



# Laois Public Participation Network

## August 2022 Newsletter

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# NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK



**National Heritage Week**  
A Heritage Council programme

**Heritage Officer Programme**



National Heritage Week 2022 took place from **13th - 21st August 2022**. There was a huge range of events registered for National Heritage Week. Below is a selection photos from Heritage Week.





Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer with Laois County Council said *"Thank you so much all the groups, individuals and communities who took part in hosting events and to all those who attended - whether you went to one event or ten, your support was crucial and is greatly appreciated by all the organisers."*



Photos: Laois Heritage Office Facebook

**Laois PPN held two events during National Heritage Week 2022; 'Tour of Portlaoise Plane' and 'Ramble at the Rock' at the Rock of Dunamase.**

**Please see page 4 to 9 to learn more.**



# LAOIS PPN EVENT "TOUR OF PORTLAOISE PLANE"



**As part of Heritage Week, Laois PPN were delighted to invite its Member Groups to a Tour of the Portlaoise Plane. The event which took place on Saturday the 20th of August 2022 included a guided tour of the Portlaoise Plane led by Teddy Fennelly Chair of The Colonel Fitzmaurice Commemoration Committee.**

The Portlaoise Plane, which was the first aeroplane built and flown in what is now the Republic of Ireland, was designed and built in Aldritt's Garage of Portlaoise. The Portlaoise Plane has been restored to its original glory thanks to the hard work of Brendan O'Donoghue.

The Portlaoise Plane has a close connection with Ireland's most famous aviation pioneer, Laois native Colonel James Fitzmaurice. According to his memoirs, Colonel Fitzmaurice worked on the plane as a young boy and was present for its first flight. It was this that helped to inspire him in his career as an aviator.

Teddy Fennelly spoke about the rich history of the Plane, from its construction to flight, and how it was tracked down and returned to its original home of Portlaoise. Alan Phelan of the Portlaoise Plane Group answered any questions attendees had on the specifications of the Portlaoise Plane and Brendan O'Donoghue was on hand to answer any questions about the restoration process.



Attendees on the day were given a rare opportunity to sit in the cockpit of the beautifully restored Portlaoise Plane. This was a special moment for attendees as it gave them an idea of the skill, courage and daring involved in piloting the first plane to take to the skies over Ireland.

**Dan Bergin, Resource Work Laois PPN said: "The Portlaoise Plane is an amazing piece of Laois and Irish Heritage. It was the winner of the Arts Culture and Heritage Category at the 2021 Laois Community and Voluntary awards. Great credit must be given to Alan Phelan, Brendan O'Donoghue and especially Teddy Fennelly for returning and restoring this amazing piece of history and heritage to Laois."**





**Teddy Fennelly, Chair of The Colonel Fitzmaurice Commemoration Committee said: *"It was a pleasure to welcome the group from Laois PPN and show them around the Portlaoise Plane. It is a wonderful part of our Portlaoise history and we are always delighted to share this with a wider audience. The committee is grateful for the support of Laois County Council in storing the Plane and working with us to find a suitable permanent home and public accessibility for this unique piece of Irish aviation history. Heritage Week is a great opportunity for all of us to learn more about our own local heritage and we commend Laois Public Participation Network for all they do in promoting awareness of Laois heritage."***

The day finished with tea coffee and sweet treats provided by Ken Macpherson of Caffe Latte at the Dunamaise Arts Centre



Photos: Denis Byrne

## LAOIS PPN EVENT: 'RAMBLE AT THE ROCK'

**On a beautiful Sunday morning, Laois PPN held a “Ramble at the Rock” event in partnership with Laois Heritage Office as part of Heritage Week 2022. The event was a guided heritage tour of one of the most iconic heritage sites in Laois – The Rock of Dunamase.**

The tour was led by local tour guide, Trudy Carmody of Experiencing Ireland. Trudy informed the group of the rich history of the Rock of Dunamase. The first known settlement on the rock was Dun Masc, an early Christian settlement that was pillaged in 842 by the Vikings. Trudy explained how through the centuries the Rock of Dunamase has been a key defensive 12th century Anglo-Norman fortification, a strong hold for the O'Moore's of Laois, a dowry gift to Strongbow by the King of Leinster and the location where the first cannonballs were fired in all of Ireland when the Rock of Dunamase was attacked by Cromwellian forces. The Rock of Dunamase has a lot of stories to tell over the centuries.

Trudy led the group up the path pointing out all the many defensive features including curtain walls, barbican gate, murder hole and a moate. The group could imagine how difficult it was to successfully attack the castle. At the top, there are spectacular views of the surrounding countryside where seven counties in Ireland can be seen.





*Trudy Carmody of Experiencing Ireland said "The Rock of Dunamase is the most iconic historic site in Laois with history stretching over 1,000 years. It has seen Vikings, Normans, native tribes and even Cromwell. Why not spend an afternoon with friends and family having a picnic and soaking in the rich heritage?"*



*Dan Bergin, Resource Worker with Laois PPN, said "The Rock of Dunamase is one of the most iconic historic places in Laois and has a key role in the history of our county. A special thanks to the Laois Heritage Office who we worked in collaboration with and Trudy Carmody for sharing the rich history of Rock of Dunamase with our member groups during heritage week."*

The day finished with tea/coffee and sweet treats for the group provided by local business "Cuddy's Brew".



# PORTLAOISE MEN'S SHED LAUNCH BEE HOME PROJECT



**With the launch of National Heritage Week 2022 with its theme based on sustainability and biodiversity. Portlaoise Men's Shed launched their Gerry Murphy Memorial Bee Home project.**

*Portlaoise Men's Shed said 'The Memorial Bee Home project is dedicated to their former shed member Gerry Murphy who passed away in 2020 and was an avid beekeeper, champion of pollinators, solitary bees, and the indigenous Irish Black bee.'*

*Portlaoise Men's Shed plan is to make these memorial bee homes available to local Tidy Towns and other groups keeping Gerry's memory alive and raising awareness of the plight of our bee and pollinator populations.*

*Portlaoise Men's Shed wish to thank Laois County Council for their help and support on this project.'*



# LAOIS PPN EVENT: WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY ON UKRAINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

**Laois PPN Event “Welcome to the Community Coffee Morning”, took place on Ukrainian Independence Day, Wednesday the 24th of August in the wonderful grounds of Abbeyleix Community Garden.**

The garden and community were in full bloom to welcome Ukrainians from across Laois with the yellow and blue of the Ukrainian national flag represented on bunting not just in the garden but throughout Abbeyleix town. Sunflowers, the Ukrainian National Emblem, which are grown in the Community Garden, were the centre piece of each table.

Baskets of fresh baked sweet treats including muffins, Portuguese custard tarts, almond croissants and pain au chocolate, were supplied by renowned local bakery Mueller and O’Connell for all to enjoy on arrival with tea or coffee.

Mary White of Abbeyleix Tidy Towns prepared a beautiful homemade vegetable soup, using an environmentally friendly handmade simple but revolutionary nonelectric slow cooker – the Wonderbag, served with fresh baguettes from Mueller and O’Connell.



Photo Denis Byrne Photography 2022



With appetites well and truly wet and the sun shining, Gary Luttrell of Abbeyleix Community Garden, invited guests to pick fresh herbs to be used to top off homemade pizzas from the Community Gardens own Woodfired Pizza Oven prepared by Richard O'Connell.

Ukrainian children in attendance were entertained with boxes of donated toys and arts and crafts to make and do including friendship bracelets. Laois PPN wish to thank our Ukrainian guests from Towns and Villages across Laois for sharing a part of their culture with us in the form of Traditional Dress and Food.

*Dan Bergin, Laois PPN Resource Worker said: "Laois PPN wishes to extend a warm welcome to all Ukrainians within our Community. Thanks to Abbeyleix Community Garden and Abbeyleix Tidy Towns for all their support in organising this event. A special thanks to Mary White of Abbeyleix Tidy Towns and Gary Luttrell of Abbeyleix Community Garden for their support. The welcoming community spirit was very evident today and Laois PPN hopes that all those in attendance enjoyed the event and we wish to thank all those who participated in making it a success."*



*Mary White, Abbeyleix Tidy Towns said, "As a Community we wish to extend a warm welcome to Ukrainians living across Laois. Thanks to everyone who played a part in organising this event especially Laois PPN, Abbeyleix Community Garden and the volunteers of Abbeyleix Tidy Towns."*



Photos: Denis Byrne



# SOCIAL JUSTICE IRELAND STRUCTURAL REVIEW REPORT CONSULTATION



**Laois PPN hosted the only in person Social Justice Ireland Consultation on Structural Review Report of Public Participation Networks (PPN).**

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) appointed Mazars to provide

consulting services to deliver a structural review of the Public Participation Network (PPN). The report from Mazars on the Structural Review of the PPNs was published in June 2022. To facilitate as much feedback as possible on the recommendations and structure options, Social Justice Ireland held online consultations and one in-person consultation. The in person consultation was hosted by Laois PPN which took place on Friday 26th August at Laois County Council Chamber. The consultation was facilitated by Suzanne Rodgers of Social Justice Ireland.



# NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

The National Ploughing Championships will return to Ratheniska in 2022, taking place from Tuesday 20th to Thursday 22nd September. Laois PPN will be in attendance for the three days along with other PPNs in the Country.

Pop over and say hello to Laois PPN Resource Worker, Dan Bergin and Support Worker, Diane Seale.



# NATIONWIDE VISITING LAOIS



Tune into Nationwide on RTE One on **Monday 19th September at 7:00pm**. This episode will cover the National Ploughing Championships along with highlighting a selection of places to visit in Laois such the Rock of Dunamase Mountmellick Embroidery Museum and Donaghmore Famine Workhouse Museum.

Keep an eye out for our PPN members Trudy Carmody of Experiencing Ireland, Paddy Buggy PPN Secretariat member and Manager at MDA Mountmellick Development Association and Trevor Stanley of Donaghmore Famine Workhouse Museum who will be on the big screen.



# LOCALHUB - NEW COMMUNITY APP



LocalHub is a free service of a new Community App in **Laois**, Offaly, and Westmeath. It's designed to help community groups, committees, and organisations get their updates to members of their communities as quickly and easily as possible.

Posts can only be made on LocalHub by approved groups, cutting out the spam found on other platforms. LocalHub also organise the service by community, allowing users to focus on their local area and the topics they care about.

Community groups, committees and organisations can register for an account for free from today. There is just a short form to fill out on their website. The general public can download the app on either the App Store or the Play Store, the public do not need to enter any personal information to use LocalHub.

Details about the LocalHub service, the registration process, creating posts, and more can be found on their website: <https://localhubireland.ie/>

**LocalHub**  
Connecting Communities

[localhubireland.ie](https://localhubireland.ie)

**CLICK HERE**

# IMPROVEMENT OF DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES - HAVE YOUR SAY!



## PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES

HAVE YOUR SAY!



An Roinn Caiteachais  
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe  
Department of Public  
Expenditure and Reform

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are looking for your help on how they can improve Irish public services by making it easier for you to use public services digitally.

- **Do you have ideas for improving public services as we put them online?**
- **Are there reasons you don't use public services online?**
- **Are there public services you think should be available online?**
- **If so, then this consultation is for you!**

The questions will take 10 - 15 minutes to answer.

The consultation is now open and due to close at the end of September 2022.

[CLICK HERE](#)  
[TO HAVE YOUR SAY](#)



# LAOIS CONNECTS

Laois Connects is taking place during the month of October to promote Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing across Laois. Keep an eye out for Laois PPN events.

**COMING SOON**

**LAOIS connects**  
PROMOTING HEALTH & WELLBEING

**“MAKE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING FOR ALL A GLOBAL PRIORITY”**

FIND US-FIND US-FIND US

**f**

**Instagram icon**

**OCTOBER 2022**



# CONTACT US

The Laois Public Participation Network (PPN) Office is open Monday to Friday by appointment only.

You can also contact us by:



**Email:** [ppn@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:ppn@laoiscoco.ie)

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



## Postal Address:

Laois Public Participation Network,  
JFL Avenue, Lyster Square,  
Portlaoise, Co. Laois



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