

TUARASCÁIL MHÍOSÚIL BAINISTÍOCHTA

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

Nollaig / December

Cathaoirleach Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick & Elected Members held a Civic Reception to celebrate 50 years of Offaly Community Games at Áras an Chontae



Birr Library were delighted to welcome 40 attendees to the launch of 'The Sun, Moon and Stars' photography exhibition

L-R Cllr. Sean O'Brien, Tom O'Hanlon, Minister Pippa Hackett and Librarian Honor Ridgeway.



Christmas- A variety of experiences across Offaly for all the family

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Offaly County Council, in conjunction with Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), wishes to advise that a new grant scheme, the Local Enhancement Programme 2024, will be open for applications in early January 2024

Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Services

PLANNING

Development Management

	To end Dec 2023	To end Dec 2022	Total 2022
Planning Applications	695	681	681
Extensions of Duration Applications & Assessments	20	16	16
Warning Letters and (Enforcement Notices) issued	181 (73)	158 (15)	158 (15)

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

Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board	The construction of a 10,989 m ² two-storey new post primary school with a capacity for 1000 pupils, Edenderry, Co. Offaly
Grid System Services Ltd Company	The development of a grid system services facility within a total site area of 3.5 hectares. Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Forward Planning

Residential Zoned Land Tax

The Council's final RZLT map for 2024 was finalised and published on the Council's website on 1 December 2023. The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was announced in Central Government's Budget 2022 and was introduced into Part 22A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 by the Finance Act 2021. The principal purpose of the RZLT is to encourage the timely activation of zoned and serviced residential development land for housing.

Just Transition

The Secretariat for Technical Assistance for Regions in Transition (START) and Offaly County Council agreed a Service Level Agreement and Workplan for the provision of 72 days of Technical Assistance to Offaly.

Following on from a site visit by the START team in March 2023 and a review meeting in June, the first of two planned one day workshops took place on 13th September 2023. A second workshop took place on 27th November 2023 with a view to devising a mechanism which will support the development of a new partnership in vocational / tertiary education, training, and research to promote a local just transition. The draft final report from the START team recently issued in December 2023. It will be finalised in January 2024.

Local and Regional Economic Support Strategies Support Scheme

The above-mentioned scheme was launched on **13 October 2023**, to be administered by Pobal. This scheme will see the disbursement of €24m for projects aligned to Local Economic and Community Plans and the disbursement of €5m for projects aligned to Regional Enterprise Plans.

- LA led LECP aligned project applications – Offaly County Council applied for funding for an Economic Development Unit to support the objectives of the **Local Economic and Community Plan** and the **Offaly Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027**. The closing date was **8th December 2023**.
- LECP aligned projects – Offaly County Council submitted 5 Concept Papers by **17th November 2023**. Feedback has been received which will inform the full applications, which are due by **23rd January 2024**.

Failte Ireland

Offaly County Council and Failte Ireland recently signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement which will facilitate:

- (a) The post of **Tourism Activator**. A three-year contract position Offaly County Council which will be 100% funded by Failte Ireland. This person will engage directly with private tourism operators within the county. This post will be filled on **2 January 2024**.

- (b) Offaly County Council has been invited to submit applications directly to Failte Ireland in respect of tourism projects in the county. The closing date is **29 February 2024**.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

Get in touch!



We ended the year with a reminder that we are here to help with

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

The All in a Day's Work campaign will continue in 2024 which is focused on highlighting the supports that will enable small businesses to make significant changes to the way they work that will help them now and in the future. It aims to help businesses to Save Time, Money, and Energy with supports which include the Lean for Business, Digital for Business and Green for Business programmes, all of which enable small businesses to become more competitive and productive in how they work.

More information is available here: AllinADaysWork.ie

2024 County Enterprise Awards

Taking part in the County Enterprise Awards 2024 is a great opportunity for any business to acknowledge their hardworking Team and gain recognition and exposure for their achievements and innovations.



By participating in the awards programme, businesses will be able to showcase their excellence and diversity to a large audience of potential clients and also, if they are the overall winner, represent Offaly at the National Enterprise Awards in Dublin in May.

The link to apply is here:

LocalEnterprise.ie/Offaly/EnterpriseAwards

'Meet the Buyers Event' for the Construction, Engineering, and Sustainable Energy industry

Calling all Construction, Engineering & Sustainable energy companies who are thinking about expanding into new/export markets or are already

exporting, and have the ambition to grow and have the capability to scale up production.

Under the Enterprise Europe Network project, the Local Enterprise Office Network in conjunction with its national partners; Enterprise Ireland and the Local Government Authorities invites you to participate in an international 'Meet the Buyers Event' for the Construction, Engineering, and Sustainable Energy industry taking place in the **National Construction Training Centre**, Mount Lucas, Daingean, Co. Offaly, R35 XW10 on the **9th February 2024**. [Find Out More!](#)



MEET THE BUYER

ARE YOU....
A Construction, Energy of Engineering company that...

- ✓ Has ambitions for to grow your company?
- ✓ Your product or service has a competitive edge?
- ✓ Is looking to expand into international markets?
- ✓ Wants to win new sales?
- ✓ Has a clear value proposition, developed business plan, and is ready to export?
- ✓ Wants to meet EU and UK food buyers for new business development opportunities?

CONSTRUCTION, ENGINEERING & SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Supported By: Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, Enterprise Europe Network, Mount Lucas, Cork Chamber, Dublin, OGG GLOBAL

Climate Toolkit 4 Business

Start your zero carbon journey!

Building sustainability into the business is critical because it matters to customers. The Government's Climate Toolkit 4 Business allows businesses to get an estimate of your carbon footprint and a personalised action plan to reduce it.

[Learn more by clicking here!](#)



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 LEO OFFALY

JAN 12	HOW TO PLAN A NEW WEBSITE FOR YOUR BUSINESS
JAN 15	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS (EVENING COURSE ONLINE)
JAN 19	ONE TO ONE MENTORING - CHAT GPT
JAN 22	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS DAY COURSE (IN PERSON)
JAN 23	HOW TO USE CANVA TO DESIGN EYE-CATCHING GRAPHICS
JAN 25	LEARN ABOUT THE PRODUCTIVITY & COMPETITIVENESS SUPPORTS
FEB 21	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS (EVENINGS COURSE)
MAR 6	START YOUR OWN BUSINESS DAY COURSE (IN PERSON)

WWW.LOCALENTERPRISE.IE/OFFALY

Housing

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

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

Housing Update

- There are 523 on the Social Housing Support List at the end of December 2023.
- A further 606 active tenancies are currently being supported under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme, 13 signed up for HAP and 2 exited from HAP in December.
- At the end of December, 35 single people and 15 couples and families were being supported in emergency accommodation.
- A rent review of Social Leasing Scheme Tenants (including Rental Accommodation, Short Term Leasing, Repair & Lease and

Mortgage to Rent) and HAP Tenants has commenced. Rent assessment forms and cover letters will issue to tenants from 17th January and tenants are requested to return completed forms and supporting documentation to the Housing Section by 6th February 2024. Any queries from tenants can be directed to our email at RentReview@offalycoco.ie

Housing Capital Programme Update

- Banagher, Kylebeg (18 Units) – Project is complete and houses allocated.
- Beechgrove, Belmont (7 units) – Project is complete and houses allocated.
- Elderberry Drive Moneygall (4 Units) – Complete and houses allocated.
- Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 no. Older Person's dwellings) – Due for completion in Q1 2024.
- Circular Road, Daingean (9 units) – Construction commenced. Completion Q2 2024.
- Raheen, Clara development (38 units) – Project started on site in March 2023. Due for completion in Q4 2024.
- Dargan Drive, Chancery Lane (20 Units) – Part 8 approved in May 2022. Stage 3 to be submitted to the Department once ESB lines on the site are undergrounded.
- Circular Road, Daingean, Site 2 (10 Units) – Stage 2 approval was granted on 27th February 2023. New Part 8 planning process; Section 179A of Planning and Development Act was advertised

on 10th October 2023. Stage 3 will be lodged with the DHLGH in Q1 2024.

- Group Housing, Croghan Road, Birr (4 Units): Stage 4 approval was granted on 21st November 2023. Preferred Contractor has been identified and works on site will begin on Q1 2024.
- Sycamore Drive, Ballycumber (10 Units) – Stage 2 approval received 30th Nov 2022. Part 8 resolution was received on 17th April 2023. Stage 3 approval application will be lodged with DHLGH in Q1 2024.

Approved Housing Bodies Schemes

- Oaklee: Clonminch, Tullamore (19 units) – Construction completed and houses allocated.
- Oaklee: Kearney's Field, Tullamore (41 Units) – Construction completed and houses allocated.
- Sofia Housing: Stage 2 approved (39 units) at Presentation Lands, Portarlinton. Planning Granted in November 2023. AHB is preparing tender documents (Stage 3)
- Sofia Housing, Clonamore, Tullamore – Works being finalised.

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 Q1 2024
- Bell Lane, Daingean - 8 Units (6 Turnkey & 2 Part V) approved May 2023. Construction and allocations completed.
- 7 x Part V units @ Redwood, Tullamore – completed and units allocated.
- 7 x Part V units @ Silverbrook, - Works being finalised.

- 8 Units (6 Turnkey & 2 Part V) Approved June 2023 at MacGregor, Birr: Construction commenced. Completion Q1 2024
- 22 Units (18 Turnkey & 4 Part V's) Approval July 2023 at Carrick Hall, Edenderry

Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People

2023 Housing Adaption Grant claims submitted to the Department. Housing continue to work with successful applicants to collate the required documentation in order that claims can be processed.

Disabled Persons Grants 2023

Housing, working with contractors, sought to maximise Disabled Persons Grants claims for 2023. The process of selecting applicants for the 2024 programme is underway, with procurement of contractors being held.

Retrofit Programme

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

- 105 Units completed
- 19 Units to start Q1 2024
- Tender preparation for a further 24 Units is under-way

Community Culture and Emergency Services

Local Community Development Committee

Offaly LCDC held their monthly meeting on Thursday December 14th. Main agenda items included the Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020 & Transitional LEADER Programme 2021 – 2022 and Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme 2018-2023 (SICAP).

LEADER Projects

Three LEADER Projects were approved to the value of €69,762.81

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) submitted by Offaly Local Community Development Committee in respect of its interest in delivering the 2023-2027 LEADER programme in the Offaly sub-regional area was not selected by The Independent Selection Committee.

SICAP

Members were informed that the tender competition and evaluation process for the new SICAP programme 2024 - 2028 is now complete and the Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC) were congratulated on their successful tender.

Community Support Fund

Ministerial approval was received on the 21st June 2023 for funding totalling €283,843 to be awarded to 188 successful community groups. The Community Support Fund supports community groups with either their Operating/Running Costs such as utility bills, insurance, etc., or capital costs which aim to enhance facilities or purchase equipment. To date 183 groups have been paid their grants amounting to €279,743. The remaining groups must submit outstanding

paperwork prior to payment of the remaining €4,100.

Community Recognition Fund

Final approval for the 26 successful projects amounting to €636,206 was received from DRCD on 22nd May 2023. Funding Agreements have been agreed between OCC and the successful applicants. All projects must be completed by 18 October 2024. Seven of the projects were fully completed in 2023, and 9 partly completed in 2023. Funding totaling €301,564.89 has been drawn down to date. Eleven projects will be fully completed in 2024.

Local Enhancement Programme 2024

The Local Enhancement Programme 2024 was announced on 6th December 2023, by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD. Details of the operation of the scheme were received from DRCD on Wednesday 13th December 2023. The Programme will open for applications from Friday 19th January 2024, with a closing date of Wednesday 28th February 2024.

Community and voluntary groups will be eligible to apply for funding to carry out minor capital works and improvements to their facilities, and to purchase equipment for community use. An allocation of €162,599.36 was announced for Offaly – see breakdown below.

The fund will replace the Department's Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) and will be administered by the Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Funding of €27,099.89

has been ring-fenced to support Women's Sheds, Groups and Networks in Offaly.

Offaly LCDC Allocation	Women's Groups Allocation	OCC Admin Fees	Total Allocation
€127,369.50	€27,099.89	€8,129.97	€162,599.36

Public Participation Network:



"The PPN was busy following up on the outcomes from the Plenary

in November.

The PPN submitted an application for Leader Environment funds and were successful in securing a fund to deliver on the Community Energy Charter in 2024 through the LCDC.

The Secretariat and reps had an end of year meeting on Dec 14th. This included setting a date for the Workplan day which will take place on Jan 17th 2024. Plans are also underway for the Midlands Regional PPN Meeting in late January. Offaly are hosting the meeting on this occasion.

PPN Reps contributed to the Community, Culture & Emergency Services SPC and also the JPC meetings in December.

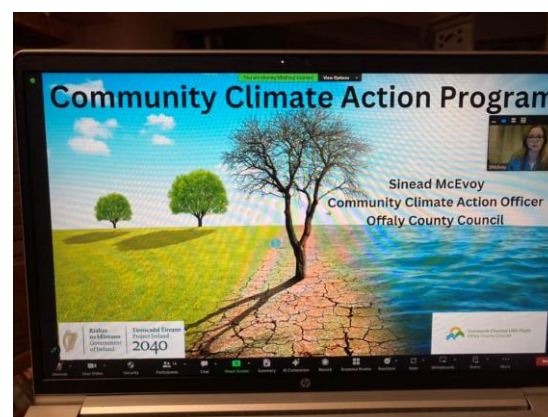
A presentation was made to the LCDC members on the role and actions of the PPN in 2023 at the December LCDC meeting. This was very well received with the number of PPN groups at 642 being noted.

The PPN Secretariat was represented at the Community & Voluntary awards event, on Saturday 16th December hosted by the Volunteer Centre in conjunction with OLDC.

The final major event of the year was the roll out of the Climate Action Community

fund. On the evening of December 18th, the PPN in conjunction with the Climate Action Team held an online information event to ascertain the level of interest and the challenges groups might face in applying for the funds.

This event will inform the Climate Action Team of the type of supports that will be required in 2024 to assist groups in making applications. The PPN will contribute to this process.



Comhairle Na nÓg



A member's meeting was held. Committee Roles were explained to new members and discussed. Roles will be voted on in January 2024. Staff from Offaly Library service attended the meeting to consult with the group on their

development plan, members completed a survey.



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.



ARTS

Arts Strategy 2024-2028



The development of the new strategy has developed through a phased approach of research, consultation and writing throughout 2023. The writing phase is now in draft stage and the report was submitted for review by the Community and Culture SPC in December – following feedback from the SPC the aim will be to submit to the council early in 2024 for approval.

ARTS OFFICE PROGRAMMES

Lough Boora - Art in Landscape Project Funding

Planning for the Art in the Landscape Festival of Change, taking place in Offaly and Mayo in April 2024 is currently ongoing with calls to artists and communities being



released before the end of the year. As part of the *Art in Landscape: Festival of Change* there will be an event called *Tionól* – a gathering of ideas; a creative space to share ideas and an opportunity for participants to share their ‘big’ or ‘small’ ideas around Art in the Landscape. The purpose of the event is to share ideas and spark conversations locally.

A call has been issued to anyone interested in, working in or volunteering in arts, heritage, culture, tourism, community development, the environment or economic development or a local community member living near Lough Boora Sculpture Park, to submit their ideas to share as part of the event. Ideas will be shortlisted based on having a mix of ideas from different sectors at the event. Selected presenters will have presentation slots of 10 minutes each.

FilmOffaly

The FilmOffaly Award 2023 has been awarded and the Arts Office are delighted to announce the winning script *A Simple Killing* by Mark Conway. This film will be produced in Offaly in 2024 by the production team, Jason Branagan, (Director) Mark de Carreau, (Actor, Producer) Emer Durcan (Producer) and Brian Durcan (Cinematographer) of Western Front Studios.

FilmOffaly Review

The FilmOffaly Review undertaken by researchers, *Culture Works* across the Summer months has been completed. The report has been presented to the Community and Culture SPC, FilmOffaly board and the Management of Offaly County Council. Following these presentations recommendations and actions will form part of the new Arts Strategy 2024-2028.

Annual Programme

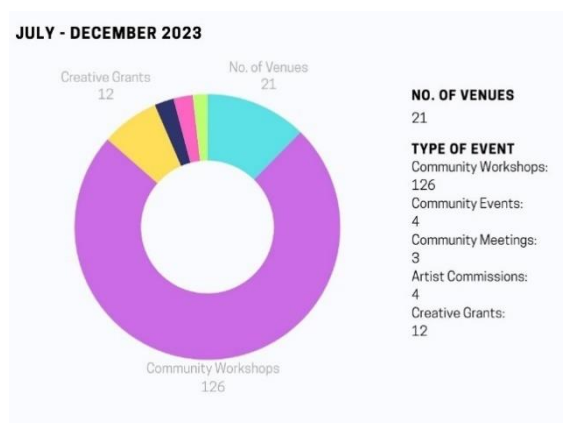
Hullabaloo! Offaly Children's Arts Festival

This was a much broader offering this year also, with the inclusion of Esker Arts as a partner in the festival this year. The programme was launched September with inclusion from artists from all over Ireland delivering workshops and performances in several art forms for children up to 12 years of age. This was the 17th edition of Hullabaloo! and it was the largest festival to date with a record 101 events taking



place across venues in four towns in Offaly from November 1st to November 4th showcasing an eclectic blend of artforms and experiences for children and their families to enjoy. In Birr, Clara, Edenderry and Tullamore there were 1,381 in attendance at the festival.

Creative Places Edenderry



Creative Places, Edenderry, a project funded by the Arts Council, led by Creative Lives in partnership with Offaly County Council Arts Office and Edenderry Municipal District, has had a dynamic 2023!, with an array of different arts-based activities, workshops and events throughout the year. These have included: Visual Arts, Music, Poetry, Playwriting, Screenwriting and Creative Writing; a Lego Clinic; Creative Movement; Dance; Ceramics; Drama; Radio, Photography and more. Towards the end of the year, the project saw a more collaborative way of working emerge with different groups across the Community coming together to respond to the ethos of the project. For example, the ASD Friends for Life group, The Parkview Residents Association, The Rainbow Room - parents group at St. Patrick's Primary School, Edenderry Library and more. Creative Places, Edenderry funded six Creative Grants of €500 each in the Community and three Artist Commissions ranging from €4500 - €12,000. Seonaid Murray, Creative Places Edenderry Co-ordinator has said 'I am most

proud of the growth in confidence within the Community and witnessing the realisation that this really is an all-inclusive project where all Creative ideas are welcome and supported in a safe, positive environment.'

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Esker Arts

The Offaly Artists Show, an exhibition featuring work by visual artists from or living in the county was on show in the venue for the last two months of the year. In all, it was a successful first year for Esker Arts and it augers well for the future, and

the important role that the venue will occupy for the arts in the county.

Edenderry Library and Arts Base

The Arts Office continues to work in close collaboration with the county librarian in the development of plans for a Multi-Purpose Arts space and Artist's Studio's to be incorporated into the planning of the new library for Edenderry, this include the audience and participant development as part of the Creative Places Edenderry project.

HEALTHY OFFALY



In December year 1 of the multiannual Healthy Ireland Fund Round 4 concluded. Work began on formulating and distributing reporting templates for implementing partners to input details of the project spends and progress in rolling out their actions. All partners were given a deadline of 19th January 2024 to have submitted their financial and progress reports to Healthy Offaly.

As projects finished up for 2023 all partners were asked to submit their action evaluation questionnaires to Edufit who were commissioned to examine and report on action results. Edufit will conduct a detailed review of the levels of pre and post action physical activity and obesity among the participants. This report will be presented to the February LCDRC Meeting. The report will inform us on year 1 actions. It is hoped to continue most of year 1 actions into 2024 with new projects identified for inclusion next year. They are:

1. An Offaly Healthy Libraries initiative called 'Minding Me' a 6-week nutrition, exercise and health education programme for retired individuals in Offaly. The

programme content suggested is in line with the Obesity/ Healthy Eating outcome indicator and will be delivered on site in Tullamore Library.

2. A Bord Na Mona's 'Cycling without Age' project whereby rickshaw bicycle operated by a trained volunteer has been purchased for Lough Boora Discovery park to allow those with additional needs access the parklands in a safe and inclusive manner. Healthy Offaly have been petitioned for funding for an online booking system which will schedule and manage bike bookings.

3. A Healthy Laois/Healthy Offaly joint venture to purchase sets of activator poles for Portarlinton Library. The poles will be loaned on the main library booking system to those looking to get out and active and who previously may not have access to such fitness aides.



Photo: Healthy Offaly's 'Drop & Move' group in action in Rhode

SPORTS



Offaly County Council hosted a civic reception to honour Offaly Community Games on their 50th Anniversary.

Offaly Sports Partnership would like to express our congratulations to Councillor Danny Ownes on his recent induction to Offaly GAA Hurling, hall of fame. We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Seamus Darby who was inducted into the Offaly GAA football hall of fame.

SEN Adapted PA Programme

Secondary Schools Sports Inclusion Day which was held on the 6th of December in Ballycumber Activity centre and sports hub. Over 50 children attended from St Marys Edenderry, Colaiste Choilm Tullamore, Ard Scoil Chiaran Nofa Clara, St Brendans Birr and Colaiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac. Participants enjoyed a variety of activities.

Chime Christmas Morning

On the 7th of December, we assisted Chime Tullamore with fun activities for their Christmas party. Chime's mission is to champion and support Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and advocate for full inclusion and equality.

Her Moves Programme

The last of the Her Moves 'Come Try Boxing' Programme took place on Tuesday 5th of December. Throughout the programme the girls received a very special visit from two-time National elite champion and Tullamore boxing star Grainne Walsh. Grainne spoke to the girls about how she got involved in the sport,

her training and how important it is for girls to find something they love and stay active. Grainne also presented the girls with their Offaly Sports Partnership/ Her Moves branded t-shirts and gilets which they received along with boxing gloves, pads and a skipping rope as part of the programme. The girls concluded the programme with a fun trip Ice Skating in Blanchardstown on Thursday 14th of December.

Walking Football – Adults 30 yrs +

Our walking football programme continued in Ballycumber right up to Christmas week. It will recommence in January after the Christmas break. Up to 12 adults of all ages are regularly attending.

Boccia Leagues

Our Boccia leagues for older adults continued throughout December. Currently there is 3 leagues, Men's league, Women's league, and a mixed league taking place.

Upcoming events

Offaly Sports Partnership will host our annual indoor Diversity games. This event will take place in TUS indoor arena, over 2 days, the 10th and 11th of January for both Primary and Secondary aged students. Over 700 participants will take part.

LIBRARY SERVICE



Looking forward to an exciting 2024

Offaly Libraries enjoyed an exciting and productive 2023 with many new developments on the horizon for 2024!



My Open Library has made a triumphant return following system upgrades to Banagher, Ferbane and Tullamore Libraries.

We look forward to opening Kilcormac Library as our fourth My Open Library location in Offaly soon.

Our library buildings have also enjoyed some upgrades and refurbishments in 2023.

Why not take a peek at the stylish and welcoming spaces on offer via our [Virtual Library Tours](#) available [here](#).



Family Time at your Library



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



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

Libraries hosted **59 events** in the run up to Christmas with a total **attendance of 1,042!**

Sensory Offaly at Offaly Libraries

We are proud to have met the needs of over **2,100 users of our Sensory Spaces**, available in Tullamore and Edenderry libraries, this past year.



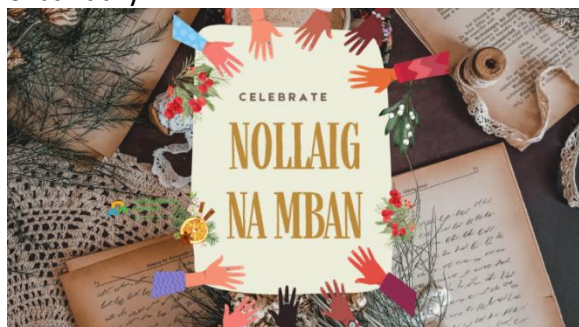
We are excited to commence work on a new **Sensory Space at Birr Library** this year. Keep an eye on our newsletters for updates.

Bookings for Tullamore's Sensory Room are open for 2024 via our [online reservation system here](#) and the Sensory Space at Edenderry Library can be booked by phoning 046 97 31028.

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

Nollaig na mBan Social Morning at Edenderry Library

Edenderry Library hosted a Nollaig na mBan coffee morning on Saturday, the 6th of January.



All were welcome to attend and unwind after the busy Christmas period with hot drinks and treats on offer along with poetry readings, mindfulness tips and chats.

Free eResources Available from Offaly Libraries

Gain free access to thousands of

- eBooks
- eAudiobooks
- eMagazines
- Global eNewspapers

to brighten your daily commute!



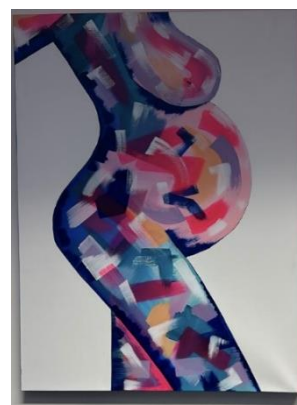
Available 24/7- Our eResources are available anytime, anywhere! All you need is your library card and a smart device.

[Browse online here](#) or simply drop into your local library branch where our friendly staff will help activate your registration.

Art Exhibition in Edenderry Library

Edenderry Library are currently showcasing works of contemporary art created by local artist, Monica Radu.

The series of abstract paintings, produced primarily with acrylic paint, can be viewed through out the month of January.



'Michael Flanagan: 50 Years Referee' Photography Exhibition in Tullamore Library

Wordsmiths presented the launch of an exhibition titled 'Michael Flanagan: 50 Years Referee' in Tullamore Library on Thursday 4th January.

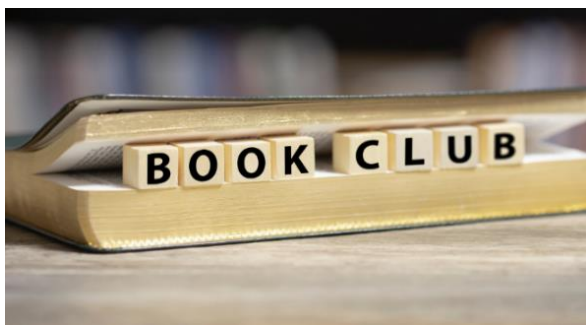
The exhibition celebrates the legacy of local referee, Michael Flanagan, with photography provided by Alex Aubin.

All are welcome to view the exhibition at Tullamore Library during January.



2024 New Year's Resolution Suggestion: Join a Book Club!

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



Library staff are always happy to **help source and select books** to suit all ages and tastes.

If you would like to join any of our existing clubs, [please check out the details for each here.](#)

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

Sign up for our Library Newsletters

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



Currently we have **2,728 subscribers** to the general newsletter and **78 teachers** subscribed to the school newsletter.

Climate Action Environment Water & Transportation

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Action

Local Authority Climate Action Plan

Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon

Development

(Amendment) Act

2021 Section 12B

(2) each local

authority is

required to

prepare a local

authority climate

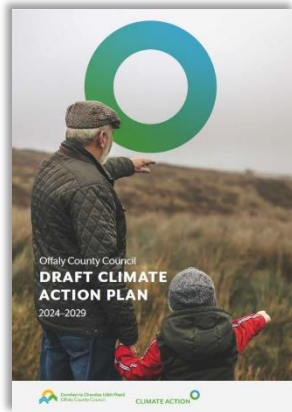
action plan for its

respective administrative area. The

guidelines have been issued under the

provisions of the Act and are therefore

statutory in nature.



Offaly County Council have developed our draft Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 for adoption by Reserve Function before 23rd February 2024.

The submissions received for the draft Climate Action Plan are currently being considered before the plan is submitted to the Members for their approval.

Community Climate Action Fund

The Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) was launched within Offaly on 13th December 2023, and will remain open for application for 12 weeks, until 6th March 2024.

The Community Climate Action Programme, under the Climate Action Fund, has been developed under two strands addressing both direct climate action, and climate education and capacity building.

Strand 1 has two parts: strand 1 entitled “Action: Building Low Carbon Communities” for €24 million, and strand 1a entitled “Shared Island Community Climate Action” for €3 million.

Strand 1: Action: Building Low Carbon Communities

€444,000 is being provided to Offaly Co. Co. to work in partnership with communities, large and small, rural and urban, within their areas of operation to build low carbon communities in a considered and structured way. The projects will address the following five themes:

- Home/energy
- Travel
- Food and waste
- Shopping and recycling
- Local climate and environmental action

Strand 1A: Shared Island Community Climate Action

In addition, a total of €3 million is being provided by the Government’s Shared Island Fund to support cross-border and all-island community climate action initiatives as an integrated part of the Community Climate Action Programme. Strand 1a enables communities and LAs to propose a cross-border project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland. The themes are the same as strand 1.

Offaly County Council is hoping to receive applications to avail of the €444,000 allocated for community groups in Strand 1. Suitable projects will receive 100% funding and must be completed within 18

months of the signed grant agreement (between OCC and relevant community group). The Community Climate Action Officer will co-ordinate this fund within Offaly Co. Co. Expressions of interest will be through an on-line application form available on www.Offaly.ie

Energy

Offaly County Council Energy Action Team launched their “Energize Offaly” campaign aimed at raising awareness amongst staff and elected members of the work done to date to increase energy efficiency across the organization and promote further action to help achieve statutory targets. Offaly County Council have again signed up to the SEAI “Reduce Your Use” for 2024, which aims to reduce unnecessary energy consumption across the public sector.



Environmental Management

From January to end of November, the Environment Section received 998 environmental complaints. All were investigated in a timely manner and resolved where possible.

Complaint Category	No
Litter pollution (fly tipping/casual litter/litter on property)	665
Waste (dumping/burning/unauthorised sites)	102
Noise (community/commercial/industrial)	22
Control of Horses	21
Control of Dogs	73
Water Quality/Services	39
Abandoned vehicles	16
Air Pollution	28

Environment Complaints

Offaly County Councils website has been updated to include an online environmental complaint form. This means that it is easier for members of the public to register a complaint. Environments Complaints Handling procedure has also been amended.

Litter Management

Following the positive feedback from the area offices regarding the solar compaction litter bins, Environment applied for and was approved for funding for additional bins under the Anti-Dumping Initiative. This allowed the Council to increase the quantity of bins across the county to 15. The bins can hold up to 8 times more litter than a conventional litter bin and allow for more efficient streamlining of the Council's Street cleansing services. Bins were installed in the following locations:

- ✓ Heritage Centre, Ferbane & Emmet Square, Birr & Market Square, Birr & Clara Square
- ✓ Tullamore – Millenium Plaza & St. Kyron Street & O'Connor Square
- ✓ Edenderry – JKL Street. & Town Hall, Medical Hall & Main Street
- ✓ Mountbolus Park
- ✓ Harbour Road, Banagher
- ✓ Crinkle Village and Cloneygowan Village



An additional benefit is that the bins have advertising panels on each side, which allow for environmental

messages and themes to be exhibited. Environment has taken the opportunity to promote the Council's Climate Strategy to raise awareness among the public. These

panels can be changed to allow for any environmental theme to be advertised.

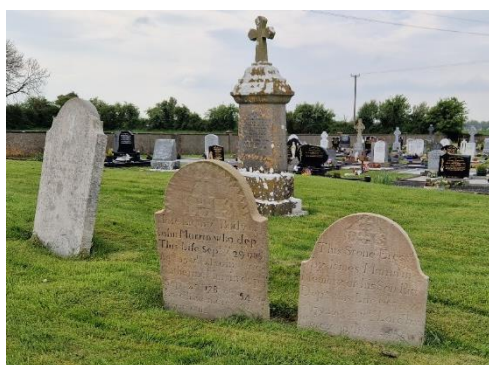
Environmental Awareness

The Environment Department participated in a pilot programme “Composting for Schools”. Four schools who expressed an interest in composting were selected to work with Composting Ireland. The programme consisted of workshop training for teachers and community members, on-site training on how to compost, develop wormeries and manage organic waste within the school. The schools who are participating are: Scoil Naomh Mhuire, Cloneygowan, St. Mary’s NS, Pullough, Scoil na Croise Naofa, Geashill and St. Josephs NS, Arden, Tullamore. So far, the feedback has been very positive, and it is hoped to extend this programme in the coming year to more schools.

Burial Grounds

St. Mary’s Cemetery, Edenderry

The tender documents for the construction of the extension to St. Mary’s are being prepared and it is planned to publish the tender by the end of January 2024.



Cemetery Committee Grants

This year we have supported seventeen cemetery committees with grants for the upkeep and enhancement of their local cemeteries, and specific projects or purchases for the upkeep of the cemetery. The overall standard of work carried out by these volunteer groups continues to be

very high and we will continue supporting these groups in 2024, and we look forward to working with new committees in 2024.

RURAL WATER SERVICES

Subsidies

The 2023 GWS annual subsidy was paid to the 15 no. Private and Public Group Water Schemes, amounting to €1,072,067.00



Capital

The Rural Water Unit of the Department of Housing have advised that the next Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme capital funding scheme will be announced imminently. Under the most recent programme over €2m of funding was secured for 24 separate projects ranging from public health measures to amalgamation of group water schemes.

Domestic Lead Remediation Grants

The Domestic Lead Remediation Grant Scheme has been in existence since 2016 and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have revised the eligibility criteria with effect from 1 December 2022.

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that was used for pipework and plumbing in some houses built up to, and including, the 1970s. However, exposure to lead in drinking water has been identified as a serious public health risk. The grant scheme was introduced in line with the Government’s National Lead Strategy in order to reduce people’s exposure to lead in drinking water.

The aim of the grant is 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.

According to the World Health Organisation, there is no completely safe level of lead in drinking water. The best and most effective way of dealing with lead in drinking water is to replace all lead pipes and all lead plumbing delivering drinking water to the house concerned.

The new eligibility conditions in the revised grant include:

- Removal of the means test requirement;
- Introduction of a uniform grant rate of 100% of the eligible costs of the replacement of any such lead pipes and/or related fittings, or €5,000, whichever is the lower;
- An additional eligible cost can be claimed to a maximum of €200 for the provision of a certificate from a laboratory or notification from a registered building professional, as outlined at (b) and (c) above and provided for in Regulation 5(1)(b) and 5(1)(c). This cost is to be included in the calculation of the maximum eligible cost total of €5,000. Note, any indirect costs incurred by the applicant themselves are not eligible costs;
- The house concerned must be occupied by the applicant as their normal place of residence;
- Minimum expenditure on eligible works in order to qualify for a grant has been increased from €200 to €750.

Grant application forms are available on offaly.ie or from the CAERW section by contacting 057 9357403

Domestic Waste Water Treatment

The DWWTS grant scheme will be amended from 01/01/2024, removing the requirement for the septic tank to be registered and also increasing the grant to 85% of allowable costs up to a maximum of €12,000.00

Grants for a Septic Tank or Domestic Waste Water Treatment System (DWWTS), to assist with the costs of remediation, repair or upgrading works to, or replacement of, such DWWTS are only available from a Local Authority where a septic tank has been

inspected by the Local Authority or Local Authority Waters Programme Office (LAWPRO) under one of the following inspections regimes:

- National Inspection Plan
- Prioritised Areas for Action, as outlined in the River Basin Management Plan, and remediation, repair or upgrading works or replacement of the DWWTS is recommended after inspection by the Local Authority.
- Where a dwelling is in a High Status Objective Catchment Area, and remediation, repair or upgrading works or replacement of the DWWTS are recommended after inspection by the Local Authority.

If persons have been recommended remediation, repair or upgrading works or replacement of your DWWTS as per above then they may be entitled to a grant towards the works required and the application form for the DWWTS grant will be provided to you by Offaly County Council.

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).

The key features of the scheme are:

- The grant payable for rehabilitation works is 85% of approved costs subject to a maximum of €3,000.00, where the Local Authority agrees that this is the most appropriate solution.
- The grant payable for the provision of a new well is 85% of approved costs subject to a maximum of €5,000.00, where the Local Authority agrees that this is the most appropriate solution.
- The provision of a water quality treatment system (typically filtration and Ultra Violet treatment) qualifies for 100% funding up to a maximum of €1,000.00, where the Local Authority agrees that this is the most appropriate solution. This can be claimed on its own or in addition to either the grant for rehabilitation works or the grant for a new well. This does not include water softeners in hard water areas.
- The minimum grant threshold is €750.00

Please note that this scheme does not apply to houses to which a Public Water Supply or a Group Water Scheme has already been provided or can reasonably be provided.

In 2023 we assisted 15 households with grants under this scheme totalling €65,549.95.

Veterinary Control of Dogs

In 2023 months we have cared for 289 dogs in the Dog Shelter which is an approximately 6% increase on the previous 12 months.

On average 15% of the dogs are reclaimed by their owners, 15% are rehomed by the Care of Dogs Team and the other 70% are rehomed through animal rescue charities. The Control of Dogs team has also dealt with 73 complaints since the start of the year and brought 2 successful prosecutions through the courts in 2023.

Control of Horses

We have dealt with 21 complaints under Control of Horse legislation from January to August 2023, which resulted in the seizure of 11 horses and donkeys.

Veterinary Inspections

Offaly County Council continues to operate the Shared Service Agreement for Veterinary Services in the Westmeath County Council administrative area.

TRANSPORTATION

Public Lighting

The following is a breakdown of the Public Lighting failures across the County. There are 217 faults on the system presently. 39 of these faults require third party intervention and as such cannot be repaired by the maintenance contractor. There are also 23 of the 39 third party faults that are historical records that include private housing estates whereby a survey was uploaded regarding a public lighting asset that was never commissioned in the first instance hence cannot be a fault. These anomalies are being addressed by the yearly public lighting capital program.

Therefore, the current actionable faults amount to 178 faults or 1.91% of the lighting stock.

The breakdown of the 178 faults across each MD are as follows:

Municipal District	No Of Faults	Total No of Lights in the MD	% fault of MD Lights Only	% fault per MD of the Countywide Public Lighting Stock
Birr MD	59	2962	1.99%	0.63%
Tullamore MD	80	3933	2.03%	0.86%
Edenderry MD	39	2405	1.62%	0.42%

Corporate Fleet Management

Five new electric Vehicles have been deployed within our Corporate Fleet in December as part of the Roads and Infrastructure commitment to decarbonising the corporate fleet via the application of Zero and Low Emission full options.

Ballycommon Trailhead/Grand Canal Greenway

Approval to proceed to tender for the proposed new parking facilities at Ballycommon was received from the TII in December 2023. The proposed scheme includes for 53 carparking spaces including EV charging and accessible parking, associated public lighting and traffic control measures on Ballycommon Bridge. This scheme is designed to provide a safe sustainable access point onto the Grand Canal Greenway.

Winter Service Plan 2023/2024

Our winter Service Plan commenced in October 2023. This service is managed by the Roads Department and the service is delivered from the Tullamore Machinery Yard and Birr Depot. There are 4 duty Engineers rostered across the season who asses real time data from the Road Networks in order to establish whether treatment is required and the associated rate of spread of rock salt.

Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive

Finance

Revenue Account Grant Income & Payroll Summary to 31 December 2023			
OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL	Full Yr Budget 2023 €m	Preliminary Value to Dec 2023 €m	% Year To Date
Payroll costs	32.97	30.55	92.7%
Grants and Subsidies Income	40.80	51.20	125.5%
OCC to 31st Dec 2023	<u>Rates</u>	<u>Rents</u>	<u>Loans</u>
	<u>€m</u>	<u>€m</u>	<u>€m</u>
Opening Balance Jan 1st, 2023	3.00	0.56	0.10
Net Invoices & Adjustments, waivers	14.78	8.13	0.53
2023 Cash Collected to end of Dec	14.95	8.02	0.56
Closing Balance Dec 31st, 2023	2.84	0.66	0.07
<u>2022 Cash collected to Dec 31st</u>	13.66	7.44	0.55
% Collection at this point in 2022	109%	108%	102%
*** Collections impacted in 2022 by waiver uncertainty and effect of lockdowns			
<u>Bank Overdraft to 31st Dec 2023</u>			% YTD
Number of days Overdrawn in Bank year to date		58	16%
Bank Interest and non conforming charges to Dec 31st 2023 YTD			€10,794
Bank Administration and transactional charges to Dec 31st 2023 YTD			€34,973