

County Longford Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 - 2022

UNITY



Prepared and Adopted by Economic Development and Enterprise SPC, Longford Local
Community Development Committee and Longford County Council

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1.0 LECP PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 LECP Aim	2
1.2 LECP Structure	2
1.3 Key Inputs	3
2.0 LECP FORMULATION PROCESS	4
2.1 Guidelines on LECP Preparation	5
2.2 Research Undertaken	6
2.3 Consultation and Participative Planning	6
2.4 Identified Priorities	7
3.0 HIGH LEVEL REVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANS AND STRATEGIES	8
3.1 LECP Context	9
3.2 Spatial Planning Context	9
3.3 Other Relevant Plans and Strategies	15
4.0 COUNTY PROFILE	22
4.1 Geographic Context	23
4.2 County Longford Socio-Economic Profile – Baseline Study Synopsis	23
4.3 Comparative Indicators between County Longford and the State	33
4.4 Socio-Economic Baseline SWOT Analysis	34
5.0 VISION, HIGH LEVEL GOALS AND THEMES	35
5.1 Vision Statement	36
5.2 High Level Integrated Goals	36
5.3 Sustainable Economic Development and Sustainable Community Objectives	39
5.4 Cross-Cutting Themes and Integrated Strategy	40
6.0 ECONOMIC PLAN	42
6.1 Introduction	43
6.2 Longford's Economic Context	43
6.3 Community Economic Development	44
6.4 Economic Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities	47
6.5 Economic Themes and Action Plan	49
6.6 High Level Goal 1 and Associated Themes	51
6.6.1 Inward Investment	52
6.6.2 Innovation and Sectoral Opportunities	55
6.6.3 Supporting Small Enterprise	61
6.6.4 Education and Training	63
6.7 High Level Goal 2 and Associated Themes	66
6.7.1 Social Inclusion	66
6.8 High Level Goal 4 and Associated Themes	68
6.8.1 Critical Infrastructure	68
6.9 High Level Goal 6 and Associated Themes	71
6.9.1 Regeneration	71
6.9.2 Social Infrastructure	72
6.9.3 Agriculture, Rural Diversification and Renewable Energy Potential	74
6.9.4 Tourism	76

7.0	COMMUNITY PLAN	79
7.1	Introduction	80
7.2	Longford's Community Context	80
7.3	Community Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities	81
7.4	Community Themes and Action Plan	81
7.5	High Level Goal 1 and Associated Themes	82
7.5.1	Employment	84
7.5.2	Entrepreneurship	86
7.5.3	Education and Training	87
7.6	High Level Goal 2 and Associated Themes	91
7.6.1	Social Inclusion	91
7.6.2	Equality and Human Rights	93
7.7	High Level Goal 3 and Associated Themes	95
7.7.1	Health	95
7.7.2	Crime	98
7.7.3	Housing	100
7.8	High Level Goal 4 and Associated Themes	103
7.8.1	Critical Infrastructure	103
7.9	High Level Goal 5 and Associated Themes	105
7.9.1	Community Participation	105
7.9.1	High Level Goal 6 and Associated Themes	106
7.9.1.1	Regeneration	106
7.9.1.2	Social Infrastructure	107
7.9.1.3	Natural Environment	109
7.9.1.4	Built Environment	111

8.0	IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW	114
8.1	Introduction	115
8.2	Implementation	115
8.3	Monitoring and Review	115

APPENDICES	
Appendix 1	Local Community Development Committee
Appendix 2	Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee
Appendix 3:	Advisory Steering Group
Appendix 4:	Summary of Key Plans and Strategies
Appendix 5:	National Spatial Strategy Proofing
Appendix 6:	Human Rights and Equality Proofing
Appendix 7:	Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment
Adopted Statements:	
Appendix 8:	Statement of Consistency from 3 Municipal Districts
Appendix 9:	Statement of Consistency from Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
Appendix 10:	Statement of Adoption by Economic Development and Enterprise SPC
Appendix 11:	Statement of Adoption by Local Community Development Committee
Appendix 12:	Statement of Adoption by Longford County Council
Appendix 13:	List of Contributors

TABLE OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: LECP Input	3
Figure 2: Schematic Representation of LECP Process	5
Figure 3: Key Segments in LECP Process Development	6
Figure 4: Consultation Process	7
Figure 5: Consultation Feedback	7
Figure 6: Key Relevant Spatial, Economic and Community Strategies	9
Figure 7: Spatial Planning Hierarchy	10
Figure 8: Midland Region – Spatial Settlement Strategy	11
Figure 9: Key Economic Development Needs for the Midland Region	11
Figure 10: Core Strategy Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021	12
Figure 11: County Longford Hierarchy Tiers	14
Figure 12: EU2020 and National Reform Programme Targets	15
Figure 13: County Longford in a National Context	23
Figure 14: Change in Population 2006-2011	24
Figure 15: Age Distribution for County Longford and the State	25
Figure 16: Ethnic Distribution by Profiled Settlement	25
Figure 17: Population with 3 rd Level Education	26
Figure 18: Number of Persons on the Live Register by Gender and Age in County Longford	27
Figure 19: Percentage of Persons under 25 years on the Live Register in County Longford compared to surrounding counties	27
Figure 20: Residents of County Longford by Industrial Grouping	28
Figure 21: Distribution of IDA Companies in County Longford	29
Figure 22: County Longford Percentage Change in Industrial Activity	29
Figure 23: County Longford Broadband Coverage in 2011	30
Figure 24: Comparative Indicators between County Longford and the State	33
Figure 25: Integrated High Level Goals	37
Figure 26: Integrated LECP Framework	39
Figure 27: Overview of Integration of Themes & Objectives of Economic & Community Plans	40
Figure 28: Small Area Community Development Strategy	46
Figure 29: Themes in Economic Plan	49
Figure 30: Economic Plan Overview	50
Figure 31: Priority Areas to address Employment and Economic Activity	51
Figure 32: Local Economic Assets	52
Figure 33: Key Sectoral Opportunities	55
Figure 34: Sectoral Opportunities	56
Figure 35: Themes in Community Plan	82
Figure 36: Community Plan Overview	83

Acronyms of Agencies

AHB – Approved Housing Board	LCC – Longford County Council
AIT – Athlone Institute of Technology	LCCC – Longford County Childcare Committee
CDP – Community Development Project	LCDC – Longford Community Development Committee
CEDRA – Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas	LCRL – Longford Community Resource Limited
CLDAF – County Longford Drugs & Alcohol Forum	LEO – Local Enterprise Office
CLTC – County Longford Tourism Committee	LGMA – Local Government Management Agency
CNO – Comhairle na nOg	LSP – Longford Sports Partnership
CoC – Chamber of Commerce	LWCT – Longford Westmeath Community Transport Ltd
CLYS – County Longford Youth Service	LWETB – Longford Westmeath Education Training Board
CYPSC – Children & Young Peoples Services Committee	LWL – Longford Women’s Link
DAHG – Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	MD – Municipal District
DCENR – Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	MEA – Midland Energy Authority
DES – Department of Education and Skills	MRDATF – Midland Regional Drugs & Alcohol Taskforce
DoECLG – Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government	MRYS – Midland Regional Youth Service
DNN – Dail na nOg	NFP – Not for Profit
DSP – Department of Social Protection	NRA – National Roads Authority
DTTS – Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	NTA – National Transport Authority
EDI – Employment, Development & Information Centre	OCC – Offaly County Council
EI – Enterprise Ireland	OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
EMRA – Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly	OPC – Older Persons Council
Foroige – National Youth Development organisation	OPN – Older Persons Network
FRC – Family Resource Centre	PPN – Public Participation Network
HAT – Homeless Action Team	RA – Regional Assembly
HSE – Health Services Executive	RPPO – Regional Planning Policy and Research Officer
ICMSA – Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	RTI – Rural Transport Initiative
IDA – Industrial Development Authority	SEAI – Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
ITM – Irish Traveller Movement	SPC – Strategic Policy Committee
IW – Irish Water	TCMG- Town Centre Management Group
JPC – Joint Policing Committee	TIG – Traveller Interagency Group
LA’s – Local Authorities	TII – Transport Infrastructure Ireland
	Tulsa - Child & Family Services
	WI – Waterways Ireland

1.0 LECP PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

1.1 LECP AIM

The purpose of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support both the economic and community development of the Local Authority Area, both by itself, and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. 'Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government' advocates a more cooperative approach to local and community development with a more comprehensive role for Local Authorities in the strategic management of local development. This sets out a wide range of reforms for local government encompassing local authority functions, structures, funding, performance and governance. The recommendations of the programme were aimed at providing a more central coordinating role for Local Government in local and community development, achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in local and community development programming and improving the delivery of services for communities and people.

The development of a Local Economic and Community Plan for the period 2016 to 2022 and the reform of Local Government have created an opportunity to start working collaboratively to achieve the vision of a County Longford which is strong, sustainable and a vibrant place to live, work and invest. The Longford LECP is also titled the 'Unity' Plan as it provides an integrated framework for economic and local community development in County Longford and has a vision for:-

'a regenerated economically sustainable County which values equality of opportunity, excellent quality of life, collaborative community and rural development, sense of place and where the wellbeing of all residents and future generations is central to everything we do'.

The Plan aims to identify and deliver positive changes that will deliver the economic and social transformation of Longford in accordance with the following guiding principles to:

- Create a framework for a strong economic and community strategy for County Longford;
- Grow the local and regional economy by creating more and better quality jobs through inward investment and supporting indigenous enterprise;
- Strengthen County Longford's role in the Midland Region;
- Ensure that everyone realises their potential and has the necessary skills and training to take up these jobs, particularly for those experiencing unemployment;
- Promoting a more resource efficient, green and sustainable economy;
- Ensure that all our people have an excellent quality of life;
- Ensure that our communities are strong, engaged and working together;
- Ensure inclusive community consultation, participation, empowerment and collective decision making to achieve change at local level;
- Maximise returns – avoiding unnecessary overlap and duplication and achieving synergies through co-operation;
- Promotion and main-streaming of equality.

1.2 LECP STRUCTURE

While the LECP has been informed by the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021, it is not a spatial plan but a strongly focussed Action Plan, within which all local and regional stakeholders can work collaboratively to achieve the vision and objectives outlined and which will be implemented through a series of specific actions. The LECP contains 2 integrated elements:

- A local **Economic** element which will guide and support the economic development role of Longford County Council;

- A **Community** development element which will promote and give direction to existing and future local and community development within County Longford.

1.3 KEY INPUTS

1.3.1 Local Community Development Committee and Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee

While the adoption of the LECP is a reserved function of Longford County Council, the community element of the plan is to be developed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) (appendix 1), while the economic element of the plan is to be developed by the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) (appendix 2). The Economic and Enterprise Development and Strategic Policy Committee and the Longford LCDC have both adopted the respective economic and community elements of the Plan (Appendix 10 and 11 respectively)

1.3.2 Advisory Steering Group

An Advisory Steering Group (appendix 3) was established to assist in the preparation, drafting, adoption, and monitoring of the LECP, and in order to ensure that the preparation of the economic and community elements of the LECP are co-ordinated.

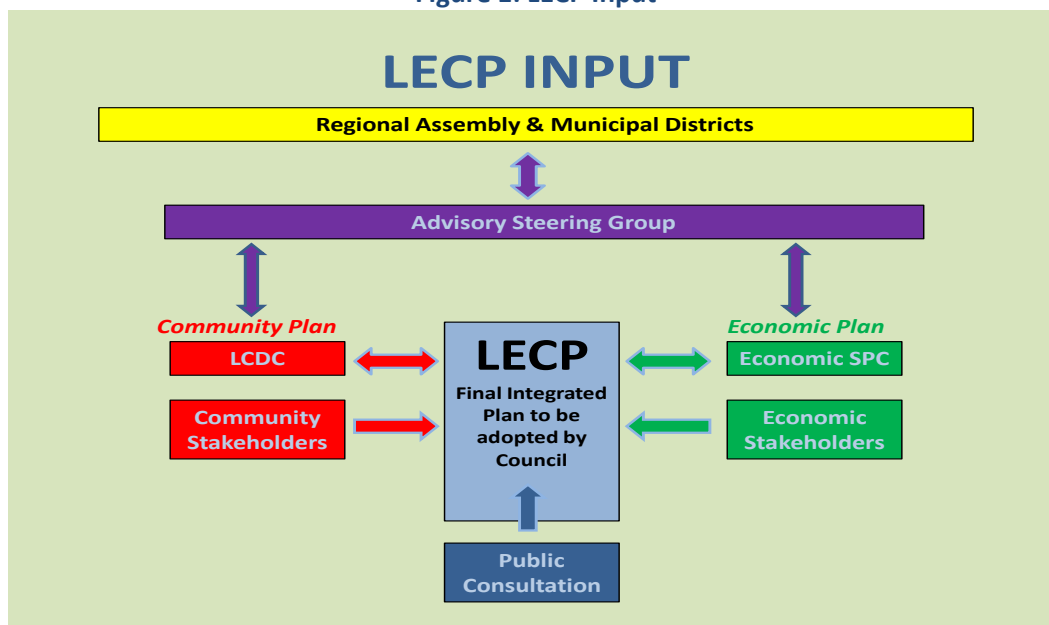
1.3.3 Stakeholder Consultation

The successful implementation of this plan will require the engagement of all stakeholders. This includes Local Government, State Agencies and the private and community and voluntary sectors all playing key and vital roles in supporting and delivering success through collaboration, engagement, support and leadership. The consultation process facilitated the LECP by providing an opportunity to collectively identify objectives and actions to promote and support the economic, local and community development of County Longford.

1.3.4 Municipal Districts and Regional Assembly

The Municipal Districts and Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly have been consulted to ensure that the LECP IS consistent with spatial planning hierarchy, other relevant strategies and that the respective community/economic elements are not conflicting. Accordingly Statements of Consistency from the 3 no. Municipal Districts of Granard, Longford and Ballymahon, and also the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly are included as per Appendix 8 and 9 respectively.

Figure 1: LECP Input



2.0 LECP FORMULATION PROCESS

2.1 GUIDELINES ON LECP PREPARATION

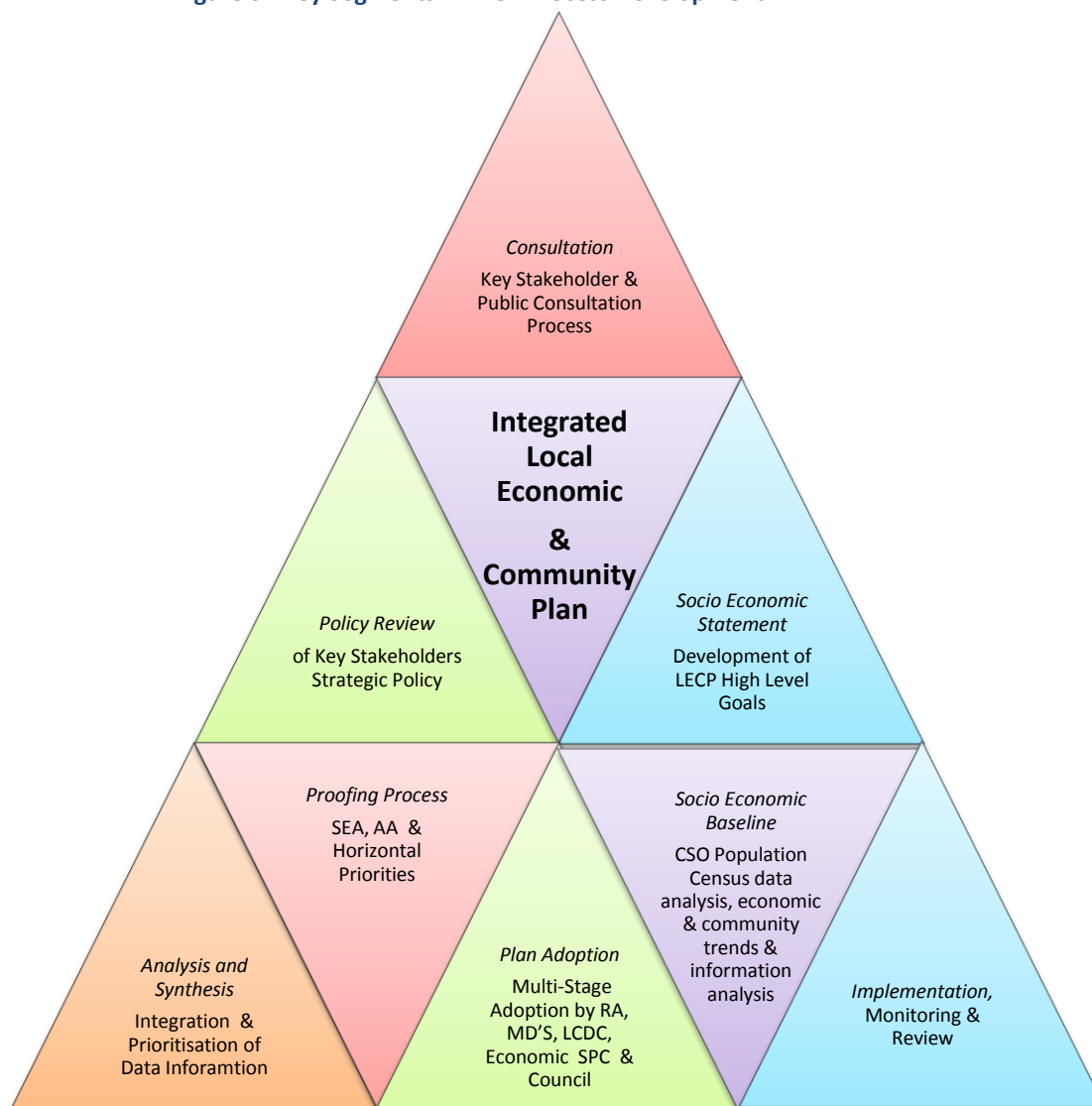
In relation to the preparation of the LECP the approach that was used was based on the framework provided in the 'Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans' (DoECLG, 2015) (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Schematic Representation of LECP Process



The approach taken to the development of the LECP was to build a socio economic profile of Longford looking at the demographics, sectoral, employment and education data for the county. Account was taken of key policies at local, national and European level. Stakeholder workshops were held and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis conducted. From the SWOT analysis a series of high level goals, strategic objectives and actions were developed. Public consultation was undertaken at various stages and the following is a specific breakdown of the process of the LECP development:

Figure 3: Key Segments in LECP Process Development



2.2 RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN

1. A review of relevant European, National, Regional and Local policy to inform the operational environment within which the LECP would be delivered (Chapter 3 and appendix 4).
2. A socio-economic and demographic profile for the County, a summary of which can be found in Chapter 4.
3. Consultation with stakeholders and the public.

All of the above information and data was analysed to identify a Vision Statement and High Level Goals for County Longford from both an economic and community perspective.

2.3 CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING

The guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government emphasise that the Plan should be developed through a process that is participative, consultative and collaborative, meaning all key stakeholder groups should have an opportunity to shape the Plan. In addition, some of these stakeholders will be delivering aspects of the Plan. Stakeholder engagement has therefore been a critical part in the preparation of this Plan. An array of consultations have been carried out ranging from a facilitated consultation session with the LCDC, consultation with the community in Municipal Districts across the county, and consultation with business interests and key agencies. An online survey was also conducted with various relevant

stakeholders. The consultation stages provided an opportunity for all interested parties to identify objectives and actions to promote and support the economic and community development of County Longford and was undertaken in 6 key phases (Figure 4).

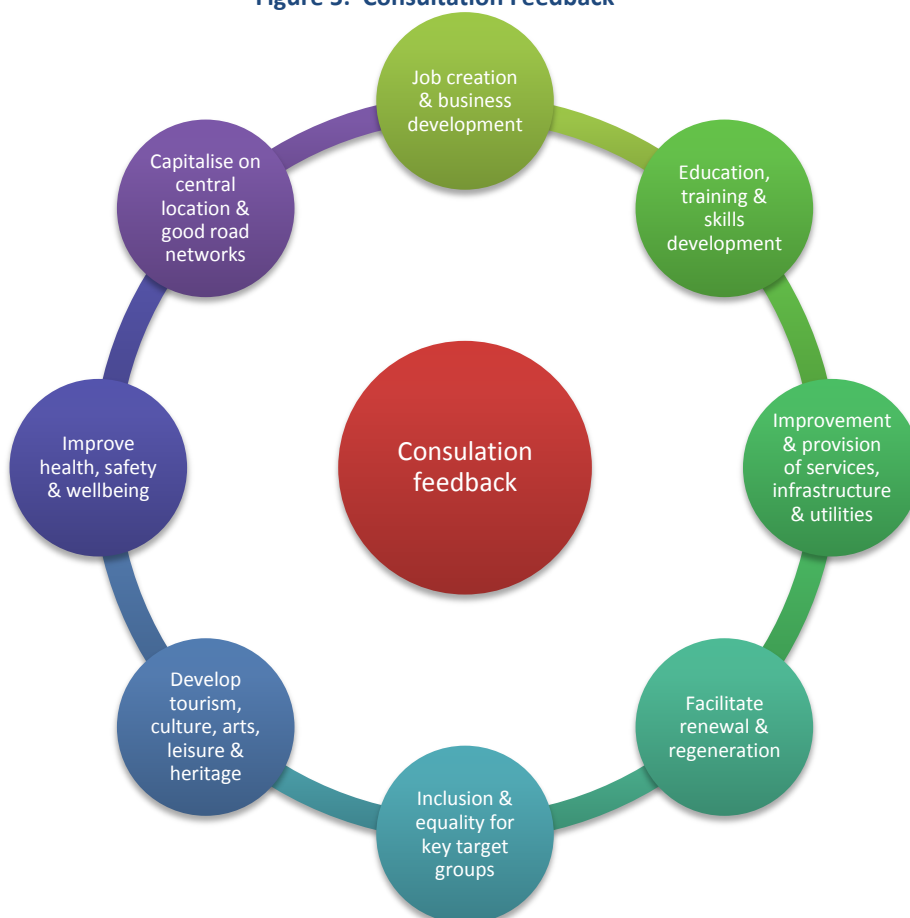
Figure 4: Consultation Process

Phase 1	Initial public written submissions sought by way of public advertisement in local press.
Phase 2	Further consultation with the general public, various agencies, key stakeholders, the LCDC and Economic SPC in order to assist in identifying the future needs and priorities for economic and community development of the County. This consisted of seeking submissions and observations by way of facilitated workshops and an online survey.
Phase 3	Stakeholder consultation with the public and agencies on the socio-economic statement prepared and high level goals identified by way of advertisement in the press, social media and the creation of an online questionnaire.
Phase 4	Consultation with the LCDC, SPC and other relevant stakeholders on the development of objectives and specific actions for the respective Economic and Community Action Plans.
Phase 5	Consultation on draft LECP with the general public
Phase 6	Consultation on draft LECP with Municipal Districts & Regional Assembly to ensure consistency with Regional Guidelines & respective relevant Economic/Community Strategies.

2.4 IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

The outcome of the consultation process in conjunction with the Socio-Economic Statement was then used to identify the high-level goals for the integrated LECP. The following are the key issues which were raised during the early consultation process (phases 1 & 2). The output from this consultation process assisted in providing the building blocks for the high level goals of the Plan:-

Figure 5: Consultation Feedback

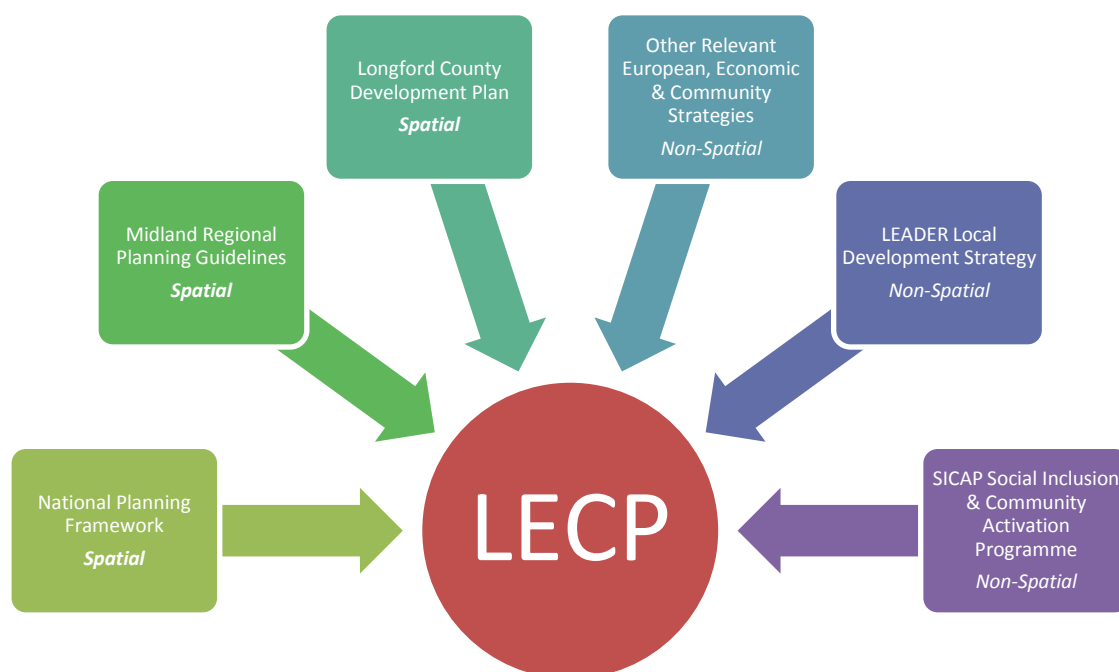


3.0 HIGH LEVEL REVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANS AND STRATEGIES

3.1 LECP CONTEXT

The LECP provides a framework which identifies actions to be implemented to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of the County. It forms part of a hierarchy of plans and strategies and as such must be cognisant of any relevant plans or strategies at European, National, Regional and Local level in terms of promoting economic and community development. All of these strategies represent evolving policies (with a new National Planning Framework to replace the National Spatial Strategy, and the Regional Planning Guidelines to be replaced by the Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy). This will be recognised and provided for in the plan review process. The LECP will provide a framework for organisations to link their own strategies and plans and therefore implement at a local level the relevant actions arising from these strategies, plans and policies. This Chapter comprises a high-level review of the key relevant spatial, economic and community strategies which will progress and create opportunities for County Longford and the region.

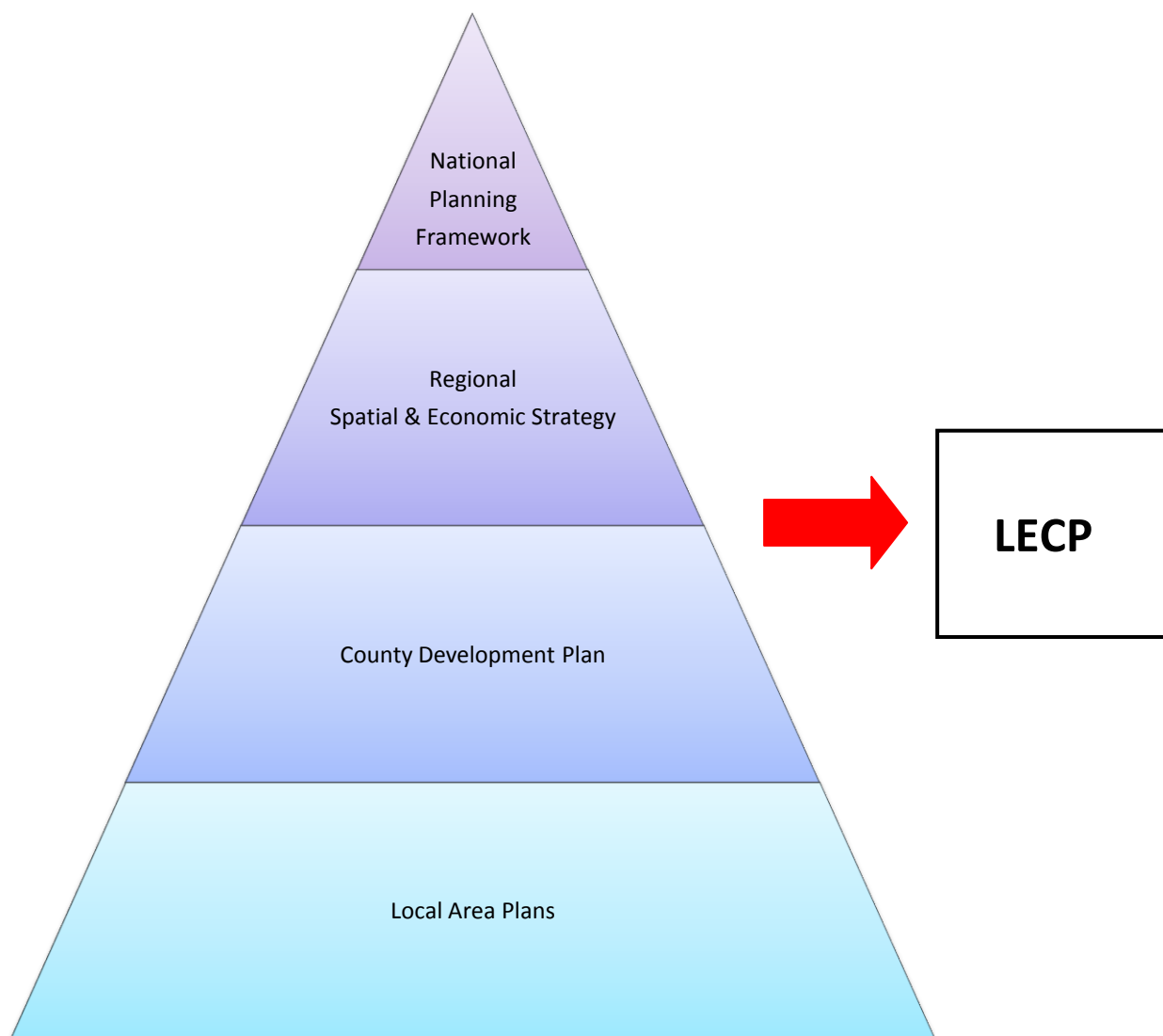
Figure 6: Key Relevant Spatial, Economic and Community Strategies



3.2 SPATIAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The LECP must be consistent with existing spatial planning strategies, namely the National Spatial Strategy, the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, and how same permeate down into the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 and any relevant Local Area Plans (figure 7). The Goals, Objectives, and Actions of this plan have been developed with cognisance of the relevant spatial planning strategies. The LECP is therefore a critical element in strengthening the link between spatial planning and the enhanced role of the Local Authority in Economic and Community Development. When new spatial planning strategies are adopted the Plan will need to be reviewed to ensure consistency.

Figure 7: Spatial Planning Hierarchy



3.2.1 National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020:

The National Spatial Strategy is a national planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, and physical development and population growth between regions in Ireland. Its focus is on people and places, and on building communities. Through closer matching of where people live and where they work, different parts of Ireland will be able to sustain a better quality of life, a strong competitive economic position and an environment of the highest quality. In 2010 the document *'Implementing the National Spatial Strategy: 2010 Update and Outlook- Harnessing Potential, Delivering Competitiveness, Achieving Sustainability'* included a statement of new priorities and objectives, taking account of new environmental, budgetary and economic challenges. The measures included:-

- Much closer alignment and integration between strategic planning decisions and settlement policy with prioritisation of significant capital investment.
- Better harnessing of the potential of rural areas and creation of new employment, particularly in the sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, renewable energy and tourism sectors, but also in other areas such as knowledge based or creative sectors which are not location critical.
- Support for the Government's Smarter Travel Policy.

3.2.3 Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021

In accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the LECP is required to be consistent with the core strategy of the County Development Plan which sets out a clear spatial framework for the growth of County Longford consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines. The Core Strategy Map (Figure 10) provides a geographical illustration of how Longford is envisaged to develop over its Plan period in line with the availability and integration of services, transport, infrastructure and economic activity whilst also preserving its natural environment and amenities.

Figure 10: Core Strategy from Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021



* as defined by MRPG's 2010-2012

The Core Strategy emphasises the following:-

- Approach overall development of the county in an inclusive, integrated way;
- Build on the growth of recent years with a view to achieving sustainable economic and social benefits;
- Create and maintain a lively and vibrant living and working environment for the County's population by making the most of the economic, social and physical development of the county;
- Identify the scope of development needed to support future population growth;
- Provide an overall plan that will make the best use of the county's resources to support the sustainable development of infrastructure, amenities and economic investment in the area;
- Identifying the role of towns, villages and rural areas of the county by way of a settlement hierarchy.

The Development Plan also contains policies and strategies to strengthen and develop the economic, social and cultural life of the county in a way that can be sustained to safeguard the quality of life for future generations. Overarching aims within the Plan bear relevance to the objectives contained in the LECP. In particular, the strategic developments outlined in the County Development Plan in relation to Tourism, Rural Enterprise, Environment, Heritage and Social and Community Activities are closely aligned to the work outlined in the LECP which will provide a mechanism for the County to reach many of its goals.

Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 – Economic Context

The County Development Plan is a key platform on which much future economic success will be built upon. Central to the successful implementation of the County Development Plan is the economic goal which aims to *'promote Longford as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism, while encouraging employment growth and economic activity'*. As per the Development Plan facilitating industrial, commercial or business development requires a combined approach which takes account the key aims to :-

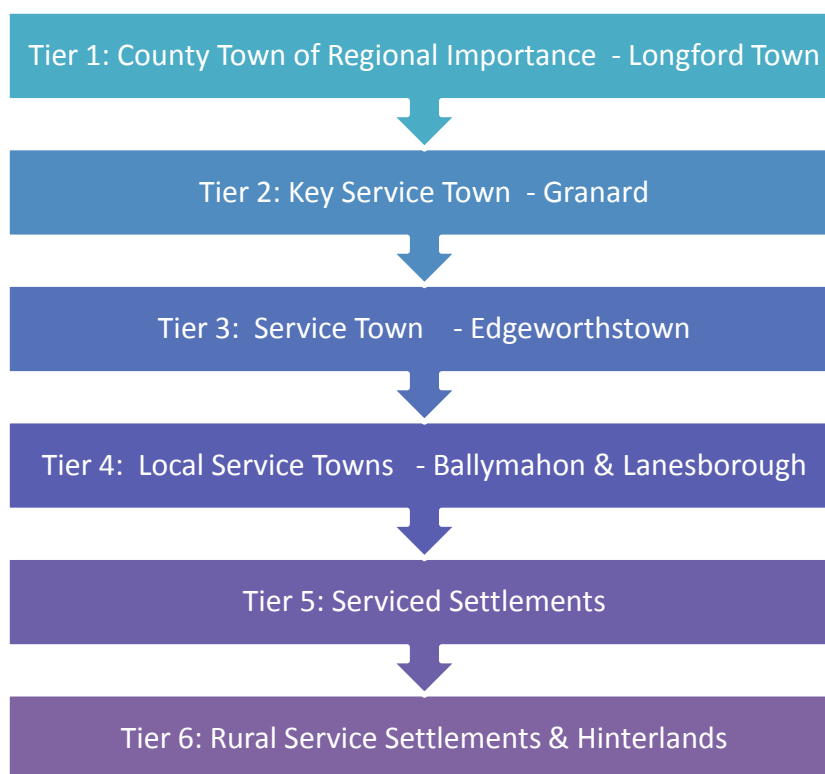
- Promote County Longford as a viable business location that is attractive and competitive for inward investment.
- Facilitate the continued economic growth of the County in appropriate areas and encourage the generation of employment and increased economic activity in a spatially balanced manner within a sustainable framework.
- Explore opportunities for County Longford to develop competitive advantage in areas that will create employment opportunities for the County's inhabitants.
- Ensure a high quality environment, including the provision of hard and soft infrastructural facilities in order to attract inward investment thus increasing employment opportunities, while at the same time enhancing the attractiveness of the area for the labour force to locate/remain within the County.
- Continue the training, development and retention of a highly educated workforce that will consolidate an enhanced economic environment within the County.
- Facilitate the development of critical mass in the industrial sector, promoting synergistic relationships between facilities and the establishment of spin-off developments, with a view towards creating an industrial centre of excellence in the north midlands.
- Facilitate the reuse of disused industrial buildings for appropriate, alternative uses.
- Work in partnership with various national bodies to promote and facilitate the location of industry and enterprise, whilst ensuring the provision of necessary infrastructure supports and linkages are developed having regard to the need to ensure conservation and the protection of the natural, recreational and cultural amenities of the County.
- Promote the Renewable Energy Sector in the County to generate business and employment.
- Promote sustainability and the use of "clean technology" in existing and proposed industrial developments, including the use of alternative and renewable energy sources and the promotion of developments located within walking/cycling proximity of larger residential areas. To establish strong inter-regional partnerships which have the potential to create opportunities for enterprise and employment in the Midland Region through expanding on linkages with the Border and West Regions.
- Identify key assets of the County and facilitate their appropriate and sympathetic development to create employment opportunities in County Longford.
- Build on and promote the development and expansion of the existing engineering industry in Longford and create new enterprises in this area.
- Promote the agricultural food sector with a view to using indigenous resources to create new enterprise and employment opportunities.
- Work with Bord na Mona, ESB and Coillte to identify opportunities for enterprise and job creation.

- Prepare a macro-economic assessment that will identify future potential development trends and job creation opportunities, linking this to the short, medium and longer term asset requirements of the County, including housing, infrastructure and educational facilities, subject to resources.
- Support the Local Enterprise Office and engage with them at critical stages of plan making processes in order to optimise the economic development potential of the County and provide a robust planning framework for sustainable job creation opportunities and economic growth.

3.2.4 Settlement Hierarchy – National, Regional and County Context

National, Regional and Local Policy encourages new developments to locate in existing towns and villages where the basic social and infrastructural services are available and where such services may be provided or expanded on an economic basis. This policy direction has the primary aim of facilitating sustainable live-work patterns to strengthen the existing urban centres in order to encourage enhanced commercial and employment opportunities, to provide an increased range of social and recreational facilities and to protect the agricultural industry and rural areas. The settlement strategy aims to provide for vibrant and viable settlements in urban and rural areas which provides a range of jobs, services and housing choice commensurate with their position on the hierarchy, with the capacity to facilitate the long-term sustainability of rural communities. The RPG settlement hierarchy for the region has been incorporated at county level into the County Longford Development Plan 2015-2021 (Figure 11).

Figure 11: County Longford Hierarchy Tiers



As such both the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Development Plan both identify Longford Town as a '*Principal Town*' with the function of driving the northern part of the Midland Region; Granard is described as a '*Key Service Town*' with the purpose to drive its own local economies; Edgeworthstown is described as a '*Service Town*', the function of which is to perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for essentially local hinterlands and support nearby

gateway and principle towns; Ballymahon and Lanesboro are described as ‘*Local Service Towns*’ and are envisaged as performing important local level, residential, retailing, social and leisure functions and providing appropriate local services to a wider rural hinterland.

The LECP provides an opportunity to reinforce Longford's urban settlement hierarchy outlined in both the Regional Guidelines and the County Longford Development Plan. The LECP in terms of its high level goals, objectives and actions is complimentary to and consistent with the National Spatial Strategy, RPG Strategic Goals and Core Strategy of the Development Plan. The LECP is consistent with and respects the growth and development framework for Longford and does not present competing proposals.

3.3 OTHER RELEVANT PLANS AND STRATEGIES

The LECP must be consistent with current Government policy in relation to economic development and any economic strategy that may apply (at present the ‘*Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020*’ (MTES). The LECP will also be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant action arising from measures under the ‘*Action Plan for Jobs*’ and other statements of Government policy including the report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA). Both the Local Development Strategy (LDS) of the Rural Development programme (LEADER) and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) are complimentary to the LECP. Also the LECP takes on the role as the primary mechanism at local level for bringing forward relevant actions arising from objectives and principles from government policy and strategies including the Action Plan for Social Inclusion, Further Education and Training Strategy and others (appendix 4), the most pertinent of which are synopsised accordingly.

3.3.1 EU 2020 AND NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME

EU 2020 is a growth and jobs strategy that will support employment, productivity and social cohesion in Europe. The Strategy offers 5 headline targets set at EU level for achievement by 2020. Ireland has committed to achieving these targets as outlined in the **National Reform Programme** (Figure 12).

Figure 12: EU 2020 and National Reform Programme Targets

Key Target	EU Target 2020	National Reform Programme
Employment	- 75% of 20-64 year-olds employed	- Raise to 69-71% employment rate for 20-64 age group, including through greater participation of young people, older workers and low-skilled workers and integration of legal migrants.
R & D/ Innovation	- 3% of EU GDP to be invested in R & D/Innovation	- Raise combined public and private investment levels to 2.5% of GNP
Education	- Reduce school drop-out rates below 10%. - At least 40% of 30-34 year-olds to complete 3 rd level education	- Reduce percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%; - Increase share of 30-34 year olds completing tertiary or equivalent education to at least 60%.
Poverty/ Social Exclusion	- At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion	- Reduce the number experiencing consistent poverty to 2% or less; - Reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in combined poverty.
Climate Change/ Energy	- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% from 1990; - 20% of energy to come from renewables; - 20% increase in energy efficiency	- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in non-traded sector by 20% compared to 2005; - Increase share of renewables in final energy consumption to 16%; - Move to 20% increase in energy efficiency.

3.3.2 MEDIUM TERM ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2014 – 2020 – A Strategy for Growth (MTES)

The Irish Government, in its Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014 - 2020 (MTES) outlined how it will continue to build the Irish Economy through achieving sustainable economic growth, strong public finances and enduring job creation. This will enable the building of a fairer Ireland by helping to reduce inequality and improve poverty outcomes across society, with a particular emphasis on child poverty in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government. The Strategy recognises that economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability must be advanced in a mutually supportive way. The Strategy is based on 3 pillars:

- Ensuring Debt Sustainability;
- Financing Growth;
- Supporting Employment and Living Standards.

3.3.3 ENTERPRISE 2025 STRATEGY

Enterprise 2025 sets out targets for competitiveness and productivity, unemployment, exports, and FDI projects. It sets out measures to meet these targets in three key areas: -

- **Create a step-change in the performance of enterprises:**
The strategy sets out to create more Irish-owned companies of scale, an increase in the number of start-ups with better survival rates, more enterprises exporting across to different markets and more businesses investing in research, development and innovation.
- **Build a real and distinctive competitive edge and differentiate Ireland's offering:**
By developing, retaining and attracting skilled people; creating attractive places for businesses to invest and for people to live and work; and implementing a knowledge development box and supporting research, development and innovation through a number of initiatives.
- **Excel in creating a jobs-fit environment and getting the basics right:**
The strategy sets out how it will achieve a jobs-fit environment by 2025, with taxation policies, investment and access to finance all playing central roles.

3.3.4 ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS 2015-2017

This is the Government's key policy instrument to support job creation and enterprise growth. The Action Plan recommends a significantly enhanced role for Local Authorities. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided legislative powers for Local Authorities to give effect to this enhanced role and enabled the establishment of Local Enterprise Offices. The Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017 has 5 strategic ambitions to achieve full employment of 2.1m people in 2018: -

- Support 100,000 additional jobs by 2016;
- Get Ireland back to a top-five ranking in international competitiveness;
- Stimulate the domestic economy and generate employment in locally traded sector;
- Build an indigenous engine of growth that drives up the export market share of Irish companies;
- Build world-class clusters in key sectors of opportunity.

3.3.5 ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS: MIDLAND REGION 2015-2017

The Midlands region covers counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. The Midland Action Plan for Jobs highlights the critical situation of unemployment in the region. The aim of this plan is to develop the full potential of the region building upon its assets and areas of competitive advantage and to deliver 10-15% employment growth in the region over the coming years. The key sectors targeted include manufacturing, tourism, food and energy, with actions to include:-

- Establish a Midlands Manufacturing Technologies Campus;
- Establish a Skills Forum to connect education providers in the region with the employers/industry in need of skilled workers;

- Develop a Regional Energy Hub for the Midlands;
- Develop a series of actions to promote 25% more start-ups in the midlands, including extra funding, mentoring programmes and establishing new incubator spaces for entrepreneurs like The Junction in Tullamore;
- Develop a series of actions aimed at attracting at least 25 additional multinational investment projects to the region by 2019, including building 2 advance facilities for Athlone, appointing an IDA Regional Manager for the midlands, and also actions to ensure that key IDA personnel overseas have enhanced knowledge and marketing plans for the region;
- A series of actions to support extra employment growth in the existing exporting companies within the midlands region, most of which are SME's.

3.3.6 ENERGISING IRELAND'S RURAL ECONOMY (CEDRA Report)

The Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) was established in October 2012 in recognition of the severe impact of the downturn in the economy on rural Ireland. CEDRA's task was to identify strategic initiatives that would ensure rural areas contribute to sustained and sustainable national economic growth and development into the future. The process confirmed that there is an abundance of natural, physical, human and capital resources and a wide variety of high quality, including dormant assets in many rural communities that could be leveraged to support national economic growth and the development of these communities. The need for higher speed broadband is supported. CEDRA recommendations relate to building of community capacity, integrated rural town planning, development of the social economy and supporting the growth of indigenous renewable energy businesses and relate to specific actions within both the Local Development Strategy and the LECP.

3.3.7 FOOD WISE 2015 - 2025

The national strategy for the development of the Agri-Food Sector outlines the key actions required to ensure it maximises its contribution to economic growth and exports in an environmentally sustainable manner over the coming decade. It identifies 4 elements to deliver growth: -

- Human Capital;
- Competitiveness;
- Market Development;
- Innovation.

3.3.8 NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES (DoCENR, 2015)

The National Broadband Plan (DoCENR, 2015) aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland. It will ensure that all citizens and businesses have access to high speed broadband no matter where they live or work. This will be delivered through a combination of commercial and State led investment, and it is envisaged that by 2020, all parts of Ireland will have access to a minimum broadband speed of 30mbps.

3.3.9 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In April 2014 a new Children and Young People's Policy Framework Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures was published outlining 160 commitments, ranging from: -

- Focusing on early interventions and quality services to promote best outcomes for children;
- Working better together to protect young people who are marginalised or at risk;
- Setting a target of lifting 70,000 children out of poverty by 2020;
- Improving childhood health and wellbeing in line with the goals of 'Healthy Ireland';
- Enhancing job opportunities for young people building on the 'Action Plan for Jobs' and 'Youth Guarantee';
- Delivering better supports for families and parenting.

3.3.10 NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY 2015-2020.

There are 4 objectives of the National Youth Strategy of particular relevance in relation to young people in County Longford:-

- Benefit from involvement in recreational and cultural opportunities including youth work, arts and sports;
- Core skills, competencies and attributes are enhanced and promoted through accessible, responsive, formal and non-formal education and learning opportunities.
- Better ability to participate in the labour market through enhanced employability skills that complement formal learning and training qualifications and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Inclusion in society, environmentally aware, equality and rights upheld, diversity celebrated and empowerment to be active global citizens.

3.3.11 YOUTH GUARANTEE

The OECD Action Plan for Youth: Giving Youth a Better Start in the Labour Market informed the design and delivery of a Youth Guarantee in Ireland which resolves to: -

- Develop the Intreo activation process for young people;
- Deliver opportunities to young people through education and training programmes;
- Earmark a quota of places/opportunities on employment schemes for young people;
- Vary the eligibility conditions for access to schemes in favour of young people;
- Expand the number of opportunities for young people;
- Introduce new options for young unemployed people.

3.3.12 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Two of the seven flagship initiatives of the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy; '*The Platform against Poverty*' and '*Social Inclusion and the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*', both support efforts to reach the targets set to assist at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion and to increase employment of the population aged between 20-64 to 75%. Key policy areas include education, quality childcare, healthcare, training, job-search assistance and rehabilitation.

3.3.13 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME (SICAP)

The purpose of SICAP is to address poverty and social exclusion through engagement, partnership and collaboration with key stakeholders including disadvantaged individuals and target groups, community organisations and public sector agencies. SICAP is managed in County Longford by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Its vision is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment through community development approaches, targeted supports and interagency collaboration, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected. SICAP has three main goals encompassing:-

- Community Development
- Education, Training
- Employment.

3.3.14 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (RDP) 2014 – 2020

The Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 has primary goals to improve the quality of life in rural areas and encourage diversification of the rural economy. A Community-led local development approach to rural development underpins priority actions, promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas. Key themes have been identified to progress Ireland's local development strategy as follows:-

- Rural Economic Development/Enterprise Development and Job Creation - supporting the development of the rural economy is seen to be fundamental to progress. Key themes

guiding local rural development strategies are identified as rural tourism, enterprise development, broadband, and rural towns;

- Social Inclusion (Building Community Capacity, Training and Animation) - social cohesion is seen to need support, particularly in respect of social exclusion and marginalisation;
- Rural Environment - an integrated and targeted approach to local development will be supported through the design of Local Development Strategies (LDS) focussing on innovation, climate change and the environment.

3.3.15 LONGFORD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (LDS) (LEADER)

The work of the Local Development Strategy encompasses energy and environmental measures, youth development work, employment generation, social enterprise, transport, town development, tourism generation and broadband provision. The strategy has been formulated from an analysis of relevant socio-economic data, a countywide consultation process, and a review of current service provision in the County. The implementation of objectives and actions of the Local Development Strategy are integrated with those of the LECP.

3.3.16 HEALTHY IRELAND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2015-2017 – A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVED HEALTH & WELLBEING

This plan which was launched by the Government in 2013 and involves every part of Irish society in improving our health and wellbeing. The vision for Healthy Ireland is where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential; where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility. The key areas in the framework are:-

- Healthy Childhood;
- Positive Aging;
- Healthy eating and Active Living;
- Tobacco Free Ireland;
- Prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing/Suicide Prevention;
- Sustainability;
- Environment and health and well-being;
- Social Inclusion;
- Disability;
- Safety.

3.3.17 CONNECTING FOR LIFE IRELAND'S NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDUCE SUICIDE 2015-2020

Connecting for Life Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020 envisions an Ireland where fewer lives are lost through suicide, and where communities and individuals are empowered to improve their mental health and wellbeing through the following 7 goals to:-

- Improve the nation's understanding of and attitudes to suicidal behaviour, mental health and wellbeing;
- Support local communities' capacity to prevent and respond to suicidal behaviour;
- Target approaches to reduce suicidal behaviour and improve mental health among priority groups;
- Enhance accessibility, consistency and care pathways of services for people vulnerable to suicidal behaviour;
- Ensure safe and high-quality services for people vulnerable to suicide;
- Reduce and restrict access to means of suicidal behaviour;
- Improve surveillance, evaluation and high-quality research relating to suicidal behaviour.

The 2 key outcomes are:-

- Reduced suicide rate in the whole population and amongst specified priority groups;
- Reduced rate of presentations of self-harm in the whole population and amongst specified priority groups.

Within the context of the strategy, multi-agency County Action Plans for suicide prevention will be developed and implemented in each County. These will set out an agreed vision for the prevention of suicidal behaviour and the promotion of positive mental health will be aligned with the national objectives of the strategy. They will set out the expected Outcomes and the Actions to be taken to achieve these at a local level. The approach in the preparation, development and implementation of the County Action Plans will be collaborative and inclusive and involve a broad range of organisations and individuals from the statutory, non-statutory, community and voluntary sectors and the general public.

3.3.18 COUNTY LONGFORD AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY 2015-2020

This is the first Age Friendly Strategy for County Longford and is committed to improving key areas of infrastructure, services, information, and our overall social response to older people's issues. An Age Friendly County is described by Age Friendly Ireland as *'a County which recognises the great diversity among older people and promotes their inclusion in all areas of community life'*. The Strategy has been developed by the Longford Age Friendly Alliance in consultation and co-operation with older people in Longford. The Alliance was formally established in 2015 and is made up of senior personnel in public sector agencies, older people's representatives and other organisations that promote a positive approach to ageing. Each of the Alliance members has given commitments in this strategy that will significantly help to improve the quality of life of older people in County Longford in the coming years. Implementing the Strategy means that County Longford will:-

- Become one of the greatest places to grow old in;
- Have easily accessible public buildings, shops and services;
- Incorporate older people's views into significant decisions being made about the County;
- Promote a positive attitude to ageing and address stereotypes about older people;
- Create opportunities for older people to be engaged with their County socially, as employees and as volunteers.

3.4 ENVIRONMENT

A number of plans relating to the protection of Ireland's environment have been appraised to ensure the LECP is in line with National Policy and includes the following:-

- Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) - established a framework for community actions in the field of water policy and has relevance to the protection of biodiversity;
- National Biodiversity Plan - states that *'biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland should be conserved and restored, to deliver benefits that are essential to all sectors of society'*;
- Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 - contains a number of objectives and policies relevant to ecology, biodiversity and nature conservation including a Green Infrastructure vision for the County.

3.4.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 -2011, the Local Authority is obliged to carry out a screening assessment for environmental effects arising from the implementation of the objectives and actions contained in the LECP. This is addressed in Appendix 7.

3.4.2 Habitats Directive / Appropriate Assessment (AA)

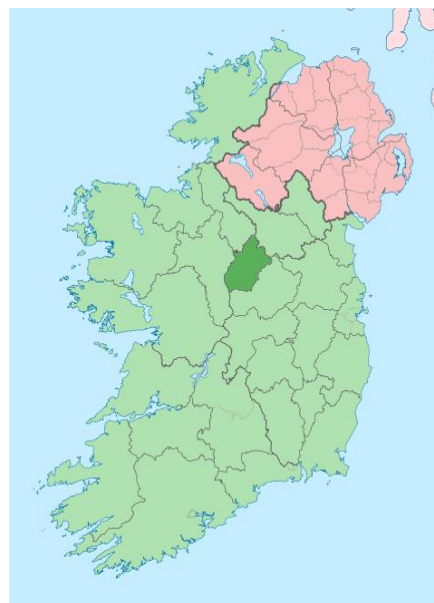
The EU Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended. Under this Directive, the local authority is obliged to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of the ecological implications of the LECP on the Natura 2000 sites within County Longford as part of the LECP preparation process. Natura 2000 sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) and Special Protection Areas (SPA's), and provide for the protection of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. This is addressed in Appendix 7.

4.0 COUNTY PROFILE

4.1 GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

County Longford is centrally and strategically located in the Midlands of Ireland providing ease of access to national and international markets making it an attractive location for inward investment (Figure 13). It is a strategic transport hub located on 2 National Primary Routes; the N4 from Dublin to Sligo and the N5 from Dublin to Mayo. Secondary routes also cross the County; the N55 linking Athlone and Cavan into Northern Ireland, and the N63 linking Longford with Roscommon and Galway. The County is also serviced by the Dublin to Sligo Inter-City railway line with 2 stations; Longford Town and Edgeworthstown. Longford Town is centrally located within the County and serves a wide catchment area. From a natural amenity perspective County Longford lies in the basin of the River Shannon and Lough Ree and has some of Ireland's oldest and best preserved peatlands. Other natural amenities include the Royal Canal, River Camlin, Lough Gowna, Newcastle and Derrycasson Forests.

Figure 13: Longford in a National Context



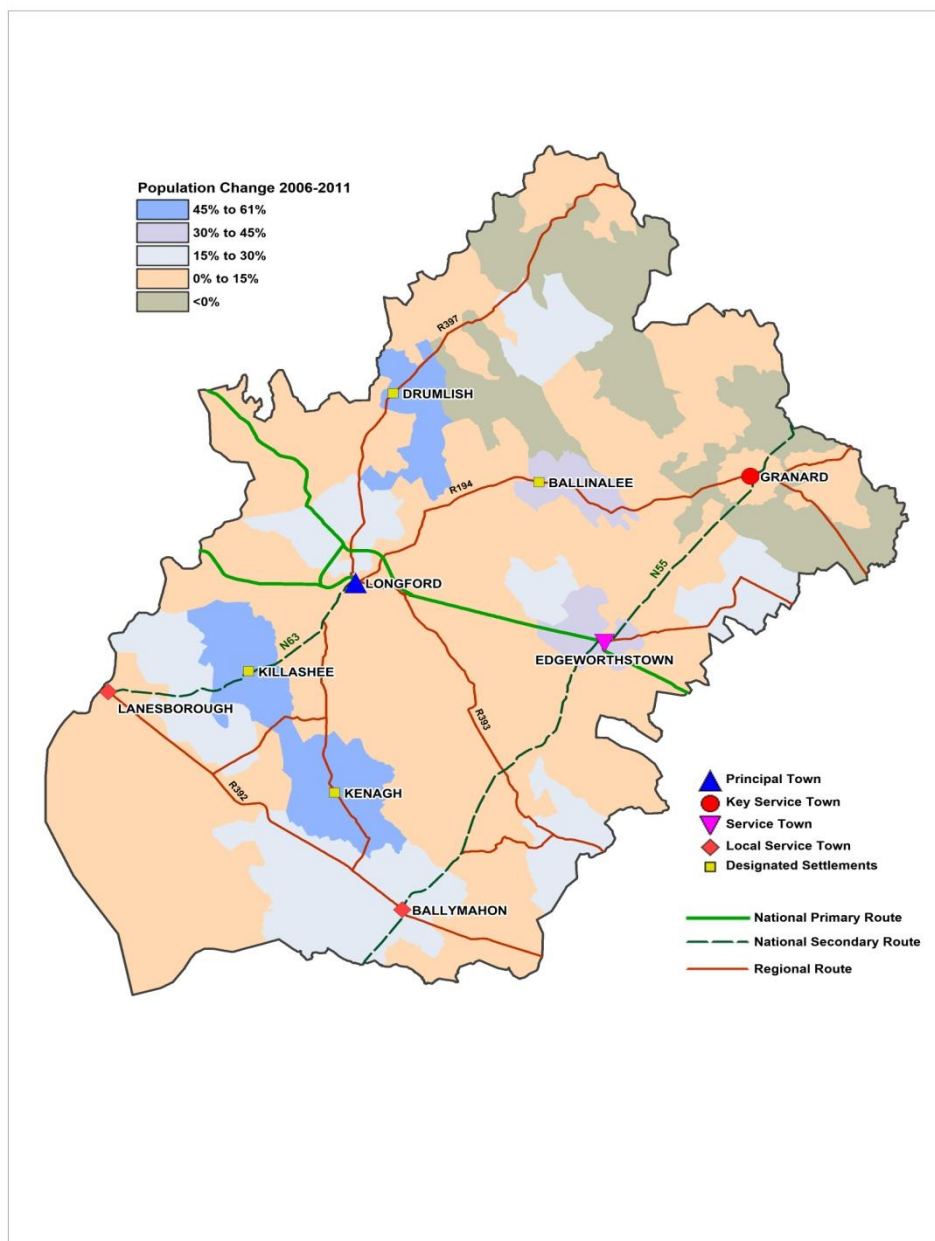
4.2 COUNTY LONGFORD SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE – BASELINE STUDY SYNOPSIS

A Socio-Economic Baseline Study was prepared as part of the preparation of the LECP, which provided an analysis of the demographic, social and economic profile of the County set in a regional and national context. This provided the LCDC and SPC with important socio-economic information to develop goals, objectives and targets in the preceding phases of the LECP preparation process. The key findings are available to view in more detail in the separate Socio-Economic Baseline Study available at www.longfordcoco.ie. A summary of the findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study is provided in the proceeding section.

4.2.1 Demographic Context

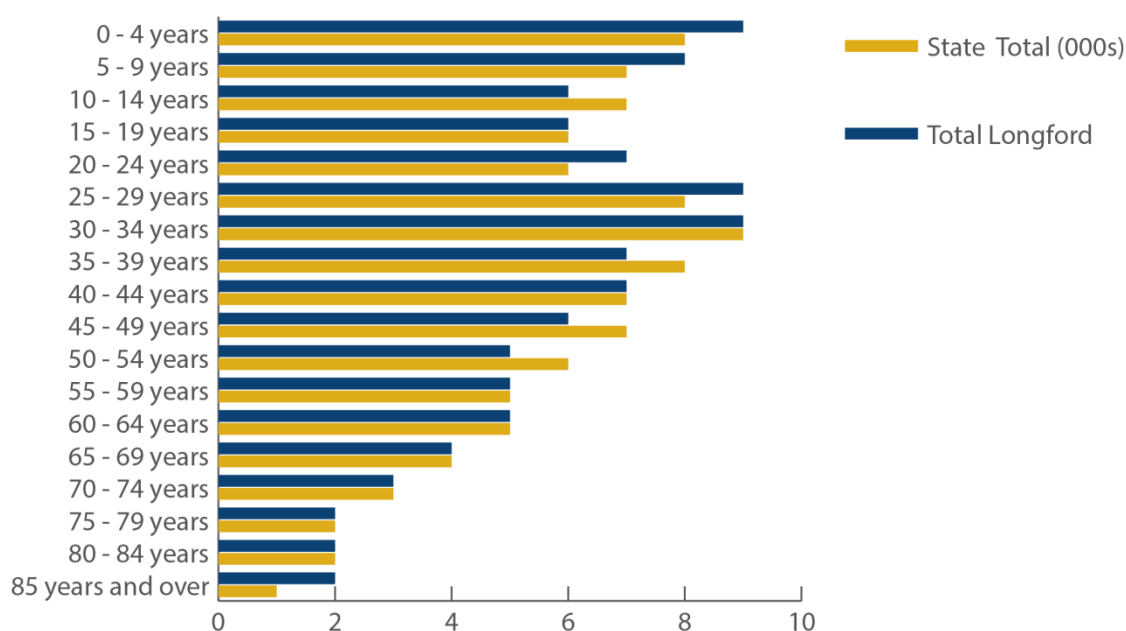
County Longford has the second smallest population nationally with a population of 39,000 (CSO, 2011), representing a rise of 13.4% on the previous Census (2006) (Figure 14). The County also recorded the sixth highest birth rate nationally in 2013 (15.7 births per 1,000 population). In the revised population forecasts in the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010–2022*, the population of County Longford is expected to increase by approximately 5,600 people over the period 2011–2022. Longford Town is the County Town with a population of 8,002 (2011). Other main towns include Edgeworthstown, Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesboro and Newtownforbes. The County has three electoral areas which in turn form the Ballymahon, Granard and Longford Municipal Districts, through which many of the local services are delivered by the Council.

Figure 14: Change in Population 2006-2011
(Source Census 2006 & 2011)



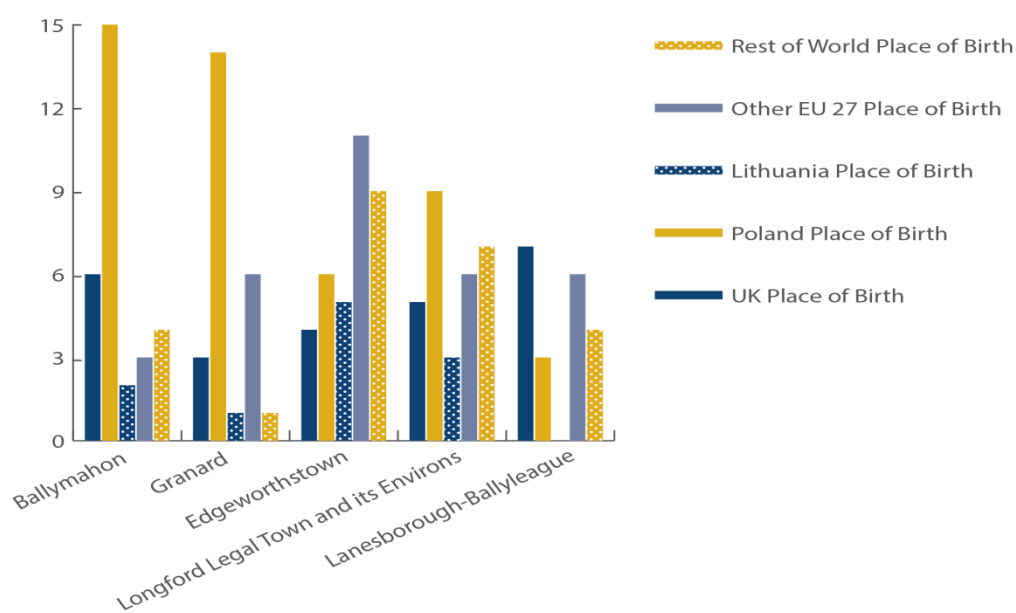
4.2.1.1 Age Distribution and Household Formation

Approximately 23% of County Longford's population are under 14 years of age, marginally higher than the national average of 21% (figure 15). Approximately 14% of County Longford's population are aged 65 years and over, similar to the national average. 29% of persons over 65 years of age live alone. In County Longford, the total age dependency ratio was 55% in 2011, an increase of 3% on Census 2006 figures and substantially above the national average (49.3%). The rate of lone parents is slightly higher in County Longford at 17% compared to the State average (15%) with Longford Town possessing a lone parent rate of 44.8% (CSO, 2011).

Figure 15: Age Distribution for County Longford and the State (Source Census 2011)

4.2.1.2 Nationality and Language

14.1% of the population of County Longford in the 2011 Census comprised of non-Irish nationals, which was higher than the national average (12%). Approximately 55% of all non-Irish nationals living in County Longford composed of three nationalities; Polish (27%); British (19%); and Lithuanian (8%). Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon possessed the highest proportion by population of non-Irish nationals at 33% and 28% respectively, while Lanesborough-Ballyleague had the lowest proportion at 16.8%, which remained above the County and National average. Latvian nationals comprised the highest community of non-Irish nationals in Edgeworthstown, while in all other profiled settlements, Polish nationals comprised the highest number (figure 16). 1,312 persons (3.4%) stated they were unable to speak English well or at all. The high rate of non-Irish nationals in the County offers both challenges and opportunities in terms of social inclusion and cultural diversity issues.

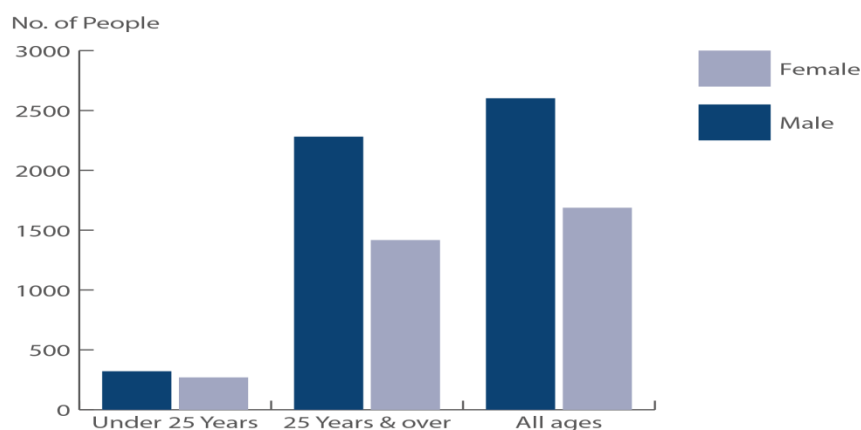
Figure 16: Ethnic Distribution by Profiled Settlement (Source Census 2011)

There is no 3rd level education institution in County Longford, with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), the closest 3rd level institution in proximity. However further education and training courses are available in the County, through Temple Michael College, Longford Women's Link and the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, which provides education and training from literacy and numeracy skills to QQI ((Quality and Qualifications Ireland) certified courses.

4.2.3 Unemployment

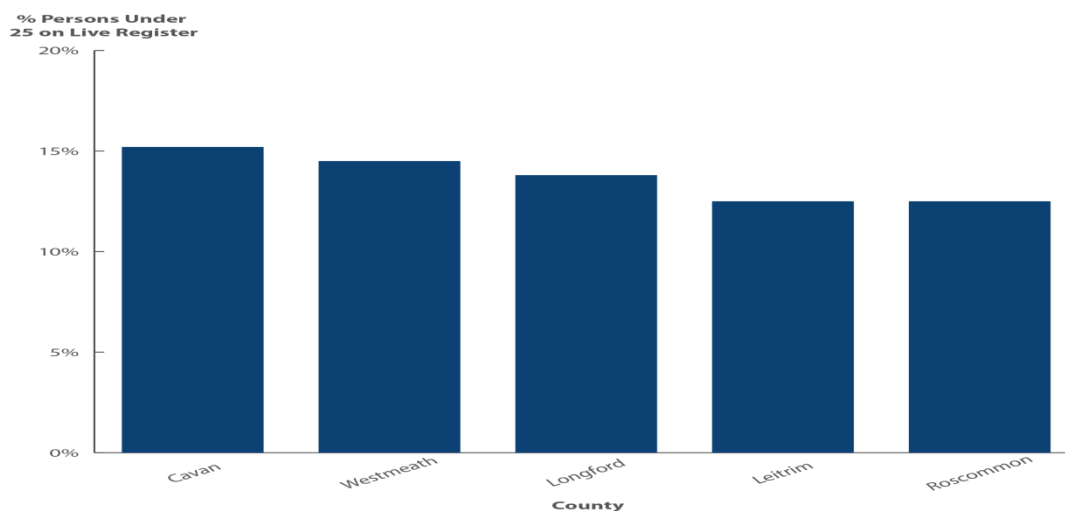
County Longford experienced significantly high levels of unemployment in the period after the economic collapse with Census 2011 identifying an unemployment rate of 24.7% for the County, compared to 19% nationally. Longford Town and Edgeworthstown had the highest levels of unemployment by settlement town, at 35% and 30.7% respectively, significantly above the County and State averages. However the number of people on the Live Register in the County has declined recently and is now at a level of 4,289 (May 2015), of which 61% are male and 39% female (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Number of Persons on the Live Register by Gender and Age in County Longford (Source Live Register, 2015)



13.8% of these are under the age of 25, which is in line with the proportions in surrounding Counties and similar to the national average (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Percentage of Persons under 25 years on the Live Register in County Longford compared to surrounding Counties (Source Live Register, 2015)

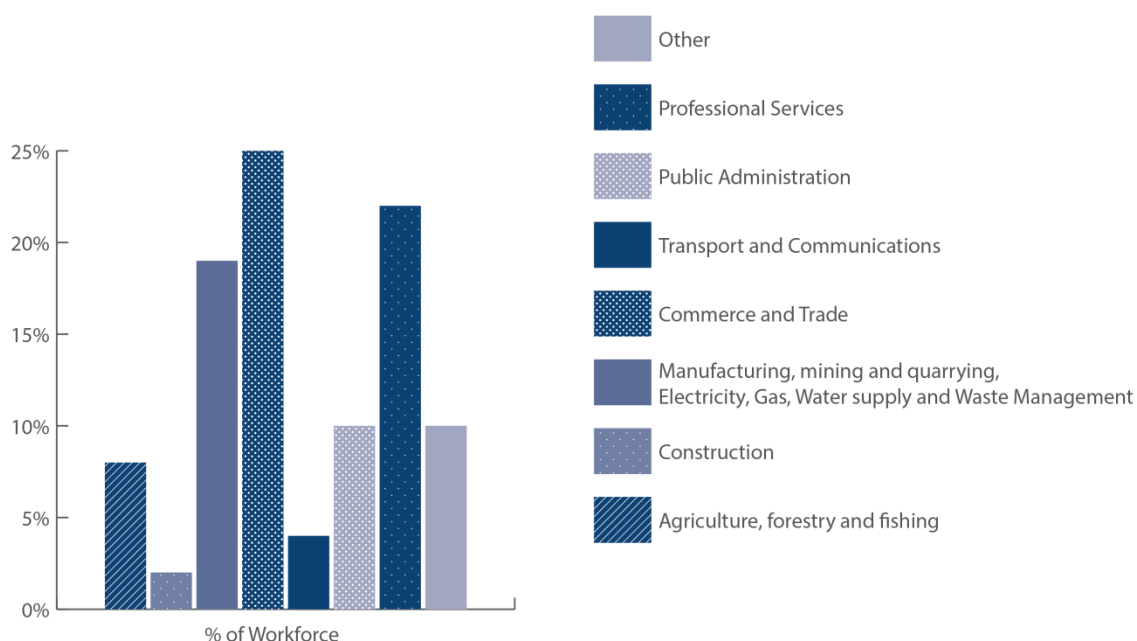


While there are more males on the County Longford Live Register than females; there is an increase in the proportion of females in the under 25 year age group of persons on the Live Register. As of May 2015 the largest group on the live register are those from the construction and craft related sectors. However, notably the highest ranking occupation group comprised 'no occupation' (970 persons). This indicates up-skilling and further education and training would benefit this cohort.

4.2.4 Employment

The largest proportion of workers from the County are employed in the Commerce and Trade Industrial Group, followed by Professional Services (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Residents of County Longford by Industrial Grouping (Source CSO, 2011)



Only 24% of County Longford residents working in County Longford have a 3rd level qualification, while in contrast, 42% of those who in-commute or out-commute from the County have a 3rd level qualification. Of the County Longford residents out-commuting for employment, a higher proportion of those possess a 3rd level or higher education attainment, compared to those living and working in the County. This suggests more skilled persons leaving the County for employment (CSO, 2011, Geodirectory, 2015).

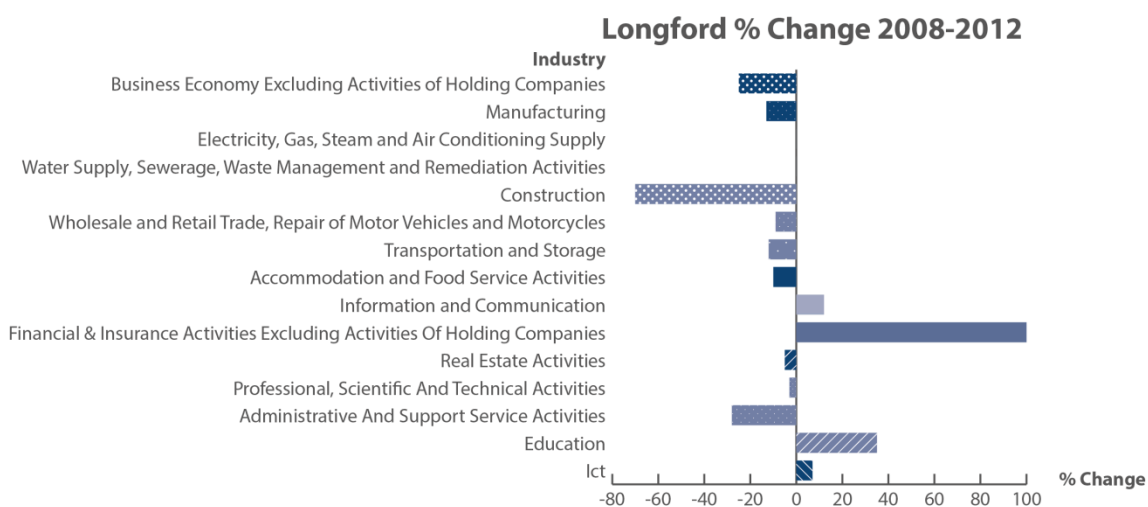
4.2.5 Enterprise

There are several significant employers in the County across a range of sectors including Pharmaceutical, Engineering, Food, Agri-Food and Wholesale/Retail. There are currently 6 IDA supported multinationals in the County (figure 21), encompassing sectors such as Engineering, BioPharma & Medical Devices, and Internet & Computer Technology Industries, which combined employ approximately 650 people (ESRI, 2015).

Figure 21: Distribution of IDA Companies in County Longford (Source Longford County Council)

It is estimated that the largest 24 enterprises in the County employ approximately 2,500 people. Longford Town also has 2 significant decentralised Government Departments. State and Semi-State organisations employ approximately 1,140 people, while the Health Services employ approximately 1,000 people. Key sectors are Manufacturing (13.4%), Wholesale/Retail (15.2%) and Public Administration (7.4%) (Longford County Council, 2015).

Between 2008 and 2012, there was a 20% decline in the number of industries in the County (Figure 22). The Mining and Quarrying (-400%) and Construction (-70%) sectors were most severely impacted, directly resulting from the economic collapse. However other sectors, such as Information and Communication, Financial and Insurance, and Education experienced growth during that same period (ESRI, 2015; CSO POWSCAR, 2015).

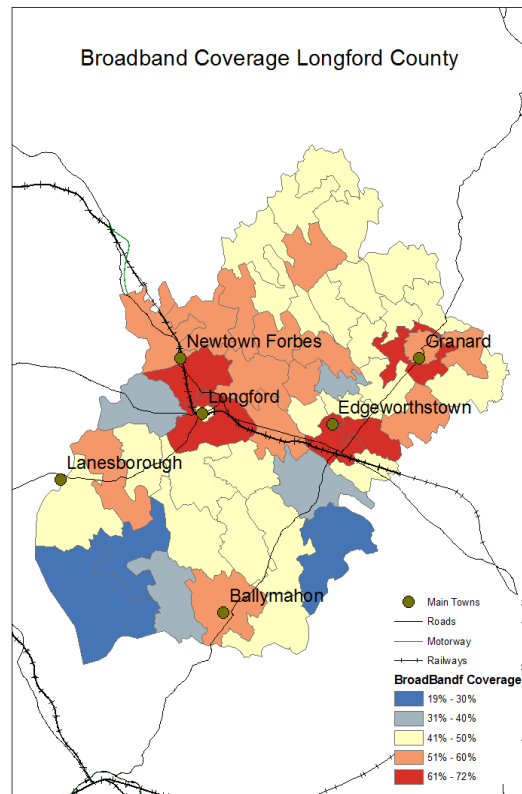
Figure 22: County Longford Percentage Change in Industrial Activity 2008-2012 (Source ESRI & CSO POWSCAR, 2015)

In 2014, there were 72 new start-up companies established in the County with 9 insolvencies recorded. The number of start-ups in 2015 is currently 35 (from Jan to June 2015), with 2 insolvencies recorded over the same period. In 2014, the most popular industry for corporate start-ups were the Motor and Hospitality sectors. Wholesale, Retail and Construction related sectors also feature prominently (VisionNet, 2015).

4.2.6 Broadband and Internet

Census 2011 identified that 51.3% of households had broadband connectivity compared with the State average of 63.8%, which is one of the lowest rates nationally. Edgeworthstown had the highest rate of household broadband connectivity of all the main settlements with 60.7%, followed by Longford with 56.2% (Figure 23). Broadband availability throughout the County is a key aspect of its future enterprise and employment development potential. Failure to provide quality access will inhibit commercial development and discourage potential investors from establishing or expanding current operations within the County. While the main settlements of Longford Town, Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Lanesborough-Ballyleague and Granard have a higher rate of access to high speed broadband services, there are large areas of the County where there are inadequate broadband facilities. In more rural areas, the low population density in certain parts of the County poses a problem for broadband suppliers. Broadband availability throughout the County is a key aspect of future enterprise and employment development potential. Failure to provide quality access will inhibit commercial development and discourage potential investors from establishing or expanding current operations within the County.

Figure 23: County Longford Broadband Coverage in 2011 (Source CSO, 2011)



4.2.7 Agriculture

Agriculture is an important economic activity accounting for over 10% of the labour force. There are 2,601 farms in the County, covering 72,773ha. Farm income is estimated to be €16.9 million with direct payments worth €31 million. The value of agricultural output in the County amounts to €88.5million. The number of food and drink processing jobs supported by the agricultural output of the County is estimated at 626 jobs (IFA, 2015).

4.2.8 Tourism

Tourism forms an essential part of the County's economy, however tourism figures for County Longford are significantly lower compared to other Counties both regionally and nationally. County Longford is located within the Midlands East tourism region, which attracted 772,000 overseas visitors in 2013; however, County Longford only attracted 3% of these (21,160 visitors) (Failte Ireland, 2013). In 2010, 45% of all overseas visitors to the County were reported as visiting friends or family, with 33% holidaying. Substantially more tourists from Britain visit friends and family in the region, while visitors from other overseas markets are more likely to be on holiday and therefore generally likely to generate more revenue in the locale. The Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre, Keenagh was the most visited tourist attraction, receiving 4,209 visitors in 2013. County Longford possesses only 3 hotels. UK firm Center Parcs have been granted planning permission for the development of a major holiday resort in the County with capacity to cater for approximately 2,500 guests and employ potentially up to 1,000 people. It also has the potential to create additional indirect employment in the locality in the Agriculture, Food, Catering and Retail sectors. When operational, it is estimated that the new holiday village will add approximately €32 million to the Irish GDP per annum (Longford County Council, 2015).

4.2.9 Health

In Census 2011, 14% of the total population of the County was identified as having a disability. Lanesborough-Ballyleague had the highest proportion of population with a disability, at 17% of the population. However, it also has a higher proportion of persons aged 65 years and over compared to the other main settlements in the County. There are 2 disability centres in the County; Phoenix Centre and St. Christopher's. Phoenix Centre provides day care services, while St Christopher's provides both day care and residential/respite services. There are 1,688 people in the County providing regular unpaid personal help to a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability, representing 4.3% of the total population of the County (CSO, 2011). Of this figure, 23.1% provide care in excess of 6 hours per day. Approximately 60% of all carers in the County are female. The HSE provides a number of services to support older persons. This includes St Joseph's long stay, palliative and day care centre, home help staff and home care packages. In 2014, there were 4 suicide related deaths recorded in the County, similar to that of the national rate (CSO, 2014).

4.2.10 Crime

Crime in County Longford has been increasing at a higher rate than many other Counties in the region. Theft related crimes experienced a particularly high increase, with a rise of 275%. Edgeworthstown and Granard, which both had a high change in deprivation between 2006 and 2011, experienced the highest levels of reported crimes within the County. Crime rates generally have decreased across all profiled settlements since 2012. County Longford has the third highest number of Gardaí per capita nationally (CSO, 2013).

4.2.11 Housing

The main tenures are 'Owner Occupied No Mortgage', and 'Owner Occupied with Mortgage', which account for two thirds of all households in County Longford, similar to other counties in the region. 475 households in the County received rent supplement in 2014. There are approximately 6

Approved Housing Boards (AHB's) providing residential housing support services in County Longford, in addition to Longford County Council. The Longford County Council '*Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability*' (May 2015) identified 65 persons in need of social housing support that have some form of intellectual, physical, sensory or mental health disability. There are 2 homeless centres in the County; operated by the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Bethany House provides emergency accommodation support to women and children and it currently has 19 beds; while St. Martha's Hostel provides emergency accommodation support to homeless men and currently has 11 beds. In the first six months of 2015, 35 persons presented as homeless in County Longford (Longford County Council, 2015).

Longford has the highest Irish Traveller population per 1,000 population nationally (CSO, 2011). In 2014 during a review of the housing needs of the Traveller community in County Longford, Longford County Council identified that there are approximately 176 Traveller children aged between 10 – 19 years in County Longford; 93 of whom will be aged 18 years and over by 2018. As such, suitable future Traveller accommodation needs will also have to be considered.

4.2.12 Poverty and Affluence

According to the 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase & Pratschke, 2012), the Midlands Region is the third most deprived region of Ireland and County Longford is the most deprived local authority area within the Midlands Region. In the absolute HP Deprivation scores only 4 Electoral District's (ED's) categorised as marginally above average. The more affluent areas are situated in the wider environs of Longford Town and in the northwest of the County, while the 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index identified the east of the County in general as below the national average. The disposable income of County Longford residents estimated from the 2011 Census was €17,158 per capita, compared to the State average of €19,055 and the Dublin figure of €21,329 per capita. Longford possesses the third lowest disposable income level of all Leinster Counties.

4.3 COMPARATIVE INDICATORS BETWEEN COUNTY LONGFORD AND THE STATE

While the key findings are available to view in more detail in the separate Socio-Economic Baseline Study available at www.longfordcoco.ie, a comparative analysis of the findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study is provided below (Figure 24) and provides an overview of the County in the context of a State perspective.

Figure 24: Comparative Indicators between County Longford and the State
(all figures based on 2011 Census unless otherwise stated)

	Longford	State
Population Indicators		
Population	39,000	4,588,252
% Population Change 2006-2011	+13%	+8.2%
% of population living in a Rural Area	66.9%	38%
Age Dependency (pop. aged 0-15 years & 65 years plus as % of total pop.)	35.7%	33.1%
Births per 1,000 (2013)	15.7	15.0
Average age of mothers at first maternity (2013)	28.0	30.2
Health Indicators		
% of pop. that considers their health 'good' or 'very good'	86.4%	88.3%
% of population with a disability	13.9%	13%
Suicide Rate Per 100,000 (2014)	10.1	10.0
Employment Indicators		
Total Population at work	13,871	1,807,360
Labour Force Participation Rate (CSO 2011)	61.5%	61.9%
Unemployment rate (CSO 2011)	24.7%	19%
Numbers on Live Register (July 2015)	4,487	363,628
Numbers on Live Register under 25 (July 2015)	647 (22.5%)	50,316(13.8%)
Disposable Income Level (per capita)	€17,158	€19,055
Social Inclusion		
Lone Parent Rate	22.3%	21.6%
% Change in Lone Parent Rate 2006-2011	3.4%	1.3%
% Local Authority Housing 2011	13.8%	7.9%
% Change in Authority Housing Rented Accommodation 2006-2011	21.9%	6.5%
Total number of Irish Travellers	743	29,573
% of Resident population that are from the Traveller Community	1.9%	0.6%
% of Non-nationals	14.1%	12.0%
Largest Minority Group	Polish	Polish
% of Polish Population	4.2%	2.7%
Proportion of Population aged 15+ with 3 rd level education	16.7%	24.3%
Absolute HP Index Score 2006	-4.93	-.23
Absolute HP Index Score 2011	-12.12	-6.78
Change in Absolute HP Index Score 2006-2011	-7.19	-6.55
Change in Relative HP Index Score 2006-2011	-.91	-.47
% pop. providing regular unpaid help to friend/family member with illness/disability	4.3%	4.0%
Language Skills		
% that speak a language other than Irish or English at home	12.5%	1.2%
% of Persons who spoke a language other than Irish/English at home and also unable to speak English well or at all	26.7%	7.4%
Household Indicators		
% of people aged 15 and over who travel to work/school in ½ hour or less	69.5%	55.9%
Vacant Housing ratio	23.2%	14.5%
% of households with a broadband connection	51.3%	63.8%

4.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASELINE SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis of the findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study is provided below. This strategic analysis was designed to identify internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and challenges. This provides guidance towards the key areas where the LECP should focus and the additional services and facilities which may be required.

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good access to northwest, west and east of Country via national road network. • Strong population growth higher than national average with high birth rate. • Significant population growth in inter-regional settlement towns. • Higher than state average youth population which will be of working age in the future. • Overall increase in employment in County Longford • Decrease in under 25 year olds unemployed. • High number of workers employed as Higher Professionals. • High percentage of persons commuting into Longford have 3rd level education. • Cultural diversity from above national average proportion of non-Irish nationals. • High inter-regional dependence and migration of workers. • Less persons receiving rent supplement than surrounding Counties. • More social housing schemes than neighbouring Counties. • Diverse set of community services. • High usage of public libraries. • High quality environment. 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of unemployment compared to State average. • Low number of large multinational companies based in the County. • Decrease in the number of industries operating in County Longford between 2008 – 2012. • Decrease in grant support for micro enterprises. • Underdeveloped and under promoted tourism potential. • Failure to utilise natural resources for development of renewable energy. • Lower than the average national rate of childcare facilities. • High level of persons with higher education qualifications out-commuting from the County. • Requirement for additional funding to support social housing requirements. • Increase in theft and robbery incidents (2013-2014). • High proportion of non-Irish nationals with poor English language skills inhibits social inclusiveness. • Underdeveloped rural transportation and connection linkages. • Presence of vacant properties, unfinished and derelict residential developments. • Poor Information & Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure in low density areas/small towns/villages inhibits social/economic development.
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographically central location with good accessibility by road, rail and bus is a positive for future enterprise development. • Further potential improvement of road networks. • Opportunity for clustering across the Midlands and to strengthen the economic role of Longford Town in the region. • Potential to develop FDI opportunities. • Roll out of Countywide broadband infrastructure will promote future economic growth. • Agri-business employment and investment opportunities. • Harness natural resources and potential of renewable energy sector. • Tourism potential of Shannon waterway, Royal Canal and Center Parcs Leisure facility. • Higher than average youth population. • Promote return-to-education schemes for unemployed persons e.g. construction workers. • Cultural diversity provides opportunities across the County, its institutions and its sectors. • Promote bottom-up, as opposed to traditional approaches to regional development. 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underinvestment in enterprise growth. • Insufficient investment in targeting disadvantaged youth and youth population. • Insufficient support and investment in childcare services. • Remaining unfinished and derelict estates have social and environmental consequences. • Retail sector in larger regional settlements attracting spending outside of County Longford. • Weak broadband infrastructure may inhibit economic growth. • Lack of capital funding to support social housing needs of the County. • Failure to address crime rates will have adverse social and economic implications. • Failure to acknowledge cultural diversity may have social implications. • High rate of unemployed females. • Environmental pollution may threaten the tourism sector.

5.0 VISION, HIGH LEVEL GOALS AND THEMES

5.1 VISION STATEMENT

The aim of the Vision Statement and High Level Goals is to represent the broad outcomes to be achieved by the LECP within the overarching purpose stated in the 'Action Programme for Effective Local Government- Putting People First' (2012), of promoting wellbeing and quality of life. This Plan provides an opportunity to identify and chart a course of actions that will support economic and community development where a higher quality of life is available to all the people of the County. Taking account of the aforementioned the overall [Vision](#) of the Longford LECP is for:-

'a regenerated economically sustainable County which values equality of opportunity, excellent quality of life, collaborative community and rural development, sense of place and where the wellbeing of all residents and future generations is central to everything we do'.

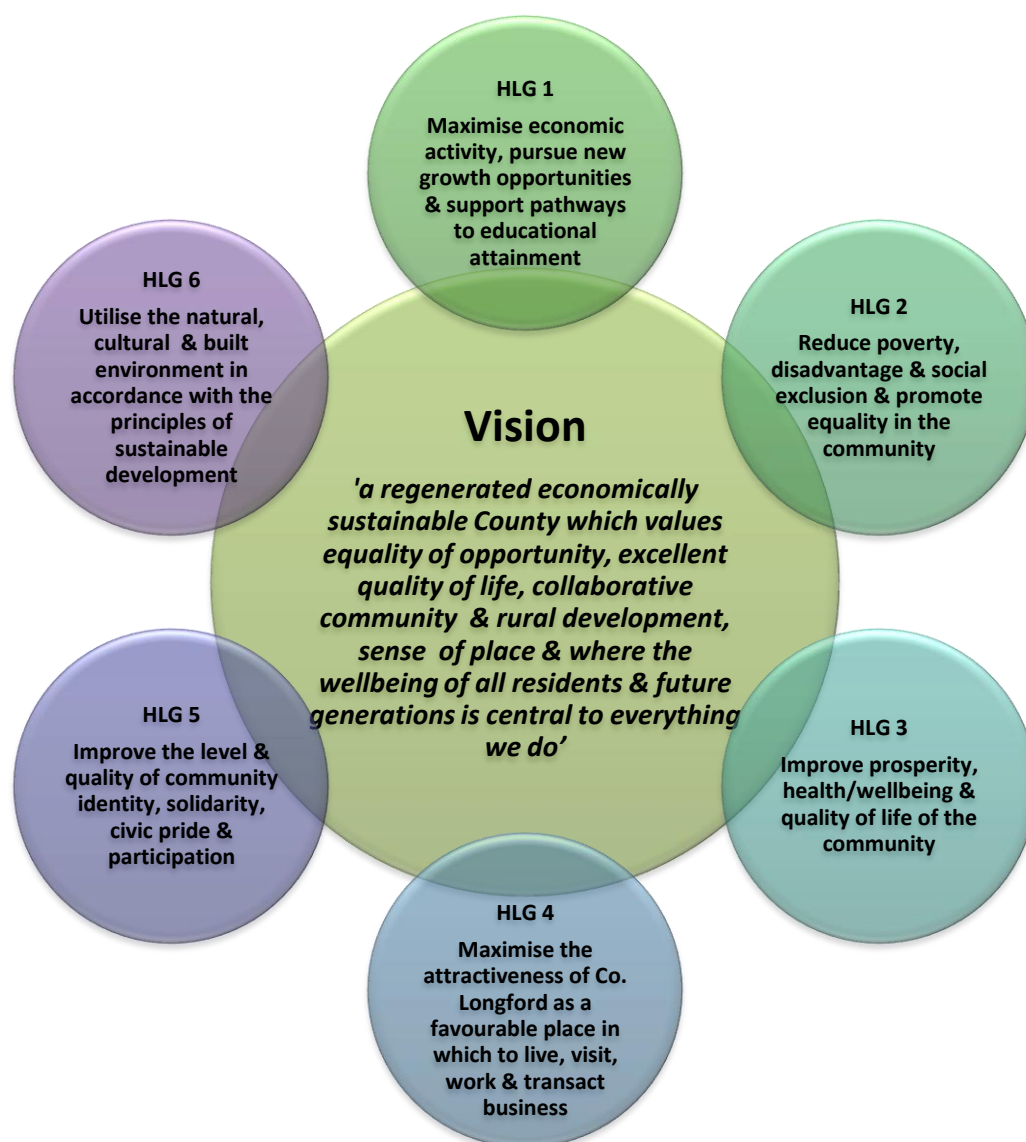
The Vision Statement is built upon the understanding that economic development and local community development are mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. The economic and community elements share dimensions of common interest and actions, as it is recognised that strong economic performance helps to build stronger communities and is fundamental to their welfare through greater prosperity, job creation and financial stability. Conversely local community development interventions support economic activity from the ground up, while also helping to combat social exclusion and poverty. The Longford LECP 2016-2022 recognises that greater integration of the economic development and community development elements will help ensure a co-ordinated and efficient delivery of actions to serve both economic and local community development.

5.2 HIGH LEVEL INTEGRATED GOALS

This LECP Vision is supported by the 6 integrated [High Level Goals \(HLG'S\)](#) (Figure 25). These High Level Goals were informed and developed by the Advisory Steering Group, the LCDC and the Economic and Enterprise SPC. The basis for the development of these High Level Goals was informed by the following:-

- Consideration of the High Level Review of the Relevant Plans (see [Chapter 3](#)).
- Consideration of the socio-economic and demographic profile (Baseline Study) for the County (summary contained in [Chapter 4](#)).
- Following on from the statistical analysis contained within the aforementioned Baseline Study, particular consideration was given to the SWOT analysis contained therein and the trends highlighted (see [Chapter 4](#)).
- Consideration of the feedback received from various Stakeholders, the Public (see [Chapter 2](#)) and LCDC and Economic and Enterprise SPC members.

Figure 25: Integrated High Level Goals



HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment;

A review of relevant European, National, Regional and Local policy highlighted the issues of employment and educational productivity in a policy context. At the highest strategic level **EU2020** contains key targets in relation to employment, Research and Development/Innovation and Education. This is accordingly embodied into National Policy in terms of the **National Reform Programme**. At a local level, the Baseline Study for County Longford and associated SWOT analysis highlighted a number of issues, amongst which include the higher levels of unemployment compared to the State average, the low number of large multinational companies based in the County; the decrease in the number of industries operating in the County, and the high level of persons with high educational qualifications out-commuting from the County. The consultation feedback received in relation to jobs creation and business development, the need to capitalise on the County's central location and good road networks, coupled with the need for targeted education, training and skills development was also noted. Accordingly this goal aims to address the aforementioned issues raised.

HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community;

A review of relevant European, National, Regional and Local policy highlighted the issues of Poverty/Social Inclusion in a policy context. At the highest strategic level **EU2020** contains a key target in relation to Poverty/Social Exclusion. This is accordingly embodied into National Policy in terms of the **National Reform Programme** with the key targets to ‘*reduce the number experiencing consistent poverty to 2% or less; and reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in combined poverty*’. In terms of statistical analysis it is noted that the Midlands Region has been identified as the third most deprived region of Ireland, with County Longford being the most deprived local authority area within the Midlands Region (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2011). The Baseline Study also highlighted County Longford to nationally have the highest Irish Traveller population per capita in the County, which is almost three times the national average (CSO, 2011). The associated SWOT analysis highlighted insufficient investment in targeting disadvantaged youth and the youth population, the high proportion of non-Irish nationals living in the County, and identified that a failure to acknowledge cultural diversity may have social implications. The public consultation process and stakeholder engagement process also raised concerns in relation to inclusion and equality for key target groups as a priority. Accordingly this goal aims to address the aforementioned issues raised.

HLG 3: Improve prosperity, health/wellbeing and quality of life of the community;

This goal covers the remits of Health, Crime and Housing. In terms of health, the National Plan ‘*Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2015-2017 – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing*’ contains a Vision whereby everyone can enjoy physical and mental health to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility. At a local level the Baseline Study indicates that 13.9% of the population of the County have a disability and that the County has an aging population. In terms of crime, this has been increasing at a higher rate than many other Counties in the Midland Region. The SWOT analysis associated with the Baseline Study identifies as a threat the failure to address crime rates as having potentially adverse social and economic implications. In terms of housing, the County has more social housing schemes than neighbouring Counties but a weakness is identified in terms of the requirement for additional funding to support social housing requirements. Domestic Violence and homelessness are also key issues in the County. The Public consultation and Stakeholder engagement process raised concerns in relation to required improvements in terms of health facilities, crime rates, public safety and general wellbeing. Accordingly this goal aims to address the aforementioned issues raised.

HLG 4: Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work and transact business;

This goal covers the remit of the provision of critical infrastructure. Nationally, County Longford is centrally and strategically located, with good road and rail networks to key urban areas. The County also boasts its own airfield. It is envisaged that through this goal, these and other key critical infrastructure components can be built upon to boost County Longford’s attraction from both an economic and quality of life perspective. However it is acknowledged that the Baseline Study and accompanying SWOT analysis identifies as a weakness the poor ICT infrastructure in low density areas and small towns/villages as inhibiting social and economic development. However the ‘*National Broadband Plan: Connecting Communities*’ (DCENR, 2015) is noted and that as part of same it is envisaged that by 2020 all parts of Ireland will have access to a minimum of broadband speed of 30mbps. The roll out of countywide broadband infrastructure is therefore an opportunity to promote future economic growth and enhance facilities for communities, particularly in isolated rural areas and make County Longford a more attractive place both economically and socially. The Public consultation and Stakeholder engagement process also raised concerns in relation to required improvements and provision of services, infrastructure and utilities. Accordingly this goal aims to address the aforementioned issues raised.

HLG 5: Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity, civic pride and participation;

This goal addresses the issues raised in the consultation feedback in relation to the poor self image and a lack of pride held by citizens and communities in County Longford. There is no recognised identity or 'Brand' for the County and this is reflected by the poor performance in the Tourism industry- whereby Longford County only attracted 3% of the total visitor numbers for the Midlands East Region in 2013 (Failte Ireland 2013). This is despite a wealth of cultural and heritage offerings within the county. As mentioned previously, the Baseline identifies the high number of travellers and foreign nationals who live in Longford and a lack of cohesive integration initiatives can exacerbate poor intercommunity perceptions. However the associated SWOT has also identified that there is a strong community sector with a fantastic volunteering ethos in County Longford – albeit there is a disjointed effort to capitalise on same. The large cultural mix in County Longford is identified as an opportunity to be embraced and can help to create an identity for the County and promote quality of life issues. Accordingly this goal aims to address the aforementioned issues raised

HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural and built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development;

At the highest strategic level **EU2020** contains a key target in relation to Climate Change / Energy. This is accordingly embodied into National Policy in terms of the **National Reform Programme** with the key targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the non-traded sector; increase the share of renewable in final energy consumption; and move towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency. Other national plans relating to the protection of the Environment have also been noted i.e. National Biodiversity Plan etc. In a local context, the Baseline Study and accompanying SWOT analysis identified our high quality environment as a strength, but also identified potential environmental pollution as a threat which may threaten our tourism sector. Other threats included the presence of vacant properties, unfinished and derelict development and that the retail sector in larger regional settlements is attracting spending outside of the County. The public consultation and stakeholder engagement process raised concerns in relation to the renewal and regeneration of the built environment and the development of tourism, culture, arts, leisure and heritage in the County. Accordingly this goal aims to address the aforementioned issues raised.

5.3 SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The LECP provides a high-level strategy designed to achieve the vision for the County, and is designed to be as action-focused as possible, recognising that delivery will be through the programmes of various stakeholders. As such drilling down further under each goal the LECP sets out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of Longford in partnership with economic and community development stakeholders. As such the LECP has been formulated within a framework of key Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDO's) and Sustainable Community Objectives (SCO's). The SEDO's have been identified to make a significant contribution to achieving required overall economic development outcomes, while the SCO's are identified to enhance the quality of life and well-being of communities. The objectives identified under each of these themes have in turn been further translated into specific actions through the programmes of various stakeholders. Longford LECP 2016-2022 comprises of an integrated framework of 6 high-level goals which encompass a number of themes, supporting objectives and a suite of actions (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Integrated LECP Framework

5.4 CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND INTEGRATED STRATEGY

Both economic development and local community development, whilst distinct involving some different challenges, approaches and skills, are also mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. As a consequence, the economic and community elements of the plan will have areas of common interest and action. Figure 27 below illustrates the relationship between the themes identified in the various objectives representing the various aspects of life in County Longford and the underpinning infrastructure, some of which are shared between both the Economic and Community elements.

Figure 27: Overview of Integration of Themes and Objectives of Economic and Community Elements

HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities & support pathways to educational attainment				
Economic Theme	SEDO	Community Theme	SCO	Integrated/Shared
Inward Investment	Create an environment which attracts inward investment, increasing employment opportunities in County Longford	Employment	Provide measures to promote additional employment opportunities in Co. Longford	Yes
Innovation & Sectoral Opportunities	Increase innovation capability & capacity as an engine of economic growth & develop sustainable competitive advantage from identified sectoral strengths			Yes
Supporting Small Enterprise	Promote a strong culture of entrepreneurship & create an enabling environment for small business development	Entrepreneurship	Support the development of entrepreneurship across all sectors of society	Yes
Education & Training	Enhance employability & entrepreneurial potential of different sectoral groups	Education & Training	Provision of programmes to address educational disadvantage, skills & training deficits	Yes
HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage & social exclusion & promote equality in the community				
Social Inclusion	Identify initiatives that will reduce barriers causing social exclusion & encourage a positive culture around minority groups & their participation	Social Inclusion	Identify initiatives that will reduce barriers causing social exclusion & encourage a positive culture around minority groups & their participation	Yes
		Equality and Human Rights	Ensure that the LECP & other actions of the LCDC give due regard to Equality and Human Rights	Only SCO

HLG 3: Improve prosperity, health wellbeing & quality of life of the community				
Economic Theme	SEDO	Community Theme	SCO	Integrated/Shared
		Health	Improve the quality & availability of services across a range of Health Service providers	Only SCO
		Crime	Provide a safe & secure environment for all in both urban and rural areas	Only SCO
		Housing	Provision of adequate housing provision to meet the needs of all sectors of the community	Only SCO
HLG 4: Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit, work & transact business				
Critical Infrastructure	Develop a critical enabling infrastructure that enhances Longford's viability as a business location	Critical Infrastructure	Provision of adequate critical infrastructure to meet the needs of enterprise and all sectors of the community	Yes
HLG 5: Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity, civic pride & participation				
		Community Participation	Identify initiatives that will encourage a positive culture around community participation	Yes
HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development				
Regeneration	Revitalise, regenerate & improve the urban environment & develop vibrant urban centres in Co. Longford	Regeneration	Revitalise, regenerate & improve the urban environment & develop vibrant urban centres in Co. Longford	Yes
Social Infrastructure	Ensure that economic development is underpinned by a robust social & cultural fabric	Social Infrastructure	Promotion & preservation of the Arts, Culture & Heritage of Longford	Yes
Rural Diversification	Develop a vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives	Natural Environment	Preservation of the natural environment of Longford	Yes
Tourism	Develop a thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to economic, social & cultural development	Built Environment	Improve the quality of the built & physical environment & provide good quality community, recreational & amenity facilities	Yes – Links with Critical Infrastructure

6.0 ECONOMIC PLAN

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the economic section of the LECP is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support economic development in the county over a 6 year period. A strong, vibrant economy is essential to provide job opportunities for the local population. The economic development of the County must be planned and managed in such a way that the needs of a growing population can be met over time. This will ensure the co-ordination of public funds in order to maximise resources and eliminate duplication of funding to capitalise on economic, business and development opportunities in the County.

For the purposes of the LECP and in accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the promotion of economic development includes but is not limited to the following activities:

- Identifying economic potential and the requirements to realise it through the role of the Local Authority, particularly the Local Enterprise Office. This is an evolving role, involving creativity, innovation and initiative.
- Identifying local strengths, challenges and opportunities relevant to economic performance
- Creating and sustaining jobs.
- Identifying human capital in terms of skills bases and the potential opportunities for training, up-skilling and re-skilling.
- Supporting enhancement of local innovation capacity including investment in research and development capacity and technology transfer.
- Identifying opportunities for existing businesses to engage with local government on relevant matters in setting up and managing their businesses and to ensure speedy and coordinated access and responses.
- Promoting the interests of the community including enterprise and economic development, foreign direct investment, indigenous industry, micro and small to medium enterprises, tourism, agriculture, forestry and other natural resources sectors.
- Identifying and acknowledging local attributes that are essential to enhancing local economic performance, such as the quality of the environment and the quality of towns and rural areas, and promoting local economic activities.

6.2 LONGFORD'S ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The economic profile of County Longford has changed significantly. During the economic downturn, the Longford business sector proved itself very resilient, with relatively few high profile casualties and a determination among the SME (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) sector to persevere until the economy recovered. However, nonetheless the economic downturn had a detrimental impact on employment particularly in the building trade in Longford.

The current economic landscape consists of a diverse range of quality employers operating across a number of sectors, providing high skilled employment. The economic strengths of the County are particularly concentrated in the Engineering, Warehousing, Pharmaceutical, Public Service and Agri/Food sectors. Sectors such as precision engineering, primary and secondary food processing and the emergence of a fledgling ICT (Information and Communications Technology) sector offer potential to create advantage and synergies if additional enterprises in these sectors can be established in the County. The successful attraction of high levels of inward investment has stimulated business confidence, a key driver of economic growth, combined with the central location of the County within a national context. Infrastructural advances, most notably in roads, rail and telecommunications have significantly enhanced accessibility, drawing labour forces and markets ever closer. The key challenge for the future is to maintain competitive advantage. It is important to recognise that Longford is competing globally for jobs and the actions in this plan build upon Longford's assets to create a unique offering that can attract jobs and people to Longford.

The LECP recognises that the economic profile of the County has changed significantly over the years and that new sectors and industries are emerging which offer potential for development. These new opportunities must be planned for and managed in a way which complements the more established sectors and industries. Longford has excellent infrastructure including roads, rail and air. Abbeyshrule Airport is a wonderful asset but still needs to concentrate on route development and the completion of additional runway. The development of Center Parcs has a major role to play, in terms of increased tourism output and associated direct and indirect spin-off. Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) is a 3rd level institution within the region which also supports strong research activities, closely aligned with industry.

The objectives and actions in the Economic Plan focus on stimulating demand for employment through attracting investment in new businesses from inward investment, promotion of entrepreneurship and the growth of indigenous business. This will be supported by supply side actions to improve the skills and qualifications of our current and future labour force to improve the attractiveness of Longford as a place in which to invest and work. There is also a focus on the individual and creation of a hierarchy of skills, so people will have the opportunity to make the most of their talents and skills to help strengthen our civic confidence, ambition and capacity to deliver. The priority for economic development is to create good quality jobs and prosperity.

Longford is a small entity, geographically and economically faces many challenges in its efforts to generate continued economic growth, a growth needed to sustain its community and provide future opportunities for its young people, returning emigrants and relatively new immigrant community. The primary goal of an Economic Plan for County Longford is to build on all our assets to deliver continued economic growth and to create an improved business environment which will provide future employment opportunities for all its citizens. This will take the form of a cultural shift which sees County Longford become more focussed on enterprise and entrepreneurial activity as primary drivers of economic growth - creating wealth and providing local job opportunities. Economically, Longford can develop both internally by building up the capacity and strength of its indigenous companies particularly those with capacity to export and also externally by improving the quality of local economic factors that might make Longford a more attractive location for inward investment.

The sense of place that exists in County Longford is a local pride in community and achievements, coupled with a belief of prosperity in the future. Constant reinforcement of our achievements and a hunger to exploit further business opportunities should derive from a strong sense of place whereby those with a vested interest in the economic well-being of the County make a determined effort to ensure all opportunities are exploited to their fullest. A vibrant economy is essential to provide employment opportunities to retain and sustain the population of the County. Longford County Council shall take a lead role to work with other state agencies and the private sector to encourage and facilitate a vibrant and dynamic economic environment. Such improvements to the business environment can be achieved through delivery of a series of integrated actions detailed accordingly in this plan.

6.3 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

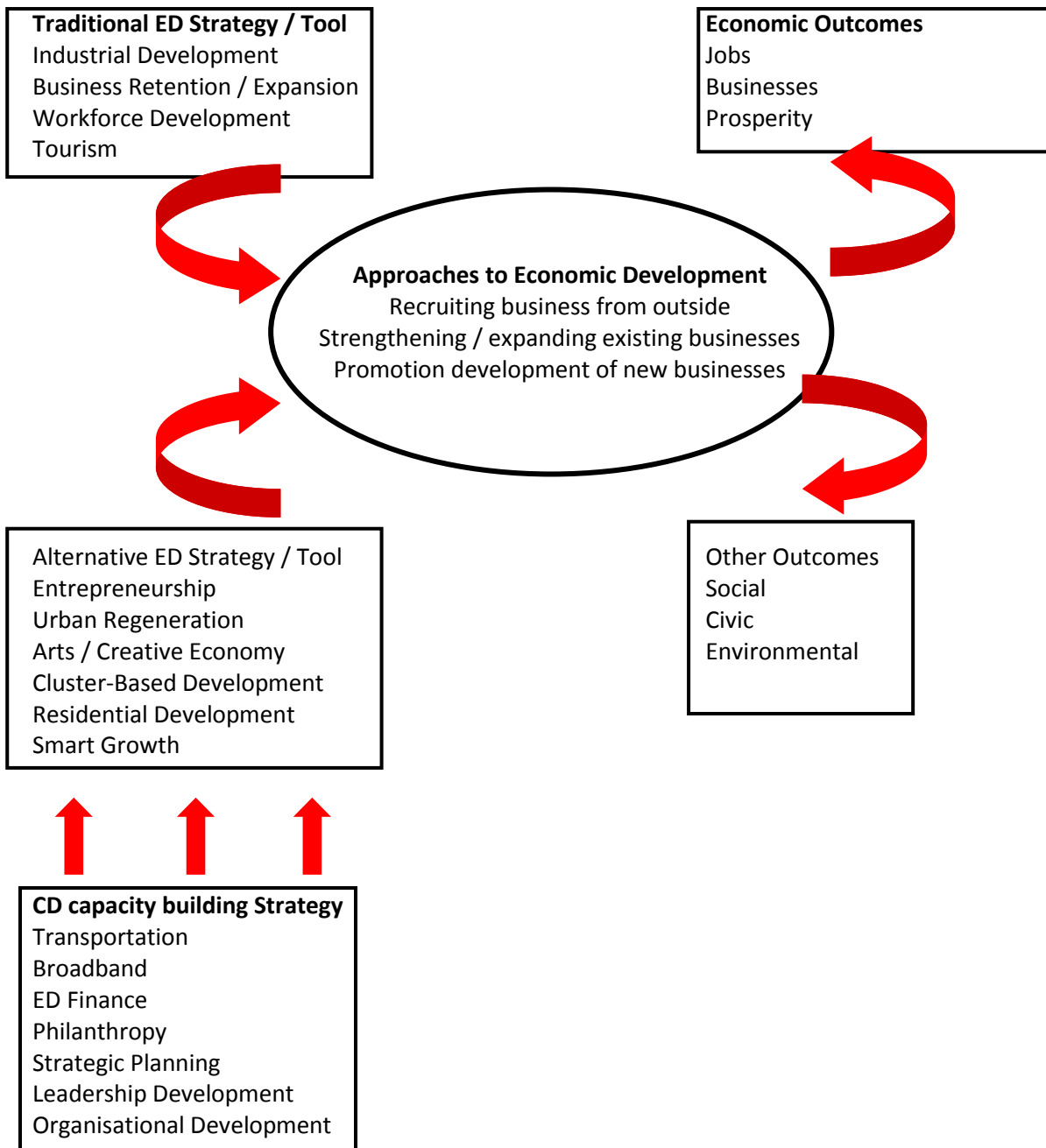
In reality for a small rural County like Longford, economic development is community development and capacity building in local communities is analogous with actions designed to produce economic outcomes. Communities that are prepared to incorporate economic and broader term community development goals, in the medium to longer term, stand to gain more than communities which adopt a piecemeal approach e.g. investment in youth entrepreneurship, leadership development or urban regeneration. For communities to successfully meet the challenges and expect positive outcomes they must be proactive and future oriented, prepared to assume risk and embrace change, acting on particular challenges before they become problems.

Human Capital (as opposed to money or other resources) is the most important resource which Longford has and the most critical ingredient to successful community and economic development. Small communities such as those in County Longford have limited resources and cannot afford to exclude anyone from planning or development efforts. As such special attention needs to be paid towards integrating newcomers into the community as they bring a fresh perspective and new energy to local challenges.

Being a small entity means there are limited sources of competitive advantage and County Longford must therefore redefine economic development assets in a much broader framework. It must promote individual people, businesses, schools, open spaces and receptive local attitudes as assets that give advantage. In addition being geographically small can be an asset as businesses located in a small town or County often have better community connections, with an associated moral and ethical standard above those of businesses located in larger urban centres. However small communities cannot work in isolation in their efforts to generate further economic growth. Regionalisation can aid communities to pool resources towards shared objectives. This is particularly relevant in trying to attract FDI as promoting regional clusters and talent pools can demonstrate a viable critical mass that cannot be demonstrated by communities or counties working in isolation. Most successful small communities have a champion or number of champions with positive connections to higher level policy makers and business leaders. County Longford must make best use of its most successful Diaspora and local leaders in keeping its priorities to the top of the national agenda.

Viable community economic development will involve the use of a comprehensive package of strategies and tools rather than a piecemeal approach. Successful development will always be multi-faceted which will only be realised through the creation of a comprehensive package of strategies and tools closely aligned with our core assets, challenges and opportunities, all of which are set within a regional context (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Small Area Community Development Strategy



6.4 ECONOMIC STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following strengths and challenges are specific to Longford and the Midland Region and have informed the formulation of the objectives and actions identified further in this Chapter.

Economic Strengths

- Strategically located in proximity to major ports and airports supported by good road & rail networks.
- Major inter-urban routes, enhancing interregional links and intra-regional connectivity.
- Strategic assets in support of innovative activity, including AIT.
- Important indigenous enterprise base including engineering, food/drink, life sciences and ICT/software, offer potential for growth.
- FDI companies chose Longford as a base for their operations as they can meet their labour skills requirements and have cemented their presence in Longford by establishing dedicated R & D facilities e.g. Abbot Ireland and Cameron Ireland.
- Large indigenous companies located in Longford have the logistic support and road infrastructure needed to serve U.K. markets and other foreign markets e.g. Green Isle and Panelto Foods.
- Long standing home grown indigenous companies have prospered as key stakeholders in their local communities and serving national and international markets e.g. C & D Foods, Pat the Baker and Tool & Plastic etc.
- A number of start-up enterprises that chose Longford as a strategic location have graduated into the Enterprise Ireland portfolio of client companies and grown into significant employers in their own right e.g. Finesse Medical and Moulding Technologies.
- Niche ICT companies have access to the necessary broadband infrastructure and skills set to grow knowledge based enterprises e.g. Elephant Smart Business and Ark Energy
- A number of new entrepreneurs emerge each year to establish new innovative businesses to provide new employment opportunities.
- Availability of skilled workforce, suitable designated development lands and supporting infrastructure.
- Longford Town retains its status as a key market town and a vibrant trade centre with all the main banks, supermarket multiples and a wide range of shops.
- 2 no. decentralised Government Departments employ in excess of 400 civil servants providing access to local employment opportunities in the public service.
- Center Parcs has chosen County Longford as its Irish resort location
- Longford has produced fine entrepreneurs who run large corporations and are an important Diaspora resource.
- Longford has a reputation as a pro-business County where authorities are responsive and co-operative, working in partnership to help entrepreneurs deliver wealth to the community.
- Unique assets in terms of the quality rural environment contributing to a high quality of life.

Economic Challenges

- Foreign Direct Investment - Longford needs to match its assets with the global strategic needs of potential investing firms.
- IDA continue to promote Regions rather than individual Counties or locations.
- Co. Longford has limited scope to promote itself to foreign firms as an independent economic entity.
- Sourcing investment needed to keep County Longford competitive as an economic entity i.e. infrastructure, products, services and human capital.
- Entity Size - Longford is the 2nd smallest County per population size and attracts levels of resources too modest to support potential investment/development opportunities.
- Employment – Longford struggles to provide sufficient numbers of employment opportunities comparable with levels of educational attainment.
- Lack of a 3rd level facility results in many young people leaving for college and availing of employment opportunities elsewhere.
- Need to broaden the range of employment opportunities, balance the sectoral offer and thereby offset over reliance on the construction sector.
- Vacant, derelict sites and buildings, poor quality business parks and associated visually incongruous vistas.

- Integration - high numbers of groups classified as disadvantaged and an increasing trend to marginalise such communities.
- Lack of broadband for rural areas.
- Development of the rural economy in an appropriate manner.
- No recognisable identity/brand for the County.

Economic Opportunities

- Grow FDI sector – 4 no. Midland Counties to work together to make the Midlands Region more attractive to FDI and build on the existing work of matching Longford’s assets with the global strategic needs of potential investing firms e.g. www.Midlands.ie
- Clusters – Co. Longford given its small size needs to adopt a Regional perspective in promoting clusters that might help attract FDI.
- Land and Infrastructure - Identification of land banks or sites, presentation of transportation, utility and communication infrastructure services that target clusters or would meet the needs of potential firms.
- Provide suitable employment opportunities and re-skilling for the resident workforce, returning emigrants and target groups.
- Identify and address skill development needs of employers in the region.
- Potential to develop niche training opportunities at third level within the county.
- Opportunity to harness renewable energy potential from cutaway bogs.
- Opportunities for farm diversification and renewable energy development.
- Potential for rebranding and development of a strong brand for the County.
- High level of interest in new R.D.P. from small business sector.
- Quality of Life - exploit this advantage by ensuring executives feel welcome and have information and support available on housing, schools and community activities.
- Tourism - potential to significantly grow tourism sector based on unique attractions of the region.
- Embrace the cultural mix.

6.5 ECONOMIC THEMES AND ACTION PLAN

Accordingly taking account of the aforementioned a number of key objectives and actions were then identified and grouped under the relevant high level goals under the following themes and objectives (Figures 29 and 30).

Figure 29: Themes in Economic Plan

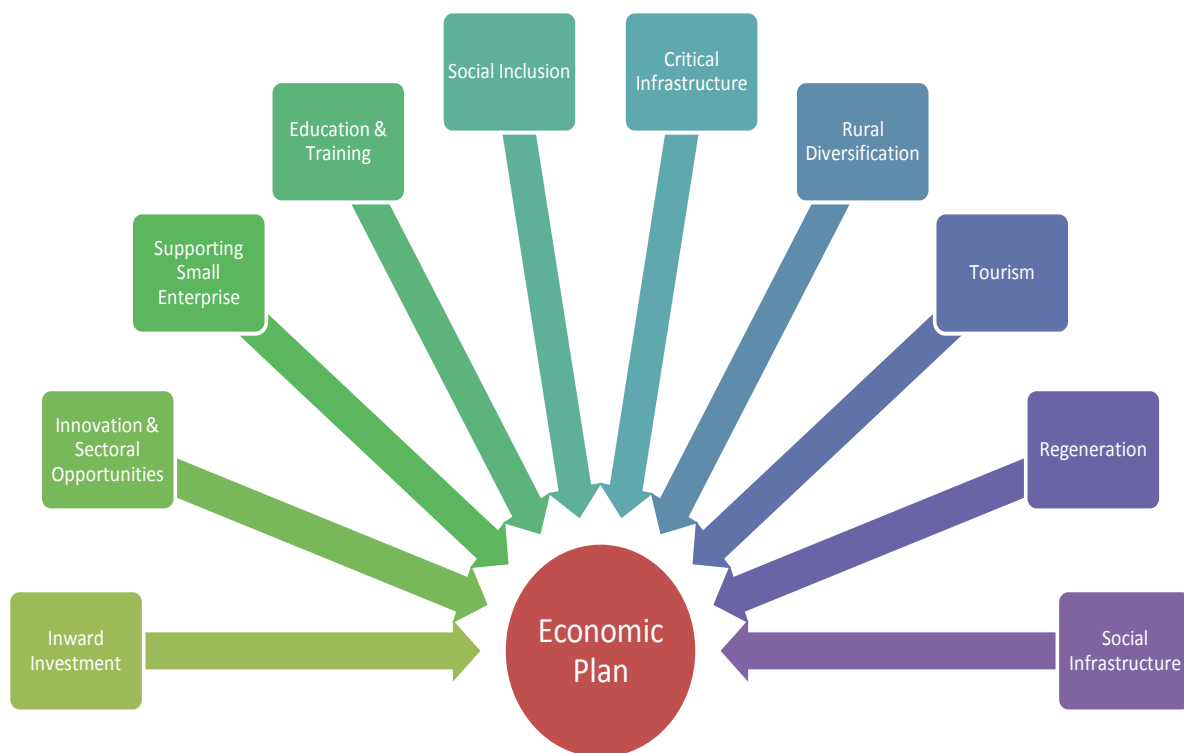


Figure 30: Economic Plan Overview

High Level Goal	Theme	SEDO	SEDO No.	Integrated SCO No.
HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment	Inward Investment	Create an environment which attracts inward investment, increasing employment opportunities in Co. Longford	SEDO 1.1	SCO 1.1 SCO 1.2 SCO 1.3
	Innovation and Sectoral Opportunities-	Increase innovation capability and capacity as an engine of economic growth and develop sustainable competitive advantage from identified sectoral strengths	SEDO 1.2	
	Supporting Small Enterprise	Promote a strong culture of entrepreneurship & create an enabling environment for small business development	SEDO 1.3	
	Education & Training	Enhance employability & entrepreneurial potential of different sectoral groups	SEDO 1.4	
HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage & social exclusion & promote equality in the community	Social Inclusion	Identify initiatives that will reduce barriers causing social exclusion & encourage a positive culture around minority groups & their participation	SEDO 2.1	SCO 2.1
HLG 4: Maximise the attractiveness of Co. Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work & transact business	Critical Infrastructure	Develop a critical enabling infrastructure that enhances Longford's viability as a business location	SEDO 4.1	SCO 4.1 SCO 6.4
HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development	Regeneration	Revitalise, regenerate and improve the urban environment & develop vibrant urban centres in Co. Longford	SEDO 6.1	SCO 6.1
	Social Infrastructure	Ensure that economic development is under pinned by a robust social and cultural fabric	SEDO 6.2	SCO 6.2
	Rural Diversification	Develop a vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives	SEDO 6.3	SCO 6.3
	Tourism	Develop a thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to economic, social & cultural development	SEDO 6.4	SEDO 6.4

6.6. High Level Goal 1 and Associated Themes:

‘Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support educational attainment’

The creation of employment opportunities is the single greatest challenge for the County. County Longford has a higher rate of unemployment than any other County in the Midland Region. Actions and projects identified in the *‘Midland Action Plan for Jobs’* include developing activity based tourism, aligning relevant tourism amenities to the Ancient East brand, increasing the number of new start-ups and positioning the midlands to become an energy hub. The planned Centre Parcs development in south County Longford is referred to within the *‘Midland Action Plan for Jobs’* as a principal job creation project. Accordingly specific actions are contained within both the LDS and LECP which will support hard to reach communities to access potential available employment generated by Centre Parcs.

It is also noted that the current review of the National Spatial strategy offers an opportunity to reposition Longford Town as the primary economic driver location in the North Midlands. Success will require bolstering existing sectors, exploiting new opportunities and replacing declining activities. Longford will need to maintain an attractive environment for inward investment which will require a continued focus on investment in education, skills, infrastructure, technology, maintaining a low cost base and continuing to offer an excellent quality of life.

Strong linkages with industry in the areas of research and development with AIT and Temple Michael College has resulted in the build up of significant human capital and a broad skills base. This is an important asset for the County in terms of attracting Foreign Direct Investment. The interconnectivity of these mutually supportive sectors means that Longford is less vulnerable than other areas to experience capital flight. Creative industries represent a key micro-enterprise growth sector. Potential growth areas include Green Economy Enterprises such as Bio-energy, Forestry and Renewable Energy, Food, Online Trading and Precision Engineering. Among the priority areas to address employment and economic activity are those indicated in figure 31 which are addressed in more detail accordingly.

Figure 31 - Priority Areas to address Employment and Economic Activity



6.6.1 Theme: Inward Investment

Longford has a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) base of 6 no. companies employing approximately 600 people. However as the IDA will continue to promote Regions rather than individual Counties or locations and County Longford has limited scope to promote itself to foreign firms as an independent economic entity. The challenge therefore is for the 4 no. Midland Counties to work together in partnership to make the Midlands Region as a whole more attractive to FDI. To this end work has been done commenced through www.midlandsireland.ie. It is envisaged that the smaller and less industrially developed counties can use this Regional approach to their advantage. This approach will of course involve an element of competition within the Region to the preferred County of choice for investment; a decision which will ultimately be determined by influence of local factors, the hard and soft infrastructural advantages that pertain in each County and the preferences of the investing firm.

County Longford needs to develop its local economic assets to meet the standards of the IDA in promoting any location for inward investment by matching assets with the global strategic needs of potential investing firms. Better coordination between the IDA and other relevant stakeholder groups is needed to ensure each County within a Region is being given fair opportunity to entice inward investment. Regular structured meetings at Regional and local level will help ensure all parties are unified in their approach and committed to an agreed strategy. Working together with the IDA in conjunction with the Regional Planning and Policy Officer (RPPO), the 4 no. Midland counties can thereby build up a much stronger profile of the Midlands through the creation of a shared information and promotion database. This data will then lead to more informed investment decisions, allowing for more qualitative assessment to be made across different Regions and Towns.

Sourcing the investment needed to keep County Longford competitive as an economic entity is a priority, with investment in infrastructure a necessity. Attracting necessary investment to a small County like Longford requires a resourceful, opportunistic approach which is deliberate in setting out priorities for projects that might bring economic or social benefit to the County and should incorporate prioritising projects and scanning funding horizons. It is imperative that a proactive approach in identifying, pursuing and convincing others that particular investment projects should be funded is developed.

Among the Local Economic Assets (Figure 32) to be particularly promoted to encourage Inward Investment are the following:-




Figure 32: Local Economic Assets

Local Economic Assets				
Workforce	Clusters	Access to Technology	Land & Infrastructure	Quality of Life






- **Workforce**- An extensive workforce inventory to identify the existing workforce in relevant clusters to include unemployed/underemployed workers at a given time. It would also include an estimate of future graduates, the need for specific training programmes and specification of the number of distant workers that might be attracted back to local jobs with shorter commutes.
- **Clusters**- County Longford given its small size needs to adopt a Regional perspective in promoting clusters that might help attract FDI.
- **Access to Technology**- The creation of a Midland inventory of technology assets to include colleges, firms in related clusters, consultancies and suppliers to help demonstrate local capacity.




- **Land and Infrastructure**- Identification of land banks or sites that might be appropriate for target clusters or firms is important as is the presentation of transportation, utility and communication infrastructure services that would meet the needs of potential firms.
- **Quality of Life** - Quality of life issues are increasingly important in the investment decision making process, influencing not only decisions to locate businesses and industries, but also in the creation and retention of a suitable labour force to service and further develop established and proposed commercial concerns. In this regard County Longford has a significant advantage in the work life balance area, as business people can give priority to quality of life issues in investment or relocation decisions. This can be a difficult area to quantify but there is little doubt that quality of education, housing, amenity and ancillary services does influence people's judgment in evaluating alternative locations. Executives moving to Longford find the experience professionally and personally rewarding and there is opportunity to exploit this advantage by ensuring that executives feel welcome and have ready information and support available around housing, schools and community activities.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support educational attainment					
SEDO 1.1	Create the environment that attracts inward investment, increasing employment opportunities in Co. Longford				
*Integrated with SCO 1.1-1.3					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
E1.1.1  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 64</i>	Ensure IDA’s Regional Action Plan fully reflects competitive strengths of the Midlands Region as an investment location	IDA	LCC, LEO, EI, AIT, LWETB	Co-ordinated stakeholder Involvement in drawing up the IDA Regional Action Plan and supporting its implementation	2016-2019
E1.1.2  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 65</i>	Identify viable Regional Sectoral ecosystems that can be developed as reference clusters to help attract further inward investment ¹	IDA	LCC, EI, AIT, LWETB	Build capacity and profile of existing business networks and facilitate establishment of viable new network clusters; No. of business clusters promoted as a Regional strength*	2016-2019
E1.1.3  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 104</i>	Work closely with existing FDI clients to retain and strengthen their presence through continued company transformation	IDA	LCC, EI, AIT, LWETB	Appointment of a dedicated Regional Business Development Manager	2016-2019
E1.1.4	Develop appropriate property solutions through the	LCC	IDA, EI, AIT, LWETB	Maximise existing land banks and vacant unit stock and develop further industrial parks and sites	2016-2019

¹ Mapping the potential for all-Island sectoral eco systems report (Intertrade, Sept. 2015)

 Link to DP Policy Econ 4, 5 & 12	provision of industrial buildings and sites in designated locations to cater for predicted future demand			to cater for future demand Sufficient zoned land/property available for potential inward investment companies	
E1.1.5	Develop a Diaspora tool-kit for engaging with Longford's business Diaspora to determine opportunities for inward investment	Longford Economic Forum	LCC, LEO, Longford Business Forum	Mange a series of connected networks of persons with a direct interest in Longford's economic prosperity; Utilise Dublin, London & New York Associations to expand linkages with the Diaspora	2017-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 50	Actively engage with and support ConnectIreland in the roll out of its Community Partnership Programme	LCC	ConnectIreland, IDA, Longford Economic Forum, Longford Business Forum	ConnectIreland resource utilised to forge and develop potential foreign direct investment leads; Engage formally with ConnectIreland at least twice a year	2016-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 44	Monitor inward investment announcements to ensure as equitable a Regional distribution as possible	IDA	LCC, EI, AIT	Increase IDA Ireland's Regional footprint to adequately support the regional strategy	2016-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 110	Work closely with Local, Regional and National enterprise authorities in developing marketing materials to promote the Region as a robust economic entity	RPPRO	LCC, IDA, EI, LEO	Produce a range of marketing materials including up-to-date websites that promote the Midlands as an investment location e.g. www.midlandsireland.ie	2016-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 111	Consider a range of initiatives designed to highlight Co. Longford as a dynamic business County	Longford Business Forum	LEO, LCC, CoC	No. of initiatives designed to promote Longford enterprise to a wider audience; Run no. of events that promote Co. Longford as a business location	2016-2022
E1.1.10	Establish an inter-agency group to facilitate sharing of	LCC	IDA, EI, LEO, Business Forum, Economic Forum	Facilitate sharing of information on a Regional and sub-Regional basis to	2016-2022

 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 90 & 91	information and ensure a co-ordinated and proactive approach to attracting inward investment			ensure a co-ordinated and proactive approach to attracting inward investment; Bi-Annual meeting with buy in from all stakeholders involved	
E1.1.11  Link to Midland Plan for Jobs Action 111	Continue to develop a strong "Brand Longford" which portrays Longford County as an attractive place to invest, live & work	LCC	LEO, Longford Business forum, CoC, LCRL	Maximise the strength of the existing industrial and commercial base to market Co Longford as an attractive investment location; A range of marketing materials that support the brand image of the County as an attractive place to invest, live & work	2016-2022
E1.1.12  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 91	Determine a Workforce inventory that maps the Counties strengths, identifies future trends & inputs into a broader Regional workforce inventory	LCC	LEO, EI, IDA	Map produced of the headline numbers employed across the Region's strongest clusters; Up-to-date data maintained on www.longford.ie and on www.midlandsireland.ie website	2016-2022

6.6.2 Theme: Innovation and Sectoral Opportunities

Innovation is crucial to the continuing success of any entity and underpin the actions in this Plan. A concerted local and regional approach to building a supportive business environment informed by the needs of the sectors highlighted is advanced. The assets of the County in conjunction with the Midland Region have been considered to see how they might be harnessed to further develop the existing enterprise base and avail of future opportunities. It is recognised that the challenge over the next decade is to shift growth toward export oriented sectors and activities. Each sector identified in Figure 33 demonstrates the suite of assets identified in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines which provide a platform for growth, for attracting investment, stimulating entrepreneurship and enabling companies to grow and target international markets. It is recognised that it is important to look beyond regional boundaries to develop key strategic sectoral alliances.

Figure 33: Key Sectoral Opportunities

- Internationally Traded Services
- Life Sciences
- Food
- Tourism and Leisure
- Engineering
- Green Enterprise
- Logistics and Distribution
- International Trading
- Public Sector
- Retail





A review of sectors within Longford has identified growth potential in certain sectors (Figure 34).





Figure 34: Sectoral Opportunities





- a. **Agri food:** There are significant opportunities to increase national primary production in the dairy and beef sectors as set out in Food Wise 2015-2025 and Longford has considerable potential in this regard. Value adding can be increased through development of the consumer food industry and further food processing.
- b. **Medical and Pharma Companies:** Longford and the Midlands have considerable existing strengths in relation to the medical and pharma sector with a number of reference companies in this sector. This is supported by strong industry focussed research in AIT which can be capitalised upon and offer potential for very strong regional clustering.
- c. **Engineering:** This is a strong and vibrant sector within the manufacturing industry. A broad range of engineering companies exist in Longford in terms of size, scale and product. It is noted that technology is changing the face of engineering and placing an increasing importance on the availability of a skilled labour force to meet industry demands.
- d. **Digital:** There is a need to build on the existing strengths in the digital sector while supporting innovation in both business and research and the transfer of leading edge knowledge. As such it is critical that broadband infrastructure quality is improved to facilitate development in this sector.
- e. **Green Enterprise:** Green enterprise is a high growth sector encompassing a wide range of goods and services within the scope of environmental and natural resource uses, management and protection. The move towards a green economy will bring both challenges and opportunities, including the transition of workers from one sector to another, and also economic diversification into new forms of eco-innovation. It is considered that County Longford offers considerable potential in this regard, taking account of its large expanses of boglands and hydro reserves.



The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support educational attainment					
SEDO 1.2	Increase innovation capability and capacity and develop sustainable competitive advantage from identified sectoral strengths				
*Integrated with SCO 1.1-1.3					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
<div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 40</div>	Foster an innovation culture through the development of a Regional Innovation Forum	EI	IDA, AIT, LCC, LEO, CoC	Structured peer to peer interaction & forward planning; Annual meeting of Regional Forum	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 67</div>	Support the development of the Midlands Manufacturing Technologies Campus (MMTC)* as a concerted response towards building Regional competitiveness and innovation capacity in the Midlands	AIT	IDA, Industry, EI, LEO, LCC,	A centre of excellence for development & adoption of advanced manufacturing processes & technologies; Level of engagement between local industry & new Campus	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>Link to Action Plan for Jobs Midland Region Action 1</div>	Recruit innovative high potential start-ups for the New Frontiers Programme run through the MIRC	LEO	LEO, EI, AIT	Support role of Midland Innovation & Research Centre in AIT to identify & support innovative high potential start-ups for region; Increase no. of high potential Start-up companies	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action. 41 & 68</div>	Identify and explore opportunities for Longford based companies to avail of the span of Research Facilities and Programmes available through AIT	AIT	LCC, LEO, EI, Private Enterprise	Formal communication channels established between AIT Centre Head's & local industry i.e. Applied Polymer Technologies Centre, Software Research Institute, Contract Industrial Services Facility, & Connected Media Application Design & Delivery Gateway.	2016-2022
E1.2.5	Consider provision of incubation facilities to support early-stage FDI	LCC	LCC, LEO,EI, IDA	No of incubation units secured/built for high potential	2016-2022

 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 25	companies &/or 2 nd stage indigenous companies graduating from the MMTC/MIRC.			Start-ups	
E1.2.6	Identify opportunities to avail of EU funding specifically designed to support company innovation and research & development activities e.g. Horizon 2020	EI	Dept. of Agriculture, AIT, LEO, LCC, IDA	Local companies are informed and supported on appropriate EU funding opportunities	2016-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs, Action 36 & 37	E1.2.7 Develop programmes to encourage local innovation, R&D and identification of market opportunities in emerging sectors	EI	LEO, LCRL, AIT, LWETB	New programmes designed and delivered focussed on opportunities in emerging sectors; No. of new companies established in emerging sectors	2016-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 25	E1.2.8 Support and fast-track the development of an Innovation Hub that allows new start-ups to interact in a creative working environment	LCC	LEO, EI, Private Sector	Establishment of an Innovation hub with early stage start-ups based on best practice, such as 'The Junction' in Offaly or 'The Hive' in Leitrim; Creation of innovation hub with early stage start-ups	2016-2022
 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 31	E1.2.9 Provide relevant, timely and up-to-date information and business resources to meet client research needs	LEO	LCC, EI, Library Business Service	Local companies have access to a wide range of materials to support their research needs and avail of LEO/Library Services to Business Bank resources	2016-2022
E1.2.10	Hold an Annual Summer School/'Think Tank' that might attract a national/International audience	LCC	LEO, EI, Longford Economic Forum, CoC, LCRL	Run a piloted or enhanced Annual Summer School such as the Lough Ree Environmental Summer School to promote new ideologies in a particular sector e.g. Lough Ree Environmental Summer School	2017-2022

E1.2.11	Investigate the introduction of the 'Charette' ² concept for developing innovative projects across a range of disciplines where feasible	LCC	LEO, AIT, LWETB, Third Level Colleges	A shared learning experience that generates innovative solutions, promotes new ideologies and identifies Longford as a proactive county	2016-2022
E1.2.12  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 103	Develop linkages between FDI, large, small and local indigenous companies to identify possible synergies, partnerships and sub-supply opportunities	IDA	LCC, EI, LEO, AIT, LWETB	Establish formal working partnerships between agencies to identify new opportunities for businesses; Added value initiatives identified and rolled out	2016-2022
E1.2.13  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 107	Work with new and existing indigenous companies to increase exports and target new markets	EI	LEO, LCC, CoC, AIT, IDA, LWETB	Increase in the number of companies exporting and in direct and indirect employment	2016-2022
E1.2.14	Identify and/or contribute to EU funded programmes with potential to lead to increased economic activity in the County.	LCC	MERA, RPPRO, LCC, LEO, EI, LWETB	Develop partner involvement in appropriate EU funded programmes that bring economic benefit to Co. Longford; Increase in no. of funding applications granted	2016-2022
E1.2.15	Contribute to the Regional Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project that looks to define areas of competitive advantage for a distinct Upper Shannon Region	Bord na Mona/ESB	LCC, LEO, Leitrim, Cavan and Roscommon LA's, Private Enterprise	Create synergies leading to economic advantage between counties and companies in the Upper Shannon Region; Increase in no. of	2016-2022

²Charrette is an intense collaborative session over a number of days in which a group of designers drafts a solution to a design problem in partnership with communities and groups. The Charrette begins with a field visit, followed by all-day work sessions accompanied by project stakeholders and volunteer landscape architects and other professionals, and overseen by senior and graduate level students. Charrettes' offer students and professionals the opportunity to work together in a close setting on real-world design scenarios, and often provide communities with design work for free.

				inter-County projects developed and implemented	
E1.2.16	Identify opportunities centred around key Flagship projects to generate enhanced economic activity	LEO	LCC, EI, CoC, LCRL	Maximise the economic benefit presented by the location of large projects of significant scale in the County	2017-2022
E1.2.17  <i>Link to DP Policy Econ 5 & 7</i>	Identify and support the establishment of sectoral clusters that allow opportunity for constructive networking and inter-firm co-operation enabling the County to promote clusters with a critical mass to a wider audience	LEO	LCC, EI, IDA, Connect Ireland, Private Industry	Facilitate development of an industry cluster that will eventually be industry-led; Establish at least one formal sectoral cluster possibly in ICT, Engineering or Food	2017-2022
E1.2.18	Foster the bundling of product or service delivery that can lead to synergies or cooperative gain for companies involved.	LEO	LCC, CLTC, EI, Longford Business Forum	Formal links established between companies in sectors that bring benefit to participating companies; No. of networks or bundled offerings established in sectors such as tourism, craft or creative industries	2016-2017
E1.2.19  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 105</i>	Prioritise the establishment of an Economic Forum comprising successful Longford business people working inside / outside the County both nationally and internationally (i.e. New York Diaspora) to guide economic strategy over the duration of the LECP	LCC	LEO, EI, Longford Business Forum, LCRL	Forum modelled on successful Forums such as the Louth Economic Forum that might develop new economic thinking for County Longford; Forum to meet an agreed quota of times per annum and produce an annual review	Inaugural event in 2016






6.6.3 Theme: Supporting Small Enterprise



Indigenous enterprise is recognised as a sustainable approach to job creation and economic growth and also plays a key role in innovation. Longford is already home to a number of high profile and growing indigenous employers, which together with a significant number of SME's have created a thriving entrepreneurial culture. There is further capacity for these companies to grow with support from the Local Enterprise Office and an increasing focus on R&D with support from AIT. An increase in entrepreneurship in rural areas is essential to economic development and well being. To this end opportunities have been identified within the agri-food sector and tourism to help grow the rural economy.

The LECP recognises that it is businesses and entrepreneurs that create jobs. Accordingly the Plan focuses on what can be done working with other agencies to support the business community and encourage entrepreneurship. With national policy advocating a stronger and more explicit direct role for local authorities in promoting economic development, particularly with the integration of the Local Enterprise Office, the Longford LECP is accordingly underpinned with actions aimed at strengthening the linkages between local government, local businesses and key economic development stakeholders.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 1: <i>Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support educational attainment</i>					
SEDO 1.3	<i>Promote a strong culture of entrepreneurship and create an enabling environment for small business development</i>				
*Integrated with SCO 1.1-1.3					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
E1.3.1	Create a business environment where investor needs are met in a responsive and pro-active manner strengthening County Longford’s pro-business reputation	LEO	LEO, Business Forum, CoC	Potential investors have ready access to full range of services they need in an appropriate manner; More co-ordinated approach to dealing with investor queries	2016-2022
E1.3.2	Support all SMEs/Micro Enterprises in County Longford to reach their full potential by adopting a case management approach	LEO	LCC, EI, IDA	All small businesses are targeted with and have access to the full range of supports available through relevant support agencies; More business availing of government and agency supports	2016-2022
E1.3.3	Build the capacity of a number of micro-enterprises to allow them graduate to the Enterprise Ireland portfolio of client companies	LEO	EI, AIT, LCRL	Work with specific client companies on management development (Accelerate) and export readiness programmes; Increase in no. of micro-enterprise clients that transfer to E.I.	2016-2022
E1.3.4	Promote local entrepreneurs as wealth creators and positive role models in our community	LEO	LCC, EI, IDA, CoC	Increased profile for local businesses via different media and through various events e.g. Local & Regional Business Awards	2016-2022
E1.3.5	Maintain improvements in local enterprise service delivery through production	LEO	LCC	Annual Local Enterprise Plan prepared to help leverage resources and	2016-2022

 Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2	of an annual Local Enterprise Plan			develop partnerships with relevant agencies	
E1.3.6  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2	Promote enterprise creation to specific target groups such as youth, females, migrants, unemployed, active aged, construction sector etc.	LEO	LCRL, LCC, LWL, CoC	Focussed programmes on enterprise creation developed to meet the needs of specific target groups; Increase in no. of start-ups from targeted groups	2017-2022
E1.3.7  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2	Enhance Student Entrepreneurship Initiatives through Student Enterprise Programmes at both primary and secondary levels	LEO	LCC, EI, LWETB, Foróige	Students understand the concept of entrepreneurship and realise its potential as a future career option; Increased no. of students engaged with enterprise and entrepreneurs	2016-2022
E1.3.8	Support the creation and development of Social Enterprises where they are identified as the most appropriate business structure	LCRL	LCC, LEO, EDI, DSP, LWL	Social Enterprise Projects created to meet identified social and economic need	2016-2022
E1.3.9  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 29	Support the potential development of the Creative industries	LCRL	LEO, LCC, CoC	Cultural and tourism potential enhanced through the development of Arts, Crafts and Creative industries; Increase in no. of new and expanding businesses in these sectors	2016-2022
E1.3.10  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 10	Establish a methodology to ensure that all enterprises are aware of the enterprise supports available from relevant agencies	LEO	DJEI, LCC, EI, LWETB, IDA, LCRL	An effective system for communicating available supports to businesses	2016-2022
E1.3.11	Advise companies on quality accreditation standards and the public procurement process	LEO	LCC, EI, COC, AIT, LWETB	Support local companies to successfully compete for projects in the public and private sector;	2016-2022

 <p>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 24</p>				<p>Increase in no. of companies achieving recognised quality standards;</p> <p>No. of procurement workshops held yearly</p>	
<p>E1.3.12</p>  <p>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 85</p>	<p>Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficient programmes and training for businesses, community groups and public sector organisations in Co. Longford</p>	<p>LCC</p>	<p>MEA, SEAI, Coillte, Bord na Mona, ESB LCRL, Private Sector</p>	<p>A reduction in carbon emissions through new renewable energy projects & energy efficiency programmes;</p> <p>Meet the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive Targets by 2020</p>	<p>2016-2022</p>

6.6.4 Theme: Education and Training





One of the main advantages that a region can offer a business is the quality of its human capital, with the availability of a skilled workforce becoming increasingly important to a firms' decisions to locate, remain, and/or expand in an area. Workforce development can be used as an instrument to attract new firms and stimulate local economic development. As skills become more important to innovation and growth, achieving alignment between employment, skills and local economic development policy becomes even more critical. A skilled workforce will also give Longford resiliency in a changing global economy, as they are less expendable, more adaptable to change and better able to transfer between economic sectors. This requires appropriate skills development opportunities for individuals as well as information on potential future job opportunities. Flexible training, education and employment services are required to proactively respond to skills gaps that may act as barriers and obstacles to business growth and expansion. These services should have the local flexibility to focus initiatives on sectors where there is comparative advantage, while continuing to promote broader economic diversity. Providing an educated, trained and skilled workforce is a key element in attracting employment opportunities.




The LECP recognises the transformative power of education and training, not only as a key driver of employment growth and productivity, but also as a critical factor in breaking the cycle of disadvantage and poverty and improving quality of life. The Plan emphasises the importance of ensuring that resources are strategically invested to support research, innovation and skills development and that better linkages are developed between industry and education providers to improve the take up of local employment options. As such there is a requirement for more flexibility and responsiveness in relation to the type of education and training options available locally, with the provision of a better match between the education and training courses available in the County to reflect the skills required to sustain and drive the local economy and create employment.

A key element of the LECP is the recognition of the wide range of community based education initiatives, which provide positive options by involving people in collaborative learning in their local areas. Mainstream programmes need to be tailored more effectively to have a real impact on the most disadvantaged individuals and communities. It is recognised that there have been a number of successful innovative initiatives that could be built on e.g. community based sports initiatives which explore opportunities to expand on the training and empowerment of community personnel with a view to enhancing their opportunities for employment as coaches and instructors.

There are also particular niches within the County with poorer levels of attainment, and it is recognised that a more targeted, tailored approach is required to engage these groups. Measures to address this include lifelong-learning initiatives aimed at improving literacy and numeracy, up-skilling and/or retraining. The plan recognises the importance of engaging people in education throughout the life cycle from early years to adult education as provided by various providers e.g. The Longford-Westmeath Education Training Board, Longford Women's Link and Local Development Companies.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support educational attainment					
SEDO 1.4	Enhance employability and entrepreneurial potential of different sectoral groups				
*Integrated with SCO 1.1-1.3					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
<div>E1.4.1</div> <div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2</div>	Deliver targeted support measures to facilitate enhanced female participation in employment and self-employment	LWL	LEO, LWETB, LCRL, DSP	Increased levels of female participation in employment and self-employment	2016-2022
<div>E1.4.2</div> <div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 15</div>	Provide support and guidance to long term unemployed to develop sustainable small businesses	DSP/LCRL	LEO	Ensure that jobseekers who wish to create sustainable self-employment enterprises are supported through the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance & Short-term Enterprise Allowance payments	2016-2022
<div>E1.4.3</div> <div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 93</div>	Design and deliver a series of apprenticeship, internship, job path and taster programmes to tackle youth unemployment rates	LWETB	LEO DSP, LEO, LCRL, LWL	More opportunities for under 25 year olds to find local employment	2017-2022
<div>E1.4.4</div> <div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 94</div>	Design and deliver a series of pre-employment programmes to enhance employability of early schools leavers and those with low education attainment	LWETB	DSP, LWL, LCRL	Programmes designed and delivered that address literacy, numeracy and language skills deficits; Increase in level of literacy	2016-2018
E1.4.5	Establish specific support measures to support employment initiatives among the Traveller community	LWETB	DSP, LWL, LCRL, LCC	Increase in percentage of young Traveller population employed	2016-2018
E1.4.6	Design and deliver a series of pre-	LWETB	DSP, LEO, LCRL, Local	Local people upskilled and programmes	2017-2022

 Link to DP Policy ECON11	employment programmes to prepare people for opportunities in emerging industries/ sectors		Industry	delivered to meet identified future employment demand (e.g. hospitality training for potential jobs in large flagship tourism developments)	
E1.4.7  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2	Design and provide training and mentoring supports specifically designed for persons setting up a new enterprise.	LEO	LCRL, DSP	Start your Own Business programmes delivered to assist potential entrepreneurs establish new businesses; Increase in no. of new businesses established	2016-2022
E1.4.8	Support the development of youth programmes that stimulate creative and inventive thinking	Foroige	Attic House, LEAP, LCRL, LEO, CoderDojo, Private industry	Young people introduced to career enhancing skills at a young age; Increase in no. of programmes in new technologies delivered	2016-2022
E1.4.9  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 100	Support development of a niche 3 rd Level Outreach Programme(s) with specific education programmes designed & delivered within Co. Longford	LWETB	AIT, LCC, LWL, Longford Economic Forum, Temple Michael College	Longford becomes a renowned Centre of Excellence in particular educational disciplines, nationally and internationally	2016-2022

6.7 High Level Goal 2 and Associated Themes:***'Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community'*****6.7.1 Theme: Social Inclusion****6.7.1.1 Migrants**

Large scale integration of new communities has been a reality in Ireland and County Longford since circa 2000, with 14.1% of County Longford's population classified as non-national in the 2011 Census, with this percentage most likely to dramatically increase in the subsequent Census results. Whilst this change in cultural mix has happened very quickly and presents many challenges it is important that it is viewed as an opportunity to be embraced rather than a cost to be minimised. Immigration can help fuel economic growth, fulfil demand for labour, encourage cultural and social diversity, promote innovation and encourage diversity of ideas. Economically active migrants can contribute to the local economy as employees and as entrepreneurs, providing that the authorities have the necessary supports in place to promote integration. As such non-Irish nationals now represent a very significant economic resource in the Irish economy. However maximising the potential of said resource will take careful management at Government policy level.



County Longford has a multi-cultural society, and it is important that all ends of that cultural spectrum can live together in a state of harmony and respect. The native population in County Longford has been broadly welcoming of new communities. This general acceptance of immigrants enhances our image as a County, and conveys a message of openness and tolerance which should encourage higher levels of outside investment and inward tourism. Respect for each other's cultural differences, celebrating cultural diversity and embracing challenges presented by the need to be more inclusive will give Longford a better future. Resources need to be better targeted at areas where needs are greatest. Longford needs to arrive at a position where it can proudly celebrate its Traveller or non-ethnic cultures as adding value to our community. Changes in approach and perceptions are required to achieve this aim; as Longford will only have a brighter future if all our diverse communities are unified and working together. It is essential for local economies like Longford achieve a level of social cohesion and avoid any fragmentation of our society. Emphasis and resources need to place on achieving meaningful integration where immigrants are fully and equally involved in the economy, and social and cultural life. It is essential is that every possible effort be made to integrate immigrants.

6.7.1.2 Potential Role of Dedicated Integration Service

The provision of a Dedicated Integration Service is increasingly necessary as the volume of immigrants coming into the County continues to rise. This service would address many of the social issues around migration, and also support economic areas by aiding migrants fulfil their economic potential in terms of:-

- Providing assistance in addressing language shortfalls.
- Viable re-training options in order to provide assistance to compete in a shifting labour market.
- Pro-actively seeking to provide targeted programmes around work experience or internships to facilitate pathways to employment.
- Building stronger links between employers and different ethnic groups.
- Building awareness of the enterprise support services and making it simpler to access these supports.
- Running targeted Start Your Own Business programmes for specific ethnic groups and pairing mentor and mentorees with a common language or cultural background.
- An element of pre-screening of CV's could take place to help convince employers to give members of ethnic groups a fair and equitable employment chance.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community					
SEDO 2.1	Identify initiatives that will reduce barriers causing social exclusion and encourage a positive culture around minority groups and their participation				
*Integrated with SCO 2.1					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
E2.1.1  Link with MRA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 Environment & Amenity Policy EP 26	Investigate the establishment of an integration service to maximise the economic opportunity presented by the influx of migrants to Co. Longford	LCC	DSP, LEO, LWETB, LCRL, LWL, Citizen's Information Office	Increased levels of migrant participation in employment and self-employment	2017-2022
E2.1.2 	Adopt the Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme	LCC	LEO, CoC, OPC	Improve image, perception and footfall and increase in target market base; No. of businesses accredited Age Friendly Business Recognition	2017-2022

6.8 High Level Goal 4 and Associated Themes:

'Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work and transact business'

6.8.1 Theme: Critical Infrastructure**6.8.1.1 Transport Infrastructure**

Longford is located centrally within Ireland. The provision of sustainable, efficient and effective transport networks in the county is a major determinant of its level of competitiveness, and capacity to address some of its major social and environmental needs. The facilitation of an Urban and Rural Transport Network throughout the County is central to the achievement of sustainable development and promoting social inclusion for rural communities. It is also essential that future development patterns promote sustainable settlement and transportation links. In terms of parking it is essential to improve and enhance parking facilities in the major towns and villages in order to relieve and prevent traffic congestion and generally enhance the amenity of its major settlements with consequent dual rewards in terms of economic and community.

In order to strengthen the economic competitiveness and social vitality of the County a strong transportation network is required to ensure adequate linkages between Longford, the remainder of the Midlands region and beyond. The position of Longford within the North Midlands means that several strategic transport routes traverse the County from east to west. These include the N4, N5, N55 N63 and several strategically important regional routes, including the R392 that provides an alternative route from Mullingar to the N5 via Ballymahon and Lanesboro. The continued upgrading of these roads is of central importance so as to develop a safe and comprehensive road system within the County. Longford's role also has the potential to be greatly enhanced as a result of the construction of the M4 motorway Dublin and potential road improvements to the N55. The N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky Road Scheme) has been progressed and the preferred route corridor selected. Further development of this scheme is dependent on central government funding. County Longford is also serviced by a private airfield at Abbeyshrule. Given the location of Longford both within the Midlands Region and within the County as a whole, it is important that development of the airfield is facilitated in order to optimise opportunity.

6.8.1.2 Land and Infrastructure






The land management process is crucial in the creation and facilitation of economic development. Longford County Council is continually proactive in the creation of available land appropriate for employment generating uses through acquisition and management of suitable land parcels. The provision of supporting infrastructural services continues to be an essential element in the activation of economic development land and the development of business parks. Business parks have been provided in Longford, Granard, Lanesboro and Ballymahon, and are critical in supporting the balanced development of the County and enhancing respective local economies.






6.8.1.3 Broadband

The County still lags behind the state in terms of quality broadband provision. Advancing and supporting priority economic infrastructural projects particularly in the areas of transport and broadband is a vital component of successful economic and community development. Telecommunications investment is essential for the strong social and economic development of County Longford. An advanced communications infrastructure is key for an information-based society, and as a key support for business, education, research, home based businesses and the various economic and day to day needs of families and communities. Intensive digitisation of telecommunications offers a competitive advantage in attracting economic development and investment and strengthening social capital. It also offers more flexible working arrangements, enabling people to work and communicate internationally from their homes including with their families who are part of the Diaspora.

Given the advances in technology, increased opportunities have developed for home working. The development of e-working and home based economic activity also facilitates the promotion of the environment through the creation of more sustainable work patterns and the reduction of commuting. In addition it also contributes to improving the quality of life of the County's inhabitants and helping to achieve an improved work life balance.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 4: Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work and transact business					
SEDO 4.1	Develop critical enabling infrastructure that enhances Longford’s viability as a business location				
*Integrated with SCO 4.1 & SCO 3.1					
	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
<div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 115</div>	Prioritise strategic locations for development to enhance Longford’s appeal as an investment location	LCC	CEDRA, LCRL, LEO	Specific number of funding streams identified and dedicated viable economic zones developed e.g. Connolly Barracks	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>Link to DP Core Strategy Strategic Aims 1,3,4 10</div>	Enhance existing business parks and evaluate the need for new serviced business parks in various urban centres in the County	LCC	EI, LEO, LCRL, Private Sector	Existing business parks maintained to highest standard & new parks with serviced sites for new business development developed in Ballymahon, Granard, Edgeworthstown & Lanesboro	2018-2022
<div></div> <div>Link to DP Policy TEL4, 8, 9,10</div>	Support implementation of the National Broadband Plan identifying & addressing areas of critical need with an increase in the no. of businesses with access to high-speed broadband	LCC	LEO, EI, DoECNR, LCRL	Every premises in Longford meets the European Digital Agenda quality of broadband service	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>Link to DP Policy Roads 10</div>	Prioritise plans for the following (i) To extend the M4 dual carriageway along the identified corridor from Mullingar, Co. Westmeath to Dromad, Co. Leitrim; (ii) Upgrade the N55	LCC	TII	Enhanced road connectivity to Dublin and other centres	2016-2022
<div></div>	Contribute and support the development of the Midlands Regional Energy Hub	OCC	SEAI, LCC, RPPRO, Midland Local Authorities, AIT, IDA	No. of demonstration and innovative energy projects clustered	2017-2022

Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 83 & 84				and delivered in the Midlands	
E4.1.6  Link to MRA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 Transport & Infrastructure Policy TIP35	Attract mains gas infrastructure to County Longford	LCC	Bord Gais, EI, IDA, LEO	Mains Gas infrastructure installed	2016-2022
E4.1.7  Link to DP Policy AIR1 & AIR2	Promote and support the sustainable use and viability of Abbeyshrule Airport and expanded facilities	LCC	Abbeyshrule Airfield Committee, private sector	Higher usage of Abbeyshrule Airfield and its recognition as the most significant Airfield in the Midlands Region	2017-2022
E4.1.8  Link to DP Policy PT1 & PT2	Provide and promote rural transport services	LWCT	NTA	Maximise the range of transport services available to rural areas of the County	2016-2022
E4.1.9  Link to DP Policy PED2	Identify sustainable transport provision (to include cycling and the provision of cycle networks) which facilitates unemployed people to access training and employment	LWCT	Bus Éireann, Department of Transport, NTA, LCRL, Private Operators St. Christopher's, Acorn, LWETB, EDI Centre, LWL, National Learning Network	Ensure transport provision is not a barrier to employment, training and social inclusion	2016-2022
E4.1.10  Link to DP Policy SC10 & SC11	Advocate and promote development of 1 st class specialist facilities on the site of St. Joseph's Hospital, Longford Town	HSE	LCC	Definitive proposal and timescale delivered for additional facilities for people with disabilities	2016-2022




6.9 High Level Goal 6 and Associated Themes:






'Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development'

6.9.1 Theme: Regeneration

Sustainable urban development requires that urban areas are attractive locations economically, socially and environmentally. Urban areas are recognised as engines of growth and hubs for creativity and innovation; they add value and contribute to the development of their wider regions and rural hinterland. Good urban design plays an important role in facilitating economic activity, changing commuter patterns, protecting diversity, whilst restoring vacant and derelict sites. Retail is a major contributor to the County's economy and Longford's Retail Strategy advocates that protecting and strengthening the County's retail primacy within the region is a key element in sustaining and growing the local economy. The Plan aims to complement the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 by strengthening the physical fabric of key locations including building on the work of the Connolly Barracks' Regeneration Project, developing Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ's), and supporting the work of Longford traders in the acquisition of purple flag status for Longford Town, and other associated projects. In the medium term urban regeneration shall be a top priority for communities looking to sustain town and village centres. To this end public private partnership are re-emerging as the prominent organisational model for small town development and it is an area which should be pursued over the next period.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development					
SEDO 6.1	Revitalise, regenerate and improve the urban environment and develop vibrant urban centres in County Longford				
*Integrated with SCO 6.1					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
E6.1.1  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 114	Prepare and implement a Regeneration Plan for Longford Town and County	LCC	LEO, CoC, private enterprise	Drive social, economic, physical and environment progress	2016-2022
E6.1.2  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Policy TOU12	Focus on the Connolly Barracks Site and environs as a priority flagship Regeneration project and take all necessary actions to ensure revitalisation of this site and surrounding area	LCC	LEO, CoC, private enterprise	Revitalise this flagship site and drive physical, economic and social progress in the wider area	2016-2022
E6.1.3  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 114	Progress the delivery of the ‘Stalled Sites’ initiative throughout the County	LCC	LEO, CoC, private enterprise	Enable communities to transform disused spaces; Improving the public realm and neighbourhoods by enabling communities to transform vacant	2016-2022



				abandoned and disused sites	
E6.1.4  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 114	Improve the business landscape in the various towns by addressing undeveloped or derelict areas	LCC	LEO, Private Enterprise	Approach roads, Brownfield, derelict/vacant sites are considered for improvement works to enhance the industrial vista	2016-2022
E6.1.5  Link with DP General Policy 1 & 2	Support the expansion of existing retail and commercial outlets within town and village centres, consistent with the Retail and Core Strategies	LCC	LEO, CoC Private Sector	The vibrancy of the towns and villages is captured and enhanced with an increase in the level of appropriate development	2016-2022
E6.1.6  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 3	Promote and implement retail/business incentive schemes in Longford Town and other areas	LCC	LEO, CoC, TCMG's	Business Incentive Scheme rolled out to encourage higher occupancy of vacant retail/commercial units	2016-2022
E6.1.7  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 114	Support efforts to improve performance in National benchmark awards such as IBAL and Tidy Towns	LCC	Tidy Towns Committees, Traders Associations	National recognition for our towns and villages; Improved marks and rating in relevant awards	2016-2022
E6.1.8  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 116	Achieve Purple Flag status for Longford Town and in turn other urban areas	CoC	LCC	Vitality and viability of urban areas improved through Purple Flag Award	2016-2022

6.9.2 Theme: Social Infrastructure

Social Infrastructure includes facilities for sports, recreation, arts and culture, library services and a good quality built environment. The development of Social Infrastructure in County Longford is key to ensuring economic growth, sustainability and quality of life for Communities. Social infrastructure, the natural environment and a robust cultural fabric underpins our society and economic development in the County. Accordingly it is a priority to promote our environment for recreational and tourism activities, and as a draw for businesses and employees to the region. Economic growth must be fostered which is increasingly dependent on these assets. The maintenance and protection of natural and cultural heritage has a fundamental role to play in the attractiveness of Longford as a destination and a location in which to live, work and recreate. It is vital to protect and enhance the

attractive environment of the County and build on this important asset for economic development purposes.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-


HLG 6: <i>Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development</i>					
SEDO 6.2	Ensure that economic development is underpinned by a robust social and cultural fabric				
*Integrated with SCO 6.2					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
E6.2.1	Support the development of key arts, cultural and tourism facilities that underpin local economic performance	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council, Dept. of Tourism, LCRL	Key arts and tourism venues upgraded and promoted as key elements of Counties economic fabric	2016-2022
E6.2.2	Strengthen relationships and partnership agreements with government agencies to protect and sustain national investment in arts infrastructure regionally	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council	Sustain support and develop arts infrastructure locally	2016-2022
E6.2.3	Support the development of a dedicated gallery for the exhibition of visual arts and research the potential delivery of an arts hub with artist’s studios and supports for the creation of work	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council	Harness the creativity and talents of visual artists and film-makers locally and promote the work of these artists	2016-2022
E6.2.4	<div><p>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 31 & 119</p></div> Promote the range of library services and support the development of a library in Edgeworthstown	LCC	DoECLG, Edgeworthstown Traders Association, LEO	Enhanced public services through the provision of a modern library network with the new library the focal point of significant regeneration	2016-2022
E6.2.5	Develop and support youth, educational and recreational facilities to enhance Longford’s appeal to working families	LCC	LWETB, Foroige, LCRL, Dept. of Sports	Continuous investment in youth facilities with 1 st class facilities accessible to all the youth population	2016-2022
E6.2.6	<div><p>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 29</p></div> Promote and facilitate the development of local markets devoted to the sale of local produce and craft produce	LCC	CoC, LCRL	Provision of a range of local markets facilitating the sale of local produce	2016-2022

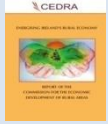





6.9.3 Theme: Rural Diversification, Agriculture and Renewable Energy Potential

The agricultural industry continues to change at a rapid pace nationally; however the most recent Census demonstrates a significant dependence on agriculture in Longford, above the national average. While the importance of the agricultural industry to the economy of the County is acknowledged, it is also recognised that there is an increasing importance of small indigenous industry in providing local employment and helping to stimulate economic activity among local communities. Given the nature of the changing economic climate and the significance and importance that rural areas contribute to the County and the County's population, it is imperative that the economic development of rural areas is promoted. This includes encouraging the regeneration of rural areas and communities, and the retention and promotion of rural services and enterprises. Longford's unique unspoilt rural environment underpins quality of life, which in itself is a fundamental driver of the local economy. Agri-food and processing is already a key contributor to the economy and Longford is home to a number of large scale food producers and a growing number of artisan food producers including a burgeoning craft brewing industry. The key to achieving the potential of these sectors will be a transition to a knowledge based high value added sector, which will increase productivity and competitiveness across both established and emerging sectors.

The Government's White Paper - *Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland* (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) sets out the Energy Policy Framework for the period 2007-2020. It outlines a number of strategic goals to ensure security of energy supply, enhance competitiveness and promote sustainability of energy supply and use. Central to this is the need to address climate change and reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, by promoting renewable energy sources and maximising our energy efficiency. The ability of the economy to perform successfully depends on the supply of adequate, affordable and environmentally sustainable energy. It is also a primary goal of the MRPG's to promote the delivery of renewable energy to the Midlands Region and to develop the renewable energy sector through the harnessing of the regions natural assets, notably the presence of cutaway bogs to accommodate wind farms and bio energy fuel sources. The Guidelines indicate that the renewable energy sector offers significant potential for the development of the rural economy, including the harnessing of wind energy, growing of energy crops, development of the biomass industry and ancillary supporting infrastructure, in addition to R&D opportunities for developing alternative renewable energy sources. This ethos has been translated at a more local level into the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021, where the promotion of the renewable energy sector and the use of renewable energy and resources is supported through various policies.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 6: <i>Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development</i>					
SEDO 6.3	<i>Develop a vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives</i>				
*Integrated with SCO 6.3					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Desired Outcome	Timeline
E6.3.1 	Prepare and implement a robust Local Development Strategy	LCRL	LCDC, LCC, LEO, Teagasc, DSP, LWETB	LEADER programme successfully implemented	2016-2020

E6.3.2 	Support CEDRA in its efforts to deliver a jobs creation strategy for rural counties such as County Longford	LCC	CEDRA, LCRL, Teagasc, LEO, Failte Ireland, Bord Bia	No of CEDRA funded programmes identified and developed	2016-2022
E6.3.3  Link to DP Policy ECON8, AGR3, RUE1, 2 & 3	Expand the reach of programmes designed to support successful diversification of farm family enterprises	Teagasc	LCRL, IFA, ICMSA, Dept. of Agriculture, LCC	Delivery of Programmes such as Teagasc's Options Programme for more farm families to generate on- farm and off - farm income	2016-2020
E6.3.4	Support actions designed to achieve Origin Green status for food & drinks companies in County Longford	Bord Bia	IFA, Teagasc, LCRL, Bord Bia	More companies operate sound environmental and other sustainability practices e.g. Bord Bia's Origin Green Sustainability Charter	2017-2022
E6.3.5  Link to DP Policy ECON8 & AG3	Promote innovative and sustainable opportunities in agricultural, food, crafts and the agri-tech industries.	LCRL	LEO, AIT, Teagasc, EI, LCC, Bord Bia, Dept. of Agriculture	Increased employment in rural based enterprises and companies created based on rural environmental factors that pertain in Co. Longford	2016 Onwards
E6.3.6  Link to DP Policy RE1	Animate the agricultural sector towards further diversification into renewable production	Coillte	Dept. of Agriculture, LCRL, Bord na Mona, ESB, Teagasc.	Greater percentage of agricultural land accommodating alternative energy resources & supporting Bord na Mona's forecasted demand for increased renewable energy options to meet future energy production needs	2016-2022
E6.3.7  Link to DP Policy RE4	Explore the potential to utilise worked-out bog lands to deliver renewable energy solutions	Bord na Mona	LCC, ESB, SEAI, LCRL, Local Community	Provision of a significant community backed renewable energy project located in Co. Longford contributing to Irelands Green Energy targets	2016-2020
E6.3.8 	Support the Governments Rural Charter ³ that commits to support Rural regeneration and underpin the future sustainable development of Ireland's rural communities	LCC	LCRL, Dept. Of Agriculture, DoECLG	Establish and roll out frameworks and practices to support the rejuvenation of the rural economy and rural society.	2016-2022

³ Charter for Rural Ireland – January 2016

6.9.4 Theme: Tourism

The Regional Planning Guidelines emphasise the need to promote and market “the natural, heritage and cultural resources of the area and its high quality of life” identifying this as a valuable contribution to the identity of the region as a whole. Key to this is creating a tourism product that provides increased linkages and targeted integration of key tourism potential opportunities with the settlement structure and its hinterland, creating alignment with tourism infrastructure provision and optimising economic benefits for the County and Region.






Centrally located within the Country, County Longford has yet to fully exploit its position in terms of tourism potential. The lack of properly developed tourism product and appropriate tourist accommodation base is a severe limiting factor. At present County Longford lacks substantial hotel and conference facilities. The development of such facilities would be an important step forward for the business and leisure industry.






Longford has a vast array of natural, historical, cultural and landscape attractions that, if sensitively managed, have the potential to raise the profile of Longford County as a significant tourist destination. County Longford’s character, quality landscape and rich culture are vital assets which help the County compete as a tourism destination and as a location of choice. Longford is uniquely positioned having regard to the River Shannon and the Royal Canal to capitalise upon the potential of these existing waterways. Recent investment in cycle infrastructure in the County, in particular the Greenway, which forms part of the National Cycle Network will further add to the County’s tourism potential.

Accordingly tourism has the potential to become a key driver of economic growth and job creation across Longford, the Midlands and the Upper Shannon Erne. Tourism provides jobs in rural and urban areas and is populated by many Irish owned SME’s. Tourism also offers positive spillovers into other aspects of the economy and society, in terms of the development of Artisan and Local Food Related Businesses, quality of life improvements for permanent residents, and increasing the attractiveness of Longford and the region for inward investment.

The following **Sustainable Economic Development Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development					
SEDO 6.4	Develop a thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to economic, social and cultural development				
*Integrated with SCO 6.4					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
E6.4.1	Explore opportunities for the development of EU tourism projects which can create viable inter-regional connections	CLTC	LCC, RPPRO, Failte Ireland, LCRL	Stronger connections with European Partners developed and the potential for EU funded projects explored to deliver connected themed projects e.g. Europe in Love Project	2017-2022
E6.4.2	Support and underpin National & Regional Strategies designed to grow tourism numbers in the Midlands Region	LCC	Failte Ireland, CLTC, LCRL, WI, RPPRO, Private Sector	Regional branding such as Ireland's Ancient East promoted; A range of integrated	2016-2022

Action Plan for Jobs Action 53				trails for the Midlands developed	
E6.4.3  Link to DP Tourism Objective 3	Oversee the development and implementation of a clear Tourism Strategy for County Longford	County Longford Tourism Committee	LCC, Failte Ireland, LCRL, Rural Recreation Office, O.P.W., Private Sector	County Tourism Strategy developed to outline clear plan of action to develop tourism as a key economic driver	2016-2022
E6.4.4  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 54	Build and promote a Longford Tourism Brand around products that have capacity to deliver significant visitor numbers to the County	CLTC	LCC, Failte Ireland, LCRL	A Communications Strategy and a clear marketable brand developed; Relevant marketing material produced	2016-2022
E6.4.5	Support the development of National/European Tourism Project(s) to become a significant tourism destinations In Ireland	LCC	Failte Ireland, CoC, CLTC	Develop a tourist market leader in its field which provides a significant increase in Tourist numbers	2016-2022
E6.4.6  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Policy 10	Identify and develop sustainable projects within Longford that offer potential to expand on the tourism product offering in the County	CLTC	LCC, LCRL, Failte Ireland, CoC	An increased range of new tourism products, activities and events developed	2016-2022
E6.4.7  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Policy TOU9	Support the development of the tourist accommodation product in Longford	LCC	CLTC, LCRL, Failte Ireland, Private Sector	Additional accommodation of various types provided to satisfy growing demand	2016-2022
E6.4.8  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Policy TOU2 & TOU3	Explore the potential to utilise worked-out bog lands to develop a National Wetlands Park	LCC	Bord na Mona, Failte Ireland, OPW, CLTC, LCRL	A significant natural attraction developed from exhausted bog land	2016-2022
E6.4.9	Support the development of a tourist visitor centre in Granard based around the Motte	LCC	Granard Traders Association, CLTC, Failte Ireland, LCRL	An interpretive centre opened adjacent to the Motte in Granard; Enhance the experience of visitors to the town and North	2017-2022

				Longford	
E6.4.10  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Objective TOU8	Support water tourism by sustainably developing the infrastructure on our watercourses and the development of Lanesborough as a premier water recreation and fishing destination	WI	CLTC, Failte Ireland, LCC, Lanesboro Traders Association, LCRL	Lanesborough regains its reputation of one of the premier fishing destinations in Ireland; Increased accessibility to the River Shannon for visitors; Increased visitor numbers to South Longford	2016-2022
E6.4.11  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Objective TOU8 & TOU21	Harness and develop the potential of the Blueway Brand	WI	Failte Ireland, CLTC, LCRL, UESFE	Significant numbers of waterbased activity tourists attracted to the Blueway and visitors focussed on water based activities	2016-2022
E6.4.12  Link to DP Strategic Tourism Objective TOU10	Complete the development of a network of integrated themed trails e.g. Rebel, Literary, Edgeworth, South Longford & Food trails	LCC	CLTC, LCRL, CoC	Fully signed, branded & mapped series of cycling, walking and driving trails in place; Increase in no. of visitors who use trails	2016-2022
E6.4.13  Link to DP Tourism Policy TOU 20	Support the development of restoration works to the 'White Bridge', Newcastle Woods, Ballymahon	LCC	Coillte, CLTC, LCRL, Failte Ireland, Private Sector	Increased accessibility to woodland trails; Increase in the no. of visitors who use trails	2016-2022
E6.4.14  Link to DP Tourism Policy TOU13	Co-ordinate and support a calendar of festivals and events that have ability to attract visitors from outside County Longford.	CLTC	LCC, Failte Ireland, CoC	Annual calendar of quality coordinated festivals and events scheduled and promoted to a wide audience	2016-2022

7.0 COMMUNITY PLAN

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The reform of Local Government identified in *'Putting People First'* prescribed a role for Local Authorities to develop a Community Plan for the communities within their administrative area. Accordingly this Community Plan has been developed to guide the strategic direction of a number of different community and local development frameworks for the period 2016-2022. The purpose of the community element of the LECP is to promote local and community development within the functional area of the LCDC and to ensure the co-ordination of relevant public-funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where most needed, and maximises benefits for communities. The focus is primarily on social and economic issues which have relevance and can be addressed at a community level, involve community engagement or participation, address the specific needs of communities, identify areas of priority and indicate the most appropriate programmes or other resources to be linked with each particular priority.

Accordingly, for the purposes of the LECP, and in accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the promotion of local and community development includes but is not limited to the following:-

- Tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion.
- Supporting training and up-skilling, creating employment and self employment opportunities and investing in local development.
- Provision of infrastructure and community facilities and investment in physical regeneration and environmental improvements.
- Supporting the capacity building of communities to improve quality of life.
- Supporting social enterprise, social capital, volunteering and active citizenship.
- Developing integrated and evidence based approaches to service planning and delivery.
- Identifying community needs and priorities and making best use of local assets, strengths and opportunities to address these needs.
- Making best use of public and private funding to stimulate development.
- Supporting community involvement in decision making processes in relation to planning and delivery of services.

7.2 LONGFORD'S COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Longford has a long tradition of organised community activity with an array of structures and initiatives. The Longford Community Plan will identify areas of priority and opportunity and indicate the most appropriate programmes or other resources to be linked with each particular priority or opportunity area. The Community Plan Framework seeks to promote synergy for collaborative work across the statutory structures, by arranging key relevant structures to collectively look at delivering on community objectives. Accordingly the Community Plan should act as a guidance document for all preparing relevant plans and strategies. The Community Plan aspires towards providing leadership, co-ordination and bringing coherence to the different structures and strategies at a local level.

The community strategy that informs this plan is concerned with achieving wellbeing, resilience and thriving communities. Values shape the community element of the LECP. These are the values of community development, equality and human rights, sustainability and partnership. The Community Plan emphasises a focus on identity-based groups that experience inequality and exclusion. The value of partnership emphasises the need for cooperation and collaboration between organisations and sectors. The Community Plan aims to address wellbeing and to include actions to support and implement a mainstreaming of inclusion, equality, human rights, and an engagement with the voice of people experiencing inequality and disadvantage. The Plan also recognises the importance of environmental sustainability.

7.3 COMMUNITY STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities are specific to County Longford and have informed the formulation of the objectives and actions identified further in this Chapter.

Community Strengths

- Strong community and local development sector.
- Good provision of community based infrastructure.
- Availability of funding from national programmes.
- Strong cultural identity.
- Good quality sports and leisure amenities.
- High quality of life and quality environment.

Community Challenges

- Level of unemployment leading to subsequent social problems.
- Media reports on anti-social behaviour garner negative attention.
- Gaps in educational attainment levels from pre-school to 3rd level.
- Young people leaving the County to avail of 3rd level opportunities may not return.
- Lack of alternative training options.
- Lack of high speed Broadband in rural areas.
- Level of Disadvantage - pockets compare unfavourably to national averages
- High Dependency Rates - Agencies under pressure dealing with different groups.
- Local resources stretched as population increases.
- Move to urban living will make services unsustainable in rural areas.
- Lack of availability of match funding in sourcing national funds.
- Funding received not maximised.
- Plethora of initiatives difficult to negotiate.
- Lack of Community Development and Youth Workers.
- Lack of pride in the County.
- Environmental threats

Community Opportunities

- Rural Development Collaboration.
- SICAP.
- Provision of community infrastructure creates opportunities for development activities in rural areas.
- Regeneration Office established.
- Availability of high speed broadband.
- Large cultural mix is an opportunity to be embraced.
- Increasing target group participation in the workforce.
- Identify approaches to break the cycle of disadvantage.
- Create an identity for the County and promote quality of life issues.

7.4 COMMUNITY THEMES AND ACTION PLAN

Taking account of the aforementioned in terms of the LECP the following key Community Themes and Objectives were identified (Figure 35 and Figure 36):-

Figure 35: Themes in Community Plan

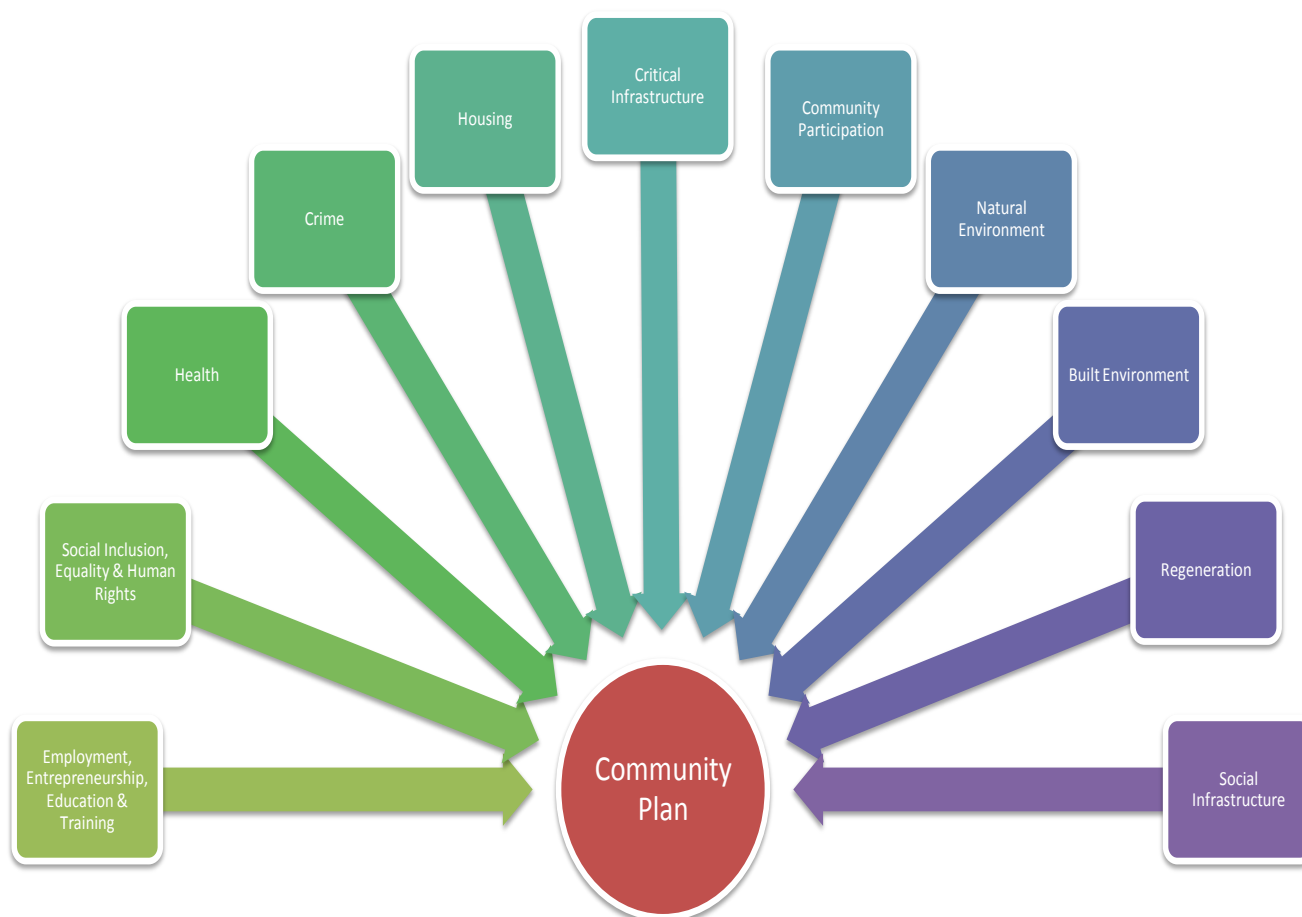


Figure 36: Overview of Community Plan

High Level Goal	Theme	SCO	SCO No.	Integrated SEDO no.
HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities & support pathways to educational attainment	Employment	Provide measures to promote additional employment opportunities in Co. Longford	SCO 1.1	SED0 1.1 SED0 1.2 SED0 1.3 SED0 1.4
	Entrepreneurship	Support the development of entrepreneurship across all sectors of society	SCO 1.2	
	Education & Training	Provision of programmes to address educational disadvantage, skills & lifelong learning	SCO 1.3	
HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage & social exclusion & promote equality in the community	Social Inclusion	Identify initiatives that will reduce barriers causing social exclusion & encourage a positive culture around minority groups & their participation	SCO 2.1	SED0 2.1
	Equality and Human Rights	Ensure that the LECP & other actions of the LCDC give due regard to Equality & Human Rights	SCO 2.2	None
HLG 3: Improve prosperity, health / well-being & quality of life of the community	Health	Improve the quality & availability of services across a range of Health Service providers	SCO 3.1	SED0 4.1
	Crime	Provide a safe & secure environment for all in both urban & rural areas	SCO 3.2	None
	Housing	Provision of adequate housing provision to meet the needs of all sectors of the community	SCO 3.3	None
HLG 4: Maximise the attractiveness of Co. Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work & transact business	Critical Infrastructure	Provision of adequate critical infrastructure to meet the needs of enterprise and all sectors of the community	SCO 4.1	SED0 4.1
HLG 5: Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity, civic pride & participation	Community Participation	Identify initiatives that will encourage a positive culture around community participation	SCO 5.1	None
HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development	Regeneration	Revitalise, regenerate & improve the urban environment & develop vibrant urban centres in Co. Longford	SCO 6.1	SED0 6.1
	Social Infrastructure	Promotion & preservation of the Arts, Culture & Heritage of Longford	SCO 6.2	SED0 6.2
	Natural Environment	Preservation of the natural environment of Longford	SCO 6.3	SED0 6.3
	Built Environment	Improve the quality of the built and physical environment & provide good quality community, recreational & amenity facilities	SCO 6.4	SED0 6.4

7.5 High Level Goal 1 and Associated Themes:

'Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment'

7.5.1 Theme: Employment

County Longford has unemployment rates slightly above the national average and struggles to provide sufficient numbers of employment opportunities compatible with levels of educational attainment. Much is being done in terms of raising educational attainment and skills levels for the adult population in order to enhance their chances of employment. However more innovative approaches need to be designed to meet employer needs in terms of job related skills.

7.5.1.1 Youth Employment

The EU is working to reduce youth unemployment and to increase the youth employment rate in line with the target of obtaining 75% employment rate for the working age population (20-64). The Irish Government has made strides to address youth unemployment with initiatives such as JobsBridge and JobsPlus providing opportunities for young people. The JobsBridge scheme in particular can boost a candidate's attractiveness for potential employers and open up internship opportunities to all young people, particularly those unable to take up an unpaid internship. Initiatives such as the Youth Employment Initiative are designed to provide extra support in the form of apprenticeship, traineeships, job placements and further education leading to a qualification. Importantly, the Youth Guarantee Scheme seeks to commit member states to measures to ensure that young people receive some form of employment or continued education with 4 months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.

The challenge for County Longford is to ensure that employers are better informed of the different supported employment schemes and subsidies which exist, that they are encouraged to give young people an opportunity to gain experience or full time employment, and that the success of the different schemes is highlighted to encourage greater levels of participation. There is also a need to arrive at innovative solutions for those communities classified as the most disadvantaged. Further resources need to be dedicated to address early school leaving and engage in a more meaningful manner with specific groups such as young Traveller men who are most at risk of long term unemployment. In many cases, intervention at individual family level will be required to instil a value on employment for the next generation which will help break cycles of unemployment and poverty.

The work of the local Intreo Office in prioritising young people under 25 years of age for case office support and personal progression planning needs to be highlighted. The authorities in Longford also need to highlight sectors where we might anticipate future labour demand and to seek resources to run specific work focussed training programmes (Momentum) or specific internship or apprenticeships. Apprenticeship schemes need to be designed for sectors such as hospitality, childcare, administration and the green economy sectors.

7.5.1.2 Female Participation in the Workforce


With the prospect of a shrinking working age population, increasing the labour force participation and raising the employment rate of women is paramount to meet the Europe 2020 headline target in terms of increasing employment levels (75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed by 2020). Parenthood, the provision of childcare facilities and the high cost of childcare facilities all have a negative effect on female participation. Studies have shown that the longer women are out of the labour market, the more difficult it is for them to find a job in the longer term. This leads to a widening of the gender gap through the life cycle reaching a peak for the older cohort.


The key solution to improve this figure involves improving access to childcare, in terms of affordability and the introduction of family friendly work practices across all sectors of the economy. Longford County Childcare Committee has responsibility for the co-ordination of facilities, activities and programmes across the childcare sector and continues to monitor current provision with projected future demand to ensure that adequate places are available where most needed. Longford Women's Link and the Education Training Board have an important role to play in tackling the continued over-representation of women among the low paid. Providing access to education and training can open up opportunities to higher paid work and help prevent occupational downgrading for females returning to work after a period in the home. Analysing future skills shortages in the region and designing upskilling training and education issues to meet specific needs will be an important element of any efforts designed to increase female participation in the workforce.

7.5.1.3 Returning Emigrants

As the economy improves and the job market recovers there will be skills deficits that can only be filled through immigration. This may provide opportunity for emigrants to return to Ireland. In County Longford the challenge is to prove to potential inward investors that if there are employment opportunities that our Irish emigrants living abroad might be willing to return. The same also applies for new business start-up's by returning emigrants. To address this there must be an active campaign to reach out and communicate with our emigrants, particularly those that have emigrated in the last 10 years and to keep them informed on potential opportunities or economic developments in the County. Building some form of skills database on emigrants who might be looking for an opportunity to return home could give extra ammunition to potential employers considering investment in Longford. Social Media is also a useful tool to advertise local opportunities to the emigrant database. This forum could also be utilised to communicate on a more regular basis with young emigrants seeking their views on a wide range of local economic issues.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-



HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment					
SCO 1.1		Provide measures to promote additional employment opportunities in County Longford			
Integrated with SEDO 1.1- 1.4					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C1.1.1	<div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 50</div> <div>Support ConnectIreland in rolling out its community partnership programme to create jobs</div>	ConnectIreland	LCC, LEO, CoC, Business Forum, Community Groups	Increase in employment levels in Longford	2016-2022
C1.1.2	Ensure the delivery of the Youth Employment Initiative Pilot Project	LCRL	Youth organisations, Family Resource Centres, HSE, Tusla, LWETB, Mental Health Support Groups,	Delivery of youth employment & enterprise – aimed at early school leavers aged between 15 & 20 years; Increase in the number of young people in enterprise/employment	2016-2018



			Addiction Support Groups, SVP, EDI Centre		
C1.1.3  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 93	Support delivery of the Employment motivation programme to young people	LCRL	Youth organisations, Schools, Family Resource Centres, HSE, Tusla, LWETB, Mental Health Support Groups, Addiction Support Groups, SVP, EDI	Delivery of youth employment motivation programme for 18-35 year olds; Increase in no. of young people in enterprise/employment	2017-2022

7.5.2 Theme: Entrepreneurship

Agencies such as the Local Enterprise Office will continue to work with young people in schools on building an understanding of entrepreneurship as a viable career choice and to provide mentoring and guidance to any young person interested in establishing their own enterprise. The Local Enterprise Office will also promote entrepreneurship schemes and recognition awards across a spectrum of target groups.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment					
SCO 1.2	Support the development of entrepreneurship across all sectors of society				
*Integrated with SEDO 1.1-1.4					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C1.2.1  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2	Collaborate with target groups to develop Enterprise supports	LEO	LCC, LCRL, LWL	Develop programmes to address lack of employment opportunities for Travellers and new communities; An increase in Travellers and new communities in entrepreneurship	2017-2022
C1.2.2  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 93 & 94	Develop Enterprise initiatives with a local approach to unemployment to include people with disabilities who cannot participate on DSP activation programmes	DSP	DFI, LCRL, Solas, LWETB, HSE	Increase the enterprise initiatives with a local approach to unemployment, & to include people with disabilities	2017-2022

C1.2.3  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 2 & 16	Continue to promote and support programmes for female entrepreneurs	LEO/LCC	EI, LCRL, LWL	An increase in no. women in entrepreneurship	2016-2022
C1.2.4 	Develop 'Age Friendly' Start Your Own Business and Social & Senior Enterprise programmes	LEO	Age Friendly Alliance Partners, CoC, Citizens Information Centre, Local SMEs, Longford Business Forum, LCC, LCDC, LCRL, Retail sector	Increase in no. of older persons involved in Enterprise Programmes	2017-2022
C1.2.5	Investigate the potential for an awards scheme to recognise the contribution and potential of Travellers and New Communities entrepreneurs	LEO	LCC, LCRL, TIG	An awards scheme for Travellers and New Communities entrepreneurs in business	2017-2022





7.5.3 Theme: Education and Training

The EU Commission proposes the following headline target with regard to Education 'to *reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% from the current 15%*'. While education offers the best opportunity to break generational cycles of disadvantage, there are alarming gaps in educational attainment among sections of our community from early pre-school to third level. Unfortunately, in some minority groups, there still exists a cultural indifference towards the value of education in opening up opportunity for young people. This apathy towards education is damaging to young people, reinforces customs and practices that are no longer tolerable in a modern functioning democracy and harmful to a local community trying to ensure equality of opportunity for all its citizens.




The lack of a third level facility in County Longford results in many young people leaving for college and subsequently availing of employment opportunities elsewhere. While Athlone Institute of Technology serves the Midlands very well, there is merit in looking at niche opportunities for 3rd level outreach delivery in County Longford. Associated with this Longford also faces the challenge to create more quality employment opportunities in order to entice graduates back to work in County Longford, thereby making Longford an identifiable location synonymous with where people can get employment consistent with their educational attainment.


Provision is also made for early Childhood Care and Educational Services and programmes to address educational disadvantage. In summation the Local Economic Community Plan aims to provide access to education for all.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 1: Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment					
SCO 1.3	Provision of programmes to address educational disadvantage, skills and training deficits and lifelong learning				
*Integrated with SEDO 1.1-1.4					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
<div></div> <div>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 93</div> <div>C1.3.1</div>	Provide education opportunities to supplement mainstream education services through the Youthreach programme and LCRL's CLYS 'Top Class Programme'	LWETB	DES, National Education and Welfare Board, LCRL, AONTAS	Alternative options for securing 2 ND level educational qualifications in place; Reduction in no. of early school leavers	2016-2022
C1.3.2	Promote and support the engagement of Traveller children in early years education	LCCC	LCC, HSE, Tusla, Department of Education, TIG, CYPSC	Increase the number of Traveller children attending pre-school and in early years education	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>C1.3.3</div>	Seek to allocate additional resources to the Adult Literacy Programme	LCDC	LWETB, HSE, Tusla, Department of Education, Foróige, TIG, CYPSC	Increase literacy levels in the County	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>C1.3.4</div>	Develop and implement programmes such as 'Failte Isteach' ⁴ for those with poor English levels and develop supports to statutory and community agencies already providing supports around English as a 2 ND language for target groups	Library Services	LCRL, Changex, PPN, AONTAS, LWETB, LWL	Improve level of conversational English for migrants; Increased interaction with minority groups	2016-2022
<div></div> <div>C1.3.5</div>	Promote and support programmes such as the 'Back to Education Initiative' and the development of additional Bridging Courses	LWETB	DSP, LCRL, PPN, LWL, DES, AIT, NUIM, LCC, DSP, EDI Centre, Foróige, sports clubs	Enhance opportunities for employment; Increase in no. of candidates availing of courses	2016-2022
C1.3.6	Develop supports for community and adult	LWETB	DSP, LCRL, PPN, DES, AIT,	Improved confidence, family well-being, and adult	2016-2022

⁴ 'Failte Isteach' is a community based project where older volunteers welcome migrants to the community through conversational English classes.

	education providers already providing formal and non-formal education to targeted disadvantaged groups and who have already identified the barriers to participation in lifelong learning (childcare, transport, peer & financial support etc.)		NUIM, LCC, DSP, EDI Centre, Foroige, sports clubs, LWL, AONTAS	to child skills transfer; Increased culture of learning and Enhanced employment opportunities	
C1.3.7	Support existing providers of education and training to lone parents to continue to deliver targeted supports, taking into account the known barriers of childcare, transport and rural isolation	DSP	LWETB, LCRL, PPN, DES, AIT, NUIM, LWETB, LCC, EDI Centre, Foroige, sports clubs, LWL, AONTAS	Increased participation in training, education and progression into employment; Improved family well-being, & adult to child skills transfer fostering an increased culture of learning	2016-2022
C1.3.8 	Promote the Utilisation of SICAP & LEADER funding to support existing providers to develop programmes and enable access to 3rd level education on an outreach basis	LCRL	LWETB, PPN, DES, AIT, NUIM, LWETB, LCC, DSP, EDI Centre, LWL, AONTAS, Foroige, sports clubs	Removal of barriers to participation and availability of 3 rd level education opportunities specifically for females with low 3 rd level educational participation and attainment rates	SICAP: 2016-2017; LEADER 2016-2020
C1.3.9  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 90 & 91</i>	Conduct a Countywide agency training audit & explore opportunities for further training interventions including specific skills, apprenticeship & community based training to meet requirements of the individual learner/labour market	LWETB	DSP, AIT, EI, IDA, LEO, LCRL, EDI, LCDC, LWL, Aontas	Production of a comprehensive online guide to training opportunities in the County and a range of specific tailored training to meet demand; Audit completed to enable learners to acquire relevant technical skills	2016-2022
C1.3.10  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 90 & 91</i>	Determine a Workforce Inventory to map the Counties strengths, identify future trends and input into a broader Regional Workforce	LCC	LEO, EI, IDA	Map produced of the headline numbers employed across the Region's strongest clusters; Up-to-date data maintained on www.longford.ie and on	2016-2022

	Inventory			www.midlandsireland.ie website	
C1.3.11  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 90 & 91	Establish a “Skills Co-operative” to include target groups and focus on the needs of potential flagship developments	LEO	Age Friendly Alliance Partners, CoC, Citizens Information Centre, Local SMEs, Longford Business Forum, LCC, LCDC, LCRL, Retail sector	Establish an inclusive database of workers skills and availability	2016-2022
C1.3.12	Deliver mentoring Programmes for young Travellers	TIG	LWETB, LCC, LCRL, EDI	Increased no. of Travellers in training and employment	2016-2022
C1.3.13	Investigate the introduction of the ‘Charette’ ⁵ concept for developing innovative projects across a range of disciplines where feasible	LCC	LEO, LWETB, 3 rd level colleges, PPN	Possibility of holding Charette(s) investigated; Provision of a shared learning experience that will result in the generation of innovative solutions	2016-2022
C1.3.14	Support the ongoing development of pre-school and after school services in Co. Longford	LCCC	HSE, Tusla, LCC, CYPSC, LWL	Sustainable childcare places available	2016-2022
C1.3.15	Provide additional supports for community childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas	LCCC	LCC, HSE, Tusla, Department of Education, CYPSC, LWL	Additional supports are provided to community childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas	2016-2022
C1.3.16	Support development of a Family Resource Centre within Longford town	LCDC	LCC, HSE, Tusla, Department of Education, Foróige, CYPSC, LWL, LCRL	Funding secured for a Family Resource Centre for Longford Town	2016-2022

⁵ ‘Charrette’ is an intense collaborative session over a number of days in which a group of designers draft a solution to a design problem in partnership with communities and groups. The Charrette begins with a field visit, followed by all-day work sessions accompanied by project stakeholders and volunteer landscape architects and other professionals, and overseen by senior and graduate level students. Charrettes offer students and professionals the opportunity to work together in a close setting on real-world design scenarios, and often provide communities with design work for free.

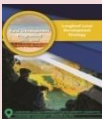



7.6 High Level Goal 2 and Associated Themes:




'Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community'


7.6.1 Theme: Social Inclusion:

One of Longford's key strengths is the diversity of its people and it is therefore crucial that these diverse needs are taken into account in programming for local economic and community development. This section of the plan includes a number of objectives and actions aimed at eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and protecting human rights in line with The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act (2014). This is also intrinsically linked to the needs of vulnerable groups, the need to address inequality and participatory governance in terms of improving democracy, access to decision making and active citizenship.

The following **Sustainable Community Objectives and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community					
SCO 2.1	Reduce the barriers that cause social exclusion, and encourage a positive culture around minority groups and their participation				
*Integrated with SEDO 2.1					
	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
	C2.1.1 Build community capacity by providing training through the LEADER Local Development Strategy	LCRL	LCD, LCC, PPN, DECLG, Pobal	Capacity building training provided to community groups	2016-2020
	C2.1.2 Address social exclusion and equality issues through implementation of the SICAP programme	LCRL	LCC, PPN DECLG, Pobal, HSE, LCDC, DSP	Increased participation of disadvantaged individuals and groups in the community	2016-2017
	C.2.1.3 Establish and support community and voluntary groups through the Public Participation Network and the implementation of its Work Plan	LCC	PPN, LCRL	Increased community participation in local decision making	2016-2022
 <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs, Action 31</i>	C2.1.4 Pilot an information and meeting hub through the branch library network	County Library Services	EDI, An Post, Citizens Information Centre, Local Services, LCC, LCDC, LCRL, PPN COC, Longford Business Forum, OPN, Media Outlets, Trade Associations, LWL	Pilot Information Hub established	2016-2022
	C2.1.5 Support the ongoing work of LCRL's Longford Volunteer Centre	LCRL	LCC	Increase in no. of volunteers available	2016-2022

C2.1.6	Encourage all implementing bodies of the LECP to have appropriate representation from minority groups on all their various working groups and committees	LCDC	LCDC, SPC's, LCRL, HSE, Age Friendly Alliance, DFI, LWCT, PPN, Local Community Associations	Increased representation of minority groups on working groups and committees	2016-2022
C2.1.7 	Expand the Yellow Flag Programme	LCC	ITM, LCRL	Promote diversity, inclusion and equality in schools Increased no. of schools with Yellow Flag Award	2016-2022
C2.1.8	Support the work of the Traveller Inter agency group	LCC	HSE, DES, DSP, TUSLA, LCRL, DJE, CLPSC, LCRL's CLYS, MRYS	Increase no. of TIG meetings	2016-2022
C2.1.9  <i>Link with MRA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 Environment & Amenity Policy EP26</i>	Investigate the provision of an Integration Service for New Communities	LCRL	All implementing bodies of the LECP	Increased interaction between the general public and minority groups; Provide target groups with a voice	2016-2022
C2.1.10 	Encourage all implementing parties of the LECP to ensure all publications/websites are written in the 'Plain English' quality standard	LCDC	LWETB, LCRL, LCDC, LCC, Training Providers, all service providers in County Longford	Documents produced to National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) guidelines with the use of plain language	2016-2022
C2.1.11	Designate as a priority the development of a comprehensive Youth Work Plan for the County	LWETB	Dept. Education & Skills, CYPSC, FRC's, Garda Diversion, Foroige, Attic, LCRL's CLYS, Macra, Schools, LSP, Sports organisations, CnO, LCCC, Community Sector, School Completion, DSP, Disability Sector	Co-ordinated Youth Work Plan in place	2016-2022
C2.1.12	Support the work of the Comhairle na nOg	LCC	DCYA, MRYS, LWETB, Foroige, CYPSC, Midlands Regional Youth Initiative	Children and young people will be a voice and an input into the development of	2016-2022

				policies and services	
C2.1.13	Provide relevant supports to youth groups and clubs	LWETB	Foroige, LCRL's CLYS, Scouting Ireland, other National Youth Organisations, CYPSC	All young people aged 12-18 years will have the opportunity to access youth services locally	2016-2022
C2.1.14	Develop a directory of services for children and young people with special needs in County Longford	LCCC	LCC, HSE, Tusla, Department of Education, Foroige, TIG, CYPSC	Directory of services for children and young people with special needs available	2016-2022
C2.1.15	Investigate the feasibility of additional youth workers for the County	LWETB	CYPSC, Foroige, LCRL, Youthwork Ireland	Improve the quality of life for young people in Longford	2016-2022
C2.1.16	Investigate the feasibility of a dedicated teen parent support service	Foroige	LEAP, LCRL's CLYS, the Attic House, HSE, Post Primary schools, Youthreach	Application submitted to the National Teen Support Programme for a teen parents service for Longford	2017-2022
C2.1.17	Support the development of positive programmes for young people in Youth Arts and Theatre, Outdoor Activities, Youth Cafes, Tour Guides, FRC's, Scouts, Community Games	LCDC	Youth organisations, Schools, Family Resource Centres, HSE, Tusla, LWETB, LCRL, Midland Area Parenting Partnership	Less isolation of young people and an increase in the number of young people engaging in services	2017-2022
C2.1.18 	Support implementation of the Age Friendly Work Plan	LCC	Age Friendly Alliance, OPC, LCRL	Improved service delivery to Older People	2016-2022
C2.1.19	Investigate the re-introduction of a dedicated counselling service for teens in Longford	LWL	CYPSC, LCRL, Foroige, HSE, DSP, FSA, TUSLA	A dedicated counselling service available for all teenagers in Longford	2016-2022

7.6.2 Theme: Equality and Human Rights

The Local Economic and Community Plan is underpinned by a commitment to promoting social inclusion. The Vision, Equality Policy and Human Rights Statement include a commitment to value and respect human rights, equality and diversity. Equality proofing has also been prepared as part of this plan (appendix 6). The Equality and Human Rights Statement underpins all of the actions of the Plan and states the following:-

'The LCDC will promote an environment which is fair, transparent and welcoming for all individuals and organisations, employees, service-users and elected members. The LCDC is committed to

eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations when making decisions, developing and implementing policies’.

Equality and Human Rights capture some of the key challenges to be pursued by the community element of the LECP. Dignity, autonomy, social justice, democracy, and inclusion are identified as the values which underpin Equality and Human Rights. The first step in responding to the challenge of Equality and Human Rights is to acknowledge and respond to diversity by identifying the specific needs of the diversity of groups in the County. These groups are identifiable by the particular situation they find themselves in, the experience they share in engaging with the wider society and its institutions, and the specific identity they hold and share. As part of the LCDC remit it is envisaged that all members will undertake Equality and Human Rights Training.



The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-


HLG 2: Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community					
SCO 2.2	Ensure that the LECP and the Other Actions of the LCDC Give Due Regard to Equality and Human Rights				
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C2.2.1	Investigate the development of An Equality Charter & the roll out of Equality training for all frontline staff in all LECP implementation bodies	LCDC	All implementing bodies of the LECP	Create greater awareness of the Equality concept	2016-2022
C2.2.2	Implementation of all actions in the LECP will be regularly monitored regarding their compliance with the Equality & Human Rights Statement	LCDC	All implementing bodies of the LECP	All actions implemented under the LECP will have due regard to addressing inequality, poverty and promoting Human Rights	2016-2022

7.7 High Level Goal 3 and Associated Themes:***'Improve prosperity, health/well-being & quality of life of the community'*****7.7.1 Theme: Health**



The promotion of wellbeing is central to the overarching vision of the Longford LECP and a core component of the community element of the Plan. Health is major asset for our society and our economy, and improving the health and wellbeing of the nation is a priority for the Irish Government. The HSE Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2015 – 2017, and the achievement of the targets set out in this plan will require strong partnerships and joint working with many organisations outside the HSE. The HSE has responsibility to advocate for other sectors to play their part in working for better health, and also to assist these sectors in the development and delivery of initiatives that support people in communities to maintain and improve their health. The key areas in the framework have been captured in the various actions and include initiatives to reduce the risk factors for chronic diseases through community based initiatives such as sports programming, smoking cessation, and programmes to promote nutrition, community safety, good mental health and wellbeing.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 3: Improve prosperity, health/well-being & quality of life of the community					
SCO 3.1	Improve the quality and availability of services across a range of Health Service providers				
*Integrated with SEDO 4.1					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C3.1.1 	Support the implementation and the targets of the 'Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2015-2017'	HSE	LCRL, Age Friendly Alliance, Community Day Care Centres, Local Community & Development Associations, County Disability Steering, Mental Health Services, NFP organisations	A coordinated effort from all sectors in the delivery of initiatives that support people in communities to maintain and improve their health	2017-2022
C3.1.2  <i>Link to DP Policy SC 11</i>	Provide a comprehensive range of community health services	HSE	Tusla	Availability of comprehensive range of community health services	2016-2022
C3.1.3	Roll out a series of targeted community based health promotion programmes, particularly in rural areas	HSE	LCRL, Age Friendly Alliance, Community Day Care Centres, Local Community & Development Associations, County Disability Steering, Mental Health Services, NFP organisations, LWL	Isolated members of the community targeted for prevention programmes; Greater uptake of relevant services	2016-2022
C3.1.4	Continue to provide Clinical Home Support and Intervention based on needs assessments	HSE	LCRL, Age Friendly Alliance, Community Day Care Centres, Local Community & Development	Increase in no. of persons enabled to stay living in their own home	2016-2022

			Associations, County Disability Steering, Mental Health Services, NFP organisations		
C3.1.5	Support community engagement in areas most affected by the drug & alcohol problem through the establishment and support of appropriate networks in Co. Longford	MRDATF	HSE, Longford Drugs and Alcohol Forum, Tusla, Community Gardai, LEAP, LCRL, Statutory, community and voluntary sectors	Establishment of appropriate drug & alcohol support networks comprised of representation from all relevant community, voluntary & statutory agencies	2016-2022
C3.1.6	Assist in the development, co-ordination and delivery of a range of drug and alcohol awareness campaigns and education programmes	MRDATF	Gardai, JPC, The Attic, LDCC, Foroige, HSE, LEAP, LCRL, LCC, Schools, Community, Voluntary and Statutory Sector	Increased awareness of dangers & consequences of substance misuse; Increased awareness of the services & supports available in the region	2016-2022
C3.1.7	Provide Drug and Alcohol Assessment, Treatment, Rehabilitation and support services for Adults and under 18 year olds concerned with their own or another's person's drug or alcohol use	HSE CADS	MRDATF, HSE, Longford Drugs and Alcohol Forum, Tusla, Community Gardai, LEAP, Statutory, community & voluntary sectors	Minimise drug & alcohol harm in order to have a positive impact on individuals, families and communities	2016-2022
C3.1.8	Assist in preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm	MRDATF	PPN, Gardai, DES, PPN	Decrease alcohol consumption across the population to a healthy consumption target of 9.2 litres per capita per annum	2016-2022
C3.1.9 	Implementation of the 'Longford Sports Partnership Strategy'	LSP	HSE	Promote increased physical activity levels among communities across the county; Increase in no. participating in physical	2016-2022


				recreation	
C3.1.10	Implement a programme aimed at addressing the health needs of Travellers	HSE	TIG, LCRL	Initiatives implemented; Improved health of Travellers	2016-2022
C3.1.11 	Provide a comprehensive range of positive mental health & suicide prevention services & support the development & implementation of 'Connecting for Life – Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce suicide (2015-2020) at a County level' along with promoting the work of the Longford Suicide Resource Officer	HSE	Tusla, NFP organisations	Availability of mental health & suicide prevention services; Strategies developed to enhance social connectedness and connect people most in need to resources, services, education & healthcare	2016-2022
C3.1.12 	Adopt and promote the 'Little Things' HSE Mental Health Programme	HSE	LCRL, LWL, Age Friendly Alliance, Community Day Care Centres, Local Community & Development Associations, County Disability Steering, Mental Health Services, NFP organisations	Programme in place and a high level of participation on the programme	2016-2022
C3.1.13 	Promote and expand specific programmes targeted at improving mental health such as 'Green Gyms' and 'Communities on the Move'	LSP	Age Friendly Alliance, Failte Ireland, HSE, LCDC, LCRL, Longford Tourism, Mental Health Services, PPN, private leisure sector operators	Decrease in suicide/mental illness rates	2016-2022
C3.1.14 	Implement Stop Smoking Initiatives in accordance with 'Healthy Ireland'	HSE	PPN	Improved health due to reduction in no. smoking	2016-2022
C3.1.15 	Formalise implementation & coordination of the 'Community First Responders' Programme in Co. Longford	NAS	PPN, HSE, Community Groups, Foroige, LCRL, Civil Defence, Longford Fire Service	Coordinated Community First Responders' Programme in place	2017-2022
C3.1.16	Expand the 'Healthy Relationships Workshop Programme' to include more Transition Year	LWL	LCRL, LWETB, DES, Foroige, CYPSC, Community/Youth Groups, Longford	Healthy Relationships Workshops available to	2017-2022


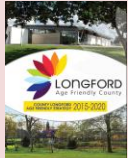
	groups and Youth Groups		Youth Services, DSP, PPN, LCC, sports clubs	increased no. of young people in schools & youth groups	
 C3.1.17 Link to DP Policy SC10 & SC11	Continue discussions with the HSE regarding potential development of an acquired brain injury unit at St. Joseph's, Longford Town	HSE	LCC	Definitive proposal & timescale delivered; Additional facilities available for people with disabilities	2016-2022

7.7.2 Theme: Crime

Creating a healthy environment and improving wellbeing is linked to a reduction in crime levels. Crime needs to be reduced as it intimidates and breaks up local communities. More intensive interventions need to be made with families that have the greatest struggles and better engagement between authorities and leaders (formal or informal) of the different community groups needs to be established and developed. Actions have been introduced to dovetail with the work of the JPC and An Garda Siochana and improve community safety.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 3: Improve prosperity, health/well-being & quality of life of the community					
SCO 3.2	Provide a safe and secure environment for all in both urban and rural areas				
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C3.2.1	Prepare a 6 year Crime Prevention Strategy	JPC	LCC, PPN, Garda Siochana, LEAP, The Attic, LDCC, Foroige, HSE, LEAP, LCRL	Strategy completed and a reduction in crime statistics	2016-2022
 C3.2.2	Support the youth division programmes that aim to divert young people from anti-social behaviour including substance abuse e.g. Garda Schools Programme and LEAP	An Garda Siochana	MRDATF, JPC, The Attic, LCDC, Foroige, HSE, LEAP, LCRL, LCC, Schools	Continued awareness of the dangers and consequences of substance misuse; Reduction in no. prosecuted for substance misuse	2016-2022
C3.2.3	Target local crime reduction and prevention initiatives, working with communities and business groups	An Garda Siochana	JPC, LCC, PPN, communities and business groups	Appropriate local policing strategies in place; Reduction in anti-social behaviour	2016-2022
C3.2.4	Increase the number of community alert and text alert areas in the county	An Garda Siochana	JPC, LCC, PPN	All areas of the county covered by a community alert scheme	2016-2022
C3.2.5	Increase the number of Community Gardai working with young people at risk	An Garda Siochana	JPC, The Attic, LDCC, Foroige, HSE, LEAP, LCRL, LCC, Schools	Continue to resource and develop the services provided through	2016-2022

				LEAP and the Attic; Reduction in no. of young person's prosecuted	
C3.2.6  Link to DP Policy CHAR2	Develop guidelines to create safe and secure design and layout of urban areas	LCC	JPC, PPN, Garda Siochana	Guidelines designed and available for safe and secure urban areas	2016-2022
C3.2.7 	Adopt the Crime Prevention Ambassador Programme, or similar alternative programme	An Garda Siochana	JPC, LCC, PPN	Effective communication links between the Gardai and older people in Co. Longford; Timely and effective proactive responses by An Garda Síochána	2017-2022
C3.2.8	Hold a series of anti- social behaviour community clinics	An Garda Siochana	JPC, LCC, PPN	Raise awareness of issues about anti- social behaviour; No. of clinics held	2016-2022
C3.2.9	Facilitate crime diversionary programmes throughout County Longford as an outreach provision from Longford Town	JPC	LCC, PPN, Garda Siochana, LEAP, The Attic, LCDC, Foroige, HSE, LEAP, LCRL	Appropriate local policing strategies in place; No. of crime diversionary programmes developed; Reduction in anti- social behaviour	2016-2022
C3.2.10	Provide supports to agencies working in the area of Gender Based Violence to raise local awareness of this crime & associated impact on the victim, their children & wider community	LWL	DSP, FSA, TUSLA, HSE, Foroige, CYPSC, CIC, Garda Siochana	Increased awareness of the dynamics of this crime; Decreased victim blaming and Increased community support for victims and their children; Increased perpetrator accountability	2016-2022

7.7.3 Theme: Housing

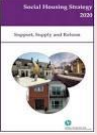

Creating a healthy environment and improving wellbeing is linked to addressing housing related issues. The provision of quality accommodation to raise families in safe and welcoming communities helps create a self-sufficient and sustainable local economy. The Housing Strategy addresses the provision of housing in the County, including social and specialist housing, demand for different housing types, and meeting the needs of varying households and incomes. In this regard it is considered that a total of 2,335 units will be required over the period to 2022. The population targets defined as part of the Housing Strategy are in line with the MRPGs population targets and support the settlement hierarchy outlined within the current MRPGs by reinforcing the roles of Longford (Principal Town), Granard (Key Service Town), Edgeworthstown (Service Town), Lanesboro and Ballymahon (Local Service Towns).




In April 2015, the government announced housing targets for each local authority area up to 2017, as part of the DECLGs 'Social Housing Strategy 2020'. Accordingly Longford County Council has been allocated €7.6m with a target figure of 210 housing units to be built between 2015-2017. It is estimated that this will reduce the housing list numbers by 35%, based on figures provided to the DECLG in the Housing Needs Assessment by the Housing Agency. Longford County Council housing department estimate that approximately 400 social housing units will have to be delivered by 2021.

A need has also been identified for social housing for people with disabilities and elderly people, so more independent and supervised housing for these groups will be required. Longford has the highest Irish Traveller population per 1,000 population nationally. During a review of the housing needs of the Traveller community in County Longford, Longford County Council identified that there are approximately 176 Traveller children aged between 10 – 19 years in Longford; 93 of whom will be aged eighteen and over by 2018. As such, suitable future Traveller accommodation needs will also have to be considered.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

***Denotes subject to DoECLG Funding**

HLG 3: Improve prosperity, health/wellbeing & quality of life of the community					
SCO 3.3 Provision of adequate housing provision to meet the needs of all sectors of the community					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C3.3.1 	Provide social housing units through a range of delivery mechanisms in accordance with the Social Housing Strategy 2020*	LCC	DOECLG, AHBS	Housing support available to people who cannot provide houses from their own resources; 210 units to be provided during period 2015-2017; Further target to be set by DOECLG for period 2018-2020	2015-2017 2018-2020
C3.3.2  Link to DP Policy HS-13	Meet the identified housing needs of people with disabilities locally where they are currently living in the community and or in a congregated setting*	LCC	DOECLG, AHBS	Housing support for people with disabilities; Units provided under the range of delivery mechanisms	2016-2022

C3.3.3  Link to DP Policy HS-13	Provide social housing units which meet the needs of the elderly*	LCC	DOECLG, AHBS	Independent living for elderly with appropriate supports	2016-2022
C3.3.4  Link to DP Policy HS-15	Identify and meet the accommodation needs of the Traveller Community in accordance with Traveller Accommodation Plan 2014-2018*	LCC	DOECLG, AHBS	Meet the housing needs for the Traveller Community; Meet the targets as set out in the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2014-2018	2016-2018
C3.3.5 	Address the needs of Homeless Persons as set out in the 'Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness May 2014 to December 2016'*	LCC	DOECLG, AHBS	Meet the housing need of Homeless Persons	2016-2018
C3.3.6	Support the work of the Regional Support Service	LCC	WCC, DOECG, Midlands Simon Community, Regional Adult Homeless Forum	Prevent homelessness and advocate for Tenancy Sustainment for vulnerable clients	2016-2022
C3.3.7	Ensure compliance with Private Rented Standards as set out by PRTB	LCC	DOECLG, PRTB	Private Rented Accommodation provided at required standard	2016-2018
C3.3.8	Develop a programme of work to upgrade social housing stock (includes heating systems)	LCC	DECLG, AHBS	Good quality social housing provided and no. of houses upgraded	2016-2022
C3.3.9	Promote availability of the following grants:- - Mobility Aids - Housing Adaptation Grants for People with Disability - Housing Aids for Older Persons	LCC	Age Friendly Alliance Partners, County Library Services, Longford Citizens Information, Media partners, PPN	Housing Grants available to people to meet their needs	2016-2022
C3.3.10	Ensure Community Houses are made available by the Council where deemed appropriate	LCC	LCRL, Voluntary organisations	Provide community support to alleviate anti-social behaviour; Assessment on case by case basis.	2016-2022
C3.3.11	In cases of Domestic Violence consider the expertise of the referring Domestic Violence Support Service in determining the level of risk/danger to which a client is exposed.	LCC	LWL, Midland Simon, HSE, DSP, HAT's, An Garda Siochana,	Due consideration is given to the advice of the referring support service with the urgency of provision of housing for the victim and their	2016-2022

				children	
C3.3.12	Support the introduction of Realistic Rent Allowances and parity across Local Authority areas relative to available accommodation	LCC	LWL, Midland Simon, HSE, DSP, HAT's	Access to affordable habitable accommodation for those in need of housing who otherwise are in a position to maintain a tenancy unsupported	2016-2022

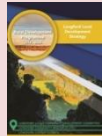


7.8 High Level Goal 4 and Associated Themes:



'Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work and transact business'

7.8.1 Theme: Critical Infrastructure

Critical infrastructure refers to the network of roads, railways, air, electricity, gas, broadband services etc. A strong critical infrastructure is crucial to the economic, social and cultural development of County Longford. The County's infrastructure needs to be well linked with the rest of the Midlands and beyond. The development of Critical Infrastructure in County Longford is key to ensuring economic growth, sustainability and quality of life for its communities.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 4: Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work and transact business					
SCO 4.1	Provision of adequate critical infrastructure to meet the needs of enterprise & all sectors of the community				
*Integrated with SEDO 4.1					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C4.1.1 	Support increased use of ICT by the community through the LEADER rural development programme	LCDC	LCC, PPN, LCRL	Enhanced IT capacity of local community; No. of ICT initiatives implemented	2016-2022
C4.1.2 	Support the provision of Broadband services to serve all areas of the County through the implementation of the 'National Broadband Plan' and the 'Connected Communities Initiative'	DCENR	Broadband Service Providers	48% of all premises in Longford will have access to at least 30Mbps by end of 2016	2017-2022
C4.1.3  <i>Link to DP Policy AIR1 & 2</i>	Promote and support the sustainable use and viability of Abbeyshrule Airport	LCC	Abbeyshrule Airfield Committee, LCRL, private sector	Abbeyshrule Airfield recognised as the most significant Airfield in the Midlands Region; Higher levels of activity in Abbeyshrule Airfield	2017-2022
C4.1.4	Investigate the development of a transport and travel information hub	LWCT	LCC, LCRL, LCDC, Age Friendly Alliance	Share local knowledge and needs on scheduling and route planning; Efficiencies in	2016-2022

				local transport services achieved	
C4.1.5	Investigate opportunities for maximising existing transport resources e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - school transport; - development of a link with local community bus providers; - expanding pilot Community Car Scheme 	LWCT	Bus Éireann, Department of Transport, NTA, LCRL, private operators	Adopt a more co-ordinated approach to all transport needs; Efficiencies in local transport services achieved	2016-2022
C4.1.6  <i>Link to DP Policy BUS1 & BUS2</i>	Identify sustainable transport provision which facilitates unemployed people to access training and employment	LWCT	Bus Éireann, Department of Transport, NTA, Private Operators St. Christopher's, Acorn, LWETB, EDI Centre, LWL, National Learning Network, LCRL	Ensure transport provision is not a barrier to employment, training and social inclusion	2016-2022
C4.1.7  <i>Link to DP Policy BUS2</i>	Identify sustainable transport provision which facilitates persons travelling to healthcare appointments outside of the County	LWCT	Bus Éireann, Department of Transport, NTA, LCRL, private operators	Ensure transport provision is not a barrier to health treatment; Increased no. of persons supported to travel to health appointments outside the County	2016-2022

7.9 High Level Goal 5 and Associated Themes:

'Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity, civic pride and participation'


7.9.1 Theme: Community Participation

As per the Report on the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government (2014) the PPN will be the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes. The role of the PPN is identified to:-

- Contribute to the local authority's development for the County a vision for the well-being of this and future generations
- Facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority
- Identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues
- Actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination,
- Encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services
- Facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors onto city/county decision making bodies.
- Support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network
- Work to develop the Environmental, Community and Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the County/City.
- Support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that they can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively, participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities and are included and their voices and concerns are heard.

The PPN is key to ensuring community buy-in and engagement with the Plan.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 5: Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity, civic pride and participation					
SCO 5.1 Identify initiatives that will encourage a positive culture around community participation					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C5.1.1	Oversee the hosting an information session to share information and encourage the participation and networking of target groups	LCDC	LCC, TIG, DFI, Age Friendly Ireland, DoECLG, PPN	Greater awareness of the Equality concept	2016-2022
C5.1.2 	Through the PPN, build and strengthen leadership and capacity in the community sector, promote active citizenship, and facilitate community participation in policy making	PPN	LCDC	Increased level of community engagement	2016-2022




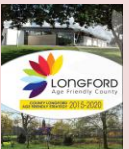
7.9.1 High Level Goal 6 and Associated Themes:


'Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development'

7.9.1.1 Theme: Regeneration

The Plan aims to complement the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 by strengthening the physical fabric of key locations, including building on the work of the Connolly Barracks' Regeneration Project developing Rural Economic Development Zones, and supporting the work of Longford traders in the acquisition of purple flag status for Longford Town and other associated projects. In the medium term urban regeneration shall be a top priority for communities looking to sustain town and village centres. To this end public private partnership are beginning to re-emerge as the prominent organisational model for small town development and is an area which should be pursued.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development					
SCO6.1	Revitalise, regenerate and improve the urban environment and develop vibrant urban centres in Co. Longford				
*Integrated with SED06.1					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C6.1.1  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action no. 114</i>	Prepare and implement a Regeneration Plan for Longford Town and County	LCC	LEO, CoC, private enterprise	Deliver key development projects and opportunities that will drive economic, social and physical progress; No. of transformational projects delivered	2016-2022
C6.1.2  <i>Link to DP Tourism Policy TOUT12 & TOUT19</i>	Deliver transformational projects determined by the Regeneration Section	LCC	LEO, CoC, private enterprise	No. of projects delivered	2016-2022
C6.1.3  <i>Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 116</i>	Achieve Purple Flag status for Longford Town and other urban areas	CoC	LCC	Vitality and viability of urban areas improved as Purple Flag Awarded	2016-2022
C6.1.4 	Establish Age Friendly Towns in the County through implementation of the Age Friendly Programme	LCC	CoC, An Garda Síochána, LCRL, Tidy Towns Committees, Community Groups, PPN, Traders Associations	Longford Town becomes a Town that benefits people of all ages; Physical improvements to improve quality of life	2016-2022




				for all citizens	
C6.1.5  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 114	Support efforts to improve performance and participation by groups and businesses in National benchmark awards e.g. IBAL, Tidy Towns, National Pride of Place	LCC	Tidy Towns Committees, Traders Associations, PPN, LCRL	National recognition for our towns and villages; Improved marks and rating in relevant awards	2016-2022

7.9.1.2 Theme: Social Infrastructure

Communities require opportunities to meet and interact, which are essential prerequisites to the evolution of a sense of place and belonging facilitated through such services as community facilities. Arts and culture are rooted in need for people and communities to be both consumers and producers of arts and culture. Heritage draws on valuing a sense of place and acknowledging the particular wealth of Longford as a County. The development and facilitation of an effective social infrastructure ensures that Longford is an attractive place to live, work and visit by building strong, inclusive communities that have a sense of place and belonging, with adequate provision of and access to services and facilities to meet the needs of the County's growing population.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-




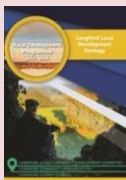
HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development					
SCO 6.2	Promotion and Preservation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage of Longford				
*Integrated with SEDO 6.2					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C6.2.1	Implement the Longford Arts Plan	LCC	Arts Council, DAHG, DECLG	Enhanced access, appreciation, awareness and enjoyment of the arts in the County; Increase in the level of profile and support for the Arts in the County	2016-2022
C6.2.2	Complete an audit of Arts and culture provision in the County and address deficits in provision	LCC	Arts Council, DAHG, DECLG	Ensure that arts provision is strong and sustainable for the entire community; Audit completed	2016-2022
C6.2.3	Ensure that investment in the Arts is protected and that partnerships are built with relevant supporting agencies	LCC	Arts Council, DAHG, DECLG	Sustain and promote any existing infrastructure and resources; Level of investment in the Arts	2016-2022
C6.2.4	Promote and encourage a stronger appreciation of our heritage and culture through a participatory programme of	LCC	HSE, LWETB	Increase the numbers attending collaborations of arts and cultural events	2016-2022




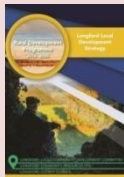



	cultural activities and encouragement of collaborations with educational institutions and health services			and programmes designed to enrich learning and promote health and well-being	
C6.2.5	Implementation of the Longford Library Development Plan	LCC	DECLG	Enhancement of library service available; Increase in no. of people utilising library service	2016-2022
C6.2.6  <i>Link to MRA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 Tourism Policy TP12</i>	Support a suite of festivals and event support schemes including Diaspora Events	LCC	Failete Ireland, LCDC, CLTC	Deliver the strategic tourism experience in Longford	2016-2022
C6.2.7  <i>Link to MRA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 Tourism Policy TP12</i>	Animate Longford's public realms through a year round programme of festivals and events	LCC	Private Sector Arts and Culture	Enhanced access, appreciation, awareness and enjoyment of the arts in the County	2016-2022
C6.2.8  <i>Link to DP Tourism Policy TOU10</i>	Continue to develop a network of additional walking and cycle routes	LCC	DTAS, CLTC, LSP	Enhancement of walking and cycling routes available and length of additional routes provided	2016-2022
C6.2.9	Strengthen relationships and partnership agreements with government agencies to protect and sustain national investment in arts infrastructure regionally	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council	Sustain support and develop arts infrastructure locally	2016-2022
C6.2.10	Support development of a dedicated gallery for exhibition of visual arts and research the potential delivery of an arts hub with artist's studios and supports for the creation of work	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council, local practitioners, Youth Arts groups	Harness creativity & talents of visual artists & film-makers locally & promote the work of these artists	2016-2022

7.9.1.3 Theme: Natural Environment

Environmental sustainability captures another set of key challenges to be pursued by the community element of the LECP. Action is required to both prevent and address the impact of climate change, pollution, resource depletion, and degradation of biodiversity. The natural environment underpins our society and economic development in the County. Accordingly it is a priority to promote our environment for recreational and tourism activities, and as a draw for businesses and employees to the region. It is vital to protect and enhance the attractive environment of the County and build on this important asset for economic development purposes. The maintenance and protection of natural and cultural heritage has a fundamental role to play in the attractiveness of Longford as a destination and a location in which to live, work and recreate.

The following **Sustainable Community Objective and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development					
SCO 6.3	Preservation of the natural environment of Longford				
*Integrated with SEDO 6.3					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
 <i>Link to DP Policy ENV1, NHB14,NHB15 & NHB2</i>	Protect the natural environment by ensuring balance between conservation and development through the implementation of the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021;- Biodiversity Action Plan;- National Pollinators Plan	LCC	DECLG, NPWS, ABP	Protection of the high quality natural environment	2016-2022
 <i>Link to DP Policy ENV7 & 9</i>	Protect and improve water quality in our lakes and rivers by the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans	LCC	DECLG, EPA, IW, Other LA's	High quality of EPA recorded natural water quality	2016-2022
 <i>Link to DP Policy ENV4</i>	Promote and implement sustainable waste management through the implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plan	LCC	DECLG, EPA	Sustainable management of waste; Level of waste recycling	2016-2022
	Promote and support development of renewable energy initiatives though the LEADER Rural Development Programme	LCDC	LCRL, SEAI	Increased utilisation of renewable energy to reduce the impact of climate change; Renewable energy	2016-2022

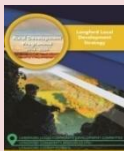

				initiatives implemented	
C6.3.5  Link to DP Policy PED2 & PED3	Implementation of sustainable transport initiatives to reduce dependence on car usage	LCC	DTTAS	Reduction in dependence on car usage; Sustainable transport initiatives implemented	2016-2022
C6.3.6 	Promote and support water conservation initiatives through the LEADER rural development programme	LCDC	LCRL IW	Water conservation initiatives implemented	2016-2022
C6.3.7  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 84 & 85	Reduce annual energy usage through collaboration with the Midland Energy Agency	MEA	SEAI	Reduce annual amount of energy used	2016-2022
C6.3.8 	Protection and improvement of local biodiversity initiatives through the LEADER Rural Development Programme	LCDC	LCRL	Biodiversity protection and improvement initiatives implemented	2016-2022
C6.3.9  Link to Midland Action Plan for Jobs Action 85	Support the refurbishment and upgrading of facilities including energy efficiency (to include social housing)	LCDC	LCRL	Improved energy efficiency of community facilities; No. of facilities upgraded	2016-2022
C6.3.10  Link to DP Policy NHB16	Develop an awareness campaign and dissemination of information regarding biodiversity and appropriate hedge cutting times	LCC	Heritage Council, NBDC, Invasives Ireland, Heritage Forum partners, LCRL	Increased community involvement in maintaining road side verges and road visibility; Improved condition of road verges and visibility	2016-2022
C6.3.11  Link to DP	Continue to investigate solutions to address the problem of Japanese Knotweed within County Longford and progress this to a	LCC	Longford Environmental Alliance	Undertake number of projects funded under Agenda 21 Partnership	2016-2022



Policy NHB17	wider Invasive Species project			Fund	
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7.9.1.4 Theme: Built Environment

Sustainable urban development requires that urban areas are attractive locations economically, socially and environmentally. Urban areas are recognised as engines of growth and hubs for creativity and innovation; they add value and contribute to the development of their wider regions and rural hinterland. Good urban design plays an important role in facilitating economic activity, changing commuter patterns, protecting diversity, whilst restoring vacant and derelict sites.

The following **Sustainable Community Objectives and Actions** were identified:-

HLG 6: Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development					
SCO 6.4	Improve the quality of the built and physical environment and provide good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities				
*Integrated with SEDO 6.4					
No.	Action	Lead Agency	Supporting Partners	Desired Outcome	Timeframe
C6.4.1 	Support the work of the Village Enhancement Plans	LCRL	Local Community Groups, PPN, LCC	Improve the built environment of villages in the County; Level of works carried out in accordance with Village Enhancement Plans	2016-2022
C6.4.2	Promote and implement universal access policies in County Longford	LCC	Community and Voluntary organisations and statutory bodies	Improve access to the built environment, services and to the social and cultural life of the County	2016-2022
C6.4.3	Conduct a Seating Audit in towns, villages and Countywide amenities	LCC	Age Friendly Town Committee, Gateway Co-ordinators, Longford Business Forum & Trade Associations, LCRL, LCDC, Men’s Sheds, CNO	Additional seating provided where appropriate	2016-2022
C6.4.4  <i>Link to DP Policy AM7</i>	Consider further facility development in various amenity areas throughout the County	LCC	LCDC, LCD, PPN, Coilte	Increase in range and quality of amenity areas available	2016-2022
C6.4.5	Investigate the feasibility of the provision of modern sports campus in Higginstown, Granard	LCC	DTTAS	Multi-functional sport and recreation facility available; Completion of campus project	2016-2022
C6.4.6	Maximise the multi-	LCDC	LCD, DES, PPN, LCRL,	Reduced demand	2016-

	use capability of existing community facilities		Church Bodies	for new build capital expenditure; No. of facilities utilised in alternative ways to their primary use	2022
C6.4.7	Provide capacity building training to community groups to enable them to manage their community facilities more efficiently	LCRL	PPN, LSP	No. of community groups provided with capacity building training; Increased capacity of communities to deliver projects and manage facilities	2016-2022
C6.4.8  Link to DP Policy AM7	Maximise public realm improvements in the various towns in Co. Longford	LCC	LEO, COC, private enterprise	Enhanced overall appearance in different towns encouraging further economic development; Public Spaces enhanced	2016-2022
C6.4.9	Provide Dog Litter Disposal facilities in recreation spaces and continue to monitor by-laws	LCC	MD's, PPN, private residents committees, tidy towns committees	More signage in place and a promotional campaign undertaken; Level of usage of litter facilities	2016-2022
C6.4.10	Adopt a Road and Community Cleanup programme	LCC	MD's, IFA, Local Schools, LCDC, LCRL, NPWS, PPN, The Probation Services, Tidy Towns groups	Reduction in litter pollution	2016-2022
C6.4.11	Carry out a parking audit to include:- -Examination of parking provision within the Municipal Districts; - Audit and monitoring the condition of disabled parking bays/Age Friendly spaces; -Parking Signage	LCC	PPN , Age Friendly Alliance, An Garda Síochána, JPC, Age Friendly Alliance,	Assess the provision, condition and signage of parking; Audit completed and standard of parking monitored	2016-2022
C6.4.12  Link to Midland Action Plan for	Support the development of a library in Edgeworthstown	LCC	DoECLG, Edgeworthstown Traders Association	New library is the focal point of a significant regeneration of Edgeworthstown Centre;	2016-2022

Jobs Action 119				Enhanced public services for Edgeworthstown	
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8.0 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Department Guidelines require an implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review framework in relation to the objectives and actions in the economic and community elements of the LECP. It is also noted that it is indicated in the Department guidance that further guidance will be issued in relation to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review aspects in due course. **Responsibility for driving implementation, monitoring and reviewing the LECP rests with a number of structures including the Local Community Development Committee, the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee and Longford County Council.**

8.2 IMPLEMENTATION

The actions set out in this plan are challenging but realistic and have a genuine possibility of being achieved with the leadership and support of all of the stakeholders. Those implementing same need to be conscious of the agreed priorities for County Longford as set out in the Plan and their roles in achieving these priorities.

In accordance with Section 44 and Section 128B of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, an Annual LECP Implementation Strategy will be prepared. This annual Strategy will be informed by the Economic SPC with respect to economic actions, and the Local Community Development Committee with respect to community actions. Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of each action is detailed and timeframes will be included. In forthcoming years, as local and regional policies change, as new initiatives are introduced and different funding streams emerge; the preparation of an Annual LECP Implementation Strategy will take on a stronger role.

The successful implementation of the Plan will require commitment and engagement of all of the stakeholders involved. This includes State Agencies, the Local Authority, and the private and community sectors. The LECP can only be achieved by all agencies and organisations working in partnership to ensure the delivery of actions.

8.3 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Monitoring and review of the actions set out in the LECP will be critical to measuring progress and ultimately achieving the vision of the plan. The actions will be subject to an annual review process. Measurement will be against a range of national, regional or local indicators as deemed appropriate for each particular action in the Annual Implementation Strategy. Each action within the LECP was designed to incorporate the following defined measurement tools: -

1. Identified Desired Outcomes
2. An implementation timescale;

As such the action plan includes a range of benchmarks for the purpose of monitoring the achievement of the actions of the Plan. The Plan will also be subject to an annual review process, which will inform the subsequent Annual Implementation Strategies. It is anticipated that the first major review of the LECP will be undertaken following the publication of the proposed Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy covering County Longford. A review of the plan may also be required on publication of the National Planning Framework. **Further detail in relation to the format of this monitoring and review process will be developed as part of the remit of the Local Community Development Committee, the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee and Longford County Council.**

The Council will also report on the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan as part of its annual reporting process. The Local Authority's performance in implementing this plan will also be subject to the examination and report by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for the establishment of a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) as a sub-committee of the city / county council in each local authority area. In Longford County, the LCDC was established in July 2014 and the committee is made up of representatives from the local government and local development sectors, public bodies and representatives of social, economic, environmental and community interests. The purpose of the Longford County LCDC is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

The LCDC will prepare and oversee the 'community elements' of the 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), including:

- Implementation of the community elements of the LECP.
- Revision of the Plan as deemed appropriate.
- Monitoring and evaluating of the plan as appropriate.
- Input into the economic element of the plan.

The members of Longford LCDC are as follows:-

Statutory Interests - 9		
Sector	Members Name	Organisation
Local Authority Elected Members	Mayor Gerry Warnock	Longford County Council
	Cllr. Colm Murray	
	Cllr. Mark Casey	
	Cllr. Martin Mulleady	
Local Authority Officials	A/CEO, Barbara Heslin	Acting Chief Executive
	Michael Nevin	Head of Local Enterprise Office
State Agencies	Grainne Nic Gabhann	Health Services Executive
	Des Henry	Department of Social Protection
	Dr. Christy Duffy	Longford Westmeath Education & Training Board
Non-Statutory Interests - 10		
Sector	Members Name	Organisation
Local & Community Development	Adrian Greene	Longford Community Resources Ltd.
Social Inclusion – Minimum 2	Seamus Orr	Springlawn Residents Group
	Louise Lovett	Longford Women's Link
Community & Voluntary – Minimum 2	Tess Murphy	Ballinamuck Community Enterprise Society
	Joe Murphy	Dromard Rural Development Association
Environmental Interests – Minimum 1	Ray Hogan	Longford Environmental Alliance
Other civic society or local community interests – no prescribed minimum	Fintan Mc Gill	Business/Employers sector
	Sean Hannon (IFA)	Farming/Agriculture sector
	Seadna Ryan	County Longford Tourism Committee
	Joe Flaherty	Longford Business Forum
Total No. of Members	19	

APPENDIX 2 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE (SPC)

The Longford Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee was established at a meeting of Longford County Council on 12th November 2014. The committee is made up of representatives from the local government as well as sectoral representatives.

The purpose of the Economic SPC is to assist in the Council's decision making process and to advise on and formulate policy before being considered for adoption by the elected representatives of the full Council.

The Economic SPC will prepare and oversee the 'economic elements' of the 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), including:

- Implementation of the economic elements of the LECP.
- Revision of the Plan as deemed appropriate.
- Monitoring and evaluating of the plan as appropriate.
- Input into the community element of the plan.

The members of Longford Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee are as follows:-

Statutory Interests - 5		
Sector	Members Name	Organisation
Local Authority Elected Members	Cllr. Seamus Butler	Longford County Council
	Cllr. Pádraig Loughrey	
	Cllr. Pat O'Toole	
	Cllr. Colm Murray	
	Cllr. Peggy Nolan	
Non- Statutory Interests - 4		
Sector	Members Name	Organisation
Business / Employers	Fintan McGill	Longford Community Resources Ltd.
Community & Voluntary	Louise Lovett	Longford Women's Link
Environmental / Conservation	Ray Hogan	Longford Environmental Alliance
County Tourism Committee	Mona Considine	County Longford Tourism Committee
Total No. of Members	9	

APPENDIX 3 – ADVISORY STEERING GROUP

While the adoption of the LECP is a reserved function of Longford County Council, the economic element was overseen by the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC and the community element was overseen by Longford LCDC. In order to facilitate this, an Advisory Steering Group was established to oversee the preparation of the Plan. This Advisory Steering Group consisted of nominees of Longford County Council, Longford LCDC, and the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC. The membership of the Group is as follows:

- Cllr. Colm Murray – Chairperson of LCDC & Member of Economic Development & Enterprise SPC.
- Cllr. Martin Mulleady – Member of LCDC
- Seadna Ryan – County Longford Tourism Committee Committee & Member of LCDC
- Adrian Greene – Longford Community Resources Ltd & Member of LCDC
- Ciaran Murphy – Chief Officer & Senior Executive Officer, Community and Enterprise
- Michael Nevin – Head of Local Enterprise Office, Member of LCDC & Economic Development & Enterprise SPC
- Laura McPhillips – Community and Enterprise Development Officer
- Janine Bartley – Administrator, LCDC
- Donall Mac An Bheatha – Senior Planner
- Louise Kiernan – Senior Executive Planner

APPENDIX 4 - SUMMARY OF KEY PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Action Plan for Jobs - Sets out how the Government will continue to work to build and sustain a competitive economy that can pay its own way, serve our society, and that can survive and thrive in a reformed Euro zone and an increasingly international economy. Key themes include national talent drive, delivering regional potential and increasing entrepreneurial activity.

Action Plan for Jobs: Midland Region 2015-2017 - This covers the counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. The core objective of the Plan is to support the creation of extra jobs in the region through the delivery of over 100 collaborative actions focusing on increasing the number of start-ups, developing the capacity of existing enterprises, and capitalising on the strengths and opportunities of the region.

Action Programme for Effective Local Government: Putting People First - Outlines Government policy for reform and development across local government, providing for better engagement with citizens. It reinforces local government as the primary means of public service at local level. It empowers local government in relation to economic development, and sustaining and creating jobs. Contains an overarching purpose for Local Government *'to promote the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens and communities'*.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020 - A Policy Framework for Improved Outcomes for Children and Young People containing the vision for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family.

Construction 2020: A Strategy for a renewed construction sector - The Strategy will put in place a National Framework for Housing Supply, ensuring a balanced approach in which the supply of housing is matched with projected demand.

Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2015 - The report concentrates on costs that are largely domestically determined such as labour, property, energy, water, waste, communications and business services, and considers both price levels, and changes in those levels (i.e. price inflation). The report finds that while costs have fallen significantly since 2009, Ireland remains an expensive location in which to do business, relative to some of our key competitors. Ireland is also the 3rd most expensive location in the Euro Zone for consumer goods and services.

County Longford Age Friendly Strategy 2015-2020 – This Strategy gives commitments to improving key areas of infrastructure, services, information, and our overall social response to older people's issues in County Longford.

Delivering a Green Enterprise - A guide, for businesses and institutions, on supports available in Ireland for developing resource efficient practices.

Delivering Green Potential: Government Policy Statement on Growth and Employment in the Green Economy - This Policy Statement affirms the Government's commitment to further developing the Green Economy in the years ahead, building on progress already made to maximise the significant employment opportunities it presents. The Statement identifies the opportunities in the Green Economy for sustainable economic growth and job creation, sets out how the Government is supporting the Green Economy and outlines new implementation structures to oversee the development of the sector. It also reaffirms the interdependencies between the Green Economy and the Government's Sustainable Development Framework.

Europe 2020: Europe 2020 is the European Union's ten year growth strategy. Five key targets have been set by the EU to achieve by the end of the decade. These cover Employment; Education; Research and Innovation; Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction; and Climate/Energy. In support of these targets, member states were encouraged to set national targets in their National Reform Programmes.

Evaluation of Enterprise Supports for Start Ups and Entrepreneurship - A guide, for businesses and institutions, on supports available in Ireland for developing resource efficient practices. Since 2012, Forfás has undertaken a detailed programme of evaluations of supports provided by the Enterprise Agencies in Ireland. These evaluations are structured under the themes of entrepreneurship and start-up supports; research, development and innovation; and business development and have been undertaken in line with the Forfás evaluation framework, which is based on international best practice. This suite of evaluations covers programmes offered by Enterprise Ireland and by the County Enterprise Boards to entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

Food Wise 2015 – 2025 - The national strategy for the development of the agri-food sector outlines the key actions required to ensure it maximises its contribution to economic growth and exports in an environmentally sustainable manner over the coming decade.

Further Education & Training Strategy 2014-2018 - Aims to deliver a higher quality learning experience leading to better outcomes for all those who engage in FET. It presents a roadmap and implementation plan to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland which will: support economic development; increase social inclusion; and meet the needs of all learners, communities and employers who engage with FET. The FET Strategy is set within a context of Government reform of public services.

Habitats Directive - The Habitats Directive (together with the Birds Directive) forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. It is built around two pillars: the Natura 2000 network of protected sites and the strict system of species protection. All in all the directive protects over 1,000 animals and plant species and over 200 so called "habitat types" (e.g. special types of forests, meadows, wetlands, etc.), which are of European importance.

Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health & Well Being 2013-2025 - Provides a framework to bring together stakeholders into a national movement with one aim of supporting everyone to enjoy the best possible health and well being.

Horizon 2020 - EU research and innovation programme and a core part of EU 2020; developed as a response to the economic crisis to invest in future jobs and growth.

Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2014 - Outlines the main competitiveness issues confronting the business sector in Ireland over the medium term, and sets out a series of policy responses required to address these challenges. The six major themes in the report are: addressing cost competitiveness; broadening the tax base and investing in economic infrastructure; enhancing our skills base; developing our enterprise base; improving access to finance; and rebuilding the trust of citizens in the ability and willingness of public and private bodies in Ireland to adhere to the highest international standards.

Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard 2014 - Provides a comprehensive assessment of Ireland's competitiveness performance, using 120 statistical indicators. The indicators assess Ireland's international competitiveness in areas such as costs, productivity and innovation, labour market and skills, investment and infrastructure, the business environment and quality of life and sustainability.

Job Creation & Local Economic Development 2014 (OECD - Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development) - Examines the local conditions and instruments for policy interventions to achieve successful local economic development in participating countries. The purpose of the report, in the Irish context, is not to formally review the proposed reform of Local Government, alignment and new policy environment across Government but to assist in shaping the new system to ensure that a robust and sustainable local development environment is created.

Local Government Sectoral Strategy to Promote Employment and Support Local Enterprise - This strategy was developed to promote employment and support local enterprise by local government and is aligned with the Jobs Action Plan.

Medium Term Economic Strategy (MTES) 2014-2020 - The MTES sets out the policy framework to continue the work of rebuilding the Irish economy, achieving sustainable economic growth, strong public finances, and enduring job creation. The overall objective is to secure job rich recovery and to set Ireland on the path to sustainable prosperity. The MTES is based on three pillars: ensuring debt sustainability, financing growth and supporting employment and living standards

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 - Details the plan to meet the national targets for poverty reduction, achieving adequate minimum wage, inclusive labour markets, access to quality services.

National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015 - The National Disability Strategy provides a framework for driving this agenda forward and delivering real and meaningful improvements in the lives of people with disabilities in Ireland. In delivering actions in this plan regard will be had to other relevant strategies including the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion; the National Positive Aging Strategy; A Vision for Change Strategy; and Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing.

National Partnership Agreement - NPA sets out the policy context within which European Structural and Investment Funds allocated to Ireland will be applied. The NPA outlines Ireland's development needs and defines national priorities to support its National Reform Programme (NRP) and the achievement of national targets for delivering the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

National Policy Statement on Enterprise in Ireland (2014) - Identifies the framework needed to make Ireland one of the most entrepreneurial nations in the world and acknowledged as a world class environment in which to start and grow a business.

National Reform Programme for Ireland - The NRP Partnership Agreement outlines Ireland's development needs and defines priorities to support the NRP and the achievement of national targets for delivering Europe 2020.

National Spatial Strategy (NSS) - Overall spatial policy framework for Ireland and sets out its detailed approach to achieving more balanced regional development.

National Strategy for Traveller / Roma Integration - Four pillars: Education; Health; Accommodation; Employment

National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 - Key objectives relate to equalising opportunity for women and men and increasing women's labour market participation rate

Our Sustainable Future: A framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland - Sets out a medium to long term framework for advancing sustainable development and the green economy in Ireland

People, Place & Policy: Growing Tourism 2025 - The focus of tourism policy is to maximise the contribution of tourism, while protecting the invaluable assets that are our natural, built and cultural heritage. This will involve a change of focus from overseas visitor's numbers to overseas visitor revenue. The goals are that by 2025 revenue from overseas visitors will increase to €25bn, employment will be at 250,000 (up from 200,000) and that there will be 10m visitors annually to Ireland.

Policy Statement on FDI in Ireland - Ireland's FDI key policy imperatives are to: maintain Ireland's strong performance in the context of intensifying competition globally for investment and talent; build a sustainable and diverse FDI portfolio in terms of sectors and activities and source markets; meet the ecosystem requirements of globalised multinationals and the mobile young economy; derive the optimum economic returns for Ireland across a variety of cross-border modes of investment, including Greenfield projects, reinvestment, start-ups and M&A; and deploy international best practice in policy execution and gain system wide engagement.

Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 - An operational programme under the Investment for Growth & Jobs Goal. It outlines the priorities and objectives to promote employment, social inclusion and skills. The programme is strongly focused on helping the unemployed return to the labour market with particular attention to youth and long term unemployed.

Regional Labour Markets Bulletin - Provides an analysis of the key labour market indicators for each of Ireland's eight administrative regions. The report shows that similarities exist across regions in terms of certain labour market indicators, such as the type of vacancies advertised through the public employment services and certain elements of the profile of job seekers. However, the report also highlights the differences across regions in areas such as labour force participation, employment and unemployment rates, as well as in terms of economic profiles, namely economic sector and industrial composition and, arising out of this, their economic output.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands Region - The RPG's provide a framework for long term strategic regional development which is consistent with the NSS and ensuring the successful implementation of the NSS at regional, county and local level.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy - The objective of regional spatial and economic strategies shall be to support the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region for which the strategies are prepared which shall be consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the economic policies or objectives of the Government.

Report on the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government (2014) – The PPN will be the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes.

Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 - The RDP 2014-2020 identifies six priority areas for rural development; fostering knowledge transfer and innovation; enhancing competitiveness, promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture; restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems; promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy; and promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future - Transport policy for Ireland for 2009-2020.

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme - The aim of SICAP is *'to reduce poverty, promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration.'* SICAP's vision is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment through community development approaches, targeted supports and interagency collaboration where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

Towards 2016 - Ten year framework social partnership agreement. Towards 2016 develops a new framework to address the key economic and social challenges which individuals face at each stage of life.

Longford County Council Corporate Plan - Provides the vision and strategic direction of Longford County Council over the next five years.

Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 - The Development Plan provides a spatial framework which gives effect to the delivery of sustainable and planned economic and social development in a manner consistent with higher plans and strategies including the NSS and the RPG.

Longford Westmeath Children's Services Committee Children & Young People's Plan - Outlines how at a local level the five national outcomes for children and young people in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures will be achieved.

Winning: FDI 2015-2019 - IDA Ireland's strategy to continue winning investment and ensuring that the benefits of those investments flow as widely as possible. The strategy includes targets of 80,000 new jobs, 900 investments, €3 billion Research and Development, and balanced regional growth.

Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan: Pathways to Work - Identifies measures to build on services and initiatives already in place to increase their impact by tailoring them to address the particular needs of youth unemployment. It introduced a new integrated employment and support service involving the transformation of local social welfare offices into a one-stop shop, Intreo, allowing job seekers to access their entitlements and get help with planning their return to work. Pathways to Work 2015 places a particular emphasis on measures to help long term and young unemployed people find a route back into employment.

APPENDIX 5 - NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY PROOFING

The National Spatial Strategy identifies four types of proofing required for all programmes, plans or strategies emanating from the Plan; poverty, equality, rural and environmental proofing.

1) Poverty Proofing

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 sets a policy framework that promotes the tackling of poverty and its root causes. Poverty proofing aims to ensure that this Plan tackles poverty and assists those who are excluded and marginalised from participating in activities that are considered the norm for other people in society. The LECP takes cognisance of same.

2) Rural Proofing

The National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region, County Development Plan together with the CEDRA Report 2014 recognises and promotes the needs of rural areas as distinct from urban areas. This plan takes cognisance of the significant challenges rural areas face through an identification of objectives to protect and enhance these areas. The LECP takes cognisance of same.

3) Environmental and Sustainability Proofing

The Plan is subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening and Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) screening. The LECP takes cognisance of same and this is currently underway and when completed will be included as part of the Final Plan.

4) Equality Proofing

Equality proofing is particularly concerned with ensuring that nobody is discriminated against and enshrines the principle of respect for diversity. Particular emphasis will be given to the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, which names 9 grounds on which discrimination should not take place as follows:-

- Gender
- Marital status
- Family status
- Age
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Race
- Religion
- Membership of the Travelling Community.

Equality proofing also recognises that there is both direct discrimination and indirect discrimination involving practices that have discriminatory effects. The LECP takes cognisance of same (see Appendix 6).

APPENDIX 6 – HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY PROOFING

It is recognised that there is a statutory obligation which requires all public bodies to proactively consider equality and human rights issues in carrying out their functions as per Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act (2014). As such **all the actions to be carried out under the County Longford Local Economic and Community Plan will have due regard to, and be underpinned by, equality and human rights in their implementation, in accordance with the Public Sector Duty: Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act (2014) Section 42.**

As per Circular LG/1/2015 AL/1/2015 Local Economic and Community Plans (2015), there is a specific section entitled ‘*Assessing the Impact and Proofing the Community Element of the LECP*’ it is stated that ‘in addition to ensuring consistency with the RSES/RPG and the Core Strategy of the Development Plan, consideration should be given to assessing the impact of the draft Plan on a number of horizontal priorities. These should include:-

- i. Sustainability
- ii. Equality
- iii. Poverty
- iv. Rurality (where appropriate)
- v. Age
- vi. Disability

Equality proofing also recognises that there is both direct discrimination and indirect discrimination involving practices that have discriminatory effects. The LECP takes cognisance of same.

Process Involved

Consideration has been had to ‘*Promotion of Equality in the Delivery of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECPs)*’ (LGMA, 2015). This recommends a number of actions to ensure the promotion of equality (access, equality, diversity, human rights, inclusion) in the LECP across both economic and community areas as follows:-

- i. Establishment of an LCDC Equality Sub-Group to receive equality training. The LGMA (Local Government Management Agency) have advised local authorities to use the Advisory Steering Committee which oversees the LECP as the vehicle to ensure that equality issues are built into the LECP. This item as per the LGMA advice notes became a standing item on the Advisory Steering Committee agenda.
- ii. The inclusion of an Equality and Human Rights Statement in the LECP.
- iii. Public consultation on high priority equality areas.
- iv. Drafting and proofing for Equality during the development and delivery of the LECP.
- v. During the drafting of the LECP there should be reference to a template Framework of Questions to influence the promotion of ‘Equality’ in the LECP. A sample framework of questions is included in Appendix 1 of the LGMA document.
- vi. Reference to a further template checklist of questions to proof the draft LECP plan to ensure ‘Equality’ has been considered. The Framework of questions for proofing equality is included in Appendix II of the LGMA document.
- vii. Equality Policy – develop an overall Local Authority sectoral template Equality Policy relating to both employment and the service side that supports the implementation of LECP’s. This can be an action for Access and Equality Officers. Accordingly an action to this effect has been included as part of this plan.

The Advisory Steering Group took on the role of ensuring compliance with the public sector duty and ensuring a focus on equality and human rights is mainstreamed into the development and coordination of the LECP. The proofing of the Plan has been an iterative process undertaken throughout the Plan evolution, in addition to a checklist at the end of the process. In this regard the

LGMA Process and associated checklists have been the favoured method of proofing the Plan. Public consultation has been undertaken specifically in relation to the target group of 'new communities'. A member of the Steering Group is also liaising with the Chair of the Traveller Inter-Agency Group, the Council Social Worker (who is directly involved with marginalised groups), the Age Friendly Strategy working group and the Disability Group. There are also a diverse range of sectors including Longford Women's Link and other groups represented as sectoral interests on the LCDC. In terms of Equality this has been included as a topic for consideration at Advisory Steering Group Meetings and the development of an equality policy is a dedicated action of the LECP. An Equality Policy is to be developed as an action of the LECP and an Equality and Human Rights Statement has also been included in the LECP as indicated below:-

LCDC Equality and Human Rights Statement

'The LCDC will promote an environment which is fair, transparent and welcoming for all individuals and organisations, employees, service-users and elected members. The LCDC is committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations when making decisions, developing and implementing policies'.

Accordingly the LCDC has ensured that the LECP is in line with the relevant National Strategies and that the community elements of the LECP meet the proofing obligations set out in national policy in relation to other policy areas.

APPENDIX 7 – STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

Under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 -2011, the local authority is obliged to carry out a screening assessment for environmental effects arising from the implementation of the objectives and actions contained in the LECP. Due consideration has been given to SEA in the preparation of the Plan and the SEA Screening Statement should be read in conjunction with this Plan (as per separate addendum report). Following the screening process the LECP has been assessed against the environmental significance criteria as contained in Annex II (2) of the SEA Directive. It is concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the Longford LECP 2016-2022.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT (AA)

The EU Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended. Under this Directive, the local authority is obliged to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of the ecological implications of the Plan on the Natura 2000 sites within County Longford and County as part of the LECP process. Natura 2000 sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and provide for the protection of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The LECP was screened to determine whether or not its implementation would result in significant adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 site network. Due consideration has been given to the AA Screening Report undertaken which should be read in conjunction with this Plan (as per separate addendum report). It has been determined that the plan would not result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites and, therefore, Appropriate Assessment is not required.

APPENDIX 8 – STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FROM MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS OF GRANARD, LONGFORD AND BALLYMAHON

Granard Municipal District:

On 24/5/16 Granard Municipal District adopted the following Statement of Consistency in relation to the Draft LECP:-

‘Granard Municipal District has considered the Draft Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 and is satisfied the Plan is consistent with the following:

- (i) the core strategy and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021;*
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and any regional spatial and economic strategy as appropriate that apply;*
- (iii) The economic and community elements of the Draft Plan are consistent with each other’.*

Longford Municipal District:

On 25/5/16 Longford Municipal District adopted the following Statement of Consistency in relation to the Draft LECP:-

‘Longford Municipal District has considered the Draft Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 and is satisfied the Plan is consistent with the following:

- (i) the core strategy and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021;*
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and any regional spatial and economic strategy as appropriate that apply;*
- (iii) The economic and community elements of the Draft Plan are consistent with each other’.*

Ballymahon Municipal District:

On 26/5/16 Ballymahon Municipal District adopted the following Statement of Consistency in relation to the Draft LECP:-

‘Ballymahon Municipal District has considered the Draft Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 and is satisfied the Plan is consistent with the following:

- (i) the core strategy and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021;*
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and any regional spatial and economic strategy as appropriate that apply;*
- (iii) The economic and community elements of the Draft Plan are consistent with each other’.*

APPENDIX 9 – STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FROM EASTERN AND MIDLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

3ú Uirlár ó Thuaidh | Ionad Cathartha | An tSráid Mhór | Baile Munna | Baile Átha Cliath 9
3rd Floor North | Ballymun Civic Centre | Main Street | Ballymun | Dublin 9



Statement on Longford Draft Local Economic and Community Plan

The formal statement on the Longford Draft Local Economic and Community Plan was approved at the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly meeting on 13th May 2016.

INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 (S.I. 573 of 2014) came into effect on the 1st January 2015 establishing the new Regional Assemblies. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, has twelve constituent local authorities split into three Strategic Planning Areas (Dublin, Eastern and Midland). The functions of the new Regional Assemblies include the formulation, adoption and implementation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), management of EU Operational Programs and implementation of national economic policy.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Regional Assemblies' role in the LECP process is set out under Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001, in particular section 66C 2(c) and 3(c) which states that the consideration of an LECP by the Regional Assembly shall relate to its consistency with (i) the core strategy and the objectives of the development plan of the local authority concerned, (ii) any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy or, as appropriate, Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) that may apply, and (iii) between the economic and community elements of the Plan.

CONSISTENCY

Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021: The draft LECP demonstrates consistency with the core strategy and the objectives of the Development Plan and it is recognised that the LECP will be implemented alongside the Longford County Development Plan.

Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022: The draft LECP is considered to be consistent with the RPGs and regionally significant plans, such as the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, have been included in the draft LECP.

Economic and Community elements of the LECP: The draft LECP inherently demonstrates consistency between economic and community objectives. Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 have economic development and community elements, with Goals 2 and 6 for instance, sharing their sustainable objectives.

CONCLUSION

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly considers, in line with Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001, that the Longford Draft LECP satisfies the requirements in terms of consistency with the core strategy and the objectives of the Longford County Development Plan, consistency with the RPGs and the integration and coordination of the economic and community elements of the plan.

APPENDIX 10 – STATEMENT OF ADOPTION OF LECP ECONOMIC ELEMENT BY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE (SPC)

On 30/5/16 the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) considered and adopted the following statement on the final draft of the **Economic** element of the LECP :-

‘The Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee has taken account of the Statements of Consistency received from the 3 no. Municipal Districts of Ballymahon, Granard and Longford and also the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly and is satisfied that the Economic Element of the Draft LECP is consistent with the following:

- (i) the core strategy and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021;*
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and any regional spatial and economic strategy as appropriate that apply;*
- (iii) The economic and community elements of the Draft Plan are consistent with each other’.*

The Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee is also satisfied that the LECP has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and the Guidelines on Local Economic & Community Plans (DoECLG, 2015)’.

APPENDIX 11 – STATEMENT OF ADOPTION OF LECP COMMUNITY ELEMENT BY THE LONGFORD LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)

On 31/5/16 the Local Community Development Committee considered and adopted the following statement on the final draft of the **Community** element of the LECP :-

‘The Longford Local Community Development Committee has taken account of the Statements of Consistency received from the 3 no. Municipal Districts of Ballymahon, Granard and Longford and also the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly and is satisfied that the Community Element of the Draft LECP is consistent with the following:

- (i) the core strategy and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021;*
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and any regional spatial and economic strategy as appropriate that apply;*
- (iii) The economic and community elements of the Draft Plan are consistent with each other’.*

The Longford Local Community Development Committee is also satisfied that the LECP has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and the Guidelines on Local Economic & Community Plans (DoECLG, 2015)’ .

APPENDIX 12 – STATEMENT OF ADOPTION OF INTEGRATED LECP BY LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

On 15/6/16 the Council adopted an integrated LECP by the following statement :-

- i) *The Council has considered the adopted statements by the following:-*
- *3 no. Municipal Districts of Granard, Longford and Ballymahon;*
 - *the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly;*
 - *the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee;*
 - *the Longford Local Community Development Committee;*
- (ii) *The Council are satisfied that the LECP has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 & Guidelines on Local Economic & Community Plans (DoECLG, 2015);*
- (iii) *The Council hereby adopts an integrated Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022’.*

APPENDIX 13 – LIST OF ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS:

Written Submissions:

1. Abbeyshrule Tidy Villages Association
2. Andrew Regan
3. An Garda Siochana
4. Backstage Theatre
5. Ballinamuck Community Enterprise Society Ltd
6. Ballymahon Tidy Towns
7. Ballymahon Traders Association
8. Bridgeways Family Resource & Community Centre
9. Colmcille Area Development Group (CADG)
10. County Longford Community & Voluntary Forum (CLCVF)
11. Co. Longford Historical Society
12. County Longford Tourism Committee
13. Creative Ardagh
14. Cruthu Arts Festival
15. Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht
16. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
17. Des Mooney
18. Disability Federation of Ireland
19. Edgeworthstown District Development Association Ltd
20. Environmental Protection Agency
21. Foroige
22. Granard Motte Community Enterprise Ltd (GMCEL)
23. Granard Tidy Towns
24. Health Service Executive
25. Kenagh Co-Operative Society Ltd and Wetlands Heritage Ireland
26. Kenagh and District Development Association
27. Killashee Tidy Towns Committee
28. Lanesborough Tourism Co-Op Society
29. Longford Community Resources Ltd
30. Longford Environmental Alliance
31. Longford Women's Link
32. Michael Carrigy (Cllr.)

33. Midlands Ireland.ie
34. Mullinalaghta Community Development
35. Newtowncashel Tidy Towns Committee
36. Pavee Point
37. Public Participation Network
38. Sarah Ni Chasarlaigh
39. Taghshinny Development Group
40. Waterways Ireland

Public Consultation Meetings:

Traders Meetings:

1. Ballymahon
2. Granard
3. Lanesborough
4. Longford

Community meetings:

1. Ballymahon / South Longford
2. Granard / North Longford
3. Longford / Mid Longford

Anonymous Completed Online Questionnaires:-

1. 27 responses to information gathering questionnaire (July 2015);
2. 4 responses to questionnaire on adequacy of High Level Goals and Socio-Economic Statement (November 2015)