A photograph of a waterfall cascading over mossy rocks in a lush green forest. The waterfall is the central focus, with water splashing and creating white foam as it falls. The surrounding trees are dense and vibrant green, suggesting a healthy, natural environment.

Laois Climate Action Plan 2024-2029



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Foreword

In response to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, which mandates all local authorities to prepare and enact a climate action plan, Laois County Council has prepared this [Draft] Climate Action Plan.



This legislation underscores the need for robust climate action, emphasising a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Our mission is to lead by example, reducing emissions, and embracing climate change adaptation as we work towards a sustainable and low-carbon future for Laois. We take this commitment seriously and understand its significance in addressing the pressing issues associated with climate change.

The implementation of actions set out in this [Draft] Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, will assist Laois County Council in embedding climate action measures across local authority services, setting realistic and achievable targets and timelines for delivery.

Laois County Council has committed to achieving its share of the national targets for public sector emission reduction. We invite our community, partners, and stakeholders to join us on this journey, outlined in this comprehensive plan. It is our collective effort, guided by a shared vision, that will drive tangible progress. Together, we will create a brighter, more sustainable future for Laois—one where we live, work, and thrive in harmony with our environment.

Paschal McEvoy
Cathaoirleach

John Mulholland
Chief Executive

remain steadfast in our dedication to delivering effective climate action, supporting households, communities, and businesses in navigating the challenges posed by climate change impacts. This plan serves as our roadmap, articulating the practical steps we will take to achieve our shared climate action goals.

In this spirit of unity and purpose, we look ahead with optimism, confident that our concerted actions will make a meaningful difference. The future we envision is one of resilience, sustainability, and prosperity for all who call Laois home. Together, we will make it a reality.

Executive Summary **1**



Ridge of Capard, Rosenallis

1 Executive Summary

Climate Change is a defining issue of our time. Local Government has been identified as a key player in leading climate action at a local, community-based level to address the social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by communities. Local Authorities have been mandated to prepare and action Local Authority Climate Action Plans (LACAP).

LACAPs will strengthen the links between local, regional, national and international climate policies. The plans will need to ensure the delivery of effective climate action at local and community level through place-based and evidence-based approaches. The LACAPs are statutory five year plans and are to include mitigation and adaptation actions that ultimately provide pathways to achieve a decarbonised society. Portlaoise has been selected as the Decarbonisation Zone for County Laois, building on the ongoing work of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project.

Throughout the preparation of this Plan, all sections within Laois County Council were consulted and involved in shaping the required actions. Public consultation was carried out via in-person consultation process and online surveys in tandem with the Local, Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and Local Development Strategy (LDS) consultations.

Climate change risk assessments and baseline evaluations for mitigation have been conducted for Laois County Council, and the designated Decarbonising Zone of Portlaoise Town.

This plan presents Laois County Council's [Draft] Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. The plan, divided into several chapters and Appendices, briefly includes:

Evidenced-based Climate Action: Section 4 summarises the evidence base used to inform climate actions within the jurisdictional area of Laois County Council, including climate change risks and an emissions baseline profile.

Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone: Section 6 focuses on Portlaoise Town as the Decarbonising Zone (DZ) including the Vision for the Spatial Area, the Strategic Priority Areas and the Actions.

Framework of Climate Actions: Section 5 outlines the plans framework for climate actions including the Vision, Mission, Strategic Goals, Objectives and Actions.

Implementation and Reporting: Section 7 sets out the Council's approach to implementing these actions and measuring progress achieved.

Introduction 2



Lea Castle, Portarlinton

2 Introduction

2.1 Requirement for a Climate Action Plan

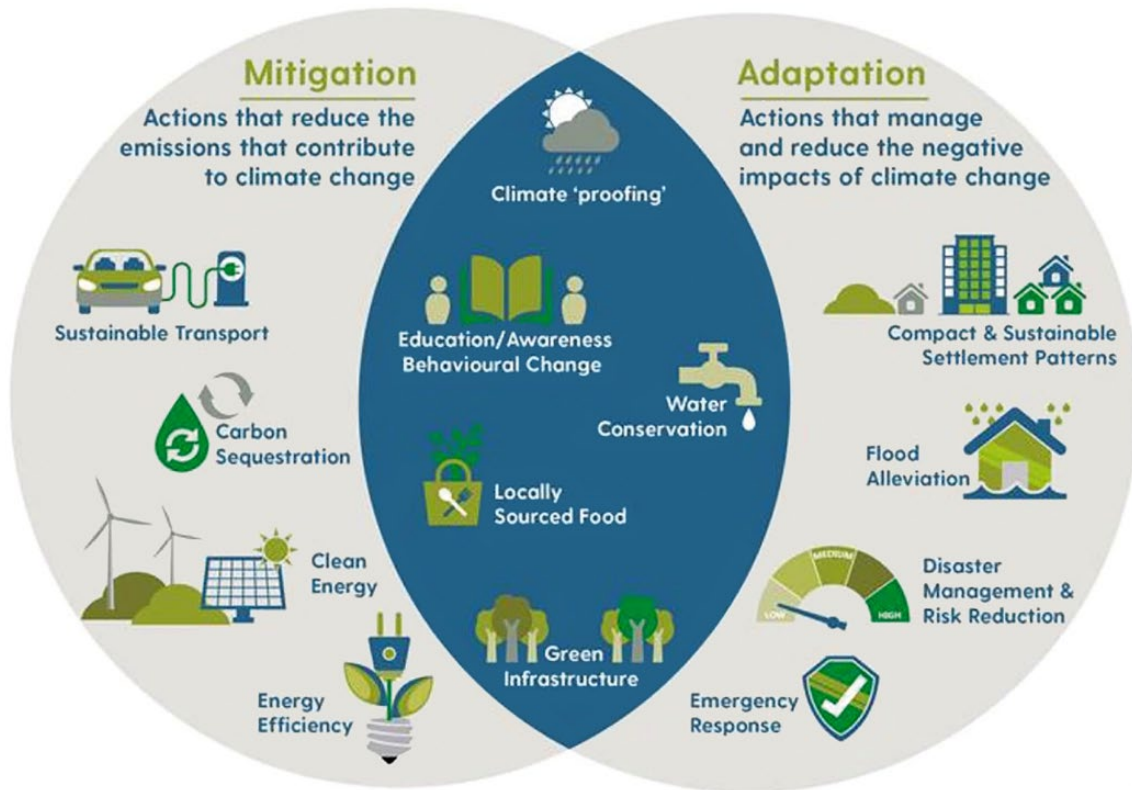
Climate change is understood to be the most critical, long-term global challenge of our time. Ireland's climate is changing in line with global trends and the impacts of these changes will be felt by every community, impacting on human and natural systems, and incurring additional costs to our economy and society.

In line with International and European visions of a climate resilient future, Ireland has now committed to a transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050. This commitment is enshrined in the National Climate Objective of the Government as stipulated in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, and amended to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Local Government has been identified as a key player in leading climate action at a local, community-based level. Local authorities are at the forefront of climate action in Ireland. They play a significant role in terms of delivering adaptation and mitigation measures at local and community levels. They are entrusted to work through their regulatory and strategic functions to operationalise the ambitious national climate targets and policy at local level, thereby assisting in the delivery of the national climate objective.

Laois County Council has prepared this [Draft] Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, to create a low carbon and climate resilient County, by delivering and promoting high quality practice in climate action, at the local level. This Plan is aligned to the Government's overall National Climate Objectives, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

Figure 2.1: Climate Change and Climate Mitigation



Source: Eastern and Midland Climate Action Regional Office

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act as amended mandates all local authorities in Ireland to prepare and publish a Climate Action Plan encompassing both mitigation and adaptation measures (Figure 2.1).

- **Climate Change Mitigation** reduces or eliminates the generation of harmful greenhouse gases and can be achieved with changes to, among other things, transportation, consumption, production, manufacturing and land-use.
- **Climate Change Adaptation** involves addressing the consequences of climate change, with practical measures to manage the risks, to safeguard communities, and enhance the economy's resilience e.g. flood reduction works.

In formulating this [Draft] Climate Action Plan, Laois County Council has considered relevant climate legislation and policy. Climate change risk assessments and baseline evaluations for mitigation have been conducted for the County, Laois County Council, and the designated Decarbonising Zone of Portlaoise Town. This Climate Action Plan shall have effect for a period of five years from the date on which it is approved by the members of the Laois County Council.

The Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications issued a set of statutory guidelines to assist local authorities in preparing Local Authority Climate Action Plans.

The [Draft] Climate Action Plan establishes a clear roadmap for Laois County Council to:

Enhance climate resilience, enhance energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the Councils assets, services, and infrastructure to achieve targets of 51% emissions reduction and 50% energy efficiency improvement by 2030.

Serve as a catalyst for influencing, advocating, and facilitating other sectors in achieving their climate targets including the local community.

Designate a Decarbonising Zone (DZ) within its administrative jurisdiction. This area serves as a test bed for the implementation of place-based climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity initiatives. This area will illustrate the feasibility of local-level actions to attain the national objectives. These national objectives are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 (based on the 2018 baseline).



Policy and Context 3



The Protectour sculpture, Portlaoise

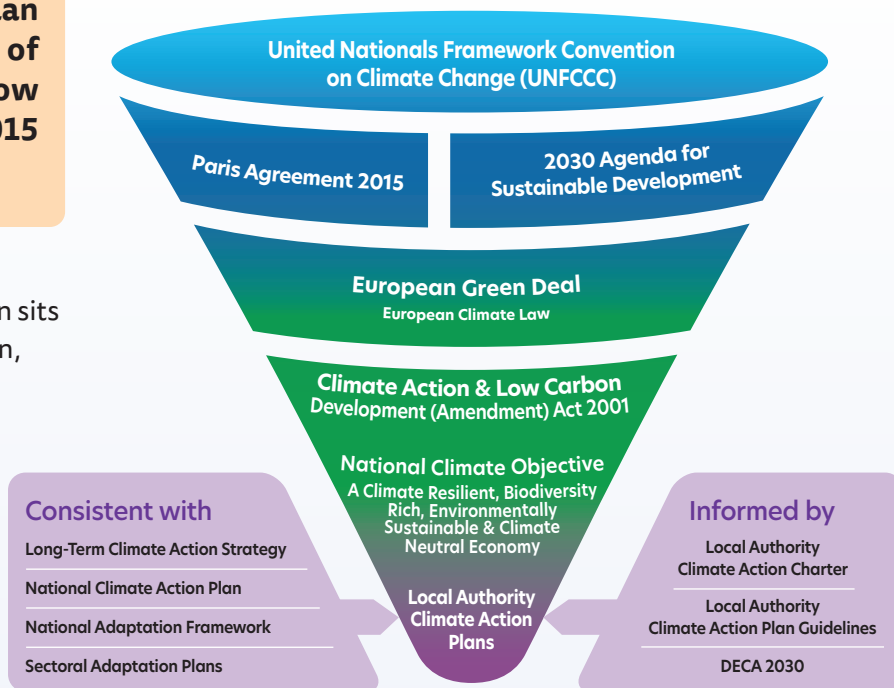
3 Policy and Context

3.1 Climate Action Plans in Context

The statutory requirement for Laois County Council to prepare a Climate Action Plan stems from Section 14 B of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended).

However, the Climate Action Plan sits within a broader global, European, and national context, shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Policy Context for Local Authority Climate Action Plans



3.2 International Climate Change Policy

It has been recognised that successfully tackling climate change requires cooperation and ambition on an international level.

Since the establishment of the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) in 1994, countries have sought to build international cooperation to limit the increase in the average global temperature and deal with the impacts of climate change, that result from these temperature increases.

These efforts led to the signing of the Paris Agreement 2015 at the [Conference of the Parties 21 \(COP21\)](#). The [Paris Agreement 2015](#) is a legally binding international treaty on climate change which was signed by all 196 member countries, including Ireland, and entered into force on 4th November 2016.

Through two clearly defined goals the Paris Agreement strives for progressive and ambitious climate action over time to avoid dangerous climate change by:

- Holding global average temperature increases to well below 20 °C and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.
- Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience.

Another International agreement closely linked with the Paris Agreement is the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) which was adopted by UN Member States in September 2015. At the Agenda's core are 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). These goals aim to "end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere." The 17 SDGs contain 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. In 2019, World leaders called for a 'decade of action' in order to achieve the Goals within this timeframe.

The European Commission in December 2019, to achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions as part of the Paris Agreement commitments, announced the [European Green Deal](#) aimed at making Europe the first climate neutral continent. The European Green Deal seeks to achieve no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, to decouple economic growth from resource use, and to leave no one behind. The EU introduced a set of proposals to align the EU's climate, taxation, energy, and transport policies to support achieving this aim. The [European Climate Law](#) made these targets legally binding, also including reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions of at least 55% by 2030.

3.3 Climate Change Policy in Ireland

The Irish Government, through the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, seeks to pursue the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of the year 2050 and to thereby promote climate justice, and just transition.

Irish climate policy is working to scale up efforts across all of society and deliver ambitious and transformative climate actions, through progressive economy-wide carbon budgets, sectoral ceilings, a suite of strategies devised to promote a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as robust oversight and reporting arrangements.

As committed to in the Programme for Government, the National Climate Action Plan 2023 sets out a roadmap to halve greenhouse emissions by 2030 and reach net zero, no later than by the end of 2050.

[Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plans](#) have been published across Government departments, in response to the National Adaptation Framework. Each Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plan identifies the key risks faced by the sector and the approach being taken to address these risks and build climate resilience for the future. They were developed applying a six-step adaptation planning process described in Sectoral Planning Guidelines for Climate Change Adaptation, published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

The Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plans address the following sectors: Agriculture, Forestry and Seafood, Biodiversity, Built and Archaeological Heritage, Transport infrastructure, Electricity and Gas Networks, Communications Networks, Flood Risk Management, Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure and Health. It is important to note that the Local Authority Climate Action Plans do not seek to duplicate the separate work of the sectoral climate plans.

3.4 Local Authority Climate Action Planning

The Laois Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 is part of longer-term efforts that require a sustained and planned response to support the delivery of the climate neutrality objective at local and community levels.

This Climate Action Plan provides a mechanism for bringing together both adaptation and mitigation actions to help drive positive climate action outcomes across the local authority and its administrative area. The framework of climate actions set within the plan, configures the arrangement of climate actions within a defined structure that ensures alignment between on the ground actions and the high-level vision that the Climate Action Plan aspires to deliver.

On 6th March 2023, Laois County Council received the request from the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications under Section 14 B (2) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended) to make a Local Authority Climate Action Plan. This Climate Action Plan has been prepared having had regard to the [Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines](#), published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in March 2023. Further background to the policy context of this climate action plan is contained in Appendix A.

There are other Plans and Strategies from Laois County Council that will assist in delivering climate actions, such as the County Development Plan and the Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021 - 2026. This Climate Action Plan does not seek to duplicate the focus of such documents. However, and for ease of reference, Appendix J contains extracts from the County Development Plan with reference to climate related matters, and Appendix K contains extracts from the Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy.



Laois County Council Climate Action Team



Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae



Approach road to Portlaoise

Evidence Base 4



Castletown at dusk

4 Evidence Base

4.1 Evidence based climate planning

Employing evidence-based approaches in climate action planning is central to improving the quality of decision making and planning.

Relying on scientific evidence and data allows policymakers to formulate robust and impactful strategies to address climate change challenges.

Among the significant research element in producing this plan were:

- Consultation processes (both public consultations and consultations internally within the Council)
- Climate Change Risk Assessment for the County

- Baseline Emissions Inventory detailing the current sources of greenhouse gas emissions from Laois County
- Analysis of the emissions produced as a result of Laois County Council's own activities.

Extracts of key points from these processes are summarised below. Additional information in Appendix B and Appendix E.

4.2 Public Consultations

The public consultation process included:

- An online survey which attracted over 500 responses
- Six in-person Community workshops
- One virtual workshop
- Targeted one-to-one engagements with stakeholders

A summary report on this public consultation process is Appendices B, C and D.



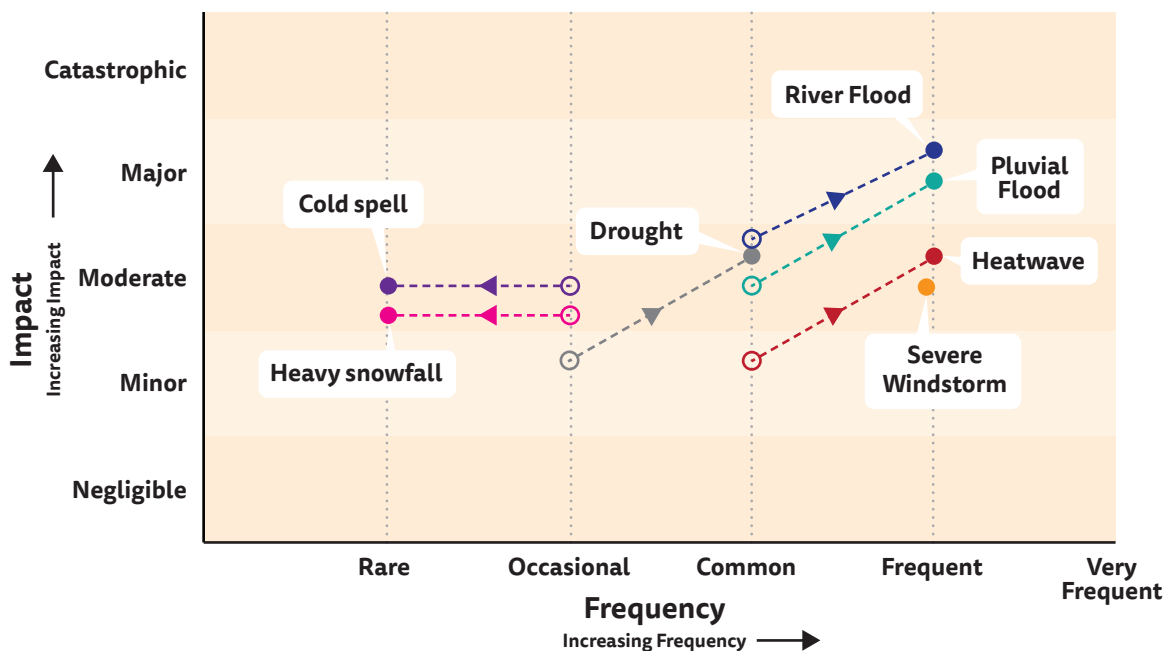
Flooding In Mountmellick in November 2017

4.3 Climate Change Risk Assessment

The evidence points to global climate change impacting the weather systems experienced in County Laois.

A Climate Change Risk Assessment report was commissioned by the Council and the Future Climate Risk Matrix is summarised graphically in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Future Climate Risk Matrix



The risk matrix above visualises the current and future risk levels associated with climate hazards in Laois, with hollow circle markers in the Figure representing current risks and solid circle markers depicting future risks. The dotted lines illustrate changes between current and future risk levels.

Source: KPMG CCRA for County Laois

Key Results and Findings of the Climate Change Risk Assessment

To enhance resilience, Laois County Council must proactively plan for and adapt to the climate change risks identified in this report.

The climate risk matrix in Figure 4.1 shows projections of varying levels of risk associated with different hazards. The risk matrix above visualises the current and future risk levels associated with climate hazards in Laois, with hollow circle markers in the Figure representing current risks and solid circle markers depicting future risks. The dotted lines illustrate changes between current and future risk levels.

Some hazards, such as river and pluvial (rain) flooding, heatwaves, and drought, are expected to increase in risk, while others, like severe windstorms, are projected to maintain their current risk level. In contrast, cold spells and heavy snowfalls are projected to decrease in frequency.

Cold Spells and Heavy Snowfalls

Recent experiences of cold spells and heavy snowfall events, such as Storm Emma in 2018, had a significant impact on County Laois, leading to road closures, public transport disruptions, power outages, and water supply interruptions. Projections indicate that as temperatures rise and snowfall decreases in frequency, the risk associated with these events will decrease. However, when they do occur, their impact is expected to be similar to current experiences.

River and Pluvial Flooding

River and pluvial (rain) flooding events have occurred almost annually in recent years (2018, 2020, 2021, and 2022). These events resulted in property flooding, business closures, transportation disruptions, sewage overflows, farmland flooding, and bridge damage. Projected increases in extreme precipitation events suggest a heightened risk of surface water and river flooding in the future.















Heatwaves and Droughts

Heatwaves and droughts, already experienced in County Laois, are anticipated to become more frequent and severe. These events have led to road damage, transportation disruptions, water supply restrictions, and increased demand on recreational areas. The increased risk of heat-related impacts will also affect vulnerable populations.

Severe Windstorms

Severe windstorms are currently frequent in County Laois, causing disruptions to energy supply and transportation networks. Projections do not indicate a significant change in their frequency, making them an ongoing risk.

Figure 4.2: Climate Projections for County Laois in 2050

HAZARD	PROJECTED CHANGE	FUTURE FREQUENCY
 Heatwaves	Projections indicate an overall increase in average temperature of between 1.2 and 1.6°C for County Laois relative to the 1981-2000 period. Under a high emission scenario, projections indicate that heatwaves will become more frequent by mid-century.	 Frequent
 Droughts	Summer rainfall is expected to reduce by between 6 and 11% in the future when compared with the baseline period of 1981 to 2000, contributing to potential drought conditions.	 Common
 Cold Spell	As a consequence of the increasing temperatures, a decrease in the number of frost days and ice days is projected for mid-century when compared with the baseline period of 1981 to 2000.	 Rare
 Heavy Snowfall	The annual snowfall in the region is projected to decrease substantially by the middle of the century.	 Rare
 Severe Windstorms	Projections of storms are subject to a high level of uncertainty. By mid-century, projections indicate that average wind speed will remain similar to those currently experienced. There is limited evidence indicating an increase in the frequency of the most intense storms, which are currently rare events.	 Frequent
 Pluvial Flooding	Projections indicate an increase in the frequency of heavy rainfall days (days with precipitation >30mm) for County Laois with some areas projected to see an increase of up to 51% by mid-century. This will potentially contribute to an increase in the frequency of river and pluvial flooding.	 Frequent
 River Flooding		 Frequent

Source: KPMG CCRA Report

4.4 Baseline Emissions

Baseline Emissions for the County

For assessing the impacts of any mitigation measures, it is necessary to have an assessment of current baseline emissions data for the County.

For assessing the impacts of any mitigation measures, it is necessary to have an assessment of current baseline emissions data for the County.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports both mains electricity consumption and mains natural gas consumption at the level of each county. That breakdown is not available at Decarbonising Zone level.

About 24% of the national electricity consumption is listed as “not coded” to any county. The “non-coded” element of the metered natural gas amounts to 61% of the natural gas metered. The “not coded” element of the CSO non-residential metered electricity and natural gas consumption relates to very large energy users and is not assigned to counties in the CSO dataset for reasons relating to confidentiality.

The CSO also report on sales of petrol, diesel, marked gas oil, and kerosene at the “county” level of the fuel trader or large user. While such data is useful, it cannot distinguish between, for example, a petrol sale to a Laois based vehicle and a petrol sale to a vehicle based elsewhere.

Despite the difficulties with the CSO datasets on electricity, gas, and petroleum products, these data sets are useful in comparing countywide trends in the consumption of these energy products over time. Appendix G contains data on the consumption of these products for the years 2015-2021, together with an estimation of the direct CO₂ emissions associated with their use. This data, however, will not give a complete baseline emissions inventory for the County. Nevertheless, the CSO data does have the distinct advantage of being directly comparable between different editions of the CSO publications.

Appendix F contains the results of the countywide baseline emissions inventory (BEI) for Laois, as commissioned from Fehily Timoney Consulting Engineers. This BEI has the advantage of including matters such as land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) in their calculations of emissions from the county. A disadvantage of these estimated BEIs is that they must use, for example, standard factors for heating a house so the BEIs are not as comparable between time intervals as the “harder” CSO data. Notwithstanding, the BEIs do give an overall picture of greenhouse gas emissions across the county and DZ.



Portlaoise Cycle Bus

For the purposes of this plan, an estimate has been produced of the GHG emissions for the whole of County Laois (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Baseline 2018 GHG Emissions for County Laois

Sector	2018 Emissions tCO ₂ -eq	Percentage Breakdown*
Residential	219,147	16%
Commercial/ Industrial	93,720	7%
Industrial Processes	9,265	1%
Agriculture	684,926	49%
Transport	344,942	25%
Water/Wastewater	15,377	1%
LULUCF	29,090	2%
TOTAL	1,396,468	100%

(* Note: percentages subject to rounding)

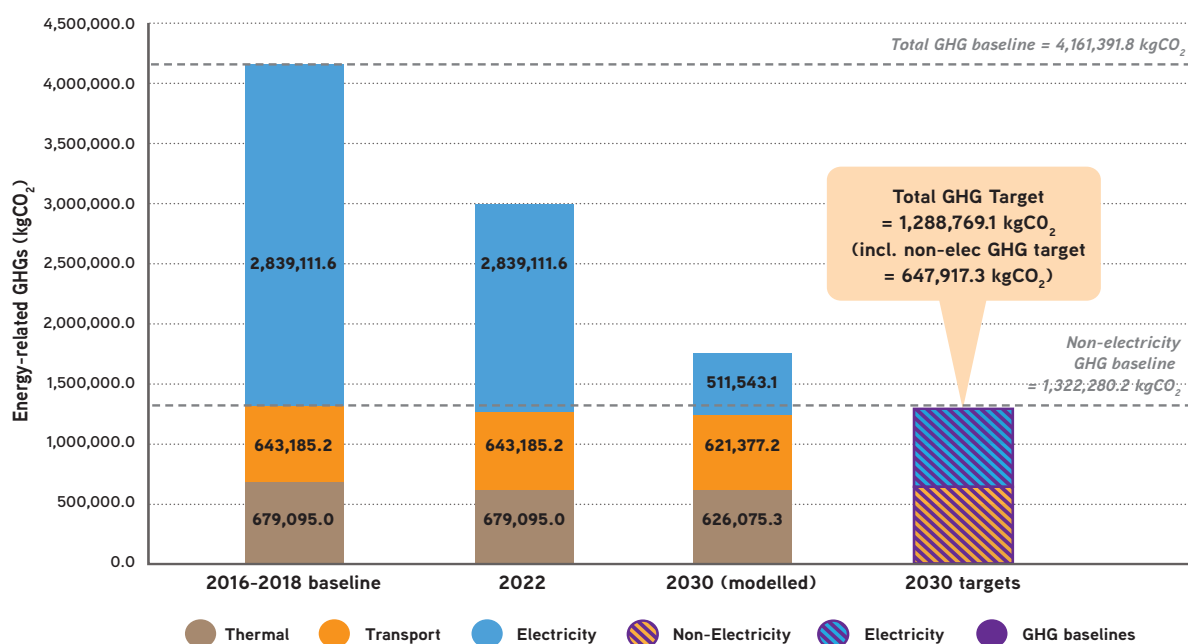
Source: Baseline Emissions Inventory Report for County Laois prepared by Fehily Timoney Consultants

Laois County Council's Own Emissions

For the purposes of greenhouse gas emissions reductions by local authorities to 2030, the baseline period to measure reductions from is set as 2016-2018. Over this period 2016-2018 the average greenhouse gas emissions attributable to Laois County Council were estimated at

4,161 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. The national target, which the Council has to meet by 2030, is 1,288 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. See Appendix I for further detail. The scale of this challenge is illustrated graphically in the Gap to Target graphic, Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: "Gap-to-Target" for Laois County Council's own GHG emissions



Framework of Climate Actions **5**



Orchid, Port Road Portlaoise

5 Framework of Climate Actions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the most crucial component of the plan, as it serves as an operational blueprint for streamlining climate action across all Laois County Council services and functions.

In formulating the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, strict adherence to the latest approved National Climate Action Plan, the most recent National Adaptation Framework, and other pertinent government policies on climate change was observed. The development of this plan was guided by the imperative to reflect the relevant policy context, all while recognising the ongoing evolution of national climate policy.

Laois County Council holds a distinct leadership position in climate action and aims to influence local and national climate policies. The goal is to foster the transition towards climate-resilient and sustainable communities, while also promoting these principles in the wider economy and society.

To achieve this, Laois County Council is committed to enhancing its internal capacity and awareness. This effort will extend from elected members to the over 500 employees of Laois County Council, ensuring that climate action becomes an integral part of all its activities and services.

The development of this Local Authority Climate Action Plan was purposefully structured to heighten awareness and enhance the capabilities of each section within the Council. Actions have been carefully crafted to empower the Council sections in fulfilling their roles. This was achieved using clear, accessible language and by collaboration with staff in shaping actions relevant to their section. Continuous participation and inclusion have been key factors in this process, ensuring that each section is equipped to take effective steps towards climate action.

The successful implementation of this Local Authority Climate Action Plan hinges on productive collaboration with numerous stakeholders, both internal and external to the County Council. Laois County Council is fully committed to influencing and enabling others to fulfil their climate responsibilities effectively.



5.2 Framework of Actions

The framework of climate actions established in this Plan organises them into a structured format, ensuring alignment between on-the-ground initiatives and the overarching vision of the Plan (Figure 5.1).

In the development of these actions regard has been had to the Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines as issued by the Minister of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Figure 5.1: Framework of Climate Actions



Source: LACAP Guidelines

Vision Statement:

"In our vision for Laois, we stand as a beacon of leadership, resilient in the face of Climate Change, steadfast in its position as a thriving place to live, work, invest, and visit—for both present and future generations. In Laois we embrace our responsibility to address the underlying causes of climate change, setting an example that inspires action and fosters sustainability."

Mission Statement:

"Laois County Council is committed to forging a path of influence with its actions, assuming a leadership role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and embracing climate change adaptation. This proactive approach will extend to households, communities, and businesses, to aid them in navigating the challenges posed by climate change impacts."

5.3 Strategic Goals

Strategic goals were formed to give context for both mitigation and adaptation actions.

The process of identifying and developing these strategic goals served a dual purpose: it supported the overarching vision and mission of the plan while allowing a structured approach to organising climate actions. These strategic goals were informed by key themes that emerged through the evidence base studies, stakeholder engagements, and ongoing local

authority climate action efforts. As a result, the strategic goals were context-specific, providing the framework for tailored actions that address local challenges effectively.

The Strategic Goals of this Climate Action Plan are summarised in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Laois County Council Climate Action Plan Strategic Goals



Within each strategic goal a number of objectives have been set (Figure 5.3) and these in turn lead to the development of the Climate Action Plan actions as set out in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.3: Strategic Goals and Objectives

Strategic Goal A: To improve our energy efficiency within Laois County Council, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to achieve a high standard of climate action in Laois County Council.	
Objectives	
A1	To reduce overall energy consumption in Laois County Council, by being more efficient in our energy use.
A2	To reduce to GHG Emissions of the energy used in Laois County Council by 51% by 2030.
A3	To collaborate with others in exploring energy and climate-based solutions.
A4	To measure and report on the carbon impact of our various activities.
A5	To consider climate impacts in the development of policies and programmes.
Strategic Goal B: Mobilise the Community, Voluntary, and Business sectors to deliver on climate action within their respective areas of influence.	
Objectives	
B1	To increase awareness across the community/ voluntary/ business sectors within the county on energy and climate related issues.
B2	To increase the number of community and voluntary groups actively pursuing climate actions.
B3	To increase the number of communities actively engaged in climate action in County Laois.
B4	To actively listen to the voice of communities, including groups representing youth and groups representing older people, so that we can help them deliver on their climate ambitions.
Strategic Goal C: Through our own actions in Laois County Council and through our partnerships with others in the Public Sector, and with the Community, Voluntary, and Business sectors, to provide leadership within the county (and further afield) on the matters related to climate change.	
Objectives	
C1	To maintain and develop cooperations with other bodies at a local/ regional/ national level.
C2	To achieve our nationally mandated 2030 targets and make progress towards the 2050 targets.
C3	To be prepared to trial technologies or other solutions not previously trialled within the county.
C4	To provide forums for local sharing of knowledge and successes in the areas of climate action.
C5	To promote opportunities for developments in the low carbon economy.
C6	To implement green public procurement strategy and procedures across all business areas.
C7	To continually develop expertise and knowledge within the local authority on climate related issues.

Continued >

Strategic Goal D: Through Active Travel, Environmental Awareness, and other programmes, to enhance opportunities for individuals to choose the better, climate friendly, options.

Objectives

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| D1 | To make it more attractive or easier for individuals and groups to choose the more climate friendly options. |
| D2 | To upgrade public infrastructure to allow for more climate friendly options. |
| D3 | To continue, through a combination of persuasion and active measures, to enforce environmental legislation in the interests of the community as whole. |
| D4 | To incorporate climate related criteria within our internal assessment procedures. |
| D5 | To work with communities to develop locally based and community driven behavioural change actions. |

Strategic Goal E: To make the county more resilient through a range of climate adaptation measures.

Objectives

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| E1 | To continue to implement approved flood protection and drainage measures. |
| E2 | To consider climate factors in our choices of construction materials and construction options. |
| E3 | To consider, where appropriate, nature based and nature friendly solutions to infrastructural elements. |
| E4 | To continually adapt our baseline maintenance requirements in the face of climate driven changes in weather patterns. |
| E5 | To maintain and improve water quality and biodiversity in our waterways, which will help mitigate the impacts of climate change on those waterways. |
| E6 | To continue to implement approved flood protection and drainage measures. |

Strategic Goal F: Recognising that climate change will not affect all in our community in an equal manner and to apply the principles of "Just Transition" in Laois County Council operations.

Objectives

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| F1 | To examine, in conjunction with the broader public sector, alternative employment and training opportunities for those whose jobs are impacted by climate change. |
| F2 | To continue the process of continuing to retrofit Council housing stock. |
| F3 | To work with communities to develop locally based and community led solutions for Just Transition. |
| F4 | To recognise that some communities or sectors of the population may be more impacted by climate change itself or measures introduced to combat climate change |

Strategic Goal G: To recognise the opportunities which may arise through mitigation and adaption, whether these are potential business opportunities, or other quality of life improvements such as air quality.

Objectives

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| G1 | To publicise the positive aspects of mitigation and adaptation measures that are put in place. |
| G2 | The Local Enterprise Offices, and other supports, to assist businesses to develop and thrive in the lower carbon economy |

5.4 Environmental Governance Principles

The intension of the [Draft] Climate Action Plan is to promote, develop and implement climate actions through process improvements, community engagement, progressive development and integrated learning processes, which will be refined throughout the lifetime of the plan.

It is important to note that it is an integral part of the [Draft] Climate Action Plan to facilitate co-benefits for climate and other environmental factors. In order to be realised, projects included in or supported by the [Draft] Climate Action Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

These considerations include the Water Framework Directive, a European Union framework that sets standards for water protection and management. River basin management plans are instrumental in implementing the Water Framework Directive's goals, as they provide detailed strategies for achieving good water status and preventing pollution across an entire river basin.

These plans help coordinate efforts among various stakeholders, such as governments, communities, and industries, to achieve integrated water management and environmental protection, thereby ensuring compliance with the Directive's objectives.

An integrated approach identifying sustainable land use practices, improved water management, and ecosystem preservation, the plan seeks to mitigate climate change's impact on water resources, safeguarding both the environment and public health.

This integrated approach demonstrates Ireland's commitment to achieving climate goals while concurrently promoting a healthier and more resilient natural environment. As well as the climate focused measures detailed throughout the plan with environmental co-benefits and environmental notes to provide the context within which the action will be progressed, there are several environmental governance principles which will steer future works (see Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4: Environmental Governance Principles

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES



Support the National Climate Action Plan (which itself supports international climate obligations) in a manner which will assist in addressing the causes of climate change the impacts of which affect humans, flora, fauna, habitats, heritage and the broader environment.



Support the National Climate Action Plan (which itself supports international climate obligations) in addressing the local impacts of climate change which has the potential to impact humans, flora, fauna, habitats, heritage and the broader environment.



Within the context of the range of Plans, Strategies and similar documents produced by the Council, to further provide for environmentally positive measures within the actions undertaken pursuant to this plan.



Promote climate action projects that support habitats such as protected trees, hedgerows wetlands, floodzones which contribute to green infrastructure.



In the context of advancing climate action, to support opportunities to improve ecological connectivity of non-designated habitats and sites to improve overall ecosystem resilience and functioning.



To support community led projects (such as Abbeyleix Bog Project) which support peatland restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance and similar carbon improvement projects.



Within the context of European, National and Regional policy instruments (such as the Water Framework Directive, River Basin Management and similar) to seek to have co-benefits with such instruments within the actions arising from this plan.



Within areas such as biodiversity protection and enhancement; improved air, water or soil quality; or enhanced recreation, amenity and cultural heritage value to seek to have co-benefits with such areas within the actions arising from this plan.



That developments by the Council and their partners continue to have regard to the potential for potential environmental impacts and environmental protection requirements.



Having regard to climate change potentially affecting the rate of spread of invasive species, to continue within the Council's own infrastructural projects to take precautions and carry out the appropriate management to avoid spreading invasive species, particularly in regard to Schedule III species.

5.5 Development of Actions

The approach adopted in developing actions was guided by a two-fold commitment: mitigation, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation, geared towards bolstering resilience against climate-induced impacts.

These dual commitments are interwoven in our actions to ensure a balanced and effective response to climate change.

Each action has a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that will guide our continuous monitoring and reporting efforts. With this approach, we aim not only to address local challenges but also to align with national climate objectives, and to make a coordinated and impactful contribution to our collective climate future.



Bus Stop on JFL Avenue, Portlaoise



Pilot Launch for Deposit Return Coffee Cup In Portlaoise Town Centre



Master Composting Course for Teachers



Positive Energy Campaign Launch



5.6 Climate Actions of the Plan

The climate actions of the Plan are in a structured format, ensuring alignment between on-the-ground initiatives and the overarching vision the Plan aims to achieve. For the full list of climate actions in this Plan refer to Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5: Actions under the LACAP

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/ A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
Theme 1: Governance and Leadership							
Mainstreaming climate action and the climate proofing of all decision-making within the Local Authority							
1	Climate Action requirements will be considered in the development of functional plans, strategies, and programmes by Laois County Council.	C6, C7	A+M	Assessment of policies, plans and projects	All sections	Central Government	2024-2029
2	The topic of Climate Action will be regularly included in Laois County Council reports such as Management Reports to Council meetings and Annual Reports. Climate Action will be a regular item at Management Team meetings and the relevant SPC meetings.	A4, G1	A+M	Recorded Minutes	All sections		2024-2029
3	Laois County Council will oversee the effective implementation of the LACAP actions and will establish and maintain an internal Climate Action Steering Group with representatives from key local authority functions. This Steering Group will conduct regular meetings to ensure action plans are executed at the department level and identify opportunities for collaboration and cross-departmental synergies.	A5, C4, C7	A+M	Number of meetings held/ Attendance record	All sections		2024-2029
4	Climate Action will be included in the Laois County Council Annual Service Delivery Plan objectives; this in turn will provide for its translation into Team Development Plans and Personal Development Plans for relevant staff.	A5	A+M	Review of TDPs by HR to ensure compliance	All sections		2024-2029
5	Laois County Council will continue collaboration with the Eastern and Midlands CARO and local authorities in the region to cooperate on climate related matters.	C1, A3, C2	A+M	Number of meetings	Climate Action	EM CARO, MEA	2024-2029

Continued >

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
6	Laois County Council will maintain membership of Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy. On adoption of the LACAP, Laois County Council will submit a Sustainable Energy Climate Actions Plan (SECAP) to Covenant of Mayors (CoM).	C1, A3, C2	M	Approval of SECAP by CoM	Climate Action		2024-2029
7	Laois County Council will continue their commitment to achieve national targets on climate change and energy efficiency and to act as exemplar for climate action.	A1, A2, F2	A+M	LACAP Progress Reporting	Climate Action	Business & Community organisations, Citizens, PPN	2024-2029
8	Laois County Council will report regularly on progress towards achieving climate related objectives to ensure sustained implementation. This will require devising and implementing appropriate reporting mechanisms.	A4, D2, G1	A+M	LACAP Progress Reporting	Climate Action		2024-2029
9	The Council will prepare applications seeking funding under various national programmes, including the Just Transition programme, to deliver on actions under this LACAP.	F3, D2, D5	A+M	Number of funding applications	All sections		
10	Laois County Council is required to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 based on 2016-2018 levels and improve energy efficiency by 50%.	A2, A4, C2, G1	M	% Reduction on baseline in GHGs annually (M&R)	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029
11	An Induction video and guidance will be provided for staff on Climate Action and Sustainability.	A5, C4, C7	M	Number of staff received training	HR	Climate Action	2024
12	Laois County Council will continue to offer training to its staff and Councillors in the areas of climate change and climate action.	C7	A+M	Number of trainings offered	HR	CARO/Climate Action	2024-2029
13	Integration of Green Public Procurement (GPP) principles will be a standard practice in all Laois County Council procurement processes, aligning with the Sustainable Public Procurement Objectives outlined in Laois County Council Corporate Procurement Plan 2021-2023 and GPP Internal Guidance Note 2023.	C6, D4	M	GPP checkpoints to be developed	All Sections	Procurement	2024

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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
14	Laois County Council will sustain Green Public Procurement (GPP) training and conduct internal workshops to enhance staff capacity across the organisation. By providing ongoing training and workshops focused on Green Public Procurement, Laois County Council aims to consistently strengthen the understanding and expertise of its staff members in implementing environmentally responsible procurement practices.	C7	M	Number of staff at training	Procurement	HR	2024
15	Laois County Council will publicise and communicate progress on implementing this Climate Action Plan, both to the public and internally within the Council. Laois County Council will utilise a range of communication mechanisms, appropriate for each audience, to highlight climate action achievements.	C4, G1	M	Communications Plan Developed / Actions Implemented	Climate Action		2024-2029
16	Laois County Council will continue to work collaboratively with other public bodies operating in the county (and region) working towards advancing climate action.	C5, C1	M	Number of meetings / joint initiatives / Number of Partnerships	All sections	CARO, EMR	2024-2029
17	Any future reviews of Laois County Council business continuity plans will take into account the altered weather ranges expected under climate change.	A5	A	Number of MEP and LEP events	Corporate		2024-2029
18	Future severe weather planning by Laois County Council will take into account the altered weather ranges expected under climate change.	A5	A	Review of plan	Emergency Services		2024-2029
19	Laois County Council will maintain an IT Risk Register that includes climate considerations, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of climate-related risks to IT systems and infrastructure.	C6	A	Annual review of the IT Risk Register	IT Dept	All Sections	2024-2029
20	Laois County Council will complete annual energy consultation reporting to the national energy Monitoring and Reporting system operated by SEAI and undertake a 'Gap to Target' analysis of its energy use annually within the lifetime of this Plan.	A1, A4, C3	M	Complete M&R	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029
21	Laois County Council will continue to act as lead authority for the Midland Energy Agency and participate in the SEAI Pathfinder programme.	C1, C3, C4, C2	M	Number of meetings	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
Theme 2: Built Environment and Transport							
The built environment and transportation systems are designed to be climate-resilient, with a focus on achieving emissions reduction and energy efficiency goals as part of our journey toward a decarbonised society.							
22	Laois County Council will continue to facilitate the upgrade of existing vacant & derelict residential and commercial properties in County Laois through schemes such as Town Centre First and Croi Conaithe.	C1, F2 E2	M	Checklist completed and integrated into processes of relevant sections	Co-lead Housing & Planning	Town Regeneration Officer, DoS Ukrainian Response	
23	Establish a baseline of derelict and vacant properties in prioritised locations under Town Centre First Programme and promote the sustainable redevelopment of same through engagement with the owners and use of legislative powers if required.	C1, F2 E2	M	Number of units activated	Community (Town Regeneration Officer)	Housing (Vacant Homes Officer), Planning	
24	Laois County Council Roads Section will produce a "Climate and Green Infrastructure" checklist for its designers of roads and public realm infrastructure. This will help integrate climate considerations and sustainable management into the design, planning and construction of roads, footpaths, and other public realm construction projects.	A5, C4, E3 D1, D2	A+M	Completion of checklist and adoption of checklist by relevant sections.	Roads	Planning (Heritage Officer), Climate Action (Biodiversity Officer), Environment	2024
25	Laois County Council Planning Section will produce a "Guide for good practice in Climate Conscious Design" for developments, based on the climate related requirements in the County Development Plan.	A5, C4, E3	A+M	Completion of guide	Planning		2024
26	Laois County Council Housing Section will produce a "Climate and Green Infrastructure" checklist for designers of new Council Housing stock. Design of new houses will also comply with the Departments "Design Manual for Quality Housing". The checklist shall be piloted.	A5, C3, C4, C7	M	Completion of the checklist. Completion of pilot	Housing	Central Government, Planning, Climate Action (Biodiversity Officer)	2024
27	All new build Laois County Council housing will adhere to Near Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standards (A2 BER).	A5	M	Number of new social housing units built	Housing	Central Government	2024-2029
28	Laois County Council will retrofit from its existing social housing and voids to a B2 standard, subject to the availability of national funding; having due regard to all relevant environmental sensitivities, as appropriate.	A5, F2	M	Number of Retrofits	Housing	Central Government	2024-2029

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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
29	Laois County Council will continue to quantify the actual carbon savings achieved from a selection of its upgraded housing stock.	A4, A5, C4	M	Maintenance of record of carbon savings	Housing	Central Government	2024
30	Laois County Council will establish a safe and accessible “Learn to Cycle” facility to promote cycling skills and confidence, fostering a culture of active travel and sustainable mobility within the community.	D1, D2	M	Number installed	Area Office	Climate Action, Roads, Active Travel, Parks	2024
31	Laois County Council will install Bike Repair Stations at strategic locations alongside existing and new bike parking facilities.	D1, D2	M	Number installed	Projects Office	Active Travel	2024
32	Laois County Council will complete three Local Transport Plans for largest urban centres population over 5,000 in County Laois i.e. Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Portarlinton - whilst having appropriate regard to environmental sensitivities and opportunities to promote climate action co-benefits.	D1, D2, A5	M	Completion of plans	Active Travel	Roads	2024
33	Laois County Council will work with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to establish a new bus route for Portlaoise Town within the lifetime of this Plan.	D1, D2	M	Number of routes	Roads	Active Travel, NTA, Local Link	2024
34	By the year 2029, Laois county council aims to transition a further 30% of its public lighting inventory to higher efficiency (lower energy) lighting sources having due regard to environmental sensitivities and bringing the overall percentage of its public lighting stock using higher efficiency lighting sources to 94%.	A1	M	Percentage of street lighting upgraded	Roads	Central Government	2024-2029
35	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council aims to propose a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for gully maintenance and general piped drainage maintenance.	E1, E4	A	Number of gullies cleaned and maintained	Roads		2024-2029



No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
36	Considering the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for masonry bridge works. During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to the need to appropriately protect and conserve protected structures in accordance with relevant protected structures regulations, and the need to not negatively impinge on any protected species or European sites.	E1, E4	A	Number of masonry bridge works	Roads		2024-2029
37	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose, in its annual budgets, a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for river drainage works. During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology.	E1, E4	A	Budget allocated	Roads		2024-2029
38	Laois County Council will continue to support (subject to statutory processes and adherence to environmental standards) the development of OPW flood protection schemes in the towns of Mountmellick, Portarlinton and Clonaslee; these schemes will make these settlements more resilient to flooding.	E1, E4, E6, F4	A	Completion of flood protection scheme	Roads, Projects Office	OPW	2024-2029
39	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will prepare a three-year forward plan for river maintenance of river channels (together with associated bridges) under its jurisdiction every two years. This comprehensive maintenance plan will be subject to statutory procedures (including Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, if and as required) recognising the sensitivity of the sites involved. The design process, the Plan, together with any statutory procedures will have due regard to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, protected species, local air quality, and cultural heritage.	E1, E4	A	Meters of river maintained	Roads		2024-2029

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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
40	Laois County Council will implement the use of a flood and incident recording system, such as WIRE app or similar, to enhance real-time data collection, reporting, and monitoring of flood events and incidents.	C1, C7, E4	A	Number of events recorded	Roads		2024-2029
41	Laois County Council will erect signage to support active travel; this will include “distance” and “time to actively travel to” signage as pilot in Portlaoise by 2024. If successful, Laois County Council will roll out around the county in towns over 5,000 population.	D1, D5	M	Assessment Report	Active Travel	Climate Action	2024-2029
42	Laois County Council will increase the availability of bike parking in urban centres countywide.	D1, D2	M	Number of bike stands installed	Projects Office	Active Travel	2024-2029
43	Laois County Council will pilot the incorporation of “playful spaces” along walking routes to create attractive pathways, especially for younger walkers. If successful LCC will deliver same in other suitable areas around county.	D1, D2, E3	M	Completion of pilot	Active Travel	Climate Action	2024-2029
44	By 2027 at least one of Laois County Councils’ HGV fleet will be upgraded to use either sustainably sourced waste HVO or CNG to reduce CO ₂ emissions.	A2, A4, C6	M	Completion of pilot	Roads	Central Government	2024-2029
45	Laois County Council will run at least two “energy efficient” driving courses for staff over the lifetime of the plan.	A1, A4	M	% HGV Drivers undertaken training	Roads	Central Government	2024-2029

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Flooding In Mountmellick in November 2017

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/ A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
46	Building on the experience of solar powered public lighting at Ballyfin, Laois County Council will pilot LED PV solar streetlights at two further locations; while ensuring the lumen levels and spectral range are maintained or reduced/controlled to avoid effects to biodiversity.	A2, C3	M	Number of solar LED PV projects	Roads	Central Government	2024-2029
47	Laois County Council will investigate the feasibility of Shared or District Heating in Portlaoise.	C3, A2	M	Completion of Feasibility Study	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029
48	Over the lifetime of this plan Laois County Council will carry out a Renewable Electricity Strategy (RES) for the County, based on revised national guidance. Such a strategy would be appropriately shaped by planning and environmental protection requirements associated with renewable energy development.	A5,	M	Completion of RES	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029
49	Laois County Council will conduct a feasibility study for Solar Farm at Kyletalesha landfill, ensuring this study has appropriate regard to planning and environmental protection considerations.	A2, C3, C2	M	Completion of feasibility study	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024
50	In accordance with the County Development Plan, Laois County Council will continue to promote compact development and urban regeneration.	A5	A+M	Number of regeneration projects with Climate Action Initiatives	Planning	Regeneration, Housing, Regeneration and Capital Projects	2024-2029
51	Laois County Council will roll out Bike Share scheme in the larger urban areas over population of 5,000.	D1, D2	M	Number of schemes	Projects Office	Roads, Active travel, Climate Action	2024-2029
52	Laois County Council will appoint a Cycling Officer to lead on promoting active travel.	D1, D2	M	Appointment of Cycling Officer	Active Travel	Roads	2024
53	Laois County Council will support piloting a Bike library.	D1, D2	M	Pilot Scheme	Climate Action		2024-2025
54	Laois County Council will continue to make E bikes available for their staff to attend meetings.	D1, D2	M	Pilot Scheme	Active Travel	Climate Action	2024-2025
55	Laois County Council will pilot a Transport Mobility Hub at Portlaoise train station, evaluating its success, and conducting a feasibility assessment for potential expansion to other train stations in the County. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	D1, D2	M	Pilot scheme complete / feasibility for roll out complete	Projects Office	Active Travel	2024-2029

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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
56	Laois County Council will examine suitable locations to carry out a "Rothar Roads" pilot.	D1	M	Completion of feasibility study / Number of pilot routes	Active Travel	Sports and Leisure	2024-2029
57	Attach the following text to the action: Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	D1, D2	M	Number of new/ upgraded bus shelters	Active Travel	Local Link/ NTA	2024-2029
58	Laois County Council will work with other agencies to assist the installation of designated bus cages, where bus pull in bays are not feasible; priority bus corridors in main towns where viable; bus hubs in main towns where feasible to allow for driver rest/comfort stops.	D1, D2	M	Completion of feasibility studies for installations / Number of installations	Active Travel	Local Link/ NTA	2024-2029
59	Laois County Council will continued engagement with, and support roll out of the Safe Routes to School Programme in conjunction with An Taisce - Active travel developments will continue to be carried out in a manner that has due regard to environmental sensitivities (such as local human receptors, Biodiversity, European sites, water quality and hydrology, existing traffic and transport conditions and amenity value).	D1, D2	M	Number of SRTS programme schools	Active Travel		2024-2029
60	Laois County Council will develop new permeability routes in urban environments to reduce travel times to key trip attractors, leading to reduced car dependency.	D1, D2	M	Number of interventions	Active Travel	Climate Action	2024
61	Laois County Council will examine suitable locations Park n Ride / Park n Stride facilities away from town centre locations. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	D1, D2	M	Feasibility study for location/ number of facilities	Active Travel	Roads	2024-2029
62	Laois County Council will install an Energy Monitoring System and Energy sub-metering across the portfolio of Council buildings.	A1, C2	M	Number of energy monitors	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029
63	Laois County Council will formulate a Fleet Decarbonation Roadmap, to provide a "roadmap" to the sustainable decarbonisation of the fleet.	A1, A2, C7,	M	Completion of roadmap/ % reduction in GHG emissions	Roads		2024-2029

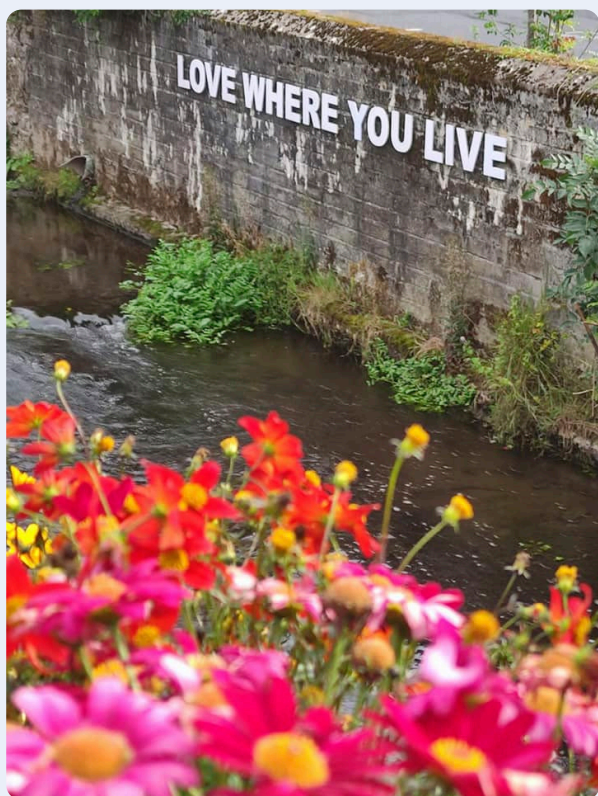
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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/ A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
64	For any Laois County Council light goods vehicles due for replacement, the default replacement vehicle will be electrically powered (or similar low emission vehicle) subject to suitability for the intended uses.	A2, C6	M	Number of replacements	Roads	Central Government	2024-2029
65	Laois County Council will upgrade server virtualisation infrastructure to reduce energy consumption required to operate council digital services.	A1, C6	M	Reduction of energy consumption	IT Dept		2024
66	Over the lifetime of this plan Laois County Council will map and record all major road drainage spine networks to establish accurate data on the existing drainage infrastructure.	E1, E4	A	Mapping complete	Roads		2024-2029
67	Laois County Council will carry out a review of older masonry bridges on upper stretches of rivers that may be impacted by increased scour due to the higher intensities of rainfall. It is acknowledged that any Plan arising from such a Review will be subject to statutory procedures (including Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, if and as required) recognising the sensitivity of the sites involved. Due regard will be given to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, protected species, local air quality, and cultural heritage within such a Plan.	E1, E4	A	Review complete	Roads		2024-2029
68	Laois County Council will collaborate with neighbouring local authorities to develop a comprehensive Electric Vehicle (EV) charging strategy, ensuring a seamless and regionally integrated charging infrastructure to support the widespread adoption of electric vehicles, having due regard to environmental sensitivities (such as material assets, the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, local air quality, and cultural heritage).	C1, D1, D2	M	Number of public EV charging points in County Laois	Roads		2024-2029

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
Theme 3: Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure							
The approach to addressing climate change challenges will underpinned by conserving, protecting, and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services within the county.							
69	Laois County Council will develop a Tree Strategy to provide the vision and direction for long-term planning, planting, protection and maintenance of trees, hedgerows and woodlands within County Laois whilst taking measures to promote the use of native species over non-natives and having due regard for water quality and soil stability issues whilst undertaking the planning process.	E3	A+M	Completion/ Adoption of Tree Strategy			2024-2029
70	Laois County Council will provide in-house training for relevant Laois local authority staff on enhancement of biodiversity and applying Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) in undertaking their roles.	C7	A+M	Number of attendees at training	Climate Action (Biodiversity Officer), Planning (Heritage Officer)	Planning	2024-2029
71	Laois County Council will carry out shade-related tree planting in 10 previously constructed housing estates, subject to need and local agreement. There will be a presumption under this measure to plant native trees.	A5, D2	M	Number of planting schemes	Housing	Climate Action (Biodiversity Officer)	2024-2029
72	Laois County Council will assist with the development of a Biodiversity Garden at the teachers Centre in Portlaoise.	B1, B4,	M	Completion of project	Climate Action	LOETB, Teachers Centre	2024-2025
73	Laois County Council will assist schools in developing biodiversity enhancing projects on their premises during the lifetime of the plan.	B1, B4,	M	Number of Biodiversity Projects completed	Climate Action	Primary Schools	2024
74	Within Laois County Councils' internal GIS system, appropriate GIS habitat map layers will be made available.	C4, C7	A+M	GIS mapping available to relevant section staff	Planning, Climate Action, IT		2024-2029
75	Laois County Council will develop and implement a good practice document for the reduction in use of chemical pesticides and herbicides lands and areas managed by the Council. Laois County Council will adopt defined good practice guide in the use of such products to reduce the risk of unintended adverse effects on the receiving environment.	E5, C7	A+M	Good practice guide complete and adopted through the relevant processes	Climate Action (Biodiversity Officer), Planning (Heritage Officer), Roads	Environment, Municipal Districts National Pollinator Plan	2024-2029

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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/ A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
76	Laois County Council will continue to enforce GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) regulations, ensuring water bodies resilience to climate changes are sustained.	E4, E5	A+M	Number of catchment inspections completed Number of awareness initiatives completed. Number of water bodies monitored.	Environment	An Forum Uisce/ DHLGH/EPA/ LAWPRO/ Uisce Eireann/ GSI/Inland Fisheries Ireland/ NWPS/IFA/ NFGWS	2024-2029
77	Laois County Council will work with partner bodies to continue to raise awareness on Good Agricultural Practices and diversification in the local agricultural sector to e.g. smart farming, farming for nature.	D3, E3, E5	A+M	No of initiatives	Climate Action	Teagasc	2024-2029



River Triogue, Portlaoise



Flower Bed, Durrow Scarecrow Festival

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
Theme 4: Sustainability and Resource Management							
Support the principles of the circular economy and cultivate the adoption of sustainable practices							
78	Laois County Council will implement the Community Climate Action Fund to engage communities in local, community-led Climate Action projects.	D5, F3	A+M	No of applications submitted	Climate Action		2024-2026
79	Laois County Council will, where feasible under the constraints of grant aided programmes, include 'Sustainability and Climate Change' scoring on relevant grant assessments. This will encourage community groups/ stakeholders to consider and incorporate Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in their grant funded activities.	A3, B1	M	Application forms updated to comply with this objective. Total number of grants with 'Sustainability and Climate Change' scoring	Community Section	Environment, Climate Action, PPN, Volunteer Centre/NTDC and STDC	2024
80	Laois County Council will encourage and support the establishment of Cycle Buses to enhance increase sustainable and active commuting options.	B1, B2, D1	M	Number of journeys made over 12 month period. Number of service users over 12 month period.	Active Travel	Climate Action	Climate Action
81	Laois County Council will continue to provide support to Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs) by offering to assist in the preparation of local Energy Master Plans for SEC areas.	B3	M	Number of registered SECs/ Number of completed EMPs	Climate Action	SEAI, MEA	2024-2029
82	Laois County Council will promote clean environments by continuing to support Tidy Towns, community groups and other environmental initiatives throughout the county.	B2, B4	M	Number of groups registered for Annual Spring Clean and other Clean-Up Programmes	Environment	An Taisce	2024-2029
83	Laois County Council will continue to deliver countywide climate-related educational and awareness information events, communication campaigns and guidance documentation.	B1, B2, B4, C4	A+M	Number of campaigns/ initiatives/ documentation.	Climate Action		2024-2029
84	Laois County Council will continue to actively engage with Community/ Voluntary organisations, including groups representing youth and older people, to help develop community-led climate actions.	B4	A+M	Number of campaigns / initiatives / documentation	Climate Action		2024-2029

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No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
85	Laois County Council will work closely with representatives of business organisations to assist those groups to develop their own climate actions.	B2, B1	M	Number of initiatives	Climate Action	LEO, Chambers of Commerce	2024-2029
86	Laois County Council will continue to work collaboratively with other public bodies operating in the county (and region) on achieving Just Transition within the county.	F1, G2, C5, C1, F4	A+M	Number of initiatives	Climate Action		2024-2029
87	Laois County Council, guided by the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the GAA and CCMA, work on sustainability and climate action projects, and engage with the 'Green Club Programme' through a nominated lead.	B1, B2, C1, C4	M	Number of clubs registered as Green Clubs.	Climate Action	GAA, CARO, RWMO	2024-2029
88	Laois County Council will promote and support the development of Eco-Tourism Training for individuals, groups and businesses.	F1, F3, G2	A+M	Number of initiatives	Climate Action/ LEO	Laois Tourism/ Waterways Ireland/ Local Tidy Towns/ community sports hubs/ LOETB/ LEADER IP	2024-2029
89	Laois County Council will continue to support further education institutes in providing third level courses locally in County Laois whilst promoting and supporting the use of active travel a preferred means of transport to/from any further education institutions.	F1, C1	A+M	Number of 3rd level courses delivered in County	No of remote third level courses	The CUBE, Hubs, LOETB, Third Level Institutes	2024-2029



Spring Bulb Project, Portlaoise



Pollinator information Signs, Portlaoise

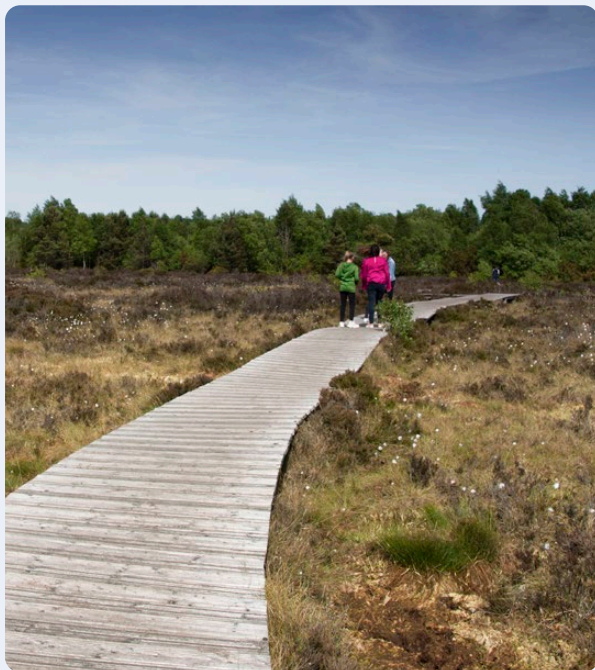
No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
Theme 5: Communities, Resilience and Transition							
Include the consideration of Just Transition in the implementation of climate action.							
90	Laois County Council will introduce and maintain an online payment system.	A3, C3, D1, D2	M	Number of online users of system	Housing	IT	2024
91	Laois County Council will continue to promote climate action and green skills in training and education in partnership with Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).	B5, F1	M	Number of courses	Climate Action	LEO, LOETB	2024-2029
92	Laois County Council will continue cooperation with second level schools in Laois to maintain Climate Literacy courses for transition year students.	B1, B4, C4	M	Number of courses	Climate Action	LOETB	2024-2030
93	Laois County Council will continue to implement re-use initiatives in the county libraries supporting the circular economy.	B1, C4, D1	M	Number of initiatives	Laois Libraries	Climate Action	2024-2029
94	Laois County Council will continue to make available Home Energy Kits for the public to borrow through their local libraries.	B1, C4, D1	M	Number of initiatives/ number of service users	Laois Libraries	Climate Action	2024-2030
95	Laois County Council will increase the active participation of schools in the Green Schools initiative.	B1, B4, C4	M	Number of schools awarded Green Flag	Climate Action (Environment Awareness Officer)		2024-2029
96	Laois County Council will update the Tenants' Handbook to incorporate a guide on heat pump operation and troubleshooting.	F4, D4	M	Completion of review of handbook	Housing	Climate Action	2024-2029
97	Laois County Council will conduct trials of diverse behavioural change programs aimed at supporting and encouraging active travel, with the purpose of facilitating a smooth transition towards sustainable mobility options within the community.	A5, B1, C3, D1, D5	M	Number of initiatives	Sports and Leisure Office	Active Travel /Climate Action	2024-2029
98	Laois County Council will pilot replicable, scalable demonstration projects during the lifetime of this plan (Community Climate Action Fund projects), Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	C3	A+M	Number of projects	Community Section	Climate Action	2024-2029

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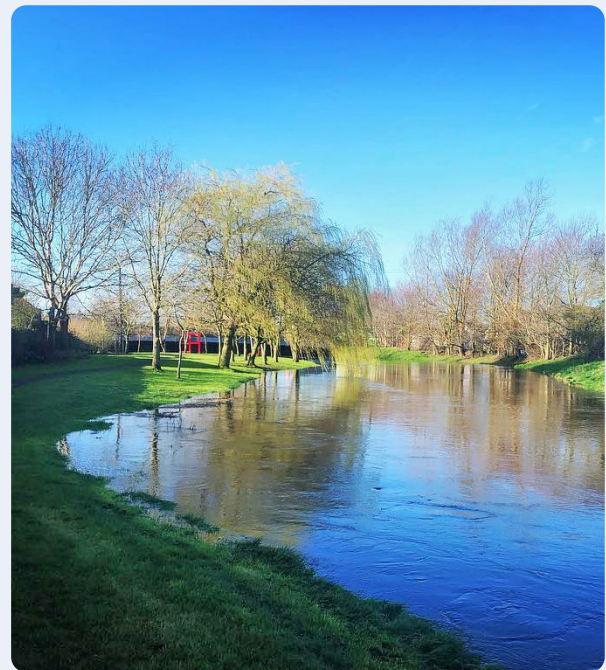
No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
99	Laois County Council will implement a pilot program introducing recycling bins alongside mixed waste bins in central areas of designated zones.	D1	M	Number of bins	Projects Office	Roads	2024-2029
100	Laois County Council will work with Laois Sports Partnership on activation programmes for new active travel routes.	A3, B1, C1, D1, D5	M	Number of workshops delivered	Sports and Leisure Office	Active Travel /Climate Action	2024-2029
101	Laois County Council will develop a "Climate and Greening" checklist for internal and external events including festivals & events supported by Laois County Council.	C4	M	Check list produced/ Number of events checklist used	Climate Action		2024-2029
102	Laois County Council will implement proposed national regulations on a brown bin for organic waste as an integral part of waste collector services for all households.	D3	M	Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI)	Environment		2024-2029
103	Laois County Council will increase awareness of climate action initiatives and energy efficient grants to SME's.	G2, F1	M	Number of awareness initiatives for SME's	The CUBE	LEO/ SEAI	2024-2029
104	Laois County Council will support micro SMEs with consultancy services towards the development of sustainability management plans (Energy Efficiency Programme & Greenstart)	B2	M	Number of businesses taking part in sustainability programmes	LEO		2024-2029
105	Laois County Council will provide Green Procurement Training for Businesses, enabling them to effectively adhere to Green Public Procurement (GPP) principles when participating in tender processes.	G2, F1	M	Number of training courses for businesses that include GPP	LEO	Procurement	2024-2029
106	Laois County Council will further develop on-line access to Council services, through shared sectoral initiatives and in-house innovation, in line with the commitments in the Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland's Public Sector.	D1	M	Number of forms/services available online	IT	All Sections	2024-2029
107	Laois County Council will continue to promote a 'Digital First', but not Digital only, approach to business process improvement within the organisation.	D1	M	Number of online services/ forms	IT	All Sections	2024-2029
108	Laois County Council will continue the reduction of paper use within the organisation through business process improvement initiatives and digitisation of internal processes and external service provision.	A2	M	Paper Use	IT	All Sections	2024-2029

Continued >

No.	Action	Objective	A/M/A+M	Tracking Measure	Lead Department	Partners	Timeframe
109	Laois County Council will, in partnership, apply for feasibility and eco tourism concept development through Just Transition Regenerative Tourism Fund, while also promoting the need for such a project to consider environmental protection requirements and climate action co-benefit opportunities.	F1, F3, G2	A+M	JT funding requests	Faite Ireland (FI)	Laois Chamber Alliance	2024-2025
110	Through Healthy Ireland, Age Friendly, and Sports programmes Laois County Council will continue to support healthy and active lifestyles, making it easier for people to use active travel opportunities.	B1, B2, D1	M	Number of initiatives	Community	Climate Action	2024-2029
111	Laois County Council will conduct a pilot for improving accessibility to waste streams at the Kyletalesha Landfill	D1, D2	M	Pilot study conducted	Environment		2024-2029



Abbeyleix Bog Walk



Flooding in Portarlinton Park

Decarbonising Zone 6



6 Decarbonising Zone

6.1 Context of the Decarbonising Zone (DZ)

In accordance with Action 165 of the National Climate Action Plan 2019, Local Authorities were required to identify and develop plans for a Decarbonising Zone within their administrative area.

A decarbonising zone is defined as:

“a spatial area identified by the local authority in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and action owners are identified to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate needs and to contribute to national climate action targets”

Technical Annex D of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines



Launch of Home Energy Kits in Laois Libraries

Action 80 of the National Climate Action Plan 2021 seeks to ‘support, monitor and assess Local Authority Climate Action’ and integrates the development of Decarbonising Zone into the statutory guidelines for local authority climate action plans.

Local Authority Climate Action Plans are given statutory authority through the provisions of Section 165 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. Consequently, integrating the Decarbonising Zone into the Local Authority Climate Action Plan gives the zone a statutory footing.



6.2 Purpose of a Decarbonising Zone

Decarbonising Zones are to act as a demonstration and test bed of what is possible for decarbonisation and climate action at local and community levels and to help achieve national climate targets.

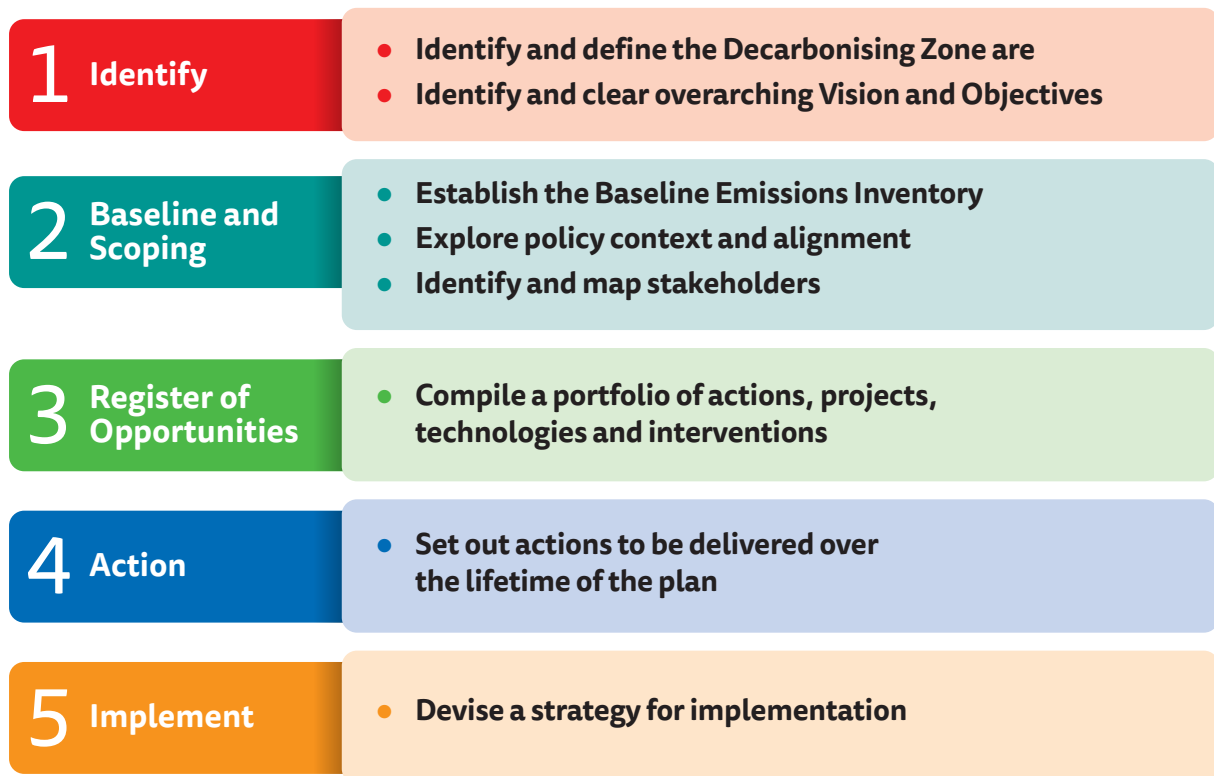
The identification, design and development of the DZ is motivated primarily to deliver actions capable of meeting the national emission reduction targets of 51% by 2030 and net zero by end of 2050. The range of measures proposed for the DZ should be specific to the emissions and climate characteristics of the spatial area covered by the zone and appropriate project partners and sponsors should be identified.

DZs should support demonstrator projects that can be replicated in other places and can be scaled up. These demonstrator projects can address energy and non-energy issues to drive achievement of our national climate ambitions and relate to a wide range of opportunities including, but not limited to: mobility, heat,

buildings, infrastructure, fuel energy poverty, green skills, employment, health and wellbeing, circular economy and land use. Ultimately the delivery of the DZ climate actions will offer opportunities beyond emission reductions, such as, the creation of places that are sustainable, resilient, inclusive and where people enjoy living, working and doing business.

Annex D of the LACAP Guidelines notes the stages involved in developing the DZ framework. The key characteristics are continuous learning and improvement over time, with engagement and collaboration with stakeholders being crucial. This approach informs the five key stages to developing the Decarbonising Zone, outlined in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Five Key Stages to Developing the Decarbonising Zone



Source: LACAP Guidelines

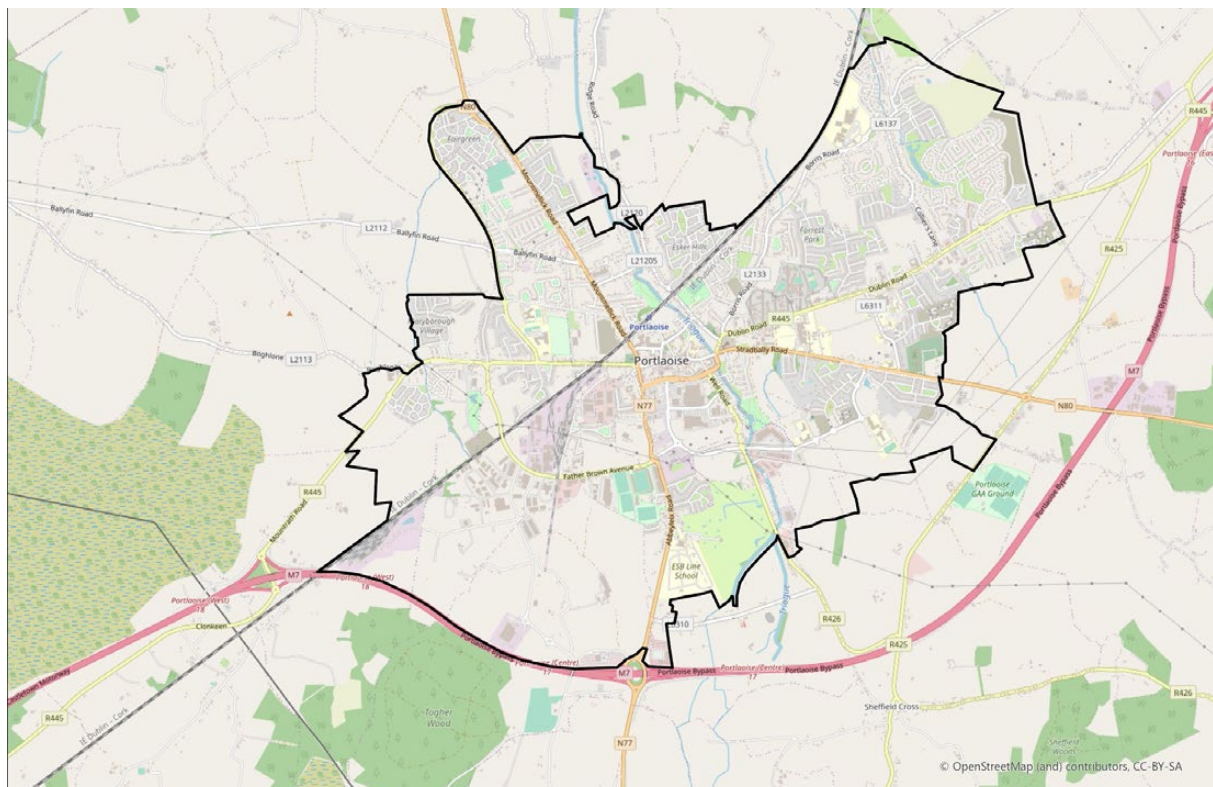
6.3 Decarbonising Zone Selection

Local Authorities were instructed to identify a Decarbonising Zone in accordance with the criteria set out in Circular Letter LGSM01 – from DHLGH 10.02.21:

- I Urban areas and agglomerations with a population not less than 5000 persons, or
- II Rural areas with an area of not less than 4km²
- III Other location/areas that can demonstrate decarbonisation at a replicable scale

Laois County Council had been actively progressing the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project since the adoption of the 2040 and Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise a Strategy for a Better Town Centre in 2017. This vision includes objectives to deliver a Low Carbon Town and a Walkable Town Centre. This proactive stance led to Portlaoise being recognised as a National Demonstration Project for Decarbonisation Zones, as outlined in Action 165c of the Climate Action Plan 2019. This along with several other key characteristics of the town resulted in the selection of Portlaoise as the Decarbonising Zone for County Laois.

Figure 6.2: Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone Boundary



Source: KPMG Tier 1 Boundary Re-adjustment Report

6.4 Characteristics of Portlaoise supporting its designation as a Decarbonising Zone

Portlaoise benefits from several key attributes that offer potential opportunities for the implementation of a Decarbonising Zone, include a growing population and young demographic, a compact urban centre, a relatively new housing stock and having a high representation of public sector organisations.

Population Growth & Young Demographic

Portlaoise continues to experience above-average population expansion of up to 38% (2006—2011) and at 23,494 is fast emerging as a main service hub for the Midlands region. Key to this expansion is a youthful demographic, with an average age of 35.6 years, and 62.5% of the population categorised as Millennials or Generation Z. Taking a conservative approach to population growth projections, it is anticipated Portlaoise will have a population of around 28,000 - 30,000 by 2040.

Compact Urban Centre

Portlaoise Town has a consolidated and compact Town Centre. Many of the main assets that make up a traditional Town Centre are located within the towns core including churches, leisure and community facilities. The Town Centre also has a consolidated business and retail cluster which has seen a major expansion to the commercial heart, south of James Fintan Lalor Avenue. James Fintan Lalor Avenue divides the modern Town Centre to the south from the traditional business core around Market Square, Main Street and the Lower Square. The Town has become centred around Lyster Square, a transitional commercial space and car park linking the modern day and historical Town Centre areas.

Newer residential building stock

The majority of households (44%) in the Town Centre were built during the construction periods 2001 - 2010. However, the Town Centre still includes relatively older housing including in the most populated region of Portlaoise town centre, and it is likely that energy efficiency is low and energy demand and consumption is high, leading to higher carbon emissions.

The housing stock within Portlaoise Town Centre can be categorised by age with the following percentages:

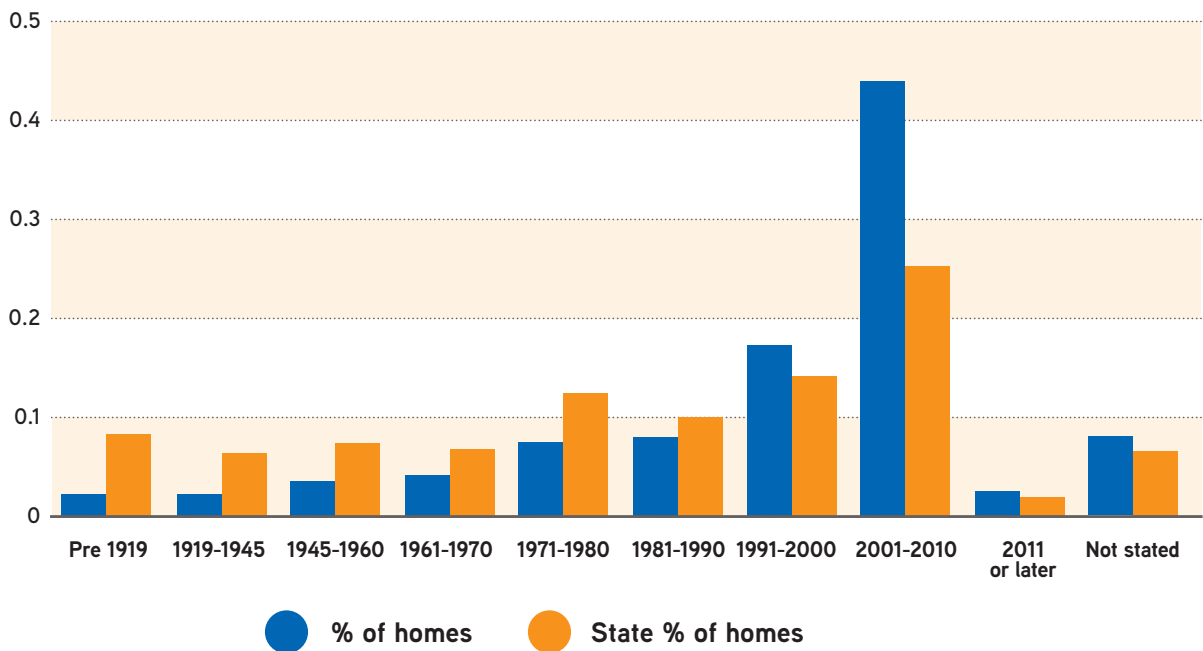
Prior to 1980:	28%
1981-1990:	8%
1991-2000:	17%
2001-2010:	44%
2011 or later:	3%

Portlaoise Town Centre contains 1,009 social housing units which the local authority has responsibility for retrofitting, along with its own building assets, including County Hall, Municipal District offices and depots.



Ministerial Opening of Doirin Alainn, Ballylinan

Figure 6.3: Housing age in Portlaoise Town Centre compared with the State (CSO2016)

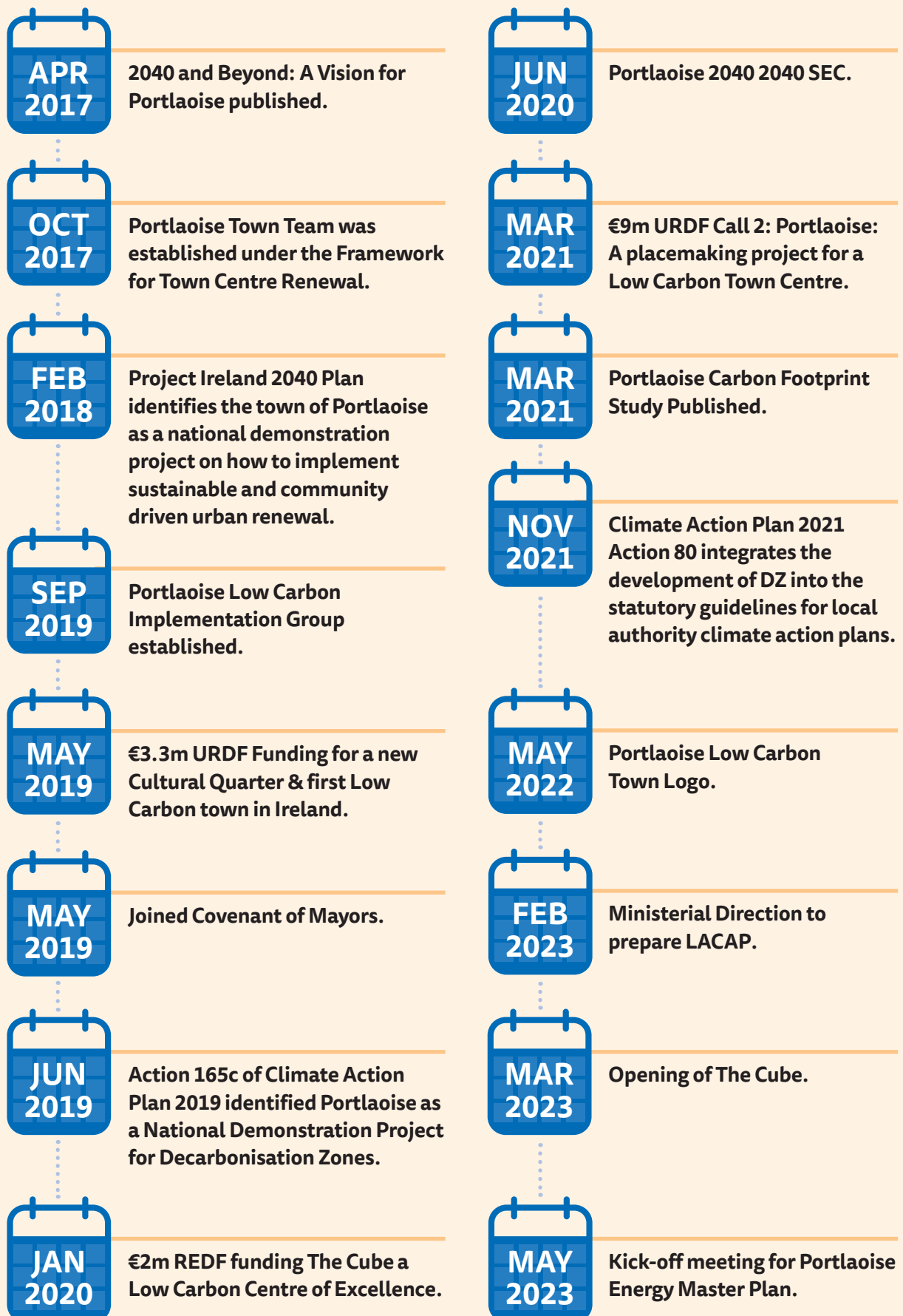


Source: Siemens, 2021

Strong Centre for Public Sector

Portlaoise Town Centre has a high representation of public sector organisations including; HSE in both the hospital and St Fintan’s campus; 10 schools; LOETB with further education and training centres, DAFM, Teagasc, two prisons and Laois Education Centre. There are opportunities for these organisations to support delivering Decarbonising Zone actions.

Figure 6.4: Timeline for Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project to date



6.5 Summary of achievements in Portlaoise Low Carbon Town

In recent years, Laois County Council has spearheaded an array of transformative initiatives, showcasing a commitment to advancing Portlaoise's sustainability, liveability, and environmental stewardship.

These accomplishments reflect a collective effort to shape a vibrant and connected community for both present and future generations. The main achievements to date can be categorised into the following: Building Networks; Urban Regeneration; Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility; Greening of Urban Areas and The Cube: Low Carbon Town Centre of Excellence. These are further detailed below.

Building Networks

Establishing strong partnerships with key stakeholders has been crucial to the progression of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project and two collaboration groups have been established at strategic and local level:

The *Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Implementation Group* comprises prominent representatives from academia, energy, healthcare, retail, and transportation sectors. This stakeholder consortium concentrates on addressing implementation challenges while highlighting the commendable efforts of local stakeholders. Through this initiative, Portlaoise serves as a model for community-driven urban renewal.

The *Portlaoise Town Team*, a more local level effort, is dedicated to developing a cohesive and collaborative approach to town centre renewal in Portlaoise. This team comprises representatives from diverse sectors, including business, retail, local authority, residents, employers, educators, age action, heritage and tourism, Gardaí, charitable organisations, community groups, and local politicians.

Urban Regeneration

Focusing on the retrofitting of existing buildings to reduce embedded carbon from new builds and to revitalise the town centre through the repurposing of buildings. The awarding of €12 million from the Urban Regeneration Development Fund in 2019 marked a pivotal turning point for the Low Carbon Portlaoise project, and enabled the bold aspirations outlined in "2040 and Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise" to gain traction. The rejuvenation of derelict buildings has emerged as a catalyst for positive change, aligning with low-carbon town commitments. Over the past five years, Portlaoise has witnessed the transformation of several key derelict and vacant sites. These include:

- The emergence of a new library in the heart of the Main Street, serving as a cultural hub.
- The planned revitalisation of the old convent on Church Avenue, repurposed into comfortable homes for the elderly.
- The transformation of a structure at Tower Hill into the innovative and low-carbon excellence hub, the Cube.
- The establishment of new homes on the formerly dormant Maltings Site.
- The creation of inviting residences and commuter amenities near the bustling Portlaoise railway station.
- The reimagining of the old Fort Protector site, for hosting music tuition and vibrant outdoor festivals.



Bike Week

Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility

Promoting sustainable and active modes of transportation has taken centre stage in Portlaoise's transformation journey to a low-carbon town. A series of well-planned initiatives underscore the town's commitment to providing alternative and eco-friendly travel options:

- The Cycle Learning Zone in Peoples Park has become a hub for fostering cycling culture.
- The Triogue Way as an off-road, cross-town active travel mobility route.
- Cycle Path on Abbeyleix Road enhances connectivity for cyclists.
- The footpath to the GAA Grounds ensures safer pedestrian access to key recreational areas.
- The Southern Circular Rd roundabout scheme and its counterparts on Boris Rd.
- The School Sustainable Travel Study found that students and their families want to travel actively to school in Portlaoise and also highlighted where improvements could be made to help them do so more often.
- R445 Mountrath Road Active Travel Scheme.
- Borris Road Active Travel Scheme and roundabout upgrades at secondary schools.

Greening of Urban Areas

A Town in a Garden there has been a concerted effort to enhance urban spaces with a flourish of nature has been a hallmark of Portlaoise's transformation into a green and vibrant place.

- The commissioning of a Biodiversity Action Plan by Tidy Towns underscores the commitment to nurturing local flora and fauna.
- The planting of 200,000 pollinator-friendly spring bulbs on approach roads serves as a visual testament to Portlaoise's greening.
- The strategic planting of 10,000 trees enhances green cover and contributes to the town greening of urban landscape and low-carbon commitments.
- Progress is underway in the planting of 9 pollinator friendly roundabouts serving as biodiversity havens.
- Planting of Urban orchards which serve as communal spaces while also providing a sustainable, locally sourced food supply.
- The development vision for "Tyrells land" off the Stradbally Road as an amenity area
- The creation of 4 little woodlands, or 'An Choill Beag', at local primary school campuses.
- Development of a Biodiversity Demonstration Garden at Laois Education Centre to exemplify transferable ideas to teach that attend the centre for training.





- The innovative greening of O’Moore Park has transformed it into a green stadium, setting a high bar for eco-friendly sports venues.
- The Rugby Club’s vision to develop their grounds into a sustainable, low-carbon sports facility underscores the community’s commitment to a greener future.
- Large areas of public grasslands and roadside verges across the town have been converted from lawn / short cut grass to meadow by changing the grass cutting regime.
- Swift boxes are installed in new library on Main St, in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland.
- Southern Ring Road biodiversity project over 40 different information signs were installed on the roadside traffic bollards and more information posts installed in housing estates.
- A management plan for the grassland at the esker Burial Ridge of Maryborough has been produced to ensure this site retains its special mix of biodiversity.

Figure 6.5: Photos of selected Biodiversity Projects in Portlaoise



Native trees planted in Kilminchy



Meadow management on the Borris Road



One of the community orchards planted by Portlaoise Tidy Towns and Laois County Council



Swift bricks installed in the new library thanks to the work of BirdWatch Ireland (Laois branch) and Laois County Council

Source: Portlaoise Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2028

The Cube: Low Carbon Town Centre of Excellence

The Cube project aimed to foster sustainability and establish a hub of low-carbon excellence within the town centre. Opened in March 2023 this 10,000 square foot Low Carbon Centre of Excellence is a dedicated centre for the development of new business and economic activity and will support the transition to a low carbon economy.

This exemplar low carbon facility is the first of its kind in the region and is located in the heart of Portlaoise’s Cultural Quarter. It will support and stimulate the development of enterprise and jobs in Laois and in the Midlands region.



The Cube, Portlaoise

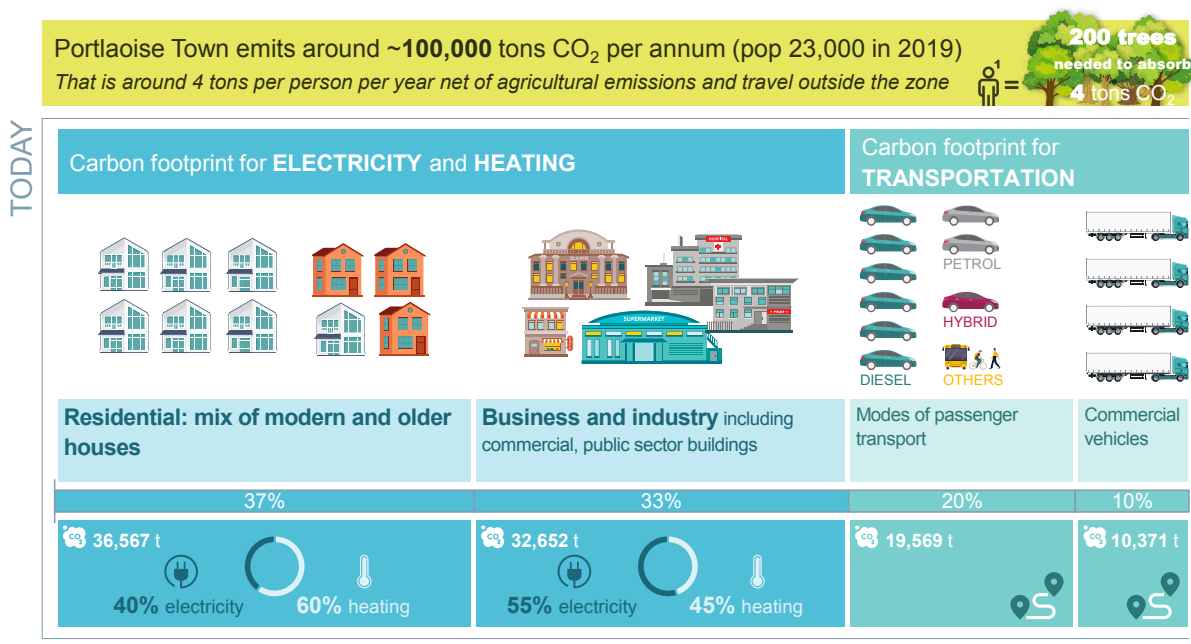
6.6 Baseline Emissions Inventory for Decarbonising Zone

Portlaoise Carbon Footprint Study

In 2019 Laois County Council engaged Siemens consultants to prepare a baseline carbon footprint of Portlaoise town and to explore potential opportunities to reduce the overall carbon footprint. The scope of the study

was limited to emissions from direct energy consumption and does not include secondary emissions from consumption of products. Local solutions were suggested, with measured impacts on emissions for these solutions.

Figure 6.6: Portlaoise Carbon Footprint Study Infographic



Source: Siemens 2021

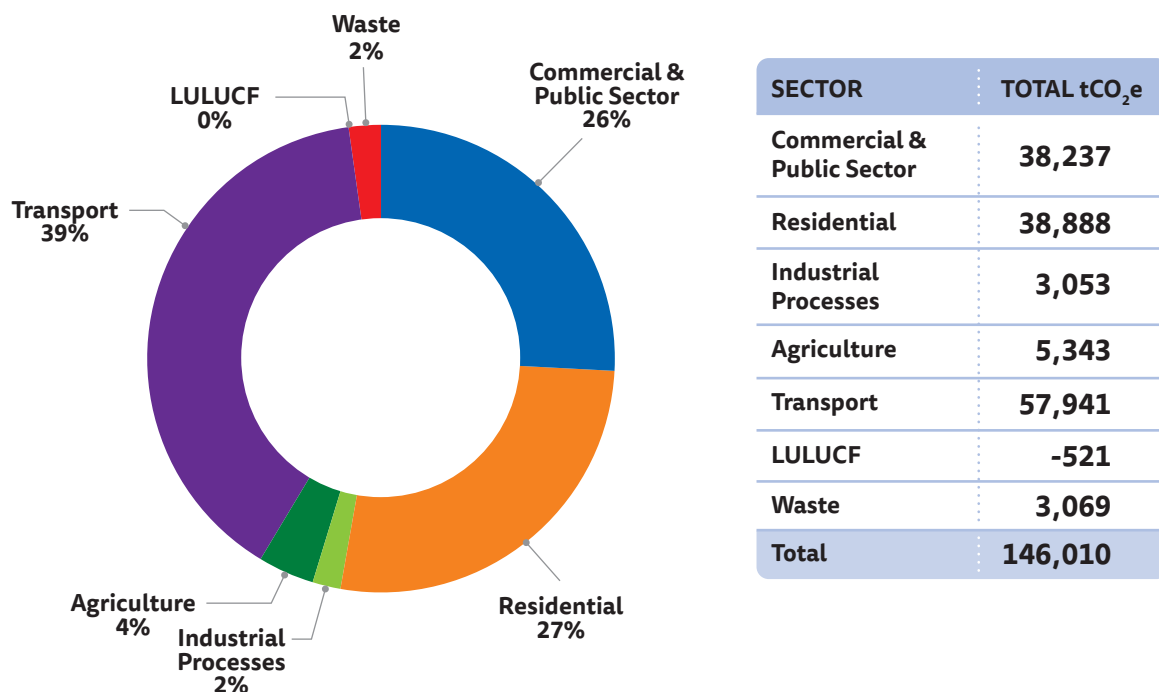


Baseline Emissions Inventory for Portlaoise DZ

Laois County Council engaged KPMG Future Analytics to carry out a Tier 3 Baseline Emissions Inventory (BEI) of greenhouse gas emissions for the baseline year 2018 for the Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone in accordance with the requirements of Annex D: Decarbonisation Zones of LACAP Guidelines (Figure 6.7).

The total baseline greenhouse gas emissions for Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone in 2018 was 146,010 tCO₂e, with the Transport Sector accounting for the greatest percentage of total emission at 39%. Other significant emission sectors included, Residential at 27% and the Commercial & Public Sector at 26% (Figure 6.7). The full report is in Appendix 3E.

Figure 6.7: Total Carbon Emissions for the Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone broken down by sector.



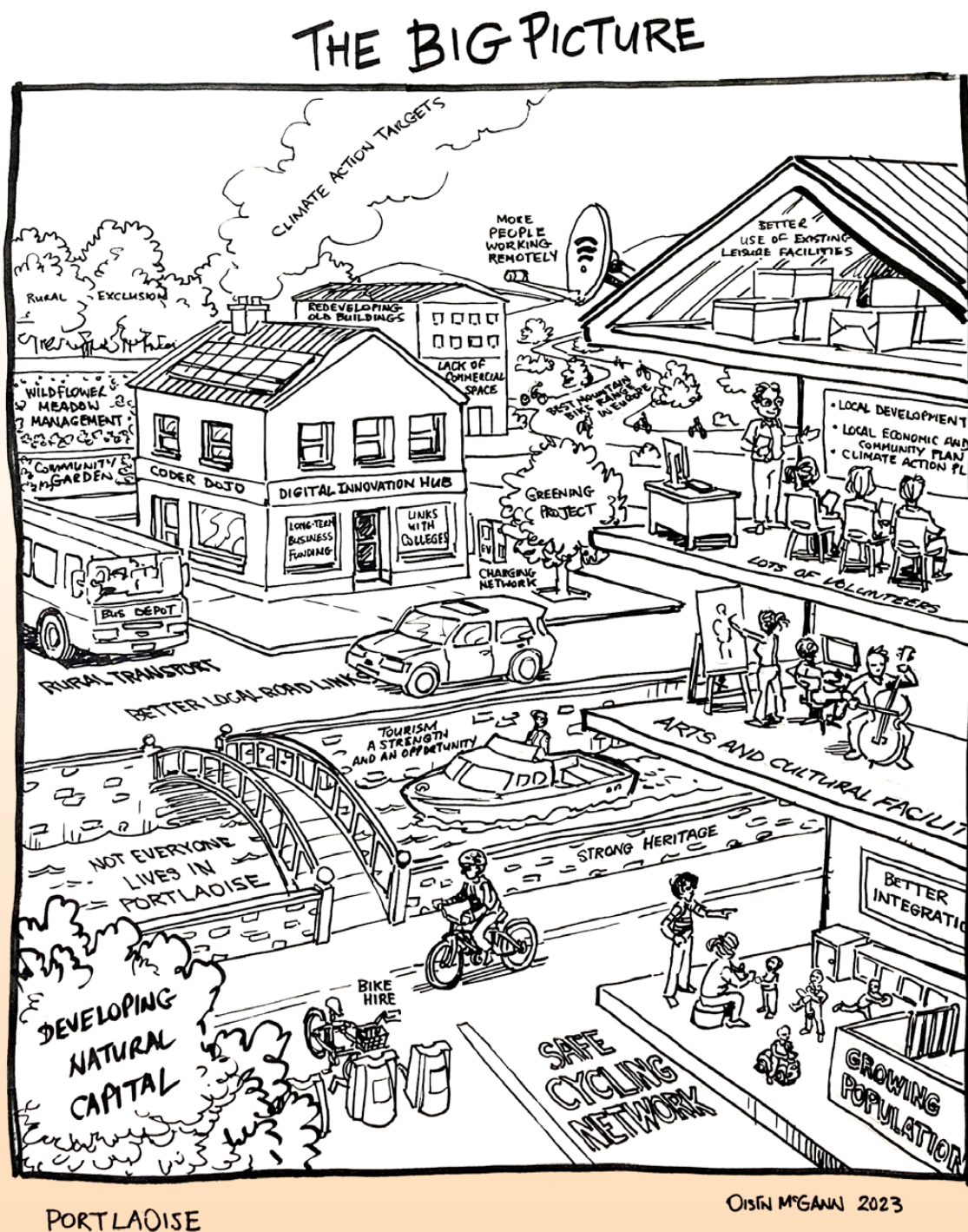
Source: KPMG BEI DZ

6.7 Consultation with key stakeholders on DZ

On 24th May a Public Consultation Workshop facilitated by Turley Consultants was held in Treo Nua as part of series of in-person workshops for LACAP in conjunction with Local Development Strategy and Local Economic and Community Plan as described in 4.2. An artist graphically recorded the session and key themes that emerged from participants were greening, active travel, digital connectivity and public transport

(Figure 6.8). Further consultation sessions were organised to collect input and insights for the development of decarbonisation actions. In September, the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Implementation Group convened, and on September 15th, an additional pre-consultation session was held, involving all seven sub-committees of the Portlaoise Town Team.

Figure 6.8: Graphic recording of public consultation conducted by Turley Consultants for Local Authority Climate Action Plan, May 2023 by Oisín McGann.



6.8 Vision Statement for Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone

Our vision for the Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone is:

“to shape a vibrant and rapidly evolving town into a beacon of sustainability that enhance the lives of its residents and workers.”

To deliver on this vision will involve enhancing the permeability and accessibility of active travel, coupled with the continuing transformation of urban spaces by integrating nature into the town landscape. The Council will continue to collaborate closely with stakeholders and businesses to drive this transformation forward.

A strong foundation in inclusivity, innovation, and environmental stewardship, will not only guide the development of Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone but also continue to foster dialogue on and engagement with this endeavour. This collective effort will propel Portlaoise towards a future that is resilient, green, and prosperous.

Figure 6.9: Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Logo



6.9 Register of Opportunities

A particular feature of the DZ is the compilation of a portfolio of projects and actions to help deliver the targets set for energy use and greenhouse emission reductions.

This portfolio is known as the 'Register of Opportunities'. The Register of Opportunities should be used in determining strategic priority areas and actions to be commenced or delivered over the lifetime of the LACAP that could lead to large scale emission reductions.

The Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone Register of Opportunities was compiled by Laois County Council Climate Action Steering Group. The Register of Opportunities word cloud in Figure 6.10 offers a snapshot of the range of interventions proposed and their contribution to mitigating emissions within the Decarbonising Zone.

Figure 6.10: Register of Opportunities Word Cloud



6.10 Action Plan for Decarbonising Zone

In accordance with LACAP guidelines, the Register of Opportunities played a pivotal role in guiding the identification actions to be undertaken in the Decarbonising Zone over the Climate Action Plan's duration.

Additionally, feedback gathered from the pre-consultations informed the development of these actions, leading to the emergence of four Decarbonising Zone (DZ) priority areas outlined below.

1 Communications and Engagement:

Enhance awareness of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town initiative and promote broader community participation by implementing a well-coordinated communication and engagement strategy.

2 Greening of Portlaoise:

To transform Portlaoise into a Town in A Garden to enhance the public realm and conserve and enhance biodiversity.

3 Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility:

To facilitate the modal shift to active travel (e.g. walking, cycling) and sustainable mobility (e.g. public transport, Park n Stride, car pooling) in Portlaoise.

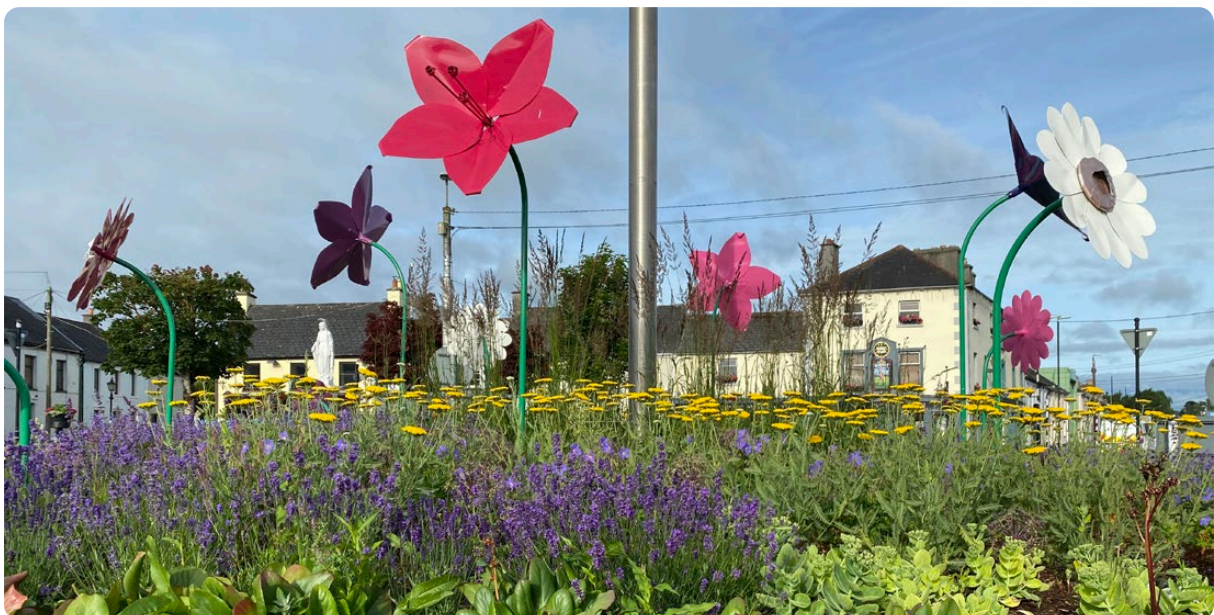
4 Decarbonisation Pathways & Circular Economy:

To identify decarbonisation pathways for Portlaoise to achieve the 2030 targets and to promote a circular economy.



Mowed Margins and No Mow for Pollinators

Over the following sections these four Strategic Priority Areas for Portlaoise Decarbonising Zone are further detailed.



Market Square Roundabout, Portlaoise

Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area One: Communications & Engagement

Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Charter

To elevate the existing webpage information on the Portlaoise DZ, a main tool to increase public awareness on the DZ will be an online Portlaoise Low Carbon Town charter. This will bring together families, business and community groups who are working, or have plans to work on sustainable projects.

Everyone will be invited to be a signatory on the new Portlaoise Low carbon town charter and join likeminded groups in pledging to take action for our environment. Signatories to the charter will receive a decal of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Logo to display in their window (logo designed by a member of the public through a competition in 2022).

Below are possible candidate groups below for the new Portlaoise Low Carbon Town charter.



Signatories to the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town charter will be showcased with case studies and videos on the webpage. A digital twin of the charter will be available in the form of an interactive map of signatories.

Figure 6.11: Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area One: Communications & Engagement Strategy

DZ Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish yearly communication strategies, complete with targeted campaigns and tools, to actively involve the community in local climate action. ● Create dedicated Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Webpage. ● Develop and promote a PLCT Charter which showcases signatories committed to sustainability. ● Launch the 'Green Together' Initiative to foster sustainable practices through collaborative partnerships among public sector entities in Portlaoise. ● Facilitate a systems innovation approach to drive innovation in sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement Signage & Branding to visually represent the town's commitment to sustainability. ● Enrich the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town experience through an arts program, animating the town's green efforts. ● Establish school-based programs to educate and actively engage students in climate action. ● Integrate climate action into the Portlaoise Town Team 3-year Strategy for a cohesive approach. ● Continue to facilitate the Portlaoise Town Team and provide support to sub-groups working on various sustainability projects. ● Implement educational and awareness initiatives to enrich knowledge and skills, facilitating a shift towards a low-carbon local future.

Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area Two: Greening of Portlaoise

Portlaoise Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2028

Portlaoise town and its surrounds have many biodiversity-rich habitats such as old hedgerows and woodlands, peatland, rivers, and famously its very own esker – The Ridge of Maryborough. The town’s north-western skyline is framed by the beautiful Slieve Bloom Mountain range. These are all key sites of natural heritage interest both nationally and regionally that support a wide range of biodiversity in the area.

Increase Awareness of ‘Portlaoise - A Town in a Garden’

The promotion of ‘Portlaoise - A town in a Garden’ has been piloted as part of a wider, long-term communication strategy for the town. The objective is for the local public and visitors to be informed on the positive impact and value of the green spaces and their management within the town from the perspectives of biodiversity, climate action, community science and wellbeing.

Some guiding principles in the public awareness programme are:

- adding value to the town and not “clutter” e.g. “less is more” approach.
- consultation with stakeholders such as Portlaoise MD Councillors, senior management, Laois Chamber Alliance, Tourism, Portlaoise Tidy Towns, etc.
- engagement with professional marketing/ advertising agency to produce signage designs.
- interchangeability of signs to keep the signage scheme fresh, relevant and informative.
- high quality materials used in signage.
- information / graphics simple, factual, and effective in catching the attention of the general public and legible by passing traffic.

Figure 6.12: Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area Two: Greening of Portlaoise

DZ Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Biodiversity Implementation Plan to guide conservation efforts. • Implement tree management strategies to maximise canopy cover in the area with a focus on promoting native trees; having due regard to environmental sensitivities such as European sites and biodiversity. • Continue the Pollinator Friendly Roundabout Project to support local pollinators. • Establish a Biodiversity Demonstration Garden at the Laois Education Centre, serving as a showcase for a wide range of practical biodiversity and pollinator projects to inspire teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the ongoing management of little woodlands or An Choill Beag in local school as an educational opportunity for students to connect with nature • Raise awareness about the “A Town in a Garden” project to engage the community. • Introduce an animation programme through arts to creatively promote biodiversity. • Conduct Stakeholder Mapping to identify key partners and collaborators. • Provide support to other organisations working on biodiversity enhancement programs. • Enhance the town’s green infrastructure to bolster biodiversity. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.



Portlaoise Cycle Bus

Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area Three: Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility

Active Travel Studies & Research

Over the lifetime of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town project and Decarbonising Zone there have been several active travel and sustainable mobility studies undertaken. The findings and recommendations of these studies have assisted with the development of actions for 'DZ Priority Area 3: Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility'. Main insights gained from these studies are outlined below.

Study One: School Sustainable Travel Portlaoise Study

In 2022 Laois County Council undertook the Schools Sustainable Travel Portlaoise project to investigate the existing experience of getting to school in the town and to collate suggestions from students and their families on improvements to support their active, sustainable school journey. The results of this project demonstrated a strong desire from students to travel to school in active ways like walking and cycling.

The study highlighted the main barriers for students:

- Lack of safe and/or adequate walking and cycling infrastructure in Portlaoise.
- Distance from school (whether real or perceived).
- Weather.
- Not being confident on a bike.
- Wearing a skirt as part of school uniform.

The results also showed a large desire and indeed a capacity for cycling to school. The Schools Sustainable Travel Portlaoise report main recommendations outlined below are either planned, in progress or completed.

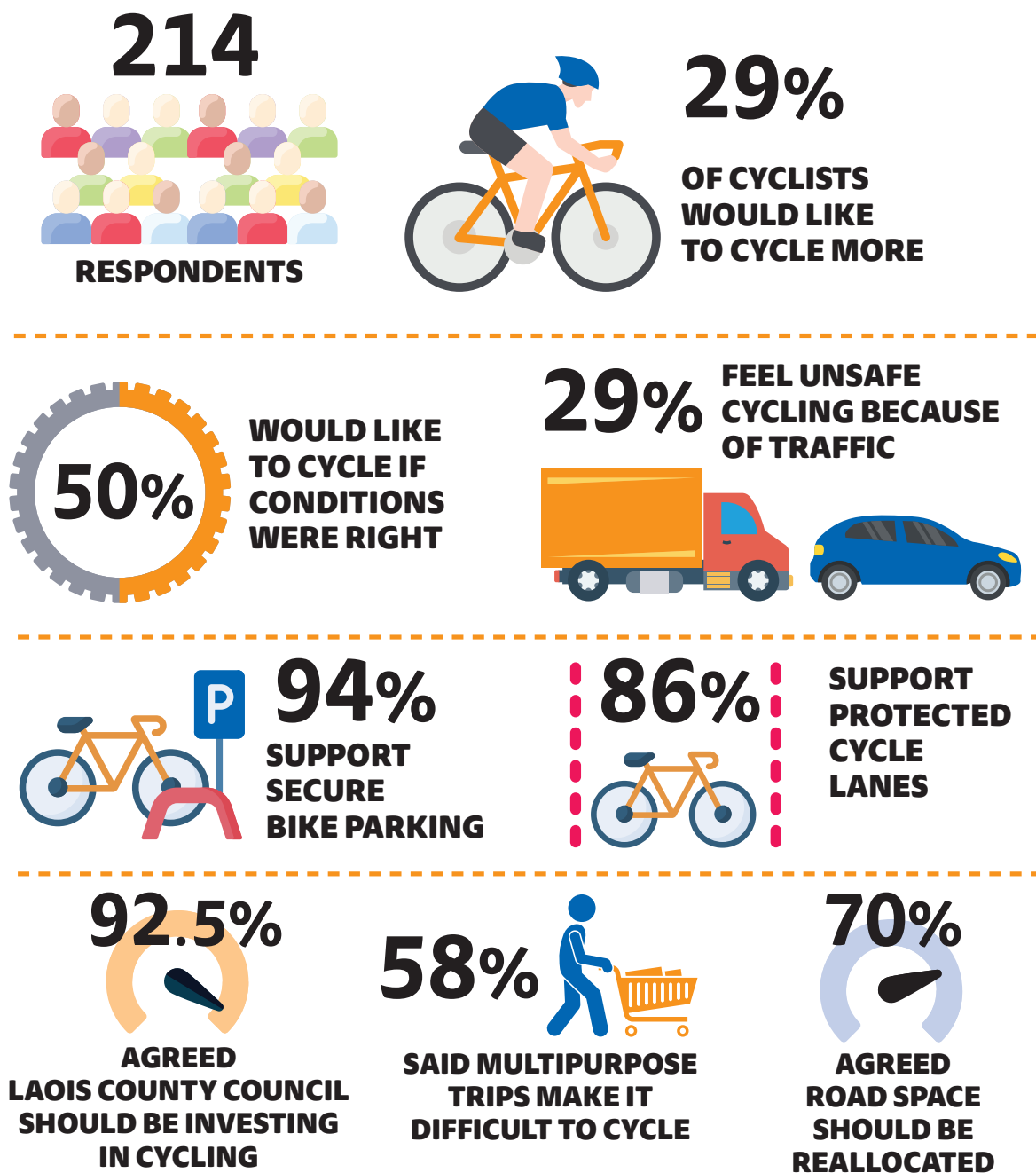
- Design of Playful Streets - in progress.
- Provision of bike cameras to Portlaoise Cycle Bus - complete.
- Social Media Awareness campaign e.g. Love to Cycle app – in progress.
- Travel Time Signage for active travel - planned.
- Public 'Learn to Cycle Park' area to be built - complete.
- Bike Repair Stations to be installed - complete.
- Bike Repair training - planned.
- Bike Hire scheme in Portlaoise - in progress.
- Dutch Cycling Embassy Study Tour for cycling infrastructure best practice - complete.

Study Two: Cycling Culture in Portlaoise

Laois County Council supported the 'Cultivating a Cycling Culture in Portlaoise' study by the Centre for Health Behaviour Research, SETU Waterford (2022). Community survey responses were sought on current travel behaviours, barriers to cycling and awareness of and support for cycling

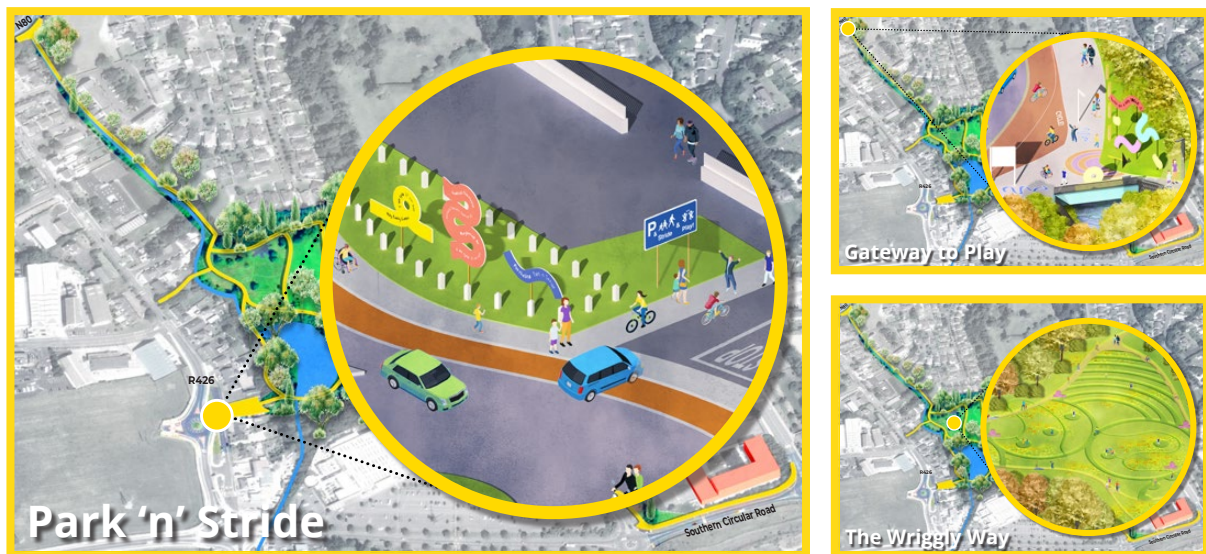
initiatives in Portlaoise. The community survey results are summarised in the infographic Figure 6.13 and included support from the community for road space reallocation for active travel, secure bike parking and protected cycle lanes.

Figure 6.13: Infographic of Survey Results of 'Cultivating a Cycling Culture in Portlaoise'



Source: SETU Waterford (2022)

Study Three: Playful Active Travel School Zone



In February 2023, A Playful City was contracted by Laois County Council to deliver an innovative programme to promote active travel in the community. This project involved extending the first section of the recently opened 'Triogue Way' from An Pairc an Phobail to the Summerhill Area (Southern Circular Road to The Downs to Aghnaharna Drive).

In the Summerhill area there are five primary schools, located on two campuses. The extension to this section will be a 'playful street' with design elements applied to pavements and along the route to create an interactive trail encouraging active travel to schools in the area and in the wider community. To develop the interventions, A Playful City undertook extensive community engagement summarised below:

- Online Family Survey and Community Surveys and a Youth Surveys sent to all five schools along the route (over 500 responses from students).
- Outreach via texts to be sent via schools' text-a-parent systems, posters erected along the route and social media posts provided to all five schools and Laois County Council.
- Youth Workshop with 24 students from schools in the area and a Parents Workshop.

A Playful City built on the ideas and insights that came out of their community engagement to finalise six interventions and a prototype of each was installed in June 2023.

- **Park n Stride System** - a series of playful signs in car parks around Portlaoise that indicate the time it takes to walk or cycle to the two school campuses.
- **Gateway to Play** - colourfully designed Gateways to Play at each of the An Pairc an Phobail entrances.
- **The Mindful Way** - a series of playful signs that promote mindful engagement with nature along the route.
- **The Wiggly Way** - a new section of the path that meanders for young people to follow on foot or wheels.
- **The Worry Rook** - a mascot that invites young people to leave their worries behind by touching its wing.
- **Children's Safety Signs** – along certain sections of the route that depict how young cyclists, wheelers and walkers feel while travelling to school to start to change the narrative around active travel and with driver responsibility highlighted and to make cyclists, rollers and pedestrians feel safe.

Final designs of these prototypes (subject to funding) will be installed by Laois County Council in 2024.

Study Four: Portlaoise Local Transport Plan Survey

Laois County Council is producing a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Portlaoise. Local Transport Plans work to demonstrate how best quality planning, urban design, and implementation can rejuvenate towns and support low-carbon town centres by reducing the impacts of cars on the public realm, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the mix of uses within the town centre. The Portlaoise Local Transport Plan will also enhance the liveability of adjoining neighbourhoods.



In the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan 'Pre-Draft Stage Consultation Survey Report' (2023) the key points identified in survey by respondents were:

- Lack of bus service – need for additional bus services connecting towns and lack of bus stops.
- Vehicular Traffic/Speed Concerns.
- Delivery of segregated/dedicated cycle lanes and the installation of cycle lanes at junctions.
- Footpaths – absence in places and poor condition
- Safer Crossings
- Park and stride/park and cycle/improved parking facilities within proximity to nearby schools and illegal on-street parking

These infrastructural deficits will be addressed by the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan which is expected to go out for public consultation as part of the Local Area Plan at the end of 2023.

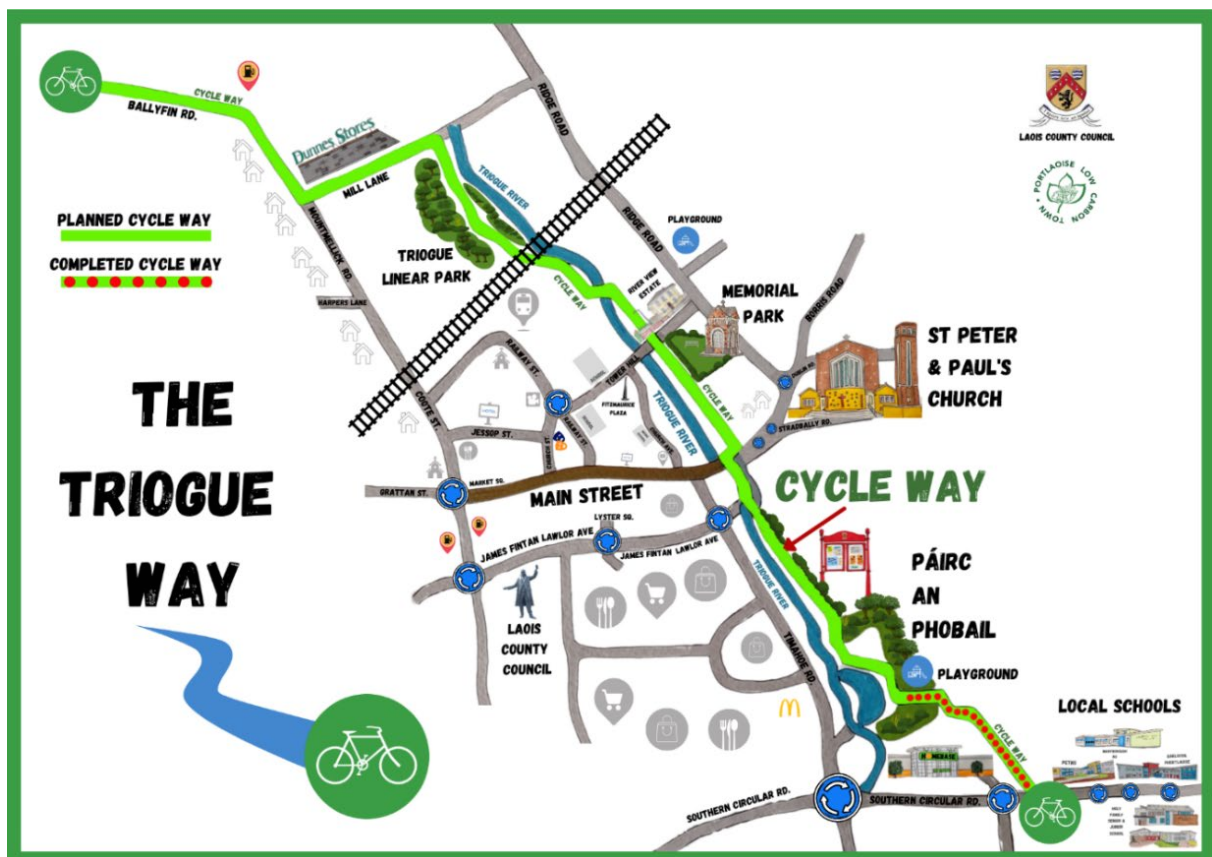


The Triogue Way

Laois County Council is promoting an increase in cycling through dual programmes of awareness and infrastructural development work in Portlaoise. It is committed to extending on-road and off-road cycleways, improving connectivity between cycleways and increasing permeability for active travel around the town. Triogue Way, a signature cross town Greenway passing through

An Pairc an Phobail, is already benefiting school going children and the greater community. There are further developments to be installed along the route. Phase one was completed in 2022 and the remaining sections will be completed over the lifetime of this Climate Action Plan (Figure 6.14).

Figure 6.14: Illustrated Map of Triogue Way



Red dotted line is Phase 1 (completed 2022). Green line are phases to be completed over life time of this Climate Action Plan.

**Figure 6.15: Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area Three:
Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility**

DZ Actions

- Develop a Playful School Active Travel Zone to promote safe and active commuting.
- Install Travel Time Signage to inform and incentivise active travel choices.
- Provide training for bike repair and maintenance to empower cyclists.
- Introduce a Bike Hire scheme in Portlaoise for convenient access to bicycles.
- Progress with Phases 2 and 3 of the Triogue Way project. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Implement the Safe School Routes to Schools (SCRTS) program in Maryborough.
- Establish a School Travel Cluster to enhance safe and sustainable school commuting.
- Install Traffic and Air Quality Monitors to monitor environmental conditions.
- Finalise and put into action the Local Transport Plan to improve transportation; Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Review speed zones throughout Portlaoise for safety considerations.
- Continue to support the Portlaoise Cycle Bus to encourage families to cycle to school.
- Identify and construct new cycle and pedestrian routes, including Tyrrells-Borris Rd-Dublin Rd via HSE lands at St. Fintan's, connecting to Block Rd. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Prioritise the connectivity of existing cycle routes for a comprehensive network.
- Provide protected cycle lanes to ensure cyclist safety. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Develop a program to upgrade roundabouts, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Enhance bus service infrastructure by establishing a bus terminal and related facilities; whilst promoting adherence to planning and environmental protection requirements, where appropriate.
- Create park and ride/stride designated sites linked with bike rental locations. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Install EV chargers and mobility hubs at the Train station to promote electric vehicle use. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Improve permeability to main hubs, including school routes, shopping areas, and amenities.
- Enhance permeability between housing estates for better connectivity.
- Support the development of EV charging points throughout the town, having due regard to planning and environmental protection requirements, as normal, and available grid capacity.
- Install Cycle Parking and Bike Repair Stations where needed to promote cycling.
- Develop a Playful School Active Travel Zone to promote safe and active commuting. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
- Install Travel Time Signage to inform and incentivise active travel choices.

DZ Strategic Priority Area Four: Decarbonisation Pathways & Circular Economy

Portlaoise Sustainable Energy Community 2040 and Energy Master Plan

In 2023 Laois County Council engaged KRA Renewables Consultancy to undertake the Portlaoise Energy Master Plan (EMP) for the Portlaoise Sustainable Energy Community (SEC). Below is a summary of key aspects of the Portlaoise Energy Master Plan:

- **Energy Baseline:** a comprehensive overview of the community's current energy consumption, including data from residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation sectors, dissected by energy type and usage categories.
- SSEA compliant **energy audits** were conducted on four key community/public buildings to highlight opportunities for energy optimisation: Clonad GAA Club, Mulhall's Supervalu supermarket, Laois Partnership facilities and the Portlaoise Parish Centre.
- Actionable solutions will be explored, considering their potential impact on social, economic, and environmental aspects. These proposals will be crafted through research and dialogue with the SEC members. A **Balanced Scorecard** will be employed to evaluate and rate these solutions, complemented by the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for future measurement of progress on/ effectiveness of actions.
- **Balanced Scorecard and Register of Opportunity:** The 'Balanced Scorecard' would serve as a live 'Register of Opportunity'. This novel tool will be designed explicitly for the Portlaoise Sustainable Energy Community.
- Resilience Strategies will offer a clear **roadmap** for effectively implementing the various solutions proposed throughout the Energy Master Plan.
- **Scenarios for Sustainability:** Integral to the roadmap for the Portlaoise SEC, scenarios will be constructed based on input from the Register of Opportunities and the Balanced Scorecard. These scenarios categorise technologies and proposals, providing a structured approach to achieving our sustainability goals.
- **Sustainable Roadmap:** The 10-year sustainable road map will help achieve an energy efficient community that constantly reduces its carbon emissions. All the technologies and energy savings are presented in a combination based on the priority of implementation.
- **Retrokit analysis:** The 4 most prevalent housing types in Portlaoise will be modelled for retrofit, and how long to pay back and carbon savings will be calculated.
- **District Heating feasibility** will be explored.

The CUBE

The CUBE, through the support of Laois County Council, provides training and consultancy opportunities to assist businesses and community groups on their decarbonisation journey, assisting with the identification of funding opportunities and providing training supports. The CUBE is also aligned with the [Midlands Regional Enterprise Development Plan to 2024](#), and is a stakeholder in a key action in that Plan: 'Climate Action – Transition to a climate neutral economy'. Within this action, The CUBE is identified as an 'Action Partner' to assist in the development and designation of decarbonising zones and addressing both adaption and mitigation measures.

The CUBE is centred around four key pillars:

- Job Creation
- Low Carbon Urban Design and Planning
- Low Carbon Consultancy and Training
- Incubation of Low Carbon-focused Start-Ups and Research

The CUBE is also identified as playing a role as a source of best practice and learning for Midland food and drink businesses.

Figure 6.16 Actions for DZ Strategic Priority Area Four: Decarbonisation Pathways & Circular Economy

DZ Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Energy Master Plan to guide our decarbonisation efforts. • Support development of "The Cube" as a hub for sustainable innovation. • Trial pop-up Energy Clinics for personalised energy efficiency guidance. • Plan public events aimed at promoting tangible climate action. • Promote sustainability programs for businesses in partnership with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). • Collaborate with Laois Chamber to support and advocate for decarbonisation initiatives. • Conduct a District Heating Feasibility Study to explore efficient heating solutions, ensuring the study has appropriate regard to planning and environmental protection constraints and considerations. • Showcase environmentally responsible businesses and organisations in our community as role models and sources of inspiration for others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop office hubs and co-working spaces in Portlaoise to facilitate remote working and reduce commuting. • Upgrade all public lighting to energy-efficient LED technology. • Provide training programs for businesses on decarbonisation strategies. • Continue to support Farmers Market and local food producers ensuring their sustainable growth and contribution to our eco-friendly objectives. • Maximise the presentation rates of "brown Bin" for organic waste through regulation and awareness thereby reducing organic waste in landfill and associated GHG emissions. • Support Reuse and Repair initiatives, minimising unnecessary waste and promoting resource conservation. • Enhance the accessibility of recycling facilities at Kyletalesha Landfill. • Investigate the feasibility of installing litter bins dedicated to recycling, thus making recycling more convenient option.



6.11 Implementation of Decarbonising Zone

The success of the Decarbonising Zone is dependent upon the commitment and efforts of a range of stakeholders.

Laois County Council will focus on playing a leadership role in facilitating implementation of the actions and coordinating key stakeholders to co-create a shared ambition and build a consensus on decarbonising opportunities and priorities.

Managing the implementation of the Decarbonising Zone actions will require Laois County Council to continue working with broad stakeholder participation and multi-disciplinary, interagency collaboration. Considerations for local authorities when establishing the supporting framework for implementation encompass the following aspects:



The Cube, Portlaoise

- 1 **Governance:** Ensure the establishment and facilitation of appropriate oversight and governance arrangements, emphasising strategic collaboration. To date the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town (PLCT) project has exemplified cross-organisational collaboration, with active involvement from various sections within Laois County Council.
- 2 **Strategic Collaboration:** Foster partnerships that unite individuals from diverse sectors, including public, private, and civic, to collaboratively work with the local authority for example the Portlaoise Town Team and Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Implementation Group.

The Decarbonising Zone actions will be implemented by the assigned lead department in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

Figure 6.17: Full List of DZ Actions

DZ Strategic Priority Area One: Communications & Engagement Strategy					
Objective: To increase awareness of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town and encourage greater participation of the wider community.					
Objective related to main Climate Action Plan actions: A2, A11, A15, A78, A79, A82, A83, A84, A85					
DZ Actions	M/A	KPI	Lead Dept.	Partners	Time
Establish yearly communication strategies, complete with targeted campaigns and tools, to actively involve the community in local climate action.	M	Completion of Plan	Climate Action	BSU	2024-2029
Create dedicated Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Webpage.	M	Completion	Climate Action	IT	2024
Develop and promote a PLCT Charter which showcases signatories committed to sustainability.					
Launch the 'Green Together' Initiative to foster sustainable practices through collaborative partnerships among public sector entities in Portlaoise.	M	No of e-bulletins/ circulation	Climate Action	IT	2024
Facilitate a systems innovation approach to drive innovation in sustainability.	M	No. of participants	Climate Action		2024
Implement Signage & Branding to visually represent the town's commitment to sustainability.	M	No. of initiatives	BSU	Climate Action	2024
Enrich the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town experience through an arts program, animating the town's green efforts.	M	No. of Workshops	Arts/Laois Libraries		2024-2029
Establish school-based programs to educate and actively engage students in climate action.	M	No. of Students	Climate Action		2024-2029
Integrate climate action into the Portlaoise Town Team 3-year Strategy for a cohesive approach.	M	No. of projects	Roads	Climate Action, LEO/BSU, MD, Projects, Active Travel	2024-2026
Continue to facilitate the Portlaoise Town Team and provide support to sub-groups working on various sustainability projects.	M	No. of meetings	Roads	Climate Action, LEO/BSU, MD, Projects, Active Travel	2024-2026
Implement educational and awareness initiatives to enrich knowledge and skills, facilitating a shift towards a low-carbon local future.	M	No. of initiatives	Climate Action	LEO/The Cube	2024-2029

DZ Strategic Priority Area Two: Greening of Portlaoise

Objective: To transform Portlaoise into a Town in A Garden to enhance public realm and conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Objective related to main Climate Action Plan actions: A69, A71, A72, A73, A74, A75

DZ Actions	M/A	KPI	Lead Dept.	Partners	Time
Complete the Biodiversity Implementation Plan to guide conservation efforts.	M+A	Completion of plan	MD	Green Pine PTT	2024
Implement tree management strategies to maximise canopy cover in the area with a focus on promoting native trees; having due regard to environmental sensitivities such as European sites and biodiversity.	A	% Canopy Cover	MD		2024-2029
Continue the Pollinator Friendly Roundabout Project to support local pollinators.	M	Completion of 9 Roundabouts	MD		2024-2025
Establish a Biodiversity Demonstration Garden at the Laois Education Centre, serving as a showcase for a wide range of practical biodiversity and pollinator projects to inspire teachers.	M	Completion of project/ No of Courses/ no access QR Codes and resources	Climate Action	MD	2024
Continue the ongoing management of little woodlands or An Choill Beag in local school as an educational opportunity for students to connect with nature	M	No. of Workshops	Climate Action		2024-2029
Raise awareness about the "A Town in a Garden" project to engage the community.	M	No. of promotional activities	Climate Action	PTT, BSU, PTownT	2024-2029
Introduce an animation programme through arts to creatively promote biodiversity.	M	No. of initiatives	Arts/Library		2024-2029
Conduct Stakeholder Mapping to identify key partners and collaborators.	M	Complete Mapping	Community		2024
Provide support to other organisations working on biodiversity enhancement programs.	M	No. of Projects	Climate Action		2024-2029
Enhance the town's green infrastructure to bolster biodiversity. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.		No. of Projects	Roads	MD	2024-2029

DZ Strategic Priority Area Three: Active Travel & Sustainable Mobility

Objective: To facilitate the modal shift to active travel and sustainable mobility in Portlaoise

Objective related to main Climate Action Plan actions: A30, A31, A32, A33, A41, A42, A43, A51, A55, A57, A58, A59, A60, A61, A80, A97, A100, A110

DZ Actions	M/A	KPI	Lead Dept.	Partners	Time
Develop a Playful School Active Travel Zone to promote safe and active commuting. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	Completion of project/ No. of measures	Roads & Climate Action		2024
Install Travel Time Signage to inform and incentivise active travel choices.	M	No. of signs	Roads		2022-2025
Provide training for bike repair and maintenance to empower cyclists.	M	No. of events	Roads		2024-2029
Introduce a Bike Hire scheme in Portlaoise for convenient access to bicycles.	M	Completion of project/ hours of use	Projects Office		2024
Progress with Phases 2 and 3 of the Triogue Way project. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	Completion of phases/ metres of Triogue way completed	Projects Office		2024-2026
Implement the School Routes to Schools (SCRTS) program in Maryborough.	M	Completion of project	Roads		2024
Establish a School Travel Cluster to enhance safe and sustainable school commuting.	M	Modal Shift of Students	Roads	Climate Action	2024-2026
Install Traffic and Air Quality Monitors to monitor environmental conditions.	M	Completion of installation	Roads	Climate Action	2024
Finalise and put into action the Local Transport Plan to improve transportation; Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	Implementation of measures within plan	Roads		2024
Review speed zones throughout Portlaoise for safety considerations.	M	No. of 30km speed zones	Roads		2024
Continue to support the Portlaoise Cycle Bus to encourage families to cycle to school	M	No. participants	Climate Action	Roads	2024
Identify and construct new cycle and pedestrian routes, including Tyrrells-Borris Rd-Dublin Rd via HSE lands at St. Fintan's, connecting to Block Rd. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	Completion	Roads		2024-2029
Prioritise the connectivity of existing cycle routes for a comprehensive network.	M	No. of projects completed	Roads		2024-2029

Continued >

DZ Actions	M/A	KPI	Lead Dept.	Partners	Time
Provide protected cycle lanes to ensure cyclist safety. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	No. of projects completed	Roads		2024-2029
Develop a program to upgrade roundabouts, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	Permeability between housing estates	Roads		2024-2029
Enhance bus service infrastructure by establishing a bus terminal and related facilities; whilst promoting adherence to planning and environmental protection requirements, where appropriate	M	No. of bus routes/stops	Projects Office	Roads	2024-2029
Create park and ride/stride designated sites linked with bike rental locations. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	No. of Park n Stride	Roads		2024-2029
Install EV chargers and mobility hubs at the Train station to promote electric vehicle use. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.	M	No. of EV/ Completion of project	Project Office		2024
Improve permeability to main hubs, including school routes, shopping areas, and amenities.	M	No of projects completed	Roads		2024-2029
Enhance permeability between housing estates for better connectivity.	M	Permeability between housing estates	Roads		
Support the development of EV charging points throughout the town, having due regard to planning and environmental protection requirements, as normal, and available grid capacity.	M	EV Charge Points	Project Office		2024-2029
Install Cycle Parking and Bike Repair Stations where needed to promote cycling.	M	No. of Units	Project Office		2024

DZ Strategic Priority Area Four: Decarbonisation Pathway and Circular Economy

Objective: To identify decarbonisation pathways for Portlaoise to achieve 2030 targets and promote principles of circular economy.

Objective related to main Climate Action Plan actions: A46, A 47, A 48, A49, A62, A 63, A 64, A65, A68, A81, A87, A88, A89, A90, A91, A92, A93, A94, A96, A99, A101, A102, A103, A104, A105, A106, A107, A108, A111

DZ Actions	M/A	KPI	Lead Depart	Partners	Time
Complete Energy Master Plan to guide our decarbonisation efforts.	M	Completion of plan	Climate Action		2024
Support development of "The Cube" as a hub for sustainable innovation.	M	No. of courses/ initiatives	Climate Action		2024-2029
Trial pop-up Energy Clinics for personalised energy efficiency guidance.	M	No. of attendees	The Cube		2024
Plan public events aimed at promoting tangible climate action.	M	No. of events	Climate Action	The Cube	2024-2029
Promote sustainability programs for businesses in partnership with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).	M	No. of businesses	LEO		2024-2029
Collaborate with Laois Chamber to support and advocate for decarbonisation initiatives.	M	No. of events	Climate Action	The Cube, Laois Chamber LEO	2024-2029
Conduct a District Heating Feasibility Study to explore efficient heating solutions, ensuring the study has appropriate regard to planning and environmental protection constraints and considerations.	M	No of studies	Climate Action	IPS, HSE, SEAI	2024
Showcase environmentally responsible businesses and organisations in our community as role models and sources of inspiration for others.	M	No. of case studies/videos	Climate Action	The Cube	2024-2029
Develop office hubs and co-working spaces in Portlaoise to facilitate remote working and reduce commuting.	M	No. of hubs/users	Midlands Hubs		2024-2029
Upgrade all public lighting to energy-efficient LED technology.	M	% of upgrade	Roads		2024
Provide training programs for businesses on decarbonisation strategies.	M	No. of Initiatives	The Cube	LEO	2024-2029
Continue to support Farmers Market and local food producers ensuring their sustainable growth and contribution to our eco-friendly objectives.	M	No. of local traders	BSU		2024-2029
Maximise the presentation rates of "brown Bin" for organic waste through regulation and awareness thereby reducing organic waste in landfill and associated GHG emissions.	M	No. of inspections/ presentation rate	Environment		2024-2029
Support Reuse and Repair initiatives, minimising unnecessary waste and promoting resource conservation.	M	No. of initiatives	Climate Action		2024-2029
Enhance the accessibility of recycling facilities at Kyletalesha Landfill	M	Completion	Environment		2024-2029
Investigate the feasibility of installing litter bins dedicated to recycling, thus making recycling more convenient option	M	No of bins	MD		2024-2029

Planning for Implementation 7



7 Planning for Implementation

This Climate Action Plan will be implemented by Laois County Council. Whilst the Plan requires a whole-of-Council approach, the ownership of the [Draft] Climate Action Plan is held within the Climate and Community Section of the Council.

A Climate Action Team will be established in Laois County Council. This team will include a Climate Action Coordinator, Climate Action Officer, Environmental Awareness Officer, Biodiversity Officer and Community Climate Action Officer. The role of this team is to mainstream climate action into the activities of Laois County Council, monitor the implementation of the actions of the Climate Action Plan and to coordinate the reporting and evaluation of the Plan, following its approval by the Elected Members.



The Climate Action Section is supported by the wider Climate Action Steering Group; a cross sectional, multi-disciplinary team including the representation from the following sections: Housing, Planning, Laois Libraries, Fire Services, Environment, Roads, Active Travel, Projects Office, Corporate, Community, Finance, Human Resources, Rural Water, Arts and Local Enterprise Office. The core Climate Action Section will also be the point of contact for the public to learn about climate action in the County.

Laois County Council will work collaboratively and in partnership with a range of key stakeholders to support the delivery of this Plan. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to, the following – the neighbouring local authorities of Tipperary, Kildare, Carlow, Offaly, Kilkenny, Westmeath Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office, Midlands Energy Agency, the Local Authority Services National Training Group, Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, Local Government Management Agency, City and County Management Agency, Public Participation Network and Comhairle na nOg. These partnerships will provide opportunities for collaboration on projects, shared learnings, technical support and leveraging of funding opportunities to implement actions in the [Draft] Climate Action Plan.

Climate change does not stop at political and geographical borders – it is a transboundary challenge. As such, a regional approach has been agreed by the local authorities in the Midlands, whereby they will collaborate closely on the implementation of their respective Climate Action Plans.

Following approval of the Laois County Council Climate Action Plan, an Implementation Plan will be developed for each the actions, which will set out in further detail how the action will be delivered including, noting the responsible department and timescales. Laois County Council will align the timing of internal implementation reporting with that of sectoral progress reporting requirements.

7.1 Funding and Partnerships

To lead by example and drive the transition to a climate neutral society, Laois County Council will need access to adequate funding for climate action projects towards achieving its 2030 and 2050 targets.

Local authorities can access various types of funding such as government grants, European funds, private sector investment and community co-financing. It is recognised that while new climate action targeted funding calls may become available in the future, already established funding bodies are introducing, and are set to increase, the level of funding streams for climate action focused categories. Laois County Council will continue to actively pursue existing and new funding opportunities from both European and National bodies that are aligned with its climate action objectives.

Partnerships are also a key ingredient towards realising our low carbon targets. Laois County Council will encourage and facilitate collaboration with the private sector and Third Level sectors where possible. The private sector,

also working towards achieving the National Climate Objectives means collaboration between local government and private interests can enhance the capabilities of both sectors in reducing greenhouse gases and increasing climate resilience.

There are also benefits for both parties in partnerships between local government and Third Level Education sector. The Third Level sector can provide research and development expertise to help local authorities develop, test and implement innovative solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change and improve resilience. These partnerships can also help local authorities access funding opportunities for climate action projects and initiatives.

7.2 Tracking Progress through Key Performance Indicators

Performance by Laois County Council on the delivery of energy efficiency and emission reductions relating to the Council's infrastructure and assets, as prescribed by national climate obligations, will continue to be tracked through the established Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system managed by the Sustainable Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

For actions outside of this, one of the reporting avenues that Laois County Council engages with to communicate progress on the delivery of actions are Sectoral Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This informs the performance of the local government sector on climate action.

Strengthened climate action policy at national level inspired a determined response and commitment by the local government sector. This commitment is set out in the County

and City Management Association (CCMA) strategy on behalf of local government entitled '[Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030](#)'.

A key consideration for the local government sector on its strengthened role in climate action is accountability, and in particular the ability to track, measure and report on progress in delivering effective climate action. In this regard, KPIs will continue to play a significant role.

The Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) along with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) collect data on an annual basis relating to a range of themes including:

- Climate Action resources
- Climate Action training for local authority staff and elected members
- Actions delivered
- Enterprise support in area of climate action
- Energy efficiency
- Emission reductions
- Active travel measures
- Severe weather response

KPIs will continue to be added as necessary by the sector and Laois County Council will contribute relevant information as required, to assist in highlighting the progress of the local government sector on climate action.

7.3 Reporting Requirements and Arrangements

Internal Reporting

To ensure that delivery is timely, the implementation of the [Draft] Climate Action Plan will be monitored via an in-house tracking system. The local authority will also facilitate reporting to elected members through the management reports to Council meetings and quarterly updates to the Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).

Monitoring and Reporting System (M&R)

Laois County Council will continue to report on their energy performance and emission targets annually to the SEAI through the established Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system.

Sectoral Performance

Laois County Council will report annually on their performance on climate action by way of KPIs (as outlined in Section 7.2) to inform the performance of the local government sector on climate action, as part of the local government DECA 2030 Strategy.

National Climate Action Plan

Laois County Council will in accordance with part 3(w) of the Local Authority Climate Action Charter, report quarterly to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Environment on the progress of climate actions at local level. Progress on all actions will be via a reporting tool to be developed by Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO).

Covenant of Mayors

Laois County Council is a signatory to the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. Following adoption of this Climate Action Plan, Laois Council commits to the completion, and monitoring of a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) as per the requirements of the Covenant of Mayor.

List of Appendices

The following supporting documents to the Laois Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 are available at <https://laois.ie>

Appendix A:	Policy and Context
Appendix B:	Pre Consultation
Appendix C:	Turley LACAP Consultation Report
Appendix D:	Graphic Recordings of Pre Consultation Workshops
Appendix E:	Evidence Base
Appendix F:	County Wide BEI Report for County Laois
Appendix G:	CSO Fuel Data Use for County Laois County Council
Appendix Ha:	Climate Change Risk Assessment for County Laois
Appendix Hb:	Laois Decarbonising Zone Baseline Emissions Inventory Analysis Report
Appendix Hc:	Siemens Carbon Footprint Study of Portlaoise
Appendix I:	Pathfinder Report for Laois County Council
Appendix J:	Climate Action Extracts County Development Plan
Appendix K:	Climate Action Extracts from Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy

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