

Laois PPN October 2020



Newsletter



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Laois PPN Ramble at the Rock

On a cold but bright Saturday in October, Laois PPN continued its outdoor promotion of local attractions with their "Ramble at the Rock" Event.

This was a guided tour of the Rock of Dunamaise led by Experiencing Ireland CEO and tour guide Trudy Carmody and was organised by Dan Bergin, Resource Worker of Laois PPN and Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer of Laois County Council.

Dan Bergin said:

"The Rock of Dunamaise is one of the iconic heritage sites in Laois. It's very well known from a landscape point of view and by people passing, but they mightn't know the rich history and importance of this attraction."

The tour lasted 90 minutes and afterwards attendees received a free copy of Arnold Horner's book **Mapping Laois**** and were treated to complimentary hot beverages and sweet treats provided by Rural Vagabonds.**

This outdoor, socially distanced event took place on Saturday 3rd October, 2020 and was in line with the current Government guidelines.

See some of the amazing photographs taken on the day courtesy of photographer Stan Henderson on the pages 3 & 4.



**Breda & Matt Hogan,
Portarlington**



Catherine Casey (Heritage Officer, LCC), Anna Rothwell, Dan Bergin (Resource Worker, Laois PPN), with Ciara Murphy (Naas) and Eric Maher (Dysart) of Rural Vagabonds



Chairperson of Rahin Towers Residents Association, Trish Donohue, Max Hogan, Heritage Officer at Laois County Council Catherine Casey, Anna Rothwell, CEO Tour Guide Experiencing Ireland, Trudy Carmody and Laois PPN Resource Worker Dan Bergin



Chairperson of Rahin Towers Residents Association, Trish Donohue with her cup of Dunamaise Blend organic coffee from Rural Vagabonds



Niall Headen of Knock Vintage Club pictured with his complimentary copy of Mapping Laois by Arnold Horner.



Ciara Murphy & Eric Maher of Rural Vagabonds with Dunamaise Blend Organic fair chain coffee which is roasted in Portlaoise by Grape and Bean.



Holy Trinity Church through a window of the Rock of Dunamaise.



Some of the group pictured before the tour of the Rock of Dunamaisé.



The group pictured on the Rock of Dunamaisé with Tour Guide Trudy Carmody.



Some of the people who attended the tour learning about the history of the Rock of Dunamaisé



Tour Guide Trudy Carmody of Experiencing Ireland points out the huge holes for the hinges of the outer barbican gateway at the Rock of Dunamaisé.



The Treacy Family from The Heath are parents Billy & Hilary and children Isabelle & Oliver pictured before the tour.



When Isabel (daughter of Strongbow and Aoife) returned to the Rock of Dunamaisé which was part of her marriage dory with namesake Isabelle Treacy from The Heath playing the part on the day.

The 'Murder Hole' at the barbican where anything was used to drop down on top of enemies trying to gain entry.



Trudy Carmody explains the first time cannons were ever used in Ireland were to destroy the Rock of Dunamaisé by Oliver Cromwell.



Laois CONNECTS week began on Saturday 10th October which is World Mental Health Day.

Laois PPN as part of Laois CONNECTS ran an online event "The Power of Choice", a talk followed by a Q & A with Philly McMahon. Philly is a household name best known for winning 7 All Irelands with Dublin, including a historic 5 in a row, County titles with his club Ballymun Kichams, 2 All Stars and bestselling author of his book "The Choice".

Philly's life could have taken a different path, his brother took a different path and tragically lost his life through drug addiction in 2012. Philly and his brother John grew up in Ballymun and faced the same challenges and choices but chose very different paths. Philly spoke about the impact of life changing events such as COVID-19, unemployment, drug addiction or loss of a loved one can have on your mental health and the choices we make. Philly's talk focused on the power of making positive choices when faced with life altering events.

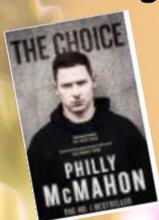
Resource worker with Laois PPN, Dan Bergin, organiser of the event said:

"Laois PPN as part of the Laois CONNECTS ran an online event titled The Power of Choice for World Mental Health Day which featured a talk by Philly McMahon. The talk was followed by a questions and answers session where many people asked questions and Philly answered them all.

"The event was originally supposed to take place in Castle Duroy. Due to current restrictions we moved the event to online and it proved hugely successful and received very positive reactions amongst those that took part.

"There was a large number and variety of groups from across the county represented on the night including GAA clubs, Schools, Youth Work Ireland, Basketball Clubs, Athletic Clubs, Musical Societies, Residents Associations, Scout Groups and Tidy Towns.

"Laois PPN hope that Philly's powerful message will benefit all of our groups and their communities in a positive way. Philly is a brand ambassador for the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and a long-term advocate of good mental health".





Five Ways to Wellbeing

On Wednesday 14th October, Laois PPN held a FREE Zoom Workshop titled "Five Ways to Wellbeing" as part of the Laois CONNECTS week.

Dan Bergin, Laois PPN Resource Worker explained the topics the workshop explored:

- **What mental health and wellbeing is**
- **What are the risk and protective factors to mental health and wellbeing**
- **How you can use the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a helpful and positive coping strategy.**

The facilitator for this event was Finola Colgan who is a Development Officer for Mental Health Ireland, Following the workshop, participants were asked to complete and return a survey and they were then forwarded their E-certificates by Mental Health Ireland.



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Mick Dowling Memorial Walk



On a beautiful Autumn morning, Laois PPN in partnership with Laois Tourism and Laois Tour Guides Forum held a Memorial Walk for Mick Dowling to mark his first anniversary on 11th October 2020. During his life, Mick was actively involved in the set up and work of a number of community groups along with being a member of the Laois PPN Secretariat.

Dan Bergin, Laois PPN Resource Worker said: "The walk was a wonderful way to mark the memory of our friend, Mick Dowling in his beloved Slieve Bloom mountains. The walk included members of the Dowling family, friends and Community Groups. There were two groups led by Shane Dowling and Trudy Carmody followed by refreshments provided by Laois Tour Guides Forum".

Here are some of the photos taken on the day.





Mick Dowling Memorial Fund

Earlier this year, Laois PPN in honour of our friend and Laois PPN Secretariat Member Mick Dowling launched the "Mick Dowling Memorial Fund".

Three groups (one from each municipal district) would be awarded €1,000 each.

We had a total of thirteen entries from the three municipal districts. The entries were judged by:

- Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Laois County Council



- Jackie Keating, Member of the Dowling Family
- Michael J Cobbe, Secretariat Member, Laois PPN



We are delighted to announce the winners of the "Mick Dowling Fund" are:

- **Borris in Ossory / Mountmellick MD:** Camross Parish Development Association
- **Graiguecullen / Portarlinton MD:** Portarlinton Social Services
- **Portlaoise MD:** Laois Tour Guides Forum



Minister O'Brien announces the fourth tranche of COVID-19 Stability Funding

Some 79 organisations across the country are to benefit from €4.29 million worth of funding under the COVID-19 Stability Fund.

The funding was announced by Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD.

The funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund is designed to support community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises that are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once-off cash injections of between €2,000 and €200,000 are being awarded to qualifying organisations that provide critical services to those most vulnerable in society.

This will help with short term cash flow issues caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

This includes organisations from both phase 1 and 2 (unincorporated charities) of the fund and is on top of three previous tranches of funding announced in June, July and September 2020 which is allocated funding of over €25m to 489 organisations.

These organisations provide services in a diverse range of areas including homeless services, cancer supports, counselling and family supports, addiction services and assistance for older and vulnerable persons.



Some of the successful applicants today include:

- **The Alzheimer Society of Ireland - €200,000**
- **Irish Kidney Association - €200,000**
- **North West Simon - €109,186**
- **Amach! LGBT+ clg - €15,215**

Speaking this morning, Minister O'Brien said:

" I am very happy to join with my colleagues at the Department of Health to announce a further tranche of funding under the COVID-19 Stability Fund to Community and Voluntary organisations and Social Enterprises that are experiencing financial difficulties at this time. My Government colleagues and myself acknowledge and appreciate the work that these organisations do in their communities and I hope that this funding will go some way to support the continuation of their valuable services.

" I would also like to take this opportunity to thank sincerely all community and voluntary organisations for the work they have done throughout this difficult period to support and provide valuable services to the most disadvantaged in our communities. Their work remains a very important part of getting Ireland through this pandemic and Government recognises and is grateful for that contribution."

Minister Butler stated:

" I am pleased to see the release of the fourth tranche of funding under the COVID-19 Stability Fund.

"Community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises play an important role in our society, and their volunteers and workers are incredibly dedicated.



This funding will help them to continue to do this. With my colleagues in the Department of Health, I welcome these additional resources which will help these organisations to continue their valuable work."

Minister Feighan stated:

" I am pleased that the fourth tranche of funding under the COVID-19 Stability Fund is going ahead.

" This funding will help community and voluntary organisations and charities to continue to contribute in these difficult times. With my colleagues in the Department of Health, I welcome the continuation of this important work."

Minister Rabbitte stated:

" I am pleased that the fourth tranche of funding under the COVID-19 Stability Fund is being released.

Community and voluntary organisations, with their dedicated staff and volunteers, contribute enormously to our society. This funding will, in the constraints of Covid, help them to continue to make these contributions. With my colleagues in the Department of Health, I welcome the release of this funding to these organisations at this time."

A full list of successful applicants under Tranche Four is available at www.gov.ie/en/publication/3957e-covid-19-stability-fund-successful-applicants/

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New Age Friendly Radio

Programme on Midlands 103:

Chatters & Matters

A new weekly Age Friendly radio programme is in preparation in Offaly, Laois and Westmeath. The innovative hour long programme will be presented by Aisling O' Rourke and will launch on Midlands Radio 103 on Sunday 1st November 2020 from 8am to 9am.

The programme will be a mix of engaging speakers, useful information and advice on a wide range of topics such as local events, health and wellbeing, gardening, cookery, DIY, bingo, story-telling, local supports and services. There will be great music, great chat, quizzes, comedy and other uplifting items.

For the last seven months, older people have not been able to enjoy their usual activities and pastimes which has resulted in social isolation and loneliness. While a lot of great work has been done by all the agencies, volunteers and good neighbours to address the needs of older people, the level of anxiety is again increasing due to the rising cases and the imposition of Level 5 restrictions. This programme hopes to give everyone a boost and provide welcome relief from the constant news updates.



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In September, Offaly Age Friendly Alliance highlighted the need for regular positive communication for older people in the Midlands and were determined to do something about it. Offaly Older Person's Network also proposed a radio programme be developed in view of the great need for a positive antidote in these unprecedented times.

Offaly Age Friendly Alliance is chaired by Anna Marie Delaney, CE of Offaly County Council and it has representation from the following agencies: An Garda Siochana, HSE, Offaly Local Development Company, Offaly Library Service, Laois Offaly Local Link, Offaly Local Enterprise Office, Offaly Sports Partnership, Laois Offaly Education and Training Board, Athlone Institute of Technology, Midlands Regional Hospital Tullamore and Offaly Older Person's Network.

Westmeath and Laois Older Person's networks have also agreed to contribute to the radio programme targeting older listeners throughout the midlands. A working group has been formed to develop the programme which comprises members of Offaly, Laois and Westmeath OPC's and staff from the Age Friendly Programmes working in the County Councils of Offaly, Laois and Westmeath. This initiative is an example of the operation of the Age Friendly Ireland Programme in local authorities helping to plan collaboratively and share resources with the interests and needs of older people at its core.



Ministers Humphreys and O'Brien announce €713,500 Funding for Library Supports

Older people, families with low literacy skills and disadvantaged and marginalised groups are to benefit from a funding package of €713,500 that will be channelled through the country's libraries.

Some €650,000 will be provided from the 2020 Dormant Action Plan and €63,500 will be provided from Libraries funding, which is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The funding has a specific focus and is aimed at groups such as the elderly, the Traveller Community, those with disabilities and people living in Direct Provision.

Part of the funding will be used to purchase literacy / numeracy digital skills licences / apps to assist people with low literacy levels, learning difficulties, visual or hearing impairments.

Other examples that the funding will be used for include:

- **Classes for older people to learn to use WhatsApp and Zoom**
- **Provision of musical sessions for young members of the Traveller Community**
- **Initiatives aimed at members of the Deaf and Blind Community and people with disabilities**
- **Workshops in coding and robotics for children from DEIS schools**

The funding was announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD.

Announcing the funding, Minister Humphreys said:

"This funding will have real positive benefits for so many people. I am delighted that this funding has been allocated to libraries across the country.



The last few months have been very difficult and any funding which helps our libraries to reach out and engage with communities is most welcome."

Also welcoming the funding, Minister O'Brien said:

" I am delighted to approve these projects under the 2020 Dormant Accounts Action Plan. The projects are diverse in nature and target a multiplicity of groups including Travellers, New Irish, residents of Direct Provision Centres, the elderly who have experienced isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, autism, deaf and blind communities, and people with learning differences such as dyslexia. This funding is building on the excellent projects which were delivered last year and will increase the public library capacity to continue that great work of fostering community well-being and building community cohesion."

The funding will provide:

- **€512,626 for events and programmes which reaches out to marginalised, socially excluded and disadvantaged communities.**
- **€180,874 to purchase literacy/numeracy digital skills licences/apps to assist people with low literacy levels, learning differences, or visual or hearing impairments.**
- **€20,000 to carry out a review of library services in prisons and also develop a 'Design Thinking' pilot for libraries.**

Minister Humphreys thanked the local authorities and the library staff for their ongoing commitment and support to the public library service.

"The local authorities have supported the library service during what has been an incredibly challenging year and by matching my Department's funding of €713,500 with €83,722 of their own they have shown their commitment to ensuring that these programmes will have a really positive impact in their communities."

Minister O'Brien concluded:

" It is great to see the investment in literacy and numeracy digital apps and licences. These can be expensive and very difficult to afford for families who need them. I hope that families, schools and afterschool clubs avail of these and benefit from them."

Laois County Council

Total Cost - €16,342.00

Department Contribution - €14,707.80

Local Authority Contribution - €1,634.20

Library Authority: Laois

Summary: To roll out library services to those cocooning and vulnerable persons over the course of the next four months during this unprecedented COVID-19 era.

Participating Community: Working with Age Friendly Alliance - Laois Older People, those with ill health, residents in nursing homes.

Cost of Project: €10,500

DRCD Allocation for Project: €9,450.00

Library Authority: Laois

Summary: Purchase of Lexia Licences

Participating Community: People with low literacy levels or learning differences.

Cost of Project: €5,842.00

DRCD Allocation for Project: €5,257.80

Total Cost of Project: €16,342.00

DRCD Total Allocation for Project: €14,707.80





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Laois County Library Services



Laois County Library Services and Volunteer Laois Delivering Books to those Cocooning

Are you cocooning and looking for books or reading material or do you know someone who is elderly or vulnerable and who is cocooning at home?

You can request a selection of library books, audio-books, magazines and DVDs directly from Laois County Council Library Services.

Volunteer Laois volunteers will then make arrangements with you to deliver these library items to your doorstep.

All items are on long loan, there are no overdue fines or fees and access to the service is always **FREE**.

Contact Portlaoise Library on **057 8622333** or email laoislibrary@laoiscoco.ie for details.



Major milestone in the National Broadband Plan as Ministers Humphreys and Ryan launch Broadband Connection Points

Heather Humphreys T.D., Minister for Rural and Community Development, and Eamon Ryan T.D., Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, announced that the first group of Broadband Connection Points, a key element of the Government's National Broadband Plan, have been connected.

Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) are among the first premises to be connected under the National Broadband Plan and are located in some of the most isolated and rural communities in the country, including islands off the coast of Donegal, Kerry, Mayo, Galway and Cork.

They will provide communities with free high-speed internet access at publicly-accessible sites under the Government's new Connected Communities initiative.

Minister Humphreys and Minister Ryan made the announcement at Glenasmole Community Centre in South County Dublin in collaboration with Anne O'Leary, CEO Vodafone Ireland and David McCourt, Executive Chairman of National Broadband Ireland.

Glenasmole Community Centre is one of the first 50 BCPs that are now connected as part of the wider BCP rollout which will see more than 200 public access points connected before the end of 2020 in addition to 75 schools BCPs. Further installations are planned for next year, to bring the total number of connected public access points to 300 in 2021.

Announcing the initiative, Minister Humphreys said:

" The launch of the first of the Broadband Connection Points under the Connected Communities initiative represents an investment in rural futures and recognises the contribution that rural Ireland makes to the culture, innovation and economy of our country. More than 50 locations have already been connected by Vodafone Ireland and NBI, with more sites to be installed each week from now until the end of the year and beyond.

" The COVID-19 crisis has shown the value of digital technology in enabling workers, businesses and families to stay connected and in touch with each other. The BCPs are intended to bring people together through digital connectivity, and it's that togetherness that I want to emphasise.

When people can work from their own communities, they can maintain the close connections that matter most: family, friends, community and their homes. More than that, they can support local businesses, sports and community groups, all of which contributes to sustainable communities."

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan T.D., said:

" The National Broadband Plan is one of the most important capital investments in the history of the State. It will have a transformative effect on those communities that have too often been left behind.

In advance of fibre being rolled out to rural households across the country, the National Broadband Plan is bringing connectivity to hundreds of remote rural locations by utilising sites such as Glenasmole Community Centre.

We have seen in recent months how important it has been for all of us to stay connected, and the opportunities digitisation can bring. The Government's investment in the National Broadband Plan will allow rural communities and households to share those benefits and address the digital divide."

Anne O'Leary, CEO of Vodafone Ireland said:

" Vodafone is proud today to partner with Government to officially launch Connected Communities - Broadband Connection Points in rural communities across Ireland. We are delighted to announce that the first 50 connection points are now live.

"The last eight months have propelled us - in terms of how we live, work and interact - on a fast track to embracing the digital society more fully. Such a dramatic behavioural shift with regards to increased remote or smart working, the rise of online learning, shopping and social interaction, has resulted in a sudden and abrupt change in how we need and use connectivity.

" We must now focus on rebuilding our society and economy to be more resilient, more competitive, more digital, and more inclusive. We know that connectivity has to be at the heart of that recovery.

The BCPs will provide an opportunity to transform the economic and social fabric of rural towns and communities by addressing the digital divide, improving lives, creating jobs and stimulating rural economic growth."

Welcoming the launch of the initiative, David McCourt, Executive Chairman of National Broadband Ireland said:

" Today is an extremely proud day for NBI as it marks the first tangible connections for communities to receive high speed connectivity as part of the National Broadband Plan.

" Broadband Connection Points offer rural communities essential access to free high-speed internet access and they pave the way for the wider rollout of National Broadband Plan, which as a project of tremendous size and scale. It will deliver world-leading Fibre-to-the-Home broadband directly to almost 540,000 homes, farms and businesses. With today's launch, we're excited for communities to start realising the transformational benefits that high-speed connectivity can bring to so many aspects of people's lives.

" Since being awarded the contract to deliver the National Broadband Plan and work commencing in January, our team has mobilised quickly to make excellent progress in our rollout schedule. Today, our teams are working across 23 counties and we've surveyed over 98,000 premises, which involves physically walking the routes where fibre will be laid.

" The first homes will be connectable to a high-speed broadband service by the year-end, and we're proud to play our role in making sure every person in Ireland has equal access to high-speed broadband and the opportunities that come with that."

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Portlaoise Tidy Towns

Congratulations to Portlaoise Tidy Towns as Portlaoise has risen four places in the latest anti-litter league and is among the cleanest towns in the country.

Laois's county town comes in as Ireland's fourth cleanest town and is ranked 'Cleaner than European Norms'.

Well done and thank you to the volunteers of Portlaoise Tidy Towns!



Minister Humphreys awards further €4.3 million for COVID-19 adaptations in towns and villages

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, announced details of a further 137 rural towns and villages that will benefit from €4.3 million in funding to help them adjust to COVID-19 restrictions.

The funding is being delivered under the Accelerated Measure of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

This funding will enable towns and villages to implement immediate measures that will encourage people in towns and villages to shop and socialise, while adhering to public health guidelines. The funding is facilitated through the Government's July Stimulus package.

The funding announced today is in addition to €6.1 million allocated by Minister Humphreys to 226 towns and villages since July under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for COVID-19 adaptations.

This means that over 360 projects are now being supported with funding of more than €10 million under the Accelerated Measure of the 2020 Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

The allocation includes funding of €1.5 million for 38 large towns with populations in excess of 10,000 which have not previously been funded through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Examples of the successful projects announced today include:

- **Digital Hubs:** Enhancements to a number of digital hubs and Broadband Connection Points across the country to support remote working.
- **Co Kerry:** Picnic and Recreational Area at Inch Beach

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- **Co. Roscommon:** Range of interventions to increase footfall in the village of Kiltreevan, including the provision of outdoor community amenities with gazebo, BBQ and outdoor heat, and a generator and PA system for events.
- **Co. Laois:** Provision of "smart benches" and cycle tracks along the Slieve Bloom cycle track.
- **Co. Waterford:** Online platform to support local traders in the Waterford Gaeltacht and the provision of amenity seating in key locations.
- **Co. Offaly:** Refurbishment of Millenium Square in Tullamore.
- **Co. Monaghan:** External Porch and enhancements to aid access to Blackwater Valley Learning Centre / Community Centre at Knockconan.
- **Dublin, Fingal:** Expansion of the number of festivals and events at Swords Castle through the purchase and installation of 40 cabins to be used by local producers.

Speaking today, Minister Humphreys said:

" Our rural towns and villages have always played a huge role in supporting businesses and communities by providing spaces for people to meet, socialise and shop locally. Recognising their importance to the economic and social wellbeing of rural areas, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme has invested significantly in towns and villages over the last number of years.

" The scheme is now more important than ever to assist businesses and communities to address the challenges that COVID-19 has brought to their towns and villages.

"I am therefore delighted today to announce the award of an additional €4.3 million under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme to 137 towns and villages across the country, for measures can be implemented immediately to adapt to COVID-19.

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" The allocation includes funding of €1.5 million for 38 large towns with populations in excess of 10,000 which have not previously been funded through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. This is in recognition of the important role that these towns play in supporting their rural hinterlands."

The Minister continued:

" This is the third round of funding I have announced under this new strand of the Town & Village Renewal Scheme since July.

" The results of this funding are already being seen in towns and villages across the country as the Local Authorities, together with local communities, are rethinking the use of our public spaces.

" I look forward to seeing the impact of these projects over the coming months so that all of our communities can make the most of what our towns and villages have to offer."

Full details of the 137 projects supported under this round of funding are available on the [gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie) website.

PORTARLINGTON REGENERATION STRATEGY



Laois County Council
Áras An Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Laois County Council invites you to make submissions or observations to the pre-draft stage of the Portarlinton Regeneration Strategy. Downey Planning have been commissioned to prepare this strategy on behalf of Laois County Council. Submissions in relation to improved connectivity with points of interest in both local authority areas will be welcomed. Your submissions/observations can be made through the following options:

- Via the online consultation portal (including a link to the online survey) at: consult.laois.ie
- By email to: portregen@laoiscoco.ie
- Via phone: email in your contact details should you wish to be contacted by Downey Planning on behalf of Laois County Council
- In writing addressed to: Senior Planner, Planning Department, Laois County Council, Áras An Chontae, James Fintan Lalor Avenue, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, R32 EHP9

Submissions or observations must be made no later than 17.00 on Friday 20th November 2020.

Submissions will be published on Laois County Council website, if you wish for your name and contact details not to be published, please let us know as part of your submission.





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CONTACT US

In accordance with official Government guidelines and restrictions, the Laois PPN Office is closed to the public. The team here continue to work hard behind the scenes.

You can contact Dan or Ailish in the following ways:



Email: ppn@laoiscoco.ie

**Phone: 057 86 65661 (Office)
086 035 2107 (Dan)**



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