

**JANUARY  
2022**



**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 Feabhra

Monthly Management Report for consideration at the February 2022 Monthly Meeting.

**EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS** - A schedule of Chief Executive Orders is included with the Council Agenda.

**FINANCE** - Appendix 1

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

#### **Local Enterprise Week**

Staff throughout the network of 31 LEO Offices are preparing for Local Enterprise Week which will take place between **Monday 7th March and Friday, 11th March**. Further details are outlined in the LEO Report

#### **Seachtain Na Gaeilge**



We are looking forward to presenting our programme of events for Seachtain Na Gaeilge 2022 which we will celebrate across our library branches from **March 1st until March 17th**.

### **REPORT AT A GLANCE**

#### **Regeneration Town Centre First**

##### **A Policy Approach to Irish Towns**

The Government published Town Centre First – a major new policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres on the 4th February, 2022 by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, the Minister for Planning and Local Government, Peter Burke TD, and the Minister for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD. Further information available in the Planning Report

#### **The NTA Active Travel and Outdoor Infrastructure**

Schemes are progressing throughout the County. The Roads section and MDs are continuing to engage with the NTA to plan and deliver additional active travel projects in Offaly in 2022.

The dedicated Active Travel Team are now in place. There are c.20 schemes planned for this year countywide. New schemes for 2022 include works at Collins Lane Tullamore, Birr Riverside walk upgrade and new Pedestrian crossings in Rhode. Total Value of the schemes is c.€3.4m.

**PLANNING**

	To end January 2021	To end January 2020	Total 2021
<b>Planning Applications</b>	24	32	831
<b>Extensions of Duration Applications &amp; Assessments</b>	1	0	0
<b>Warning Letters and (Enforcement Notices) issued</b>	2	2 (1)	13(2)

**Architecture and Conservation**

- **Built Heritage Investment Scheme** – 34 applications were received and 27 provisional allocations submitted to the Department for consideration. Projects range from several thatching applications, historic sash window repair, structural stabilization, lime rendering, roof repairs to stained glass repairs. Note funding increased from €94,800 in 2021 to €126,400 for Offaly which has assisted with the greater number of provisional grants.
- **Historic Structures Fund** - 4 applications received were submitted to the Department for consideration.
- **Architectural/Conservation Reports** for Planning Applications and Pre Planning – ongoing 8 completed for January.

**Regeneration - Town Centre First: A Policy Approach to Irish Towns**

Town Centre First contains 33 unique actions which will give our towns the tools and resources they need to become more

viable and attractive places in which to live, work, visit and run a business.

The policy is underpinned by multi-billion-euro investment spread across major Government schemes such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Key objectives are

- Major new strategy to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into town centres
- Network of Town Regeneration Officers to drive future development
- Investment to make our towns better places to live, work and raise a family
- Suite of supports and tools to help businesses and local communities deliver on their unique vision for their area
- New Policy to deliver on the objectives of ‘Housing for All’ and ‘Our Rural Future’

**Town Centre First Plans**

**2021 Clara:**

On 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 under Phase I, Clara was selected by the Minister from Offaly County Council’s nominated towns for the Town Centre First Plan. It is envisaged that Clara’s Town Centre First Plan can reimagine the potential of the town and focus in particular on its centre and immediate surroundings. The plan will identify specific interventions including tackling dereliction and vacancy, decarbonisation, maintaining a strong local economy, creating high value job opportunities and promoting compact growth.

Tender document for consultants to carry out the Town Centre First Plan are currently being prepared.

### **Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF)**

**2021 Edenderry Phase II** - Demolition of 33/34 JKL Street commenced and 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of library design team advertised on e tenders

**2021 – Ferbane Regeneration** - St Joseph’s Convent purchase progressing

### **Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)**

#### **Successful ORIS projects progress update**

**2020 - ‘Route to the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails’, ‘Kinnitty Woods Novice-Grade MTB Loop’, and “Rediscovering Castle Bernard’s Historic Bridges”** - Part 8 now in place Progressing to tender for “route to the trails” from Kinnitty village. Novice loop to be constructed by Coillte during 2022 Rediscovering Castle Bernard’s Historic Bridges project underway.

**2021 Derryounce Lakes and Trails, project development** - Steering group established and tender documents for development plan being prepared

**2021 Clashawaun River Walk** - Initial consultation in progress

### **Town and Village Renewal Scheme**

The Department of Rural and Community Development announced a call for TVR 2021 funding on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2021. 6 applications were submitted, announcements are still pending, due shortly.

There are currently 11 active TVR projects and 2 covid accelerated measures projects as follows:

<b>Birr MD</b>	<b>Edenderry MD</b>	<b>Tullamore MD</b>
The Green, Birr (2019)	Blundell Park (2019)	Mount Bolus phase I (2019)
Shinrone phase II (2019)	Cloneygowan (2020)	Mucklagh (2020)
Pollagh (2020)	Daingean Phase II (2020)	Mount Bolus Phase II (2020)
Ferbane Fairgreen (2020)	Kilmalogue (2020)	Millenium Sq Tullamore (Covid measure 2020)
Lusmagh (Covid measure 2020)		

### **ROADS**

Planning, design and procurement of schemes for 2022 are ongoing.

Offaly County Council received the 2022 National Roads Allocation of €2,744,000 from the TII and we are awaiting the grant allocation for the Regional and Local roads in the County. The 2022 Roads Programme will be prepared for March 2022.

### **N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link**

It is expected that The Route Options selection report will be published in March, and this will conclude Phase 2 of the project. Following publication of this report OCC will seek approval and funding to progress to Phase 3.

### **TII Fencing Retrofit**

Upgrading of fences comprising horizontal rail elements bounding National Roads. Works are ongoing on the N62 near Derrinlough to conclude the 2021 programme. C.€100k is budgeted to upgrade sites on the N52 near Eglis in 2022.

**Edenderry Town Inner Relief Road**  
Works continue to progress well. Drainage works are complete. Ducting, Footpath & Kerbing works 90% complete. Junctions are now under development. Construction works to deliver the scheme will be ongoing into Q2 2022.



*Drone aerial photograph of scheme under construction*

### **Winter Service**

The winter service period commenced in October 2021. The weather has been mild and thus limited salting has been required. The Winter Service plan covering the 2021/2022 period is available on [Offaly.ie](http://Offaly.ie) to be viewed by members of the public.

### **TII Safety Scheme**

Works are ongoing at the N62 Doon Crossroads since the beginning of the year following a successful application by OCC to the TII in 2021. The scheme is designed to significantly enhance the visibility at the R444/N62 crossroads when turning onto the N62 and also to prevent unsafe parking practices at busy periods near the public house on the crossroads. It is a high quality scheme design and will significantly enhance safety at the crossroads. OCC will continue to pursue finance from TII for other sites where significant safety concerns prevail.



*TII Safety Scheme enhancement works at N62 Doon Crossroads*

## **ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

### **Consultations**

#### **Draft Regional Water Resources Plan**

Irish Water are now seeking feedback through public consultation on the draft RWRP: Eastern and Midlands and associated SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement.

A thirteen-week statutory consultation is running from the 14 December 2021 to 14 March 2022 during which time the draft RWRP Eastern and Midlands and associated environmental reports can be viewed and downloaded from the website and at your local authority's planning office during their normal opening hours. Information on the consultation can be viewed at [www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie) This is your opportunity to feed into the process of how Irish Water identifies the issues in the region and determine what the opportunities are to provide a more resilient water supply in your area. A webinar was held on the 9 February for Councillors, IW have said they can have an additional webinar if there is a demand for it.

### **Water Quality**

The *Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027* was published on 27th September 2021. The document sets out



the current situation in relation to water quality in Ireland, which despite focus and progress in recent times, the overall water quality is again in decline in Ireland, primarily due to nutrient pollution. The plan is now open for public consultation until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and is available at [www.gov.ie/draftRBMP](http://www.gov.ie/draftRBMP)

The *Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027* sets out a Program of Measures on how Ireland proposes to protect and restore water quality focusing on a wide range of pressures. Appendix 3 of the document sets out the proposed “Areas for Action” with a total of 26 identified in Co. Offaly.

### **Climate Action**

In line with climate action now entering a “delivery phase”, a structured work plan for the Climate Action Steering Group is currently being developed with specific actions. Work is progressing on a number of initiatives in the area of communications, projects etc.

Having successfully met 2020 energy efficiency targets, Offaly County Council have commenced their 2021 energy efficiency monitoring and recording programme through SEAI. Each LA is obliged to annually M&R their total energy consumption levels in order to accurately measure energy efficiencies against pre-set targets.

A significant body of work commencing in 2022, will be the development of a Climate Action Plan of Offaly County Council. The Minister has 18 months from the enactment of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act to instruct each local authority to produce a Climate Action Plan. Each LA will then have 12 months to produce their specific Climate Action Plan, as per normal statutory plan making procedures. Draft guidance on the

structure, layout and content of these plans has been developed, and issued to LA’s by the CARO’s. LA’s are advised to start preparation works immediately in advance of the Ministers announcement. This will include establishing baseline emission inventory’s (BEI’s) for the County, from which progress on emission reductions shall be measured to 2030.

### **Environment**

#### **Tullamore Living River Project**

The Tullamore Living River Project is substantial complete; a planting plan is being developed which will introduce trees and shrubs into the area.

### **Litter & Waste Management**

Litter complaints received: 70

Waste enforcement complaints received: 8

Clean ups: 26

Litter fines issued: 10

### **Litter Management Plan**

Every 3 years a LA has to write and publish a Litter Management Plan. Our previous Plan expired in 2018 and was extended for 3 years in accordance it the legislation – Litter Pollution Act, 1997.

The draft plan was presented on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December to the SPC members. They were advised of our intention to go forward to the full Council in January 2022. EWS then commenced a public consultation process which closed on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> of February and the Final Draft of the Litter Management Plan will be brought forward to the February meeting for consideration. It is intended to run a mattress amnesty campaign in the coming months

### **Flood Management**

#### **Rahan Village, Flood Relief Project**

Environment Section is completing a feasibility study to carrying out flood relief

works at Rahan Village in conjunction with the OPW.

The proposal would include approximately 220m of embankment to protect the rear of College View, protection of the Waste Water Plant and a flood defence to tie in to the bridge.

An Environmental Consultant has been appointed to complete an AA screening report on the proposed project.

### **Rural Water Programme**

The Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2019 – 2021 is ongoing. Of the 19 projects awarded funding 14 are now complete and the remainder are due to be completed by the end of quarter 1/22. In addition, two Group Water Schemes have been approved for funding for projects that have arisen during the term of the current funding programme and two more projects are awaiting confirmation from the Rural Water Unit.

## **HOUSING**

### **Covid-19 – Housing**

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

<b>Service</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
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	HousingAidGrants@offalycoco.ie

Older People and People with a Disability Scheme	
Housing Leasing Enquiries	leasing@offalycoco.ie
Anti-Social Behaviour	ASB@offalycoco.ie

### **October Housing Update**

- There are 492 on the Social Housing List awaiting housing support at the end of January 2022.
- A further 791 active tenancies are currently being supported under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme, 2 signed up for HAP and 4 exited from HAP in January.
- At the end of January, 16 single people and 7 families were being supported in emergency accommodation.
- No Local Authority Home Loan applications have been received to date in 2022. This new scheme was introduced on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022 replacing the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan.
- Following a competitive tendering process, a consultant has been appointed to carry out Private Rented House Inspections to ensure that the property complies with the Minimum Housing Standards Act.

### **Housing Stock – Number, Maintenance & Repair**

- Total housing stock at end of January 2022 is 1969.
- 317 maintenance calls were logged in January.

### **Housing Capital Programme Update**

- Raheen, Clara development (38 units) – The Stage 4 approval application was approved by the

Department on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Letter of Intent has been sent to preferred Tenderer and works will commence on site in Q1, 2022.

- Dargan Drive, Chancery Lane (20 Units) – Stage 2 was approved on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The Pre-Part 8 process is in progress and Part 8 consultation will be advertised in February 2022.
- Moneygall (4 units) – Contractor commenced works on site on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Due for completion in Q1 2023.
- Beechgrove, Belmont (7 units) – Project commenced on site on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Due for completion in Q3, 2022.
- Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 no. Older Person's dwellings) – Assessment of Tender Returns is currently under way. Six no. Tenders were returned on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Stage 4 approval application will be lodged with the Department in Q1. Works will commence on site in Q2.
- Banagher, Kylebeg (18 Units) – Stage 4 approval received on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Contractor has been appointed (Pat Loftus Construction Ltd.) and work has commenced on site. Project is due for completion in Q4, 2022.
- Circular Road, Daingean (9 units) - Stage 4 approval application was submitted to the Department on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Works will commence on site in March/April 2022 subject to Department approval.
- Circular Road, Daingean, Site 2 (9 Units) – Stage 1 approval application was granted on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2021 for the site adjoining the OCC housing site on Circular Road. Stage 2 is due to be lodged in Q2 2022.

- Sycamore Drive, Ballycumber (10 Units) – Stage 1 approval was granted by the Department on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Design Team have been appointed and Stage 2 will be lodged in Q1 2022.

### **Vacant Houses Initiatives**

- 1 Newbridge Street, Birr: Works commenced on site on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Works are ongoing. Due for completion in May 2022.
- 4 Hillview, Holly Park, Birr: Progressing as an acquisition.
- 121 Lakeview, Clara: Stage 1 submission will be submitted to the Department in Q1, 2022
- 3 x Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) completed in 2021.

### **Approved Housing Bodies Schemes**

- Cluid Housing Association: Jackson's Hill, Tullamore - Construction ongoing on 26 units with completion date projected for February 2022.
- Oaklee: Clonminch, Tullamore (19 units) – Completion in August 2022
- Oaklee: Kearney's Field, Tullamore (41 Units) – Completion in early 2023
- Sofia Housing: Stage 2 approved (39 units) at Presentation Lands, Portarlinton. Stage 2 submission was made in October. Sophia Housing have lodged a planning application for the development – further information is being sought from the AHB.
- Sofia Housing, in a joint initiative with Midlands Simon Community, acquired Clonamore Hotel in Q3, 2020. The facility will be developed as an enhanced centre for the provision of supported accommodation for homeless

people. Under the terms of a landmark agreement Midlands Simon Community will operate the facility, with a team of qualified social care workers providing support on a 24/7 basis. Following refurbishment, the facility will provide professional supports for up to 17 people. Permission to proceed to tender approved in December 2021.

### **Turnkey Developments/Part V**

- Main Street, Daingean (8 Units): houses completed and 8 families allocated to their new homes.
- 6 Turnkey Schemes (82 units) which received departmental approval in December 2020 are progressing as follows:
  - Mucklagh, 8 units – Completion in Q1 2022
  - Woodfield, Birr, 34 units - 5 completed in 2021 and due for allocation in January 2022
  - Bog Road, Portarlinton, 28 units - Under Construction
  - Walsh Island, 4 units - Under Construction
  - Tullamore, 5 units – discussions ongoing
  - Cloneygowan, 2 units – completed and allocated in 2021
- 4 x Part V units in Silverbrook Drive, Tullamore have been completed and allocated.
- 7 x Part V Units @ Hawthorns completed in 2021, 5 more due in Q1 2022

### **Housing Grants (Private)**

The total allocation in 2021 towards private housing grants, i.e., Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People; People with a Disability Scheme and Mobility Grants was

€1,600,000. 20% of this funding is provided from the Council's Housing resources. The total amount of grants awarded was 138 grants. Housing staff are liaising with all applicants who have been approved for works in an effort to ensure that all works are progressing and to facilitate the drawdown of funds.

### **Disabled Person's Grants (Social Housing)**

8 Extensions and 22 adaptations were funded from 2021 allocation of €833,773. Assessments are underway for further works in 2022

### **Retrofit Programme**

The Council received notification on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 of an increase in their allocation under 'Just Transition for the Midlands Region' programme to €4.2m.

Lot 1&2, Birr: The Contractor for the works has been appointed (Retrofit Design Ltd.) and works are in progress on the Birr houses. Completion in Q2 2022.

Lot 3&4, Tullamore: The closing date for the Works Tender for the 42 houses in Tullamore was 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021. 4 no. tenders were returned. Works should begin in Q1, 2022 subject to Department approval of the tender amount.

Lot 5&6, Edenderry, Daingean, Clara, Ferbane, Shannonbridge, Cloghan: The appointed consultants have prepared the works tender which will be advertised on [www.etenders.gov.ie.in](http://www.etenders.gov.ie.in) Q1, 2022.



## **LOCAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)**

Offaly LCDC held their monthly meeting on Thursday 20th January, 2022 with members attending by video link. Main agenda items included the Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020 & Transitional LEADER Programme 2021 – 2022, the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme 2018 – 2022 (SICAP), Local Economic and Community Plans Guidelines 2021 and the European Just Transition Territorial Plan. LEADER Projects were approved to the value of €36,953.

Members were provided with a comprehensive presentation and overview of the content of the proposed 2022 SICAP Annual Plan and Statement of Priorities 2022-2023 and briefed on a vast range of key actions and programmes to be delivered in 2022. The Emerging Needs Target Group for 2021 was agreed as ‘Older People that are Socially Isolated’. Members welcomed and approved in principle the 2022 SICAP Annual Plan. The 2021 SICAP Case Study was presented to the members, the Target Group being ‘Disadvantaged Young People’.

Members were provided with a detailed presentation in relation to the updated 2022 LECP Guidelines. The LECP process will consist of two parts: Development of an overall LECP Framework and Development of Implementation Plans. The new guidelines build on the lessons learned from the current LECP cycle as well as changed policies, strategic and socio-economic context.

### **Age Friendly Alliance**

- Age Friendly Ireland meeting on Toolkit for development of the new Age

Friendly Strategy took place on the 31st January.

- The Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team met on 6th January. Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team work plan for 2022 includes the development of Clara as the first Age Friendly town in Offaly.

### **Community Activities Fund**

The Community Activities Fund (CAF) is a once-off fund allocated by Offaly LCDC under the Department’s Community Enhancement Programme. The CAF is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with €277,102 approved for Offaly. Offaly LCDC has decided to ring fence up to €75,600 of this year’s allocation towards grants to support established community playgrounds with replacement of equipment or running costs. The CAF will support not-for-profit community or voluntary groups with their non-pay running costs or operating costs. Groups will also be able to use the funding to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities or purchase equipment. The closing date for applications is 12 noon on Friday 11th February 2022.

### **Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 2021**

In October 2021 the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth issued a call for proposals from local authorities under a Disability Awareness and Participation Fund (DPAF). The purpose of DPAF 2021 is to provide funding for Local Authorities to support the participation of people with disabilities in local activities, to help remove barriers to community involvement and to support the promotion and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in communities.

On December 22 2021, Offaly County Council was awarded funding of €75,000 based on the application made. The themes as set out in the 2021 funding call cross a number of Offaly County Council service areas:

1. UNCRPD Promotion within local authorities and/or at local level
2. Disability Awareness Capacity Building and Training
3. Participation and Engagement in community life for persons with disabilities
4. Accessible Public and Community Spaces

## **ARTS**

### **Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath Harps and Pipes programmes**

The uilleann pipe programme is continuing and we have since moved to our second BCP unit in Croghan, and recently had a visit from our Uilleann Pipe tutor for a face-to-face lesson.

We have just launched a new Harp programme as part of our Play an Instrument Outreach programme and are really looking forward to partnering with Durrow National School in Offaly and Gaelscoil an Choilinn in Mullingar. We recently purchased 12 harps from Brian Callan, a harp maker based in Galway, which will be delivered to schools in the February ready to start after the February mid-term.

### **MGOW Schools Programme**

MGOW is back working in our partner primary schools across the regions, with the recent addition of 2 secondary schools: Ard Scoil Chiaran in Clara and Oaklands Secondary school in Edenderry. In all cases, our musician educators are working face-to-face with the children and young people.

## **Reporting and statistics**

We are in the process of gathering our statistics for 2021 and despite all the challenges we faced, we still managed to reach 3640 children and young people across the 2 counties, which we are absolutely thrilled about.

MGOW is in the process of finalising its annual planning for 2022 for submission later this month.

## **Intergenerational Ukulele programme Ukulele Ceili:**



Our Intergenerational Ukulele Programme is back in full swing, with the Arden View group meeting face-to-face every Friday afternoon. Our online group are growing from strength to strength and we have also connected with

Active Retirement groups, Men's sheds and have musician educators meeting groups in Tullamore, Kilbeggan and Rochfortbridge, Mullingar and Athlone each week. We are planning to extend this programme to other areas in the region through the Active Retirement and Men's/Women's shed networks. We were delighted to be featured recently in the local Offaly newspapers.

**We love this! Ukulele Céilí is the new big music craze in Offaly**



**We love this! Ukulele Céilí is the new big music craze in Offaly**

### Funding

**Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund:** The fund, administered by Laois-Offaly ETB has awarded MGOW nearly €5k which will cover the cost of purchasing 4 new MacBooks and related software so we can work bring our mobile recording studio out to where young people are creating music and work with them to capture their music.

**Local Creative Youth Partnerships:** MGOW has been awarded €5k towards the purchase of additional musical resources that will be used to support our on-going work in Co. Offaly youth groups.

### Arts Office

The Arts Office continues to plan for a very busy annual programme for 2022. The annual programme will be delivered in response to the current and anticipated restrictions, therefore will be a combination of online and where possible on the ground projects.

### Grants & Awards

Applications for Arts Acts Grants and Professional Artists Support Scheme have been received and assessed by an external panel. The Arts Acts Grants recommendation will be made available at the February Council meeting. The call for Festival Arts Grants deadline for submissions is 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022. All applications are now being processed through Submit.com which enables the Arts Service to collect and process information more effectively which will assist future planning

### Continuing Programming In the Open | Faoin Spéir

The programme will be launched at our first major event 'Behind these Walls' by artists Caroline Conway at the Tullamore Gaol on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

### Creative Places

Creative Places Edenderry have launched the promotion of a project entitled 'Dancing Shoes', see link attached [Dancing Shoes project](#). A programme of workshops for five different dance styles: Ballet, Hip Hop, Line Dancing, Irish Dancing, and Swing Dancing will be taking place in the hall at St Mary's Primary School between now and St Patrick's Day



### FilmOffaly

FilmOffaly Award 2021, a documentary incorporating mentoring, the award is progressing with filming being undertaken. Will be moving to post production in February. Requests for locations are expected to become more frequent as there is a return to on location shoots.

### Online

Arts Office launched the music video 'From Shannon to St Rynagh's' featuring children from St Rynagh's Primary School Banagher singing a song written by Jessica Traynor and TY students of Banagher college and composed by Elaine Agnew. This formed part of the Banagher Public Art Project 'A Place of Pointed Stones'.



## Capital Projects

### Arts Infrastructure Strategy

The Arts Infrastructure Strategy for the County continues to be progressed by People Places Consulting: Caoimhín Corrigan and Siobhán O'Malley. The strategy will explore how all the Arts Infrastructure (existing and planned) can be developed in a collaborative and harmonic manner, resulting in a cohesive, complimentary and self-sustaining network of arts infrastructure that is beneficial to the whole county.

### Esker Arts

Work continues with regards to the opening of Esker Arts in 2022.

The Arts Office are continuing to develop a series of arts as part of the In the Open | Faoin Spéir project. This programme will aim to re-engage an audience / local community participation in advance of the Art Centre opening.

## LIBRARY SERVICES

### Squeeze in a Read for Ireland Reads Day 25th February 2022 with Offaly Libraries



Offaly Libraries will be hosting a number of events to celebrate this national campaign to encourage as many people as possible to get reading. The

campaign will run throughout February, leading up to 'Ireland Reads Day' on **February 25th 2022.**

Ireland Reads is about promoting the power of reading for enjoyment and wellbeing, encouraging everyone, young and old, to get back into the habit of reading and regularly setting aside time to sit and read a book, a poem, a comic, a newspaper,

whatever works for them! Log into [www.irelandreads.ie](http://www.irelandreads.ie) and take the pledge now!

In this spirit, our library branches are taking part in a county-wide Readathon. All patrons will be asked to bank the number of minutes they have spent reading which will be tallied and published across our social media platforms on a weekly basis.

Offaly patrons have banked over 12,000 minutes of reading time so far, which is equivalent to 8 full days or about the amount of time Apollo 11 took to reach the moon and back!



### Squeeze in a Read: Author Visit

Edenderry Library will host local author, Geraldine O'Neill, for an online event on Wednesday, February 23rd at 7pm to celebrate Ireland Reads 2022.

Geraldine will talk about how books have influenced her life in many ways, and led her on the path to becoming an author herself. She will discuss books she loved from childhood, and how fiction informed her about other countries and cultures and gave her a broader understanding of people in general. She will also talk about non-fiction and inspirational books which have helped shape her life.

Patrons can register for this event here: <https://bit.ly/3rLNU1z>

Find out more at [www.irelandreads.ie](http://www.irelandreads.ie) and make your pledge to read on Ireland Reads Day.



## Leisure Reading Areas return to Offaly Libraries



Offaly Libraries are excited to announce the return of leisure reading areas to our library branches. With the easing of restrictions, we can now welcome patrons to avail of our soft furnishings, daily newspapers, magazines and to enjoy a wider selection of Public PCs and study spaces.



## Art Exhibition in Edenderry Library

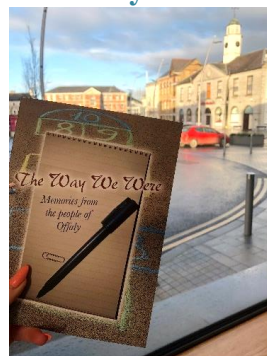
We are delighted to present our first physical art exhibition since March 2020. Niamh Hynan will display her exhibition entitled

‘Flow\_Clarify’ at Edenderry

Library during February / March 2022 with a digital exhibition also on display in Birr, Tullamore and Clara libraries.



## ‘The Way We Were’



The Way We Were - Memories from the People of Offaly is the fruit of a collaborative project between the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance, Offaly Older Persons Network, LOETB

and Offaly Local Development Company. Copies of the book are available to borrow from all Offaly Library branches.

## Seachtain Na Gaeilge – 1<sup>st</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> March

Our larger branches will offer a dedicated ‘Irish Corner’ or ‘Cúna Gaeilge’ which will provide an opportunity and a space for patrons to speak Irish with each other. Staff volunteers will wear a badge indicating that they can offer help in Irish. Our Irish language stock collections will also be on display. Why not visit our eLanguage Learning Platform [www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Libraries/Digital-Library/eLanguages/eLanguages.html](http://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Libraries/Digital-Library/eLanguages/eLanguages.html) to improve your Irish language skills and celebrate Seachtain Na Gaeilge 2022 with Offaly Libraries!



Stories told through Irish will be posted to our social media channels and library staff will also be offering Zoom Story sessions through Irish to local Primary schools. For local Secondary schools, we have arranged a Tráth na gCeist quiz and a secondary Tráth na gCeist will be hosted on MyQuiz.org for members of the public to take part in.



## STEAM

Offaly Libraries' School Steam programme for 2022 will highlight innovation in Engineering, Technology and Biodiversity. The



programme will include workshops in the Science of Harry Potter, a virtual visit to Dublin Zoo, the Offaly Space Connection, 3D printer workshops, wildlife of Offaly and even rocket building.



**Engineers Week** will take place from March 5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>

books on topics including starting school, friendship and being comfortable in yourself. Each ELC will receive a friendship themed book which ties in with the overall theme.

## 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 our Library Newsletter and through following our social media channels. Currently we have **1,304 subscribers** to the newsletter. The link to subscribe to our newsletter is here; [Offaly Libraries Newsletter](#).

## 5 Little Library Initiative at Offaly Libraries



Offaly Libraries were delighted to have supported two very successful phases rolled out in 2021 which saw over 170 bags collected by 58 ELCs and After-School Services in the County.

Round 3 is due to begin in March and in support of the transition from preschool to school, children due to begin primary school in September will be invited to collect a Little Library Bag from their local libraries. These bags will contain three



## TOURISM

The hospitality and tourism sector from all over Offaly recently gathered for a free online Tourism webinar 'Rebuilding together for the Future'. Organised by Offaly County Council, in association with Offaly Tourism Marketing (CLG), the free business-to-business event provided tourism stakeholders with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with what is happening within the tourism industry and be fully informed on the plans for County Offaly.

The event featured special guest speakers from the industry, including Jarlath O'Dwyer of Burren Ecotourism and Pól Ó Conghaile Irish Independent Travel Editor. On a local level, the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council, Anna Marie Delaney and the Tourism Officer Olive Farrelly also provided information on Offaly's tourism network, an update on the marketing achievements to date and future plans.

Fáilte Ireland has announced the expansion of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands to include all of counties Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly and an additional part of Tipperary, parts of

which were previously covered by the Ireland's Ancient East regional tourism brand.

The announcement was made at Fáilte Ireland's 'From Survival to Recovery' industry event at The Convention Centre Dublin, which was attended by over 800 representatives from the tourism and hospitality industry.

Making the announcement, Paddy Mathews, Head of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands at Fáilte Ireland, said: "Today's expansion of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand to include Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly and part of Tipperary will allow us to further raise awareness of this region domestically and internationally. The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand is centred around Ireland's natural rural beauty, relaxation, and untouched heritage and outdoor activities which each of these counties boast in abundance. We look forward to working with industry stakeholders, strategic partners, Members of the Oireachtas and the Local Authorities as we develop this beautiful region as one of the leading regenerative tourism destinations in Europe, with nature and communities at its heart."

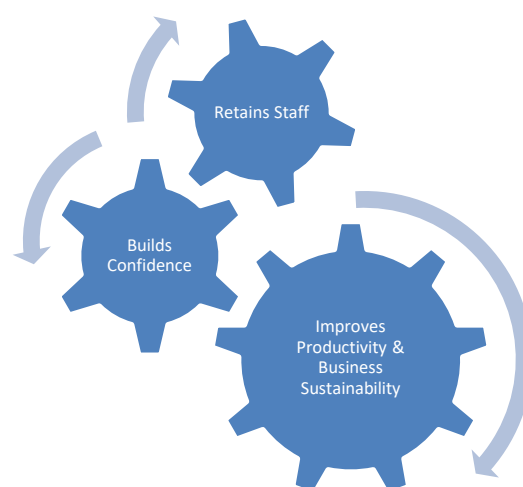
Ireland's Hidden Heartlands was launched by Fáilte Ireland in 2018 and has been successful in growing tourism in the region. The expanded footprint for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands to include Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly and part of Tipperary will give visitors a more cohesive visitor experience in the area and will strengthen the overall tourism offering.

#### LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

##### Focus on Enterprise Training & Development

LEO Offaly continues to design and deliver enterprise training programmes that are practical and informative. The training programmes are heavily subsidised and are delivered by business owners, for business owners.

##### Some benefits of Enterprise Training



##### Grow Your Own Business Course

LEO Offaly's new **Grow Your Own Business** Course commenced in January with 11 participating Offaly businesses. This programme is designed specifically for established business to enable the business owner to analyse current practices and strategically plan for future business success. The trainers have an extensive knowledge of a wide range of business sectors and they have tailored the delivery of each training session to the needs of the participants, ensuring each person gains the maximum benefit from the programme. They also provide mentoring on a one to one basis with the clients applying their business skills and experience in a holistic manner to provide insightful and useful recommendations.

### Upcoming Courses and Initiatives

For details on our upcoming training courses, please click on the link below

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Offaly/>

### Green For Micro Scheme

Rising energy costs are a concern for all businesses. The free Green For Micro scheme helps business owners understand energy usage in their business and what they can do to reduce consumption and cost.

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Offaly/Financial-Supports/Green-for-Micro/>

### Economic Development

The Junction Business Innovation Centre at 19H Axis Business Park has been redesigned and refurbished to enhance members' experience by improving facilities there, while also increasing capacity. The layout on the 1st floor was reimagined to overcome some of the limitations of the original design.

A break-out space, a meeting room, and privacy booths were created, along with a new office. The original open-plan office with dedicated and hot desks has been moved into what was a large, underused meeting room which could only be accessed by walking through the shared office disturbing members. The new layout reduces the need for others to enter the shared office creating a more productive and safer working environment.

All of 19H was repainted. There is now a bright cheerful colour scheme throughout using colours from The Junctions' logo. The new floor arrangement in 19H has created additional capacity. There are 5 extra desks available in the shared office and a new 3 desk office. The project was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, under the Connected Hubs scheme. The project received support funding from Offaly

County Council. Many thanks to Mary Hensey, Business Development Manager in The Junction for all of her work on this project.



### Local Enterprise Week

Staff throughout the network of 31 LEO Offices are preparing for Local Enterprise Week which will take place between Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March and Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> March. In addition to local Offaly events, there will be a number of National Spotlight events. These spotlight events will be online, free and open to businesses throughout the County and Country.

DATE	TIME	EVENT
<b>Mon 07/03</b>	09.30 - 11.00	Driving growth through digitizing your business
	Afternoon	Food Trends (featuring Bord Bia)
	18.30 - 20.30	Retail event
<b>Tue 08/03</b>	10.00-12.00	Internationalising your business: Developing export opportunities in a digital age.
	14.00-16.00	Growing Lean and LEAN Digisation within your Business

<b>Wed 09/03</b>	09.00-11.00	Green & Sustainability event for small businesses featuring Green4Micro
	11.00-13.00	Agile Ambition - Funding for Innovation
	14.00-16.30	IP event - EEN
<b>Thur 10/03</b>	09.30 - 12.30	Futureproofing your small business using smart tools
	Afternoon	Social Media Mash-up
<b>Fri 11/03</b>	11.00 - 13.00	Boost your business online: How to stand out from the crowd
	14.00-16.00	Raising Finance for your business (featuring LEO, EI, MFI, SBCI, +)

*Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive*

**Revenue Account Grant Income & Payroll Summary to 31st January 2022**

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL	Full Yr Budget 2022 €m	Preliminary Value to January 2022 €m	% Year To Date
Payroll costs	29.81	1.90	6.4%
Grants and Subsidies Income	37.98	0.67	1.8%

**OCC to 31st January 2022**

	<u>Rates</u> €m	<u>Rents</u> €m	<u>Loans</u> €m
Opening Balance Jan 1, 2022	3.14	0.52	0.125
Net Invoices & Adjustments, waivers	0.00	0.77	0.047
2022 Cash Collected to end of January	0.33	0.61	0.047
Closing Balance January 31st , 2022	2.81	0.68	0.125

**2021 Cash collected to January 31st**

	0.35	0.54	0.05
	***		
% Collection at this point in 2021	95%	114%	100%

\*\*\* Collections impacted in 2021 and 2022 by waiver uncertainty and effect of lockdowns

**Bank Overdraft to 31st January 2022**

Number of days Overdrawn in Bank year to date	4	1%
Bank Interest and non-conforming charges to January 31st 2022 YTD	(Estimate)	€6,000
Bank Administration and transactional charges to January 31st 2022 YTD	(Estimate)	€9,000