Regeneration Development Fund: (RRDF)

Rural Regeneration Category 1 (Shovel ready) - Closing date of 1st December, 2020 for submission.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

To date the Regeneration Team in conjunction with Municipals Districts and

other sections have submitted 18 projects in Rounds 1-3 of the TVR accelerated measures in response to Covid 19.

DRCD announced successful project from the final Round 3 as follows on the 12th October, 2020.

Tullamore - To refurbish Millennium Square to include a deep clean of the area, replace some paving and create an attractive urban seated/garden area providing an additional outdoor gathering space for Tullamore Town.

Daingean - Rejuvenation of Daingean Square, including deep clean, footpath resurfacing, urban seating and planters and the provision of additional seating in adjacent green amenity space to create safe, public gathering areas.

Clara - To enhance a river amenity in Clara by providing additional seating, resurfacing of stony pathways, improved entrance accessibility, landscaping and refurbishment of pedestrian bridge over the River Brosna.

Ferbane - The provision of a “Chill & Chat” pop up urban garden in the town centre of Ferbane where people can enjoy social interaction in a safe outdoor space while observing social distancing protocols.

Ballycumber - To enhance a river amenity area in Ballycumber by providing additional seating, upgrading of canopied seating area, improved entrance accessibility and repair of pathway to facilitate safe outdoor gatherings.

Geashill - To enhance 2 outdoor amenities in Geashill a picnic amenity area and the Glebe Walking Trail by providing additional seating and picnic tables and promote their use by providing heritage signage.

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TVR scheme 2020

Offaly County Council have submitted 10 applications to the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme on the 30th September, 2020.

Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme: (ORIS)

The Department of Rural and Community Development announced a call for ORIS 2020 funding on 29th May 2020. Applications will be developed and prepared for Measure 2 and 3 by Regeneration Team in conjunction with other relevant sections for 30th November, 2020.

ROADS

Roads Programme 2020 is near completion throughout the County with the final grant claims in progress.

N80 Tullamore to Killeigh road surface improvement scheme is now complete;

The following works commenced in October and are currently ongoing:

- Collins Lane, Arden Way and Arden View Junction safety scheme;
- Bracknagh and Shannonbridge safety schemes;
- Offaly Grand Canal Greenway Ballycommon Bridge to Daingean and Wood-of-O Bridge to County Boundary;
- Edenderry Granary Court to Fairgreen Link Road;
- Upgrade of the Bus stop in Cloncollig Tullamore;
- Active travel and climate change adaptation measures in Offaly.

The Phase 2 Public Consultation for **N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link Road** Scheme Route Corridor Options commenced on Friday 6th November 2020 to 11th November 2020. Information on the online consultation room is available on the website n52tullamoretokilbeggan.ie.

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER SERVICES

Water Services - Water

Works on the upgrade of the Tullamore, Birr and Clonaslee Water Treatment plants are on-going. IW are currently preparing the design for replacement reservoir at Clonbullogue and considering a replacement reservoir at Walsh Island. Leak repair: Find and fix works are ongoing in Rhode, Tullamore, Newtown, Edenderry. Watermain upgrades at Clonin and Newtown have been carried out with sizeable reductions in leaks.

Daingean Storm tank has been commissioned and the new Treatment Plant at Bracknagh has been up & running since 02-11-20. The Rahan Wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is progressing well and should be commissioned in Q2 of 2021 at the latest.

Edenderry WWTP: There have been ongoing correspondences between Irish Water and Offaly County Council in relation to both the operation and maintenance of the existing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and the proposed upgrade of the WWTP. IW are preparing tender documents to appoint a Consultant to prepare a Feasibility Study Report.

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Environment

Environmental Complaints

From the 1st January 2020 to the start of November, the Environment Section received 1252 complaints. These complaints cover the full range environmental issues such as litter, waste, noise, water quality etc.

All 1252 complaints have been investigated, with 849 closed and 403 cases are ongoing enforcement actions. This 403 figure includes litter fines to be issued as part of the Anti-Dumping Initiative.

The Environment Section assisted in 202 community clean-ups across the county, providing bags, pickers, gloves and removing materials collected. It should be noted that the 202 community clean-ups are addition to the complaints mentioned above.

Illegal Dumping

As part of the Anti-Dumping Initiative funding approved by the DCCAÉ earlier in the year, CCTV cameras were installed at a number of litter/dumping black spots throughout the County. Following on from this exercise, the Environment Section intend to issue 139 litter fines for fly tipping/dumping and 58 warning letters for more minor offences.

Flooding Relief Works

Flood relief to the Bog Road in Portarlington are nearing completion. This scheme was funded under the OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works fund.

Tullamore Living River Project

The Tender process for this scheme is now complete and we await a decision on Leader funding. Subject to the grant of Leader

funding, the project will commence in Spring 2021.

HOUSING

Covid 19 – Housing

Following the introduction of Level 5 Covid 19 restrictions on 21st October the Housing Section has reviewed service delivery and continues to provide critical essential services as outlined in the Government Roadmap. To assist us in streamlining service delivery we encourage the use of the following email addresses:

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 & People with a Disability Scheme

HousingAidGrants@offalycoco.ie

Anti-Social Behaviour

ASB@offalycoco.ie

October Housing Update

- The return of applications and supporting documents for the 2020

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Housing Need Assessment has closed and staff are currently reviewing all files and updating them as required.

- There are 658 on the Housing Waiting List awaiting housing support at the end of September 2020.
- A further 850 active tenancies currently being supported under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme, 15 signed up for HAP and 16 exited from HAP in October 2020.
- At the end of October 2020 there were 19 single people and 5 families in emergency accommodation.
- 17 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans applications were received in 2020 to date and 3 RIHL have been approved.
-

Housing Stock – Number, Maintenance & Repair

- Total housing stock at end of October, 2020 is 1,919.
- 2,831 maintenance call logged in 2020 to 30th October with 374 received in October.

Housing Capital Programme Update

- Raheen, Clara development (38 units) – received Stage 2 approval on 21st August 2020, and is progressing to planning.
- Church Street, Clara (3 OPD units) – received Stage 2 approval on 17th August 2020. Unfortunately, the vendor has withdrawn and the project cannot be progressed further at this time.

- Dargan Drive, Chancery Lane (20 Units) – received Stage 1 approval in March 2020. Staff are currently finalising the assessment of the consultant framework to allow the scheme to progress to planning.
- Moneygall (4 units) – received Stage 2 approval in July 2020 and the members approved the Part 8 planning at the October Council meeting.
- Beechgrove Belmont (7 units) – received Stage 2 approval in July 2020 and the Planning Part 8 is listed on the November Council meeting agenda for the members' consideration.
- Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 Units) – received Stage 2 approval in August 2020, and currently the scheme is at Part 8 public consultation stage.
- Banagher, Kylebeg (18 Units), a second stage 3 submission was made in April 2020. Stage 3 was approved by the DHPLG in May 2020 and the Tender documentation is being prepared and will issue soon.
- Circular Road, Daingean (9 units) - Stage 2 approval was received in December 2019 and the Part 8 planning resolution was approved by the members at the September Council meeting. The development is progressing to tender.

Approved Housing Bodies Schemes

- Mid Offaly Housing Association: Mountbolus, (4 Units) – completion due in November.
- Oaklee: Clonminch, Tullamore (19 units) - Tender Report almost

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complete by AHB, Stage 4 submission to department made in October.

- Oaklee: Kearney's Field (41 Units) - Tendering process is complete and the project is to commence this year.
- Cluid Housing Association social housing scheme on the Rahan Rd (Jacksons Hill) (26 units) is scheduled to start in Q4 2020,
- Tuath: Killane Drive, Edenderry (27 units) – completion due in Q1 2021.
- Sofia Housing: Stage 1 approved (32 units) at Presentation Lands, Portarlinton. Stage 2 submission was made in October for a further 7 units.
- Sofia Housing, in a joint initiative with Midlands Simon Community, acquired Clonmore Hotel in Q3, 2020. The facility will be developed as an enhanced centre for the provision of supported accommodation for homeless people. Under the terms of a landmark agreement Midlands Simon Community will operate the facility, with a team of qualified social care workers providing support on a 24/7 basis. Following refurbishment, the facility will provide professional supports for up to 17 people.

Turnkey Developments

- Main Street Daingean (8 Units): Approved 13th August and works are scheduled to start in November 2020.
- MacGregol, Birr: 12 Units – 6 units complete and a further 6 are progressing.

Retrofit Programme

The Council received notification on 8th September that €3.3m was being awarded to Offaly for the 'Just Transition for the Midlands Region' programme.

A surveyor has been appointed for first lot of 36 houses and it is anticipated that the initial surveys will be completed by mid-November. The information, gathered at survey stage, will allow contract documents to be prepared and for works to be tendered prior to Christmas. It is envisaged that a contractor will be appointed in the new year for these units. Further discussions with tenants to outline the works involved prior to the commencement of these works in early 2021.

The consultants will determine the works that will be required, works may include the following:

- Replacement of the heating system to a new technology heating system called a "Heat Pump"
- New radiators
- Attic insulation top up
- External or internal wall insulation
- Window Replacement
- New Doors
- Improved Ventilation

The Council has advised SEAI of the locations of these units for retrofitting and SEAI will now engage with private properties located near these dwellings to offer similar works under their existing home energy grant schemes.

LOCAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Offaly Covid-19 Community Response Helpline

The Helpline continues to operate from 9.00am to 5.00pm, 7 days per week. The

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change to Covid Level 3 in Offaly on 6th October and the move to Covid Level 5 on 21st October did not result in an upsurge in the number of calls to the Offaly County Council Community Call Helpline. It appears that most people have supports already in place. A monthly breakdown of calls to the Helpline to date is given below.

Month	Number	%
April	312	68
May	93	20
June	19	4
July	8	2
August	8	2
September	7	2
October	9	2
Total	456	100

Offaly Community Response Forum

There have been 14 meetings of the Offaly Community Response Forum to date. In October meetings were held on the 8th October and the 30th October and members were updated on support services being provided.

The members of the Forum are Offaly County Council, HSE, GAA, OLDC, An Garda Síochána, ALONE, SVP, An POST, Offaly PPN, Local Link, Citizens Information Service, Túsla, IFA, Offaly Traveller Movement, Kildare Volunteer Centre (covering Offaly), Civil Defence, Offaly Library Service, Family Resource Centres, and Offaly Community Services.

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Offaly LCDC held their monthly meeting on Thursday 15th October with some members in the Council Chamber and the remainder attending by video link. Agenda

items included the Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020; Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 and an update on the Community Enhancement Programme 2020.

Members approved the proposed Local Development Strategy(LDS) budget revisions. There was no change to the overall budget allocation, the revisions involved the movement of funds between sub-themes. Under the Rural Development LEADER Programme, 7 Projects were approved and the total amount of funding awarded was €175,130.06.

Guidelines on flexibility in relation to the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2020 were received from POBAL due to the impact of COVID-19 and restrictions on the programme. The members approved the revised target in respect of KPI 2 – Goal 2: Working with Individuals to 500 individuals in respect of 2020. Members also agreed to the proposal to establish the Community Response Forum as a sub-committee of the LCDC.

Age Friendly Strategy

Work continues on the production of the Age friendly Tri County Radio programme which will air each Sunday morning from 8am – 9am on Midlands 103 commencing on November 1st. A subcommittee chaired by the Regional Age Friendly Manager Brian Pey has met weekly over the past month to coordinate this piece of work.



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This group includes members of the OPC from all three counties and the Age Friendly Managers also. A Competition was held via the PPN in Laois Offaly & Westmeath to come up with a name for the programme. The winning name was 'Chatters & Matters'. Age friendly Alliance members continue to support the 'Connecting the Faithful' Newsletter with Issue 6 gone to print.

Public Participation Network



The PPN are working with the Environment section in setting up workshops on Climate Change. Green Offaly as part of the Environmental wing of the PPN have been successfully in harnessing Just transitions funding. This is a follow on from the initial Leader funding projects.

The PPN are currently arranging to hold their Plenary in a different format this year. It will be run via Zoom by Municipal District to engage as many members as possible in these challenging times. The focus is on supporting groups with presentations on Committee role and Managing Communication and Fundraising during Covid.

Comhairle na nÓg

Offaly Comhairle na nÓg took part in the CYPSC Participation Consultation on the 28/10/20 with some valuable insights added to the previous year's document 'Summary of Laois and Offaly Children and Youth Participation Consultation 2019'. It's an important document which listens to the views and opinions of children and young

people in their space. A Comhairle meeting was held on the 21st of October and the Executive created a survey which will be sent to all the schools in order to decide what topics are most important to young people for discussion at the AGM.

Music Generation Offaly Westmeath Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2020

We were delighted to find out that Offaly County Council has been shortlisted for the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2020, for its role in Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath in recognition of our work in sustaining the arts. The Excellence in Local Government Awards 2020 (ELG Awards), sponsored by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, recognise and celebrate outstanding work being carried out by local authorities all over Ireland. This year's awards ceremony will be held online and hosted by Mary Kennedy at 3:30pm on Thursday, 26 November.

Autumn Voices 2020

Autumn Voices took place during the mid-term break. Working in partnership with Music Generation Louth and Sing Ireland we spent 2 days working with around 40 young singers aged from 12 up. Activities included singing, song writing, rapping and we even found time for a pet show.



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Mini Music Makers Session

Our Music Educators Catriona Walsh and Ailbhe Kelly are running mini music sessions in conjunction with the library service. The sessions involve a combination of songs, music games, story time, rhymes and a singalong with and attract attendance from home-based toddlers and pre-school aged children, alongside groups of children attending preschools and crèches. Initially envisaged as a 7 week project we intend to develop the project further next year.

Sinfonia

Our Orchestral Residency developed in partnership with Maynooth University is back running weekly sessions online.

Music Jam

In early October Music Jam had made a welcome return to face to face tuition with a small number of participants, but due to level 5 Covid restrictions being implemented, we are now meeting on zoom. This will continue for the moment until it is safe to return to the face to face sessions again.

Music Production Autumn Course

Following on from the success of our summer course, we are running advanced Music Production and held our first session on the 8th of October. We have a group of 8 young people working with local musician Graham Dowling to learn the skills behind music production and develop their own compositions.

Athlone Youth Orchestra

We are busy working behind the scenes to develop a plan to get Athlone Youth Orchestra back in action.

Arts Office

Arts Grants

We have been continually assessing the arts act grants, professional artist support grants and festival grants, with a view to aid community groups and artists find alternative means of engagement if their original proposal could not take place. The latest update is that several Arts Act Grants and Festivals are now on course for delivery. The deadline for draw-down of funding is November

FilmOffaly – Screen Ireland Application

FilmOffaly has been working to draw together a Midlands Film consortium comprising Kildare, Westmeath, Laois County Councils, LOETB, LEO, Midland Film Producers Network, with the purpose of submitting a bid to Screen Ireland for developing a New Talent Development Agency for the Midlands region to be led by FilmOffaly. This bid has been submitted.

FilmOffaly Mentoring Programme

FilmOffaly mentor Helen Flanagan has continued to be engaged and is working with 4 writers selected for the programme. Film Professionals Helen Flanagan and Alan Fitzpatrick have been delivering a series of online workshops in September for film professionals in Offaly. This programme is in collaboration with LOETB, LEO and Screen Skills Ireland.

Culture Night

The audience figures for the online culture night activities show that from the 14 programmed events, we achieved 25.9K reach and over 12K video views.

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Hullabaloo!

The Arts Office Hullabaloo! Children's Arts Festival was successfully held online during the Halloween break of October. Due to the current restrictions the programme has had to go fully online which did take additional time and resources to undertake. However, there was a very full programme on online events for the week of the festival including 12 zoom workshops, 25 pre-recorded workshops, 6 online shows. So far audience figures show that we received 25k social media reach and over 3k video workshop views.

Anam Beo

The Arts Office are one of the partners for an Arts Council funded award through their 'Invitation to Collaborate'

The lead partner in this project is Laois County Council Arts Office. The project is a regional project titled Mapping Arts Provision in Health Settings. Partner organizations are Laois County, County, Westmeath County Council, Offaly County Council, Music Generation OW, Anam Beo, Helium Arts, Waterford Healing Arts Trust (WHAT). Selection for the researcher has taken place and research has now commenced.

Public Art



Jessica Traynor who was awarded the Banagher Public Art Literature Commission

continues to develop links within the community to develop her oral history recording project, schools' writing and choral workshops, mentorship

opportunities for local writers and events in conjunction with the That Beats Banagher Festival.

Jessica has recently been in contact with Banagher College. Musician Elaine Agnew will be arranging some online workshops and recording between herself and the students. The plan is for Elaine to set the poetry that Jessica worked on with her TY workshops, earlier this year to music, and that the students will record the piece remotely with Elaine guidance and facilitation. The resulting song will be released around Christmas over social media as a celebration of Banagher - and to celebrate getting through a difficult year!

Lough Boora

- The Deep Mapping project has been printed and was launched on Culture Night
- The Arts Office was invited to present the Deep Mapping Project at Creative Ireland's online conference titled 'Creating Deeper Engagement on Climate Change'. Lough Boora Sculpture Park featured as a case study model of best practice and the Arts Office took part in a discussion group on ways of engaging the public on climate action through creativity.
- ITC Art in Landscape Research Project – Collaboration with Mayo County Council and Visual Arts Ireland. The researcher Terre Duffy is continuing consultation with all stakeholders for the project.
- The Arts Office have submitted an application for continuation funding from the ITC Arts Council funds to bring in a curator and organise an

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online conference in 2021 with existing partners Mayo County Council and VAI on Culture Environment and Tourism

Platform 31

Platform 31 is the nationwide artist development scheme being piloted by ALAEO (Association of Local Authority Arts Officers) in collaboration with the Arts Council. This national opportunity is for artists to develop their practice and test new ideas of collaboration, research, audience-development, place-making and sharing their work, each county will put out a call for artists to apply through a selection process, and each county will select a local artist for the scheme. The press release for this project will be available in November.

Creative Edenderry

The development of the Creative Edenderry network is progressing well with regular meetings taking place with a cohort of interested people. The Group are continuing to progress an Arts project, looking at the theme of Our Place, with a focus on industrial heritage – the project is titled Shoes of Edenderry and includes curating stories, images, anecdotes from locals around the old shoe factory. A walking exhibition in shop fronts was launched as part of Culture Night, and the project will be developed further with a planned series of events to take place in April 2021 under the Galway 2020 collaboration project. The artist Michael Fortune has been engaged to work with the group towards the delivery of an activity in April.

Birr Writer's Retreat

Four candidates were awarded the residency and these were planned to take place before end 2020, but this has been dependent on Covid restriction and it is possible that these residencies will now take place in 2021

Creative Ireland

The Arts Office continue to lead on a number of Creative Ireland projects including: Creative Edenderry, Community Open Call projects, Animation Residency and the Tullamore Arts Development Project. The finalisation of these projects has been taking place with Creative Ireland during October.

Online Communication Strategy.

We continue to engage the public and artists through our online and social platforms, Facebook, twitter and our extensive email

distribution databases, some topics covered in May include:

- Offaly Artists encouraged to share their work to Offaly Arts – Visual & Music
- Promotion of online festivals i.e. Tullamore International Summer Organ Series, Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival.
- Awareness building of Covid 19 grants currently available.
- Public Interest – i.e. Sharing of online virtual tours, films, drama shows,



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dance shows, creative writing
forums, arts activities for children

Support to Artists

Provision of online workshops in September through the Creative Ireland fund. The Arts Office held a series of online workshops for offaly artists with regard to delivering their business and working on line.

Sports - Funding

Sport Ireland

- Covid19 small grant scheme application - €47,996 secured to support 44 clubs to return to sport and physical activity
- Covid19 LSP supports - €10k secured
- Core & Dormant Accounts funding applications for 2021 submitted
- Keep Well fund called – max of €10k available to support initiatives as part of the “Keep Well” in the community campaign. Closing date for receipt of applications is 25th November

Programmes

Community Sports Development Officer programme

– outdoor physical activity sessions for women and older adults underway in Edenderry and Tullamore



Healthy Ireland

- round 1 allocations under the community mental health fund small grants scheme announced for six organisations
- round 2 community mental health fund small grants scheme announced with eight applications received

Primary school physical activity programmes

- south Offaly sports hub commenced delivery of winter fitness programmes in 10 schools
- Fit class programme and additional winter fitness programmes which were due to commence delivery after mid-term in another 35 schools have been deferred

Sports Inclusion Development Programme - one to one physical activity programmes for people with disabilities continue to be delivered for over 50 people with disabilities

Three youth / sports leadership training programmes completed in Oaklands

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Community College in October for 75 transition year

Four youth / sports leadership training programmes in Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara (two programmes) and Tullamore College (two programmes) due to commence delivery after mid-term deferred



LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Office Offaly team continues to work remotely and provides a full service to new and existing enterprises in Offaly. The LEO team are providing much needed assistance to deal with the unprecedented numbers of business owners contacting the Local Enterprise Office. As we enter Level 5 restrictions, The LEO Office will continue to provide all our services remotely including mentoring, training courses and financial supports.

National Women's Enterprise Day

The National Women Enterprise Day Event took place Online on Wednesday 14th October 2020. The theme of this year's Women's Enterprise Day was "We're stronger together". Over 2,000 owners, managers and entrepreneurs around the country joined the online events. The LEO National Event is chaired by Orla Martin, LEO Offaly. The interactive events moved online to due to the Covid Crisis. The main themes for this year were resilience, self-care, innovation and opportunity. All events were free of charge and include workshops with experts, panel discussions, a virtual marketplace and facilitated networking to

connect more entrepreneurs with each other.

Entrepreneurs that shared their insights and journeys included Caroline Lane of Equipeople Ltd; Alison Ritchie of Polar Ice Ltd; Olympian-turned-company founder Derval O' Rourke, Sonia Deasy of the Irish global skincare brand, Pestle & Mortar, Pamela Laird of Moxi Loves and Áine Kerr, the co-founder of Kinzen and RTÉ broadcaster, who was also the M.C. for the day. Other contributors included Tracy Keogh of Grow Remote, Deirdre Parkinson of Microfinance Ireland as well as Sheelagh Daly, Anne Lanigan and Marina Donohoe of Enterprise Ireland.



Upcoming Events and New Initiatives COVID-19 Micro-Enterprise Assistance

This grant is a contribution towards the cost of re-opening or keeping a business operational and re-connecting with employees and customers. Grants of a minimum of €500 to a maximum €1,000 in respect of vouched expenditure. This is a restricted scheme with only one grant available per business.

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This fund is open to operating businesses who have suffered a 30% reduction in turnover due to COVID-19 restrictions or downturn in trade provided they commit to remaining open and to hiring and sustaining employment; Employed between 2 and 10 full-time employees (or full-time equivalents) on their payroll at the 29th February 2020 and have an annual turnover of less than €2 million as per the latest set of annual accounts. Businesses are not eligible for the COVID-19 Restart/Restart Plus Grant or similar COVID-19 business restart grants from other government departments. Applications must be submitted via www.micro-enterpriseassistance.ie. Closing date has been extended to 13 November 2020.

Irish Business Design Challenge



Irish Business
DESIGN
CHALLENGE

The Irish Business Design Challenge is a competition with a prize fund of €50,000. The Irish Business Design Challenge will profile Ireland's 'hero businesses' over a number of weeks. 'Hero businesses' are those businesses that excel in coming up with innovative, smart, useful and relevant ideas or solutions, and which have a demonstrable impact and benefit on business, society or wider community. This might include environment, sustainability, diversity & inclusion, mental health and more.

The competition is open to micro, small and medium Irish businesses to share the challenges they are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 and the solutions they have designed to resolve them.

To apply, please visit www.ibdc.awardstage.com. The deadline for entries is the 13th November 2020.

Brexit Workshops - Preparing for Brexit

Free Online workshop 'Customs Workshops - Preparing for Brexit' will take place remotely on Friday 13th November covering customs procedures. This workshop will cover how export and import customs procedures on trade with 'Third Countries' apply, how tariffs work and the need to correctly classify your goods.

Another Free Online workshop 'Have you Thought about Brexit' will take place remotely on Thursday 19th and 26th November covering a comprehensive overview of how Business can prepare for Brexit.

There is now an urgent need to prepare your company to prepare for Brexit. Regardless of a hard or soft Customs Brexit, goods to/from the UK or transiting through the UK, will be subject to strict compliance and documentation requirements.

Are you BREXIT Ready? Meet an Experts

Enterprise Europe Network, in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Offices in Ireland, is bringing up to 50 Brexit experts direct to your screens with our first-ever virtual Meet the Expert event, which will give you the opportunity to engage in "1 to 1" sessions with up to 50 Brexit experts direct to your screens. This event, for both exporters and non-exporters alike, is a great opportunity to get the best advice possible to help you prepare for the substantial changes that will arise from 1st January 2021.

The event will take the format of pre-arranged 20-minute meetings that will be

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available to book in advance with a range of Brexit Experts. Regardless of a hard or soft Customs Brexit, goods to/from the UK or transiting through the UK, will be subject to strict compliance and documentation requirements.

COVID 19 Supports

Remote Training Sessions

Booking is now available for a number of Online courses such as Start your Own Business Course, Digital marketing for Business, COVID-19 Government Supports for business, A Layman's Guide to Tax, how to create marketing videos on a budget and Start your Own Business course. These courses are aimed at those interested in starting their own business or growing their business. Most of the courses have been fully booked and have received excellent feedback.

Remote Mentoring Sessions

The Local Enterprise Office Offaly has a number of free mentoring sessions to assist businesses through the Covid 19 crisis. Please contact us to arrange a mentoring session. The types of mentoring available are Business, Finance, Banking Supports & Advice, Human Resources, Social Media Strategy and Microfinance Loans.

Trading Online Voucher (eCommerce) Grants Available

LEO Offaly continues to experience high demand for the Trading Online Voucher scheme. The voucher is a financial incentive to small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online. Under the scheme a qualifying business may apply for funding to a maximum value of €2,500. Following approval of their application, a successful applicant can engage suppliers

and upon completion of the work, submit a request for payment to the LEO in line with the terms and conditions of their voucher. One to one mentoring and information seminars are available online. The application process for the vouchers will be a competitive process.

LEO Feasibility Grant Call

Feasibility grant towards prototype development & research available - Next closing date 31st December 2020. Feasibility/Innovation Grants are designed to assist the promoter with researching market demand for a new product or service and examining its sustainability. It includes assistance with innovation including specific consultancy requirements, private specialists, design, and prototype development.

LEO Financial Supports

Priming and Business Expansion grants are available for eligible businesses. Local Enterprise Office Offaly offers a wide range of financial assistance to help you start up your business or grow your existing business. We provide a free information and advisory service to new and existing entrepreneurs on all aspects of setting up and running a business. For further information, visit www.localenterprise.ie/Offaly/

GradStart scheme now available for LEO clients

The GradStart scheme is a 24-month graduate placement programme with funding of up to €30k (€15k per year). Local Enterprise Office client companies with at least 5 full time staff can apply for the GradStart programme.

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The objective of GradStart is to assist indigenous companies to scale and grow their businesses through the introduction of good graduate talent (with a minimum Level 6-degree qualification) to deliver clearly defined projects.

Microfinance Ireland loans

The COVID-19 Business Loan from Microfinance Ireland is a government initiative to support small businesses with less than 10 employees through the current period of uncertainty and protect job creation or sustainment in Ireland. The loan scheme has been revised and relaunched. Loans are from €5,000 – €25,000 up to 3 years. First 6 months – 0% Interest & Zero repayments. Reduced interest rate 4.5% APR for LEO applications.

Prepare for Brexit – Information for Businesses

For any businesses dealing with UK companies, there may be issues with continuity of supply post December 31st 2020. In particular payment of UK VAT on purchases will be demanded and this cost will not be recoverable. In addition, customs duties will be payable on most products.

Eight practical measures that businesses on the island of Ireland should adopt now:

1. Register online with HMRC or Revenue for an EORI number – you cannot trade without one.
2. Contact your suppliers and logistics providers about the continuity of goods and services you need for trade.
3. Check if your non-UK suppliers use the UK as a land-bridge and

ascertain whether this will cost and cause delays.

4. Classify the goods that you import or export for customs duties and know their origin.
5. Seek out a customs agent or enhance in house customs knowledge.
6. Ensure that you have a line of credit to deal with the customs duties that will arise on imports from the UK or Ireland.
7. Check whether your current certifications, licences or authorisations will be valid post-Brexit.
8. Use the Local Enterprise Offices and other Irish Government supports available.

The Local Enterprise Office Offaly also recommends that all businesses take the Brexit Scorecard first. This will analyse your business and outline the key areas of concern in the event of a hard Brexit.

Financial Supports

1. InterTrade Ireland Start to Plan Voucher Scheme

InterTrade Ireland offers 100% financial support up to €2250 (inclusive of VAT) towards professional advice in relation to Brexit matters. This support can help your business get advice on specific issues such as movement of labour, goods, services and currency management. For more information visit: www.intertradeireland.com.

2. SBCI Brexit Loan Scheme

The Brexit Loan Scheme can provide affordable financing to businesses that are impacted by Brexit. The Scheme is

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delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders and will make €300 million available to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees at an interest rate of 4% or less. The loans are available through AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank. Loans will range from €25,000 to €1.5 million per eligible business, with unsecured loans up to €500,000 and terms ranging from 1-3 years. For more information, please visit www.sbc.gov.ie

3. InterTrade Ireland: Support towards employing a full-time sales person

Many businesses face the challenge of funding and recruiting a dedicated professional to win sales in the cross-border market – and, here again, Acumen can help. Acumen will fund up to 50% of the cost of a Sales Person's salary in the first year. The maximum cost covered can be up to €37,500/£30,000 with Acumen paying up to €18,750/£15,000. For more information, visit www.intertradeireland.com.

streaming. You'll find these services in the [Digital Library](#) section of our website.

#StartANewStory

A new library campaign by the government aims to encourage people to keep reading Ireland's most celebrated authors virtually while libraries remain closed.



After the demand for e-books and audiobooks more than doubled during the first lockdown, the campaign urges the public to keep using their local libraries virtually during Level 5 restrictions.

The #StartANewStory campaign is spearheaded by Libraries Ireland and Creative Ireland with support from the department of Rural and Community Development as well as Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Offaly Digital Libraries

We continue to build on our full digital suite of online resources and services which have been widely used over the past few months. Users have access to eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, eNewspapers, educational courses, language learning, free music and film



As we look forward to a return to Contact & Collect and Browse by Appointment Services, we took this snapshot of usage so far!

Physical usage before Level 5 restrictions were in place



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Positive Ageing Week 2020

This year's Positive Ageing Week took place from 28th September and extended into an additional week due to its success. Pictured are library borrowers with their **Positive Ageing Week gift bag** as a thank you from Offaly Libraries and our Age Friendly Alliance partners.

Offaly Libraries presented **300 gift bags** to our older patrons this year. **253 older library users** used the *Contact and Collect* service which was established during the first lockdown (May) to provide reading material for vulnerable people. Many thanks to our wonderful collaborators: Age Friendly Alliance, Birr & Tullamore Lions clubs, Birr Castle & Gardens, Failte Ireland, Age Action, and Offaly Community Response Forum partners.



Children's Book Festival at Offaly Libraries October 2020

Two-year old Aoibh was delighted with her Fishy Bookmark, created with her Crafty Take-Away bag from Offaly Libraries as part of our #ChildrensBookFestival



Offaly Libraries' Children's Book Festival Programme for 2020 was a huge success with an array of events and activities. We delivered a great selection of virtual engagement pieces for our younger library members and school communities. The events included 15 Zoom to the Library! Live Story-times, Elmer Make & Do with Aisling, Paper Dragons with Aidan, Big



Mouth Art with Aidan, Niall de Búrca read two of his stories online, Judi Curtin and Oisín McGann presented three Zoom visits each. All the events were very well attended and we received excellent feedback especially from local schools.

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*Pupils from **Gaelscoil Na Laochra Biorra** really enjoyed the e-visit/workshop (via Zoom) by Sarah Webb and Alan Nolan.*

Before the level 5 restrictions were placed, many children received their **Crafty Take-Aways** via Contact & Collect! You can still view our collection of online storytimes on Facebook [here](#). The theme this year was “Books about Books!”

An Post Irish Book Awards

Congratulations to #EdenderryLibrary guest blogger, Caroline Nolan! Caroline’s humorous short story, 'Falling for the New Housemate', features in Ray Darcy’s new book, 'A Page from My Life'. Thousands of listeners to the Ray Darcy Show on RTÉ Radio 1 entered the competition to be a contributor in this book and Caroline’s

funny story was among those selected for publication. The book has been shortlisted for the An Post Irish Book Awards,

and all funds raised from sales will go to LauraLynn – Ireland’s Children’s Hospice. Offaly Libraries are thrilled to promote local literary talent and wish Caroline all the very best in her creative writing endeavours. You can read Caroline's post on our blog at the link below:

www.offalylibrariesblog.a_trip_down_memory_lane



SHOCK-TOBER



For the month of October Offaly Libraries brought daily updates on all books, movies and songs to help you embrace the dark side.



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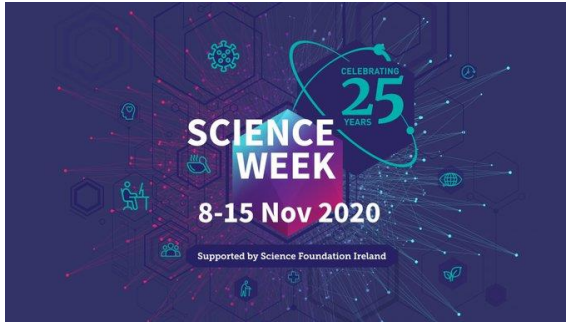


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UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

Science Week 8th -15th of November 2020



The Offaly Libraries team are currently preparing science-related stories on famous Scientist from our Little People – Big Dreams collection. We also plan to host online chats about the old weather traditions related to changes in our weather in Ireland and quirky facts that have been around by word of mouth through the ages.

DAF Projects Update

Offaly Libraries received Dormant account funding for 4 socially inclusive projects. The

Touch-Type Read and Spell (TTRS) resource is a multi-sensory course that teaches touch-typing to help children and adults improve their reading and spelling skills. 1,000 of these licences will be promoted around the county. Contact your library for more details.

Our **BrickFlicks** project is a stop motion Lego animation workshop that will be delivered online. These workshops involve plenty of hands-on learning which will be combined with some online demonstrations. The students will collaborate to design and create their own film sets, storyboards, and script for their



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accounts fund

stop motion movies. They will film and edit these movies on iPads or tablets. It is an interactive way for children to develop STREAM subject skills in a fun and creative manner.

Songwriting for Your Community and the *Bricks 4 kids* workshops are in development and will progress when safe to do so under public health guidelines.

Small scale capital works in Libraries

We are busy putting the grant of



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

€100,000 from the Department of Rural and Community Development, as part of the Small Scale Capital Works Programme in public libraries to good use.

Works underway range from the installation of some study spaces, occupancy controls, perspex screens, to building reconfigurations and refurbishments; all of which will make a real difference to our libraries and help us comply with new public health guidelines. These works will strengthen the library's position as a community hub and ensure that it is a modern, well-equipped and comfortable facility that will leave a positive legacy for years to come.

Christmas Programme Preparations



Our Christmas preparations are underway with a special **12 days of Christmas singalong** with Noel O' Farrell – starting 13th

December, join us on [Offaly Libraries Facebook](#) page each morning for

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a Christmas singalong- there will be old favourites and twists on modern classics.

We will also have a virtual **Wishing Line** to spread positivity, gratitude, and wellbeing at this time of year. We are asking the community of Offaly to email us with the things that they are grateful for or feel positive about in 2020 and their wishes for 2021. These wishes will appear across our social media platforms in December 2020.

We are looking forward to lots of seasonal **Zoom into the Library** story-time sessions for the local schools.

We will re-imagine our traditional **Polar Express** events this year in support of Library Family Time. With the hope that Level 5 restrictions will be lifted in time for Christmas, Offaly Libraries will gift our younger library members a book as we spread the message of ‘embracing the joy of reading’ this Christmas. Contact the library for more details in December.

Library Newsletter

A quick reminder that the best way to keep up to date with all library programmes, developments and new services is via our Library Newsletter and of course through following our social media channels. The link to subscribe to our newsletter is here; [Offaly Libraries Newsletter](#)

BROADBAND / DIGITAL

DojoMór

Nationwide, online, coding fun-day for young people aged 7 to 17. Offaly County Council was involved with 8 third level colleges as part of this online event and nationally we had over 9,500 attendees taking part with over 700 from Offaly. This

event showed students how to create a simple game, build a website, programme electronics, create music and develop 3D models using computer coding techniques. Greatly inspired by CoderDojo, this event was an amazing opportunity for young people to be exposed to and to learn practical and valuable skills, that they will take with them for life. Offaly was the only Local Authority involved and this is building on existing links with Trinity for iLofar and Cork Institute of Technology for VEX Robotics. Colleges involved were: Tralee Institute of Technology, Cork Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Waterford Institute of Technology, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Maynooth University.

STEM Programme in schools

This month we start the programme in the primary and post primary schools in Offaly. This programme is needed to ensure today’s students are qualified for the jobs of tomorrow. This programme is an ideal introduction to students who we hope will drive Offaly’s economic ambitions, support innovation and provide the foundations for future prosperity in the county. OCC and OLDC have provided funding to rollout the post primary programme to all 12 secondary schools in Offaly. We currently have 30 schools involved in the primary school programme and we currently have funding application in under Just Transition Fund(JTF) for “Building Resilience & Adaptability in Primary School children through STEM in communities impacted by decarbonisation“to further increase the

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number of primary schools talking part in the 2020/2021 school year. This STEM VEX programme is delivered by Offaly County Council in partnership with CIT (Cork Institute of Technology), DRCD(Department of Rural and Community Development), OLDC(Offaly Local Development Company), LEO(Offaly Local Enterprise Office), Offaly Libraries, Broadband Officer and OCC ICT Department.

Live Church Services

We have assisted numerous churches and parishes over the last few months to get online. Church services help bridge the digital divide and helps connect seniors and communities to technology. This is also helping communities feel more connected during Covid restrictions.

Broadband Providers

With regard to fibre connections in towns we have worked directly in recent weeks with Virgin Media to address the connection gaps in Portarlington, and with Eir in Shannonbridge. Relevant civil works have been undertaken and the connections for domestic and business locations are now available.

National Broadband Ireland

Offaly County Council are continuing to keep in contact with National Broadband Ireland with relation to surveys in Offaly in preparation for National Broadband Plan fibre rollout.

Connecting Communities:

Broadband Community Points (BCP)
Ballycommon TTC is one of the national pilot sites for BCP rollout and is still being tested. Three further sites are now also fully

connected, at Kilclonfert Community Hall and Croghan Community Hall also in the Edenderry Municipal District while the Rosfaraghan Business Park near Ferbane Primo premises is also connected. Offaly County Council are awaiting formal handover of these BCP sites from the Dept. team, for the community venues to commence local operations. Other BCP sites in the county are on the November installation list for the backhaul BCP connection, and where that is in place already some further sites are in line for the Vodafone connection which will provide actual service to the venues. Offaly County Council have listed some further BCP opportunities with the Dept. for consideration for connection. A low key national launch of the BCP sites took place on Friday 16th October in Kerry and Offaly will organise local launches in due course. Town & Village Renewal Scheme funding for “Fit out of Broadband Connection Points” in the amount of €40,000 has been received and is supported by matching funding of €5,000 from Offaly County Council.

WiFi4EU

Installation at sites is proceeding in partnership with community and business locations in Offaly. The Tullamore WiFi4EU project was launched on 8th October as a lead in to the Tullamore Municipal District meeting that day.

The Birr sites are being worked on and the Edenderry sites are in preparation. A fourth list of remaining sites will be connected in due course. As a result of the Tullamore WiFi4EU launch the EU Commission has identified this project as the first in Ireland

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progressing to full installation and has invited Offaly County Council to submit a project review for their use at European Commission's WiFi4EU website and beyond.



thinking location at national level. Other similar projects are ongoing in SmartSandyford, Digital Limerick and SmartDublin. Offaly wishes to position itself at that level and Edenderry has been an ideal location in which to develop the project to date due to staff buy in and support and other factors including the major support from Cellnex on this project to date.

E-denderry Digital Smart Town pilot project

This is progressing well with the recent installation of the first LoRa (Low Range radio) gateways in the country, and air quality monitors provided by Cellnex our technical partners in the project in late Sept; in collaboration with work the project is doing with the EPA air quality monitoring programme to evaluate how such stations can use new Internet of Things technology which communicates over LoRa. By the end of October designated car parking spaces sensors were installed in Electric Vehicle parking bays, wheelchair spaces and loading bays and next week some bin sensors are being installed. All of these systems are being piloted as IT comms opportunities to help test the Cellnex SmartBrain data management interface and the systems will be evaluated for their benefits to town management. Other sensors systems are also being looked as to use for wider projects in the town using IoT, LoRa and Smartbrain. It is hoped to formally launch this project at the Edenderry MD meeting of 9th December. This partnership will help position Edenderry as an innovative and forward

Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive

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Appendix 1

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Revenue Account Grant Income & Payroll Summary to 31st October 2020

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL	Full Yr Budget 2020 €m	Preliminary Value to October 2020 €m	% Year To Date
Payroll costs	27.07	22.24	82.2%
Grants and Subsidies Income	34.94	34.06	97.5%

OCC to 31st October 2020

	<u>Rates</u> €m	<u>Rents</u> €m	<u>Loans</u> €m
Opening Balance Jan 1, 2020	2.29	0.73	0.32
Invoices/Adjustments	14.59	5.26	0.44
2020 Cash Collected to end of October	7.70	5.32	0.46
Closing Balance October 31st, 2020	9.18	0.67	0.31
<u>2019 Cash collected to October</u>	13.42	5.20	0.44
% Collection at this point in 2019	57%	102%	106%

Bank Overdraft to 31st October 2020

Number of days Overdrawn in Bank year to date	36	12%
Overdraft/Negative Interest and non conforming charges to October 31st 2020 YTD		€27,589
Bank Administration and transactional charges to October 31st 2020 YTD		€30,177

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