



LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL
Annual Report 2009



Bongphort Uí Fhearghail





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FOREWORD

COUNCILLOR PEGGY NOLAN, MAYOR



As Mayor of County Longford it is with great pride that I present the Council's 2009 Annual Report detailing the activities of the Council during the year. This excellent publication is a valuable source of reference material and information with regard to the Council's wide range of services.

The Annual report records the achievements of this Council and the progress that has been made with regard to achieving the goals that were included in the Corporate Plan adopted by Longford County Council in 2004. Major development and growth has taken place in the county during the year and the County Development Plan has been used as the template for controlling the pace and level of development.

The key functions of Longford County Council are delivered across the four Directorates. The challenges facing each Director of Service in managing the services for which he is responsible are significant. I want to thank the Directors of Services and each of the employees of Longford County Council, both indoor and outdoor, for their efforts in delivering a professional and efficient service. I, also, wish to thank the elected members of Longford County Council whose diligent attention to their work ensures that every corner of the county is serviced to a high standard. I particularly wish to thank the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Gerry Brady for his advice and assistance that he provided to me throughout my term of office.

In the current uncertain economic climate and with increasing unemployment and a projected contraction of the economy, the leadership role of Longford County Council in our county will be of greater significance than ever before. The challenges facing the Council's Executive and the Elected Members with regard to maintaining service levels with reduced resources and declining revenues are daunting. However, it is my belief that these challenges will be overcome.

To conclude I would like to wish everyone a successful 2010 and pledge my continued commitment to work for a bright future for all who choose to call Longford "Home". I commend this report to the people of Longford as an excellent overview of the work done by this Council in 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peggy Nolan'.

Peggy Nolan
Mayor

INTRODUCTION

MR. TIM CAFFREY, COUNTY MANAGER

I am pleased as County Manager to present this, Longford County Council's Annual Report for 2009.

The drive for public sector reform and the many budgetary and staffing constraints presented a wave of new challenges for the organisation in 2009. The introduction in early 2009 of the Staffing Moratorium coupled with the range of incentivised Schemes like the Early Retirement and Career Break Schemes, resulted in a significantly reduced workforce and loss of knowledge and expertise developed over the years.



In response to the dramatic changes in our operating environment, a new set of strategic priorities were identified, with the adoption of the organisation's Corporate Plan in 2009. This Plan will shape our approach to policy development and service provision for the next five years.

The key challenge was to respond and change very quickly within the organisation. Employees displayed a great willingness to continue with full commitment to maintaining core service delivery despite the cuts in funding and reducing staff numbers.

The Council members and employees worked together maintaining a sense of common purpose and commitment to service delivery and the Council moved forward with a number of projects in the last twelve months.

As a result, I can again report good progress across all areas of activities in 2009, including the following highlights:

- The completion of a number of housing developments in Ballinalee, and Townspark
- The official opening of a housing scheme in Colehill
- Significant progress on the Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme
- Completion of the advance works contract on the Ballymahon Regional Supply Scheme
- Clondra Harbour Development
- Edgeworthstown Fire Station
- Progress to contract stage for the refurbishment of Ballymahon Library

The Local Elections in June 2009 resulted in a significant change in the membership of the Council with one third of the membership being newly elected members. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Council and look forward to working with them during the term of this Council.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the outgoing members for their valuable and positive contribution to the work of the Council during their many years representing their communities.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of employees and elected members for their commitment during the year. The demands placed on all of us in 2009 brought about by the challenges of the economic climate and the Transforming Public Services Agenda look set to continue for the coming year and I am confident that together, we will respond positively to the many and varied challenges.



Tim Caffrey,
County Manager

MEMBERS OF LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL



LARRY BANNON



PADDY BELTON



MICK CAHILL



BARNEY STEELE



Ballymahon



SEAN FARRELL



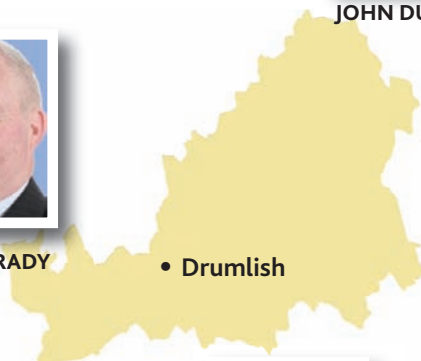
MARK CASEY



JOHN DUFFY



GERRY BRADY



• Drumlish



LUIE MCENTIRE



MARTIN MULLEADY

MEMBERS OF LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL



THOMAS VICTORY



FRANK KILBRIDE



MICHEÁL CARRIGY



P.J. REILLY



DENIS GLENNON



MAE SEXTON



PADRAIG LOUGHREY



ALAN MITCHELL



PEGGY NOLAN



VICTOR KIERNAN



PAUL CONNELL

MEMBERSHIP OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES 2009-2014

Consequent on the Local Elections 2009, it was necessary to establish new Strategic Policy Committees in line with Departmental guidelines.

The statutory basis for establishment of Strategic Policy Committees is contained in Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001. The formation of Strategic Policy Committees is intended to afford an opportunity to various sectoral interests to influence the development of policies by the Council.

Longford County Council, at its Annual General Meeting held on June 19th, 2009, elected the Chairpersons Designate in respect of the four Strategic Policy Committees together with the Mayor, the Chairpersons Designate form the Corporate Policy Group.

Membership of Strategic Policy Committees also comprises representation from the other two Local Authorities in County Longford and representation from the sectoral interests groups.

The Strategic Policy Committee Scheme and membership of the Committees was formally adopted by resolution of the Members of Longford County Council at a meeting held on 20th January 2010.

| Strategic Policy Committee | County Council Members | Town Council Members | Sectoral Representatives | Total | Chair |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Housing, Planning and Building Control Strategic Policy Committee | Councillors - V. Kiernan - M. Carrigy - P. Nolan - P.J. Reilly - D. Glennon - P. Connell | Councillor Tony Flaherty | Development and Construction - Kevin Hughes Community and Voluntary - Charlie Harrison - Helena Doyle - Paddy Howe | 11 | Chair - First Term Cllr. Victor Kiernan Second Term Nominee Cllr. Micheál Carrigy |
| Transportation, Road Development and Road Safety Strategic Policy Committee | Councillors - A. Mitchell - J. Duffy - M. Cahill - L. McEntire - M. Casey | Councillor Maura Kilbride Harkin | Agriculture and Farming - John Farrell Trade Union - Kieran Woods Environmental - Tara Keegan | 9 | Chair – First Term Cllr. Alan Mitchell Second Term Nominee Cllr. John Duffy |
| Water Services and Environmental Strategic Policy Committee | Councillors - G. Brady - P. Belton - S. Farrell - P. Loughrey - T. Victory | Councillor John Maguire | Agriculture and Farming - Sean Reilly Environmental - Ray Hogan Community and Voluntary - Noreen McLoughlin | 9 | Chair – First Term Cllr. Gerry Brady Second Term Nominee Cllr. Paddy Belton |
| Economic Development, Urban Renewal, Rural Re-organisation, Educational, Cultural and Recreational Development Strategic Policy Committee | Councillors - M. Mulleady - B. Steele - F. Kilbride - L. Bannon - M. Sexton | Councillor James Keogh | Business and Employers - Fintan McGill Community and Voluntary - Alan O'Toole Cultural - Terry McKenna | 9 | Chair – First Term Cllr. Martin Mulleady Second Term Nominee Cllr. Barney Steele |
| TOTAL | 21 | 4 | 13 | 38 | |

REPORT ON WORKING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES DURING 2009

REPORT ON WORKING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES DURING 2009

WATER SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

The Water Services and Environmental Strategic Policies Committee met two times during 2009. The S.P.C. considered the following matters and recommendations:

26th January 2009

- Draft Longford Co. Co. (Storage, Presentation, Segregation and Collection of Household Waste) Bye-Laws 2008.
- Draft Enforcement Policy on Illegal Waste Activities.
- Water Conservation Regulations 2008.

1st April 2009

- Draft Enforcement Policy on Illegal Waste Activities.
- Customer Panel
- Taking in Charge of Private Group Water Schemes

TRANSPORTATION, AND ROAD DEVELOPMENT, MAINTENANCE AND ROAD SAFETY

The Strategic Policy Committee met twice during 2009 with a core objective of ensuring that infrastructural transportation policies and investment assist the economic and social development of County Longford, and preserve and improve the particular attractiveness of the county and its background environment.

The dates of the meetings were:-

- 2nd February 2009
- 6th April 2009

The main items for discussion and consideration were:-

1. Longford Road Safety Strategy
2. Roads Winter Maintenance Policy and Procedures
3. Policy for Closure of Roads
4. Identification of Policy for development in 2010

The term of the Strategic Policy Committee expired in June 2009.

HOUSING & SOCIAL POLICY, PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL POLICY

The Housing & Social Policy, Planning & Building Control Policy SPC met twice during 2009. The dates of the meetings held were as follows:

- 26th January 2009
- 20th April 2009

The following is a list of the main issues considered by the Committee in 2009

- Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013
- Waste Collection in Local Authority Estates – joint meeting with the Environmental and Water Services SPC
- Midlands Simon Community – Presentation
- Preparation of Longford Homeless Plan
- Evaluation of Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes
- Planning Statistics 2006/2007/2008

ECONOMIC, URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, CULTURAL AND RECREATION POLICIES

The Strategic Policy Committee met on 2 occasions in 2009. The committee discussed the following policy issues:

- Industrial Development
- Clondra Harbour development
- Business Parks
- County Longford Museum
- Connolly Barracks
- Library Development Programme
- County Longford Museum
- Longford Swimming Pool
- Disability Awareness Programme
- Longford County Development Board
- Social Inclusion Measures Working Group
- Community & Voluntary Forum
- Comhairle na nÓg/Youth Council
- Student Council Training
- Module on Local Government with transition year students
- National Pride of Place Competition 2009
- Pride of Longford Competition 2009
- CCTV
- Tourism strategy
- County and Village Signage
- Sports Partnership
- Joint Policing Committees
- Poverty Profile/Social Inclusion Strategy
- Travellers Interagency Group

KEY FUNCTIONAL AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The principal services of Longford County Council are now provided within the following Directorate structure. The four Directorates cover the areas of:

- Infrastructure and Environment
- Housing, Planning & Emergency Services
- Economic & Community Development, Corporate & Cultural Services and Human Resources
- Finance and Information Systems



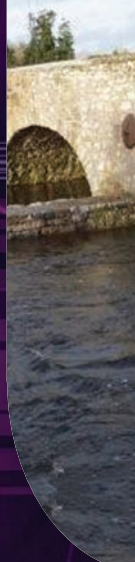
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INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT





Cllr. Alan Mitchell,
Chairperson of
Transportation SPC



Cllr. Gerry Brady,
Chairperson of
Water Services &
Environmental SPC



Mr. Ciaran Murphy
A/Director of
Services

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

WATER SERVICES

Core Objective: *To provide, improve and maintain the necessary water and wastewater infrastructure throughout the County to ensure an adequate supply of good quality water and to maximize the protection of the environment in order to promote the social and economic development of the county.*

WATER SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

There are five regional water schemes serving County Longford and it is estimated that 85% of the population receives a piped water supply treated to EU standards.

The Schemes are: Ballymahon, Lanesboro/Newtowncashel, Longford Central, Lough Gowna and Granard.

Drinking Water Quality is monitored by the Health Services Executive on an agency basis for Longford County Council in accordance with the E.C. (Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption) Regulations, 2000. All non-compliant results are immediately reported to the Local Authority for appropriate action.

Under the new Drinking Water Regulations, S.I. No. 278 of 2007 European Communities (Drinking Water) (No.2) Regulations 2007, the EPA is the supervising authority for Public Water Supplies. Local Authorities must now report any non-compliance to the EPA immediately and may be directed to develop and implement Action Plans under direction from the EPA.

Under the new Drinking Water Regulations, S.I. No. 278 of 2007 European Communities (Drinking Water) (No.2) Regulations 2007, the Local Authority is the supervising authority for Group Water Schemes (GWS) and Small Private Supplies (SPS). This is a greatly increased regulatory role for Longford County Council.

The Water Services Act 2007 continues to be brought into force in a number of stages and also increases Longford County Council's regulatory role.

The Council has prepared a Strategic Rural Water Plan, a Network Appraisal and Rehabilitation Plan and a GIS Spatial Database/Complete Information System of the water and sewer networks in the county.

There are eleven public sewerage schemes in the County: Ballymahon, Kenagh, Lanesboro, Longford, Newtownforbes, Drumlish, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Legan, Abbeyshrule and Clondra.

The Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007 have been signed into legislation. All Water Services Authorities' waste water discharges are to be subject to the new Regulations, requiring licensing by the EPA.

Longford County Council received an EPA licence for the Longford Wastewater Treatment Plant at Cartrons in September 2008.

A licence for the Ballymahon Waste Water Treatment Plant was received from the EPA on the 15th December 2009.

Further applications for the Wastewater Treatment Plants in Ballymahon, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Drumlish, Newtownforbes, Kenagh, and Abbeyshrule have been prepared in-house and submitted to the EPA.

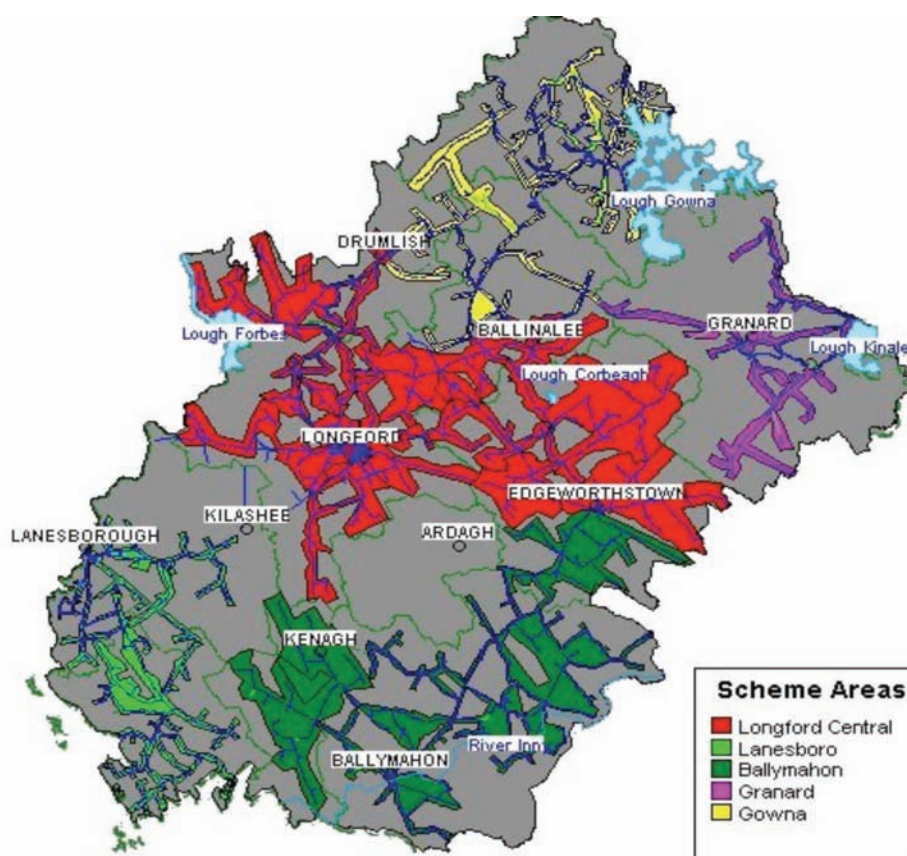


Figure 1. County Longford Regional Network Map

WATER CONSERVATION

Works continued on the Water Conservation Project Stage 2. All District Meter Areas (DMAs) have been set up and all telemetry for monitoring flows have been installed.

Leak detection and repairs was also continued. This project has significantly reduced Unaccounted for Water to an average of 290 litres per kilometre of watermain per hour, which is good when compared to UK water company's figures.

In total €1,672m has been spent on Stage 2 Phase 1 of the Water Conservation Project.

In Stage 2 phase 2 of Water Conservation additional funding of €750,000 was provided jointly by DoEHLG and Longford County Council for further leakage detection, repairs and maintaining existing District Meter Areas.

A Stage 3 Phase 1 Network Rehabilitation contract is progressing and it is envisaged that construction work will commence in 2010.

Application for Stage 3 Phase 2 rehabilitation works has been submitted for approval to the DOEHLG. The Non-Domestic Water Metering project has reached substantial completion and customer billing commenced in 2007. This project will be continued for the future maintenance of customer meters and for the billing of future non-domestic customers.

WATER SERVICES INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2007 – 2009

| Schemes to start 2007 W/S | Est. cost € |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Edgeworthstown Sewerage Scheme (Nutrient Reduction) S <i>Works completed December 2007</i> | 600,000 |
| Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme (Reservoir and Pipelines) W <i>Construction works to be completed by March 2010</i> | 7,500,000 |
| Schemes to start 2008 | |
| Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme (Improvement) W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Advance civil works completed. Tender documents for WTW upgrade and pipelines being finalised</i> | 4,500,000 |
| Granard Regional Water Supply Scheme W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Tender documents for WTW upgrade contract and pipelines contract being finalised</i> | 6,500,000 |
| Longford Sewerage Scheme Phase 2 (New Sewers) S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Local Area Plan adopted</i> | 5,700,000 |
| Schemes to start 2009 | |
| Drumlisk and Newtownforbes Sewerage Schemes ¹ S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Construction works completed September 2010 DBO to follow</i> | 8,300,000 |
| Schemes to Advance Through Planning | |
| Lanesborough Regional Water Supply Scheme W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Consultants updating Preliminary Report</i> | 8,000,000 |
| Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme Phase 12 W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Tenders for short term Lough Forbes WTW upgrade received. Tender documents for pipelines and reservoir contract being finalised.</i> | 7,000,000 |
| Longford Grouped Towns and Villages Sewerage Scheme Feasibility Study (Abbeylara, Abbeyshrule, Ballinamuck, Barry, Killashee, Ennybegs, Legga, Moydow, Moyne, Newtowncashel, Stonepark and Taghshinny) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Funding not approved by DOEHLG</i> | 8,060,000 |
| Longford Town Sewerage Scheme (Network Review, Wastewater Treatment Plant and Hub Centre for Sludge) S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Brief with the DOEHLG prior to Consultant Procurement.</i> | 9,760,000 |

Rural Towns & Villages Initiative

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Ardagh/ Ballinalee/ Aughnacliffe Sewerage Schemes ¹ S | 4,000,000 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|

- *Network Construction commenced August 2009. DBO to follow*

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Lanesborough Water Supply Stage 1 (Wellfield Development) W | 1,400,000 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|

- *Consultants updating Preliminary Report*

Water Conservation Allocation

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Start Construction of Network Rehabilitation Contract 2010</i> | 4,200,000 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|

Asset Management Study

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| <i>Network Mapping</i> | 30,000 |
|------------------------|--------|

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Programme Total | 75,550,000 |
|------------------------|-------------------|

1 Bundled together as a Grouped DBO Scheme

2 Works arising from the Strategic Review

WATER SERVICES CAPITAL

Longford County Council continued to progress an ambitious Water Service Investment Programme throughout 2009.

The Edgeworthstown Waste Water Treatment Nutrient Reduction Scheme was completed in 2007. This Scheme provides phosphate removal treatment in order to comply with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations.

The Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme Stage 6 – Reservoir & Pipelines involves the provision of a new local water storage reservoir at Knockahaw for Longford Town and its environs and a water supply trunk main from existing storage reservoirs at Prucklish to the new reservoir at Knockahaw. Construction works commenced in August 2008 and should be completed by March 2010.

Work has progressed on the Five Villages Sewerage Scheme (Ardagh, Aughnacliffe, Ballinalee, Drumlish and Newtownforbes) with the commencement of construction works on the two network contracts for this Scheme. Drumlish and Newtownforbes network contract was completed in 2009 with Ardagh, Aughnacliffe, and Ballinalee expected to be completed in 2010. The provision of the Treatment Plants will follow by Design, Build and Operate Contract with construction works to commence in 2011.

Longford County Council sought approval from the DOEHLG in 2007 for funding for major infrastructural improvements in both Water and Wastewater Infrastructure. Approvals received in 2007 for Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme Phase 1, Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme and Granard Regional Water Supply Scheme will ensure continued investment in Water Service Infrastructure. This is a vital component in the long term sustainable development of the County.

Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme Phase 1 involves upgrading of Lough Forbes Water Treatment Works (WTW), rising mains from Lough Forbes to Prucklish Reservoir and from Glannagh to Lisnanagh Reservoir and new reservoirs at Prucklish and Lisnanagh. Short term/operational upgrade at Lough Forbes WTW to commence in 2010.

Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme involves upgrading works at Abbeyshrule WTW and distribution mains to Edgeworthstown, Kenagh and Forgney and should commence end of 2010. Granard Regional Water Supply Scheme involves upgrading works at Lough Kinale WTW and rising main from Lough Kinale to Rathcronan Reservoir and should be commence end of 2010.

The Department approved the inclusion of Legan and Kenagh Sewerage Schemes in the Water Services Investment Programme at the request of the Council.

RURAL WATER PROGRAMME

GROUP WATER/SEWERAGE SCHEMES

In March 2009, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government advised Longford County Council of a Block Grant Allocation of €620,000 for the year 2009 for New Group Water Schemes, Upgrading of Group Water Schemes and Takeover of Group Water Schemes.

Applications for proposed group water/sewerage schemes were received from Ballincurry No. 2 GWS, Dooroc GWS and Abbeyshrule Group Sewerage Scheme.

Design and/or construction work took place on the following schemes in 2009:- Fermoy GWS, Abbeyshrule GWS, Moydow GWS and Aughacordrinan GWS.

Upgrade works were completed on Clonmore/Kilmore GWS and Fostra GWS.

Works were carried out on the following schemes to progress the Local Authority taking over the scheme:
- Ardagh GWS, Ballincurry GWS, Derawley GWS, Curryline GWS, Drumhaldry GWS, Ballycloghan GWS, Drumure GWS, Grillagh/Derryadd GWS and Aughnacliffe GWS.

The Longford Rural Water Monitoring Committee met twice during 2009 to review progress on the implementation of the Rural Water Programme. The committee were advised on the current work programme and commitments under the various measures. The E.C. Drinking Water Regulations 2007 were discussed in detail, as were applications for the take-over of Group Water Schemes and the implications of the suspension of CLÁR funding.

Longford County Council formally approved the takeover of 7 no. group water schemes at its meeting of 20th May 2009.

The Council submitted proposals to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for Block Grant funding for 2010 totalling €1,221m under the Rural Water Programme in respect of new and ongoing works for group water/sewerage schemes, as well as group water scheme upgrades and proposals for taking group water schemes in charge.

SMALL PUBLIC WATER AND SEWERAGE SCHEMES

In March 2009 Longford County Council was advised that the Block Grant Allocation under the Rural Water Programme Small Schemes measure was €675,000.

Substantial works were carried out in 2009 under this measure, including the in-progress Legan and Kenagh Waste Water Treatment Plants. Necessary upgrade works were completed at Smear and Abbeyshrule Water Treatment Plants and work on the new Waste Water Treatment Plant in Ballinamuck is progressing. Other major projects included the Watermain Replacement at Dooroc and advance Regional Watermain to help service Drumlish.

The Council submitted proposals to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for Block Grant funding for 2010 totalling €4.25m in respect of Small Public Water & Sewerage Schemes. This submission included funding for on-going sewerage works at Legan, Kenagh and Ballinamuck and major upgrade works to Smear Water Treatment Plant.

GROUP WATER SCHEME SUBSIDIES AND INDIVIDUAL WELL GRANTS

Longford County Council processed nine applications for subsidies towards the operational costs of group water schemes; total amount paid out was €24,238.50.

Ten applications were received for grants for individual water supplies. Approval was given for eight applications, one is pending and one application was refused. Grant payments totalling €11,124.63 were made to six individuals.

In the summer of 2008 the Commercial Accounts Receivable Team was set up through the amalgamation of the Commercial Rates and the Water Billing Revenue Collection Teams. The Team is responsible for the collection of Commercial Water Charges, Commercial Rates and processing Road Opening/Water Sewer Connection Licences.

ROAD SAFETY, ROADS & TRANSPORT

Core Objective: “Ensure that infrastructural transportation policies and investments assist and enhance the economic and social development of County Longford, and preserve and improve the physical attractiveness of the county and its background environment”

Longford is strategically located near the centre of Ireland and is traversed by National Primary Routes N4 and N5 and National Secondary Routes N55 and N63. These routes give rise to significant traffic flows throughout the county

Fundamental to the proper development of County Longford is a requirement that the road network meets current and projected traffic volume and safety requirements. Strengthening economic activity requires the support of a good quality road network. It is recognised that for Longford to benefit effectively from this growth in industry, agriculture and tourism and the attractions of its lakes, rivers and scenic beauty, the road network and particularly our regional and county roads must be of an appropriate standard, inviting and safe for visitor and locals alike.

Except for a limited number of roads under the authority of Longford Town Council, Longford County Council is responsible for the provision, improvement and maintenance of the public road network within the County. Currently the breakdown of roads under the authority of the County Council is as follows:

| Classification | National Primary | National Secondary | Regional | Local | Total |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| North Area (km) | - | 13 | 53 | 654 | 720 |
| Mid-Area (km) | 33 | 18 | 20 | 224 | 295 |
| South Area (km) | 15 | 25 | 78 | 452 | 570 |
| Total Kilometers | 48 | 56 | 151 | 1331 | 1585 |

Finances available to the Council in 2009 were as follows:

1. National Roads (National Roads Authority Grants):

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Major Planning & Design | € 750,000 |
| Other Improvement Works | € 650,000 |
| Safety Measures | € 145,000 |
| Maintenance | € 633,328 |
| Total: | € 2,178,328 |

2. Non-National Roads (Department of the Environment & Local Government Grants):

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Specific Improvement Works | € 913,000 |
| Restoration Improvement Works | € 2,659,000 |
| Restoration Maintenance Works | € 1,400,000 |
| Discretionary Improvement Works | € 206,000 |
| Discretionary Maintenance Works | € 487,000 |
| Low-cost Safety Improvement Works | € 166,000 |
| Local Improvement Schemes | € 458,000 |
| Regional Road Signposting | € 31,000 |
| Footpath Provision | € 44,000 |
| Training Programme | € 29,799 |
| Total: | € 6,393,799 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 3. Non-National Roads (Council Contribution) | € 1,000,000 |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|

TOTAL BUDGET: € 9,572,127

In addition Planning Development Funded Schemes to the value of €601,400 were selected for 2009 for works on footpaths, public lighting and traffic management projects throughout the county.

Design of National Road Infrastructural Projects has progressed with the assistance of the National Roads Authority Regional Design Office as follows:

- Archaeological Resolution Contract and Supplementary Ground Investigation works for N5 Longford Town Bypass Scheme were completed
- Emerging Preferred Route corridor option identified for N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Scheme and the third public consultations held.

All other Improvement and Maintenance Works were implemented through the two Area Engineering offices and the Council's Road Design office.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

A total of 16 schemes were completed.

ROAD SAFETY PROMOTION & SCHOOL WARDEN SERVICE

The Road Safety role of Local Authorities is wide and ranges from Road Construction to Safety Promotion to School Warden Schemes. They now have an expanded role in promoting road safety by developing more initiatives at local level such as:-

- Participation working group to co-ordinate the activities of agencies and bodies involved e.g. Gardai and HSE
- Updating and Development of a Road Safety Plan
- Co-ordination with the Road Safety Authority – advertising, promotions, and media campaigns
- Introduction of BEEP day at all Childcare Facilities in County Longford
- Promotion and launch of “Check It Fits” Roadshow in Longford
- Pilot Scheme for Salmon and Friends to Pre-School Children in conjunction with Road Safety Authority and Longford Childcare Committee
- Promotion of Road Safety in Secondary Schools through the “Drive for Life Programme”
- Launch of Road Safety Initiative aimed primarily at cyclists and pedestrians in conjunction with Roscommon/Longford Garda Division, Longford County Council and the HSE
- Promotion and launch of the ‘Be Safe’ Curriculum in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority for Primary School’s
- The Junior School Warden Service is designed to provide safe crossing facilities for children in the vicinity of primary schools in provincial towns and villages

The Local Authority is responsible for the introduction and operation of the Junior School Warden service with the co-operation of the Gardai, School Boards of Management, Teachers, Parents and Children. The Road Safety Authority provides assistance with the initial organisation of the schemes. Longford County Council has 1 scheme in operation at Scoil Mhuire National School, Newtownforbes. Adult School Wardens are also provided at St. Joseph’s National School, St. Emer’s National School, Longford and Lanesboro National School.

This section covers a diverse range of functions and services. The principal areas are:

1. Pollution Control and Water Quality Management
2. Litter Management and Street Cleaning
3. Waste Management
4. Burial Grounds
5. Veterinary Services and Food safety
6. Dog Control
7. Fire and Emergency Services
8. Civil Defence

POLLUTION CONTROL AND WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Pollution control legislation covers areas such as water and air pollution, and noise nuisance. Specific activities undertaken in relation to pollution control include investigation of water pollution incidents, licensing of discharges to waters and the implementation of a monitoring programme for rivers, lakes and closed landfills.

RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The Water Framework Directive was introduced in December 2000 in response to declining water quality throughout Europe and is the key European Directive under which Ireland's waters will be managed for the foreseeable future. The WFD was adopted in Irish law by the EC (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 under which River Basin Districts, (RBD), were established. Longford is part of the North Western RBD and the Shannon International River Basin District.

The overall objective is to achieve at least a good status in all waters by 2015. Monitoring programmes have been developed to identify the status of the waters and to enable the measurement of future improvements. The production of a River Basin Management Plan for the Shannon and North Western RBD's is scheduled for May 2010.

ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY

The County Council Environment Laboratory is located at Park Road, Longford. It provides support to the Water Services and Environment Sections. The principal areas of activity are:

1. Water pollution monitoring and control
2. Monitoring County Council Urban Wastewater Treatment plants
3. Landfill monitoring
4. Monitoring industrial effluent discharges
5. River and lake monitoring

LITTER MANAGEMENT

Enforcement of the Litter Pollution Act, 1997 – 2009 is one of the key mechanisms in tackling the litter pollution problem in County Longford. Litter Control is conducted primarily by the Council's Litter Wardens assisted by the Longford Town Council's own Litter/ Traffic Wardens.

In 2009 Longford County Council was successful in over 90% of cases heard in court in relation to offences committed under the Litter Acts.

ANTI LITTER AWARENESS GRANTS

Anti Litter initiatives, funded by a DoEHLG grant of €20,000 were enacted during 2009 by Longford County Council. Funding was allocated to various projects, including, Longford Tidy Towns Committee (IBAL); Graffiti removal Scheme; Schools Waste Recycling Competition; Litter Black Spot clean up; Purchase of litter pickers, bags, gloves and other material to assist in clean-ups in County Longford.

LOCAL AGENDA 21 ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP FUND

A grant of €6,344 was allocated to Longford County Council by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to support innovative, community-based environmental projects. In turn, Longford County Council is required to contribute matching funding and a total fund of €12,688 was distributed to the following organisations:-

Tidy Towns Committees, Kelvin Moore, Mc Eoin Park Residents Association, School Book Exchange, Jumbletown, IBOTZ, Irish Peat land Conservation Council, Andy Booth, Abbeylara National School, Abbeyshrule Community Development and Lough Ree Summer School.

STREET SWEEPING

In 2009 the Council carried out a regular programme of Street Sweeping in the towns and villages of County Longford. This involved using mechanised equipment as well as manual sweeping of litter and servicing of litter bins in accordance with the County Longford Litter Management Plan. Total expenditure on street sweeping during 2009 was €337,007.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2005-2010

The Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region 2005-2010, as adopted, sets out a framework for the sustainable management of waste within the five local authority areas (Offaly Co. Council, Laois Co. Council, Longford Co. Council, Westmeath Co. Council and North Tipperary Co. Council) and covers all non-hazardous waste arising in the region. In addition, Local Authorities must take account of the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan in the implementation and revision of regional and local Waste Management Plans.

PROVISION OF FACILITIES

There are 25 bring banks in County Longford. Green, brown and clear glasses as well as aluminium cans are accepted at all sites.

Over 458 tonnes of glass and 20 tonnes of aluminium cans were collected in 2009 at the bring banks.

ENFORCEMENT

Longford County Council has an active Waste Enforcement Team, combining both technical and administrative disciplines. The Enforcement Team deals with areas such as Waste Facility Permits, Collection Permits, enforcement of a wide range of Producer Responsibility Regulations and all unauthorised waste activities. During 2009, the Waste Enforcement Team continued to target large-scale incidents of burning and illegal waste disposal. Sixty eight complaints were resolved on foot of Warning Letters issued. A total of 21 Enforcement Notices were sent out in 2009 and 13 cases were resolved when recipients complied

with instructions. A total of 8 cases have carried forward into 2010 for further enforcement actions. Prosecutions taken in 2009 resulted in fines of up to €2,000 and costs of up to €1,300 being imposed on those convicted of unauthorised waste disposal. Longford County Council's "Enforcement Policy on Illegal Waste Activity" can be viewed on the home page of the Council's website at www.longfordcoco.ie

The Waste Enforcement Team acquired new responsibilities under a number of new Regulations and bye-laws. The *Waste Management (Prohibition of Waste Disposal by Burning) Regulations 2009* came into force in July 2009, and make it an offence to dispose of household waste by burning within the curtilage of a building or to carry out backyard burning, and clarifies the situation regarding the disposal of vegetation on farms by burning.

The Longford County Council *Waste Management (Storage, Presentation, Segregation and Collection of Household Waste) Bye-Laws 2009*, were adopted in early 2009 to assist in meeting national targets to divert biodegradable waste away from landfill.

Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009, came into force in December 2009 and gives further responsibilities to Waste Enforcement Teams in relation to commercial food waste segregation and disposal. The Council operates a "Litter Complaints Hotline". Anyone who witnesses illegal dumping or who becomes aware of waste that is being dumped is asked to report the matter to the Council by calling the hotline number which is **1850 434 450**.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

During the year continued good work was accomplished in the following areas:

- 1 National Spring Clean
- 2 National Tree Week
- 3 Large Goods Collections
- 4 Green Schools
- 5 Hazardous Waste Collections
- 6 Farm Waste Audits

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN

The National Spring Clean campaign 2009 was a great success with 52 groups and organisations taking part in the town and county areas. Approximately 800kg of litter and waste was collected as well as 200 kg of metal and 40kg of plastic bottles. Litter pickers, gloves, bibs and colour-coded bags were provided for the community clean-ups.

LARGE GOODS COLLECTIONS

Three temporary Civic Amenity Collections were organised during the Autumn months of 2009 and a total of 10.20 tonnes of waste was collected. These took place in Granard, Longford and Ballymahon.

GREEN SCHOOLS

Longford was once again very successful in increasing activity in Green Schools. The participation of schools in the Green Schools programme increased with 98% of national schools and 100% secondary schools registered at the end of 2009. During 2009 five new schools were awarded the green flag and five more schools renewed their flags. This brings the total number of schools with Green Flags in County Longford to 22.

The schools that were awarded the green flag for the first time during 2009 were:

- **Colehill N.S.**
- **Killoe N.S.**
- **Ballinalee N.S.**
- **St Michaels Boys N.S.**
- **Stonepark N.S.**

HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

A Hazardous Waste Collection was held on the same days as our large goods collection in Longford Slashers. A total of 613 Kg of hazardous waste was collected in Longford Town. Batteries are now free to recycle and special boxes have been placed in all shops and outlet stores that sell batteries.

LOCAL AUTHORITY PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION FUND - FARM WASTE AUDIT PROGRAMME

In 2009 Longford County Council completed the pilot Farm Waste Audit Programme with four farmers in County Longford. This Programme was co-sponsored with the Environmental Protection Agency and aims to assist farmers to develop waste prevention practices on their farm. A booklet for the farming community was also launched earlier in the year.

FARM PLASTIC COLLECTION

Waste farm plastic collections, by private waste collectors, continued throughout 2009. Collection dates and locations were notified to the County Council and these collections were monitored by staff to ensure no waste was left at the site.

BURIAL GROUNDS

There is a total of 74 cemeteries in Co. Longford of which 10 are closed. Maintenance of the cemeteries is carried out by a combination of County Council and Rural Social Scheme staff. In addition, grant aid was provided to a total of 20 local committees involved in cemetery maintenance.

Funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, as part of the National Disability Scheme, enabled the Council to continue providing wheelchair-accessible facilities at designated burial grounds. Works were carried out to entrances and footpaths at Ardagh and Coolamber Cemeteries.

Construction work commenced on the extension of Aughafin Cemetery, Edgeworthstown.

VETERINARY SERVICES AND FOOD SAFETY

The Veterinary Section of Longford County Council services a contract between the Council and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland with regard to food safety and veterinary public health issues.

The small slaughterhouses and low throughput meat manufacturing establishments in the county are statutorily supervised with a view to ensuring that there is full compliance with food safety legislation.

Locally produced cattle and sheep continued to be processed in small slaughterhouses in County Longford in 2009. Each animal that was slaughtered was ante-mortem and post-mortem inspected. A sampling programme which is intended to detect harmful substances in meat is carried out. The Local Authority Veterinary Service ensures that animal health and welfare is maintained in accordance with current legislative provisions.

During 2009 the low throughput meat manufacturing establishments and slaughterhouses in County Longford continued to work to EU approved standards. Meat products which were produced in the county are safe and of high quality. The Local Authority Veterinary Service regulates and, at the same time, affords appropriate flexibility to low throughput premises. While there are changes occurring on an ongoing basis with premises, the level of activity is being maintained and new entrants are also becoming involved in the sector.

2009 also saw the re-introduction of pig slaughtering in Local Authority supervised abattoirs in the county. This helped the sector to increase the amount of processing in County Longford and is in keeping with our Corporate Plan for promoting enterprise and development in this important area of commercial activity. Longford also ensured inclusion for its local abattoirs in the LEADER supported branding and marketing pilot programme for locally produced beef and lamb in the North-West.

Continuing Professional Development and training in food safety and animal health and welfare continued in 2009. In October the County Veterinary Officer provided national training on Veterinary Public Health – *Listeria Monocytogenes* – Practical Considerations in Food Businesses.

A register of herds which produce liquid milk is kept by Longford County Council. The farms that are included in the register were inspected in 2009, as is required. This included a new enterprise producing goats' milk.

Activities relating to the disposal of Animal By-Product continued to be an important area of work in 2009.

Meetings of the Regional Zoonosis Committee provide the forum for formal liaison between Longford County Council Veterinary Public Health Service and other agencies, e.g. Department of Agriculture and HSE.

DOG CONTROL

Longford County Council provides a full time Dog service in County Longford. The Council employs a Dog warden and operates the Dog Shelter at Little Water Street in Longford Town. Pound fees are charged for the accommodation of impounded animals. The service dealt with 345 cases of unwanted/stray dogs in 2009. Of these, 84 were re-homed, 53 were reclaimed by their owners and 205 were euthanised.

In many cases the dogs which were re-homed were selected by their new owners with the aid of the Council's "Save a Dog" web page which can be accessed at www.longfordcoco.ie.

In order to combat the problem of unwanted dogs, Longford County Council continues to advocate responsible animal ownership and operates a scheme in cooperation with Longford SPCA for subsidised neutering for dogs.

In 2009, 1783 individual Dog Licenses were issued. Longford County Council continued to promote the need for the owners of dogs to purchase a Dog License. Currently a Dog Licence costs €12.70. Dog Licences can be purchased from any Post Office. The purchasing of a Dog Licence is an important aspect of responsible dog ownership.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGE LEVY FUNDS PROJECTS

Under the supervision of Environment staff, the following projects were undertaken during 2009

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Longford Electoral Area | Landscaping in Longford Town; Enhancement works at Cullyfad; Royal Canal Walk and Cycle Track; Aughareagh-Clonterm bog walk; Clondra playground; Longford playground improvements. |
| Granard Electoral Area | Old Granary Ballinalee; Dring Amenity Area improvements; Fair Green Edgeworthstown. |
| Ballymahon Electoral Area | Car parking at Cashel Cemetery; Slipway at Blenavoher; Legan village enhancement works and playground facility; Ballymahon Riverside Park and Newcastle walk enhancement works; Lanesboro quarry development; Drainage at Newtowncashel; Improvements at Abbeyshrute village. |
| Drumlish Electoral Area | Tubberpatrick Ancient Graveyard; Annagh Lake Leisure Park; Footpath from Ballinamuck Village to battle-site; Drumlish village playground. |



HOUSING, PLANNING & EMERGENCY SERVICES



Cllr. Victor Kiernan,
Chairperson of Housing &
Planning SPC



Mr. Jack Kilgallen
Director of Services

HOUSING

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The housing needs of County Longford continued to be met through a range of housing options. The last statutory assessment of housing need was undertaken in 2008. Changes in Social Welfare legislation which became operational in July 2009 require that new applicants for rent supplement support must have a full housing needs assessment (including interview) to be carried out by the local authority. At present Longford County Council has in the region of 1000 housing applications. Many of these applicants do not have a need for local authority housing and their accommodation needs are being met through private rented accommodation with rent supplement and other housing options. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides that in future years social housing needs assessments may be carried out on an annual basis.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Approximately €7.3m was spent on the Housing Construction Programme in 2009. This included a number of turnkey developments, purchase of individual houses, the construction of single rural cottages and various works under the Scheme of Improvements in lieu of Local Authority Housing.

THE FOLLOWING SCHEMES WERE IN PROGRESS AT THE END OF THE 2009

Ballinamuck (16), Kenagh (12), Church Quarter Granard (6), Beechwood (7), Rural cottages (2)

THE FOLLOWING SCHEMES WERE COMPLETED IN 2009

Townspark, Longford (50), Streamstown, Colehill (20), St. Johnstown, Ballinalee (20), River Crescent, Ballinalee (5). 4 individual houses were purchased and 1 rural house was completed. Since the 1st January 2009 there were 259 allocations of tenancies.

HOUSING LOANS

Approval and advancement of housing loans continues as in previous years. From April 2009 all housing loans are now being assessed, approved or declined by the Affordable Homes Partnership (AHP) in Dublin. All applications are subject to rigorous credit checks which are carried out by the Irish Credit Bureau. A total of 14 valid applications were received in 2009 with 10 loans approved and 6 advanced. This amount does not include applications refused or withdrawn.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

To date, Longford County Council has provided almost 100 eligible households with the opportunity to purchase their own home through the Affordable Housing Scheme. In the case of Part V Agreements, most of the houses have been sold by direct sale between the developer and the purchaser, with Longford County Council providing a list of eligible purchasers. As a result of the economic downturn and the fact that many new housing estates have not been completed, the availability of Affordable Houses is limited. Unemployment and changes in financial circumstances have also impacted on the ability of applicants to secure a mortgage and in turn to purchase a house under the Affordable Housing Scheme.

VOLUNTARY HOUSING

Longford County Council has a long association with the Voluntary Housing Sector and a substantial contribution has been made by the Voluntary Housing Sector in the provision of Social Housing in County Longford under the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) and the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS). In

2009, Respond continued the construction of its development at Townspark, Longford comprising of 89 units. This scheme is due for completion in March 2010. In 2009, Longford County Council also worked with several other Voluntary Housing Organisations on a local level including Saint Vincent de Paul and St. Christopher's.

HOMELESS FORUM

The Longford Homeless Forum met on a number of occasions in 2009. Following on from the objectives published in the 2008 in *The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland*, the forum has developed a Longford Homeless Action Plan which was adopted by Longford County Council in late 2009. The Longford Homeless Action Plan contains practical measures which aim to end the cycle of homelessness in Longford. The preparation of homeless actions plans has now been put on a statutory basis in the 2009 Act.

MAINTENANCE AND REFURBISHMENT

In 2009, a sum of €750,000 was provided in the budget for the maintenance and repair of Local Authority Housing. This area is continuously examined to ensure that best practice and value for money is achieved at all times.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

The Housing Liaison Officer and Estate Manager continued to work with tenants and residents associations throughout 2009. Compulsory pre-tenancy courses are attended by all new tenants. The "Better Estates Awards" were held again in 2009 and the winners were as follows, Small Estate – 1st Prize – River Crescent, Ballinalee, Medium Estate – 1st Prize – Páirc Mhic Giollabride, Edgeworthstown, Large Estate – 1st Prize – Devine Crescent, Edgeworthstown. In the Community Development Section, Páirc Mhic Giollabride, Edgeworthstown won 1st Prize and Cartron Road, Kenagh won 2nd Prize.



Páirc Mhic Giollabride, Edgeworthstown

A new community resource centre was opened in MacEoin Park, Longford. An outreach clinic is held there every Wednesday by the Housing Liaison Officer and the local community gardai. It is anticipated that other organisations will also use this centre for clinics in the near future. Tenancy Enforcement was ongoing during the year with a number of cases taken to court.

HOUSING GRANT SCHEMES

In 2009, a combined total of 254 applications were received under the three grant schemes; the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme, the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and the Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme.

A total of 164 grants were paid out and this amounted to €947,901 – this figure includes 15 Disabled Persons Grants in the amount of €139,576 and 3 Essential Repairs Grants in the amount of €12,540. These were grants which were approved in previous years prior to the introduction of the above mentioned three new grant schemes.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 was adopted by Longford County Council on 25th February 2009. This sets out the 4 year strategy in relation to the programme and type of accommodation to be provided for travellers. The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee meets on a quarterly basis and will monitor the progress achieved in relation to targets set out in the plan. It is expected the works will commence this year on the Willow Park Halting Site Refurbishment

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME (RAS)

At the end of 2009, there were 245 RAS tenancies in place. Eligibility for the scheme depends on applicants being assessed as having a housing need and also being in receipt of rent supplement for more than 18 months. The RAS Scheme and the associated operational and administrative costs are self financing in Longford.

LONG TERM LEASING ARRANGEMENTS

The Minister of State (with special responsibilities for Housing) announced this scheme in 2009. The main features of the scheme involve the Local Authority agreeing long term leases for multiple housing units (minimum of 5 units) with developers/owners of new private rented properties over ten to twenty years. The Council has received Department approval in relation to leasing of 5 units under the scheme in the Ballymahon area.

REMEDIAL/REGENERATION WORKS:

In 2009, proposals were advanced to carry out Remedial Works at Tromra Road, Granard. Documentation has been forwarded to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in relation to this scheme. The estimated cost of this project is €4m. This project has been prioritised as Priority 1 by the council.

PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS

The local authority is responsible for implementation and enforcement of accommodation standards in the rental sector. Funding is made available to the Local Authority based on the number of inspections carried out. 275 inspections were completed in 2009 and landlords were advised of non compliance issues. Many of these properties were inspected as part of the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

PLANNING

Significant activities undertaken by the planning department in 2009 are outlined below together with a broad Planning outlook for 2010.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The Development Management Section is responsible for processing all planning applications in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations.

The above chart indicates the numbers of applications and commencement notices received over the last 10 years. Peaks in 2004 and 2007 can be attributed to the rural renewal scheme and grant-aid for agricultural buildings respectively.

While lower numbers of applications were experienced in 2003 and 2005, those received contained high numbers of complex applications, requiring significant personnel hours to address at all stages in the process from validation and assessment through to completion and compliance.

2008 witnessed a substantial change in the number and complexity of planning permissions lodged, with a significant number of applications for modifications of existing permissions granted, one-off houses and smaller developments in general.

Application numbers continued to decline through 2009, reflecting economic trends and the downturn in the construction industry at all levels. This has been balanced by an increase in demands in other areas of the planning system, most notably in terms of taking in charge and the forward planning workload at a local and regional level.

It is interesting to note the trend in commencement notices in the same period which exhibits a considerably more stable pattern and is perhaps a better indicator of how applications physically translate onto the ground.

Pre-Planning consultations are an integral part of the Development Management process and are utilised on an ongoing and increasing basis. These meetings are held to provide a higher quality and more transparent planning service to the general public. In 2008 over 96 pre planning meetings were held to facilitate discussion with potential applicants on the issues associated with their proposals. This number increased to 110 in 2009. Pre-planning meetings are now recorded digitally to facilitate consistency, transparency and seamless integration with the decision-making process

License applications under Section 254 of the Act, principally for roadside signage, have also become a regular feature of the work carried out in the past 3 years, representing a substantial increase in workload over the previous years.

DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Development contributions are levied in accordance with the scheme adopted by the Council under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Each grant of planning permission contains a condition requiring the payment of a relevant development contribution which becomes payable if and when the development commences. There are many cases where permissions granted have been superseded by alternative permissions on the same site and where permissions granted have not yet been activated. This can sometimes give an inaccurate impression of the amount actually due and owing to the local authority.

The primary objectives of the Development Contribution Scheme are to:

- Provide a mechanism by which developers and others can contribute to the cost of providing public infrastructure and facilities that benefit development in their area
- Increase flexibility for local authorities in relation to the range of projects that could be funded from this source, by allowing authorities to fund public infrastructure provision without necessarily tying it to a specific development
- Introduce greater transparency into the way in which development contributions are levied and applied (so that developers would be able to establish in advance what levy should apply to them)
- Ensure that local authorities can manage and maintain growth by providing key infrastructure to support local economies

The Development Contribution Scheme has had a very positive impact on the delivery of infrastructure in Longford since its introduction. It has generated funds for a wide variety of infrastructure, including the acquisition of land, provision of open spaces, recreational and community facilities, amenity and landscaping works, roads, car parks, footpaths, water and waste water facilities.

Projects funded from new development contributions in 2009 amounted to €2.5m, while receipts for the period amounted to €384,860. The balance outstanding for development contributions and Part V as at 31st December 2009 amounted to €6.8m.

TAKING IN CHARGE

97 housing estates have been identified for consideration in the County, all of which have Planning Permission for more than 5 years but for less than 12 years. Bonds are in place on 84 of these developments. 21 have applied to the Council to be 'taken in charge'. Progress is currently being made by agreement and through litigation to resolve the issue of the 13 estates that do not currently have Bonds.

On identification of an unfinished housing estate, preliminary inter directorate reports are prepared. The developer is then informed in writing of the items of unfinished works and non-compliance with planning conditions in the estate. The technical report is also forwarded to the financial institution with a request for an extension of the Bond or to call in the Bond to allow for completion of the estate to standard.

To date, despite current unfavourable economic circumstances, this process has been relatively successful in relation to Bonds. The process of completion of the estates will take much longer and require considerable input from the Council in terms of staff resources.

The process of taking in charge is a lengthy one, requiring input across directorates and the allocation of a cross-disciplinary and dedicated team in order to run efficiently. The process involves the following main steps:

- Identification of full planning history of housing estate – this may be a complicated process where several permissions may exist on a site, possibly spanning a broad timescale
- Survey and inspection must be carried out to determine level of compliance with permission granted
- The developer responsible must be approached and negotiations held in order to determine how compliance is to be achieved
- Bonds and contributions must be determined in terms of amounts, phasing of payments and legal arrangements
- Failsafe monitoring systems must be established and maintained in order for the system to operate successfully
- Where enforcement action is unavoidable, this initiates an additional process with which staff must be familiar, also requires a specialised, dedicated cross-directorate Team

Work in this area is ongoing and expected to become a substantial element of planning over the coming years.

FORWARD PLANNING

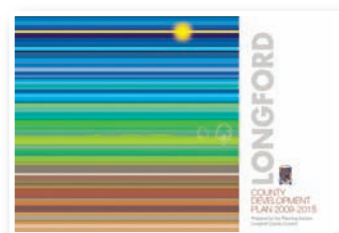
The Forward Planning Section is responsible for the research, preparation and production of all Development Plans, Local Area Plans and forward looking initiatives. The economic downturn and slow down in the construction industry does not affect the forward planning work schedule which is governed by the 2000 Act and ongoing implementation of national and EU legislation in the planning and environmental arena. In addition, the Forward Planning Section is regularly involved with other projects that require substantial time allocation such as CPOs, Route Corridor Studies and other projects from local to national level.

The following summary outlines the main projects addressed in 2009 and looks forward to the 2010 schedule.

LONGFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2009-2015

The review of the current Longford County Development Plan 2003 – 2009 commenced in April 2007 following substantial preparation work carried out in 2006. 2008 was a busy year in the development plan schedule with the majority of the consultation phases being carried out in this period.

The Development Plan was adopted in February 2009 and come into force on 16th March, 2009.



LONGFORD TOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2009-2015

Longford Town Development Plan was prepared by the Planning Section over the period from 2007-2009, which included the preparation and administration of the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. The Plan was adopted in July 2009 and came into force the following August.



LOCAL AREA PLANS

Local Area Plans facilitate the planned growth of designated towns and villages, through which development can be promoted to support existing communities particularly in rural areas. The Development Plan sets out areas to be covered by Local Area plans, which include Lanesboro and Cooleeney to be addressed in 2010.

Longford Southern Environs

The Southern Environs Local Area Plan (SELAP), a joint project between Longford Town and County Councils, is nearing completion. The plan aims to outline a planning vision for the area and how this can be implemented based on existing and projected available infrastructure over the medium to long-term. The plan recommends three phases of development in the relevant area, closely linked to the provision of appropriate infrastructural facilities.

Having initially been circulated in draft form to the members of both Councils in September 2008, the draft SELAP was revised to reflect changes to infrastructural proposals and incorporate these into the planning context. Formal public consultation on the draft plan was completed in November 2009. The Managers Report on submissions is due for discussion at both council meetings in January 2010. If adopted, this plan shall come into force in February 2010.

Clondra

Clondra LAP is in an advanced stage of preparation, with extensive work having been carried out over the 2008/9 period, including substantial consultation in relation to SEA and AA with the relevant authorities. The formal public consultation process is currently on hold.

Lanesboro

Lanesboro Local Area Plan is currently up for review. Preliminary work has been carried out on the plan including a public meeting. This will form part of the 2010 work schedule.

Carrickglass

Carrickglass Local Area Plan is due for review in 2010. This will be a challenging plan, requiring an innovative approach involving all departments, groups and bodies responsible for the development of the County.

OTHER PROJECTS

Land Use and Transportation Study (LUTs)

A land use and transportation study (LUTs) is ongoing and in an advanced stage of preparation for the Longford town and environs area which will feed into the provisions of the relevant plans. Accompanied by an updated traffic model for the town, this study will provide information such as existing and projected traffic flows, capacities at junctions and potential solutions to existing bottlenecks and problem areas throughout the town. It will also provide guidance on signage, street furniture and the treatment of traffic and pedestrian circulation in new developments. The study has been carried out in close consultation with the other forward planning projects in the area such as the northern and southern environs LAPs and the Town and County Development Plans.

GIS commitments

The Draft Development plan and SEA monitoring will require the development and implementation of GIS systems to assemble, analyse, store and present planning and environmental data as part of the fulfilment of these projects.

Specific GIS projects to be addressed on foot of the County Development Plan include:

- Updating of Iplan system to reflect current development plan policy
- The preparation of a County Tourism Map
- Mapping of Rural Housing

The Housing Land Availability analysis is a specific and detailed GIS data collection exercise for the Department of the Environment carried out annually in the Autumn.

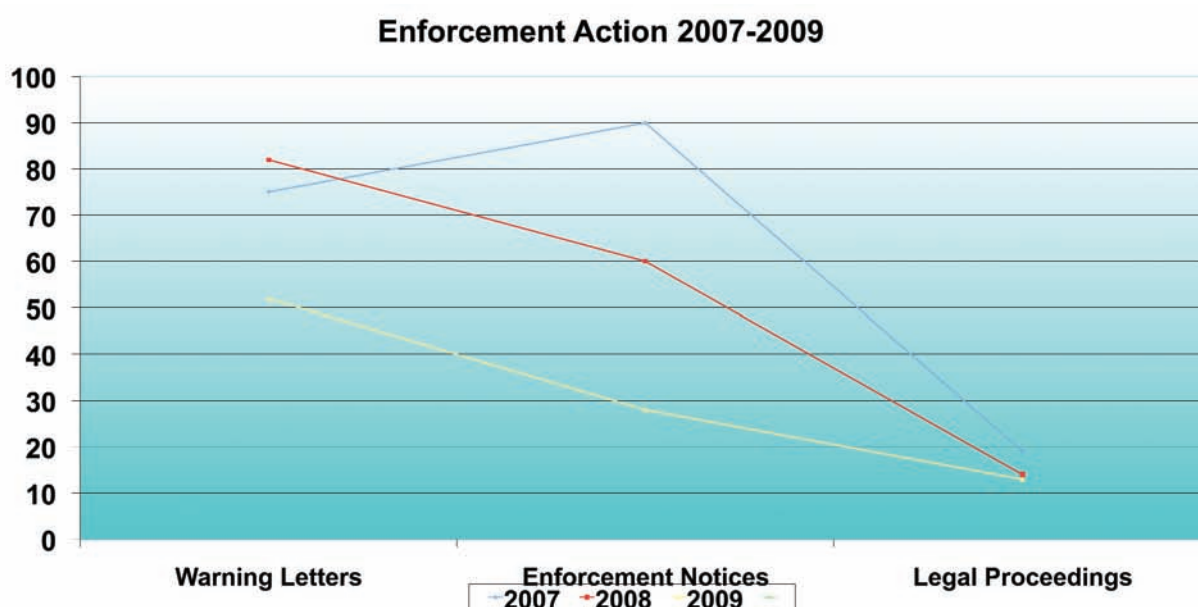
Regional Planning Guidelines

The planning guidelines for the Midland Region are currently under review. This is a much more intensive process than the original one, with Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment some of the additional elements that must be taken into account. Preparation of these guidelines is a lengthy process that has involved substantial staff input from the planning section to date and will continue to do so until finalised.

Policy changes in these guidelines will also require the amendment of plans and policies at County level, which will impact on the forward planning schedule into 2010 and beyond.

ENFORCEMENT

2006-2007, marked another active year for Longford County Council in the area of planning enforcement. During 2007 the Council issued 75 warning letters and 90 enforcement notices. Legal proceedings were commenced on 19 cases.



2008 saw a similar number of enforcement cases, with 82 warning letters issued, 60 enforcement notices issued and 14 legal proceedings instigated. In 2009, 52 warning letters were issued, along with 28 enforcements and 13 cases referred for legal proceedings. These trends are graphically represented on the chart above.

FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Fire and Rescue Service has stations in the following locations:

Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Lanesboro and Longford

These stations are manned by 48 retained fire-fighters who respond to both fire and rescue incidents. The Fire Department was active in promoting fire safety throughout the year. Such activities included the Fire Safety in Schools Programme where all primary schools were visited and talks given to third class students and working on the Halloween Festival Committees with the HSE and Gardai which promoted Safety at bonfires and the use of fireworks.

The Fire Department processed Fire Safety Certificates Planning Referrals and Court Licence Application Referrals. Inspections of places of entertainment and residential-type premises were carried out during 2009.

The contract for the new fire station in Edgeworthstown was signed in December 2009. The successful contractor is Adston Ltd from Belturbet Co. Cavan. Work is due to commence early January 2010 with a completion time of 12 months from signing of contracts.

Major incident equipment was purchased to the value of €100,000. The Department of Environment provided capital funding for this equipment.

The Longford town fire station extension has been tendered. We are currently awaiting approval from the Department of Environment to proceed to award this contract.

A Regional Major Emergency Exercise was held in December with participants from Westmeath, Offaly, Laois and Longford County Councils, the HSE and An Garda Síochána. The role of the Controller of Operations was tested in this exercise.

OPERATIONS

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has funded a new Emergency Tender vehicle which went on the road in Edgeworthstown in October 2009. The Department is also funding a Hazardous Materials Unit (incl. a decontamination system and gas-tight suits), a foam trailer, thermal imaging cameras, ground monitors and a mobile repeater unit; all of which were received in 2009.

In January 2009 the fire brigade welcomed back Seán Mimmagh who had resigned from the Lanesboro Unit in 2006. Also in 2009, Oliver Kelly joined the Longford Unit in January, with Philip O'Hara and Piotr Doroz joining the Granard Unit in September. Liam Connerton retired from the Lanesboro Unit in December 2009 after 21 years service as fire-fighter and sub officer.

In March members of the fire brigade took part in the inaugural Rescue Organisation Ireland national challenge competition and finished in third place in the overall competition. In addition Station Officer Pauric Cullen was awarded second place in the *Command Management* category and Driver-Mechanic Rory Kelly and Fire-fighter Raymond Hussey were placed second in the *Technical Skills* category. The fire-fighters prepare for and participate in this competition in their own time.

2009 ended on a sad note for the fire brigade when early on Christmas morning they were called to a major fire at St. Mel's Cathedral, a building held in great affection by the people of Longford. Five units of Longford Fire Service responded to the fire. Unfortunately, the fire caused major structural damage to the cathedral.



CIVIL DEFENCE

Civil Defence is part of a global organisation with the primary role of saving lives and the alleviation of suffering in time of war, while its peacetime role is to assist at natural disasters and man-made accidents. At local level, Civil Defence is responsible for the recruitment and training of volunteers and the provision of training centres in the community.

The main activities, programmes, events and developments during 2009 were:

- One of our members achieved one of the first EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) Certificates in the Country that was run by the Civil Defence College. She gave a lot of her spare time and a lot of effort in the course and we were all delighted with the outcome
- We ran a number of First aid courses during the year including BLS/AED (Basic Life Support/Automated External Defibrillation), CFR (Cardiac First Response), OFA (Occupational First Aid), EFR (Emergency First Response) and Basic Community First aid courses for members of the public, new recruits and existing members. We also ran Induction and Manual Handling courses for all members
- Two members took on the Advanced Coxswains Course which was carried out in the sea off Westport and included coastal and night time navigation, boat handling and a marine radio course. While in training in preparation for this course on Lough Ree, near Athlone we were asked to assist the Coastguard in a search of the area based on a distress call they had received

- Locally there were a number of Courses based on Radiation Monitoring, Searching and Communications
- Our boat crew took part in the Annual training seminar in Carrick-on-Shannon in connection with the avian flu
- In October a team from Longford along with members from Dublin and Wicklow won the National Exercise in Co. Louth. This was a first for Longford and the team deserve great credit for the time they put in preparing for the event
- Members were involved in the Local Authority Major Emergency Exercise in December
- During November and December Civil Defence were on stand-by quite a bit during the floods and the bad weather. The boat crew were called into action on one occasion and we assisted the local meals on wheels on a number of occasions
- Throughout 2009 Longford Civil Defence also assisted in 42 local community events



National Exercise Rescue Site in Drogheda



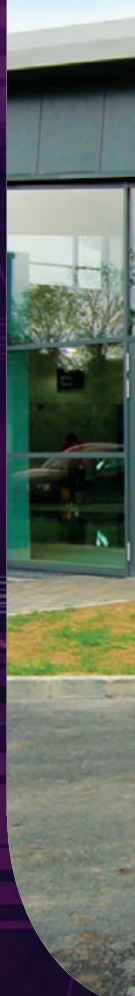
Regional group taking part in the Advance Coxswains course in Westport.



Taking part in the National Exercise water exercise on the Boyne in Drogheda



ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CORPORATE & CULTURAL SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES





Cllr. Martin Mulleady,
Chairperson of Economic
Development SPC



Mr. Frank Sheridan,
Director of Services

COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE

LONGFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

There are 29 members on the Board drawn from four sectors and are as follows:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (7 MEMBERS)

Cllr. Alan Mitchell, Chairperson of the Board, Mayor Peggy Nolan, Cllr. Victor Kiernan, Cllr. Martin Mulleady, Cllr. Gerry Brady, Longford County Council. Cllr. Fintan Flood, Granard Town Council, Mr. Tim Caffrey, Longford County Manager.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT (7 MEMBERS)

Mr. Adrian Greene, Mr. Pat O'Rourke, (Longford Community Resources Ltd). Dr. Ruth McGrath, (Environment Pillar) Mr. Michael Nevin, Ms Beatrice Cunningham, (Longford County Enterprise Board). Ms Josephine Stroker, (Longford Acorn Project) Ms. Patricia Harrison, (Longford County Childcare Committee).

STATE AGENCIES (10 MEMBERS)

Supt. Denis Shields (Garda Síochána), Mr. Kevin Kidney (Fáilte Ireland), Ms Chris Forde (IDA Ireland), Vacant (Enterprise Ireland), Mr. Grainne Nic Gobhann (Health Service Executive), Ms. Michael Kearney (Department of Social Welfare), Mr. Peter Egan (FÁS), Mr. Oliver Burke (Teagasc), Ms Josephine O'Donnell (County Longford VEC), Mr. Eugene Rafferty (Department of Education & Science).

SOCIAL PARTNERS (5 MEMBERS)

Mr. George Shedwell (Irish Congress of Trade Unions), Ms Kate Keegan and Ms Brenda Quinn (Community & Voluntary Sector), Mr. James Brady (Farming Sector), Karen Clabby (Business Sector)

Reconstitution of Membership of the County Development Board following the Local Elections in 2009.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Following the Local Elections in 2009, Mayor Peggy Nolan, Cllr. Victor Kiernan, Cllr. Martin Mulleady and Cllr. Gerry Brady replaced Cllr. Sean Farrell, Cllr. Martin Farrell, Cllr. Barney Steele and Cllr. Adrian Farrell.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Adrian Greene, Mr. Pat O'Rourke and Mr. Sean Hannon replaced Monica O'Malley, Tess Murphy and Charlie Harrison of LCRL. During 2009, Mr. Sean Hannon (LCRL) was replaced by Dr. Ruth McGrath (Environment Pillar)

STATE AGENCIES

Ms Chris Forde replaced Ms Gillain Maunsell IDA. Grainne Nic Gobhann replaced Donie Murtagh (HSE), Mr. Michael Kearney replaced Ms Marie Cullen (Dept. Social Welfare), Mr. Peter Egan replaced Gerry Johnston), Mr. Oliver Burke replaced Michael Lennon (Teagasc), Ms Josephine O'Donnell replaced Mr. Sean Ryan (County Longford VEC), Mr. Eugene Rafferty replaced Mr. Seamus Murray, Dept. Education and Science.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Ms Kate Keegan and Ms Brenda Quinn replaced Mr. Mark Casey and Ms Fionnuala Spillane (Community & Voluntary Forum). Dr. Ruth McGrath representing the environmental pillar is an additional place on the Board.

LONGFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

On Friday 20th March 2009, the Board undertook a review of its 2006-2008 Strategic Plan. The Board was successful in achieving its priority goals during this period through the engagement of agencies at all levels and the commitment to the concept of 'interagency work'. The Board has lead and piloted a number of unique and innovative projects across the spectrum of social, economic and cultural spheres.

Going forward the Board has decided to focus on a limited number of priorities and actions over a three and a half year period from mid 2009 to end 2012, with particular emphasis on interagency co-operation and the need for sharing resources to ensure efficiencies and value for money to meet the needs of the relevant client groups. Arising from the review the Board agreed an Action Plan which prioritises 7 key issues, and subsequent actions for the period 2009-2012.

Endorsement of Local Development Agency Plans by the County Development Board

A key role of the County Development Board (CDB) is to bring about a more co-ordinated delivery of public and local development services at local level. Central to this co-ordination role is overseeing the implementation of a ten-year strategy through relevant agencies including local development plans. To facilitate better co-ordination the plans of the local development agencies were considered by the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group (SIMWG) and on their recommendation endorsed by the CDB.

LONGFORD POVERTY PROFILE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY / UPDATED

The Poverty Profile and Social Inclusion Strategy documents were published in 2009. The purpose of the Poverty Profile and Social inclusion Strategy is to map disadvantage in County Longford and allow for more targeted planning and intervention. Exodea Europe consultants were appointed to develop Longford's first Poverty Profile and Social Inclusion Strategy. The development of a Poverty Profile and Social inclusion Strategy was one of the key actions of the CDB Strategic plan. The Social Inclusion Measures Working Group was charged with the delivery of this action and established an interagency steering group to oversee it.

INTERAGENCY CO-OPERATION IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

A Traveller Interagency group operates as a subcommittee of the County Development Board and oversees the implementation of the Longford Traveller Interagency Plan which has four key areas: health, education training and employment. Significant progress was made in sustaining young Travellers in education and in training and in securing employment for a number of Traveller women. In 2009, the group was asked to undertake a review of their existing actions and reprioritise a number of key actions going forward.

LONGFORD COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY FORUM

The Community & Voluntary Forum conducted its own plan for 2009/2010. Two facilitated planning sessions resulted in a thorough analysis of Forum operations and organisation.

The vision for Longford Community & Voluntary Forum is:

1. The need for an effective voice for the community sector at decision making level in the county
2. The need for effective communication within the community sector and between that sector and other sectors in the county
3. The need for an effective organisation of the community forum to respond for those needs

The Forum identified four key objectives for 2009:

- Engaging within the next year in a concrete exercise of advocacy for the community sector
- Identifying and putting in place procedural arrangements within this year to enable the Forum to effectively represent issues arising from individual member groups

- Identify and secure resources for the forum
- Identify a training strategy for the forum membership

At the Forum's April 2009 AGM the following were elected to the executive committee:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chairperson | Joe Murphy (Dromard Rural Development Association) |
| Vice-Chair | Parvez A Butt (Newtownforbes Development Co-Op) |
| Secretary | Edel Kelly (EDI Centre) |
| Asst. Secretary | Grace Hegarty (Longford Tidy Towns) |
| Joint Treasurers | Rose Higgins (Tang Muintir Community Council) Brenda Quinn (LSPCA) |
| Public Relations | Patricia Rouiller (Longford Women's Link) |

REDEVELOPMENT OF RICHMOND HARBOUR, CLONDRA

Longford County Council, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland collaborated in the completion of Richmond Harbour, Clondra. The project includes the installation of a floating jetty and safety boom, extension of existing harbour wall, refurbishment of existing derelict building, improving the area with both hard and soft landscaping and also the provision of a much needed play area. The project provides a much needed tourism boost for the area.

LONGFORD TOURISM STRATEGY

A multi agency group consisting of representatives from Longford County Council, Longford Town Council, County Enterprise Board, LCRL, Fáilte Ireland and Longford Tourism are working collaborately to develop a Tourism Strategy for the County. An audit was completed and will be used for strategic planning coupled with extensive consultation with the sector.

DÁIL NA NÓG & COMHAIRLE NA NÓG 2009

The National Children's Strategy has as its first goal that "Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity". Dáil na nÓg is the annual national parliament for young people and gives young people the opportunity to discuss issues of concern to them and to influence public policy. Delegates are elected to the Dáil na nÓg through the local Comhairle na nÓg. Five young people from Longford were selected to attend in February 2009 and they were, Claire Donlon, Stephen Norton, Carlus Matthews, Aiden Coady and Enya Mulcahy. The delegates attended training in Cavan with delegates from neighbouring counties to prepare them for participating at the Dáil na nÓg. The themes for discussion on the day of the Dáil an Óg were physical and mental health. These themes were broken down into the following issues: suicide, bullying, healthy living and sexual health.

The County Development Board has responsibility for organising the annual Comhairle na nÓg. The 2009 event was held in Longford Slashers on Thursday the 12th of November and attended by young people, aged between 15-18 years old from the post primary schools and training centres around the county. The young people discussed a range of issues affecting them such as drugs and alcohol and the lack of employment opportunities. The themes put forward by the post primary schools and training centres in County Longford for discussion at the National Dáil na nÓg were the lack of jobs, college fees, and the rise in crime among young people. Five young people were elected to represent County Longford at the Dáil na nÓg, which will be held on the 5th of March 2010 in Croke Park.

ENHANCED PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITY FOR THE COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

Funding was secured from the Office for the Minister of children to develop the Comhairle na nÓg. An Interagency Steering Group of key stakeholders were established to advise and assist in the implementation

of a number of initiatives to enhance the participation in, and the more effective running of the Comhairle na nÓg. Some of the initiatives are as follows:

COUNTY LONGFORD YOUTH COUNCIL

County Longford Youth Council represents students from all the post primary schools and training centres throughout County Longford. The aim of the Council is to provide an opportunity for young people from across the County to raise and debate issues of concern to them. A number of meetings were held in 2009 at which a range of issues were debated and recommendations made to local bodies. A review was undertaken of issues arising from various student councils. The issue of social facilities for older teenagers was explored with guest speaker Jim Maher from Foróige.



Students attending the Comhairle na nÓg 2009

STUDENT COUNCIL TRAINING PROGRAMME

In 2009 training was provided to Student Councils in post primary schools and Youthreach centres to facilitate the development of Student Councils and to create an awareness of the Comhairle na nÓg and the Dáil na nÓg. This initiative was very successful in fostering a culture of democratic participation by young people.



Longford County Council with Templemichael Student Council.

DISABILITY AWARENESS PROGRAMME

In December 2009, Longford County Council in conjunction with the Irish Wheelchair association officially launched an interactive education DVD 'View from Here'. The purpose of this resource is to raise awareness among students and teachers of the simple steps they can take, the attitudes they can choose and the decisions they can make that will improve how people with disabilities are treated. The DVD resource includes a booklet to assist teachers and leaders with further support material, workshop handouts and outlines the key issues involved. The inspiration for this programme came from two 14 year old students, who live almost identical lives but are treated very differently by many people. One of the girls has a disability and the other doesn't. Camera's were fitted to a wheelchair so viewers of the DVD will see some of the daily situations that arise from a wheelchair user and perhaps be surprised at what can happen. The wheelchair user is a representative of all members of a community who face a mobility challenge in any way.

This initiative shows a commitment by Longford County Council to develop and enhance our Comhairle na nÓg by targeting the inclusion of young people with disabilities. This project was made possible as a result of funding secured by Community & Enterprise from the office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.



Mayor Peggy Nolan and Laura McPhillips Longford County Council with members of the Irish Wheelchair Association at the launch of the Disability Awareness Programme.

NATIONAL PRIDE OF PLACE COMPETITION 2009

'Pride of Place' is a competition, which is directed towards recognising improvements by local communities to create civic pride in their area. The all island competition is hosted by Co-Operation Ireland in conjunction with the Local Authority Steering Forum comprising of officials from authorities in both parts of Ireland. The aim of the "Pride of Place" competition is to encourage best practice, innovation and leadership in providing vibrant sustainable communities that improve the quality of life for all. Pride of Place is a unique opportunity for community groups to be officially recognised, on an all island basis, for the valuable work undertaken in their local areas. The nomination process to the all island competition is undertaken through the Local Authorities.

In 2009, Longford County Council nominated five entrants to represent County Longford in a number of categories. They are as follows: Revamp (category – youth), Pairc Mhic Giolla Brid (category – housing estates) Abbeyshrule Community Development Association (category – heritage), 'East Meets West Women's Group' (category – integration). Judging took place over three days in July 2009. Each group was required to make a presentation highlighting the range of activities and projects they had undertaken. A National Award Ceremony was held in Newcastle, County Down on the 21st of November 2009 at which the 'East Meets West' Women's Group won the Pride of Place Special Category, Integration Award, a great honour for Longford and the committee.



Mayor Peggy Nolan with members of the 'East Meets West Women's Group' winners of the National Pride of Place Competition Integration category, at the National Awards Ceremony 2009.

PRIDE OF LONGFORD COMPETITION 2009

The Pride of Longford Competition provides an opportunity for Longford County Council to acknowledge and recognise the voluntary work and commitment of local groups to enhancing their local communities. Every year the competition takes a different theme and in 2009 the chosen theme was 'Cultural Activities in the areas of music, art, dance, drama, language, sculpture and photography'. Entry in the competition was open to all community groups in County Longford. Judging took place on the 14th of May. An Awards Ceremony was held on Thursday the 16th of July 2009 at which the winners were honoured with certificates and prize money across a number of categories.

JOINT POLICING COMMITTEES

Joint Policing Committees (JPC's) were established in co-operation with the Garda in the three Longford Local Authorities in accordance with guidelines issued in September 2008. In 2009 a meeting was held in the Council Chamber at which a presentation was given by the Garda on a number of issues including, crime, public orders and community policing initiatives.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Longford County Council continues to pro-actively support economic development throughout County Longford. During 2009 the downturn in economy continued and was particularly evident in the construction sector and in the lack of consumer spending. The local authorities and other support agencies must co-operate in assisting vulnerable enterprises survive the current challenges.

LONGFORD SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

BOARD OF LONGFORD SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

The Board of Longford Sports Partnership (2009) comprised of representatives from statutory, voluntary and sporting organisations: Cllr. Maura Kilbride Harkin, Cllr. Thomas O'Flaherty, Cllr. Martin Mulleady, Frank Sheridan, Longford County Council, Clodagh Armitage, HSE, Sean Hannon, LCRL, Sean Ryan, VEC, Mark Casey, County Development Board, Sara Jane Jordan, County Longford youth Services, Mary Killane, Longford Leisure Centre, Oonagh Flynn, St. Christopher's Services Ltd., Fabien Walsh, Eileen Farrell, Stephen Coy, Pat Cahill, Rose Kane and Eamon Tynan. Cllr. John Duffy and Cllr. Michael Carrigy were welcomed to the LSP Board following local elections in June 2009.



Members of Longford Sports Partnership Board

CORE PROGRAMMES

Eight Primary schools in County Longford received **Buntus Generic** training with approximately 100 teachers and 1200 students benefiting from the programme. The programme provides teacher training, a bag of equipment and resource cards, all of which are free to the schools.



Teachers participating in Buntus Generic Training

Buntus Start, the equivalent programme for pre-schools has seen 18 centres and over 100 trained. Approximately, 975 children will have access to quality physical activity provision as a result.

Four **Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport** (Child Protection) workshops were held throughout the year. Over 60 volunteers and coaches were certified by the Irish Sports Council following the training and over 17 sports represented. Courses will continue to run on a regular basis.

The **Sports Club Grant Scheme** administered by the LSP assisted seventeen clubs in the County. Projects that were supported include junior club development, coach education and training and project which increased community usage of facilities.

TARGET PROGRAMMES

Working in conjunction with other LSPs in the midlands region, Longford LSP hosted a **Volunteers in Sport Seminar** in Belvedere House, Mullingar in June 2009. Over 80 participants heard presentations from National Governing Bodies representatives, local volunteers and Jim Glennon, former Ireland rugby international. MC Ciaran Mullooly launched a **Volunteer in Sport** booklet produced by the LSPs at the event.

Girls On The Move, a pilot programme targeting inactive teenage girls was launched in four secondary schools throughout the County. They were Ballymahon Vocational School, Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon, Lanesborough Community College and Ardscoil Phadraig, Granard.

Communities in Action is a RAPID funded programme targeting young people aged 13-18. The programme includes sports coaching, volunteer education and training and a Walking Bus project in schools. A steering committee has been established to continue the roll-out of this programme in 2010.

Longford Sports Partnership in conjunction with the HSE is currently facilitating the **Playground Markings Initiative** which is being rolled out in primary schools in Longford. Scoil Samhthann N.S., Ballinallee is the first school in the County to avail of the scheme.

Stencil Packs (stencils and games booklet) which enable schools to put down playground markings are being offered FREE to all primary schools in Longford to encourage greater physical activity in young children through Play in the school setting.

COMMUNICATIONS

Longford Sports Partnership in conjunction with the County Development Board published a newsletter in autumn 2009 and will issue two more during 2010.

A new **website** has been developed and launched. **www.longfordsports.ie** holds information on a variety of sports, clubs, funding streams and facilities in Longford.

Following consultations in October 2009 with sporting organisations, local agencies and individuals, a **Strategic Plan for Sport** in Longford is now ready to be launched. Copies are available for download on the LSP website.



LONGFORD COUNTY LIBRARY, ARCHIVES AND HERITAGE SERVICES

OVERVIEW

The six branch libraries are located at Longford, Ballymahon, Granard, Lanesboro, Edgeworthstown and Drumlish.

This year has been a very successful one for the library service with increases of almost 8% in membership and 6% in the number of visits to our libraries up from 109,092 in 2008 to 124,343 in 2009. This clearly reflects the success of our policy to make our library service more citizen-centred, responsive and inclusive to the needs of the whole community. Our vision is to make our library service "a welcoming space for all" and to respect the individuality and diversity of the community we serve.

The year ended on a very high note with the official signing of the contract for the refurbishment of a modern community library for Ballymahon. The main consultants on the project are award-winning architects Sean Harrington Architects and the contractors who will carry out the work are the Galway-based company Purcell Construction. Work is to begin in early February 2010.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2009

The library continues to build strong partnerships with a network of other service providers to promote active citizenship and to address issues of social exclusion in the key areas of information, lifelong learning and improving the quality of life for all of our citizens.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The 'East Meets West' Women's group, which meets fortnightly in Longford Library, has gone from strength to strength with ten different nationalities now members of the group. The highlight of the year for them was the receipt of a 'National Pride of Place Integration Award' at a special ceremony in Newcastle, County Down in November. The 'Polish Mother and Toddler' group is now in its third year and continues to meet weekly on Friday mornings. Usage of the library's foreign language literature collection continues to grow and the twice yearly French, Spanish, Italian and Irish classes are always very much in demand.



*Members of "East Meets West"
with their National Pride of Place trophy*

HEALTHY READING PROJECT

In July, Deputy Peter Kelly T.D., representing the Minister for Mental Health launched the "Nurturing Your Mental Health Project" which is a very successful multi-agency project led by the library, in partnership with Longford Mental Health Association, HSE, Rapid, and local health professionals. Fourteen information leaflets along with a poster promoting different aspects of mental health from Depression to Eating Disorders were produced and distributed to all local GPs, Health Centres and community groups. The broad objective of the project was to raise awareness and encourage people to use the library for information on all aspects of mental health, helping to alleviate the traditional stigma surrounding mental illness.



The launch of the "Nurturing Your Mental Health" project

Very positive feedback has come from this project and has led to excellent partnership working with the health services in Longford. A national award was won by Longford Mental Health services for their involvement in this project which helped to fund additional stock for the library. As a follow-up action, a very successful Community Mental Health Day was organized in early December with cooperation from all the services in Longford working the area of mental health.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

One of the biggest developments in the library service in recent years has been the huge response from the community to the availability of fast and reliable internet broadband and WiFi access in all of our library branches.

A new partnership project "FÁS e-Learning at the Library", aimed primarily at the unemployed and those who wish to improve their job prospects, was launched in September in the Longford, Granard and Lanesboro branch libraries. The programme is open to all learners (over 18) and currently 75 learners have registered to participate in the initiative from a cross section of the community – retired, unemployed, those working at home, as well as a group of Longford County Council staff who are completing the ECDL. Facilitated Workshops are taking place weekly at participating libraries and there is a continuous intake and waiting list for the programme.

Other ICT developments during the year were:

- Introduction of SMS texting service to our customers as a means of enhancing communications with them
- Introduction of new features on our library website, i.e. online business databases, online recipes, new website reporting tools
- Continued support of national online initiatives such as Borrow Books, Ask About Ireland website
- Upgrading of our cataloguing management system to ensure our online database contains accurate and easy to use information for our customers
- Installation of web-based bibliographic resource to enhance cataloguing process



Bealtaine tour of Derrycassan Woods

SERVICES TO OLDER PEOPLE

The month of May has been designated as a month to encourage creativity in older people coordinated through the Bealtaine initiative. The library, in partnership with Longford Older Persons Network and Longford VEC, organized a varied and exciting programme for Bealtaine this year. We are very grateful to the Donovan family, owners of Newcastle House, Ballymahon, who gave us their facilities free to launch a "Longford Recipes Online" webpage to promote traditional local recipes gathered by Longford pupils from their grandparents. This event was followed by an afternoon tea-dance attended by 120 members of Active Age groups around the county. An intergenerational project encouraging children to discover more about their own parish and teaching them basic research skills was initiated between pupils of Fermoy and Lanesboro national schools and the Local Active Age clubs was a great success, culminating in the production of a booklet "Open the Door".

LONGFORD COUNTY LIBRARY STATISTICAL REPORT 2009

LIBRARY MEMBERSHIP FIGURES FOR 2009

| Branch | Adult | Junior | 2nd Level Student | 3rd Level Student | Other | Total 2009 | Total 2008 | % Inc/Dec |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Longford | 1710 | 1974 | 638 | 528 | 60 | 4910 | 4427 | +10.9% |
| Lanesborough | 201 | 162 | 43 | 14 | 3 | 423 | 405 | +4.4% |
| Granard | 189 | 196 | 37 | 15 | 23 | 460 | 572 | -19.6% |
| Ballymahon | 133 | 156 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 310 | 288 | +7.6% |
| Drumlish | 87 | 168 | 28 | 11 | 18 | 312 | 250 | +24% |
| E'town | 84 | 194 | 18 | 6 | 3 | 305 | 271 | +12.5% |
| TOTAL | 2,404 | 2,850 | 774 | 580 | 112 | 6,720 | 6,260 | +7.3% |

NO. OF CUSTOMER VISITS TO LIBRARIES

| Branch | No. of Visits |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Longford Branch | 118, 578 |
| Lanesboro Library | 10, 815 |
| Granard Branch | 5, 449 |
| Drumlish Branch | 3,960 |
| Ballymahon Branch | 3,066 |
| Edgeworthstown Branch | 2,268 |
| Longford Local Studies Room | 316 |
| TOTAL | 144,452 |

TOTAL NUMBER OF ITEMS BORROWED 2009

| Branch | Adult Fiction | Adult Non-Fiction | Children | Teens | Audio | Foreign Language | Inter-Library Loans | Total 2009 | Total 2008 | % Inc/Dec |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Longford | 20,994 | 16,923 | 19,280 | 1,500 | 4,260 | 1,516 | 396 | 64,869 | 62,198 | +4.2 |
| Lanesboro | 3,668 | 1,618 | 2,732 | 170 | 56 | 184 | 73 | 8,501 | 7,905 | +7.5 |
| Granard | 2,567 | 1,381 | 2,998 | 134 | 183 | 60 | 52 | 7,375 | 8,172 | -9.8 |
| Ballymahon | 2,168 | 562 | 1,767 | 106 | 15 | 30 | 10 | 4,658 | 5,432 | -15.2 |
| Drumlish | 1,076 | 708 | 2,656 | 134 | 25 | 18 | 4 | 4,621 | 4,764 | -3.1 |
| E'town | 1,155 | 650 | 2,335 | 78 | 98 | 0 | 10 | 4,326 | 4,746 | -8.9 |
| TOTAL | 31,628 | 21,842 | 31,768 | 2,122 | 4,637 | 1,808 | 545 | 94,350 | 93,217 | +1.2 |

INTERNET USAGE STATISTICS 2009

| Branch | No. of Sessions Used (wired) | WiFi Sessions (wireless) | Total 2009 | Total 2008 | % Inc/Dec |
|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Longford | 16,304 | 980 | 17,284 | 14,885 | +9.5% |
| Lanesboro | 2, 765 | 157 | 2,922 | 2,527 | +15.6% |
| Granard | 1, 737 | 21 | 1,758 | 1,726 | +1.8% |
| Ballymahon | 837 | — | 837 | 801 | +4.4% |
| Drumlish | 741 | 19 | 760 | 696 | +9.1% |
| E'town | 461 | 1 | 462 | 555 | -16.8% |
| TOTAL | 22,845 | 1,178 | 24,023 | 21,190 | 13.3% |

TOP 10 BOOKS BORROWED IN LONGFORD LIBRARIES IN 2009

- Hold Tight by Harlan Coben
- The Official Driver Theory Test – compiled by the Road Safety Authority
- This Charming Man by Marian Keyes
- Forgive and Forget by Patricia Scanlan
- When the Light Fades by Kathy Rodgers
- The Secret Scripture by Sebastian Barry
- Horrid Henry by Francesca Simon
- Lessons in Heartbreak by Cathy Kelly
- Horrid Henry and the Mummy's Curse by Francesca Simon
- Twilight by Stephanie Meyer

OTHER LONGFORD LIBRARY EVENTS IN 2009



Top row, from left: Fairtrade expert Diane Aurret at the launch of Fairtrade Fortnight 2009 (March); Saxophonist Jimmy Hughes entertaining the attendees at the Bealtaine 2009 tea-dance in Newcastle House (May); County Vet, Michael King answering questions from young pet owners during the Longford Library Summer Festival 2009 (July); A brave librarian at a talk given by the Irish Raptor Research Centre during the Longford Library Summer Festival 2009 (July).

Bottom row, from left: A devilish Longford Library member enjoying a book at the Longford Library Halloween Festival (October); Magician Christophe Lombardi at the Longford Library Halloween Festival 09; Activist Rosaleen McDonagh speaking at the Longford Traveller Focus Week 2009 (December).

LONGFORD COUNTY ARCHIVES SERVICE 2009

During 2009, Longford County Archives Service continued to make progress in the twin areas of archives and records management but from May onwards we were unfortunately without the services of an archivist.

PROCESSING AND ACCESS:

The archives of Lanesborough Mixed NS, 1889-1953, and Lanesborough Boys' NS, 1958-2007, were cleaned and listed, and are now ready for public access. The collection consists of registers, roll books, daily report books and a large number of photographs.

ACCESSIONS

The following collections were deposited:

- Papers of the late James Hussey, Derryohill, Lanesborough, concerning his involvement in the War of Independence, 1919-'21 and Civil War, 1922-'23
- Papers of the late Canon Kelly PP, Granard
- The Rainsford papers, including letters of the Brooke family and two signed letters from Rev. John Wesley

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Archivist continued to advise local authority staff on record-keeping matters, including the appropriate retention periods of files.

LONGFORD HERITAGE OFFICE 2009

The overall aim of the Longford County Heritage Plan is to ensure ***"that our heritage will be part of life for everyone"***. This is being achieved through:

1. The establishment and management of the County Longford Heritage Forum and their buy-into the existing *Longford Heritage Plan 2004 – 2009* and the putting together of the new *Longford Heritage Plan 2010-2015*
2. The co-ordination and Implementation of the *Longford County Heritage Plan 2004-2009*
3. The review of the existing Heritage Plan and the drafting of a new Heritage Plan to come into effect from 2010

LONGFORD HERITAGE OFFICE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2009

In 2009 a number of significant projects were undertaken to further the aims and objectives of the Longford Heritage Plan 2004-2009 and to increase our knowledge and awareness of Longford's diverse heritage stock. These comprised:

Commencement of a Public Realm Plan for the historic core of Granard

The Longford town of Granard has a historical, architectural and archaeological character unique in County Longford and indeed the surrounding counties. The consultation process of a Public Realm Plan to better guide the delivery of an attractive and user-friendly public realm, comprising public thoroughfares, pathways, open spaces and civic structures commenced with liaison with the Town Council and the Buttermarket Committee. This process will continue into 2010 culminating in the delivery of the Public Realm Plan.

Conservation Management Plan for the Monuments of Saints Island

The ecclesiastic complex on Saints Island in Lough Ree houses the ruins of an Augustinian priory with its roots in the early Christian period. The site comprises the above-ground remains of the priory church, additional chapels,

sections of the cloister and garth and a graveyard. The site is also adjacent to Lough Ree which is a protected Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Natural Heritage Area. An in-depth analysis was made of the site, with recommendations made for the conservation of the architectural, archaeological, historic and natural heritage of the site.

Accessibility Audit of Traditionally-Accessible Monuments on the Record of Monuments & Places for County Longford

County Longford has a rich resource of archaeological heritage, a significant proportion of which is in public guardianship or otherwise traditionally accessible or highly visible to the general public. Under the National Disability Act 2005, there is a requirement to achieve access for all with regard to heritage features. This audit is a baseline study of access to 300 of Longford's traditionally-accessible sites with suggestions for improvement of access where this would not compromise the integrity of the monuments and sites.



View of the medieval Augustinian Priory on Saints Island, Lough Ree, with the priory chapel on the right.

Heritage Week 2009 Programme

Heritage Week 2009 played host to a wide variety of events and themes. The overriding topic was Longford-born writer/poet/playwright/folklorist Padraic Colum, with an exhibition of his life and work as one of the week-long events held. Other talks and events held promoted awareness of multiple aspects of heritage, including alien species in gardening, the contribution of the Edgeworth family to modern astronomy, and the role of the Irish in the American Civil War to name but a few. As ever a wide programme to suit various ages and interests was brought together from many community and voluntary groups and societies in County Longford.

BUILT HERITAGE PROJECTS

Essential conservation works to the former Market House/Court house in Ballymahon (future Ballymahon Library) were undertaken in 2009. This comprised the repointing of two elevations using traditional materials and techniques; the replacement of the uPVC windows with historically-accurate timber sliding sash windows and other minor repairs.



Former Ballymahon market house & courthouse after repointing, with new timber sash windows.

All of these works improved the appearance and character of this fine structure enormously, and the planned conservation and renovation works to be carried out in 2010 will continue this trend for the benefit of the building and the streetscape of Ballymahon town.

The Heritage Office liaised closely with the Roads Section in the carrying out of essential repairs carried out to the Mill Bridge in Clondra, Co. Longford. This 18th century bridge required the insertion of a retaining wall over the mill pond and the careful reinstatement of its stonework to complement its historic character.

HERITAGE AWARENESS

To further awareness of heritage within County Longford, the Heritage Office undertook the following:

- Storytelling, drama, mask-painting and art workshops for children in partnership with artist Chris Thompson as part of the Longford Summer Festival, based on the theme of Étaín and Midir. The drawings from the workshops were published in the Calendar of Longford's Mythological Heritage 2010 which was available free of charge and to download from www.flickr.com/longford_library
- Promotion of the county's natural heritage through sponsoring a hedgerow maintenance demonstration at the county Ploughing Championships at Easter and a display of birds of prey at the Longford County Agricultural Show in July 2009.
- Having input into committees, groups and events to further the awareness and protection of Longford's varied heritage including the Rural Development Programme.
- Having input into national policies and strategies in relation to heritage, e.g. submissions on the Ireland's Draft Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Devising databases of Longford's traditional words and sayings and practitioners of traditional skills.
- Providing guidance and advice on heritage matters to Local Authority staff and departments, e.g. traditional stonework in bridge repairs, Protected Structures and conservation or biodiversity and the legislation surrounding protected plant and animal species.



*Mask painting in Drumlish Library during the Longford Summer Festival
– each mask is a character from the legend of Étaín and Midir*

The Heritage Officer Programme is a partnership arrangement between The Heritage Council & Longford County Council.

LONGFORD ARTS OFFICE

VISUAL ARTS

- **Established the Midlands College of Photography** in partnership with County Longford VEC at Templemichael Community College Longford. The College attracts student from the five surrounding counties who participate in photography classes and projects of varying lengths from one year to one day events. The types of projects offered are: FETAC Level 5 Digital Photography, Know Your Camera, an Introduction to Digital Photography, Intermediate Digital Photography, Low Light Photography, An Introduction to Photoshop, Advanced Techniques in Photoshop Editing. In 2010 we hope to significantly broaden our programme
- **Youth Photography Residency** appointed the professional photographer Luke Danniells to work with students in St. Mel's College Longford and Ard Scoil Padraigh in Granard. The photographer divides his time between transition year students in St Mel's and Applied Leaving Certificate students in Granard where he developed the students interest in photography and their understanding of the principals of photography through a series of class based activities combined with field trips and demonstrations
- Supported the established the Lough Ree Camera Club in Lanesborough Co. Longford
- Established the Longford Camera Club
- **Organised Photography Exhibitions** The County Arts Office organised a number of photography exhibitions for individual photographers and for Camera Clubs throughout the year. The largest of which was the graduation exhibition of FETAC students which toured in Longford, Westmeath and Co. Cavan
- **Photography field trips and Master Classes** during the year we organised a series of environmental and streetscape photography field trips as well as an extensive programme of lectures, demonstrations and master classes in such diverse topics as; portraiture, ambient light photography, "The Exposure Triangle", digital printing techniques
- **Developed www.midlandcollegeofphotography.ie** a dedicated photography website which is proving to be a very useful means of communicating with our client base of photographers throughout the midlands as well as providing a platform for the display of their work

PUBLIC ART

- Completed the commissioning of the Longford Town Emigration memorial.

VISUAL ARTS MASTER CLASSES

As part of the Midlands Arts Officer's Partnership programme Longford County Arts Office organised master classes in:

- advanced photography
- Traditional egg tempura painting techniques that were fully subscribed and drew participants from the surrounding six counties

ARTS GROUPS

- At any given time Longford has between four and six active painting groups the Arts Office supported visiting workshop facilitators, gallery visits and other art form development initiatives
- The County Arts Office supported, in partnership with the Westmeath VEC Arts Education Officer, an "Artist Atelier Project" involving the artist Kevin Flood and the art student of Moyne Community School

LITERATURE/CREATIVE WRITING

- Longford Anthology – engaged an editor, Caroline Barry and compiled and published the second anthology of Longford writing. The anthology will be launched in early December
- As part of our commitment to use digital media to support the development of creative writing we recorded the contributors to the anthology reading their submissions and this will be broadcast on-line to coincide with the launch of the anthology
- The Arts Office established the Longford Creative Writing bursaries to enable local writer to attend the Kerry Writers Course
- Compiled a collection of audio-visual recordings of professional development advice packages with novelist Caroline Barry
- Recorded interviews for the website www.virtualwriter.net with writers from Longford or associated with Longford about their creative and professional development
- Updated the website www.virtualwriter.net and managed the site
- Supported the activities of the four Longford Writers Groups
- Provided financial support to Longford poet Kieran Furey to produce his latest anthology of poetry

DRAMA

- Actively supported Backstage Theatre in their involvement in this year's award winning Nomad production of "The Dead School"
- Was actively involved in Backstage Theatre Group's efforts to stage the 2009 National One Act Drama Festival
- Supported Backstage Theatre group's annual production
- Supported the Backstage Youth Group's annual drama production and pantomime
- Provided organisational, programming and financial support to Boglane Theatre Ballymahon

MUSIC & DANCE

- Provided on-going support to the Arts Office sponsored Longford County Choir
- Supported the rapidly expanding Kindermusik programme throughout the county
- Supported the Edgeworthstown traditional music project
- Assisted the Midlands Musicians club in the delivery of the educational element of their annual programme
- Supported the establishment of the Annaly School of Dance

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

- Worked with the Midlands Arts Officers to compile and publish The Midlands Arts and Culture magazine
- Worked with the Midlands Arts Officers to organise a professional development Master Class series
- (as above)
- Co-funded an "Artist Atelier" in Moyne Community School in Partnership with County Westmeath Midlands Arts Education Officer (as above)
- Established The Midlands College of Photography in partnership with County Longford VEC
- (as described above)

CORPORATE SERVICES

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS 2009

A total of 20 FOI requests was received by Longford County Council during 2009 from a mixed source of business, clients, staff and other persons. Three requests for internal review were received and no appeal was made to the Information Commissioner.

FRANCHISE

CONDITIONS FOR REGISTRATION

A person must be at least 18 years of age on the day the Register comes into force (15th February). A person may be included on a Supplement to the Register if the person reaches 18 years of age between the 16th February and the day on which an Election or Referendum is held.

Every resident, irrespective of their nationality who is 18 years or older, is entitled to be on the Register of Electors.

The numbers registered to vote on the 2008/2009 Register of Electors were as follows:

| Branch | No. of Electors |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Ballymahon | 8318 |
| Drumlish | 3762 |
| Granard | 6495 |
| Longford | 9249 |
| Total: | 27824 |

LOCAL ELECTIONS 2009

Local Elections took place on the 5th June 2009 in conjunction with the European Parliament Elections. The local elections were conducted in conformity with the County of Longford Local Electoral Areas Order, 2008 which amended the division of County Longford into Local Electoral Areas and fixed the number of members of Longford County Council to be elected for each such area as follows: Ballymahon – 6; Drumlish – 4; Granard – 4 and Longford – 7. The revision of the boundaries was necessary in order to take into account the recommendations of the Boundary Review Committee.

A total of 41 candidates lodged nomination papers to contest the Longford County Council Local Elections in respect of the four electoral areas. The Count took place in the Mall Complex on the 6th and 7th June 2009. A Recount followed on the 8th June 2009 and 21 Councillors were duly elected to Longford County Council.

The successful conduct of the local elections was due in no small measure to the hard work, diligence, knowledge and commitment of all those who were involved in the process.

LOCAL ELECTION EXPENDITURE 2009

In accordance with Section 19 of the Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations and Expenditure) Act, 1999 as amended, details of the aggregate local election expenditure incurred by each candidate and third party and details of any donations received by the candidates must be included in the Annual Report. The relevant information is set out hereunder.

| Candidate | | Aggregate Expenses | * Donation Received (Unsuccessful Candidates) |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Brady | Gerry | €2,660.00 | N/A |
| Bannon | Larry | €1,775.00 | N/A |
| Belton | Paddy | €2,630.00 | N/A |
| Brennan | Michael | €3,000.00 | Nil |
| Butler | Seamus | €1,151.21 | Nil |
| Cahill | Mick | €2,285.25 | N/A |
| Carrigy | Micheál | €3,741.00 | N/A |
| Casey | Mark | €3,080.00 | N/A |
| Connell | Paul | €1,410.00 | N/A |
| Connell | Margaret | €4,043.17 | Nil |
| Duffy | John | €3,185.00 | N/A |
| Farrell | Martin | €1,460.00 | Nil |
| Farrell | Adrian | €1,205.00 | Nil |
| Farrell | Sean | €2,316.70 | N/A |
| Farrell | Brendan | €1,108.27 | Nil |
| Feeney | James | €1,420.65 | Nil |
| Glennon | Denis | €2,230.00 | N/A |
| Grimes | Ciaran | €1,815.19 | Nil |
| Keaveney | Seamus | €940.02 | Nil |
| Kiernan | Victor | €2,230.00 | N/A |
| Kilbride | Frank | €4,560.00 | N/A |
| Kilbride-Harkin | Maura | €3,355.65 | Nil |
| Loughrey | Padraig | €3,061.18 | N/A |
| Lynch | Sean | €2,252.00 | Nil |
| Lynch | Brian 'Batt' | €3,605.00 | Nil |
| McEntire | Luie | €3,074.94 | N/A |
| Mitchell | Alan | €2,767.39 | N/A |
| Mulleady | Martin | €3,950.00 | N/A |
| Mulligan | P.J. | €3,782.21 | Nil |
| Mulvey | Jack | €336.50 | Nil |
| Murphy | Peter | €1,975.00 | Nil |
| Nevin | Michael | €1,300.00 | Nil |
| Nolan | Anne Marie | €4,641.97 | Nil |
| Nolan | Conor | €1,670.73 | Nil |
| Nolan | John | €2,720.00 | Nil |
| Nolan | Peggy | €1,360.00 | N/A |
| Reilly | P.J. | €2,380.00 | N/A |
| Sexton | Mae | €2,017.04 | N/A |
| Steele | Barney | €2,290.00 | N/A |
| Stokes | Tommy | €2,350.00 | Nil |
| Victory | Thomas | €1,924.91 | N/A |

*** Successful Candidates – Donations Received**

Each elected member will furnish to the Local Authority not later than the 31st January each year a separate Donations Statement and, if applicable, a statement from a financial institution if a political donations account was opened.

Statements by National Agents/Designated Person/Third Party

| Party | Amount | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Labour Party (National Agent) | €297.24 | |
| Fianna Fail (Designated Person) | €1,203.46 | |

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT, 2003

The first year's operation of the Irish Language Scheme 2008 -2011 was reviewed by a representative from the Comisinéir Teanga's office at a meeting held in the County Council offices on the 1st September 2009.

It was recognised that the Local Authorities are focussed on implementing the Language Scheme but that a number of significant undertakings remain to be fulfilled before July 2011. The challenging nature of implementing these statutory undertakings before the Scheme ends were recognised and it was recommended that the Local Authorities efforts be intensified. However, it was emphasised to the representative that a new economic reality prevails since the Scheme was originally agreed and that it may be difficult if not impossible from a financial viewpoint to fulfil all obligations as set out.

A number of objectives and targets as set out in the Irish Language Scheme and scheduled for implementation were achieved during 2008 and 2009. As agreed in the Scheme a Customer Survey was conducted in 2009 seeking the views of members of the public in relation to the provision of services through Irish. The results were as follows: 19% would like to see the Council deliver some of its public services through Irish; 58% would like to see the Council use bilingual forms and 23% would conduct business with the Council through Irish if services were available at the same standard as English.

The effective operation of the Scheme and the implementation plan will continue to be monitored and reviewed during 2010.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee has an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters as part of a systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the Council. It is non-executive and is independent in the determination of its work programme and in the formulation of its recommendations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee was reconstituted after the Local Elections in June 2009 and consists of five members. One member is an elected representative; one member is a former elected representative and the other three are external members.

The Committee met four times during 2009. The Audit Committee Charter was adopted at the Council meeting held in February 2009 and the Chairperson of the Audit Committee presented the first Annual Report of the Committee at the Council meeting held in March 2009. During the course of the year the Local Government Auditor and senior staff of the Council presented reports to the Audit Committee on matters relevant to its remit.

NON-PRINCIPAL PRIVATE RESIDENCES (NPPR)

The Local Government (Charges) Act, 2009 gave effect to the Government commitment in Budget 2009 to introduce a €200 charge on non-principal private residences. Generally, the charge applies to private residential rental properties, holiday homes and vacant properties with an exemption for certain buildings and owners from this liability. The charge does not apply to principal private residences.

In the first year of its implementation a sum of €324,511 was paid in respect of homes located in County Longford. Administrative and set up costs totalling €19,269 were incurred in addition to costs that related to the development of the on-line system that is used to register properties and manage the making of NPPR payments.

In 2010 and all future years the liability date for the payment of NPPR Charges will be March 31st. The administration of the NPPR charges was handled by the Corporate Services Department in 2009.

MEETINGS

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Meetings of the County Council were held monthly, with the exception of the months of June and August 2009.

Local Elections were held on the 5th June 2009.

The First Annual Meeting of the newly elected Council was held on the 19th June 2009. Councillor Peggy Nolan was elected Mayor and Councillor Gerry Brady was elected Deputy Mayor until the date of the Annual Meeting in 2010.

Members of Longford County Council were elected to the following Committees at the Annual Meeting:

Association of County and City Councils

Councillors Luie McEntire, Paul Connell and Frank Kilbride.

Local Authority Members' Association

Councillor Alan Mitchell.

Lough Outher, Gowna and River Erne Joint Drainage Committee

Councillors John Duffy and Victor Kiernan.

Longford Leisure Ltd

Councillors Alan Mitchell, Victor Kiernan and Pádraig Loughrey.

Midland Regional Authority

Councillors Mick Cahill, Paddy Belton, Larry Bannon, Victor Kiernan and Micheál Carrigy.

EU Operational Committee of the Midland Regional Authority

Councillors Peggy Nolan and Micheál Carrigy.

Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly

Councillor Larry Bannon.

Longford County Enterprise Board

Councillors P.J. Reilly, Paul Connell, Paddy Belton and Frank Kilbride.

Longford Enterprise Development Company Ltd

Councillors Tom Victory, Peggy Nolan and Alan Mitchell.

Longford Community Resources Ltd

Councillors Denis Glennon, Sean Farrell and John Duffy.

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd. – at attend Annual Meeting

Councillor Peggy Nolan.

Rural Water Monitoring Committee

Councillors – Martin Mulleady, John Duffy and Micheál Carrigy.

Steering Committee for the Promotion of the Irish Language

All the members of the Council.

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Councillors – Padraig Loughrey, Tom Victory, Gerry Brady, Victor Kiernan, Frank Kilbride and Alan Mitchell.

Councillor Peggy Nolan appointed Chairperson of Committee.

County Longford Vocational Education Committee

Councillors – Barney Steele, Luie McEntire, Sean Farrell, Gerry Brady, Micheál Carrigy, John Duffy, Victor Kiernan, Alan Mitchell and Mae Sexton.

Audit Committee

Councillor Alan Mitchell and Mr. Seamus Butler.

Sports Partnership Committee

Councillors – Micheál Carrigy and John Duffy.

Joint Policing Committee

Councillors – Martin Mulleady, Mick Cahill, Tom Victory, Padraig Loughrey, Mark Casey, Micheál Carrigy, Peggy Nolan, Gerry Brady, Paddy Belton, John Duffy, Larry Bannon and Frank Kilbride.

Councillor Sean Farrell was appointed Chairperson of the Joint Policing Committee.

Shannon River Basin District Advisory Council

Councillors – Paul Connell and Sean Farrell.

North Western International River Basin District Advisory Council

Councillors – Gerry Brady and Victor Kiernan.

Health Service Executive Regional Health Forum, Dublin-Mid Leinster

Councillors – P.J. Reilly, Paddy Belton and Gerry Brady.

County Longford Heritage Forum

Councillors – Denis Glennon and Micheál Carrigy.

Councillor Sean Farrell appointed Chairperson.

Midlands Energy Agency

Councillors – Gerry Brady and Paddy Belton.

Area Committees of Longford County Council

- Longford County Electoral Area Committee
– Members of Longford County Electoral Area.
- Ballymahon County Electoral Area Committee
– Members of Ballymahon County Electoral Area.
- Drumlish/Granard County Electoral Committee
– Members of the Drumlish and Granard County Electoral Areas.

Appointment of Chairpersons of Strategic Policy Committees

- Councillors Martin Mulleady and Barney Steele appointed Chairpersons (two year and three year terms) of the Economic Development, Urban and Rural Renewal, Cultural and Recreation Policies and Corporate Affairs Strategic Policy Committee.
- Councillors Gerry Brady and Paddy Belton appointed Chairpersons (three year and two year terms) of the Sanitary Services and Environmental Policies Strategic Policy Committee.
- Councillors Alan Mitchell and John Duffy appointed Chairpersons (three year and two year terms) of the Transportation, Road Development and Maintenance and Road Safety Policy Strategic Policy Committee.
- Councillors Victor Kiernan and Micheál Carrigy appointed Chairpersons (three year and two year terms) of the Housing and Social Policy, Planning and Building Control Policy Strategic Policy Committee.

MONTHLY MEETING – 21ST JANUARY 2009

Superintendent Denis Shields, Longford Garda Station, addressed the meeting on Garda boundary changes.

MONTHLY MEETING – 18TH MARCH 2009

Mr. John Madden, Chartered Engineer, made a presentation on proposed extension to runway and associated site works at Abbeyshrule Aerodrome for Longford Aviation.

MONTHLY MEETING – 20TH MAY 2009

A presentation was made to Councillor James Coyle who retired after thirty five years service to Longford County Council.

MONTHLY MEETING – 18TH NOVEMBER 2009

Councillors Peggy Nolan and Pdraig Loughrey nominated to the Board of Backstage Theatre.

MONTHLY MEETING – 16TH DECEMBER 2009

Mr. Fergus Kennedy, Arts Officer, presented the Arts Development Strategy 2009 – 2014.

The Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014 was adopted by the members of the Council.

County Longford Vocational Education Committee

Ms. Mary Toher, Ms. Maura Kilbride-Harkin, Fr. Tom Murray and Mr. Adrian Farrell appointed to County Longford Vocational Education Committee.

JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

A Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee was held on the 27th February 2009.

AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Twelve Area Committee meetings were held in 2009 including a joint meeting with Longford Town Council.

RECEPTION

A Reception was held in Aras an Chontae, Great Water Street, Longford on Wednesday, 25th November 2009 to honour Cumann Luthchleas Gael on their outstanding achievements during the past 125 years.

PLAYGROUNDS PROVISION

Longford County Council continued to develop play facilities for the children of the county with the official opening of Drumlish playground containing a wide range of equipment including a play water feature. Play facilities in Legan were completed and officially opened in 2009. A new playground was constructed in Clondra and is open to the public. This facility is part of major improvement to Richmond harbour area supported by Inland Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Longford County Council.

Works on a new playground in Ardagh have commenced and this will be open for use in early 2010. A resurfacing of the playground in the Mall Longford Town was completed.

DISABILITY STRATEGY

The Disability Act, 2005 facilitates the provision of disability specific services and the improvement of access to mainstream public services for people with disabilities.

Longford Local Authorities are implementing on an ongoing basis the Disability Plan which was adopted by the Council in September 2008. Specific proposals were included in that plan for measures that are to be taken to facilitate the provision of improved access by persons with disabilities to information, services, public roads, public places and public buildings in County Longford.

The Council receives funding on an annual basis to enable the undertaking of works which will facilitate participation by people with disabilities in activities that they could only participate in with difficulty if at all.

An allocation of €233,000 was made in 2009 by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government under the National Disability Strategy. During 2009 works were carried out to enhance physical access to the offices of Longford County Council at Áras an Chontae and Camlin Court. Improvements were, also, made to the Municipal Offices of Longford Town Council.

As part of an ongoing programme of improving accessibility work was undertaken in a number of cemeteries. This programme of work has led to a situation whereby it is possible for people to access family plots where this was not previously the case. It is intended to continue this work in 2010.

Where improvements are being made to footpaths across the county the Council is providing funding in order to ensure that access for persons of all abilities is improved. The Council is committed to a process of continuous improvement in that regard.

Longford Library, Archives and Heritages Services continued to improve accessibility to its buildings, services and information during 2009.

SAFETY HEALTH AND WELFARE AT WORK

Increasingly the necessity to provide for the Health and Safety of all is becoming evident. The Council takes very seriously its responsibilities with regard to Health and Safety. Employees are being trained and up skilled in order that they are as keenly aware as possible of the need to ensure that the undertaking of work is carried out in a planned and safe manner.

In 2009 the following activities were undertaken with the aim of ensuring the Safety, Health and Welfare of employees and others:

- The Corporate Safety Statement was reviewed and amended where necessary.
- Ancillary Safety Statements for Infrastructure and Environmental Services, Corporate, Community & Enterprise and Finance, Housing and Planning and the Town Council were reviewed and updated in line with the structural changes in each Directorate
- There were 3 accidents and 5 near misses reported during the year
- There was 1 documented visit from the Health and Safety Authority and 1 undocumented visit from the Health and Safety Authority
- Random and Scheduled Health and Safety Inspections took place within all departments of Longford County Council and Longford Town Council
- Regular meetings of the Safety Management Committee and the Safety Monitoring Consultative Committees were held in each of the Directorates
- A questionnaire was developed in order to determine the level of risk associated with each employee regarded as a Lone Worker within Longford Local Authority
- Training was conducted in the following areas
 - Safety Statement Training
 - Safety Induction Training
 - First Aid Training
 - Automated External Defibrillator Training
 - Manual Handling Training
 - Safety Rep Training
 - Laboratory Safety Training
 - Confined Space Training
 - Signing, Lighting and Guarding
 - Locating Underground Services
 - Abrasive Wheels
 - Health and Safety at Road Works
 - Managing Safety in Construction
 - Training on the Procedure for Managing Construction Projects

The Council is fully committed to meeting its obligations under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and will continue to develop the Safety Management System in ensuring a safe place of work for all its employees and the public alike in 2010.

HUMAN RESOURCES

OVERVIEW

The Human Resources Department has primary responsibility for handling, assisting and dealing with all employee related matters. The Department's work is shaped by our strategic goals and objectives as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan. The context in which our Human Resources Department operated in 2009 was greatly influenced by Government Policy decisions in relation to Public Services. Implementation of centrally driven change presented a revised focus and a consequential revision in work programme for the HR Department in 2009.

The combination of cuts in funding, reducing employee numbers and the introduction and impact of a range of incentivised schemes presented a revised work programme. The impact of these measures resulted in a 15% reduction of the overall workforce. The traditional key work areas of recruitment and training that were a significant feature of work programmes in recent years no longer placed the same demands. The Department's work programme was refocused to respond to a number of key challenges. These included the managing and maintaining service delivery with a reduced workforce, achieving efficiencies and providing leadership to employees to assist them in dealing with current and future challenges being faced in a positive manner.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Within the context of the foregoing operating environment, the recruitment statistics below reflect the reduced level of activity in 2009 by comparison with 2008. The HR Department progressed through the newly introduced procedure of staffing request applications to the Department and obtained approval to fill a limited number of posts as an exception to the general moratorium on filling of public service posts. Quarterly staffing returns on our overall staffing numbers continued to be submitted in 2009.

RECRUITMENT STATISTICS 2009

| Number of Competitions Advertised | Number of Interview Days | Number of Applicants invited for interview | Number of Applicants attended for interview | Number of Employees appointed |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 11 | 11 | 89 | 64 | 6 permanent 11 temporary |

RECRUITMENT STATISTICS 2008

| Number of Competitions Advertised | Number of Interview Days | Number of Applicants invited for interview | Number of Applicants attended for interview | Number of Employees appointed |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 32 | 65 | 670 | 486 | 24 permanent 83 temporary |

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2009 the HR Department continued with delivery of our annual Training Programme in an effort to respond to the employees identified training needs. The impact of budgetary constraints and the need for employees to have a deeper knowledge of the ever changing legislation underpinning their work resulted in the Council Training Programme focusing almost entirely on the provision of statutory training.

A total of 53 training programmes were delivered over 965 days with training delivered to staff across all disciplines. The table below outlines some of the areas of training provision.

- Abrasive Wheels Training
- Advanced Browser & Excelerator Training
- AED – Defibrillator Refresher Training
- Locating Underground Services
- Diploma in Computer Studies
- Diploma in GIS
- Equality / Dignity at Work
- First Aid
- Health & Safety at Roadworks
- Housing Conference
- IOSH Managing Safely
- Agresso Training Basic
- Building Energy Rating issues
- Confined Space Training
- Budget Management

In addition to this training provided in house, a number of employees supported by the Training and Development Support Scheme Policy successfully completed external training programmes and were awarded certificates and diplomas from the Institute of Public Administration as reflected in the photographs underneath.

The focus on achieving maximum value for money through cost effective methods of training delivery and of transfer of learning to the workplace will continue in our approach to ensure that the HR Department provides a quality service in the area of training provision.



Above: Presentation of IPA Management Development Programme to Padraig Farrell (back left of photo) and Bernard Shea (second row- far right). Missing from this photo is Enda Tiernan.

Right: Presentation of IPA Certificate in Local Government Studies to Michael Hand, Aiden Beirne, Caroline Norton & Fiona Baskett.



Presentation of IPA Diploma in Local Government Studies to Bernadette Doyle.



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Industrial relations is broadly recognised as being the management of the relationship between employers and employees. The HR Department assisted Line Managers throughout the organisation in dealing with various grievance issues throughout 2009.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions plan of action to oppose the implementation of Governments policy decisions impacting on public sector workers culminating in the National day of industrial action held in November 2009 resulted in increased activity in this area in 2009. Notwithstanding the challenges this presented, the HR Department and the various Union Representatives through a spirit of open communication and constructive engagement managed this period of industrial action.

HR PROJECT

Longford County Council is one of twenty seven Local Authorities currently engaged in the National Project to implement an integrated HR, Payroll and Superannuation Management Information System in Local Authorities. This system will support our strategic approach to HR management and provide a robust, flexible and efficient payroll system. The key modules of the system are Human Resources, Payroll, Superannuation and Time & Attendance.

Key benefits of the system include:

- Reduction in data entry and administrative time and costs in information retrieval through employee and manager self service
- Reduction in service delivery costs by automating some HR and payroll processes and reducing duplication
- Production of individualised Pension Benefit Statements
- Improved communication with staff and increased employee and line manager satisfaction by improving quality and access to HR services and information

The Project Team's full commitment and dedicated efforts together with the co-operation of employees in HR and Finance resulted in great progress in 2009 in implementation with the HR and Superannuation modules fully implemented and operational. The plans for 2010 are to build on the earlier progress and move forward with Payroll and Time & Attendance modules implementation.

PARTNERSHIP

Workplace Partnership consists of a process whereby management, employees and trade unions work together to bring about organisational change in an open and co-operative manner. The Workplace Partnership process is achieved by employee participation and consultation, information sharing and the development of joint objectives.

The Partnership Committee met eight times in 2009. Input into policy development was a key activity for the Committee. Items discussed included:

- Health and Safety issues
- Open Learning, Training and Development Support Scheme
- Communications issues
- PMDS

PARTNERSHIP PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

Project funding was sought and awarded by LANPAG for initiatives such as the staff newsletter and the retirement function.

LA Confidential the staff newsletter was circulated twice in 2009, in July and once again in December. In September staff availed of a number of information sessions given by the Marie Keating Foundation organised by the Committee which also arranged a vaccination programme for all staff in the wake of the swine flu pandemic in October.

Training was provided for all members of the Partnership Board on 26th May. Among items discussed were the necessity of maintaining good communications, increasing the profile of Partnership, project delivery, PMDS and resource issues.

One of the highlights of the year was the retirement function held for members of Longford Local Authorities staff who retired in 2008-2009. They were honoured on November 26th in a function hosted by the Partnership Committee in Longford Golf Club.

Partnership was involved in discussions concentrating on more substantive issues facing the organisation through the Handling Significant Change Committee which comprises the Partnership Committee, senior management representatives and union branch officials. The HSC Committee met five times during 2009 and discussions included the following items:

- Water and Waste Treatment Plants DBO Contracts
- Budgetary and Staffing issues including the Incentivised Early Retirement and Career Break Schemes in addition to the Shorter Working Week Scheme
- Planned Plant Maintenance Contracts
- Modernisation of the Machinery Yard



Retirement Function hosted by the Partnership Committee

Back Row (L-R): James Geraghty, Liam Flynn, Roger Timlin, Francis Corcoran, Sonny McArdle, Gerry Matthews.

Centre Row (L-R): Seamus Mallon, James Clancy, Henry McGurk, Mary McCormack, Joe Carrig, Tommy McDonald, Gerry Murtagh.

Front Row (L-R): Mayor Brendan Gilmore, Vera O'Sullivan, Aida McDermott, County Manager Tim Caffrey, Ann O'Donnell, Packie Lynch, Mayor Peggy Nolan. **Missing from Photo:** Eamon Mulligan, James Clarke, John Joe McNaboe, John Clarke, Mel Kiernan, Tom Brady, Michael Tiernan and Michael Gilmurray.

FINANCE & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



Mr. Barry Lynch,
Head of Finance

FINANCE & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

FUNCTIONS

The main functions of the Finance Department of Longford County Council are to:

- Achieve the financial objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan.
- Manage the financial affairs of the Council.
- Ensure that adequate internal controls are in operation to safeguard the assets of the organisation, and to ensure, the accuracy and reliability of the accounting records.
- Ensure as far as possible that value for money is achieved throughout the organisation.

SERVICES

- Motor Taxation
- Rates
- Higher Education Grants
- General Office – processing payments to suppliers and payroll.

PAYMENT PRACTICES

The provisions of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997 and the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations, 2002 applies to Longford County Council and Longford Town Council. Both Local Authorities have systems in place to ensure that interest penalties are not incurred. However, in a small number of cases, late payments occurred in 2009.

Total amount of interest penalties

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Longford Co. Council | €153.68 |
| Longford Town Council | Nil |

Every effort is made to ensure compliance with the Act and Regulations and avoidance of interest penalties. However, the procedures can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material non-compliance with the legislation.

INTERNAL AUDIT

Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function charged with reviewing activities across all areas within Longford County Council. It objectively examines and reports on management of risks, the adequacy of internal controls, and the achievement of proper, efficient and economic use of resources. An Internal Audit Charter sets out the role and responsibilities of the Internal Auditor and Management.

HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

Prior to 1968 Councils and County Borough Corporations awarded grants to students pursuing second and third level courses. The Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Act, 1968 abolished the making of grants for second level education and revised the system of grants for third level education. Grants are on a graduated basis and may contain a maintenance element as well as fees where exemption from fees does not apply. The bulk of the cost is recouped from the Department of Education with the Local Authority being responsible for a sum equal to the value of the grants awarded by the Council in the 1967 financial year.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/2010

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of new awards issued | 136 |
| Number of renewals issued | 170 |
| Total number of students in receipt of Higher Education Grants | 306 |
| Number of students attending Irish colleges | 285 |
| Number of students attending UK colleges (including Northern Ireland) and EU colleges | 21 |

EXPENDITURE

| Local Government Act 2001 – Section 142 Expenditure | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| | € |
| Mayor and Other Allowances | 72,432 |
| Entertainment and Associated Expenses | 2,812 |
| Representational Payments, Expenses of Members and Representation at Conferences | 800,523 |
| Expenses of Members attending Conferences abroad | 6,595 |
| Members gratuities | 227,083 |
| Total: | 1,109,445 |

MOTOR TAX**MOTOR TAX – STATISTICS 2009**

| | No of Transactions | Amount |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Vehicle Licences (discs) | 32,918 | 6,803,878 |
| Driver Licences | 4,431 | 62,095 |
| Road Worthiness Certificates | 3,722 | 26,695 |
| Trade Licences | 82 | 24,779 |
| Miscellaneous Receipts | 2,617 | 149,765 |
| Total | 43,770 | 7,067,212 |

| Vehicle Licences Issued – 2009 | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Private | 25,160 |
| Goods | 5,825 |
| Cycles | 158 |
| Tractors | 914 |
| PSV's (Bus, Taxi and Hackney) | 237 |
| Other (incl. dupl.) | 582 |
| F.I.L. Vehicle Licences | 42 |
| Total | 32,918 |

| Drivers Licences Issued – 2009 | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 Year Driving Licences | 46 |
| 3 Year Driving Licences | 663 |
| 10 Year Driving Licences | 1,312 |
| 1 Year Provisional | 263 |
| 2 Year Provisional | 1,303 |
| Duplicate Licences | 457 |
| F.I.L. Licences | 387 |
| Total | 4,431 |

In addition, 8,246 vehicle Licences were issued by Motor Tax Online Service during 2009. These Vehicle Licences are issued directly from the Vehicle Registration Unit in Shannon, Co Clare.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Longford Local Authorities ICT Department provides and supports the following ICT Systems:

- Electronic mail, Internet, Intranet and Extranet
- Web based systems
- Agresso Financial systems that support the local authorities' financial management information systems and transaction processing
- Geographical information systems that provide essential information on roads, water mains etc. in the county
- Planning administration systems
- Housing administration systems
- Various small database systems

NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

The network is made up of several complex components which require on-going management, maintenance and monitoring. Responsibility for managing the network also includes maintaining a wide area network which connects all off site offices back to Aras and Chontae, using leased lines, wireless and fibre optic links. There are a total of twelve sites, seven in Longford Town and five outlying Library sites.

NETWORK UPGRADES

In 2009 through the Government Framework, the bandwidth of the Virtual Private Network (VPN) was upgraded from 2MB to 20MB to provide constant and secure data communications between government networks. The upgraded VPN replaced Frame Relay for Motor Tax communications.

SYSTEM UPGRADES

Migration from Systems Management Server (SMS) 2003 to System Center Configuration Manager 2007 to enable the ICT Department to assess, deploy, and update clients, servers, and mobile devices across IT systems in physical, virtual, distributed, and mobile environments.

Migrated from Blackberry mobile devices to Nokia E71 with push email to allow users access to corporate email. The backup tape library for data recovery was upgraded from a DLT to an LTO tape library for faster backup times and the ability to hold more data on fewer tapes.

The conclusion of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement meant licences on existing Microsoft software were bought out in a one off payment to replace a yearly subscription charge.

NEW SYSTEMS

Planning Development Charges System

The LGCSB system for dealing with the Planning Development charges, which interfaces with the IPlan planning system and Agresso, was implemented in 2009.

INTERNET & INTRANET

During 2009 the continued development of our public websites continued with each section adding to the range of available content. One of the peak periods on the website was during the local election events coverage when for the first time the results were made available online as soon as they were declared. This seen usage of our site go to a record high with over 16,000 page views over that weekend alone.

Amongst the internal applications development was a tenders tracking system which replaced the previously used system provided by a third party and resulted in significant cost savings.

WEBSITE VISITS DURING 2009

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| longfordcoco.ie | 58,324 |
| longford.ie | 37,676 |
| longfordtowncouncil.ie | 9,777 |
| virtualwriter.net | 4,924 |
| longfordlibrary.ie | 22,800 |

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON CORPORATE PLAN 2005–2009



INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Core Objective: *"Ensure that infrastructural transportation policies and investments assist and enhance the economic and social development of County Longford, and preserve and improve the physical attractiveness of the county and its background environment"*

MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF ROADS

Further important steps were taken in 2009 in the advancement of the Longford N5 Bypass with the Archaeological Resolution Contract for site work being commenced on July 16th 2009. The field work component was completed in September 2009. Final reports were issued in December and confirmed that no further field work was required in connection with the Scheme. In addition Supplementary Ground Investigation work on the route was carried out in September 2009.

The third public consultation on the N4 Longford (Roosky) to Mullingar emerging preferred route took place in May 2009. Works are on going on the preparation of Route Selection Report which is expected to be published March 2010.

Pavement repairs were carried out on the N55 route at locations near Ballymahon and Granard

The Multi-annual Road Restoration and Surface Dressing programmes for Non National Roads are ongoing with extensive works being completed on a significant number of Regional and Local Roads.

Specific Grant Schemes were advanced at the following roads:

- R198 at Gaigue Cross
- R194 at Lisnamuck
- Saints Island Causeway, Newtowncashel
- R392 at Forgney
- R398 at Cloontabeg

In addition as part of these Specific Grant Schemes important upgrading works were carried out on the following two historic bridges:

- The Mill Bridge, Clondra
- Newcastle Bridge, Ballymahon

ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Low-cost Safety Remedial schemes have been advanced and are at various stages of completion at:

- R198 Drumlish
- R194/L1041 Esker
- R198/L 5029, L5026 Leitrim Cross
- Nr. UP 3013 Ballymakeegan/Feraghfad
- L 1005 Newtownforbes
- R 397 Cartronwar
- R 393 Dublin Road Longford
- R 392 Forgney Junction

Road safety recommendations relating to Planning Permissions are ongoing.

The implementation of the multi-annual Public Lighting Plan continued with additional lighting added in a number of towns and villages. The Council continued to promote, facilitate and participate with the Gardai, Schools and Road Safety Authority in the operation of Junior School Wardens and Road Safety Campaigns. The Council continued to monitor effective implementation of the EU Commercial Vehicle Regulations in close consultation with the 2 No. authorised test-centres in the county. Implementation of the multi-annual Non-national Road Signage Plan is substantially completed

CURRENT POLICIES

Quality road design standards were promoted for implementation.

Access for the disabled was promoted in accordance with recommended guidelines in consultation with stakeholders. Works were carried out at the Cathedral Junction in Longford town.

Participation continued in the Steering and Technical Groups managing the National Roads Authority Regional Design Office.

Appropriate liaison was promoted between transportation development stakeholders such as public representatives, representative bodies, the general public, the Department of Transport, the National Roads Authority, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Gardai, the Road Safety Authority, Iarnród Éireann, Waterways Ireland, etc.

Implementation of Local Improvement Schemes continued.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Services has continued to expand its area of activity. The following measures were put in place to facilitate delivery of the objectives set out in the plan:

1. Three temporary Civic Amenity collections were organised during 2009 as part of the National Spring Clean operation
2. A very successful Hazardous Waste Collections were held in autumn 2009 with 613 kgs of Hazardous Waste collected
3. During 2009 the Waste Enforcement Team received 1230 complaints all of which were investigated and appropriate enforcement actions taken
4. Longford is one of the only Counties in Ireland to have 100% participation from both Primary and Secondary Schools in the Green School programme
5. Over 20 cemetery committees availed of financial assistance under the Cemetery Support Scheme with the remaining Council owned cemeteries being maintained by County Council and Rural Social Scheme staff
6. Construction commenced on an extension to Aughafin Cemetery in 2009
7. The council participated with the Rivers Shannon and Erne District Basin Management Systems
8. Longford County Council participated in the National Litter Monitoring Scheme
9. The contract for the new fire station in Edgeworthstown was signed in December 2009

HOUSING, PLANNING & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Core Objectives: *"Provide and maintain an acceptable standard of Social and Affordable housing in a planned environment that meets the needs of the people of County Longford and promotes social inclusion."*

SOCIAL HOUSING

The housing needs of County Longford continued to be met through a range of housing options. The last statutory assessment of housing need was undertaken in 2008.

Longford County Council's housing programme continued throughout 2009. 4 individual houses were purchased and 1 rural house was completed. There were 259 allocations of tenancy in the year.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE / REFURBISHMENT

In 2009, a sum of €750,000 was provided in the budget for the maintenance and repair of Local Authority Housing.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

The Housing Liaison Officer and the Social Worker continued to work with tenants and residents associations throughout 2009. Tenancy Enforcement was ongoing during the year with a number of cases being taken to court.

VOLUNTARY HOUSING

The Council continued its association with the Voluntary Housing Sector. Negotiations are ongoing with a number of bodies in relation to the provision of sheltered housing.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

To date, Longford County Council has provided almost 100 eligible households with the opportunity to purchase their own home through the Affordable Housing Scheme.

LOANS/GRANTS

A total of 14 valid loan applications were received in 2009 with 10 loans approved and 6 advanced. This amount does not include applications refused or withdrawn.

In 2009, there were a combined total of 254 applications received under the three grant schemes. A total of 164 grants were paid out and this amounted to €947,901.

HOMELESSNESS

Following on from the objectives published in the 2008 in *The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland*, the forum has developed a Longford Homeless Action Plan which was adopted by Longford County Council in late 2009.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 was adopted by Longford County Council on 25th February 2009. This sets out the 4 year strategy in relation to the programme and type of accommodation to be provided for travellers.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME

At the end of 2009, there were 245 RAS tenancies in place. The RAS Scheme and the associated operational and administrative costs are self financing in Longford.

LONG-TERM LEASING ARRANGEMENTS

The Council has received Department approval in relation to leasing of 5 units under the scheme in the Ballymahon area.

REMEDIAL/REGENERATION WORKS

In 2009, proposals were advanced to carry out Remedial Works at Tromra Road, Granard.

PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS

The local authority is responsible for implementation and enforcement of accommodation standards in the rental sector.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CORPORATE & CULTURAL SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Core Objective: “Longford Council County will lead the economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Longford”

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The rapid decline in the construction sector and failures in financial markets presented many challenges to the local economy. Although Longford’s broad industrial base has cushioned the adverse impact, economic indicators point to a period of economic uncertainty. During this difficult period it is essential that enterprise support agencies collaborate in supporting business survival.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The County Development Board produced a strategic review for 2009-2012 to help guide interagency cooperation during that period. A comprehensive poverty profile and strategy was produced providing a focus on key issues. The Joint Policing Committees were established to ensure increased co-operation and provide a forum on crime. The County Development Board launched a Disability Awareness Programme for schools and a module on Local Government Studies.

CULTURAL SERVICES

Funding was secured for the New Ballymahon Library project that will commence construction in early 2010. Longford’s “East Meets West” group won the integration category in the National Pride of Place Awards.

RECREATION & AMENITY

The Longford Sports Partnership was established under the Longford County Development Board with financial support from the Sports Council. Work continued on developments at Clondra’s Richmond Harbour in a collaborative venture with Waterways Ireland, Longford County Council and Fáilte Ireland. In co-operation with other agencies work commenced on the preparation of a County Longford Tourism Strategy.

