



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
an Longfoirt
Longford Local Community Development
Committee



Co. Longford Local Economic & Community Plan

Socio-Economic Statement & High Level Goals
2022-2028



Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Socio Economic Profile	Page 4
Guiding Principles	Page 5
LECP Process	Page 6
Key Findings	Page 7 & 8
Longford Key Facts	Page 9,10 & 11
Comparative Indicators Longford & State	Page 12 & 13
SWOT Analysis	Page 14 & 15
Vision	Page 16
High Level Goals	Page 17, 18 & 19
Next Steps	Page 20
Appendix 1	Page 21
Appendix 2	Page 22



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
an Longfoirt
Longford Local Community Development
Committee

Introduction



The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is a six-year plan to support the economic and community development of Co. Longford, by Longford County Council itself and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The LECP will be developed within the context of the principles of sustainable development. The UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change. It is important that Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders engaged with the LECP process fully consider their responsibilities with regard to Public Sector Duty and ensure that the objectives and actions detailed in the LECP are designed to support these responsibilities where appropriate.

This is the socio-economic framework for the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for Co. Longford. This framework sets out the priority high level goals that will be addressed in the plan. They will be further defined into specific measurable objectives and practical time-bound actions. These will be based on evidence and on further analysis of the socio-economic factors pertaining to Co. Longford.

This framework is now going out to consultation, to the community and to key stakeholders, those who will be affected by service delivery and those who will be involved in the implementation of this plan. It is hoped that this will harness a widespread support for, and commitment to, the plan. It is only by working together that the potential development that the plan creates can be realised.



Socio-Economic Profile

A Socio-Economic Profile Study has been prepared as part of the preparation of the County Development Plan - <https://www.longfordcoco.ie/services/planning/longford-county-development-plan-2021-2027/> Volume 1, Chapter 2 provides a profile of County Longford while Volume 3, Annex 3 provides a Socio- economic profile of the Municipal Districts in the county. This aims to provide the LCDC and SPC with important socio-economic information that will assist in the development of goals, objectives and targets in the preceding phases of the LECP Plan process.

The Socio-Economic Profile Study provides data about County Longford at both County and small area/Municipal District , thereby enabling a detailed depiction of the County's social and economic character. It also draws comparison to wider regional and national data results, where applicable.

This profile is largely based on data collated from the Census 2016, including the CSO POWSCAR database. The data is also supplemented where appropriate with other CSO reports and available departmental statistical results, such as the Live Register and Quarterly National Household Survey and Department of Social Protection data, the Pobal HP Deprivation index, Fáilte Ireland datasets and the Longford GeoDirectory.



Guiding Principles

The LECP is underpinned by a number of guiding principles:

- ✓ Social Justice
- ✓ Sustainable Development
- ✓ Social Inclusion
- ✓ Human Rights, Equality and Anti Discrimination
- ✓ Empowering Communities
- ✓ Active Participation



Stage 1 Preparation

- ✓ Establish & analyse the socio-economic evidence base.
- ✓ On foot of this evidence Develop a socioeconomic statement for the county and develop high level goals for the integrated LECP
- ✓ Advisory Steering Group to prepare SPC & LCDC to adopt the statement for public consultation

Stage 2 Public Consultation

- ✓ Undertake a Public Consultation (4 weeks) on the socio-economic statement and high level goals
- ✓ Advisory Steering Group to prepare advised statement
- ✓ SPC & LCDC to adopt revised statement

Stage 3 Develop the Objectives and Actions

- ✓ Develop detailed objectives for the economic and community elements of the plan together with an outline of desired outcomes, which will be supported by practical, time-bound actions as part of the Stage 5 Implementation process.
- ✓ Advisory Steering Group to prepare, SPC & LCDC to agree to the objectives and outcomes
- ✓ Advisory Steering Group to submit a final draft incorporating the statement and goals, objectives and outcomes for consideration by the Municipal Districts and Regional Assembly

Stage 4 Finalise Plan

- ✓ SPC & LCDC consider & adopt final draft revised as necessary following consideration by the MDs and RA
- ✓ Local Authority to adopt the final draft of the LECP
- ✓ Final Plan submitted to the Minister and published by the LA

Stage 5 Implementation

Stage 6 Monitor and Review

- ✓ Advisory Steering Group to monitor process – Annual / biennial work plan and report prepared



Key Findings:

The key findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study are summarised as follows:

Population

- County Longford occupies an area of 1,091km² and is the fourth smallest county in the State.
- Based on the preliminary results of the 2022 Census, Longford's population stands at 46,634 which is an increase of 14.1% on 2016, the largest increase in the Country. CSO Figures from April 2016 stated that Longford had the second smallest population nationally 40,873 – 49.6% females and 50.4% males.
- The population was relatively well distributed across each area with 16,046 people within Longford MD, 10,674 within Granard MD and 14,153 within Ballymahon MD with relatively higher concentrations around the larger towns of Longford Town, Ballymahon, Granard, Lanesborough and Edgeworthstown

Age Distribution

- In County Longford, approximately 62.5% of the population within County Longford are of working age (i.e. 15 – 64 years) with 51.2% of prime working age (defined as the 25-64 age cohorts). Specifically, 27.2% of Longford's population are between 25 – 44 years old with a further 24.2% between 45 – 64 years old.
- Specifically, 29.7% of the county population are under 19 years of age with the number of children of pre-school age (i.e. 0-4 years) in County Longford was 3,051 (7.5%) whilst 5,205 (12.7%) are of primary school going age (i.e. 5-12 years). A further 3,432 (8.4%) are of secondary school going age (13-18 years)
- The average age in County Longford was slightly below the national average (36.8 and 37.4 years respectively), and this is generally reflective of the slightly younger age profile within the broader Eastern and Midlands region.
- 14.2% of the population are over 65 years (i.e. older persons), of which just 5.7 % of the population is older than 75 years of age

Ethnicity

- County Longford is a diverse county with many nationalities living therein which contribute to the local population and vibrant community. Approximately 19.5% of the population were born overseas and 16.4% of the population are not of Irish nationality
- The British, Polish and Lithuanian communities are the largest groups of non-nationals with pockets of high concentrations of Polish evident in Granard, Ballymahon and Longford town and Lithuanians in Longford town, Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown

Education

County Longford has varying levels of educational attainment. 52.1% of the population above 15 years had completed their Leaving Certificate whilst 30.2% had completed Third Level education (i.e. to at least Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications [NFQ]).

Primary Schools

- There are 38 mainstream primary schools and 1 dedicated special needs primary school within the County.
- There is 1 no. Irish-medium taught primary school.
- All schools are either Catholic or Church of Ireland denominated faith.

Post-Primary Schools

- 68% of the population above 15 in the County have completed up to secondary level education
- There are 9 post-primary schools in the County; 5 of which are inter-denominational, and none of which are in the Irish medium.

Third Level

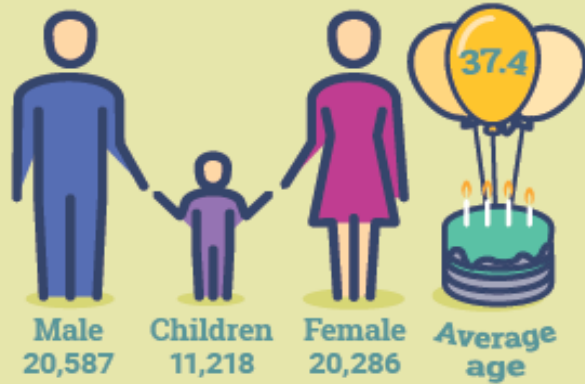
- 30.2% of the population above 15 in the County have completed third level education or higher.
- Third level education levels are highest in the environs of the main County settlements and in those areas along the main transport corridors.

Employment

Employment levels in County Longford (48.4%) were lower than the national average (53.4%) and unemployment at the county level (11.8%) was higher than the national average at (9.1%) Other Stats: (5.1%)Disability, (15.2%) Retired, (9.9%) Students

Pockets of relatively high unemployment were evident around Newtownforbes, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Longford town when compared to other areas within the county.

Breakdown of population
Total 40,873



**Number of Students/
Pupils**
Aged 15 and Over
3,062



**Number & most common type of
Private Households**

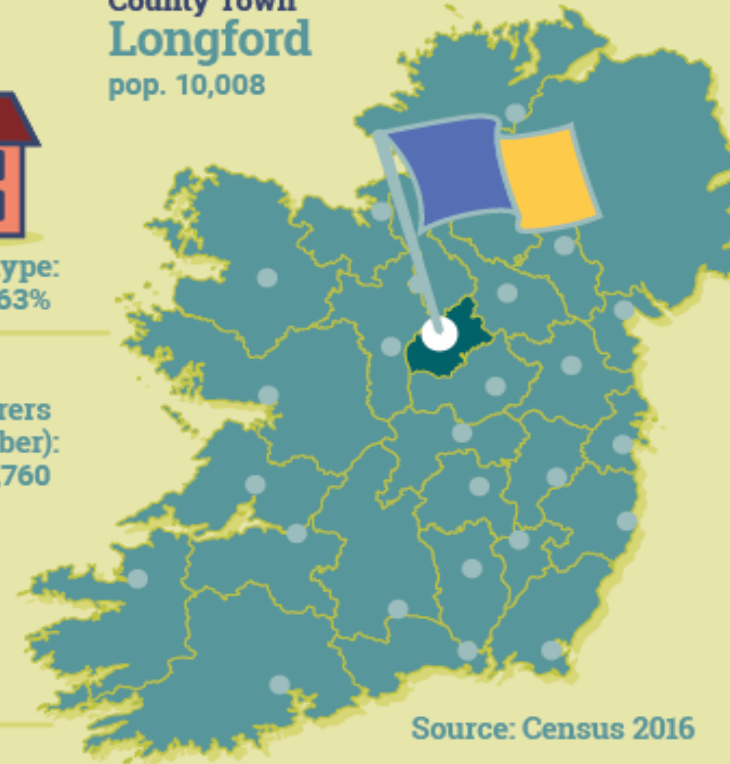


**Number & percentage of
Persons with
a Disability**

Number: 5,916
Percentage of total persons: 14.5%



County Town
Longford
pop. 10,008



Source: Census 2016

Longford – Key Facts

Top 3 Non-Irish Nationalities



Lithuanian
544



UK
1,162



Polish
1,907

Top 3 Marital Status

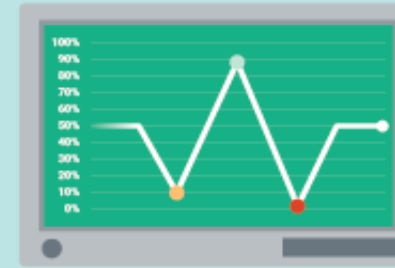
Single
52%

Married
38%

Widowed
5%



Our Health



Good & Very Good
34,855

Fair
3,985

Bad & Very Bad
839

Top 3 Spoken Languages other than Irish or English

Polish
2,069

Lithuanian
513

Latvian
434



Home Ownership

Owner occupied*
9,617

Rented
4,819

Other
656

*with or without loan or mortgage



Top 3 Types of Commuting

Bus, Coach or Minibus
10%

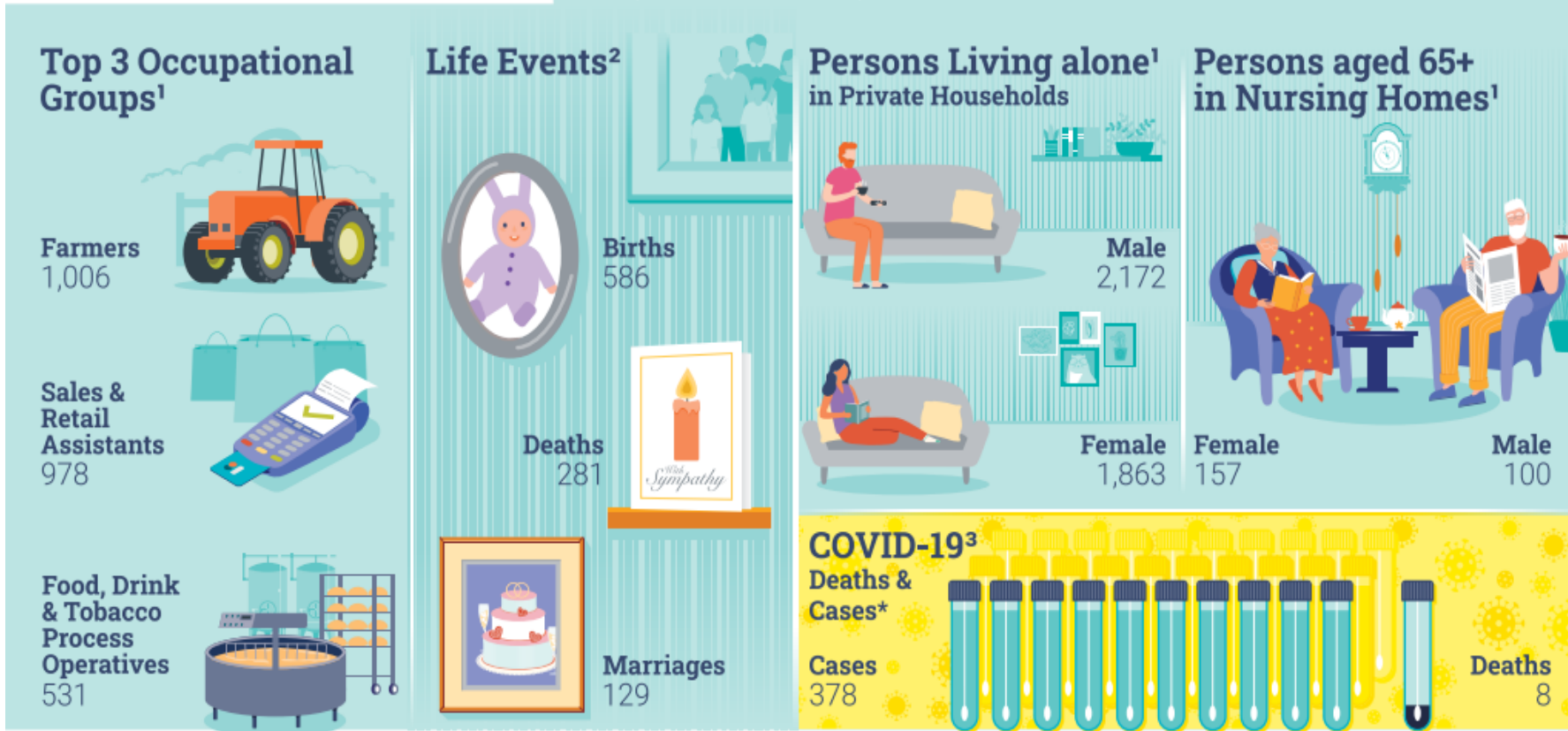
On Foot
12%

Total by Motor Car
61%



Source: Census 2016

Longford - Key Facts



Sources: ¹Census 2016 | ²CSO: Vital Statistics 2019 | ³CSO COVID-19 Information Hub

*up to and including 02 October 2020

Longford Key Facts (incl 2019 Covid Stats)

Comparative Indicators between Longford and the State

A comparative analysis of the findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study is provided below and provides an overview of the County in the context of a State perspective.

POPULATION

	Longford	State
Population	40,873	4,761,865
% of Population change 2011 -2016	+4.8%	+3.8%
% of Population living in a Rural Area	65.85%	37.3%
Age Dependency (pop aged 1-14years &65 years plus a % of working age) (14-64)	56.11%	52.7%
Births per 1000 (CSO 2016)	14.9%	13.5%
Average age of mothers (CSO 2016)	31.8	32.7

HEALTH INDICATORS

% of pop that considers their health “good” or “very good”	85.3%	87%
% of pop with a disability	14.5%	13.55%
Suicide rate per 100,000	9.8%	9.2%

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Lone Parent rate (2011)	22.3%	21.6%
% Local Authority Housing 2016	13.5%	8.9%
Total number of Irish Travellers	1038	30,987
% of Resident population that are from the Traveller Community	2.5%	0.6%
% of non nationals	14.7%	11.6%
Largest Minority Group	Polish	Polish
% of Polish community	4.7%	2.6%
Proportion of population aged 15+ with 3 rd level education	32.5%	42%
Absolute HP Index Score 2016	-10.2	-3.6

Contd....

EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS

	LONGFORD	STATE
Total pop at work	15,172	2,006,641
Labour Force Participation Rate (CSO 2016)	60.2%	61.4%
Unemployment Rate (CSO 2016)	11.8%	9.1%
Numbers on Live Register (May 2022)	2112	171,903
Numbers on Live Register under 25 (May 2022)	271	16,824
Disposable Income Level (per capita 2019)	16,865	22,032

Language Skills

% that speak a language other than Irish or English at home	14.2%	13%
% that speak a language other than Irish or English at home and also unable to speak English well or at all	28.2%	16.6%

Household Indicators

% of people aged 15 and over who travel to work/school in ½ hour or less	64.2%	54.2%
Vacant Housing ratio	14.6%	9.14%
% of households with broadband connection (2019)	86.8%	91%

SWOT Analysis

Based on the findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study, the purpose of the SWOT analysis is to identify internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. This provides guidance as to the key areas where the LECP should focus and the additional services and facilities which may be required.

STRENGTHS

Location and accessibility of County makes it attractive to investors while the development of different coworking facilities offers opportunity to localise employment for all

Strong industrial base particularly in environs of Longford Town with emergence of potential clusters in engineering, medtech and food processing

Higher than average population and employment growth rates supporting natural regeneration trends

A good network of connected towns & villages gives Longford a service & resource spread

Growing tourism product, capacity and reputation with a diverse offering covering experience, heritage, attractions etc

Untapped natural beauty in the County – County Longford is a ‘hidden gem’ with an abundance of natural assets

Cultural diversity with above national average proportion of non-Irish nationals

Rich cultural traditions, including music, literary & arts

A strong and committed partnership approach between Community Groups, local stakeholders and agencies involved in economic and community development

High quality environment

Ability to develop the Food & Agri Industry to grow employment and benefit the carbon economy

Integrated Education across all levels

WEAKNESSES

N4 route at capacity hindering access to east and west

Rural decline evident in many rural towns & villages in Longford – vacancy rates, aging population and service decline

Lack of quality business infrastructure needed to attract and facilitate inward investment

Low number of large multinational companies based in the County.

Low in key Digital measures - innovation; skills; digital integration in business.

Higher levels of unemployment compared to State average

High levels of social disadvantage

Perception of low community safety

High level of persons with higher education qualifications out-commuting from the County compared to persons living and working in the County

Tourism potential under-developed

High proportion of non-Irish nationals with poor English language skills inhibits social inclusiveness.

Failure to utilise natural resources for development of renewable energy

Accommodation capacity issues may undermine ability to grow tourism & business sector

SWOT Analysis

Contd...

OPPORTUNITIES

The geographically central location of Longford with good accessibility by road, rail and bus is a positive in terms of future enterprise development

Increasing capacity to harvest 'green energies' especially through Smart Communities Initiatives and Just Transition Funding for Midlands region

Inter-Regional dependency of midland counties and settlements should provide opportunities arising from collaboration, clustering and strategic industrial partnerships

Global growth in the digital economy

Longford's positioning for investment

Continued roll out of countywide broadband infrastructure including BCP's will promote future economic growth

Use of govt. funded programmes to counter-act social disadvantage , exclusion and promote health equity

Use of govt. funded programme to improve community safety

Continue to build on Longford's tourism potential of the Shannon, Royal Canal and walkways and capitalise on the Center Parcs "Longford Forest "project

Cultural inclusiveness and diversity

Harness and promote natural, cultural heritage.

Strengthen the economic role of Longford Town in the region

Opportunity to benefit from the new university status awarded to TUS in Athlone

Potential to promote return-to-education schemes for unemployed persons and enhance life-long learning

Continued roll out of the Gas Pipe Line throughout the County

Utilise suitable green spaces as biodiversity havens to support native species

THREATS

Underinvestment in enterprise growth.

International macro-economic climate including Brexit, Ukraine, rising energy prices, inflation etc

Retention and development of young, talented workforce for Longford's benefit will be challenging

Insufficient investment in targeting disadvantaged youth and youth population.

Insufficient support and investment in childcare services.

Retail cores in town centres face sustainability issues in the face of changing consumer trends

Insufficient resources to support proper integration of new communities could lead to ghettoisation of communities in some areas.

Potential increase in drug related crime will have adverse social and economic implications.

Environmental pollution may threaten the tourism sector

Lack of resources and coordinated approach to support both physical & mental health services.

Failure to implement trauma-informed person-centred services continues to contribute to (intergenerational) poverty, mental and physical health illnesses, and social issues

Over-dependence on fossil fuels for household and business energy needs



Vision

The Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2022-2028 is guided by the following overarching vision:

That Longford will be a county:

- ✓ with vibrant, diverse and resilient sustainable urban and rural communities experiencing a high quality of life;
- ✓ where people will want to live, visit, be educated, work and do business;
- ✓ which offers its citizens quality employment opportunities;
- ✓ which offers high quality urban and rural environments supported by excellent sustainable physical and social infrastructure and sustainable employment opportunities, and
- ✓ which values its natural environment and leads the way to a Green Economy

This is to be supported by the following integrated [High Level Goals](#)

What county
are you from?



	Community	Economic
People	Improve the safety, wellbeing, physical & mental health, and quality of life in our Communities	Realise Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn
Place	Build resilient, sustainable and connected Communities	Support our County in the transition to a Green Economy
Opportunity	Empower Communities to combat poverty and social injustice, while promoting social inclusion, equity and equality	Maximise economic opportunities through smart technology digitalisation and Education

Connected

....



Community

Empower Communities to combat poverty and social injustice, while promoting social inclusion, equity and equality

Build resilient, sustainable and connected Communities

Improve the safety, wellbeing, physical & mental health, and quality of life in our Communities



Economic

Support our County in the transition to a Green Economy

Realise Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn

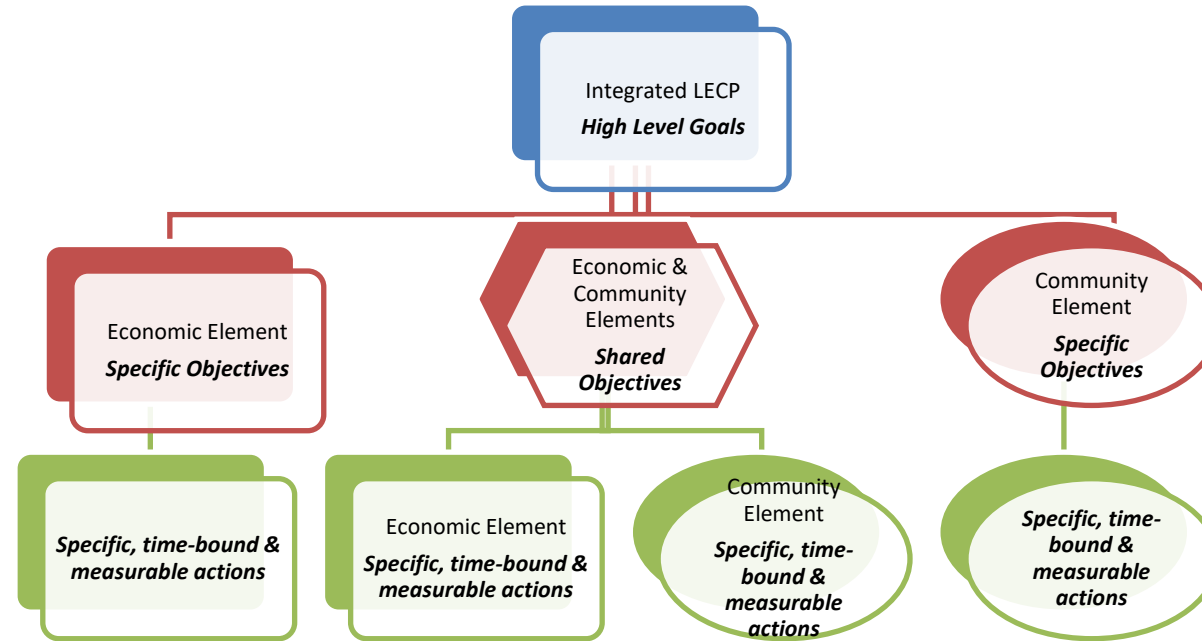
Maximise economic opportunities through smart technology, digitalisation and education





LCDC

Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
an Longfoirt
Longford Local Community Development
Committee



Longford LCDC and Place Making SPC welcomes feedback and comment on this Socio-Economic Statement and associated high level goals, and also in relation to the suggestion of possible objectives and specific actions, or on any other issues you believe should be included in the LECP.

Submissions can be made by email to LECP@longfordcoco.ie or by writing to
Longford Economic and Community Plan,
Director of Community and Enterprise,
Longford County Council,
Aras an Chontae,
Great Water Street,
Longford



National Policies & Plans

Pathways to Work Strategy 2021 - 2025

National Economic Plan (NEP)

National Recovery and Resilience Plan

Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland Project Ireland 2040

Town Centre First Policy National Development Plan 2018 - 2027

National Planning Framework

Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future

National Broadband Plan

Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government

Enterprise 2025 Renewed - Building resilience in the face of global challenges

Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020

National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024

Building Future Skills: The Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment Sector to 2030

Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy People

Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

Supporting the sustainability of our islands and coastal communities

Regional Policies and Strategies

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for NWRA

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for EMRA

Regional Enterprise Plans

Appendix 1

Economic

Associated

Strategies & Plans

Appendix 2

Community

Associated Strategies & Plans

National Policies and Plans

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024

National Policy Statement the Bioeconomy

CAP Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future

Housing for all: A New Housing Plan for Ireland

Town Centre First Policy Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan

Youth Justice Strategy 2021 - 2027

National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021

Programme for Government: Our Shared Future

Civil Defence - Towards 2030

Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy

IDA Ireland: Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021 – 2024

Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020

International Financial Services Strategy

Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025

Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023

Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025

National Positive Aging Strategy (NPAS)

National Dementia Strategy

National Carers Strategy

Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government

20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021

National Migrant Integration Strategy

National Strategy for Women & Girls

National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)

LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021