

Warning that funding cuts will undermine road safety for drivers

OLIVIA RYAN

A Dundalk councillor has sounded the alarm over “ongoing reductions to road maintenance funding”, warning that the cuts are undermining road safety, increasing the risk of flooding, and accelerating the deterioration of local routes.

Cllr. Charan Fisher said vital upkeep such as clearing gullies and drains, repairing potholes and carrying out small surface works is essential to keeping roads safe—particularly as County Louth experiences heavy rain events and more frequent extreme weather.

“Road maintenance isn’t an optional expense—it’s core infrastructure investment that safeguards the public and reduces long-term costs,” Cllr. Fisher said. “When budgets are slashed, minor issues escalate into expensive crises. It’s a real case of a stitch in time saves nine.”

According to figures highlighted by the councillor, funding allocated to road maintenance within Louth County Council has fallen from €297,819 in 2021



Road damage along the Inner Relief Road, Dundalk.

to €252,940 in 2025—a drop of €44,879 over four years.

The figures also show a reduction in funding for road maintenance across all local authorities.

“In an era where roads face greater strain from rising traffic volumes and harsher weather patterns, these budget reductions are illogical,” he said. “They force communities to contend with subpar road quality and heightened dangers.”

Cllr. Fisher argued that local authorities need stable, adequate funding to carry out maintenance

proactively rather than reactively. Without consistent investment, he warned, roads will continue to deteriorate and issues that could have been addressed cheaply will turn into far more costly repairs.

“Ensuring roads remain in proper shape is among the most fundamental duties of government. Our communities merit secure, properly maintained infrastructure—not one that crumbles progressively because of repeated funding shortfalls.”

Funded by the Local Democracy Reporting Scheme

Over 1,900 offences committed by suspects while on bail last year

LIAM COSGROVE

More than 1,900 criminal offences across a policing division that incorporates Cavan and Monaghan have been committed by individuals over the past 12 months while they were on bail.

Newly revealed figures by Justice Minister Jim O’Callaghan on foot of a parliamentary question by Cavan/Monaghan Sinn Féin TD Matt Carthy detailed how approximately 1,904 offences were perpetrated in the Louth/Cavan/Monaghan Garda division by defendants on bail from local courts.

In total, more than 38,000 offences were investigated nationwide last year by Gardaí concerning the activities of suspected offenders who were, at the time, already under the auspices of the judicial system.

Their proved to be the most prolific offence (10,104) followed by public order (9,789) and court related offences (5,377).

Mr O’Callaghan said the number of offences carried out by individuals whose liberty was already being accommodated by the State was “totally unacceptable”.

Moves to tighten the country’s present legislation are currently being examined by Department of Justice officials following a review by Senior Counsel Lorcan Staines.

That body of work, titled ‘An Assessment of the Efficacy of Bail Laws in Ireland’ was published last November, findings Mr O’Callaghan said illustrated the need for “additional actions” to be taken to minimise bail-linked criminality.

Under the Bail Act 1997, a person charged with a serious offence can be refused bail where the court considers it necessary to prevent the accused from committing a further serious crime.

The Dublin Bay South TD last week brought a memo of cabinet as part of that review in a move aimed at criminal gangs that intimidate witnesses and jurors. Planned legislative changes will also expand the powers of Gardaí to argue against paedophiles and rapists receiving bail if they flout notification requirements of the sex offenders registry.

The first proposed amendment will see crimes committed under Section 41 of the Criminal Justice Act, 1999, added to the list of scheduled offences under the bail laws.

This covers incidents where a person harms, threatens or intimidates an individual who is assisting a criminal investigation, or is a witness to a case, as well as their family members. In submissions to the Staines report, the DPP also highlighted

the operational issues arising for Gardaí when they encounter an offence that is not on the schedule of the Bail Act.

Mr O’Callaghan is also planning to add offences committed under Section 12 of the Sex Offenders Act, 2001, to the list of scheduled offences.

This relates to sex offenders who fail to comply with notification requirements or fail to provide required information, supply false details, or refuse to co-operate with Gardaí by withholding fingerprints, palm prints or photographs.

These offences carry penalties of up to five years’ imprisonment on conviction on indictment. Mr O’Callaghan is seeking government approval to draft these amendments under the Criminal Law and Civil Law Bill 2026.

The addition of these to the list of scheduled offences was among 15 recommendations made by Mr Staines in his review.

Another recommendation made was that Gardaí should have a power of arrest where they reasonably suspect that an individual is in breach of their bail conditions. Mr Staines also recommended that better information be made available to the courts when considering bail applications and reviewing legislation around electronic tagging or monitoring.



Readvertisement of Public Notice and Extension of deadline due to Inclusion of notice of €50 fee for submissions / observations for the Application to An Coimisiún Pleanála for Approval Louth County Council

Pursuant to Section 175 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and associated requirements of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), notice is hereby given that Louth County Council proposes to make an application to An Coimisiún Pleanála to seek approval to carry out an urban regeneration project on lands at Ardee, County Louth.

The application site covers an area of approx. 7.79 hectares which includes the following roads/streets/lanes/ areas and their adjoining footpath/public realm areas at Ardee Main Street (N2) including Golf Links Road, Dundalk Road, Main Street, Irish Street, Market Street, Castle Street, Boat Trench, Bridge St, Fosters Close, Markethouse Lane, Tierney St, O’Carroll St, Barrett’s Lane (N52), Hale St, William St, Ash Walk and lands within the grounds of St. Josephs Hospital (in the townland of Townparks), the former railway lands off O’Carroll Street (in the townlands of Dawsons Demesne / Cappocksgreen) and lands off Tierney St. (in the townland of Cappocksgreen). It is noted that the application site is partly located within Ardee Architectural Conservation Area and in the vicinity of Ardee Castle (National Monument LHO17-101018, Protected Structure LHS017-017 (NAH Reg. No. 13823004)) and Hatchies Castle (Recorded Monument LHO17-101015, Protected Structure LHS017-009 (NAH Reg. No. 13823005)).

The proposed development consists of the following:

- (1) Public realm improvement works at Ardee Main Street (N2) and surrounding streets as listed above (in the townland of Townparks) comprising: new hard landscaping including resurfacing; soft landscaping including new tree planting; street furniture; new pedestrian connections and footpaths; Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS); new cycle parking; tactile paving; and undergrounding of services.
- (2) Road improvement works at Ardee Main Street (N2) and surrounding streets as listed above (in the townland of Townparks) to include: alteration of road alignment; realignment of Golf Links Road / N2 Junction; raised junctions; resurfacing; shared surface treatments; revised access arrangements; pedestrian crossing points; reduction and rationalisation of the layout / orientation of existing on-street public car parking provision; installation of electric vehicle charging points; new bus stop shelters; road signs; and new public lighting.
- (3) Resurfacing of Bridge Street Bridge (NAH Reg. No. 13823008 / Protected Structure Ref. LHS017/056) at Bridge Street.
- (4) Construction of a new segregated cycle lanes at Main Street (N2) (in the townland of Townparks), Ardee provided as dedicated one-way and two-way bi-directional cycle lanes and associated cycle parking stands.
- (5) Alterations to the existing car parking layout at Ardee Library off Ardee Main Street (N2) (in the townland of Townparks) to create in part a public plaza including retention of Sir Frederick Foster Memorial Fountain scheduled monument (NAH Reg No. 13823042 / Protected Structure Ref. LHS017/070) and realignment of existing access road to Foster Close.
- (6) Extension of Ash Walk Road (extending approx. 60m to the west and upgrades to existing junction to the Supervalu car park / services access off Ash Walk Road.
- (7) Development of a woodland walk within St. Joseph’s Hospital Grounds (in the townland of Townparks) including: resurfacing of existing informal path within St. Joseph’s Hospital grounds (Protected Structure Ref. LHS017/035); a new footpath on agricultural land linking St. Joseph’s Hospital grounds to Ash Walk and Golf Links Road; resurfacing of existing footpath linking St. Joseph’s Hospital grounds to the rear of Ardee Day Care Centre to create new pedestrian access point onto Ardee Main Street; and new soft landscaping boundary treatments; bollards and signage.
- (8) Construction of a new community park at lands known as the Old Railway Lands off O’Carroll Street (in the townlands of Dawsons Demesne / Cappocksgreen) including: hard and soft landscape areas; community garden; equipped children’s play space; pedestrian footpaths and kerbing; storage container; proposed boundary treatments; street furniture; public lighting; Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS); heritage enhancement including demarcation of former location of Ardee Town Wall with engraved natural stone paving; new signage; construction of a new vehicle / pedestrian access and associated gate piers to O’Carroll Street and associated works; and provision of car parking and circulation space within community park.
- (9) Retention of existing railway heritage infrastructure off O’Carroll Street (in the townland of Dawsons Demesne) to provide a public amenity space.
- (10) Construction of a community sports and recreation facility and single storey sports pavilion building (7m high) on lands off Tierney St. (in the townland of Cappocksgreen) to include: a 200m all-weather running track; bowling green and associated flood lighting and boundary treatments; hard and soft landscape areas; Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS); new pedestrian access points to existing old railway walk retaining pedestrian linkage to Old Railway Lands; provision of new car parking; new public lighting; street furniture; and signage.
- (11) All associated site works including: drainage; undergrounding of services; and all other associated ancillary development works.

Louth County Council has carried out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report and has determined that a full Natura Impact Statement (Appropriate Assessment) is not required in respect of this proposed development.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA) has been prepared in respect of the proposed development. All plans and particulars of the proposed development, including the EIA, will be available for inspection free of charge and can be downloaded free of charge from the consultation portal of Louth County Council or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy during normal office hours 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday from Friday 19th December 2025 to Tuesday 24th February 2026 (inclusive) at the following locations:

- An Coimisiún Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01 V902.
- County Hall, Millennium Centre, St Albion’s Street, Dundalk, Co Louth.
- Louth County Council, Mid Louth Civic Services Centre, Fair Green, Ardee, Co. Louth, A92 RY7Z.
- The consultation portal of Louth County Council <https://consult.louthco.ie/>.

Submissions or observations may be made to An Coimisiún Pleanála on the proposed development in relation to: (i) the implications of the proposed development for ‘proper’ planning and sustainable development in the area concerned; and (ii) the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development.

Any submissions or observations may be made in writing to An Coimisiún Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, D01 V902 or online at www.pleanala.ie/en-ir/home. Any submission must be accompanied by a fee of €50 (except for prescribed bodies) and must be received by An Coimisiún Pleanála not later than on or before **Tuesday 24th February 2026**. Such submissions or observations must include the following information:

- a) You must clearly state your own name and address. If a planning agent is acting for you, the agent must clearly state their own name and address as well as your name and address.
- b) You must give us enough details to allow us to easily identify the application or appeal you are making the observation on.
- c) The subject matter of the submission or observation. The planning grounds of observation (reasons and arguments), and any items you wish to support your grounds of observation.

An Coimisiún Pleanála may give approval to Louth County Council’s application for development with or without conditions or may refuse the application for development. A person may question the validity of a decision of the Board by way of an application for judicial review, under Order 84 of the Rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 15 of 1986, as amended) in accordance with section 50 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). Practical information on the judicial review mechanism can be accessed under the heading ‘Publications – Judicial Review/ Notice’ on An Coimisiún Pleanála’s website (<https://www.pleanala.ie/>) or on the Citizens Information Services website www.citizensinformation.ie.

Bryan Coughlan, Senior Executive Officer, Public Realm and Regeneration
Date: 10th February 2026

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