

**APRIL
2023**



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

Do: Baill Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí

To: Each Member of Offaly County Council

Tuairisc mhíosúil bainistíochta a bhreithniú i gcomhair tionóil mí Bealtaine

Monthly Management Report for consideration at the May 2023 Monthly Meeting.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS:

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

FINANCE:

Finance Report– Appendix 1

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

OFFALY JOBS FAIR

Saturday 10 June 10-3 at Tullamore Court Hotel

TULLAMORE LIBRARY

‘Under an Irish Sky’ art exhibition will be on display for all visitors for the duration of May.

CRUINNIU NA NÓG

Cruinniú na nÓg is Ireland’s national day of free creative activity for children and young people up to 18 years of age and is taking place on Saturday 10 June

PPN UPCOMING EVENTS

Social Inclusion meetings

Edenderry MD The Cabin, May 17 10am – 1pm

Tullamore MD Charleville Centre, May 18 11am – 2pm

Community & Voluntary Pillar meetings

May 16 Marian Hall Birr @7pm

May 17 Bracknagh Parish Hall @7pm

May 18 Tullamore Town Council @7pm

REPORT AT A GLANCE

LCDC

Offaly LCDC held an Engagement Workshop in relation to the development of the Offaly Local Development Strategy on Thursday 13th April.

Tourism

The Tourism Team hosted a very successful Familiarisation Trip around the county on 24th April. Various sectors of the tourism and hospitality trade enjoyed a fun filled day where they visited eleven locations and gained invaluable knowledge.

Nature Based Solutions (NBS)

The Climate Action Team hosted a mini workshop as part of the EU NBS EduWORLD project.

PLANNING

Development Management

	To end April 2023	To end April 2022	Total 2022
Planning Applications	188	220	681
Extensions of Duration Applications & Assessments	4	6	16
Warning Letters and (Enforcement Notices) issued	77 (47)	17 (4)	158 (15)

During the month of **April 2023**, the following large planning applications were received:

Bare Meadows Projects Ltd.	PP Conversion of Public House to Commercial Use, Blueball, Tullamore.
Edgewater Medical Centre	PP Change Of Use Existing House to Medical Centre, Extend Front and Sides And Extension For Consulting Room, Kilcruttin, Tullamore.
Sophia Housing Association	PP 37 No Residential Units Within The Curtilage of a Protected Structure, Patrick Street, Portarlinton.
Tony Kilduff	Retention and Refurbishment of 19th Century Cottage, PP 4 No Singlestorey Dwellings, Clonfinlough.

Forward Planning

At the Council Meeting held on 17th April 2023, the elected members agreed to materially alter the draft Edenderry Local Area Plan 2023-2029, with the proposed material alterations to go on public display 3 weeks later, inviting submissions for a period of 4 weeks.

A Chief Executive Report on the submissions received on the proposed Material Alterations to the draft Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029 was issued to the elected Members on 6th April, for their consideration for a period of 6 weeks.

Conservation Architecture

Report Amanda Pedlow, Heritage Officer and Ricky Whelan, Biodiversity Officer.

This report is based on the six Key Actions in the **Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-27**. The first quarterly Offaly Heritage Forum meeting was held on Wednesday 29 March 2023.

1. Offaly County Council Projects

Funding for the final year of Decade of Centenaries has been submitted to the Department for assessment. The proposal builds on previous years' collaboration with Offaly History.

Creative Ireland funding of €191,000 has been allocated to Offaly County Council. The call has been made for the Creative Communities funding which is now allocated to community groups across the county.

2. Biodiversity

Ricky Whelan started work as Offaly's Biodiversity Officer on Monday 14th March 2023. This role is supported by the Heritage Council. Ricky will lead on expanding the range of biodiversity actions to be undertaken; delivering the actions applied for under the Local Biodiversity Action

Fund (€100,000 in 2023) including the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, invasive species control and data collection to the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

3. Partnering with Local Communities and Societies

Working with Tidy Towns groups to prepare for the application deadline on 10 May 2023. A presentation was made to the Tidy Towns Network on 24 April 2023 by R. Whelan on biodiversity friendly measures.

4. Documenting Heritage

County Archive Service – Orla Connaughton is the newly appointed archivist with Offaly History who are leading the delivery of the county archive service.

Publications - Two significant publications were launched. *Camcor The River of Birr* by John Feehan was launched on 30 March 2023 in Birr (supported by the Heritage Council) and Jim Houlihan's book *The Great Law of Birr* was launched in Birr Library on 27th April 2023 (supported by Creative Ireland).

Kilcomin Graveyard memorials book by Stephen Callaghan will be available shortly.

5. Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites

Under the **Community Monuments Fund**, support towards 6 projects in County Offaly totalling €442,000 has been allocated. This will enable conservation works on site at the medieval churches Monasteroris and Kilbride Churches to move to the next stage, continuing the great work under the Just Transition Conservation and Pollination programme. Conservation also commenced in 2022 on the walls at Seir Kieran Monastic site at Clareen and this

allocation means substantial progress can be made in 2023.

The really significant chapter house at Killeigh will have conservation works commencing.

Research leading to a conservation management plan will be undertaken for Ballintemple Church near Walsh Island as well as research into the unique staircase at Emmel Castle.

Just Transition Conservation and Pollination Programme - Conservation works are underway at Kilbride and Monasteroris. In conjunction with this, the Irish Heritage School are running a community engagement programme with an online lecture series, workshops in lime mortar, and site visits.

Lemanaghan Monastic Site – we are working with the community to develop an interpretive plan for this site building on the Heritage Council's conservation plan and the conservation work done in the intervening years.

6. Access to heritage

The **Offaly Naturalists' Field club** has restarted with its first events in three years with an event exploring the upper reaches of the Camcor and a dusk chorus at Derryounce. For the full programme see <https://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Biodiversity/Offaly-Naturalists-Field-Club-Programme-/ONFC-2023-brochure.pdf>

In partnership with LAWPRO, the new episodes of **Wildflowers in Offaly** with John Feehan have started. The new podcast season of **In Your Nature** in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland and the Heritage Council is now underway.

Work has commenced liaising with communities to plan **Heritage Week** in August 2023.

REGENERATION

2023 Community Centres Investment Fund – New Builds Measure

The Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys has launched the 2023 Community Centres Investment Fund, which will see €20 million invested in new and ambitious community projects in our towns and villages.

For the first time, funding of at least €1 million and up to max of €6 million will be invested in projects in areas that currently lack community centre facilities. The “new build” community centre projects must be ‘shovel-ready’ with all the necessary permissions and consents in place (e.g. planning consent) and be located on a green/brown field site.

The objectives of the Community Centres Investment Fund’s New Build Measures are to:

- Assist voluntary and community organisations and local authorities to develop high quality, accessible, safe, well-designed and sustainable new build community centres to help develop empowered, inclusive and resilient communities.
- Encourage the sharing of community facilities.

The Department recognises the vital role that community centres play at the heart of each community in bringing people together, engaging with those who may be marginalised or disadvantaged, and building stronger, more coherent communities.

The lead party to an application must be a State-funded body. The deadline for the receipt of applications is 12 noon on 3rd

July 2023, however application forms are only available from DRCD on confirmation the site is shovel ready. Queries in relation to this scheme can be submitted to tvr@offalycoco.ie.

Croí Cónaithe

Changes are currently being proposed with respect of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (Croí Cónaithe). With effect 1 May 2023, eligibility for the Grant will be updated to include properties built prior to 2007. In addition, properties which are made available for rent and not just owner occupied will be included and grant rates will also be reviewed.

Updated guidance on the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, a revised application form and FAQs which are currently being prepared by the Department are imminent. Application forms or queries can be submitted to tvr@offalycoco.ie.

There are currently >100 applications being reviewed for vacant homes grants in Offaly for potential owner occupier homes.

Town Centre First, Clara 2021

- A draft of the Town Centre First plan has been received and reviewed by internal sections of OCC.
- Once the feedback from OCC has been incorporated into the plan, the plan will circulate to the Town Team for review and feedback.
- Once the Town Team’s feedback has been considered the plan will go to a wider circulation.

Town and Village Renewal - 2023 Building Acquisition Measure

Further to an announcement by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, on 27th March to the launch the 2023 Building Acquisition Measure under Town and Village Renewal

Scheme, properties are currently being assessed by the Regen Section.

Buildings purchased under this Measure must be for use as multi-purpose community spaces. Multi-purpose use could include enterprise spaces, arts, tourism, youth hubs, theatre space, gallery, sports or pastimes space. It may also include a space for local craft market or food/farmers market.

Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF)

Successful RRDF projects progress update - 2020 Banagher RRDF

- A presentation on progress to date on the Architectural and Tourism Master Plan for Banagher Marina and Environs was held for Birr MD members.
- Meeting with IW and WWI have taken place to assist the design process for the Marina area.
- A consultant for the Conservation Master Plan for the Shannon Royal Hotel has been procured.

2021 Edenderry Phase II

- The Edenderry Library design team are currently on schedule and moving onto Stage (ii) b detailed design to planning.

2021 – Ferbane Regeneration

- Design team appointed for the refurbishment of Ferbane Convent and inception meeting to take place this month.

ROADS

Public Lighting

As of the 8th of May 2023 there are approximately 70 or 0.75% of failures on our Public Lighting stock across the County. Our contractor has assigned additional resources across the County in order to bring the number of failures in line with the expected percentage failure, which is specified at 1% at any time.

The Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP) site surveys are due to commence in County Offaly in late May 2023 and installation works are currently programmed to commence in July 2023 with an estimated 13 week delivery timeline.

Decarbonisation of the Corporate Fleet

The Roads Department have commenced the procurement process of Offaly County Councils first Zero Emission Vehicles. Orders have been placed for 5 new Electric Vans to replace existing diesel models and commence our migration towards Zero Emission vehicles. The first 3 vehicles are due for delivery in early July 2023.

Edenderry Town Inner Relief Road

Offaly County Council received approval from the Department of Transport to commence the appointment of the Most Economically Advantageous Tender for the construction of Stage 2 of the Edenderry Inner Relief Road. The process has now commenced and it is hoped that a contractor will be onsite in early Q3 of 2023.

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER SERVICES

Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Team is continuing stakeholder consultation and completion of baseline studies in preparation for the making of The Climate Action Plan. The

public will be invited to make pre-draft submissions later this month. It is intended that an overview of the first draft will be presented to the July Council meeting.

Nature Based Solutions (NBS)

This workshop brought together stakeholders with an interest in Nature Based Solutions education to discuss challenges, barriers, opportunities and champions within the field of NBS education. The workshop was facilitated by project team members from Trinity College Dublin, and participants included teachers & students from Sacred Heart Tullamore, St. Brendan's Birr, LAWPRO, Green Offaly and various NBS related staff from OCC including our Green Schools coordinators and Heritage Officer.



Climate Action Economic Opportunities Conference

The 3rd Climate Action Economic Opportunities conference was held in the Tullamore Court on Wednesday 26th April. There were over 200 attendees who heard from a wide variety of expert speakers. The second half of the conference was dedicated to successful businesses who have embraced the opportunities of climate change, and hearing their stories.

Environmental Management

In April, the Environment Section received 71 environmental complaints. All were investigated in a timely manner and resolved where possible.

Complaint Category	Number
Litter pollution (fly tipping/casual litter/litter on property)	56
Waste (dumping/burning/unauthorised sites)	9
Noise (community/commercial/industrial)	0
Control of Horses	2
Control of Dogs	2
Water Quality	2

The month of April saw the promotion of National Spring Clean. Offaly County Council continued to support all voluntary groups who participated in this scheme by providing litter supplies and collecting all bags. There was over 50 collections in the month of April as part of NSC and almost 4 tonnes of litter was picked by local volunteers and collected by our Litter Wardens. Below is an image of pupils and staff from Geashill National School doing their litter pick on April 29th.



Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy

This draft Plan seeks to influence sustainable consumption and prevent the generation of waste, improve the capture of materials to optimise circularity and enable compliance with policy and legislation.

The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, have co-ordinated the preparation of this plan which is the first National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy. This Plan sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for the period 2023 to 2029.

The Statutory Consultation Period for the Draft Plan will commence on Wednesday the 3rd of May and run until the **5th July**. All Draft Plan documents and full details on making a submission will be available on mywaste.ie from 3rd May.

Air Management – Solid Fuel Regulations Enforcement Funding

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications is offering funding support grants for individual local authority to a maximum of €25,000 (excl. VAT), or a larger grant can be allocated where multiple local authorities work together to deliver a project. OCC Environment Section has applied for funding in relation to Retailer sales and introducing a register. Approval of grant allocations will be issued to successful local authorities by the 12th of May.

HOUSING

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

HAP Enquiries

hap@offalycoco.ie

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans

homeloans@offalycoco.ie

Housing Inspections – HAP, Leased, Private, etc.

standards@offalycoco.ie

General Enquiries, Maintenance Issues, etc.

housing@offalycoco.ie

RAS & Leasing Enquiries

RAS@offalycoco.ie

Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme

HousingAidGrants@offalycoco.ie

Anti-Social Behaviour

ASB@offalycoco.ie

Housing Update

- The ‘Winter Emergency Period’ under the *Residential Tenancies (Deferment of Termination Dates of Certain Tenancies) Act 2022* ceased on the 31st April 2023. Accordingly, deferred tenancy terminations may take effect over a staggered period from 1st April. Further information on the pathways available to Tenants on valid Notice of Termination are available at <https://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Housing/News/TENANT%20IN%20SITU%20NOTICE%20OF%20TERMINATION.html>

- There are 493 on the Social Housing Support List at the end of April 2023.
- A further 673 active tenancies are currently being supported under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme, 7 signed up for HAP and 7 exited from HAP in April.
- At the end of April, 31 single people and 16 couples and families were being supported in emergency accommodation.
- The annual rent review of Local Authority Tenants has commenced. 1,984 rent assessment forms issued to Local Authority Tenants. These and any queries from tenants can be directed to our email RentReview@offalycoco.ie.
- Local Authority Home Loans (LAHL): currently 5 applications at approval in principle stage to a value of €856,000.

Housing Stock – Number, Maintenance & Repair

- Total housing stock at end of April 2023 is 2034.
- 221 maintenance calls were logged in April.

Housing Capital Programme Update

- Banagher, Kylebeg (18 Units) – Stage 4 approval received on 25th June 2021. Project is due for completion in Q2, 2023.
- Beechgrove, Belmont (7 units) – Project commenced on site on 10th November 2021. Due for completion in Q2, 2023.
- Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 no. Older Person's dwellings) – Stage 4 approval was granted on 11th April 2022, contractor appointed and has

started on site. Due for completion in Q4 2023.

- Circular Road, Daingean (9 units) – Contractor appointed and project started on site in early March 2023.
- Raheen, Clara development (38 units) – Project started on site in March 2023. Due for completion in September 2024.
- Dargan Drive, Chancery Lane (20 Units) – Part 8 approved at the May council meeting. Stage 3 to be submitted to the Department once ESB lines on the site are undergrounded.
- Circular Road, Daingean, Site 2 (10 Units) – Stage 2 approval was granted on 27th February 2023. New Part 8 exemption process; Section 179A of Planning and Development Act will shortly be advertised.
- Sycamore Drive, Ballycumber (10 Units) – Stage 2 approval received 30th Nov 2022. Part 8 resolution was received on 17th April 2023. Stage 3 to be lodged with Department in early Q2 2023.
- 4 Holly Park, Birr, 1 Unit: Consultants have been appointed; Combined Stage 2/3 application to be submitted to Department in early May 2023.
- 121 Lakeview, Clara: Stage 1 approval application lodged on 16th November 2022. Queries were received from DHLGH on 24th February 2023. Project size to be reduced in line with funding being offered.

Approved Housing Bodies Schemes

- Oaklee: Clonminch, Tullamore (19 units) – Completed and nominations to Oaklee Housing completed in April 2023.

- Oaklee: Kearney's Field, Tullamore (41 Units) – Completion in Q2, 2023.
- Sofia Housing: Stage 2 approved (39 units) at Presentation Lands, Portarlinton. Planning Application lodged.
- Sofia Housing, Clonamore, Tullamore – Contractor has been appointed and works are progressing well.

Turnkey Developments/Part V

- 2 x Part V units under construction at Ard na Carriage, Edenderry. Completed and allocated.
- Bog Road, Portarlinton, 28 units - Under Construction and anticipated completion in Q2, 2023.
- Part V units in Redwood & Silverbrook, Tullamore under construction.

Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People

Housing received notification on 28th April 2023 that the combined capital allocation to Offaly County Council for the payment of the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability scheme for private homes in 2023 is €1,579,375 which is composed of €1,263,500 Exchequer funding (representing 80%), and €315,875 matching local authority funding (representing 20%) to be provided from the authority's own resources. The Council anticipating the budget have committed a significant portion of this funding to date and to allow for works to be completed and funding claimed during the financial year.

LOCAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Local Community Development Committee

The monthly meeting was held on Thursday 27th April. Main agenda items included the Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014–2020 & Transitional LEADER Programme 2021–2022 and LEADER Programme 2023–2027: Draft Local Development Strategy (LDS).

Members were briefed in relation to the progress of Stage 2 – Development of the Offaly Local Development Strategy (LDS) to date; informed that local communities and key stakeholders have been consulted with over the last few weeks, and have been involved in the identification of the needs and the development of the strategy and action plan.

Members were updated regarding the process for the development of the new LECP 2023-2028 and were advised that the existing plan has been reviewed; an Advisory Steering Group has been established and 4 High level Goals identified. Members were informed that the public consultation phase for the Community element of the Local Economic Community Plan 2023-2027 has been advertised via public notice in local newspapers and will take place in May.

Community Enhancement Programme - Community Support Fund 2022

Applications totalling €298,782 were recommended by Offaly LCDC at their meeting on 9th March 2023 and the Department was notified of the successful 200 community groups. The LCDC will notify successful applicants once approval to proceed has been received from the Department.

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 located in communities, towns and villages that are hosting Ukrainian refugees in significant numbers. All 28 applications were assessed by the LCDC subcommittee and projects were approved for submission to the Department by the LCDC at its meeting on 9th March 2023. OCC submitted proposals to the Department on 15 March 2023 where they are being assessed. Final approval for successful projects is awaited from the Department of Rural & Community Development.

Public Participation Network

Birr Social

Inclusion Pillar:

A solution based



meeting brought together members from across the Birr MD. Themes: Transport, Housing, Traffic Management & New Communities. The themes arose from the November Plenary workshop finding.



A planning meeting took place with the Climate Action Team & Bio Diversity Officer in advance of the PPN Pillar Meetings in May.

Offaly PPN attended the Bord Na Móna Podcast launch which was facilitated by the ETB.

Preparation for Workers Retreat 27th & 28th April - Participated in a number of meetings to organise speakers and Community Artist.

LECP Pobal Workshop took place in the Bridge House Hotel attended by interested parties from both Laois & Offaly.

Participated in a Geo Thermal Discussion meeting with John McNally & John Cunningham OCC, Green Offaly, OLDC & PPN & architect working on the Fiesta Hall.

Property Marking Machine Training: Saturday April 22nd Mucklagh Community Centre. The property Marking Machine was purchased by Offaly PPN. The training was funded through Offaly Co. Co. The Machine will be housed in the Community Section of Offaly Co. Co. and a system put in place to facilitate Communities who have undertaken training to use the Machine. This will take place in conjunction with the Gardaí. Community groups from the following areas attended between the morning and afternoon sessions, Coolderry, Durrow, Drumcullen Eglis, Rahan, Community Alert, Pullough Men's Shed Tullamore Men's Shed, along with Gardaí from both Laois and Offaly. It was a very productive event.



National PPN Workers Retreat: 2 days of discussion, presentations and workshops with Speakers

- Michael Quirk: A Cohesive collective
- Brian Harvey Strategic Policy Committees
- The Wheel Tony Ward & Johnny Sheehan

PPN Plenary 27th April Tullamore Court Hotel Key Note Speaker Brian Carroll got the evening off to a high note. Followed by Equal Ireland Opportunities to return to Education.



Other Business of the evening included: The 2023 Work Plan and Budget were ratified and the SPC Induction Pack was approved with the proviso that changes could occur during the Pilot phase.



John McNally will present at the Environment Pillar meeting in the Bridge House Hotel on May 10th @7.30pm followed by Ricky Whelan, Biodiversity Officer.

Brian Pey & Community team - LECP Consultation



Comhairle Na nÓg

The group have been working hard on their Topic:

Disability Awareness



Here are some highlights from April:

14 members attended National Showcase Event in Croke Park. The group had a chance to showcase all their hard work on a display board. They met the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Roderic O Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth and received a certificate of achievement signed by Minister Roderic O'Gorman.

Charlie, Chair of Offaly CNN, spoke on Midlands 103 about their experience of the Showcase event and explained the work of Offaly CNN.

14 members attended members meeting. Brainstormed ideas for each working group. They set out action plans with timelines and made contact with relevant services/organisations e.g. Libraries, ODN and OCC Head of IT.

A Steering Committee meeting was held with great engagement from the representatives involved.

Rachel Kenny and Ana Maria Cumpanici joined the PPN as Comhairle na nÓg representatives.

Tidy Towns Network

A Tidy Towns network meeting was held at Áras an Chontae on Monday 24th April 2023. A presentation entitled “*Creating Habitats for Biodiversity*” was given to Tidy Towns groups from across the county by newly appointed Offaly Biodiversity Officer, Ricky Whelan. We wish all Tidy Towns groups every success in the Tidy Towns competition which closes for applications on 10th May 2023.

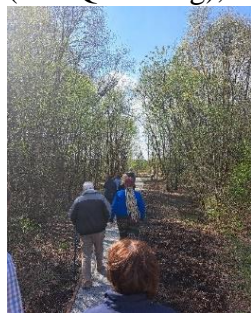
Age Friendly



Climate Action Workshop: Members of Offaly's Older Persons Council, Active Retirement Groups, Tidy Towns Committee's, and interested locals attended the Climate Action Workshop on Tuesday 18th April in Lough Boora Discovery Park. (Age Friendly Ireland and CARO). Gavin Harte, Sustainability Consultant, Climate Action Coach and Environmental Activist, delivered the training. Items such as climate science, carbon footprints, energy saving, home energy upgrade were discussed. The Climate Action Team from Offaly County Council were also in attendance.



The second part of the day included a site visit to An Portach Ciúin at Lough Boora (The Quiet Bog), with a talk hosted by Julie McLoughlin, Visitor Experience Lead, Lough Boora Discovery Park, Bord na Móna. An Portach Ciúin is set in a woodland clearing close to a wetland. The area is rich in nature with trees, meadow grasses, reeds, bog cotton and the wetland supporting a wealth of natural habitats. Collectively, An



Portach Ciúin provides a feast of senses including the forms and colours of vegetation; the sound of gentle breeze rustling through the trees and reeds; the glistening light reflecting on the lapping water; the skyscape directly above and also reflecting in the water; and the magical symphony of birdsong from dawn to dusk.



ARTS OFFICE

Arts Strategy 2023-2028

The Arts Office are currently in an evaluation process for Consultant(s) to assist with the planning / consultation process that aligns with the newly adopted Arts Infrastructure Strategy.

ARTS OFFICE PROGRAMMES

Lough Boora - Art in Landscape Project Funding

Offaly County Council 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. OCC Art's Office is the lead partner on the project. The project will include a series of events to take place at Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile (County Mayo) in September/October.

Briefing documents were prepared for the roles of Project Manager and Curator for

the project, to advance to the next stage of the project. These roles are currently being processed. Once appointed, the curator will deliver a curatorial direction for the project and the Project Manager responsibilities will include managing artist commissions, planning and delivering of a Hedge School, as well as a wide array of consultation, documentation and evaluation. We expect to announce the roles in May.

FilmOffaly

The FilmOffaly Award 2022 entitled, *Missing* was shot on location in Offaly in March and the film is now in post-production. The FilmOffaly 2023 Award - Shortlisted filmmakers will be brought forward for a script writing workshop in May followed by an interview with an external panel in June.

FilmOffaly Review

The FilmOffaly Review is underway by researchers, *Culture Works* is continuing with an update anticipated for May 2023.

Annual Programme

Planning for *Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival*, Mini Movies and Culture Night is underway. The callout for Culture Night and Hullabaloo facilitators has been publicised. The Mini Movies programme is also under review, with a refreshed programme planned for 2023. The Birr Writers Residency process has also been subject to review with a refreshed callout scheduled for May. Other artist support has included a collaboration with Irish Theatre Institute, to support three Offaly artists the opportunity to attend the annual Theatre Forum Conference in May.

The Arts Office is also supporting Birr Theatre & Arts Centre and Esker Arts in working with the *Bealtaine Roots & Shoots Programme* scheduled for May 2023. Both venues will host age-friendly Arts events in

May 2023 with Esker Arts hosting the Offaly County Council, Le Chéile and HSE Choirs for a *Timeless Tunes* performance at Esker Arts on May 28th a programme of music, specially selected for Bealtaine. Additional Bealtaine events at Esker Arts include a guided Age Friendly Gallery Talk and an age friendly dance workshop with Amy Donlon, designed to maintain flexibility, strength and condition. Birr Theatre & Arts Centre will host the popular Midlands writer and story-teller Jean Farrell with an afternoon of Memories & Melodies on May 4th as well as a performance of the popular theatre show *From the Shoulders Down* and an age-friendly flexibility workshop. Both arts centres are also running Bealtaine-themed films across the month of May.

The Arts Office supported *Poetry Day Ireland 2023*, on April 27th 2023 with a Poetry Workshop at Esker Arts on 21st April, with Offaly Poet Simon Costello, leading participants in a day-long workshop, designed to guide poets towards the creation and performance of a poem for the day itself. Esker Arts hosted the first Open Mic Poetry event at Esker Arts on Poetry Day, April 27th which was a huge success and was open to poets from across Offaly. Participation on the night included an eclectic array of Poets, spanning all generations and levels of experience from emerging to published Poets.

Creative Places Edenderry

The Creative Places programme is well underway with Creative Places co-ordinator Seonaid Murray leading a number of initiatives on the ground. The Creative Places programme is divided into three phase, *'Connect, Cultivate, Celebrate'* Now in the Cultivate phase of the project, following the gathering of ideas, thoughts and input from the local community a number of workshops, events and projects

are underway, such as; the Friday Community Social, writing workshops with Eugene O' Brien and Pauline Mc Namee, visual art workshops for neuro-divergent and disability sector, classes in wood burning and drama classes for young people. Creative Grants applications were recently assessed, with the outcome of same, pollinating further arts activity in the area across the coming months. The following were the recipients of this initial round of funding; Eden FM, Creative Crafts, Retox Dance, St. Patrick's Primary School, The Women's Shed, Fighting Words - Story Seeds.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Esker Arts

The soft opening of Esker Arts over the weekend of 14th and 15th April fulfilled a huge sense of optimism and delight from the local community. The Lions Club Choral



fundraising event held on the evening of 14th April was the first event open to an audience and was sold out in a matter of days. The evening proved to be hugely successful. This was followed by the launch of the Arts Council Breaking Ground exhibition on Sat 15th and this was open to everyone, a great many people attended the event in part to see the wonderful exhibition in the two new galleries and also just to enjoy the newly opening building.



Edenderry Library and Arts Space

The Arts Office will be continuing to work in collaboration with the county librarian in the development of plans for a multi-purpose arts space to be incorporated into the planning of the new library for Edenderry, this will include developments as part of the Creative Places Edenderry project.

HEALTHY IRELAND

Preparation for the commencement of Round 4 continued in April with the completion (by the newly appointed project implementers) of detailed plans to outline how their proposed actions will be delivered. The form was a follow up from the expression of interest application completed in February and seeks some additional clarification on items such as project timelines, outlining the various milestones of the action and most importantly how the action will be measured.

As regards the HIF Round 4 online application and strategic plan, Pobal have completed their deliberations on each County's submission and have forwarded all details to the Department of Health for final analysis. Pobal are optimistic that Counties will be notified very shortly as to the status of their submissions. They have further advised that no work should commence under final approval is received. Healthy Offaly are ready to draft service level agreements with the project implementers once approval is granted.

SPORTS

Offaly Sports Partnership would like to congratulate Denise Coghill, Community Sports Development Officer; and her partner on the birth of their second child, Lily Kate.

Programmes

ACE schools programme – Liam O Reilly

Easter saw the delivery of ACE multi-sport camp in the Tullamore Harriers for 40 children.



ACE Easter camp 2023

April saw 37 schools and over 1,500 primary school pupils participate in the spring athletics semi-finals across five locations in the county (Crinkle, Edenderry, Tullamore, Daingean and Ferbane). The top 2/3 qualifiers in each event for boys and girls from first to fourth class, will head to the Tullamore Harriers in May for the finals of the event.



Action from the regional heats for the ACE spring athletics programme

Clara Positivity Week

Jean Brady and Olivia Murphy supported the Clara Positivity Week in late April. Three events were delivered:

- Sports day for special education needs units in Scoil Bhríde and Scoil Phroinsias Naofa primary schools and Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa Secondary School.
- Sports day for sixth classes from Scoil Bhríde and Scoil Phroinsias primary schools delivered by students from Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa.
- Community walk for all three schools.



Community Sports Development Programme

A “Games on the Green” programme was delivered across four housing estates in Offaly – Puttaghan Close and Cloncollig Estate in Tullamore; and Mooney Terrace and Frankfort Estate in Kilcormac. On average, 15 children were in attendance on each of the days.

Community sports hubs

Daingean – Liam O Reilly, ACE Coordinator has taken over the management of the Daingean community sports hub while Denise is on maternity leave; with April seeing the continuation of a number of successful programmes in the centre – HIIT and Core, and Strength and Conditioning for older adults (15 on average participating weekly); as well as a

schools programme in Daingean national school.

Mucklagh – Jean Brady, Sports Inclusion Development Officer continues to coordinate delivery of activities within the Mucklagh sports hub; with April seeing the continuation of a number of successful programmes in the centre and wider area: -

- Multi-sport mornings for Ukrainian families in Tullamore Town Park.
- Easter camp for 45 children.
- Folk dance showcase as part of a wider social inclusion event.
- Mucklagh “*Moby Bike*” launch.
- Activator poles programme for over 30 older adults.



Sports Inclusion Development Programme

Among the programmes delivered in April were Zumba taster sessions for those who took part in the Healthy choices / Healthy Community programme in quarter 1 of this year.

Jean also supported the delivery of the five regional heats for the ACE spring athletics programmes, as well as Clara Positivity Week.



From an advocacy point of view, Jean attended the most recent sitting of the Offaly Disability Equality Network.

TOURISM

Familiarisation Trip

It was a wonderful opportunity for the participants to network and build important relationships with fellow businesses. Due to its success, another ‘Fam’ Trip is planned before the end of the year.





Offaly on RTE Radio One

Offaly featured on The County Measure, an RTÉ Radio 1 series on the Bank Holiday Monday May 1st. The hour long show was packed with entertaining stories from around the county, not just tourism related, but lots of local community banter, arts and culture!

The County Measure is a landmark RTÉ Radio 1 series that explores the identity and communities within Ireland's counties. From the volcanic vista of Croghan Hill; the community spirit restoring Daingean's Town Hall; to Birr bursting with musical talent- writer and broadcaster Vincent Woods delivered the 'Faithful county' at its best. You can listen back to the series on www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/the-county-measure



Lord Rosse Brendan Parsons, Grainne O'Malley, general manager of Birr Castle Demesne and Vincent Woods



Father and son Michael and Ger Hough of J.J Hough's Singing Pub, Banagher with Vincent Woods

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

National Award for Offaly Students at Enterprise Finals

There were 82 student businesses in contention across three main categories for the final in what is Ireland's largest entrepreneurship programme for second level students. The initiative, funded by the Government of Ireland through Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities throughout the country, saw 25,000 students from almost 500 secondary schools across the country take part.

Supported by Local Enterprise Office Offaly, there were two national award winners; **A Merit Award** and a **My Entrepreneurial Journey Award**.

The Merit Award winning students were: Morgan Bennett and Niall Kelly from Presentation Secondary School, Killina. Their student enterprise was called: Cru Capaill Limited.

My Entrepreneurial Journey Award winner was Sinead Ryan from Tullamore College for her "Spoken Stories" enterprise.

Neale Richmond, T.D., Minister of State for Employment Affairs and Retail Business, who took part in the ceremony, congratulated all the participating students.



Most Enterprising Primary School Student (or Students)!

Local Enterprise Office Offaly was delighted to host this year's [Most Enterprising Student Awards](#) in the Tullamore Court Hotel on Tuesday 25th April. The initiative is designed to introduce the concept of business to primary school children.

This year 13 schools from across the county entered the competition and nominated their Most Enterprising Student or Students. Thank you to Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council, Cllr. Frank Moran who presented the awards to the students. Also thank you to Carol Nolan, TD, Cllr. John Clendennen, Pat O'Gorman, Local Enterprise Office Offaly Evaluation Committee and all the teachers and students who participated and attended on the day. The future of entrepreneurs in Offaly is bright!



Building Better Business in the Midlands

Orla Martin, Head of Enterprise and Lisa Molloy, Business Advisor in the Local Enterprise Office Offaly attended the



An Roinn Fiontar,
Trádála agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Trade and Employment

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Building Better Business event recently in the Midlands Park Hotel opened by Minister Simon Coveney and Minister Dara Calleary.

This event looked at how businesses in the Midlands Region can be assisted on their digitalisation and decarbonisation journey. As part of the panel discussion, "**How has Digitalisation improved your business' bottom line?**", Orla outlined the supports available in the Local Enterprise Offices especially Digital Start, LEAN for Micro and Green for Micro which are there to help improve businesses' performance.

Lisa Dooley from The FACTORY joined the panel on 'The business journey to a Low Carbon Economy' and shared insights on their sustainability journey so far.



Local Authorities Supporting Enterprise Conference in The Tullamore Court Hotel on Wednesday, 26th April 2023



Lisa Molloy, Business Advisor and also the lead on the Climate Action Steering Group Economic Opportunities Subcommittee attended this conference which placed a spotlight on the need for innovation in enterprise to help in the fight to combat climate change and the role of local authorities in facilitating sustainable enterprise. The conference showcased examples of how businesses are pivoting to capitalise on new opportunities and in doing so are becoming green economy pioneers with the support of local authorities.

Offaly's The Factory wins Irish Business Design Challenge 2023

The Factory, a design and print agency based in Fivalee, Birr were announced as winners at the awards ceremony in April

and will receive €15,000 in prize money. The award was presented to Brendan and Lisa Dooley by Neale Richmond TD, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with special responsibility for Employment Affairs and Retail Business; and at the Department of Social Protection.

The 2023 challenge focused on design solutions to make businesses more sustainable and efficient. Based in Birr, the Factory is a second-generation family run design and print business specialising in the supply of sustainable printing and print products using recycled and sustainable paper, plant-based inks and plastics-free packaging and the reuse of rainwater in its production processes. The Factory has care for the environment and sustainability at the heart of its ethos and the products and services it supplies. It is expanding its services to graphic design and web development.



The award is the latest in a line of sustainability awards for the company, who have been putting sustainable business in the Midlands on the national stage with a series of award wins over the past year, winning Sustainability Awards from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Small Firms Association and Green Awards. The company also recently teamed up with Local Enterprise Office Offaly to run an Eco Action for Enterprise event to assist other small businesses in improving their sustainability.

Dates for your diary

Offaly Job Fair 2023

The Offaly Job Fair is taking place again this year after a very successful inaugural event last year. Over 650 job seekers from all over the Midlands and further afield flocked to the first ever Offaly Job Fair last year. There were 36 employer stands and over 500 hundred jobs on offer. This year promises to be bigger and better. If you are an employer looking to hire staff, contact the Tullamore Chamber of Commerce to book a stand - info@tullamorechamber.com

There will be lots of employers looking to fill vacant positions so spread the word!

ffaly Job Fair

Saturday 10th June | 10am - 3pm

FIND YOUR DREAM JOB

Manufacturing | Construction | Retail
Hospitality | Engineering | Pharmaceutical
Financial | Administration | Many More

TULLAMORE COURT HOTEL

Energy supports for business

Information on starting your energy efficiency journey including Toolkits and Energy Audits is available on the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment website](#).

Upcoming Events

Most of our courses are **FREE OF CHARGE!** Whether it is starting a business or growing a business there is something suitable for everyone. Full details and links to book are here: <https://bit.ly/3B5LTku>

Upcoming Events		See All Events >
12/05/2023	Small Business Accounts	Book online
12/05/2023	Social Media Review Clinic 12 May (Online)	Book online
16/05/2023	How to break into international markets	Book online
22/05/2023	Website Health Check (1:1 Mentoring) Clinic 22 May...	Book online
23/05/2023	Start Your Own Business Course Evenings	Book online
23/05/2023	Practical Guide to Income Tax for Businesses	Book online
25/05/2023	Google Tools	Book online

LIBRARY SERVICES

Bealtaine Festival 2023



Bealtaine Festival, the national celebration of age and opportunity, is currently running throughout the month of May.

Offaly Libraries has developed a varied programme of workshops and activities to help our older patrons connect with each other, including a series of social **Coffee Mornings** organised in Banagher, Clara, Edenderry, Ferbane and Tullamore Libraries.

Visitors to Tullamore Library over the coming weeks will be treated to a Lunch Time **Music Concert** offered by the Gramophone Society, a **Storytelling** session with Daria and a library-guided **Gratitude Walk** down the Grand Canal.

Wreath Making Workshops were delivered to **59 attendees** across our libraries during the first week of May with many locations having to implement waiting lists due to the high demand.



Continuing with the theme of nature and mindfulness, our libraries will distribute **free Irish Wildflower Seed packs** over the next couple of weeks.

For more information on all of our Bealtaine events, [please see here](#).

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Bealtaine is an Age & Opportunity Arts initiative. Offaly Libraries Bealtaine programme is kindly co-funded by **Creative Ireland**.

Age Friendly Initiative at Offaly Libraries



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

We are proud to announce that each of our library branches have now received the **Age Friendly Charter** from Age Friendly Ireland!

Clara Library was the first to receive this honour as part of the National Age Friendly Libraries Recognition Programme in 2019.

The Great Law of Birr; Book Launch at Birr Library

Birr library was delighted to host Dr. Jim Houlihan to launch his book *The Great Law of Birr* on Thursday, April 27th.



A crowd of **70** attended the event on the night and thoroughly enjoyed the informative talk given by Jim along with special guests Dr John Feehan and President of the High Court, Mr Justice David Barniville.



The book, beautifully illustrated by local artist Caroline Conway, is [available to borrow](#) from any of our library branches.

Tech Week at Offaly Libraries

On Friday, 21st April, **Edenderry Library** hosted an exciting day of exploration into

robotics and Virtual Reality, bringing the wonderful world of technology to life.



Almost **50 students** from two local primary schools were given the opportunity to drive VEX Robots and library staff showcased our Virtual Reality headsets, taking students on exciting tours of space, our oceans and beyond!

A **Free Play session** was also on offer to after school visitors to the library.

Great News! Grant Success for Offaly Libraries



Offaly & Laois Libraries:
Parent Support Programme



Offaly Libraries are thrilled to announce success in our application for funding from **CYPSC** to continue our popular **Parenting Programme**, delivered in partnership with Laois Libraries. CYPSC has also awarded funding to Offaly Libraries to assist in delivering our 2023 strand of **Sensory Offaly** programming.



eResource for Kids: LOTE Now Offering Scéalta as Gaeilge!

Offaly Libraries offers free access to LOTE (Languages Other Than English) for Kids through our [Digital Library](#).



There are hundreds of digital books in over 50 languages to choose from, including the newly added **Irish collection** with **Irish Sign Language** coming soon!

New books and languages are released each month. [Find out more here.](#)

Tovertafel's 'Magic Table' at Offaly Libraries



The Magic Table (or 'Tovertafel' in Dutch) is an award-winning innovation designed to help people with **dementia**, adults with **learning disabilities** and children with **additional needs**.



It consists of a series of colourful and fun interactive light games, which respond to hand and arm movements, stimulating physical and cognitive activity as well as encouraging social interaction.



Magic Tables are available at five locations in Offaly Libraries: **Banagher, Clara, Edenderry, Ferbane and Tullamore.**

Groups or individuals interested in using the Magic Table are advised to [contact their respective library directly.](#)

Healthy Ireland Events this May



A series of **Healthy Ireland at your Library** talks have been organised both in branch at Tullamore Library and online during the month of May. On Thursday, 4th May, **15 people** attended a talk on **Wellness during Menopause** delivered by Dr. Diane Cooper of EduFit.

Healthy Ireland Talks

Cyber Safety Talk with CyberSafeKids
Wednesday 10th May 6pm Tullamore Library

Understanding Self Harm with Josephine Rigney, Suicide Prevention Officer HSE
Thursday 11th May at 6pm Tullamore Library

Online: Understanding Self Harm with Josephine Rigney Suicide Prevention Officer HSE Thursday 18th May at 6pm

For more information or to book any of the above talks please phone 057 93 46832 or email tullamorelibrary@offalycoco.ie

'Under an Irish Sky' Art Exhibition at Tullamore Library

'Under an Irish Sky' brings together a collection of paintings by Pauline McNelis, highlighting many of our beautiful landscapes, coastlines, wildlife, historical bridges and walks along our Grand Canal Greenways.



Pauline, a local artist from Edenderry, takes her inspiration from these landscapes and ever-changing skies.

Lego Free Play Saturdays at Edenderry Library

April marked the launch of Lego Free Play sessions in Edenderry Library, every Saturday from 10am – 12pm.



No booking is necessary for these events. For more information, [please contact Edenderry Library directly.](#)

A New Look for Banagher Library

Refurbishments at Banagher Library are nearing completion, with plenty of work done in the past few months!



Visitors to the library will be greeted with a warm, welcoming interior complete with accessible shelving, comfortable communal spaces and a designated Children's Area. This upgrade has been co-funded by Offaly County Council and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Right to Read Programme



Spring into Storytime

Offaly Libraries celebrated another successful *Spring into Storytime* programme, with over **1,000 participants** across the county taking part in an exciting array of **school visits, story times, craft sessions, competitions, scavenger hunts** and more!

Cruinniú na nÓg, Saturday 10th June

Offaly Libraries, on behalf of Offaly County Council, has organised a diverse range of **workshops** in all **8 library locations** and Offaly Volunteer Centre hub.



Creative activities include workshops on music, abstract art, illustration, creative writing and story-telling.



Offaly Libraries has also commissioned key **development projects**, as part of Cruinniú na nÓg, with **students from 11 Primary and Secondary schools** around the county will learn new skills including creative writing, clay character design, film-making, upcycling, sustainable business and soap-making.

The outcomes of each of these projects will be unveiled on the day of Cruinniú na nÓg in various library branches.

[Keep an eye on our social media and on our website for further details.](#)

On June 10th, children are invited to collect “**Spinning Plate Kits**” and **Craft Kits** to suit all ages. For more information, please contact your local branch. [Details can be found here.](#)

Kindly funded by Creative Ireland.

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Book Clubs at Offaly Libraries



Did you know that Offaly Libraries now have **book clubs** spread across our library branches *and* online?

[Check them all out here.](#)

We are proud to welcome our **newest book club to Banagher Library**. They had their first meeting on Wednesday 3rd May, bringing our collective of book clubs up to 10 strong! Here is a taste of what our book clubs are reading this month:



Sign up for our Library Newsletter

A quick reminder that the best way to keep up to date with all library programmes, developments and new services is via **Offaly Libraries Newsletter** and by following our social media channels. Read our [latest newsletter here](#).



Currently we have **1,818 subscribers** to the newsletter. Follow the link to subscribe to our newsletter: [Offaly Libraries Newsletter](#).

Sign up for our School Mailing List!

Offaly Libraries invite education professionals to sign up for our school-focussed mailing list, due to launch this September!



Joining our mailing list is the best way to stay up to date with all the supports and services Offaly Libraries has to offer to **Early Learning Centres, Primary schools, Secondary schools and Further Education Centres**.

Sign up is easy, [simply click here and add your details](#).

Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive

Revenue Account Grant Income & Payroll Summary to 30 April 2023

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL	Full Yr Budget 2023 €m	Preliminary Value to Apr 2023 €m	% Year To Date
Payroll costs	32.97	8.97	27.2%
Grants and Subsidies Income	40.80	7.86	19.3%

OCC to 30th Apr 2023

	<u>Rates</u> €m	<u>Rents</u> €m	<u>Loans</u> €m
Opening Balance Jan 1st, 2023	3.00	0.56	0.10
Net Invoices & Adjustments, waivers	16.78	2.49	0.13
2023 Cash Collected to end of Apr	6.05	2.48	0.20
Closing Balance Apr 30th, 2023	13.73	0.57	0.03

2022 Cash collected to Apr 30th

	5.56***	2.36	0.18
% Collection at this point in 2022	109%	105%	112%

*** Collections impacted in 2022 by Q1 waiver and effect of building business back up after lockdowns

Bank Overdraft to 30th Apr 2023

	-	-	
Number of days Overdrawn in Bank year to date	47		% YTD 39%
Bank Interest and non conforming charges to Apr 30th 2023 YTD (Estimate)			€4,353
Bank Administration and transactional charges to Apr 30th 2023 YTD (Estimate)			€9,887