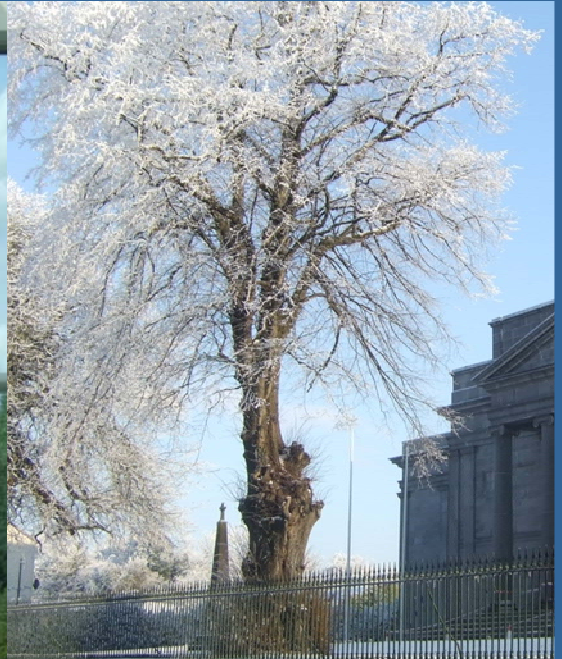


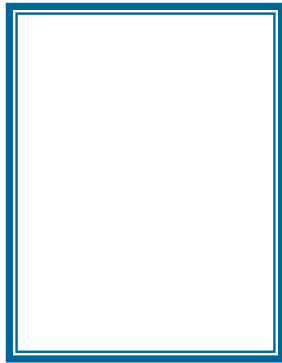


**Offaly County Council**  
**Annual Report 2010**



## ***JOINT ADDRESS BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND COUNTY MANAGER***

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Danny Owens  
Cathaoirleach



Pat Gallagher  
Bainisteoir Chontae

We are very pleased to present the Annual Report of Offaly Local Authorities for the year 2010. This report contains information about the services provided by Offaly County Council, its elected members, staff and departments. It looks at the achievements of the local authorities in 2010, which, despite a very difficult operating environment, proved to be a year of progress in some very significant ways.

The production of an annual report such as this is a vitally important element in the work of our organisation. The local authorities are accountable to the people of the county they serve, and all citizens have a right to be informed of the details of the programmes undertaken by the authorities on their behalf and to be able to examine their associated expenditure. But it is also a time for the elected members and the staff of the County Council to reflect on the reporting year, to examine successes and failures, to take stock, in a very practical way, of the direction the organisation is moving in and the priorities it has set itself. Above all, it is an opportunity to question rigorously the effectiveness of all the elements which make up our services.

In reviewing the year, it will be seen that many important interventions were demanded of the council. Some of the most notable achievements evident in the report include: major flood relief works in towns and villages affected by the severe

weather conditions; prolonged salting of roads during the coldest winters experienced for many decades; the adoption of the Midland Region Planning Guidelines; the commencement of the project to upgrade Tullamore Wastewater Treatment Plant under the Water Service Investment Programme; the adoption of Offaly Local Authorities Customer Services Action Plan; the adoption of Tullamore and Birr Town & Environs Development Plans 2010-2016; the completion and allocation of 18 houses in Shinrone and Cloghan and acquisition of 21 houses in various locations throughout the county; the introduction of a Library Development Plan.

Other highlights included the visit of the US ambassador, Mr. Dan Rooney, to Áras an Chontae in August 2010. The opportunity afforded by Mr. Rooney's visit was used to invite President Obama to Offaly in the event of the President choosing to visit Ireland during his incumbency. A civic reception was also held in December to recognise the achievements of the Offaly Intermediate Camogie Team, who surpassed all expectations in winning the All Ireland championship in their first year in the grade

However, the year's work is not all about the delivery of exciting new projects or responding to emergencies. A significant element of the Council's work is in the continued delivery of existing services, maintaining the roads and water services, providing quality housing, dealing with planning applications and many other activities. It can never be our prerogative to become complacent about these services: they are too important in the daily lives of the people of Offaly. An annual report may not be able to capture adequately the level of dedication required to ensure that services continue to be delivered to the highest of standards, but these notes are a good opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing commitment and co-operation of the elected members, management and staff, indoor and outdoor, for their work throughout 2010.

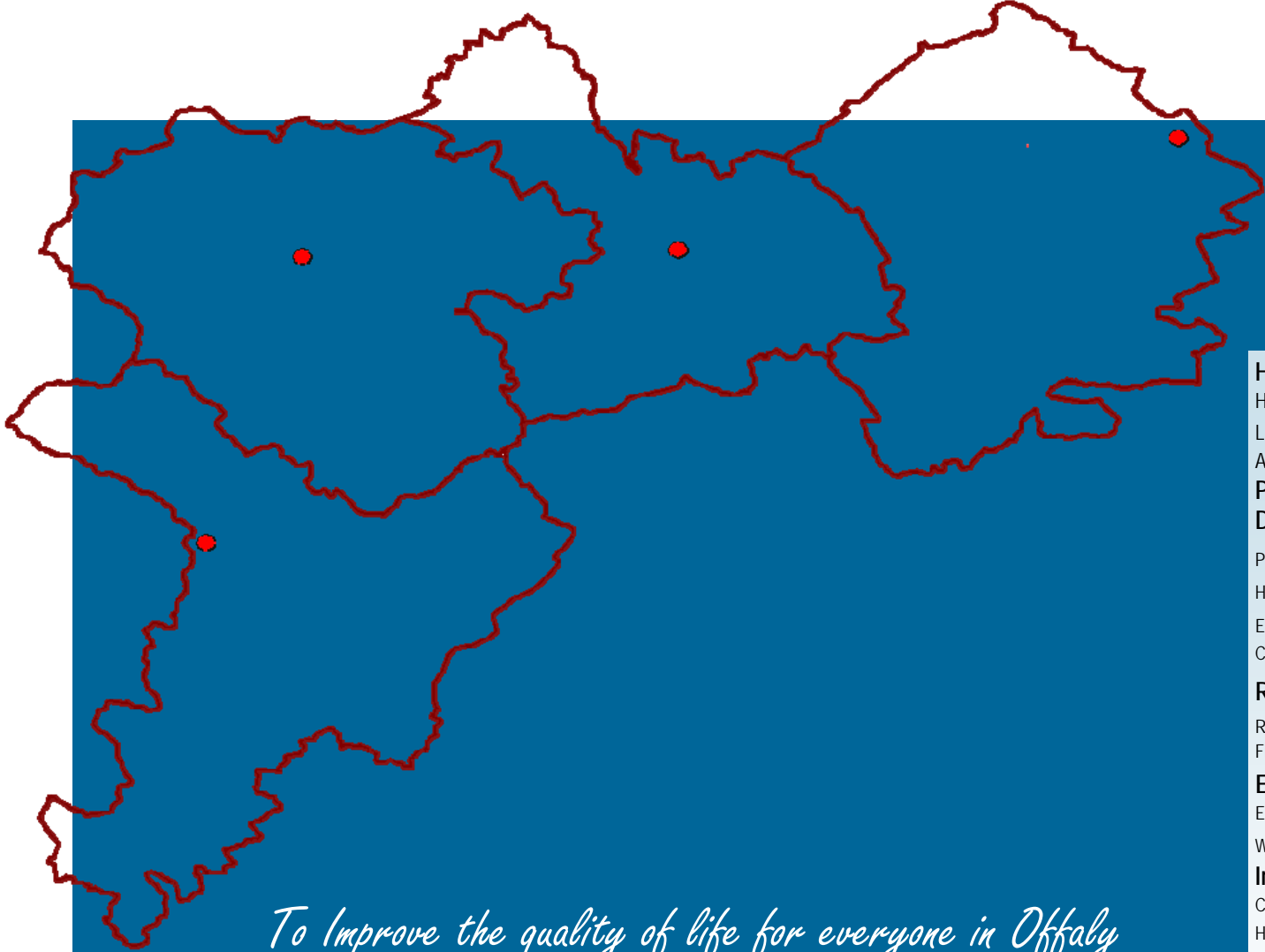
In conclusion, we would like to pay tribute to former Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Noel Bourke and to Mr. Barry Cowen, T.D., who held the office of Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council from June 2010 until February 2011 when he was elected to Dáil Éireann.

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***Danny Owens — Cathaoirleach***

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***Pat Gallagher — Bainisteoir Chontae***



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*To Improve the quality of life for everyone in Offaly*

# Housing, Social and Cultural Services

**SPC Chair: Molly Buckley MCC**

## Members

Cllr. Barry Cowen

Cllr. Sinead Moylan-Ryan

Cllr. John Carroll

Cllr. John Leahy

Cllr. Finian O'Neill

## Sectoral:

Ms. Susan Ryan

Ms. Tessy Doyle

Mr. Joe O'Brien

**Director Of Services:**  
Sean Murray

**Senior Executive Officer:**  
Dermot Mahon, Housing

**Senior Executive Engineer:** Martin Quinn,  
Housing

**County Librarian:** Mary Stuart

**Arts Officer:** Sinead O'Reilly

## Housing Department

### Achievements and Constraints

There was a further increase in the number of approved applicants for social housing supports in 2010 due to the ongoing economic downturn. 384 applications were received in 2010 of which 177 were approved following assessment. The Housing list reached 585 at year end representing a 17% year on year increase. Increasing demand for social housing together with capital budget restrictions made it more difficult for the Council to fully respond to the housing needs in the County.

Significant achievements during 2010 were the completion and allocation of 18 houses in Shinrone and Cloghan and acquisition of 21 houses at locations throughout the County. An additional €2.5m was secured from the Department for the capital programme for interim final accounts on two completed schemes in Edenderry and Tullamore.



*Development of 12 units in Cloghan completed in 2010.*

The number of RAS transfers achieved in 2010 was 63. In addition, the waiting time for housing assessments was kept to a minimum due to the ongoing commitment of staff in providing quality customer services. 63 tenancy allocations were made in 2010 and 25 long-term

and casual voids were brought back into stock. Significant progress was also made on the Grove St Action Plan with 10 vacant houses bought back into stock though significant investment under the Energy Efficiency Programme.

12 Part V social units were acquired completing all outstanding Part V obligations. 20 unsold Affordable units transferred to RAS in 2009 continued to be managed by Helm Housing Association in partnership with the Council.

Meeting customer demands for housing adaptation, housing aid for older persons and mobility grants continued to be a challenge. Revised procedures introduced in 2009 resulted in reduced waiting times for approval and almost 160 grants were issued to the value of €2.2m. Tenant purchase and private site sales were negligible in 2010.

Continued suspension of Estate Management grants made it more difficult to engage with residents groups or to plan any significant estate improvement works. Despite this, considerable progress was made in dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints and estate management issues in a number of locations. Plans for the provision of emergency homeless facilities in Tullamore were further progressed.

Considerable progress was achieved on plans for remedial works at Churchview Heights Edenderry and budget cost and Part 8 approval was achieved. Tenders for works were approved with work due to commence in January 2011.



*Construction activity in Cloghan*

## Social and Voluntary Housing Output

The housing stock in the county stood at 1,074 at the end of the year with an average occupancy rate of 97%.

2010 Capital Programme	2010 No of Units/Status
<b>Shinrone</b>	<b>6 units allocated April</b>
<b>Cloghan (Turnkey)</b>	<b>6 units allocated Sept</b>
<b>Cloghan (Part V)</b>	<b>6 units allocated Sept</b>
<b>Banagher, Kilcormac, Edenderry (Part V)</b>	<b>3 units acquired</b>
<b>Kilcormac (Part V)</b>	<b>3 units allocated Aug</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Hand acquisitions</b>	<b>18 units acquired</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>

2010 Voluntary Programme	2010 No of Units/Status
<b>Cluid Housing Association (Edenderry)</b>	<b>7 units acquired</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>

49 house completions and acquisitions in 2010 are comprised of 42 local authority social units and 7 voluntary units in comparison to 133 completions in 2009. The largest scheme completed and allocated was 12 units at Cloghan. 18 houses were acquired during the year together with 12 Part V Social houses at various locations.

The main social housing construction programme for the Council has now been completed with no new schemes at planning stage and no schemes to be completed in 2011.

7 voluntary housing units were acquired by Cluid Housing Association in Edenderry under a special Capital Assistance Scheme programme for use by the elderly. The CLSS Scheme has been discontinued nationally and no new approvals for schemes under this programme were issued during the year.

A Shared Services agreement was drafted for the amalgamation of capital programmes on a county-wide basis on behalf of the Town Councils in 2009. This process has facilitated increased efficiencies and savings.

### **Housing Maintenance and Pre-Let Repairs**

Despite budget reductions over 1,000 maintenance repairs were completed in 2010 while significant progress was achieved in restoring homes that were void for considerable periods. A panel of small works contractors was set up in 2008 and houses in need of major refurbishment continue to be contracted out to speed up turnaround time. This panel will be reviewed in 2011 to reflect shared service agreement with the Town Councils. Funding in the region of €400,000 was expended on pre-let repairs to 25 houses that in some cases required considerable renovation prior to re-let.

A revised Housing Maintenance Policy was drafted for SPC consideration in 2011 and a review of Clerk of Works duties undertaken.

### **Regeneration and Remedial Works Programmes**

Proposals for the redevelopment of Greenwood Park and Churchview Heights estates in Edenderry were approved by the Department and Part 8 approval secured in September. The proposed works include upgrading open spaces, laneway closures, providing additional car parking and traffic calming areas. The demolition of 6 derelict apartments at Churchview was completed and the remedial works scheme put out to tender with works to commence in early 2011. Plans for a remedial works programme in Ballyvora Grove, Ferbane progressed and works are to commence in 2011.

### **DPG's / Demountable Dwellings / Improvement Works Scheme**

One IWS was completed in 2010 while the Council provided funding for two demountable dwellings and completed three and commenced a further three DPG projects at various locations around the County. Three DPG's are planned for 2011.

### **Energy Efficiency Programme / Radon Testing**

Energy efficiency upgrades were completed at 10 vacant units in Grove St Crinkle and at two other locations at a cost in excess of €300,000. The completed works brought energy rating from a typical F to a C1 rating. A comprehensive radon measurement test of 500 social houses in the County was completed in partnership with the RPII indicating an overall low level of radon present in all locations. Additional testing was required at only one location and remediation works will be completed if required.

### **Affordable Housing and Part V**

The ongoing downturn in the economy resulted in a further reduction in the number of units coming on stream during the year. By the end of 2010 a total of 154 units were provided under the Part V process to date, of which 75 are Affordable units. One Affordable house sale transaction was completed during the year.

20 unsold Affordable units in Clara and Edenderry were transferred to RAS in partnership with Helm Housing Association under a 5 year lease agreement in December 2009. 12 Social Part V's were acquired during the year. Revised Guidelines on the Implementation of Part V were adopted by Council in December 2009 to amend the Councils preferred options in negotiating Part V agreements in the future. The Council completed its existing Part V obligations in 2010 and no additional units are to be acquired in the short-medium term.

### Technical Support Services

Works were completed on school access road at Banagher and technical services provided for Tullamore Library renovation project.



*Banagher School Access Road construction*

### Housing Assessment and Allocations

63 tenancy allocations were made during the year. The Social Housing waiting list stood at 585 at the end of the year with the greatest demand from the Edenderry area. The increase in the number of applications received from homeowners who had their family home repossessed was particularly significant. It is expected that this trend will continue and possibly accelerate in 2011. A housing needs assessment update was completed in 2010 which led to a radical overhaul of the waiting list. Revisions and amendments to the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities were adopted by SPC and Council in March 2010. The new scheme introduced elements necessary to deal with the ever changing landscape of social housing applications.

### Tenant Purchase

One house was purchased under the 1995 Tenant Purchase Scheme in 2010. A "Home Ownership Incentive for Long Term Council Tenants" was announced on Budget day which will make the existing Tenant Purchase Scheme more attractive. In 2011 tenants will be able to avail of a discount of up to 45% on the market price of a house they are eligible to purchase under the scheme (discount is currently 30%). Tenants will be able to accumulate the 45% discount over a 15 year period at a rate of 3% for each year of tenancy.

This will be of particular benefit to long-term tenants. A new Incremental Purchase Scheme was introduced which will be expanded further in 2011 to replace the existing TPS.

### Differential Rent Scheme

A new Differential Rent Scheme was approved by Council and implemented with effect from March 2010 and a full rent review of all tenancies was completed based on household/income details submitted. Revised rents were applied from 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2010. National guidance will issue from the DeHLG in 2011 in relation to future rent revisions ensuring consistency in approach across all local authorities and in compliance with the Housing Act 2009.

### Housing Rents and Loans Arrears Policy

In order to address the growing problem of arrears, policies were adopted by Council to ensure early intervention to prevent threat of eviction or repossession, but where agreements can not be reached or broken, to outline the procedure for dealing with eviction / repossession where required. The guiding principle of arrears control is that of taking early action so as to protect the income of the authority and to prevent the accumulation of debts by individual tenants.

### Housing Loans

5 applications for House Purchase Loans were received in 2010. 2 applications were cancelled due to non-submission of further information requested. The remaining 3 loans were processed by the Affordable Homes Partnership who carried out credit checks and issued a recommendation of refusal on each application in accordance with the Credit Policy adopted by the Council in July 2009.

### Adaptation, Mobility and Older Persons Grants

Almost 800 applications have been received under the three grant schemes since their introduction in November 2007. 350 of these applications were received in 2010. 163 final approvals were issued under the three schemes in 2010 and expenditure was in excess of €2.2m. At the end of the year 306 grant applications were awaiting approval.

### Private Sites

Criteria for the sale of private sites were amended and adopted by Council to effectively remove all restrictive conditions and sell sites on the open market. The marketing and sale of sites at 6 locations was undertaken by a local Estate Agent following competitive tender for services. Despite extensive marketing, only 3 sites in Banagher were sale agreed by year end.



### Rental Accommodation Scheme / Leasing Scheme

63 transfers were completed in 2010. Tullamore continued to be the priority area as it represented the area of greatest need. 44 transfers alone took place in Tullamore. A review of landlord contracts and rental agreements was completed during the year which resulted in considerable rent savings. The Council also provided a regional support service for RAS for six neighbouring local authorities.

A new Leasing Scheme was introduced during the year providing the opportunity to acquire long term leases on suitable accommodation in order to house persons on the local authority's waiting list. Lease agreements were concluded in respect of 3 properties in 2010 with a number of others under negotiation at year end. The progression of both the Rental Accommodation Scheme and Leasing initiative will be a priority as a viable social housing option in 2011.

### Private Rented Accommodation – Enforcement of Standards

Offaly County Council continued to manage this function on a countywide basis during the year. The revised Building Regulations / standards, together with the revised system of Enforcement which was introduced in 2009 requiring a more detailed level of assessment, inspection and compliance, provided the operating procedure

for the 108 inspections which were conducted during the year.

### Traveller Accommodation and Supports

A 5 year Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 was adopted in 2009 which aims to provide 78 units of accommodation over its lifetime. The following table gives a breakdown of progress made in the two year period 2009 - 2010 under the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2009-2013:

Families Accommodated	Tullamore Town Council	Birr Town Council	Offaly County Council	Total
Standard Housing	3	4	3	<b>10</b>
Voluntary Housing	4			<b>4</b>
Permanent Caravan Site	4	1	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>
Target to date				<b>21</b>
Private rented				<b>36</b>

At the end of 2010 the targeted total of 21 units of accommodation has been provided. A mid term review of the Programme will be carried out by the end of 2011. The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee met quarterly to co-ordinate delivery of the Plan. Proposals for a number of accommodation schemes in the Tullamore area are progressing and consultation has begun with residents of Millbrook Park caravan site in Birr on the provision of a group housing scheme.



### Anti-Social Behaviour

A new Anti Social Behaviour Strategy was adopted in October 2010 in accordance with the provisions of the 2009 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. Links have been established with the Community Gardaí and with the Joint Policing Committees.

### Homeless

Homeless services are now being co-ordinated on a regional basis in accordance with the provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Westmeath County Council is the lead authority on the joint Regional Homeless Forum for the Midland region. Following on from the national homeless strategy 'The Way Home' (2009) and the relevant provisions of the 2009 Housing Act, a 3 year Framework Regional Homeless Action Plan for the 4 midland counties was adopted by the Council in June 2010. A more detailed Action Plan for each county must be adopted in early 2011.

Plans are being advanced by Tullamore Housing Association, in conjunction with the Midlands Simon Community, the Offaly Local Authorities and the HSE to provide a 4 unit emergency homeless facility in Tullamore. This availability of this facility promises to provide a significant solution to addressing the problem of homelessness in Offaly. In 2010 a total of 44 adults and 17 children presented as homeless to Offaly County Council.

### Estate Management

An Inter-agency Steering Group was established in Grove Street, Crinkle in January 2010 to address social issues on the estate. The Group meets every 2 months. An agreed Action Plan was developed and significant progress has been made in a number of key areas. A Percent for Art project commenced in Grove Street in late 2010. Pre-tenancy supports continued together with support for residents associations.

Phase 1 of the Remedial Works Scheme at Greenwood Park and Churchview Heights estates in Edenderry to include back lanes improvement works, including public lighting, lane surfacing, surface water disposal and security measures was tendered in November 2010 and works will commence on this phase in early 2011. Phases 2 and 3 covering environmental works to large and small open spaces

in Greenwood Park which will include extensive landscaping and planting works along with car parking works, traffic calming and signage, drainage and public lighting will be tendered in early 2011 with expected work commencement in March 2011 and May 2011 respectively. €375,000 has been allocated for the remedial scheme from the capital budget. In addition, the demolition of 6 derelict apartments at Churchview took place in June 2010. A community cabin in Churchview Heights provided by the Council is managed by an active Management Group and is used by local residents and state and voluntary agencies.

Part VIII approval was received for a small remedial works programme in Ballyvora Grove, Ferbane. Survey work and production of tender documentation was commenced with works expected to commence by mid 2011.



*Official Opening of Killane Drive Edenderry  
by Cllr. Noel Bourke, Cathaoirleach.*

### Efficiency and Customer Service Initiatives

The Housing Programme Management System (HPMS) continues to facilitate more efficient capital approvals and financial claims with the Department and enhance project management capabilities. A revised Housing Appeals procedure and form were approved by the SPC and came into use to streamline the appeals process. The Council continued to review and update the maintenance contracts for Aras an Chontae and identified a number of savings and efficiencies including energy savings and accessibility.

### Playgrounds

During the year the Council developed and adopted a Joint Playground Policy with Offaly Local Development Company outlining a commitment to working in partnership with the community in the provision of appropriate playground facilities across the County. Leases on Council lands were granted to two groups to develop facilities in Kilcormac and Shannonbridge and €20,966 was provided as match funding support for these facilities together with a contribution towards the development of a playground in Shinrone.



*Shannonbridge Playground opened in 2010*

### Housing, Social & Cultural S.P.C.

The SPC met 5 times during 2010 and the following issues were agreed and recommended to Council for adoption:

#### SPC Policies, Programmes and Initiatives adopted

- Scheme of Letting Priorities (Amendments and Additions)
- Housing Loans and Rents Arrears Policies 2010
- Revised Private Sites Criteria 2010
- Differential Rent Scheme 2010
- Midlands Regional Homeless Action Plan 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy 2010
- Library Development Plan 2010 -2014
- Joint Playground Policy 2009 – 2014

#### Other Items considered and discussed by SPC

- Homeless Forum and Homeless services
- Housing Appeals system and procedures
- Tullamore Library and Arts Facility
- Offaly Film Commission
- Public Arts Protocol

## Library Service

The Library Development Plan 2010-2014 "**Planning for the future – connecting with the community**" was adopted in 2010. The development plan is underpinned by the themes of social inclusion, access and quality customer service. 6 key priorities were identified that will guide the future development of the library service.

- *Improve infrastructure: building, technology and stock*
- *Quality service*
- *Children's and school service*
- *Culture, heritage, information and learning*
- *Linkages and cooperation*
- *Marketing and promotion*



### Achievements 2010

- *208,034 visits to libraries - 16% increase*
- *11,913 members - 10% increase*
- *227,925 items issued - 13% increase*
- *48,591 internet sessions - 26% increase*
  
- *Wifi introduced in 4 libraries – Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry & Clara*
- *Self-service technology introduced in 3 libraries – Birr, Edenderry & Clara*
- *Free text service to alert members of events, new books and overdue items*
- *Self-service Internet access in 4 libraries– saving staff time*
- *Automated back-office processes including stock management system, integration of invoicing into library management*
- *Wide variety of events – One Book One Clara, Hullabulo Festival, Bealtaine, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Heritage Wee Environmental talks, Author visits, Art exhibitions & mu*



### Infrastructure: buildings technology and stock

#### Buildings:

Planning permission was received in 2010 for the refurbishment of Tullamore Central Library. Approval was received from the DoEHLG to progress to tender. Construction is expected to commence in May 2011. The new refurbished central library will include:

- *Multi-functional community space*
- *Dedicated ICT training area*
- *Multi-purpose meeting rooms*
- *Teenage / Local History / Children's / Study area etc.*
- *Exhibition area*
- *Self-service*
- *Study facilities*
- *Internet and wifi*

### Technology:

An upgrade of ICT infrastructure was completed in 2010 to future-proof our ICT services and provide enhanced service delivery. Wifi access and self-service Internet access was introduced in Tullamore, Edenderry, Birr and Clara Libraries. This service is free to laptop & smartphone users and has increased use of our library services by students and e-workers.

A free text service was introduced to alert members of events, requests and overdue items. A digital training room and Local Studies centre was opened in Tullamore Library in January 2010 and is available to researchers and members of the public during opening hours – 38 hours per week.

Funding of €17,250 was received from the DoEHLG under the **2010 Public Libraries Access and Services Improvements Support grant**. The funding enabled the library service to enhance technological services with the provision of self-issue services in Edenderry & Clara Libraries and laptops for loan for FÁS e-learning across the library network.



### Book and media resources:

The book and media budget was maintained at 10% of overall budget. Priority was given to improving the non-book digital material by 25% (DVD, mp3, CD etc). A Teen Zone space was created in all libraries containing recommended reading, including graphic novels, board games, and books-into-film.

### Quality Service

Work commenced on improving access to library services via [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie). The aim is to provide a web presence where users not only search for information but also collaborate and share ideas. Social media communication, Web 2.0 (Twitter <http://twitter.com/OffalyLibraries> and Face book <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Offaly-Libraries/>) was introduced to promote and contact library members in relation to events, news stories and receive feedback. There were 30,000 website hits during 2010. A web portal to improve access to e-government and library services was developed and this interface is now available on all 82 public access PCs.

The e-learning programme **FÁS e-learning in the library** (commenced in 2009) continued to be very popular with waiting lists for entry to the programme in all libraries. By the end of 2010, 379 people had signed up for the programme either completing a workshop in the library or self-learning via the Internet.

### Children's and School Services

The library continued to work with schools, Arts Office, Heritage Office and local and national authors and artists to promote services for children and young people. The following initiatives were undertaken:

- ◇ Clara Library was involved in a very successful community reading initiative in February and March 2010. The initiative *"One book one Clara: a community reading together"* was funded locally and involved all members of the community young and old.

- ◇ *The Hullabaloo Children's Art festival* funded by the Arts office was extended to include both Clara and Birr.
- ◇ *A Creative Writing Course* funded by the Arts Office involved over 20 teenagers in Birr and concluded with an open mic session.



*Teenage Creative Writers in Birr Library*

- ◇ Over 600 people visited Tullamore Library when it opened its doors for the first time on a Sunday on 10th October for *Know Your Tullamore Day*. The library hosted a Family Fun Day with a magician, storytime, family films and games running throughout the day.
- ◇ *Boys into books* and *Girl Power* reading initiatives in Birr Library involved 4 local schools – 6,000 books read by young people.
- ◇ The *Birr Road to Croker* – a project undertaken with 6th class boys in St. Brendan's Primary School to promote research and publishing skills was supported by Birr GAA club and Offaly County Board.

- ◇ The *ENFOpoint* pilot programme in Clara Library hosted talks (attended by over 300 local primary and secondary school students) given by ecological speakers of national renown such as Dale Treadwell (in conjunction with *Green Schools*) and Myles Nolan.
- ◇ To celebrate Tullamore Town Council's 150 years, an exhibition "*Tullamore – our history our town*" was compiled by library staff and made available electronically on the web.
- ◇ Other events included *Children's Book Festival*, *author visits*, *reader development*, *art workshops*, *storytelling*, *book clubs*, *class visits*, *reading tree*, and the *annual summer reading challenge*.

### Culture, Heritage, Information and Learning

The library continued to work with Arts Office, Heritage Office and Offaly Historical Archaeological Society to enhance collections. A pilot digitization project was initiated in 2010 in partnership with the Heritage Office and Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society. 2,800 slides / negatives / images of a historical nature were digitized and will be catalogued and made available on the web in 2011.

### Linkages and Cooperation

The library service developed links during 2010 with many agencies including FÁS, VEC, HSE, Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society. Cooperative events include the following:

- In collaboration with The Irish Hospice Foundation & Health Service Executive Tullamore Library hosted a Bereavement Night in November 2010. A bereavement booklet produced as part of the project was launched at the event.
- In November 2010, Birr Library hosted a craft fair by Offaly Crafty providing an opportunity for local craft people to display their work.
- During *Birr Vintage Week*, Birr Library developed a partnership with the Leinster Regiment Association and hosted exhibitions and lectures.
- Edenderry Library celebrated *Africa Day* with local African community with a display of food, costume and dance in the library.

## Marketing and Promotion

Raising the profile of the library service, through the website, press releases and local radio continued to be a priority in 2010.

- Library newsletters were published and distributed electronically and in print format
- Free text alerts were introduced to alert library members in relation to events, requests and overdue items.
- Book clubs were facilitated by the libraries in Birr, Clara, Edenderry, Kilcormac and Banagher.
- The library website was updated on a daily basis to raise awareness of all activities in the library.

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## Arts Service

The Arts Service of Offaly County Council aims to be a facilitator and catalyst for the development of a vibrant arts environment in the county. Offaly County Arts Plan, 2007 to 2011 recognises that the Council can

*"... provide leadership in quality inclusive and innovative experiences of the arts for all and to demonstrate through best practice and partnership the benefits of increased access to and involvement in the arts for all our citizens. "*

### Main Achievements in 2010:

#### Public Art

In 2010, Offaly Local Authorities Public Art Working Group developed a 2 year commissioning programme called *Places, Spaces and People 2010-2012*. A call for artists of all disciplines to be placed on a panel was advertised, from which commissions will be tendered for. Artists were commissioned for Public Art projects in Edenderry, Birr and Kilcormac, which will be delivered in 2011.

#### FilmOffaly

Offaly County Council's Film Commission, FilmOffaly, in partnership with Filmbase established its second FilmOffaly Award. The award was won by Blinder Films for the short film *the End of the Reel*, which went on location during winter 2010. The 2009 award winning film, *Noreen* won Best Short Drama at the 2010 Galway Film Fleadh.

FilmOffaly was instrumental in attracting Fastnet Films to shoot the film *The Other Side of Sleep* entirely in Offaly during 2010. FilmOffaly also initiated the inaugural **OFFline Offline Film Festival** which took place in November 2010, with screenings, workshops and a filmmaking challenge.



*Carla Mooney, Portarlinton, (pictured left) with the OFFline Committee was winner of the first OFFline filmmaking challenge with her short film the Sandeman*

### Arts Act Grants

42 community groups received funding under the Arts Act Grants. The grants provide support to assist individuals and/or groups to organise and participate in arts events. The total budget of €13,500 was allocated in grants that ranged from €600 to €200.

### Support to Artists Scheme

22 artists received financial support under this scheme. The scheme seeks to assist the artists with purchasing materials, exhibition costs or research time. Writer Rosalind received the Tyrone Guthrie Bursary to spend two weeks at Annamacarrig and artists Patricia Hurl, Willie Redmond and Siobhan McCormack received solo exhibitions in Aras an Chontae.

### Drama Awards

12 drama groups and musical societies received funding for productions or equipment and 2 people received bursaries to attend the Drama League of Ireland Summer School. Grants ranged from €500 to €1000.



*Ballycumber Drama Group – the cast of Run for your Wife*

### Youth Arts Scheme

In 2010 the Arts Section introduced a new scheme aimed at providing quality and innovative arts experiences for a youth group. Applications are jointly made between the support organisation and an artist. 11 grants were offered ranging from €150 to €650.

### Community Band Grants

In 2010 a new funding scheme was introduced to support the growth of community bands over the past few years. 4 grants were offered ranging from €500 to €800.

### Staff Photography Project

2010 was second year of this project aimed at providing an energetic and creative focus for staff, across all sections. 15 staff members attended a photography course and 35 staff members participated in an exhibition (60% increase on 2009) which was shown in Áras an Chontae and then at Birr Theatre and Arts Centre.



*Images by staff members Frank Heslin and Leonie Geraghty*

### Bealtaine, Festival of Arts for Older People

A county wide programme of events was coordinated and developed by the Arts Office in collaboration with the Library Service for the Bealtaine Festival. There were 30 events across the county, including a tour by Tullamore Amateur Dramatic Society to nursing homes.

### Festival Support

The Arts Service facilitated with funding, advice and promotional assistance to:

- The Shannonbridge Midsummer Music Festival
- Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival,
- The Phoenix Festival,
- Slievebloom Storytelling Festival



*Offaly Youth Dance 2010*

### Youth Dance

A grant to Legitimate Bodies Dance Company (at Birr Theatre) enabled the dancers to hold workshops in 25 primary schools across Offaly at a reduced rate, with an estimated participation of approx 700 students.

The dance company also facilitates a series of community dance classes in Birr Theatre and Arts Centre including the Offaly Youth Dance Company, Yummy Dance, First Footing and Adult Ballet.

45 students in Gallen School Ferbane took part in a contemporary dance theatre adaptation of Romeo and Juliet with the dance company, which was performed at Birr Theatre and Arts Centre

### Young Novelists

Novelist Caroline Barry worked with a youth creative writing group (14 to 18 years) in Birr for a full year teaching them the skills of composition, character and plot development. The participants worked on individual projects and held an open mike session in December at Birr Library.



## Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands

Sculpture in the Parklands is a community recreational facility which provides an opportunity for visitors to interact with contemporary works of art by internationally renowned artists in a relaxed environment.

In 2010, international artist Alfio Bonnano created one of the largest works to date, *Earth and Sky*, Legitimate Bodies Dance Company were invited to create a site specific dance performance entitled *Sculpture into Movement* and a conference called Art in the Land took place on 17<sup>th</sup> September.



*Earth and Sky* by Alfio Bonnano  
Sculpture in the Parklands in 2010

## Birr Theatre and Arts Centre



Birr Theatre and Arts Centre celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

In 2010, Birr Theatre and Arts Centre celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and extended its internal lobby to create more visual arts space. We continued in partnership to deliver the Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival and supporting Legitimate Bodies Dance Company to deliver community and youth dance programmes.

## Midlands Collaborative Projects

(The Arts Offices of Offaly, Westmeath, Laois and Longford)

There were 3 publications of the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine. This free, 32 page magazine, highlighted the diversity and quality of arts projects across the four counties and aims to create a greater cultural identity in the Midlands.

- Kindermusic continues to develop in 9 centres as a music education programme for toddlers and parents. It is run in conjunction with the VEC.
- Midlands Youth Orchestra collaborated with a Youth Orchestra from Bremen Germany.
- Midland Master Classes were delivered as professional development opportunities for artists in the Midlands.

## Tullamore Community Arts Centre

Tullamore Community Arts Centre Limited was incorporated and Tullamore Town Council donated a site for the centre at Kilbride Plaza. The public were invited to submit their ideas for the centre and these were included in the architects design brief.



Artistic impression of what the centre might look like on the site

### Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival

In 2010, Hullabaloo took place simultaneously in both Birr and Clara during the October midterm break. There were over 50 workshops and performances for children and families, with an estimated participation of over 700 children. The festival, running for its first year in Clara, was warmly received. A dedicated local committee, with the assistance of the Arts Office, co-ordinated and administered the festival.



*Artist Daniel Doyle carved a giant pumpkin out of 40 tonnes of sand at Birr Castle Courtyard*

### Belmont Mill Artists Studios

Increasingly becoming nationally renowned for its idyllic setting, the Mill continues to attract visiting artists and tourists into Offaly as well as providing a facility for community activity. In 2010, ten artists stayed at the studios including renowned Irish artist Brian Bourke, lectures were held by the National Gallery of Ireland as well as exhibitions and tours.

### Support and Information Service to Professional, Amateur, Voluntary and Community Groups and Individuals

The Arts Office is a resource for artists and organisations that require advice, direction and information on developing and promoting their arts practice. This element of the service is based on best practice principles in all forms of arts development and is intended to give rise to increased confidence in quality methods and professional approaches.

# Planning, Economic & Local Development

SPC Chair: Cllr. Eamon Dooley

## Members:

Cllr. Dervill Dolan

Cllr. Peter Ormond

Cllr. Liam Quinn

Cllr. Sinead Dooley

Cllr. Johnny Butterfield

Cllr. Michael Loughnane

## Sectoral:

Mr. Ray Kennedy

Mr. Dominic Doheny

Mr. Tom Finnerty

Mr. Dominic Carroll

## Director Of Services:

Declan Kirrane

## Senior Executive Planner:

Andrew Murray

## Administrative Officer:

Phylis Hughes, Planning

## Architect:

Rachel McKenna

## Heritage Officer:

Amanda Pedlow

## Administrative Officer:

Jackie Finney,  
Economic Development

## Administrative Officer:

Seamus Corrigan,  
Community & Enterprise

## Administrative Officer:

David Minton,  
Community & Enterprise

## Sports Partnership

### Co-ordinator:

Eamon Henry

## Planning Department

The Planning Department is responsible for land use policy, control of development including the protection of the natural built heritage and amenity of the County.

Land use policy is implemented by means of the County Development Plan (incl. Town Development Plans), Local Area Plans, Village and Sraid Plans. Planning Control involves the processing of planning applications and the taking of appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

### County Development Plan 2009 – 2015

The Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015 was formally made on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and came into effect 4 weeks later, on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009. The County Manager is required to prepare a report two years after the making of the Development Plan on the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the Plan.

This report was prepared at the end of 2010 and was presented to the members in January 2011 and concludes that a variation to the County Development Plan is required to be undertaken in order to comply with the provisions of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010. This will entail the inclusion of a 'Core Strategy'

### Tullamore Town & Environs Development Plan 2010 - 2016

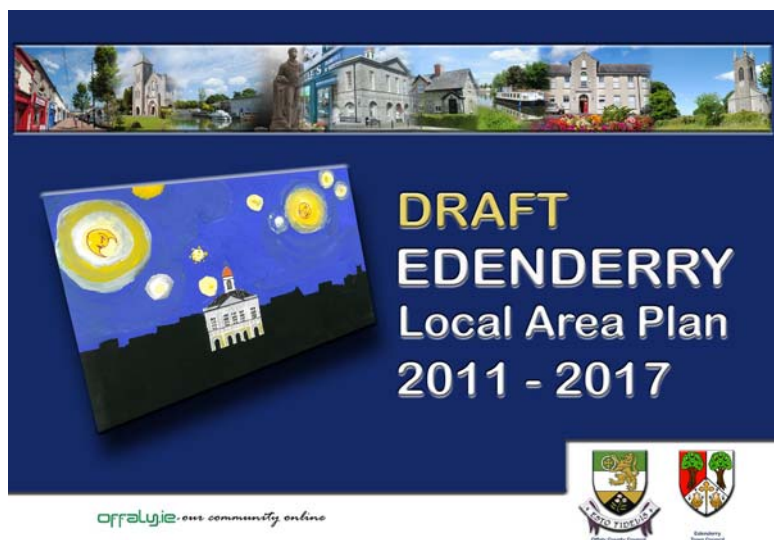
The Development Plan for the town of Tullamore for the period 2010 to 2016 was adopted by Members of Tullamore Town Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010. It was jointly adopted by members of Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and came into force on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

### Birr Town & Environs Development Plan 2010 - 2016

The Birr Town and Environs Development Plan was adopted in January 2010 and came into force on the 15<sup>th</sup> February.

### Draft Edenderry Local Area Plan 2011 - 2017

In December 2010, the draft Local Area Plan for Edenderry 2011-2017 went on public display. The display period was preceded by community and public consultation over a 4 week period in September 2010. The plan is due to be adopted in 2011.



### Strategic Policy Committee Meetings

During 2010, four meetings of the committee were held and the Committee considered the following matters:

- Review of Birr and Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plans 2010 – 2016
- Review of Regional Planning Guidelines Process
- Implications of Regional Planning Guidelines
- Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 and its implications.
- Guidance on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects

- Consider Review of Development Contribution Scheme 2008-2014
- Local Area Plans – Edenderry & Clara
- 2 year progress report on the County Development Plan 2010-2015
- Protocol for development served by on-site waste-water treatment on lands at risk of flooding
- Work Programme 2010

### Regional Planning Guidelines

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2016 were adopted in July 2010 by the four Local Authorities. Regional Planning Guidelines are an established feature of the legislative and policy framework for spatial planning in Ireland. The Council, in preparing its Development Plans, must have regard to the objectives and policies included in the Regional Planning Guidelines.

The new RPGs set out population targets, associated housing land requirements and the resultant unit requirements for County Offaly. The Core Strategy Variation is to be undertaken in 2011 and is required to demonstrate 'consistency' with the provisions of the RPGs as set out in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010.

### Development Management

The following table sets out the trend in the number of planning applications received and decided by the Council over the past number of years:

Yr.	No of Applications	No. Granted	No. Refused	Total Decided
2008	1069*	854	185	1039
2009	557*	418	69	487
2010	449*	332	54	386

(\*This figure includes applications which were invalid)

Planning permission is required for any development of land or property unless the development is exempted development. Development management ensures that these developments comply with the statutory provisions in the County Development Plan, the Planning Acts and the Regulations.

The continued downturn in the economic activity, particularly in the construction sector, has been reflected in the number of planning applications received in 2010. 449 planning applications have been received in 2010 which compares with 557 for 2009.

The downturn in the planning applications has afforded the opportunity to the Planning Department to focus on other areas of activity, such as the compilation of a derelict sites register, preparation of action plans for sraids and villages, the taking in charge of housing estates and a more consistent and concerted effort in relation to enforcement and compliance issues.

Derelict Sites were taken over from the Environment Section in 2009. There were 66 Derelict Sites files open at the end of 2009. There were 24 files opened and 36 files closed in 2010 and consequently at the end of 2010 there were 54 open files.

All planning applications have been screened for Appropriate Assessment since January 2010. This is in order to ascertain whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.

At the start of 2010 Offaly County Council took over the administrative planning function of Tullamore Town Council.

### Strategic Infrastructure

During 2010 two applications to An Bord Pleanála, under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 were decided. These applications referred to the development of a Power Generation Station at Derrygreenagh which was granted with modifications on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010 and the Gas Fired Power Station at Lumclon which was granted with modifications on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010. There are a number of major projects that are under consideration by An Bord Pleanála at the pre-planning stage and it is anticipated

that further applications of this nature will be coming before the Council in 2011 or 2012 for consideration.

### Conservation Grants

In 2010, Offaly County Council received an allocation of €124,993 grant assistance from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The objective of the scheme is to assist the owners or occupiers is a structure, which is protected because of its architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest to undertake conservation works on such structure.

Grants varying from €1,700 to €12,243 were allocated to 23 applicants subject to matching funding of 50% of the cost of the works.



*Mount St. Joseph's Roscrea, Boundary Wall*

### Compliance/Enforcement

During 2010 a new system came into operation whereby the area planners undertake enforcement. They take responsibility for the inspection of, and reporting on, all stages of enforcement cases (excluding those which relate only to development contributions).

On average over one hundred complaints are received each year in relation to unauthorised development. While some of these initially can appear to be of a simple nature, they can develop into more serious issues and require a considerable amount of input from the staff, including the attendance at court. During the year, the Council had a number of significant successes in relation to a number of enforcement cases, many by resolution. Regular meetings are held with the Council's legal advisers to ensure that all cases are pursued in a timely manner.

In accordance with Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, the following details relate to enforcement proceedings in 2010:

<b>Warning Letters:</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Enforcement Notices:</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>District/Circuit Court Cases:</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Prosecutions <u>Initiated</u>:</b>	<b>26</b>

During May to September 2010, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government carried out a National Housing Development Survey, the results of which were published in October 2010. They assessed all built and commenced housing developments of 2 or more houses. The survey identified the extent & scale of unfinished housing developments nationwide, and the basis on which actions can be developed to address them.

All existing private housing developments in Co. Offaly were visited in Dec. 2009 and Aug. 2010 by planning staff, in anticipation of the D.E.H.L.G. survey. This was to ensure that we could assist, as requested by D.E.H.L.G., in the collation & cross referencing of figures.

### **CFRAMS (Flooding)**

Through 2010, the Planning section in conjunction with the Environment Section has attended workgroups as requested by the Office of Public Works (OPW) regarding the preparation of Catchment Flood Risk and Management studies (CFRAMs) which are required to be drafted for the entire Country by the end of 2011.

### **Appropriate Assessment Training**

A one day workshop on Appropriate Assessment was organised by Offaly County Council in conjunction with Kildare County Council, with support from the EPA (STRIVE programme) in June 2010. The workshop was attended by c. 55 professional and technical staff from 6 local authorities.



### **Development Contribution Scheme**

A review of the Development Contribution Scheme was undertaken in 2010 in relation to the charge for commercial developments. A new lowered charge for commercial development was agreed at a rate of €40 per sq. m.

Details of amounts received and disbursed as circulated to members with the Budget 2010, are as follows:

<b>Development Contributions-Receipts and Application of Development Funds for the period from Dec 2009-Nov 2010.</b>	
Receipts	€000's
Balance Available – November 2009	13,531
Contributions Received Dec 2009 to Nov 2010 (as follows)	
Development Contributions – Customers	859
Water & Sewerage: Dev. Contributions - Town	
Disbursements Dec 2008 – Nov 2009 (see below)	667
Balance Available – November 2009	13,723

<b>Allocation of Funds – since last report to Council, December 2009</b>	<b>000's</b>
Small Water & Sew Schemes Block Grant	72
Small Water & Sew Schemes Block Grant	66
Banagher School Road	100
Swimming Pool Pumping Station Upgrade Tullamore	14
Sewerage Works	
Shinrone Playground Committee	5
Shannonbridge Renewal	8
Kilcormac Community Childcare	7
Mountlucas Road and Signage Scheme	51
Dev Contribution Scheme – Collins Lane Roundabout (Grahams Dev)	127
<b>Tullamore Town Council Footpaths</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Shannon Broadband Project Birr &amp; Banagher</b>	<b>117</b>

<b>OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS AVAILABLE FOR DISBURSEMENT AS AT</b>	
Job Description	Funds Available €000's
Dev. Cont. Scheme – Amenities	2,261
Dev. Cont Scheme – Infrastructure	1,857
Dev. Cont Scheme – Wastewater	3,447
Dev. Cont Scheme – Water	5,286
Spl. Dev. Cont. 2004 – Edenderry Sewerage Scheme	191
Spl. Dev. Cont. 2004 – Car Parking	353
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme '04– Crinkle Booster Pump	16
Spl. Dev Cont. Scheme '04-Daingean Upgrade Sewerage	8
Spl Dev. Cont. Scheme – Imp & Main Drumcraw, Mt. Lucas	17
Spl Dev. Cont. Scheme – Masts	264
Spl Dev Cont Rd Imp. Tullaroe Clareen	8
Spl Dev Cont – Calming Kilcumber BDG Edenderry	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,273</b>

## Heritage Section

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The Council's Heritage Officer works with the Offaly Heritage Forum, made up of state agencies and NGOs, coordinating and liaising on heritage projects. The forum meets four times a year for site meetings and discussion with working groups meeting when necessary. There is close contact and support both in expertise and in finance from the Heritage Council. All work is guided by the Offaly Heritage Plan 2007 - 2011. The Heritage budget is matched by Heritage Council funding and the heritage section often draws down additional funding schemes and works in partnership with other groups.

The projects delivered with Heritage Council financial support in 2010 were a comprehensive survey of 2460+ trees in Birr to assist Birr Town Council in their management plan; reconstruction drawings of four 16th and 17th castle scenes for the forthcoming castles publication; the installation of the cycle route along the old Pilgrim's road from Ballycumber to Clonmacnoise as part of the suite of cycle paths being developed in Offaly and a number of podcast and Youtube interviews in partnership with a Brown University residency in West Offaly.

A significant part of the programme, also supported by the Heritage Council, is the co-ordination and delivery of heritage awareness events which included

the Offaly Naturalist's Field Club programme of 19 events spanning 27 days. All day trips are free and leaders are predominantly Offaly experts working on a voluntary basis. Heritage Week in August was the busiest yet with a large range of very well attended events over the 9 days. This week is now firmly established in the calendar. The Annual Heritage Seminar was held on the 12th and 13th of November with 110 people attending sessions. Two field trips were held on the Saturday morning with lectures on the Friday evening and Saturday afternoon.



The *'Wildflowers of Offaly'* book was promoted during the year and assistance was given towards the publication of *'Tullamore' A Portrait* by Michael Byrne of the OHAS. The work scanning carved stone in Offaly over the past two years was brought together and is now available to the public as 3D downloads on [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie). This is the first time this has been done in Ireland.

The Heritage officer works with many sections in the Council, for example, delivering the Birr Public Realm Plan with Birr Town Council, working towards eradicating the invasive Japanese Knotweed with the area teams and Environment, developing supports for Tidy Towns with Community Enterprise and the Tidy Towns Seminar with Environment, events co-ordination and scanning of the slide collection with the library service, and supporting an application on architectural awareness led by the Arts Office.

A considerable amount of the time in the heritage office is spent assisting communities and individuals to plan and deliver heritage projects. Assistance was provided to Lough Boora Parklands for the week long children's summer school with Brandon Ballengee in July.



This aspect of work will continue to grow as funding available to groups is channelled through OLDC. The Heritage office helped commission and develop a range of expert reports on Tihilly Monastic site which the OHAS secured finance for from the Dept of Environment. It is planned to publish the Tihilly Conservation Plan in 2011.



*Tihilly Monastic Site*

The heritage officer is a Board member of the Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre and she has been involved in the sub committee which is looking at a 10 year review and business plan for the future.

### **Outlook for 2011**

While budgets remain tight, it is planned to maximise outputs through working with the Heritage Forum partnerships and facilitating groups to develop heritage projects. During 2011 the next Heritage Plan for 2012- 2016 will be prepared.

## **Community and Enterprise**

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Community and Enterprise support Offaly Local Authorities goals and strategies as follows:

*Providing Civic Leadership for Offaly and all its People, whatever their circumstances or backgrounds*

### **Supporting Offaly County Development Board**

Offaly County Development Board (CDB) is nearing the end of the implementation of the 2002-2012 Strategy.

The CDB is currently concentrating on the 4 priority areas as identified in the CDB Action Plan 2009-2012 -

- Education and Skills (Lifelong learning).
- Creation and retention of employment and enterprise.
- Sustainable development.
- Social Inclusion Measures action – Implementation of the Local Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Community and Enterprise Department works closely with Offaly Local Development Company and also provides a link between the County Development Board/Offaly County Council and the Offaly County Childcare Committee, the Midland Regional Drugs Task Force, the Edenderry School Completion Programme and the Rural Transport Programme among others.

### **Supporting the Offaly SIM Group**

The Community & Enterprise Section continues to support the Offaly SIM Group which meets bi-monthly and brings together all agencies and organizations in the County that have a remit around combating poverty and exclusion. In 2010 the SIM Group commenced the Mid-Term Review of the Local Anti-Poverty Strategy which will be completed in early 2011.

### Comhairle Na nÓg

The purpose of Comhairle is to link young people to adult decision making bodies and ensure that young people can influence policy. In 2010 Offaly Comhairle planned for it's first Youth Conference "**Say It Out Loud**". The Conference brought together almost 200 young people and addressed issues that included eating disorders, sexuality, suicide, teenage pregnancy, addictions & family issues.

The Comhairle Group realised that there are many issues facing young people and there is a need to talk about these issues.



The Conference, organised by the Offaly Comhairle Committee is the largest event Comhairle has organised to date and received National Coverage on RTE. The Comhairle group identified two main issues that they wanted to address in 2011. These issues were teen suicide and mental health; focusing on bullying and pressures on young people.

The Comhairle executive meets on a monthly basis and works on projects that have been identified by young people. The group is

representative of young people aged 13-17 from a wide geographical area within the County. Offaly Comhairle engages with the HSE, Gardai and Councillors on their issues and is supported by the collaborative working of Youth workers in Offaly.

### Offaly Sports Partnership

In early 2011 the CDB adopted the Offaly Sports Partnership Strategic Plan for 2011-2015. A brief flavour of the programmes undertaken by the Sports Partnership in 2010 is outlined as follows,

#### *Sports Hall Athletics*

Thirty schools participated in the Sports Hall Athletics Programme and approximately 2,700 pupils benefited. 23 Schools participated in the Inter-Schools Competition in early 2011.

#### *Internacional Maratón Simultáneo.*

Following an invitation from the AAA in the UK, as a result of their work delivering sportshall athletics and other athletics programmes, Offaly Sports Partnership was invited to enter a team in the Internacional Maratón Simultáneo.

25 primary schools participated in the project from which 80 were chosen to represent Offaly (and Ireland) in an international event staged in a number of locations in Canada, UK and Spain all being linked up through web links. Very positive feedback has been received from children, parents, school teachers and schools on this project it is planned to maintain the international partnership for this. The event was also covered on RTE children's television.

#### *Sports Inclusion Disability Officer*

The Sports Inclusion Disability Officer continues her work in bringing sport and physical activity programmes to people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. Three members of Midlands Powerchair Soccer Club, established by the Sports Inclusion Development Officers in Offaly and Westmeath have been picked for the National Squad. The Development Officer continues to deliver disability awareness training in 2nd and 3rd level colleges and institutes.

To date, a total of 810 (202 in 2008, 194 in 2009, 414 in 2010) people with disabilities have been reached by Claire, and the organisations she works with. Some have gone on and competed at national and international level.

Further details of Sports Partnership Programmes are available from their website at <http://www.offalysports.ie>

### ***Supporting the Community Forum to Participate In Policy Development***

Following on from the increased membership in Offaly Community Forum from 2009, the Forum now has over 400 member groups.

The Forum has been active in a range of areas including networking, information sharing, training, and policy development. Projects for 2010 that the Forum engaged in were; developing the Offaly Volunteer Centre in conjunction with Offaly Local Development Company; establishing a County Tidy Towns Network; establishing a Community Alert Network bringing together the Neighborhood Watch and Community Alert Groups.



*Internacional Maratón Simultáneo.*

## **Economic Development**

Offaly is a vibrant business location, which offers a unique quality of life in the centre of the Irish Midlands. It is a positive enterprise led community and the ideal place to establish and grow a business. For this reason the Economic Development Office was established. The role of this office is to promote economic development in Offaly and liaise with commercial and industrial companies looking to locate their business in Offaly. Our role is to provide information, support and linkages to relevant state bodies to make their experience of 'Doing Business in Offaly' as easy as possible.

One of our more fundamental roles is building relationships and working on an interagency basis to generate sustainable employment with agencies like the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Offaly County Enterprise Board, Shannon Development and FAS. We work within the framework of the County Development Plan to ensure balanced development across the County. Through the National Spatial Strategy we also work in a collaborative way with our colleagues in Westmeath (ATM) and the wider Midlands area. Some of the initiatives delivered during the year include:

### **Branding and publicising 'Doing Business in Offaly' and the Economic Development Office**

- A. Development of our website
- B. Development of logo
- C. Promotion of our service

#### **A—Development of our website**

[www.offaly.ie/businessinoffaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie/businessinoffaly.ie) is now live. The intention of this site is to provide valuable information to prospective investors but also provide information on how easy it is to do business in Offaly.

Homepage is now titled '**Lets do business**' with sub pages titled:

- Perfect location
- Educated workforce
- Business supports
- Family county
- Set up supports

The site now has an overview of Business and Technology Parks across the County including Ferbane, Birr, Tullamore, Portarlinton and Edenderry and includes sites along with maps and photographs of

- ⇒ Tullamore – Central Business Park, Axis, Srah
- ⇒ Ferbane Business and Technology Park
- ⇒ Birr – Shannon Development
- ⇒ Rhode Business Park
- ⇒ Portarlinton

### **B—Development of logo**

For the purpose of branding and office recognition we developed our Business in Offaly Logo that would be used along side Offaly County Council in all of our direct communications. The logo developed was:



### **C- Promotion of our service**

In order to promote the service of the Economic Development Office a leaflet was printed for distribution promoting our service:

- ⇒ Information and statistics available to help your business
- ⇒ Act as a referral agent to other supporting bodies
- ⇒ Information on Planning, Environment, Roads, Water Services etc
- ⇒ Assist in any statutory and regulatory applications



**Are you interested in doing business in Offaly?**

- *Starting up a new business?*
- *Do you need information on business supports available?*
- *Looking to expand your existing business?*
- *Would you like to locate your business in County Offaly?*

The Economic Development Office in Offaly County Council can assist with;

- *Information and statistics available to help your business*
- *Act as a referral agent to other supporting bodies*
- *Information on Planning, Environment, Roads and Water Services relating to business development*
- *Assist in any statutory and regulatory applications*

For more information please see  
[www.offaly.ie/DoingBusinessInOffaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie/DoingBusinessInOffaly.ie)  
or contact the Economic Development Office on 057 935 7456

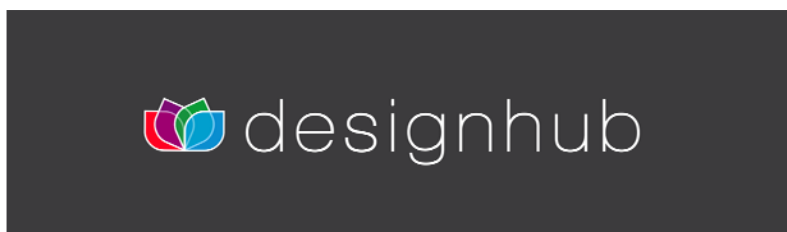


### Offaly Innovation Centre and Design Hub

The Innovation Centre is operating on the Ground Floor of Offaly County Council. It is currently home to Design Hub. This is a group of young product, web and interior designers that work on their own and new innovative products and businesses. The purpose of the Innovation Centre is to lend space to young business people. This space affords users the time to explore their business models and encourages the development of new companies in Offaly. Ultimately this encourages entrepreneurship and generates employment. An Taoiseach Brian Cowen also launched the Offaly Innovation Centre and attended the launch of Design Week.



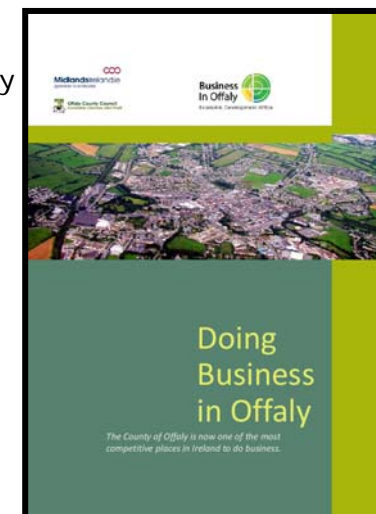
Within Offaly we were fortunate enough (and timely) that a group of young designers (digital, product, industrial, interior and furniture) were seeking a space to facilitate the development of their concept Design Hub. Design Hub is a studio space where designers, people with ideas, businesses and local manufacturers can collaborate to develop new products and ideas and help them to a successful conclusion. This project has been very successful so far in assisting young people to start their business, support others to develop their concepts and finally promote Offaly as a research design County.



### Doing Business in Offaly Guide

One of the initiatives proposed through our SPC was the development of a guide to doing Business in Offaly. The purpose of the guide is to provide an overview of services, supports and infrastructure available in County Offaly. It also takes people through costs associated with doing business and the process required. The contents of the guide includes

- Overview of Doing Business in Offaly
- Location and profile
- Energy Resources
- Water services
- Transport and accessibility
- National roads network
- Health Services
- Costs and supports available



### Offaly Tourism

The Economic Development Officer sits on the Offaly Tourism Interagency Group. The group consists of representation from Offaly County Council, Offaly County Enterprise Board, Failte Ireland, Shannon Development and Offaly Local Development Company. This group holds the remit of promoting Offaly's tourism product. In the past year Offaly Tourism has published two guides for distribution:

- Offaly: Your guide to staying in Offaly
- Offaly: at your leisure – promotional guide to tourist attractions in Offaly

The Interagency Group also hosted a very successful networking event for stakeholders in the County linking accommodation providers with activity providers. The group has also recently completed its Action Plan for 2011.

### Active Age Park Birr

The Economic Development Office initiated the Birr Active Age Park. Under its Tourism Umbrella the Economic Development Office was working with HSE Health Promotion, the Local Development Company and Birr Town Council to provide an active age park. Within once concentrated area of Birr, the town would be complimented with a playground, new skateboard park and an active age park. These amenities would prove extremely beneficial to the local community but also prove attractive to visitors and tourists across all age groups.



### Support to West Offaly and North Offaly Development Fund

The Economic Development Office is secretary and support worker to both the West Offaly Enterprise Fund and the North Offaly Development Fund. Although a very difficult economic year there has been some positive stories. Companies like Safe Farm and Cultec have taken up residence in Ferbane Business and Technology Park and are both expanding their business from there. Rhode Business Park is near completion and will provide a strong attraction to new businesses in the North Offaly area with its proximity to the motorway. Biotricity have received planning permission on a site adjacent to Rhode Business Park. It would be expected that they would act as a large draw to other companies from that particular industry. Biotric-

ity will take in raw biomass sourced from forestry and agriculture crops which will be chipped, dried and then turned into Biofuel pellets.

It has been an extremely difficult year economically but there have continued to be positive news stories. For example the announcement in early 2010 that Freund will establish their European Hub in Tullamore. We have also developed good linkages with colleagues in Arizona and developed valuable economic linkages. Offaly County Council has also been exploring all possible developments for existing land banks that could provide an economic return or jobs boost. We will continue to explore all opportunities for the sustainable development of our County.

## Roads and Emergency Services

**SPC Chair:** Tony McLoughlin MCC

### Members:

Cllr. Noel Bourke

Cllr. Connie Hanniffy

Cllr. Ger Plunkett

Cllr. Danny Owens

Cllr. Paddy Rowland



### Sectoral:

Mr. Hugh Farrell

Mr. Brian Kenny

Mr. Michael Kenny

### Director of Services:

Frank Heslin

### Senior Engineer:

Charles McCarthy, Roads

### Chief Fire Officer:

Eoin O'Ceilleachair

### Civil Defence Officer:

Raphael Fallon

## Roads Department

### NATIONAL ROADS

Due to the inclement weather conditions (flooding & winter maintenance) experienced in 2009 and over the winter/spring period of 2010 expenditure by Offaly County Council on National Primary/Secondary Road Maintenance were much greater than in recent years.

Temperatures as low as -10.00 degrees were experienced across the midlands resulting in sections of the pavement on national road network breaking out in potholes overnight, due to frost heave. The repair cost to these sections of road was estimated at approximately €300,000.

Over the period from the beginning of November 2009 to the end of February 2010 Offaly County Council had to salt the roads in excess 60 nights. The cost of this operation alone is in excess of €500,000. The maintenance allocation for National Primaries was slightly increased from 2009 and there was a 22% reduction in the National Secondary allocation. These allocations were not adequate in the present circumstances, especially in relation to winter maintenance and salting of roads, to maintain the 140.00 Kms of national roads in the County in a satisfactory condition.

The allocations received from the National Roads Authority for 2010 were as follows: -

## 1 National Secondary Major Schemes

Route	Description of Works	2009 €	2010 €
N52	Tullamore Bypass	29,250,000	2,855,000
N52	Kilbeggan to Tullamore	150,000	300,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,400,000</b>	<b>3,155,000</b>

### Tullamore By-Pass

The Bypass opened on October 23rd 2009. The construction contract makes provision for a 3 year maintenance and defects period. The most significant defect to date was the failure of sections of the pavement surfacing to comply with specified skid resistance criteria. Extensive remedial work was carried out during 2010 and further testing will be carried out during 2011 in order to confirm that surfacing meets the specification.

Resurfacing of the following roads were carried out and funded from the residual network improvement grant in 2010:

- 1200m of pavement overlay at Bunaterin
- 900m of pavement overlay on the Charleville Road
- 1350m of pavement overlay on the Clara Road
- 1000m of pavement overlay on the Daingean Road (west and east of the bypass)
- 500m of pavement overlay on the Tinnycross Road
- 2000m of surface dressing in the townland of Lynally



### N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link

Work on the preliminary design, ground investigation and environmental assessment of the proposed dual carriageway link between Tullamore and Kilbeggan continued during 2010. An Environmental Impact Statement is currently being prepared and is due to be completed by May 2011. Approval from the NRA to proceed to CPO/Statutory Process will be sought at that time.

## 2 National Secondary Pavement and Minor Improvement & Bridge Rehabilitation

The following table indicates the percentage of Minor Improvement Works (Overlays) carried out between 2006 and 2010 on the National Secondary Road Network: -

Year	Length (Km)	% of N.S.	Allocation €
2006	6.50	5.00	2,375,000
2007	9.60	8.00	2,523,000
2008	4.55	3.76	970,000
2009	Localised Repairs		500,000
2010	13.90 (6.10 Kms of repairs + 7.80 Kms O/L Schemes)	10.00	1,273,000 (Final Allocation €2,237,600)

The 2010 initial allocation of €1,273,000 was divided between pavement surfacing and pavement repairs. The repair work was carried out on pavements that suffered structural damage due to the previous winter severe weather conditions.



Repair Works in 2010 were carried out in the following locations with initial allocations from the NRA of €273,000: -

No.	Route	Area Sq.m	Location	No	Route	Area Sq.m	Location
1	N7	2500	Moneygall Village	10	N62	16800	Killowney More
2	N52	225	Birr Town- Towns Park	11	N62	2250	Seffin Birr Town
3	N52	6650	Durrow Tullamore	12	N80	805	Tober
4	N52	5500	Idle Corner Kilcormac	13	N80	8568	Woodfield Clara
5	N62	2000	Cloghan Village	14	N80	90	Clara Town
6	N62	1800	Derrinlough	15	N80	180	Ashfield
7	N62	3000	Clooneen	16	N52	3150	Kilcormac
8	N62	3300	Drumakeenan	17	N62	1800	Galross Cross
9	N62	2340	Sharavogue		TOTAL		6.10 Kms



Sharavogue

An initial allocation of €500,000 was received for an overlay on the N62 at Drumakeenan on the Birr/Roscrea Road. During 2010 the NRA advised Offaly County Council that it would be prepared to provide additional funding for overlay work at locations on the National Secondary Road network in circumstances where the Local Authority could demonstrate there was an urgent need. Offaly County Council submitted an extra scheme from the County Boundary with Westmeath on the N52 at Kilbeggan to the Tullamore By Pass, a total length of 4.30Kms. We also sought funding to extend the overlay scheme on the N62 at Drumakeenan, which initially was 1.5Kms long, to the County boundary with North Tipperary (an extra 2.00Kms) a total length of 3.5Kms. The NRA confirmed these allocations to us late in the year. Unfortunately due to the poor weather conditions experienced towards the end of the year it was not possible to complete this work until the early months of 2011.

The final allocations received from the NRA in 2010 for repairs and

pavement and minor improvement works are detailed below: -

Route	Description of works	Initial Allocation	Additional Allocation	Final Allocation
		2010 €	2010 €	2010 €
N7	Overlay repairs	14,000	40,600	54,600
N80/ 62/5 2	Overlay repairs	273,000	0.0	273,000
N80/ 62/5 2	Pavement & Minor Improvements + Kilbeggan to Tullamore By Pass O/L	500,000	550,000	1,050,000
N62	Overlay at Drumakeenan on Birr to Roscrea Road	500,000	360,000	860,000
	Leinster Bridges Rehabilitation Contract No 2	575,000	0.0	115,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,862,000</b>	<b>950,600</b>	<b>2,352,600</b>

The structural improvements to Cox's Bridge Tullamore (N80) and Charlestown Bridge Clara (N80) under the Leinster Bridges Rehabilitation Contract No2 were delayed and works were substantially completed in January and February 2011.



### 3 National Secondary Safety Measures

There was a substantial increase in this initial allocation from €200,000 in 2009 to €957,000 in 2010. The details of the 2010 schemes are outlined below: -

Rd.	Description of Works	2010 (I) €	2010 (F) €
N52	Arden Road Tullamore	5,000	5,000
N52	Kilcormac Pedestrian Improvements	80,000	80,000
N52	Kilcruttin Pedestrian Improvements, Tullamore	30,000	nil
N62	Blackbull Junction and adjoining lay-by	305,000	450,000
N62	Birr Road, Cloghan	60,000	60,000
N62	Chapel Lane, Birr	15,000	15,000
N80	Derrybeg, Tullamore	10,000	10,000
N80	Woodfield Clara	10,000	10,000
N80	Scrub Cross, Killeigh	240,000	240,000
N80	Traffic Calming, Tubber	202,000	404,000
*N62	Doon Cross Traffic Calming	nil	118,000
2			
		957,000	1,392,000

I = Initial Allocation

F = Final Allocation

- Additional Scheme



Tober Village

The 2010 allocations enabled Offaly County Council carry out the following works: -

- Assessment of the N52 pavement on Arden Road Tullamore.
- Road improvements, road markings, pedestrian crossing & construct new footpaths where narrow or non-existent on the Tullamore approach to Kilcormac.
- Provision of a right turning lane, widening of carriageway, drainage works, lining and signing at Blackbull junction on N62.
- Re-alignment of junction to improve visibility and turning movements of large vehicles at Birr Road, Cloghan.
- Raise road pavement on Chapel Lane, Birr at junction with N62 to improve visibility.
- Improve visibility at junction of Derrybeg Road with the N80 Tullamore/Killeigh road.

- Improve visibility at Woodfield junction on N80 Clara/Moate road.
- Improve visibility on bend and provide turning lane for safe manoeuvre of vehicles on the N80 Tullamore/Killeigh road at Scrub/Clonaslee junction.
- Installation of a traffic calming scheme on the N80 at Tubber.

## NON-NATIONAL ROADS

The 2010 Estimate included a figure of €1,301,700 from the Council's own resources for maintenance of Non-National roads as compared to €1,313,740 in 2009.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ROADWORKS

The Council is allowed to spend up to 7½% of the total allocation for restoration maintenance/reconstruction on roads on which there would be an input of resources from local communities. Local communities are required to contribute a minimum of 25% either in money or in kind towards the project. A number of cul-de-sac roads will be considered under this programme at the Area Committees. The allocation for this category of work was €300,000 in 2009 and was reduced to €200,000 for 2010 (€50,000 per Area). A limited number of schemes were completed under this heading in 2010.

### NON-NATIONAL ROADS-SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS & SPECIAL GRANTS

The allocation under this Grant for 2010 was €600,000 with a 2009 allocation of €2,140,000. The projects undertaken were as follows: -

ROAD	SCHEME	2010
	Link Road Banagher – Phase 2	€325,000
	Cloneygowan By-Pass - Design	€100,000
	Strengthening/Improvements to Bridges at the following locations: -	€175,000
	Cloncreen Edenderry	
	Borneiss Edenderry	
	Cushina Edenderry	
	Derryad Tullamore	
	Derrygolan Tullamore	
	Mullaghmahery Tullamore	
	Killoughey Tullamore	
	Drumcullen Birr	
	Polduff Birr	
	Drumbane Birr	
	Boheraphuca Birr	
	Blackwater Ferbane	
	Ballycarrig Ferbane	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>600,000</b>

The above allocations allowed Offaly County Council to progress the above listed schemes as follows: -

- Completion of the Construction of Phase 2 of the Banagher Link Road from the Lusmagh road to the Crank Road. The completion of this scheme was delayed to the early months of 2011 due to issues with utilities and also the severe weather conditions experienced in December 2010.
- Progress the Design/Planning of the Cloneygowan By-Pass to Part VIII Planning. The elected members at the November meeting of Offaly County Council adopted Part VIII for this scheme.
- Carry out Bridge Improvements at various locations in the County as per the above list

### LOW COST ACCIDENT IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The allocation under this category increased from €89,000 in 2009 to €200,000 in 2010. Details of the schemes completed are as follows:

AREA	LOCATION	2009 GRANT €
Edenderry	R402 Ballyfore Cross Roads – Provision of public lighting, renewal of lining & cats eyes, upgrading of advance warning signs	30,000
Edenderry	R400 Eneghan Walsh Island – Provision of road markings, advance warning signs and chevrons.	15,000
Ferbane	R438 Five Roads Banagher – Provision of warning signs, road markings and junction definition posts.	5,000
Ferbane	R439 Hill Road Banagher – Complete re-design of junction including buildouts, lining, signs and bollards.	50,000
Edenderry	R400 Rhode Bridge – Replace existing damaged crash barriers and upgrade advance warning signs from both sides of the bridge.	30,000
Birr	R491 Shinrone – Widen road and remove part of the hill to improve sightlines.	55,000
Edenderry	L 01001 The Derries – Provision of signs, lining and junction definition posts.	5,000
Edenderry	L 02025 Toberleheen (Ballingar/Tullamore road) – Provision of advance warning signs and road lining.	10,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>200,000</b>

### MULTI-ANNUAL ROADS RESTORATION PROGRAMME

The Restoration Improvement Programme was suspended for 2010. For this year only the Restoration Improvement Grant and the Discretionary Grant were amalgamated into a single 2010 Improvement Grant. The reason for this was to provide Local Authorities with greater flexibility to address the needs of the Regional and Local

Road network in their area that were damaged due to the severe weather conditions experienced over the Winter/Spring period of 2009/2010. Local Authorities were given the discretion to carry out the necessary repairs to the Non National Roads in their area as required. The Restoration Improvement Grant in 2010 was €4,521,000. This allowed Offaly County Council to carry out improvements on 44 Local Road Schemes with a total length of 26.0Kms (1.6% of Local Road Network) and 10 Regional Roads Schemes with a total length of 9.5Kms (2.7% of Regional Road Network).

### RESTORATION MAINTENANCE GRANT

The Restoration Maintenance Grant (RMG) allocation for 2010 was €1,310,000. This grant refers to Surface Dressing on Regional and Local roads. 59 schemes with a total length of 61 Kms (3.2%) of Non-National Roads were surfaced in 2010 under the Department of Transport grants.

### CASTLETOWN TO NENAGH MOTORWAY SCHEME M7

This Design and Build scheme was opened to traffic prior to Christmas 2010. This section of the motorway scheme is 36.00 Kms long. It starts at the most easterly junction of the Nenagh By-Pass and finishes at the Borris-in-Ossory interchange. The new motorway passes through approximately 6.50Kms of County Offaly, bypassing 12.00 Kms of the existing N7 National Primary route including the village of Moneygall.

The scheme also provides greater accessibility (via Junction 22 at Roscrea and Junction 23 at Moneygall) to south Offaly. Moneygall Village will benefit in terms of pedestrian safety and also on environmental grounds due to the removal of road traffic noise and pollution. The contractor was Somague Bowen and the final cost for design, land acquisition and construction was in the region of €290,000,000.

During the construction phase, construction traffic caused a certain amount of damage to the regional and local road network in the area. Offaly County Council made a submission to the NRA for funding to repair these roads and received an allocation of €450,000. These monies were used to carry out overlay work and surface dressing on the following roads in the area: -

No	Road No	Location	Length (Km)
1	R490	Moneygall to Cloughjordan	0.320
2	L04013-1	Templemore Road	2.100
3	L04021-3	Ballinlough to Rathmoyle	1.800
4	L04021-4	Barnagrotty to Quarry	0.650
5	L04021-4	Barnagrotty to County Bdy	0.250
6	L08022-2	N7 to Clashagad Lower	1.300
7	L04016-1	Moatquarter	0.250
8	L04021-1	Armyhill	0.850
9	L04023-2	Clynoe	0.400
10	L04021-3	Rathmoyle	0.300
TOTAL			8.22

### HEALTH & SAFETY

The roads section is committed that all road works are carried out safely and in compliance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation. All contractors tendering for road works within Offaly County Council are assessed in both competence and capability to carry out the works in a safe manner.

Over the past year in excess of 59 Health and Safety policies have been developed nationally. These policies address various work practices through out the Local Authority network, including roads, such as working at heights, manual handling, accident reporting procedures to name just a few. The implementation of these policies over the next number of years will place an added financial burden on Local Authorities.

Offaly County Councils' Health and Safety advisor in conjunction with the Area Engineers carry out regular inspections and safety audits of road works to ensure compliance with health and safety practices. In 2010, 32 inspections/audits were carried out and the consensus was that there is a consistent improvement of health and safety aware-

ness/practices by staff and contractors employed by Offaly County Council.

As per recent years compliance with Health and Safety legislation is a substantial cost and has the effect of reducing the amount of work carried out by up to 15%.

### REGIONAL ROAD SIGNPOSTING

This grant category has received funding over the past 5 years and again this year as follows: -

Year	Allocation €
2006	50,000
2007	200,000
2008	150,000
2009	93,000
2010	150,000
2011	300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>943,000</b>



The grant relates to the improvement of directional signs at junctions on regional roads. Directional Signage on the following regional roads was improved during that period: -

- R402 Tullamore to Edenderry
- R420 Tullamore to Portarlington
- R423 Portarlington to Mountmellick
- R419 Portarlington to Rathdangan
- R357 Tullamore to Shannon Bridge
- R436 Ferbane to Clara to Kilbeggan
- R439 Birr to Banagher
- R438 Anglers Rest to Cloghan
- R356 Banagher to Cloghan

#### LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Allocation in 2010 was €70,000. This allowed 6 schemes to be completed in 2010. In 2009 the allocation was €209,000 and 12 schemes were completed.

#### WINTER MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT

Offaly County Council received an allocation of €320,000 from the NRA in 2010 under the heading of Winter Maintenance Equipment and Additional Storage Provision. This allowed the County Council to: -

- Purchase a new dedicated 12.5 cu.metre salt/brine spreader. This is a prototype and is the first of its type and capacity in Ireland. The 12.5cu.metre machine is 2.5 times the capacity of the existing 5.0cu.metre demountable salt spreaders and has the capability of treating more than 3 times the length of roads than the traditional 5.0cu.metre spreader. The NRA selected Offaly County Council to trial this machine and to examine the efficiency and value for money of spreading salt mixed with a brine solution compared to salt on its own. At present we have taken delivery of the machine and plan to carry out the trials between this year and next year. At present the machine is in operation in the Tullamore Area spreading salt only.
- Purchase a new demountable 9.0cu.metre salt spreader to replace an existing 5.0cu.metre demountable salt spreader. We

took delivery of this machine in January 2011 and this has been put into operation in the Birr Area. The advantage of the bigger spreaders is that it is possible to complete spreading routes in a shorter time period, without refilling, which is very time consuming.

- Build a new 600 tonne capacity covered salt barn and winter maintenance equipment storage area at the County Council complex at Ballydrohid in Tullamore. This building is under construction at present and will be in operation for the 2011/2012 winter maintenance period.

#### OTHER PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2010

Funding from other sources was received in 2010 for the completion of the following projects: -

- Re-alignment of the N62 in Birr. This project consisted of the design, planning and construction of 2 roundabouts and a short section of road including land acquisition, public lighting, drainage, accommodation works, footpaths and landscaping. The work was carried out by contract at a cost of €660,000
- Re-alignment of the R400 outside Rhode village between Rhode and Rochfortbridge. This project consisted of design, planning, land acquisition, road widening, drainage, public lighting, accommodation works, landscaping and construction of new roundabout and upgraded access from the R400 to Rhode Business Park. The construction was carried out by the Edenderry Area office direct labour force at a cost of €700,000.



*Realignment of the N62 in Birr*

## NOTABLE EVENTS IN 2010

- ⇒ Exceptional severe weather conditions experienced in December 2010 resulting in continuous salting and snow ploughing of the roads listed in the Winter Service Plan.
- ⇒ Opening of the Castletown to Nenagh M7 Motorway Scheme which bypasses 12.00 Kms of the N7 in County Offaly. The old N7 has been re-classified as the R445.
- ⇒ Progressing the planning and design of the Tullamore to Kilbeggan link road.
- ⇒ Adoption by the elected members in November of Part VIII for the Cloneygowan By Pass.
- ⇒ Substantial progress on the construction of Phase 2 of the Banagher Link Road with a view for completion in 2011.
- ⇒ Completion of 4 major traffic calming and safety schemes at Tubber Clara, Sharavogue Birr, Scrubb Cross Killeigh and Doon Cross Ferbane.
- ⇒ Structural Improvements to Cox's Bridge Tullamore deferred to the beginning of 2011.
- ⇒ Structural improvements to 13 bridges on the Non National Road network.
- ⇒ Directional signage improved on the following regional roads; R356, R357, R420, R436, R438 and R439.
- ⇒ Fifteen kilometres of national secondary roads improved including 2 major overlays on the N52 between the Tullamore By Pass and Kilbeggan and N62 at Drumakeenan between Birr and Roscrea.
- ⇒ Two significant road re-alignments completed on the N52 in Birr town and on the R400 at Rhode Business Park.
- ⇒ Adaption of 2 SPC policies on "Traffic Calming" and "Sale of Vehicles on a Public Road".
- ⇒ Procured 2 New Salt Spreaders and began construction of a 600 tonne capacity Salt Barn at Ballydrohid Tullamore.





## Fire Services

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The aim of the Offaly County Council Fire Authority is to protect the public from fire and to preserve life and property. The Fire Service is an organisation established and maintained in accordance with Sections 9 and 10 of the Fire Services Act, 1981. Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service provides a total fire service to the community 24 hours a day every day of the year.

The Fire Authority provides a number of services ranging from the emergency response to incidents such as fires, road traffic accidents, chemical incidents, etc. to ensuring the fire safety of the community and built environment through certification, inspection, enforcement and education. The Authority also provides information and training on fire safety management and fire fighting.

### Operations

In 2009 Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service were alerted to 865 incidents, made up of 700 fire calls, 86 road traffic accidents, 63 special service calls and 16 false alarms. The response to these calls came from 8 stations located throughout the county.

### Section 26 Plan

The Council had the Draft Section 26 Fire and Emergency under consideration. The full implementation of this plan formed the basis for the Fire Service work program 2010. The 2010 budget of €3.3 million maintained the revised 2009 revenue allocation. An additional €250,000 was provided by the Council to maintain the 3 stations not included in the draft plan.

### Training

There is a very strict training regime in the Fire Brigade as is necessitated by the sometimes difficult and dangerous environment in which Firefighters work.

Significant resources have been made available for training within the Fire Service with an expected spend of €140,000 for training alone in 2010. In addition the Councils commitment to training for fire fighters, and research into the latest equipment and technology ensures that our fire crews are best equipped to respond quickly, safely and effectively to the full range of emergency incidents that we attend.

The training centre in Tullamore was utilised for training internally and by other Local Authorities. Accreditation, for the Sub-Officer course which was run, was received from the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management.

### Fire Prevention & Building Control

Offaly County Council Fire Service assessed over 90 Fire Safety Certificate, Dangerous Substances, and Disabled Access Certificate applications, gave advice on planning referrals, and dealt with 90 licence applications. A total 300 fire safety inspections of public premises took place. Offaly Fire service also advised community groups on fire safety and prevention and also delivered the Fire Safety Schools program to all primary schools in the county.

During 2010 the Building Control function of Offaly County Council was integrated into the fire service. This relates to the processing and reception of commencement notices and maintaining the register of same as per the building control regulations. This also includes the inspection and monitoring of new works to monitor for compliance with all the requirements of the Building Regulations, 1997. In total there were 200 inspections of 63 buildings carried out, which represent 22% of new buildings notified to the local authority.

### **Major Emergency Management**

Both the Local and the Regional Major Emergency Plan were maintained, reviewed and revised by the Major Emergency Development Committee, the Regional Working Group and the Regional Steering Group. Offaly County Council participated in a regional major emergency exercise in Tullamore.

### **Civil Defence**

Civil Defence provided emergency response capability, in particular during the severe weather in 2010, and supported the community and events throughout 2010. Over 50 Civil Defence duties were carried out during 2010, providing Ambulance/First Aid cover and logistical support to various events such as: 10k walks; Cycling races; Football matches; Charity events; Community activities; St. Patrick's day parades; Equestrian events; and the Tullamore Phoenix festival. The largest duties in terms of manpower and resources, were the Tullamore Livestock show and the response to the severe weather. Civil Defence worked in conjunction with other agencies such as the HSE Ambulance service, Gardai, Irish Red Cross, Order of Malta and Offaly Fire & Rescue Service. This interaction proved very beneficial to our members from an operational view point.

Quite an amount of new training was undertaken in terms of the Casualty service. New members joining the service were also trained in A.E.D. (Defibrillators) and C.P.R. Occupational First Aid courses were delivered during our training year also. These new guidelines will figure in all future Casualty courses.

In 2010 new members were recruited to the service, and this will increase our numbers as people retire in the future, and this will enable us to maintain a good corps group, trained in the various disciplines.

People wishing to join our Unit may contact the Civil Defence Officer at Tullamore Central Fire Station, by phone at 057 93 27429

## Fire Service — SERVICE INDICATORS 2010

<b>F.1</b>	Fire Service Mobilisation	
<b>A</b>	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in full time stations in respect of fire	n/a
<b>B</b>	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in part time stations (retained fire service) in respect of fire	5.39
<b>C</b>	Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of all other emergency incidents	n/a
<b>D</b>	Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of all other emergency incidents	5.81
<b>F.2</b>	Percentage of Attendances at Scene	
<b>A</b>	Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance is at the scene within 10 minutes	58.27 %
<b>B</b>	Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance is at the scene after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	33.68%
<b>C</b>	Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance is at the scene after 20 minutes	8.05%
<b>D</b>	Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance is at the scene within 10 minutes	41.13%
<b>E</b>	Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance is at the scene after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	48.23%
<b>F</b>	Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance is at the scene after 20 minutes	10.64%
<b>F.3</b>	Fire Prevention	
<b>A</b>	Total number of fire safety certificate applications received	56
<b>B</b>	Total number of fire safety certificate applications processed (including cases deemed invalid)	51
<b>C</b>	<b>Total number of applications deemed invalid</b>	<b>4</b>

## Environment and Water Services

**SPC Chair:** Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick

### Members:

Cllr. Percy Clendennen

Cllr. Thomas McKeige

Cllr. John Foley

Cllr. Nichola Hogan

Cllr. Brendan Killeavy

### Sectoral:

Ms. Anne Fahey

Mr. Joe Gaffey

Ms. Teresa Ryan-Feehan

### Director of Services:

Seán Murray

### Senior Engineer,

**Environment:** David Hogan

### County Veterinary

**Inspector:** Ciarán Sullivan

### Senior Engineer, Water

**Services:** Tom Shanahan

### Administrative Officer,

**Water Services:**

Catriona Hillard

## Environment Services

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

#### Derryclure Landfill

2010 continued to be a very difficult year in terms of landfill income with the further collapse in both gate fees and tonnages. This has resulted in a substantial decrease in our budgeted income levels.

We have continued to improve our gas extraction infrastructure in the working cells and made significant changes in operations management on the site. This has had a positive impact on reducing our emissions to the local environment.

In July 2010, we had an EPA audit after which a Notice of Compliance was issued by the Agency, which outlined the significant improvements on the site in relation to compliance with the conditions of the Waste Licence.

On 14 October 2010, the EPA issued a revised Waste Licence for the site, WL29-04, increasing the annual tonnage acceptable at the site to 100,000 tonnes per annum. The requirements of the new licence also address the diversion of the biodegradable fraction of domestic and commercial waste away from landfill.

In July 2009, An Bord Pleanála refused the Council's application to intensify our waste intake. Having reviewed the Inspector's report, we are considering our options in what has become a very competitive marketplace.

## Recycling Facilities



*Recycling Centre introduced in 2010*

They are currently 45 bring banks in the County for glass, aluminium & steel cans recycling on both private and public sites. We are continuing to expand our textile bank infrastructure on public sites in order to provide additional services to the people of Offaly. With the support of the DEHLG, the Council has upgraded their bring bank network to provide a more efficient service for the public. This upgrade includes the provision of a specifically designed bottlebank, some with disabled access and noise reduction technology incorporated. Also included is new informative signage for the public.

We now operate three Civic Amenity Facilities (CAFs) in Birr, Derryclure and Edenderry. These accept a wide range of materials for recycling and compliment our existing bring bank facilities. The Council have entered a long term contract with a single operator to maintain and manage all three CAFs. Mixed domestic and biodegradable waste is now accepted at Derryclure CAF, thus providing a one stop shop for householders.

As there is no mobile collection service for household hazardous waste, both the facilities at Birr and Derryclure make provisions for this type of waste. Charges apply for all waste brought to these facilities, with the exception of electrical items, glass packaging and batteries.

The Council continues to promote home composting through the sale of composting units as well as supporting local Tidy Towns and community initiatives through local grant aid. The Council also supports local communities in this regard, buy providing home composting workshops as well as supporting initiatives such as Community Composting. Already, there are two Community Composting programmes underway, in Tubber and Geashill.

The Council also sponsored a new anaerobic digester in an assisted living housing estate in Tullamore which is part of Tullamore Housing Association. This allows for the communal processing of the houses' organic waste and has proved to be a successful venture thus far.

The Council continues to support local environmental projects with the provision of grants, part funded by the DEHLG – namely the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund and the Anti-Litter Anti-Graffiti Awareness Grant. Due to budgetary constraints, the Council funded Environment Grant (for local amenity areas within the County) were unfortunately not available.

## Waste Management Plan

In July 2010, we brought our annual report to the Council on our progress to date in implementing the current waste Management Plan which is due to expire in Feb 2011. In August we commenced the statutory process of reviewing the current Plan.

The key challenge ahead for the next 3 years is the diversion of biodegradable waste away from landfill and to ensure that all waste collectors operating in the county operate a pricing system that encourages the recycling and waste minimisation.

## Waste and Litter Enforcement

The Council continued to investigate all illegal waste activities and instigate legal proceedings as appropriate. A total of 687 complaints (waste and litter) have been investigated in the year to-date which resulted in there being sufficient evidence to issue 54 on-the-spot fines and 108 notices relating to litter and waste activities. In Jan. we will have an additional Litter Warden in place which will increase our visibility on the ground.

We inspected and audited the operations of Waste Collector Permit holders of domestic waste collectors and collated all AER information for EPA National Waste survey. Inspections were also undertaken at Waste Facility Permit sites, and inspections undertaken to assess compliance under the following regulations: Waste Tyres, WEEE, Batteries and Packaging. This approach has ensured an effective use of scarce resources

### **Awareness Programme**

Offaly County Council has continued to actively promote environmental awareness both in the community sector and schools. Currently we have over 65 schools registered for the Green Flag programme and 36 of these have received their Flag.

During the year we held a debate competition for all schools in the county under the key theme of protecting the environment.

We are supporting communities in their efforts to introduce community composting units into their local villages - namely Tubber and Geashill. We also support community projects such as anti-graffiti (in Tullamore) and hedge-laying initiatives (Tubber) and the Midlands Gateway initiative. We continue to promote and support litter awareness, especially during national spring clean week.

We have, in conjunction with the County Enterprise Board and the EPA, developed closer links with the Business Sector and we continue to support a pilot programme to promote green business within Offaly.

## **PROTECTION OF NATURAL WATERS**

### **Water Framework Directive:**

Offaly is affiliated to three River Basin Districts (RBDs); namely the Shannon International River Basin District, the Eastern River Basin District and the South Eastern River Basin District, and in March we recommended the adoption of River Basin Management Plans for each of the three RBDs. We continue to implement an extensive operational monitoring programme of the rivers and groundwater within the county.

We have identified point and diffuse source pressures within each river basin districts that may be contributing to the quality status of the surface waters. These pressures were the basis of the Programme of Measures (POMs) set out in each of the River Basin Management Plans. These Programmes of Measures are designed to protect water quality where existing status is high or good and to restore quality where existing status is less than good. maintain existing water status and improve where possible.

We continued to investigate activities and installations, such as agriculture, wastewater disposal commercial, and industrial discharges to surface waters, within the catchment area of designated rivers with less than good status and to identify and implement remediation measures.

### **Protection of Groundwater:**

January 2010 saw the introduction of a new Code of Practice for the assessment of on site waste water treatment systems for single houses. The new code requires a far more comprehensive and onerous site assessment from the previous standard.

We carried out investigations of Zone of Contributions of Public Water Supply boreholes and prepared Aquifer Protection Plans, based on the perceived risk from agricultural, domestic, commercial and industrial activities, to the groundwater quality. This reflects a comprehensive approach by the council to protect the raw water quality of our public supplies and by extension the health of the people of Offaly.

### **FLOOD RISK**

The environment section participated in the CFRAM process and the Flood Warning System process being led by the OPW.

Works were carried out on four minor flood alleviation schemes in conjunction with the area offices and 90% funded by the OPW.

## BURIAL GROUNDS

Following the rejection by the Members of our proposal to restructure the provision of burial grounds throughout the county given the lack of capital funding, we now propose to bring a revised policy to the SPC in early 2011.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY AWARENESS

Climate Change & Energy awareness was an area of major activity in 2010. Offaly County Council formed an Energy Map Team at the end of 2009 and participated in the Energy Map Programme in conjunction with the Midlands Energy Agency and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Energy Team undertook a 3 day training programme with SEAI which has now resulted in significant energy saving initiatives being made through simple & cost free procedures.

A Climate Change & Energy awareness week for both staff and the public was held in Aras an Chontae from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> November to highlight energy saving tips.. During this week and in association with the EPA, DEHLG, and SEAI, a series of national climate change awareness lectures called Climate for Change was presented by a renowned expert, Mr. Gavin Harte. These well attended lectures proved both interesting and informative. An energy monitor loan scheme was put in place with the Library service in November and has proved very popular with energy monitors available to borrow in each library around the county

Many energy saving initiatives have been put in place in 2010 including virtualisation of the computer servers, reduction in costs for water treatment & waste water treatment plants through changing electricity suppliers from ESB to Energia, reduction in printing costs in the planning department, and the installation of a Variable Speed Drive unit on the air handling system in Aras an Chontae. All have resulted in significant cost savings.

The carbon footprint for Offaly Local Authorities was calculated at 14,719.31 CO<sup>2</sup> tonnes for 2009 through the Carbon Management tool. 2011 will see further implementation of energy saving initiatives through the implementation of our Climate Change Strategy.

## ANIMAL CONTROL & WELFARE

### Stray Animal Control Service

Offaly County Council's Veterinary section operates its dog control service in accordance with the Control of Dogs Act, 1986 involving:

- Collecting stray dogs / Taking in surrendered dogs
- Investigating sheep kills.
- Investigating nuisance caused by dangerous dogs or dogs not under proper control.

Under the [Control of Horses Act, 1996](#) , all Local Authorities are responsible for the control of horses in their areas including the collection of stray horses on public or private land.

### Disposal of Fallen Animals

These are becoming an increasing problem in the county. It is however, the statutory responsibility of Offaly County Council to dispose of animals dumped on public land. Every effort is made to trace the ownership of said fallen stock in order to recover our costs.

## FOOD SAFETY

Offaly County Council's Veterinary Department is responsible for carrying out functions in relation to Food Protection and Disease Control. It implements the terms and conditions of a Service Contract between the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and Offaly County Council in relation to the slaughter of food animals and imposes statutory controls on the production of meat, meat products and poultry. Its principal functions in relation to food safety relate to small throughput Slaughtering Premises of which there are currently five operating in the county, to meat product and distribution premises of which there are three operating within the county. Two new meat cutting plants have submitted documentation and are undergoing an approval process. There is also a "seasonal" poultry slaughterhouse within the county.

The temporary veterinary inspectors (TVI's) who carry out meat inspection duties in our slaughterhouses have recently signed a new contract which represents significant cost savings, without compromising public health expectations.

# Water Services

## Introduction

The delivery of Water Services throughout the county continues to expand against a background of increasing statutory responsibility and customer expectation of 24hr/365 day service.

The level of service expectation from our customers, continues to put pressure on Water Services costs and resources. There were no boil water notices or significant water quality issues in 2010. The unprecedented cold spells in January and December caused interruptions to supply due to individual frozen services and caused short term increases in unaccounted for water. The operational cost of water services was carried out within budget in 2010.

## Financial Management

The cost of operating our water and wastewater treatment plants and networks was within the allocated budget of €12.3m for 2010. The Water Services budget had increased substantially over the last 6 years due to:

- The development of new or upgraded Sewage Treatment Plants, where previously a lower standard of treatment existed.
- Disposal of water treatment and wastewater treatment sludges. This continues to be major cost because of transport and strenuous environmental regulation of disposal options.
- The expanded role of the Local Authority as a Regulatory Authority for Group Schemes and Small Private supplies under the new Drinking Water Regulations.
- The licensing process for waste water discharges introduced under the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007.
- The large development in the group scheme area where connected to Council supply.

In 2010, electricity supply to all of our treatment plants was transferred to another supplier following a Regional Energy Supply Tender in 2009, saving almost 20% in electricity costs.



*Clara Water Treatment Plant*

## Water Treatment

In 2010, the implementation of recently enacted Water Services legislation continued and placed a very considerable demand on resources. The Regulatory requirements for Drinking Water Quality and Wastewater Discharges are enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA were given increased staff resources in 2009 to enable them to enforce the 2007 Drinking Water Regulations and the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007, while Local Authority staff numbers decreased. Notwithstanding this, Water and wastewater quality in Offaly continues to be above the National Average.

### **S.I. 278 of 2007- European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007**

These regulations, among other things, require that:

- I. The EPA Audit at least one Water Supply Scheme in each LA Annually.
- II. The LA provide an immediate Response and corrective action programme to the EPA in the event of any non-compliance



III. The LA monitor and enforce regulations for Small Private Supplies and Group Water Schemes.

In 2010 the EPA audited the Clara Water Treatment Plant following the successful implementation of a THM action programme. There were 27 notifications to the EPA. Most of these notifications related to exceedance of the lead parameter and one off exceedances of chemical parameters.

There was 100% compliance with the Bacteriological Parameters.

Clara, Clonaslee, Dungar and Birr Public Water Supplies were removed from the EPA's Remedial Action List (RAL) and there are currently no Offaly Schemes on the RAL.

Telemetry has been rolled out to all Water Supply Schemes which facilitates alarming of, and response to, water quality problems as required by the EPA.

The EPA have stipulated that All Drinking water monitoring results should be available on Local Authority web-sites. All 2010 Drinking Water Results for public schemes in Offaly are available on the Council web-site.



*Clara Wastewater treatment plant*

### **Wastewater Treatment**

#### **S.I. 684 of 2007- Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007**

Under the above regulations 14 Discharge Licence applications (Plants > 500PE) and 15 applications for Certificates of Authorisation (Plants <500PE) were made between 2007 and 2009.

In December 2009, the EPA issued a licence for the Birr Wastewater Plant discharge, which had been applied for in 2008. This was the first licence issued to Offaly under the regulations. In 2010, Licences were granted for Edenderry and Tullamore Wastewater Treatment Plants.

In order to comply with the licence, there will be a requirement for additional monitoring, a detailed Annual Environmental Report and immediate reporting of incidents or non-compliances with the Quality Standards. As further licences are granted, there will be a requirement for a substantial increase in human and financial resources to comply with the licence requirements.

### **Health & Safety**

The 2005 Health & Safety Act and 2006 Construction Regulations have placed further requirements and in particular responsibilities, on the Local Authority with regard to Health & Safety in the workplace. Implementation of rigorous Health & Safety procedures to all aspects of work and providing adequate and regular training is adding to the cost of providing services and constructing works.

All formal safe work systems introduced over the last few years, such as Confined Spaces Equipment, Bi-Annual Certification of lifting equipment were maintained in 2009.

There were two unannounced formal inspections on Water and Wastewater facilities by the Health & Safety Authority in Offaly in 2010, and this is likely to increase in 2011. The potential for prosecution arising from non-compliance remains high, and therefore adequate resources must continue to be made available for Health & Safety.

All Water Services Safety Statements were reviewed and updated in 2010.

## Water Services Capital Schemes

The Capital Schemes Programme consists of new or substantial upgrades to existing Water Supply and Wastewater schemes in the County. Schemes are generally funded through either the

- I. Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP)
- II. Rural Water Small Schemes Programme (RWP)
- III. Special Development Contribution Schemes (SDC).

The Major Capital Schemes are set out in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2010-2012. (Appendix 1)

This programme was published in April 2010 with the omission of several schemes that were on the previous WSIP. The focus of the Current WSIP is on the main towns and Water network rehabilitation. While most Water Services Capital Schemes require in the order of 30% Local funding, network rehabilitation only requires 10% Local funding and is therefore extremely good value to the Local Authority. Construction of the following Schemes were completed or commenced in 2010:

Scheme	Cost	Source of Funding
Daingean WSS Improvements	€100k	SS
Effluent Quality Improvement Measures in Moneygall, Rhode, Cloghan & Kilcormac	€130k	SS
Water Quality Improvement (Monitors & Telemetry)	€50k	SS
Water Main Upgrades in Sharavogue (Shinrone WSS)	€60k	SS
Edenderry WSS Upgrade-New Borehole (Complete)	€25k	SS
Tullamore Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade (In Progress)	€20m	WSIP
Ballinagar Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade (commenced December 2010)	€750k	SDC

The upgrade of Tullamore Wastewater Treatment Plant under the WSIP commenced construction in 2010. The upgrade of Tullamore WSS, consisting of the upgrade of Clonaslee WTP and a new source at Arden are awaiting DEHLG approval.

Detailed Design and Contract Documents for the following WSIP Schemes were progressed in 2010:

- I. Tullamore Sewerage Scheme Collection System
- II. Tullamore Water Supply Scheme-Clonaslee Upgrade
- III. Edenderry Sewerage Scheme
- IV. Birr WSS
- V. Birr SS
- VI. Clara Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade.

## Rural Water Programme

### Allocation for 2010 was:

Interim Works on ECJ Schemes:	€ 40,000.00
Connect to Public Main:	€ 0.00
Take Over by Local Authority:	€ 80,000.00
Upgrade:	€ 400,000.00
Small Public Schemes:	<u>€ 450,000.00</u>
	<b>€ 970,000.00</b>

Funding in 2010 for Group Water Schemes was mainly granted for upgrade works and for completion of existing schemes. No funding was received for any new group water schemes. 8 schemes have been grant aided in respect of upgrade/refurbishment works. The works consisted of, site purchase for reservoirs, pipeline extensions and replacement and source improvements.

## Group Water Schemes Activity 2010

There was a very significant improvement in Private Group Scheme Water Quality in 2009. At the start of the Year, 1 GWS was on a "Boil Notice" because of non-compliance with Bacteriological Parameters. At the end of the year, all Private GWS were fully compliant with Drinking Water Quality Standards and all restrictions have been removed.

A total of 18 Group Water Supply Schemes have applied for subsidy payments in 2010. 18 applied for to be reimbursed for 2009 while 11 of these applied for advance payments in 2010.

A total of 11 applications have been processed for private well grants and the sum of €20,214.62 has been paid in grants in the current year to date.

All payments in respect of well grants and subsidy payments are recouped from the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government on a quarterly basis.

### Water Conservation Project

The first phase of the Offaly Water Conservation Project was completed, and Phase 2 commenced in 2007. Phase 2 was completed in early 2010, and a strategy report for implementing Phase 3, Pipeline Rehabilitation, was submitted to the DEHLG in 2009.

Phase 1 of the project reduced Unaccounted For Water by 3000m<sup>3</sup> per day and greatly improved management of the Water Distribution System. Phase 2 provided improved telemetry, pressure management and metering on the water distribution network and further savings of approximately 2,000m<sup>3</sup> per day were achieved. This improved efficiencies in the management of the network and greatly improved the level of service to our customers.

	2008	2009	2010
<b>Average Daily Inflow To System</b>	29732m <sup>3</sup>	28637m <sup>3</sup>	28820m <sup>3</sup>
<b>Average Daily Unaccounted For Water</b>	50.5%	48.8%	45.4%

Under Phase 2 of the Water Conservation Project, a Pilot Study on the use of Water Conservation devices in a Large School was con-

ducted. The findings of the study were then used in an advice booklet produced on water conservation for schools. Further advice booklets for Farms and Business were also produced.

In 2010, a policy for dealing with customer side leakage was implemented under the Water Conservation Regulations. Under this policy, customers are informed where leakage or unusually high usage is detected on their property, and requested to repair the leak within a reasonable time. Reasonable and practical enforcement procedures are then implemented to ensure the repair is carried out.

This policy in conjunction with non-domestic metering has contributed significantly to the reduced UFW figures.

**Under the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012, Offaly Co. Council have been allocated €12.3m for Phase 3-Mains Rehabilitation on the basis of the success of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Water Conservation works. This work will commence in 2011 and will further reduce UFW.**

## Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012

Scheme Name	Contract Name	W/S	Estimated Cost €
<b>Contracts at Construction</b>			
<b>Edenderry Sewerage Scheme</b>	Contract 1 Sewers & Watermains	S	1,876,000
<b>Water Conservation Stages 1 &amp; 2 Works</b>	Water Conservation Stages 1 & 2 Works	W	3,123,000
			4,999,000
<b>Contracts to Start</b>			
<b>Birr Sewerage Scheme</b>	Contract 1 (Network and storm tanks)	S	5,750,000
<b>Birr Water Supply Scheme</b>	Water Treatment Plant Upgrade	W	1,000,000
<b>Edenderry Sewerage Scheme</b>	Contract 1 (Network)	S	9,600,000
	Contract 2 (Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade)	S	5,000,000
<b>Tullamore Sewerage Scheme (G)</b>	Contract 1 (Wastewater Treatment Plant - DBO)	S	24,000,000
<b>Tullamore Water Supply Scheme Phase 5 (G)</b>	Contract 2 (Network)	W	18,100,000
	Water Treatment Plant Upgrade (Clonaslee)	W	5,800,000
			69,250,000
<b>Water Conservation Stage 3 Works – Phase 1</b>	Contract 1 - Daingean South & Tullamore Town North	W	1,588,000
	Contract 2 - Birr Town Centre & Tullamore Town South	W	2,428,000
	Contract 3 - Birr Southwest, Edenderry - Francis St & Edenderry - Southeast	W	1,762,000
	Contract 4 - Tullamore - Marian Place	W	1,927,000
	Contract 5 - Tullamore - Arden Vale	W	1,584,000
	Contract 6 - Birr North & Kilcormac WSS	W	2,942,000
			12,231,000
			86,480,000
	<b>Contracts Total</b>		<b>86,480,000</b>

## Internal Services

Corporate Services, Human Resources,  
Finance and Information Systems

### Corporate Services

**Director of Services:**  
Seán Murray

**Senior Executive Officer:**  
Monica Cleary

**Partnership Facilitator/  
Administrative Officer:**  
Gerry Bruton

### Human Resources

**Director of Services:**  
Declan Kirrane

**Senior Executive Officer:**  
Ann Dillon

**Administrative Officer:**  
Paula Donovan

### Finance

**Head of Finance:**  
Declan Conlon

**Financial Management  
Accountant:** Marita Hanlon

**Financial Management  
Accountant:** Thomas Mawe

### Information Systems

**Head of I.S.:**  
Hugh O'Donoghue

**I.S. Project Leader:**  
Ray Bell

**I.S. Project Leader:**  
Eileen Jackson

## Corporate Services

The main functions of the Corporate Services section include:

- To provide an efficient and professional secretariat to the Council and their committees.
- To make information available to the members in a timely, convenient and flexible manner to allow for informed decision making.
- To maintain and update the register of electors.
- To implement our Higher Education Grants in a fair and efficient manner.
- To develop initiatives to increase cross-departmental awareness and input to the development of corporate policies.
- To improve communications internally and externally on Local Authorities activities.
- To ensure best practice is applied in securing value for money in the management and maintenance of corporate property.

### Support Services

There are 21 Councillors on Offaly County Council. The Corporate Services Department provides a secretariat service for meetings of the County Council. The Council normally meets on the third Monday of each month, excluding August. In addition an Annual Budget Meeting and an Annual Meeting must be held. In all, 17 council meetings were held in 2010.

At the Annual Meeting, held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010, Councillor Barry Cowen was elected Cathaoirleach and Councillor Danny Owens was elected Leas Cathaoirleach.

### Corporate Plan 2010 - 2014

Offaly Local Authorities mission statement and strategic priorities and are implemented in accordance with the core values identified

and adopted by the members in *Offaly Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2010-2014*.

### Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Chairpersons of the Strategic Policy Committees are elected members of the County Council. They, along with the Cathaoirleach of the Council, form a committee called the Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.), advised by the County Manager. The C.P.G. is essentially the Council's 'Cabinet'. Its main roles are consultation in preparation of budgets, dealing with corporate issues, modernisation and customer service.

The Corporate Policy Group met on 11 occasions during 2010.



(Back Row l-r) Cllrs. John Leahy, Danny Owens, Liam Quinn.  
 (Middle Row l-r) Cllrs. Dervil Dolan, John Carroll, Ger Plunkett, Tony McLoughlin, Peter Ormond, Eddie Fitzpatrick, Declan Kirrane, D.O.S.  
 (Front Row l-r) Cllrs. Noel Bourke, Molly Buckley, Cathaoirleach Tullamore Town Council, Mr. D. Rooney, United States of America Ambassador to Ireland, Cllr. Barry Cowen, Cathaoirleach Offaly County Council

### Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.s)

S.P.C.s have a key role in advising and informing the Council. Their purpose is to provide a forum for debate on policy issues and for the development of policy recommendations for the Council. They have a broad membership including sectoral and community interests working with elected members and council staff. There are four S.P.C.s in Offaly dealing with the following policy areas:

- Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services
- Planning, Economic and Local Development
- Transportation and Emergency Services
- Environment and Water Services

### Register of Electors

The Register of Electors was produced on the 1<sup>st</sup> February and came into force on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The total electorate for County Offaly for the 2010/2011 Register of Electors was 56,112 broken down over the local electoral areas as follows:

<b>Birr</b>	<b>10,593</b>
<b>Edenderry</b>	<b>15,413</b>
<b>Ferbane</b>	<b>11,729</b>
<b>Tullamore</b>	<b>18,377</b>
<b>Total on the Register</b>	<b>56,112</b>

### Civic Receptions

The Honourable, Mr. Dan Rooney, United States of America Ambassador to Ireland, visited Áras an Chontae on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

Councillor Barry Cowen, Cathaoirleach Offaly County Council formally welcomed the Ambassador to Offaly and to Áras an Chontae. A meeting with the Ambassador and members of Offaly County Council and the Cathaoirligh of Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore was held to discuss issues of mutual concern. The Cathaoirleach noted in his address the extraordinary commitment the Ambassador has shown to Ireland through his involvement with the American Ireland fund, which has raised over \$300 million for cultural and educational projects throughout Ireland, and particularly for projects which further the cause of peace and reconciliation.

Afterwards, an open forum with invited guests from the US Embassy from local community and business sectors was held. The Ambassador heard of the issues that affect local communities.

The Cathaoirleach presented Ambassador Rooney with a scroll commemorating his visit to Offaly, a gift from Tullamore Dew Heritage, the *Wildflowers of Offaly* written by John Feehan and published by Offaly County Council, 2009 and a hand painted silk scarf from local artist, Hazel Greene, Bramber Studio, Shinrone.

The Offaly Junior Camogie Team's outstanding achievement in winning the 2010 All Ireland Intermediate Camogie Championship was recognised by the Council at a civic reception, held on in December 2010.

#### **Joint Policing Committee**

The Joint Policing Committee met on three occasions in 2010. Offaly County Council Joint Policing Committee Work Plan 2010 - 2012 was agreed.

# Offaly County Council Members

## Birr Electoral Area:

Carroll, John	The Ring, Birr	(057)9120976	<a href="mailto:cilrjohncarroll@eircom.net">cilrjohncarroll@eircom.net</a>	Non-Party
Clendennen, Percy	Kinnitty, Birr	(057) 91 37076	<a href="mailto:percyclendennen@oceanfree.net">percyclendennen@oceanfree.net</a>	Fine Gael
Ormond, Peter	Kyleogue, Shinrone, Birr	(0505) 47079	<a href="mailto:ossiec@eircom.net">ossiec@eircom.net</a>	Fianna Fáil
McLoughlin, Tony	Main Street, Birr	(057) 91 21376	<a href="mailto:cilrtonymcloughlin@eircom.net">cilrtonymcloughlin@eircom.net</a>	Non-Party

## Edenderry Electoral Area:

Bourke, Noel	Killane, Edenderry	(046) 97 31295	<a href="mailto:noelbourke@hotmail.com">noelbourke@hotmail.com</a>	Fianna Fáil	(Cathaoirleach)
Fitzpatrick, Eddie	Benfield, Cloneyhurke, Portarlinton	(057) 86 23261	<a href="mailto:eddiefitzp@eircom.net">eddiefitzp@eircom.net</a>	Non-Party	
Foley, John	Killane, Edenderry	(046) 97 32332	<a href="mailto:info@johnfoley.ie">info@johnfoley.ie</a>	Fianna Fáil	
Hogan, Nichola	8 The Sycamores, Edenderry	(086) 3840320	<a href="http://nhogan@lawlibrary.ie">nhogan@lawlibrary.ie</a>	Fine Gael	
Plunkett, Ger	Ballycrystal, Geashill	(057) 9343854	<a href="mailto:gerardplunkett@hotmail.com">gerardplunkett@hotmail.com</a>	Fianna Fáil	
Quinn, Liam	Edenderry Road, Rhode	(087) 9163066	<a href="mailto:liamjq@gmail.com">liamjq@gmail.com</a>	Fine Gael	

## Ferbane Electoral Area:

Dooley, Eamon	Na Tullaig, Aughaboy, Ferbane	(090) 64 54510	<a href="mailto:eamondooley@eircom.net">eamondooley@eircom.net</a>	Fianna Fáil
Hanniffy, Constance	Doon, Ballinahown	(090) 6430106	<a href="mailto:connieh@iol.ie">connieh@iol.ie</a>	Fine Gael
Leahy, John	Glendine, Kilcormac	(087) 2073226	<a href="mailto:info@johnleahy.ie">info@johnleahy.ie</a>	Non-Party
Moylan Ryan, Sinead	Woodbank, Shannonbridge	(057) 9151113	<a href="mailto:sinead.moylan-ryan@oireachtas.ie">sinead.moylan-ryan@oireachtas.ie</a>	Fianna Fáil

## Tullamore Electoral Area:

Buckley, Molly	Moylena, Clara Rd, Tullamore	(057) 93 41357	<a href="mailto:mollybuckley@eircom.net">mollybuckley@eircom.net</a>	Fine Gael
Butterfield, Johnny	Ballincanty, Blueball, Tullamore	(057) 93 54027	<a href="mailto:butterfield.iad@eircom.net">butterfield.iad@eircom.net</a>	Non-Party
Cowen, Barry	Kilnacarra, Lahinch, Clara	(057) 93 23277	<a href="mailto:cowenaut@eircom.net">cowenaut@eircom.net</a>	Fianna Fáil
Dolan, Dervill	10 Cormac Street, Tullamore	(057) 23530	<a href="mailto:dervilldolan@eircom.net">dervilldolan@eircom.net</a>	Non-Party
Dooley, Sinead	Rahan Road, Sragh, Tullamore	(057) 93 51828	<a href="mailto:sineadtdooley@gmail.net">sineadtdooley@gmail.net</a>	Fianna Fáil
McKeigue, Thomas	Spollanstown, Tullamore	(057) 93 41519	<a href="mailto:tommymckeigue@eircom.net">tommymckeigue@eircom.net</a>	Fine Gael
Owens, Danny	Lugamarla, Mountbolus, Tullamore	(057) 93 54814	<a href="mailto:dannyowens@eircom.net">dannyowens@eircom.net</a>	Fianna Fáil



<b>Payments Made to Members in 2010</b>						
<b>Name</b>	<b>Representational Payment €</b>	<b>Monthly Allowance €</b>	<b>SPC Chairperson's Allowance</b>	<b>Conference Expenses incl. Conf. Fees €</b>	<b>Chairperson's Allowance €</b>	<b>Foreign Travel €</b>
Noel Bourke	16,724.00	5,354.28		2,721.66	13,411.07	3,574.30
Molly Buckley	16,724.00	4,413.96	6,000.00	3,109.19		
Johnny Butterfield	16,724.00	4,413.96		3,438.19		
John Carroll	16,724.00	5,589.36		3,363.39		
Percy Clendennen	16,724.00	5,040.84		3,761.26		
Barry Cowen	16,724.00	4,413.96		3,853.98	14,988.88	
Dervil Dolan	16,724.00	4,413.96		0.00		
Sinead Dooley	16,724.00	4,413.96		3,462.43		
Eamon Dooley	16,724.00	5,040.84	6,000.00	3,087.89		898.99
Eddie Fitzpatrick	16,724.00	4,727.40	6,000.00	3,325.20		
John Foley	16,724.00	5,354.28		0.00		
Nichola Hogan	16,724.00	5,432.64		3,544.47		
Connie Hanniffy	16,724.00	5,040.84		3,331.82		
John Leahy	16,724.00	4,727.40		2,947.17		
Tommy McKeigue	16,724.00	4,413.96		2,141.62		
Tony McLoughlin	16,724.00	5,432.64	6,000.00	0.00		
Ger Plunkett	16,724.00	4,413.96		4,132.21		
Sinead Moylan Ryan	16,724.00	6,137.88		0.00		
Peter Ormond	16,724.00	6,372.96		2,849.17		
Danny Owens	16,724.00	4,413.96		4,695.92		
Liam Quinn	16,724.00	5,197.56		0.00		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>351,204.00</b>	<b>104,760.60</b>	<b>24,000.00</b>	<b>53,765.57</b>	<b>28,399.95</b>	<b>4,473.29</b>

**Councillors supported and attended the following conferences in 2010 Date of Conferences No. Delegates**

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland	12th/13th Feb. 2010	6
Change Management in Local Government	19th/21st Feb. 2010	2
Atlantic Corridor Ireland	25th Feb 2010	3
Colmcille Heritage Trust	26th/28th Feb. 2010	1
ACCC "Rebuilding Confidence in Urban & Rural Communities"	4th/5th March 2010	2
19th Annual Kerry Environmental Conference	4th/7th March 2010	1
The Local Government Housing Service	18th/20th March 2010	3
Exploring Arts and Culture through town twinning	25th/27th March 2010	1
LAMA Annual Conference	9th/10th April 2010	10
IPI Planning Conference	15th/16th April 2010	1
BMW Annual Conference	16th April 2010	2
Banking, Insurance and NAMA "The effect on Local Government"	16th/18th April 2010	4
New EPA Guidelines for Singles Houses	23th/25th April 2010	1
Housing Practitioners Conference 2010	27th/28th April 2010	1
BIDS Conference	11th May 2010	1
Will the Croke Park Deal deliver	4th/6th June 2010	3
A Climate for Change Conference	24th/25th June 2010	4
Wind & Solar Energy	25th/27th June 2010	2
Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2009	16th/18th July 2010	3
William Carleton Summer School	2nd/3rd Aug 2010	2
Waste Management Regulations	20th/22nd Aug 2010	4
Water Conservation Conference	27th/28th August 2010	3
AMAI 97th Annual Conference	9th/11th Sept . 2010	7
La Touche Legacy	1st/3rd Oct. 2010	3
Douglas Hyde Conference	16th/18th Oct. 2010	2
Criminal Law Bill 2010	29th/31st Oct. 2010	1
LAMA Autumn Seminar	8th/9th Oct. 2010	6
Getting a Grip 2010	7th/8th Oct. 2010	2
Clare Tourist Conference	25th/27th Nov. 2010	2
Exploring Options for the Unemployed	19th/21st Nov. 2010	1
Building Regulations Conference	17th/19th Dec 2010	3

### **Freedom of Information - Statistics:**

In 2010 under the Freedom of Information Act, the total numbers of applications were as follows:

- 23 applications were received by Offaly County Council.
- There were 0 applications received by Birr Town Council.
- There was 1 application received by Tullamore Town Council.
- There were 0 applications received by Edenderry Town Council.

### **The Ombudsman**

5 complaints were received by the Ombudsman in 2010 in relation to Offaly County Council.



*Music Recital in Áras an Chontae on National Music Day 2010*

### **Higher Education Grants**

In the 2010/2011 academic year the number of Higher Education Grant new awards was 163 and a further 330 students qualified for grant renewal. €2,769,378.64 was spent on Higher Education Grants during this period. This money is recoupable from the Department of Education & Science, except for a fixed contribution made by Offaly County Council. The administration of the scheme is a service provided by this Council to students and parents in County Offaly.

### **Internal Audit Function**

Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function which reviews the internal control system in operation within Offaly County Council. It

objectively examines evaluates and reports on the adequacy of internal controls as a contribution to the proper, economic, effective and efficient use of resources.

During 2010 the Internal Auditor undertook a number of audits and the findings and recommendations from each audit were reported to management. The Internal Auditor also undertook follow up audits to assess the implementation of the recommendations from the previous audits.

The Audit Committee in Offaly County Council consists of five members: Mr. Peter Scully, Committee Chairman, Cllr. Connie Hanniffy, Mr. Brian Gunning, Mr. Paddy Hughes and Mr. Tom Feighery. The Audit Committee met 4 times in 2010.



*All Ireland Intermediate Camogie Champions, 2010*

### **Service Indicators**

Each section, as appropriate, prepared their National Service Indicators statistics. The statistics were collated by Corporate Services and submitted to the Local Management Services Board.

### **Presentations to Oireachtas Members**

The Management Team met members of the Oireachtas in November 2010 and provided an update with regard to the operations of Offaly Local Authorities.

### **County Coroners**

The total expenditure was €173,407.36 (including salary) in respect of coroners' inquests in 2010.

### **Exhibitions held in Áras an Chontae**

A number of art exhibitions were held in Áras an Chontae during 2010.

### **Partnership Committee**

The Partnership Committee held 4 meetings in 2010.

The reduction in the number of meetings should be viewed against the background of the difficult industrial relations climate that prevailed in late 2009 and until mid-2010. Following the introduction of austerity measures by central Government, the Trade Unions embarked on a campaign of industrial action to have the measures reversed. As part of that campaign the trade unions withdrew from the Partnership Process in late January 2010.

During the summer 2010 discussions between the social partners took place and the issues were resolved to the satisfaction of the trade unions. Partnership Committee meetings were reconvened in August 2010.

Following the retirement of Mr. Michael Roche, Management Joint Chair, from Offaly County Council in February 2010 the Management Team nominated Mr. Frank Heslin as Management Joint Chair.

Once their meetings had recommenced the Partnership Committee continued with the outstanding business on their agenda and

conducted a review of Partnership in conjunction with the national body LANPAG. The Report of the Working Group on the Review of the revised Public Opening Hours is under consideration by the Committee with a view to presenting it to the Management Team in early 2011.

Following the ethos of partnership, a series of meetings were held with outdoor staff in mid-2010. The primary function of the meetings was to commend staff for their diligent work during the past winter months. The staff were reminded that both the elected members and the Management Team were very appreciative of their efforts during this time. Each meeting was addressed by the relevant Town/Area Manager. Each meeting also included a brief presentation on Health and Safety by the Health and Safety Advisor, on Partnership by the Partnership Joint Chair and on the Communications Strategy by the Partnership Facilitator. Each meeting concluded with a question and answer session which explored various issues of concern to staff.

# Human Resources

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Offaly County Council is committed to the effective and efficient management of its human resources. Outlined here is a summary of developments in 2010 in the context of continuing reductions in financial and human resources and protracted low level industrial action as well as the continuing moratorium on Public Service Numbers.

## **Industrial Relations and Public Service Agreement 2010-2014**

Offaly County Council was served with notice of Industrial Action in early 2010 by all Trade Unions representing staff interests as their response to pay cuts announced in the national Budget for 2010. The action continued until the ratification of the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 in mid June which gives a commitment to no further reductions in pay and no compulsory redundancies in the public service if efficiencies are achieved by other means.

Following extensive discussions held at national level in the autumn of 2010 between Local Government Management and Trade Unions, under the auspices of the Local Authority Implementation Committee (LAIC), the Local Government Sector forwarded its Sectoral Action

Plan to the National Implementation Body at the end of September 2010. The Sectoral Action Plan gives effect to

the Public Service Agreement for the Local Government Sector and deals with;

- ✦ Restructuring including continued reduction in staff numbers
  - ✦ Shared Services within and between Local Authorities
  - ✦ Maximising economies of scale in procurement
  - ✦ Maximising the potential of e-Government
  - ✦ Redeployment
  - ✦ Productivity and Performance
- Service delivery options

Each local authority was then advised to prepare a Local Action Plan

which would set out how the objectives of the agreement would take effect locally and to engage with the trade unions regarding it. A Local Action Plan was developed by management and issued to Trade Unions in early December 2010.

Engagement with staff interests representing retained Fire Fighters regarding the achievement of necessary efficiencies in the Fire Service began in January 2010 and continued throughout the year. Issues arising were referred to the Labour Relations Commission which held its first meeting with unions and management in December. Specific measures regarding the Fire Service are contained in the Local Government Sectoral Plan and Local Action Plan under the Public Service Agreement.

## **Supporting staff to reach their full potential - Training & Staff Development**

The budget assigned to staff training and development was cut again in the annual budget for 2010. As a result, the provisions of the Training and Development Plan were prioritised and corporate level training was provided accordingly. An extensive training programme on new and existing Human Resource policies was delivered to all staff. This included Attendance Management, Performance Management, Grievance and Disciplinary procedures, Equality and Diversity, and Dignity and Work. Training on our Dignity at Work policy and procedures was also made available to elected members. Essential training on Health and Safety was also provided as was training on Customer Services and I.T. systems as well as job specific training in each Department. Financial support for staff wishing to pursue Third Level qualifications relevant to their work was not made available in 2010 due to budgetary constraints.

## **Recruitment**

Notwithstanding the Moratorium on Public Service recruitment, Offaly County Council sought and received sanction to fill the following vacancies which were advertised and/or competitions held in 2010

- Retained Fire Fighter (Birr, Edenderry, Tullamore, Ferbane)
- Retained Driver Mechanic (Birr, Tullamore, Edenderry, Clara)
- Retained Sub-Officer (Ferbane, Birr)
- Temporary Acting Health & Safety Advisor
-

- Temporary Staff Officer (Confined and Open Competitions)
- Temporary Clerical Officers
- Temporary Health and Safety Officer
- Temporary Environmental Technician
- Water & Sewerage Caretaker Grade 5 (Confined)
- Temporary Litter Warden.

### Information Systems solutions for HR – the CORE system

Staff from our Information Systems and Human Resources Departments were assigned to work on a new computerised system to assist in the management of HR records and processes. Since early 2010, Payroll for all staff, personnel records and organisational structure is administered through this system. Indoor staff no longer receive payslips but can access their pay records online. Following the ending of industrial action mid-year, work began again on introducing other elements of the system including the management and recording of annual leave and sick leave and attendance, and the administration of superannuation.

### Workforce Planning

Offaly County Council continues to comply with the moratorium on public service recruitment with a significant reduction in staff numbers from June 2008 to date. Reductions in staff numbers have resulted from the non-replacement of retiring staff, the expiry of fixed term contracts and the absence of cover for career breaks, maternity leave and long term sick leave. Under the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 provision is made for the redeployment of permanent staff within and between County Councils and within the wider public sector. There is also provision for the on-going implementation of local mobility policies whereby staff are transferred to meet operational and business needs while being provided with an opportunity for wider experience within the authority.

### Staff Retirements 2010

The following staff retired during 2010 having given many years of valued and dedicated service to Offaly County Council:

Name	Grade
Sean Bergin	Craftsman
James Bourke	General Services Supervisor
Anthony Usher	Lorry Driver / Machinery Operator
Seamus Corrigan	Administrative Officer
James Feery	Craftsman
William Coffey	Staff Officer
Patrick Guilfoyle	General Services Supervisor
Donal Geoghegan	Staff Officer
John McGillicuddy	Administrative Officer
Patrick Quigley	Caretaker
James Martin	Caretaker
Tim Malone	Craftsman
Peter O'Meara	General Operative
William Devereaux	Semi Skilled II/Ganger
Patrick Spain	General Services Supervisor

# Information Systems

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Although, operating with reduced resources in 2010, the Information Systems department continued implementation of Offaly Local Authorities' ICT Strategic Plan.

The main projects that were progressed during the year were:-

- Implementation of the CORE HR / Payroll / Superannuation system. Phase 1 of the project is now complete. The Phase 2 modules will be implemented as they become available during 2011.
- The Edenderry Broadband MAN has now been signed over to e-Net Teoranta, who will market and promote this important infrastructure from now on.
- Continued development of a Green ICT policy which included:
  - \* Commencing Phase 2 of the introduction of SAN and Virtualisation technologies to the Council's main ICT Server Room and DR facility.
  - \* Continued implementation of Energy Saving technology on all Council PCs.
  - \* These initiatives will result in savings in communications, energy and maintenance costs and a reduction of the organisation's carbon footprint in the medium term
- Review of all our landline telephony accounts, resulting in savings on all telecommunications costs. In 2011 we will go to tender under National Frameworks for landline and mobile telephony for the organisation.
- Review of the organisation's printing requirements, which will result in the deployment of Multi-Function devices over the medium term.
- Completion of SCADA technology in Water Plants across the county, which delivers monitoring and control information to a centrally managed database. This facility will be expanded to Sewerage Plants in 2011
- Introduction of the online G-Plan mapping facility to Tullamore and Birr Town Councils.
- Upgrade of ICT infrastructure throughout the County Library network, including public wi-fi and enhanced security facilities.
- Installation of Fire Suppressant protection system in the Council's main Server Room.
- Implementation of Document Scanning technology in the Planning section, with a view to making planning information available on [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie)

# Finance

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## Our Goals

To plan the strategic financial management of Offaly Local Authorities and deliver the services of the finance function in an efficient, effective and professional manner.

## Our Strategies

- Develop accounting and management information systems that deliver the best possible basis for future planning, budgeting and decision making in order to maximise financial resources available.
- Promote and direct Value for Money concepts and foster a culture of effective use of resources.
- Prepare an annual financial budget that reflects our corporate objectives.
- Enhance the Financial Management System and in particular, the provision of more meaningful financial management information.
- Ensure prompt payment to suppliers.

## Our Services

The Finance Department deals with both the short and long term financing of all the Council's operations, both of a Revenue and Capital nature. This involves:

- Monitoring and controlling income and expenditure.
- Arranging borrowing/leasing requirements.
- Treasury Management
- Compliance with all statutory and financial accounting principles, which apply to all monies paid by or to the Council.

The Council's revenue and day-to-day expenditure is funded from sources such as:

- Commercial Rates;
- Local Government Fund;
- Government Grants;

- Housing Rents, Planning Fees, Commercial Water Charges, Landfill and other Fees.

## Main Sections within Finance

### Financial and Management Accounting

Financial reporting is the preparation of the Annual Financial Statements and other statutory returns and dealing with the Local Government Audit process. Management Accounting is the preparation of monthly management reports to assist with budgetary control and the decision-making process within each directorate. The Annual Budget process is managed in this section, in consultation with all the service divisions. This section provides variance analysis, costing information and other financial information required by internal and external customers.

### Central Revenue Collection

The recovery of Commercial Rates, administration of Housing Loan accounts, Water billing, collection and receipt of all monies due to the Council.

### Accounts Payable

The processing and payment of suppliers invoices with statutory deductions and the completion of statutory returns. We are extending the use of Low Value Purchase (LVP) cards in order to increase efficiencies in the processing of low value transactions.

### Payroll

The processing of the wages, salaries, pensions and the completion of statutory returns to Revenue Commissioners and other agencies. The implementation of the Core payroll system in late 2009 has streamlined payment patterns.

### Motor Taxation Office

The Council collects vehicle licence duties and issues driving licences within its functional area on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government



### **Fixed Asset Register**

The maintenance of the fixed asset master file that records fixed assets acquired (created or purchased) and disposed of throughout the year. Compliance with the accounting policies relating to assets and work-in-progress such as asset categories, capital flags, capital job set-ups etc

### **Risk Management**

Coordination of the Risk Management function within Offaly County Council.

## **Main Reports Produced by Finance**

### **The Annual Budget**

The Finance Department prepares the overall Revenue Budget in consultation with the County Manager and the Management Team. The budget is presented to the Corporate Policy Group and to the Elected Members for adoption at the Annual Budget Meeting.

### **The Annual Financial Statement (AFS)**

The AFS is produced annually and analyses the income and expenditure for the financial year for both revenue and capital expenditure. The Balance Sheet shows the assets and liabilities of the County Council at the end of the year. THE AFS is presented to members at Council Meeting and audited by the Local Government Auditor.

### **Monthly Management Reports**

The monthly management report provides details of the income and expenditure for the various services provided by the council. The actual results are compared to Budget and all variances investigated to assist with the monitoring and control of the Budget.

### **External Reporting**

Various reports are produced for stakeholders in Offaly County Council relating to all aspects of the councils activities.

### **Motor Taxation Office**

This office issues vehicle and driving licences and processes other

transactions such as change of ownership for pre-1993 vehicles, certificates of roadworthiness, vehicle registration certificates vehicle licensing arrears. The Section also produces information for Gardai and other Local Authorities, e.g. penalty points, traffic fines, parking fines, etc. The Motor Taxation Office is open to the public from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., including lunchtime, Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays. Electronic payment is available at the counter and through the postal applications.

In 2010, this office generated €10.8m in revenue, handled 93,539 transactions (57% over the counter, 13% via post and 30 % was processed online)

### **Revenue Collection Service Indicators**

Amount collected as a percentage of the amount due at year end:

Rents	90%
Commercial Rates	93%
Housing Loans	68%
Non Domestic Water Charges	39%

**Extract from the Unaudited Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended December 31, 2010**

**DRAFT INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2010**

<b>Expenditure by Division</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>Gross Expenditure 2010 €</b>	<b>Income 2010 €</b>	<b>Net Expenditure 2010 €</b>	<b>Net Expenditure 2009 €</b>
Housing and building		7,888,734	7,014,665	874,068	695,871
Road transport & safety		18,032,550	14,065,241	3,967,309	3,672,439
Water services		12,469,044	4,664,114	7,804,930	8,280,412
Development management		3,708,287	683,542	3,024,744	3,238,452
Environmental services		8,416,027	3,683,939	4,732,088	4,225,946
Recreation and amenity		3,041,574	485,105	2,556,469	2,629,063
Agriculture, education, health & welfare		6,249,535	5,899,062	350,472	456,244
Miscellaneous services		6,442,561	4,073,411	2,369,150	2,694,939
Central management charges		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenditure/Income</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>66,248,311</b>	<b>40,569,080</b>		
Net Cost of Divisions to be funded from Rates and Local Government Fund				25,679,231	25,893,365
Rates				7,968,100	7,640,652
Pension related deduction				1,108,975	871,681
Local government fund / general purpose grant				14,545,566	15,370,906
County charge				2,083,800	2,083,800
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Transfers</b>				27,210	73,674
<b>Transfers from/(to) Reserves</b>	<b>15</b>			(944,816)	(226,261)
<b>Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year</b>				(917,606)	(152,587)
<b>General Reserve at 1st January</b>				(484,668)	(332,081)
<b>General Reserve at 31st December</b>				(1,402,274)	(484,668)

**Capital Account Summary — Extract from The Draft Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended December 31, 2010**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Balance (Debit)/Credit @ 1st January</b>	<b>12,647,650</b>	<b>8,105,438</b>
Total Expenditure (Including Transfers)	(24,429,452)	(56,907,179)
Total Income (Including Transfers)	<u>25,773,393</u>	<u>61,449,392</u>
<b>Balance (Debit)/Credit @ 31 December</b>	<b><u>13,991,591</u></b>	<b><u>12,647,650</u></b>