



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



Annual Report 2023



Our Mission

To lead sustainable
economic, social
and community
development in Offaly

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Introduction

Offaly has space to innovate, space to explore and space to grow. As a Council, we are committed to providing the highest quality of services to our growing population and creating innovative opportunities which supports economic growth for current and future generations.

Our Annual report, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001 (S221), provides an opportunity to reflect on the work of the Council in delivering important public services during the year, our achievements with overarching reference to the strategic goals set out in our 5 year Corporate Plan.

As an innovative Council, our commitments to strengthening and extending service delivery allowed us to include STEM, Climate Action,

Active Travel, Heritage, and Biodiversity initiatives (including the appointment of a Biodiversity Officer), in addition to the Council's regular services. As part of the national programme for Local Government Ireland Planning System, Online planning went live in Offaly. Offaly County Council is delighted to be part of the Local Government Online Planning Portal as Ireland's planning sector moves towards a paperless and environmentally friendly system where applicants have 24/7 access to their planning applications.

During 2023, we added five new electric vehicles as part of our decarbonisation commitments, successfully availed of funding from Fáilte Ireland, Built Heritage Investment Schemes as well as capitalising on Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding to

revitalise our rural towns and villages. The new Community Library and Arts Base in Edenderry development gathered momentum as did the €4.4 million Regional Fire Services Training Centre in Tullamore and the redevelopment of Birr Rectory Lands Concept Master Plan.

We were delighted to have hosted three Civic Receptions to honour local community leaders achievements and contribution to society at local, national or international level. Those honoured with a Civic Reception included Offaly Boxers Gráinne Walsh, Nicole Buckley and Paul, Loonam, Offaly Community Games and Offaly Association New York.

We continue to promote Offaly on a regional basis, supported by Midlands Ireland as part of the Midlands Regional and the Eastern &

Midland Regional Assembly. Our work continues to spread to wider audiences due to our ongoing and growing social media presence, our new website as well as supportive local and national print and broadcast media outlets.

All Council meetings continued in hybrid format during 2023 and as a Council, we wish to thank Elected Members, Management Team and staff for their continued support and proactive engagement.

Finally, we also wish to thank our colleagues in front line services for their engagement in emergency responses activities during 2023.



Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick
Cathaoirleach



Anna Marie Delaney
Chief Executive of Offaly County Council



Birr Municipal District



Cllr John Carroll



Cllr Clare Claffey



Cllr John Clendennen



Cllr Eamon Dooley



Cllr John Leahy



Cllr Peter Ormond

Edenderry Municipal District



Cllr Noel Cribbin



Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick



Cllr John Foley



Cllr Mark Hackett



Cllr Robert McDermott



Cllr Liam Quinn

Tullamore Municipal District



Cllr Sandra Feehan Smollen (Co-opted)



Cllr Neil Feighery



Cllr Declan Harvey



Cllr Tony McCormack



Cllr Frank Moran



Cllr Sean O'Brien



Cllr Danny Owens



Cllr Ken Smollen (Retired)

Strategic Policy Committees 2023

The Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) are local authority committees in city and county councils whose membership includes elected councillors, representatives of business, farming interests, environmental/conservation groups, trade unions and community and voluntary members.

SPCs, as committees of the council, advise and assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy.

SPC Chairs



Cllr John Clendennen
Chair of Community
Cultural & Emergency
Service Strategic
Policy Committee



Cllr Eamon Dooley
Chair of Land Use,
Planning & Economic
Development Strategic
Policy Committee



Cllr Tony McCormack
Chair of Climate Action,
Environment, Water
& Transportation
Strategic Policy
Committee



Cllr Robert McDermott,
Chair of Housing
Strategic Policy
Committee

Community, Cultural & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee

Chairperson: Cllr John Clendennen

Council Members: Cllr Clare Claffey, Cllr Mark Hackett, Cllr Liam Quinn
Cllr Ken Smollen (replaced by Cllr Sandra Feehan Smollen, Sept 2023)

Sectoral Interests:

- Thomas Woulfe (Agricultural / Farm Sector);
- Ana-Maria Cumpanici & Rachel Kenny (Youth / Environment);
- Madeline Corboy (Social Inclusion)
- Vacant Position (Voluntary / Community Sector)

Meeting Date	Theme / Policy Issue
02.03.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate Action Plan ● Disability Participation and Awareness Fund (presentation on Accessible Offaly Report by Mary Lee and Stephen Keogh, ODEN) ● Update on funding to NGO Sports bodies by Offaly Sports Partnership ● Pilot SPC Induction training for PPN Representatives ● LECP Plan consultation – Offaly Socio Economic Profile and High Level Goals
26.05.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disability Participation and Awareness Fund (presentation on ‘Accessible Offaly Report) ● Offaly Age Friendly Strategy ● Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 consultation – Offaly Socio Economic Profile and High Level Goals
22.09.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update on Offaly Local Development Strategy ● Introductory Presentation on Offaly Arts Strategy 2024-2029 ● Update on Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024-2029
08.12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comhairle na nÓg presentation (2023 Activities) ● National Library Strategy 2023-2027 ● Draft Offaly Arts Strategy 2024-2029

Climate Action, Environment, Water & Transportation Strategic Policy Committee

Chairperson: Cllr Tony McCormack

Council Members: Cllr Mark Hackett, Cllr Peter Ormond, Cllr John Foley and Cllr Neil Feighery

Sectoral Interests:

- Roger Guiney, Business/Commercial Development/Construction
- Enda Bracken, Agriculture/Farming Sector Representative
- Shane Lambert, Trade Union Representative
- Michael Newham, Environmental/Conservation Representative
- Philip Glover, Business/Commercial Development/Construction

Meeting Date	Theme / Policy Issue
22.02.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Section Updates ● Climate Action Plan ● Burial Ground bye-laws ● Work Programme - Tree Management Policy / Biodiversity / Bill Boards
10.05.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation - National Waste Management plan by Hugh Coughlan, Eastern & Midlands Regional Waste Management Planning Office ● Tree Policy ● Climate Action Plan ● Section Update
27.09.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft Climate Action Plan ● Tree Policy ● Section Updates
12.12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate Action ● Tree Management Policy ● EV Strategy ● Climate Action, Environment & Rural Water Section Updates ● Roads Section Updates

Housing Policy Strategic Policy Committee

Chairperson: Cllr Robert McDermott

Council Members: Cllr Danny Owens, Cllr Sandra Feehan Smollen, Cllr Declan Harvey and Cllr Noel Cribbin

Sectoral Interests:

- John Carroll – Business/Commercial
- Diane Serviss – Mid Offaly Housing
- Stephen Keogh – Offaly Disability Equality Network
- Ruth Keane – Midland Simon

Meeting Date	Theme / Policy Issue
22.01.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2023 Work Programme ● Domestic Violence Supports Update ● Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 to 2026 ● Tenant Incremental Purchase Scheme ● Offaly Response to Ukraine Refugee Crisis
24.05.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Domestic Violence Supports Update ● Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 to 2026 ● Local Authority Home Loan ● Offaly Response to Ukraine Refugee Crisis
28.09.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Domestic Violence Supports Update ● Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 to 2026 ● Tenant Purchase Scheme Review ● Offaly Response to Ukraine Refugee Crisis
29.11.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Domestic Violence Supports Update ● Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 to 2026 ● Estate Management ● Offaly Response to Ukraine Refugee Crisis

Land Use, Planning & Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee

Chairperson: Cllr Eamon Dooley

Council Members: Cllr Sean O'Brien, Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick, Cllr John Carroll, Cllr Frank Moran, Cllr John Leahy and Cllr John Clendennen

Sectoral Interests:

- Vacant as at January 2023
- Pat Walsh – Farming
- Dominic Doheny, Business, Commercial Development/Construction
- Don Gibney – Trade Union
- Anna Orman – PPN

Meeting Date	Theme / Policy Issue
07.02.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate Action Plan Update ● Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 – Peat and Energy Elements of the Plan. ● Offaly Development Contribution Scheme – Large Scale Energy Developments. ● Derelict Sites Policy and Procedure. ● Economic Development Strategy – next steps.
06.06.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 – Peat and Energy Elements of the Plan. ● Economic Development Strategy - Update
05.09.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 – Wilderness Corridors, Peat After Use and Community Benefits. ● Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 – 2 year progress report. ● Economic Development – Update. ● Regeneration – Update. ● Just Transition – Update.
05.12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation by CHL on the Draft Tourism Strategy. ● Derelict Site Policy amendments. ● Economic Development – Update. ● Dates for 2024 Meetings

Public Sector Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('the Duty') is a statutory obligation for public bodies in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Section 42(1) requires public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of their services.

The obligations which Offaly County Council embeds within the organisation to ensure implementation of the Duty include:

- To eliminate discrimination.
- To promote equality of opportunity.
- To protect the human rights of our staff and people who use our services.

We recognise that implementation of the Duty is linked to Offaly County Council's strategic planning cycle and is part of a continuous process.

Building on the work undertaken to date, including Offaly County Council attending presentations by ODEN members / Inclusion Ireland on Public Sector Duty, during 2023, Offaly County Council continued working with the Offaly Disability and Equality Network (ODEN) and Inclusion Ireland. (ODEN aim to be the voice of disabled people and works to identify barriers and campaign for better accessibility and inclusion for disabled people in Offaly, and Inclusion Ireland, the National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability.).

The initial focus of activities related to People with Disabilities and a booklet was produced based on the outcomes from workshops held with staff prior to COVID 19. This booklet was distributed by ODEN during 2023 and Council staff received training regarding its contents.

During 2024, Offaly County Council commits to raising the profile of the Duty and to consider human rights and equality obligations at every Directorate level to identify the human rights and equality issues specifically relevant to the functions of the Directorate, to the services it provides and to its employees.



Arts Office



Offaly County Council's Arts Office is responsible for investing in and developing high quality, imaginative arts activity, with and for the people of Offaly and visitors to the county. In doing so, the arts office advocates for and clearly communicates the significant role that the arts play in enriching the wellbeing of society, of our citizens, and in enhancing the public realm. This is achieved through our strategic planning processes, and our annual programme; delivered in cooperation with artists, cultural producers, community groups and local stakeholders and, involving regional and national partners. Offaly arts office assists with the development of a range of key county-wide arts programmes such as: *FilmOffaly*, *Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival*, *Anam Beo - Arts and Health*, *Culture Night*, along with providing ongoing support and advice to the many artists, creative practitioners, festivals, and community groups undertaking arts and culture projects across the county.

YOUTH ARTS

The Arts Office, in 2023, continued to implement the findings of the report '*The Makings: Fostering Youth Creativity*'.

YOUTH ARTS COMMISSIONS

In direct response to the findings of *The Makings - Fostering Youth Creativity*, the Arts Office developed and delivered 4 projects in 2023.

- Julie O'Hea worked with young people from Youth Work Ireland / Midlands to explore several nature-based creative projects, using natural and easy to source materials.
- Dance artist Olwyn Lyons offered taster workshops in dance to schools across Offaly with a view to developing future projects to develop an interest in dance.
- Music Generation Offaly developed a songwriting project outside of their existing programme with students from Banagher College.
- Fun House Youth Theatre engaged Darren Yorke to run a series of training workshops in Improvisation for young people aged 13-25.

HULLABALOO! OFFALY'S CHILDREN'S ARTS FESTIVAL

Hullabaloo! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival presented its biggest programme to date hosting 101 events in Birr, Clara, Edenderry and Tullamore with an extravaganza of creativity, art making and fun experiences for all the family .

MINI MOVIES

In an exciting collaboration with Young Irish Filmmakers a consultation was hosted with young people in Offaly at Offline Film Festival, examining the opportunities for the growth of the Mini Movies programme. *Meeting Of Young Minds* took place in October, and the outcome of this review will inform the 2024 programme.

Mini Movies is funded by The Arts Council, Offaly County Council Arts Office with support from the J.V.W. Trench Trust.

FILMOFFALY

FilmOffaly continued to attract investment from national and international film-makers.

The **FilmOffaly Award 2022** entitled, *Missing* (produced by Maggie Ryan, Escape Pod Media and written and directed by Maura Foley) was shot and completed on location in Offaly. The film held a local premiere in Birr during the OFFline Film Festival in October 2023, with the film then entering the film festival circuit.

The **FilmOffaly Award 2023** was awarded with the winning script *A Simple Killing* by Mark Conway. This film will be produced in Offaly in 2024.

FilmOffaly Review – A FilmOffaly Review was undertaken and completed by researchers, *Culture Works* in 2023. The review examines the development of film production and the film sector in Offaly to date and offers recommendations for the potential growth of Film in Offaly going forward. The report focus is on the developments of the film commission FilmOffaly, the Offaly County Council Arts Office and Creative Ireland’s Film and Animation programmes, and other key film activity that takes place in the county. The purpose being to demonstrate the value of Film to the county as a social, cultural and economic driver.

CULTURE NIGHT OFFALY

Celebrating its thirteenth year, Culture Night Offaly, supported by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Creative Ireland Programme and Offaly County Council, brought a packed programme of events that reflects the eclectic cultural exuberance in Birr, Clara, Edenderry Library, Tullamore as well as the launch of Kilcormac Development Association’s project *Capturing Our Story*.

BEALTAINÉ ROOTS & SHOOTING PROGRAMME

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre and Esker Arts hosted age-friendly arts events including film curated for the audience, dance workshops,

exhibition tours and a story-telling event with the popular Midlands writer and story-teller Jean Farrell with an afternoon of Memories & Melodies.

ARTS AND HEALTH

Offaly Down Syndrome Association, Offaly Arts Office and renowned Offaly-based Photographer James Crombie, delivered an Arts in Health Project funded under the Disability Participation Fund, the project funded 10 adults from the Down Syndrome Community to engage in a week-long workshop with James Crombie, learning the fundamentals of photography and exploring portrait photography as well as taking part in an outdoor field trip, at a nearby Alpaca Farm. The final part of the project took place in March, this was followed by a planned exhibition of works taking place in Tullamore on World Down Syndrome Day.

LOUGH BOORA SCULPTURE PARK – ART IN LANDSCAPE PROJECT

The Arts Office in collaboration with Mayo County Council Arts Office and Visual Artists Ireland were successful in securing project funding under the Art Council’s Invitation for Collaboration Scheme.

The project includes an artist commission in Offaly and Mayo, and a series of events in Lough Boora Sculpture Park, Esker Arts and Tír Sáile (County Mayo) in April 2024. Curator Helen Pheby, who works as an associate director of programming for Yorkshire Sculpture Park, was appointed as Curator for the project. The artists commissioned to work in Offaly and Mayo are international artists Hardeep Sahota, collaborating with the photographer Tim Smith.



PUBLIC ART

The Arts Office in collaboration with representatives of the Public Art Working Group began planning for the development of a public art programme to commence in 2024. Public Art is funded through the Per Cent for Art Scheme, a Government Scheme which creates opportunities for people to engage with contemporary art and artists in everyday settings. The scheme is linked to public capital infrastructure projects such as schools, social housing, roads and healthcare.

ARCHIVES

In 2023 the Arts Office undertook an extensive archiving project examining our files from the last thirty years. We identified documents of cultural relevance to be saved for historical purposes. These included samples of millennium and centenary events, public art, festivals, community grants, artists awards and programmes representative of all art medium visual art, literature, exhibition, dance, theatre and film.

ARTS OFFICE SUPPORTS

The following grants were provided

● Arts Act Grants

The Arts Acts Grants 2023 were assessed by an external panel. 21 arts projects were funded under the Arts Acts grant scheme, awarding a total allocation of €20,190 Euro to community groups across the county.

● Festival Arts Grant

Offaly County Council provided financial assistance, advice and promotional assistance to 9 festivals including Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival, OFFline Film Festival, Tullamore International Summer Organ Series, and Birr Festival of Music at total cost of €9,400.

● Professional Artist Support Scheme

20 applications were approved to a total cost of €11,740.

● **Birr Writers Residency**

The Arts Office continued to support the Birr Writers Residency with St Brendan's House, Tin Jug Studios, Birr. The residency is open to professional writers of any genre, e.g. literary fiction, poetry, playwriting, journalism or travel writing. In 2023, two professional writers were awarded the residency.

● **Creative Places Edenderry**

Creative Place Edenderry, an Arts Council supported 3-year developmental programme designed to encourage a sustainable grass roots approach to creativity – continued to receive the support of both the Arts Office and Edenderry MD in 2023. There was an array of different arts-based activities, workshops and events, including Visual Arts, Music, Poetry, Playwriting, Screenwriting and Creative Writing; Creative Movement; Dance; Ceramics; Drama; Radio, Photography and more.

Creative Places Edenderry also funded 6 x Creative Grants of €500 each in the Community and 3 x Artist Commissions between €4500 - €12,000.

SUPPORTS FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ARTISTS

● **Irish Writer's Centre – National Mentoring Programme**

Offaly collaborated in a national programme of support for writers organised by the Irish Writer's Centre, who selected artists from across Ireland for a national mentoring programme.

● **Theatre Forum**

2023 Offaly offered 3 bursaries for theatre artists to attend Theatre Forum Waterford Gathering in Waterford City. This networking event enables local theatre artists to network, share practice and skill with others from the sector in a national event.

ARTS AND HEALTH

Anam Beo, Offaly's Arts and Health organization, promotes arts inclusion through the delivery of comprehensive arts projects for older people in community and care settings.

CREATIVE IRELAND PROJECTS

The Arts Office continued to work closely with Creative Ireland as a member of the Creative Ireland team on projects including Arts and Older Persons, Community Open-Call projects, Animation Residency, Lough Boora Sculpture Park.

“ In 2023 the Arts Office undertook an extensive archiving project examining our files from the last thirty years. ”

ANIMATION RESIDENCY

The Animation Film Residency was supported during 2023.

ONLINE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Arts Office continue to engage the public and artists through our online and social platforms, Facebook, twitter and our extensive email distribution databases.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

● ARTS INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Offaly Arts Infrastructure Strategy by People Places Consulting: Caoimhín Corrigan and Siobhán O'Malley was ratified and published in 2023. The strategy explores how Offaly Arts Infrastructure (existing and planned) can be developed in a collaborative and harmonic manner, resulting in a cohesive, complimentary and self-sustaining network of arts infrastructure that is beneficial to the whole county.

● ARTS OFFICE STRATEGY 2024-2028

2023 saw work on the development of a new strategy for the Arts in Offaly for 2024-2028 which aligns with the newly adopted **Arts Infrastructure Strategy 2023-2028**.

● BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre continued to provide an extensive arts programme through its annual performance season, its learning and outreach community projects and as an incubation and administrative hub thanks to increased funding provided by the Council.

● ESKER ARTS

Since the official opening of Esker Arts by President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins in June 2023, a vibrant and exciting programme of events were held in 2023 with great acknowledgement coming from the community in the numbers attending their innovative programme

● LOUGH BOORA SCULPTURE PARK

The signed MOA between Offaly County Council and Bord na Móna (BNM) sets out the partnership approach which facilitates future curatorial direction of the Sculpture Park, as well as enhancing governance and management structures.

● EDENDERRY LIBRARY AND ARTS SPACE

The Arts Office continued to work in collaboration with the Offaly Library Service in the development of plans for a multi-purpose arts space and studios to be incorporated into the planning of the new library for Edenderry.

Climate Action, Environment & Rural Water



Climate Action

Minister Eamon Ryan TD launched the Climate Action Plan programme across the local authority sector, starting a 12-month statutory plan making process, whereby each Local Authority was required to develop and adopt their individual five year LA Climate Action Plan February 2024. Climate Action Coordinator and Climate Action Officer roles were identified in line with this five-year programme. Highlights include:

- Offaly County Council continued to build upon the 6 months of preparation work completed ahead of this launch by engaging with internal and external stakeholders while developing their draft CAP with extensive collaboration with environmental consultants. Offaly County Council elected members approved the draft plan to for public consultation at October meeting and the formal consultation process ran until the 6th December 2023. Submissions were carefully reviewed and considered. (The final plan was adopted by the elected members at their February 2024.)
- Implementation of our 2019 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, reporting in October 2023 that 91% of our 88 stated actions had either been completed or are on-going. Our Climate Action Steering Group held 8 meetings during 2023.
- Climate Action training program continued, with the commencement of the “Delivering Action” pillar being roll out to outdoor staff.
- The €444,000 “Community Climate Action Fund” (phase 1) was launched with successful projects receiving 100% funding towards climate action projects.
- An application for 11 high speed EV Charging Points under the EUJTF Community Facilities Charging Scheme at locations including libraries, parks, working hubs,

Municipal District offices, business parks, leisure centres, fire stations and marinas as part of the submission to this €15m scheme.

- 2023 saw Offaly County Council confirmed as achieving 40% energy efficiency, results from our statutory annual SEAI energy report. Work continues towards the mandated target of 50% energy efficiency by 2030 including implementation of the SEAI “Pathfinder” programme which part funds deep retrofit measures to public buildings.
- “Energize Offaly” staff awareness campaign and replacing single use cups with sustainable alternatives in Áras an Chontae.

ENVIRONMENT

The Environment Section in Offaly County Council has responsibility for a broad range of environmental functions including monitoring, enforcement and management of new development covering the areas of air, noise, waste and water quality.

Waste Management

Waste facilities and waste collectors in Offaly are regulated under the Waste Management Act and associated Regulations. The Council monitored/enforced its 2 current Certificates of Registration and 12 Waste Facility Permits. All authorisations need to be monitored to check compliance with their statutory obligations.

Prosecutions

Environment successfully brought 11 cases for legal action under the Waste Management Act, 1996 mainly under two sections of the Act, which relate to illegally managing and storing waste (Section 55), causing environmental pollution and transferring waste to an unauthorised waste collector (Section 32). The penalties included fines from €100-€2,000 as well as prison sentences.

Derryclure Landfill

All inspection programmes and monitoring are necessary to meet the requirements of the EPA licence, however the aftercare costs of the landfill continue to be a financial burden. A review of activities and equipment at the landfill to manage costs associated with treatment of leachate, reduction in gas and age of existing systems that monitor leachate and gas at the landfill.

Recycling Facilities

There are 38 bring banks for glass, aluminium & steel cans which are serviced by Glassco Ltd and textile banks are serviced by Coppertale Ltd.

Civic Amenity Sites

Oxigen operate and manage 3 Civic Amenity Sites at Birr, Derryclure and Edenderry. Service users are charged to use the sites, with the exception of WEEE goods which are free of charge.

Litter Management

The Council's Litter Management Team continued to address the problems of littering, fly-tipping and illegal dumping during 2023 through enforcement of relevant legislation (Litter Pollution Act, Waste Management Acts and Segregation and Presentation of Waste Bye-Laws) and awareness campaigns including initiatives funded under the 2023 Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI) Scheme administered by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti Grant Scheme 2023

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications provided Offaly County Council with €16,000 towards Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti Grant Schemes (an additional 30% is provided from Environment budget).



2GoCup launch with Minister Osian Smyth and Minister Pippa Hackett

Anti-Dumping Grant

Offaly County Council applied for 3 projects under the Anti-Dumping Initiative for 2023 and received 100% funding of €72,452 for Clean Ups (€29,313), Radio Awareness Campaign (€11,934) and the expansion of Solar Compaction Litter Bins across the county (€31,204) – now in 15 locations.

Air Quality Management

Awareness campaigns and enforcement inspections relating to the Solid Fuels Regulations were developed during 2023. The Council operates three air quality monitors in Edenderry, Tullamore and Birr that measure particulate matter and gases. Monthly reports have been prepared based on results from these monitors and summarise the air quality in Offaly.

Noise Management

The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC) aims to put in place a European wide system for identifying sources of environmental noise, informing the public about relevant noise data and taking necessary steps to avoid, prevent and reduce noise exposure. The current Noise Action Plan for Offaly has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Noise Regulations and is aimed at the strategic long-term management of environmental noise, primarily from road noise in the county. The Environment Section continues to respond to complaints alleging noise nuisance.

Water Quality

Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The WFD Team worked very closely with the regional Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) on water quality in 2023 including the implementation of a programme of measures under the Water Framework Directive, particularly in relation to agriculture, unsewered industries and septic tanks.

● Septic Tank Inspections

The National programme of septic tank inspections as set out by the EPA saw 25 Domestic Wastewater Treatment System inspections completed. 19 were compliant with Advisory Notices issued to 6 sites that were non-compliant.

● Discharge Licensing

There are 11 discharge licences of trade and sewage effluent to waters from unsewered industries. All these licences have been screened to ensure that the conditions attached to them are compatible with the achievement of the Council's water quality obligations.

“ Awareness campaigns and enforcement inspections relating to the Solid Fuels Regulations were developed during 2023 ”

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Green schools

Offaly continues to support the Green Schools Programme in all education facilities within its area through workshops, visits and financial assistance for environmental initiatives. A successful teacher training seminar was held in October and a new initiative was piloted in 3 primary schools and one Tidy Towns Committee (Pullough Tidy Towns), called Composting for Ireland. St. Joseph's School in Arden, Tullamore, Scoil Mhuire in Cloneygowan and Geashill NS were selected as pilot schools. Online and onsite modules were provided for each and an onsite workshop to build a wormery for schools and community composting for Pullough Tidy Towns.

Environmental Complaints

In 2023, a total of 980 Environmental Complaints were received and investigated. All were investigated in a timely manner and concluded where possible. A breakdown of the complaints received are categorised as follows:

Complaint Category	Number received and investigated
Water Services	1
Water Quality	39
Abandoned Vehicles	16
Air Pollution	28
Control of Dogs	73
Control of Horses	21
Dead Animals	13
Litter Control	665
Noise Pollution	22
Waste Enforcement	102
TOTAL	980

RURAL WATER & WATER SERVICES

The Local Authority will continue with its role as the Water Services Authority for the Rural Water Sector, in the administration and management of the Rural Water Programme. Offaly County Council have a significant role in Group Water Schemes, i.e. schemes that are privately owned and operated. Offaly County Council continue to administer grants and subsidies, in addition to having the remit to test the water supply of Group Schemes, Small Private Supplies (SPS), and ensure it is safe to drink, under the Drinking Water Regulations. However, the Council is not responsible for maintaining group scheme pipes and filtration systems.

Offaly County Council continue to administer all aspects of Well Grants, Lead Remediation Grants, and Domestic Waste-Water Treatment System Grants.

Offaly County Council's role as Water Services Authority means there is an opportunity to retain a level of water services activity within Local Government, to support and co-ordinate water services investment locally and to influence policy in the future. The separation of this function from the broader former Water Services offer allows local authorities to retain some skills and capability in water & related testing going forward.

Rural Water Programme

GWS Subsidies of €1,072,067 was paid 15 Group Water Schemes. The Council also assist GWS with funding for capital projects as over €2m of funding was secured for 24 separate projects ranging from public health measures to amalgamation of group water schemes. The funding for these projects is provided under the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme.



Domestic Waste Water Treatment System (DWWTS) Grants

Amendments due in 2024, removing the requirement for the septic tank to be registered and increasing the grant to 85% of allowable costs up to a maximum of €12,000. The focus of the grant is on the protection of surface and ground water, (particularly drinking water sources).

Well Grants

Grants are available from Offaly County Council to assist with the improvement of a water supply to an individual private dwelling (this means a water supply providing water intended for human consumption and domestic purposes that serves only one house). 21 Domestic Water grants totalling €65,549.95 were paid out in 2023.

Lead Remediation Grants

Grants are available to assist households with the cost of replacing lead pipes and fittings within the boundaries of the property. The grant is available if you receive a water supply from either a public or private water supplier, up to a maximum cost of €5,000.

Water Services

Uisce Éireann have taken over the management and direction of Offaly County Council's Water Services Staff as of 26th July 2023, known as the 'Effective Date'. Since then, Uisce Éireann have full accountability for the delivery of public water and wastewater services.

BURIAL GROUNDS

There are 187 burial grounds in County Offaly, 66 of which are in the ownership of Offaly County Council. 21 are currently open and operated by the Council – the remainder are closed (no grave spaces remaining) but there may be permission for burials to take place in some of these. The Council is responsible for the provision of and extension to our burial grounds.

Many of our burial grounds are beautifully maintained by voluntary local committees and 17 cemetery committees received grants for the upkeep and enhancement of their local cemeteries totalling €30,000.

VETERINARY

The Council manage the Control of Dogs and Horses through the Veterinary Section in accordance with the Control of Dogs Act, 1986 and the Control of Horses Act 1996, Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010 and the Animal Health and Welfare Act, 2013.

In 2023, the Control of Dogs team have cared for 313 dogs in our Dog Shelter, increasing by approximately 10% year on year. On average, approximately 15% of the dogs have been reclaimed by their owners, with a further approx. 70% been rehomed by dog welfare charities and 15% being rehomed by the Control of Dogs team directly from the Dog Shelter. The Control of Dogs team have dealt with 72 complaints in 2023 and brought 2 successful prosecutions in the District Court under the above legislation.

Community & Culture



Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)



The Offaly LCDC was established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. 11 meetings were held during 2023 and membership is provided below

Statutory Interests (9)		
Sector	Members Name	Organisation
Local Authority Elected Members	Cllr. John Leahy (Chair)	Offaly County Council
	Cllr Declan Harvey	Offaly County Council
	Cllr. Noel Cribbin	Offaly County Council
Local Authority Officials	Ms. Anna Marie Delaney	Offaly County Council
	Ms. Orla Martin, Head of Enterprise	Offaly County Council
State Agencies	Ms. Celine Kirwan	Dept. of Social Protection
	Ms. Anne-Marie Keane	Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board
	Mr. Con Feighery	Teagasc
	Ms. Ann Sheerin	Health Service Executive
Non-Statutory Interests (10)		
Sector	Members Name	Organisation
Public Participation Network	Ms. Sylvia Sweeney (Vice-Chair)	Community & Voluntary Sector
	Ms. Fiona Fitzpatrick	Community & Voluntary Sector
	Ms. Deirdre Arnold	Social Inclusion Sector
	Ms. Olive O'Sullivan	Social Inclusion Sector
	Ms. Rebekah Keaveny	Environment Sector
Local and Community Development	Mr. Brendan O'Loughlin	Offaly Integrated Local Development Company
Other Civic Society or Local Community Interests	Mr. Mark Cronin	Construction Industry Federation
	Mr. Richard Scally	Irish Farmers Association
	Mr. Fechin Daly	Business Interest
	Mr. Philip O'Brien	Offaly Tourism Marketing (CLG)

The following key priorities were progressed and developed in 2023 by the LCDDC:

- Implementation of the Offaly Local Development Strategy and LEADER Rural Development Programme 2014-2022, including the EURI Transitional Programme funding 2021-2022 and approval of LEADER Programme funding;
- Implementation, monitoring and review of Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2023;
- Implementation of the SICAP Ukrainian Response Budget 2023;
- Submission to DRCD of Local Development Strategy 2023-2027 (LDS) in respect of LCDDC's interest in delivering the LEADER Programme 2023-2027;
- Completion of the procurement and evaluation process for new SICAP Programme 2024-2028;
- Preparation of Local Economic Community Plan 2024-2029;
- Implementation of the Community Support Fund 2023, Community Recognition Fund 2023/24 and the launch of the Local Enhancement Programme 2024 under the Offaly Community Enhancement Programme;
- Operation of the Ukrainian Community Response Forum;
- Implementation of the 2023 Dormant Account Fund Allocation 'National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy' Action 6.3;
- Provision of support to the community sector and affording a voice through the Offaly PPN Network;
- Implementation of the Offaly Healthy Ireland fund;
- Progression and improvement of the health and physical activity status of the people of Offaly by Offaly Sports Partnership.

Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDDC) is the designated Local Action Group (LAG) and has responsibility for the delivery of LEADER Rural Development programme 2014-2022 including the Transitional LEADER EURI Programme 2020-2022 in the County and for approval of LEADER Funding. The Implementing Partner is Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC). During the period 2016-2023 over €8.8 m of LEADER funding was invested in 317 innovative community and private enterprise projects, focusing on social inclusion, poverty reduction, economic development in rural areas, and expenditure on these projects continues.



A detailed breakdown of LEADER Project Approvals and Claim Expenditure for 2023 is outlined as follows:

THEME	SUB-THEME	RDP Transitional LEADER Programme			EURI Funding		
		No Of Projects Approved Jan - Dec 2023	Project Approvals 2023	Claim Expenditure 2023	No Of Projects Approved Jan - Dec 2023	Project Approvals 2023	Claim Expenditure 2023
Economic Development	Rural Tourism	0	€0.00	€127,378.18	1	€9,000.00	€0.00
	Enterprise Dev	0	€0.00	€39,153.90	0	€0.00	€139,191.09
	Rural Towns	0	€0.00	€97,559.93	0	€0.00	€6,000.00
	Broadband	0	€0.00	€40,000.00	0	€0.00	€0.00
Social Inclusion	Basic Services	1	€11,319.99	€393,748.47	0	€0.00	€0.00
	Rural Youth	0	€0.00	€7,389.75	0	€0.00	€0.00
Rural Environment	Water Resources	0	€0.00	€0.00	0	€0.00	€0.00
	Biodiversity	1	€47,268.00	€47,895.00	0	€0.00	€18,000.00
	Renewable Energy	2	€60,762.81	€47,734.32	0	€0.00	€0.00
TOTALS		4	€119,350.80	€800,859.55	1	€9,000.00	€163,191.09

The commitment and diligent work of all involved in the LEADER Programme to date is greatly appreciated and acknowledged and sincere thanks is expressed in particular to the Chair and members of Offaly LCDC, Project Promoters, Evaluation Committee members, the Implementing Partner Offaly Local Development Company and the staff of the Community Section in Offaly County Council.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME 2018-2023 (SICAP)

The Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is the primary social inclusion programme of Government and provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion at a local level through engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and

public sector agencies. The Programme aims to address high and persistent levels of deprivation and to target and support those who are disadvantaged, hardest to reach and less likely to use mainstream services through targeted and innovative locally led approaches. SICAP is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with co-funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL). PEIL's priority areas for investment revolve around the activation of the unemployed, social and labour market inclusion, education and youth employment. Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the Contracting Authority for SICAP and oversees, co-ordinates and manages the delivery of SICAP and directs funding to the Programme Implementer. The Programme Implementer is Offaly Local

Development Company who delivers SICAP at a local level as per the Annual Plan, works with target groups and beneficiaries, and reports to the LCDC on progress in carrying out actions and achieving targets.

The LCDC is responsible for the monitoring, review, and annual planning of the nationally-funded SICAP Programme. SICAP Funding Allocation for 2023 was €927,791 and the Ukrainian Response Allocation for 2023 was €100,842 with an additional €15,000 allocated in October 2023. The SICAP Programme Implementer worked with 79 local community groups and 644 individuals during 2023 across the County, strengthening community development, providing personal development and well-being supports, providing education and training, and preparing people for employment. Several supports were provided to the Emerging Needs Target Group for 2023 'New Communities'.

Table: SICAP 2023 Lot Targets

LOT Targets Offaly County (12-1)	Target 2023	Achieved 2023
Key Performance Indicator 1 Community Groups	65	79
Key Performance Indicator 2: Individuals	469	644
% KPI 2 Living in Disadvantaged Areas	32%	43.07%
Emerging Needs Group:	New Communities	

Table: SICAP 2023 key indicators

Key SICAP Indicators Achieved	2023
Disadvantaged individuals worked with on a one-to-one basis	202
Community Groups assisted under SICAP	79
Children that received an educational or developmental support	466
Recipients of employment support	240
Progression into self-employment	29

During the course of the year, the LCDC completed;

- End of Year Performance Review 2022.
- SICAP Annual Plan process and approved SICAP Annual Plan 2023.
- SICAP Mid-Year Performance Review 2023.

The SICAP Annual Plan 2024 formed part of the Request For Tender, procurement and evaluation process for SICAP 2024-2028. An Empowering Communities Working Group has been established, and members provide assistance on the implementation and monitoring of SICAP and meet on a regular basis throughout the year.



Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme

MEMBERS OF SICAP EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES WORKING GROUP

Sylvia Sweeney (Chairperson)	Offaly PPN Community & Voluntary Sector
Cllr. Declan Harvey	Offaly County Council
Celine Kirwan	Dept. of Social Protection
Ann Sheerin	HSE
Olive O'Sullivan	Offaly PPN Social Inclusion Sector
Deirdre Arnold (Vice Chairperson)	Offaly PPN Social Inclusion Sector
Paula Donovan	LCDC Support
Louise Larkin	OLDC Support

DORMANT ACCOUNTS FUND 2023

Department of Rural and Community Development have responsibility for a number of actions in the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy including Action 6.3 - Take measures to ensure that existing community infrastructure is inclusive and welcoming to LGBTI+ people and consider the provision of pop-up LGBTI+ services.

Offaly LCDC were allocated €10,838.90 under this fund and a programme of works will be developed and a Service Level Agreement put in place to support LGBTI+ Projects in County Offaly under various initiatives including outreach, drop in services etc.

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

Comhairle na nÓg is the recognised national structure for participation by children and young people (aged 12-17 years) in decision-making and is funded by Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and administered in conjunction with Pobal. Offaly County Council is responsible for

overseeing the use of, and reporting on, the CNN Development Fund and is responsible for the overall management and monitoring role over CNN.

Offaly Comhairle na nÓg held 15 meetings in 2023. The Executive chose Disability as their topic for their project in 2022 and 2023 and put in a significant amount work to increase awareness. Members liaised with Offaly County Council IS Department, Offaly Libraries, Offaly PPN and ODEN (Offaly Disability Equality Network) among others.

In October 2023 over 100 young people gathered at the Tullamore Court Hotel for Offaly Comhairle na nÓg's Youth Conference.

The event was also attended by the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive of Offaly County Council and members of the Comhairle Steering Committee. Members presented on their work in 2023.

Over 50 expressions of interest to join Offaly CNN were received at the Youth conference. The following are some highlights from 2023:

- In March, five members presented to the Secretariat for the Assistance of Regions in Transition (START) in the Offaly County Council Chamber as the Youth Voice - Being heard on Just Transition. An Interactive conversation followed with Comhairle members on their family connections with the peatlands and opinions were put forward on Just Transition and prospects for the future.
- In Croke Park in April the National Showcase event was attended by members who displayed their work and met members from other Comhairlí. A Comhairle na nÓg representative was interviewed on Midlands 103 regarding the event and the work of Offaly Comhairle.

- The group recorded a Podcast to promote awareness on living with Disabilities.
- Interactive workshops were developed and delivered in schools across the county to educate and increase awareness and understanding of disability in all forms.
- Members of Offaly Comhairle na nÓg have engaged with the HSE in relation to the funding of projects and organisations which aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 15-24 years.
- In October Offaly Comhairle na nÓg was represented among the delegates that attended the Ireland National Rural Youth Assembly in Dublin Castle to discuss the challenges and opportunities for young people participating in civic society in rural Ireland and to make recommendations for consideration by rural policy makers across Government.
- In December, Comhairle members presented at the Community, Culture and Emergency Services SPC Meeting. The presentation outlined the purpose of Comhairle na nÓg and covered their work and achievements in 2023.

OFFALY COMMUNITY RESPONSE FORUM

The Community Forum consists of a range of key agencies working within Offaly who meet to discuss updates in relation to Ukrainian refugees arriving into the County and ensuring appropriate responses with integrated supports to housing, transport, medical, social welfare, education, employment, training and social integration. The membership includes:

Offaly County Council	An Garda Síochána
Health Service Executive	Local Link Laois Offaly
Offaly Local Development Company	Offaly Library Service
Offaly Volunteer Centre	Family Resource Centres
Túsla	Citizens Information Service
County Childcare Committee	SVP
Department of Social Protection	Laois Offaly ETB
Civil Defence	Offaly PPN

“Interactive workshops were developed and delivered in schools across the county to educate and increase awareness and understanding of disability in all forms.”

The total numbers of Ukrainians in Offaly has gradually increased from 419 in 2022 to 1,159 in 2023 and are based in Tullamore, Birr, Portarlington, Moneygall, Kilcormac and Shannonbridge.





LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN (LECP) 2024-2029

This is Offaly’s second Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The membership of the Advisory Steering Group (ASG), who assist in preparing, drafting, adopting, implementing and monitoring the LECP, include:

Name	Representing
Brendan O’Loughlin, Chair	Offaly Local Development Company
Councillor Eamon Dooley	Chair of Land Use, Planning and Economic Dev. SPC
Councillor John Clendennen	Chair of Community, Culture & Emergency Services SPC

Ann Dillon	DOS for Land Use, Planning and Economic Development
Sharon Kennedy	DOS for Housing & Community Services
Anne Marie Keane	LOETB, LCDC Nominee
Ann Sheerin, HSE	LCDC Nominee
Rebekah Keaveney	Green Offaly, LCDC Nominee
Orla Martin	Head of Offaly Local Enterprise Office
Lourda Giles	LCDC Chief Officer
Lorraine Mitchell	Senior Executive Planner (Forward Planning)

The Draft Framework LECP has been jointly prepared by the Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC. It is the primary mechanism at local level to transfer relevant actions arising from EU, national, regional and local strategies and policies to a County Offaly context.

Our High-Level Goals			
Sustainable Empowered Communities	Healthy Place Making	Economic Opportunity	Climate Action
 <p>Offaly will be a county which supports sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities</p>	 <p>Offaly will improve the physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work and invest in.</p>	 <p>Offaly will strive to spread economic opportunity and prosperity to all sections of society.</p>	 <p>Offaly will pro-actively address climate change and work to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030 and support transition to low carbon Region by 2050.</p>

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION FUND 2023

This Fund of €669,691 for capital projects was launched by DRCD on 24 January 2023 specifically targeted at projects that are in communities, towns and villages that are hosting Ukrainian refugees in significant numbers. A total of 26 applications were approved for submission to the Department by the Offaly LCDC received €636,206. Funding Agreements were agreed between Offaly County Council and the successful applicants.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND 2023

Offaly was approved for a Fund totalling €283,843 which was managed by Offaly LCDC. A total of 188 applications received grant approval under the following categories:

1. €144,791 Current non-pay running costs such as energy costs
2. €136,064 Capital repairs and improvements to facilities / purchase of equipment/ LED Lighting upgrades
3. €2,988 Women's Sheds Non-pay Running Costs

A subcommittee of the LCDC assessed the submissions and their recommendations were approved by the full LCDC.

OFFALY AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE

Throughout 2023, work was ongoing on the development of the second Age Friendly Strategy 2024-2029. Other activities include

- Age Friendly Offaly held a Climate Action Workshop in Lough Boora in association with Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO).
- Walkability Audit was carried out in Kilcormac.

Work continues to develop Clara as a Pilot Age Friendly town as part of the Clara Town Centre Plan.

Offaly PPN is the main link through which the Local Authority connects and consults with

the community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors.

The PPN Secretariat meet monthly in person to guide and direct the work of the PPN on behalf of the Membership. Members of the Secretariat meet with OCC Community section management team quarterly.

The PPN distributes information from a local and national perspective and shares information broadly across the Community sector reflecting the needs of its members. Groups are supported in joining the PPN, accessing MD grants, Town & Village renewal projects, the Community Enhancement Programme and Clár funding and other opportunities. A plenary is held in Spring, following on from the MD meetings and again in Autumn. The Autumn MD & Plenary meetings inform the work plan for the following year.

Groups are also assisted with queries including Revenue/Tax registration and Tax Clearance to draw down grants. We also collaborate with other sections and external organisations on areas of work. In Spring & Autumn the PPN hosts Municipal District meetings. We have a growing media presence via the website, Facebook, X and Instagram.

In person and online training events are undertaken during the year on a range of topics including Funding, Committee skills, Online Communications and Budget Projections. Informing and representing the PPN membership and developing the capacity of members are key elements of the PPN remit. These priorities will continue for the membership which now exceeds 645. There are a further 100 plus interested parties on the mailing list. Offaly PPN are members of the Midland Regional PPN and meets quarterly to network and deliver on cross county projects. The PPN National Conference took place in Arklow in 5-6th.October 2023.



The PPN work in collaboration with Council sections and a wide range of services, supports and agencies during the year and coordinates Disability Awareness Week and Social Inclusion Awareness alongside many other initiatives and events.

Offaly Disability Equality Network Launch of the Accessible Report & Action Plan 2023 - 2025

The Property Marking machine is making its way around the County with events in Birr, Edenderry and Rahan. Training took place in Mucklagh, Ferbane and Clonbullogue. This PPN initiative is carried out in conjunction with the JPC, Gardai and the Council. Demand for use of the machine and further training is increasing.

Clare and Bridie represent Offaly PPN at the official opening of the LOETB Enterprise Hub and the LOETB Information Hub by Minister Simon Harris, TD, Minister for Further and Higher innovation and Science. Participating in the mental health Initiative Tullamore Goes Green.

TIDY TOWNS NETWORK

The Offaly Tidy Towns Network is supported by the Community and Heritage sections of Offaly County Council. Tidy Towns Network meetings

are held two to three times a year when advice, information and invaluable networking between members takes place.

21 Tidy Towns groups from Offaly entered the Tidy Towns competition in 2023 with Geashill winning (again) the title of Ireland's Tidiest Village. Other Offaly groups also made great progress and increased their overall scores.

Other Offaly award winners were:

- **Geashill**
County First & Gold Medal
- **Birr**
Silver Medal
- **Clonbullogue**
County Second & Bronze Medal
- **Tullamore**
County Third & Gold Medal
- **Kilcormac**
Endeavour Award

PRIDE OF PLACE 2023

The IPB Pride of Place is an annual competition organised by Co-operation Ireland and sponsored by IPB Insurance. It promotes and celebrates the best in community development and recognises the enormous efforts of volunteers in making their local neighbourhoods better places to live, work and

socialise. Offaly County Council nominated the following groups to the 2023 competition:

Community Group	POP Category	Municipal District
Ballyboy Community Development	Population 1,000- 1,500	Birr MD
Tullamore Tidy Towns	Climate Action and Biodiversity	Tullamore MD
Bracknagh Community Assoc.	Population 0 to 500	Edenderry MD

Judging for the Offaly entries took place in September 2023. Ballyboy Community Development won the Runners Up prize in its category, beating off strong competition from across the country.

Healthy Ireland Offaly

Research and developing / delivering projects to increase physical activity level and to tackle obesity were discussed and implemented during 2023, including following projects, which were approved by LCDC:

- Drop and Move – a pilot initiative with 6 GAA/Camogie/LGFA in 9 separate communities. (€24,000)
- ‘Traveller Men Football Team’ €20,000
- Invest in Yourself’ with Clara Family Resource Centre (€17,400)
- ‘Offaly project’ with Social Farming Ireland’s (SoFI) (€10,000)
- ‘After School Physical Activity Programme’ with Crinkle Sports & Recreation Centre’s (CSRC) (€9,000)
- Activator Poles for older adults run by Kilcormac Development Association and Crinkle Sports & Recreation Centre (commenced in September 2023).

Offaly Sports Partnership (OSP)

As a subcommittee of LCDC, OSP seeks to improve the health and physical activity status of the people of Offaly at all life stages; and has a specific focus on reaching out to low participation groups. The funding of €651,155 ensured the OSP team and guest tutors support the delivery of numerous projects including:

- ACE (Assisting Children Excel) – supporting 5,000 pupils to participate in various sport and physical activity programmes.
- Club and Sporting organisations’ supports – to assist in reestablishing sporting programmes after Covid, participate in child protection training and development grants.
- Community Sports Development programme – five community based sports programmes catering for over 650 teens, adults and older adults
- Integration programmes increasing the participation and visibility of people of an ethnic minority background in sport. The key programme delivered this year was our second annual Africa Day event, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs
- Sports Inclusion Development programmes which support the participation of people with additional needs in sport and physical activity. Funded by various agencies (Sport Ireland, Health Services Executive and Healthy Ireland via the Laois / Offaly Childrens & Young Persons Services Committee), 13 programmes were delivered for over 650 people with additional needs
- Women in Sport programmes including flagship projects Women in Sport week, HER Outdoors week and a “girls get active” programme. 12 programmes were delivered catering for just under 550 participants.



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 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.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The Corporate Services section 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, 15 council meetings were held in 2023.

At the Annual Meeting, held on 19th June 2023, Councillor Eddie Fitzpatrick was elected Cathaoirleach and Councillor Danny Owens was elected Leas Cathaoirleach.



Members continued to receive the agenda and supporting documentation electronically on DecisionTime for all meetings of the Council.

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 Chief Executive. Where a Municipal District is not represented on the C.P.G. that Municipal District may elect a member to the C.P.G. 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 12 occasions during 2023.

MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE OIREACHTAS

The Cathaoirleach and the members of the Management Team briefed the Oireachtas Members on progress to date and challenges to the Local Authority at a meeting held on 2nd October 2023.

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Electoral Reform Act 2022 commenced in October 2022, which led to the modernisation of our electoral registration process to deliver greater accessibility and improved integrity. The average of online applications has increased

in Offaly County Council. Total electorate is provided below:

Birr Municipal District	21,121
Edenderry Municipal District	16,997
Tullamore Municipal District	22,103
Total on the Register	60,221

JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

The Joint Policing Committee met on four occasions in 2023.

During the year the Committee reviewed the Department of Justice and Equality Community CCTV Scheme to assist communities with their applications. The Committee were given presentations from the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner and Muintir na Tire. The Committee also received regular updates on the Recommendations arising from the Report of the JPC Sub-Committee on Safety in Public Spaces.

SWIMMING POOLS

Corporate Services administer the Council's support grant.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

During 2023 Offaly County Council processed 13 requests under the Access to Information on the Environment.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Council responded to the Office of the Ombudsman in relation to Offaly County Council issues.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT, 2014

No protected disclosures were made to the Council in 2023.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Offaly County Council processed 63 Freedom of Information requests during 2023.

Applications received / processed in 2023	
Applications on hand at 31/12/2022	1
Applications received during 2023	63
Decisions taken during 2023	53
Applications withdrawn and dealt with outside Fol	
Applications on hand 31/12/2023	6

Nature of the information requested	
Personal (to applicant)	15
Non-personal	48

Requests were received from the following	
Journalists	24
Business / Interest	1
Oireachtas	0
Staff	0
Clients	14
Others	24

County Coroners

The total expenditure was €110,825.00 (including salaries) in respect of coroners' inquests in 2023.

Performance Indicators

Each section, as appropriate, prepared their National Performance Indicators statistics. The statistics were collated by Corporate Services and submitted to the Local Management Services Board and the National Oversight and Audit Committee (NOAC). NOAC published the National Service Indicator Report for all Local Authorities for 2022 in September 2023. Please see Appendix for information.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Unit completed Audits on the following areas, as per the agreed Internal Audit Plan 2023:

- Disability Access Grants
- Midland Retrofitting Scheme
- Greenway
- Homelessness Services
- Motor Tax Stock Review
- Housing Capital Programme
- Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme 2022 Audit
- Final Review of Development Levy Contributions
- Follow up audits (Machinery Yard Fuel Audit, Burial Grounds & Travel Expenses)

Audit Reports were circulated to the Management Team and the Audit Committee. Follow-up checks on the implementation of recommendations of previous Audits were also undertaken.

The Internal Audit Strategic Plan was used in the development of the 2023 Audit plan as it allowed for a risk-based approach in setting the 2023 Audit Plan and ensures Internal Audit Unit is in line with best practice procedure.

PUBLIC SPENDING CODE QA PROCESS

Internal Audit was responsible for compilation of the Council's Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report 2022. This report was certified by the Chief Executive and submitted to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) at the end of May 2023, and is published on Offaly County Council's website. A full inventory of the Council's revenue and capital expenditure programmes

over €0.5M, two in-depth project reviews and a final report were completed and submitted to NOAC by Internal Audit as part of the process.

COLLABORATION

The Internal Auditor attended National and Regional Audit Network meetings and staff participated in training and continued professional development activities. The Bi-annual National meeting was held in Kilkenny County Council and with focus on synergy sessions, training needs and the Public Spending Code. The meeting was also attended by several key speakers with presentations given on risk assessment and the Active Travel Scheme.

SUPPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Internal Audit Unit provided administrative support to the Audit Committee in the fulfilling of its duties in 2023. This included preparing the agendas and relevant reporting

documentation for the hosting of 4 Audit Committee meetings online, and the Chairs annual reports to the Council.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 4 occasions in 2023 as per legislative requirements.

Audit Committee Meetings in 2023 were attended by the Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Directors of Service and the Local Government Auditor.

At their meetings the Committee considered and received briefings on:

- Offaly County Council's Annual Financial Statement 2022,
- Offaly County Council's Annual Report 2022,
- Updates on Local Government Audit Service Statutory Auditor's Reports,
- Quarterly finance report and
- Quarterly updates on Internal Audit Plan progression.

The committee were further briefed on follow up reports from the Audit Recommendation Tracking System. Internal Audit staff prepared the following documents:

- Internal Audit Charter 2023,
 - Internal Audit Risk register,
 - Internal Audit Draft Strategic Plan,
 - Internal audit Plan for 2023/2024 and
 - Audit Committee Work Plan 2023/2024
- which were approved by the audit committee as part of their duties throughout the year.

The Committee Chair presented the following to the Council at its meeting on February 19th 2024:

- Audit Committee Annual Report 2023
- Audit Committee Report to Council on 2022 Annual Financial Statement and Local Government Auditor's Report
- Audit Committee Charter 2024
- Audit Committee Work Plan 2024
- Internal Audit Plan 2024

The current Audit Committee members are: Mr. Peter Scully (Chair); Mr. Brian Gunning; Ms. Constance Hanniffy; Mr. Michael Loughnane and Mr. Eugene Mulligan.



Finance, Motor Tax & Procurement



Finance

OUR GOALS

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

OUR STRATEGIES

- Develop and operate 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 Statutory Financial budget that reflects our corporate objectives.
- Enhance the Financial Management System and in particular, the provision of more meaningful financial management information, to support effective business decision making.
- 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 Financing requirements.
- Treasury and Investment Management
- Compliance with all Statutory and DHLGH financial accounting principles, and regulations.

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

- Commercial Rates;

- Local Property Tax;
- Government Grants;
- Agency Water Services
- Housing Rents, Planning Fees and Charges, NPPR, and other sundry Fees

MAIN SECTIONS WITHIN FINANCE FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING

Financial reporting involves the preparation of the Annual Financial Statements (AFS), other statutory returns, regular reporting to the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and external agencies and dealing with the Local Government Audit process.

Management Accounting is the preparation of quarterly management reports to assist with budgetary control and the decision-making process within each directorate. The Annual Budget process is a statutory requirement and is managed in this section, in consultation with all the service divisions. This section also manages variance analysis, costing information and other financial information required for internal and external requests.

REVENUE COLLECTION

This section mainly deals with the collection and receipt of almost all monies due to the Council. This extends to Commercial Rates, Housing Rents and Housing Loans. Occasional SME support schemes are also managed by this section



ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

This unit is responsible for the processing and payment of supplier's invoices, ensuring compliance with all procurement regulations and appropriate statutory deductions. It also ensures compliance with all statutory taxation returns and application of deduction procedures on behalf of the Revenue Commissioners.

MOTOR TAXATION OFFICE / CASH OFFICE

The Council collects vehicle licence duties within its functional area on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). This unit also manages general Cash collection and NPPR certificates. The Section responds to requests for information from the Gardai and other Local Authorities, regarding penalty points, traffic fines, parking fines, etc. Payments are receipted at the counter, electronically and through postal application.

GENERAL LEDGER / AGRASSO SUPPORT

This unit manages the Financial Management System (FMS) and ensures proper control over all the organisations assets and liabilities. Compliance with the national accounting code of practice and enforcement of DHLGH circulars also falls within its remit.

NPPR

This section, accommodated in the Motor Tax office, manages Non-Principal Private Residence receivables.

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 Council Members, Chief Executive and the Management Team. The Local Government (Reform) Act 2014 specifies an extensive statutory budget process, timetable and disclosures, including determination of LPT, to

be completed in advance of the adoption at the Annual Budget Meeting. In 2022, the Council members varied the Local Adjustment Factor 2023 and 2024, as provided for by legislation.

THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT (AFS)

The AFS is produced annually and details 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.

QUARTERLY MANAGEMENT REPORTS

The quarterly 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 are investigated.

DHLGH / IMF QUARTERLY REPORTING

Offaly County Council reports financial performance Quarterly to the DHLGH. These reports consist of a quarterly Income and Expenditure Report, Capital Account report and Debtors report, and are presented to the Council in the CE's monthly report to Council. In addition, various reports are produced for budget holders in Offaly County Council relating to all aspects of the Council's activities. Council Members get a financial update in the CE's monthly report.

2023 FINANCE STATISTICS

Motor Tax

In 2023, the Motor Taxation Office generated approximately €3.5m in revenue via the Motor Tax office directly. In total Offaly Motor Tax processed 89,956 transactions (18.5% issued via Motor Tax Office and 81.5% was processed online).

Revenue Collection Service Indicators

Amount collected as a percentage of the amount due at 2023 year end:

(Draft AFS App 7 percentages)

Rents	93%
Commercial Rates	87%
Housing Loans	94%

Procurement

The Procurement section continues to ensure that Offaly County Council's procurement function drives and facilitates the development of the County, operates in accordance with best practice and all legislative standards in public procurement and achieves effective service delivery. It also endeavours to deliver best value for money, with accountability and transparency across all functions of the organisation. The procurement section's focus is on achieving increased value for money and greater efficiencies through common procurement frameworks where feasible. Procurement within the organisation is decentralised, with buyers in all areas of the council, seeking quotations and utilising the two electronic procurement portals, etenders.gov.ie and SupplyGov.ie.

2023 saw the transition to a new electronic platform for www.etenders.ie. and a change in procurement thresholds as outlined in Circular 05/2023. The Procurement section works with all sections to include Green Public Procurement (GPP), in their procurement processes to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact. In 2023 Offaly County Council:

- Utilised over 30 OGP frameworks
- €2.2 million expenditure on Plant Hire in 2023.
- Advertised 29 tender competitions for works, goods and services on eTenders
- Published 106 competitions through existing frameworks on SupplyGov.ie

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME					
(INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT STATEMENT)					
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2023					
The Income and Expenditure Account Statement brings together all the revenue related income and expenditure.					
It shows the surplus/(deficit) for the year. Transfers to/from reserves are shown separately and not allocated by service division.					
Note 16 allocates transfers by service division in the same format as Table A of the adopted Local Authority budget.					
Expenditure by Division					
		Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Net Expenditure
		2023	2023	2023	2022
	Notes	€	€	€	€
Housing & Building		18,833,111	19,450,117	(617,006)	(1,201,010)
Roads Transportation & Safety		28,373,964	23,495,868	4,878,096	6,051,352
Water Services		5,851,197	5,312,048	539,149	553,426
Development Management		12,389,810	7,426,490	4,963,320	4,385,361
Environmental Services		9,518,579	2,661,025	6,857,554	6,680,332
Recreation & Amenity		4,862,296	338,494	4,523,803	3,859,355
Agriculture, Food and the Marine		680,165	329,016	351,149	289,774
Miscellaneous Services		8,428,417	9,966,341	(1,537,924)	(1,493,911)
Total Expenditure/Income	15	88,937,541	68,979,400		
Net cost of Divisions to be funded from Rates & Local Property Tax				19,958,141	19,124,678
Rates				16,519,381	16,856,641
Local Property Tax				8,317,793	8,401,722
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Transfers	16			4,879,033	6,133,685
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	14			(4,457,403)	(5,708,627)
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year				421,630	425,059
General Reserve @ 1st January 2023				(1,213,190)	(1,638,249)
General Reserve @ 31st December 2023				(791,561)	(1,213,190)

Capital Account Summary - Extract from the Draft Annual Financial Statement

	2023	2022
Balance (Debit)\Credit @ 1 January	20,349,138	14,755,162
Total Expenditure (Incl Transfers)	(46,527,917)	(45,731,832)
Total Income (Incl Transfers)	52,973,213	51,325,808
Balance (Debit)\Credit @ 31 December	26,794,434	20,349,138

Statement Of Internal Financial Control (SIFC)

INTRODUCTION

I, Anna-Marie Delaney, Chief Executive (CE) of Offaly County Council am responsible for the Annual Financial Statement (AFS), prepared by the Head of Finance, in accordance with the accounting code of practice issued by the Minister under section 107 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

I certify that the financial statements of Offaly County Council for the year ended 31 December 2023, are in agreement with the books of account and have been prepared in accordance with the accounting requirements of the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The AFS is subject to external audit, by an auditor of the Local Government Audit Service, whose purpose is to form an independent opinion of the accounts and state whether the annual financial statement presents *fairly the financial position* of the local authority and of its income and expenditure for the period in question, and whether the transactions of the local authority under which they purport to have been carried out.

The AFS reports on the day-to-day activity of Offaly County Council in the form of the Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure, summarised by Division. The Statement of Financial Position outlines the

Offaly County Council overall financial position as of the 31st of December 2023.

The *Statement of Comprehensive Income* represents expenditure and income on the day-to-day running of Offaly County Council.

The key sources of income for Offaly County Council are as follows:

	Current Year 2023 €	Previous Year 2022 €
Goods & Services	22,026,203	19,198,012
Grants & Subsidies	46,354,260	42,545,165
Other Contributions	598,937	672,799
Rates	16,519,381	16,856,641
Local Property Tax	8,317,793	8,401,722

The increased income in Good and Services primarily arises from increases in housing Rents, Uisce Éireann agency charges, and planning fees. Road and Rural and Community Development grants mainly account for the increase in Grants and Subsidies.

Activity on the Income and Expenditure account for 2023 is as follows:

	2023 €	2022 €
Income	93,816,574	87,674,339
Expenditure	88,937,541	81,540,654
Transfers to Capital	4,457,403	5,708,627
Exceptional Item	0	0
Surplus/ (Deficit) for year	421,630	425,059
Prior Year Adjustment	0	0
Opening Revenue Reserve	(1,213,190)	(1,638,249)
Closing Revenue Reserve	(791,561)	(1,213,190)

Offaly County Council continues to eliminate its cumulative deficit and expects to have it eliminated completely by the end of 2025.

The Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) represents the total financial activity of the council for the year together with comparative year figures as appropriate. The statement includes assets and liabilities as follows:

- Assets both recently constructed/ purchased and historical assets
- Work in progress and preliminary schemes- mainly roads and housing
- Long Term Debtors – housing loans
- Current Assets- including Stock, Debtors, Cash at bank
- Current and long-term liabilities- mortgage and non-mortgage loan borrowings
- Various Reserves/Balances

The Net Assets of Offaly County Council at the end of 2023 total € 1,553m and are as follows:

	2023 € m	2022 € m
Fixed Assets	1,528	1,508
Works in Progress	22	17
Long Term debtors	27	28
Current Assets	49	40
Current Liabilities	(19)	(19)
Net Current Assets	30	21
Creditors (Amounts greater than 1 year)	(54)	(55)
Net Assets	1,553	1,519

A Statement of Funds Flow was introduced as part of AFS 2011. While the guidance of International Accounting Standard 7 Statement of Cash Flows has been followed, the business of local authorities is substantially different to most private sector organisations and therefore some minor changes to the format have been agreed to ensure the data displayed is meaningful and useful within the local government sector.

SYSTEM OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROLS

As CE of Offaly County Council, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Offaly County Council. This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to Offaly County Council. Also, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and

properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

FINANCIAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

As CE of Offaly County Council, I confirm that a financial control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- Financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability.
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- Formal procedures have been established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.
- There is an Audit Committee which as part of its work programme regularly review the internal financial control system.
- Procedures for all key business processes have been documented.
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS AND MANAGEMENT REPORTING

As CE of Offaly County Council, I confirm that a framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability and, in particular, that:

- procedures for key business processes have been documented
- there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems
- there are systems in place to safeguard the assets of the local authority and
- there are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines in operation.

PROCUREMENT COMPLIANCE

Offaly County Council ensures that there is an appropriate and ongoing focus on good practice in tendering and purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant procurement guidelines.

INTERNAL AUDIT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

As Chief Executive, I can confirm that Offaly County Council has an internal audit function with appropriately trained personnel, which operates in accordance with a written charter. Its work is informed by analysis of the financial risks to which Offaly County Council is exposed and its annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. I am satisfied that there are procedures in place to ensure that the reports of the internal audit function are followed up. I can confirm that Offaly County Council has an effective audit committee which carries out an annual effectiveness review of their activities. I can also confirm that an Audit Committee is in place in accordance with the requirements of Section 122 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

The statutory functions of audit committees as set out in section 59 and 60 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 are as follows:

- I. to review financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within the local authority that has established it;
- II. to foster the development of best practice in the performance by the local authority of its internal audit function;
- III. to review any audited financial statement, auditor's report or auditor's special report in relation to the local authority and assess any actions taken within that authority by its chief executive in response to such a statement or report and to report to that authority on its findings;

- IV. to assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the local authority's performance of its functions; and
- V. to review systems that are operated by the local authority for the management of risks.

I recognise that the audit committee plays a crucial role in the governance framework of local authorities, particularly in the context of increased public sector accountability. They have an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the local authority. I acknowledge the Audit Committee's role in the risk management process and in the continuing review of the control environment and governance procedures in Offaly County Council.

RISK AND CONTROL FRAMEWORK

Offaly County Council has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, mitigate those risks.

A corporate risk register is in place which identifies the key risks and evaluates and grades them according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the Management Team on a regular basis. There is also a risk register in place for each service

division and these are also reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level. The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibilities for the operation of controls are assigned to specific staff.

As Chief Executive, I confirm that key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

The Statement of Internal Financial Control will be included in the draft Annual Report submitted to Council members by 30 April 2024 and thereafter included in the published Annual Report prepared and adopted by the Council by 30 June 2024.

Signed by:



Anne Marie Delaney
Chief Executive



Fire and Rescue Service



IONAD OILIUM SEIRBHÍ DOTEAM REISIMACHA
REGIONAL FIRE SERVICES TRAINING CENTRE
AN TULLACH MHOIR
TULLAMORE



Offaly Fire & Rescue Service

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 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 2023 Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service were alerted to 606 incidents (298 fire incidents, 308 other emergency incidents). The response to these calls came from 5 stations. The Section 26 Fire and Emergency plan formed the basis for the Fire Service work program 2023. The 2023 budget of €3.2 million maintained the Fire Service.

2023 saw the full resumption of the strict training regime Fire Service Training Program (affected previously by COVID 19).

EQUIPMENT & CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The National Directorate of Fire and Emergency Management has provided approval for new Fire Station in Raheen, Clara and currently the Council is in the process of appointing design consultants. Other highlights include:

- Our new Training and Development Centre in Tullamore has proceeded to construction phase with a completion date of December 2024.

- Funding was also obtained in 2023 from the National Directorate for the provision of a new incident command vehicle and two 4WD Jeeps.
- The Breathing Apparatus Training Centre in Tullamore is utilised for the training of Offaly Firefighters and is leased by other Fire Authorities and non-Local Authority organisations.

FIRE PREVENTION & BUILDING CONTROL

Offaly County Council Fire Service received 83 Fire Safety Certificate applications and dealt with license applications and conducted 71 fire safety inspections.

Offaly Fire & Rescue service developed a Community Fire Safety Strategy which focuses on Home fire safety and fire prevention. The Building Control function (inspection and monitoring of new works) of the Council is integrated into the fire service. There were 369 new buildings notified on commencement notices with 56 building inspected.



Offaly Fire and Rescue Service maintained its 'ISO 9001 Quality Management System' accreditation by NSAI.

MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Both the Local and the Regional Major Emergency Plan were maintained, reviewed and revised by the Major Emergency Development Committee.

Throughout the pandemic Offaly County Council participated in meetings of both the Regional Steering Group and the Regional Working Group for Major Emergency Management to coordinate the interagency response to the pandemic both regionally and locally.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

During 2023 Offaly County Council Fire and Rescue Service maintained its 'ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Management System' accreditation.

Offaly Civil Defence

Following on from a successful six months of recertification and engagement in 2022, the number of volunteer recruits increased and brought new life and enthusiasm to Offaly Civil Defence.

Nationally there was also changes a foot with a new Civil Defence Bill going through various stages in the Oireachtas. Offaly Civil Defence Officer represented the organisation at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence in Government buildings in March 2023. The Civil Defence Act 2023 was signed by the President on June 26th, 2023, and was commenced on 18th July 2023. The Act provides a consolidated modern legislative basis for Civil Defence and the long awaited (VEMS) system, Volunteer Equipment Management System for Civil Defence Volunteers and Equipment Management saw an investment of over €1,000,000 in Civil Defence nationally. This will further help the effective management and record keeping for the organisation in the future.

During 2023 Offaly Civil Defence locally provided medical support at over forty-five community events across the county, midlands region and country including

- Offaly Athletics events across the County during the year
- the Beet on the Peat Festival in Belmont,
- Community walks and cycle trials in the Slieve blooms,
- National Bike Week events including the Local Authority Grand Canal cycle from Edenderry to Pollagh and
- Púca Spooka in Lloyd Park Tullamore
- President Joe Biden visit to Ballina
- National Ploughing Championships
- National Ambulance Service Training Day
- Open day, in association with Offaly Fire & Rescue Service.

Other improvements included a new Communications Unit and an all-terrain off-road vehicle. The final conversion to this vehicle should be completed and ready for deployment at the end of Q1- 2024.

In December we held our Annual Awards evening and this event was attended by Cathaoirleach Cllr. Eddie Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Fire Officer Eoin O' Ceilleachair and Director of Service Ann Dillon. Presentations were made to those long service volunteers (Ten, Twenty, Thirty, Forty and Fifty years of service) while letters of appreciation were also presented to the long service participants from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence by Offaly Civil Defence Officer Fergal Conroy.

2023 has brought a new change and direction to Offaly Civil Defence and with the continued support of all involved and the implementation of the 'Towards 2030 Civil Defence Policy' Offaly County Council will play its part in the future development of the organisation and continue to support the Principal Response Agencies in the years ahead.

Housing



Housing for All, the government's plan to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 units per year over the next decade, was launched in September 2021. The measures, outlined in the plan, are supported by over €4 billion in guaranteed State funding every year.

The social housing build targets for Offaly County Council are:

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Build	180	67	68	73	75	463

Offaly County Council continued to progress and deliver on the objectives and targets set out in the adopted Housing Delivery Action Plan.

SOCIAL HOUSING LIST AND ALLOCATIONS

Successful applicants on the Social Housing Support List are supported through a variety of Social Housing options, including:

- Tenancy of a Council Property
- RAS and other Social Housing Leasing Options
- Housing provided by Approved Housing Bodies
- HAP (Housing Assistance Payment).

At the end of 2023 there were

- 523 qualified applications on the Social Housing Waiting List,
- 606 in receipt of Housing Support via Housing Assistance Payments (HAP).
- 215 were supported in various leasing arrangements and
- a further 80 had Mortgage to Rent applications concluded with the Local Authority.

Throughout the year, allocations to social housing continued and in all 170 families received keys to their new homes during 2023, i.e., 87 families received keys to their new Council owned properties; 78 were nominated

and received keys to Approved Housing Bodies homes; and a further 2 were allocated to leasing units. 3 Mortgage to Rent arrangements were finalized.

SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

The Council provides accommodation for those on the Approved Social Housing Support List by a variety of means.

Council Direct Build Programme

In 2023 the Council completed **29** direct build units in

- Kylebeg, Banagher (18 Units);
- Elderberry Drive, Moneygall (4 Units) and
- Beechgrove, Belmont (7 units).

At the end of 2023 there are **51** direct build units on site - Raheen, Clara (38 units) and Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 Units) and Circular Road, Daingean (9 units). There are **70** further houses with Department approval and other proposals in Tullamore, Birr, Daingean, Ballycumber and Shinrone to be progressed over the lifetime of Housing for All.

Turnkey & Part V

In 2023, 25 new units were completed and allocated via Turnkey/Part V in Tullamore, Daingean and Edenderry. There were a further 48 units on-site at the end of 2023 due for delivery in 2024 in Tullamore, Birr, Daingean, Edenderry and Portarlington. There are



further units under consideration following an expression of interest competition held in 2023. The Council continues to liaise with developers on the provision of Part V units as new developments are lodged for planning and are granted planning permission.

Approved Housing Bodies (AHB)

Offaly County Council continued to effectively engage with several AHBs throughout 2023 and nominated households from the Social Housing Support List for AHB housing stock. 58 units were delivered in Tullamore through the CALF and CAS financial models. Sophia Housing advanced their planning application for the delivery of 37 social housing units in Portarlinton.

Acquisitions

The 'Winter Emergency Period' under the Residential Tenancies (Deferment of Termination Dates of Certain Tenancies) Act 2022 ceased on the 31st March 2023. The Council worked closely with Tenants who had received a valid Notice of Termination and engaged with Landlords that were seeking to sell their house. 26 Tenant in Situ acquisitions

were finalised in 2023, with a further 10 being progressed to sale agreed status.

The Council acquired an additional 19 Part V units, for allocation across the county. All acquired units required refurbishment works that the council are progressing on an ongoing basis.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

Offaly County Council's Homeless Action Team continued to meet on a regular basis throughout the year. The collaborative interagency approach ensured that those presenting as homeless received advice and assistance to meet their needs. On 31st December 2023, there were 15 families and 35 single people in emergency accommodation.

Offaly is part of the Midlands Regional (Westmeath, Laois, Longford, Offaly) Joint Consultative Homeless Forum which develops and co-ordinates homeless policy in the Midlands Region. The acquisition of Clonamore Hotel by Sophia Housing Association in partnership with Midland Simon was supported by the Midlands Regional Joint Consultative Homeless Forum and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

Following a tendering process, in 2020, the Midlands Regional Joint Consultative Homeless Forum awarded The Peter McVerry Trust the Housing First Programme on a 3-year basis. In accordance with the contract it will be reviewed in 2024. A few individuals, experiencing long term homelessness in Offaly, continue to be supported by the Peter McVerry Trust during 2023.

The Council's HAP Place Finder continued to work with persons in emergency accommodation or with those at risk of becoming homeless and assisted several applicants to secure HAP accommodation throughout the year. The Council's HAP Place Finder worked with all tenant households who had received a valid Notice of Termination. Engagements with Landlords helped to secure sustainable outcomes for many households.

SAFEHOMES PROGRAMME

Working in partnership with Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services, TUSLA, Oaklee Housing Association and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage three Safe Homes were delivered in 2023, one in each Municipal Districts. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the relevant parties.

MAINTENANCE AND REFURBISHMENT

The Council's housing stock increased to 2,110 properties by 31st December 2023.

The number of maintenance calls rose from 3,745 in 2022 to 3,872 in 2023.

ENERGY RETROFITTING

Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) runs to 2030 and represents significant upscaling from 'shallow' to 'deeper retrofit' on what has been completed by Local Authorities to date. Funding provides for the installation of a Heat Pump. Insulation, windows and doors are only permitted if calculations show that

the Heat Pump requires fabric upgrades. The average spend per unit provided for by the Department is €34,000, accordingly Offaly County Council is progressing a blend of houses. This will ensure that the Council is both maximising the number of units and funding available under the current scheme. In all, 99 Local Authority homes have been retrofitted to achieve a minimum B2 energy rating since 2021.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Housing Liaison Officers continued to work with tenants, Residents Associations, Offaly Sports Partnership, Arts, Libraries and our IT Section to provide a variety of projects.

The Estate Management Interagency Committee, established under the aegis of the Joint Policing Committee met on several occasions to advance a number of interagency initiatives.

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOME LOANS (LAHL)

28 LAHL applications were received in 2023, 8 of which were approved in principle.

TENANT PURCHASE SCHEME

Applications are progressed under the Revised Tenant Purchase Scheme. 45 Tenant Purchase applications were received in 2023, of which 28 were approved in principle, 9 were deemed not eligible and 8 applications were under consideration at year end.

HOUSING AND DISABILITY STEERING GROUP

Offaly County Council continues to provide supports for Older Persons and Persons with a Disability. Offaly adopted *the Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability, 2022 to 2026* in 2021, ensuring there is a comprehensive and integrated approach to the provision of suitable housing supports for persons with disabilities.

“ Offaly County Council reported that 37 persons with a disability received an allocation during 2023. ”

In accordance with the National Implementation Policy, Offaly’s Housing and Disability Steering Group revised their Terms of Reference. The forum provides all stakeholders including the HSE, AHBs, representatives from the disability sectors and persons with a disability to engage and actively progress the goals and strategies provided for in the National Implementation Plan and in *Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability, 2022 to 2026*.

In accordance with objective 7 of *Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland* quarterly updates will be provided by the Housing and Disability Steering Group to the Housing SPC and the Chief Executive.

Offaly County Council reported that 37 persons with a disability received an allocation during 2023. The breakdown of these allocations was: physical 24; sensory 8; mental health 4; and intellectual 1.

PRIVATE GRANT SCHEMES

€1,600,000 was awarded under the private grant schemes in 2023. Housing in administering the Scheme awarded 150 grants across the three categories that were available to applicants. This grant is 80% funded by the Department.

Grants were awarded under the three grant categories as follows:

- Mobility Aids Grant Scheme - 13
- Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme - 54
- Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme - 83

DISABLED PERSONS WORKS ON LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSES

Funding of €615,915, received under the Disabled Persons Programme, provided for works on 24 Local Authority homes including 4 extensions and 20 adaptations.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

Departmental approval to appoint a Traveller Tenancy Sustainment Officer was received during mid-2021. Under this pilot programme the Traveller Tenancy Sustainment Officer works with those from the Traveller community with their tenancy, be that a HAP or allocation to a Local Authority unit.

The Local Traveller Consultative Committee (LTACC) met on 4 occasions during 2023. Work on implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 continued.

PRIVATE RENTED PROPERTY INSPECTIONS

Offaly County Council is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019. The contract with Inspex Ltd., who were engaged in 2020 to do private rented inspections in Offaly, ceased in 2023. Work on the development of a new tender for private rented inspections to be in place for 2024.



Human Resources



The role of the HR Department is to recruit, retain and support a competent workforce, to deliver organisational priorities and act as the key driver for organisational change and development.

The work of the Department is broadly divided into eight key areas:

- Recruitment & Retention of staff
- Staff Training and Development
- Payroll & Superannuation
- Employee Welfare
- Performance Management
- Industrial Relations
- Workforce Planning
- Workplace Policies

STAFFING

The total staff complement at 31st December 2023 in comparison with 31st December 2008 when the public service moratorium on employment was introduced is set out below. The total Staff Headcount includes the non-DHLG&H posts and Retained Fire-Fighters posts. This represents the significant increase in recruitment in recent years where the workforce is returning to 2008 levels.

Year	Total Staff Headcount	Non-DHLG&H Posts	Retained Fire Fighters
2008	516	12	63
2023	512	14	51

RECRUITMENT

Significant recruitment took place during the year including several major competitions in entry grades across administrative, technical, professional and specialist posts. 47 different competitions were held over the year and resulted in 78 new staff joining the organisation.

TRAINING & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff training was delivered based on the following priorities: -

1. Mandatory Health & Safety Training
2. Identified corporate needs and priorities
3. Training needs identified by staff in their Personal Development Plans

Additional funding was again provided by the Members in the training budget for 2023 specifically for the purposes of funding a scheme of financial assistance for staff undertaking further studies as part of their career/personal development. This funding was used to support staff wishing to undertake the Local Government Certificate and Diploma course in the Institute of Public Administration as well as Master's Degree and Post Graduate Courses. 23 staff members availed of this funding in 2023. This positive move continues to be welcomed by staff and is particularly important for new staff working in the local authority sector for the first time.

The following is a summary of the range of training delivered across the organisation throughout the year: -

HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING COURSES

30 courses were held over 55 training days in 2023

OTHER TRAINING COURSES

43 courses were held over 51 training days in 2023

“ *The Human Resources Department continued to implement its Employee Assistance Programme through service providers Spectrum Life during 2023.* ”

HR PAYROLL / SUPERANNUATION

The HR Payroll / Superannuation section continued to administer and monitor the Council Payroll and Superannuation requirements during the year. This included administering pay increases agreed under the National Pay Agreements.

EMPLOYEE WELFARE

The Human Resources Department continued to implement its Employee Assistance Programme through service providers Spectrum Life during 2023. In addition, arrangements were made to roll-out a Covid 19 booster programme for employees during the year in conjunction with the HSE.

The following Work-life Balance Arrangements and other employee welfare schemes also continued to be facilitated for employees during 2023:

1. Parental Leave
2. Work-sharing
3. Shorter Working Year
4. Parents Leave
5. Paternity Leave
6. Cycle to Work scheme

INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The Human Resources Department manages the Council's relationship with trade unions and staff representatives dealing with both local and national issues as they arise. The

main issues that arose in 2023 involved the transition of Water Services to Uisce Éireann, the new Fire Services Agreement and the Job Evaluation claim from FORSA. In addition, the on-going implementation of the requirements of the Public Service Agreements continued during 2023.

GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING

Offaly County Council published its second Gender Pay Gap report in December 2023. The report highlighted a positive gender pay gap and work is ongoing in this regard.

BLENDED WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Human Resource Department implemented and rolled-out a Blended Working policy and resulting arrangements in line with Government policy.

RETIREMENTS

The following staff retired during 2023:

- Frank Shaughnessy
- Gerard Brophy
- Bernadette Doheny
- Gerard Smith
- Vincent Heaton
- Patrick O'Connell
- Martin Crowe
- Patrick Pilkington
- Denis O'Meara Jnr



Information Systems



The Information Systems department manages the Council's entire ICT hardware and software infrastructure as well as Cloud Services. The infrastructure is spread across approximately fifty locations in the County and is utilised by close to 500 staff and associates. With increasing reliance on ICT to help business connectivity and productivity, it's more important than ever that Offaly County Council collaborates with other Local Authorities. Information Systems staff in Offaly are key to collaboration on Cyber Security and Digital Systems across the sector.

- Information Systems staff participated in the formation of a new Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy 'Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone' which sets out how the local government sector will significantly develop digital services, digital communities, digital workforce, and digital systems by 2030.
- ePlanning was adopted in Offaly, which enables planning files to be uploaded to the portal rather than being printed out. ePlanning also enables easier management of a planning application from making an application, viewing the application files, making a submission, right through to the final decision.
- Offaly.ie was completely upgraded to a new Platform to include content migration and LGMA service catalogue referencing. Offaly.ie will be the main portal for Council services working in conjunction with our partners in Business and Tourism to develop a consistent online presence for Offaly.
- A Cybersecurity management role was approved and filled. Information Systems staff continue to work in line with the Public Sector Cyber Security Baseline Standards and the new role will allow for a more coordinated approach to address cyber security risks. Information Systems continue to collaborate closely with the National Cyber Security Centre and other public sector bodies to reduce the threat of cyber incidents. Cybersecurity awareness among staff is key to maintaining a secure network. All staff receive regular training in Cybersecurity.
- New payment methods were introduced for several services using the MyCoCo platform. This will enable rates, rents and loans customers to pay and view their account details online and will allow for future expansion of other payment types via the MyCoCo platform.
- Network connectivity for Water staff moving to Uisce Éireann was re-engineered along with changes to how remote sites connect; to increase communications system resiliency and useability. Support for the NWCPO, Libraries, Fire Services and Stores continues with new network connectivity systems being trialed for low-bandwidth sites.
- Helpdesk staff completed over 7,200 calls in 2023. The Helpdesk remains a top priority for the Information Systems section as we enable our colleagues to be more productive. A reduction in calls means that we have a more stable set of platforms which in turn leads to better outcomes for staff and customers and enables Information Systems staff to concentrate on areas such as digital transformation.
- A full upgrade of our Microsoft Office suite was carried out for all staff. This ensures they have a more collaborative and secure platform to work from.
- Adoption of Cloud Services in Operational IT, to enable a more mobile workforce and ensure better business continuity when

connectivity issues occur; whether working remotely, or in the Office. Disaster Recovery (DR) testing was carried out for certain DR scenarios and business users were able to test connectivity in the case that DR needed to be invoked.

- Digital Transformation – Digital transformation is the integration of digital technology into all areas of our business, fundamentally changing how we operate and deliver value to customers. New and interim solutions were adopted for systems such as Planning Enforcements, Environmental Complaints and Blended Working. Work to reduce the overall power consumption of ICT assets was carried out which will help the organisation achieve better outcomes with climate action objectives.
- Upgrades to systems were carried out such as Local Enterprise CRM system, Planning Documents system, Housing systems and the Financial Management System.

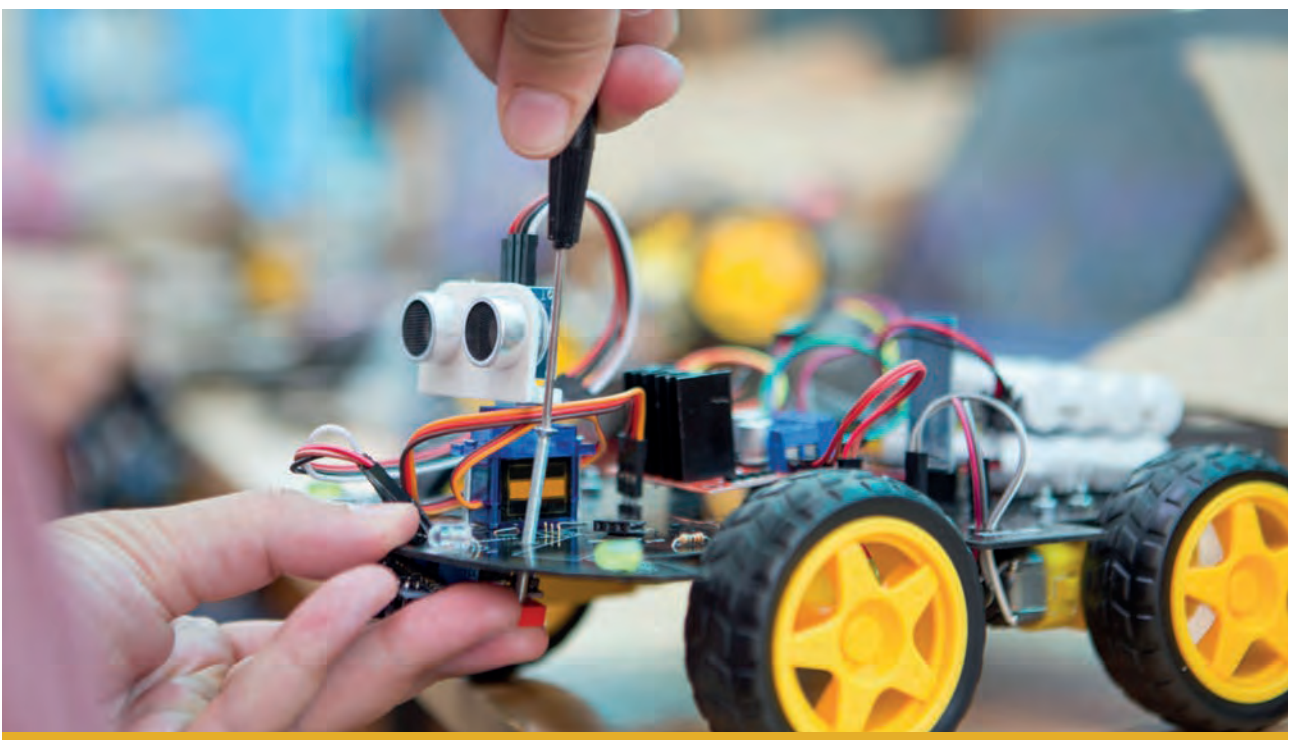
BROADBAND / DIGITAL

Offaly County Council Broadband Officer acts as a dedicated point of contact

within County Offaly for engagement with telecommunications providers and assists with preparing the rollout of the National Broadband Plan within the county. The Broadband / Digital Officer plays a vital role in developing telecommunications and broadband services throughout Offaly. This is achieved by working closely with industry and participating with Regional and National Action Groups. Offaly County Council Digital Strategy ensures that the benefits of infrastructure development under the National Broadband Plan are fully realised from an economic and social perspective. This strategy aims to enable Offaly to leverage broadband and digital technologies for rural regeneration. The Broadband / Digital Office will also liaise with Council Departments, colleagues, councillors, local communities, and funding channels to link and coordinate activities and projects supporting the Digital Strategy.

In 2023 the main projects were:

- Public/Community Free Public Wi-Fi in over 100 locations in Offaly.
 - 40 community centres now have high speed broadband and Wi-Fi installed.



- Working with Community Section / OLCD on opportunities for new sites.
- National Broadband Plan - 1672 Homes can now get Fibre - NBI continue to survey in other areas in Offaly and we are working to escalate delivery in Offaly.
- Connected Hubs - Offaly 9 Hubs and we continue to support the development of sustainable remote working, coworking and business workspaces.
- Investment in Fibre Infrastructure in Offaly
 - SIRO Announced €10 Million Investment in Full Fibre Broadband Network for Offaly Towns (Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry & Portarlington).
 - OpenEir continue to rollout fibre in Offaly.
 - Ongoing work with all Telecommunication Companies on rollout of highspeed Broadband and 5G in Offaly
- Digital Skills / Education - STEAM Education
 - Full time STEM Education Officer working directly with primary and post primary school in Offaly throughout 2023 conducted over 200 visits to schools to help and assist students and teachers.
 - Offaly VEX Robotics Championships 2023 with over 2000 students taking part.
 - Tubber National School represented Offaly and Ireland at VEX Robotics World Championship in USA in May 2023 and represented Offaly with distinction.
 - DojoMór - Coding Event for Children 7-17 - Offaly involved with eight third level colleges - Oct 2023.
 - LOETB STEAM Programme aimed at 1st and 2nd year students. (Vex Robotics, First Lego League, Microsoft Minecraft & Podcasting/Digital Media
- Collaboration with Education and Learning Providers to support Digital Education and Training opportunities.
 - Partnership between Offaly / Laois County Council and Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board where we are working with teacher to get their "HDip in Science in Computing for Educators" via ATU (Atlantic Technological University) Letterkenny which will enable post primary school to offer Computer Science as a Leaving Cert Subject.
- Midlands ICT Cluster - Midland ICT Skills & Talent
 - Working with Industry, Education and Government to develop a digitally skilled workforce in areas such as advanced manufacturing, robotics, engineering, software, and data analytics,
 - By collaborating across the counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath, we're working to embed digital education programmes in schools across the region. The region is investing in future generations by giving them the skills required for jobs, which may not be considered yet.
- DreamBig program, students engage in hands-on activities covering Digitalisation, Robotics, Engineering, Automation and Manufacturing. This industry-driven initiative aims to inspire, engage, and support young people to pursue advanced manufacturing as a career.

Offaly Library Service



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

205,443
Physical & Online
Issues



186,571
Visitors

+119% 
MORE FREE EVENTS

+67% 
MORE ATTENDEES

 **+16%**
**MORE LOANS
ON BORROWBOX**

+80% 
**MORE NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Offaly County Library Service continues to deliver on the objectives of the National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027: *The Library is the Place: Information, Recreation, Inspiration*, and of Offaly Libraries outgoing interim development plan: *Creating Collaborative Communities, 2022-2023*, which was adopted by Offaly County Council in January 2022.

Consultations and preparations for a new Library Development Plan for 2024-2028, are currently underway.

Strategic national programmes under *The Library is the Place* will include the following;

- **People** (*Reading & Literacy Festivals, Libraries for All - Collections, Programmes & Inclusion, Skills for Life*)
- **Spaces** (*The Library as the Centre of the Community, Buildings & Sense of Place, Sustainability & Climate Action Our Digital Offer*)
- **Connections & Culture** (*Partnerships & Collaborations, Community & Cultural Provision, R&D and Promotion*)

“ Work has been ongoing throughout 2023 on the development of a new library and multi-purpose arts space at 33-34 JKL Street, Edenderry, Co. Offaly. ”

2023 PERFORMANCE

Library staff promoted quality services and worked to utilise our unique civic spaces to strengthen the role of libraries as gateways to and transmitters of cultural works, skills, and experience.

Particular efforts were made to embed Social Inclusion, Climate Adaptation and Accessibility into our service models in support of increasing user engagement in 2023.

The Library Service is pleased to report an increase in user engagement across a variety of formats and platforms, as detailed in our performance highlights in the table below

CAPITAL PROJECT: EDENDERRY LIBRARY AND MULT-PURPOSE ARTS SPACE

Work has been ongoing throughout 2023 on the development of a new library and multi-purpose arts space at 33-34 JKL Street, Edenderry, Co. Offaly. This project is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development in partnership with Offaly County Council through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

The project will consist of a new two-storey community library and arts space to include adult, teen and children’s libraries, multipurpose space and Artists’ studios as well as ancillary support spaces such as library meeting rooms and Sensory Room. Part 8 Planning was granted in January 2024.

Performance	2023	2022	%
Library Visits	186,571	149,587	+25%
All Issues	205,443	202,017	+2%
Events	3,011	1,372	+119%
Attendees	30,099	18,041	+67%
ICT Usage	55,965	54,204	+3%
eBook Issues	31,060	26,632	+16%
Social Media Follows	11,022	10,174	+8%
Newsletter Subscribers	3,104	1,723	+80%

2023 DEPARTMENTAL GRANT AWARDS TO OFFALY LIBRARIES

Securing grant funding has enabled Offaly Libraries to build upon successful programmes and develop new relationships. Some highlights worthy of mention include:

- **€58,000 DRCD Funding** for ICT upgrades to public devices, making our public libraries more accessible and digitally inclusive places for all.
- **€8,000 CYPSC Funding:** Allowing for Sensory Offaly Programme and Parenting Support Programme, in partnership with Laois Libraries
- **€6,000 Healthy Ireland Funding:** Provision of Age Friendly Seating and a programme of Events for all age groups.
- **€4,000 Integration Funding through CYPSC & DCEDIY:** Events for Children and their families living in International Protection Accommodation Services.
- **€1,250 Tusla Funding:** Book Supports for the Ukrainian Community

MY OPEN LIBRARY SERVICE RETURNS TO OFFALY LIBRARIES

2023 saw improved Banagher, Ferbane and Tullamore MOL services fully operational and a new My Open Library due in early 2024 at Kilcormac Library.

ICT & DIGITAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS IN OFFALY LIBRARIES

Virtual Tours were delivered for each library branch in support of Offaly Libraries' accessibility commitments. These tours can be accessed online at offaly.ie/libraries, providing a comprehensive preview of the services available at each library in a user-friendly format before visiting in person.

As part of the broader redevelopment efforts on the [Offaly.ie](https://offaly.ie) website, a new landing page was introduced for Offaly Libraries. The fresh design showcases a wide range of accessible

information about our library branches, services, and programmes.

Since the implementation of a new Library Management System, library users have made excellent use of their online accounts, having **reserved over 10,500 items** and **renewed over 12,500 items** in 2023, Offaly Libraries online catalogue received over **214,000 visits** in 2023 alone.

In September 2023, Offaly Libraries launched an additional targeted newsletter, 'The Bookmark Bulletin,' aimed at schools, educators, and youth workers to highlight the educational support services on offer through the library.

Currently, the school newsletter boasts **130 subscribers**, while our general newsletter has grown to over **3,100 subscribers**.

Offaly Libraries introduced a new eResource for children. **Moshi** aims to enhance the social and emotional well-being of children aged 0 - 10 by assisting them in navigating complex emotions such as sadness, self-confidence, frustration, or empathy.

The app is child-friendly, has zero ads, and offers over 400 pieces of custom content, all free to Offaly Libraries' patrons.

LIBRARY BUILDINGS DEVELOPMENTS

My Open Library and improved wayfinding were installed at Tullamore, Ferbane and Banagher libraries in 2023.

Banagher Library has been revamped with refurbishments completed in early 2023. The installation of accessible shelving and new furnishings has transformed the space into a bright and inviting environment.

OFFALY LIBRARIES SENSORY OFFALY INITIATIVE

Sensory Offaly provides access to essential resources, toys, equipment, and information to support children, young adults and adults with disabilities, additional needs and learning challenges. Harnessing funding opportunities offered by CYPSC, Offaly Libraries delivered a series of **11 events for 115 attendees**, focussing on play and sensory workshops.

Offaly Libraries also have a purpose-built Sensory Room at Tullamore Library, a Sensory Space at Edenderry Library and is in the process of developing a third Sensory Space at Birr Library. In 2023, we welcomed over **2,300 users** to our Sensory Spaces.

PARENTING PROGRAMME AUTUMN 2023 SERIES

Offaly Libraries, together with Laois Libraries, were delighted to co-deliver **34 of online talks and in-person workshops** with **278 attending** the events in 2023.

Supported by Laois Offaly Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC), the Parenting Support Programme invites experts to discuss a broad range of parenting topics currently impacting children.

OFFALY LIBRARIES STEAM PROGRAMME

Supported by Creative Ireland, Offaly Libraries innovative STEAM Programme has evolved into a county-wide coordination of workshops and

events for all audiences in 2023.

Specifically aligned with national Science Festivals, our libraries continued to promote STEAM subjects year round with regular Lego Freeplay sessions, VEX Robotics events, Virtual Reality experiences and demonstrations of our 3D printer. Offaly Libraries welcomed over **2,300 participants** to STEAM events in 2023.

Offaly Libraries STEAM 2023 programme, as part of Offaly County Council's wider STEM initiative, was recognised with **LAMA's 'Best Communications / Innovation Award'** for 'STEAMing Ahead: How Offaly's Kids are Shaping our Rural Future' in February 2024.

OFFALY LIBRARY SERVICE – COMMUNITY RESPONSE

There are many services offered by **Offaly Libraries** as part of the wider Offaly County Council Community Response Forum.

Integration Funding secured through CYPSC & DCEDIY allowed Offaly Libraries to deliver **13 events for 267 children and their families**, aimed at supporting families living in International Protection Accommodation Services centres in integrating into their local communities. These events were delivered in Banagher and Tullamore Libraries,

Offaly Libraries are proud to offer books in languages other than English, including Ukrainian, as well as online resources supporting readers in languages other than English. A leaflet



was produced in Ukrainian detailing the many services on offer at Offaly Libraries.

Supporting National Right to Read Initiatives: Right to Read is a national initiative supporting literacy and reading development through annual events.

Offaly Libraries co-ordinated a host of events for each strand of the programme, all of which were a huge success!

Right to Read Programme	2023	2022	%
Spring into Storytime	2,707	387	+599%
Summer Stars	4,997	896	+558%
Summer Stars Sign ups	1,891	1,267	+149%
Children's Book Festival	1,801	1,195	+151%
Family Time at your Library	3,099	1,826	+170%

SPRING INTO STORYTIME 2023

Library staff delivered an amazing array of **108 free events to 2,707 attendees** for Spring Into Storytime during March and April.

SUMMER STARS 2023

More than 1,890 children registered for the Summer Stars Reading Adventure with Offaly Libraries and **4,997 participants** attended **251 free events**.

CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL 2023

Offaly Libraries curated a range of events with **1,801 attendees** for Children's Book Festival. Author visits, story-telling and craft sessions were hosted during October.

FAMILY TIME AT YOUR LIBRARY 2023

Offaly Libraries coordinated an array of festive events, enjoyed by **over 3,000 participants** as part of our Family Time at Your Library celebrations, including Story Times, Christmas Carolling and Family Movie screenings.

IRELAND READS DAY, 25TH FEBRUARY 2023

Offaly Libraries embraced this National Day of Reading, encouraging people in Offaly to **'Squeeze in a Read'** for the month of February and especially on Saturday, 25th February, Ireland Reads Day.

Offaly Libraries coordinated **25 countywide events with 578 attendees**, including story times, crafts, school visits, drop in sessions for our digital services, author visits and illustration workshops.

FIRST 5 LITTLE LIBRARY INITIATIVE, 2023

Offaly Libraries distributed over **1,700 bedtime storybooks** to children under 4 years of age as part of the First 5 Strategy.

816 Little Library book Bags were gifted to children due to start school in September 2023 under the My Little Library Book Bag initiative. Children were invited to join their local library and pick up their own library card wallets.

Library staff **visited 36 Early Learning Centres** in 2023 to promote the initiatives.

SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE LE LEABHARLANNA UÍBH FHAILÍ

Offaly Libraries curated an excellent variety of events for all ages and abilities during Seachtain na Gaeilge in 2023.

150 participants were encouraged to use their cúpla focail at **30 events**, including storytime and crafts for kids as well as special movie

“ Offaly Libraries, working with LGMA, Dept. of Health and local Healthy Ireland partners, delivered a varied programme of free events both online and in branch. ”

screenings ‘as Gaeilge’ for older audiences. We are very proud to have three, well established Comhrá groups who meet in Birr, Clara and Tullamore Libraries on a weekly basis. In 2023, these groups held **75 meetings** with an **attendance of 525**.

CRUINNIU NA NÓG, SATURDAY 10TH JUNE

On Saturday 10th June, over **254 children** from all over the county were captivated by **28 free events** organised for Cruinniú na nÓg, delivered by Offaly Libraries on behalf of Offaly County Council.

In the run up to Cruinniú, Offaly Libraries commissioned several development projects with local schools including Film-Making, Creative Writing and Clay Modelling.

OFFALY LIBRARIES COMIC CON, SATURDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Tullamore Library delivered its fourth instalment of **Offaly Libraries Comic Con** on Saturday 16th September 2023. Library staff welcomed over **1,300 visitors to Tullamore Library** throughout the day.

Free creative workshops and activities were on offer in our Creative Zone, with over **60 participants** in Fantasy Map Making, Mythological Character Building and Lego workshops.

The family-friendly event also featured a wide variety of activities for children of all ages including Dungeons and Dragons sessions, Lego Freeplay, VEX Robotics and Virtual Reality experiences.

Kindly co-funded by Creative Ireland, Offaly Libraries Comic Con is a shining light of innovation, creativity and fun within Offaly Libraries’ calendar.

HEALTHY IRELAND AT YOUR LIBRARY

Offaly Libraries, working with LGMA, Dept. of Health and local Healthy Ireland partners, delivered a varied programme of free events both online and in branch. **11 events** focussing on health-related topics such as Menopause, Cyber Safety, Mindfulness and Self Harm, to name but a few, were delivered to **267 attendees**.

AGE FRIENDLY AT OFFALY LIBRARIES

We are proud to announce that in 2023, each of our libraries have received the **Age Friendly Charter** from Age Friendly Ireland.

Our libraries offer a variety of assistive service for older patrons, including a new Age Friendly Assistance Trolley at Tullamore Library. Magnifying Glass Readers and Hearing Loops have been installed in all library branches.

Offaly Libraries successfully delivered a vibrant and varied programme of **20 events** in celebration of **Bealtaine Festival** in May 2023.

We welcomed **182 attendees** to Tea and Coffee mornings, LOETB Wreath Making workshops, Gramophone Concerts, Storytelling sessions, and a talk on Smartphone Photography. Bealtaine is an Age & Opportunity Arts initiative. Offaly Libraries, kindly co-funded by **Creative Ireland**.

Our libraries coordinated **20 events** around the county to help celebrate **Positive Ageing Week** in October 2023. Coffee Mornings, Chair Yoga, Intergenerational Music with Music Generation and Mindfulness sessions were delivered to **169 attendees**.

PRIORITIES FOR 2024

- Progress capital development of a new community library and arts space in Edenderry
- Introduce and adopt a new Library Development Plan for 2024 – 2028
- Embed strategic alignments and maximise funding opportunities at a local, national and European level
- Launch My Open Library services at Kilcormac Library
- Showcase Offaly Libraries as the heart of reading and literacy development within our communities
- Progress service and building improvements in library facilities across the county
- Contribute to local and national climate and environmental objectives by providing information and programmes for the community via libraries.
- Libraries at the heart of communities, creating a ‘sense of place’. Continue to promote social inclusion and develop



innovative partnerships and meaningful in-person community and cultural event programmes

- Increase accessibility and library engagement by developing traditional and digital collections, services and library technology
- Increase active membership by encouraging users back into library spaces
- Strengthen the partnership between Offaly Archives Service and Offaly Libraries, and further promote Offaly Archives and Offaly Libraries Local Studies services
- Raise the library profile locally, nationally and internationally through in person advocacy, and online promotions to include newsletters, blogs, interactive cultural programmes and social media campaigns.
- Review, monitor and evaluate library service activities. in line with all local and national service indicator requirements, for the benefit of the community

LEO Offaly and Economic Development



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LEO Offaly manages the Enterprise, Economic Development and Tourism Functions within Offaly County Council. The Head of Enterprise reports to the Director of Services for Economic Development and Planning, and Enterprise Ireland.

Through a wide range of activities and targeted work programmes, Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Offaly is working hard to deliver Offaly County Council's Mission Statement "To lead sustainable economic, social and community development in Offaly."

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The Local Enterprise Office produces a four-year Enterprise Development Plan. The implementation of the 2021 -2024 LEO Offaly Enterprise Development Plan requires LEO Offaly to deliver a wide range of initiatives.

Core Activities Include:

- First Stop Shop for anyone thinking of setting up or growing a business
- Business Advice, Mentoring and Coaching
- Enterprise Training
- Networking Events and Seminars
- Finance, Grants and Loan Finance
- Promoting Entrepreneurship

KEY ENTERPRISE HIGHLIGHTS 2023

Active Engagement with Offaly Enterprises to support them post-pandemic, post-BREXIT and through the energy crisis

LEO Offaly staff proactively reach out to clients and Offaly enterprises to hear about business issues, and to advise the business owners of relevant supports. Business owners are receiving support through targeted mentoring, enterprise and management training, funding, and networking. LEO Offaly also provides consultancy days to assist with business strategy and development. LEO Offaly is actively encouraging business owners to engage with their LEO office when times are going well, and when there are difficulties. Our monthly electronic newsletter issues to 5,000+ subscribers.

Training, Seminars and Events

Throughout the year, LEO Offaly delivers a wide range of enterprise training and business events. In 2023, LEO Offaly continued to deliver many training programmes online while also arranging a number of in-person training and networking events. In 2023, 691 business people participated in our enterprise training programmes and 221 people availed of one to one mentoring assignments.

In 2023, LEO Offaly worked closely with Enterprise Ireland to promote a range of targeted initiatives to help businesses become more efficient and productive. They include Green for Business, Lean for Business and Digital for Business. A new national media campaign and website has been launched www.allinadayswork.ie to increase awareness of the supports.

To complement this campaign, LEO Offaly introduced a free mentoring session to Offaly businesses owners so that they can learn more about the initiatives and which supports would best suit them. The initiatives are either free or heavily subsidized and can be completed over a 2 to 5 day period.

Pilot to Support Businesses with International Ambition

In 2023, Enterprise Ireland launched a new Pilot Initiative for Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Service Businesses employing up to

50 people. Qualifying businesses, with an ambition to export, can apply and subject to criteria, be supported by either LEO Offaly or Enterprise Ireland. The initial support is towards the creation of an Internationalisation Plan. Following on from that, the business may be assigned to either LEO Offaly or Enterprise Ireland where they can apply for financial supports.

Entrepreneurship Promotion – Student Enterprise, Female Entrepreneurship

Student Enterprise - LEO Offaly is one of a few Local Enterprise Offices nationally that runs Student Enterprise Programmes at both Primary and Secondary levels. In 2023, for the Primary Level, there were 13 participating schools and 42 participating pupils. At Secondary Level, there were 10 participating schools and 613 participants.

Female Entrepreneurship – National Women’s Enterprise Day Midlands Region took place on Thursday, October 19, 2023, at the majestic Castle Durrow and gave women from Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath a chance to network, learn and be inspired by other women in business. Over 200 women attended the event at Castle Durrow.

Deliver Local Enterprise Development Plan 2021-2024

The implementation of the above plan requires LEO Offaly deliver a wide range of initiatives. The following are in addition to information and advisory services, training and mentoring, financial and other supports:

- **Local Enterprise Week** – March,
- **Offaly County Enterprise Awards** – March
- **Student Enterprise Programme** (Secondary Level) - March
- **National Student Enterprise Awards** - May
- **Most Enterprising Student Competition** (Primary Level) - May
- **National Enterprise Awards** - June
- **Tullamore Show** - August
- **National Ploughing Championships** – September
- **National Women’s Enterprise Day** – Regional October
- **Look for Local** – November

In addition, LEO Offaly is working in collaboration with stakeholders on a number of initiatives arising from the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan, and Midlands Regional Transition Team. These include development of the ICT Cluster and Engenuity Engineering Cluster.



LEO Offaly worked with local partners on the delivery of the second Offaly Job Fair, which took place in July.

LEO OFFALY OUTPUTS 2023

Jobs	Output 2023
Total Employment in LEO Clients	1177
Gross Jobs Created	235
Net Increase (after Job Losses)	10
Number of LEO Clients	209

	Output 2023
Financial Support Packages - Grants	24
Productivity Tools Approvals	19
Trading Online Approvals	24
Total Training Attendees	691
Start Your Own Business Course Attendees	109
Management Development Programme Attendees	66
General Enterprise Training	516
Mentoring Assignments	221
RD&I Supports (Standard/Agile)	1
First Time Exporters	1
MicroFinance Ireland Approvals	5
Client Transfers to Enterprise Ireland	1

Schools Entrepreneurship	Output 2023
Number of Secondary Schools Participating	10
Number of Students Participating	613
Number of Primary Schools Participating	13
Number of Students Participating	50

KEY ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2023

- Offaly Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2027
- Grand Canal Dock Tullamore Masterplan
- New Industrial Sites
- Rhode Green Energy Park
- Develop and expand Co-Working Hubs

ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS 2023

Offaly Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2027

Plan completed and some implementation underway. Focus of the Plan is to develop national and international reputation in 6 distinct areas:

- Construction and Engineering (the Built Environment)
- Rural Green (including Energy Generation and Storage)
- MedTech and Wellbeing
- ICT Sector
- Food & Nutrition and the technologies that support them
- EcoTourism and the Creative Arts

Grand Canal Dock Tullamore –Masterplan nearing completion.

Industrial Sites –Exploring options for new Business Park in Tullamore

Ferbane - Industrial Site Sales and Building Development

Co-Working Hubs

E-hive, stream BIRR and The Junction are now TUS Learning Gate Hubs. This will enable TUS students access the co-working hubs for online courses, networking and study. The expansion of The Junction at 25J will commence in late 2023.

Rhode Green Energy Park: Preparatory work on the infrastructural project at Rhode Green Energy Park was undertaken in 2023. The full infrastructural works are scheduled to be completed in 2024. Furthermore, the development of a framework for an Industrial

“ Positioning the county as Offaly: The Green Energy County continued in 2023 with the completion and launch of two noteworthy Feasibility Study Reports. ”

Eco-Park was advanced in 2023, with a publication date scheduled for Q2, 2024. LEO Offaly continues to provide Secretariat duties for North Offaly Development Fund CLG, and Head of Enterprise is a Director in the company.

Positioning the county as **Offaly: The Green Energy County** continued in 2023 with the completion and launch of two noteworthy Feasibility Study Reports. The reports confirm Offaly’s strategic location where an abundance of renewable energy generation, the national gas network and the electricity grid meet. The evidence-based studies confirm that Offaly is leading the way in green energy production and innovative green technologies. Offaly’s central location provides an ideal base for companies to decarbonise, while serving national and international markets.

Data Centre Integration with Renewables

- Report Funded by Just Transition & North Offaly Development Fund
- Delivered by Siemens
- Confirms Rhode’s suitability for large energy users to decarbonize
- Job and Economic Development Potential

Rhode Renewable Hydrogen Report

- Report Funded by GNI, North Offaly Development Fund, SSE, Bord na Mona
- Delivered by RPS, UCD and NUIG
- Confirms Rhode’s suitability for renewable hydrogen hub
- Job and Economic Development Potential

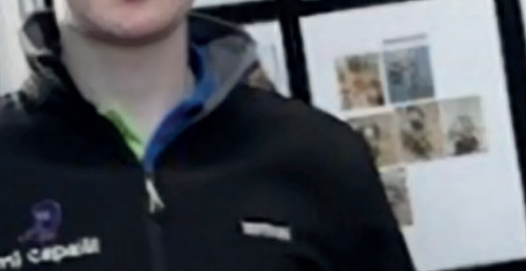
Local Economic Community Plan (LECP)

LEO Offaly is responsible for the development and delivery of the Economic goals and actions for the above plan. The Head of Enterprise is a member of the LECP Advisory Steering Group Committee attending regular meetings to progress the writing of the Plan.

Killina Presentation School, Offaly

Óbair Fiontaraí - An tOifis
Local Enterprise Office

Óbair Fiontaraí - An tOifis
Local Enterprise Office



NWCPO



National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO)

As of December 31, 2023, there were 1979 waste collection permits in the NWCPO register - 130 new applications and 193 review applications were received in 2023. These review applications included 57 permits reviewed to amend permit conditions to implement incentivised charging on commercial kerbside waste collections.

KERBSIDE WASTE COLLECTIONS

There are currently 51 waste collectors authorised for the collection of household kerbside waste. Amendments to the Waste Collection Permit Regulations in 2023 required the review of permits issued for the collection of commercial kerbside waste. Conditions on 57 permits were amended, introducing requirements on these waste collectors to inter alia weigh the commercial waste being collected, report back the weights to customers and put a customer charter in place.

ISO 9001 CERTIFICATION

The office received certification for the ISO 9001 standard in November 2014. The office has successfully retained the certification this year.

INCENTIVISED CHARGING STUDY

The NWCPO has commenced a study into incentivised charging for household and commercial kerbside waste collections. The NWCPO is coordinating the study being undertaken by specialist consultants, while DECC is providing funding.

WASTE ACTION PLAN FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

“A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy” was launched on the September 4, 2020. The policy specifically identified new roles for the NWCPO as well as introduced new policies that will impact on current operations and require measures to be taken. A business case for the enhancement of the office has been approved by the PSROG to progress the implementation of these policy measures.

Planning, Heritage and Biodiversity



Planning

Land use policy is implemented by means of the County Development Plan (which includes town, village and sráid plans), Local Area Plans. Development Management involves the processing of planning applications and the taking of appropriate enforcement action where necessary. The Planning Department has experienced another productive year as the new online planning system was introduced on 27 June. There has been a significant increase in planning applications across the various development types since last year, which is welcome.

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.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Year	No of Applications	No. Granted	No. Refused	Total Decided
2015	375*	263	12	275
2016	441*	313	16	329
2017	519*	378	29	407
2018	607*	411	46	446
2019	616*	436	35	471
2020	674*	412	58	470
2021	831*	529	46	575
2022	682*	481	48	529
2023	713*	447	40	487

(*This figure includes applications which were invalid)

EXTENSIONS OF APPROPRIATE PERIOD

Year	No of Applications	No. Granted	No. Refused	Total Decided
2015	37	35	3	38
2016	20	23	0	23
2017	13	13	0	13
2018	10	10	1	11
2019	13	12	1	13
2020	6	6	0	6
2021	13	11	2	13
2022	15	8	6	14
2023	20	11	7	18

In 2023 the number of planning applications submitted to the Planning Department increased by 5% approximately, reflecting the change in our economy and the demand for housing and business interests.

In addition, while the number of planning applications increased from that received by the Planning Department in 2022, the volume of complex development applications, including large residential, commercial, industrial, and large scale green renewable energy projects has continued at pace.

As in recent years, this trend is likely to be sustained into 2024.

LARGE-SCALE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS (LRD)

Under the LRD legislation, planning applications for residential developments for 100 or more housing units or student accommodation including 200 or more bed spaces are required to be submitted to Local Authority. In addition, as part of this LRD process, there is a requirement for a formal LRD meeting to be held with the Applicant and the Planning Department, and for the Planning Authority to issue a LRD Opinion, to the Applicant, stating

whether the proposal constitutes a reasonable basis to make an LRD planning application.

In 2023, the Planning Department granted planning permission for two LRD applications for housing developments in Tullamore Town. Another LRD application was submitted but not decided upon in 2023.

LRD Written Opinions were also issued on two additional sites in Tullamore.

LEAVE TO APPLY FOR SUBSTITUTE CONSENT & SUBSTITUTE CONSENT

LTAFCSC applications are for historical industrial-scale peat extraction and associated bog development works throughout the County. As per the legislative requirements, the Planning Authority is required to submit a formal response to the ABP with respect to these applications.

The Board granted 2 LTAFCSC applications in 2023 and the Planning Department provided a detailed response to these Substitute Consent (SC) applications.

5 LTAFCSC applications were deemed withdrawn in 2023.

“ *In 2023, the Planning Department granted planning permission for two Large-scale Residential Developments applications for housing developments in Tullamore Town.* **”**

Compliance / Enforcement

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

Unauthorised Developments

Warning Letters.....	50
Enforcement Notices.....	11

Unpaid Development Contributions

Warning Letters.....	181
Enforcement Notices.....	73

During 2023, 201 new enforcement files were opened in relation to unauthorised developments (62) and unpaid development contributions. (139)

RENT PRESSURE ZONE

Tullamore was added to the list of Rent Pressure Zones in 2020 and a new resource was employed to monitor the requirements from late 2020. The position became vacant in late 2021 and continued through 2022. However, in November 2023 this position was filled, and work has been ongoing to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and appropriate action taken where deemed necessary. Initial examinations in 2021 indicated that short-term letting taking up housing stock was not a particularly acute issue for Tullamore.

LIAISON WITH THE LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Planning Section assists the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) which was set up within the County Council in 2014. Such assistance includes pre-planning advice and meetings for new clients or expanding businesses.

FORWARD PLANNING

Preparation of Local Area Plans

● Edenderry LAP 2023-2029

The Edenderry Local Area Plan (LAP) was adopted by Offaly Council on Monday July

17th 2023, before taking effect from August 28th 2023.

● Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029

The Birr Local Area Plan (LAP) was adopted by Offaly Council on Monday May 15th 2023, before taking effect from June 26th 2023.

● Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2024-2030

The first stage of consultation has been completed, having taken place over a four-week period from September 21st, 2023, through to October 19th 2023, inclusive. A total of 38 submissions were received by Offaly and Laois County Councils during the consultation period. It is envisaged that the Draft LAP will go on public display in Q2 2024.

RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX (RZLT)

The Council continued its implementation of the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) in 2023 since the initial mapping processes started in 2022. The principal purpose of the RZLT is to encourage the timely activation of zoned and serviced residential development land for housing. In order to implement this tax measure, local authorities are required annually to undertake mapping to identify lands in-scope for the tax, with provisions allowing those landowners identified as being in-scope to make submissions and appeal.

OFFALY GREENWAYS

The Grand Canal Greenway from the county boundary at Edenderry to Shannon Harbour moved closer to completion during 2023 and is due to be completed by summer 2024. Thereafter the Council will work with Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to add heritage and other interpretation, rest facilities etc. to ensure it becomes a robust tourism product. The Council is working with Waterways Ireland to get the section from

“ The Council is working with Waterways Ireland to get the section from Edenderry town to the county boundary with Kildare and on to Ticknevin, Co. Kildare completed as soon as possible.”

Edenderry town to the county boundary with Kildare and on to Ticknevin, Co. Kildare completed as soon as possible.

Offaly County Council staff including the Director of Services Roads & Transport, Senior Planner and a Roads Executive Engineer sit on the overall Grand Canal Greenway steering group with Waterways Ireland, South Dublin and Kildare County Councils with the aim of delivering the greenway from the centre of Dublin to Shannon Harbour, a distance of c.130km.

Council staff also sit on the sub-groups on (i) Marketing & Interpretation and (ii) Maintenance.

The Grand Canal Greenway is being promoted on www.visitoffaly.ie and through Visit Offaly and Offaly County Council’s social media channels.

Funding for a high-quality link from Leabeg to Lough Boora Discovery Park was approved by TII in December 2021, however it was re-allocated on the councils request during 2022. Part 8 planning for this link was approved in November 2022. New funding has since been allocated (Q1 2023) and works will commence in 2024.

Just Transition Funding of €782,500 (exclusive of an additional 15% Offaly County Council match funding) was secured in November 2021 to upgrade some of the existing cycling and walking paths in Lough Boora Discovery Park to enhance the connections between the Grand Canal Greenway and the Lough Boora Discovery Park visitor centre. During 2022, the Council applied to the Department of Environment Climate & Communications to reassign €241,800 from another aspect of the application (*Midlands Cycling Destination - Offaly*) to carry out further trail upgrades and to cover price inflation and this was agreed by the Department. These upgrades, to a very high standard of sealed surface, were largely completed during 2022 and the final contracts will be completed during Q2 2024.

GREENWAY FUNDING - FUTURE

Funding for Greenways switched from the Dept. of Transport to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in 2021. The Council has engaged positively with TII with the aim to complete the Grand Canal greenway to Shannon Harbour by Q2 2024. This will result in a 71km continuous greenway across the county with a 7km link to the county boundary - Kilbeggan Branch.

MIDLANDS CYCLING DESTINATION - OFFALY

There was less progress on this overarching strategy in 2023 than in 2022 and previous years, due to the council concentrating on delivery and due to resource constraints. It is likely that the next phase of the MCD-O's delivery will be by way of Fáilte Ireland's proposed 'Strategic Trails Network for the Midlands', as part of the Just Transition Territorial Plan, for which €30m has been allocated across the affected counties. The overall Fáilte Ireland package is €68 million and includes:










- €25m Amenity Support to Tourism Businesses;
- €3m for Alternative Low Carbon Accommodation and
- €10m for Smart Solution Development, all of which can enhance the offer for walking and cycling in Offaly and neighboring counties.

GRAND CANAL GREENWAY - TULLAMORE URBAN STRETCH

It is expected that The Tullamore Urban Stretch of the Grand Canal Greenway, which has been allocated funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund 2018, will be constructed in 2024.

JUST TRANSITION

The EU Just Transition Fund, was launched on 28th April 2023 by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Minister Eamon Ryan. The fund, worth up to €169 million, is to support regions most negatively affected by the ending of commercial peat extraction and peat-based energy production as part of Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy. The EU JTF will facilitate projects and initiatives which help address the adverse social, economic and environmental effects of the climate transition for regions previously reliant on fossil fuels. It also sets out Ireland's investment strategy for the funding, with up to €84.5 million financed by the EU matched by up to €84.5 million from the Government of Ireland.

<p>PRIORITY 1 Generating employment by diversifying the local economy €87m</p>	<p>A1.1 Economic Diversification €38m</p> 	<p>A1.2 LECP/REP Schemes €29m</p> 	<p>A1.3 Bioeconomy €20m</p> 
<p>PRIORITY 2 Restoration of degraded peatlands and regeneration of industrial heritage assets €57m</p>	<p>A2.1 Peatland Restoration €12m</p> 	<p>A2.2 Carbon Capture €15m</p> 	<p>A2.3 Network of Trails €30m</p> 
<p>PRIORITY 3 Smart and sustainable mobility options €18m</p>	<p>A3.1 Electric Buses €2m</p> 	<p>A3.2 Transport €1m</p> 	<p>A3.3 Charge Points €15m</p> 

A number of funding calls were made in 2023.

- 28th July 2023 – Community Facilities EV Chargers €15m (A3:3)
- 30th August 2023 Failte Ireland Investment Grand Aid Scheme for Private & Community SMEs €17m (A1:1)
- 13th October 2023 Local & Regional Economic Strategies Support Scheme €24m (A1:2)

Under the latter which opened for all public bodies, Offaly County Council awaits the outcome of an application which was submitted on 8th December 2023, to fund an Economic Development Unit to support the implementation of the objectives of the Offaly Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027.

Subsequent applications submitted by the next deadline of 23rd January 2024, would include proposals in relation to:

- FilmOffaly Development Officer
- an enterprise hub in Tullamore
- a services corridor study for the provision of services to the Rhode Green Energy Park in North Offaly
- repurposing of the Dalton Centre, Shannonbridge

In November 2023, Offaly County Council signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Failte Ireland under Action 1:1. The Council proceeded to prepare and develop three applications, to be submitted by 29th February 2024, under the EU Just Transition Fund Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme (2023-2026). Each project seeks to put ‘place’ at the centre of the tourism model and seek to deliver net positive benefit for the environment, community, industry and the visitor.

OFFICE OF THE PLANNING REGULATOR REVIEW

The Office of the Planning Regulator review 2023 found overall that Offaly County Council is delivering its planning functions on an effective basis with evidence of best practice in some respects.

PLANNING BILL 2023

The Planning and Development Bill was published in 2023. The bill is to be progressed to become a Planning and Development Act during 2024. This will present a very major challenge in terms of its implementation over the coming years.

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS DEVELOPMENT LEVY ALLOCATIONS 2023

JOB DESCRIPTION	Funds Available €000's
Development contribution income - to be assigned	12,094
Currently assigned:	
Infrastructure	6,085
Amenity	3,129
Quarrying	790
Windfarms	834
Special development contributions	1,105
Other misc. balances	151
TOTAL	12,094

ARCHITECTURE & CONSERVATION

- **Architectural/Conservation Report for Planning Applications** Planning reports relating to Protected Structures were undertaken, throughout the year and with the refilling of vacant post (from May 2022 to August 2023) – we were able to also provide reports on large planning files from August.
- **68 reports completed in 2023.**
- **S57 Declarations** – Site visit, research, report – **17 S57 Declarations for 2023**, note this is a considerable increase from the average 8 or 9 in previous years.
- **Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS)** –**€94,378, 11 projects completed** (Lime render, window repairs, stabilisation etc.). 2024 launched and advertised. New **Thatching Grant** by Department €15,450, funding approved for 4 thatch projects, no thatch projects were carried out in 2023. Projects included stained glass repair, sash window repair, consolidation of stone structures repairs to historic timber porch.
- **HSF (Historic Structures Fund)** – **3 projects completed 2023**; Kinnitty Castle window repairs (€37,500), Birr Suspension Bridge, repairs (€135,750), St Mary’s COI Ballyboy, structural repairs – tenders received via consultants, PSCS process, Offaly County Council owned, (€37,500), Total for 2023 **€210,750**
- **Creative Ireland:** part of Creative Ireland Team - Annual funding for Follies project **€10,000** Vegetation removal at Toberdaly Gazebo and survey of Tinnamuck Folly.
- **Creative Ireland** – Annual Vernacular **€5,000** Thatching at Derrybeg and repairs to Chaise Longue Belmont
- **Heritage Council Stewardship Funding**, new scheme in 2022: Heritage Council, **€19,926** Conservation Management Plan Tubberdaly Gazebo (former castle) 2023 by Howley Hayes Cooney recommendations, together with CORA Consulting Engineers, Colm Flynn, Archaeologist and Tir 3D.
- **RRDF** - Steering Group for Banagher project.
- **Masterplan Steering Groups** – Tullamore Harbour and Tullamore Town.
- **Town Enhancements** – Kinnitty, sketch proposals for further phases.
- **Birr Destination Town** – Fáilte Ireland funding, project to commenced on site and underway, new entrance to Birr Demesne,

Toberdaly Conservation Plan



“ In 2023, €37,500 was received from Heritage Council to support the delivery of projects from the Heritage Plan. ”

The Green. Curved stone wall to courtyard completed. Stainless steel surround in place, solid oak doors fitted, grading of ground re level change underway. New pedestrian crossing to be completed across to The Green in 2024 Q1.

- **Team Administration (Amanda Pedlow, Ricky Whelan and Brian McDonald, with sub-team including Karen Gray and Matilda Falkhede)** - Relevant paperwork and resources in management of 6-person team, required H&S.
- **Biodiversity Officer** - new post filled 2023.
- Heritage Forum attend and update quarterly meetings.
- **Traditional Architecture in Offaly by Rachel Mc Kenna**, c.286 pages, 750 copies printed. Book launch 30 November at Áras an Chontae 2022. Sold out.
- One of six books shortlisted for the **Katharine Briggs** (Ireland and England) **Folklore Society award** and received an Honourable Mention on the evening in London 07/11/23, (Professor David Hopkin, Chair of Folklore Society) ‘This book’s title belies what turns out to be a much wider, deeper and altogether rich material, social and cultural history of the community of Offaly. Production values are first class, with detailed present-day photography combined with clear illustrations and well selected historical sources.’
- **Talks** - on Traditional Architecture book; **Trinity College Dublin**: presentation to History of Architecture Students and lecturers, March 2023, **OHAS Offaly History**,

presentation on the book March 2023, **Irish Georgian Society**: present as part of Vernacular Architecture Day June 2023, **SPAB** Society of Protection of Ancient Buildings: podcast re book and architectural conservation in Offaly August 2023

- **Nationwide (February)** - organised 1-day filming 18 February 2023 with reporter and cameraman relating to completed folly projects at Acres Folly, Kinnitty Suspension Bridge and Gloster Arch. Visit craftsmen in Offaly making God-in-the-Bottle. Show aired 1st March 2023.
- **Nationwide (May) Gloster House** aired 03 November 2023, interviews with the owners, historians, stuccodore who carried out repairs, former kitchen maid (now 89), nuns and former students and Rachel Mc Kenna
- **Tracks and Trails** - one day filming at Kinnitty Castle August 2023, (arranged by Offaly Tourism), interview re Castle, Demesne and Bridges.

HERITAGE TEAM 2023

Delivery was based on the **Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-27**. Four Offaly heritage forum meetings were held during the year to provide updates on project delivery across the county.

Heritage Council Funded Projects in 2023 - €37,500 was received from Heritage Council to support the delivery of projects from the Heritage Plan.

Medieval Churches and Burial Grounds

1. Final year of 3-year Just Transition

'Conservation and pollination' project with Laois County Council for medieval churches in each Municipal District with conservation works undertaken at Kilbride (Ballycowan), Monasteroris nr Edenderry and Kilmurry near Shinrone

- The maintenance programme for those churches already conserved was continued to prevent regrowth of vegetation.

COMMUNITY MONUMENTS FUND

€464,593 was received for the conservation of archaeological sites in county Offaly. Reports were commissioned for the conservation of Ballintemple Church nr Walsh Island and for the unique Emmel Staircase. Works were carried out on site to conserve Killeigh Chapter House, Monasteroris church (phase 2), Kilbride church (phase 2) and Seir Kieran burial ground walls.

- **Decade of Commemorations** – This was the final year of the Decade of Commemorations and programming was in partnership with Offaly History, and Crinkill Tidy Villages with a grant of €49,950 received from the Department.
- **Creative Ireland 2023-27.** This was the first year of the 2nd five year Offaly Creative Ireland Strategy. The programme places creativity at the centre of public policy focusing on projects that are collaborative involving the arts, heritage and libraries with strong community reach with a budget of c.€200,000 anticipated in 2023. Amanda Pedlow is the co-ordinator of the Creative Ireland Team in Offaly County Council. Karen Gray joined the team as the full time Creative Community Engagement Officer.
- **County Archive Service** worked along with the county librarian to support the operation and development of the county archive service based in Axis Business Park and operated by Offaly History.
- **Publications** – supported and facilitated the production of high quality books about Offaly's heritage. *Camcor*, *The River of Birr*

and *A Microcosmic Jungle – The Meadow in Birr Demesne* by John Feehan were published by Offaly County Council as was *Kilcomin Memorials* by Stephen Callaghan. A book on *Irish Mist and Faithful Images*, *Public Art in County Offaly* and the *Offaly History Journal* were published by Offaly History and supported by Offaly County Council.

- **Tidy Towns and Local Community Heritage Projects** – worked with Community section to support the Tidy Towns Network. Assisted community groups to plan and deliver heritage projects.
- An interpretive strategy for **Lemanaghan Monastic site** was led by Kevin O'Dwyer in partnership with the community.
- **Heritage Awareness** – key programmes
- **Wildflowers of Offaly Youtube series** – the 2023 season was on water based plants in partnership with LAWPRO. The Offaly Heritage channel now has over 2450 subscribers.
- Hosted week long Summer School based in Birr on pollination as part of the Offaly Naturalists' Field Club programming.

HERITAGE WEEK

Heritage Week was a very engaged 9 days in August with 41 events co-ordinated and promoted across the county and many new groups hosting events. Bracknagh Heritage Group were runners up for the *Living Heritage Award* nationally with Ballycumber runners up in the *Wild Child Award*.



Biodiversity

- Offaly County Council appointed a **Biodiversity officer** in March 2023
- In 2023 **Offaly Naturalists' Field Club** returned to a full in-person programme of events. The programme sees fifteen biodiversity related events from bats to botany and bogs to birds hosted by the end of 2023.
- Offaly Naturalist Field Club also hosted the week long **Summer School** lead by John Feehan and focusing on pollinator and pollination.
- Offaly County Council accessed €100,000 in funding under the **Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF)** in 2023. The funding has gone towards actioning ecological surveys, habitat creation projects, citizen science, staff training and invasive species control across the county.

Some exemplar projects include:

- **Offaly Barn Owl Monitoring and nest box project:** This project sees specialised nest boxes erected for these threatened species and a monitoring programme

looking at nest productivity across the county. Project partners BirdWatch Ireland have reported a good year for barn owl productivity on Offaly and are reporting a population increase in Offaly in recent years.

- **Graveyard Grassland Management:** This project sees Offaly County Council staff and contractors manage cemetery grass areas to benefit wildflowers and pollinators. The project involves implementing mowing regimes that allow wildflowers such as red clover, Ox-Eyed daisy and orchids to flower in-turn providing food for pollinators. The effort is balanced with the need to keep our burial grounds neat and tidy for those visiting deceased relatives.
- **Invasive species Management + Monitoring;** Offaly County Council's county-wide Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam management programme continued with both problem species being reduced significantly across the county. The results from monitoring programmes for non-native invasive

Quagga Mussels + Alpine Newts showed huge growth in the distribution of these species which we will need to deal with in the months and years ahead to protect our native flora and fauna.

■ **Creation of local biodiversity**

action plans: Offaly County Council commissioned experts to help compile biodiversity action plans (BAPs) for two large towns in Offaly (Clara + Kilcormac) these BAPs will act as roadmaps and guides for the respective communities to improve their local environments for flora, fauna and the community alike.

■ **Biodiversity themed events** in both Biodiversity and Heritage week, reach all corners of the county with events and targeting young and old alike including Bat Walks, Moth trapping and recording and Swallow ringing

- The **In Your Nature podcast**, which is a collaboration between Offaly County Council biodiversity officer and Bird Watch Ireland and promotes birds and biodiversity through expert interviews and lively discussion. The podcast hit 100k downloads in October a great milestone for the project.
- A programme of community and staff training and upskilling events was

completed during 2020/23, covering such activities as **Technical Design of Nature Based Solutions** within the Urban Environment, **Planning for Swifts**, which focused on the protection of Swifts through planning and enhancement of urban habitats to promote their conservation and Staff training in - **Wetland habitats** - managing water, enhancing biodiversity.

Community Upskilling & Networking

- **Seed Collecting and Saving Event:** This event saw experts leaders demonstrate how to collect and store wildflower seeds to be stored and cultivated locally to aid pollinators. The event was a big success and field demonstrations took part in the north and south of the county to maximise involvement of communities in the county.
- **Geashill Biodiversity Knowledge Share Day:** This all day event saw community groups from across Offaly gather to hear from experts on an array of biodiversity topics, from meadow management, pond creation and invasive species. The afternoon was given to exploring project locally that have been implemented through best practice.



Regeneration



Regeneration

The Regeneration Department consists of 2 teams, a Regeneration Team, and a Derelict/Vacancy Team.

- **The Regeneration Team** is responsible for coordinating community supports to access funding opportunities for Offaly's Town and Villages including Urban & Rural Regeneration Development Fund, Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Outdoor Recreational infrastructure Scheme & Community Centre Investment Fund. The team works closely and engages with local communities, Elected Members, stakeholders, and agencies to identify projects, source funding, guide and advise on project development and delivery to enhance and develop County Offaly. The schemes identified for implementation are based on a coordinated strengthening of the three main pillars, Economic, Social and Physical regeneration of the County.

Grant funding has been secured under various schemes through the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport & Media and Fáilte Ireland.

- **The Derelict/Vacancy Team** are responsible for managing the Derelict Site register, collecting Derelict site levies, following the Derelict Site Act to place properties on the derelict site register/remove properties accordingly. The Team actively promotes, and coordinates funding supports available for tackling derelict and vacant properties in Offaly. The Croi Cónaithe/Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant is managed by the staff in this team along with promoting housing grants e.g. Repair and Lease and Buy and Renew Schemes. A specific Urban

and Renewal Development Fund for tackling dereliction in Tullamore town specifically is also managed by the team.

TOWN REGENERATION OFFICER

The role of the Town Regeneration Officer is to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response both at local and national level to the significant challenges facing Towns and Villages in Offaly. The Town Regeneration Officer supports the establishment and ongoing work of Town Teams, ensuring development and delivery on the Town Centre First Plan alongside local champions, providing a vital link between the Town Teams, the expertise within the Local Authority and other organisations, allowing Town Teams to access funding, deliver projects, and supporting implementation at a local level.

TOWN CENTRE FIRST

Town Centre First was introduced in 2022 to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres by providing a coordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to proactively address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them.

In line with the "Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns", Clara was chosen as one of 26 towns across the country to receive funding to develop a Town Centre First Plan. The TRO supported the establishment of the Clara's Town Team. Urban Agency Architects were appointed by Offaly County Council to support the Town Team and the Council to prepare the Town Centre First Plan for Clara.



Present: Brian Sheridan, Sinead Cornally, Anna Orman, Olwen Cummins (Town Regeneration Officer, Offaly County Council), Mary Delaney, Bernie Henry at the Erry Mill site Clara. picture Brian Bastick.

Following background/baseline research, stakeholder engagement, numerous public engagement events and surveys, the process is now complete.

The plan presents a new vision for Clara, by providing an understanding of the place, defining the place and identifying means of enabling the place.

Offaly County Council worked closely with Clara Town Team which represents the four main community groups in Clara, Clara Heritage Society, Clara Tidy Towns, Clara Chamber of Commerce and Clara Community Council, this initiative highlights a comprehensive approach to community engagement and planning. The plan has identified a number of potential projects and ideas that could transform Clara and help create a vibrant town centre. This initiative is a key part of Our Rural Future – the

Clara Town Centre First Plan

Government's ambitious five-year strategy designed to reimagine and revitalise Rural Ireland.

STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENT MEASURE

Offaly County Council secured funding of €100,000 under the Department for Rural and Community Development, Town and Village Renewal for the Clara Streetscape Enhancement Measure.

This project has improved the appearance of the streetscapes in Clara Town Centre, concentrating on vacant and derelict properties, focusing on three main streets in the centre of Clara: Main Street, Bridge Street and River Street.

The community-driven approach to revitalising the town centre shows the commitment of

Clara Streetscape Enhancement Measure



Clara's Town Team to the Clara Town Centre First Plan and the community in enhancing the aesthetics and creating a vibrant town centre.

The progress made with the Streetscape Scheme, as evident in the pictures above, underpins the positive impact of such initiatives on the overall appeal of the community.

TVR BUILDING ACQUISITION MEASURE

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD announced Clara's Town Team success in partnership with Offaly County Council in its application to acquire a vacant and derelict town

centre building in Clara through the Building Acquisition Measure under the 2023 Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

The Co-Op is a very significant building in terms of its place in Clara's history, its prominent access to the Brosna River and its Town Centre location. The Town Team can now apply for Town and Village grants to assist with design fees and future capital costs to refurbish the building into a multipurpose community space.

TOWN AND VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME

The Regeneration Team in conjunction with community groups, Municipals Districts and



Former Co-Op purchased under Building Acquisition Measure 2023

other sections have submitted the maximum number of applications under the 2023 TVR Scheme, announcement pending, expected in Q2 2024.

Projects complete/ongoing under Town and Village Renewal Scheme:

The following images show the positive impact the ongoing investment of €29m from the Department of Rural and Community Development’s has had in Offaly since 2020. This investment has fostered economic, social, and environmental opportunities throughout the County.

Birr Municipal District



The Green, Birr – TV190Y10
Works complete, €200k claimed



Shinrone – TV190Y9
Works complete, €100k claimed



Pollagh - TV200Y10
Works complete, €100k claimed



Ballyboy
Site cleared to enable amenity works



Fairgreen, Ferbane
Planning Secured



Market Sq., Birr
Community Consultation ongoing



Kilcormac
Enabling works complete



Old Library, Shinrone
Community Consultation ongoing



Moneygall
Design team to commence Q1 24

Edenderry Municipal District



Cloneygowan - TV200Y03
Works complete, €100k claimed



Daingean - TV200Y04
Works complete, €100k claimed



Kilmalogue - TV200Y07
Works complete, €100k claimed



Clonbullogue “People’s Park”
Works 70% complete



Daingean Project Development Measure
Appointed Conservation Architect

Tullamore Municipal District



Mountbolus Ph I – TV190Y07
Works complete, €100k claimed



Mountbolus Ph II - TV200Y08
Works complete, €100k claimed



Mucklagh - TV200Y09
Works complete, €100k claimed



Killeigh Community Centre

This sustained effort contributes to creating vibrant, appealing communities and enhancing public spaces for both residents and visitors. The collaboration between communities, Offaly County Council, the Department of Rural and Community Development are vital in achieving these positive outcomes.

OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME

The Regeneration Team in conjunction with community groups, Municipals Districts and other sections have submitted applications under the 2023 ORIS Scheme, announcement pending, expected in Q2 2024.

derryounce
10 Year Plan, 2024-2034

walk
swim
cycle
explore
connect
compete

explore the unexpected

re-peat
adventure

ÁrdTodhchaí Tuaithe Our Rural Future

Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann Project Ireland 2040

Fáilte Ireland

Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí Offaly County Council

SLR

STUDIO AULA

Bord na Móna

COILLTE

ESB Energy for generations

HALLER CLARKE

bright sparks

2021 – Derrycastle Lakes and Trails, project development

A funding package totalling €70k, comprising €50k and a matching €20k, provided the opportunity to develop a 10 year plan for the enhancement and expansion of Derrycastle Lake and Trails.

On June 1st 2023 Offaly County Council together with Portarlington Community Development Association signed contracts with the Project Team, SLR Consulting Ltd. to prepare a 10 Year Plan and Concept Designs for the Derrycastle Lakes and Trails.

On Thursday 6th July 2023 Offaly County Council, in partnership with Portarlington Community Development Association, held a Stakeholder Workshop which over 30 people attended. The aim of the workshop was to contribute to the development of a visionary long-term plan for the future development of Derrycastle over the next 10 years.

This investment will facilitate a comprehensive 10-year development plan, aimed at introducing new complementary features and improving accessibility. The Draft Derrycastle 10 Year Plan, developed by SLR Consulting Ltd., is in its final stages following various public consultation throughout 2023. Prior to finalization, it will undergo a final round of public consultation via newsletter and online questionnaire. The anticipated completion date for the plan is by the end of Quarter 1, 2024.

KINNITTY & SLIEVE BLOOM MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme allocates funding for the development of new outdoor recreational facilities.

In Kinnitty, a €500,000 grant together with significant match funding of €275,300 from Offaly County Council has facilitated the ‘Route to the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails,’ ‘Kinnitty Woods Novice-Grade MTB Loop,’

and “Rediscovering Castle Bernard’s Historic Bridges.”

- The ‘Route to the Trails’ project established a seamless, secure, and visually appealing cycle and pedestrian link from Kinnitty Village to the existing Mountain Bike trails and walking/hiking routes originating in Kinnitty Forest near Kinnitty Castle.
- The ‘Kinnitty Woods Loop,’ a 2km novice trail, has extended the Slieve Bloom MTB trails. Now catering to younger and inexperienced cyclists, thereby broadening the trails’ appeal to a wider audience.
- “Rediscovering Castle Bernard’s Historic Bridges” has enhanced the region’s extensive walking and hiking opportunities, spotlighting elements of Kinnitty Castle Demesne’s rich outdoor heritage, including its historic bridges and associated demesne walks.

RURAL REGENERATION DEVELOPMENT FUND

2021 Cat 2 RRDF Edenderry Phase II

- Demolition and site clearance of 33/34 JKL Street complete
- OPW site acquisition complete
- Part 8 proposal for Edenderry Community Library & Arts Base at 33-34 JKL Street, Edenderry approved.
- 11 no. submissions were received in total, 9 no. from members of the public and 2 no. from Prescribed Bodies.
- The Elected Members agreed that the proposed development, details of which were placed on public display on the 18th October 2023, should proceed.

2021 Cat 2 RRDF – Ferbane Regeneration

- Small construction works were undertaken within the Convent to facilitate mean while use for Community Groups during the standstill period of design and construction.



Edenderry CGI Library

- Public Open Day on 31st of March 2023 to encourage public participation in the redesign of St. Joseph's Convent.
- Design team appointed on the 12th of May 2023 for the refurbishment of Ferbane Convent.
- Initial surveys of the site and existing buildings completed and processed by the Design Team.
- Design Team presented 3 no. concept designs on the 8th December 2023 for the consideration of Offaly County Council, An Síolán and key Stakeholders.
- The Design Team currently analysing feedback on the concept design and are preparing a final design.
- Ferbane Tidy Towns recently completed another great project utilising the AXA Parks grant to provide remedial work, seating and planting at the former convent.



Ferbane Convent

“ The new Derelict Sites policy delivers a coordinated approach to the management of the Derelict Sites Act from a countywide perspective, taking a town-by-town approach.”

- Ferbane Tidy Towns and St. Hilda’s Service Users and Support Staff planted organic pollinator friendly bulbs on the 19th of August 2023 as a symbol of the years of hard work the Sisters of Saint Joseph gave to the community.

2020 Cat 2 RRDF - Banagher Regeneration

- A presentation on progress to date on the Architectural and Tourism Master Plan for Banagher Marina and Environs was held for Birr MD members in 2023.
- Meeting with IW and WWI took place to assist the design process for the Marina area.
- Banagher Marina & Environs Master Plan complete.
- Design phase for Marina progressing in consultation with Waterways Ireland and Irish Water.
- Procurement for conservation plan for Shannon Royal Hotel progressing.

VACANCY AND DERELICTION

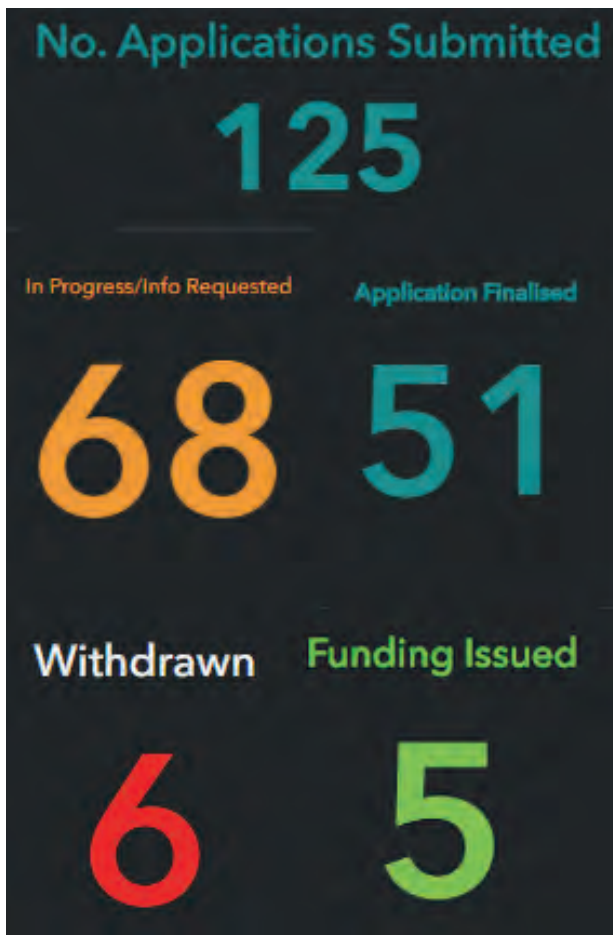
Derelict Site Policy

In June 2023, the Regeneration staff formulated a new policy in relation to its Derelict Sites function namely “Offaly County Council’s Derelict Site Policy & Procedure” which was approved at plenary council in June 2023.

The new Derelict Sites policy delivers a coordinated approach to the management of the Derelict Sites Act from a countywide perspective, taking a town-by-town approach. The dedicated team worked closely with the Vacant Homes Officer to support and manage the various funding schemes which include the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and any other funding opportunities to develop vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use. Identification of any properties which may be suitable for the provision of social housing is a continued focus of the Council.

Vacant Home Officer

The Vacant Homes Officer co-ordinates the Compulsory Purchase Order Activation Programme identifying vacant and derelict properties, engaging with owners to promote the various funding streams available and where appropriate acquiring properties through either the Compulsory Purchase Order or Compulsory Acquisition process. The Vacant Homes Officer manages the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant application process.



URDF Call 3

The Derelict/Vacancy Team secured €2m to address vacancy and dereliction in Tullamore town under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund. 26 properties were identified and approved to progress under the fund by the Department.

This third call was specifically designed to address long-term vacancy and dereliction in Tullamore Town Centre. The fund is available to cover the acquisition costs of a property or site and any civil or design works which may be required to de-risk or improve the site/building to make it more attractive for reuse, development by others or onward sale. The intention is that the fund would be replenished from the proceeds received from the end use/user, thereby allowing the Offaly County Council to put in place a rolling program to tackle long term vacancy and dereliction without recourse to borrowing and the associated financial risk.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant program is making steady progress, with ongoing support for the transformation of vacant residential and commercial properties into private residences or rental properties. As of May 1, 2023, the maximum grant available has been set at €50,000, with a potential top-up grant of up to €20,000 for properties confirmed as structurally unsound. This brings the total grant available for derelict properties to a maximum of €70,000.

The Regeneration Department has received over 125 applications since the official launch of the scheme. Following approval of an application, applicants are allowed a subsequent period of 13 months during which the applicant completes the necessary works. Thereafter, Offaly County Council conducts a reinspection of the property and coordinates the payment of the grant.

Roads and Transportation



Roads and Transport

In 2023 the Roads and Transport Department of Offaly County Council have strengthened and expanded our service delivery with the addition of the Taking in Charge Brief and the Regional Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. There has been and will continue to be targeted investment towards our existing infrastructure to maintain, upgrade and expand our existing road networks to facilitate growth across our entire County. There has also been an emphasis placed on identifying additional funding avenues throughout the year to maximise the benefits to County Offaly. The approach and ethos applied in 2023 will be both replicated and strengthened in 2024 to maximise any funding potential.

Our 2023 Roads program included for the following works;

- Annual 2023 Roads Program
- Active Travel Schemes
- Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure
- Introduction of Zero Emission vehicles into our corporate fleet
- Introduction of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO)
- Grand Canal Greenway Construction
- Edenderry Inner Relief Road Stage 2
- Birr Distributor Roads (North and South)
- PLEEP-Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project

The 2023 grant allocations from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), the Department of Transport (DOT), National Transport Authority (NTA) and The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) are set out below, the figures for 2022 are shown alongside for comparison purposes.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IRELAND & DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, ROAD GRANTS

Initial Grant Allocations	2022 (€)	2023 (€)
Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)		
National Primary		
Motorway MMarC Lighting	9,117	9,117
National Secondary Improvement		
Major Scheme N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link	0	0
Minor Works N62 Crancreagh (Cloghan to Derrinlough)	150,000	200,000
Pavement Scheme on the N62	460,000	4,000,000
Pavement Scheme HD28 Pavement Renewals	TBC (Q2/Q3)	TBC (Q2/Q3)
HD15 & HD17 Minor Works N52, N62 & N80	125,000	TBC (Q2/Q3)

HD15 & HD17 Minor Works Fencing Retrofit (N52/N62/N80)	100,000	TBC (Q2/Q3)
Local Authority Support (Improvement)	160,000	275,000
National Secondary Maintenance		
Ordinary Maintenance	129,194	129,194
Route Lighting	75,900	75,901
Winter Maintenance	190,000	170,000
Local Authority Support (Maintenance)	30,700	11,800
Local Authority Support (Winter Maintenance)	10,000	10,000
Greenways	€1,323,000	3,880,000
TII Total	€2,762,911	8,761,012
Department of Transport		
Regional & Local Roads Grants		
Restoration Improvement	6,190,500	6,542,000
Restoration Maintenance	955,000	955,000
Supplementary Restoration Maintenance	750,500	750,500
Discretionary Grant	1,776,500	1,783,500
Bridge Rehabilitation	366,975	376,500
Safety Improvement Works	297,700	300,000
Specific Improvement Grants	2,275,000	2,100,000
Speed Limits	16500	54,000

Cycle Signs	-	7,150
Former National Roads	250000	420,000
Strategic Regional and Local Roads	-	50,000
Climate Adaptation	320763	388,650
Training Grant	47500	47,500
Community Involvement Scheme	368500	301,500
Pilot Scheme testing on roads over peat	800000	1,000,000
PSCI Survey Support	16000	16,000
Drainage Works	446993	447,000
DOT Total	€14,878,431	€15,539,300
National Transport Authority		
Active Travel		
Transport / Mobility Plans: Tullamore	146,000	134,448
Tullamore Cycle Network Phase 1	116,000	358,231
Footpath Improvements Package A: Birr & Crinkill	377,894	100,563
Footpath Improvements Package B: Clara	192,525	298,882
Edenderry - Hare's Lane	75,000	Works complete
Footpath Improvements Design Package: Banagher & Cloghan	38,000	38,000
Tullamore - Spollenstown Road	116,000	191,104

Countywide Pedestrian Crossings	246,000	26,212
Portarlinton Active Travel Scheme	173,455	Works complete
Safe to Schools Programme - Support Infrastructure: Frederick Street, Clara	-	9,382
Low Cost Urban Junction (tightening) Schemes: Edenderry & Birr	115,000	110,449
Light Segregation Cycling Scheme: Edenderry	69,034	Works complete
Tullamore Urban Greenway Project	371,000	50,000
EDENDERRY - R402-1 Junction Upgrade	240,000	183,055
TULLAMORE - Collins Lane Junction - Advance Scheme	200,000	99,473
BIRR - Riverside Walk Upgrade/Link	285,000	147,500
RHODE - Pedestrian Crossings & Footpath	185,000	185,000
MUCKLAGH - Brocca Rd - Junction/Path	200,000	191,083
SHINRONE - Cloughjordan Road	140,000	140,000
BALLYCUMBER - Upgrade Footpath Links	125,000	125,000

Offaly County Council Active Travel Office - Staff Costs	271,000	271,000
Edenderry - SRTS (R1) Design & Cycle Links	-	75,000
Edenderry Active Travel elements	-	50,000
Arden View Tullamore Active Travel elements	-	75,000
Banagher SRTS (R1) Design Links	-	75,000
Kilcormac Village, Kinnity Road Active Travel elements	-	75,000
NTA Active Travel Total	€3,681,908	€3,009,382
Bus Stops in Tullamore & Edenderry	€63,374	
NTA Total	€3,745,282	€3,009,382



Funding Partner	2022 Initial Allocation	2023 Initial Allocation
Transport Infrastructure Ireland - National Roads allocation together with Greenways allocation	€2,762,911	€8,761,012
Department of Transport	€14,878,431	€15,539,300
National Transport Authority (incl Bus Stops)	€3,745,282	€3,009,382
Offaly County Council (Own Resources Local Roads)	€2,077,130	€2,246,269
Total	€23,463,754	€29,555,963

Offaly County Council has allocated €2,077,130 from own resources. In summary therefore, the 2022 initial Roads Budget is as follows:

TII GRAND CANAL GREENWAY

As part of our 2023 TII allocation Offaly County Council's Road and Transportation team were allocated approximately €3,880,000 to deliver the final 16km of the Grand Canal Greenway. The remaining works were separated into 4 specific capital contracts all of which were procured, and a contractor appointed in 2023. The works in their entirety will be completed in Q1 of 2024. As part of our works to provide connectivity to the Grand Canal Greenway we will commence the delivery of strategic links from specific towns and villages with the first scheme to be delivered in 2024.

TII PROTECTION AND RENEWAL

As part of the protection and renewal program Offaly County Council were approved for

additional funding for the delivery of 2 Emergency schemes on the N80 at Ballinarash and the N52 at Blueball. These schemes were in addition to the approximately 8.5km of pavement renewal works on the N62 delivered in Q2/Q3 of 2023.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE REGIONAL STRATEGY

Offaly County Council's Road and Transportation acting on behalf of the lead authority which is Offaly County Council in collaboration with our colleagues in Westmeath, Longford, Laois and Roscommon commenced the procurement process for specialist Technical Consultancy services for the formation of a Regional Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy in 2023. The strategy will produce an implementation plan for the region. This implementation plan will be used to apply for funding and ensure regional delivery of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure which in turn will ensure any synergies that can be delivered with regards to positioning of infrastructure and delivery of this new service can be identified at the inception phase of the project.

CORPORATE FLEET MIGRATION TOWARDS ZERO EMISSION AND LOW EMISSION FUELS

Offaly County Council's Road and Transportation Department commenced the migration of the Corporate Fleet toward both Zero Emission and Low Emission fuels in 2023. Our fleet now includes 5 electric vehicles which have replaced 5 diesel engine vehicles.

We have also introduced Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as replacement for diesel across several vehicles as a trial in 2023. The success of this trial underpins our commitment to introduced HVO as our primary fuel in 2024 which will provide a 90% reduction in our carbon footprint.

The Machinery Yard purchased two velocity road patching units in 2023, with grant assistance from the Department of Transport. The velocity patching unit provides for significantly higher quality, safer operation and cost saving for pothole repairs than conventional units. They reduce our carbon footprint through reducing binder content of repairs and reducing the necessity to repeat repairs. With these savings we will reach more roads in a timely fashion.

BIRR NORTH DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

Design works for the proposed new Birr North Distributor Road have progressed in 2023 with a detailed design now substantially completed and tender documentation due to be issued for approval to the Department of Transport. The Roads and Transportation Department aim to commence construction on this scheme in late Q2 early Q3 of 2024 subject to Department of Transport approval and funding.

EDENDERRY INNER RELIEF ROAD

Works commenced in Q3 on Stage 2 of the Edenderry Inner Relief Road with a completion date projected for Q2 2024. Once completed this scheme will provide a strategically important piece of infrastructure that will assist in promoting our Town Centre Ethos and will help maximise the benefits of our ACTIVE Travel Investment programs going forward.

BIRR SOUTH EASTERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

Procurement for the appointment of Technical Consultancy Services commence in 2023 with a view to having a specialist consultant appointed in Q1 2024.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION WORKS:

Offaly County Council's Road and Transportation Department works programs for 2023 were underpinned by assisting our organisations approach towards meeting our Climate Action commitments and showing leadership in this space. An example of works undertaken in 2023 are as follows;

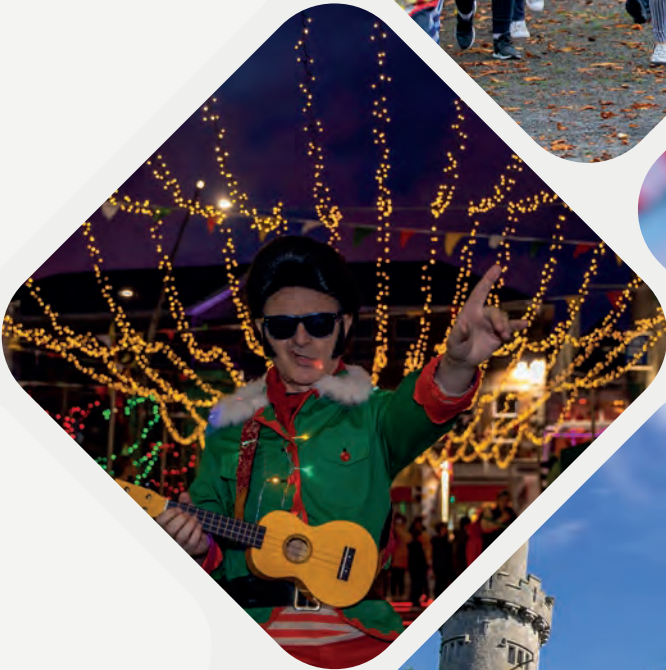
- Active Travel Schemes
- Decarbonisation of the Corporate Fleet
- Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure
- PLEEP-Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project
- Deployment of 2 new Velocity Patchers
- Completion of the Grand Canal Greenway

ROAD SAFETY 2023

As part of the 2023 Roads program Offaly County Council in collaboration with all our stakeholder partners have completed our counties Road Safety Plan. The works relating to it are ongoing.

“ Works commenced in Q3 on Stage 2 of the Edenderry Inner Relief Road with a completion date projected for Q2 2024. ”

Tourism



Tourism has a valuable role to play as a driver of economic growth and as a contributor to the sustainability of rural communities in Offaly. The tourism team work in partnership with key stakeholders from the tourism and hospitality sectors throughout the year, in promoting and co-ordinating all tourism related activities in the county. The tourism team play a key role in the Offaly's destination Management Organisation, Offaly Tourism Marketing (CLG), and together they design and implement an annual marketing plan, delivering key objectives to grow tourism in the county in a sustainable manner.

TOURISM SEMINAR

A successful tourism seminar was held on 3rd March in Tullamore. Compared by Tina O'Dwyer, tourism expert from 'The Tourism Space', speakers included Paddy Matthews Head of Operations for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Julie McLoughlin, Visitor Experience Lead Lough Boora Discovery Park and tourism consultants CHL. Many members of the tourism and hospitality trade and associated stakeholders attended for an enjoyable and informative morning.

FAMILIARISATION (FAM) TRIPS

FAM Trips provide an excellent opportunity for the sector to learn about each other's unique businesses, network and build important relationships. Two FAM trips were held exclusively for Offaly Tourism members in 2023; 24th April & 16th October. The full day tours included businesses from throughout the county and even made time to stop and learn more about Ireland's tidiest village, Geashill.

MARKETING

The implementation of the Annual Marketing Plan includes public relations, advertising and social media but also a myriad of smaller marketing activities to reach various target audiences including; Blogs, ezines, competitions, maps and brochures.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Public relations continued to be a focus for the team in 2023 and Offaly earning great exposure on print media, social media and TV. The Ireland AM crew visited Birr again in 2023, not once but twice!! Popular weatherman and social media influencer Deric O'h'Artagain kicked off Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival in August with a live broadcast early on a Friday morning! Derek returned again to Birr in September for a special tourism feature on Offaly. Birr Castle Demense GM Grainne O'Malley and Offaly Tourism Marketing Chairperson Philip O'Brien gave informative interviews explaining the appeal of Offaly to visitors.

Offaly received much coverage in the media over the Summer period with full features in The Sunday World and www.thegloss.ie. Other noteworthy mentions included The Sunday Times, www.her.ie, www.joe.ie, The Irish Independent and The Irish Times.

THE IRISH HOT AIR BALLOONING CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Irish Hot Air Ballooning Championships returned to Offaly with much fanfare in September. With Offaly County Council tourism team co-sponsoring the event, bringing worldwide visitors to Tullamore for the weeklong festivities. The weather may have not been as hoped but the last day stole the show with a magnificent turnout in Lloyd Town



Park as the balloons scattering the sky above Tullamore to the delight of onlookers.

ROSE OF TRALEE TOUR

Offaly Tourism hosted the 2023 Rose of Tralee Tour in August for a fun filled trip around the county. The Roses were greeted by a large enthusiastic crowd in O'Connor Square where they were treated to music and dance before they had a civic reception in the Library HQ. The Roses experienced many of our great sights and attractions which included Tullamore Dew Distillery Visitor Experience, Linda O'Brien Jewellery, Birr Castle Demesne, Clonmacnoise and the mighty River Shannon at Banagher and Shannonbridge. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase Offaly to a national and international audience with exposure on national TV.

RADIO CAMPAIGN

Once again, a national radio campaign ran for a period of two weeks on Today FM & Newstalk, in May & June, boosting Offaly's profile

nationwide. This included a daily competition giveaway on the very popular Ray Foley Show. This ran in tandem with a campaign on iRadio the same period, targeting a younger demographic.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Offaly Tourism continued to grow its social media presence in 2023, with Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter) accounts using the #visitoffaly. Working with a social media consultancy firm, our following and reach continues to grow year on year. The total number of followers over the social media platforms is now in excess of 18,000; an increase of 47% in the last three years.

PRINT ADVERTISING

Offaly specific adverts and editorial were organised for a number of publications in 2023; Your Daily Adventure Guide; 'Your Ireland' Supplement, Celtic Media Group; Summer Breaks in Ireland, Nationalist Paper Group.

NEW OFFALY TOURISM STRATEGY 2023 - 2027

The tourism team undertook the process of preparing a new Tourism Strategy for the County in 2023. CHL Consultants were the appointed consultants working on the strategy document, which will be in place for five-years, from 2023 to 2027. The new Strategy will guide the recovery, growth and development of the tourism sector in Offaly.

EVENTS/SHOWS / MARKETING MEETINGS

- **Holiday World Show** - attendance of approx. 70,000 people over 3 days
- **Tullamore Show** - showcasing all Offaly has to offer in the Offaly Pavilion
- **Offaly Tourism Marketing Meetings** - 5 held during 2023

Volunteer staff based in the Offaly Tourist Office in Tullamore continued to welcome visitors throughout 2023.

FÁILTE IRELAND EU JUST TRANSITION FUND

September saw the announcement of Fáilte Ireland EU Just Transition Fund which is available to eligible members of the tourism and hospitality sector. The tourism team will be assisting the trade in their applications. A new Tourism activator joined the team in December in order to strengthen our role in building awareness and confidence in the potential of tourism in Offaly, elicit quality ideas and grant applications and to build strong networks among our tourism businesses.



Municipal District Update

Birr Municipal District



Birr Municipal District

- **District Director:** Ann Dillon
- **District Engineer:** John Mitchell
- **District Administrator:** Deirdre Molloy

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monthly Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the Birr Civic Offices at 4.00pm.

SCHEDULE OF REPORTS

Reports were presented to the members from various Council departments on a rolling monthly basis. During this period reports were received from the following:

- January: District Engineers Roads Report
- February: Heritage Report
- March: Roads Programme 2023
- April: Water and Environment Services & Schedule of Municipal District Works 2023
- May: Housing Services Update
- June: District Engineers Roads Report and Community & Culture Report
- July: Water and Environment Services Report
- September: Housing Services Report
- October: Town and Village Report & Roads Progress Report
- November: LEO Presentation & Environment, Climate Action and Rural Water Report
- December: Community Policing Plan & Community and Culture Update

ROADS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (€3.76 MILLION IN 2023)

- R445 Dunkerrin
- Hill Street, Banagher
- Kinnitty Route to the Trails – over 750m of a new cycle track linking the village to Mountain Bike Trails
- Active Travel – Boherdeel Road, Crinkill
 - New 700m of footpath linking the Southgate, An Corrán, and Grove Street estates back to the village
 - Constructed by our Birr crew
- Bridge Improvement Programme
 - Clonlisk Bridge, L-8030
 - Cloonaloughan Bridge, L-4020
- Community Involvement Schemes
 - Cribben Terrace, Crinkill
 - St Kieran’s National School Broughal – New Set-down areas and staff car parking. Funded under CLÁR programme, MD allocation and constructed by our Kilcormac crew.
- Ferbane Playground
 - €40,000 investment in new playground equipment and constructed by our Ferbane crew

Municipal District Update

Edenderry Municipal District



Edenderry Municipal District

- **District Director:** Sharon Kennedy / Andrew Murray Q4, 2023
- **District Engineer:** Joseph Harte
- **District Administrator:** Louise Direen

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monthly Meetings were held on the second Wednesday of each month at 3.30pm, in-person with a remote option also available.

AGENDA ITEMS

The Elected Members of Edenderry Municipal District agreed that the following be included on their agenda for their monthly meetings as set items:

- Regeneration/Project Updates
- District Issues/Updates
- Roads Update

SCHEDULE OF REPORTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS

On a rolling monthly basis, the Elected Members met with staff from other departments providing updates on activities within these sections such as Roads, Heritage, Environment & Water Services Housing, Community & Culture and Economic & Enterprise.

ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEMES

Active Travel Measures to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in Edenderry Municipal District.

- Rhode - Footpaths and Pedestrian Crossings
- Edenderry - R402-1 Junction Upgrade
- Various Pedestrian Measures & Junction works

EDENDERRY MUNICIPAL DISTRICT ROADS PROGRAMME 2023

- €7.07m initially secured
- 100+ projects successfully delivered

- Restoration Improvement - €2.1m (up from €1.6m in 2022)
- Restoration Maintenance - €460k (same as 2022)
- Community Involvement Scheme
 - Garryhinch - Footway towards Coillte Woods
 - Rhode Bridge - Footway towards village
 - Walsh Island - Footway, Traffic Calming, Public Lighting, Pedestrian Crossings

TOWN & VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME

The Town & Village Renewal Scheme is a key part of the Action Plan for Rural Development and the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Programme for Rural Regeneration. Projects approved through the scheme are aimed at making small rural towns and villages more attractive and sustainable places in which to live and work. Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding was approved for Kilmalogue Streetscape and Clonbullogue Bridge & Public Realm Works.

PORTARLINGTON FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Advancing €15m project with OPW/LCC

1. Scheme Development & Design (Sept. 2020 - Dec 2023)
 - Public Consultation, Surveys/Design, EIA
 - 25th Nov: Public Consultation - Emerging Options
2. Planning (Submission expected March 2024)
3. Detailed Design (Q3 2024 - Q2 2025)
4. Construction (Q1 2025 - Q4 2026)

“ Edenderry Library Project consists of a proposed new library and multi-purpose arts space on JKL Street which will become an important community destination.”

RRDF/EDENDERRY LIBRARY

The RRDF is a key part of Our Rural Future, the Government’s five-year policy designed to reinvigorate Rural Ireland. The Fund is designed to combat dereliction, increase the vibrancy of town centres and regenerate old buildings so that they have a new purpose. Edenderry Library Project consists of a proposed new library and multi-purpose arts space on JKL Street which will become an important community destination on JKL Street, providing life, activity and a new link to the park beyond. It will provide a welcoming space for all, enable the opportunity to develop community programmes, while adding life and vitality to the town centre and park. Demolition and site clearance of 33/34 JKL Street is now complete and the Part 8 planning process has also been approved.

CREATIVE PLACES EDENDERRY

Offaly County Council in partnership with Creative Lives (the lead delivery partner) were awarded the highly significant Creative Places funding for Edenderry. This funding is for a 3-year programme that will provide a foundation for the future development of the town. The project will align with the development of the planned Library Art Space; building audiences and public engagement prior to the opening of this new much needed cultural space.

Highlights from 2023 include;

- Explorations into Visual Arts, Music, Poetry, Playwriting, Screenwriting/Creative Writing, Lego Clinic

- Creative Movement – Dance, Ceramics, Drama, Radio, Photography
- Funded 6 Creative Grants of €500 each in the community
- Funded 3 Artist Commissions (€4,500 - €12k)

GMA FUND/COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME

Through the General Municipal Allocation/Community Grants Scheme the Elected Members of Edenderry Municipal District provided funding towards a total of 42 projects/groups in 2023, for example:

- Playgrounds
- Christmas Lights/Festivals
- Village/Estate Enhancement via Residents Groups
- Community/Development Groups
- Sports Clubs
- Mens/Womens Sheds

EDENDERRY CHRISTMAS/SANTA VISIT

Edenderry Municipal District arranged a very successful and well attended Christmas event in the Town Square on Sunday 26th November. The event consisted of market stalls, kids entertainment, food stalls and switching on the Christmas lights with Santa.



Municipal District Update

Tullamore Municipal District



Tullamore Municipal District

- **District Director:** Tom Shanahan
- **Senior Executive Officer:** Jean Ryan (Q1-Q3, 2023)
- **District Engineer /Acting SEO (Q4, 2023):** John Connelly
- **District Administrator:** Killian O' Brien

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings of the Municipal District are held on the second Thursday of the month at 2.30pm, generally in the Municipal District Chamber, Town Hall, Tullamore.

ACTIVITIES IN 2023

- Team Tullamore: in partnership with Tullamore Tidy Towns, Waterways Ireland and the Tullamore Chamber of Commerce;
- IBAL Anti-Litter League: Tullamore remains 'Clean to European Norms'
- National Tidy Towns & Local Tidy Towns initiatives - Tullamore continues to improve in the national competition and achieved its 9th Gold medal;
- Street cleaning services throughout the Municipal District area;
- The Estate Management Interagency Committee, as part of Offaly Joint Policing Committee, focusing on anti social behaviour.
- Estate enhancement in conjunction with the Housing section
- Esker Arts

TULLAMORE URBAN REGENERATION DEVELOPMENT

- **URDF 1 Urban Greenway** - the construction of the Urban Greenway through Tullamore will connect the Grand Canal Greenway at Convent View on the east to join the urban Greenway at Bury Quay to and Srah Road and Srah Bridge, on the west of Tullamore. The design of the cycleway was amended in 2022 in line with the overall plan for

Tullamore as a cycle friendly town and a revised Part 8 planning was approved. The design and tender documents went to tender in Q3 2023 and a report on Tenders and final business case in line with the Public Spending code was prepared and submitted to the Department for approval in December 2023. A URDF grant of €1.76m with NTA active funding of €0.58m is approved for this project subject to Tender and Final Business case approval by the Department.

- **URDF Call 2** - The Tullamore Urban Regeneration and Development Fund 2020 (URDF 2) Project incorporates six individual projects building on the successful completion of the Tullamore Street Enhancement project funded under URDF 1. Each of the six projects, as listed below, are deliverable in the short to medium term. A URDF grant of €2.25m is approved.
 - A: O'Connor Square to Church Street, Urban Garden, Civil Building / RW Hub
 - B: High Street to Tanyard New Street Link
 - C: Meath Lane Civic Space
 - D: Tullamore Regeneration Framework
 - E: Tullamore Harbour Development Options and Viability Appraisal
 - F: Acres' Folly Enhancements
- **Town and Village Renewal Scheme:** The Mucklagh TVR/Active Travel Scheme was completed.

- **Annual Roads Programme:** Tullamore MD successfully delivered 17km of surface reconstruction over 22 schemes and 14km of surface dressing over 13 schemes in 2023.
- **Low Cost Safety Schemes Completed:** LCS completed for Coleraine (R420)
- **Bridges:** Clonad East, Ballyboughlan, New Bridge, Derryesker, Springfield Bridge
- **CIS:** two Community Involvement Schemes in Derrygolan & Curranagh in 2023
- **LIS:** Castle Armstrong, Cloncoher, Tinamuck West, Glaskill, Ballyfarrell, Annaghmore, Derrylachan.
- **Climate Adaptation & Resilience:** schemes were completed in Mountbolus, Erry (Clara) and Woodfield.
- **Active Travel: the following Active Travel schemes advances in 2023**
 - The Tullamore Area Based Transport Assessment was progressed to draft stage in 2023
 - Cycle Network Phase 1 preliminary design was progressed
 - Spollenstown Active Travel scheme was substantially completed and the design for the pedestrian bridge was progressed
 - Ballycumber Village active travel scheme was substantially completed
- **Lloyd Town Park** received its 8th Green Flag and received funding from the Department of Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, supplemented with TMD GMA, for the supply of a modular building for a new caretakers office, storage unit and public toilets.
- **Reports** from Offaly County Council were given to members at Municipal District Meetings as follows:
 - Climate Action-Environment-Rural Water: 13/04/23, 13/07/23, 09/11/23
 - Roads & Transport: 09/02/2023, 08/06/2023, 12/10/2023
 - Housing: 11/05/2023, 14/09/2023
 - Heritage: 09/03/2023
 - Community & Culture: 08/06/2023, 14/12/2023
 - Economic/Enterprise: 12/10/2023
- **Schedule of Works 2023:** Consideration and adoption of the Schedule of Works for the Municipal District was approved at the District meeting of 13/04/2023;
- **Budget 2023:** Consideration of General Municipal Allocation approved at the district meeting of 09/02/2023;
- **Community Grants:** Supporting in excess of 70 community and voluntary groups in the Municipal District by way of providing funding towards various community and estate enhancement initiatives.
- **Christmas Lights:** Tullamore MD continued to support Tullamore Chamber of Commerce in 2023.
- **Events** various events throughout the year including;
 - Tullamore & Clara St. Patrick's Day Parades
 - Tullamore Tradfest - March 31st - April 2nd
 - Cannonball - May 27th
 - Litha Festival, Clara - June 24th
 - Irish Hot Air Balloon Championships - September 23rd - 30th
 - Púca Spooka 2023 returned to Lloyd Town Park from the 28th & 29th of October, with ten thousand visitors to the Park over the two days.
 - Tullamore Christmas Lights and outdoor markets.



Appendices

- **Appendix I Councillor Membership of Standing Committees of the Council / Other bodies**
- **Appendix II Payments to Councillors**
- **Appendix III Conferences/Seminars/Training attended by Councillors in 2023**
- **Appendix IV Performance Indicators 2022**

Appendix I Councillor Membership of Standing Committees of the Council / Other bodies

Association of Irish Local Government	Cllrs. N. Cribbin, D. Owens, E. Dooley	Sub Project Birr MD	Cllr. C. Claffey
Board of Directors Oxmantown Hall Management Committee	Cllrs. J. Clendennen, C. Claffey	Midland Regional Drugs Task Force	Cllr. F. Moran
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	Cllrs. E. Fitzpatrick, T. McCormack, D. Owens	North Offaly Development Fund Ltd	Cllrs. N. Cribbin, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, L. Quinn, M. Hackett, R. McDermott
EU Just Transition Fund	Cllr. R. McDermott	Offaly Film Commission	Cllrs. D. Harvey, S. O'Brien, D. Owens
Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd	Cllr. D. Owens	Offaly Innovation & Design Centre	Cllr. T. McCormack
Joint Policing Committee	Cllrs. J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Feighery, T. McCormack, E. Fitzpatrick, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, F. Moran, P. Ormond, M. Hackett, R. McDermott, S. O'Brien, K. Smollen, S. Feehan Smollen	Offaly Sports Partnership	Cllrs. D. Owens, C. Claffey, N. Cribbin
Local Authority Members Association:	Cllr. P. Ormond	Regional Health Forum, Dublin-Mid-Leinster	Cllrs. E. Fitzpatrick, T. McCormack, S. O'Brien
Local Community Development Committee	Cllrs. D. Harvey, N. Cribbin, J. Leahy	Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Cllrs. E. Fitzpatrick, J. Clendennen, M. Hackett
Offaly Local Development Company	Cllrs. C. Claffey, E. Fitzpatrick, T. McCormack	Swimming Pool Committees	<i>Birr</i> – Cllr. P. Ormond <i>Clara</i> – Cllrs. K. Smollen S. Feehan Smollen <i>Edenderry</i> – Cllr. N. Cribbin
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Cllrs. N. Feighery, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, K. Smollen, T. McCormack, S. Feehan Smollen	Tullamore Leisure Ltd.	Cllrs. T. McCormack, D. Harvey, D. Owens, K. Smollen, S. Feehan Smollen
Laois and Offaly Education Training Board	Cllrs. J. Carroll, E. Fitzpatrick, C. Claffey, N. Feighery, R. McDermott, F. Moran	Tullamore Community Arts Centre:	Cllrs. T. McCormack, D. Harvey, S. O'Brien, D. Owens
		Tullamore Sports Link Ltd.	Cllr. T. McCormack
		Tullamore Chandler Sister Cities	Cllrs. T. McCormack, D. Owens

Appendix II Payments to Councillors

Councillor	Represent Pay & MD allowance	Monthly Expenditure allowance incl. LRA	Conference/ Training incl. Fees	SPC chairpersons allowance	MD Chairperson allowance	Chairpersons allowance	Gratuity	Travel Abroad	Total
John Carroll	28,200.37	4,395.9	350.13		2,667.77				35,614.17
Clare Claffey	28,200.37	5,195.38							33,395.75
John Clendennen	28,200.37	7,781.72	1,267.06	5,979.48	3,311.71				46,540.34
Noel Cribbin	28,200.37	6,195.31	3,249.09		3,265.72				40,910.49
Eamon Dooley	28,200.37	3,660.88	1,786.11	5,979.48					39,626.84
Neil Feighery	28,200.37	6,524.86	2,479.12		2,621.77				39,826.12
Eddie Fitzpatrick	28,200.37	7,204.99	2,592.21			10,655.74			48,653.31
John Foley	28,200.37	5,066.77							33,267.14
Mark Hackett	28,200.37	4,538.45							32,738.82
Declan Harvey	28,200.37	4,299.11	2,039.65		3,357.74				37,896.87
John Leahy	28,200.37	7,426.41							35,626.78
Tony McCormack	28,200.37	2,877.27		5,979.48		1,855.17			38,912.29
Robert McDermott	28,200.37	4,061.72	1,506.69	5,979.48	2,713.76				42,462.02
Frank Moran	28,200.37	6,877.28	2,118.03			9,275.86	4,214.25		50,685.79
Sean O'Brien	28,344.90	7,077.29	5,257.78						40,679.97
Peter Ormond	28,200.37	5,498.54	785.72						34,484.63
Danny Owens	28,200.37	2,877.27	2,278.15			2,131.15			35,486.94
Liam Quinn	28,200.37	4,208.16							32,408.53
Ken Smollen	22,695.42	2,175.12							24,870.54
Sandy Feehan Smollen	6,113.25	702.15							6,815.40
Totals	536,559.86	98,644.58	25,709.74	23,917.92	17,938.47	23,917.92		4,214.25	730,902.74

Appendix III Conferences/Seminars/Training attended by Councillors in 2023

Councillors attended the following training in 2023	Venue	Date of Conferences	No. Delegates
AILG Module 1	Limerick	24 and 25/02/2023	3
LAMA Spring	Bantry	2 and 4/03/2023	8
AILG Module 2	Dundalk	24 and 25/03/2023	4
AILG Annual	Kilkenny	19 and 20/04/2023	6
AILG Module 3	Mullingar and Cork	15/06/2023 and 20/07/2023	4
AILG Module 4	Sligo	21 and 22/07/2023	8
AILG Autumn	Sligo	13 and 15/09/2023	7
AILG Module 5	Tralee	21/10/2023	3
LAMA Autumn	Tuam	25 and 26/10/2023	7
AILG Module 6	Galway	18/11/2023	2
Armagh Observatory	Armagh / Dublin	12 and 13/01/2023, 25/05/2023	1
Celtic Conference	Carlingford	3 to 5/02/2023	3
MacGill Summer School	Donegal	16 to 19/08/2023	3
Celtic Conference	Carlingford	13 to 15/10/2023	2
Celtic Conference	Cork	1 to 3/12/2023	2

Appendix IV Performance Indicators

A function of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) established in July 2014 under Section 61 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 is to scrutinise the performance of any local government body against or in comparison with relevant indicators that the Commission considers it appropriate to refer to, and which includes relevant indicators relating to customer service.

NOAC's role in relation to the scrutiny of local government performance against relevant performance indicators replaces, in respect of performance in 2014 and subsequent years, the service indicators in local authorities that were introduced by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in 2004. The LGMA role in the collection of the data and the compilation of the report will continue in respect of the replacement report to NOAC.

For 2023, there are 45 local authority performance indicators, as follows:

● Housing (H1 to H7)	● Library/Recreation (L1 and L2)
● Roads (R1 to R3)	● Youth/Community (Y1 and Y2)
● Water (W1 and W2)	● Corporate (C1 to C5)
● Waste/Environment (E1 to E7)	● Finance (M1 to M4)
● Planning (P1 to P5)	● Economic Development (J1 to J5)
● Fire Service (F1 to F3)	

There is one new Indicator reported on in 2023 :

H7: Social Housing Retrofit

NOAC have advised that some indicators are amended; **P1, M2** and **J5** and there are minor edits on the Roads Indicators.

The Service Indicators figures provided for 2023 are for reference only (not audited by NOAC at time of publishing).

H: HOUSING (H1 TO H7)	2023	2022
H1: SOCIAL HOUSING STOCK		
A. The number of dwellings in the ownership of the Local Authority at 1/1/2023	2010	1953
B. The number of dwellings added to the Local Authority owned stock during in 2023 (whether constructed or acquired)	79	58
C. The number of Local Authority owned dwellings sold in 2023	0	1
D. The number of Local Authority owned dwellings demolished in 2023	0	0
E. The number of dwellings in the ownership of the Local Authority at 31/12/2023	2089	2010
F. The number of Local Authority owned dwellings planned for demolition under a DHPLG approved scheme	0	0
H2: HOUSING VACANCIES		
A. The percentage of the total number of Local Authority owned dwellings that were vacant on 31/12/2023	2.49%	2.14%
H3: AVERAGE RE-LETTING TIME AND COST		
A. The time taken from the date of vacation of dwelling to the date in 2023 when a new tenancy had commenced in the dwelling, averaged across all units re-let in 2023	42 wks	42 wks
B. The cost expended on getting the dwellings re-tenanted units in 2023 ready for re-letting, averaged across all units re-let in 2023	€ 36,025.79	€ 36,927.89
H4: HOUSING MAINTENANCE COST		
A. Expenditure during 2023 on the maintenance of LA housing compiled from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, divided by the no. of dwellings in the LA stock at 31/12/2023	€683.77	€ 655.63

H5: PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR INSPECTIONS		
A. Total number of registered tenancies in the LA area at the end of June 2023		3,630
B. Number of rented dwellings inspected in 2023	458	331
C. Percentage of inspected dwellings in 2023 that were found not to be compliant with the Standards Regulations	98.08%	100.00%
D. Number of non-compliant dwellings that became compliant during 2023	49	16
E. Number of inspections (including re-inspections) undertaken by the Local Authority in 2023	521	389
H6: LONG-TERM HOMELESS ADULTS		
A. Number of adult individuals in emergency accommodation that are long-term homeless as a % of the total number of homeless adult individuals in emergency accommodation at the end of 2023.	85.71%	15.56%
H7: SOCIAL HOUSING RETROFIT (NEW IN 2023)		
A. (1) Total number of houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme.	12	New in 2023
(2) Number of houses that achieve a BER rating of B2 or above between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme.	12	New in 2023
(3) Number of heat pumps installed in those houses between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme.	12	New in 2023
B. Total annual energy savings in MWh from houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme.	342.9 MWh	New in 2023
C. Total carbon emission reduction tCo2 from houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme.	120.7	New in 2023

R: ROADS (R1 AND R2)		2023	2022
R1: RATINGS IN PAVEMENT SURFACE CONDITION INDEX (PSCI)			
A. The % of (a) Regional , (b) Local Primary and (c) Local Secondary , road kilometres that have received a PSCI condition rating in the 24-month period prior to 31/12/2023 The % of (d) Local Tertiary road kilometres that have received a PSCI condition rating in the 60-month period prior to 31/12/2023	<i>Regional</i>	80.69%	96.00%
	<i>Local Primary</i>	63.69%	69.00%
	<i>Local Secondary</i>	57.89%	60.00%
	<i>Local Tertiary</i>	61.65%	64.00%
B. The % of total (a) Regional road kilometres at 31/12/2023 rated in each of the following 4 groupings of the 10 PSCI rating categories; 1-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10	<i>Category 1 - 4</i>	2.21%	6.29%
	<i>Category 5 - 6</i>	13.36%	16.51%
	<i>Category 7 - 8</i>	33.34%	38.89%
	<i>Category 9 - 10</i>	31.79%	38.30%
C. The % of total (b) Local Primary , road kilometres at 31/12/2023 rated in each of the following 4 groupings of the 10 PSCI rating categories; 1-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10.	<i>Category 1 - 4</i>	4.34%	8.32%
	<i>Category 5 - 6</i>	13.96%	23.35%
	<i>Category 7 - 8</i>	21.12%	35.35%
	<i>Category 9 - 10</i>	24.29%	32.19%
D. The % of total (c) Local Secondary , road kilometres at 31/12/2023 rated in each of the following 4 groupings of the 10 PSCI rating categories; 1-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10.	<i>Category 1 - 4</i>	3.90%	11.47%
	<i>Category 5 - 6</i>	12.74%	21.44%
	<i>Category 7 - 8</i>	22.14%	40.28%
	<i>Category 9 - 10</i>	19.12%	26.32%
E. The % of total (d) Local Tertiary , road kilometres at 31/12/2023 rated in each of the following 4 groupings of the 10 PSCI rating categories; 1-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10.	<i>Category 1 - 4</i>	9.22%	18.25%
	<i>Category 5 - 6</i>	8.98%	10.96%
	<i>Category 7 - 8</i>	17.49%	23.50%
	<i>Category 9 - 10</i>	25.97%	33.00%
R2: REGIONAL ROAD GRANTS WORKS			
A. Kilometres of Regional Road strengthened during 2023.	<i>Km of Road</i>	18.2 km	15.4 km
	<i>Amount Spent</i>	€ 3,654,525	€ 2,799,417
	<i>Average unit cost</i>	€ 29.13	€ 27.73
B. Kilometres of Regional Road resealed during 2023.	<i>Km of Road</i>	13.8 km	14.1 km
	<i>Amount Spent</i>	€ 480,622	€ 549,008
	<i>Average unit cost</i>	€ 5.63	€ 6.48

C. Kilometres of Local Road strengthened during 2023.	<i>Km of Road</i>	56.3 km	47.6 km
	<i>Amount Spent</i>	€ 4,515,402	€ 4,165,259
	<i>Average unit cost</i>	€ 17.99	€ 19.96
D. Kilometres of Local Road resealed during 2023.	<i>Km of Road</i>	57.6 km	51.0 km
	<i>Grant Amount</i>	€ 1,224,113	€ 1,162,598
	<i>Average unit cost</i>	€ 4.65	€ 5.17
R3: % OF MOTOR TAX TRANSACTIONS CONDUCTED ONLINE			
The percentage of motor tax transactions which are dealt with online (i.e. transaction is processed and the tax disc is issued) in 2023		81.47%	81.10%

W: WATER (W1 AND W2)	2023	2022
W1: % DRINKING WATER (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHEMES) IN COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS		
The indicator that will be presented in the performance indicators report is the data supplied to the EPA in respect of the monitoring of the quality of private drinking water supplies during 2023.	Provided by EPA	Data not available for 2022
W2: % OF REGISTERED SCHEMES MONITORED		
The number of registered schemes monitored by each local authority as a percentage of total schemes registered.	100.00%	97.87%
The number of registered schemes monitored in 2023	50	46
Total number of registered schemes in 2023	50	47

Note: This data will be obtained directly from the EPA and was not available at time of publication.

E: WASTE / ENVIRONMENT (E1 TO E6)		2023	2022
E1: No. / % OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH AVAILED OF A 3 BIN SERVICE			
A. The number of households, which availed of a 3 bin service offered by a licenced operator at 31/12/2023		7601	7,252
B. The % of households within the local authority that the number at A represents (based on agglomerations > 500).		67.96%	** 69.81%
E2: % OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION COMPLAINTS CLOSED			
A. The total no. of pollution cases in respect of which a complaint was made during 2023, the number of pollution cases closed from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 and the total no. of cases on hands at 31/12/2023.	Complaints Made	783	929
	No. Closed	719	1,110
	No. on Hand	80	185
E3: % OF LA AREA WITHIN THE 5 LEVELS OF LITTER POLLUTION			
A. The % of the area within the LA that when surveyed in 2023 was 1) unpolluted or litter free , 2) slightly polluted , 3) moderately polluted , 4) significantly polluted , or 5) grossly polluted .	Provided by Tobin Consulting Engineers		5.0 %
			61.0%
			32.0%
			2.0%
			0.0%
E4: % OF SCHOOLS THAT CURRENTLY HOLD AND HAVE RENEWED THEIR GREEN FLAG STATUS.			
A. The % of schools that have been awarded/ renewed Green Flag Status in the two years to 31/12/2023		31.17%	33.77%
Schools that have attained a Green Flag for the first time in 2023		0	0
Schools that have renewed their Green Flag in 2023		11	13
Schools which held a Green Flag from 2022 and therefore do not require renewal until 2024		13	13

**Indicator E1 has been amended to measure the % households based on those in agglomerations of >500 instead of the 2016 census household figure

Indicator E3: The data will be submitted by Tobin Consulting Engineers directly to the LGMA from the data for the 2023 National Litter Pollution Monitoring System Report and was not available at time of publication.

E5: ENERGY EFFICIENCY PERFORMANCE		
The cumulative % of energy savings achieved by 31/12/2023 relative to baseline year (2009)	%	-43.45 %
E6: PUBLIC LIGHTING		
A. Total billable wattage of the public lighting system	3306.99 MWh	3337.24 MWh
B. Average billable wattage of the Public Lighting system	85.70 W	86.49 W
C. Percentage of the total system that LED lights represent	44.06%	43.27 %
Number of LED lights in the public lighting system;	4102	4014
Number of SOX-SON lights in the public lighting system.	5209	5262
E7: CLIMATE CHANGE		
1. Does the local authority have designated FTE climate action resources under the following headings?		
a) Climate Action Coordinator	Yes	Yes
b) Climate Action Officer	Yes	Yes
2. Does the local authority have a climate action team?	Yes	Yes

Indicator E5: This data will be obtained directly from the SEAI as part of local authority's annual M&R return to SEAI and was not available at time of publication.

P: PLANNING (P1 TO P5)	2023	2022
P1: NEW BUILDINGS INSPECTED		
A. Buildings Inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority	15.18%	14.29%
P2: No. / % OF PLANNING DECISIONS CONFIRMED BY AN BORD PLEANÁLA		
A. Number of LA planning decisions which were the subject of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála that were determined by the Board on any date in 2023	13	19
B. % of the determinations at A which confirmed (either with or without variation) the decision made by the LA	84.69%	63.00%
P3: % OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT CASES CLOSED AS RESOLVED		
A. Total number of planning cases referred to or initiated by the local authority in the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 that were investigated	62	59
C. Total number of cases that were closed during 2023	9	14
D. % of the cases at B that were dismissed, as trivial, minor, or without foundation, under Section 152(2), Planning and Development Act 2000 or were closed because statute barred or an exempted development.	66.67%	14.29%
E. % of the cases at B that were resolved to the LA's satisfaction through negotiations	0.00%	21.43%
F. % of the cases at B that were closed due to enforcement proceedings (i.e. in remedied in response to a warning letter issued under Section 152 of the Act or to an enforcement notice issued under Section 154 of the Act or where a prosecution was brought under Section 157 or an injunction was sought under Section 160 of the Act)	33.33%	64.29%
G. Total number of planning cases being investigated as at 31/12/2023.	328	275

P4: COST PER CAPITA OF THE PLANNING SERVICE		
A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme D data divided by the population of the LA area per the 2022 Census.	€39.01	€ 38.17
P5: APPLICATIONS FOR FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATES		
A. The % of applications for Fire Safety Certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt.	78.67%	76.19%
B. The % of applications for Fire Safety Certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant.	21.33%	23.81%

F: FIRE SERVICE (F1 TO F3)	2023	2022
F1: COST PER CAPITA OF THE FIRE SERVICE		
A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme E expenditure data divided by the population of the LA area per the 2022 Census for the population served by the fire authority as per the Risk Based Approach Phase One reports.	€ 50.40	€ 42.03
F2: SERVICE MOBILISATION		
A. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of fire	N/A	N/A
B. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of fire	6.01	5.24
C. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	N/A	N/A
D. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	5.45	5.38
F3: PERCENTAGE OF ATTENDANCE TIMES AT SCENES		
A. % of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	40.00%	36.88%
B. % of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	47.00%	48.50%
C. % of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	13.00%	14.62%
D. % of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	30.54%	31.14%
E. % of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	46.11%	42.51%
F. % of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	23.35%	26.35%

L: LIBRARY / RECREATION SERVICES (L1 AND L2)	2023	2022
L1: LIBRARY VISITS AND ISSUES		
A. Number of visits to libraries per head of population for the LA area per the 2022 Census.	2.24	1.81
B. Number of items issued to library borrowers in the year.	205,443	201,645
C. Library active members per head of population	0.16	N/A
D. Number of registered library members in the year	10,317	13,024
L2: COST OF OPERATING A LIBRARY SERVICE		
A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme F data divided by the population of the LA area per the 2022 Census.	€ 37.93	€ 35.85
B. The annual per capita expenditure on collections over the period 1/01/2023 to 31/12/2023.	€ 1.80	€ 1.81

Y: YOUTH / COMMUNITY (Y1 AND Y2)	2023	2022
Y1: PARTICIPATION IN COMHAIRLE NA NÓG SCHEME		
A. Percentage of local schools involved in the local Youth Council / Comhairle na nÓg scheme.	91.67%	91.67%
Y2: GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK (PPN)		
The number of organisations included in the County Register at 31/12/2023 and the proportion of those organisations that opted to be part of the Social Inclusion College (SIC) within the PPN	11.82	11.24

C: CORPORATE SERVICES (C1 TO C5)	2023	2022
C1: TOTAL NUMBER OF WTEs		
A. The whole-time equivalent staffing number as at 31 December 2023	506.71	429.45
C2: WORKING DAYS LOST TO SICKNESS		
A. Percentage of working days lost to sickness absence through medically certified leave	3.85%	5.28%
B. Percentage of working days lost to sickness absence through self-certified leave	0.22%	0.20%
C3: No. OF VISITS TO LA WEBSITE		
A. The per capita total views of the local authority's website in 2023.	15.16	16.15
B. The per capita total number of followers at end 2023 of the LA's social media accounts (if any).	1.26	1.21
C4: OVERALL COST OF ICT PROVISION PER WTE		
A. All ICT expenditure in the period from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023, divided by the WTE number	€ 3466.69	€ 3,905.92
C5: OVERALL COST OF ICT PROVISION PER AS A PROPORTION OF REVENUE EXPENDITURE		
A. All ICT expenditure calculated in C4 as a proportion of Revenue expenditure.	1.98	2.06

M: FINANCE (M1 TO M4)	2023
M1:5 YEAR SUMMARY OF REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCE	
A. The cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2019	-€ 1,873,757
B. The cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2020	- € 1,661,523A.
C. The cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2021	-€ 1,637,257
A. The cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2022	- € 1,213,150
D. The cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2023	- € 791,561
E. The cumulative surplus or deficit at 31/12/2023 as a percentage of Total Income in 2022 from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS**	- 0.84 %
F. Revenue Expenditure per capita for the year	€ 1,069.60
G. Revenue expenditure per capita in 2023 excluding significant out of county / shared service expenditure.	N/A

M2: 5 YEAR SUMMARY OF % COLLECTION LEVELS FOR MAJOR REVENUE SOURCES			
The individual % figures for each of (a) Rates , (b) Rent & Annuities and (c) Housing Loans in the final column of Appendix 7 of the Annual Financial Statement (AFS) for	% Rates	% Rents and Annuities	% Housing Loans
A. Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	88.00	89.00	62.00
B. Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	77.10	92.00	75.00
C. Appendix 7 of the AFS* for 2021	86.00	93.00	82.00
D. Appendix 7 of the AFS* for 2022	85.00	93.00	85.00
E. Appendix 7 of the AFS* for 2023	87.00	93.00	94.00
M3: PUBLIC LIABILITY CLAIMS		2023	2022
A. Per capita total cost of settled claims for 2023.		€ 9.21	€ 2.70
Total number of notified claims (IPB and settled under excess)		114	41
Total number of settled claims (IPB and settled under excess)		77	25
Total cost of settled claims (IPB and settled under excess)		€ 765,439.35	€ 223,195.63
M4: OVERHEADS		2023	2022
A. Overall central management charge as a percentage (%) of total expenditure on revenue account.		14.63%	15.03%
B. Total payroll costs as a percentage (%) of revenue expenditure.		34.05%	34.82%

* The figures in the unaudited AFS are to be used where the audit by the Local Government Audit Service has not taken place by the 15th April.

J: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (J1 TO J4)	2023	2022
J1: No. of Jobs Created		
The per capita number of jobs created with assistance from the Local Enterprise Office during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023, per 100,000 of population	12.03	186.29
J2: TRADING ONLINE VOUCHERS		
A. The per capita number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in 2023.	28.86	18.14
B. The per capita number of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2023.	6.01	7.26
J3: No. of Mentoring Recipients		
The per capita number of participants who received mentoring during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	266.99	180.24
J4: TOURISM		
Does the Local Authority have a current Tourism Strategy?	Yes	Yes
Does the Local Authority have a designated Tourism Officer?	Yes	Yes
J5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPEND (TEST INDICATOR IN 2022)		
The spend on local economic development by the local authority in 2023, per head of population	€68.24	€136.4





Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



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