

Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council

ANNUAL REPORT **2023**

Your Council for **Your** Community





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Introduction

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Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council





Foreword



Paula Butterly
Cathaoirleach

It has been my greatest privilege to serve as Cathaoirleach of Louth County Council during 2023, and an honour to see first-hand the incredible contribution of our citizens who help communities across the county grow and flourish.

Representing Louth as 'First Citizen' at many events over the second half of 2023 has been a particular source of pride for me, as it has been a time of great progress, when we have witnessed the county at its best.

The strides made in improving our towns and villages in 2023, through key projects, has been especially welcome, as many of these will improve the everyday lives of people living and working in Louth. It was fantastic to see projects such as the new Ardee Educate Together National School get underway, and the progress in developing the Port Access Northern Cross Route in Drogheda continue.

Regeneration projects in mid Louth towns Dunleer and Clogherhead, and along the border in Omeath, are advancing, work which will improve the connectivity between the rural and urban parts of our county.

I was delighted to attend the launch of many initiatives that will be of real, tangible benefit to our society, including the mental health wellbeing ambassador programme, the Driving Equality for Women in Louth report, and the roll out of environmentally significant schemes such as the fund for Community Climate Action initiatives in Louth.

There have been many opportunities to celebrate, whether it was the Louth in Bloom awards, the illumination of Drogheda at the Lú Festival of Light, or the IPB Pride of Place awards.

I welcome the diversity and inclusion which has emerged, with the selection of myself as Cathaoirleach and Cllr Andrea McKeivitt as Leas-Cathaoirleach in June 2023 marking the second time two women have held the top posts on Louth County Council. It was wonderful to see our female colleagues also taking a lead role across the Municipal Districts.

I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their support during my time as Cathaoirleach this year and pay tribute to them for their dedication and tireless work on behalf of the people of Louth. I am proud that we have worked together to overcome the challenges and put our best foot forward to make our county the very best it can be for all.

I would also like to thank Chief Executive Joan Martin, the executive team and all of the staff of Louth County Council for their work and commitment to the people of Louth. My time as Cathaoirleach has been very rewarding, and I look forward to continuing to play my part in addressing the challenges facing the county.

I welcome the publication of the Louth County Council Annual Report 2023, which illustrates the breadth of work carried out by the local authority over the last year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Butterly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Overview



Joan Martin
Chief Executive

As Chief Executive, Louth County Council's Annual Report is an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges of the last twelve months and to look back on what has been an exceptionally busy year in Louth.

Undoubtedly the most significant event for the county was the visit by US President Joe Biden in April 2023, putting Louth on the map with unrivalled global recognition. Louth County Council were immensely proud to play a key role in a unique collaboration with state bodies and government departments in ensuring the visit by the second sitting American President to Louth was such a phenomenal success.

As a local authority we have advanced a series of major projects, a number of which broke ground in 2023, after many years, and in some cases decades, in planning, including the Port Access Northern Cross Route in Drogheda, and the Mount Avenue Link Road in Dundalk. Both schemes are hugely important to the county as they have opened up areas of land in Louth's two largest towns for much needed housing projects.

The Drogheda Westgate and St. Laurence's Plaza projects have also taken a significant step forward over the last year. After extensive work by Louth County Council, in consultation with stakeholders, a planning application was lodged with An Bord

Pleanála at the end of 2023, and we look forward to seeing advances made in the coming months and years.

In Dundalk, the St. Nicholas Quarter regeneration scheme has been a priority for the local authority for many years. Following on from the fantastic redevelopment of Market Square and Clanbrassil Street, it will further enhance the town centre with a streamlined streetscape.

Across mid-Louth there are number of projects which made headway in 2023, including the Town Centre First schemes in Dunleer and Clogherhead, and the flagship Project Ardee 2040.

Louth County Council is proud to be a lead partner on the Narrow Water Bridge project at Carlingford Lough, and we are delighted to see major advances during 2023 in delivering this historic cross border infrastructure.

County Louth has been given very ambitious social housing targets under the government's Housing For All strategy. Throughout last year, we have worked to provide new homes using every method available to us, including Louth County Council own build, Turnkeys, Part V units and houses from Approved Housing Bodies.

A number of housing projects got underway across the county last year, with others advancing towards completion, and as already highlighted, many of the larger schemes are linked to major infrastructural projects which are transforming our towns and villages.

In 2023 we continued to offer assistance to those fleeing war from Ukraine, and provided resources to assist those seeking sanctuary. Our Homeless Action Team have been actively involved with those facing homelessness and throughout the year engaged with rough sleepers, whilst also coordinating with other state bodies on the broad range of issues affecting people who are experiencing homelessness.

Louth County Council has been at the heart of many initiatives which provide support for our citizens. In the last year we have led and supported a range of projects aimed at improving the everyday lives of people who live in and visit Louth.

Vital community services such as our public libraries continue to expand and develop. We welcomed the award of Library of Sanctuary status to Louth Library Service in 2023, with Louth County Council continuing to strengthen and support communities by providing dynamic, inclusive and responsive library services.

Our very busy community section continued to lead and launch a significant number of programmes which benefit people from every demographic across the county. These included Age Friendly Ireland, Healthy Louth, Louth PPN, amongst many others.

In Louth, we treasure our outdoor spaces, and are fortunate to have many public parks, stunning beaches and woodland areas for people to explore and enjoy all year round. In 2023, our efforts to maintain these beautiful areas were rewarded with An Taisce Green Flag awards, which were retained at four parks and the Blue Flag awards, once again awarded to beaches at Clogherhead, Port and Templetown, and the Green Coast award for 2023 for the beach at Seapoint, Termonfeckin.

As a local authority, we are tasked with dealing with many of the impacts of climate change on County Louth. 2023 proved a challenging year. But through the response of our staff and services during a number of severe storms, and initiatives implemented to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including the reduction of energy use across our buildings, we continued the vital work to protect and improve our environment.

This year also proved an important one in preparations for the Brigid1500 celebrations. It was with great personal pride that we launched the programme for the 'Louth Birthplace of Brigid' festival in October, with a wide range of events and initiatives unveiled to honour the life and legacy of Brigid, who remains inextricably linked to our county.

Louth County Council were delighted to play a key role in the fantastic Lú Festival of Light once again this year, with the festival proving a huge success, and a unique addition to Drogheda's Arts and Cultural calendar of events.

Although I have endeavoured to explore some of the many developments which shaped 2023 in Louth, I hope you will take time to read through the Annual Report for a more detailed look at the extensive range of work which has been carried out, and the many services which the council provides to the citizens of Louth.

On a personal note, I wish to convey my sincere thanks to all of our staff, who through their dedication, skill and experience continue to make a difference every day to the work of Louth County Council.

May I take this opportunity to present the Louth County Council Annual Report 2023.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.





2023
AT A GLANCE



158,675
INTERACTIONS
WITH CUSTOMERS

82,892 PHONE CALLS ANSWERED
AVERAGE OF 336 CALLS PER DAY



295,875 LIBRARY
ITEMS ISSUED
235,341
LIBRARY VISITS
17,062
LOUTH LIBRARY MEMBERS

ENERGY
EFFICIENCY
IMPROVED BY
48%



EQUAL TO 308,001 MILES
DRIVEN IN AN AVERAGE
FAMILY CAR

319 PRE-PLANNING,
1,044 PLANNING
APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

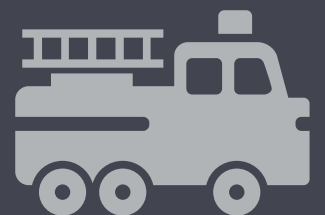


179 WARNING
LETTERS ISSUED
ON UNAUTHORISED
DEVELOPMENT



46
DANGEROUS
STRUCTURE
FILES OPENED

1,200 FIRE &
EMERGENCY SERVICES
INCIDENTS
RESPONDED TO



96% OF DOGS
RECLAIMED OR
RE-HOMED



365
NEW HOMES DELIVERED

427
HOMES ALLOCATED



2,930
HAP
TENANCIES
SUPPORTED



5,408
HOME REPAIRS
CARRIED OUT

543 WATER
QUALITY
INSPECTIONS
COMPLETE



124 RIVER
SAMPLES AND
120 BATHING
WATER SAMPLES
TAKEN



423 PLANNING
INSPECTIONS
COMPLETE

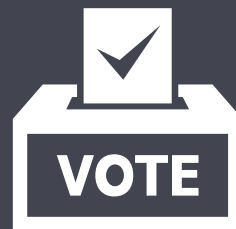


REACCREDITED WITH
ISO 50001
ENERGY MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM FOR 2024-2026



LEO LOUTH HOSTED 47 BUSINESS,
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMES WITH 970 PARTICIPANTS

OVER **70,000KMS**
OF ROADWAY CLEANSED
PER ANNUM



94,964
REGISTERED
ELECTORS



1170
STUDENTS
FROM 17
SECOND LEVEL
SCHOOLS
TOOK PART IN
THE STUDENT
ENTERPRISE
PROGRAMME

WATER SUPPLIED
TO **49,498**
HOMES AND
BUSINESSES



SPRING
PLANTING
150,000 BULBS OF
VARIOUS SPECIES
PLANTED



Electoral Areas of County Louth

County Louth is divided into the 3 municipal districts of Drogheda, Ardee and Dundalk. For electoral purposes the County is made up of 5 electoral areas: Dundalk-Carlingford, Dundalk South, Drogheda Urban, Drogheda Rural and Ardee.

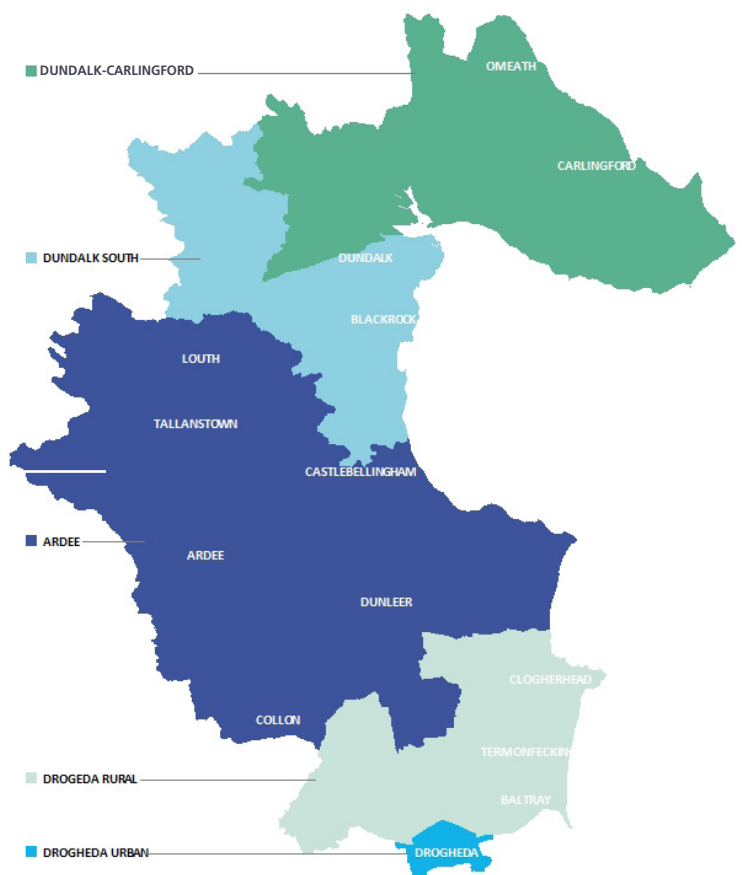
REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Rolling Register of Electors continued to be continuously updated during 2023. The Register of Electors, effective on 18th October 2023, showed a total voting population of **94,927** for County Louth.

Presidential Electors	88,498
Dáil Electors	89,517
European Electors	89,183
Potential European Electors	2,578
Local Electors	94,927

The Franchise Section of Louth County Council continued to work on a 'data cleanse' of the Register of Electors and in 2023 the section dealt with various issues including duplicate electors, duplicate eircodes, electors with no dates of birth and invalid eircodes. Louth County Council issued letters to electors to confirm their details, this helps to ensure the accuracy of the electoral register, which also includes ensuring electors are voting at the correct polling station.

The introduction of PPSNs also contributes to greater accuracy, enabling identity data to be cross-checked.



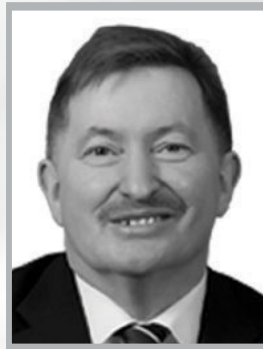
Voters are urged to check the register at www.checktheregister.ie to ensure their details are correct and to update their date of both, eircode and PPSN, where necessary.

Total electorate	94964	
Total electorate with DOB Populated	93023	97.95%
Total electorate with Eircode populated	90225	95%
Total electorate with email address populated	3227	3.39%
Total electorate with contact number populated	2849	3%
Total electorate with DOB and Eircode populated	88796	93.5%
Total electorate with PPSN	3634	3.8%

**ELECTED MEMBERS:
COMHAIRLE CONTAE LÚ / LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL****Ardee Electoral Area - 6 Members**

JOHN SHERIDAN
Fianna Fáil

e: john.sheridan@louthcoco.ie



PEARSE McGEOUGH
Sinn Féin

e: pearse.mcgeough@louthcoco.ie



PAULA BUTTERLY
Fine Gael

e: paula.butterly@louthcoco.ie



DOLORES MINOGUE
Fine Gael

e: dolores.minogue@louthcoco.ie



JIM TENANTY
Non Party

e: jim.tenanty@louthcoco.ie



BERNIE CONLON
Non Party

e: bernie.conlon@louthcoco.ie

Drogheda Rural Electoral Area - 4 Members



EILEEN TULLY
Fine Gael

e: eileen.tully@louthcoco.ie



MICHELLE HALL
Labour

e: michelle.hall@louthcoco.ie



TOM CUNNINGHAM
Sinn Féin

e: tom.cunningham@louthcoco.ie



DECLAN POWER
Non Party

e: declan.power@louthcoco.ie

Drogheda Urban Electoral Area - 6 Members



JOANNA BYRNE
Sinn Féin

e: joanna.byrne@louthcoco.ie



PIO SMITH
The Labour Party

e: pio.smith@louthcoco.ie



EMMA CUTLIP
The Labour Party

e: emma.cutlip@louthcoco.ie



KEVIN CALLAN
Non Party

e: kevin.callan@louthcoco.ie



JAMES BYRNE
Fianna Fáil

e: james.byrne@louthcoco.ie



PADDY McQUILLAN
Non Party

e: paddy.mcquillan@louthcoco.ie

Dundalk - Carlingford Electoral Area - 6 Members



EDEL CORRIGAN
Sinn Féin

e: edel.corrigan@louthcoco.ie



SEÁN KELLY
Fianna Fáil

e: sean.kelly@louthcoco.ie



CONOR KEELAN
Fianna Fáil

e: conor.keelan@louthcoco.ie



JOHN REILLY
Fine Gael

e: john.reilly@louthcoco.ie



ANDREA McKEVITT
Fianna Fáil

e: andrea.mckevitt@louthcoco.ie



ANTÓIN WATTERS
Sinn Féin

e: antoin.watters@louthcoco.ie

Dundalk South Electoral Area - 7 Members



MARIANNE BUTLER
Green Party/Comhaontas Glas

e: marianne.butler@louthcoco.ie



EMMA COFFEY
Fianna Fáil

e: emma.coffey@louthcoco.ie



ROBERT NASH
Fine Gael

e: robert.nash@louthcoco.ie



KEVIN MEENAN
Sinn Féin

e: kevin.meenan@louthcoco.ie



LIAM REILLY
Fianna Fáil

e: liam.reilly@louthcoco.ie



TOMÁS SHARKEY
Sinn Féin

e: tomas.sharkey@louthcoco.ie



MAEVE YORE
Non Party

e: maeve.yore@louthcoco.ie

Louth County Council wished the following two members who resigned in 2023 well, and thanked them for their service:



Maria Doyle,
Dundalk South



Fiachra MacRaghnaill,
Dundalk Urban

A large white number '2' is centered on a yellow background. To the right, a photograph shows a coastal town with houses and a boat on the water, with green hills in the background under a cloudy sky.

2

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Corporate Services provides support service to councillors and senior management, along with general services to members of the public. It is responsible for the delivery of customer services, the administration of council meetings, the compilation of the Register of Electors, preparing the Council's annual report, Corporate Estate management, health and safety, data protection and handling Freedom of Information requests.

The Community Section within Organisational Development promotes public participation with Louth County Council, supports pride of place and community efforts, assisting local groups to access grant funding for environmental, cultural and town enhancement, and pushing the community led tidy town and village ethos with a heavy focus on ensuring everyone in the community is included.



The Human Resources Section strives to ensure Louth County Council is an equal opportunity and accessible employer, promoting staff welfare and safe work practices throughout.

The Climate and Waste Section address all matters in relation to our Climate Challenges and regulating all matters in relation to waste. This also includes water quality and the Litter Function.

Our Vets Sections deals with all matters in relation to Dog and Horse Control and also our contracted functions with regards to Food Safety as provided in an agreement with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

Council Meetings 2023

A total of 14 Full Council meetings were held in 2023, which included a scheduled monthly meeting on the third Monday of each month, an annual meeting in June and a statutory budget meeting. There were no meetings held in August. A special council meeting was called for the 2nd June 2023 to co-opt two new Members into the Council, Cllr Robert Nash who replaced Cllr Maria Doyle, and Cllr Emma Cutlip who replaced Cllr Fiachra MacRaghnaill.

Each of the Municipal Districts held 11 statutory monthly meetings, plus 1 annual meeting and 1 budget meeting. On top of this Drogheda Borough District held 1 special online meeting.

Louth County Council Chairperson/Cathaoirleach - **Cllr Paula Butterly**

Municipal District of Dundalk Chairperson/Cathaoirleach - **Cllr Sean Kelly**

Mayor of Drogheda and Borough District of Drogheda Chairperson/ Cathaoirleach - **Cllr Eileen Tully**

Municipal District of Ardee Chairperson/Cathaoirleach - **Cllr Dolores Minogue**

Meetings of Louth County Council in 2023

Meetings of Louth County Council in 2023	
Monthly Meetings	11
Annual Meetings	1
Budget Meetings	1
Special Meetings	1
Corporate Policy Group (CPG)	11
Municipal District Meetings	
Borough District of Drogheda	11
Municipal District of Ardee	11
Municipal District of Dundalk	11
Municipal District Budget Meetings	3
Municipal District Annual Meetings	3
Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)	
SPC - Housing	4
SPC - Economic Development & Enterprise	4
SPC - Planning & Support Infrastructure	4
SPC - Climate Action & Energy	5
SPC - Community, Quality of Life, & Creativity	4
Joint Policing Committees/Local Policing Forum (LPF)	
JPC Steering Group	2
LPF - Dundalk	4 including a public meeting
LPF - Drogheda	4 including a public meeting
LPF - Ardee	4 including a public meeting
Audit Committee	6

Council Meetings 2023

SPC ACTIVITIES 2023

There were 4 meetings of the Community & Quality of Life & Creativity Strategic Policy Committee in 2023. Agenda items included the Creative Ireland strategy (2023-2027), insights from “Dundalk Outcomers” regarding their services and a discourse by Ben Malone on the Local Authority Waters Programme. Additionally, SPC member Kayleigh Mulligan shared a presentation on the invaluable role of volunteerism in communities, complemented by inputs from Louth Comhairle Na nÓg. Wrapping up the year, Amanda Brannigan presented on “The Library is the Place,” explaining the National Public Library Strategy for 2023-2027.

There were 4 meetings of the Housing SPC held in 2023. Agenda items included Affordable Dwelling Purchase Scheme, Capital Delivery Targets, Accelerated Delivery Programme, Tenant in Situ Scheme, Housing Delivery Action Plan, Allocation Scheme Review and Housing For All Update.

There were 4 meetings of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC held in 2023 together with a number of additional meetings to contribute to and approve the proposed Draft Local Economic and Community Plan. Agenda items included: review of the Shop Front Grant scheme, the Lú Festival of Light and contribution to a full ‘Nationwide’ programme about the Sea Louth Scenic Sea Food Trail on RTE, updates on Business Supports available from the Local Enterprise Office and Economic Development. Updates were also given on the Streetscape Enhancement Scheme in Omeath which was completed over the course of 2023. There was also a presentation from the newly appointed Night Time Economy Advisor for Drogheda.

There were four meetings of the Planning & Support Infrastructure SPC held in 2023. Agenda items included updates on the status of the Local Area Plans for both Dundalk and Drogheda, presentation on Bike Share Scheme and developing a working paper on the review of the Architectural Conservation Areas and Protected Structures within the County.

There were 5 meetings of the Climate Action & Energy SPC held in 2023. Agenda items included Louth County Council Climate Action Plan, Community Gardens and Allotments, Community Climate Action Fund and Review of the SPC Workplan.

A number of guest speakers presented at meetings during the year - Una Fitzgerald, Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Planning Office gave a presentation on the Draft National Waste Management Plan at the May meeting.

As part of the SPC Workplan review, Meabh O’Hagan from Teagasc attended at the September meeting and gave a presentation on the Signpost Advisory Programme outlining how this programme is a collaborative partnership of farmers, industry and state agencies working together for climate action. The Climate Action Plan was discussed in detail at the November meeting and was subsequently put forward for adoption at the full Council meeting in Feb 2024.



158,675 INTERACTIONS
WITH CUSTOMERS INCLUDING
E-MAILS, CALLS AND PUBLIC
COUNTER QUERIES



7,811 E-MAILS ANSWERED,
AN AVERAGE OF
72 PER DAY



ASSISTED **57,972**
CUSTOMERS
AT THE PUBLIC COUNTER



82,892 PHONE CALLS WERE ANSWERED,
AN AVERAGE OF
336 CALLS PER DAY

Civic Awards and Events

The Ardee Civic awards, Dundalk Civic Awards and Drogheda Mayoral awards are awarded annually in recognition of excellent contributions of individuals and organisations to the community in County Louth. Award recipients are nominated by a local representative for their dedication, achievements and contributions to community and sporting life at local, national, and international levels.

Three Annual Civic Award ceremonies took place in 2023. The Borough District of Drogheda, Mayoral Awards 2023, were presented, by Mayor Michelle

Hall in the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda. Cllr Dolores Minogue, Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District of Ardee presented the Ardee Civic Awards in Ardee Civic Offices, and Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District of Dundalk Cllr Kevin Meenan presented the Dundalk Civic Awards in the foyer of County Hall, Dundalk.

Recipients of awards are listed on our website https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/louth_county_council/civic-awards/



Ardee Civic Awards



Drogheda Mayoral Awards



Dundalk MD Awards

Louth County Council also contributed to and assisted with other ceremonies throughout the year including wreath laying at the Cenotaph on 11th November 2023 and an annual memorial for Halpin & Moran which took place on 13th February 2023.



Cenotaph

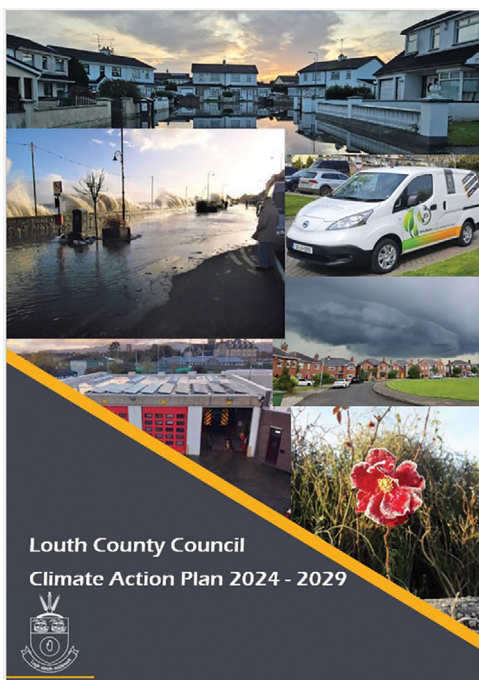
A breakdown of costs expended by Louth County Council for civic awards is below:

Events 2023	Cost
Ardee Civic Awards	€718.90
Dundalk Civic Awards	€1,216.40
Halpin Moran Memorial	€200.00
Drogheda Mayoral Awards	€1,602.70
Remembrance Sunday Memorial	€802.48
Total	€4,540.48

Climate Action

LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The main focus of the Climate Action Team throughout 2023 was the preparation of a climate action plan for Louth. In February 2023, the Minister for The Environment, Climate and Communications instructed all Local Authorities in Ireland to commence drafting a climate action plan. Over the course of the year the Climate Action team, following the ministerial guidelines, prepared a set of documents to inform the plan writing process. These included a Base Line Emissions inventory for county Louth and a climate risk assessment. Before starting to write the plan, a Pre-Draft public consultation was held. A draft plan was produced, and this then went through a statutory public consultation process between 22nd of November and the 20th of December. As part of this consultation, an information event was held in the evening time in each of the libraries across the county. A total of 26 submissions were received across the consultation period.



Climate Action: LCC Climate Action Plan Cover



Climate Action: Fiona Lennon, Community Climate Action officer, Rory Sheehan, Climate Action Coordinator. Public information event in Drogheda Library for the Climate Action public consultation

EU MISSION, ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

During 2023, Louth County Council continued to engage with the EU Mission, adaptation to Climate Change. A number of online training events were attended by the Climate Action Staff in Louth County Council, including the Mission launch event and the annual mission forum. The Climate Action Team applied for and were awarded a technical assistance package, delivered by the EU government. This assistance is scheduled to start in Spring 2024.

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL CLIMATE ADAPTATION STRATEGY

The final report to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communication against the targets within the Louth County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy was completed. The strategy formally concluded in 2023 and is scheduled to be replaced by the upcoming Louth Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION FUND

During 2023, Louth County Council commenced work on delivering the community climate fund. LCC were awarded €604,000 to distribute to communities across the county for direct climate action projects. Work on this began with the recruitment of a Community Climate Action Officer. A series of online information events around each theme in the fund was run in June to help get communities ready to submit an application. The community climate action officer visited and met with a number of community groups either online or in-person to discuss potential projects. Expressions of interest opened in December with the funding expected to be distributed later in 2024.



Fiona Lennon, Community Climate Action Officer, Cllr Paula Butterly, Cathaoirleach of Louth County Council, Joe McGuinness, Director of Organisational Development. Launch of the Community Climate Action Fund

BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

The Climate Action Team at Louth County Council welcomed the addition of a new member and a new role into the local authority in the form of a biodiversity officer. They commenced work in October. The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme is delivered in Partnership with the Heritage Council.



Virginia Teehan, Chief Executive Officer, Heritage Council, Minister Helen Hanratty the LCC Biodiversity Officer, Brendan McSherry the LCC Heritage Officer, Dr Martina Moloney, Chairperson, Heritage Council Board. Biodiversity Officers training event

CLIMATE OUTREACH

The Climate Action Team and the Library Team ran a children's artwork competition to highlight the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This was open to school kids across the county.

Members of the Climate and Biodiversity team carried out public engagement events during the Louth Science Festival.



Helen Hanratty, Biodiversity Officer, Fiona Lennon, Community Climate Action Officer. Louth Science Festival in Ardee

Energy & Facilities



**ENERGY
EFFICIENCY
IMPROVED BY
48%**

ENERGY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Louth County Council are committed to fulfil their legal obligations and strive to lead by exemplar. Compared to its energy efficiency baseline, **Louth County Council has reduced its energy use by almost 46%, according to the "SEAI's Annual Report 2023 on Public Sector Energy Performance"**. That is the most recent such report by SEAI.

Louth County Council uses ISO 50001 as the benchmark for improving its energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. ISO 50001 is an International Standard to establish systems and processes necessary to continually improve energy

performance (including energy efficiency and consumption). The implementation of this standard is a driver for Louth County Council to ensure reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, energy cost, and other related environmental impacts, through systematic management of energy.

Louth County Council was previously certified under ISO 50001: 2018 for the period 2021 – Feb. 2023. The Council was successful in retaining certification of its Energy Management System (EnMS) in 2023, for another 3-year cycle (2024 – 2026). This is the third such cycle of certification by Louth County Council.

Nine Significant Energy Users (SEUs) are responsible for some 70% of the Council's energy use (the end of 2022). Previously four SEUs used that portion of energy, so energy use by those users has reduced and nine energy users are now required for the same 70%. The Council's Significant Energy Users are Public Lights, County Hall, Dundalk Town Hall, Council Transport Fleet, Dundalk Fire Station, and Drogheda Fire Station, County Library, County Museum and County Archives Buildings.



Graphic shows Increasing Energy Efficiency at Dundalk Town Hall

REDUCING ENERGY USE & PROMOTING ENERGY AWARENESS

PARTNERSHIP WITH OPW FOR ITS OPTIMISING POWER AT WORK PROGRAMME

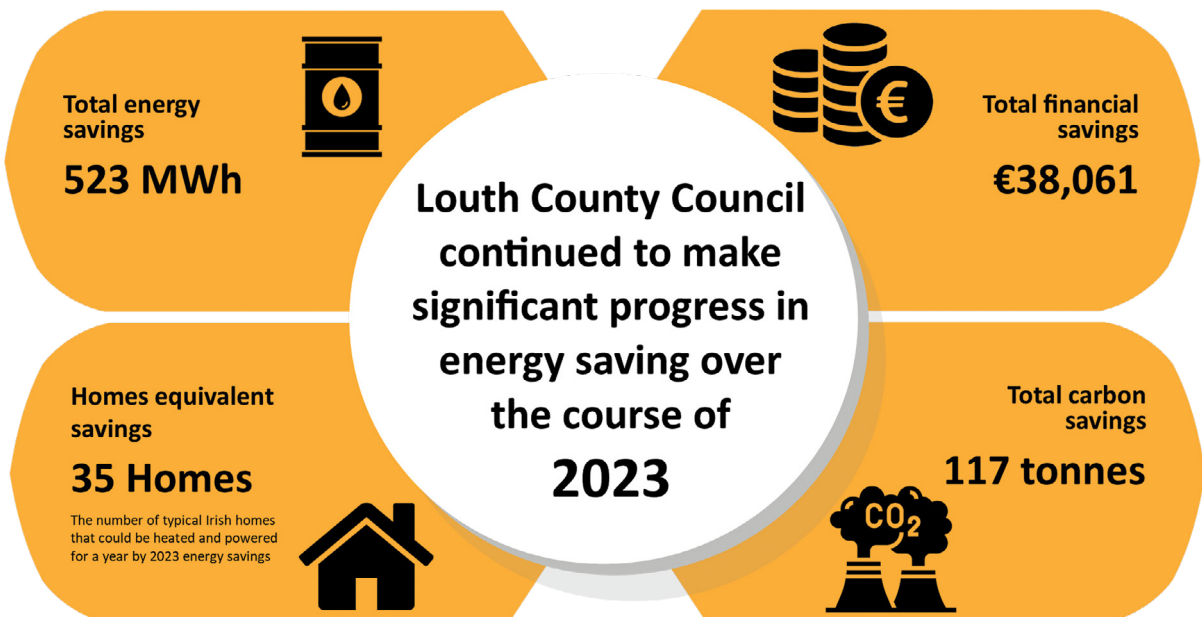
Louth County Council participated in OPW's Optimising Power at Work Programme again in 2023. That national programme is a successful behaviour change campaign for public buildings. Louth County Council participates with the inclusion of 2 buildings - Dundalk Town Hall and County Hall, to assist the Council to manage and improve energy use there.

Energy consumption at **Dundalk Town Hall** has **reduced by 40%**, and **Carbon Dioxide Emissions have reduced by 77 tonnes** (compared to the Benchmark year 2014). This has generated **financial savings of €24,388**.

County Hall became a participant in the Optimising Power @Work program back in 2016. Since then, the initiatives implemented have resulted in significant savings in energy, carbon emissions, and monetary expenses, showcasing the program's remarkable success within this building.



Graphic show Energy Savings at County Hall in 2023



Graphic Shows Combined Energy Savings in 2023 for Dundalk Town Hall and County Hall Buildings since joining the Optimising Power @Work programme

ENERGY AWARENESS - PROMOTION AND EVENTS

Louth County Council are leading the way in energy efficiency, as part of the Government's **Reduce Your Use** campaign.

During 2023, Louth County Council's Energy Team promoted regular energy saving actions for all council employees to take at work. Information was signposted, through an effective **poster campaign on energy saving ideas at home and in the office**. That supplements participation in OPW's behaviour change programme 'Optimising Power at Work' by the Council. In addition, the Council posted energy tips on social media during the year.

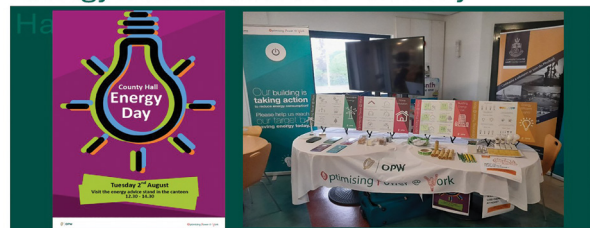


To share knowledge and encourage staff engagement in energy saving, the Council maintained an Energy Email Account. This was very active in 2023. 47 emails were sent to staff including relevant webinars recommendations, bank holiday weekend and Christmas energy shutdown campaign, monthly

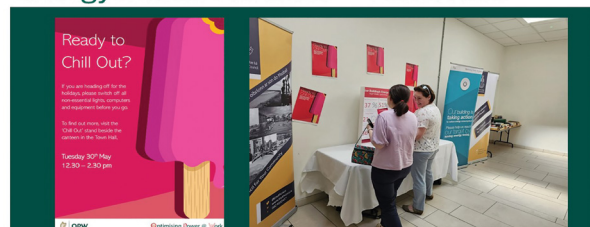
energy tips and energy saving information. The account was also used for suggestions from staff for improvements they think Louth County Council could take to save energy and 7 emails were received from staff in 2023.

Continual energy training remains essential for enabling staff to effectively spread the message about energy conservation. This year emphasis was placed on strong engagement with Building Management Systems (BMS). Complementing this, various all staff initiatives were implemented to promote energy awareness and efficiency, including Energy Awareness Days, Energy Clinics, the Spot the Dot – TRV campaign, and Chill Out Day. These activities collectively fostered a culture of energy conservation, empowering individuals to make informed decisions to reduce their carbon footprint and energy consumption, both at home and in the workplace.

Energy initiatives 2023 – County



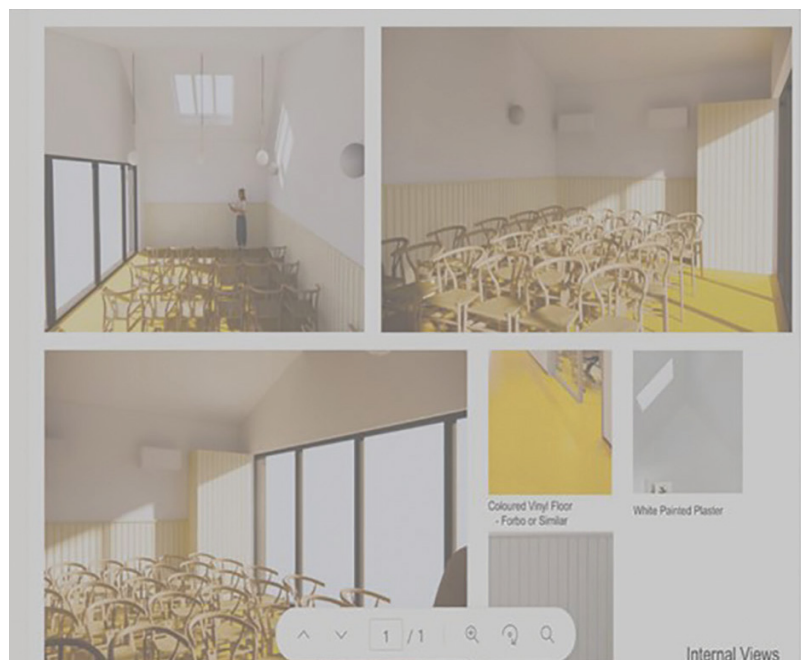
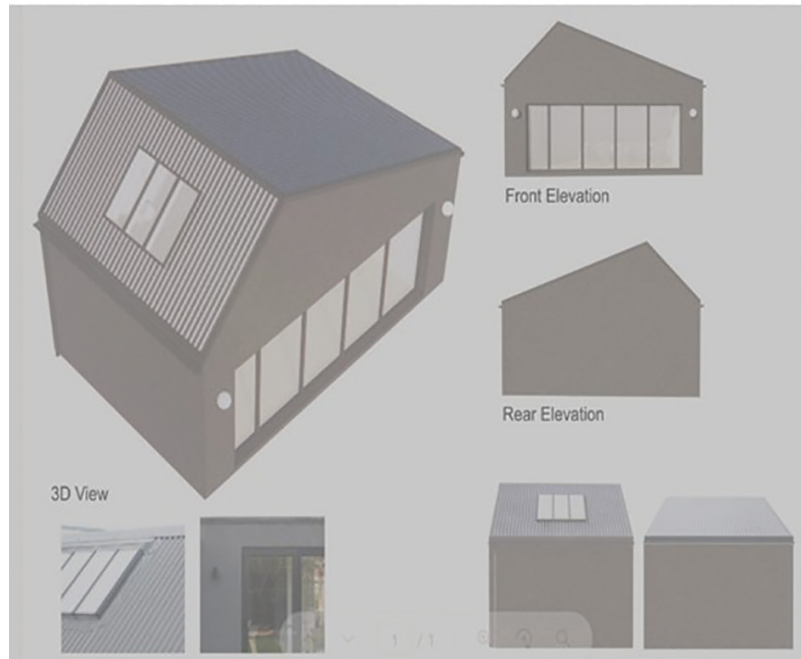
Energy initiatives 2023 – Town Hall



Employees attended individual energy clinics with experts with 10 minute tea time talks, to discuss their utility bills and receive customized advice on conserving energy at home and in the workplace, thereby reducing their carbon footprint, energy consumption, and related costs.

Varcities (H2020 - Funded) Project

Since September 2020, Louth City Council is a partner in the EU-funded project VARCITIES, which aims to implement visionary ideas and establish sustainable models for increasing the health and well-being of citizens in cities: children, young people, middle aged, and the elderly. This project is implemented by a consortium of 25 organisations, including 7 pilots, under the lead of the Technical University of Crete. Within the courtyard area of County Library/Museum Quarter in Dundalk, VARCITIES will support the implementation of a Pilot with three Visionary Solutions as part the regeneration of the area, aiming to create of a diverse, accessible, safe, inclusive and high-quality green area that will increase well-being and health and deliver a fair and equitable distribution of the associated benefits.



VS1: Dundalk Learning Pod; Creation of Outdoor Learning Pod between Dundalk Library & Museum Quarter to showcase the newest technologies and host shared functions



New Bike Stations and Sensors Bike-stations



Creation of Outdoor Learning Pod between Dundalk Library & Museum Quarter to showcase the newest technologies and host shared functions

DUNDALK PILOT CITY 2023

Sensors deployment in Dundalk September 2023

In the last days of Summer 2023, Louth County Council installed their VARCITES sensors across their pilot site in Dundalk. The purpose of these sensors is to provide real time data for a health and well being platform which is being created by our Varcities partner IES for the area. Having this platform will assist the Council in making better informed choices using real time data.

Sensors include:

- 1 LoRaWAN for the communication protocol and system architecture of the network and communication with the Health & Well-Being Platform
- People and bike counters strategically placed at the front and rear gates to the site along the side gable of the library and along the courtyard to try and capture numbers using the actual pilot site area
- 1 Air Quality Monitor measuring temperature, relative humidity, VOCs, Barometric pressure, CO2, Oxygen, Particulate matter, PM1, 2.5, 4, 10 and 1 Rain water monitor
- 1 Noise and Sensedge Stick to monitor noise in the area
- New software for the existing solar panels will enable the energy generated to be seen by the visitors, encouraging the use of sustainable energy solutions in the area.





CONSTRUCTION WORKS COMMENCED IN NOVEMBER

Following a Public Consultation Process and Planning Permission approval, contractors officially commenced work at Dundalk's pilot site in the first week of November 2023. Lots of off site works have been going on but the main structure associated with the learning pod is well under way, with works due to be completed in Mid 2024.

LOUTH SCIENCE FESTIVAL NOVEMBER 2023

Louth County Council, VARCITIES partner responsible for Dundalk's pilot site, organised a cultural activity as part of Louth Science Festival on 16th November. The event was held Dundalk Library, right by VARCITIES' pilot site. The pilot team presented the three Visionary Solutions and explain how they will contribute to increase health and well-being in the area. Our Technical partner Dartek from Malta, was also present to lead a demo of the GoNature Game, a VR experience of the pilot site. Students from Dun Dealgann, Ó Fiaich, Elected Representatives and the general public all came along and had their say on the development of the AR game being developed for our Library site, as part of the project. Feedback was wonderful and great fun was had by all.

FOLLOW VARCITIES and of Louth County Councils Progress at

- Website: <https://www.varcities.eu/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/VARCITIES>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/eu.varcities/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VARCITIES1>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/69730315/>
- A video presenting the project was released: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuF0nYgllTs>

GENCOMM INTERREG ENERGY STORAGE PROJECT GENCOMM INTERREG ENERGY STORAGE PROJECT - GENERATING ENERGY SECURE COMMUNITIES

Fair Street Drogheda Office Cupola Restoration

In 2023, the Council completed restoration of the Cupola at the Civic Fair Street, Drogheda. That included refurbishment of the weather vane which depicts symbols from the building's use as part of the Cornmarket of Drogheda.

The Fair Street building was designed and built as a corn exchange (as was Dundalk Town Hall). The weathervane incorporates various shapes reflecting this original function. At the top of the weathervane is the star and crescent - Crest of Drogheda, on top of a wheat sheaf, which stands on a plough. To one side of the wheat sheaf are, from the top, a sickle (for harvesting corn), a shovel, a spade, a hay fork and what is probably a corn flail.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage rates the building as being of national significance and describes it as a 'Detached multiple-bay single- and two-storey stone former market, dated 1796, court house addition c. 1850, now in use as offices.... The corn market served as the town's market place and was later altered by the insertion of the courthouse in the mid-nineteenth century. Drogheda Borough Corporation moved to the corn market in 1899.

The closing conference of the GenComm project, held at Belfast Met on May 31st, 2023, marked a momentous occasion in the collective effort to address energy sustainability challenges across Northeast Europe. At its core, GenComm stands as a testament to the transformative power of renewable hydrogen production and storage, with emphasis on remote communities in the region.

Louth County Council, as an esteemed associate partner, played a role in this endeavor and was honored to be invited with speaking opportunity at the conference. LCC's invaluable contributions have assisted in driving the project's success, underscoring our dedication to advancing sustainable energy solutions.

Through GenComm's collaborative spirit and visionary leadership, the significance of hydrogen as a sustainable energy source has been illuminated. With each update shared on the project's website, the world is invited to witness the profound impact of Louth County Council's involvement, shaping a future where energy production becomes a catalyst for economic growth and community empowerment.



Vets

FOOD SAFETY

Louth County Council Veterinary Section, under a Service Level Agreement with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, enforces food safety standards on one abattoir and fourteen meat processing plants under its supervision in the County.

In early 2023, one meat plant had its approval rescinded, and the business is now closed. The owner was successfully prosecuted in Dundalk Circuit Court on foot of counterfeit labels on 135 boxes of frozen meat, all of which was seized and destroyed by Louth County Council.

In July, a delegation from the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture, along with the FSAI, visited Martin Commins' abattoir in Ardee as part of a study tour, and were supported by the Louth County Council Veterinary team.

In November, an unapproved meat processing business was operating from a premises in Blackrock, County Louth, and was ordered to close with immediate effect by an authorised officer of Louth County Council under the FSAI Act, 1998.

ANIMAL CONTROL & WELFARE

The overall number of dogs entering the pound in 2023 was 313, an increase of just 7% from 2022 which reflected a national upward trend over the past number of years.

Another trend in recent years is the numbers of dogs surrendered to the pound by owners for various reasons, currently accounting for 42% of the dog intake, again indicating responsible dog ownership.

All dogs coming into the pound are wormed, vaccinated and assessed by our qualified staff. Approximately 50% of dogs coming into the pound were already micro-chipped, but any dog that is not is then chipped at the pound. Also encouraging is the overall reclaim/ re-home rate of 96%, with 24% of these dogs being reclaimed by their owners.

The Louth County Council Dog Pound Facebook page was launched in the spring of 2023 and has greatly enhanced the profile of the organisation and assisted in the rehoming process.

Dog licence sales were up 3% in 2023 to 7,011 with approximately 40% of these being purchased online.

195 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued in 2023 under the Control of Dogs Act 1986-1992 was similar to 2022 at 201.

Horse numbers remain low with 4 horses seized in 2023 compared to 3 in 2022.

ANIMAL CONTROL FLEET AND DIESEL CONSUMPTION

The fleet consists of 2 electric vans and 1 jeep, which is required for use with the horsebox on horse control activities. The diesel consumption for 4 vehicles in 2018 was approximately 2,800L per year. Now with only 1 diesel vehicle in operation the diesel consumption has reduced to less than 250L in 2023, resulting in a 91% reduction in diesel consumption since 2018.



Human Resources

2023 was another busy year for Human Resources. As has been the case for the past number of years, significant activity took place in the Recruitment to minimize vacancies and ensure positions are filled in a timely manner. To this end, 34 recruitment competitions were held during the year, resulting in 103 new staff members joined the organisation, and a further 56 existing members of staff being appointed to new positions in the Council.

A particular focus in 2023 was the wellbeing of our staff. To support this, a Staff Wellbeing Officer was appointed, a Staff Wellbeing committee was established, and numerous initiatives were put in place.

As has been the case in previous years, the Council again placed considerable emphasis on upskilling and developing existing employees. Work by our Training section continues to grow and a total of 177 training courses were provided in 2023, an increase of over 20% on the figure for 2022.

Applications for support through the Training and Assistance Programme grew again in 2023 with 38 staff commencing new formal education courses across a range of providers. The other work of HR such as Workforce Planning, payroll and employee support has also continued.

Competitions	34
New staff appointments (joiners)	103
Total staff appointments	159
Retirements/Resignations	75
No. of Training Courses Held	177
No. Of Training Days	1882
No. of Training and Assistance Applications Received	38

Community

MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC) IN 2023

Public Sector	
Louth County Council	Cllr Liam Reily
Louth County Council	Cllr Kevin Meenan
Louth County Council	Cllr Eileen Tully
Louth County Council	Cllr Dolores Minogue
Louth County Council Official	Joan Martin (Chairperson LCDC)
Louth County Council Official	Niamh Dennehy
Louth Meath ETB	Sadie Ward McDermott
DSP	Sharon Curran
HSE	Bridie Pepper
Private Sector	
Louth Leader Partnership	Ciarán Reid
Community & Voluntary Interests	Alison Quail
Community & Voluntary Interests	Jasmine Mathew
Louth Volunteer Centre	Olivia Conlon
Social Inclusion	Bernardine Quinn
Social Inclusion	Carol Murphy
Environment	Lisa Doyle
Farming	John Carroll
Chamber of Commerce Dundalk	Una McGoey
Chamber of Commerce Drogheda	Steven Rice

LOUTH LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)

In 2023 Louth Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) prepared the new six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) which includes actions to tackle poverty and disadvantage, support enterprise, employment and training, develop community infrastructure and the promotion of economic development. Louth LCDC held most of the monthly meetings in 2023 via Zoom platform and

oversaw the following body of work administrated and facilitated through the Social and Community Office Louth County Council.

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

- In 2023, SICAP supported 84 local community groups and registered 1326 individuals
- 84 community groups received developmental, technical and capacity building supports
- 24 Local Community Groups received grants with 2 Local Community Groups receiving funding for 2 grant aid activities. In total 26 Grants were administered.
- 1326 individuals engaged in lifelong learning and labour market supports
- 21 individuals were supported into employment
- 100 individuals were referred by Department of Social Protection were supported to establish their own business through the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme
- 151 individuals received education/training grants
- 23 individuals received enterprise grants
- 7 Social Enterprises received a social enterprise grant



Pathway Graduates



Equality for Women



Healthcare Graduates



Community & Safety Wellbeing Event

Leader Programme

The LEADER Programme 2014-2020 was launched in County Louth in February 2017 with a project budget of €4.5million to be allocated to projects under the following three measures;

- Economic and Enterprise Development and Job Creation
- Social Inclusion
- Rural Environment

In 2021, Minister Heather Humphreys announced a Transitional LEADER Programme which resulted in an allocation of €1.8 million for County Louth. This funding was to deliver support for rural development projects, initiated at local level, in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs.

As these programmes drew to a close in 2023, the DRCD gave approval for the re-allocation of funding from a number of project de-committals in the County. These de-committals were mainly the result of project underspends. There was also funding allocated for LEADER Food Projects across the country and Louth LCDC were eligible to apply. One project was successful in receiving approval from the DRCD to apply for this special funding under the LEADER Food Initiative.

Notable Achievements in 2023 included:

- Four Projects received letters of offer in 2023.
- One project was allocated funding from the National Call for Food Projects. The project was Dunany Flour and was allocated funding of €57,599.00 in December 2023.
- The LCDC awarded funding to three other projects in 2023, which were Merci Beaucoup Cakes, Wakely Engineering and Irish Sustainable Communities.

Louth Local Development are the Implementing Partner for the LEADER Programme and they received 19 Expressions of Interest for Funding in 2023. Louth County Council is the Lead Financial Partner for the Programme in County Louth and they carry out the Article 48 checks on all projects and claims.

Leader Programme	TOTAL
Expressions of Interest (EOI) Received	19
EOI eligible for Funding	19
Ineligible for Funding	0
Contracts Issued	4
Food Contracts Issued	1
Claims Processed	45
Claims Paid	€1,433,389
LAG funding approval 2023	€120,184.00

REDEEMER FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Funding of €56,322.00 was allocated to the Redeemer Centre in Dundalk, for the upgrade and refurbishment of the MUGA Pitch in Cox's Demesne. Minister Heather Humphreys officially opened the pitch in November 2023.



Official Opening by Minister Heather Humphries Nov 2023

TULLYALLEN MENS SHED

Tullyallen Mens Shed received €29,821.00 under the LEADER Programme towards the upgrade and refurbishment of their premises at the Glen Emmets Car Park in Tullyallen, County Louth.

INNOVATING COMMUNITIES

This project was a Co-Operation project between Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. Innovating Communities is a training and mentoring project in the area of Design Thinking.

The project was designed to empower local people to work together and address challenges facing their areas. It equipped them with the tools needed to further enhance their communities across these six counties.

In March 2023, the six counties presented a sample of their achievements on the Innovating Communities Project. This Learning Showcase was held in Castleblayney before an audience of over 200 and was attended by Minister Heather Humphreys.



Minister Heather Humphreys with members of the Louth Innovating Communities team

LEADER 2023-2027

As part of the process to develop a Local Development Strategy (LDS) for Louth an extensive public consultation was undertaken across the county, which employed three key methodologies for data collection. These consisted of:

- An online survey which was available for four weeks which was open to individuals, community groups, businesses and organisations to complete.
- Four public consultation meetings held across the county.
- Two online focus group sessions which were created for Elected Members, members of the Louth LCDC as well as members of the various SPC's.

The LEADER themes and sub-themes are as follows:

- **Economic Development and Job Creation**
 - The Green Economy
 - Agricultural Diversification
 - Rural Tourism & Recreation
 - Enterprise Development
 - Rural Food Production
 - Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises
- **Rural Infrastructure and Social Inclusion**
 - Rural Infrastructure
 - Accessible Services
 - Optimising Digital Connectivity
 - Rural Youth
- **Sustainable Development and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption**
 - Sustainable Development of Rural Environment
 - Climate Change Capacity Building
 - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Louth LCDC completed their Louth Local Development Strategy (LDS) in July 2023 which was then submitted to the Department of Rural & Community Development for approval. An independent panel assessed the Strategy on behalf of the DRCD and Louth received confirmation of approval on 28th November. It was also confirmed that Louth LCDC, with its Implementing Partner Louth Local Development CLG and Lead Financial Partner Louth County Council, was approved as the Local Action Group to deliver the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme for County Louth.

The LDS will form the backbone for the delivery of the next LEADER programme in County Louth.



Public Consultation in Dundalk in May 2023



Public Consultation in Dunleer in May 2023



Alison Quail, Chairperson of the Louth Local Community Development Committee (centre) with Ciaran Reid, CEO of Louth Local Development (L) and Joe McGuinness, Director of Services and Chief Officer of Louth Local Community Development Committee (R) at the signing of the LEADER Rural Development Programme for 2023-2027

Community Support

Throughout the year 2023, the community support team consistently extended its support and engagement with various bodies such as schools, community groups, residents' associations, Tidy Towns committees, and business sectors.

Active participation in nationwide initiatives like the National Spring Clean month in April, National Tree Week in March, hosting the Gum Litter Taskforce pop-up in July, and ensuring an ongoing provision of litter picking equipment to groups across the county exemplified the team's dedication to fostering community involvement and environmental well-being.

The community support team in 2023 extended its assistance to various groups by implementing annual grant schemes to facilitate the realisation of their projects. The Tidy Towns project scheme and Amenity Grant scheme continued to utilise an efficient online application process. Notably, these schemes incorporated actions and additional weighting factors aimed at encouraging more sustainable practices and fostering biodiversity- and pollinator-friendly projects. This strategic approach not only supported community initiatives but also played a role in promoting awareness about the crucial importance of addressing climate change.

The Public Participation Network (PPN) observed a notable surge in membership for the third consecutive year following the introduction of the Amenity Scheme's online application process, which mandated a response regarding PPN membership.

In 2022, a novel online information session was introduced and continued into 2023, providing invaluable support to Tidy Towns groups participating in the National Tidy Town competition. Complementing this, a support group meeting convened Tidy Town representatives with senior officials, creating a forum for the exchange of support and advice to further enhance the effectiveness of community initiatives.

In a delightful return, the community, individuals, and business sectors were once again honoured at the "Louth in Bloom" competition in 2023. The event celebrated the collective efforts and contributions of participants, showcasing the vibrant and blossoming spirit within the community.

The culmination of this celebration took place at an awards ceremony held in the picturesque Bellingham Castle in October. To accommodate modern preferences, entrants were provided with the option to participate through both the traditional methods



Cooley Community Alert Spring clean event

and an online portal, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity. The event marked a resounding success, acknowledging and applauding the collective efforts of participants in fostering a vibrant and blooming community in Louth. The event was a great success.



Eanna Ni Lamhna presents Helen Byrne, Dundalk Tidy Towns with a Special Contribution Awards at the "Louth in Bloom" Awards Ceremony

Louth County Council made a notable presence in the Pride of Place competition this year through the commendable efforts of the "Drogheda District Support 4 Older People" and "Outcomers Dundalk." Both projects delivered exceptional performances, leaving a positive impact on the judges who visited each initiative in September.

A special congratulations is extended to the "Drogheda District Support 4 Older People," which achieved a podium finish by securing the first position in the Age Friendly initiative category. The recognition was sealed with an award presented at the Gala event held on November 10th, 2023, in Armagh. This accomplishment reflects the dedication and positive impact of these initiatives on the community.



Drogheda District Support 4 Older People receiving their award at the Pride of Place Gala awards ceremony, in Armagh

In the 2022/2023 school year, the Green Schools programme in County Louth achieved significant success, with a total of 14 flags being awarded. Notably, the programme marked a return to on-site assessments, a positive development facilitated and supported by the community support team throughout the year. This accomplishment underscores the commitment of schools in County Louth to environmental sustainability and the valuable role played by the Green Schools programme in fostering eco-friendly practices within the educational community.

In 2024, our commitment to climate action remains central to all the programmes we undertake, showcasing best practices across the sectors we currently assist. There will be a particular emphasis on engaging communities comprehensively in every facet of the climate agenda, prioritising direct actions that communities can take to address and enhance their local environments.

The upcoming year's programme will encompass these priorities while extending continued support through grant aid and various forms of assistance to Residents Associations, Tidy Towns, Community Groups, Schools, and Business sectors. This ongoing commitment includes facilitating access to a range of local and national funding schemes aimed at fostering sustainability and environmental initiatives within these communities.

EG: CLÁR, Town & Village Renewal Scheme, Town & Village Building Acquisitions Measure Scheme, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, LA Prevention Network Programme, Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti awareness scheme and the Anti-Dumping initiative.

BLUE FLAG BEACHES

In 2023, the Council achieved yet another success by securing Blue Flag status for the beaches at Clogherhead, Port, and Templetown. Furthermore, Seapoint Beach at Termonfeckin was honoured with the Green Coast flag.

These prestigious designations, the Blue and Green Flags, stand as globally recognised eco-labels, continuing to raise environmental awareness and advocate for sound environmental management

of beaches worldwide. The awards specifically acknowledge beaches for their pristine environments, outstanding water quality, and natural beauty.

As part of enhancing beach amenities, two new beach huts were acquired and installed at Templetown Beach and Port Beach in 2023. Another beach hut, scheduled for Clogherhead, was procured in the same year, with installation planned for 2024.

Across the county, several Clean Coast groups, comprised of dedicated volunteers, collaborate with the Council to ensure the immaculate presentation of beaches, further emphasising the collective commitment to preserving these valuable natural assets.



Educational activities at Templetown Blue flag Beach

Community & Quality of Life & Creativity SPC

Throughout 2023, the Community & Quality of Life & Creativity Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) played a pivotal role in shaping the local governance landscape. Conducting quarterly meetings in various Municipal Districts, the committee ensured widespread accessibility and engagement.

The committee features a diverse membership, comprising elected council members, representatives from national sectoral pillars, active participants from the Public Participation Network (PPN), and dedicated council officials.

Notably, the chairpersonship saw a transition during the year, with Cllr John Sheridan stepping down and Cllr Sean Kelly assuming the role. The committee diligently adhered to its outlined work programme, which included enlightening presentations on crucial subjects. Sessions covered a spectrum of topics, ranging from the Creative Ireland strategy (2023-2027) to insights from "Dundalk Outcomers" regarding their services and a discourse by Ben Malone on the Local Authority Waters Programme. Additionally, SPC member Kayleigh Mulligan shared a presentation on the invaluable role of volunteerism in communities, complemented by inputs from Louth Comhairle Na nÓg. Wrapping up the year, Amanda Brannigan presented on "The Library is the Place," explaining the National Public Library Strategy for 2023-2027. This collaborative and informative approach underscored the committee's commitment to fostering community well-being and promoting creativity throughout the region.

Membership of the Community & Quality of Life & Creativity Strategic Policy committee

Cllr Sean Kelly, Chairperson
Cllr Maeve Yore
Cllr Paddy McQuillan
Cllr Michelle Hall
Cllr Pearse McGeough
Cllr John Sheridan
Stacey McVeigh, Youth Rep
Fiona Crawley, Environmental Rep
Lorna Costelloe, Social Inclusion Rep
Susan Farrelly, Arts Rep
Kayleigh Mulligan, Sports Rep
OFFICIALS:
Joe Mc Guinness, Director of Services
Ger Murphy, Director of Services
Finbar Gethins, Senior Executive Officer
Amanda Brannigan, Acting County Librarian
Paula Gribben, Administrative Officer
Oliver Winters, Senior Staff Officer

Community Development

JOINT POLICING COMMITTEES

The JPC Steering Committee agreed a work plan for the JPC's established in each Municipal District. JPC Steering Committee Members agreed the Community Safety Strategy will form basis of the JPC Work Programme for 2023.

Joint Policing Committees operate in a manner that offers an opportunity to develop greater consultation, cooperation and accountability between An Garda Síochána, Local Authorities and elected local representatives, with the participation of the community and voluntary sector, on the management of policing and crime issues. Each of the partners involved in JPCs has its own distinct perspective and inputs to offer, along with its own responsibilities in ensuring that society's needs are effectively met to maintain safe and secure communities.

A total of 12 JPC meetings were held in 2023 and this also included 3 public meetings.

Public Meeting Schedule 2023

Ardee and Mid Louth JPC Ardee Parish Centre, Ardee	19th September 2023
Dundalk and North Louth JPC The Lisdoon, Dundalk	20th September 2023
Drogheda and South Louth JPC The D Hotel Drogheda	21st September 2023

In 2023 the theme of the public meetings was "personal safety and crime prevention" and included presentations from a representative from the Road Safety Authority and the Louth Crime Prevention Officer. In addition An Garda Síochána and Louth County Council Officials welcomed questions and comments from the members of the public attending the meeting.

A new format and theme based approach to public meetings saw a welcome increase in numbers attending the public meeting and a wide variety of issues were raised by members of the public including issues with e-bikes/e-scooters, concerns around drug dealing and drug intimidation, speeding and anti-social behaviour.



Ciara Brady Road Safety Authority & Segreant John Heavey Louth Crime Prevention Officer, An Garda Síochána



Members of Drogheda Community Policing Unit

LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN (LECP) 2023-2029

Louth County Council are in the final process of adopting the new LECP 2023-2029. The primary aim of the LECP is to set out the objectives and actions needed to support the economic and community development of the county for the next 6 year period. The LECP is an important way to set out how Government, local authorities and other stakeholders can work together to ensure that their initiatives, programmes, and projects support an improved quality of life for people living and working in County Louth.

Following a comprehensive public consultation, all information and data gathered from surveys, observations and comments from the public consultations was collated and used to inform the draft LECP framework, high level goals, objectives and actions and Socio Economic Statement.

A series of consultations followed with key stakeholders regarding the preparation of a Two-Year Implementation Plan, this process which has been running in tandem with the preparation of the new LECP.

The final plan reflecting Stakeholder, Municipal District and Regional Authority input was approved by the LCDC on 15th January 2024 and the Economic SPC on 23 January 2024.

It is anticipated the final draft will be presented to full council at the meeting scheduled for Monday 19th February 2024 and adopted.



Attendees at LECP Public Consultations in Ardee Parish Centre, Ardee



Participants at LECP Public Consultations The Mill Enterprise Centre Drogheda



Attendees at LECP Public Consultations The Fours Season Hotel, Carlingford

LOUTH MEATH JOINT MIGRANT INTEGRATION FORUM

The Louth Meath Joint Migrant Integration Forum held a number of meetings during 2023 to deliver on a number of key goals and actions contained within the Strategy.

Goal 5 Promoting Civic & Civil engagement and political participation

Action 5.3 Work with the Irish Equality & Human Rights Commission to ensure the delivery of training programmes to elected members on racism discrimination and rights and engage with them to explore how to continue to give leadership around diversity and interculturalism and give priority to political, economic, social inclusion in decision making.

This included provision of diversity and inclusion training for elected members. Training took place on 26th June 2023 online and was provided by the Immigrant Council of Ireland. Elected Members from both Louth & Meath attended the training.

Action 5.4 Increase awareness among migrants of their entitlements to vote and continue to encourage migrant communities to register to vote. Ensure information on elections is available in multiple languages and encourage political parties to do the same.

Work is currently ongoing in the local authority, schools, colleges, community groups & migrant groups to provide information on the registration/voting process and encourage migrants and people from new communities to register to vote.

Forum members also held a Migrant Information event in October 2023 to celebrate integration diversity and inclusion in Louth & Meath.

The purpose of the event was to showcase the work of the Joint Migrant Forum to date and to provide further information on services and supports to new communities, international protection applicants and migrants on topics such as employment, education, housing and welfare entitlements.

There were over 25 exhibitors at the event, a number of presentations from local migrant community groups such as Culture Connect and Cultúr highlighting the integration projects and anti-racism work they carry out in the community. There was also an energetic dance performance from Hands 4 Unity, a wellness yoga workshop and an arts & crafts corner for young kids.

DRIVING EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IN COUNTY LOUTH (2023)

Louth County Council supported a number of events and consultations during 2023 to support equality for women in County Louth. The project culminated in the launch of a new report ***Driving Equality for Women in Co Louth (2023)*** at an event in Monasterboice in Q4 of 2023.

The report is the result of collaborative engagement between Louth County Council, Louth Public Participation Network and Louth Local Development with over 200 women across the county and captures the themes, objectives, outcomes and outputs of the participative process.

The engagements, interactions, learnings and collective female voice in County Louth have been captured and outlined in the report.

It is hoped that the report will help promote a strong community voice amongst women across Louth to help build partnerships moving forward and to advocate for lasting change.



Louth County Council Elected Members & Officials, and staff from Louth Local Development at the launch of the report, *Driving Equality for Women in Co Louth (2023)*

LOUTH AGE FRIENDLY



The Louth Age Friendly Programme continued to grow steadily during 2023.

The Age Friendly Programme is working to create the kind of community in which older people live autonomously, independently and valued lives with the assistance of the Louth Age Friendly Alliance and the Louth Older People's Council.

The Age Friendly Alliance met several times during 2023. Rod Bond is the current Chairperson. Members of the Alliance attended focus groups and public consultations in relation to the preparation of the new Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029. Alliance members in conjunction with the Older People's Council prepared a submission to the new LECP. The issues raised and commented on has helped inform the Age Friendly goals, objectives and actions contained within the new LECP.

The Older People's Council (OPC) was re-established in March 2023 and Joe Grogan was selected as the new Chairperson. The Louth (OPC) was established to represent the voice of older people in County Louth. It replaced the Older People's Forum which was previously in place. The OPC is a key structure of the local Age Friendly Programme. OPC members discuss issues of interest and concern to older people in County Louth. The OPC brings issues and areas of concerns to the Age Friendly Alliance, and it informs

and influences the decision making process in the Age Friendly Programme.

The OPC members have been involved in the following events/activities in 2023

- Training for OPC members
- Participation in LECP focus groups and public consultations:
- Preparation of submission for new Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029
- Attendance at Age Friendly Ireland Conference in Tralee, County Kerry
- Bealtaine Events- Age Friendly Louth supported a number of activities and projects across the county
- Launch of the Eu Shafe Project Report on Ageing & Ageism
- Age Friendly Louth Expo in Ardee Theme Keeping Safe at Home
- Attendance at Age Friendly Awards Wexford, County Wexford
- Age Friendly Louth welcomed almost 200 people to the Ardee Parish Centre on 4th October 2023 to celebrate Positive Ageing Week
- Age Friendly Christmas Bag Project - preparation and delivery of over 300 Christmas Bags to older and vulnerable people in County Louth



Members of Louth Older People's Council 2023



Almost 200 people attended the Louth Age Friendly Expo in Ardee in 2023



Age Friendly Louth work with our friends in An Garda Síochána to deliver Christmas Bags to older and vulnerable people in County Louth



Members of Louth OPC at the December 2023 OPC meeting



Louth Comhairle members meet with American President Joe Biden

COMHAIRLE NA nÓG

Louth Comhairle na nÓg made a presentation to the full council on Monday 20th February 2023. Members from the Dundalk and Ardee Comhairle provided information on the many projects and events Comhairle members across all of County Louth were involved with during 2022. Members also provided a presentation on the Comhairle na nÓg annual conference 2022 and the Comhairle work plan for 2023 and advised of the topics they intended to cover in 2023:

- Inclusion and Engagement
- Civic Leadership Cross Border
- Active and Healthy
- Comhairle Gaeltacht Project

Indeed 2023 proved to be a very busy and exciting year for Louth Comhairle members with the highlight for many meeting American President Joe Biden during his visit to County Louth in early 2023.

Other events activities and projects Comhairle na nÓg members were involved with included:

- Hosting Cross Border event with Newry Mourne & Down Youth Council
- Attending Comhairle na nÓg Annual Showcase in Croke Park



Comhairle members at the annual Comhairle na nÓg conference in Ardee, County Louth

- Attending Comhairle na nÓg Annual Meeting
- Developing and running the Omeath Summer Gaeltacht
- Attendance at Healthy Ireland Youth Event
- Comhairle members gave presentation to Community Strategic Policy Committee

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND UNDER THE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (CSF)

The LCDC at its meeting on the 20th March 2023 approved funding, under the CSF, in the amount of €323,952. The Community Support Fund supported groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas:

- With their non-pay running costs for example energy costs (electricity costs, refuse charges, heating charges) or other non-pay operating costs for example rental/lease costs, insurance bills.
- Groups were also able to use the funding to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities, purchase equipment such as tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops and printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment etc

(€3,240) of the Fund was Ring fenced funding and application form for Womens' Sheds. The fund was advertised in local newspapers, social media and through the PPN resulting in 141 applications an increase of 56 from the previous year. The fund also saw a big increase in groups applying for funding under the Community Enhancement Programme for the first time.

Funding was allocated across each Municipal District Area. The Dundalk District received €143,767; Drogheda District received funding of €110,590 and Ardee District receiving €66,355.

The table below sets out a summary of how the total CSF fund of €323,952 was allocated throughout the county:

Area	No of Applications	Allocation
Dundalk	58	€143,767
Drogheda	37	€110,590
Ardee	21	€66,355
Funding Ring-Fenced for Women's Sheds		€3,240
Total	116	€323,952

Sport Facilities

SPORTS FACILITIES FUNCTION:

To develop, operate and facilitate the use of Louth County Council's Sports Facilities, and to provide opportunities for all in the community of Louth to participate in Sport and Physical Activity, safely and inclusively.

SPORTS FACILITIES YEARLY ATTENDANCE FIGURES 2023

Dundalk Sports Centre	
Children's participation in Soccer Activities	>3,500
Adult's participation in Soccer Activities	>500
Children's participation in Athletics Sessions	>320
Children's participation in Multi Sports Activities (after-school activities/camps)	>3,600
Individuals with a disability participation in Multi Sports Activities	>5,000
Participation in Fitness Classes	>6,000
Active Adult Programmes for 50+	>7,500
Children's participation in Basketball	>12,000
Casual Users e.g., Table tennis, Pickleball and Badminton, Tennis	>2,500
Lourdes Stadium	
Casual Track users	>2,000
Bowling Green users	>1,500
Clubs and Groups Facilitated	>600
Bootcamp	>120

DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE IN 2023



ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES AT DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE

Tel: 042 9392987
 OPENING HOURS
 MON-FRI 9am-10pm
 Sat/Sun: 9.30am-5pm

DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE TIMETABLE

Legend:
 ■ STUDIO
 ■ MAIN HALL
 ■ Pitch Hire
 ■ Tennis Courts
 ■ MUGA

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Pickleball available to hire mon-sun Contact DSC to book	Active Ageing 10:30 - 11:30 am €3	Strength & Balance 11:30 - 12:30pm €3	Chair Yoga for older Adults 10.30am-11.30am €3	Walk in Basketball Available Mon-Sun Contact DSC for availability
School Pitch Hire AWP Available Mon-Fri	Mindful Movement 11:30 - 1:30pm €2	Ravens Basketball Club Mon-Fri (External)	Tennis Courts available Mon-Sun Contact DSC to book	Joy Yoga 7-8 pm (External Instructor)
Futsal 3:30 - 4:45pm Ages 8 - 12 €4	DSC Basketball 3:30 - 4:45pm 9 year olds only €4	DSC Basketball 3:30 - 4:45pm Ages 6 - 8 €4	MUGA available Mon-Sun Contact DSC to book	IWA Wheelchair Junior - 7.8.30pm Senior- 8.30-10pm Basketball €3
Badminton available to hire Mon-Sun Contact DSC to book	Zumba 6-7pm €5	DSC HIIT FITNESS 6:15pm-7pm (19th October) €5	Zumba 6-7pm €5	SATURDAY DSC Development 12pm-3pm Basketball €4
Joy Yoga 7-8 pm (External Instructor)	Pilates 8:15 - 9:15pm €5	Sister Sister Club (Girls Basketball) 7-8:30pm (8th Oct) Ages 13-17 €4	Teen Sports Conditioning 7.30-8.30pm (6th Oct) 14-17years €4	Table tennis Available Contact DSC to book
Woman's Basketball Sports Nights €5-10pm €3	Volleyball Sports Nights 8-10pm €5	Men's Basketball Sports Nights €5 8-10pm	Teen Sports Conditioning 8.30-9.30pm (6th Oct) 14-17years €4	

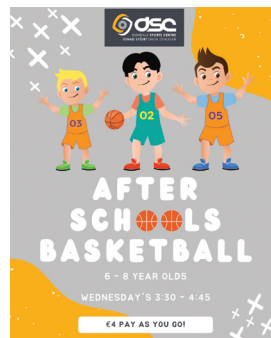
DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE ACHIEVED THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD AWARD



Dundalk Sports Centre has achieved an Outstanding (Gold) NQS Award for the fifth year running and the sixth Award in six years. The National Quality Standard Award is given to facilities that meet the operational standards for leisure and fitness facilities across 250 quality-based criteria. The standard is designed

to encourage continuous improvement within the sector and recognises facilities for their remarkable standards in the areas of safety, hygiene, customer service and human resources. The National Quality Standard award is the only industry-specific award for the leisure, health, and fitness sector in Ireland.

DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMES



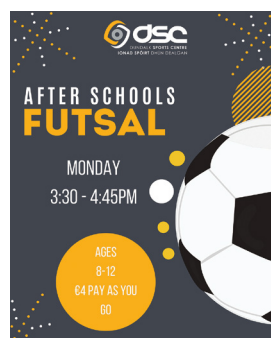
U8's After Schools Basketball:

The always popular 'After Schools Basketball' which ran throughout the 2023 school calendar had 30+ kids weekly. The classes are held every Wednesday from 3:30 to 4:45 pm

in the main hall of the Dundalk Sports Centre. Costing €4, pay as you go. The basketball sessions are suitable for all ability levels.

Dundalk Sports Centres Afterschool Futsal

After Schools Futsal returned in 2023 at Dundalk Sports Centre. In 2023 this class grew from 8 participants in 2022 to 18 participants in 2023. Sessions are held every Monday from 3:30 to 4:45 pm, costing €4. Futsal is fantastic for children who want to try



a new sport or for those who want to work on their football skills.



U10's Afterschool Basketball: This is the pathway programme for kids to come in from the Wednesday after-school basketball and then once they reach 11 years old, they are linked in with the local basketball team Ravens. In 2023 this

programme had an average of 15-18 participants weekly. The activity is on every Tuesday 3.30 pm-4.45 pm.

50+ ACTIVE ADULT PROGRAMMES

There has been continued success in all our older adult programmes recently. Participants find the classes challenging but fun, varied and very sociable.

There are classes to suit everyone, and they are designed to complement each other so that customers can come to all classes during the week and enjoy tea/coffee afterwards.

Active Dance: This is a great programme for our older adults and there are both standing and chair-based dance options. This was a new class in 2022 and has grown in 2023 with 15-20 participants weekly.

Active Aging: This class is a multi-activity program with each week having different activities, the class consists of chair-based exercises, target games, multi-sport games and many more. This programme has been a continued success in 2023 with over 40 participants weekly.



Strength and Balance: Strength & Balance: Dundalk Sports Centre's strength and balance programme has continued to grow in 2023. New members are being recommended to come along via their family and friends. The class offers two experience levels beginner and advanced. The beginner class is held every Wednesday from 10:30 to 11:30 am and the advanced-on Wednesdays from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm.



Chair Yoga: Due to increasing demand, a second chair yoga class was added in 2023. This class had 50 people participating weekly and we expect the numbers to continue to grow. This class is great for mobility work, strength, and relaxation. We encourage all our older adults to attend, especially after participating in our Active Ageing and Strength & Balance classes earlier in the week.

Older Adult Trip: The Centre organized a trip to Carlingford village during the summer. The sports Centre's participants were eager to take part. A group



of 40 went for a gentle walk to explore the village, followed by some refreshments in a local café.

DISABILITY PROGRAMMES

Mindful Movement: Mindful Movement classes are held every Tuesday morning for adults with intellectual disabilities. The class is designed so adults with intellectual disabilities can be active in a fun, safe and sociable environment. This class has been extremely successful in 2023 with an average of 3-40 participants weekly.

Mindful Dance: Mindful Dance is a great programme for any adult with intellectual disabilities who loves music and dancing. This class is every Monday 11.30 am-12.30 pm and in 2023 had an average of 40 participants weekly.



Santa's Arrival: On Tuesday the 12th of December Santa surprised the 'Mindful Movement' group with a visit during their session. The participants were super excited to queue up and meet Santa and even get a small gift to bring home.



DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE SPORT NIGHTS



Women's Basketball: 2023 saw the continued success of women's basketball which is coach-led by Dundalk Sports Centre Staff. It is great to see so many women participating and enjoying the sport of basketball. The photo is from the Dundalk sports night women who played a friendly game against an opposing team to gain game confidence.

Volleyball: Volleyball sports night is a fun, friendly, and energetic program. With the numbers averaging around 25 each week, this program has all age groups attending and enjoying the sport of Volleyball.

Men's Basketball Sports Nights (Competitive): This program was changed in 2023 due to the massive demand for this activity and the wide range of participant levels. This programme is for players who want to compete.

Men's Recreational Basketball: This was a new program for the Sports Centre in 2023. It was for men who wanted to play basketball for fun! Perfect for complete beginners and ex-players. The first 12 weeks of this programme were coached by Dundalk Sports Centre staff.

FITNESS CLASSES

Zumba: Although Zumba has been running in the Sports Centre. 2023 saw many new members trying the class for the first time with the average number increasing to 15-18 participants. It is a fantastic class for getting active and improving your cardiovascular fitness whilst simply having fun. The classes are held every Tuesday and Thursday from 6-7 pm at Dundalk Sports Centre.

Pilates: This programme has grown in popularity in 2023 with an evening class of 24 people most weeks and a morning class that started in October 2023 with an average of 15 participants.

DSC BASKETBALL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Development Basketball was created in 2022 to allow teenagers to develop their skills in basketball. This has only grown in 2023 with there being over 30 12–17-year-old participants training every Saturday at Dundalk Sports Centre, this has allowed a pathway programme into the local Dundalk Ravens basketball club for any child that wants to compete competitively.



PICKLEBALL

Pickleball is a paddle sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong using a paddle and plastic ball with holes. This was a new sport to Dundalk Sports Centre in 2023 and has become very popular, especially with the 50+ age group. There is a new pickleball club called Oriel Pickleball Dundalk that was created at Dundalk Sports Centre.



WALK IN ACTIVITIES

In 2023 Dundalk Sports Centre had walk-in slots that were available to the community.

Walk in's Available

- TABLE TENNIS
- TENNIS COURTS
- BADMINTON
- BASKETBALL
- PICKLEBALL

BASKETBALL SUMMER CAMPS

JUNIOR BASKETBALL
10-14 JULY
(AGES 6-12)

SENIOR DEVELOPMENT
17-21 JULY
(AGES 13-17)

All camps 1-5pm | €60 per child
For more info please contact Dundalk Sports Centre on 042-9392987 or email dscsupervisors@louthcoco.ie

MULTI-SPORT SUMMER CAMPS

CAMP 1
3-7 JULY

CAMP 2
24-28 JULY

CAMP 3
14-18 AUG

All camps 10am -2pm | €60 per child | Age: 6-14
For more info please contact Dundalk Sports Centre on 042-9392987 or email dscsupervisors@louthcoco.ie

SUMMER CAMPS 2023

Multi Sports Summer Camps: The first multisport camp of 2023 was held in July. The camps were a huge success with over 50 children enjoying a variety of games throughout the week. These camps suit all ability levels and are designed to be fun and creative.

Junior Basketball Camp: Junior basketball camps were in July and August for ages 6 to 12 years old. Over 40 children participated in the 5-day camps, with many participants from the Dundalk Sports Centre’s basketball programmes attending. The basketball camps are first and foremost focused on being fun and enjoyable. However, the camps are a great opportunity for children to get involved in the sport for the first time or to develop their skills over the summer.

Inclusive Camps: Dundalk Sports Centre and Louth Local Sports Partnership ran two inclusive camps for adults with intellectual disabilities. The camps had 60 participants in each camp.

INCLUSIVE CAMPS

CAMP 1: 26-27 June
10am-12pm

CAMP 2: 28-29 Aug
10am-12pm

€10 per person, per camp!
PRE BOOKING ESSENTIAL

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT DUNDALK SPORTS CENTRE ON 042-9392987 OR EMAIL DSCSUPERVISORS@LOUTHCOCO.IE

LOURDES ATHLETIC STADIUM

Bowling Green: Lourdes athletic stadiums bowling green was very popular in 2023 in the morning time with our regulars returning numerous times a week even in the cold weather. The bowlers can also look forward to tea/coffee afterwards. This small added extra helps with the social aspect which is extremely important for the age range our bowling green attracts. There were 4 bowl events in 2023 these were held in May, June, July, and August with 24+ participants in each event.

Bootcamp: Lourdes Stadium ran 4 Outdoor boot camps in 2023. The boot camps had 24+ participants in each one and took place every Tuesday and Thursday evening over 6 weeks. Sessions consisted of strength and cardio exercises tailored to suit all fitness levels with plenty of fun through team challenges. The boot camp enabled participants to meet new people and get fitter and stronger.



NORDIC WALKING

Boyne Nordic Walking became a regularly run programme at Lourdes Athletic Stadium in 2023. Nordic Walking strengthens muscles and bones, uses 90% of your muscles, has 25% increased calorie burn compared to normal walking and is therapeutic for mental health due to taking place outdoors.



Louth Local Sports Partnership

Louth Local Sports Partnership, an integral part of Louth County Councils Sports Unit, provides support and guidance to sport and physical activity at a local level in County Louth, supporting sustainable participation by working with individuals, communities, and agencies to identify the sport and physical activity participation needs of the county.

We work with stakeholders to develop programmes, events and initiatives that respond to these needs ensuring that people in County Louth, particularly those from specific target groups, have access to a variety high quality sport and physical activity opportunities in their local community.

This is achieved by working under the following four pillars;

- **Participation**
- **Sustainable Infrastructures**
- **Education & Training**
- **Information Hub**

2023 was an exciting year for Louth Local Sports Partnership (LLSP), with a total of 295 programmes, events and training courses delivered to 17,727 people across County Louth.

2023 OVERVIEW

- **Participation**

During 2023, Louth LSP directly delivered 217 programmes and initiatives targeted at increasing participation in sport and physical activity within clubs, schools, and community organisations in County Louth. These programmes included activities such as; Cycling, Basketball, Swimming, Kayaking, Walking, Football, Gaelic Games, Yoga, Pilates and Nordic Walking, to name a few.

- **Sustainable Infrastructures**

During 2023, Louth LSP responded to the needs of local sports clubs and groups by securing funding totaling €65,000 which was disseminated to 74 sports clubs and community groups through our Small

Club, Sports Energy Support Scheme and Covid 19 restart grants to assist them to develop sustainable structures and increase participation in sport and physical activity.

The Covid 19 restart grant funding supported clubs and community sporting organisations, who were still impacted by the pandemic, to continue to recover and grow their activities again post Covid 19.

The Sports Energy Support Scheme funding enabled local community facilities, who were not eligible through other schemes, to access funding to alleviate the impact of increased energy costs with a view to ensuring that communities in Louth can continue to enjoy the benefits of sport and physical activity in local facilities, particularly during the winter months.

- **Education & Training**

In 2023, Louth LSP facilitated 78 workshops and courses for coaches and volunteers, in Louth, to improve their governance and increase capacity in sports clubs and community groups Louth. These workshops included: Safeguarding, Disability Inclusion, Youth Leadership, Coaching Teenage Girls, Coaching Children, Autism in Sport, Learn to Cycle, Inclusive Learn to Cycle, Walk Leaders Training, and Physical Activity Leader Training.

- **Information Hub**

During 2023, Louth LSP provided information and guidance in relation to sport and physical activity in Louth, by communicating, in a variety of different ways. 92,811 people visited the Louth LSP website, 3,487 people followed our Facebook page and 698 people followed our Instagram page. We developed 12 newspaper adverts or articles in the local press and developed 5 information resource booklets with specific information and advice on sport and physical activity.

2023 Programme and Event Highlights

HER OUTDOORS

Louth Local Sports Partnership, in collaboration with stakeholders and partners across the county, delivered a hugely successful programme of opportunities for females of all ages and abilities to enjoy physical activity and sport in the outdoors as part of Sport Ireland's HER Outdoors week national initiative from 14th-20th August 2023.

The aim of HER Outdoors week is to encourage more females to get active in the outdoors while also bringing visibility to, and celebrate, the opportunities for females to get involved in outdoor physical activity in their local communities.

In Louth, over 535 females participated in various outdoor activities across the week including; Open Water Swimming, Beach Yoga, Nordic Walking, Kayaking, Stand Up Paddle Boarding, Hill Walking, River Rowing, Cycling, Inclusive Equestrian, Inclusive Orienteering and a Teenage Girls in Active in the Outdoors programme.



BIKE WEEK

Louth LSP in conjunction with Louth County Council and the Department of Transport for Ireland delivered a hugely successful programme of events and opportunities for children, adults and families to promote and enjoy cycling across Louth as part of National Bike Week which took place from 13th-21st May 2023.

In Louth, the initiative featured over 30 programmes and events delivered through schools, cycling clubs, community groups and other stakeholders with 1,547 participants taking part.

Bike week endeavours to attract and encourage cyclists, particularly new cyclists of all ages and abilities to discover the benefits and the enjoyment of cycling while also availing of on-going sustainable cycling opportunities within the county.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Louth LSP delivered four Level 1 Sport Leaders Awards in 2023 in Dundalk, Dunleer and Drogheda with 117 teenagers taking part.

The programme works with teenagers aged 13-17 who wish to develop their leadership skills through sport and physical activity. The young leaders also complete voluntary coaching hours within their own sports club or community groups as part of the programme.

In addition, Louth LSP launched a new Try Sports Leadership Programme for Transition Year Students in Second Level schools. The programme provides the students with a basic introduction to leadership skills and behaviours through sport and physical activity. 350 students in 6 schools in Louth participated in this programme in 2023.



LOUTH LSP 'SPORTS CLUB VOLUNTEER' OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Louth LSP organised and hosted the first ever Louth Sports Club Volunteer of the Year of the Awards in November 2023. The awards recognise and honour the huge community of volunteers across the county who give their time and skills to provide sport and physical activity opportunities that we all enjoy.

The ceremony, hosted by Sky Sports Broadcaster and Boyne Rugby Club volunteer, Kieran O'Sullivan, saw 103 volunteers to receive recognition for their contribution to their local sports club to ensure that sport and physical activity opportunities are created and sustained in communities across Louth.

The event was attended by Minister of State for Sport and Physical Education, Mr Thomas Byrne T.D., Cathaoirleach of Louth County Council Cllr Paula Butterly, Chief Executive Officer of Louth County Council, Joan Martin, local political representatives, Sport Ireland representatives, Louth LSP Committee members and members of the local sporting community.



LOUTH SPORT ABILITY DAY

Louth LSP hosted our Louth Sport Ability Day on Sunday 3rd of December 2023 in Dundalk Sports Centre, as part of International Day for people with a Disability, with over 120 adults and children participating on the day.

The event aimed at creating awareness of the various sports club and physical activity opportunities on offer for people with a disability around the county, including, activity sessions from GAA All Star clubs, Football for All, Badminton, Boccia, Dance and Yoga and Inclusive Cycling, and information stands from IWA Sport, and Vision Sport Ireland.





COMMUNITY WALKING

Louth LSP's community walking programme started in 2018 with one walking community group and has grown to 15 groups by the end of 2023.

Louth LSP has engaged with local communities, in the county, to establish needs and to upskill local volunteers as walking leaders to deliver the programme and to create sustainable opportunities for the local community to get involved in a social walking group in their area.

In 2023 we developed a further 4 Walking groups with one of the most successful groups having been developed in partnership with the newly formed Dundalk Women's Shed, that saw Over 30 women take part in weekly walks in their local area. Other groups were developed in Ardee and the Moneymore area of Drogheda.

LOUTH SCHOOL GIRLS LEAGUE

Louth School Girls League, established in 2019, provides sustainable opportunities for girls in Louth and the Northeast to play football within their local community from U7-U15 levels.

The success and growth of the league, now in its fifth year, has been remarkable. In year 1 the league had 7 registered clubs and 240 girls playing from U7-U12.



This number has now grown to 19 registered clubs and over 1,200 girls playing on a weekly basis from U7-U15 levels in 2023.

In addition to the increase in the number of clubs and players participating in the league, a huge number of new female coaches, referees and administrators are now volunteering on a weekly basis within the league.

Pathways and guidance have been provided by the FAI and Louth LSP to support female volunteers to upskill and become involved in a coaching and officiating capacity within the league. This has been an important development to ensure we can increase the capacity of the league to grow. It also provides several local female role models within our local clubs and league structure that young girls in Louth can aspire to become.

GAA ALL-STARS CLUBS

Louth LSP supported the on-going development of GAA All-Stars clubs in Louth working directly with GAA clubs to develop their structures and capacity to create a sustainable GAA All-Stars programme. The All-Stars programme was developed for children with disabilities and additional needs. The main objective of the programme is to ensure that children are provided with an opportunity to participate in Gaelic Games in clubs, focusing on inclusion and enjoyment, in a safe environment.

Ten clubs in Louth have currently developed and rolled out their GAA All-Stars programme.

Louth LSP support the clubs to ensure that all the coaches adhere to best practices, and are all Garda vetted, have received Child Protection training and have completed Disability Inclusion training.



Environment

The services provided by Louth County Council's Waste Management & Environment Section include:

- **Waste Regulation & Enforcement**
- **Landfill Aftercare**
- **Litter Enforcement**
- **Air, Noise & Water Quality Regulation**

Louth County Council's Waste Management & Environment Department works in conjunction with national and regional organisations including: EPA, WERLA, RWMPO, NWCPO, LAWPRO and DECC, to ensure the implementation of National Environmental Priorities for County Louth.



- 313** WASTE INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 1,578** LITTER INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 543** WATER QUALITY INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 117** AIR/NOISE INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 423** PLANNING INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 223** FIXED PENALTY NOTICES ISSUED
- 10** FARM INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 12** SEPTIC TANK INSPECTIONS COMPLETED
- 124** RIVER SAMPLES TAKEN
- 120** BATHING WATER SAMPLES TAKEN
- 5** PROJECTS COMPLETED UNDER THE ANTI-DUMPING INITIATIVE
 - 3 X MATTRESS AND SOFA AMNESTY EVENTS
 - 2 X CLEAN UP PROJECTS
- 6** ROADSIDE CHECKPOINTS UNDERTAKEN

Litter Enforcement

There are 6 full time litter wardens in County Louth and in 2023, 1,578 litter investigations and patrols were completed. Enforcement action is undertaken where evidence is detected from these investigations. The litter wardens continue to investigate all reports received by Louth County Council of littering and illegal dumping within urban and rural areas. They also continue to engage with businesses advising on litter mitigation measures and actively patrolling litter hot spots. Illegal signage is also removed and fixed penalty notices issued accordingly.



Waste Management

Louth County Council Waste Enforcement Officers continued to investigate waste complaints and illegal waste cases in 2023.

There were 5 schemes undertaken in County Louth under the “2023 Anti-Dumping Initiative” which included mattress and sofa amnesty events and clean-up projects. A total grant of €91,700 was approved for Louth County Council for this work.



Muirhevnamore Alley Clean up – Before works



Muirhevnamore Alley Clean up – After completion of works



Castletown River – Before Works



Castletown River – After completion of Works

A total of 6 multi-agency checkpoints were held in 2023, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, the NTFSO and the RSA. These checkpoints are used by Waste Enforcement staff to check the transportation of waste both within County Louth and across the border with Northern Ireland.

Other waste enforcement activities undertaken in 2023 included:

- Historical illegal waste cases
- Removal of hazardous diesel sludge that is dumped throughout the county at various locations
- Investigation of Construction & Demolition complaints and cases
- Inspection and validation of Waste Collection Permits, Waste Facility Permits and Certificates of Registration
- Review of Article 27 notifications
- Inspection of End-of-Life Vehicle Facilities
- Inspection of Authorised Treatment Facilities
- Management of Civic Amenity sites
- Enforcement of the Segregation, Storage and Presentation of Household and Commercial Waste Bye-Laws

Air, Noise and Water Quality Regulation

AIR & NOISE REGULATION

A Solid Fuel Register was implemented by Louth County Council in 2023 which identifies all merchants, retailers and producers of solid fuels within the county. In November and December 2023, Louth County Council Waste Enforcement Officers carried out inspections under these Regulations in Jenkinstown, Bellurgan, Carlingford, Omeath, Ardee and Drogheda.



Ambient air monitoring was continued in Dundalk and Drogheda, in conjunction with the EPA. Additional air monitoring was undertaken in Greenore Port.

Additional inspections were conducted under the Deco Paints, Solvents and Petroleum Vapours Regulations.

Drafting of the new Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 commenced in late 2023 and it is expected that the new plan will be in place from Q2 2024.

There were 45 noise complaints received in 2023 by Louth County Council, all of which were investigated and closed out.

WATER QUALITY

A total of 10 farm inspections were undertaken in 2023 plus additional inspections in relation to agricultural spreading and odour complaints.

12 Septic tank inspections were undertaken in 2023, which included a pre-meeting with the homeowners in addition to a full on-site inspection.

In 2023, Louth County Council had 30 active Section 4 Discharge licences, which were inspected and audited throughout the year. Four non-compliant Section 4 Licences were sent forward for enforcement action due to a series of non-compliances.

Additional water quality monitoring undertaken in 2023 consisted of 124 river samples being taken by Environment staff in addition to investigative monitoring in chosen catchments. There was a total of 83 water pollution complaints received and closed out during 2023 also.

There are 4 designated beaches within County Louth, namely Templetown, Port, Clogherhead and Seapoint. The bathing season for 2023 commenced on the 1st June and finished on the 30th September.

Over 120 samples were undertaken of the bathing waters in County Louth during this time. One prohibition notice was issued for Templetown beach on the 30th August 2023 due to a non-compliant water sample, which was attributed to heavy rainfall and associated runoff.

3

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Social Development Directorate is responsible for delivering Housing and Cultural Services.

Housing delivers a range of services which aim to provide quality social housing in sustainable communities. Services include housing allocations, tenancy support services & estate management, rents & loans administration, homelessness services, housing grants and maintenance. The implementation of the social housing capital delivery programme as set out in the Housing Delivery Action Plan and Housing for All, and the energy efficiency retrofit programme, are also key functions of the section.





Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council



Cultural Services provide accessible and inclusive services via the County Library branch network and our continually improving and innovative online and digital services. A wide range of Arts initiatives are supported and developed by way of direct and collaborative delivery models. The County Archives and County Museum provide a range of services including historical exhibits and events, research services, and archival records management.



**HOUSING
SERVICES
AT A GLANCE**



**€14,599,496
MILLION
IN RENTAL INCOME**



**2,930
HAP TENANCIES
SUPPORTED**



**5,136 ON COUNCIL WAITING
LIST, A DECREASE FROM 2022**



**365
NEW HOMES DELIVERED**



**427 HOMES
ALLOCATED**



**193 ANTI SOCIAL
BEHAVIOUR
INVESTIGATIONS**



**5,408 HOME
REPAIRS CARRIED
OUT**



**207
ENERGY
EFFICIENCY
RETROFITS
COMPLETED**

Housing

HOMELESS SERVICES 2023

Louth County Council's Homeless Service provides assistance to both single individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in County Louth. In 2023 69 homeless households were allocated either a social or an approved housing body property and 93 households availed of assistance from Homeless Services in accessing private rented accommodation under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme.

Louth County Council, in conjunction with our partners in the non-governmental organisation sector continues to provide supported temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and families. 2023 saw an increase in supported homeless bed capacity with the opening of a facility for the accommodation of up to 9 homeless families in Knockbridge, Dundalk.

In 2023 Louth County Council Homeless Services, in conjunction with TUSLA, Child & Family Agency and Peter McVerry Trust, oversaw the opening of a three-bed aftercare facility for young person's exiting the care system.

At the end of 2023 there were a total of 169 adults availing of emergency accommodation in County Louth. The number of families in emergency accommodation stood at 34, including 51 adults and 64 children.

HOUSING FIRST

Louth County Council continues to lead the implementation of the Housing First model in the Northeast Region (Louth, Monaghan & Cavan) as part of the National Implementation Plan for Housing First. Peter McVerry trust has been contracted to provide the service on behalf of the Northeast local authorities since 2020. By year end of 2023, 35 individuals in County Louth were successfully placed in supported tenancies under this model.

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

A total of 402 allocations were made in 2023 of which 262 were local authority homes and 140 were provided by approved housing bodies. In addition, 25 transfer requests were facilitated. A total of 69 allocations were made to homeless applicants and 68 allocations were made to applicants with a disability.

PRIVATE RENTAL INSPECTIONS

The private rental inspection team continued its work during 2023, enforcing the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019.

In total 520 rented dwellings were inspected with the majority of dwellings found not to be compliant with the required standards. A total of 361 advisory notes, 48 improvement notices and 7 prohibition notices were issued in 2023.

HOUSING CAPITAL

In 2023 under the 'Housing for All' plan, Louth County Council delivered 365 new housing units throughout the county. These new housing units were delivered via a range of measures including direct local authority construction, turnkey acquisitions, acquisitions to meet specific social housing needs, long-term leasing, Part V's acquisitions and in partnership with approved housing bodies.

In August, Louth County Council welcomed the completion of 6 new A-rated energy efficient homes in Doire Beag, Collon. These housing units comprised a mix of 2 and 3 bed houses (bungalows and two storey).



Doire Beag, Collon, completed in 2023. 6 Units

During 2023 Louth County Council acquired turnkey and Part V housing units in developments throughout the county, such as Ellwood, Ballymakenny Road in Drogheda, Medebawn Close, Avenue Road, Dundalk, Newtown Wood in Drogheda and Potters Field in Ardee. All units acquired in these new developments are A-Rated energy efficient homes.



Ellwood, Ballymakenny, Drogheda. 46 Units



Medebawn Close, Avenue Road, Dundalk, completed in 2023. 4 Units

In 2023 Louth County Council signed contracts and commenced construction works on the local authority direct build schemes at Mount Avenue, Dundalk (93 units), Boice Court, Drogheda (72 units) and Muirhevnamór infill sites, Dundalk (11 units). These developments are progressing on site and due to be completed in 2025.



Mount Avenue, Dundalk. Construction commenced in 2023. 93 Units



Boice Court, Mell, Drogheda. Construction commenced in 2023. 72 Units



Muirhevnamór, Dundalk. Construction commenced in 2023. 11 Units

Under the Accelerated Delivery Programme (ADP) Louth County Council's Housing Capital Delivery Section, in conjunction with the appointed architect design teams, continued to progress the designs of new residential schemes at Ballymakenny (West) and Greenhills in Drogheda, Mullavalley in Louth Village, Point Road in Dundalk and at Ravel, Dunleer.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Louth County Council's 2023 Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program initially provided for energy upgrade works to 105 Council houses. This program is primarily funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, with supplementary funding provided by Louth County Council, in order to assist with the delivery of the program.

With the support of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Louth County Council ultimately delivered energy retrofit works to 205 Council houses in 2023, well in excess of our original delivery target of 105 houses. Depending on the exact requirements for each house in the 2023 Program, the energy retrofit works included upgrading heating systems through the installation of air to water heat pump systems, replacing windows with triple-glazed units & external doors with composite doors, applying external wall insulation or cavity wall insulation as appropriate and providing top-ups to attic insulation.

The energy retrofit works have improved the fabric of the houses and have provided tenants with an increased level of comfort in their homes. The energy retrofit works has also resulted in all houses included in the program now having a B2, or better, energy rating. The 2023 program resulted in a combined post-works energy saving of 44,850kWh/m²/yr and carbon savings equivalent to 10,332 KgCO₂/m²/yr. In accordance with the departmental criteria for the program, a blend of houses was selected for inclusion, providing a balance between houses that required a full suite of retrofit measures, and those that required a shallower energy retrofit.

APPROVED HOUSING BODIES

Under the Housing for All Action Plan, Louth County Council in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies delivered 293 Units, comprising 88 houses and a mix of 205 duplex and apartments.

Municipal District	No. of Units
Dundalk	75
Drogheda	207
Ardee	11

These homes are funded under the Capital Assistance Leasing Facility (CALF) which allows the Approved Housing Bodies to borrow up to 30% of the total cost of acquisition. These units are then made available to the local authority under a Payment and Availability Agreement for 25 to 30 years.

All units are A-rated energy efficient residential homes.



An Tobar, Drogheda with Clúid



Tierney Street, Ardee with Circle



Dúiche Roden, Dundalk with Clúid

FERRARD COURT, DROGHEDA – COST RENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Comprising 34 cost rental homes Ferrard Court, Drogheda is a new residential scheme completed via a partnership arrangement between Tuath, Louth County Council, the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, and The Housing Agency. The funding for Ferrard Court is a combination of the Cost Rental Equity Loan (CREL) funding from the department and private finance through the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). The 34 A-rated apartments are part of a 70 home development built by CFS Homes Ltd. Ferrard Court represents the inaugural delivery of cost rental homes in County Louth under this program, offering secure, affordable housing with rental prices nearly 30% below comparable properties in the area.

The development was officially opened on 17th of November 2023.



Feran Court Cost Rental Development in Drogheda

TENANT IN SITU SCHEME

Louth County Council actively works with tenants and landlords in relation to the Tenant in Situ scheme where tenants have been issued with a Notice of Termination by their landlord, some of whom may be in receipt of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Louth County Council may purchase properties for applicants who are at risk of becoming homeless. Louth County Council acquired 35 Tenant in Situ properties in 2023.

VACANT PROPERTY REFURBISHMENT GRANT

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, funded by the Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund, was launched on 14th July 2022 and then expanded from 1st May 2023. The Grant allows applicants apply for one property to be made available for rental purposes, and one property to be their principal private residence. The aim of this scheme is to increase the number of vacant and derelict properties being brought back into use. Applicants can apply for up to €50,000 for works to a vacant property, with an additional top-up of €20,000 if the property is declared derelict.

Up to the end of December 2023, there were 125 applications, with 90 of these being approved for the grant. The grant has been paid out on one applicant, with a further 3 at final inspection stage.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Louth County Council received departmental approval for a 10-unit Affordable Purchase Scheme in Blackrock. Details were advertised in early 2024 on local radio, social media and print media. Discussions are ongoing with developers throughout the county for further affordable purchase schemes.

MORTGAGE TO RENT SCHEME

Under the Mortgage to Rent scheme, a borrower may stay in their home but gives ownership of the home to the Mortgage to Rent provider. This means the borrower becomes a social housing tenant of

their local authority or Approved Housing Body. This arrangement is entered into voluntarily and agreed between the borrower, their lender and the Mortgage to Rent provider. After five years have passed, the borrower might be given the option to buy the home back if they are in a position to do so. In 2023 Louth County Council processed 19 Mortgage to Rent applications.

REPAIR AND LEASE

To reflect the national ambition for the repair and leasing scheme (RLS), as committed to in Housing for All, national delivery targets were set for RLS of 660 units for 2022-2026.

In 2023, Louth County Council finished and inspected 2 units in Dundalk with 7 more at negotiation and pre-planning stage.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT – TENANT LIAISON OFFICERS (TLOS)

The Tenant Liaison Officers provide advice and assistance to promote good estate management in Council owned properties. All new tenants must attend pre-tenancy training and where tenants breach their tenancy agreements, the tenant liaison officers can implement a range of measures proportional to the non-compliance. Support is also provided by the Estate Management team towards the upkeep and maintenance of green spaces and environs in housing developments.

Actions 2023	Number
Number of tenants who attended pre-tenancy training sessions	262
Number of post-tenancy inspections provided for new tenancies	258

ESTATE MANAGEMENT – ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OFFICERS (ASBOS)

The Anti-Social Behaviour Officers process complaints under the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. Warning letters and other action can be implemented where tenants breach their agreements. A number of abandonment notices were served where tenants had moved out but did not inform the Council.

Actions 2023	Number
Number of Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Completed	193

Letters Issued for Tenancy Breaches	
Verbal Warnings	69
Written Warnings	19
Tenancy Notifications	10
Tenancy Warnings, Section 8 Housing Act, 2014	5
Abandonment Notices, Section 15, Housing Act, 2014	17



New tenant receiving their keys for their forever home



Estate Management supporting residents in the upkeep of their green space at Ellwood, Drogheda



New tenants in their forever home



Estate Management provided assistance towards flowers and hanging baskets

Two new Council owned estates, Wadman Park and Green Gates are part of a new development in Haggardstown, Dundalk. Estate Management staff participated in the Haggardstown Interagency Development Group to address the emerging needs from the residents living in Haggardstown. An information and coffee morning event was held in the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk in October with all residents living in the area invited to attend at which a survey was carried out. This exercise has paved the way for more social engagement and interaction with residents.



Lawn mower provided by Estate Management to Lavin Park Residents Committee, Tullyallen

HOUSING ADAPTATION GRANTS FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

The Council receives funding from the department for adaptations to private homeowners for disabilities and for older Persons. The Council's contribution is 20% and 303 grants were offered in 2023 the total value of which was €2,822,072.

Description	Number of Grants Awarded
Housing Adaptation Grants (HAGS)	159
Mobility Aids Grants (MAGS)	27
Housing Aid for Older Persons (HOPS)	117
Total	303



New Windows installed in a house in Tallanstown 2023 with assistance from a Housing for Older Persons Grant

ADAPTATIONS TO COUNCIL STOCK FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

The Council spent €821,017 on 3 extensions and 31 smaller adaptations to Council homes. The smaller works include handrails, specialist smoke alarms etc.



After photo of a bathroom adaptation, completed by the Council in a Council owned property in Toberona, Dundalk

DISABILITY HOUSING

The 2023 annual target for social housing allocations to disabled people was 81 units of accommodation. 68 units of accommodation were provided to disabled people, which is equivalent to 84% of the target. A large number of disabled housing applicants were consulted regarding accommodation in several new housing developments. However, the full allocation process was unfortunately not completed during 2023 due to delays in delivery of these units.

The provided accommodation consisted of 23 single storey dwellings (1 standard, 3 wheelchair accessible and 19 adapted), 18 apartments (6 standard, 11 adapted and 1 wheelchair accessible) and 27 two-storey dwellings (21 standard and 6 adapted).

16.9% of all social housing allocations (402) in 2023 were made to disabled people.

Tenancy Sustainment Support Service for new tenants with mental health diagnosis commenced in 2023 and is provided by HAIL. Six tenants of Louth County Council and Approved Housing Bodies availed of this tenancy support in 2023.



Special Needs Housing, Doire Beag, Collon

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The total target for social housing allocations to Traveller households under the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 2019-2024 is 55 units of accommodation. 77 units of accommodation were provided to Traveller households to date (July 2019-March 2024). 68 of these 77 units were standard social housing allocations (41 local authority units and 27 Approved Housing Body units). 2 of the units were group housing re-lets and 7 were halting site bay re-lets. Year 5 of TAP runs from 1st July 2023 – 30th June 2024 and the specific target for this final year is 12 units and to date 5 allocations have been completed with a further 5 planned and due for completion in the next few weeks.

- 2 caravan/mobile home loan applications were approved in 2023 and Traveller families were able to purchase mobile homes for their allocated bay in the Council's halting site.
- Energy Upgrade works were completed in two units of a group housing scheme in Dundalk in 2023.
- Adaptations were completed in 2023 under Traveler Accommodation Programme funding at three properties for Travellers households who have a member with a disability.

Louth Library Service

Louth Library Service continued to focus on the library's role in literacy support, supporting lifelong learning opportunities and establishing the library as a community hub.



**LIBRARY
SERVICES
AT A GLANCE**



**17,062
REGISTERED
MEMBERS**



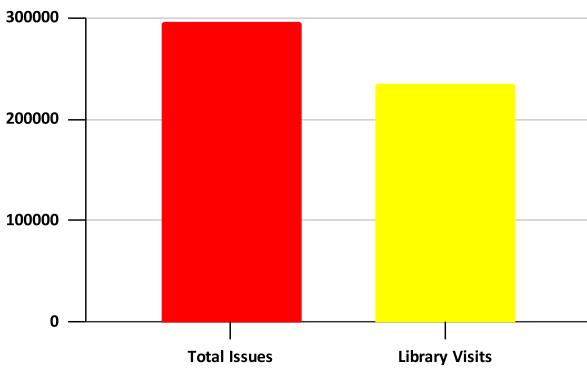
**235,341 VISITS
TO LIBRARY
BRANCHES
FROM 1/1/2023
TO 31/12/2023**



**295,875
ITEMS ISSUED
TO LIBRARY
BORROWERS
IN THE YEAR**

LIBRARY VISITS/ISSUES

Total Issues 295,875
Library Visits 235,341

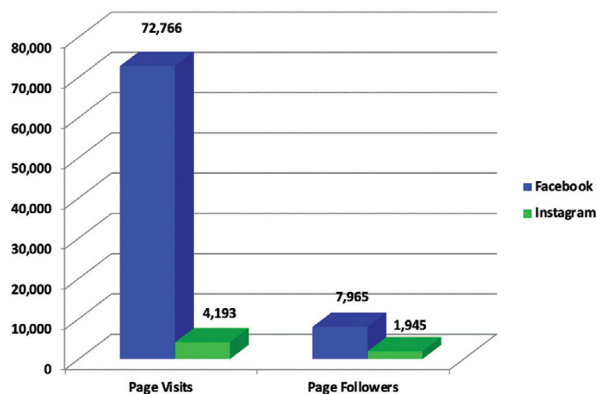


SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Social Media is a key marketing tool to promote and share the wide array of initiatives and events taking place. By end of 2023 Louth Library Service had:

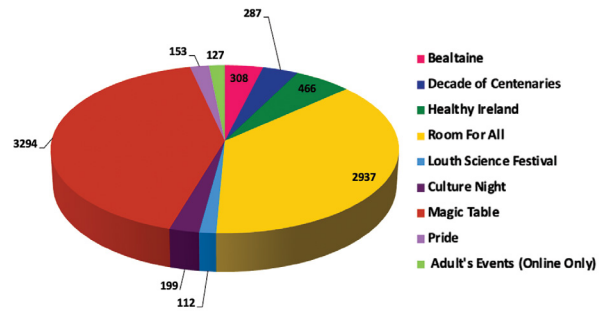
8,022 followers on Facebook
1,959 followers on Instagram @louthlibraryservice

Social Media Use in 2023

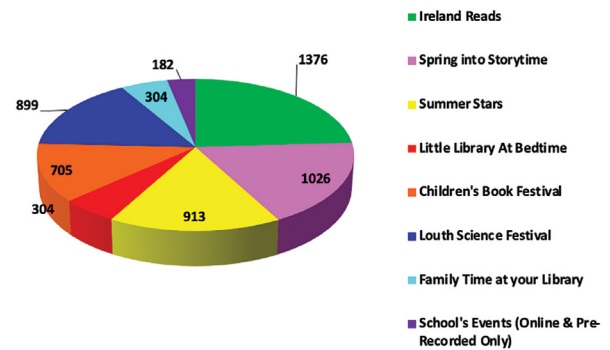


LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

Adult's Events Attendance



Children's Events Attendance



eServices

eSERVICES

The wide range of services includes:

- Borrow Box for eBooks and eAudiobooks
- LOTE online for Kids provides access to 3,000 picture books for children in 60 languages
- Press Reader provides access to newspapers and Libby for magazines
- Transparent Language Online with over 100 languages to choose from
- Universal Class for various courses such as Business, Finance, Office Skills, Crafts and Hobbies
- eServices information sessions are held every month in Dundalk, Drogheda, and Ardee Libraries where staff provide demonstrations on all our eServices

Irish Newspaper Archives

Louth researchers can now access historical Irish newspapers from 1738 to the present day on public PCs in library branches through the Irish-based Irish Newspaper Archives gateway. The archives consist of over 6 million pages of newspaper content from titles across the island of Ireland including local papers such as The Dundalk Democrat, The Drogheda Independent as well as other national and provincial papers. Through the newspaper obituaries Irish genealogists can search, retrieve, and view births, death, and marriage records from 285 years' worth of Irish newsprint.

Launch of *The Library is the Place*, the new 5-year national public library strategy 2023-2027

On the 17th of July the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, launched *The Library is the Place* in Portlaoise Library. This ambitious new strategy is designed to support and strengthen the public library network over the next 5 years. *The Library is the Place* contains 66 separate actions which will ensure public libraries become multi-purpose social and educational spaces for all members of the community to enjoy.

Library Strategic Initiatives

HEALTHY IRELAND AT YOUR LIBRARY (HIAYL) 2023

This Department of Health led initiative enables libraries to provide quality, reliable and valuable health information within the community, including a comprehensive collection of Health Service Executive (HSE) recommended books on health and wellbeing in all branches, online health information such as eBooks, eAudiobooks and online courses.

The Healthy Ireland at your Library Programme this year saw several events take place across libraries in Louth. These included the launch of a monthly Alzheimer's Café in Dundalk library which is very well attended and continues to draw crowds.

We had an extremely successful visit from the Irish Heart Foundation Mobile roadshow which saw numerous members of the public as well as Louth County Council staff availing of healthy heart checks at the library.

Various topical talks took place on *Aging Well*, *Breaking Bad Food Habits*, *Teen Mental Health and Resilience* and *Food and Nutrition Workshops* advising on healthy ways to feed your family. We cooperated with Safefood Ireland to produce an event in Dundalk Library which was also live streamed throughout many Irish Libraries. This Safefood- Healthy Eating for Tots event worked well as it enabled us to engage with in person audiences but also library users who cannot attend talks/ events in branch. It was facilitated by TV Presenter Anna Daly.

We worked closely with the newly appointed Healthy Louth Coordinator on several projects. Most notably we were involved in the *We're Breastfeeding Friendly Louth* project. This was rolled out by Healthy Louth and supported across our library branch network. Staff were trained on how to make our spaces breastfeeding friendly and currently display posters and leaflets on how mothers can avail of and feel at ease in our spaces.

We received additional funding for the purchase of a Healthy Ireland Marquee. This will allow Louth libraries offer an additional way of promoting and accessing HI services within the community by setting up our information stand at local shows, fairs, and events. Funding also allowed for a new Healthy Ireland (HI) digital display screen for Drogheda Library where members of the public can access health information, lists of new books and news of HI events planned.

RIGHT TO READ

The Right to Read programme supports literacy development for families, adults, and children as part of a locally coordinated, sustainable and standardised approach across County Louth. Louth Library Service facilitated a programme of literacy supports and initiatives throughout 2023 including:

IRELAND READS CAMPAIGN

The third year of the Healthy Ireland led national campaign *Ireland Reads* commenced on the 7th of February which led up to a national day of reading on February 25th. The campaign promoted the power of reading for enjoyment and wellbeing by encouraging everyone, young and old to get into the habit of reading and regularly setting aside time to sit and read a book, a poem, a comic, or a newspaper. Local Ireland Reads ambassadors for Louth Library Service included Mayor of Drogheda Councillor Michelle Hall, LMFM presenter Sinead Brassil, several community-based Drogheda Gardaí, local authors Florence Gillan, Barry Landy, Nicola Pierce and Nicola Cassidy.

To celebrate Ireland Reads Day author and illustrator Alan Nolan visited Dundalk and Drogheda Libraries for a fun interactive "Uncanny Ireland" workshop for children aged 8-12 years. Louth Library Service took part in a Libraries Ireland Tik Tok challenge and the "Let's Get Louth" podcast launched with library staff discussing Ireland Reads, the benefits of reading and how your local branch can help you get reading. Poster promotions and reading trees in branches and the schools van allowed borrowers to pledge to read,

with 241,610 minutes pledged on the Ireland Reads website.

- **Spring into Storytime** took place during April encouraging children, families, and schools to visit the library for story time and literacy events. 35 events were scheduled with 1,026 participants.
- **Summer Stars Reading Programme** is the national public library reading programme for children running throughout the summer. Louth Library Service had a very successful Summer Stars with 39 events and 883 participants.
- **Children's Book Festival** helps spread the enjoyment of reading among children and families, during the month of October. 17 events took place, with 705 participants. Events included school visits, author visits, arts and crafts and a collaboration with Meath Library Service for a children's event in Mosney.
- **Family Time at Your Library** in December took place in all libraries to support the involvement of the whole family in children's reading. There were 17 events with 304 participants.
- Four **DEIS Schools Literacy and Numeracy Summer Camps** took the opportunity to visit their local library for a tour with information on joining and using the service. Each camp included team-building activities such as quizzes and activities providing an opportunity for pupils to learn skills such as teamwork, cooperation, creative thinking, collaborative engagement. These social skills give pupils the chance to build relationships with each other and encourage further engagement with the library.
- Library staff visited two Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) classes in St. Oliver's Community College in Drogheda. Library staff work-shopped reading for pleasure, providing new engaging resources for the students with 19 transition and 30 first year students taking part.
- **Adult literacy services** were developed during 2023 through continued collaboration with our Right to Read network partners. Library staff delivered library tours along with Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB), signed up new members, facilitated book clubs and promoted the Open Door Series collection. 2023 has seen demand grow for the magic table which uses interactive light technology to provide a sensory experience to engage and provide a technology programme to support lifelong learning.
- **Housebound Service:** 470 individual housebound deliveries were made throughout County Louth during 2023, offering borrowers who are not able to come into the library in person a way of staying connected to their communities and keeping up to date with reading trends and materials.
- **Louth Library Service and Meath Library Service** continued a joint literacy initiative aimed at those living in Mosney Village. This collaboration aligns to an action under the subgroup of Community Development, Arts, Culture and Sport under the Drogheda Implementation Board. Library staff provided e-services roadshows, allowing residents join the library with demonstrations on e-services and digital services and the extended access available via My Open Library. Events were held during Children's Book Festival and Family Time at your Library. *My Little Library Bags*, *Little Library at Bedtime* and *Summer Stars packs* were provided for the crèche and community library in Mosney.
- **Little Library Book Bag Initiative 2023** is funded by Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth (DECDIY) and Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The initiative aims to build on the relationships between the Early Learning and Care (ELC) and libraries as part of the First 5 Government Strategy for babies and children and the Right to Read Programme. As part of the initiative, a *My Little Library Book Bag* was available free from library branches for every child starting school in September 2023. Each *My Little Library Bag* contained three books, a membership wallet and postcard.

- **Little Book at Bedtime initiative**, under the whole of government First 5 strategy and *The Library is the Place* national public library strategy 2023-27, supports parental engagement in reading to their children, promotes library membership and fosters a love of books and stories.
 - All children aged four and under were invited to visit their local library to collect a free book
 - A bedtime reading tips guide provided to parents/guardians
 - Little Library Bedtime wallets for membership cards
- **Our Lady of Lourdes neonatal reading project**
Louth Library Service is collaborating with HSE Librarian, Ruth O'Rourke and Deirdre Bradley, Speech & Language Therapist from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital on a neonatal reading project. The reading project provides board books for loan to parents/guardians and staff to read to babies in the neonatal unit. Library staff provided expert advice on recommended baby board books for purchase for the project. The Library Service also provided information on the 'Right to Read' Programme including the promotion of 'Little Library at Bedtime' and the "Bedtime Reading Tips" leaflet aimed at 0-4-year-olds. Reading to babies encourages cognitive development, bonding, and overall wellbeing.
- **Primary School Library Service**
Louth Library Service provides a comprehensive and easily accessible service to more than 70 primary schools throughout the county. The return of the Schools Library Van to the roads in Autumn 2022 meant that 2023 was a busy year for the service. Over 3,000 students and teachers visited the mobile van. This, together with the investment made in improving and developing reading resources and literacy stock, was reflected in the increase in issues from January to December.

- **54 - Number of Days Visiting Schools**
- **80 - Number of Schools Visited**
- **261 - New Teacher Accounts**
- **3028 - Visitor Numbers on van**

The schools library service provides schools with a continued connection to the library. Class visits were also encouraged across all five branches, allowing for a marked increase in junior members and book issues throughout the county. Schools were also offered a variety of events and programmes as part of Literacy Week, World Book Day, Spring into Storytime and Science Week. Teachers had the additional option to visit the library van in Dundalk by appointment, where they had full access to the complete school's collection.

CLASS SETS, PROGRAMMES AND SPECIALISED EQUIPMENT

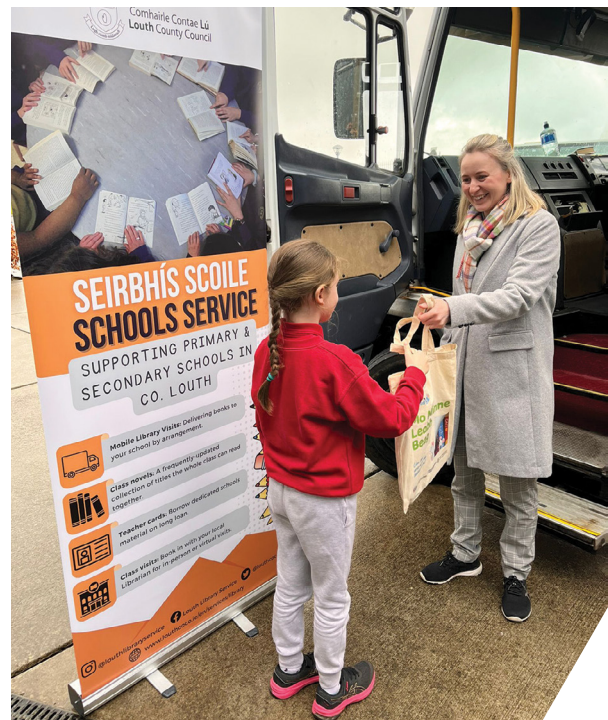
- We continued to provide class sets for loan and this particular service is widely used in all schools. In total, 118 class sets were issued in 2023.
- Touch-Type Read and Spell (TTRS) licences are also available on request via the Schools Library Service.
- In 2023, we also introduced borrowable C-Pens for teachers to use with students and it has been particularly successful as a trial for children who have been recommended additional support for their reading.
- Library staff provided consultations to schools on setting up and developing their own libraries, including on-site visits.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS SERVICE

Library staff provided workshops for history projects, as well as resources and assistance to students and teachers for school project work and research, either within the library branch or electronically, as available. The local studies department provides access, including online resource access, to a wide range of historical material about the local area, such as maps, photographs, documents, and information. Local secondary schools, specifically TY students, were also involved in attending workshops on Dealing with Anxiety in branch, tying in with some of our Healthy Ireland at Your Library Programmes.

EARLY LEARNING CENTRES

This year we actively engaged with **Early Learning Centres** (ELCs) in Louth. The mobile visited various preschools and crèches in the area and offered Storytimes and advice as well as loans to onsite teachers.



Library assistant Katie Lynch on World Book Day



Author Nicola Pierce at a Children's Book Festival event in Drogheda Library

LIBRARY FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

€1.3 million in funding to provide new computers, laptops, and iPads in public libraries

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, announced funding of €1.3 million for the provision of new computers, laptops, iPads and other information and communication technology in public libraries across the country towards the end of 2023.

The investment, under the Libraries Capital Programme, is assisting libraries in becoming more digitally inclusive.

Communities across the country are benefitting from the initiative – with a particular focus on supporting young people, our elderly, and our disadvantaged.

Louth Library Service received nearly €17,000 in funding for the provision of new laptops and notebooks.

The funding also supports the new public library strategy, *The Library Is the Place*, launched by the Minister in the new Portlaoise Library in July.

The strategy promotes the vision of public libraries as leaders in enabling and supporting all people, across all communities, to be informed, connected, literate individuals, skilled for life. It also commits to support strategic actions to develop public libraries as enablers of digital services and facilitators of digital skills development while also recognising the importance of enhancing digital inclusion and providing up-to-date ICT infrastructure.

This funding has enabled the replacement of outdated I.T. hardware with new devices for the benefit of library users of all ages. In supporting digital inclusion, we are providing literacy and technology skills training for those looking for work. As part of our Library of Sanctuary status it is vital that we continue to support marginalised and disadvantaged communities to access digital services.

NEW LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY SPACE FOR DUNLEER

Louth County Council recently purchased the former Bank of Ireland building in Dunleer for the provision of a new Council library and community space. As highlighted by Louth County Council Chief Executive Joan Martin, Louth County Council is committed to the development of its library service, evidenced by recent, considerable investments to ensure the library service meets the strategic objectives as per the Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025, a key focus of which is *'Improving access, use and visibility of the public library and establishing it as the go-to place for a range of sustainable, integrated public services'*.

Louth County Council recognises the need to develop the public library service in Dunleer to meet the needs of the growing community. The acquisition of this building on the main street allows for the placing of a public facility in the heart of the community. During 2023 councillors approved the CE's recommendation of €250,000 spend to upgrade the building.

This works in tangent with the Dunleer Masterplan, which is currently being developed under the Town Centre First Policy, which promotes re-using existing town assets, tackling vacancy and dereliction, breathing new life into Dunleer town centre. A new and improved library space will offer better access to digital hardware and software and support increased community engagement with more space and opportunities for school visits, story time, talks, book clubs and the many other services offered by Louth Library Service.



Chief Executive Joan Martin, Senior Executive Librarian Linda Larrigan, Former Director of Services, Paddy Donnelly, Dunleer Branch Librarian Muriel Sheils, and Acting County Librarian Amanda Branigan

DORMANT ACCOUNTS FUNDING (DAF) Inclusive Technology

Louth Library Service was delighted to launch the introduction of further equipment to enhance and complement services to older people, children, and adults with additional sensory needs and those with dyslexia. The new initiatives were launched in Dundalk Library by Director of Services' Ger Murphy on the 8th November and funded under the 2023 Dormant Accounts Fund from the Department of Rural and Community Development and Louth County Council.

Assistive equipment includes the C-Pen Reader, a new inclusive technology service available from all Louth Library branches. This is a reading tool designed to improve and enhance reading and learning and is particularly beneficial to people with dyslexia, those who may be experiencing problems with their vision, or anyone learning a new language.

The C-Pen Reader Pen is a portable, pocket-sized tool that scans and reads words and full lines of text aloud, supporting independent reading and literacy. It is designed to be user-friendly and intuitive, regardless of the user's age or digital experience. Adults and children who are learning the English language will also find the reading pen an extremely helpful piece of technology to use.



Launch of DAF equipment in Dundalk Library - Amanda Branigan Acting County Librarian, Linda Larrigan Senior Executive Librarian, Ger Murphy Director of Services and Sarah McAllister, Executive Librarian



Acting County Librarian Amanda Branigan, Senior Executive Librarian Linda Larrigan, Executive Librarian Leona Burgess, Dundalk Sanctuary Ambassador Zakaria Osman Mohamed, CE Joan Martin, Tiffy Allen, National Co-Ordinator Places of Sanctuary Ireland, Cathaoirleach Conor Keelan

Funding was also used to provide noise cancelling headphones and adult fidget blankets. Headphones are available to use in the library for children and adults with sensory issues who may feel overwhelmed in the busy environment. Fidget blankets are available for use in Dundalk Library and help to calm and reduce anxiety, as well as providing stimulation.

LIBRARY OF SANCTUARY AWARD

Dundalk Library hosted a celebration on the 7th of March where Louth Library Service formally received the Library of Sanctuary award. Louth Library Service is the first in the country to gain this award for a library service as a whole, with the five branches and school

service gaining recognition. Louth County Council Chief Executive Joan Martin accepted the award from Tiffy Allen, National Co-Ordinator Places of Sanctuary Ireland. Also present were Cathaoirleach Councillor Conor Keelan, Dundalk Sanctuary Ambassador Zakaria Osman Mohamed, invited stakeholders and library staff. This award recognises the good practice taking place in Louth Library Service and the contribution libraries make to building a community of welcome and sanctuary across County Louth, welcoming people seeking sanctuary and all new arrivals in the community.

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND (LAI) AND CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS (CILIP) JOINT ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

The LAI/CILIP joint annual conference took place in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dundalk on 26th and 27th April 2023. The theme of the conference was “Libraries Making a Difference” and what that means in all library contexts.

Louth Library Service was well represented at the conference with staff both presenting and submitting posters.

- *Library of Sanctuary* presented by Executive Librarian Leona Burgess
- *Pride in Louth Library Service* presented by Library Assistants Ray Gainford and Ciara Brodigan

The poster submissions highlighted various initiatives within Louth Library Service including:

- Louth Science Festival
- Room for All, which provides a flexible space for use of the magic table in Dundalk Library
- 1 Card 6 Libraries, collaboration between Louth Library Service and DKIT Library Service
- Library outreach in secondary schools via Junior Achievement Ireland
- Library Housebound Service

Delegates were offered a tour of Dundalk Library and the County Museum, Dundalk as part of the conference programme which was a wonderful opportunity to showcase our service and the town of Dundalk. Chief Executive Joan Martin also spoke ahead of the conference dinner on April 26th.



Library Assistants Ray Gainford and Ciara Brodigan presented on 'Pride in Louth Library Service' at the LAI/CILIP Conference



Executive Librarian Leona Burgess presenting on Louth Library Service's Library of Sanctuary award



Leona Burgess, Executive Librarian and Amanda Branigan, Acting County Librarian at the LAMA awards on the 15th of April

LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS ASSOCIATION (LAMA) AWARDS

Louth Library Service staff attended the LAMA awards ceremony which was held in the Minella Hotel in Clonmel on the 15th of April. The LAMA awards recognise and celebrate communities and councils working together. They provide a great opportunity to highlight and celebrate the work done within our communities, to reward our unsung heroes and recognise the phenomenal contribution they have made to our lives.

Louth Library Service was shortlisted in the Most Inclusive Project 2022 category for the recent Library of Sanctuary award. This award is for an individual, team, group or network who initiate and lead action to remove barriers to attract and improve working experience and engagement levels and make the environment more inclusive for all.

Creative Ireland

LIBRARY LED MULTI-AGENCY PROJECT WITH FIGHTING WORDS

This project, funded by Creative Ireland's Excellence Grants, continued into 2023, with young people from Drogheda's Cable Youth Diversion Project, Boyne Garda Youth Diversion Project, Boomerang Youth Centre and Southside Community Youth Project participating. This was a collaboration between the youth groups, Louth Library Service, Garda Anita O'Shea (Juvenile Liaison Officer, Drogheda), Fighting Words and the Droichead Arts Centre.

The project proved to be a great success with participants creating stories from their experiences with the support of the Fighting Words facilitators, youth leaders and library staff, culminating in the participants bringing their stories to life in two videos that premiered on the 29th of June in the Droichead Arts Centre, 'Taking Over' and 'Wanting More'. The project was very much led by the participants and what they wanted to achieve.

WOMEN IN WELLNESS PROGRAMME

Following on from the success of the 2022 programme in Drogheda Library Creative Ireland funding was secured to expand the Living in Wellness programme to Dundalk Library in 2023 and Ardee Library in January 2024.

The practices offered in Living in Wellness workshops help awaken a state of wellbeing in the person. The practices are tools to provide a solid base for healing many symptoms resulting from stress and trauma and promote a way to live in wellness amid the challenges of life. The workshops weave together a mix of creative exercises and energy practices that nurture the whole person.

*Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme*



Louth Science Festival 2023

The sixth annual Louth Science Festival took place from 13th-26th November 2023.

The 2023 Festival was funded by Louth County Council and Creative Ireland. Louth Science Festival saw Louth Library Service partner with facilitators, schools, and organisations to make science more fun and accessible to the entire community.

A family fun day was held on November 11 to officially launch the festival with Dr Barry Fitzgerald in Dundalk and Drogheda Libraries sharing the Secret Science of Santa Claus. Meanwhile, Ardee Library enjoyed an interactive light board workshop with Beyond the Bump.

Other highlights included school events with Dundalk Institute of Technology, iCrag (The Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre in Applied Geosciences hosted by University College Dublin), the Irish Air Corps, Met Éireann and our very own Mini Beasts workshop led by library staff.

Adult events included Barn Owl origami; podcasting with Rob Flynn, an audio post-production and sound designer; the science of Blacksmithing with An Gobha; chemistry experiments; wool workshops and large-scale art projects in Drogheda and Dundalk Libraries facilitated by artist Susan Farrelly and Pebble Lane Art Studios, respectively.

As well as funding events, Louth County Council was heavily involved in the festival programme. Through the Sustainable Energy Section, participants got a Virtual Reality glimpse of the VARCITIES project currently under construction in Dundalk. Work began in late 2023 on the VARCITIES Project in the courtyard of Dundalk Library and the County Museum. Dundalk



is one of seven EU cities chosen to pilot the project. The project is led by the Sustainable Energy Section and funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation fund. The purpose of the project is to create a more pleasant, inviting, and all-inclusive outdoor space which will serve our community at the highest level. The space will be for multi-generational use with learning facilities for all, enhancing and complementing the facilities currently provided by the Library and Museum.

The project will focus on 3 visionary solutions within the courtyard area to include:

1. Creation of an Outdoor Learning Pod to showcase the newest technologies and host shared functions
2. Outdoor Urban Green Learning and Sensory Garden for health and wellbeing
3. Sensor equipped bike stations

The Louth County Council Community Climate Action Officer and Biodiversity Officer also gave informative and educational talks, showing children how to make their very own simple birdfeeders!

Lego, Messy Play, and collaborations with the Road Safety Authority and Agrikids rounded out another successful year for Louth Science Festival.

DECADE OF CENTENARIES 2023 PROGRAMME

Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin T.D., on behalf of the government published the 2023 Decade of Centenaries Programme on March 23rd.

2023 brought the Decade of Centenaries Programme (2012-2023) to a close, with the centenary of the admission of the Irish Free State to the League of Nations in September. The centenaries of some of the greatest atrocities of The Civil War occurred as well as the ending of the conflict. Key cultural and societal milestones were marked including the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Yeats in 1923.

HISTORIAN-IN-RESIDENCE

Dr Thomas Tormey continued in his role as Louth County Council Historian in Residence during 2023. He will shortly publish two titles "Louth and the Irish Revolution: a research guide" which includes research on the late Harold O'Sullivan's uncatalogued personal papers in the Military Archives. The second publication is a book of essays entitled "War and Peace in the County Louth During the Struggle for Independence and After". Dr Tormey also published an essay to mark the anniversary of the General Election in 1923 "Monday 27 August 1923: General Election in the Irish Free State" which is available to view on the Louth Library Service Blog: Shelf life: <https://shelflifethelouthlibraryserviceblog.wordpress.com/>

Several events were held to mark Decade of Centenaries related anniversaries in 2023. These involved panel discussions and lectures which sought to offer a national context for the events of the Civil War. All events were available to attend in person and to view live on the Louth Library Service crowdcast channel and are available to watch back: <https://www.crowdcast.io/louthlibraryservice>.

Events included:

- Historian in Residence Dr Thomas Tormey on "From executions to elections: Louth in 1923"
- Dr Brian Hanley on "Republicanism, crime and paramilitary policing, 1916-1945"
- Dr Margaret Ward on "A cold house for women, gender and the early years of the Northern Ireland state"
- A lecture by Helena Byrne on "The origins of women's soccer in County Louth"

HISTORY ROADSHOW

Louth Library Service hosted history roadshows for primary school 6th class students:

Great Irish Politics with David McCullagh, *Great Irish History* with Myles Dungan and *Stories of the Revolution and Children and the President of Ireland* with Flor McCarthy. Louth Library Service also purchased additional history stock including schools sets and history material particularly for young people.

DROGHEDA CIVIC TRUST

Drogheda Civic Trust held two local seminars to recall the Irish Civil War with reference to local experiences and an opportunity to commemorate three local men: Hugh Thornton of Peter St., Michael Woods of Nun's Walk, and Patrick Breen from the Windmill Road. These three young men, as members of the new National Army were killed in County Cork. A second seminar entitled "Honouring the women of the Decade of Centenaries in Drogheda" was held in June.

BANNER EXHIBITION

Louth Library Service produced a portable exhibition of banners highlighting events over the course of 1912-2023. The banners give local context and connection to events of 1912-1923 and provide a permanent remembrance of local events throughout the Decade of Centenaries period. These went on display in Dundalk Library and the exhibit will visit other library branches throughout 2024.

Amanda Branigan, Acting County Librarian attended an event in Dublin Castle on November 23rd which acknowledged the work of stakeholders throughout the Decade of Centenaries programme which was led by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar.



Members of the public and staff from Dundalk Library with Ger Murphy Director of Services at the launch of the Decade of Centenaries banner exhibition in Dundalk Library

CLIMATE ACTION

Louth Library Service's continued promotion and uptake of eServices and the recycling/re-distribution of book stock to schools and community facilities contributes to lowering our carbon footprint. A library staff representative is a member of the recently established Cross-Directorate Group to help drive delivery of climate action targets and goals across the organisation. Each library branch has an appointed climate action champion and we worked closely with the Climate Action Co-Ordinator during 2023.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The new National Public Library Strategy, *The Library is the Place 2023-2027* is the first national library strategy to have a specific focus on sustainability and climate action, with actions designed to help Ireland achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Louth Library Service and the Climate Office of Louth County Council held a primary schools art competition to celebrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) week. The theme for the artwork competition was Sustainable Development Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy.

COMMUNICATING EUROPE INITIATIVE 2023

Louth Library Service and Rory Sheehan, the Louth County Council Climate Action Officer, secured funding of €4,000 from the Department of Foreign Affairs under the Communicating Europe Initiative 2023 for a project promoting EU environmental legislation, specifically the EU Waste Water Directive, to primary school children. The project was facilitated by Mark O'Connor from Field Studies Ireland and Ben Wallace, Community Water Officer from Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO).

The project took place during the week of the 12th of June in Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Carlingford libraries. Pupils from 4th and 5th classes visited their local library for a short talk on how the EU Waste Water Directive has impacted positively on the environment. Pupils went on a site visit to a local water body to learn about kick sampling and how to identify species.

OTHER EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Into Europe: Ireland and The EU 1973-2023** - To mark the 50th anniversary of Ireland joining the EU, the Department of Foreign Affairs commissioned the Royal Irish Academy to produce an exhibition to show the impacts of EU membership over these 50 years. The exhibition was launched by the Tánaiste Micheál Martin on January 24th. Louth Library Service was delighted to be one of the first in the country to host the exhibition.
- **International Women's Day** - took place on Wednesday 8th of March. Our own Library Assistant Dr Ciara Stewart celebrated the day with a talk entitled "The Women's Mission": an examination of Irish women's political movements in the 19th century and their role in the fight for women's franchise.

- **Seachtain na Gaeilge March 1st-17th** - Bhí áthas ar Leabharlann Dhroichead Átha Seachtain na Gaeilge a cheiliúradh le lucht rang 5 agus 6 ó Mell NS. Bhaineamar úsáid as ár dteanga le cluiche cosúil le 'Pictionary' as Gaeilge. Bhí go leor ealaintóirí agus Gaeilgeoirí sna ranganna, agus bhí ann-spraoi againn!

Drogheda Library was delighted to celebrate Seachtain na Gaeilge with the 5th and 6th class pupils from Mell National School. We used our language by playing a game similar to 'Pictionary' in Irish. There were plenty of artists and Gaeilgeoirí in the classes, and we had a wonderful time!



Pupils from 5th and 6th class Mell National School for Seachtain na Gaeilge in Drogheda Library

- **Pride 2023** - Louth Library Service held several events to celebrate Pride, Dundalk Library had a storytime session for children as well as a separate craft session. There was also a drop-in session for young adults and adults to get book recommendations from our librarians. Dundalk Library also held an event in conjunction with local LGBTQ+ support group, Outcomers entitled "Pride Around the World" where people were invited to speak about their experiences growing up in countries where it was illegal to be LGBTQ+. Drogheda Library had two separate storytime sessions for children as well as their monthly LGBTQ+ "Coffee & Chats" drop-in sessions where people could socialise and get book recommendations.

- **Bealtaine Festival** - This Age and Opportunity Festival is Ireland's national celebration of the arts and creativity as we age. Louth Library Service had a packed schedule of events throughout May including flower arranging demonstrations and the popular Bealtaine table quiz. The Drogheda Male Voice Choir held a wonderful lunch time recital in Drogheda Library. Tracing your family history, a free genealogical and family history consultation on a one-to-one basis with library staff took place in Drogheda Library.
- **Heritage Week, 12th-20th August** - Library staff in Drogheda Library compiled a video recording entitled '*Exploring the Landmarks and Heritage of Drogheda*' which was streamed on the Louth Library Service Facebook page and on the digital display in the library. The short video brought viewers on a historical journey exploring some of Drogheda's most famous landmarks.



Library Assistant Eilish Boyd who compiled a video to celebrate Heritage Week 2023 entitled '*Exploring the Landmarks and Heritage of Drogheda*'

- **Culture Night, 22nd September** - Dundalk Library celebrated Culture Night with artist Shauna Swords who worked on a colourful collage of our natural history with entertainment afterwards by musicians from Scoraíocht Linn Léire. In Drogheda Library 'United' a collaborative photographic exhibition between Irish and Ukrainian photographers was launched and Ardee Library held a family friendly evening with local musicians, The Ardee Intermezzo Ensemble and Uke'n'Rollers Ukulele band.

'LET'S GET LOUTH': THE LOUTH LIBRARY SERVICE PODCAST

Librarian Siobhán McGuinness interviewed the following throughout 2023 and these are available on the Let's Get Louth Podcast which you can access here: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/louth-libraries-podcast>

- Library Staff members Siobhán and Lisa discussed the Ireland Reads Campaign, the benefits of reading for wellbeing and literacy supports available in Louth Library Service
- International Women's Day interview with Gráinne Berrill, Drogheda Implementation Board
- Louth Library Service celebrated International Day of Happiness on the 20th of March 2023 in conversation with wellness educator Tracey O'Brien and artist Breda Marron
- Earth Day 2023 interview with Louth County Council's Heritage Officer, Brendan McSherry
- Bloomsday 2023 interview with Nuala O'Connor, author of Nora
- Heritage week interview with Anthony Murphy of Mythical Ireland
- National walking day 2023 with Louth County Council community sport development officer Barry Casey
- Lú Festival of Light with Trevor Connolly from Love Drogheda BIDS

Louth Arts Service

CreateLouth, the Arts Service for County Louth, delivered a wide range of actions in 2023 including the delivery of the new Louth Culture and Creativity Strategy as part of the new 5-year term of the Creative Ireland initiative.

DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY

The Arts Service continues to support a wide range of programmes and residencies in Creative Spark, An Táin Arts Centre and Droichead Arts Centre. In addition, direct programming by the Arts Service, liaising with strategic partners culminated in activities including the following:

Music & Entertainment in Healthcare Settings

Our Bealtaine programme in May saw visits to six healthcare settings around the county. Musicians Liam Merriman, Grainne Hope, Lisa McGuinness and many more sang songs and engaged all the residents in a wonderful afternoon's entertainment in each setting.

Alongside our Music in Health Programme, we also partnered with An Táin Arts Centre to bring the interactive comedy theatre piece "The Grannies" into over 12 nursing homes in October and November. The Grannies brought great fun and laughter to the residents as the performers carried out their circus act and comedy sketch.

Brigid1500 workshops

As part of the councils Brigid1500 commemorations the arts office arranged a series of creative workshops to take place across the 3 main libraries in the county to coincide with the launch of the St. Brigid's School Brigid Cloak which was commissioned by the council. The cloak which was created by artist Shauna Swords was a Creative Ireland project and the arts office funded several Brigid themed workshops to take place in each of the libraries between May and July.



The St. Brigid's School Brigid Cloak in Dundalk Library when it launched in May 2023. Image – Ultán Hodgers

GRANTS & AWARDS

In 2023, CreateLouth continued to make available a range of bursaries and awards to individuals and organisations in Louth, including grants under the Arts Act & School Musical Instrument Purchase Scheme. A total of 37 grants were awarded during 2023.

In addition to the grant scheme, we supported festivals including Drogheda Arts Festival, Ardee Baroque, Drogheda Traditional Music Weekend, Drogheda Classical Music Series, Louth Contemporary Music Society and Féile na Tána. We also provided support to the World Africa Day, Knockbridge Vintage Day and several projects including the printing of a poetry book, an outdoor art exhibition and 2 film projects.



Tumble Circus performing at Scotch Hall Shopping Centre as part of the Drogheda Arts Festival 2024 – image Jenny Callanan

INFORMATION & ADVICE

In December the arts office hosted 3 information evenings in the libraries. The sessions outlined funding opportunities for artists and groups that would be made available in 2024. Over 60 people attended across the 3 nights. There was also an online version of the presentation recorded and made available on the website at www.createlouth.ie

The www.createlouth.ie website is the hub for funding, events, opportunities, projects, and resources for the Arts in Louth. We continue to provide information and support to local artists on resources available to them and supports we can provide throughout the year.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

Youth Events

The arts office continues to provide support to Droichead Youth Theatre and MAD Youth Theatre who work with young people in the development of their skills in theatre and production. We also supported the inaugural Drogheda Youth Arts Festival and Droichead Arts Centre's Young Producers Programme where young people get to programme and curate their own events under the mentorship of local theatre professionals.

Culture Night 2023

Culture Night took place on 22nd September and 2023 saw us hosting our largest programme to date. Over 24 events took place across 13 venues in Louth, and we had everything from poetry clinics to live music, photography exhibitions and gallery openings. Highlights included an open evening at Townley Hall and a Poetry SOS Clinic in the County Museum. Artist Shauna Swords conducted a wonderful evening of creativity in Dundalk library as participants contributed to a magnificent collage of natural heritage. Ardee library had live music while Drogheda library hosted a wonderful photography exhibition of images from the Ukrainian community, both of the war back home and of their life here in Ireland. We had street busking



The International Song Choir from Drogheda performing in Droichead Arts Centre as part of Culture Night 2023 – *image by Jenny Callanan*

at An Táin, and AAEX (Art as Exchange) hosted an evening of art and expression at the Creative Spark Downtown Hub where participants got to spray paint their image onto a canvas to take home as well as contributing to an overall piece. Over 1,500 people attended the live events, and over 120 artists facilitated the events on the night.

Other initiatives that we supported financially in partnership with our local strategic partners included the Harp Festival, Quintessence's 'The Scalping of Peg Carroll', and the Vital Signs tour of poetry with Festival in a Van.

Creative Ireland

CREATIVE IRELAND

In 2023 a new Creative Ireland culture team was formed to lead the new 5-year initiative. The new team is made up entirely of Local Authority staff and includes members from Public Realm, Community, Economic Development, Libraries, Heritage, Archives, Museum, Climate Action and the Arts office.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Under the new 5-year initiative each local authority was required to recruit a Creative Community Engagement Officer to help support the Co-Ordinator and the Culture Team in delivering the new 5-year plan. Louth's local officer took up position in July 2023.

THE CREATIVE IRELAND COMMUNITY GRANT

The fund supported 11 groups in researching, planning, and delivering projects. One of the highlights included the Making Waves project, a podcast of women from the Moneymore area in Drogheda focusing on their contribution to the community and recounting life in the area. There was also an art project with Ukrainian community where artist Els Borghart spent time with individuals from the Ukraine and drew portraits of them based on the stories they told. Both these projects were launched on Culture Night.

CRUINNIÚ NA nÓG

Cruinniú na nÓg, the national day of youthful creativity in June, took place on Saturday 10th June. We ran a series of workshops across Louth in the weeks leading up to Cruinniú day including DJ workshops, theatre, and drama workshops. On the day itself we had live music at the square in Dundalk with Music Generation and youth bands from across the county. There were workshops in both Droichead and An Táin Arts Centre's, and Creative Spark had their ever-popular spray-painting workshops at Market Square and brought their FabLab onsite where children got to make 3D playground sculptures. Over



Spray-painting workshops at Market Square in Dundalk as part of Cruinniú na nÓg 2023 – image Ultán Hodgers

500 young people took part across all the events and our music at the square had an attendance of over 800 across the 4-hour concert.

Large Scale Projects - other large-scale projects with significant impact or legacy were also funded. These included a community outreach project run by Droichead Arts Centre with local schools, the Louth Library Service Wellness for Women initiative which is specially designed for women from marginalized backgrounds.



Children taking part in workshops during the Leanbh Festival outreach programme with Droichead Arts Centre – image by Jenny Callanan

Artist in the Community project - match funded by Louth County Council and their Brigid1500 programme, we issued a tender for a group of artists to work on a large-scale art project in the community throughout 2023. Creative Spark print studio manager Grainne Murphy led the project with artists Susan Farrelly, Claire McAteer, Una Curley and Etaoin O'Reilly, working with over 23 groups and 300 participants throughout the year to create several art installations to form a community art exhibition as part of the planned 2024 Brigid1500: Louth Birthplace of Brigid festival.

Decade of Centenaries - a new young adult story was developed as part of our 2023 Decade of Centenary funding project. The story evolved around protagonist Sorcha and her time as a maid in Bellingham Castle during these troubled years. With various tales of her family's involvement in several key events, as well as the involvement of her employers, this is a tale that is both educational and engaging for a young audience. A copy of the book is to be given to each school in the county for their library stock and copies will also be made available in each of our libraries.

CREATIVE CLIMATE ACTION FUND

Louth County Council were successful in their Creative Climate Action application and have been awarded €48,000 for their Louth Urban Food Sanctuary Project. The initiative aims to encourage communities to develop community garden space and to encourage backyard gardeners to grow more of their own produce, in particular those which have a high import rate. Produce being selected for growth include garlic, ginger, heritage peas and corn. The launch event was held on 13th October in Creative Spark, the main partner on the project. The project will run throughout 2024 with the next community seeding event to be held on 2nd March.



The Louth Urban Food Sanctuary Project Team at the launch in October 2023

CREATIVITY IN OLDER PERSONS

In partnership with Music and Health Ireland we were successful in being awarded €15,000 for the Creativity in Older persons project 'Teas, Chats and Tunes'. This initiative allowed musicians to work with residents in 3 selected nursing homes and their carers on developing the practice of using music to help better the residents wellbeing. The project worked with Curam Care Homes in Dundalk, Moorehall Lodge in Ardee and Moorehall Lodge in Drogheda. It focused on the dementia units in each facility, in particular how music can be used as a tool to calm and soothe the patient. The musicians who are all trained in working with patients with dementia, also provided workshops for the staff and carers of each facility to show them how they can use the basic instruments to help benefit the residents in their daily lives.

CREATIVE IRELAND 2023-2027

The new 5-year Culture and Creativity Strategy was launched in February and can be found on the createlouth website <https://createlouth.ie/louth-culture-and-creativity-strategy-2023-2027/>

Louth County Archives Service

The historical records preserved in Louth County Archives form the documentary heritage of the county encompassing many aspects of the lives of the people of Louth, portraying their authentic history, and operating as a vital element in their collective memory. This collective memory is of significance as it preserves identities and connects the past with the present while guiding future decisions. The County Archives continuously strives to care for, manage, and make available that memory.

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

The Archivist processed 175 enquiries in 2023. Research enquiries included those from private individuals, academics (historians, archaeologists, social scientists, etc.), professionals (solicitors, engineers, planning consultants, etc), family historians, students, and state agencies. The Archivist also supported staff in various Council sections with many business-related enquiries. Access to visitors in the Research Room was provided, as was access to information on archive collections through the service's website, online archive catalogue, and various archival portals.

ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

The identification and preservation of archives is a vital need for our society and the Archivist continued to process archive collections, manage the transfer of new archives (valuation records, pre-1963 planning files, agendas and Chief Executive orders, and financial records) and monitor the environmental conditions in which they are housed.

DIGITAL ACCESS TO CULTURAL MEMORY

The County Archivist along-with the Local Studies Librarian attended the Local Studies and Archives meeting held by Libraries Development in the LGMA at the end of March. The meeting discussed issues in relation to a national programme under the new public library strategy for increasing digital access to cultural heritage.

ARCHIVE DONATIONS

County Louth has a strong archival history, and the County Archives is indebted to those who have helped to preserve and expand our documentary heritage by donating local archives and records. Local archives may relate to any aspect of the history or development of our county and may include material from community groups, clubs and societies, national schools, individuals, or local businesses. Archives received during 2023 included the papers of the late Dermot Casey, who was originally from Mullacrew and had a strong interest in local history. His papers include information on Louth buildings, places, wells, families of interest, writings on the murders at Wildgoose Lodge, and copies of family members' letters to home, from people who had emigrated. Another accession that was found in a museum in England was the Omeath Mill book which lists the spending of Omeath Mill in 1805. It includes the names of suppliers of materials and the names of labourers and masons. These donations contribute towards the availability of valuable research sources on our county's heritage for present and future generations. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to deposit their collections in the County Archives so that they too will form part of our collective memory.

Date	Name	Charge	Amount
Sept 10	Carriage of Timber to from Newry	2	10 0
	Went to Deal to bring timber to	3	1 2 9
	Beam & Wrights	1	14 11
	Repairing Beam & more Wrights	1	0 0
	Ridge Piles		14 11
	Plates	4	10 0
	Plates - Connelly	3	8 3
	Matthew Hillin - mason	2	18 6
	Line from Mr. Barry	94 10	7 12 9
Oct 10	James Conwell - Mason	3	8 9
	Murtagh Dullaghan - Mason	1	14 11
	John Brilly - labourer		14 6
	Pat Gully - do		1 0
	Pat Blain - do		

Page from Omeath Mill book detailing names of masons and labourers, 1805

NATIONAL RETENTION POLICY RECORDS MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

The County Archivist is a member of the Local Government Management Agency led Records Management Working Group and continued to work on the revision of the National Retention Policy for local authority records during 2023. The retention policy is important in identifying that the appropriate records become archives and that correct retention recommendations are determined. To date, Health and Safety, Planning and Development, Housing, Procurement, Finance, Human Resources, Water, Transport and Infrastructure, Corporate, Enterprise and Economic Development, Environment and Information Technology have been completed, approved and issued out to local authorities, whilst Library, Community and Legal Services are currently in the final stages. The Archivist also advises staff on the preparation of records both for destruction and for transfer to the Records Centre and the County Archives.

'LASTING LEGACY' ONLINE EXHIBITION

As part of the Louth County Council Decade of Centenaries Programme 2023, Louth County Archives created an online exhibition called *'Lasting Legacy'* on the post-Truce period 1921 – 1923 that is available on <https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/services/archives/louth-1916-1923/>.

It was produced in collaboration with the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society, and it features noteworthy documents and photographs with explanatory text which narrates this turbulent stage of our history. It focuses on local events that occurred in County Louth and includes topics such as the Dáil courts, policing and justice, elections, infrastructure damage and compensation claims, the role of women, the 'Big House' burnings, and the border and customs controls.

The online exhibition follows the *'Dundalk Jail during the Civil War'* book that was produced in 2022 about events that led up to the 'Hole in the Wall' jail escape in July 1922. This book continues to be available from the County Archives with further copies being printed in 2023. The Decade of Centenaries Programme is funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media.



Photograph from the Lasting Legacy exhibition showing troops at customs hut on the Newry Road, 1923 (Source: Curran)

LOUTH HISTORY AND SOCIETY

Geography Publications with the support of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society and Louth County Council launched their book *Louth History and Society Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish County* in Dundalk on 23rd November 2023 in County Hall. The Drogheda event took place on 30th November 2023 in the Boyne Valley Hotel. The book is the 30th in the county *History and Society series* and is edited by Emeritus Professor William Nolan of University College Dublin. The Archivist was a contributor to the volume with a chapter on *Louth's Archives* documenting the rich resources of the County's archival treasures that span almost 400 years and illustrations of many records held in the County Archives were included in several of the volume's essays.

The Archivist spoke on the night of the launch in Dundalk and paid tribute to the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society and to the late Noel Ross, whom the book is dedicated to. For many years, Noel collected archives that illustrate every aspect of Louth history and society, many of which he deposited in the County Archives when it was established and encouraged others to do likewise, for their proper preservation, access for all and for the benefit of posterity. The Archivist told the audience that ‘archives have the power to narrate the record of our story and so to enable future generations to learn about their origins. History is constantly at work supporting the operation of our society and giving context and meaning to individual and community life. Without archives, we would have no comprehensible history and without history we would have no roots or future direction.’



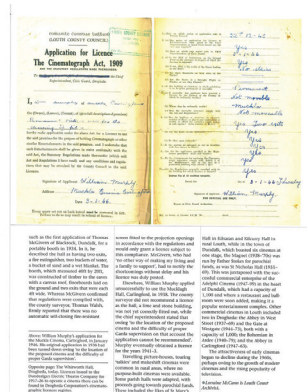
County Archivist Lorraine McCann speaking on the night of the launch of Louth History and Society (image courtesy of Cllr Maeve Yore)

HISTORY IRELAND

The November/December 2023 issue of the Local Archives series in the magazine History Ireland featured an article on cinema licence registers written by Archivist Lorraine McCann. The series seeks to raise awareness of collections held in local authority archive services and each issue features an archive document or collection from a different county archive. Several registers of licences spanning the 1917-1950 period created under the Cinematograph Act, 1909 are held in the County Archives (as well as material in the correspondence and engineering files and in numerous discussions documented in Council minute books).



50 HISTORY IRELAND November/December 2023



HISTORY IRELAND November/December 2023

History Ireland's 'Local Archives' series featuring Louth cinematographic licences in November/December

County Museum, Dundalk

Fundamental to the workings of any museum are the concepts of memory and legacy. As the Museum approaches its 30th anniversary in 2024 these tenets are central to all that the Museum collects and exhibits. Taken in that context three specific events capture these concepts: specifically:

- the exhibition on St. Brigid
- the handover and exhibition of the bell of the *SS Dundalk*
- the exhibition *From Small Acorns: the development of Women's Football in Ireland*

Opening at the end of January the exhibition on St. Brigid highlighted the enduring legacy of the Faughart-born Saint. Not only did the exhibition feature several variations of her cross, but it also highlighted the manner in which the cross continues to be visible in all facets of Irish life with organisations as diverse as RTÉ, the Nursing and Midwifery Board as well as Louth and Kildare GAA. Moreover, in light of the Brigid 1500 festival, artefacts associated with the first National Pilgrimage to Faughart with images of Frank Aiken and Eamon de Valera leading the vanguard of pilgrims are a strong reminder of the importance of collection in a museum context.

The importance of memory and legacy were never as powerfully articulated in mid-summer with a presentation of the bell of the *SS Dundalk* to the Museum. On the night of Monday October 14th, 2018, the *Dundalk* was homeward bound on the Irish Sea having sailed to Liverpool just two days' previously. It was intercepted and torpedoed by a German U-boat. It sank within 10 minutes with the loss of 20 lives. In the last number of years, the final resting place of the *Dundalk* was located by divers who brought back with them perhaps the most poignant memory of the ship - its bell. In a moving handover ceremony, in the presence of descendants of those involved in the events of that tragic October night, the bell was handed over to the Museum in accordance with Isle of Man Law by Michelle Haywood from Discover Diving. The bell is now on display in the Museum Reception, a

poignant reminder not only of the losses of that night but also of how a town and community responded and supported all of those affected by the loss of the *Dundalk*.

The principle of legacy was again evident in the exhibition *From Small Acorns ... - The Story of Women's Football in Ireland*. Over the course of a fortnight in August 1973 Stade de Reims, a French women's football club, toured Ireland playing seven matches against a variety of club and invitational sides. This tour was one of the single greatest factors in establishing the women's game here which ultimately culminated in the national team's participation in the Women's World Cup in 2023. Significantly the original tour included a match here in Louth as well as involving both players and administrators alike, a legacy that continues to reverberate to the present day.

Whilst these three events represent the realization of these principles, the Museum continues to collect, conserve and curate items in its possession. As ever, it owes a huge degree of gratitude to the members of the public who entrust it with items of personal significance. It is these items, coupled with their respective backstories, which ensure that the collection grows in importance and relevance. Over the course of the year the Museum has added artefacts from all aspects and walks of life ranging from wedding dresses to fossils; priests' vestments to trench art; President Biden's visit to toys; boxing kit from Deirdre Gogarty to signed hurls from the Poc Fada. In collecting these, coupled with the very many lectures and workshops (Hallowe'en, St. Brigid, etc.) that the Museum organizes, our work with schools through project work and guided walking tours; our engagements with retirement groups and history societies such as the Old Dundalk Society and the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society we continue to ensure that the memory of those who went before continues to reassure and inspire. As we enter our fourth decade of operation there can be no greater legacy.



A figure for our times – marking the legacy of St. Brigid



We will remember them – the bell from the SS Dundalk



Building on the legacy – three international jerseys – the growth of women's football



4

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Strategic Economic Development Directorate provides for the coordinated economic development of the county by planning for, initiating and managing projects that contribute positively to its ongoing development.

The Directorate has three key areas of responsibility:

- Economic Development, including the Local Enterprise Office, tourism services and work involving partners and funding outside the state, including European Affairs and the EU PEACE programme.



Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council



- Fire and Emergency Services, including the Fire Service, Civil Defence, and Building control, providing vital and lifesaving services to the public.
- Planning, the way in which we organise the built environment in our county. Planning, conservation works, heritage and the implementation of strategies which help to keep our citizens safe.

The Directorate is involved in the marketing and promotion of the Council as a business-friendly location and engages in strategic economic planning, which informs Louth County Council's policy decisions.



**PLANNING
SERVICES
AT A GLANCE**



**1,044 PLANNING
APPLICATIONS
RECEIVED**



**555 PLANNING
APPLICATIONS
SUBMITTED VIA THE
ePORTAL**



**319 PRE-PLANNING
APPLICATIONS RECEIVED**

Planning Section

ONLINE PLANNING

The online e-planning system went live in December 2022. During 2023, 53% of all planning applications received were via the online portal.

Customers who wish to lodge a planning application or make a submission to a particular application can use the e-planning portal and upload documents via this platform <https://planning.localgov.ie/en/local-government-ireland-planning-system>

A once-off registration on the portal is required for all users.

TWO YEAR REVIEW OF THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

As required under section 15(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), a Two-Year Report setting out the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the County Development Plan was prepared.

This report included an analysis of the rate of population and housing growth in the County, utilising the results from Census 2022. This analysis concluded that the Council has been successful in the implementation of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy as set out in the County Development Plan, with the population growth and residential construction taking place in the settlements designated for growth. The report also identified that significant progress has been made in the progression and delivery of enabling infrastructure in the County including the Drogheda Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) and Mount Avenue Link Road in Dundalk.

Progress was also made in creating attractive, sustainable communities through the ongoing progression of public realm projects and investment and delivery of social and community infrastructure. These are all important indicators in demonstrating

the successful implementation of national and regional planning policy.

PRE-DRAFT ISSUES PAPER DUNDALK LOCAL AREA PLAN

As part of the preparation of the Dundalk Local Area Plan a Pre-Draft Issues Paper was published. The intention of the Issues Paper was to encourage public participation in the plan-making process and give people an opportunity to comments on issues they feel are important in the future growth and development of the town. This includes issues such as housing, the economy, social and community facilities, the environment, and transport.

In collaboration with University College Dublin (UCD) a workshop and neighbourhood walk were also organised. This was aimed at improving public participation in the Strategic Environmental Assessment process, with the workshop and neighbourhood walk enabling people to highlight any environmental considerations that should be taken into account in the preparation of the SEA.

44 submissions were received in response to the Issues Paper. These submissions will be considered in the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan.



Community Mapping Workshop

LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEME 2023

Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) enables the Planning Authority when granting permission under Section 34 of the Act to include conditions requiring the payment of a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the Planning Authority that is intended will be provided by or on behalf of the Local Authority. A Draft Development Contribution Scheme for the County (excluding the area covered by the North Drogheda – R132 to Dublin-Belfast Railway Line Development Contribution Scheme) was placed on display in July 2023. 18 submissions were received in response to the consultation. Following the preparation and consideration of a Chief Executive's Report the Scheme was adopted by the members on the 18th September 2023.

RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) is a new tax that seeks to activate zoned and serviced land for residential purposes. It was introduced by the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under Section 80 of the Finance Act 2021.

The role of the Planning Authority is to prepare maps that will show the residential and mixed-use land the tax will relate to (i.e. zoned and serviced land), including where relevant the date that the lands satisfied the criteria for inclusion in the tax. These maps take the form of a Draft and Supplemental Map identifying land which is considered to be in scope for the tax measure. The Louth County Council final RZLT Map for 2024 was published on 1st December 2023. The Residential Zoned Land Tax will be charged annually from 1st February 2025 onwards. The tax will be administered by the Revenue Commissioners and landowners will have to register for the tax. Homeowners will not be liable for the tax where houses are included in the maps.

There will be a chance to make submissions in respect of land on the draft revised final map for 2025, during 2024. A draft revised final RZLT map for 2025 will be published by 1st February 2024.

Planning - Enforcement

The Planning indicators are given below in relation to Enforcement complaints regarding unauthorised developments for the year January - December 2023.

Description	Enforcement in relation to unauthorised development
Number of Planning Enforcement Complaints Investigated	228
Number of Planning Enforcement cases received which didn't require follow up	0
Number of cases closed/resolved through negotiation.	108
Number of Warning letters issued	179
Number of Enforcement Notices issued.	11
Number of cases referred for legal proceedings	10
Number of Injunctions	0
Number of Prosecutions	0

The Planning indicators listed below are in relation to Notices Issued under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 for the period January – December 2023.

Description	Enforcement in relation to Derelict Sites 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2022
No. of Derelict Sites Files Opened	72
Number of Section 11 Notices – Directing Owner to carry out work	2
Number of Section 8 Notices – Intention to Enter on DS Register	40
Number of Section 8 Notices – (Entry on DS Register)	29
Number of cases referred for legal proceedings	Nil
Number of sites removed from the Derelict Sites Register	1
No. of DS Levies Raised	Nil
Number of Prosecutions	Nil
No. of Files Closed	23

PLANNING - ENFORCEMENT - DANGEROUS BUILDINGS

The Planning indicators listed below are in relation to Notices Issued under the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964 for the period January - December 2023.

Description	Enforcement in relation to Dangerous Structures January to December 2022
Number of Dangerous Structures Files opened	46
Number of Section 3 (1)(a) Notices – Directing Owner to carry out work	27
Number of Section 3(2)(b) Notices – LCC carry out works	1
Number of Section 2 Notices – Dangerous Place	Nil
Number of Dangerous Structures Entered on the DS Register	24
Number of cases referred for legal proceedings	4
Number of Prosecutions	Nil
Number of Dangerous Structures Removed from the DS Register	6
Number of cases closed	14

SHORT TERM LETS

Louth County Council had 19 cases under investigation at the end of December 2023 for breaches of the planning legislation contained in the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2019 relating to the short term letting of residential properties in rent pressure zones.

- No Notification Letters were issued during 2023 informing property owners of their legislative responsibilities in this regard. 7 No. Form 15s (annual notifications) were received in 2023
- 12 Planning applications were received in 2023, of which 2 were subsequently granted Planning Permission and 4 were refused. 6 applications were deemed to be invalid
- 1 Warning Letter issued / re-issued in 2023, and this subject case is still open

- 5 Enforcement Notices issued in 2023 and all 5 of these cases are still open; 1 case is the subject of a Retention application which was subsequently refused Permission

TAKING IN CHARGE

The planning section continued to work on resolving remaining unfinished housing developments in the County in collaboration with Uisce Eireann and other sections of the Council. There were 3 estates taken in charge in 2023. There are currently 23 on-going estates which are progressing through the varying stages of the Taking in charge process.

LARGE SCALE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Strategic Housing Development legislation was repealed and replaced with the Planning and Development (Amendment) (Large-Scale Residential Development) Act in December 2021. This, essentially, reverts the function of determining large scale residential development applications back to the local

authority. There are three main stages in dealing with such applications: - Pre-planning (S. 247 consultation), LRD Meeting following which an Opinion issues and finally the application. The Opinion must issue within 4 weeks following the holding of the LRD meeting. The table below sets out the extent of pre-planning and Opinions that have issued for these types of development.

Application	Date received	Location	No. Units	Status Stage 1-4			
				S.247 Consultation	S.32 LRD Meeting	LRD Opinion	Planning Application
LRD001	17/02/22	Haggardstown, Dublin Road, Dundalk	205	Y	Y	Issued 23/8/22	Received/ Granted 23/64
LRD002	25/07/22	Dawsons Demense, Ardee	136	Y	Y	Issued 04/4/23	Received/ Appealed 2360237
LRD003	01/02/22	Land to the north of Boyne Road, Drogheda	192	Y	Y	Issued 26/9/22	Received/ Granted 2360053
LRD004	13/09/22	Muirhevanamor Dundalk	115	Y	Y	Issued 21/2/23	
LRD007	03/11/22	Lisdoon, Dundalk	211	Y	Y	Issued 14/12/23	
LRD008	22/12/22	Haggardstown, Dundalk	517	Y	Y	Issued 25/5/23	Received 2360476
LRD009	16/05/23	Hill Street, Dundalk	180	Y	N		
LRD011	29/06/23	Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda	121	Y	N		
LRD012	04/07/23	Hill Street, Dundalk	318	Y	N		
LRD013	05/07/23	Rábháil, Dunleer	105	Y	N		
LRD014	18/09/23	Old Slane Road, Mell/ Tullyallen, Drogheda	237	Y	N		
LRD015	16/10/23	Muirhevanamor, Dundalk	113	Y	N		

BUILT HERITAGE INVESTMENT SCHEME AND HISTORIC STRUCTURES FUND 2023

Louth County Council received 25 applications under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, with a further 8 applications under the Historic Structures Fund in 2023.

Funding of €134,806.97 was shared between seventeen applicants under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme. This comprised of, Salterstown Thatch (rethatching of front roof); Whiterath Cottage (repairs to internal walls); Collon Parish Church (window restoration); Smarmore Castle (repair/replacement of sliding sash windows); Kildemock House, Ardee (repairs/replacement to sliding sash windows); St. Peter's Place, Drogheda (repair/replacement of sliding sash windows), Scarlet Street, Drogheda (repair/replacement of sliding sash windows); Dundalk Grammar School (stone renewal/repair and mask stop repairs); St. Mary's Church, Ardee (repair/replacement of rainwater goods); Former Parochial House, Dunleer (repair/replacement of sliding sash windows); The Sycamores, Drogheda (roof repair, structures and coverings including leadwork); Castle Road, Dundalk (repointing works and sash window repairs); Outbuilding Canonstown (roof repair, structures and coverings including leadwork); Palace Street, Drogheda (roof repair, structures and coverings including leadwork); Kelso Terrace., Dundalk (repair/replacement of sliding sash windows); Castle Road, Dundalk (repair/replacement of front door); Peter Street, Drogheda (repair/replacement of sliding sash windows).

Funding of €203,426.70 was drawn down under the Historic Structures Fund 2023, covering three projects, under the 2023 scheme, at the Widow's Houses Castellingham, Rampark Thatch Jenkinstown and Connell & Co., Dundalk. Two further, two-year projects (commenced in 2022), completed in 2023 were also drawn down for works undertaken at the Foresters Hall Dundalk and a re-thatching project at Carrickadoon.



Salterstown Thatch (during)



Salterstown Thatch (after)



Collon Church North Window re-glazed and re-leaded



Castle Road Chimney (before)



Castle Road Chimney repairs (complete)

Economic Development

The Economic Development Unit supports the co-ordinated economic development of County Louth by planning for, initiating and managing projects that contribute positively to the County's ongoing economic development. The unit is involved in the marketing and promotion of the County as a business-friendly location and engages in strategic economic planning which informs Louth County Council's policy decisions. This work is important to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived from economic and employment development decisions associated with major infrastructure.

LOUTH ECONOMIC FORUM (LEF)

The forum, established in 2009, comprises the business sector of County Louth, Local Authority Management and all of the State Agencies that interact with those generating economic activity in the county and is a one stop shop for potential investors. The award winning forum continues to build partnerships and fosters a culture of joined-up thinking to proactively facilitate further economic development and job creation in Louth, focusing on key areas including Tourism & Heritage, Foreign Direct Investment, Indigenous Industry and Education & Training. Mr Gerry Murphy took on the role as Chairperson in late 2022, replacing the previous Chair, Mr Martin Cronin.

With the move in direction on some funding opportunities to a more regional basis, the Forum continued to incorporate a regional focus on meetings with presentations being given by Regional representatives, thus ensuring stakeholders in County Louth are aware of the opportunities which are available at an early stage. In 2023, this included a workshop facilitated by Francis Verling which looked at the key challenges and opportunities for the Forum over the next 5 years; a presentation by KPMG on the incoming Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029 with an update later given by Finbar Gethins, SEO, Louth County Council on the pre-draft goals, objectives and actions of the Plan; a

presentation by Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan, President of DkIT, on the current status and future prospects of the Institute; an update from Amanda Smyth, Program Manager for the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) focusing on the opportunities available, key actions planned and next steps to progress same; and finally a presentation in late 2023 from DkIT on their Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

DUBLIN BELFAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (DBEC)

A DBEC Directors' meeting was held on 6th July 2023. A presentation on the DBEC work plan was given by the Programme Manager Amanda Smyth and an update given on the Feasibility Study for Innovation Hubs.

SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENT GRANT SCHEME

The Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme which forms part of Louth County Council's suite of business incentives was available to local retailers and business owners in the towns of Ardee, Drogheda and Dundalk to continue to help enhance shop fronts in the town centres. In 2023, the scheme was extended to areas not covered by the existing scheme via an Expression of Interest form. 14 Expressions of Interest were received with all applicants notified that they were eligible to apply for funding under the main scheme. In total, 42 applications were received under the scheme.

STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME – OMEATH

24 applications were received by Louth County Council under the Streetscape Enhancement Scheme with 20 applications completed to grant stage. Work was undertaken during 2023, the result of which has had a positive visual impact on the overall appearance of Omeath.

A report on same was submitted to the Department of Rural & Community Development in October 2023.

DELEGATIONS FROM ABROAD

In January 2023, Louth County Council welcomed to County Hall, the French Ambassador to Ireland, H.E. Ambassador Vincent Guérend, and in September 2023, the Council welcomed a nine-person delegation from Jinan, China. The delegation was led by Mr Li Kaisen, Deputy Minister of Organisation Department of Jinan Municipal Party Committee. The purpose of the visit was to exchange economic trade and promotion policies.



Mr Zhang Lei, Deputy Director, Talent at Work Division, Jinan Municipal Party Committee; Mr Li Kaisen, Deputy Minister, Organisation Dept of Jinan Municipal Committee with Chief Executive, Joan Martin

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT SCHEME (BIDS) - DUNDALK

A proposal was received in March 2023 from Dundalk BIDS Company to extend the term of the Business Improvement District Scheme for a further period of five years from January 2024 to December 2028. No submissions were received following a period on public display.

A ratepayer plebiscite was held with the following results: number of votes in favour of the proposal for a continuation of the Dundalk BID Scheme, 569, and number of votes against the proposal for a continuation of the Dundalk BID Scheme, 37.

The proposal was approved by the members at the September Council Meeting with the extension of the Scheme coming into force from 1st January, 2024.

FESTIVAL FUNDING

Louth County Council received 22 applications under the 2023 Festival Grant Initiative which was open to local and community events to benefit the local economy and tourism in the County. 18 applications received funding and 4 were unsuccessful.

8 applications were received under the Large Festival/ Participative Event Programme 2023. 4 applications received funding and 4 were unsuccessful.

Louth County Council also provided funding for the following in 2023:

- Sponsorship of the Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee St. Patrick's Day Parades
- Sponsorship of the Cross Border Tourism Conference 2023
- Sponsorship of the Drogheda Sail Training Bursary which celebrated its 10th year in 2023
- Sponsorship of the Carlingford Lough Cross Border Summer Business Cruise 2023
- Sponsorship of the Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer School 2023

- Contribution towards completion of the Boyne Valley Camino Project
- Sponsorship of the Omeath Halloween Fireworks Display
- Contribution to the Dundalk Shop Local Gift Voucher Scheme
- Contribution towards the design & print of Carlingford Lough Heritage Trust Maps
- Sponsorship of Rás Tailteann International Cycle Race – Blackrock Final Stage
- Sponsorship of Irish Legends Tour 2023 – Seapoint Golf Links
- Sponsorship of the Best Tourism Business Award at the 2023 North East Business Excellence Awards
- Contribution to Drogheda Lú Festival of Light 2023
- Contributions towards Ardee, Dundalk & Drogheda Christmas Lights 2023



Launch of Drogheda Sail Training Bursary 2023



Frostival Festival of Light 2023

Tourism

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

As part of our collaboration with Fáilte Ireland on the various tourism projects, Fáilte Ireland engaged a Digital Specialist to undertake a review of our tourism destination to look at 1) digital orientation and 2) review of the tourism websites. Arising out of the findings and recommendations, work on the upgrading of the websites was undertaken in 2023.

Following on from the tourist itineraries developed in 2022, a number of new itineraries were published on the Visit Louth website in 2023 including 'The Biden Bucket List' to capitalise on the visit of US President Joe Biden to County Louth and the 'Legendary Golf Courses in County Louth' to coincide with the 2023 Irish Legends Tour being hosted at Seapoint Golf Club.

Visit Louth, together with sea louth, had a very well received stand at the Holiday World Show, Dublin in January 2023. The stand was available to tourism providers and trade within County Louth giving them an opportunity to promote their businesses and attract visitors to the county.



Visit Louth/Sea Louth stand at the Holiday World Show 2023

A delegation from Louth County Council travelled to New York to meet representatives from Tourism Ireland and take part in the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade. They also attended a series of events where County Louth was promoted, including meetings with IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Irish Consulate and the Irish Ambassador to the UN.



Louth County Council Delegation meeting Tourism Ireland

Louth County Council were delighted to be one of the sponsors of the Irish Legends Tour which took place in June 2023 at Seapoint Golf links. Some well-known celebrities descended on County Louth to play in the celebrity pro-am. Visit Louth / sea louth and Boyne Valley Flavours had a stand at the tournament to welcome players and visitors to County Louth.



Susan Murphy, Daniel O'Donnell & Colette Moss at the Visit Louth/Sea Louth Stand



Emma Gill, Food Development Officer at the Boyne Valley Flavour Stand

Visit Louth and sea louth had a stand at the Dundalk Agricultural Show in June to promote all the county has to offer. There was great footfall on the day with over 5,000 in attendance.

'SEA LOUTH' SCENIC SEAFOOD TRAIL



The tourism section continued to actively promote this tourism initiative throughout 2023 with a number of blogs published and an ongoing social media campaign on X, Facebook & Instagram. The trail showcases Louth's picturesque coastline and locally sourced seafood and aims to drive footfall into our restaurants and eateries which serve good quality seafood dishes, and to also enhance the visitor experience while in County Louth thus increasing dwell time.

The RTÉ1 television series Nationwide broadcast a full programme dedicated to sea louth on Wednesday, 31st May at 7pm. It showcased highlights of all there is to see, eat and admire about County Louth, featuring a mix of our seafood producers, restaurants and stamp collections points.



Filming of Nationwide

Following on from the broadcast, all the tourist offices and many of the stamp collection points reported a large increase in new passport and stamp collections.

The newly appointed Food Development Officer continued to work with some new prospective restaurants and producers to become part of the trail; and has also been speaking to the stamp collection points, Tourist offices and producers to get feedback on how the trail is working for their economic benefit.

Failte Ireland organised a FAM trip to Carlingford in October 2023 for a group of German journalists with welcome packs provided by sea louth.

In November 2023, sea louth was shortlisted in the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards in the 'Supporting Tourism' category.

ANCIENT DESTINATION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (DEDP)

The Louth and Meath DEDP Steering Committee met in February to review 2022 and agree priorities for 2023. The 2022 review was published and launched at an Ireland's Ancient East Regional Industry Day held in The Knightsbrook Hotel, Trim.

TÁIN TRAIL

Fáilte Ireland has engaged the Paul Hogarth Company to review the current Táin Trail route and to provide recommendations on opportunities to reimagine it into an internationally compelling experiential route that engages local communities and visitors. They are working with the local authorities in the Táin Trail region on same. Public consultation commenced with a drop-in event on Friday 6th October in Dundalk Town Hall. A draft plan is being prepared at present.

BRIGID 1500: LOUTH BIRTHPLACE OF BRIGID

Following a competitive tender process, Creative Spark were awarded the 'Artist in the Community' for the Brigid 1500: Louth Birthplace of Brigid programme. The programme saw 4 artists work with a number of community groups and schools during 2023 conducting a variety of workshops to develop a series of art works which will be produced and exhibited at a unique exhibition in January/February 2024 as part of the Brigid 1500 commemorations.

A newly designed St. Brigid's Cloak was launched in Dundalk Library in May 2023. The cloak was designed and facilitated by artist Shauna Swords while working with St. Brigid's School, Ard Easmuinn, Dundalk. The work involved meticulously creating individual impressions on hundreds of specially cut copper foil circles. Each circle was hand stenciled and then the circles were stitched and glued together creating



Launch of Brigid 1500: Louth Birthplace of Brigid

strands of vibrant and detailed work which all come together to make the life-sized cloak. It toured the County's libraries and a number of workshops were planned to coincide with same.

The full programme of events for the Brigid 1500: Louth Birthplace of Brigid was launched to a full foyer of invited guests on 19th October 2023 in County Hall, Dundalk. As part of the programme, the 'Brigid 1500 Retail Window Decoration Scheme' and the 'Brigid 1500 Arts and Creativity Community Grant Scheme' were also launched.

BOYNE VALLEY CAMINO – SPANISH DELEGATION VISIT

A delegation from the Galicia region in Spain, including their President visited Drogheda on 21st September to experience the Boyne Valley Camino. The delegation visited many points of the Boyne Valley Camino which is part of the Celtic Camino route affiliated to the Camino de Santiago in Spain.



Camino Delegation in the Drogheda Tourist Office

BOYNE VALLEY TOURISM

Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2024-2030 Consultation

Surveys were undertaken throughout September at the Ploughing Championships, Hill of Tara, Trim Castle, Bru na Boinne & Old Mellifont Abbey with 350 surveys completed. Industry in-person consultation took place on 14th September 2023 at the Ardboyne Hotel, Navan and Monasterboice Inn, Drogheda; with online consultation provided for those who missed the in-person consultation and phonecalls to those who missed both.

Public Consultation (3 Sessions) took place on Friday, 6th October 2023. Individual sessions were held with MCC/LCC Climate Action Teams, Biodiversity, Heritage, FI Climate and Inclusion Managers and further consultations with Meet in Ireland, Travel Buyers and ITOA.

Marketing and Promotion Highlights

The Discover Boyne Valley website continues to consistently perform well with in excess of 400K pageviews in 2023. The website is updated with content daily and now has a total of 18 Boyne Valley itineraries and 37 consumer ezines. 2 tiktok videos and 2 blogs are posted per week. Google Maps was added to the website itineraries.

A monthly trade ezine commenced in May 2023 and Google Display ads, Facebook and Instagram ad campaigns take place around key holiday times.

A PR Virtual Journalist Event was held in February with 15 national journalists and influencers in attendance. The Media Event included a presentation and quiz and a voucher was sent to each journalist to invite them to visit the Boyne Valley. The new #MyBoyneValley videos were launched at the event. These videos

were produced with the support of Fáilte Ireland and supplemented by Louth & Meath County Councils and feature a personal tour of the Boyne Valley by the industry.

Two Group Press visits took place in 2023 with The Irish Times, Irish Independent, The Star, Belfast Live, Tara Povey influencer, Farmers Journal and The Herald. There were individual press visits from the Irish Daily Star, Sunday Independent and Ireland of the Welcomes.

The Discover Boyne Valley brochures were distributed at Dublin Airport, to member businesses & Tourist Offices and at conferences. Conferences attended in 2023 included the Balmoral Show, Bord Bia Bloom and the Holiday World Shows in Dublin & Belfast.

Networking & Training

25 businesses attended a Familiarisation (Fam) Trip in January 2023 in Drogheda. The trip included Droichead Arts Centre, the new urban art trail DRAWDA, a talk from Droichead Arts Centre and Love Drogheda BIDS, Scholars Townhouse with a talk from Scholars and Boyne Valley Trails, Listoke Gin School, Bective Tearooms and The Zone. A second Fam Trip was organised in March 2023.

Boyne Valley Tourism brought 25 Tour Operators to the destination in March 2023.

Businesses were invited to 2 networking events in February & April 2023 to discuss challenges faced - a referral document was created for them to give to guests.

LOUTH/MEATH FOOD DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Boyne Valley - Centre for Food Culture Project Manager / Food Development Officer

Meath County Council, together with Louth County Council, ran open competitions for the roles of Boyne Valley - Centre for Food Culture Project Manager and Food Development Officer.

Ella Ryan was appointed Centre for Food Culture Project Manager and Emma Gill commenced as Food Development Officer in May 2023.

Boyne Valley Food Strategy

The Food Development Officer has been working with Mark O'Connell of Repucon Consulting in relation to the new 5-year strategy, which included circulating surveys, facilitating and attending consultations with members and steering group committee members.

Consultation on the Boyne Valley Food Strategy took place at Slane Castle in November 2023. This gave an opportunity for attendees to have an input into the vision for developing the new Strategy.

Boyne Valley Bites

The Boyne Valley Bites dining initiative was announced on 28th August, 2023. The objective is to encourage eateries in Drogheda, Trim/Athboy and Kells to offer a Boyne Valley Bite on their menu during the weekend(s) of local festivals taking place in their town (Lú Festival of Light, Púca and Samhain). Workshops were held in Drogheda and Navan with chefs Tara Walker and Conor Halpenny showcasing how local food and drink could be highlighted. A recipe pack and producer directory of local craft drinks and food has been produced to share with the trade. This campaign is being supported by Fáilte Ireland.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AND PLANS

Destination Towns Capital Investment Programme

The wayfinding totems, engraved paving stones and bronze stud inlays were installed across Drogheda during 2023. This tourism investment displays historical information, maps of easily accessed locations within walking distance of the streets, shopping and parking information. The Council are in discussions with Fáilte Ireland on a launch event to take place in 2024.



Wayfinding Totem at Millmount, Drogheda

Urban Animation - Lú Festival of Light, Drogheda

The 2023 festival launched on 27th October and ran until 4th November. In 2023, there were spectacular audio-visual shows at St. Peter's Church on West Street, The Old Abbey, St. Laurence's Gate, a light installation at the former Methodist Church Garden on St. Laurence's Street and a water screen audio-visual show at St. Dominic's Bridge. In addition to the

shows, there was on-street entertainment with fire breathers, facepainting etc.

As part of the funding received from Fáilte Ireland for Urban Animation, an installation was placed in the Drogheda Tourist Office (The Tholsel). This legacy installation will show highlights of the festival to date and is available to view during the Tourist Office opening hours.



The Old Abbey, Drogheda during the Lú Festival of Light 2023



Colette Moss, Louth County Council & Colin Hindle Fáilte Ireland at the Legacy Installation

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Shared Island Development Fund

A consultant was appointed in 2023 to carry out a Feasibility Study to develop the greater Carlingford Lough region incorporating the Cooley Peninsula and Mourne/Gullion Area. Work on same has commenced. The report is complete and was submitted to the Department of the Taoiseach in November 2023.

Night-Time Economy Adviser for Drogheda

Louth County Council are one of nine Local Authorities taking part in the pilot scheme appointing a Night Time Economy (NTE) Adviser. Following a competitive process, Mr Mark Davies commenced in this role in August 2023. Louth County Council was the first Local Authority to have their NTE Adviser in place.

The NTE Advisor was invited to the statewide Night Time Economy Taskforce on 13th December in Dublin. Co-ordinated by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media, the Taskforce aims to foster vibrant and inclusive night-time economies in town and city centres still recovering from the impact of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crises. This marked the first time areas involved in the Night-Time Economy Adviser pilot, including Drogheda, had been invited to take part in discussions at a national level. Discussions on this occasion centred on evening and overnight transportation, upcoming changes to licensing laws and a statewide noise mitigation grant for late night venues. Going forward this platform will provide an excellent opportunity for the Night-Economy Advisers to regularly network with key stakeholders at a national level.

Peace IV Programme



Peace IV projects have been supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB) and supported locally by Louth County Council and Louth Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Match-funding has been provided by The Executive Office in Northern Ireland and the Department for Rural and Community Development in Ireland.

The last theme to finish from PEACE IV was that of Shared Spaces, namely the works at Peters Hill, Drogheda, and the works at the Muirhevnamor Community Centre.

SHARED SPACES

Peters Hill, Drogheda

The Artwork "Inspired to Meet" was installed at Peters Hill in March 2023.



'Inspired To Meet' artwork installed at Peters Hill

A successful opening event was held at Peters Hill Drogheda in May 2023 and was attended by the LCC Cathaoirleach Conor Keelan, Mayor of Drogheda Michelle Hall, the Chief Executive Louth County Council Joan Martin, a representative of SEPUB,



The Opening Event at Peters Hill Drogheda



The Opening Event at Peters Hill Drogheda



St. Peters Hill Shared Space in use by the Loving Life Choir

members of the Peace IV partnership Committee and local Protestant and Catholic clergy.

Following a speech, the plaque was unveiled by Cathaoirleach Conor Keelan. This was followed by performances from the Living Life Choir and local dance troupe Kidkast. The opening event was followed by light refreshments in the nearby St. Peters Church of Ireland Parish Hall.

Throughout the year, it became apparent how useful this space was to public life in Drogheda as groups began using it as a meeting point and event space.

Upgrades to the meeting place were carried out via the installation of new seating, to allow for more meeting and usage options.



Muirhevnamór Community Centre Extension, Dundalk

BUILDING WORKS WERE COMPLETED AT THE MUIRHEVNAMOR COMMUNITY CENTRE.

A successful opening event was held at Muirhevnamor Community Centre in June. This opening event was attended by LCC Cathaoirleach Conor Keelan, Chief Executive Joan Martin and members of the PEACE IV Partnership Committee. Entertainment was provided by the Top Theatre School, Dundalk. Following this, the plaque was unveiled by Cathaoirleach Conor



Members of the Top Theatre School performing at the Opening of the Muirhevnamor Community Centre Extension

Keelan. Light refreshments were provided as part of a gathering in the new extension and shared space.

WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL, DUNDALK

There was a wreath laying ceremony and event held at the PEACE IV Shared Space, the Dundalk War Memorial. This demonstrates continued and sustained use of the site as a Shared Space and reflects the value of the site for the town and communities.



Wreath Laying Ceremony at the PEACE IV War Memorial in Dundalk

PEACE IV CLOSING EVENT

A celebration event for all PEACE IV projects was held in June at Muirhevnamor Community Centre. This event was to acknowledge the work and outcomes of all 16 projects carried out, covering the three themes of PEACE IV. Speakers included LCC Cathaoirleach Conor Keelan, Chief Executive Joan Martin, a representative from SEUBP and programme managers from some of the projects. There was also a video message from Minister Heather Humphreys and the launch of a brochure which catalogued all the projects that were part of the PEACE IV Programme. Musical entertainment was provided by Music Generation Louth with a harp performance while M.A.D. Youth Theatre provided a performance of An Táin.



Councillors and members of the PEACE IV partnership gather at the celebration event for PEACE IV



M.A.D. Youth Theatre perform as part of the celebration event for PEACE IV

PEACE PLUS Programme 2021-2027



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Skemes Boadie



PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government

PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR THE PEACEPLUS ACTION PLAN

Arising from the public consultations to ensure co-design of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan in late 2022 and early 2023, hundreds of concepts were received from members of the public. These were filtered and sifted in Phase Two Consultations and assessed for eligibility and feasibility by consultants Blu Zebra as part of the stage two consultation process.

The Action Plan is due for submission in March 2024.

PEACEPLUS PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership continued to meet regularly to ensure the successful creation of the Action Plan and was instrumental in the co-design process.



Attendees at Phase II PEACEPLUS Consultations

Heritage Office

The Heritage Office acts as a contact point and resource for those with an interest in or responsibility in relation to Louth's heritage, as well as directly running projects to protect and enhance the county's heritage and providing support, including funding, for others' projects.

The Heritage Officer liaises with colleagues across the Council, in terms of planning referrals, flood defence and other works, tourism development and community projects, and also answers many queries from elected members, the general public, other organisations (including agencies of central government) and voluntary groups, such as Tidy Towns.

Many successful projects were run by or funded through the Heritage Office of Louth County Council in 2023, thanks to the increased availability of external funding from central government.

COMMUNITY MONUMENTS FUND

Conservation works on Glaspistol towerhouse castle, near Clogherhead, were held up because its owner was unable to engage a bat expert. The same issue held up works at Taaffe's Castle towerhouse in Carlingford. Permission was obtained to defer parts of these works into the first half of 2024, with partial drawdown of funding in 2023. The conservation of these towerhouses will be multi-annual projects, assuming the continuation of funding support from the Community Monuments Fund (CMF).

LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FUND

Greatly enhanced funding was obtained for the expansion of the Little Tern Conservancy project at Baltray. The funding allowed the Louth Nature Trust to increase its staffing, leading to another successful year for the fledging of little tern chicks.

Grants were received for the erection of nesting boxes for swifts in Drogheda and for the Louth Barn Owl project for the making, erecting and monitoring of nest boxes for barn owls throughout County Louth.

Contractors completed a plan for the management of public access in relation to the need for ongoing cattle grazing on the Council's nature reserve at Clogherhead.

LIAISON AND CO-ORDINATION

The Heritage Officer continued to act as the regional co-ordinator for the annual CoastWatch survey and to promote Biodiversity Week in May and Heritage Week in August.

He also took part in community and tourism consultations, including on the Táin Trail, and chaired a session at the annual Cross-Border Tourism Conference hosted by Dundalk Chamber of Commerce.

The Local Enterprise Office

The Local Enterprise Office is a First Stop Shop for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in County Louth. LEO Louth promotes entrepreneurship, fosters start-ups, and develops existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation, and provides a wide range of accessible high quality supports for businesses and start-ups. Funding for LEO Louth is provided by Enterprise Ireland and is included in the 2023 Budget.

LEO Louth provides local businesses with information advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial supports. It engages with over 2000 local businesses annually and has a portfolio of clients which the LEO has provided direct grant assistance to in recent years. In turn these businesses increased their employment levels by a gross figure of 212 and net 26 jobs in the past year.

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

During 2023, LEO Louth continued to provide financial supports to businesses included Trading Online Vouchers, Microfinance Ireland's Loan products and mainstream Grant Aid to manufacturing and internationally tradable service businesses with potential to export.

- **12** loan applications were advanced to Microfinance Ireland.
- **18** grant applications were received: Feasibility Study (4), Priming (1), Business Expansion (3) and Technical Assistance Export Grants (10) were approved with a total approved value of €239,846.40.

EXPERT ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Business Training

The training schedule for 2023 continued virtually.

- LEO Louth hosted a total of **47** business training and development programmes with **970** participants.
- **4** Trading Online Workshops were delivered to **126** participants.
- LEO Louth hosted 9 Start Your Own Business programmes which were delivered to 135 people looking to establish a new business.

Business Monitoring

In total, **523** mentor assignments were completed during the year, whereby small business owners were matched with a business expert on a one-to-one basis. This was against an annual target of **390**.

This was made up of:

- 317** General Business Advice Clinics
- 8** Financial Business Clinics
- 198** 1 to 1 Mentoring

Food Sector Supports

LEO continued to support food businesses under the joint Louth-Meath Food Strategy through its work with the Boyne Valley Flavours initiative.

Emma Gill was appointed as the Food Business Development Officer and works between Louth and Meath LEO's.

Food Starter Programme

3 Louth businesses took part in the Regional Food Starter Programme in 2023. The event offered participants a unique opportunity to engage in virtual sales meetings with senior buyers throughout Ireland and the EU.

Food Academy

Successful applicants for the Board Bia/Supervalu Food Academy Programme were informed in 2023 and The Prism Creative World were accepted onto the programme.

SUPPORTING RETAIL

Look for Local /Shop Local Campaign

LEO continued to promote #ShopLocal #LookforLocal throughout 2023, and launched a shop local Christmas Campaign, 'Look For Local - Look For Louth' which generated extensive coverage in local press, radio and social media in the weeks leading to Christmas. The very popular LEO Christmas video from last year featuring business owners and images of the major shopping areas was again very well received in 2023.

As part of the 2023 Christmas Campaign LEO pushed for new businesses to join Louth's online shopping directory which now has a wide range of local businesses and their eCommerce websites listed. This is available at www.localenterprise

Photo 1 refers - In Pic (L-R) Cathaoirleach of Louth County Council Cllr Paula Butterly Smith, Sarah Mallon of Local Enterprise Office Louth and Patricia McDonnell, Chair of Ardee Traders at the launch of Look For Local campaign.

PRODUCTIVITY & COMPETITIVENESS SUPPORTS

GREEN for Business

In 2023, 11 applications were approved under the Green for Business Programme.

This support offers business access to an environmental consultant to complete an audit on their business to help them developing a 'greener' policy which will offer many benefits to business, including:

- Increased cost savings
- Improved resource efficiency (for example: using less energy, water, and materials)
- Reduced environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions
- Opportunities for higher and additional value on products and services
- Increased access to customers, improved corporate image and reputation.
- Increased resilience to climate change impacts

LEAN for Business

In 2023, 7 applications were approved under the Lean for Business Programme.

Lean For Business is designed to encourage clients to adopt Lean business principles in their organisations to increase performance and competitiveness. Lean is for all companies, regardless of sector – it is not just for manufacturing companies.

Lean tools and techniques helping companies across to address competitiveness issues within their businesses by building the capability of their people to identify problems, improve operations and create a more innovative organisation. In a nutshell, Lean is about doing things quicker, better and saving costs. Lean strives to remove waste and to continually improve a company.

Companies who have successfully engaged in LEAN business programmes recorded significant gains, including:

- Productivity increases 20%.
- Sales increases 40%
- Delivery adherence improvements 43%
- Product & Service quality improvements 30%
- Employment increases 11%

Digital Start

In 2023, 1 application was approved under the Digital Start (Pilot) Programme.

Digital for Business is a pilot initiative from the Local Enterprise Office designed to give Local Enterprise Office funded clients that digital edge - from optimising processes to delivering a seamless digital customer experience, the aim is to help businesses prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the business.

Digital for Business provides support to obtain digital strategy, technical and/or advisory services for eligible businesses. Our expert digital consultants help to develop a unique digital strategy that transforms businesses by identifying where a business is on their digital business journey, developing a digital adaptation plan based on their identified need and assisting them to implement their digital plan.

Trading Online Voucher Scheme

In 2023, **36** Trading Online Vouchers were approved with a total value of **€86156.36**.

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is designed to assist small businesses with up to 10 employees to trade more online, boost sales and reach new markets. Participating in this scheme can make the process of trading online much easier for businesses.

LEO Management Development Programmes

Financial Capability Skills: LEO Louth launched a Financial Capability Skills management development programme and 12 businesses took part in this programme.

E-Commerce: This programme supported 12 Louth businesses in 2023, providing them support to greatly enhance their e-Commerce capability providing digital consultancy support to help build their online businesses and sell into international markets.

Innovate Accelerate Europe: LEO Louth partnered with LEO Meath and Newry Mourne & Down District Council in an online International Trade Readiness Programme which started in 2023 and will complete in 2024 which focuses on supporting small craft businesses with 6 businesses from Louth participating.

Thrive: This Programme is designed to support women bringing new products and services to the market in the STEM sector. It also supports women in management in other sectors, or work returners, to pivot their existing skills and experience to enter management and leadership positions in STEM industries. LEO Louth had 14 clients in this programme.

NORTH EAST CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS - 7 BUSINESSES

Louth County Council, in collaboration with LEO Monaghan and Cavan, spearheaded an innovative project, funded through Creative Ireland, aimed at bolstering the Design Sector within the region's creative industry. The project, launched in June 2023, marked a significant step towards nurturing and enhancing the creative landscape in our community. The programme, which saw active participation from 7 Louth-based businesses, commenced with personalised one-on-one needs analysis sessions with business mentors. These sessions were meticulously designed to empower participants by refining their

innovation capabilities, offering crucial business support, and paving the way for potential export opportunities. Subsequent to these sessions, tailored masterclasses were conducted to address the unique findings from the needs analysis, thereby ensuring targeted and impactful learning experiences.

A series of cluster facilitation initiatives followed suit, featuring engaging networking events and workshops. Distinguished guest speakers, including successful regional, national, and international role models, shared their insights, inspiring participants and fostering invaluable connections within the industry.

For those eyeing global expansion, personalised one-on-one mentoring sessions were made available, supplemented by a visit to the prestigious London Design Fair in September 2023. This immersive experience, attended by 6 businesses, provided a firsthand glimpse into the potential of international markets. Additionally, a constructive meeting with representatives from Enterprise Ireland in London further enriched the participants' understanding of export dynamics and opportunities.

Central to the project's objectives was the imperative of acquainting design sector businesses with the many resources offered by the Local Enterprise Offices. Throughout the duration of the programme, each LEO showcased its comprehensive suite of services and support mechanisms at various events. Participants were actively encouraged to establish connections with their local business advisors, fostering a collaborative ecosystem wherein businesses could thrive and flourish.

LEO Externally Funded Enterprise Projects

LEO Louth continued to support a number of enterprise projects in County Louth which previously secured external funding.

DKIT CONNECT DAC

(dConnect) is a Connected Health and Wellbeing Innovation & Learning Hub for Business based out of the Regional Development Centre, DkIT.

DDIH - DROGHEDA INNOVATION HUB

Louth County Council's Drogheda Digital Innovation Hub which is currently being designed. The aim of the project is to encourage high-potential future oriented tech projects seeking to start and grow, to locate in the greater Drogheda area. The project will provide affordable co-working space in Drogheda town centre complemented with tailored management and mentoring support to facilitate their growth and export potential. A programme manager will be in place by the first quarter of 2024.

BLAS NA hÉIREANN AWARDS 28TH TO 30TH SEPTEMBER

The Blas na hÉireann awards are the all-island food awards that recognise the very best Irish food and drink products, and the passionate people behind them. Products from every county in Ireland were entered into the 2023 competition to win Gold, Silver or Bronze Blas na hÉireann awards in over 150 food and drink categories. The awards are supported by LEO Louth.

Sarah Mallon represented LEO Louth at the Blas na hÉireann Irish Food Awards on 28th September in Dingle where ten Louth based businesses were shortlisted for awards in 2023.

LEO Events and Programmes

NATIONAL WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE DAY

LEO Louth and LEO Meath hosted an in-person event in the Monasterboice Inn on Thursday 19th October, with over 100 people in attendance. It was a very successful event with a guest panel featuring Cathy O'Connor Stylist, Caroline Duffy Designs and Carina Conyngham of Slane Castle and The Rock Farm Slane. The event was hosted by MC Miriam Simon.



(L-R): Lorna Cooney - LEO Meath, Caroline O'Connor - Stylist, Sarah Mallon - LEO Louth, Miriam Simon MC, Carina Conyngham - Slane Castle, Caroline Duffy Design and Nicola Mitchell - LEO Meath



(L-R): Artie Clifford from Blas na hÉireann, Emma Gill Boyne Valley Food Officer, Adrian Regan from Hilton Foods, Sarah Mallon LEO Louth. Hilton Foods won the best in County award at the Blas na hÉireann awards. This award was sponsored by LEO Louth

STUDENT ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME

1170 students from 17 2nd level schools in County Louth took part in the Student Enterprise Programme for the 2023-2024 academic year. On Thursday 2nd March 2023 three county Louth schools were chosen by a judging panel to go forward to represent County Louth in the national finals in Croke Park on Friday 5th May 2023:

County Senior Winner - Just Tap

Callum Moore, Eoin Carpenter and Sam Sweeney Students of St. Mary's College, Dundalk. These students came up with the idea of using NFC technology to seamlessly share digital information with other people thereby eliminating business cards and plastics.



County Senior Winner - Just Tap

County Intermediate Winner - Like Your Locker

Hailing from Drogheda Grammar School, Like Your Locker won the Intermediate category. Students Nora Gilligan and Alex Borza produced handcrafted locker shelves and accessories. Supported by their teacher Alma Carney, their products help to organise and improve the functionality of any school locker. There were double celebrations for Drogheda Grammar School as Tegan Semple of Tegan's Trinkets scooped the runner up prize in the intermediate category.



Alex Borza & Nora Gilligan (Like Your Locker) from Drogheda Grammar School

County Junior Winner - Strawsome

Strawsome, the creation of Jack Ivers and James Lavery, supported by their teacher Sharon Browne from Dundalk Grammar School, took first place in the Junior category. They impressed the judges with their homegrown, cut to length, bamboo straws that are sold in a sustainable pack, including a straw cleaner.



County Junior Winner - Strawsome

County My Entrepreneurial Journey Winner - Dearbhla McArdle

Dearbhla McArdle of St. Vincent's Secondary School in Dundalk was named winner of the My Entrepreneurial Journey Award. Supported by her teacher Eimear McCreesh, Dearbhla chronicled what life would be like as a successful entrepreneur in the future and judges were deeply impressed by her writing and she will also proceed to the national competition.



Eimear McCreesh, Dearbhla McArdle and Cllr Conor Keelan

LOCAL ENTERPRISE WEEK 2023 6TH-10TH MARCH



LEO Louth Team Members

Local Enterprise Week ran from March 6th-10th across all 31 Local Enterprise Offices and Louth had a packed programme with **7** local events with **461** attendees and a number of regional events with Meath, Cavan and Monaghan as well as **5** national online seminars available to all.

The week was an opportunity for business owners to learn from experts about the latest trends and key issues facing enterprises and to hear about how the Local Enterprise Office can provide supports to help. Highlights from the week included the opening event Roadmap to Funding & Supports for Your Business where a panel of LEO clients were guided through the various supports available, Tik Tok Training, a HR

seminar in conjunction with Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, a Cyber Security Information session with Dundalk Chamber of Commerce and a seminar on Neurodiversity in the Workplace with Network Louth. On Wednesday March 8th LEO Louth and Louth County Council were one of the main sponsors of the annual Cross Border conference which this year moved away from the focus on Brexit and looked at Future Opportunities for The Cross Border Economy. The event was addressed by Minister Simon Coveney and had over **300** attendees.

NATIONAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS 2023 - COUNTY LEVEL

On March 10th, the business community gathered to celebrate the winners of the County Louth Enterprise Awards. These awards recognise outstanding businesses in Louth across 4 categories with 1 chosen to go forward to the national finals to represent County Louth in June 2023.

LEO Louth announced County winners of the National Enterprise Awards during Local Enterprise Week. Awards were presented to the Best Start-Up Business, Best Established Business, and an Innovation and Sustainability Award. With an Overall County finalist picked to represent Louth in the national final.

Best Established Business Award



Best Established Business Award: Sarah Mallon, Donal Geraghty of SeaPark Consultancy and Cllr Conor Keelan

Best Innovation Award



Best Innovation Award: Sarah Mallon, Donal Quinn and Cllr Conor Keelan

Best Start Up Business



Sarah Mallon, Tom Condon and Donal McLoughlin and Cllr Conor Keelan

Best Sustainability Business



Best Sustainability Business: Sarah Mallon Peter and Jackie Joliffe and Cllr Conor Keelan

Best Overall Winner



Donal Geraghty of SeaPark Consultancy

NATIONAL CONNECTED HUBS SHOWCASE - CREATIVE SPARK DOWNTOWN HUB

On 26th April 2023, Sarah Mallon represented LEO Louth at an event in the Creative Spark Downtown Hub as part of the National Connected Hubs SHOWCASE. On the day hubs across the Connected Hubs network held events to display the incredible variety and regional diversity of the national hub network with a focus on promoting why their hub and its locality is a great place for innovation driven enterprises and remote workers.

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys officially launched the series of open day initiatives from Creative Spark Downtown Hub with a “Why Choose Dundalk” event focusing on town regeneration, hub users and their experience of returning to the area and working from the hub.

SPEED NETWORKING EVENT 9TH MAY 2023

Sarah Mallon represented LEO Louth at this event organised by the Drogheda Chamber of Commerce held on 9th May in The Mill Drogheda.



Hubert Murphy, President of Drogheda Chamber of Commerce and Sarah Mallon, Programme Manager LEO Louth attending the Speed Networking event.

NETWORK LOUTH AWARDS 26TH MAY 2023

On behalf of the Local Enterprise Office Louth, Gráinne McKeown, Business Advisor attended the Network Louth Awards on Friday 26th May 2023 in the Monasterboice Inn. As LEO Louth was a sponsor to the Louth Women in Business Network Sarah Mallon, programme manager LEO Louth was Chair of the judging panel and Gráinne McKeown, presented an award on the night.



(L-R) Gráinne McKeown LEO Louth, Andrea McQuillan Coppertops Digital Marketing and Niamh Pentony, Boyne Ergonomics, President of Network Louth

CROSS BORDER TOURISM CONFERENCE

This event was held in the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford and Sarah Mallon represented LEO Louth and Colette Moss from Economic Development spoke on behalf of Louth County Council. The conference was followed by a networking lunch giving attendees the opportunity to meet the speakers on a one-to-one basis and visit all the trade exhibits at the event.

NATIONAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS 2023

On June 1st, 2023, the national final of the Local Enterprise Awards was held in the Mansion House, Dublin. Louth was represented by Donal Geraghty of SeaPark Consultancy and the event was attended by the Cathaoirleach, Niamh Dennehy Business Adviser, LEO Louth office and Mr Thomas McEvoy, Director of Strategic Economic Development.

LAUNCH OF NORTHEAST BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

On Thursday 1st June 2023, Director of Services Thomas McEvoy and Gráinne McKeown, Business Advisor, LEO Louth represented Louth County Council at the Launch of the Northeast Business Excellence awards in the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda. Louth County Council have partnered with Drogheda and District Chamber this year and are sponsoring the 'Tourism Business of the Year' category and the Best Emerging New Business (Start-up), which is supported by Louth Local Enterprise Office. Closing date for applications was Thursday 31st August 2023 and the winners were announced at a Gala Dinner on Saturday November 25th, 2023, at the City North Hotel.



(L-R) Director of Service Thomas McEvoy, Hubert Murphy Drogheda and District Chamber President and Gráinne McKeown LEO Louth

SHOWCASE 2023

Showcase 2023, the largest Irish trade fair for the craft and gift sector ran in the RDS from January 22nd-24th.

5 Louth exhibitors took part in the Local Enterprise Showcase area with many reporting good sales including some export to the US and UK. The businesses who attended where:

- Sophie Hunter - Sophie Hunter Designs, Drogheda
- Yvonne Mullen - LORE Natural Skincare, Jenkinstown
- Maria Morgan - Esker Fields, Drogheda
- Caoilfionn Murphy O'Hanlon - Cushla of Gullion, Dundalk
- Caroline Duffy Design, Dundalk



(L-R) Sophie Hunter, Yvonne Mullen, Maria Morgan, Caoilfionn Murphy O' Hanlon & Caroline Duffy were the 5no. Louth Exhibitors who took part in Showcase 2023



(L-R) Rosemary Steen, CEO of the Design & Craft Council of Ireland with LEO Louth client Garrett Mallon of Garrett Mallon Jewellery, Winner of the overall Jewellery Award

Caroline Duffy Design, Esker Fields and LORE Natural Skincare were all selected for the curated Edit.

LEO Louth client Garrett Mallon Jewellery also won the overall Jewellery Award at the show.

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESS

Niamh Dennehy, Business Advisor, represented LEO Louth at the Building Better Business conference organized by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on 22nd September in DKIT. LEO Louth had a stand at the conference and LEO Louth client Laura Armada-Buch of The Juiceworks participated on one of the speaker panels.

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION EVENT 2023

On 27th October 2023, in conjunction with Junior Achievement Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office organised the annual Junior Achievement Recognition Event 2023/24 in the Council Chamber in County Hall to recognise the staff of Louth County Council who volunteered during the last academic year.

Volunteers from Louth County Council and Junior Achievement Ireland (JAI), have once again joined together to inspire over 220 students in schools across the region to reach their potential, through a series of interactive programmes. The partnership, now in its 20th year, aims to empower students to shape their own future through a positive role model from the world of work.

In the past academic year, volunteers from the Local Authority have implemented the programme in 4 primary schools, namely: St. Pauls S.N.S. Drogheda, Ardagh N.S., Tallanstown National School and St. Brigid's National School, Omeath. At this level, these hands-on learning workshops teach children how they can impact the world around them as individuals, workers, and consumers.



(L-R) Thomas McEvoy, Director, Elaine O'Brien Lynch and Lisa McKittrick (Junior Achievement), Niamh Dennehy, LEO Louth, Siobhain Carroll, Volunteer, Sharon Keaveney, Volunteer, Linda Kelliher, LEO Louth and Brian Martin, Volunteer – missing from picture is Alan Wall, Volunteer

The programme continues right through to secondary school, preparing students for their future careers through entrepreneurship, employability, economics, financial literacy, and STEM programmes. Louth County Council staff visited three secondary level schools: Coláiste Rís, Dundalk, Ó Fiaich College, Dundalk and St. Joseph's Secondary School, Drogheda.

BUSINESS NETWORK LUNCH - DECEMBER 2023

Sarah Mallon represented LEO Louth at the Drogheda Chamber of Commerce Christmas networking lunch which was hosted by LEO Louth and held in the D Hotel on December 15th.



(L-R) Sarah Mallon, Colette Moss and Rober Murray from Drogheda Chamber of Commerce

LOUTH BUSINESS AWARDS 2023

Dundalk Chamber hosted their annual business awards on 21st October 2023 in the Carrickdale hotel. LEO Louth was represented by Sarah Mallon and Niamh Dennehy at the event. Niamh Dennehy presented the award sponsored by LEO Louth "Best Use of Digital Marketing & Social Media" to The Gift & Art Gallery.



(L-R) Aidan Callan, Dundalk Chamber Skillnet, Una McGoev, President, Dundalk Chamber, Michelle Rafferty, the Gift & Art Gallery and Niamh Dennehy, LEO Louth

DROGHEDA & DISTRICT CHAMBER AWARDS 2022 - 25TH NOVEMBER 2023

Sarah Mallon represented LEO Louth at the North East Business Awards hosted by Drogheda Chamber of Commerce in City North Hotel on November 25th. LEO Louth sponsored the Best Emerging Business Award which was won by ENSO Initiatives Limited, a former client business of LEO Louth.



(L-R) Sarah Mallon, LEO Louth and Donal Quinn of Enso Initiatives

VISITORS TO COUNTY LOUTH

Indian Ambassador Visit - 12th July 2023

Representatives from Dundalk Chamber, Michael Gaynor and Paddy Malone, met with the ambassador with Mr Gaynor outlining the area's history and culture.

Mr Malone explained the reason for the strong presence of local engineering and related businesses. He also outlined Dundalk's location, and the priority given to the M1 Corridor by the Government from Drogheda to Newry.

Portuguese Ambassador - 17th October 2023

Economic and Commercial Counsellor, Luis Carmo Reis from the Portuguese Embassy of Ireland met with the local businesses on the 17th October 2023.

Fire Services

There were two nationwide strikes involving members of the Retained Fire Service during the Summer of 2023. The first was from 6th June to 19th June. During this period training was suspended but retained members in Louth continued to attend life threatening calls, ensuring that all serious incidents in Louth had a fire service attendance.

The industrial action was suspended following a Labour Court intervention on 19th June and a full Labour Court hearing with the parties took place on 26th June.

The Labour Court recommendation was rejected, and a second strike started nationwide on 26th July and was suspended on 17th August. This followed WRC discussions between the LGMA, DHLGH and SIPTU on 16th August. Proposals were issued and were subsequently accepted by SIPTU Retained Fire Service members. These included improvements to pay and conditions.

Due to the strike the level of fire service training was reduced with no training courses from June to September 2023. The number of incidents attended was also affected.

There was a 2% decrease in emergency incidents attended by Fire Brigades in Louth in 2023 compared to 2022. However, the five-year trend of incidents numbers is slightly upwards. See below.

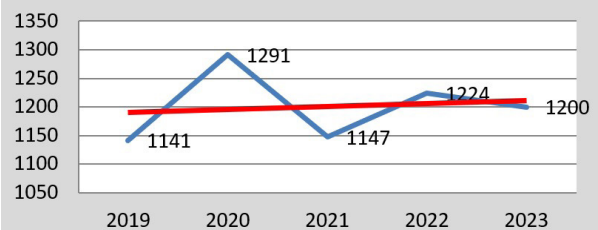
Comparative Period	No of Incidents	% Difference +/-
2019	1141	-10.23%
2020	1291	+13.15%
2021	1147	-11.15%
2022	1224	+6.71%
2023	1200	-1.96%

- The number of incidents in Drogheda Fire Brigade's area was 426 and the number in Dundalk Fire Brigade's area was 400. Both were reduced from 2022.
- Ardee was the busiest county brigade with 88 emergency incidents attended in its own area during 2023 (and additional incidents in other station areas).
- There was an increase in the number of house fires attended, from 86 in 2022 to 96 in 2023.
- There were 87 ambulance assist calls in 2023, a large increase on 2022.
- There was a reduction in the number of small outdoor grass fires, rubbish fires and skip fires from 238 in 2022 to 209 in 2023. This continued the trend from 2020. There was a further large reduction in forest fires and gorse fires and grass fires from a total of 55 in 2022 to 18 in 2023.

These incident types are weather-related.

- There were 174 incidents attended in Meath during 2023, the same as 2022. These incidents were all attended by Drogheda Fire Brigade, making it by far the busiest Brigade in Louth.
- The number of incidents attended in Meath during 2023 was well more than the number of incidents attended by Ardee, Carlingford or Dunleer Fire Brigades.

Incidents in Co. Louth - 5 year Trend





Breathing Apparatus Wearer's Course Class Photo

The training programme included the following courses in Dundalk Training Centre:

- Flood First Responder and Water Awareness courses
- Breathing Apparatus Wearer's course
- Wildland Fire Fighting course
- Winch course
- Breathing Apparatus, Compartment Fire Behaviour and Road Traffic Accident refresher courses

The Design Team for the new Dunleer fire station is led by Vincent Hannon Architects and produced the initial design for the fire station during 2023. This will be submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for approval and to proceed to appoint a Contractor to build the station once the purchase of the site has been completed. Increased funding of €2.9 million was approved during 2023 for the extension and upgrade of Dundalk Training Centre. Tender documents are being

prepared for the procurement of a Design Team.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has announced capital funding for Louth County Council for the purchase of two new fire tenders under the national procurement framework. They will be purchased from Emergency One in the UK.

The Road Safety Authority audited Louth Fire Service fleet management during 2023 and a score of 98% was achieved by the Fire Service.

The number of Fire Safety Certificate applications received by the Fire and Building Control Section substantially increased from 131 in 2022 to 152 in 2023. The number of Disabled Access Certificate applications marginally decreased from 106 in 2022 to 103 in 2023.

The Fire Prevention Section inspected a number of buildings used for the accommodation of Ukrainian



Image 2: House Fire in Termonfeckin, March 2023

refugees and International Protection applicants. Two of these properties did not meet the required standard and enforcement action was taken.

The Building Control Section inspected new developments for compliance with the Building Regulations and met national inspection targets.

Major fires attended during 2023 included a large railway depot fire and large house fire in Termonfeckin where there was one fatality and one person rescued.

Louth County Council Fire Brigades attended flooding incidents in Dundalk, Ardee, Bellurgan and

Carlingford in late October 2023. Actions taken included pumping out flooded houses and the rescue of occupants.

Louth Civil Defence continued to recruit new volunteers during 2023 up to approximately 60 members.

Civil Defence volunteers provided medical cover at many events during 2023, including the Joe Biden visit from 12th to 14th April 2023.



Dundalk Fire Service at flooding incident, October 2023

5



PLACEMAKING AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Placemaking and Physical Development Directorate manages many of the most visible services provided by the Council across three core teams, namely Roads & Local Services, Placemaking and Physical Development.

Roads & Local Services deliver on the annual Road Works Programme, which primarily centres on the maintenance and improvement of the regional and local road network in the County, but also includes bridge rehabilitation projects, drainage works and traffic calming measures. Street cleaning, maintenance of our award-winning public parks and playgrounds, harbours and piers and the upkeep of a number of cemeteries across the county are also delivered through our Roads & Local Services team, while



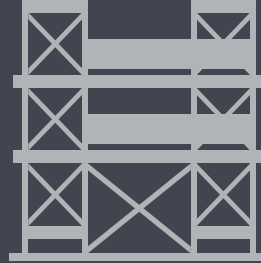
a key operational role in Louth County Council's overall response to severe weather events is provided through this team.

Our Placemaking team is developing projects to regenerate our town and village centres and addressing vacancy and dereliction. Numerous projects are being advanced through the Urban Regeneration and Rural Regeneration Development Funds respectively, both at design and construction stages, while additional playground provision across the County is also being progressed. In addition, the implementation of the government's Town Centre First policy at local level is being delivered

through the Placemaking team, with the establishment and support to Town Centre First Town Teams and the development of Town Centre First Plans. The Physical development team are providing key infrastructural projects to enable the development of new residential communities, the economic development of the County, and the development of Drogheda and Dundalk as regional growth centres. Projects include key capital road projects, greenways, Active Travel and Flood Relief projects. In addition, a number of cross border capital projects between Louth County Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council are being advanced through our Physical Development team.



**PLACEMAKING
& PHYSICAL
DEVELOPMENT
AT A GLANCE**



30 HOARDING
(SCAFFOLDING)
LICENCES ISSUED



73 SKIP
PERMITS ISSUED



4 FUNFAIR
LICENCES ISSUED



253
ABNORMAL
LOAD
PERMITS ISSUED



21 SECTION 254 LICENCES
FOR OUTDOOR FURNITURE ISSUED



97 EVENTS
LICENSED BY THE
SECTION IN 2023

Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR)

Phase 1 of the PANCR commenced construction in 2023. An official sod turning event was held in February 2023 which was attended by the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

The first phase of the PANCR comprises of two km of new roadway, 9m in width and incorporating footways and cycle lanes, together with two roundabouts located on the intersections of the Twenties Lane and Ballymakenny Road. The scheme also includes for the upgrade of sections of the Ballymakenny Road (c.1km) and the Twenties Lane (c.0.6km).

The scheme is being constructed by a consortium of developers, PANCR DEVELOPMENT LIMITED, and Contractor Housing Infrastructure Services Company, HISCO, (utilising Clonmel Enterprises). The scheme is ultimately financed by Louth County Council through the North Drogheda Development Contribution Scheme.

The scheme is expected to be substantially completion in Q2 of 2024.



Narrow Water Bridge (NWB)

The tender process for this iconic cross border structure continued throughout 2023. The qualification of a restricted panel of contractors (5 no.) was established in April 2023, and construction tender documentation was issued at the end of April.

Due to the complexity of the project a suite of tender consultation meetings, (4 no.) was held from May to October 2023 in a bid to ensure that contractors fully understand the works requirements and their roles and responsibilities throughout the project. The discussions resulting from these consultations meetings also feed into amendments of the detailed design and a number of tender bulletins were issued throughout this phase to reflect these meetings.

On 27th October 2023 the Council received two number tenders on the tender deadline date. These

tenders are currently being assessed for price, quality submissions and compliance with the work requirements. It is expected that a preferred bidder will be identified in quarter 2 of 2024 and subject to Government approval through the Shared Island Fund of the DHLGH.

Other ongoing works in 2023 included finalising wind tunnel testing, appointment of land valuation services, Category 3 Independent Bridge Checker, Mussel Fishers Compensation Services.

Throughout 2023 ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, (landowners, Department of Infrastructure Northern Ireland, Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, Loughs Agency, etc) took place, and North South Ministerial Subgroups meeting for the project also took place.



Faster Project

The FASTER Project is a joint initiative across Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland to support the overarching ambition to transition to low carbon transport systems and to demonstrate how each of the three jurisdictions can provide early systems learning in relation to electrification of transport.

One of the main barriers to the take up of electric vehicles is the lack of public charging infrastructure and in particular rapid charging infrastructure. The project aims to ensure that the availability of charging stations is not a major obstacle to the Electric Vehicle (EV) market penetration.

The FASTER Project partnership will implement the physical roll out and installation of 73 rapid charging stations (50KW capacity and above) across Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland before 31st December 2023.

Louth County Council are acting as lead partner of the Ireland jurisdiction. Louth County Council was allocated €1.9 million for delivery of 25 no. rapid chargers as part of the project.

During 2023, Louth County Council commenced the construction tender process for the delivery of sites to generate an approved site list 25 EV Rapid Chargers across the border counties, the full list and maps across all regions can be view on the project website: <https://www.fasterevcharge.com/provisional-locations-for-faster-project-charging-stations-revealed/>

In May 2023 a pre-qualification stage was released to the market to establish a restricted panel of competent contractors/operators to deliver the sites across the region. Once established tender documents were released with a competitive dialogue process undertaken before a tender being received in July 2023. On the 9th of September 2023 WEEV.ie Ltd was awarded the contract for the installation and operation of the rapid chargers across the region. Construction commenced on the chargers



Faster Project charging station

in September 2023 with all or the chargers being installed before the funding deadline of December 31st. The ESB has energized some of the site and it is envisaged that the remaining sites will be energized in early 2024.

A project close out event took place in the Ballymascanlon Hotel in December 2023.

Drogheda Civic Offices Phase 1

Construction works continued throughout 2023 on the redevelopment of the Drogheda Civic Offices, Phase 1. The project consists of the dismantling, demolition and extensive conservation works on protected structures, upgrade works and construction of a new link building at Drogheda Civic Offices.

The project will include.

- Refurbishment of the existing former council chamber building (Block B), 54 Fair Street, this is a two-storey protected structure.
- Refurbishment of the existing community services building (Block C), 55-56 Fair Street, this is a two-storey protected structure.
- Demolition of Valhalla Theatre Building, retention of brickwork and slates for reuse on Blocks B and C for conservation purposes.
- Construction of a new Link Building (Block N), this will connect the protected buildings on both the ground floor and first floor via a mezzanine.
- Extensive landscape external works to the front and back of the buildings which will also include an ESB substation.

Building Design Partnership (BDP) are appointed Architects who are required to manage a range of multi disciplines needed to complete this type of large and complex project. The construction works are being undertaken by Townlink.

Substantial works took place in 2023, including the re-pointing and re-roofing of conservation buildings, replacing and repair of conservation windows and roof trusses. Construction of the new link building which will incorporate the new customer services counter and foyer for the civic offices.

The project is programmed to be completed by April 2024.



Drogheda Civic Offices Phase 1

2023 Operations

N53 - DUNDALK TO CASTLEBLAYNEY ROAD PHASE 4. HACKBALLSCROSS TO RASSAN

Following on from the submission of a Compulsory Purchase Order to An Bord Pleanála in 2022, an oral hearing was set for the 10th January 2023 to deal with objections to the scheme. Further to this process An Bord Pleanála made a Confirmation Order for the scheme on the 1st of August 2023 with the scheme becoming Operative on the 20th of September. A Notice to Treat was issued in December 2023 to the affected landowner within the scheme.

The design team continued with detailed design throughout 2023 with Technical Approval Reports approved by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The design team continues to engage with the landowners, their agents, and other stakeholders. Tender documents for both hedge removal and Archaeology were issued to the market toward the end of December 2023 and it is envisaged that these contracts will commence in early 2024. A Notice to Enter will be issued in advance of these works to the affected landowners.

DROGHEDA AND BALTRAY FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Louth County Council, in partnership with the Office of Public Works, appointed RPS Consulting Engineers Ltd to the Scheme. When complete, the scheme will afford protection to 249 residential and 205 non-residential properties during flood events. The Project is currently in the first of five stages – Stage I: Identification and Development of a Preferred Scheme.

The Steering Group continue to collect data to ensure the most accurate and up to date information is used to inform the technical analyses being undertaken to meet the project objectives. Additional topographical surveying was carried out in November 2023 in the Beaulieu Village area.

After incorporating the additional topographical survey data from the Beaulieu Village area into the hydraulic model, RPS are completing the calibration of the modelled river network within Drogheda and Baltray. This ensures that the model can simulate historical flood events and provides an accurate representation of the rivers and flooding mechanisms in the area.

A draft Hydraulic Analysis report was produced and commented on by the Steering group in 2023. The Hydraulic Analysis report provides details on how the model was constructed and calibrated for future use in the project.

Preliminary Ground Investigation works were mainly completed in 2023. These works will inform optioneering for the scheme. An otter survey has been completed and an overwintering bird survey commenced in October 2023 and will continue until March 2024. These investigations will provide data to inform the scheme analysis and development phase of the project.

DUNDALK AND ARDEE FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Louth County Council, in partnership with the Office of Public Works, appointed Binnies and Nicholas O'Dwyer as a Joint Venture to the Scheme. When complete it will afford protection to 1,887 residential and 176 non-residential properties during flood events. The project is currently in the first of five stages – Stage I: Identification and Development of a Preferred Scheme.

Through 2023 progress is being made in terms of environmental surveys and assessments, flood modelling and optioneering for both Schemes. Information collated from flooding and the impacts from Storm Ciarán in late 2023 was incorporated in the hydraulic modelling, improving the understanding of the flooding mechanisms. It was used to further verify the hydraulic model outputs.

In 2023 hydraulic modelling and wave overtopping analysis continue for Dundalk with the baseline modelling for certain flood events completed. Flood cells have been delineated given the greater understanding of the dominant mechanisms of flooding in each area of the Scheme. New developments have been also identified in the Dundalk catchment. It is envisaged that optioneering for Dundalk will commence in Q2 of 2024.

A second round of wintering and migratory bird surveys was procured and commenced in October 2023, following the first round of surveys. Similarly bat activity surveys, snails and terrestrial mammals reports for Dundalk are now completed.

Site investigation surveys for 2024 are currently being scoped for the Dundalk Study Area. With a view to these works having the minimum impact on the existing environment and cultural heritage, assessments are being prepared to establish the best practices to undertake the works.

The preliminary environmental site assessment report and the geomorphology report are finalised for Ardee scheme. A draft hydraulics and options and scheme viability report for Ardee was submitted toward the end of 2023 and will be assessed by Louth County Council and the OPW, where it is envisaged that a final report for Ardee will be published in Q2 of 2024.

OBELISK BRIDGE REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

Significant refurbishment works to the Obelisk Bridge, which was constructed in 1869, commenced in August 2023 with the appointment of Jons Civil Engineer to complete the work. The Obelisk Bridge is a listed structure of historical importance and is in need of maintenance/ refurbishment works. The bridge is a single line carriageway (approx. 4m in width and 39m in length), and currently has a 5-tonne weight limit on it. The bridge paint system is

showing signs of failure and structural iron members have areas of high corrosion. There are lattice web members with 100% section loss and cross-girders are demonstrating delamination at flange locations.

To prolong the design life of the bridge and ensure the serviceability of the structure as part of the local road's infrastructure within County Louth / Meath, the following rehabilitation works are required:

In 2023 works commenced on the encapsulation of the bridge to ensure no detritus materials fall into the environmentally sensitive waters of the Boyne River. The removal of the bridge deck was completed, and sand blasting and paint undercoating of steel members is ongoing. Removal of steel members which have deteriorated beyond serviceability and similarly repair of salvageable members is underway and will continue into 2024. The works are expected to be completed in May 2024 and a road closure is in place until this time.



Obelisk Bridge Encapsulation System

ARDEE EDUCATE TOGETHER SCHOOL

In June 2023 Louth County Council, working under a service level agreement with the Department of Education, signed a significant construction contract with McDermott and Treaty Construction to construct a new Educate Together school in Ardee. The construction contract worth €7.6m will deliver twelve classrooms and special need units and all associated administrative and ancillary accommodation, including the construction of a section of carriageway of the N52 in Ardee. Works in 2023 include for site clearance, commencement of utilities, drainage, and the access road. Works commenced on the foundations for the main building in late 2023. The construction is expected to take 21 months.



Ardee Educate together School, commencement of foundation works

CARLINGFORD LOUGH GREENWAY

The Carlingford Lough Greenway project comprises the creation of c.10.1 km of new cross-border greenway, linking Newry City in Northern Ireland to Carlingford village in Ireland. The new stretch will link with the previously completed Portadown to Newry element resulting in a total length of 52km of cross border Greenway along the East coast of the island of Ireland. The scheme is a joint project with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and East Border Region, with Louth County Council as lead partner.

The project is primarily financed by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme.

In September 2023 works commenced on the section of the greenway from the border to Omeath and the section from Carlingford Marina to Carlingford Village. In Northern Ireland planning permission for a boardwalk element was granted in October 2023 and a section of greenway at Victoria Lock and Rough Island has been completed.

Towards the end of 2023 the main contractor, Glas Construction completed site clearance, formation levels, drainage, culvert works. A considerable amount of fencing was substantially completed in December 2023. It is envisaged that the section of greenway in County Louth will gain substantial completion in Q2 of 2024 while the construction of the boardwalk in Northern Ireland will be completed by August 2024.



Carlingford Lough Greenway Completion of final Surface at the Border

Public Realm

WESTGATE VISION, DROGHEDA

The Westgate Vision planning preparation stage has been financially supported by the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) as part of Project Ireland 2040 and match funded by Louth County Council. The Placemaking team has been supported by Turley planning consultants and a design team who have developed designs for each of the character areas: Westgate; Medieval Wall; Riverfront and the Old Abbey. These plans include improvements to the public realm and streetscape within the Westgate area. The Westgate Planning application was submitted to An Bord Pleanála in December 2023.

ARDEE 2040, ARDEE

Under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) funding was received to carry out feasibility and preliminary design of the public realm and amenity lands and to seek planning permission for these extensive works in Ardee. This project has developed a plan to transform the town from its traditional manufacturing centre to a community centred town with defined character areas highlighting the distinct heritage of the town.

Turley Planning was appointed as consultants to form a design team to develop exciting plans to improve the streetscape and amenity of Ardee with a focus on four key sites: Main Street; Ash Walk; the Old Railway; and amenity lands to the east of the town to allow planning consent to be received.

The initial design proposals and reports have been completed and have been going through pre-planning approvals with TII in 2023.

LIVING IN CARLINGFORD VISITING CARLINGFORD

Under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) funding was received to carry out feasibility and preliminary design of the public realm and vision for the Carlingford area. RPS were appointed as the consultants for this project and led a design team who have developed initial designs for three-character areas: Gateway; Town Square; and the Recreation Zone. The Gateway area is seen as a welcoming meeting space connecting to the heritage, mountains, and sea. The Town Square will be developed as the commercial heart of the town and a shared space for pedestrians and the Recreation zone as the family space, informal and safe with a strong biodiversity element. This project plans to enhance the connectivity and visual routes for pedestrians in the area with improved public spaces that can be used for a variety of events and activities. This project has successfully achieved planning permission through the Part 8 process in 2023.



Carlingford

OMEATH PLACEMAKING SCHEME

The Omeath Placemaking Scheme involves the regeneration of the heart of the village with improvements to the public realm, traffic management and road improvements. This will be achieved by economic and social regeneration, increased footfall and maximising the tourism potential of the Great Eastern Greenway which runs through the heart of the village.

BDP were appointed as consultants with a multidisciplinary design team to develop and design the public realm to increase the amount of pedestrian space, the creation of shared spaces, renewed traffic systems in the heart of the village, realignment of junctions in favour of pedestrians and developing measures to decrease vehicular speed and appropriate lighting schemes to the village core.

The works are funded through the Rural Regeneration Development fund (RRDF) and match funded by Louth County Council and are part of Project Ireland 2040. The contractor commenced onsite in October 2023 with works anticipated to conclude in 2024.

ST. NICHOLAS QUARTER & BACKLANDS

Under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) funding was received to carry out feasibility and preliminary design of the public realm and to seek planning permission for these works. This project is building on the completed Clanbrassil Street project to further enhance the experience of those living, working, and visiting Dundalk town centre. The vision for the St. Nicholas Quarter/Backlands area is to create a thriving hub for the community. The physical and visual transformation of the area will introduce new opportunities for all to enjoy walking, cycling, meeting, shopping, working, and regenerating the area for the local community. BDP were appointed as a multi-disciplinary design team for both phase I and phase II of the project. Detailed design for phase I of the project was completed in 2023.

PUBLIC REALM WORKS AROUND ST. LAURENCE'S GATE, DROGHEDA

A preliminary design for the public realm around St. Laurence's Gate has been developed to create an outdoor space for gatherings and performances. Environmental surveys have been ongoing to allow a Part 8 planning application to be submitted.

Operations

In 2023, the Road Operations Maintenance and Repair team at Louth County Council continued its unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety, reliability, and sustainability of the county's road network. With a network spanning 1600km, our dedicated staff and expert engineers worked tirelessly to maintain and enhance road infrastructure, facilitate safe passage for road users, and contribute to the overall prosperity of our community. This annual report highlights our key achievements, investments, and initiatives undertaken throughout the year.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Investment in Road Network:

With a targeted investment of €15 million, we prioritised the maintenance and improvement of Louth's road network. This significant funding enabled us to address critical areas of infrastructure, enhance road safety measures, and ensure the longevity of our roads.

2. Road Renewal and Protection:

A total of 78km of roads were renewed and protected during the year, covering 5% of Louth's extensive network. This proactive approach to road maintenance not only enhances the quality of our roads but also extends their lifespan, reducing the need for costly repairs in the future.

3. Bridge Renewal Programme:

Our team of expert bridge engineers meticulously maintained and repaired the county's almost 600 bridges, ensuring their structural integrity and safety for road users. This comprehensive bridge renewal programme plays a vital role in preserving critical infrastructure and facilitating seamless transportation across water bodies.

4. Cooley Road Reconstruction Programme:

Following severe flooding events in October 2023, we planned and developed a comprehensive road reconstruction programme in the Cooley area. With an investment of €1.6 million, we embarked on the reconstruction of 16 roads, mitigating flood risks and enhancing resilience against future natural disasters.

5. Footpath Renewal:

In line with our commitment to pedestrian safety and accessibility, 2km of new footpaths were constructed, and several hundred meters of broken footpaths were renewed. These improvements enhance the pedestrian experience and promote active transportation within our communities.

6. Road Signs and Markings Maintenance:

A total of 11347 road signs and 3750 road markings were meticulously maintained and repaired throughout the year. This proactive approach ensures clear and visible signage for road users, enhancing safety and navigation, particularly during adverse weather conditions.

7. Winter Maintenance Operations:

Our three emergency on-call crews provided round-the-clock support for winter maintenance operations, ensuring the safety and accessibility of roads during snowfall and freezing temperatures. With a proactive approach to gritting and snow clearance, we minimise disruptions and mitigate risks to road users.

8. Street Lighting Upgrades:

With a focus on energy efficiency and sustainability, we continued the renewal of 14,278 streetlights, with 60% now equipped with LED lighting. This transition not only reduces energy consumption but also enhances visibility and safety on our roads, contributing to our environmental goals.

9. Road Safety Interventions:

In collaboration with our engineers, 20 road safety interventions were constructed at collision hotspots, aligning with our new Road Safety Strategy 2024-26. These interventions aim to reduce accidents and improve road safety for all road users. Our efforts encompass a range of measures designed to enhance safety on our roads, including the installation of safety warning signage, implementation of speed control measures such as cushions and ramps, provision of safe crossing points such as zebra crossings, deployment of traffic light systems, application of anti-skid surfacing, placement of cats eyes road studs, and the maintenance of white and yellow road markings spanning over 1600 kilometres.

10. Road Gully Maintenance:

A total of 6000 road gullies were cleaned and maintained to ensure effective road drainage and prevent deterioration and flood-related damage to vehicles. This proactive maintenance reduces the risk of flooding and enhances the durability of road infrastructure.

11. Implementation of Proworks Road Safety Software:

To streamline traffic management and enhance efficiency, 40 tablets were issued to staff for the accurate and timely production of statutory traffic management plans for roadworks. This technology enables us to optimise traffic flow, minimise disruptions, and ensure the safety of both road workers and motorists.

12. Integration of AI in Road Asset Maintenance:

Leveraging advanced machine learning techniques, we developed a digital twin of our entire road network to plan and execute road works programmes effectively. This innovative approach enhances asset management, optimises resource allocation, and improves the overall resilience of our road infrastructure.

13. Recycling Initiatives:

In alignment with Sustainable Development Goals and the Louth Climate Action Plan, we incorporated 30% Recycled Asphalt Pavement (RAP) in road build-up layers. Additionally, we stockpiled 4000 tons of RAP to facilitate a pilot project aimed at achieving 100% RAP reuse in road reconstruction projects, contributing to our sustainability objectives.

14. Road Safety Education:

Collaborating with the road safety officer, we conducted road safety education programmes across 110 schools in Louth and implemented Safe Route to School schemes in five schools. These initiatives promote road safety awareness among students, parents, and the community, fostering safer environments for pedestrians and cyclists.

15. Traffic and Pedestrian Lights Maintenance:

A total of 115 sets of traffic and pedestrian lights were diligently maintained and repaired to ensure optimal functionality and safety for road users. These efforts contribute to smoother traffic flow, enhanced visibility, and reduced accident risks at intersections and pedestrian crossings.

In conclusion, the Road Operations Maintenance and Repair team at Louth County Council achieved significant milestones in 2023, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to road safety, infrastructure maintenance, and sustainability. Through targeted investments, proactive maintenance initiatives, and innovative approaches, we continue to enhance the quality, resilience, and accessibility of Louth's road network, ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. As we look ahead, we remain dedicated to our mission of delivering excellence in road operations and contributing to the overall prosperity and sustainability of our county.

Parks

PARKS

We are pleased to report on the progress and achievements in maintaining and enhancing our parks and green spaces across County Louth. Our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship remains steadfast as we strive to create vibrant and accessible outdoor spaces for our communities to enjoy.

Green Flag Status:

We are proud to announce that four of our parks in County Louth - Blackrock Park, St. Helena Park, St. Dominic's Park, and Icehouse Hill Park - have successfully maintained their Green Flag status. This prestigious recognition underscores our dedication to maintaining high standards of cleanliness, safety, and environmental sustainability in our parks.

Urban Beautification Efforts:

In our urban areas of Dundalk and Drogheda, we have undertaken significant efforts to enhance the aesthetic appeal of our streetscapes. This includes the planting of 150 trees and the display of 500 hanging baskets, adding a splash of colour and greenery to our urban environments.

Invasive Species Management:

Recognising the threat posed by invasive species such as Japanese knotweed, we have implemented a comprehensive program for its treatment and control. Over the past year, approximately 2050 square meters of affected areas have been treated across various locations in the county, safeguarding our native flora and biodiversity.

Community Engagement and Support:

We remain committed to supporting local initiatives aimed at improving our communities' green spaces. Throughout the year, we have provided advice, support, and on-the-ground assistance to Tidy Towns groups, allotment groups, and other stakeholders dedicated to enhancing the beauty and sustainability of our surroundings.

Playground Maintenance and Refurbishment:

Ensuring the safety and enjoyment of our youngest residents, we have conducted ongoing inspections, refurbishment works, and maintenance of playgrounds throughout the county. These efforts are vital in providing safe and engaging recreational spaces for children and families to enjoy.

Spring Bulb Planting:

Adding a burst of colour to our landscapes, we have planted 150,000 bulbs of various species in different locations around the county. This initiative not only enhances the visual appeal of our green spaces but also contributes to the biodiversity and ecosystem health of our region.

Intensive Maintenance Programme:

Our dedicated team has continued with its intensive maintenance programme, including grass cutting and arboriculture activities such as wood plant pruning and felling. These efforts are essential in preserving the health and vitality of our natural landscapes and ensuring the longevity of our green infrastructure.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, our ongoing efforts in parks and green space management reflect our commitment to sustainability, community engagement, and the preservation of our natural heritage. We look forward to continuing our work in collaboration with local stakeholders and residents to create thriving, eco-friendly outdoor spaces for generations to come.

STREET CLEANSING

The Dundalk and Drogheda Street cleansing team actively sweeps over 70,000km of road way per annum and empties 615No bins many of which are done on daily/nightly basis.

NORTH LOUTH OPERATIONS

The Dundalk area, inclusive of Operation, Parks, and Environment sections, actively supports community initiatives such as Dundalk Tidy Towns Group, Residence Associations, and Social Employment schemes like TUS. The Council collaborates with these groups to address various community needs, including the removal of visible rubbish and household dumping, such as mattresses and furniture, from public areas within estates.

Tidy Towns members are equipped with necessary resources, including gloves, bags, and pickers, to organise and execute clean-up activities in designated areas. The Council provides logistical support by collecting bags and larger debris on a regular basis, either daily or weekly, depending on the schedule and requirements of the clean-up efforts.

In larger estates such as Muirhevnamor, Coxs, and Fatima, Tus workers are engaged in waste management activities, with the Council facilitating weekly rubbish collections and accommodating additional support as needed, based on available resources.

For more extensive clean-up projects, the Council seeks funding under initiatives such as the Anti-Dumping Initiative to address areas within estates that require specialised equipment and resources for effective cleanup. These efforts have yielded significant results, with recent projects involving the removal of 24 tons of rubbish from an estate, enhancing the living environment and creating recreational spaces for local residents, particularly children.

Furthermore, the Council addresses concerns related to flooding, particularly among vulnerable residents, by maintaining a stock of sandbags readily available for distribution. These sandbags can be delivered to individuals who lack transportation or assistance, ensuring that properties are adequately protected during times of heightened flood risk.

Additionally, the Council takes proactive measures to address issues of dereliction and anti-social behaviour by clearing sites and structures that pose a risk to community safety. Recent endeavours have resulted in the removal of debris and structures from derelict sites, paving the way for community-led initiatives such as Men's Shed groups to revitalise and utilise these spaces for productive purposes.

In summary, the collaborative efforts between the Council and community groups exemplify a commitment to placemaking and physical development in Dundalk areas, fostering a cleaner, safer, and more vibrant environment for residents to enjoy and thrive in.

SOUTH LOUTH OPERATIONS SLO

SLO is the main support arm to several tidy towns' groups and resident's associations. As part of the support, we offer various items from location to location but in general materials are supplied consisting of the following.

- Gloves
- Litter picks.
- Bags

All materials that are collected are removed on a preplanned time schedule that facilities working crews and resources available to operations.

The following areas are facilitated.

- Monasterboice tidy towns
- Tenure village residents' groupings
- Termonfeckin tidy towns
- Clogherhead neighbours together
- Baltray residents' groups.
- Tullyallen tidy village

DROGHEDA

- Hillview residents' association
- Southside project
- Marleys lane/ St. Nicholas GAA
- Dublin road concerned residents
- Wheaton hall residents' association
- Old abbey support team
- Boyle O' Reilly
- Highfield resident groups
- Job Initiative scheme
- Tús initiative

South Louth operations have carried out several projects in conjunction with other partners such as the following.

BUS STATION AREA DONORE ROAD

Over 150 bags were removed in a joint effort led by LCC staff and joined by Bus Eireann and Tus. This has led to greater awareness which has led to further signage being erected to show the damage empty plastic waste does to our environment and green space.

JOHN STREET/BUTTER GATE

LCC has worked alongside TUS to carry out major clean-up of this location. The gathering over approximately 3000 beer cans which had gathered over several years and the cut back of overgrowth extends the vision and safety of this area. This project we hope will lead to a greater eco cycle program attracting nature to return to its habitat.

ST. MARY MAGDALEN'S DOMINICAN CHURCH WELLINGTON QUAY

The location offers a vital important backdrop on our historical town and has been further enhanced by our visitors from the Ukraine community who have took up resident in the old friary attached to the church. The church dates back to approx 1790 and the wrought-iron railings surrounding it has been extensively renovated and painted up. This work was carried out by Tús initiative with the support of South Louth Operations of LCC. This simple but important work plays to both protect the site and to continue to acknowledge the part the place of safety that former church and house plays in the life of those who have had to leave important memories behind and relocate to Drogheda.

SCHOOL'S PROJECTS

South Louth Operations have carried out several initiatives to assist schools become aware of their responsibilities surrounding litter control in their neighbourhood. Materials have been supplied to carry out clean-up projects in the Dale and other green spaces areas.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL

The constant challenge to local authorities to overcome and alleviate graffiti in public areas is supported by constant and quick cleaning of Life Rings, Street furniture, public kiosks, and hard structure areas such as ESB boxes alongside other key locations South Louth operation have carried cleaning of graffiti on several locations at various times. This work is supported by TUS.

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

The major business Coca cola have played a tremendous part in cleaning areas through their colleagues' clean updates.

- Highland steps weekly clean up
- Queensborough clean up yearly project.

BOYNE RIVER

South Louth operations works constantly with our partners in river rescue front liners. As part of this the river is regularly dredged and items removed. All shopping trollies are inspected by warden service and FPN notices issued.

DUBLIN ROAD

In partnership with Irish Rail (IR) a major undertaking was taken by IR to clear the front of McBride Station Dublin Road Drogheda on to the public road way (R132). This has led to the beginning of the planation of a new shrub bed pus a wild garden.

RATHMULLEN AREA

St. Nicholas GAA club volunteers/South side c have partnered with LCC to improve the walkway from Marleys Lane to the Rathmullen estate. This work was assisted by an improvement in the public lighting plus major weekly clean-ups.

BALLSGROVE PARISH

Holy Family youth club/Southside partnership supported by South Louth Operations created an excellent piece of artwork to enhance the community. Local businesses supported the project that was assisted by Love Drogheda (BIDS).



Ballsgrove Parish

MARSH ROAD DROGHEDA

Following a review by IBAL in their yearly inspection, an improvement of this area was carried by out clearing over growing head rows and power washing footpaths. The area was further enhanced by a street art project. This has certainly assisted in lighting the entrance to our wonderful town by this route.



Marsh Road Drogheda

BULLY'S ACRE

A support was offered to the volunteers who have begun to clean and maintain this location.

6

SUPPORT & WATER SERVICES

Louth County Council Water Services manages the day-to-day operation of Water and Waste-Water plants and networks on behalf of Uisce Eireann under an SLA agreement. Support Services includes the Finance and Information Technology sections and provide efficient and responsive support to the organisation and the Members of the Council. The Finance section is responsible for the managing and reporting on the finances of the Council and the Information Technology section is responsible for the management, development and security of our IT systems.



Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council



Water Services

Louth County Council, working under a Service Level agreement with Uisce Éireann, in 2023 managed the water supply to 49,498 homes and businesses across the County. As part of Louth County Council's agreement with Uisce Éireann, the Council was also responsible for waste water treatment. Significant capital investment was made in the County's water and wastewater infrastructure in 2023. This included:

- Water Conservation works ongoing throughout the County.
- The Construction Phase for Omeath Wastewater Treatment Plant at both the Pumping Station and Wastewater Treatment Plant, works progressed during 2023. The Project is programmed for completion in 2024.
- Greenhills Sewer Replacement Project was completed.
- Uisce Éireann progressed the design of proposed Upgrade Works at Greenmount Water Treatment Works.
- Ongoing works on schemes/projects under the *Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021 (*extended into 2023).
- Detailed design progressed for the rationalization of Tallanstown water supply. Louth County Council continued to liaise with Uisce Éireann and their consultants to advance the project. Land acquisition was progressed by Uisce Éireann. Projects include works at Mullacrew Reservoir, new Pumping Station at Allardstown and new Pumping Station at Bannons Cross.
- Dundalk Drainage Area Plan (DAP) progressed during 2023.
- Dundalk East Strategy progressed to detailed design stage during 2023 - In advance of completion of Dundalk DAP. UÉ Consultants are progressing the design with Uisce Éireann, in consultation with LCC.
- Quay St./St. Helena Rising Main, Dundalk Construction works were completed along the Inner Relief Road and Quay Street.
- Cockle Hill PS Upgrade progressed in 2023.
- Uisce Éireann carried out works at Drogheda Wastewater Treatment Plant to mitigate any potential odour issues arising from the wastewater plant or the network.
- Atkins Consulting Engineers progressed the detailed design of the North Drogheda Strategic Wastewater Network.
- Design works for Drogheda Drainage Area Plan (DAP) commenced and progressed during 2023.
- A Strategic Review was progressed for Dundalk Wastewater Treatment Plant and Blackrock Wastewater Treatment Plant as part of Dundalk LNRP.
- Regional Sewer Network Rehabilitation. The 2023 Programme commenced with works underway in the Drogheda Agglomeration.
- Coe's Road Pumping Station. Operational modifications to the Pumping Station were undertaken by EPS.

From the 31st of January 2024 Uisce Éireann assumed full accountability for the delivery of water services and the necessary management and direction of all eligible Water Services staff, including those who choose to remain employed by Louth County Council.

Information Technology

The ICT Department continued to support all IT systems that facilitate business processes during 2023. ICT continued the rollout of Office 365 to all staff and elected members. This involved upgrading all the office versions on relevant PCs, migrating accounts to the Office 365 environment, and supporting staff and councillors during the transition.

The ICT Department worked on the procurement and implementation of a new Hyper Converged Infrastructure to upgrade our storage, virtual, and Disaster Recovery environment. The Councils server and network infrastructure were managed and upgraded, where necessary, to ensure reliability. Significant work was undertaken to upgrade the server room in the Civic Offices in Drogheda.

The ICT department continued to focus on security in 2023. A privileged access management system was implemented, and a cyber security baseline assessment was conducted.

ICT worked with our Planning Department to support the implementation of the PACE system for the digitisation of Planning Applications. Our GIS department updated all internal and public Map Viewers to incorporate the data from the PACE System. ICT also worked with the planning department on the development of requirements for a new Planning Enforcements System.

ICT supported the upgrades of existing systems such as iReg, iHouse and iPlan.

The ICT department completed the procurement and commenced the implementation of a new Managed Print Contract for all Louth County Council sites in 2023.

7

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

The Directorate tasked with the Ukraine Humanitarian Response is a temporary creation since June 2022.

Led by an Acting Director of Service, it leads on the delivery of temporary emergency accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTPs).





Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council



Humanitarian response to the Ukrainian Crisis

The Directorate tasked with the Ukraine Humanitarian Response is a temporary creation since June 2022.

Led by an Acting Director of Service, it leads on the delivery of temporary emergency accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTPs), for example through the following initiatives.

- a) the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) Emergency Refurbishment Ukraine Programme (ERUP) to the contract stage with Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
- b) 'Louth Offer A Home' which provides vacant homes offered by owners for Ukrainian beneficiaries

The Ukraine response team will work with DCEDIY relocations team to minimise disruption to families when beneficiaries are being moved from hotel, or other unsuitable accommodation to more long-term accommodation delivered through the ERUP initiative. The team support beneficiaries in accommodation in or seeking assistance to move Louth.

The newly formed Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) work within this Directorate and is tasked with coordinating mainstream services, community and integration supports to beneficiaries of temporary protection, International Protection Applicants, Programme Refugees, Those with Refugee, Subsidiary Protection, or Permission to Remain status. The LAIT works closely with the Community Response Forum to meet this aim under the guiding principle of 'integration from day one'.

UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

During 2023, the Ukraine Humanitarian Response Team continued to work with the Community Response Forum and the Inter Agency working group to support beneficiaries of temporary protection residing in Louth. The number of beneficiaries residing in Louth at end of 2023 was 2,426 (Central Statistics Office).

REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME

The Team assessed 40 proposals as part of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) led Refurbishment programme. The team facilitated a contract from Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) with a private provider of accommodation for 20 beds in 2023 in one project. Eight Projects with Legal framework were progressed to Letter of Intent (LOI) with a capacity for in excess of 600 beds.

OFFER A HOME

The Louth Offer a Home programme assessed 31 vacant properties for use by beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTPs) during 2023. 89 BOTPs were assigned to 28 properties. The Ukrainian speaking relationship manager provided support to both owners of the properties and to the beneficiaries settling into homes.



Yoga Classes

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY INTEGRATION TEAM

The Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) was established at beginning of November and consists of an Integration Support Coordinator, two Integration Supports Workers and an administrator. The role of the team is to provide International Protection applicants, Refugees and Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) with the supports they require. The team is tasked with complimenting and providing linkages with mainstream services to support integration for four refugee cohorts:

- Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs)
- International Protection Applicants
- Programme Refugees, and
- Those with Refugee, Subsidiary Protection, or Permission to Remain status

Since the team was established in November 2023 the LAIT has met with statutory agencies and other groups who are involved with the integration of migrants in County Louth. The LAIT also began work on developing a directory of services for the County which will include health, employment, education and other services.

TRAINING

Members of the LAIT attended training to support local authorities to engage marginalised and disadvantaged communities in local planning and decision-making processes. The Training was funded by the Dormant Accounts Engagement Project, a Department of Rural and Community and Development (DRCD) initiative, which is managed by Pobal.



Art Classes



Trip to Funtasia Water Park

8

APPENDICES

Conference attendance


**Record of payments to Members for meetings
Committees and Representation**

Corporate Plan Progress Report

Financial Statements

Performance Indicators

Statement of Internal Financial Control (SIFC)



Louth County Council
Comhairle Contae Louth

Cathaoirigh na Contae
1899 – 1999

1899 -1913	Peter H
1913 -1918	William
1918 -1920	Patrick
1920 -1925	James
1925 -1955	James
1955 -1957	William
1957 -1958	Lauren
1958 -1960	William
1960 -1967	Bernar
1967 -1973	Patric
1973 -1974	Patric
1974 -1975	Nich
1975 -1976	Patric
1976 -1979	Pete
1979 -1980	Nich
1980 -1981	Tom
1981 -1982	Nich
1982 -1983	Patric
1983 -1985	Nich
1985 -1986	Pete
1986 -1988	Joh
1988 -1989	Pete
1989 -1990	Nich
1990 -1991	Mic
1991 -1992	Joh
1992 -1993	Pete
1993 -1994	Jin
1994 -1995	Nic
1995 -1996	Fr
1996 -1997	T
1997 -1998	M
1998 -1999	N
1999 -2000	F



Female representation in chambers - Mayor of Drogheda Cllr Eileen Tully, Cathaoirleach of Louth Cllr Paula Butterly, Leas-Chathaoirleach of Louth Cllr Andea McKevitt, Cathaoirleach of Ardee Cllr Dolores Minogue helping address the gender balance in Louth County Council.

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT STATEMENT) FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2023

The Income & Expenditure Account Statement brings together all the revenue related income and expenditure.

It shows the surplus/(deficit) for the year. Transfers to/from reserves are shown separately and not allocated by the service division.

Note 16 allocates transfers by service division in the same format as Table A of the adopted Local Authority budget.

Expenditure by Division

Expenditure by Division	Notes	Gross Expenditure 2023	Income 2023	Net Expenditure 2023	Net Expenditure 2022
		€	€	€	€
Housing & Building		55,420,702	56,987,299	(1,566,597)	(2,983,207)
Roads Transportation & Safety		26,189,573	14,961,620	11,227,953	10,489,431
Water Services		7,033,060	6,907,344	125,716	55,105
Development Management		20,835,969	14,430,094	6,405,875	5,924,553
Environmental Services		18,512,521	2,638,433	15,874,088	14,970,229
Recreation & Amenity		9,243,167	1,316,594	7,926,573	7,765,174
Agriculture, Food and the Marine		966,215	471,062	495,153	324,624
Miscellaneous Services		9,626,268	13,195,477	(3,569,209)	(2,243,528)
Total Expenditure/Income	15	147,827,475	110,907,922		
Net cost of Divisions to be funded from Rates & Local Property Tax				36,919,553	34,302,382
Rates				34,331,121	34,546,750
Local Property Tax				9,866,199	9,866,196
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Transfers	16			7,277,767	10,110,564
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	14			(7,080,846)	(8,517,954)
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year				196,921	1,592,610
General Reserve @ 1st January 2023				3,962,840	2,370,230
General Reserve @ 31st December 2023				4,159,761	3,962,840

Statement of Financial Position

Statement Of Financial Position (BALANCE SHEET) AT 31st DECEMBER 2023		Notes	2023	2022
			€	€
Fixed Assets	1			
Operational			797,036,640	773,913,430
Infrastructural			1,355,364,519	1,355,364,519
Community			4,293,709	4,306,004
Non-Operational			49,079,247	49,079,247
			2,205,774,116	2,182,663,200
Work in Progress and Preliminary Expenses	2		87,609,508	35,734,096
Long Term Debtors	3		174,198,075	167,423,081
Current Assets				
Stocks	4		-	-
Trade Debtors & Prepayments	5		62,740,093	34,347,570
Bank Investments			78,425,195	118,474,999
Cash at Bank			9,344,897	2,364,285
Cash in Transit			311,595	343,129
			150,821,780	155,529,984
Current Liabilities (Amounts falling due within one year)				
Bank Overdraft			-	-
Creditors & Accruals	6		48,387,004	80,758,441
Finance Leases			-	-
			48,387,004	80,758,441
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)			103,618,920	124,705,599
Creditors (Amounts falling due after more than one year)				
Loans Payable	7		103,618,920	124,705,599
Finance Leases			-	-
Refundable deposits			21,086,699	18,350,665
Other			107,373,329	99,303,163
			232,078,948	242,359,427
Net Assets			2,337,937,526	2,218,232,493
Represented by				
Capitalisation Account	9		2,205,774,116	2,182,663,200
Income WIP	2		91,284,435	33,947,064
General Revenue Reserve			4,159,761	3,962,840
Other Specific Reserves			469,071	469,071
Other Balances	10		36,250,143	(2,809,682)
Total Reserves			2,337,937,526	2,218,232,493

Summary of Major Revenue Collections for 2023

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Debtor type	Incoming arrears @ 1/1/2023	Accrued - current year debit (Gross)	Vacant property adjustments	Write offs	Waivers and Credits	Total for collection = (B+C-D-E-F)	Amount collected	Closing arrears @ 31/12/2023 = (G-H)	Specific doubtful arrears*	% Collected = (H)/(G-J) **
	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Rates	7,561,465	34,331,121	2,579,754	517,966	366,981	38,427,885	33,075,305	5,352,580	353,015	87%
Rents & Annuities	2,621,885	14,970,286	-	13,810	-	17,578,362	14,665,201	2,913,161	-	83%
Housing Loans	295,384	2,041,648	-	-	-	2,337,032	2,039,785	297,248	-	87%

*Specific doubtful arrears = (i) Vacancy applications pending/criteria not met & (ii) Accounts in examinership/receivership/liquidation.

Councillor Attendance Record

Title	Dates	Members Attended	Travel & Subs Cost	Conference Cost	Total Cost
Conferences at Home					
Celtic Conference - O'Donovan's Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork Local Authority Procurement Process	20th-22nd Jan. 2023	Pio Smith	€600.00	€100.00	€700.00
					€700.00
AILG Training					
AILG Module 1 Radison Blu Hotel, Limerick	25th Feb 2023	Jim Tenanty	€430.54	€80.00	€510.54
		Declan Power	€384.20	€80.00	€464.20
		Pio Smith	€422.24	€80.00	€502.24
AILG Module 2 - Fairways Hotel, Dundalk	25th March, 2023	Marianne Butler	No Claims for T&S		
		Jim Tenanty			
AILG Spring Annual Training Conference - Hotel Kilkenny	19th & 20th April, 2023	Declan Power	€473.47	€165.00	€638.47
		Paddy McQuillan	€464.14	€165.00	€629.14
		Pio Smith	€640.35	€165.00	€805.35
		Jim Tenanty	€538.15	€165.00	€703.15
AILG Module 3 Mullingar Park Hotel, Mullingar	15th June, 2023	James Byrne	€73.78	€80.00	€153.78
		Pio Smith	€169.61	€80.00	€249.61
		Declan Power	€100.53	€80.00	€180.53
		Jim Tenanty	€112.43	€80.00	€192.43
AILG Module 4 Radison Blu Hotel, Sligo	22nd July, 2023	Pio Smith	€350.73	€80.00	€530.40
		Jim Tenanty	€412.00	€80.00	€492.00
		James Byrne	€188.57	€80.00	€268.57
AILG Autumn Annual Training Seminar '23	13th - 14th Sept. 2023	James Byrne	€422.10	€165.00	€587.10
		Declan Power	€500.04	€165.00	€665.04
		Jim Tenanty	€557.79	€165.00	€722.79
		Pio Smith	€639.33	€165.00	€804.33
		Paddy McQuillan	€453.09	€165.00	€618.09
AILG Module 5 Rose Hotel, Tralee, Co. Kerry	20th - 21st Oct. 2023	Pio Smith	€776.05	€80.00	€856.05
		Jim Tenanty	€733.47	€80.00	€813.47
AILG Module 5 Training - Kilmore Hotel, Cavan	19th October, 2023	Declan Power	€150.96	€80.00	€230.96
AILG Module 6 Clayton Hotel, Galway	18th November, 2023	James Byrne	€383.23	€80.00	€463.23
		Pio Smith	€600.23	€80.00	€680.23

Conferences

Title	Dates	Members Attended	Travel & Subs Cost	Conference Cost	Total Cost
LAMA Training					
LAMA Spring Seminar Westlodge Hotel, Bantry, Co. Cork	2nd - 4th March, 2023	Pio Smith	€715.68	€180.00	€895.68
		Jim Tenanty	€676.19	€180.00	€856.19
		James Byrne	€483.15	€180.00	€663.15
LAMA Autumn Seminar Ard Ri House Hotel, Tuam, Co. Galway	25th & 26th October, 2023	Pio Smith	€799.86	€160.00	€959.86
		Jim Tenanty	€678.77	€160.00	€838.77
		James Byrne	€434.52	€160.00	€594.52
					€17,569.87
Attendance other Meetings					
I.P.B. Insurance Members Engagement Forum Canal Court, Newry	5th - 6th Oct. 2023	Pio Smith	€591.40	nil	€591.40
Foreign Travel					
New York Trip	14th -18th March 202	Cllr Paula Butterly	€2,338.67	nil	€2,338.67
		Cllr Conor Keelan	€2,338.67	nil	€2,338.67
		Cllr. Michelle Hall	€2,338.67	nil	€2,338.67
		Cllr. Kevin Meenan	€2,338.67	nil	€2,338.67

Training
18,269.87

Side view of Town Hall Dundalk on a summers evening, overlooked by a mural of The Arctic Fox, Francis Leopold-McClintock painted by artist 'Friz' for the Seek Festival



Payments to Members of Louth County Council

	Payments to Members of Louth Local Council	Louth County Council
1	Number of Council & Committee Meetings	112
2	Annual Expenses, Allowance (travel, subsistence & misc. Expenses e.g. postage, including vouched expenses). Total of expenses paid to members in respect of attendance of meetings of the Council and its committees	€161,648.23
3	Representational Payment	€830,373.92
4	Chairpersons Allowance	€20,000.00
5	Vice Chairpersons Allowance	€4,000.00
6	Chairpersons of SPC's/MPC's	€30,000.00
7	Chairpersons of Municipal Districts	€30,000.00
8	Member of Municipal District Allowance	NIL
9	Mobile/Blackberry Phones & Broadband	€14,989.45
10	Expenses on Conference & Training etc. attended: Home Abroad	€18,269.87 NIL

Statement of Internal Financial Control (SIFC)

INTRODUCTION

I, Joan Martin, Chief Executive (CE) of Louth County Council am responsible for the annual financial statement (AFS), prepared by the Director of Finance, in accordance with the accounting code of practice issued by the Minister under section 107 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

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

The AFS is subject to external audit, by an auditor of the Local Government Audit Service, whose purpose is to form an independent opinion of the accounts and state whether the annual financial statement presents fairly the financial position of the local

authority and of its income and expenditure for the period in question, and whether the transactions of the audited body conform with the statutory or other authorisation under which they purport to have been carried out.

The AFS reports on the day-to-day activity of Louth County Council in the form of the Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure, summarised by Division. The Statement of Financial Position outlines Louth County Council's overall financial position as of the 31st of December 2023.

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

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

	Current Year €m	Previous Year €m
Goods & Services	€33.6	€30.7
Grants & Subsidies	€76.5	€60.3
Other Contributions (as appropriate)	€0.8	€0.4
Rates	€34.3	€34.5
Local Property Tax	€9.9	€9.9

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

In 2023, we had additional expenditure in the refurbishment of Long-term Voids (€0.7m) and Energy Fabric Upgrades (€2.3m) in our housing stock both of which were funded by the Department and our own funding. We also had the additional costs in relation to providing accommodation for Ukrainians, these costs were recouped from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration & Youth. The Department approved additional payroll increases to alleviate the cost-of-living increase in 2023 and we received funding from the Department towards this extra cost.

We received funding from the Department in December 2022 with regard to our legacy land loans. This was not in time to redeem the loans with the

HFA before the year end therefore the income was deferred in the 2022 accounts and brought into the 2023 accounts where we redeemed the relevant land loans. This is in line with guidance issued by the Department. Due to the repayment of the land loans and reduction in the interest charges the council approved additional spending in 2023 in the areas of Housing Grants, Long Term & Ordinary Voids, Boiler Maintenance programme, Dunleer Library, Taking in Charge, Climate Action, Workforce plan, Dereliction and Tidy Towns/Estates.

These additional funds were reported in the Chief Executive's monthly reports council during the year.

	Current Year €m	Previous Year €m
Income	€155.1	€135.8
Expenditure	€147.8	€125.7
Net Transfers to/(from) Capital	€7.1	€8.5
Exceptional Item	Nil	Nil
Surplus/(Deficit) for	€0.2	€1.6
Prior Year Adjustment	Nil	Nil
Opening Revenue Reserve	€3.9	€2.3
Closing Revenue Reserve	€4.2	€3.9

Total Revenue Expenditure (including transfers to Capital) for 2023 was €159.4 million and Total Revenue Income (including transfers from Capital) was €159.6 million given us an overall surplus of €196.9k, which is 0.12% of expenditure. This added to our carried forward General Reserve of €3.96m leaves us with a General Reserve of €4.16m. This fund covers the €1.5m debit balance provided in the budget for 2024 and any increase in costs we may incur in 2024.

The *Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet)* represents the total financial activity of the council for the year together with comparative year figures as appropriate.

The statement includes assets and liabilities as follows:

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

The Net Assets of Louth County Council at the end of 2023 total € 2,338m and are as follows:

	Current Year €m	Previous Year €m
Fixed Assets	€2,206	€2,183
Works in Progress	€88	€36
Long Term debtors	€174	€167
Current Assets	€151	€156
Current Liabilities	(€48)	(€81)
Net Current Assets/ (Liabilities)	€103	€75
Creditors (Amounts greater than 1 year)	(€232)	(€242)
Net Assets/(Liabilities)	€2,338	€2,218

A *Statement of Funds Flow* was introduced as part of AFS 2011. While the guidance of International Accounting Standard 7 Statement of Cash Flows has been followed, the business of local authorities is substantially different to most private sector

organisations and therefore some minor changes to the format have been agreed to ensure the data displayed is meaningful and useful within the local government sector.

SYSTEM OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROLS

As CE of Louth County Council, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by Louth County Council. This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to Louth County Council. Also, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

FINANCIAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

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

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

Administrative Controls and Management Reporting

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

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

PROCUREMENT COMPLIANCE

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

INTERNAL AUDIT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

As Chief Executive, I can confirm that Louth County Council has outsourced our internal audit function to a professional qualified auditing firm. Our internal audit work programme is informed by analysis of the financial risks to which Louth County Council is exposed. I am satisfied that there are procedures in place to ensure that the reports of the internal audit function are followed up.

I can confirm that Louth County Council has an effective audit committee which carries out an annual effectiveness review of their activities. I can also confirm that an Audit Committee is in place in accordance with the requirements of Section 122 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

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

- I. to review financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within the local authority that has established it,
- II. to foster the development of best practice in the performance by the local authority of its internal audit function,
- III. to review any audited financial statement, auditor's report or auditor's special report in relation to the local authority and assess any actions taken within that authority by its chief executive in response to such a statement or report and to report to that authority on its findings,
- IV. to assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the local authority's performance of its functions and
- V. to review systems that are operated by the local authority for the management of risks.

I recognise that the audit committee plays a crucial role in the governance framework of local authorities, particularly in the context of increased public sector accountability. They have an independent role in

advising the Council on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the local authority.

I acknowledge the Audit Committee's role in the risk management process and in the continuing review of the control environment and governance procedures in Louth County Council.

RISK AND CONTROL FRAMEWORK.

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

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

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

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

The Statement of Internal Financial Control will be included in the published Annual Report prepared and adopted by the Council by the 30th of June 2024.

Signed by:



Joan Martin
Chief Executive

Dated: 30th April

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PLAN 2019-2024 PROGRESS REPORT

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide leadership and deliver high-quality, citizen-focused, responsive and effective services.



Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council

HOUSING

Title	Update
Delivering the Rebuilding Ireland Strategy targets for County Louth	Considerable progress was made in the delivery of the Louth County Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan in 2023. 365 new homes were delivered this year which greatly exceeded the Government's target of 156 new homes.
Delivering the Homeless Action Plan	During 2023 Louth County Council opened its first Homeless Family Emergency Accommodation Facility located in Knockbridge, Dundalk. In addition, 69 homeless households were allocated a social/voluntary property and 93 households availed of assistance from Homeless Services in accessing private rented accommodation under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme.
Implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP)	The total target for social housing allocations to Traveller households under the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 2019-2024 is 55 units of accommodation. 77 units of accommodation were provided to Traveller households to date (July 2019-March 2024).
Working with key stakeholders to achieve a mix of housing options	Preparations for county Louth's first Affordable Dwelling Purchase Scheme in many years located in Blackrock were finalised in late 2023. Discussions continued with Developers active in the county for new schemes in several locations. The first Cost Rental Equity Loan (CREL) scheme opened in Ferard Park, Drogheda in Oct 2023. This scheme is a collaboration with Tuath and Louth County Council. There was a significant uptake on activity under the Croí Cónaithe vacant property grant scheme with 90 applications approved during the year.
Delivering compact growth in Dundalk & Drogheda, including town centre and multi-storey living	Since the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 came into effect on the 11th November 2021, 51% of all new residential units granted are on infill/brownfield lands. This is in line with the growth strategy included in Policy Objective CS2 which seeks to achieve compact growth through the delivery of least 30% of all new homes in urban areas by developing infill, brownfield and regeneration sites and redeveloping underutilised land. Recent trends indicate higher densities and increased building heights with permissions granted for taller buildings at Ramparts Lane (5 storey), Francis Street (5 storey) and Dublin Street Dundalk (2 to 5 storey) in addition to a 4-6 storey residential development currently under construction at 'Connolly's Field' in Dundalk.
Prioritising the role of housing in placemaking	The role of housing in placemaking remains a priority and is achieved through compliance with Policy Objective HOU 17 of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied which seeks to promote and facilitate sustainable development of a high-quality built environment.

DROGHEDA & DUNDALK

Title	Update
Delivering new local area plans (LAP) for Drogheda & Dundalk	<p>The preparation of the Drogheda Joint Local Area Plan in partnership with Meath County Council has commenced and is currently at 'Issues Paper' stage with submissions on the Issues Paper having closed on the 27th March 2024.</p> <p>The preparation of a Local Area Plan for Dundalk has commenced and a Draft LAP is expected to be published in Q2 of 2024.</p>
Delivering the key objectives for Louth in Ireland 2040 and the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy	Dundalk and Drogheda are designated Regional Growth Centres as per the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). Continued sustainable growth with 57.5% of the population growth of Louth being within the Regional Growth Centres of Dundalk and Drogheda. Both Dundalk & Drogheda are on target to reach a population target of 50,000 on or before 2031 which is in line with targets within the RSES which is informed by Ireland 2040.
Delivering strong population growth with compact multi-storey development within town footprints	Census 2022 data indicates a population increase in Louth of 10,819 person (8.4%) between 2016-2022. Population figures for the Regional Growth Centres of Dundalk & Drogheda and the Self-Sustaining Towns of Ardee and Dunleer have also shown an increase in the same period. This is also reflected in the grant of permission of 51% of all new residential units on infill/brownfield lands since the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 came into effect.
Progressing urban regeneration projects, such as Westgate Vision, Drogheda; Long Walk, Dundalk	There are currently three projects funded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund: Westgate Vision, Drogheda; Long Walk, Dundalk; and St Nicholas Quarter, phase I and II in Dundalk.
Enhancing Recreation, Cultural and Sports Facilities	A Nighttime Economy Officer has been employed and recruitment commenced for a Tourism Officer. Droichead Arts Centre and An Tain in Dundalk have seen ongoing support and investment from the council as have smaller groups and facilities through our Arts Grant scheme. Upkeep and improvement works have been carried out to the Tholsel, and Millmount. Louth took charge of St Laurences Gate from the OPW. The VarCITIES project continues to progress plans for the courtyard area at back of Dundalk Library. Investment into initiatives and festivals such Lú Festival of Light, Sea Food Louth, enhance the image of Louth as a place to be. Tenders were issued for the redevelopment of Dundalk Leisure Centre Changing Village, which encompasses a Changing Places Facility. The Lourdes Stadium redevelopment to make the facility more accessible has also gone to tender.

DROGHEDA & DUNDALK continued

Title	Update
<p>Maintaining strong levels of job growth in Drogheda & Dundalk</p>	<p>The level of employment generating development has been strong with various employment related permissions granted in Drogheda and Dundalk including a digital innovation hub at the Boyne Mill in Drogheda and an enterprise Park on the Armagh Road in Dundalk which will be for light industrial and warehousing issues although it is acknowledged that it will take a number of years for the recently granted permissions to be developed.</p> <p>There has been a good quantum of retail floor space granted within 6,848sq.m gross retail floorspace granted in Drogheda and 6,159sq.m granted in Dundalk.</p>
<p>Developing our towns as great places to Live, Work and Play</p>	<p>Continued promotion of compact growth in urban areas. A number of Active Travel projects have received funding in Drogheda and Dundalk through the Active Travel Investment Programme for 2024 which will improve cycling and walking facilities.</p> <p>The Louth County Development Contribution Scheme 2023 (adopted 18th September 2023) allows for reductions for residential and non-residential developments in town centre (core retail area) locations of Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee and identified 'Retail Opportunity Sites.</p>

CLIMATE ACTION

Title	Update
Delivering Louth's Climate Action Strategy	The 'Louth County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029' was developed throughout 2023. A full climate action team is now in place to drive the delivery of the actions within the plan.
Working to deliver Ireland's Climate Action Strategy	The Climate Action Team in Louth County Council will work to ensure the organisation has Climate Action as a key consideration in decision making going forward. The team will ensure that our plans and actions are derived from the national plan.
Continuing to develop as exemplars for energy efficiency and awareness	Louth County Council has joined the 'Mid-East Energy Unit', which is a joint effort by four local authorities to share knowledge and access funding. We continue to maintain our ISO50001 accreditation for our energy management system. Our Energy team have monthly awareness activities to ensure staff are aware of energy use and can make changes to improve efficiency. It is a goal that all building upgrades undertaken by our facilities team, now involve a sustainable energy action.
Combat the flood threat in Drogheda & Dundalk and other areas in partnership with the Office of Public Works	<p>In 2023 progressing with Stage I continued for the Dundalk and Ardee Flood Relief Scheme which includes the identification and development of a preferred scheme to alleviate flooding in the towns of Dundalk, Blackrock and Ardee.</p> <p>Environmental surveys have taken place in both Dundalk and Ardee and are now finished with detailed reports produced by specialist ecologists, marking a large step forward for the understanding of the environmental constraints of the Study Area. Recently received reports for Ardee included, Preliminary Environmental Site Assessment Report & Geomorphology Report. Reports received for Dundalk include, reporting on snails in the study area, Bat activity and terrestrial mammals. Additional wintering bird surveys are planned for this year & next to further inform the design and provide continuity of data for the environmental assessments of the scheme which will emerge from the options appraisal. The Hydraulic modelling and wave overtopping analysis are continuing for Dundalk with the baseline modelling for certain flood events now completed. The Draft emerging flood relief options are starting to be considered in line with the hydraulic modelling. A Site Investigation contract is currently being scoped for Dundalk Flood Relief Scheme. The aim of this SI contract is to obtain as much geotechnical information as possible to inform the design and planning processes. Due to the sensitive environmental nature of Dundalk Bay and its environmental designations, an Appropriate Assessment screening process is</p>

CLIMATE ACTION continued

Title	Update
	<p>currently under consideration in advance of progressing with the Site Investigation contract. An archaeological assessment of the proposed SI works will also be carried out.</p> <p>In 2023 progressing with Stage I also continued for the Drogheda and Baltray Flood Relief Scheme which includes the identification and development of a preferred scheme to alleviate flooding.</p> <p>The Steering Group are continuing to collect data to ensure the most accurate and up to date information is used to inform the environmental and technical analyses being undertaken to meet the project objectives.</p> <p>Louth County Council and the OPW have confirmed acceptance of the Hydrological Analysis report as final. This report includes an assessment of the frequency and magnitude of river flows over a range of scenarios and the establishment of coastal design boundaries. This along with the survey data, provided the necessary inputs data to the computational model as part of the hydraulic analysis. The Hydraulic analysis is progressing with the final report expected in early 2024. The initial flood extent maps are being used to identify the flooding mechanisms within Drogheda and Baltray. This is required to support the identification of draft potential flood relief measures that could ultimately be constructed as part of the scheme. A specialist Ground Investigation contractor was procured to collect data on the ground conditions where the scheme is likely to be developed. These investigations, which commenced mid 2023 will provide data to inform the Scheme Analysis and Development phase of the project.</p>
Being part of the Local Authority Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project	<p>Local authorities are working on a coordinated basis to upgrade their public lighting stock through the National Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project. There are more than 480,000 public lights across Ireland, which cost more than €56m to operate each year. The energy these lights consume accounts for half of all the energy consumed by local authorities.</p> <p>Twenty-one local authorities are taking part in the National Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project to upgrade their public lights to LED.</p>

CLIMATE ACTION continued

Title	Update
	<p>The project will upgrade approximately 205,000 public lights through an investment of €150 million. These lights currently consume 123 million kWh of energy annually.</p> <p>Once complete, the project will avoid emitting 20,000 tonnes of CO2 each year, save 68 million kWh in energy, saving local authorities €12m in energy and maintenance costs each year. Louth County Council are part of Region 2 works package and will have all lights changed to LED in 2025.</p>
<p>Developing and pursuing strong policies on biodiversity</p>	<p>A full-time Biodiversity Officer has been recruited and an SLA signed with the Heritage Council. An enhanced Biodiversity Action Plan will be developed in 2024.</p>
<p>Working with key stakeholders throughout County Louth to improve sustainable transport options</p>	<p>Larger Active travel projects in conjunction with the NTA are currently going through the design phases (1-7) for the development of cycleways and footpaths in Dundalk and Drogheda. A number of non statutory public consultation on design option for these large active travel schemes were held throughout 2023, and it is expected subject to NTA approvals that these will go through the relevant planning process in 2024.</p> <p>Safe Routes to school programme in conjunction with An Taisce are ongoing with round 1 expected to be on the ground in summer of 2024.</p>
<p>Reducing the carbon emissions by improving energy efficiency</p>	<p>Louth County Council has joined the 'Mid-East Energy Unit', which is a joint effort by four local authorities to share knowledge and access funding. A gap-to-target analysis has been developed which has resulted in a pipeline of projects to be delivered over the next 5 years, which will guide us towards our statutory carbon reduction targets.</p>

KEY INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

Title	Update
Drogheda Civic Centre	Construction Contract for the first phase of the project has been signed and works on the ground & commenced in April 2022, it's envisaged that construction will be completed in May 2024.
Ardee Castle Upgrade	Ardee Castle Refurbishment has funding under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. Detailed design is complete and a contractor is ready to be procured for the construction works. Following an extensive process Ministerial Consent has been received.
Port Access Road	<p>A Licence agreement for Road Works by 'PANCR Developments Limited', which allows for construction of Phase 1 of the Port Access Northern Cross Route, along with other necessary infrastructure was signed in mid-2022.</p> <p>The project, known as PANCR Phase 1, will cover a new stretch of road from the Rosehall Roundabout to the proposed Ballymakenny Road Roundabout, together with the realignment of Twenties Lane and remaining upgrades to the Ballymakenny Road. This Phase 1 of the Project is being delivered by the Housing Infrastructure Services Company (HISCo) on behalf of PANCR Developments Ltd. and is being funded by the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund. Clonmel Enterprises have been appointed as Main Contractor. Construction is commenced in Q4 of 2022 and will be completed in March 2024.</p>
Ardee bypass	Part 8 Planning Consent Process was completed in 2022. However, a Judicial Review by Third Parties to An Bord Pleanala directions to Louth County Council relating to EIAR/NIS, with Louth County Council being a noticed party was made to the High Court. The hearing has been assigned a date of April 9th 2024.
Narrow Water Bridge	Following on from the announcement on the 18th of November 22 Louth County Council received permission to proceed to tender for the project. In April 2023 Louth Co. Council established a restricted panel of Tenderer and Tender Documentation was then release to this Panel. Four number tender consultations were held with the bidder during the tender period and tenders were received from two bidders in Oct 27th. Tenders are currently being assessed and it is expected that a contract would be awarded early Q2 2024.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS continued

Title	Update
Sporting & Leisure Facilities	Tenders were issued for the redevelopment of Dundalk Leisure Centre Changing Village, which encompasses a Changing Places Facility. The Lourdes Stadium redevelopment to make the facility more accessible has also gone to tender.
Clanbrassil Street & St. Nicholas Quarter	The successful public realm works completed on Clanbrassil Street will now be continued into St Nicholas Quarter with the enhancement of the public realm along Bridge Street, Linenhall Street and Peace Park. The project is funded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund and will be delivered under two phases. Phase 1 will commence on the ground in 2024.
Long Walk	The Long Walk regeneration project has funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund. The department has agreed to Louth County Councils procurement strategy. A multi-disciplinary design team will be appointed to complete a Framework Plan for the area as well as a Part 8 Planning procedure for a project highlighted in the Framework Plan. Tender documents are nearing completion for procurement of a consultant.
Westgate Vision	The Westgate planning application was lodged with An Bord Pleanála in 2023 and seeks approval for significant regeneration of the Westgate area of Drogheda through a public realm scheme. The proposed improvements to the public realm will encompass several streets including Georges Street to Dominick Street and from Fair Street to Father Connolly Way.
Ardee 2040	Ardee 2040 is funded under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. It is intended to seek planning approval from An Bord Pleanála in 2024. This large scale project seeks improvements to the streetscape and amenity in Ardee with a focus on the key areas of Main Street, the Old Railway Lands and the proposed new amenity lands to the east of the town centre.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

Title	Update
<p>Delivering quality job opportunities in Louth for the people of the County</p>	<p>In 2023, the Local Enterprise Office Louth (LEO Louth) continued its unwavering commitment to supporting businesses in Co. Louth amidst the ongoing challenges posed by the Energy Crisis, inflation and the follow on from Brexit. Collaborating closely with Louth County Council, LEO Louth prioritised assisting businesses in navigating these economic hurdles while ensuring they were well-informed about and able to access a comprehensive range of services tailored to their needs.</p> <p>Throughout the year, LEO Louth, in conjunction with Economic Development, delivered an extensive array of enterprise supports tailored to both budding startups and established businesses across County Louth. These initiatives were designed with the overarching goal of fostering sustainability, growth, and enhanced performance within the local business community. Complementing these efforts were a series of strategic economic development initiatives aimed at fortifying the region's economic landscape.</p> <p>Serving as a proactive catalyst for progress, Louth County Council actively facilitated the creation of quality job opportunities, thereby contributing to the prosperity and welfare of the residents of County Louth.</p>
<p>Working with stakeholders to attract investment</p>	<p>LEO Louth actively engages with a diverse range of stakeholders to bolster investment prospects and foster economic development. Partnering with Chambers of Commerce in Dundalk and Drogheda, as well as Skillnet groups in both areas, LEO Louth harnesses collective expertise to attract investment and nurture business growth. Through participation in steering committees such as the North East Regional Skills Forum and the North East Regional Enterprise Plan, LEO Louth contributes insights and collaborates on strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing the region's economic landscape. Moreover, LEO Louth's involvement in the Evaluation Committee of the Leader Programme underscores its commitment to facilitating sustainable development at the grassroots level.</p> <p>Additionally, LEO Louth holds board positions in seven Community Enterprise Companies, including Dundalk Bids Company and Drogheda Enterprise Centre Co., among others. By leveraging these partnerships, LEO Louth strengthens community ties and promotes entrepreneurial endeavours at the local level. Furthermore, through formal Memorandums of Understanding with nine national protocol partners, including government agencies like Microfinance</p>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION continued

Title	Update
	<p>Ireland and the Revenue Commissioners, LEO Louth facilitates seamless collaboration and resource sharing to bolster investment opportunities and support business growth.</p> <p>LEO Louth delivers tailored business advice and support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This includes providing vital information on commercial property availability and ongoing assistance to Community Enterprise Centres like The Mill, Ardee Business Park, and Creative Spark.</p> <p>Moreover, Louth County Council actively collaborates with neighbouring local authorities to promote initiatives such as the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, positioning County Louth as a prime investment destination along the M1 Corridor. Frequent engagements with key agencies like IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland underscore the concerted effort to attract inward investment, further bolstering the county's economic prospects and fostering sustainable growth. Through these multifaceted collaborations, LEO Louth and its stakeholders endeavour to create a vibrant and resilient economic ecosystem in County Louth.</p>
Working with stakeholders to mitigate the impact of Brexit	<p>In 2023, LEO Louth took proactive measures to collaborate with stakeholders and mitigate the impact of Brexit on businesses in the region. Among its initiatives, LEO Louth was involved in a pivotal cross-border conference in March, facilitating dialogue and knowledge-sharing among businesses on both sides of the border to navigate the complexities of Brexit. Additionally, recognising the need for tailored support, LEO Louth provided customs training specifically designed for SMEs, equipping them with essential knowledge and skills to navigate new trade regulations effectively.</p> <p>Furthermore, recognising the diverse needs of businesses, LEO Louth offered personalised Brexit mentoring sessions, providing one-to-one guidance and support upon request, ensuring businesses received targeted assistance tailored to their unique circumstances. Through these concerted efforts, LEO Louth played a crucial role in empowering businesses to navigate the challenges posed by Brexit and emerge resilient in the face of uncertainty.</p>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION continued

Title	Update
<p>Continuing to work with Louth Economic Forum as the key collaborative driver of economic development in County Louth</p>	<p>Continuing its pivotal role within the economic landscape of County Louth, the Louth Economic Forum remains a beacon of collaborative effort, spearheading initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth and job creation. In 2023, bi-monthly meetings, supported by the Economic Development Section of Louth County Council, served as dynamic platforms for knowledge exchange and strategic planning. Under the stewardship of Mr. Gerry Murphy, who assumed the role of Chairperson in late 2022, the forum continued its mission to forge partnerships and cultivate synergies across key sectors including Tourism & Heritage, Foreign Direct Investment, Indigenous Industry, and Education & Training. Embracing a regional perspective, the forum welcomed presentations from regional representatives, ensuring stakeholders in County Louth are well-informed of emerging opportunities.</p> <p>Noteworthy sessions in 2023 included a workshop led by Francis Verling, exploring future challenges and opportunities, as well as insights from KPMG on the upcoming Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029. Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan of DkIT provided valuable updates on the Institute's progress and future prospects, while Amanda Smyth shed light on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) initiatives.</p> <p>Furthermore, DkIT presented its Strategic Plan 2023-2028, highlighting concerted efforts towards academic and regional advancement. Through such engagements, the Louth Economic Forum remains steadfast in its commitment to driving inclusive and sustainable economic development throughout the region.</p>
<p>Continuing to increase the impact of LEO on small businesses</p>	<p>LEO Louth is well established within the Economic Directorate and delivers Louth County Council's Service Level Agreement to Enterprise Ireland under an enterprise focused Action Plan aimed at supporting entrepreneurship, start-ups and established small businesses. This is reviewed on an annual basis and includes a series of targeted business metrics to be delivered each year. LEO Louth continues to increase its impact on small business by supporting the development of a range of indigenous clusters in Engineering, Craft, Tech, Food and FinTech through initiatives such as the Focused Engineering Network, Louth Craftmark, Network Louth, Creative Spark, Boyne Valley Flavours and the Fintech Corridor.</p>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION continued

Title	Update
	<p>These clusters facilitate best practice and information exchange amongst the small business community. During 2023, LEO Louth continued to provide financial supports to businesses included Trading Online Vouchers, Microfinance Ireland's Loan products and mainstream Grant Aid to manufacturing and internationally tradable service businesses with potential to export.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 loan applications were advanced to Microfinance Ireland. • 18 grant applications were received: <p>Feasibility Study (4), Priming (1), Business Expansion (3) and Technical Assistance Export Grants (10) were approved with a total approved value of €239,846.40.</p> <p>Moreover, LEO Louth's dedication to fostering entrepreneurial success extended to comprehensive expert advice and guidance, delivered through a robust business training programme conducted virtually throughout the year.</p> <p>A total of 47 business training and development programmes were hosted, engaging 970 participants keen on honing their skills and knowledge. Additionally, 4 Trading Online Workshops were tailored to meet the evolving needs of 126 participants, while 9 Start Your Own Business programmes provided essential guidance to 135 aspiring entrepreneurs looking to embark on new ventures.</p> <p>Complementing these efforts, LEO Louth facilitated invaluable one-to-one business mentoring, with 523 mentor assignments completed during the year. This personalised approach ensured small business owners received tailored guidance from industry experts, surpassing the annual target and comprising various advisory clinics and mentoring sessions, including General Business Advice Clinics, Financial Business Clinics, and one-to-one mentoring sessions. Through these multifaceted initiatives, LEO Louth remains at the forefront of empowering businesses to thrive and succeed in an ever-evolving economic landscape.</p>
<p>Engaging with all cross-border platforms to drive the economic development of the Border Region and the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor</p>	<p>Louth County Council has taken proactive steps to strengthen cross-border collaborations, recognising the significance of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor in driving regional economic development. Partnering with seven other local authorities spanning from Dublin City to Belfast City, the council has worked tirelessly to promote and amplify the advantages of this vital economic corridor. Furthermore, the council has maintained its commitment to cross-border initiatives through active engagement with the East Border</p>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION continued

Title	Update
	<p>Region, a local authority-led cross-border network dedicated to fostering cooperation and growth.</p> <p>In alignment with these efforts, LEO Louth has played a pivotal role in delivering Innovate Accelerate an impactful cross-border business programme conducted in collaboration with Newry and Mourne and Down Enterprise agency and Meath County Council serve as catalysts for innovation, collaboration, and business acceleration. Through these initiatives, LEO Louth contributes significantly to the advancement of cross-border economic synergies, driving sustainable growth and prosperity throughout the region.</p>
<p>Making Louth a great place to Live, Work and Play</p>	<p>Some roles in the Local Authority Integration Team were appointed and coordinated and provided collaboration across the mainstream services and supports required for all beneficiaries of temporary protection, International Protection Applicants, Programme Refugees and those with status migrants via the Community Response Forum to the end of 2023.</p> <p>The Economic Development and Tourism office continued its promotion of Louth with a list of things to do in Co. Louth and a suggested list of itineraries of places to visit. The promotion of Sealouth the scenic seafood trail continued in 2023 the highlight being a full "Nationwide" programme on the trail aired on RTE in June 2023 which highlighted the array of local produce and scenic places Louth has to offer thus highlighting the recreational amenities available to the residents and visitors of County Louth.</p> <p>A Consultant was also appointed in 2023 under the Shared Island fund to carry out a Feasibility Study to develop the greater Carlingford Lough region incorporating the Cooley Peninsula and Mourne/Gullion Area as the premier outdoor activity centre of Ireland. The report was submitted to the Department of the Taoiseach in November 2023.</p> <p>Louth County Council made an application and were successful in becoming one of nine Local Authorities invited to take part in the pilot scheme appointing a Night Time Economy (NTE) Advisor for Drogheda. Louth County Council was the first Local Authority to have their NTE Advisor in place and work commenced on the development of local talent and co-ordination of events in the town.</p>

KEY PLANS & STRATEGY

Title	Update
Louth Economic Community Plan	Extensive engagement took place across 2023 with community and economic stakeholders to develop the LECP. The plan was nearing finalisation towards the end of 2023, with approval & implementation set for approval in early 2024.
County Development Plan	<p>The Two-Year Progress Report on the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 was published in September 2023.</p> <p>Proposed Variation No.2 of the County Development Plan was published in March 2024. This Variation seeks to update the Plan to take account of the Guidelines 'Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities' published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024.</p>
Local Area Plans (LAP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundalk • Drogheda • Ardee 	<p>The preparation of a Local Area Plan for Dundalk has commenced and a Draft LAP is expected to be published in Q2 of 2024.</p> <p>The preparation of the Drogheda Joint Local Area Plan in partnership with Meath County Council has commenced and is currently at 'Issues Paper' stage with submissions on the Issues Paper having closed on the 27th March 2024.</p> <p>The Local Area Plan for Ardee has not yet commenced.</p>
Westgate Vision	Louth County Council published the Westgate Vision in 2018, it is an urban regeneration vision which has been designed to be used as a guide for townscape recovery in the Westgate area of Drogheda. Three study areas were examined in the Vision: Barlow; Old Abbey; Donaghy's Mill. From this vision, a public realm scheme has been designed for two of the study areas Barlow and the Old Abbey. These plans are currently lodged with An Bord Pleanala seeking permission for the works.
Louth Climate Adaptation Plan	The Climate Adaptation Strategy has been superseded by the 'Louth County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029', which was developed throughout 2023. A full climate action team is now in place to drive the delivery of the actions within the plan.

KEY PLANS & STRATEGY continued

Title	Update
Major Emergency Management	<p>Louth County Council continue to prepare for any response that is required under the above framework. This includes training and monitoring all severe weather events and mobilise the Severe Weather Assessment Team when required. Louth saw a sudden unpredicted and unprecedented flooding event in late 2023, however on assessment while significant damage was caused to roads and some properties it was not deemed necessary to instigate a Major Emergency as Louth County Council staff were assigned to assist with mitigations for those affected by flooding distributing sandbags and assisting those who required evacuation from properties. The full extent of the effects of the flooding could not be determined until flood waters dissipated. An inter-agency Major Emergency exercise took place in Gormanstown in Q4 of 2023.</p>
Louth Economic Forum Action Plans	<p>In 2023 has made a valuable input to Regional plans and engaged with Louth County Council and other State bodies on their strategic plans. Noteworthy sessions in 2023 included a workshop with KPMG on the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029. Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan of DkIT made a presentation on the Institute's Strategic Plan 2023-2028, highlighting concerted efforts towards academic and regional advancement and Amanda Smyth shared insights into the work of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) initiatives with all such presenters receiving valuable feedback on their initiatives. Through such engagements, the Louth Economic Forum remains steadfast in its commitment to driving inclusive and sustainable economic development throughout the region.</p>

QUALITY OF LIFE

Title	Update
<p>Making our communities great places to live and volunteer – where everyone takes pride in their local area</p>	<p>The Community Section continued to provide funding via amenity and other grants to assist Community Groups to develop pride of place while annually acknowledging group efforts through various award ceremonies, while discretionary funding provided to Elected Members saw a myriad of local groups supported for various works to enhance local areas.</p> <p>We have continued to support the Louth Community Volunteer Programme which saw 725 hours of voluntary service given across various events in the County.</p>
<p>That all of our citizens avail and enjoy our Arts, Culture & Library Services</p>	<p>Louth Library Service</p> <p>Louth Library Service continued to focus on the library’s role in literacy support, supporting lifelong learning opportunities and establishing the library as a community hub.</p> <p>Our visitor numbers, issues and membership continue to grow highlighting public libraries being at the heart of our communities.</p> <p>2023 saw the launch of <i>The Library is the Place</i>, the new 5-year national public library strategy 2023-2027. This ambitious new strategy is designed to support and strengthen the public library network over the next 5 years. The Library is the Place contains 66 separate actions which will ensure public libraries become multi-purpose social and educational spaces for all members of the community to enjoy.</p> <p>Strategic initiatives including Right to Read and Healthy Ireland at Your Library continued to develop encouraging reading at all levels, improvement in digital skills and literacy and to support the provision of information and guidance on many topics including health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Funding opportunities included €17,000 in funding for the provision of new laptops and notebooks. This funding has enabled the replacement of outdated I.T. hardware with new devices for the benefit of library users of all ages. In supporting digital inclusion, we are providing literacy and technology skills training for those looking for work. As part of our Library of Sanctuary status it is vital that we continue to support marginalised and disadvantaged communities to access digital services.</p>

QUALITY OF LIFE continued

Title	Update
	<p>Dormant Account Funding allowed for the introduction of further equipment to enhance and complement services to older people, children, and adults with additional sensory needs and those with dyslexia.</p> <p>Louth County Archives Service The historical records preserved in Louth County Archives form the documentary heritage of the county encompassing many aspects of the lives of the people of Louth, portraying their authentic history, and operating as a vital element in their collective memory. This collective memory is of significance as it preserves identities and connects the past with the present while guiding future decisions. The County Archives continuously strives to care for, manage, and make available that memory.</p> <p>Archive Donations County Louth has a strong archival history, and the County Archives is indebted to those who have helped to preserve and expand our documentary heritage by donating local archives and records. Local archives may relate to any aspect of the history or development of our county and may include material from community groups, clubs and societies, national schools, individuals, or local businesses.</p> <p>County Museum Dundalk Fundamental to the workings of any museum are the concepts of memory and legacy. As the Museum approaches its 30th anniversary in 2024 these tenets are central to all that the Museum collects and exhibits. Taken in that context three specific events capture these concepts: specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the exhibition on St. Brigid • the handover and exhibition of the bell of the SS Dundalk • the exhibition <i>From Small Acorns: the development of Women's Football in Ireland</i>. <p>Whilst these three events represent the realization of these principles, the Museum continues to collect, conserve and curate items in its possession. As ever, it owes a huge degree of gratitude to the members of the public who entrust it with items of personal significance. It is these items, coupled with their respective backstories, which ensure that the collection grows in importance and relevance.</p>

QUALITY OF LIFE continued

Title	Update
	<p>Louth Arts</p> <p>CreateLouth, the Arts Service for County Louth continues to support a wide range of programmes and residencies in Creative Spark, An Táin Arts Centre and Droichead Arts Centre. In addition to supporting artists direct programming by the Arts Service, liaising with strategic partners culminated in activities including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music in Healthcare Settings • An extensive Culture Night programme • Brigid1500 projects including the Artist in the Community Project and the Brigid Cloak tour and workshops programme. <p>Grants & Awards</p> <p>In 2023, the arts service continued to make available a range of bursaries and awards to emerging and established artists across the county for a range of projects and development programmes.</p> <p>Creative Ireland</p> <p>The Creative Ireland initiative was extended for a second 5 year term from 2023-2027. The Louth Culture and Creativity Strategy was launched in February 2023 along with the National Strategy. The new strategy will continue and develop the work began under the initial 5 year term which ended in 2022 and a new Culture and Creativity Team was set up to verse the facilitation of projects and funding under the new initiative. This team is made up of representatives from several sectors of the Local Authority including Library, Archives, Public Realm, Community and Economic Development. We will continue to use Creative Ireland to enhance the work of the local authority through initiatives that work directly with community groups and which address areas of importance such as Climate Change, enhancing health, wellbeing and ageing and delivering on annual initiatives such as our Cruinniú na nÓg programme.</p>
<p>Make Louth a great place to live for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our older people • Our younger generation • Immigrants and all minority communities • And where those with disabilities can live ordinary lives in ordinary places 	<p>During 2023 Louth County Council established the Older People's Council and continued working collaboratively with groups including the Louth Older Peoples Forum, Comhairle na nÓg, disAbility Louth and other stakeholders to assist in the delivery of their goals and objectives. The Louth Meath Migrant Integration Forum completed the implementation of the joint strategy during the year.</p>

WATER

Objective	Progress
<p>Work with Irish Water to ensure the continued supply of safe and secure drinking water in adequate quantities to provide for the development needs of County Louth</p>	<p>Louth County Council work with Uisce Éireann under a Service Level Agreement to ensure safe and secure drinking water in County Louth and with UÉ Connections and Developer Services team and Asset Strategy team to address the development needs of County Louth.</p> <p>From the 31st of January 2024 Uisce Éireann assumed full accountability for the delivery of water services and the necessary management and direction of all eligible Water Services staff, including those who choose to remain employed by Louth County Council.</p>
<p>Implement a water conservation programme to minimise water losses from the distribution network in collaboration with Irish Water</p>	<p>Louth County Council work with Uisce Éireann to roll out an active leak detection and repair programme across the county to reduce unaccounted for water and to minimise losses across the network. From the 31st of January 2024 Uisce Éireann assumed full accountability for the delivery of water services and the necessary management and direction of all eligible Water Services staff, including those who choose to remain employed by Louth County Council.</p>
<p>Provide for adequate waste water treatment and collection systems, in collaboration with Irish Water, to comply with the requirements of the River Basin Management Plans</p>	<p>Louth County Council work with Uisce Éireann to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and Outfall Discharge licences. From the 31st of January 2024 Uisce Éireann assumed full accountability for the delivery of water services and the necessary management and direction of all eligible Water Services staff, including those who choose to remain employed by Louth County Council.</p>

Performance Indicators

Unaudited at date of publication. Not approved by NOAC and subject to missing information being supplied by external stakeholders.

Topic	Indicator	Value
Housing: H1, H2 & H4 Approved	A. Number of dwellings in the ownership of the local authority at 1/1/2023	4119
	B. Number of dwellings added to the local authority owned stock during 2023 (whether constructed or acquired)	155
	C. Number of local authority owned dwellings sold in 2023	20
	D. Number of local authority owned dwellings demolished in 2023	0
	E. Number of dwellings in the ownership of the local authority at 31/12/2023	4254
	F. Number of local authority owned dwellings planned for demolition under a DHLGH approved scheme at 31/12/2023	2
	A. The percentage of the total number of local authority owned dwellings that were vacant on 31/12/2023	2.70 %
	The number of dwellings within their overall stock that were not tenanted on 31/12/2023	115
	A. Expenditure during 2023 on the maintenance of local authority housing compiled from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, divided by the no. of dwellings in the local authority stock at 31/12/2023, i.e. the H1E less H1F indicator figure	€807.71
	Expenditure on maintenance of local authority stock compiled from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, including planned maintenance and expenditure that qualified for grants, such as Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) grants for energy efficient retro-fitting works but excluding expenditure on vacant properties and expenditure under approved major refurbishment schemes (i.e. approved Regeneration or under the Remedial Works Schemes).	€3434383

Topic	Indicator	Value
Housing: H3 & H5 Approved	A. The time taken from the date of vacation of a dwelling to the date in 2023 when the dwelling is re-tenanted, averaged across all dwellings re-let during 2023	34.51 wk
	B. The cost expended on getting the dwellings re-tenanted in 2023, averaged across all dwellings re-let in 2023	€19272.93
	The number of dwellings that were re-tenanted on any date in 2023 (but excluding all those that had been vacant due to an estate-wide refurbishment scheme)	115
	The number of weeks from the date of vacation to the date the dwelling is re-tenanted	3969.15 wk
	Total expenditure on works necessary to enable re-letting of the dwellings	€2216387
	A. Total number of registered tenancies in the LA area at the end of June 2023	6476
	B. Number of rented dwellings inspected in 2023	520
	C. Percentage of inspected dwellings in 2023 not compliant with the Standards Regulations	100.00 %
	D. Number of dwellings deemed compliant in 2023 (including those originally deemed non-compliant)	74
	E. The number of inspections (including reinspections) undertaken by the local authority in 2023	594

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
Housing: H6 Approved	A. Number of adult individuals in emergency accommodation that are long-term (i.e. 6 months or more within the previous year) homeless as a percentage of the total number of homeless adult individuals in emergency accommodation at the end of 2023	40.62 %
	The number of adult individuals classified as homeless and in emergency accommodation on the night of 31 December 2023 as recorded on the PASS system	160
	The number out of those individuals who, on 31/12/2023, had been in emergency accommodation for 6 months continuously, or for 6 months cumulatively within the previous 12 months	65
Housing: H7 Approved	A. (1) Total number of houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	205
	A. (2) Number of houses that achieved a BER rating of B2 or above between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	205
	A. (3) Number of heat pumps installed in those houses between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	205
	B. Total annual energy savings in MWh from houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	2545.8 MWh
	C. Total carbon emission reduction tCo2 from houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	629.1

Topic	Indicator	Value
Roads: R1 & R2 Approved	A. (a) The percentage of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	97.59 %
	A. (b) The percentage of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	96.38 %
	A. (c) The percentage of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	95.89 %
	A. (d) The percentage of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	14.79 %
	B. (a.1) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	2.55 %
	B. (a.2) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	7.44 %
	B. (a.3) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	46.69 %
	B. (a.4) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	40.91 %
	B. (b.1) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	6.70 %
	B. (b.2) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	5.28 %
	B. (b.3) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	57.11 %
	B. (b.4) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	27.30 %

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
	B. (c.1) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	11.14 %
	B. (c.2) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	4.87 %
	B. (c.3) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	54.55 %
	B. (c.4) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	25.33 %
	B. (d.1) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	1.31 %
	B. (d.2) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	1.72 %
	B. (d.3) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	3.95 %
	B. (d.4) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	7.82 %
	A.1 Kilometres of regional road strengthened during 2023	6.2 km
	A.2 The amount expended on regional roads strengthening work during 2023	€2553116.00
	A.3 The average unit cost of regional road strengthening works per square metre (€/m ²)	€43.81

Topic	Indicator	Value
	B.1 Kilometres of regional road resealed during 2023	26.7 km
	B.2 The amount expended on regional road resealing work during 2023	€737522.00
	B.3 The average unit cost of regional road resealing works per square metre (€/m ²)	€3.94
	C.1 Kilometres of local road strengthened during 2023	10.4 km
	C.2. The amount expended on local road strengthening work during 2023	€2401114.00
	C.3 The average unit cost of local road strengthening works per square metre (€/m ²)	€40.62
	D.1 Kilometres of local road resealed during 2023	38.6 km
	D.2 The amount expended on local road resealing work during 2023	€1618827.00
	D.3 The average unit cost of local road resealing works per square metre (€/m ²)	€7.13
Motor Tax: R3 Approved	A. The percentage of motor tax transactions which were dealt with online (i.e. transaction is processed and the tax disc is issued) in 2023	82.63 %
Water: W1 & W2 Approved	Percentage of drinking water in private schemes in compliance with statutory requirements	
	The number of registered schemes monitored by each local authority as a percentage of total schemes registered	100 %
	How many local authority registered schemes were monitored in 2023	17
	Total number of registered schemes in 2023	17

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
Waste: E1 Approved	A. The number of households which availed of a 3-bin service offered by a licensed operator at 31/12/2023	25695
	B. The percentage of households within the local authority that the number at A represents (based on agglomerations of more than 500)	81.63 %
Environmental Pollution: E2 Approved	A. Total number of pollution cases in respect of which a complaint was made during 2023	1611
	A. Number of pollution cases closed from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	1497
	A. Total number of pollution cases on hands at 31/12/2023	137
	The opening number of pollution cases carried forward from the year end 2022	23
Litter Pollution: E3 Approved	A1. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was unpolluted or litter free	
	A2. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was slightly polluted	
	A3. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was moderately polluted	
	A4. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was significantly polluted	
	A5. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was grossly polluted	

Topic	Indicator	Value
Green Flag Status: E4 Approved	A. The percentage of schools that have been awarded/renewed green flag status in the two years to 31 December 2023	32.61 %
	Schools which attained a Green Flag for the first time in 2023	1
	Schools which renewed their Green Flag in 2023	13
	Schools which held a Green Flag from 2022 and therefore do not require renewal until 2024	16
Energy Efficiency: E5 Approved	A. The cumulative percentage of energy savings achieved by 31/12/2023 relative to baseline year (2009)	
Public Lighting: E6 Approved	A. Total annual consumption of the public lighting system	5292.17 MWh
	B. Average wattage of each public light	91.81 W
	C. Percentage of the total system that LED lights represent	59.71 %
	Number of LED lights in the public lighting system	8525
	Number of non-LED lights in the public lighting system	5753
Climate Change: E7 Approved	1 a) Does the local authority have a designated (FTE) Climate Action Coordinator?	Yes
	1 b) Does the local authority have a designated (FTE) Climate Action Officer?	No
	2. Does the local authority have a climate action team?	Yes

Performance Indicators

Unaudited at date of publication. Not approved by NOAC and subject to missing information being supplied by external stakeholders.

Topic	Indicator	Value
Planning: P1 Approved	A. Buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority	12.19 %
	Total number of new buildings notified to the local authority i.e. buildings where a valid Commencement Notice was served in the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 by a builder or developer on the local authority	927
	Number of new buildings notified to the local authority in 2023 that were the subject of at least one on-site inspection during 2023 undertaken by the local authority	113
Planning: P2 & P3 Approved	A. Number of local authority planning decisions which were the subject of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála that were determined by the Board on any date in 2023	45
	B. Percentage of the determinations at A which confirmed (either with or without variation of the plan) the decision made by the local authority	88.89 %
	Number of determinations confirming the local authority's decision (either with or without variation)	40
	A. Total number of planning cases referred to or initiated by the local authority in the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 that were investigated	228
	B. Total number of investigated cases that were closed during 2023	108
	C. Percentage of the cases at B that were dismissed as trivial, minor or without foundation or were closed because statute barred or an exempted development	56.48 %
	D. Percentage of the cases at B that were resolved to the local authority's satisfaction through negotiations	25.00 %
	E. Percentage of the cases at B that were closed due to enforcement proceedings	18.52 %

Topic	Indicator	Value
	F. Total number of planning cases being investigated as at 31/12/2023	331
	Number of cases at B that were dismissed as trivial, minor or without foundation or were closed because statute barred or an exempted development	61
	Number of cases at B that were resolved to the local authority's satisfaction through negotiations	27
	Number of cases at B that were closed due to enforcement proceedings	20
Planning: P4 & P5 Approved	A. The 2023 Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme D data divided by the population of the local authority area per the 2022 Census	€32.79
	AFS Programme D data consisting of D01 - Forward Planning, D02 - Development Management, D03 - Enforcement (inclusive of the relevant Programme D proportion of the central management charge) for 2023	€4581226
	A. The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt	41.18 %
	B. The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant	30.59 %
	The total number of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were not withdrawn by the applicant	85
	The number of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of the date of receipt of the application	35
	The number of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within an agreed extended time period	26

Performance Indicators

Unaudited at date of publication. Not approved by NOAC and subject to missing information being supplied by external stakeholders.

Topic	Indicator	Value
Fire Service: F1 Approved	A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme E expenditure data for 2023 divided by the population of the local authority area per the 2022 Census figures for the population served by the fire authority as per the Risk Based Approach Phase One reports	€80.06
	AFS Programme E expenditure data consisting of E11 - Operation of Fire Service and E12 - Fire Prevention for 2023	€11183967
Fire Service: F2 & F3 Approved	A. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of fire	1.37 min
	B. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of fire	5.27 min
	C. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	1.52 min
	D. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	4.73 min
	A. Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at scene is within 10 minutes	72.76 %
	B. Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	22.24 %
	C. Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	5.00 %
	D. Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	57.63 %
	E. Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	36.14 %

Topic	Indicator	Value
	F. Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	6.23 %
	Total number of call-outs in respect of fires from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	580
	Number of these fire cases where first fire tender attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	422
	Number of these fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	129
	Number of these fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	29
	Total number of call-outs in respect of all other emergency incidents (i.e. not including fire) from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	321
	Number of these non-fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	185
	Number of these non-fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	116
	Number of these non-fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	20
	A. Number of visits to libraries per head of population for the local authority area per the 2022 Census	1.68

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
Library Service: L1 Approved	B. Number of items issued to library borrowers in the year	295875
	C. Library active members per head of population	0.15
	D. Number of registered library members in the year	17062
	Number of visits to its libraries from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 per automatic counters if used	235341
Library Service: L2 Approved	A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme F data for 2023 divided by the population of the local authority area per the 2022 Census	€28.05
	B. The annual per capita expenditure on collections over the period 1/01/2023 to 31/12/2023	€1.19
	A. AFS Programme F data consisting of F02 - Operation of Library and Archival Service (inclusive of the relevant proportion of the central management charge for Programme F) for 2023	€3919225
	B. The annual expenditure on new stock acquired by the library in the year	€166018.28
	A. Percentage of local schools involved in the local Youth Council/Comhairle na nÓg scheme	94.74 %
	Total number of second level schools in the local authority area at 31/12/2023	19

Topic	Indicator	Value
Youth and Community: Y1 & Y2 Approved	Number of second level schools in the local authority area from which representatives attended the local Comhairle na nÓg AGM held in 2023	18
	A. The number of organisations included in the County Register at 31/12/2023 and the proportion of those organisations that opted to be part of the Social Inclusion College within the PPN	26.01
	Total number of organisations included in the County Register (maintained in accordance with section 128 of the Local Government Act 2001) for the local authority area as at 31/12/2023	542
	Total number of those organisations that registered for the first time in 2023	63
	Number of organisations that opted to join the Social Inclusion Electoral College on whatever date they registered for the PPN	141

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
Corporate: C1, C2, C4 & C5 Approved	A. The wholetime equivalent staffing number as at 31 December 2023	706.80
	A. Percentage of paid working days lost to sickness absence through medically certified leave in 2023	3.87 %
	B. Percentage of paid working days lost to sickness absence through self-certified leave in 2023	0.45 %
	Total number of working days lost to sickness absence through medically certified leave in 2023	7564.83 day
	Total number of working days lost to sickness absence through self-certified leave in 2023	736.89 day
	Number of unpaid working days lost to sickness absence included within the total of self-certified sick leave days in 2023	21 days
	Number of unpaid working days lost to sickness absence included within the total of medically certified sick leave days in 2023	1349 days
	If any staff are on long-term sick leave (i.e. a continuous period of more than 4 weeks), include a text note of the number of staff on long-term sick leave	80 staff who were on sick leave from more than 4 weeks continuously at some point during 2023. Please note some had more than one instance of this but any period beyond 1 is discounted.

Topic	Indicator	Value
	A. All ICT expenditure in the period from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023, divided by the WTE no.	€4972.30
	Total ICT expenditure in 2023	€3514420.11
	A. All ICT expenditure calculated in C4 as a proportion of Revenue expenditure	2.38
	Total Revenue expenditure from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 before transfers to or from reserves	147827475
Corporate: C3 Approved	A. The per capita total page views of the local authority's websites in 2023	8.63
	B. The per capita total number of followers at end 2023 of the local authority's social media accounts (if any)	0.52
	The cumulative total page views of all websites operated by the local authority for the period from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 obtained from a page tagging on-site web analytics service or equivalent	1205087
	The total number of social media users who, at 31/12/2023, were following the local authority on any social media sites	72162
	The number of social media accounts operated by the local authority	33
	Indicate if there was a change to the cookie policies on the local authority sites and the date this came into effect	No

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
Finance: M1 to M4 Approved	A. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2019 in the Revenue Account from the Income & Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€950351
	B. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2020 in the Revenue Account from the Income & Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€1007413
	C. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2021 in the Revenue Account from the Income & Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€2370230
	D. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2022 in the Revenue Account from the Income & Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€3962840
	E. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2023 in the Revenue Account from the Income & Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€4159761
	F. Cumulative surplus or deficit at 31/12/2023 as a percentage of Total Income in 2023 from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	2.68 %
	G. Revenue expenditure per capita in 2023	€1058.16
	H. Revenue expenditure per capita in 2023 excluding significant out of county/shared service expenditure	
	The 2023 Total Income figure from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€155105242
	The 2023 Total Expenditure figure from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€147827475
	The 2023 Revenue expenditure excluding county/shared service expenditure for the service providers of HAP, MyPay, DRHE and Dublin Fire Services and is only applicable to Dublin City, Laois and Limerick	

Topic	Indicator	Value
	A. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	83.0 %
	A. (b) Collection level of Rent & Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	80.0 %
	A. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	82.0 %
	B. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	63.0 %
	B. (b) Collection level of Rent & Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	81.0 %
	B. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	85.0 %
	C. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2021	76.0 %
	C. (b) Collection level of Rent & Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2021	84.0 %
	C. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2021	88.0 %
	D. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2022	83.0 %
	D. (b) Collection level of Rent & Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2022	84.0 %
	D. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2022	86.0 %
	E. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2023	87 %

Performance Indicators

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Topic	Indicator	Value
Economic Development: J1 to J4 Approved	E. (b) Collection level of Rent & Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2023	83 %
	E. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2023	87 %
	E. (d) Collection level of HAP SSC for 2023	
	A. Per capita total cost of settled claims for 2023	€22.67
	IPB Insurance: Number of notified claims for 2023	265
	IPB Insurance: Number of settled claims for 2023	201
	IPB Insurance: Total cost of settled claims for 2023	€3163401.45
	Total cost of claims settled under excess for 2023	€4224.75
	Self-insured: Number of notified claims for 2023	
	Self-insured: Number of settled claims for 2023	
	Self-insured: Total cost of settled claims for 2023	
	A. Overall central management charge as a percentage of total expenditure on revenue account	13.91 %
	B. Total payroll costs as a percentage of revenue expenditure	34.63 %
	Overall central management charge from the Local Authority FMS and defined in the Annual Budget	€20561383
	Total payroll costs from Appendix 1 of the AFS for 2023 (including Salaries, Wages and Pensions)	€51193237

Topic	Indicator	Value
Economic Development: J1 to J5 Approved	A. The number of jobs created with assistance from the Local Enterprise Office during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 per 100,000 of population	18.61
	The number of jobs created with assistance from the Local Enterprise Office during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	26.0
	A. The number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in 2023 per 100,000 of population	25.77
	B. The number of trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2023 per 100,000 of population	3.58
	The number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in 2023	36
	The number of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2023	5
	A. The number of participants who received mentoring during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 per 100,000 of population	374.37
	The number of participants who received mentoring during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	523
	A. Does the local authority have a current tourism strategy?	Yes
	B. Does the local authority have a designated Tourism Officer?	Yes
	The spend on local economic development by the local authority in 2023 per head of population	€129.44
	The spend on local economic development by the local authority in 2023	€18083455







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