

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Aim: To Promote And Develop Laois' Economy And Create A Viable And Favourable Economic Environment For Business And Enterprise To Thrive Both In Urban And Rural Areas Whilst Delivering Sustainable Jobs, Employment Opportunity Both Within The County And Beyond

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the economic development of Laois including developing employment opportunities, inward investment, local entrepreneurship and town/village centre management, retail. A sound local economy is fundamental to fostering sustainable communities and a good quality of life.

This Plan seeks to create the conditions to support the sustainable economic development of County Laois during the Plan period 2021 – 2027 in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. In addition to the economic benefits associated with the sector, Laois County Council is committed to protecting, promoting and enhancing the natural resources of the County making it a nicer place to live and visit.

Similar to the wider regional and national picture, the local economy has undergone rapid changes of fortune over the last ten years and in particular the instability caused by COVID 19 pandemic. There has been a significant shift in the number of people working from home and a greater emphasis is now placed on facilitating remote working facilities such as co-working hubs in particular in more rural areas.

The central location of Laois is strategically important, lying between the southern region and Dublin. Its central location in Ireland can be leveraged to enable significant strategic investment to a greater extent than at present, supported by a sustainable pattern of population growth, with a focus on strategic national employment and infrastructure development, quality of life and a strengthening of the urban cores of the county towns and other principal settlements.

6.2 POLICY CONTEXT

This section is prepared in the context of the following documents:

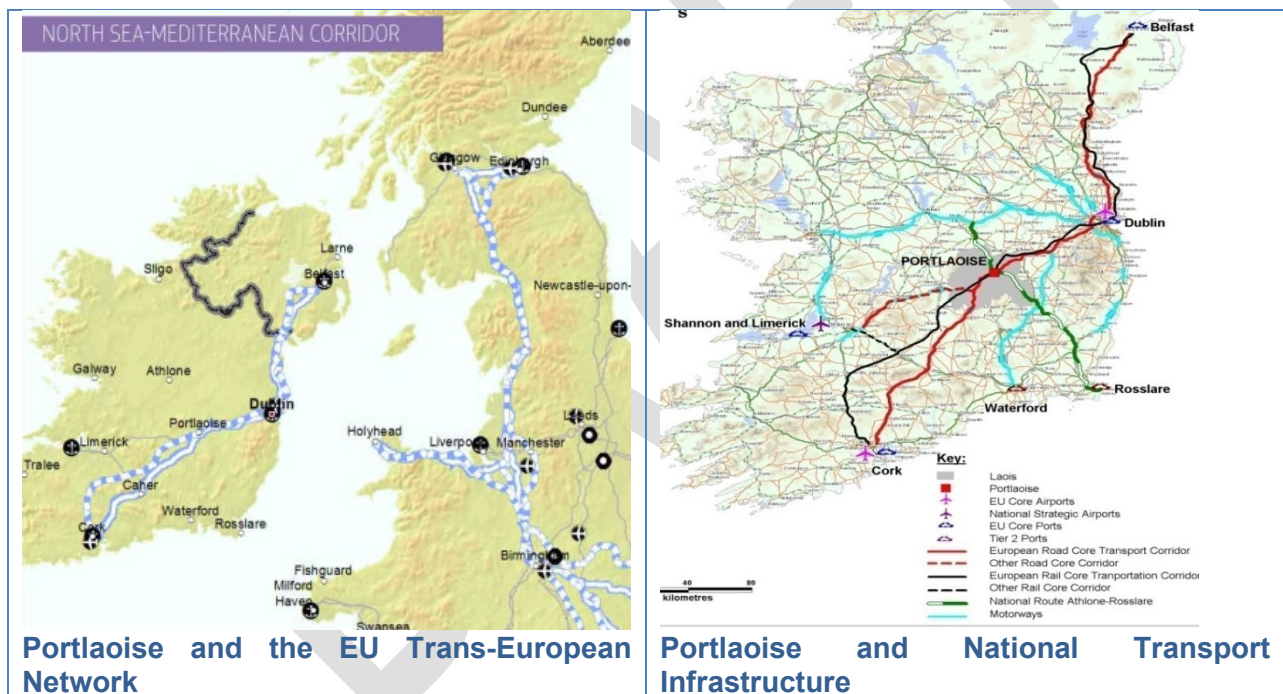
- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (2018)
- National Development Plan 2018-2027
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019)
- Food Wise 2025: A 10 Year Vision for the Irish Agri-Food Industry (2015)
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021
- Enterprise 2025 Renewed (2018)
- Realising Our Rural Potential (2017)
- Midlands Regional Enterprise Action Plan 2019-2020
- National Policy Statement on the Bio-economy (2018)
- National Mitigation Plan (2017)
- Climate Action Plan 2019

- National Broadband Plan (2012)
- Laois Digital Strategy (awaited)
- National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022
- Just Transition Progress Report 2020
- Powering the Regions, Enterprise Ireland Regional Plan Report, 2019
- Enterprise 2025 Renewed
- Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan

The RSES notes Dublin as the main economic driver of the region, however the region also contains an extensive network of large economically active towns which provide key employment functions within the urban and hinterland area.

There has been consistent improvement in employment levels in Laois since mid-2013. Relative to the national average, Laois has a young population and high labour-force participation rates. Similar to the wider Midlands and national trends, Laois' services sector continues to grow its share of the local economy in employment and productivity terms.

Figure 6.1: Portlaoise and its connectivity in the national and European Context



The modern economy is characterised by rapid changes with new and sometimes unexpected areas of commercial opportunities emerging, while some traditional enterprises lose their competitive advantage. It is anticipated that further employment growth in Laois will be strongly associated with private sector enterprises in the services sector. Zoned brownfield and greenfield lands provide opportunities for a range of uses including office-based uses.

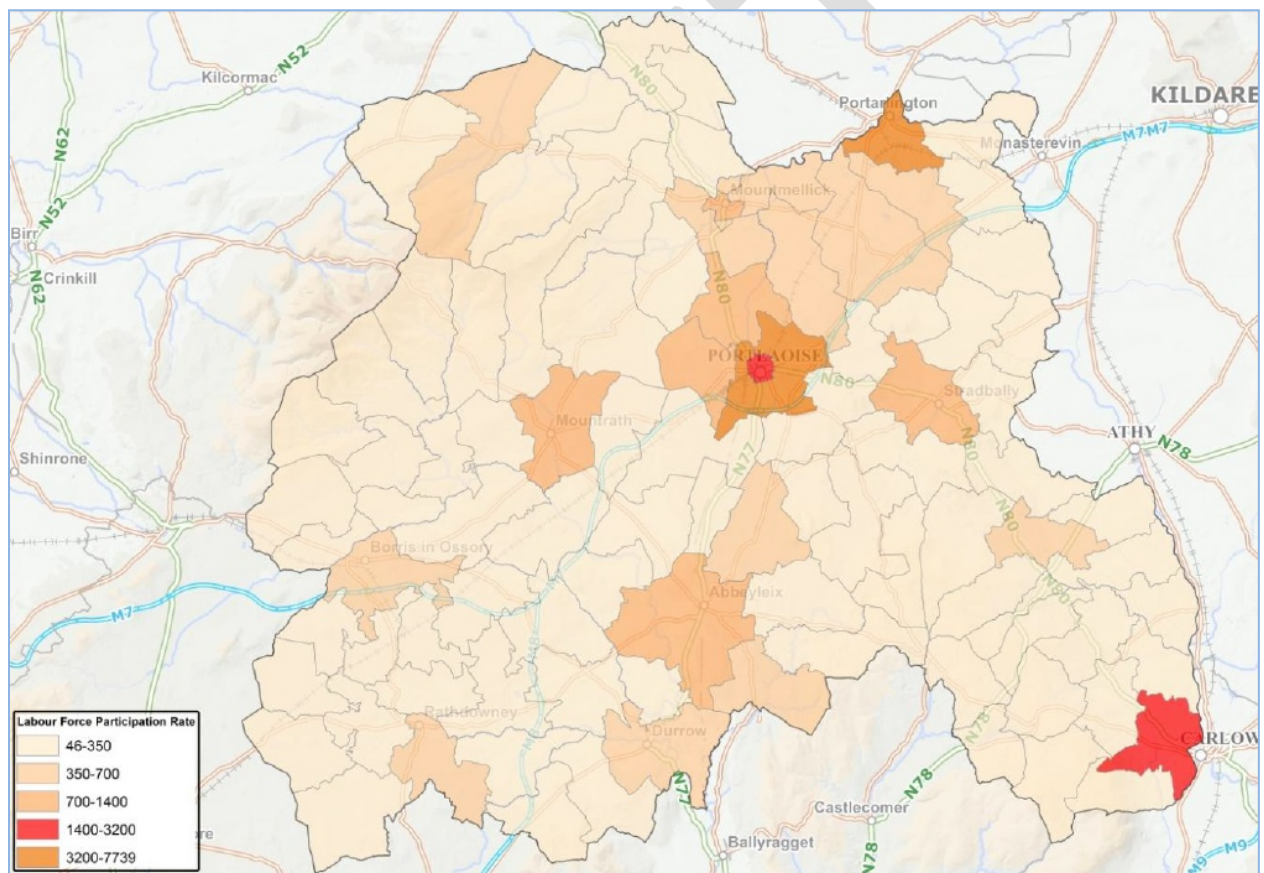
6. ECONOMIC PROFILE OF LAOIS

6.3.1 LABOUR FORCE

According to Census 2016, the total labour force residing in Laois was 39,609 which is equivalent to 62% (Labour Force Participation Rate) of the total population of the County. Between 2011 and 2016 the labour force in Laois increased by an additional 5.34% (+3,239). This rate of increase was marginally below the state average of 3.2%.

The distribution of the labour force in Co. Laois is varied with the highest rates tending to be in close proximity to urban settlements across the county. As presented in Figure 6.2 the highest rates were recorded in Portlaoise and Portlinoon.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of Labour Force in Laois



Aside from these areas the highest rate was recorded in the ED of Graigue Rural; 67% (2,304 persons) of the total population within the ED aged 15 and over is part of the labour force. The following EDs also recorded a high labour force participation rate of the total population of the ED Mountrath Urban 58% (1,367 persons), Borris 71% (822 persons), Clondarrig 71% (921 persons), Stradbally 56% (807 persons), Mountrath 60% (1,099 persons) and Abbeyleix 56% (1,232 persons).

According to the 2016 Census, the total labour force 'At Work' residing in Laois is 33,541 persons and equates to 84.6% of the total labour force within the county. The rate is lower than the state (87.1%) and neighbouring county Kildare (88.6%) yet higher than Offaly (84%).

Aside from Portlaoise and Portarlington, the highest number of individuals recorded 'At Work' was within the ED of Graigue Rural; 57% (3,455 persons) of the total population aged 15 years and over were recorded as been 'At Work'. High concentrations were recorded in the following EDs Mountmellick Urban 44% (1,028 persons), Clondarrig 60% (780 persons), Mountrath 47% (855 persons) and Abbeyleix 49% (1,072 persons).

With over 18,505 jobs in the County and a Jobs:Workforce ratio of 0.56 recorded in Census 2016, the economic benefits associated with the strategic location of the County and good transport connectivity, and in particular the strength of the employment base, are apparent.

At a settlement level, Portlaoise is the primary centre of employment in the County, with almost 8410 jobs in 2016. The Job:Workforce ratio in the town of Portlaoise was 0.99 in 2016, highlighting the close alignment between population and employment generation. Portarlington on the other hand has a lower job workforce ratio 0.435 which implies that more people are leaving the town for places like Kildare, Dublin, Tullamore and Portlaoise for employment.

Traditionally factories like Avon and Odlums and the ESB power plant would have created jobs for the resident population. However in recent years investment in both the Enterprise Centre and Business Park has not nearing full capacity and planning permission has been granted for extensions to commercial businesses and new enterprises such as the Garden Shop.

Table 6.1: Resident workers, jobs, and jobs ratio in Laois by settlement in 2016

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Works	Total Jobs	Jobs:Resident Workers
Co Laois	84,697	33,244	18,505	0.557
Abbeyleix	1,770	645	501	0.777
Mountmellick	4,777	1,571	915	0.582
Mountrath	1,774	586	367	0.626
Portarlington	8,368	3,103	1,349	0.435
Portlaoise	22,050	8,438	8,410	0.997

Source: Appendix 2 NPF

6.3.2 UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the 2016 Census, the total labour force 'Unemployed' residing in Laois is 5,452 persons and equates to 13.8% of the total labour force within the county. The rate recorded for Laois is higher than the state (12.9%) and neighbouring county Kildare (11.4%) yet lower than Offaly (14.4%) and Carlow (17.0%). Highest rates tend to be strong in and around urban settlements, particularly to the north east of the county.

6.3.3 EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

In a similar fashion to the state profile, the most dominant industries of Laois workers is within the 'Professional Services' 23% (7,717 persons) and 'Commerce and Trade' 22% (7,307 persons). Industrial sectors such as Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing 7% (2,431 persons), Building and Construction 6% (1,976 persons) and Public Administration 8% (2,548 persons) are all higher than the equivalent state averages. According to the 2016 Census the number of Laois workers employed in Manufacturing Industries 10% (3,423 persons) and Transport Communications 7% (2,286 persons) is below the state averages.

6.3.4 COMMUTING

The 2016 Census reported 35,795 County Laois residents commute to either work (33,245) or third-level study (2550) on a daily basis. Excluding mobile workers, those who work from or at home and those whose place of work, school or college could not be coded, a total of 25,959 County Laois residents regularly commute either to work (91%) or to third-level study (9%).

Of those commuting to work, 52% commute to a location within County Laois and 48% leave the County. Dublin (13%) is the most popular destination outside of County Laois, with nearly half of those travelling to Dublin City. Commuters to Kildare (13%) and Carlow (7%) are the next popular destinations.

The majority of County Laois commuters drive, accounting for 73% of those who commute to work and 30% of those commuting to third-level study. The next most popular modes of travel for workers is walking (6%) , and for third level students on foot (23%) and bus (17%) were the next most popular.

6.3.5 EDUCATION

In contrast to national results from Census 2016, Laois has a higher than average level of attainment in the lowest category of No Formal/Primary Education (13.1%, 6,995 persons). Laois County also scores higher than the national average for other lower tiers of education attainment; Lower Secondary (16.2%, 8,651 persons), Upper Secondary (21%, 11,173 persons) and Technical/Apprenticeship/Certificate (16.5%, 8,774 persons). Laois County attains a relatively young population; possible justification for the higher than average education attainment in the lower tiers.

Third level education rates consist of 11.6% (6,195 persons) attaining Lower Third Level education (higher certificate or ordinary bachelor degree) and 14.6% (7,778 persons) attaining Higher Third Level education (honours degree, postgraduate or PhD). Of the total population in Laois County aged 15 years and over 26.2% (13,973 persons) attains third level education, significantly lower than the state average of 33.4%, the 8th lowest in the state.

6.4 MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES ENTERPRISES (NATIONALLY/INTERNATIONALLY TRADED)

Employment in manufacturing in Laois is low relative to the Midlands Region and the state average. However, it remains locally significant despite a long-standing international trend of

declining employment levels in manufacturing. A very small number of Laois-based service and manufacturing jobs are agency-supported (IDA, Enterprise Ireland).

Laois has a limited share of high-value-added/high-technology manufacturing and service provision. However, a small cluster of clean-technology firms operate in the county including Enva Ireland and LSM Engineering based in Portlaoise.

Clean technology is an umbrella term for industries concerned with resource, material or energy efficiency as well as sustainable waste and water management, energy generation/storage and mobility. There may be opportunities to further develop this sector in revenue terms in Laois, having regard to its transport connectivity to domestic and international markets, infrastructural capacity (water, gas, and electricity), labour pool and land availability.

Some of Laois' manufacturing activities add value to local produce, for example the Dawn Meats factory in Rathdowney, Sheeran's timber manufacturing plant in Mountrath, Laois Sawmills in Portlaoise and Glanbia's Oats Mill in Portlaoise all utilise locally-produced commodities. The manufacturing of concrete and stone products, using locally-quarried aggregate and stone, is a feature of the manufacturing sector in Laois. Adding value to locally-produced commodities within the county is a way of increasing the value, sustainability and importance of the commodity sector to the Laois economy. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, the manufacture of niche or specialist food products using local agricultural produce provides for sustainable rural development.

Modest growth in employment in the construction sector is anticipated as the economy improves and following the employment collapse in this sector between 2006 and 2011.

National and regional policy supports the development of a landbank outside Portlaoise known as Togher for a range of service enterprises including transport, logistics and conferencing. Though policy support has been in place for several years, the envisaged development never materialised. Economic recovery may bring about fresh interest in taking advantage of Portlaoise transport connectivity and the enabling policy support.

6.5 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A drop of 20% in the number of private enterprises headquartered in Laois occurred between 2008 and 2012, as well as a 40% reduction in employment in these enterprises (Business Demography 2012). Income levels of self-employed workers in Laois declined by 35% compared to a decline of 12% in employee incomes between 2008 and 2012 (County and Regional Incomes 2012). These figures suggest a strong focus on supporting innovation and entrepreneurship is needed in Laois. Around 80% of businesses operating in Laois are micro in scale (Data Ireland 2012).

Developing capacity in innovation and entrepreneurship is therefore an important objective for LEO Laois, Laois Partnership Company, Carlow IT as well as Portlaoise and Portarlington Enterprise Centre.

6.6 INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ZONING

Laois County Council is proposing industrial and commercial land-use zonings in the Plan. The Council is mindful of the need to ensure that economic development and employment opportunities within the county are maximized so as to cater for the dramatic increase in population that has occurred over the past two decades in particular.

The type and quantum of such zonings are as follows and are listed in order of size:

Table 6.2: Enterprise and Employment, General Business and Industrial Vacant Sites

Zone_Type	Total_Hectares	Area Ha
Enterprise and Employment	212.28	524.5
General Business	50.52	124.77
Industrial	107.33	265.2
Retail Warehousing	0.85	2.11
Total	370.98	916.58

In addition other zonings which are more generic in name allow for a certain level of economic development. For example the land use light industry is considered as “open for consideration” [without invoking a material contravention procedure] in Town and Village Centres zonings.

The Council is also mindful of the economic development opportunities presented as a result of recent large scale road and rail infrastructure projects throughout the county such as the M7 and M8 Motorway and various rail upgrades.

As expected the bulk of the industrial and associated zonings are located in accordance with the settlement strategy which in turn adheres to advice from the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy RSES as to the optimum siting of population growth and employment generation. Specifically in Portlaoise the following table indicates how much of the land zoned for economic purposes is available at this point in time.

Table 6.3: Draft Portlaoise Zoning 2021-2027

Zone_Type	Total_Hectares	Area Ha
Enterprise and Employment	178.6	441.29
General Business	65.95	163
Industrial & Warehousing	36.91	91.22
Mixed Use	7.13	17.64

Moreover, the Council has allocated economic development and employment generating land use zonings in a number of smaller settlements that benefit from being in close proximity to the improved road and rail transport network. These locations include Borris-in-Ossory, Ballacolla, Ballybrittas and Rathdowney. The aforementioned strategic job creation sites are indicated in Map 6.1 below.

6.7 REMOTE WORKING / DIGITAL HUBS

The Midlands Network of Co-working Facilities (MNCF), which offer a landing space option and a base for those wishing to work remotely and ‘beat the commute’.

The Laois Hubs Collective, made up of six remote working centres, has been launched to highlight the facilities available to accommodate a wide range of employers, workers and start-ups.

There are six co-working hubs in the Laois Hubs Collective and they are based in Mountmellick (Webmill), Portlaoise (Portlaoise Enterprise Centre & Vision 85), Rathdowney (Brand Central Digital Hub – formerly Erkina), Mountrath (Bloom HQ) and Portarlington (Portarlington Enterprise Centre Innovation Hub).

6.8 HOME BASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

County Laois aims to provide enough jobs to support its population. 42% of Laois workers with a fixed place of work commute out of the County for work with Dublin (30%), Kildare (27%), Carlow (15%), Offaly (10%) and Kilkenny (7%) the most popular destinations (2011). Just 20% of Laois-based jobs are performed by inbound commuters.

The net outbound commuting of Laois residents to all surrounding counties (excluding Offaly) for employment indicates the need for the creation of additional jobs in the county in the interests of a sustainable economy, smarter travel and a good quality of life.

Many electoral divisions in east Laois experience out-of-county commuting in the order of 60%. High commuting patterns in eastern parts of the county correlate with higher rates of third-level education suggesting that commuters possess high-end skillsets and an employment profile distinct from in-county workers.

The creation of additional higher-skilled employment in the county may provide opportunities for Laois residents to work locally with economic as well as social and environmental benefits accruing as a result. For example, Portarlington has a high % of residents with third-level education and a high % of commuters. Though it has over twice the population of Mountmellick, a similar numbers of jobs are based in Portarlington as Mountmellick. Harnessing the full potential of Laois' rich pool of skills and talent is important to its future economic development.

6.9 CLIMATE ACTION AND JOBS

In response to the Low Carbon Transition for Portlaoise and generally for the County, Laois County Council has been funded under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) to develop an Innovation and Collaboration space to create communities of practice will spearhead future Low Carbon initiatives on this island.

The project pivots around a set of recently published Government plans and strategic directions namely:

- Project Ireland 2040
- Climate Action Plan to tackle Climate breakdown
- Future Jobs Ireland 2019
- Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan 2020

The CUBE at Portlaoise, a Low Carbon Centre of Excellence, will act as a focal point for the development of new business and economic activity and that in turn will support and assist a transition to a low carbon economy. This is a new concept in business development not alone for the Portlaoise area but also in a national and international context and in that regard it is a strategic change project in every respect.

Companies located in the Cube and affiliated to the Cube will avail of, or provide services through the Cube. These services will be available to the wider region and nationally. The Cube will specialise in bespoke professional services and training programmes tailored to align with the requirements of disparate sectors for which there is currently minimal advice or service available.

The project will deliver jobs and enterprise in its own right at the CUBE and at existing outreach landing points in Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountrath and Mountmellick. It will also have a profound transitional impact on job creation in all key Markets including Agribusiness, Renewable Energy, Forestry, Food Production, Transport, Construction, Manufacturing, Retail, Business Services, Education and Urban Design and Planning.

It is anticipated that approximately 260 jobs will be created both within the Cube and as a consequence of the impact of the Cube services.

By creating links between existing and emerging industries and education the project can ensure Ireland has the technical knowledge and the skills necessary to excel in the changing marketplace. The Cube will provide services on the low carbon agenda for the region through a number of initiatives in partnership with regional enterprise and educational and training experts.

The Cube will dedicate space for the incubation of Low Carbon focused start-ups and SME's and will actively market the building, utilising the unique selling point of an exemplar Low Carbon Facility, with a focus on providing services with a Low Carbon agenda. This will be critical to attracting fledgling companies who fundamentally require key advice on Low Carbon specifics vital to their operations and future development.

6.10 RURAL BUSINESS

A key objective of the NPF is to enable all parts of the Country – both urban and rural – to achieve their full potential. The RSES reflects this core objective and aims to strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, supporting rural towns and communities as well as the open countryside, improving connectivity, and supporting job creation, particularly in a more diverse range of sectors.

The rejuvenation of rural towns and villages requires that appropriate job creation can be supported in rural areas. Traditional sectors such as agriculture, tourism, extractive industries and forestry are complemented by diversification in sectors such as food, renewable energy and opportunities provided from improved digital connectivity.

The agri-food sector plays a significant role in Ireland's rural economy and this sector is supported through the implementation of Food Wise 2025. The forestry Sector is another significant contributor to the economy as is tourism and the development of greenways, blueways and peatways to provide an alternative visitor experience. Energy production, including renewable energy in the form of wind, solar and biomass have to date largely been provided in rural areas and the location of future renewable energy production is likely to be met in rural areas. See Section 9.6 of Chapter 9 on Rural Laois for specific policy objectives in relation to rural enterprise.

6.11 ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR COUNTY LAOIS

The economic strategy for Co Laois aligns with the LECP for County Laois which aims to develop the following specific goals as they relate to economic development for the following period 2016-2021

Goal 1: Market Laois to foster inward investment

Goal 2: Diversify and strengthen a sustainable County Economy

Goal 3: Support innovation and entrepreneurship.

Working together with stakeholders such as the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Laois LEO, Laois Partnership, Laois Chamber of Commerce has already resulted in additional jobs within the county and promoted the county on an national and international level. Local entrepreneurs and local food producers have also had the benefit of exposure on many platforms.

The primary place for job creation will be in the Key town of Portlaoise and also in the key town of Graiguecullen/ Carlow where job creation and investment opportunities will be developed in collaboration with the Carlow County Council.

The Key Town of Portlaoise has been identified as an FAU and key growth enabler within the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), however it is also important to note the large towns of Portarlinton, Mountrath, Abbeyleix and Mountmellick and Key Town of Graiguecullen provide an important employment function in their own right and are suitable for economic development opportunities.

Portlaoise has a strong economic base spread across various sectors including global business, ICT, agri-business. The J17 National Enterprise Park is a 121ha site located to the southwest of Portlaoise town centre bound by the M7 motorway and includes an existing IDA Park.

A masterplan has been prepared for the area and has significant potential for the expansion of Portlaoise's economic base and as an identified in Table 6.5. Since 2017, two new industrial developments have established within the area – Glanbia Cheese EU (food manufacturing/processing plant) and Greenfield Global (ethanol and solvents Processing plant) with other sites going through the planning process.

Portlaoise has also undergone significant environmental improvements under the delivery of Portlaoise Regeneration and Development Demonstration Project to become Ireland's first Low Carbon Town. In this regard there is significant scope to develop Portlaoise and employment opportunities and as a centre of excellence for climate change.

The creation of sufficient **employment opportunities** in Portarlinton is fundamental to build a sustainable community and reduce the rate of outward commuting. Portarlinton's unique location on the regional road network, intersection of the national train line and proximity to the Greater Dublin Area, in conjunction with the zoning and servicing of cost effective land and good quality high speed broadband is of major benefit to attracting economic development to the town.

This plan places a firm emphasis on maintaining and expanding existing businesses such as Odlums, Jamestown, Camsaw, Polar Ice etc., small businesses, entrepreneurial development and tourism, rather than a return to reliance on construction and industry as the drivers of the local economy. Additionally, building strong communities, improving the physical environments namely the town centre and developing or marketing a strong identity for the town can do much to attract new businesses and investment. In this respect, the Council will support local

enterprise and employment generating opportunities, facilitate the up skilling and training of the labour force and the provision of key hard and soft infrastructure. Opportunity sites in Portarlington have been identified for the purposes of job creation within this plan period.

Such measures aim to create an attractive base for employers and more self-sustaining development for the population, while providing an alternative to commuting to the GDA for employment.

6.12 STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

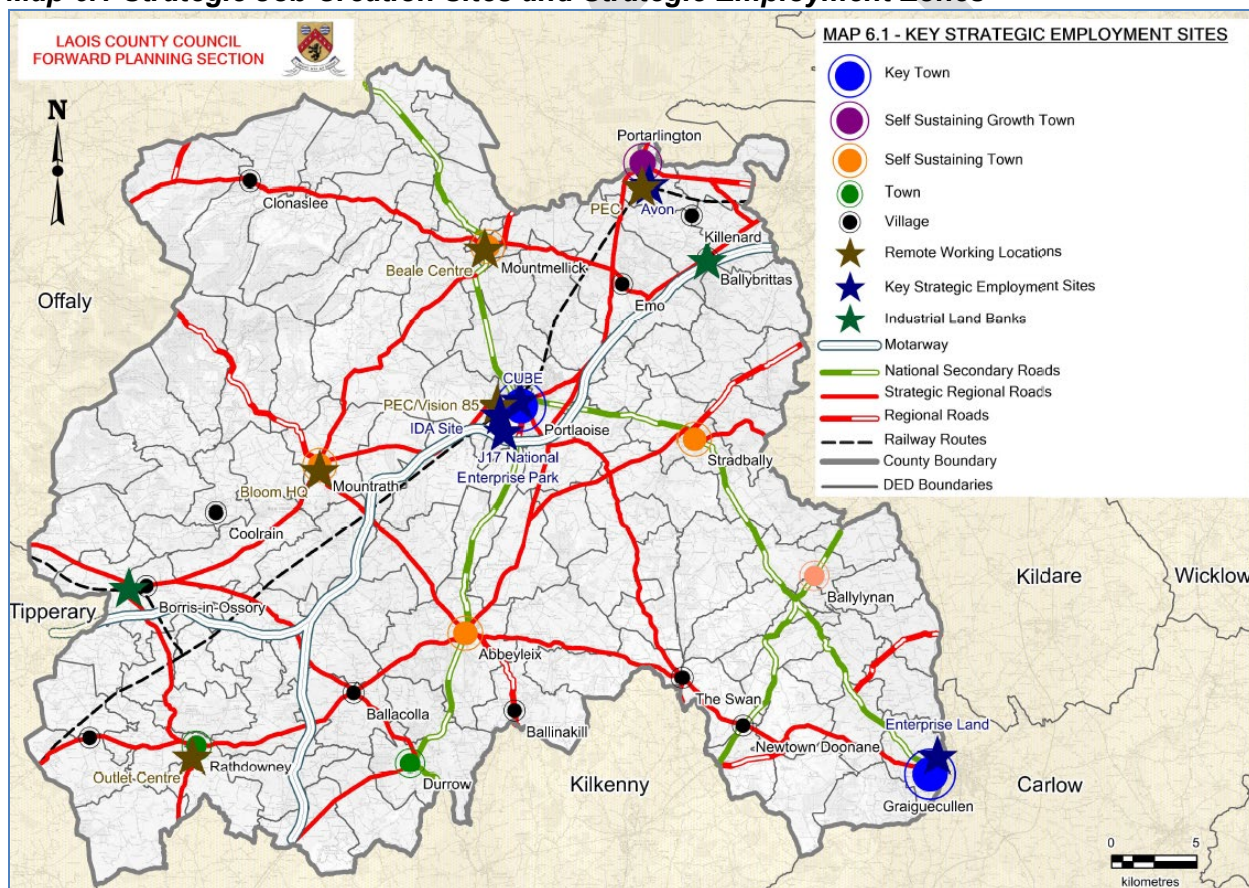
The following are key strategic employment initiatives that will drive economic activity within the County during the plan period:

Table 6.4: Strategic Employment Initiatives

KEY STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES IN COUNTY LAOIS	
1	Continue to promote and develop J17 National Enterprise Park in Portlaoise – a Strategic Employment Zone for the County and to support the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone
2	Support the development and designation of Portlaoise as a “Low Carbon Town” through the implementation of a suite of initiatives/range of technologies deployed that serve as demonstrators for other towns and support the development of The CUBE as a Low Carbon Centre of Excellence in Portlaoise
3	Facilitate the development of lands in Graigecullen Key Town for job creation as identified in the Joint Spatial Plan and collaborate with Carlow County Council to identify an economic development strategy for the joint area.
4	Continued employment and enterprise generation support in the Self Sustaining Growth Town of Portarlington at sites such as the SIAC steel site, the former “Avon” site, McMahons builders yards, etc in order to reverse long distance commuting as indicated in the Settlement Hierarchy in Chapter 2 of this Plan. The Council will also investigate the feasibility of providing new enterprise / business opportunities on appropriately zoned lands within the town of Portarlington.
5	Promote and facilitate job creation Opportunity Sites in many settlements in the county as indicated in Chapter 7 – Retail and Town/Village Centre Renewal of this Plan and in Volume 2 Settlement Plans
6	Potential for relocation of ‘back-office’ facilities from the Dublin Metropolitan Area to Laois to take advantage of cheaper land, high quality life and reduce long distance commuting.
7	Continued support of remote working practices in the Laois Hub Collective (Portlaoise Enterprise Centre / Portarlington Enterprise Centre/ Bloom HQ/ Webmill / Vision 85 , etc) whereby facilities are made available to workers travelling outside of



	the county
8	Provide adequate zoning in towns and villages to facilitate employment, enterprise and existing initiatives (indicated in Volume 2 Settlement Plans)
9	Continue to strengthen the attractiveness of Laois as a tourist destination to visit in collaboration with Laois Tourism
10	Support the development of Laois as National Event Centre to support the concept of “Big Events” that represent niche cultural events hosted in unique settings such as Emo House, Stradbally Hall, Roundwood House

Map 6.1 Strategic Job Creation Sites and Strategic Employment Zones



The following key strategic sites offer the potential for job creation in the key town of Portlaoise and the Self Sustaining Growth Town of Portarlington. These sites are well connected with regard to proximity to the national motorway network and by sustainable transport options via rail into both locations.

Table 6.5: Strategic Opportunity Sites

Location	Strategic Opportunity sites	Employment	Commentary
Portlaoise	<p>J17 National Enterprise Park</p> 		<p><i>J17 Enterprise Park Master Plan Area</i></p> <p>This has been of major benefit to Portlaoise following on from supporting policies within the RSES in relation to continued development of the J17 National Enterprise Park.</p> <p>In recognition of this designation, the Council has been pro-active and has serviced and provided serviced sites at Togher, due south of the town centre and directly adjacent to the M7, for various enterprise and employment activities. The ability of this site to facilitate Foreign Direct Investment development opportunities will be maximised during the Plan period.</p>
Portarlington	<p>Former Avon Site</p> 		<p>This prime site is located in close proximity to the train station. The 5.18ha. brownfield site is currently vacant and fully serviced. Environmental considerations following previous uses of the site must be adhered to. The site is outside of Flood Zones A and B. There is an opportunity to provide a key landmark building/ enterprise campus.</p> <p>Suitable for a wide variety of enterprise and employment uses including low input and emission manufacturing, campus style offices, storage, wholesale and distribution etc. A high quality public realm will be required in any development.</p>
	<p>McMahons Site beside Train Station</p>		<p>This site is strategically located directly adjacent to Portarlington Railway Station and car park. The 1.56ha. brownfield site was formerly used as timber and hardware retail</p>



outlet, the buildings have been cleared and the site is vacant. The site is fully serviced and outside of Flood Zones A and B.

There is opportunity to intensify development to provide a key landmark or gateway building to signify the approach and entrance to the town from the south and railway station to create a sense of arrival.

The building should address the extensive street frontage and be designed to an exceptional standard.

A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

<i>Economic Development Policy Objectives</i>	
ED 1	Build on the role of Portlaoise as the driver for the economic development of County Laois reflecting its designation as Key Town in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
ED 2	Support the development J17 - National Enterprise Park in line with RPO 4.73 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan.
ED 3	Provide a landing space for businesses who wish to establish a second site in a more competitively priced location
ED4	Support the development of the Cube in Portlaoise as a space for incubation of Low Carbon focused start ups and SME's
ED 5	Support entrepreneurship in County Laois and jobs-focused education and training programmes.
ED 6	Support the implementation of LECP Economic Actions to market Laois for Inward Investment and for diversifying and strengthening a sustainable Laois economy, such as the preparation of a suite of opportunity site briefs suitable for large-scale enterprise/commercial uses and the promotion of Laois' centrality, its transport connectivity and Portlaoise's location along a Trans-European Core Network Corridor and its designation as a national transport node.
ED 7	Work in partnership with agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, Connect Ireland and IDA Ireland to find suitable sites or premises for prospective enterprises considering locating in Laois.
ED 8	Ensure the provision of enabling infrastructure (potable/waste water, electricity, gas) keeps pace with the needs of existing and prospective enterprises and protect lands reserved for enabling infrastructure development.

ED 9	Encourage the clustering of mutually supportive land uses to maximise synergistic business relationships and develop specialist labour skills in particular in the clean technology sector and enterprises that locally-produced commodities as inputs.
ED 10	Ensure a sufficient quantum and range of serviced employment lands is zoned and available to accommodate appropriate enterprise development.
ED 11	Support direct labour intensive enterprises to town centre/edge of centre locations and brownfield sites and favour brownfield sites over greenfield sites for general enterprise development in the interests of sustainability and orderly development.
ED 12	Work in partnership with agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, LEO Laois, Laois Partnership Company, the Portlaoise Enterprise Centre and the Portarlington Enterprise Centre to provide enterprise incubator spaces and support enterprise formation and scaling, subject to the Development Management Standards contained in this section.
ED 13	Support home-based economic activities subject to environmental, traffic and residential amenity considerations and not undermining the land use zoning objectives of employment lands.
ED 14	Foster the cultivation of entrepreneurship among children, the provision of jobs-focused further education programmes and entrepreneur-focused training and mentoring to business owners in partnership with the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board, LEO Laois, Laois Partnership Company, Department of Social Protection and Laois library network.
ED 15	Support and facilitate the development of remote working / co working space opportunities in a range of locations throughout the county such as Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Rathdowney and other appropriate locations subject to proper planning and development
ED 16	Seek to provide opportunities for highly-skilled outbound commuters to work locally through local employment opportunities, tourism opportunities, the development of an e-working centre or working-from-home arrangements facilitated by high-speed broadband in the interests of sustainable economic development, smarter travel and quality of life considerations.
ED 17	Support community initiatives to foster stronger engagement between commuters and their local towns and villages.

Economic Development Management Standards

DM ED 1	<p>INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Where proposed industrial facilities, waste disposal facilities, mineral extraction developments, or other developments that may have a significant impact on surface water quality, ground water quality, or on the water table, the developer will be required (whether as part of an EIAR or an Environmental Report) to:</p> <p>1) submit an assessment of the impact of the development on water</p>
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	<p>quality and the water table; mitigation and monitoring measures should also be included, as appropriate;</p> <p>Development proposals that could cause pollution, a reduction in biological or chemical water quality or changes in the water table will not be accepted unless appropriate mitigatory measures are proposed, such as settlement ponds, oil and chemical interceptors, bunding of storage tanks and refuelling areas, capping where ground water is exposed as a result of extraction etc.</p>
<p>DM ED 2</p>	<p>COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT - WAREHOUSES AND INDUSTRIAL USES/BUSINESS CAMPUSES (for shopping and office development see Chapter 7)</p> <p>The criteria for assessment of such developments will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The nature/activities/processes of the proposed development and site location factors; 2) The compatibility and impact with/on adjoining uses; 3) The traffic implications and alternative access, servicing and sustainable mobility plans / commuting arrangements; 4) The quality of building design; 5) The site layout including car parking arrangements; 6) Landscaping plans; 7) The energy efficiency and overall sustainability of the proposed developments; 8) Details in relation to surface water/stormwater management systems; 9) Details in relation to climate resilience measure
<p>DM ED 3</p>	<p>HOME BASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY</p> <p>Home based economic activity is defined as ‘working from home’. In dealing with applications for such developments the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The nature and extent of the work and the justification for the proposed location; 2) The effects on the amenities of adjoining properties particularly as regards hours of operation, noise and general disturbance; 3) The anticipated levels of traffic generation (a traffic and car parking statement shall accompany any application for such a change of use); 4) The details concerning the generation, storage and collection of waste; 5) Quality signage proposals – plastics and neon signage on buildings will not be permitted <p>Permissions for such partial change of use will be restricted to use by the</p>

applicant and may be temporary, for a temporary period, in order to enable the Planning Authority to monitor the impact of the development. Permission will not normally be granted for such changes of use in apartments.

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