



A meeting of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board was held on Tuesday 27 May 2025 at Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac, Offaly.

Present

CLlr Neil Feighery (Chairperson)	CLlr Catherine Fitzgerald
CLlr Eddie Fitzpatrick	Valerie O'Connell (online)
CLlr Aoife Masterson	Serena Fitzpatrick (online)
CLlr Hugh Egan	William Flanagan
CLlr Claire Murray (online)	Seamus Bennett
Myra Kennedy	Vivienne Phelan
CLlr Claire Murray Smale	Alan Lindley
CLlr Vivienne Phelan	

In Attendance

Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive
Pam Nolan, Director of OSD
Nicole Doyle, Corporate Services

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairperson, Neil Feighery, welcomed members and thanked them for their attendance. He also welcomed Alan Lindley to his first meeting as a new board member.

Apologies were received from Tommy Mulligan, Tara Carty, Caroline Dwane Stanley, Clive Davis, and Gareth Stanley.

Vicki Guinan, Principal at Coláiste Naomh Cormac, informed members about the recent developments at the school. Members wished everyone at the school continued success.

2. Minutes of LOETB Board meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on 25 March 2025, were circulated to members. Members approved the minutes.

Proposed: Catherine Fitzgerald

Seconded: Eddie Fitzpatrick

Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Governance

Update on Risk Register

There was no update to the Corporate Risk Register. Pam Nolan informed members the next update would be provided after the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting in July.

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.

4. Minutes of Committees of the Board

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

Banagher College

- 26 February 2025

Clonaslee College

- 13 March 2025

Oaklands Community College

- 2 February 2025

Portlaoise College

- 3 March 2025

5. Draft Policies

The following policies were noted by members:

- Self-Financing Policy
- Purchase Card Policy

Pam Nolan took members through the policies and their purpose. Members were satisfied with the information provided.

6. Licence Agreement

The following Licence Agreement was noted by members:

Park Villas - Adult Literacy Learning Hub where Adult Literacy, ESOL and Community Education – 375 m2.

€40,000 per year for 3 years with option to extend further for 1 year and 9 months

Given the changing nature of FET provision and uncertainty regarding future funding, a licence agreement was being put in place instead of a lease as was indicated at the previous meeting. A review of all commitments on external accommodation will be conducted in advance of the July meeting.

7. Nomination to Youth Work Committee

Organisation	Nomination	Proposed	Seconded
Offaly Comhairle na nÓg	Rachel Kenny	Hugh Egan	Catherine Fitzgerald

8. Executive Report

Schools Directorate

Schools

Community of Practice groups

Community of Practice groups are in place in several disciplines and involve leaders and school staff from the nine post-primary schools. Recent Community of Practice meetings included:

Guidance Counsellors Forum: 26 March 2025

Special Class Co-Ordinators Forum: 2 April 2025

School Self-Evaluation/DEIS Co-Ordinators Forum: 3 April 2025

Ethos: 9 April 2025

Provision Mapping

LOETB Inclusion Co-Ordinator facilitated the Data Analysis for the Provision Mapping Cross-Sectoral pilot for participating JMB and ACCS schools on 29 April 2025 in Laois Education Centre.

NCSE

Relate training (A Regulation-First Approach to Reframing Behaviour and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation) for LOETB schools was delivered across 3 days by NCSE Advisors Martin McGettrick and Evanna Derrick. All nine post-primary schools participated.

LOETB All Stars

The All Stars is an Inclusive Sport initiative aimed at students enrolled in special classes in LOETB schools. The programme culminated in an All Stars Sports Day in Portlaoise College on 1 May with over 70 students taking part in a wide array of activities and competition events. The awards ceremony was attended by special guests Dr. Johanna Fitzgerald (ETBI) and John Kearney Chief Executive of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Youth Services

Local Youth Club Grant Scheme 2025

LOETB was allocated €99,191 to administer under this Grant Scheme for 2025. The Scheme supports voluntary youth club/groups activities for young people, with priority given to clubs/groups catering for aged of 10 and 21. The primary focus of the Scheme is to assist

local, volunteer-led youth clubs/groups that provide a programme of youth work activities for young people. In total there were 36 Applications, which are currently being processed. It is anticipated that awards will be made to successful applicants in late June 2025.

UBU Resilience and Effectiveness Initiative 2025

LOETB was allocated €20,000 to administer under the Resilience and Effectiveness Initiative. This fund has been designed to address specific issues or concerns within individual funded organisations, whether that be to address ongoing financial challenges or to increase service provision to young people. In total there were 3 successful Applicants, who were awarded €20,000 collectively in March 2025.

Summer 2025 Holiday Meals Pilot Programme

LOETB has been allocated grant funding up to a maximum of €28,125 to administer under this Grant Scheme for 2025. The aim of the pilot is to provide meals to young people who normally receive meals via the Schools Meals Scheme and are at risk of not having access to a hot/substantial meal during official school closure times. The pilot will explore various methods of providing food to those aged 10-18 attending *UBU Your Place Your Space* youth services throughout the 12-week school summer holiday period, assessing whether this approach can help tackle holiday hunger. In total there was 1 successful Applicant, who was awarded €22,464 in May 2025.

Local Creative Youth Partnership (LCYP)

The LCYP supported enabled St. Marys Youth and Community Centre Tullamore to bring a group of young people to Birmingham to a special Junior Theatre Festival to perform workshops with actors from Broadway. LCYP supported Tullamore Trad Festival with workshops for neurodivergent young people and Portlaoise Trad Festival with masterclasses for young people. Youth Voices in Decision Making training was delivered by the Co-ordinator of the LCYP to young people in Edenderry FET Centre, Mountmellick FET Centre, and Youth Work Ireland Laois. Midlands Science provided 2 Bee workshops for Biodiversity week on behalf of the LCYP.

REALT

Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP): 113,115 PPSNs have issued to Ukrainians in Ireland as of 13 April 2025. All children except for some with additional educational needs have been provided with school places to date.

International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS):

Total Number of IPAS citizens in Laois: 486

Total Number of IPAS citizens in Offaly: 521

Music Education

Music Generation Laois

Students from Music Generation Laois and Portlaoise FET Centre QQI Level 5 and Level 6 Further Education Studies in Music programme took part in an end of year concert in Kavanagh's Music Venue, Portlaoise on 9 May.

TY Music Students from Heywood College, Scoil Chríost Rí, Mountmellick Community School, Coláiste Dhún Másc and Portlaoise College took part in a week-long TY Music week in Laois Music Centre from 12-16 May this was supported by LOETB and the Local Creative Youth Partnership. On Saturday 7 June, a programme of free music, crafts and dance workshops will take place in Laois Music Centre with Laois Traveller Action Group; MGL Bells Ukrainian Childrens Choir; MGL Laois Community Choir and guest artists.

A two-day festival in the Malthouse, Stradbally featured young musicians from Music Generation Laois and Laois School of Music in collaboration with guest artists. Young harpers from Music Generation Laois, travelled to Edinburgh to participate at Edinburgh International Harp Festival.

66 young violin players from Scoil Mhuire Fatima (Timahoe) and Scoil Bhríde (Rathdowney) took part in a large-scale Fiddle Fiesta, a gathering of young violin players from Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford, presented by Music Generation Westmeath, on 16 May in TUS Athlone.

Music Generation Offaly

Music Generation Offaly hosted Music Camps in Tullamore, Birr, and Daingean with over 50 children and young people taking part.

Our community music programmes have an after-school hub in Clonfanlough with 40 students enrolled in guitar, ukulele, and drum lessons. There is a DJ programme with young people from the Youth Work Ireland Fusion Garda Diversion Project in Tullamore and we have completed our ukulele classes with young people from Offaly Traveller Movement in Birr and Tullamore.

EC'kO (Esker Community 'kulele Orchestra) had their first performance on 8 May as part of the Bealtaine Festival in Esker Arts. They were joined on stage by a group of 6th class students from Scoil Eoin Phóil who are learning ukulele through our primary school's programme.

Building Orchestral Pathways (BOP) is a research project investigating the provision of instrumental tuition for children and young people across the midlands which was commissioned by MG Offaly/Westmeath in partnership with MG Laois.

A Singfest Schools Concert on 15 May in TÚS Athlone, featured approximately 500 children from schools across Offaly and Westmeath. Singfest is a choral programme which was established in 2016 and gives children and young people the opportunity to work with a professional conductor and musicians.

FET Directorate

National Demonstration Park for MMC

The Groundworks phase of the new National Demonstration Park for the Modern Methods of Construction at Mount Lucas commenced on 19 May. This phase will include a new road and six concrete foundation pads. We are continuing to work with the preferred contractors for the Phase One housing units and it is our intention to agree contracts in principle with them before the end of the year. We are also in the process of developing a management strategy for the park, identifying target audiences and park functions in Years 1-3.

LOETB & Agri Aware Schools to FET Programme

LOETB and Agri Aware officially launched the new 'Intro to Ag' programme on 16 May. This programme is targeted at Transition Year students and aims to increase Third Level and Apprenticeship participation in Agriculture related provision. The programme also includes a 'Mobile Teacher' who will work with Senior Cycle students and teachers to support Ag Science students.

Birr OEC Cycling Centre of Excellence

Birr OEC will transition to a Cycling Centre of Excellence in 2025. This new approach will target the cycling tourism trade offering a wide range of programmes. They include:

- Slow Cycling: Using the greenways and Lough Boora
- Mountain Biking for all levels with a focus on the Slieve Bloom Mountain trails.
- Family cycling fun days and Road safety programmes

This approach will develop Birr OEC as a unique site nationally and maximise the natural landscape adjacent to the Centre.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Provision

LOETB has developed a new AI Essentials training programme for SMEs. The programme offers a practical introduction to artificial intelligence, tailored for small and medium enterprises. It provides a clear overview of key AI concepts and tools, helping businesses understand AI and its integration into daily operations for improved efficiency and competitiveness. The training focuses on real-world applications such as customer service automation, data analysis, and marketing.

It also highlights the importance of responsible AI use, covering key governance and ethical considerations. Creating an awareness of emerging policies and regulations.

The programme is part of a broader suite of AI programmes that we intend to launch before the end of 2025.

FET Estates Strategy

LOETB has developed a FET Estates Strategy which outlines our building stock and prioritises works that will be required to improve the energy rating of our FET buildings. LOETB met with SOLAS in April to discuss these works and we are currently in the process of appointing a Design Team for retrofit works in Birr OEC and Abbeyleix FET Centre. Our strategy includes a timeline of building upgrades across the FET Building stock to 2030.

Employer Engagement

LOETB are working with SOLAS and DFHERIS to develop services for SMEs regionally and nationally. We will begin by focusing on the Construction sector, meeting with SMEs to gauge what training they require and how best they can access it. Part of this approach will include broadening the Employer Incentivisation Scheme to include all MMC programmes in 2025.

LOETB Apprenticeship Provision

LOETBs agreed Apprentice figure for 2025 was 596, however, the funding allocation received from SOLAS will only allow provision for 455. As Apprentice classes are scheduled three months in advance, we will reduce class size for the remainder of 2025. It is our intention to revert to full classes for the new intakes (subject to funding) in 2026.

LOETB/TEAGASC MOU

LOETB has identified Agriculture as a strategic priority for our region. By supporting employers, employees and increasing new entrants in the broad Agri sector we can reduce the impact of Just Transition and strengthen the local and regional economy. The MOU with Teagasc provides a range of learner supports for young people currently studying and working in the sector. In 2025, LOETB will expand this service to include Learner Guidance and Information seeking to grow the numbers opting for Agri related programmes.

The CE invited all board members to the Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) event launch happening in the National Construction Training Campus on 9 June. Members welcomed this invite.

OSD Directorate

Human Resources

Interview Board Training was held on 12 May and Dignity in Work Training is ongoing. Recruitment of teachers 25/26 commenced in May and is moving a pace.

The post of Principal at Oaklands Community College has been advertised. A new Recruitment package, Hire Lab, is now operational.

SPSP Pension Benefit Statement are being prepared and will be issued ahead of end of June deadline. The Pension Service Project is near completion, and all pensioner increases applied and up to date. ESBS in process of taking over payments to our pensioners.

Payroll Figures are as follows:

28/02/2025	€1,635,111.21	1168
14/03/2025	€1,586,840.76	1174
28/03/2025	€1,627,878.96	1174
11/04/2025	€1,620,290.76	1178
25/04/2025	€1,816,732.13	1239
09/05/2025	€1,588,367.44	1180

Pam Nolan highlighted to members of an issue regarding pension overpayments. Pam reassured members that this issue was not found in LOETB but was a national level issue.

Finance

Budgets

Review of income and expenditure transactions taking place each month.

Finances

Summary of finances to end of April 2025.

Summary of Workings to End April 2025								
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	1,059,135	(552,337)	13,970,805	0	1,067,896	(15,742,496)	(196,997)	-5.08%
Associated Main Scheme Grants	1,369,427	552,337	1,597,714			(430,602)	3,088,876	9.38%
Capital Schedule	6,081,563	0	558,606			(3,169,902)	3,470,268	75.88%
Further Education & Training	76,221	0	17,145,792			(19,693,634)	(2,471,621)	16.39%
Youth Affairs	199,653	0	220,938			(303,832)	116,759	-0.78%
Agency	489,572	0	741,444			(894,458)	336,558	4.13%
Self Financing	645,130	0	417,301			(571,706)	490,725	0.09%
Third Party Funds	20,151	0	5,538			(7,256)	18,433	0.00%
Totals	9,940,853	0	34,658,138	0	1,067,896	(40,813,886)	4,853,001	

The difference between the closing cash balance per financial systems and the amount on investment (documented below) is the amount held in school bank accounts at year end due. The adjustment to opening balance is the transfer of funds held for A5 licence uplift from Main Scheme to Associated Grants as per DEY instruction.

Investment

NTMA

On Investment at end of April 2025	€2,725,203
Interest Received to end of April 2025	€25,203
Interest Rate	1%
Investment Term	1 Week

AIB

On Investment in Deposit Account at end of April 2025	€1,985,965
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Interest Received to end of April 2025	€6,601
Interest Rate	0.25%

Creditor Payments

4,372 invoices, amounting to €10,894,720 were paid in the first quarter of 2025. Of these, 71% were paid within 15 days of receipt of invoices, and a further 18% were paid within 30 days.

91 purchase orders for €20,000 or above, totalling €5,519,374 inclusive of VAT, were paid in the first quarter of 2025.

Procurement

Location	Project	Status
LOETB	Contract Cleaning	OGP Framework. New Contract in place 1/5/2026.
LOETB	Managed Print Services	Tender closes on 28/5/2026. Evaluation to be held week of 9 June.
Training Services	Training Services in Engineering and Renewable Energy	Contract awarded to METAC. Letter of Acceptance and Contract issued 28/05/2025
LOETB	Supply Fixed Term and Temporary Agency Staff & Recruitment Services	Tender closes on 23/5/2026. Evaluation to be held on 4 June.
LOETB	OGP Framework for Multi-Purpose Recycled Office Paper for Printing and Photocopying	OGP Framework. Signed up to framework and countersigned NAGS form has been received
Training Services	AI and Hoofing	Tender Complete. Contracts in place 14/4/2025.
Training Services	Tower Crane and related Construction Skills	Contract awarded to National Construction Training and Safety. Letter of Acceptance and Contract issued 8/05/25
LOETB	Stationery and Office Supplies	OGP Framework. NAGS form to be counter signed. Supplier to be set up by ESBS. Supplier to provide catalogue for P2P system

Buildings

Location	Buildings Project	Status
Clonaslee College	Additional ASD Accommodation 2022 & 2023	Completed.

	Pathfinder 2025	Selected for Pathfinder Heat Pump Project.
	Emergency Works Scheme – Boiler	Approved. Works to coincide with Pathfinder heat pump programme.
	Additional Accommodation (4 rooms)	Approved by DEY
St Fergal’s College, Rathdowney	Modular Accommodation	Completed – Snagging ongoing.
	Emergency Works Scheme - gas proving	Works completed.
Portlaoise College	Additional Accommodation - permanent build	Waiting on Stage 2a meeting. Cost breakdown sent to DEY.
	Additional Accommodation - Modular	Floors remediated. Snag List to be completed.
	Approval for upgrade of Building Management System	Works completed.
	New Athletics Track	Consultant Appointed. Pre-planning pack commenced.
Dunamase College	New Building	Stage 2a is now closed with project progressing to the next Stage 2b. Planning permission submitted to Laois County Council on 16 May.
Oaklands Community College	New Building	Stage 2b – to be submitted to DEY by end May
Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara	New Building	Finalising stage 2a report – Site Cost comparison reported completed and sent to DEY.
Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac	Pathfinder project	Works completed. Snag list in the process of being completed.
	Additional Accommodation	Consultants appointed. Site surveys being carried out.
Tullamore College	Additional Accommodation - Modular 3 classrooms 2 SEN Units	Completed.
	Additional Accommodation - Permanent Build	Consultant tenders being evaluated.
Head Office	Boardroom/meeting rooms	Works Completed.
	Air-Con	The air conditioning system requires an upgrade. Consultants have been engaged to develop the specification and design.
Banagher FET Centre	Plumbing Apprenticeship Workshop	Design Team appointed.

Tullamore FET Centre	Formation of 3 classrooms	Works have commenced.
Information Hub, Portlaoise	Fit-out	Works Completed. Waiting on BCMS from Laois County Council.
Portlaoise Institute	Additional Accommodation	Waiting on stage 2a meeting. Cost breakdown sent to DEY.
Apprenticeships	Phase 2 expansion at Kilcruttin Business Park	Snagging ongoing.
National Construction Training Campus	SIUF	DEY Stage 1 approval. Stage 2a commenced.
	MMC Park	Coolsivna to commence on site on 19 May.
Laois Schools	Schools Photovoltaic Programme – Solar Panels	Works Completed.
Climate Action Summer Works Scheme		Consultants appointed. Site visits have commenced.

A member asked about the new building for Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa in Clara (ASCN). The CE informed members that an updated cost comparison for re-development at the current site or greenfield development at the Drayton Villas site has been submitted to DEY. The school design for the new site has been approved by the DEY technical team following consultation with Offaly County Council planning officials.

ICT

Ongoing projects:

- Additional space in ICT office now complete and allows for faster configuration times of hardware devices.
- ICT fit out of all 3 new modular buildings for St. Fergal's College, Tullamore College and Portlaoise College to commence in the next few weeks and will be ready for the new school year.
- ICT fit out of new Portlaoise Information Hub complete.
- New Barracuda backup solution for entire Microsoft 365 tenancies in place
- Email scanning solution (Darktrace) initial 12-month contract was a success. Quotes currently being sought for 3-year option.
- OGP Managed Print Services tender to close on May 28th with evaluation to take place in early June.
- ISMS & Cyber Security Baselines Standards work ongoing
- Work ongoing for securing our Office 365 tenancies to the level set out by the National Cyber Security Centre
- Microsoft 365 A5 uplift project will be completed at the end of the month. Submission to DEY has been approved and money has been drawn down from the RED fund (Insurance Dividend).

Corporate Services

Ongoing projects:

- Completion of the Annual Report.
- Completion of the M&R 2030 Reporting for 2024.
- Preparation for the 2024 External Audit.
- Preparation for Internal Audit on aspects of statements of internal controls within schools and centres.
- Staff Training - Safe Pass, First Aid and Fire Warden completed.
- Ongoing policy and procedure document review.
- Processing data access requests, Section 41(b) requests, Oireachtas enquiries, and legal queries.

9. Correspondence

Item No.	Correspondence From	Date/Ref No.	Details	
1.	Dept. of Education	CL.S1.2025	Annual Report 2023	Noted by Members
2.	Dept. of Education	CL.S2.2025	Limited Appeals Process for Option to Join Public Service Spouses' and Children's Contributory Pension Schemes – DPER Circular 23/2022	Noted by Members
3.	Dept. of Education	CL.S.3.2025	Application of CPI – Minimum Death Gratuity Payable to New Entrant Non-Officer Grades – Only Applicable to Pensionable Local Authority Employees from 1st January 2008	Noted by Members
4.	Dept. of Education	CL9.2025	Interdepartmental competition for promotion to Higher Executive Officer for Chief Executive Officer	Noted by Members
5.	Dept. of Education	CL10.2025	Guidance Note to all HR Units on the use of Excluding Orders as provided for under the Public	Noted by Members

			Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004	
6.	Dept. of Education	CL12.2025	Interdepartmental Competition for Promotion to Assistant Principal Officer (Standard) in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	Noted by Members
7.	Dept. of Education	CL13.2025	Occupational Injury Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools	Noted by Members
8.	Dept. of Education	CL13.2025	Interdepartmental Competition for Promotion to Engineer Grade I in the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)	Noted by Members
9.	Dept. of Education	CL25.2025	Information in relation to Standardised Testing and Other Matters – Academic Year 2024/25 and Subsequent Years	Noted by Members
10.	Dept. of Education	CL26.2025	Allocation of Assistant Principal Officer Posts 2025 – 2026	Noted by Members
11.	Dept. of Education	CL27.2025	Allocation of Assistant Principal Posts 2025/26	Noted by Members
12.	Dept. of Education	CL28.2025	Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate exams in 2027	Noted by Members
13.	Dept. of Education	CL29.2025	Multi Annual Climate action summer works scheme (CASWS)	Noted by Members
14.	Dept. of Education	CL30.2025	Cost Limits for Primary and Post primary School buildings	Noted by Members
15.	Dept. of Education	CL31.2025	Say Yes to Languages Primary	Noted by Members
16.	Dept. of Education	CL33.2025	Update to the capturing/entry of pupil ethnicity to the Primary Online Data (POD) and the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD)	Noted by Members

17.	Dept. of Education	CL34.2025	Graduate Certificate in Autism Education	Noted by Members
18.	Dept. of Education	CL35.2025	Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Teacher Professional Learning for Special Education Teachers, 2025/2026	Noted by Members
19.	Dept. of Education	CL38.2025	Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English	Noted by Members

10. Vote of Sympathy

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

- Noreen Flynn – Tullamore College
- David Higgins – Portlaoise Prison
- Tomás Hassett – Portlaoise Prison
- Geraldine Farrell – Abbeyleix FET Centre
- Brian Burke – Abbeyleix FET Centre
- Leanne Breen – LOETB Administrative Offices

11. Vote of Congratulations


There were no votes of congratulations noted.

12. Any other Business

Pam Nolan informed members of the last online session for Phase 3 Governance Training by ETBI/IPA. This session will take place on 4 June from 2-4pm.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 22 July at LOETB Administrative Offices, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, Laois.

Signed: 
[Neil Feighery \(Jul 31, 2025 08:06:22 GMT+1\)](#)

Chairperson

Date: 31/07/2025