



A meeting of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board was held online on 9 December 2025.

Present

ClIr Neil Feighery (Chairperson)
ClIr Aoife Masterson
ClIr Hugh Egan
Seamus Bennett
Alan Lindley
Tara Carty
ClIr Caroline Dwane Stanley
ClIr Claire Murray Smale

William Flanagan
Serena Fitzpatrick
ClIr Eddie Fitzpatrick
ClIr Catherine Fitzgerald
ClIr Claire Murray
Valerie O’Connell
ClIr John King

In Attendance

Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive
Pam Nolan, Director of OSD
Tony Dalton, Director of FET
Derek McGourty, Head of Corporate Services
Nicole Doyle, Corporate Services

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairperson, Neil Feighery, welcomed members and thanked them for their attendance online due to the weather conditions on the day.

Apologies were received from ClIr Vivienne Phelan, ClIr Tommy Mulligan, Myra Kennedy, and Tara Carty.

2. Minutes of LOETB Board meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on 28 October 2025, were circulated to members. Members approved the minutes.

Proposed: John King

Seconded: Alan Lindley

Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Governance

Update on Risk Register

Derek McGourty presented an update on changes to the Risk Register. At the time of review, the Register contained 22 risks. No new risks were added, but one existing risk was amended (see below), leaving a total of 22 risks moving forward.

- **Risk 24-02** was amended from Amber (6) to Red (9) and relates to exposure from expanding use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), increasing the likelihood of inaccurate/biased AI outputs, data mishandling, and cyber threats.

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. Reports from Committees of the Board

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

Audit and Risk Committee

- 4 December 2025

Finance Committee

- 4 December 2025

5. Minutes of Committees of the Board

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

Banagher College

- 24 September 2025
- 9 October 2025

Clonaslee College

- 24 November 2025

Oaklands Community College

- 19 June 2025
- 19 August 2025
- 22 September 2025

Portlaoise College

- 15 September 2025

6. Board Effectiveness Evaluation 2025

Pam Nolan informed members of their obligation to complete the annual Board Effectiveness Review. This questionnaire is designed to gather the Board's views and feedback on the conduct and quality of its meetings.

The link was circulated during the meeting and again via email after the meeting.

7. Policies

The following Policies were noted by the Board:

- Annual Leave Policy
- Fundraising and Sponsorship Policy
- Gifts Policy

8. FET Funding Model

Tony Dalton briefed the Board on the FET Funding Model for 2026. He detailed the budget growth and the changes to the funding model. He pointed out that LOETB was the first ETB to complete the Adult Educator conversion, that there would be no overspend in 2025, and that the cost per FET beneficiary is €2,195, which is the lowest in the sector.

A member asked for further explanation on the 2024 overspend in FET. It was explained to members that the apprenticeship sector is underfunded and there was not enough supplementary budget to cover the expenditure required during 2024. With prudent planning and strict adherence to allocation in 2025, this allowed for the reduction by 50% of the overspend, saving €544,000.

A member queried if the allocation for 2026 is sufficient for planned provision. Tony Dalton explained that it will be a challenge to meet all demand, but only a small number of requests will not be achieved due to funding limit.

9. Office of Comptroller and Auditor General

Pam Nolan explained the following documents for 2026:

- Audit Universe
- Scheduling Letter
- Audit Planning Memorandum

The members can review the Audit Universe document and highlight any areas of focus for audit in 2026.

10. Executive Report

Schools Directorate

Schools' Support

Road Safety Campaign

The Minister for Justice, Jim O'Callaghan TD, launched the Offaly Road Safety campaign at Tullamore College recently in collaboration with Tullamore Rotary Club. First year students from Tullamore College, Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara, and Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac heard safety talks from the Emergency services and then watched re-enactment of a road accident recovery by Fire, Ambulance, and Garda personnel in the school carpark.

Junior Maths Competition

The Inter-ETB Junior Maths competition final was held at Bloomfield House Hotel on 27 November. Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara, Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac, Portlaoise College, and Tullamore College represented LOETB at the event. The eight teams competed against schools from LWETB and CMETB. Tullamore College emerged as overall winners on the day for the second year in a row.

All Stars

The second All Stars event for the academic year took place on 13 November at Portlaoise College. Five schools competed in the basketball event. Students enjoyed a range of collaborative and engaging activities over the course of the morning. We look forward to welcoming schools to the third event in March.

Youth Services

UBU Your Place Your Space New Service 2025 / LOETB Call for Service

Youth Work Ireland Laois was selected to deliver the new UBU Your Place Your Space service in Laois Rural (inc. Mountmellick/Dangans/ Mountrath and Rathdowney). The service will provide out-of-school supports to young people in their local communities to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by improving their personal and social development outcomes.

Oíche na hÓige/ Youth Night 2025

The event took place on a pilot basis from 21-28 November. DEY allocated €11,500 to LOETB to administer to 18 successful applicants under this initiative. The participating clubs and services opened their doors to the public, hosting showcase events that celebrated youth work and its shared impact with the wider community.

Spoken Word Laois Event

Ten young people received coaching from poet and performer Dagogo Hart in writing, performance, and spoken-word expression. Their work culminated in a live performance at the Dunamais Arts Centre.

Community Consultation Project

Laois and Offaly Local Creative Youth Partnership funded a creative consultation between Laois Traveller Action Group and the Community Garda Unit, engaging young Travellers and Gardaí in designing mural concepts for the Portlaoise Garda Barracks renovation.

Ceol Connected – Lullaby Leaf

In partnership with Laois and Offaly Local Creative Youth Partnership, Music Generation Laois and Creative Ireland Laois, Ceol Connected delivered nine immersive sensory-theatre workshops for 54 children aged 6–8 with complex needs.

Science Week 2025

Midlands Science ran three interactive workshops for 84 children, exploring water, states of matter, and the scientific process through hands-on experiments.

REALT

Based on ArcGIS Online (ESRI) figures, Offaly has 294 Ukrainian pupils in primary schools and 197 in post-primary, while Laois has 218 in primary and 122 in post-primary. Two new Accommodation Centres for Ukrainians have been sanctioned in Portarlinton and Ballylinan with a total of 47 spaces.

Music Generation

Music Generation Laois

Sam Marchetti, a student of Mary Wisely in Laois School of Music, and Kiêu Conroy, a student of Siobhan Buckley in Music Generation Laois performed at the RIAM Spotlight Awards Concert in Visual, Carlow on 30 November.

The Big Christmas Sing, featuring Laois' Community Choir, directed by Nuala Kelly, performed on the grounds of Laois Music Centre on 30 November.

Music Generation Offaly

A Christmas single has been released in collaboration with the Irish Independent, with support from Music Generation National Development Office. Students from two of our partner schools in Tullamore (St. Philomena's NS and Scoil Eoin Phóil II Naofa) collaborated under the guidance of their musician educators, Aoibheann McKnight and Emma Goulding, to write an original Christmas song called *Rocking December Nights*.

TY and 2nd year students from Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara have been working on a special project with composer Fiona Linnane to create original compositions which draw their inspiration from the wildlife and sounds in Clara Bog Nature Reserve. These creations will be compiled by the composer into a Geolocated Sound Walk which members of the public will be able to access on their mobile phones and listen to as they walk around the boardwalk.

FET Directorate

Tertiary

LOETB is delivering Year 1 of three-degree courses at Portlaoise Institute in collaboration with SETU Carlow (Years 2-4) for academic year 25/26. They are:

- Bachelor of Business Studies – Year 1
- Bachelor of Science in Software Development – Year 1
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology – Year 1

In addition, LOETB is currently developing a pilot Tertiary Degree programme in Mental Health Nursing. This programme is in collaboration with TETB, and LCETB and each ETB will have 5 designated places on the BSc (Hons) in Mental Health Nursing at TUS (Athlone). This programme will be piloted at Tullamore FET Centre and to build on the already established strong relationship between LOETB and the Nursing Department at TUS. This is a 1+4 model, and the first cohort of students will be enrolled in September 2026.

Apprenticeships

The Apprenticeship team has delivered Phase 2 training to 504 apprentices in 2025.

LOETB is at the planning stage for the new plumbing apprenticeship workshop at Banagher FET Centre. In 2026 we will deliver Phase 2 Plumbing at both METAC in Mountrath and Banagher FET Centre.

Inclusion

My Health Matters

A service gap impacting older adults was identified in 2025 through collaborative efforts involving the Regional Literacy Coalition Partners, LOETB, and the Health Service Executive (HSE). The identified gap centred on health literacy, specifically addressing the need to support older adults in understanding their health requirements through targeted education. LOETB, together with HSE partners, developed an education programme based on the internationally recognised Age-Friendly Health Systems 4Ms: Mobility, Medication, Mentation, and What Matters to Me, with the addition of Meals. The programme promotes making informed health-related decisions and supports literacy and overall well-being.

The programme was launched on 3 December at Midlands Skills Centre, Tullamore.

Skills

Fastway Couriers: Back in Gear: Taking Back Control

Back in Gear is a targeted, fast-track support programme designed for former Fastway couriers, depot managers, and franchise owners affected by the recent company receivership. The programme focuses on helping participants rapidly regain stability, rebuild income, and explore viable self-employment or subcontracting opportunities in the logistics sector, particularly in the high-demand period leading up to Christmas.

Participants will leave the programme with:

- A personalised action plan for re-entering the workforce or setting up independently
- Practical tools for business setup, financial planning, and compliance
- Access to new contacts, subcontracting leads, and industry insights
- Renewed motivation and confidence to move forward

Quality Assurance Support Service

Programme Development

In collaboration with the ESB, LOETB has submitted our application for validation of Level 5 Electrical Overhead Lines Technician Apprenticeship to QQI. The anticipated start date is October 2026 at National Construction Training Centre, Mount Lucas.

LOETB plans to submit a Level 4 Agriculture major award to QQI by year end. This award will ensure that learners will meet entry requirements that have been introduced by Teagasc for their Level 5 Green Cert programmes. It is anticipated that the programme will commence in September 2026.

Work has commenced on the development of a Level 4 major award in Construction. The aim of this award is to provide a relevant accredited pre-Apprenticeship programme which focuses on employment options in the construction industry. The programme, once developed and validated, will be delivered as a pilot at Mountmellick FET Centre from September 2026.

Skills

SDG Champion

LOETB has been selected by the Department of Climate, Energy, and Environment as one of just 20 organisations nationwide to become an SDG Champion. This achievement recognises LOETB's strong leadership in sustainability, its commitment to embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals across our Further Education and Training service, and its ongoing work in supporting learners, communities, and industry to build a greener, more inclusive future. Over an 18-month period LOETB will:

- Advocate and promote the SDGs and sustainable development
- Acts as a good practice example of how an organisation or group can contribute to the SDGs and integrate the SDGs into their work or activities
- Shares learnings with others

Organisation Support and Development

Human Resources

Recruitment

The following posts have been filled since October 2025:

October 2025

Location	Post
Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara	Assistant Principal I
Dunamase College	Teacher x 3
Tullamore College	Teacher x 1
Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara	Teacher x 1

St Francis Special School	Teacher x 1
Adult Literacy	Resource Person
Mount Lucas	Grade VII

November 2025

Location	Post
Banagher College	Grade IV
Tullamore College	Programme Co Ord at AP1
Head Office	Attendant
Tullamore College	Assistant Principal I
Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara	Acting Programme Co Ord
Clonaslee College	Grade 3
Banagher College	Teacher x 1
Portlaoise College	Assistant Principal II
LOETB	Sub Teacher Panel
LOETB	Sub SNA Panel
LOETB	Bus Escort Panel
LOETB	Personal Assistant
Clonaslee College	Principal
Human Resources	Assistant Principal Officer
Portlaoise FET	Adult Literacy Organiser

Auto Enrolment

Auto-enrolment is a new retirement savings system for employees who do not have a pension scheme, earn more than €20,000, and are aged between 23 and 60. LOETB has a small cohort of employees who will fall into this scheme. LOETB will register on the Portal and then issue communications to relevant employees.

Category	Update
Retirement Pensions	18
Spouse/Child Pensions	8
Transfer of Service	Transfer in – 38, Transfer out 38
Purchase of Service	22

Incremental Credit

29 active applications being processed.

HR/Payroll

Figures for salaries paid from October 2025 are as follow:

Date	Amount	Employee
24/10/2025	€1,664,992.10	1138

07/11/2025	€1,625,969.91	1132
21/11/2025	€1,566,954.37	1116
05/12/2025	€1,607,728.09	1120

Finance

Budgets

Working with budget holders to balance budgets to year end.

Finances

Summary of finances to end of October 2025:

Summary of Workings to End October 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)	41,361,963	0	207,852	(37,464,784)	4,611,828	-5.08%
Associated Main Scheme Grants	1,369,427	551,859	2,541,471			(2,119,765)	2,342,992	9.38%
Capital Schedule	6,081,564	425	7,625,068			(9,241,376)	4,465,681	75.88%
Further Education & Training	76,220	1	44,880,913			(44,403,741)	553,393	16.39%
Youth Affairs	199,653	0	732,979			(848,891)	83,741	-0.78%
Agency	490,412	(16,024)	1,591,537			(2,253,189)	(187,264)	4.13%
Self Financing	645,130	16,140	1,430,869			(1,315,965)	776,173	0.09%
Third Party Funds	20,151	(64)	24,031			(18,666)	25,452	0.00%
Totals	9,941,692	0	100,188,830	0	207,852	(97,666,377)	12,671,996	

Reconciliation to V4 (Bank Reconciliation)		Total
Cash Balance 01/01/2025		9,941,692
Budgets to October 2025		100,188,830
Payments to October 2025		-97,666,377
Cash Balance 31/10/2025		12,464,144
Less Balance per V4 31/10/2025		7,741,877
	Difference	4,722,267
Non Public Bank Accounts Opening Balance		144,767
Balance Allocation per DE Service Plan		4,576,663
Expenditure Coding Errors		0
Opening Balance Coding Errors		837
	Difference	Rounding
		-1

The difference between closing bank balance per financial systems and amount on investment documented below is due to funds being held to pay Revenue amounts in November and uncashed cheques.

Investment

NTMA		
On Investment at end of October 2025		€8,871,432
Interest Received to end of October 2025		€81,432
Interest Rate		1%

Investment Term	7 day	€8,871,432
	30 day	€0

AIB	
On Investment in Deposit Account at end of October 2025	€658,342
Interest Received to end of October 2025	€10,479
Interest Accrued end October 2025	€343
Interest Rate	.25%

Procurement

Location	Procurement	Progress
LOETB	Managed Print Service	Installations in progress. Processing document with location limits issued.
Training Services	Plumbing Apprenticeship Equipment Tender	Evaluation held. In standstill until 2 December.
LOETB	Waste Management	Tender closed. Evaluation rescheduled to 25 November.
LOETB	Managed ICT Security Services DPS - Mini Comp (e-mail scanning)	Tender closing date 28 November.
Training Services	Electrical Apprenticeship Programme Revalidation – Equipment Capital	Meeting scheduled with apprenticeships 24 November.
Training Services	Plant & Machinery	All plant on site with exception of excavator
Schools	School SMIS	Principals list of requirements complete. Working group meeting to develop tender documents.
LOETB	PAT Testing	RFT published on eTenders, closing on 25 November.
LOETB	OGP - Service of Fire Alarm, Emergency Lighting, Electronic Security System	Specification sheets being completed for return to Procurement by 16 January 2026. Second extension in place until 30 April 2026.
Schools	EPS Framework for Books	Tender documents being drawn up with EPS.
LOETB	OGP - Occupational Health Services to the Public Sector	Query raised with OGP regarding number 2 supplier on cascade due to no response from number 1. OGP Information session on 2 December 2025
LOETB	Legal Framework Extension	Extension to be drawn up for 1 year.

LOETB	ICT Maintenance	Meeting to be scheduled with Contractor ahead of contract extension
LOETB	Bus Tender	RFT on eTenders, closes on 22 December.
Training Services	Training provider for Scaffolding Components Apprenticeship	Tender documents being drawn up.

A member enquired about training for the new printing systems. Pam Nolan stated that training can be provided to those who require it with school and centres advised to contact the IT Department to organise same.

Buildings

Location	Project	Status
Clonaslee College	Pathfinder 2025	Selected for Pathfinder Heat Pump Project. Awaiting direction from DEY on asbestos survey roll-out.
	Emergency Works Scheme - Boiler	Contractor appointed. Works progressing, due for completion by end November.
	Additional Accommodation 4 rooms	Approved by DEY. Cost comparison for changing Home Economics room to Graphics submitted 4 November.
	Soffit & Fascia	Received SWS approval for this project.
St Fergal's College, Rathdowney	Modular Accommodation	Final accounts approved. Project Complete.
	1937 Building	Stage 1 to recommence as per DEY instruction. High level cost report sent to DEY on 6 October. Meeting scheduled for 26 November.
	All weather Pitch – Kerbs, lighting & walking path	Design progressing – awaiting tender documents.
Portlaoise College	Additional Accommodation - permanent build	Updated schedule of accommodation & brief sent to SOLAS for approval. SOLAS to agree funding amount.
	Additional Accommodation - Modular	Cert of Substantial completion issued. Final Account agreed.
	Track Lights	Short term solution in place. Works to commence to reconnect to mains supply. Contractor on site from 24 November.
	Roof Leak & Fire Doors	EW application being prepared. Alternative solutions being explored as original costs extensive.

	New Athletics Track	Construction planned for Q2 2026 – final design documents being prepared.
Dunamase College	New School	Planning Permission – Further Information submitted.
Oaklands Community College	New School	Stage 2b – submitted to DEY on 23 September. Awaiting meeting date.
Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara	New School	Waiting on decision from DFHERIS and SOLAS regarding financial contribution to the proposed development at Drayton Villas.
Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilkormac	Pathfinder project	Snags completed.
	Additional Accommodation	Email sent to ASA requesting a review of agreed scope. Awaiting decision from ASA.
Tullamore College	Additional Accommodation - Permanent Build	Consultants appointed. Aiming for Stage 1 submission before year end. Site surveys to be carried out.
	Roof Leak	EW application being prepared.
Head Office	Air-Con	Design obtained from M&E Engineer. RFT to be prepared.
Banagher FET Centre	Plumbing Apprenticeship Workshop	Planning application submitted on 15 October, decision due by 18 December. Design Team finalising Fire and Disability Access Certificates.
Portlaoise Institute	Additional Accommodation	Updated schedule of accommodation and brief sent to SOLAS for approval on 20 November.
	Temporary Prefabs	Civil works completed on 4 classrooms on site. Cladding to be finalised in next 2 weeks.
Portarlington FET Centre	Doors	AG1 letter received on 6 November. Consultant appointed. Design commenced.
Clara FET Centre	Gas	HSA Inspection – Signage, isolation valve, risk assessment, and inspection due to be returned on 5 December.
National Construction Training Campus, Mount Lucas	SIUF	Stage 2a meeting with SOLAS/DFHERIS held on 7 November. DT response to queries to be submitted on 10 December.
	MMC Park	Groundworks due to be finished mid-December.
	Training Space Slab	Contract awarded. Works have commenced on site.
Birr Outdoor Education Centre	Minor Capital Works	Consultant continuing with design. Draft pre-tender cost report due mid-December

Abbeyleix FET Centre	Minor Capital Works	Consultant continuing with design. Draft pre-tender cost report due mid-December
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IT

Printers

Roll out of new printers with Cantec complete. Collection of Bryan S Ryan printers has commenced.

Email Scanning Solution

Contractor appointed on multi-year deal.

Windows 10 updates

Licences purchased and roll-out to commence 8 December.

Corporate Services

Audits

The Internal Audit Unit's (IAU) audit on the *Review of Previous Audit Recommendations* within LOETB is currently ongoing. The IAU's *Data Protection and Freedom of Information Audit* has recently concluded, with the closing meeting held on 2 December. The draft audit report will be issued in the coming weeks, at which point management responses will be required.

Compliance

Implementation of Q4 Compliance Plan is ongoing, with a check on the financial aspects of the Statements of Internal Control recently completed. Three centres and three schools were sampled, with documentation reviewed and site visits conducted to verify submissions. Compliance checks were also conducted on LOETB buses with documentation reviewed centrally, followed by site visits where physical inspections of each bus and logbook were completed.

Green Team

Energy audits for Birr OEC and Abbeyleix FET Centre soon to be finalised. The Buildings section will progress energy audits for all owned FET buildings, starting with Portarlinton FET Centre and Mountmellick FET Centre. Emphasis will be placed on the Christmas shut down period over the coming weeks, which forms part of our broader *Reduce Your Use* campaign focusing on practical steps staff can take to reduce energy consumption.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Steering Group

A pilot process for the adoption of Microsoft 365 Copilot is underway. AI literacy training for all staff is currently being developed, with rollout planned for Q1 2026.

SharePoint Project

Phase 1 of the SharePoint Project is underway, focusing on auditing the current SharePoint environment and developing a proposed site design and structure. Preparatory work for a Scoping and Design Workshop with the provider is in progress, and a small working group has been established to support this phase. In parallel, LOETB is finalising an agreement with the provider for ongoing day-to-day SharePoint support.

11. Correspondence

Item No.	Correspondence From	Date/Ref No.	Details
1.	DEY	CL22.2025	Interdepartmental Competition for Promotion to Higher Executive Officer (HEO) Strategy, Research & Insights in the Policing & Community Safety Authority (PCSA)
2.	DEY	CL37.2025	Recruitment procedures for all staff other than persons employed as teachers or special needs assistants in Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
3.	DEY	CL65.2025	Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes
4.	SOLAS	CL72.2025	Enhancement to Irish Sign Language (ISL) Scheme provision
5.	DEY	CL74.2025	Panel access for fixed-term/temporary (this includes substitute) and part-time teachers to the Supplementary Redeployment Panel for the 2026/27 school year

Members noted all correspondence.

12. Vote of Sympathy

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

- Breed Hassett
- Noeleen Meleady
- Molly McCusker
- Ciara Murray

The Board also wishes to extend its sympathy to the family and colleagues of the following former Presidents at ETBI

- Patrick Gerard Murphy (Cork ETB)
- Jim Finucane (Kerry ETB).

13. Vote of Congratulations

The Board wishes to extend its congratulations to Board member Alan Lindley on his recent appointment as SIPTU Honorary President.

14. Any other Business

The schedule of Board meetings for 2026 was circulated to members for noting.

Nomination of Male Staff Representative to LOETB Board:

Nominee: Enda Gilligan


Proposed: Catherine Fitzgerald

Seconded: Serena Fitzpatrick

15. Date of next meeting

The Chairperson conveyed his Christmas best wishes to the Board and expressed his appreciation to the Board and LOETB Staff for their support and contributions throughout the year.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 24 February 2026, venue to be confirmed.


Signed: Neil Feighery (Mar 7, 2026 11:37:06 GMT) **Date:** 07/03/2026

Chairperson