



LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
COMHAR SPÓIRT NA LAOISE

— SPORT IRELAND —

Laois Sports Partnership Strategic Plan

2022-2026

Everybody Active in County Laois





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The Board of Laois Sports Partnership would like to acknowledge and thank all who contributed to the development of this strategy - Everybody Active in Laois 2022 - 2026. In particular, we would like to acknowledge; Our Laois Sports Partnership team, Board of Directors past and present, Sport Ireland, our partners, stakeholders and the general public. This feedback was integral to the development of this strategy which will guide the work of Laois Sports Partnership during 2022 - 2026

Foreword

Laois Sports Partnership 2022 – 2026 Strategy

I would like to congratulate Laois Sports Partnership on the development of their latest strategic plan. Sport Ireland is passionate about getting Ireland physically active, involved in sport and ensuring everyone in the community has a chance to be included. I am delighted to see the emphasis Laois Sports Partnership have placed on this throughout their strategy.

Laois Sports Partnership have identified the need to create sustainable pathways for all to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation in the county. Their proactive approach to strengthening partnerships with agencies, organisations, clubs and communities will ensure that sport and physical activity opportunities are accessible to all across the county.

The National Sports Policy 2018-2027 aims to increase the number of people from all areas of society regularly and meaningfully taking part in sport and physical activity. Local Sports Partnerships play a vital role in the sustainable development of sport and physical activity at a local level. They ensure opportunities for participation in sport are progressive, innovative and fully inclusive. Laois Sports Partnership's contribution to this has been noteworthy since its inception in 2001. I look forward to continued delivery of results as part of the implementation of this strategy .

The Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021-2024 further highlights the important role which Local Sports Partnerships can play by being key advocates in the strategic planning, development and promotion of sport and physical activity at a local level. I look forward to seeing Laois Sports Partnership continuing to make a meaningful contribution to reaching the aims of this plan.

The long-term implications of COVID 19 on community sport and physical activity will become more apparent throughout the implementation of this strategy. I am pleased to see that by aiming to be collaborative, inclusive and empowering, Laois Sports Partnership will ensure that there are a variety of opportunities available to all sections of society.

I commend Laois Sports Partnership on the extensive consultation, evaluation and research carried out during the strategy development, during a period when such work became more challenging than ever. This process has led to a strategy that meets the needs of the communities in Laois and has buy in and support across the county. I would like to thank, in particular, the staff and board members of Laois Sports Partnership, as well as all stakeholders and partner organisations who were involved in developing this strategy and who will contribute to its successful delivery.


Chief Executive
Sport Ireland



Message from Laois Sports Partnership

The board and team of Laois Sports Partnership are delighted to present this strategy as an important feature of the work already underway and also of that which lies ahead. The members of the Board of Directors have always taken their role very seriously and at every opportunity supported the development and continuation of sport, recreation and physical activity in Laois. Tasked with increasing participation we are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated hardworking and committed team, who have continued to be creative and unrelenting in these past few years particularly during the many challenges faced during COVID-19. During the lifetime of our Strategic Plan 2017-2021 we delivered over 689 programmes to 90,816 people participating with 190 training courses and 3,172 participants. We have also increased our income from €352,530 in 2017 to in excess of €1million in 2021. Both Eibhlin Smith Chairperson Laois Sports Partnership and Caroline Myers Coordinator Laois Sports Partnership agree it has been very satisfying and rewarding for all of us to watch the position of the Sports Partnership in Laois move from a direct delivery role to a more focused leadership role, encouraging many more sports, clubs, communities, agencies and organisations to open up the possibilities for participation and engagement. This is the main activity which we will continue to develop and grow with your help and support, making Laois an even more vibrant hub for sport and physical activity. We would like to sincerely thank S3 Solutions for their guidance throughout this process and the members of the Board for taking the time to engage and be part of this strategy. In particular, the staff of the Sports Partnership for their insight and input in this document and of course, Mr. John Treacy, former CE as well as our current CE Dr. Una May and all the staff of Sport Ireland for their continued support and encouragement. We will be guided by the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, Sport Ireland's Participation Strategy 2021 - 2024, the National Physical Activity Plan and the Healthy Ireland Framework for improved health and wellbeing. Laois Sports Partnership will be steadfast in its efforts in achieving the full vision of Everybody Active in Laois, working together to keep Laois active underpinned by our values of inclusion, collaboration, facilitation and partnership.



Eibhlin Smith
Chairperson
Laois Sports Partnership



Caroline Myers
Co-ordinator
Laois Sports Partnership

Laois Sports Partnership Board

Eibhlin Smith Laois PPN	Ciarán Reilly Club Representative	Wes Wilkinson Laois County Council	Niall Tully Laois Offaly ETB
Marion O'Boyle Secondary Schools Representative	Karen Phelan Primary Schools Representative	Clodagh Armitage Health Service Executive	David Hainsworth Club Representative
Naeem Iqbal Service Provider	Marian Condren Laois PPN	Louis Brennan Honorary Board Member	

Finance Audit Risk Committee

Emer McCarthy	Paul Culleton	Eibhlin Smith
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Laois Sports Partnership Team

Caroline Myers Co-ordinator	Róisín Lawlor Administrator	Catriona Slattery Sports Inclusion Disability Officer
Eimear Bryant Community Sports Development Officer	Ciarán Cafferkey Communications Officer	Rathdowney Errill Activity Hub
Bloom HQ Sports & Activity Hub	SVT Activity & Wellness Hub	

A trip down memory lane to where it all began as Laois Sports Partnership enter their 21st year

The birth of the Sports Partnership.

The birth of the Sports Partnership. Sport Ireland was established on 1st October 2015. It is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. Driving the development of sport in the country is done through collaboration and partnerships with the many organisations that are interested and active in the sports sector in Ireland. Key among these in terms of participation is the national network of Local Sports Partnership (LSP's) of which there are 29 across the country, including Laois LSP.



"Having a chat." John Treacy and Louis Brennan at an event in the Maldron Hotel Portlaoise, 2014

Given the success of Sport Ireland (formerly known as the Irish Sport Council) and the LSP network, it is interesting to reflect on the early beginnings of both when the vision of like-minded sports people in Laois was being mirrored, replicated and supported at national level.

In 1996, Louis Brennan, then Temporary County Manager, Laois Co. Co. supported by the enthusiasm and knowledge of a group of sports people, came up with an innovative idea of establishing a Sports Forum in the county. Louis had the feeling that the County Council should spearhead the concept of involving people of all ages, in sport and recreation so that all our people had the opportunity to play sport and learn how to lose as well as to win. His thinking was that this could be achieved using the then infrastructure and harnessing the wonderful commitment and experience of groups in the county. Following much dialogue locally and with the assistance of like-minded people across the county and beyond, he felt that Laois could also be the influencer for other counties and councils. He received the support of the County Councillors and the local clubs. This led to Laois County Council being one of the first local authorities to create the post of Sports Officer to formally develop the vision of Laois Sports Forum. The concept, supported and driven by Sport Ireland, has developed over time into Local Sports Partnership network as we know it.

How it was done. Through his role with Laois County Council, he assembled a group of sports people in County Hall and discussed the concept of a non-profit motivating force, coaching etc. for the development of leisure, recreation and sport in the County. In addition to active sports people, he included non-active but interested people. The initial thinking was to ensure and assist in the inclusion of all communities in

sport/recreation and the structuring of sporting communities using existing built and natural infrastructure. They really ensured that the group would not be involved, in any way, with the development or purchase of buildings or infrastructure.

Among the community/sporting representatives directly involved at the initial stages were: Seamus O'Brien; John Brennan; Kieran Conroy; Pat Critchley; John Cotter; Eileen Hayes, Jimmy Keenan; Tim Browne; Ger O'Brien and others. Some of the earlier tasks included brainstorming and fundraising. In relation to the latter, one particular and distinguished fundraising event was when Jimmy Keenan from Portlaoise agreed to race a greyhound in the Newbridge Dog Track. The event raised the princely sum of approximately £4,000 for the project.

Established 1st Sports Forum in Ireland. In 1998 a bold and unprecedented step was taken with the formal establishment of the Laois Recreation, Leisure and Sports Forum, supported by the newly appointed Sports Officer, Ms Ann Marie Maher. It's strategy was based on the "needs and analysis" of our community which had been identified. Equally as important were the continuous discussions which took place between John Treacy and Louis Brennan. Following visits to Laois and discussions locally, John expressed a sincere and deep interest in "what was happening in Laois." At this time, he was also proceeding with the development and extension of the concept nationally. With the good will and support of national stakeholders and local groups including the Laois Recreation, Leisure & Sports Forum, in 1998 the National Sports Council was set up.

Assistance from John Treacy & Irish Sports. From the early days there was an excellent relationship with John Treacy former Chief Executive of Sport Ireland and it was through his involvement that the Laois project was replicated and enhanced throughout Ireland. The Sports Partnerships replaced the "Forums" and undertook the role and duties of the Partnerships at county level. John Treacy introduced people like Eamonn Coughlan, Kieran McGeeney, Morgan Buckley and Frank Fahy to us and we benefitted from their involvement. Throughout that process there was also involvement and consultations with other Sports Partnerships. The network was formally launched by the then Minister for Sport, Michael Ring T.D. in 1999. During the launch the Minister was questioned regarding the role and function of the Partnerships. One particular question from the floor caused him a little difficulty dealing regarding some of the procedures of the Partnerships. His response was "if you really want know the answer to that, talk to the representatives from Laois, as they know".

My involvement with Laois Sports Partnership. As an official of Laois County Council, I had always been both actively and passively interested and involved in the Partnership. I represented the community on the Board of the Company and since my retirement I have had a continuous involvement as an active member of the Board of the Company and was vice chairman for some years. The Board of the Partnership is excellent and that is a tribute to the continuous success and appointment of people with a real interest in their role and function.

Caroline Myers has been the full time Co-ordinator for the past 14 years. Caroline has been an outstanding official and has driven the LSP from strength to strength accompanied by the LSP team and in partnership with our partners both on the Board and in Sport.

I thank the Board and team of LSP for their support over the years. I wish John Treacy and Una May every success into the future and wish Laois Sports Partnership continued success.

Louis Brennan

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

S3 Solutions were commissioned by Laois Sports Partnership to draft the Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2026. As per terms of reference the key elements of the strategic planning process included the following:

- Review of the previous plan to include a write up of the final strategy which considers feedback and changes suggested by the Laois Sports Partnership
- Assessment of the current standing of Laois Sports Partnership in the community
- Assessment of the internal environment
- Assessment of the external environment
- SWOT analysis
- Assessment of the vision, mission statement, key thematic areas and objectives

The information presented in this report was gathered during the period July 2021 to October 2021.

1.2. About Us

Laois Sports Partnership is a leader in local sports development in Ireland and is one of the founding partnerships. Laois County Council identified the need for a Local Sports Partnership for Laois in 2001 and an inter-agency partnership was established to develop a submission to Sport Ireland, then the Irish Sports Council. The board of Laois Sports Partnership was established in May 2002 and has since met on a bi-monthly basis to address the operational and strategic oversight of sport, recreation and physical activity in the county. The Partnership is supported in its work by a Board of Management with a broad spectrum of representative groups on the board.

The key aims of the Local Sports Partnership are to increase participation in sport through coordination. This is to ensure that local resources are used to best effect and to enable the ongoing development of quality sporting and active recreational opportunities throughout County Laois in an environment that promotes healthy lifestyles, maximum participation and achievement. The outcomes sought from the Local Sports Partnerships by Sport Ireland include:

- Enhanced planning of sport at local level
- Increased levels of local participation, especially amongst specific target groups e.g., older people, girls and women, people with disabilities, unemployed people and those who live in identified disadvantaged communities

- Club development & volunteer training
- Local directories of sports bodies and facilities
- Clear priorities for facility provision and improvement, with related quality management initiatives
- School/ club/ community and school/ National Governing Body links
- Local sports events

To achieve these outcomes, the three main functions of LSPs are summarised by Sport Ireland as:

- Information: Resource audits and a needs analysis which can be used as a basis for planning at local level
- Education: To provide training opportunities, courses and to facilitate participation
- Implementation: Strategic plans used to implement local programmes based on local requirements, to maximise the impact and benefit of national programmes at the local level and to market and promote sport and physical activity

1.3. Governance and Organisation Structure

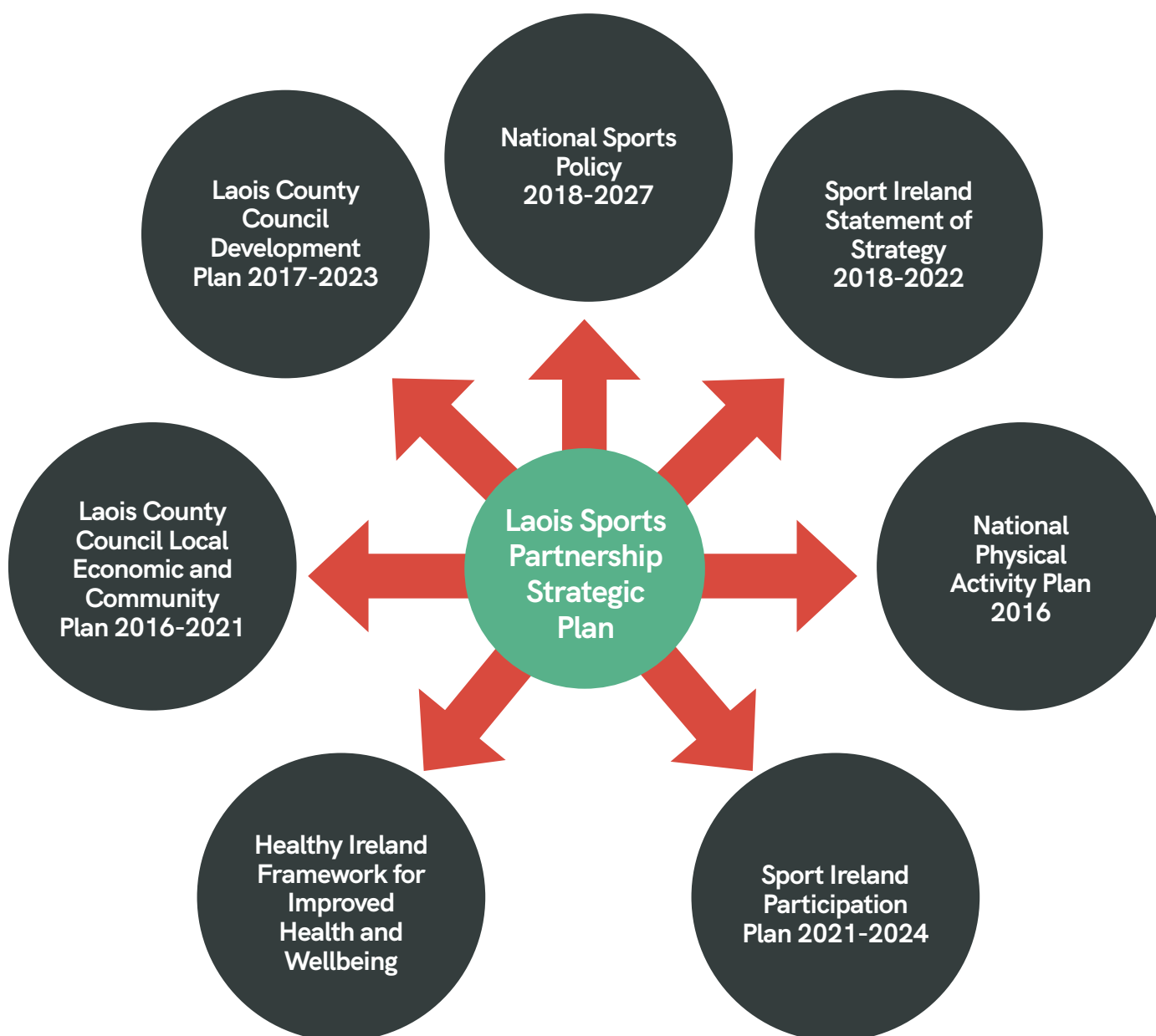
Laois Sports Partnership was established in 2001 as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG). The organisational structure of voluntary board of 11 directors, staff team, coordinator and a number of seasonal coaches and volunteers who support programme delivery. This is illustrated in the diagram below:



Section 2: Strategic Context

2.1. Introduction

This section sets out the strategic context for the development of the Laois Sport Partnership strategic plan. Several pivotal policies are synthesized and reviewed in this section and a range of other policy documents are referenced given their alignment or link to the context of the new strategic plan. The information presented in this section is summarised in a way that illustrates the panoramic alignment between the Laois Sports Partnership Strategy and the relevant strategic and policy context within which the work is delivered.



2.2. Strategic Context

Policy	High Level Overview	Thematic Alignment
<p>The National Sports Policy 2018-2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term commitment to greater inclusion in Irish sport • Focus on promoting opportunities for participation to those who face barriers to sport • Prioritising projects which develop multisport, multi-use options around participation • Recognising the importance of enhanced collaboration between sports. • Emphasis on improving the capacity of LSPs through strong leadership, ethics and governance at all levels 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Places: To create more inclusive and accessible places in County Laois for physical activity and contributing towards the planning and development of facilities across County Laois.</p> <p>Active Partnerships: A commitment to building links between governing bodies, LSPs, sports clubs and communities, engaging with organisations that are advocating for inclusion and diversity in sport and a clarity of responsibility.</p> <p>Active Promotion: Promoting the messages of sporting policy</p> <p>Active Governance: High standards of ethical conduct and a balanced accountability framework</p>
<p>Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2018-2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on participation, performance, and high performance. • Lifelong and inclusive sport • Increasing participation • Playing at a level appropriate to ability underpinned by a community-based club network 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Partnerships: A commitment to building links between governing bodies, LSPs, sports clubs and communities, engaging with organisations that are advocating for inclusion and diversity in sport and a clarity of responsibility.</p>

Policy	High Level Overview	Thematic Alignment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to LSPs with an emphasis on collaboration 	<p>Active Promotion: Promoting the messages of sporting policy</p>
<p>Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021-2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics, values and rights-based approach to ensure actions are delivered in an inclusive manner • Diversity of opportunities • Creating opportunities for all and lifelong participation • Creating sport and physical activity opportunities across all places, spaces and environments • LSPs and NGBs at the centre of a strategy to enable a whole system approach to the development and delivery of sport and physical activity. • Advocates for the importance of sport and physical activity 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Places: Maximise existing facilities and resources, create more inclusive and accessible places in County Laois for physical activity and working with stakeholders to identify facility gaps.</p> <p>Active Partnerships: A commitment to building links between governing bodies, LSPs, sports clubs and communities, engaging with organisations that are advocating for inclusion and diversity in sport and a clarity of responsibility.</p> <p>Active Promotion: Promoting the messages of sporting policy</p>
<p>The National Physical Activity Plan 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the proportion of the population undertaking regular physical activity by 1% per annum by: • Creating increased opportunities for people to be active in ways that suit individual needs and interests. • Removing barriers to being active • Enhancing cross-sector cooperation • Encouraging a supportive environment where physical activity is the norm • Promoting good practice and finding new models of participation. 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Places: Maximise existing facilities and resources and create more inclusive and accessible places in County Laois for physical activity.</p> <p>Active Partnerships: A commitment to building links between governing bodies, LSPs, sports clubs and communities, engaging with organisations that are advocating for inclusion and diversity in sport and a clarity of responsibility</p> <p>Active Governance: A governance framework and quarterly review process to be implemented.</p>

Policy	High Level Overview	Thematic Alignment
<p>The Healthy Ireland Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life • Reduce health inequalities • Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing • Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Places: To create more inclusive and accessible places in County Laois for physical activity and contributing towards the planning and development of facilities across County Laois.</p> <p>Active Promotion: Promoting the messages of Healthy Ireland</p>
<p>Laois County Council Local Economic and Community Plan for 2016-2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrich civic participation and empower communities • Promote equality and inclusiveness across all sectors • Recognise and support the diverse needs of people • Cultivate a strong county identity and an excellent quality of life • Develop and promote ways of living and doing business that support a sustainable environment 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Places: To create more inclusive and accessible places in County Laois for physical activity and contributing towards the planning and development of facilities across County Laois. Supporting the development of Blueways, Greenways and park runs, hubs and outdoor spaces.</p> <p>Active Partnership: Developing stronger partnerships in County Laois that maximise resources including liaising with Laois County Council on policies, strategies and the local sports plan.</p> <p>Policy makes references to a desire to collaborate with Laois Sports Partnership to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a feasibility study on the potential for the establishment of an Indoor Centre of Excellence for Disability Sport • Performing a feasibility study to determine Laois' potential to attract major sporting events • Work in partnership to seek funding to improve sporting and recreational facilities in Laois.

Policy	High Level Overview	Thematic Alignment
<p>Laois County Council's Development Plan for 2017-2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a framework for acceptable uses within the county, defining acceptable forms of development and where they should be directed • To provide a detailed basis for the promotion and management of development • To implement National and Regional development policy provisions at a county level • Ensure the natural environment is protected, cultural and built heritage is safeguarded • Opportunities for existing residents and future generations to live, work, visit and enjoy safely and as equals 	<p>Active People: To enable inactive people to become sustainably active including marginalised communities, those who face barriers to sport and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Active Places: Maximise existing facilities and resources and create more inclusive and accessible places in County Laois for physical activity. Supporting the development of Blueways, Greenways and park runs, hubs and outdoor spaces.</p> <p>Active Partnership: Developing stronger partnerships in County Laois that maximise resources including liaising with Laois County Council on policies, strategies and the local sports plan.</p>



Section 3: Where We Have Come From

3.1. Introduction

This section presents a summary of the evolution of Laois Sports Partnership in recent years. It illustrates the framework through which Laois Sports Partnership has arrived at this stage of their strategic development and provides an insight into the work they are involved with.

3.2. Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives

The Laois Sports Partnership Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 was set out within the following framework.

- **Vision Statement:** *'lifelong participation in sports and physical activities in County Laois.'*
- **Mission Statement:** *'lead, co-ordinate, support, inform and deliver a range of sports and physical activity opportunities for our community.'*
- The **values** of opportunities for all and particular sports for some.
- Four guiding **objectives:**
 1. Increase levels of participation
 2. More sustainable infrastructure
 3. Greater access to training & education
 4. Improved access to information

3.3. Funding (Sample Taken from 2021)

Funding Source	Funding Amount (€)
Core & Challenge funding from Sport Ireland	332,816
Sport Ireland COVID-19 Funding	69,972
Dormant Accounts	424,870
HSE	10,000
Slaintecare Pobal	24,792
Healthy Ireland LCDC Funding	28,100
Sports Capital Grant	38,803
Other Partners	10,300

3.4. Delivery in 2020 and 2021

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, Laois Sports Partnership continued to provide a range of activities for people in the community. As the pandemic moved into 2021, provision continued and a mid-year report was produced by Laois Sports Partnership which highlights the current provision of activity. In the first 6 months of 2021, 39 programmes were started and/or completed with 3,330 people having taken part in courses.

3.4.1. 2020 COVID-19 Lockdown Delivery



Bubbles & Pods Activity Programme

Comprising games, equipment, resource cards and online tutorials for schools.



Supporting Your Wellbeing Booklet

Booklet that promotes positive mental health, focusing on the benefits of physical activity. Distributed free of charge to 7,000 households and available online.



Workout At Home Programmes

Official YouTube Channel

Laois Sports Partnership physical activity programmes and content from Sport Ireland, NGB's and Partners

Online Teen Fitness Sessions



Workout At Home, DVD

Distributed to older adults and people with a disability who do not have access to the internet or live sessions

Couch to 2K and Couch to 5K Podcasts

A series of podcasts and tutor-led activity programmes

COVID-19 Sports Safeguarding Courses



105

Participants over 9
Safeguarding 1
courses



45

Participants over 4
Safeguarding 2
courses



11

Participants on 1
Safeguarding 3
course

3.4.2. 2021 Provision

Laois Sports Partnership aims to provide a wide range of activities through work with the local community. These activities include but are not limited to:

- Walking programmes
- Laois Fit Teenagers
- Self Defence
- Activator Poles
- Swimming Events
- Couch to 50k cycle for women
- Basketball
- Family cycling events

3.4.3. Examples of Other Initiatives

Online Training Courses

27 online training courses with 235 participants were provided by June.

Virtual 5K

The Laois 5K Virtual Run/Walk took place over 5 days in March 2021. Organised in association with Portlaoise Athletics Club, around 700 participants took part.

Activator Pole Programme

Beginning in 2020, the programme carried over into 2021. The use of poles for exercise can improve stability, reduce impact on hip and knee joints, develop core strength, improve posture and promote a better gait pattern.

Mom and Me Bootcamp

An online exercise bootcamp for mothers and daughters delivered and aimed at increasing physical activity amongst women and developing interaction and bonding amongst families.

3.5. Impact of our work in 2019 – 2021



2,915

participants in 20 initiatives in the SVT Activity & Wellness Hub



2,770

participants in 82 programmes in the Sports Inclusion Disability Programme



379

participants on 24 training courses



14,320

participants in 166 Locally Delivered Programmes



1,223

participants in the #BeActive Night - Riverdance



173

Volunteers assisted with the Sports Inclusion Disability Programme



351

people from local clubs received Safeguarding Training (Child Protection)



901

participants in 32 Women in Sport Programmes



25,000+

people engaged with activities online during lockdown



37

clubs received funding through Community Hub, Women in Sport & LSP Activity Grant Scheme



35

clubs received funding from COVID-19 Small Club Grant Scheme



321

families supported in Lockdown by Sports Inclusion Disability Programmes



Rock for All, Inclusive Cul Camp which was run in partnership with The Rock GAA Club and Laois LSP in July 2021

Section 4: Where We Are Going

4.1. Introduction

The consultation findings, engagement and planning sessions informed the development of a new strategic framework for Laois Sports Partnership. This is comprised of a vision statement, mission statement and a series of organisation themes which are built upon 5 'active' themes.



4.2. Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Values

The new vision statement for County Laois Sports Partnership is:

'Everybody active in County Laois'

The new mission statement for County Laois Sports Partnership is:

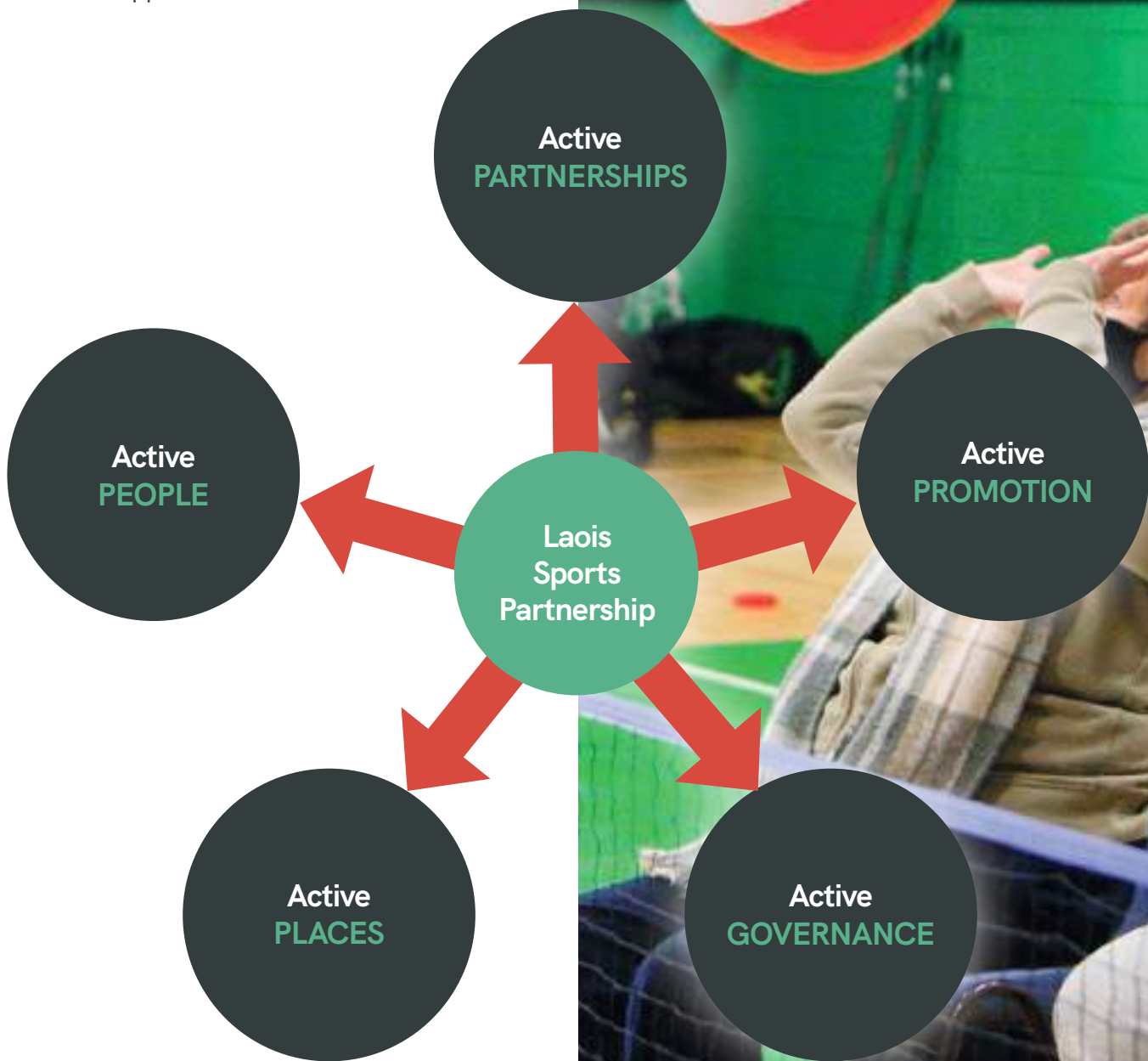
'Creating sustainable pathways for all to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation in County Laois'

The new set of values agreed for County Laois Sports Partnership are:

Community Development	Empowerment	Inclusiveness	Accountable
Integrity	Needs Led	Sustainable Engagement	Strong Partnerships

4.3. Organisation Themes

A key element of the new strategic framework has been the identification of five new 'active' themes. These themes define the type and nature of work that Laois Sports Partnership are engaged in. Each theme is expanded through a strategic aim along with a series of key objectives. Each objective has action areas and key performance indicator/s. These will form the Annual Operational Plans. The 'active' themes are displayed in the chart below with the full strategic plan following. An action plan template for this strategic framework is provided in Appendix 3.



4.4. Theme 1: Active People

'To create more opportunities for everyone in County Laois to be active for life'

Objectives	Action Areas	Key Performance Indicators
1. More inactive people supported to become sustainably active	<p>a) Increase participation in sport and physical activity for women of all ages</p> <p>b) Increase participation in Sport Ireland programmes</p>	<p>i. Numbers of women participating</p> <p>ii. Numbers participating in Sport Ireland Programmes</p>
2. Greater number of people from marginalised communities supported to become active	<p>a) Develop a Disability Action Plan to ensure participation for all</p> <p>b) Encourage clubs to sign up to CARA Disability Charter</p> <p>c) Ensure that all Laois Sports Partnership programmes are adaptable for people with disabilities</p> <p>d) Work with HSE to promote and support their national programmes and deliver programmes for people with disabilities</p>	<p>i. Disability action plan in place</p> <p>ii. Number of clubs signed up to the charter</p>
3. More people engaged in capacity building and training	<p>a) To deliver Dormant Accounts programmes and volunteer supports, capital projects</p> <p>b) Deliver training/education courses</p>	<p>i. Programs delivered</p> <p>ii. People engaged in training/education courses</p>
4. Number of volunteers and coaches created and supported	<p>a) Work with clubs and NGB's to encourage more coaches to become involved</p> <p>b) Support clubs and coaches to build capacity</p> <p>c) Develop coaches to support the provision of targeted interventions for marginalised people</p>	<p>i. Number of new coaches</p> <p>ii. Number or courses delivered</p> <p>iii. Number of participants completing courses</p> <p>iv. Number of qualifications gained</p>
5. Improved health and wellbeing	<p>a) Deliver programmes that improve people's overall health and well being</p> <p>b) Work with others to promote healthy lifestyle choices</p>	<p>i. Health and wellbeing programmes delivered</p> <p>ii. Participants engaged</p>

4.5. Theme 2: Active Places

'To maximise existing facilities' and 'Work in partnership to support the creation of more accessible sport, recreation and physical activity spaces and places across County Laois'

Objectives	Action Areas	Key Performance Indicators
1. Existing facilities and resources are maximised	a) To continue to support the development of Community Sports Hubs	i. Increased engagement in existing facilities and infrastructure
2. Contributing towards the planning and development of facilities across County Laois for sport, recreation and physical activity	a) To work with other stakeholders to identify facility gaps and to play our part in supporting the development of new facilities	i. New capital projects identified ii. Capital development processes initiated iii. New facilities delivered
3. More facilities are fully inclusive and accessible	a) To work with others to carry out an assessment of facilities b) Provide mapping in relation to accessible facilities	i. Greater awareness of existing accessible facilities ii. Gaps in accessible facilities identified iii. Facilities that have become accessible
4. Supporting the development of Blueways, Greenways and parkruns, hubs and outdoor spaces	a) Increase participation in sports recreation and activities such as park runs across the county. b) Provide training and support in specific areas such as cycling and water-based activities c) Work closely with the local authority in the development of blueways and greenways d) Engage in needs led research that provides an evidence base for community led hubs in County Laois	i. More people involved in park runs ii. More people involved in water-based activities iii. More greenways and blue ways created iv. An evidence base in place for the creation of new facilities

4.6. Theme 3: Active Partnerships

'Develop stronger partnerships in County Laois that maximises resources and opportunities for people to become sustainably active'

Objectives	Action Areas	Key Performance Indicators
1. Clarity of roles and responsibilities between partnership organisations in County Laois	<p>a) Build on and create networking opportunities</p> <p>b) To liaise with Laois County Council on policies, strategies and the local sports plan</p>	<p>i. Stronger partnerships and networks</p> <p>ii. Greater input into local strategy and policy</p>
2. Less duplication of facilities and resources	a) Ensure that resources are targeted based on need through ongoing consultation and mapping	i. Recourses reaching those in most need of support
3. Stronger sports clubs and community organisations across County Laois	<p>a) To develop relationships with clubs and communities</p> <p>b) Support Club Development & Sport Capital Grants</p> <p>c) Support Clubs/Organisations with SI COVID-19 Grant Funding</p>	<p>i. Strong relationships with clubs and community organisations</p> <p>ii. Amount of grants allocated</p>
4. Continued engagement with schools through education, training and programme delivery	<p>a) Deliver primary school programmes</p> <p>b) Deliver secondary school programmes</p>	<p>i. Number of schools engaged</p> <p>ii. Number of pupils participating</p> <p>iii. Number of pathways created for sustained participation</p>
5. Greater engagement with organisations that are advocating for inclusion and diversity in sport for all	<p>a) Engage with organisations who advocate for marginalised groups/ communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New communities • People with a disability • LGBTQI+ 	<p>i. Number of organisations engaged</p> <p>ii. Marginalised people participating as a result</p>

4.7. Theme 4: Active Promotion

'To promote the benefits of an active lifestyle to the people of County Laois'

Objectives	Action Areas	Key Performance Indicators
1. Promoting and celebrating the achievements of role models inspiring people to become active	<p>a) Promote the benefits of physical activity & wellbeing</p> <p>b) Identify role models at all levels and work to promote their achievements</p>	<p>i. Number of promotional initiatives delivered</p> <p>ii. Role models identified and celebrated</p>
2. More people aware of the work of Laois Sports Partnership	<p>a) Launch 2022 Laois Sports Partnership Strategic Plan</p> <p>b) Enhance social media presence</p> <p>c) Overall review of PR & Marketing</p>	<p>i. Launch event takes place/ Numbers attending</p> <p>ii. Social media statistics</p>
3. Communicating the sports and physical activity opportunities in the county	<p>a) Proactively promote opportunities for all</p> <p>b) Be the go-to source of information in County Laois for sport and physical activity</p>	<p>i. Enquiries from the general public</p>
4. Linking key national messages to a local level	<p>a) Promote the key messages of National Physical Activity Plan, Healthy Ireland Framework, National Sports Policy</p>	<p>i. Number of publications</p> <p>ii. Campaigns delivered</p>



4.8. Theme 5: Active Governance

'That Laois Sports Partnership operates to the highest standards of professionalism and holds itself accountable to its stakeholders'

Objectives	Action Areas	Key Performance Indicators
1. Well-balanced accountability framework developed and implemented	<p>a) Implement governance framework</p> <p>b) Quarterly review process</p>	<p>i. Laois Sports Partnership is a more transparent and accountable organisation</p> <p>ii. Quarterly review process implemented and recorded</p>
2. Clear communication systems and processes in place	<p>a) To improve communications with all stakeholders</p> <p>b) Improve communication internally</p>	<p>i. Better communication reported internally</p> <p>ii. Social media output</p> <p>iii. Improved relationships</p> <p>iv. Greater awareness of Laois Sports Partnership</p> <p>v. Greater awareness of opportunities to participate</p>
3. Clarity across the organisation of roles and responsibilities	<p>a) To upskill staff on training for GDPR on our CRM systems and capturing data</p> <p>b) Operational model to be agreed and implemented</p> <p>c) Review Governance framework</p>	<p>i. Awareness of governance framework across the organisation</p> <p>ii. Staff training on CRM system</p> <p>iii. Improvement in data capturing</p>
4. Robust performance, financial, risk and information management systems developed and implemented	<p>a) Evaluate all programmes and training using Logic Model and M1</p>	<p>i. All programmes and training evaluated</p> <p>ii. Logic model operational</p>
5. High standards of ethical conduct	<p>a) Regular reflection on the organisational values involving board members and staff</p>	<p>i. Greater awareness of the Laois Sports Partnership values across the organisation</p>

Appendix 1: Area Profile

5.1. Geography

County Laois is located in the province of Leinster. It is the 23rd largest county in the country and is bordered by Tipperary, Offaly, Carlow, Kilkenny, Kildare and Westmeath. Considered doubly landlocked, County Laois is the only landlocked county in Ireland which is also bordered entirely by landlocked counties.

Laois is included in the Laois-Offaly constituency for national elections but divided into 3 electoral areas for local elections: as shown in the adjacent map.

Image: Local Enterprise Office Laois



5.2. Population and Demographics

County Laois has a population of 84,697, seeing a population growth rate of 5.1% from 2011 (Census 2016). Laois is one of the fastest growing populations in the country and is part of the commuter belt to Dublin. The County has a population density of 49.3%. A breakdown of the population in terms of sex is shown in the adjacent graph.



County Laois is the fifth youngest county in Ireland with an average age of 35.6. Individuals under the age of 18 represent 29.87% of the Laois population compared to 26% for the state as a whole. Individuals aged over 65 represent 11.34% of the total Laois population compared to 13.39% for the country. The youth age dependency ratio in County Laois was 36% in 2016 (CSO 2016).

11,396 people are registered as having at least one disability which equates to 13.5% of the County Laois population. This is the same as the national rate of 13.5% (CSO 2016).

5.3. Deprivation

County Laois has a deprivation level of -2.53, marginally below average (Pobal 2016). The deprivation level has been increasing since 2006 when the level was -1.23, with the deprivation level being -2.28 in 2011. The County is made up of 3 electoral areas for local elections which are further divided into a total of 100 electoral divisions. If we compare the levels of deprivation across County Laois, 39% of the electoral divisions are 'marginally above average'. There is 1 pocket of affluence within the County in Moyanna (Pobal 2016). Of the remaining electoral divisions, 56% are 'marginally below average' and just 4% are 'disadvantaged'. In particular, the electoral divisions of Dangans (-10.06), Rathdowney (-10.71), Mountmellick Urban (-11.54) and Doonane (-11.22), are the most disadvantaged areas within the County (Pobal 2016).

5.4. Employment

Male unemployed in County Laois significantly decreased between 2011 and 2016, from 24.83% to 15.92%. Similarly, female unemployment decreased from 16.88% in 2011 to 15.34% in 2016 (Pobal 2016). However, both male and female unemployment rates are significantly higher in County Laois than the national rate of 9.2% for males and 6.2% for females (CSO 2016). In County Laois, 18.42% of parents are lone parents (Pobal 2015). Lone parents are found to experience greater financial hardship and this burden may be linked to increased negative outcomes for children with regards to poor housing, health problems, poor nutrition and fewer opportunities. Single parents because of family breakdown can also be linked to increased psychological, developmental and emotional issues in children

5.5. Education

Of those over the age of 15 in County Laois, 14.1% have either no formal education or only primary level education. In terms of third level education, 42.7% of the population aged 15 years and over have achieved a third level education. This is slight above the national rate of 42% having recorded as attaining a third level education (Census 2016).

5.6. Health

In 2016, 73,545 people stated that they were in very good or good health, representing 86.8% of the total population of County Laois (Census 2016). This is slightly lower than the 87% of the population nationally. The rates of those who report their health as bad or very bad are similar between the County and the national average, with 1.59% in County Laois and 1.61% nationally (HSE, 2015). The County's rate of suicide between 2018 and 2020 was 3.8% per 100,000 which is significantly lower than the national rate of 7.9% per 100,000. The suicide rate in County Laois has been steadily decreasing since 2015 (HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention).





Appendix 2: Review Methodology

6.1. Data Collection

A mixed method approach was used comprising reflective sessions, semi structured interviews, focus groups discussions and an online survey. A consultation framework was co designed and developed following an initial meeting with Laois LSP in July, this included:

- Two reflective sessions were facilitated with the Laois Sports Partnership Board and Staff team respectively, these sessions explored the purpose of Laois Sports Partnership, what the big goals of the strategy should be and what the delivery of a successful strategy would look like.
- Five qualitative semi structured interviews were carried out with staff from Laois Sports Partnership. These discussions focused on service delivery and how it aligns with the organisation's purpose, existing processes and their effectiveness, future strategic priorities and challenges.
- Ten consultation meetings were held with stakeholder organisations identified in collaboration with Laois Sports Partnership. These discussions gathered an external perspective on the future role of the organisation and how it aligns with the strategic landscape.
- A survey was circulated among individuals and organisations from across County Laois. The survey sought views on the key issues and challenges facing these respondents over the next three years and gathered opinions on the future of sport and physical activity and how activities and programmes could be developed to help tackle these issues.

6.2. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach¹. Categories were developed, coded and reduced. Survey data, researchers' observations and thematic data from interviews was cross referenced in order to identify emergent themes and issues and to explore the relationships between issues². The researchers adopted an inductive approach, focused on wide ranging engagements with key stakeholders to build an abstraction and describe the key concepts relating to sport and recreation in Laois.

1 Lewis-Beck, M. S., Bryman, A. & Liao, T. F. (Eds.) (2004). The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods (Vols. 1-3). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications

2 Morgan, D. L. (1997). Focus groups as qualitative research (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

6.3. Limitations

Efforts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of findings through multiple method consultation (surveys, focus groups and interviews). We also extended the data collection process on a number of occasions to ensure maximum input into the process. We note the following limitation:

- As with any survey data, errors due to question non-responses may exist. The number of respondents who chose to respond to a survey question may be different from those who chose not to respond, thus creating bias.

Our Guiding Principles

Everything we do as a network is underpinned by an agreed set of principles, these are;

- Evidence informed and quality
- Collaboration and partnership working
- Cross sectoral involvement
- An all island approach
- Good governance and transparency
- Openness to new ideas, models and approaches
- Shared learning and collective development

6.4. Steering Group

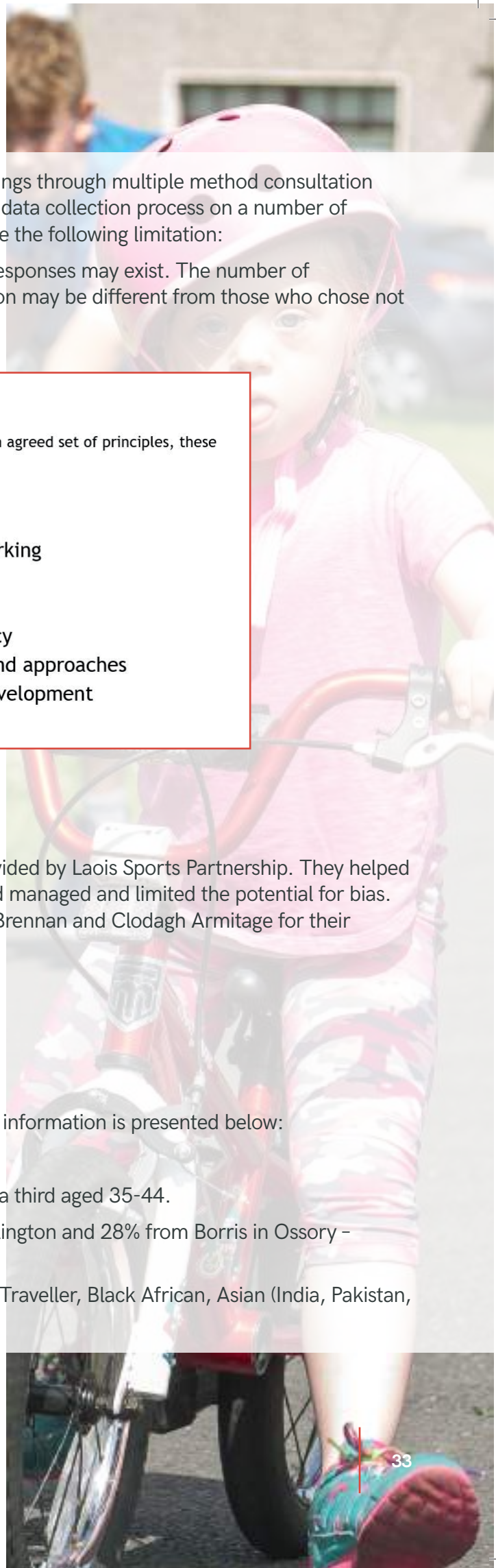
We would like to acknowledge the guidance and counsel provided by Laois Sports Partnership. They helped shape our report, held us to account on the methodology and managed and limited the potential for bias. We would like to thank Caroline Myers, Eibhlin Smith, Louis Brennan and Clodagh Armitage for their ongoing support and direction throughout this project.

6.5. Headline Survey Findings

Demographics

There were 185 responses to the individual survey. Some key information is presented below:

- 82% of respondents were female and 18% male
- Respondents from across the age spectrum with over a third aged 35-44.
- 43% from Portlaoise, 29% from Graiguecullen-Portarlinton and 28% from Borris in Ossory - Mountmellick.
- 93% Irish with other ethnicities including British, Irish Traveller, Black African, Asian (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) and Chinese.



- 74% identify as heterosexual, 18% asexual and 3% gay or lesbian.
- 6% have a disability: 18% physical, 27% sensory and 9% intellectual.

There were 29 responses to the organisation survey:

- 50% from sports clubs and 39% from community and voluntary organisations or charities
- 4 respondents provided Gaelic Games sports and 2 hockey
- Other sports include golf, handball, Ladies Gaelic Football, Soccer, Swimming and Canoeing

Awareness of Laois Sports Partnership

Many respondents were both aware of and had been involved in the programmes, events and/or activities provided by Laois Sports Partnership (70% of individuals and 87% of organisations). Just 4% of individuals were unaware of Laois Sports Partnership whilst no organisational respondent was unaware.

Opportunities to Participate in the Area

Respondents indicated that opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity in the community are currently average, rated 5.63 on a scale of 1 to 10. This finding identifies a gap in relation to opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. This does not necessarily conclude that the opportunities do not currently exist however, rather that people may not know about them.

Respondents also noted that they did not feel that they have a consistent say in the activities or opportunities developed in the area. This would suggest that more outreach and engagement may be required at a local level to develop needs-led opportunities.

Challenges to Quality of Life

The top 4 challenges to quality of life for people in the community were reported as:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Lack of fit for purpose community facilities
- Lack of services and facilities for children and young people
- Lack of amenities within the area

"Lack of indoor sports facilities results in anti-social behaviours, mental health issues and poor general health due to inactivity. Also leads to obesity and children falling into unhealthy online activities, isolation etc."
- Organisation Respondent

"I have a high functioning child with ASD, finding a sport that has inclusiveness and an understanding of ASD is a challenge. It's also an issue that others in the communities aren't aware of these challenges."
- Individual Respondent

Barriers Facing Organisations

The top 4 barriers to organisations trying to address challenges in the area were reported as:

- Difficulty accessing funding
- People not being aware of services and activities that are available
- Difficulty in recruiting and/or retaining volunteers
- Local facilities not being fit for purpose

Barriers to Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

The top 5 barriers to participating in sport and physical activity in the area were reported as:

- Cost of sport and physical activity
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of awareness of what is available
- Busy family life
- Access to facilities



Role for Laois Sports Partnership

Respondents noted a range of suggestions through which Laois Sports Partnership could support people in the community to access sport and physical activity opportunities. These include:

- Better engagement with and provision for schools
- Better provision for children
- Increased promotion of the Partnership and what is available
- Enhanced collaboration with other organisations
- A focus on promoting inclusivity
- Provision outside of the normal 9-5 operating hours
- More diverse sport provision

Addressing Barriers

Respondents identified several actions that they would like to see developed in their area to address barriers to sport and physical activity. These include:

- Improving sporting infrastructure e.g., leisure/multi-sport centres and swimming pools
- Increasing resources
- Develop a more inclusive sport offering for target groups
- Facilitate more non-competitive sport



Suggestions for the types of activity that respondents would like to see developed include:

- Yoga/Pilates
- Community games
- Hockey
- Gymnastics
- Walking Clubs
- Water-based sports
- Badminton
- 5-aside football
- Mountain biking
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Hiking
- Athletics
- Rock-climbing

6.6. Presentation of Information to the Board

Following the gathering and assessment of consultation findings, the next stage of the process involved a presentation of this information to the Board and staff of Laois Sports Partnership followed by a series of planning sessions informed by the findings. This initially involved a reflection on organisational strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- Staff team
- Track record of delivery
- Trusted by funders and service users
- Professionalism
- Partnership
- Events

Weaknesses

- PR & Marketing
- Partnerships
- Targeted needs-led provision
- Strategic focus and coordination
- Relationships
- Sustainability

Laois Sports Partnership identified that we have a strong staff team, longevity and positive record of accomplishment of delivery. The process also identified areas for improvement such as marketing, building stronger partnerships and targeting provision at those who are marginalised and disengaged from sport and physical activity such as people with a disability or ethnic minority communities.

What you told us has had helped to shape the new strategic framework for Laois Sports Partnership. Section five outlines the strategy in detail. Our plan has been developed around several thematic themes which these have been identified and refined to address challenge, barriers and gaps in existing provision.

The consultation identified a lack of fit for purpose facilities as a barrier to participation. This has directly influenced the identification of our 'Active Places' thematic theme. Similarly, the lack of information about what is available, which was highlighted by consultees, will be addressed through the 'Active Promotion' theme of work. The next section provides a more detailed overview of how what you told us has influenced what we will do as part of our new strategy.



6.7. Application of Findings

The information gathered through this process has helped to inform the goals, objectives and actions of the new strategic plan for 2022-2026. The issues identified through consultation will be addressed through the following strategic thematic themes:

Active People

Active People will focus on engaging all inactive people in physical activity and address barriers to sport and physical activity for those who lack the confidence to engage, for those with disabilities and marginalised groups. This will include targeted needs-led provision and creating inclusive sport offerings. The actions for this objective include encouraging clubs to sign up to CARA Disability Charter, developing a Disability Action Plan and increasing activity for women of all ages.

Active Places

Active Places will address the lack of adequate facilities in the area by ensuring current resources are maximised whilst we work with stakeholders to identify facility gaps and support the development of new inclusive and adaptable facilities for the use of the whole community.

Active Partnerships

Active Partnerships will address the desire for better engagement with and provision for, schools and enhance collaboration with the local authority and other organisations, including those who advocate for marginalised groups and communities.

Active Promotion

Active Promotion will address the lack of awareness of people in the community of what is available to them in terms of sport and physical activity and better promote Laois Sports Partnership. This will include a review of PR and Marketing, an enhanced social media presence and taking steps to become the go-to source of information in County Laois for sport and physical activity.

Active Governance

Active Governance will ensure that the strategic focus and coordination is maintained within Laois Sports Partnership to ensure that as an organisation we are delivering to the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and accountability to all our stakeholders.

Appendix 3: Annual Operational Plans

LSP Name	Strategic Goal	Objective	Action	Staff Lead	Main Funding Partner	Main Delivery Partner	Action Output	Action Category
Laois Sports Partnership CLG								





LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

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