



A meeting of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board was held on Tuesday 28 January 2025 at Mountmellick FET Centre, Harbour Street, Mountmellick, R32 TND3.

**Present**

Cllr Neil Feighery (Chairperson)	Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald
Cllr John King	Clive Davis (online)
Cllr Ollie Clooney	Serena Fitzpatrick
Cllr Hugh Egan	William Flanagan
Cllr Aoife Masterson	Seamus Bennett
Valerie O'Connell	Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick
Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley	Cllr Claire Murray
Cllr Claire Murray Smale	

**In Attendance**

Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive  
Pam Nolan, Director of OSD  
Frank Walsh, Head of Corporate Services  
Mary Loughrey, Corporate Services  
Nicole Doyle, Corporate Services

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chairperson, Neil Feighery, welcomed members and thanked them for their attendance. Apologies were received from Vivienne Phelan, Myra Kennedy, Tommy Mulligan, Tara Carty, and Gareth Stanley.

The Chairperson welcomed Mary Loughrey who has recently joined the Corporate Services section.

The Centre Manager, Brenda Duggan, gave members a detailed explanation of the programme and services on offer at the centre. The members thanked Ms Duggan for her presentation.

**2. Minutes of LOETB Board meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on 10 December 2024, were circulated to members. Members approved the minutes.

**Proposed:** Valerie O'Connell

**Seconded:** Aoife Masterson

### 3. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### 4. Governance

#### Update on Risk Register

Pam Nolan informed the members that there has been no update on the Risk register since our last meeting in December. The Audit and Risk Committee is due to meet in February and any updates will be provided to members thereafter.

#### Declaration of Interest

As per Schedule 3, Paragraph 10, Section 3 of the ETB Act (2013) and the Agenda Notice, no conflicts of interest were declared.

### 5. Reports from Committees of the Board

The reports from the Audit and Risk Committee and Finance Committee were circulated to members for noting.

### 6. Nomination of Community representative to Board of Management

School	Nomination	Proposed	Seconded
CNC Kilcormac	Elaine Dermody	Neil Feighery	Hugh Egan

### 7. Minutes of Committees of the Board

The following minutes were circulated to members prior to the meeting for noting.

#### Audit and Risk Committee

- 21 March 2024

#### Finance Committee

- 21 March 2024
- 11 July 2024

#### Clonaslee College

- 4 June 2024

#### Coláiste Naomh Cormac

- 21 October 2024

#### Dunamase College

- 4 September 2024
- 10 September 2024
- 17 September 2024
- 1 October 2024

- 11 November 2024

#### **Oaklands Community College**

- 12 September 2024

#### **St Fergal's College**

- 27 August 2024
- 15 October 2024
- 4 December 2024

#### **Tullamore College**

- 25 September 2024

## **8. Chief Executive Report**

### **Schools Directorate**

#### **National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Planning Meetings**

A Co-Teaching Workshop is scheduled for 10 March which will be co-facilitated by Patrick Kelly and Martin McGettrick from the NCSE.

#### **LOETB All Stars**

This initiative is a PE Programme aimed at students enrolled in a Special Class. The format is like a mini sports day with 4 events over a 2-hour session. The second session took place on 19 January. The third session is scheduled to take place on 20 March.

#### **Community of Practice Groups**

Community of Practice groups for Ethos, Provision Mapping, Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators, Special Class Co-Ordinators, DEIS /SSE Co-Ordinators, and Guidance Counsellors continue to run during the second term with dates scheduled in January, February, and March for groups to meet using a hybrid model of in-person and online meetings.

#### **STEAM Programme**

This partnership with Offaly and Laois County Councils continues to the next stage. All nine schools, covering over 300 students, are involved in the programme, which seeks to develop skills in several areas of digital technology. There are four strands to the programme (Vex Robotics, Lego League Coding, Minecraft Design and Podcasting). This year's theme is Virtual Reality, with support and equipment from Youth Services. The work the students have created as part of the programme will be on display at the 2024/2025 STEAM Showcase, hosted this year at Banagher College on 10 April.

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidelines**

A set of guidelines has been provided to schools around the use of A.I. tools. The guidelines were formulated through the Digital Community of Practice, with input from Dr. Keith Quille of Technological University of Dublin.

## Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Modules

LOETB, in partnership with Laois and Offaly County Councils and ATU, are supporting teachers to complete modules in digital technology, with completion of six modules leading to the award of a higher diploma from the college. The in-person modules are hosted at LOETB locations. Over 20 LOETB teachers have completed the modules to date.

## Youth Services

### UBU Your Place Your Space 2025

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has approved the 2025 grant funding for youth services. A total of €460,334 has been allocated to Laois Offaly Education and Training Board in its capacity as a grant administering body, in respect of the UBU scheme.

### Migrant Integration Fund 2025

DCEDY has allocated €43,129.00 to LOETB to administer under this initiative to provide supports to Ukraine (Migrant) Young People Youth Organisation/Youth Clubs.

### Targeted Youth Employability Support Initiative (TYESI) 2025

DCEDY has allocated €60,000 to LOETB to administer to the Funded Organisation under this initiative for 2025.

### Laois and Offaly Local Creative Youth Partnership

The budget for 2025 will increase from €150,000 to €190,000.

## Regional Education and Language Team (REALT)

### BOTPs (Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection) – Ukrainians

The number of Ukrainian citizens in Laois and Offaly remains stable. The movement of Ukrainian families has been significant and will continue over the coming months which affects school places and transport. Temporary DACs (90-day accommodation centres) continue to close. There are 4 remaining in the country – none in Laois and Offaly.

### IPAS (International Protection Accommodation Service)

The total number of IPAS citizens in Laois is 470 (increase of 4% since Nov 2024) while in Offaly the total number is 480 (drop of 1.5% since Nov 2024). The 7-day rolling average is 31 arrivals per day (of which there are 22% children).

## Music Generation

### Music Generation Laois

Music Generation Laois launched 'Isle of Song', a song writing project for 50 children and young people from Laois, Offaly, and across Northern Ireland, partnering with The Nerve Centre in Derry. This project will run from March to October 2025 and MG Laois was

awarded €180,000 in funding from Creative Ireland's Creative Youth on a Shared Island fund to develop and deliver 'Isle of Song'.

### Music Generation Offaly

Our community music programmes have also returned and include an after-school hub in Clonfanlough with 40 students enrolled in Guitar, Ukulele, and Drum lessons. A DJ programme has also commenced with young people from the Youth Work Ireland Fusion Garda Diversion Project in Tullamore along with 2 new Ukulele classes with young people from Offaly Traveller Movement in Birr and Tullamore.

Planning is also currently underway for the first ever *Singfest* Schools Concert Series in partnership with Music Generation Westmeath. Schools from across Offaly and Westmeath have been invited to take part in 2 concerts in TUS Athlone in May 2025.

## FET Directorate

### Construction Skills

Construction (MMC) provision in the National Construction Training Campus (NCTC), Mount Lucas grew by almost 30% to 3400 beneficiaries in 2024, exceeding our target by 900 participants. As part of this provision, the partnership with St. Andrews delivered over 1,000 beneficiaries providing over 600 jobs to the hardest-to-reach groups in Dublin. Alongside the provision, the NCTC co-ordinated the development of a new suite of MMC programmes ranging from new 1-day courses to Traineeships.

### Pathways and Tertiary

Full Time places at LOETB grew to over 2,500 in 2024 with new provision in STEM, Digital Media, Engineering, Services, and Agriculture. All new QQI Level 5 and 6 provision is now developed in line with Higher Education programmes, supporting FET learners to progress to Third Level. Tertiary provision now includes courses in IT, Business, Art, Construction, Science, and Engineering based on growing partnerships with SETU, TUS, and TUD. In 2025, LOETB will progress our work on a Nursing collaboration with Maynooth University.

### Inclusion and Learner Support

Our Inclusion pillar delivered courses to 7,500 beneficiaries in access, literacy, and community education in 2024. The establishment of Centre-based Care Teams along with the appointment of learner support workers in every Centre has helped to increase retention, certification, and progression across the service. For example, the number of learners achieving major QQI Awards grew by 12% in 2024.

## Apprenticeship

LOETB continued to play a significant role in reducing the Apprenticeship backlog providing 560 Phase Two Electrical and Plumbing places in 2024. To further support the apprentices, LOETB delivers NZEB training, Teamworking, Maths Support, and Cleanroom operations as additions to the standard Phase Two curriculum. As part of this provision, LOETB worked directly with the ESB to train 96 ESB apprentices. LOETB also partnered with CAIRN Homes to launch a second training rig focusing on Phase Two Craft Apprenticeships. This partnership has been further enhanced with the delivery of additional supports to CAIRN sub-contractor apprentices as part of CAIRN’s apprenticeship academy initiative.

## FET Data and Provision Review

LOETB appointed a FET Data Manager in 2024 to ensure consistency of data entry and Reporting, effective management of all FET Data, and to enhance the accuracy of FET Data reporting. As part of the data brief, LOETB has undertaken a review of all FET provision using criteria such as retention, outcomes, cost, relevance to strategic priorities, and participation. The aim of this review is to further streamline provision and ensure that FET provision is relevant and effective.

# OSD Directorate

## Human Resources

### Recruitment

Department	Project	Status
Recruitment	Posts November 2024 – January 2025	Posts filled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PWT Grade VII Corporate Services</li><li>• Teacher Maternity leave post - SEN and English</li><li>• Teacher Maternity Leave Post SEN/History</li><li>• AP2 Posts Oaklands Community College</li><li>• AP2 Post Clonaslee College</li><li>• AP2 Post Portlaoise College</li><li>• AP2 Post Coláiste Naomh Cormac</li><li>• PWT Grade IV Finance</li><li>• Fixed Term AE - Psychology (Portlaoise Institute)</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed Term AE - Beauty Therapy (Portlaoise Institute)</li> <li>• Home Economics Teacher - St Francis School</li> <li>• Clerical Officer posts - PWT</li> <li>• Sub Attendant - Tullamore College</li> <li>• Teacher - Resource and Engineering - Tullamore College</li> <li>• Sub Panel Teachers - 3 Competitions Held</li> <li>• Sub Panel Bus Escorts - 3 Competitions Held</li> <li>• Sub Panel SNA - 3 Competitions Held</li> </ul>												
<b>Payroll</b>	Salaries paid	<table> <tr> <td>22/11/2024</td> <td>€1,513,891.74</td> <td>1138</td> </tr> <tr> <td>06/12/2024</td> <td>€1,567,849.90</td> <td>1148</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20/12/2024</td> <td>€1,590,831.32</td> <td>1185</td> </tr> <tr> <td>03/01/2025</td> <td>€1,610,312.51</td> <td>1166</td> </tr> </table>	22/11/2024	€1,513,891.74	1138	06/12/2024	€1,567,849.90	1148	20/12/2024	€1,590,831.32	1185	03/01/2025	€1,610,312.51	1166
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## Pensions

LOETB pensioner increases have been applied for 1 October 2024. Work to commence in January to calculate LOETB's pension Liability for the financial year ending 31 December 2024. All benefit statements issued for 2023.

The service project is dealing with 486 employees in pre-2013 pension schemes has resulted in service for 416 of these employees has been calculated, checked, and uploaded to Core HR. Service for the remaining 70 employees is being progressed.

## Recruitment

Work to commence in January to procure new on-line Recruitment Package for LOETB.

## Finance

### Budgets

A full review of income and expenditure transactions taking place in preparation for the completion of the 2024 Annual Financial Statements.

### Finances

Summary of finances to end of December 2024 pre full review. Overall figures correct, movement between category may occur.

Summary of Workings to End December 2024								
ITEM	Opening Grant Cash Balance	Adjustment to Opening Balance	Receipts	Credits Transfer	Receipt Targets	Payments	Closing Grant Cash Balance	% of Overall Total
Main Scheme Grant	1,132,064	(9,053)	40,740,783	0	0	(40,795,434)	1,068,363	-5.08%
Associated Main Scheme Grants	1,174,542	(8,529)	2,353,114			(2,130,034)	1,389,093	9.38%
Capital Schedule	7,236,603	(13,962)	17,787,747			(18,930,700)	6,079,688	75.88%
Further Education & Training	1,842,154	17,439	51,905,619			(53,722,403)	42,809	16.39%
Youth Affairs	73,513	39,777	992,306			(898,118)	207,478	-0.78%
Agency	307,491	(73,023)	4,560,643			(3,803,547)	991,565	4.13%
Self Financing	93,285	47,330	706,597			(719,779)	127,434	0.09%
Third Party Funds	0	20	40,502			(20,371)	20,151	0.00%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11,859,652</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>119,087,310</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(121,020,382)</b>	<b>9,926,580</b>	

The difference between closing cash balance per financial systems and amount on investment documented below equals amount held in current account over Christmas period for payments due.

## Investment

### NTMA

On Investment at end of December 2024		€0
Interest Received to end of December 2024		€99,099
Interest Rate		1%
Investment Term	7 days	€0
	30 days	€0

### AIB

On Investment in Deposit Account at end of December 2024		€8,404,363.70
Interest Received to end of December 2024		€7,959
Interest Accrued end December 2024		€3,522
Interest Rate		.25%

## Creditor Payments

4,718 invoices, amounting to €17,967,928.92 were paid in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Of these, 75% were paid within 15 days of receipt of invoices, and a further 17% were paid within 30 days.

57 purchase orders for €20,000 or above, totalling €8,742,264.91 inclusive of VAT, were paid in the fourth quarter of 2024.

## Procurement

Location	Project	Status
LOETB	IT Computer Support and Maintenance	Contract awarded to NIS, signed and in place.
LOETB	Sanitary Services	OGP Framework. Signed up to framework and countersigned contract has been received.



Training Services	Waste Collection Permitting Course	Contract awarded to Amtivo. Letter of Acceptance and Contract issued 21 January 2025.
Tullamore College	Tullamore College: Architect, Civil & Structural, Mech & Elec, QS and PDSP	Tenders opened on 21 January 2025. Evaluation to take place presently.
Training Services	Plant and Machinery	Evaluation complete, marks uploaded to e-Tenders, letters of intent/regret to issue by close of business 27 January 2025.
LOETB	Contract Cleaning	Tender to go live on e-Tenders by 29 January 2025.
Schools	Metalwork/Engineering Class Materials	Tender closed. Evaluation to commence the week beginning 27 January 2025.
LOETB	Managed Print Services	Documents for OGP mini tender being drafted.
Training Services	AI and Hoofing	Tender documents being drafted.

## Buildings

Location	Project	Status
Clonaslee College	Additional ASD Accommodation 2022 & 2023	Final Account being agreed with DoE.
	Additional Accommodation 4 rooms	Waiting on Approval from DoE to proceed.
St Fergal's College	Modular Accommodation	Task Order 2 issued and works progressing well.
	Emergency Works Scheme - gas proving	Emergency Works Application approved – Works to start end January 2025.
Portlaoise College	Additional Accommodation - permanent build	Stage 2a Report sent to DoE.
	All weather pitch	Works completed waiting on snags to be addressed.
	Additional Accommodation - Modular	Task Order 2 issued and fees agreed with DoE. Snag List to be completed.
	Approval for upgrade of Building Management System	Waiting on Tender Report.
	New Athletics Track	Tender for Consultants on eTenders - Closing End of January.
Dunamase College	New Building	Stage 2a is now closed with project progressing to the next Stage 2b.
Oaklands Community College	New Building	Stage 2b – to be submitted to DoE in mid-February.
Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara	New Building	Stage 1 meeting held with DoE 27 June 2024. Approval to proceed to Stage 2a – Certificate of Completion Stage 1 received and sent to DoE.
Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac	Pathfinder project	Works commenced June 2024 works currently ongoing.
	Additional Accommodation	Consultant tender currently being evaluated.
Tullamore College	Additional Accommodation- Modular 3 classrooms 2 SEN Units	Phase 1 approved by DoE - Works commenced.

	Additional Accommodation - Permanent Build	Phase 2 approved by DoE - Tender for Consultants currently on eTenders
Head Office	Boardroom/meeting rooms	Works ongoing
Information Hub, Portlaoise	Fit-out	Works ongoing
Portlaoise Institute	Additional Accommodation	Stage 2a submitted. Meeting with SOLAS scheduled
Abbeyleix FET Centre	Additional Accommodation - classroom	Completed
Apprenticeships	Phase 2 expansion at Kilcruttin Business Park	Planning Granted – project to start early 2025
National Construction Training Campus	Project	Expression of Interest Stage 3 and Stage 4 on eTenders – on hold
	Project 2022	Design Team Appointed. Planning Application submitted to Offaly County Council
Laois Schools	Schools Photovoltaic Programme – Solar Panels - Notified of Phase 2 of programme for Laois Schools	Tenders due back for Clonaslee College, St Fergal's College, Dunamase College, Portlaoise College
Gaelscoil na Laochra	Handover of building	Working on Final Account invoices for Project

## ICT

Location	Project	Status
Head Office	Boardroom/meeting rooms	Works ongoing
Portlaoise College	IT fit-out of modular building	To commence in early February
Information Hub, Portlaoise	IT fit-out	To commence in early February
LOETB	Office 365 tenancies	Securing to standard set by the National Cyber Security Centre

## Corporate Services

- Review and issue of Statements of Internal Control
- Issuing of SIPO forms
- FOI/GDPR Audit
- Service Plan Development and preparation of Annual Report
- Preparation of ISMS Audit Response

- Insurance Review
- Processing data access requests, Section 41(b) requests, Oireachtas enquiries, legal queries.

Members thanked the CE for the comprehensive report and made enquiries on specific building projects and FET courses at Mount Lucas.

## 9. Correspondence

Item No.	Correspondence From	Date/Ref No.	Details	
1.	Dept. of Education	CL1.2025	Guidance in Post Primary Schools 2025	Noted by Members
2.	Dept. of Education	CL2.2025	Prescribed material for Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies	Noted by Members
3.	Dept. of Education	CL3.2025	Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2024	Noted by Members
4.	Dept. of Education	CL12.2025	Amendments to the Social Education Leaving Certificate Applied Module	Noted by Members
5.	Dept. of Education	CL64.2024	The operation application and deployment of Special Education Teachers	Noted by Members
6.	Dept. of Education	CL81.2024	Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students	Noted by Members
7.	Dept. of Education	CL92.2024	Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools	Noted by Members
8.	Dept. of Education	CL93.2025	Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools	Noted by Members

9.	Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General	13 January 2025	Audit of Education and Training Board - Laois and Offaly Financial Statements – 2024	Noted by Members
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## 10. Draft Policy

The following draft policy was circulated and shared on the LOETB Board Shared drive to members prior to the meeting.

- Garda Vetting Policy

## 11. Vote of Sympathy

The Board wishes to extend its sympathy to the following staff members on their recent family bereavements:

- Laura Flynn – Administrative Offices, Portlaoise
- Eileen Kenna Quinn – Portlaoise FET Centre
- Isabelle Quinn – Community Education Service
- Nikki Byrne – Adult Literacy Service
- Aiden Maloney – Administrative Offices, Portlaoise
- Maura Burke – Tullamore FET Centre
- Mark Barrett – Tullamore FET Centre
- Jen Carter – Administrative Offices, Portlaoise
- Josephine Moore – Administrative Offices, Portlaoise
- Geraldine Dunne – QA Service
- Natalia Maduabum – Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac
- James Madden – Clonaslee College, Laois
- Genevieve Bennett – Dunamase College, Laois
- Brendan Galvin – Midland Skills Centre, Tullamore
- Ann Shields – Adult Literacy Service

The Board also wished to extend its sympathy to the family of Sean Mac Cartáin, the former Chief Executive Officer of County Offaly VEC.

## 12. Vote of Congratulations

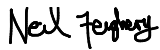
There were no Votes of Congratulations noted.

### 13. Any Other Business

A member asked the CE how the schools account for the days they were closed due to weather warnings. The CE informed members that the schools are currently examining how savings can be made, for example, in terms of reducing school trips and professional development days between now and the year-end.

### 14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 25 February in Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara, Offaly.

Signed:   
[Neil Feighery \(Feb 28, 2025 10:29 GMT\)](#)

Date: 28/02/2025

**Chairperson**