

County Longford - LEADER

Local Development Strategy 2023-2027

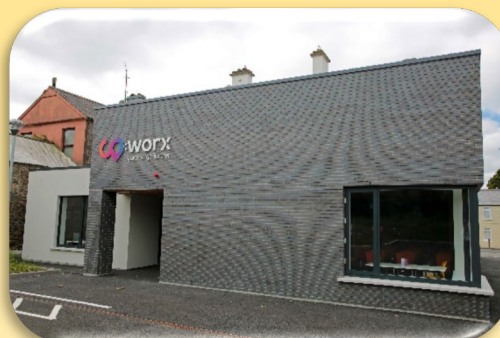


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

GLOSSARY OF TERMS	4
SECTION 1: LOCAL AREA GROUP GOVERNANCE MODEL.....	5
1.1 Organisation Details	5
1.2 Legal Description of the Local Action Group	5
1.3 LAG composition and Decision Making	5
1.4 LAG Roles and Responsibilities.....	9
1.5 LAG Financial Management	10
1.6 LEADER Staffing	12
1.7 Project Selection Procedures for LEADER.....	14
1.8 Relevant Experience	16
1.9 Implementation Partner: Longford Community Resources Clg	20
SECTION 2: LDS AREA PROFILE	24
2.1 Geography & Accessibility.....	24
2.2 Population and Trends	24
2.3 Employment Market	30
2.4 Economic Activity	32
2.5 LEADER Interventions – Area Profile	35
2.6 Area Needs Analysis Key Points.....	38
SECTION 3 - CLLD and PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING.....	39
3.1 Consultation Process	39
3.2 Summary of Outcomes.....	41
3.3 SWOT Analysis.....	42
3.4 Local Development Strategy Priorities	45
SECTION 4: STRATEGIC INTEGRATION	49
4.1 LEADER Policy Alignment	49
4.2 Policy Alignment	49
4.3 Innovation	57
4.4 Networking	58
4.5 Co-operation	62
SECTION 5: LDS ACTION PLAN.....	63
5.1 Vision	63
5.2 Strategic Approach	63
5.3 Overview of Strategic Objectives and Actions.....	63
5.4 Sustainability	89

SECTION 6: LDS FINANCIAL PLAN	90
SECTION 7: MONITOR AND PERFORMANCE	93
7.1 Monitoring & Review	93
7.2 Data Protection	97
7.3 Evaluation	97
APPENDIX 1.....	99
Appendix 1.1 Longford Local Community Development Committee Standing Orders and Conflict of Interest Policy	99
Appendix 1.2 Heads of Agreement	108
Appendix 1.3 Job Descriptions for LEADER staff members of the LAG & Implementation Partner	112
APPENDIX 2.....	119
Appendix 2.1 Map of County Longford Towns & Villages.....	119
Appendix 2.2 Overview of County Longford including the Municipal Districts	119
APPENDIX 3.....	121
Appendix 3.1 Key Services	121
APPENDIX 4.....	126
Appendix 4.1 Feedback from Consultation Process	126

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abbreviation /Term	Definition
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	L'iaison Entre Actions de Development de l'Economie Rurale
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LCRL	Longford Community Resources Clg
EDI	Employment Development Information Centre
LWL	Longford Women's Link
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
BCP	Broadband Connection Points
ILDN	Irish Local Development Network
CCMA	County and City Management Association
TUS	TUS Community Workplace Initiative
RSS	Rural Social Scheme
EETD	Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
RDP	Rural Development Programme
TUS Athlone	Technology University of the Shannon
ECCEP	Environment, Climate change and Emergency Planning
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
ENRD	European Rural Development Network
ELARD	European LEADER Association for Rural Development
I.D.A	Industrial Development Authority
MABS	Money Advisory and Budgeting Service
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
CSO	Central Statistics Office
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland
TUSLA	Child & Family Agency
NPWS	National Park and Wildlife Services
HSE	Health Service Executive
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
NRN	The National Rural Network
ICA	Irish Countrywomen's Association
DSP	Department of Social Protection
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
LWETB	Longford Westmeath Education Training Board
OPW	Office of Public Works
PPN	Public Participation Network

SECTION 1: LOCAL AREA GROUP GOVERNANCE MODEL

1.1 Organisation Details

Longford Local Community Development Committee (Longford LCDC)
C/o Ciaran Murphy Longford County Council, Great Water Street, Longford, Co. Longford

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1.2 Legal Description of the Local Action Group

Established	June 2014
Legal Structure	Statute established committee, under the Local Government Reform Act 2014.
Operational Ethos	<p>The aim of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development activity within county Longford for the purposes of reducing overlap, avoiding duplication, and improving the targeting of resources.</p> <p>This includes co-ordination of local development spend while ensuring that local needs are met, generating greater citizen and community engagement in, as well as the oversight of Local and Community Development Programmes.</p>

1.3 LAG composition and Decision Making

The composition of the LAG in accordance with the legislation and guidelines, has a total membership of 19, including 10 members drawn from a wide ranging non-statutory sector and 9 members from the public sector. This membership and LCDC Standing Orders will ensure that more than 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by members which do not represent statutory agencies.

The general operation and procedures of the Longford LCDC are outlined in the standing orders document which was approved by the LCDC and is attached in Appendix 1 of this strategy.

The membership of the Longford LCDC is outlined as follows:

Private sector Members

Vacant	Longford Chamber of Commerce
Deirdre Orme	County Longford Tourism
Adrian Greene	Longford Community Resources Clg.
Emmet Duffy	Irish Farmers Association
Vacant	Ballymahon Traders Association
Eileen Finan	PPN – Community & Voluntary
Patrick Mc Givney	PPN – Community & Voluntary
Francesca Pawelczyk	PPN – Environmental
Tara Farrell	PPN – Social Inclusion
Vacant	PPN – Social Inclusion

Public sector Members

Colm Murray	Elected Representative (Chair)
Seamus Butler	Elected Representative
Paraic Brady	Elected Representative
Colin Dalton	Elected Representative
Paddy Mahon	Chief Executive, Longford County Council
Michael Nevin	Head of Local Enterprise, Longford Local Enterprise Office
Aine Bohan	Area Manager Longford and Employer Engagement - Midlands Division, Department of Social Protection
Veronica Brennan	County Manager, for Longford Primary Care Services HSE
Shauna Doherty	Adult Education Officer, Longford Westmeath Education Training Board

The membership is configured to give the broadest of representation across the range of local interests. The Chief Officer shall carry out a regular review of the membership to ensure that an appropriate balance and mix of members is achieved and that the membership is relevant and representative of the work of the LCDC, its aims and objectives. This will take account of changing LCDC objectives with the option of recommending the replacement of member organisations, where this is appropriate e.g., where the strategic need for member organisations has been satisfied or new member organisations are required to meet a specific strategic need or member organisations are not attending on a regular basis. When retirement or other vacancy arises, the member shall be replaced from within the sector she/he represented on the LCDC. If a member retires and is not eligible for reappointment, the Chief Officer of the LCDC shall make the necessary arrangements for that member to be replaced, as may be appropriate for the sector represented.

The LAG will ensure the representation of young people and marginalised groups. Youth interests are represented in several ways. It is proposed to continue to have a representative of young people on the LEADER Evaluation Committee. The Public Participation Network represents the voice of community and voluntary groups including young people. Longford Community Resources Clg operates the County Longford Youth Service which supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. LCRL and Longford County Council are represented on the HSE 'Children and Young People Service Committee' (CYPSC) and participation on this committee will ensure that all objectives and actions of the LEADER Programme are aligned to their programme of work.

Gender Balance

As outlined in the Standing Order the LCDC aims for a minimum membership of 40% men and 40% women, respectively. At present the membership consists of 9 men, 7 women and there are 3 vacancies meaning that the present split is 56% male and 44% female. The LCDC

will strive to ensure that the minimum required gender balance is maintained during the term of the LEADER 2023-2027 programme.

Decision making procedures/structures.

The Chairperson of the LCDC will endeavour to ensure meaningful, focused, and inclusive participation by all LCDC Members in the decision-making process. Matters for discussion at meetings will be related to the functions of the LCDC as set out in the Standing Order document. Where there are specific requirements and/or rules in relation to decision making in relation to the LEADER Programme these requirements will supersede those in the Standing Orders.

The LCDC should arrive at decisions, as far as possible, by agreement, and votes should be avoided. Where this is not possible, Committee members shall agree to vote using roll call. Each member present at a meeting of the LCDC shall have a vote unless prohibited by any conflict of Interest. Each meeting agenda will contain an item - to note any conflicts of interest. Members will be required to declare any conflicts of interest and must absent themselves from the consideration of or decision-making in respect of matters before the LCDC because of a conflict of interest. A member may abstain from voting, and such abstention shall be recorded in the minutes. At least 50% of those voting on a decision will be representative of non-public sector partners and decisions are to be carried by majority vote.

The LCDC may decide to allow members attend meetings and take decisions via telephone or other video conferencing facility and this attendance may be included to meet the quorum requirement of 50%. The largely voluntary status of LAG members is recognised. Accordingly, subject to the LEADER Operating Rules, the LCDC may decide that LAG decision-making arrangements may facilitate voting by written procedure, thus ensuring participation in the decision-making by LAG members who are unable to attend the relevant LAG meeting. Where the Chairperson has not formally declared the result of a vote or is in doubt as to whether their declaration is right or wrong, they are entitled if they think fit to take a second vote on the matter, especially if they consider that through some misunderstanding the first vote did not properly represent the sense of the meeting at that time. The Chairperson does not have a casting vote and where there is a tied vote, a motion is deemed not to be carried.

Longford Local Community Development Committee as the Local Action Group will have ultimate responsibility for the delivery, implementation and decision making in relation to the LEADER Programme. In order to support the successful delivery and implementation of the County Longford Local Development Strategy 2023-2027, Longford Community Resources Clg and Longford County Council are engaged as the implementation partner and financial partner respectively, the roles and responsibilities of the LAG and each partner are set out in point 1.4 below. In addition, the LCDC have, and will be, establishing a number of substructures to support the delivery of the programme, namely, LEADER Policy Group, Evaluation Committee and LEADER Monitoring Committee. The membership and purpose of these committees are detailed below and each of these sub-structures report directly to the LCDC.

LEADER Policy Group

Membership – Initial membership to be six members of the LCDC and to ensure public and private representation three members from the public sector (including the Local Enterprise Officer) and three members from the private sector, (including two members to be nominated by the PPN. It is also proposed that once established the Evaluation Committee would also nominate two people to the policy group with one being the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee.

Purpose – To devise, review and recommend policies to the LCDC which will be required to rollout the actions identified in the Local Development Strategy for the LEADER 2023-2027

programme in County Longford, this will include making recommendations to the Longford LCDC on the formulation of all policies required for the implementation of the LEADER Programme and its Themes, Objectives and LDS Actions, advising on policies for budget levels for project types/criteria and making recommendations on priority areas.

Evaluation Committee

Membership – It is recommended that the committee should comprise of twelve members from the following representative sectors.

- 3 nominees from the Public Participation Network representing community & voluntary, social inclusion and environmental colleges.
- 1 nominee from Longford Co. Council as financial partner representing the Local Enterprise Office and Finance.
- 1 nominee from Longford Local Enterprise Office.
- Targeted approach to selection of remaining members with consideration to representatives for youth, disability, farming, heritage, business, finance, and tourism.

Members of the Evaluation Committee must not be members of the LCDC and in the case of in-house projects must not be members of the Implementing Partner.

It will be important to ensure that anyone selected for the Evaluation Committee has a level of expertise in the area that they are representing and that they are capable of engaging and making decisions as part of the Evaluation Committee role in making recommendations to the LCDC for ultimate decision. This will make the programme application process in relation to the evaluation of applications more transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory and also give meaning to the community led ethos of the programme.

Purpose – The overall purpose of the Evaluation Committee will be to appraise and have oversight of the project assessments and project files on completed project applications made to the Implementing Partner seeking funding under the LEADER Programme and to make recommendations to the LCDC on project applications in line with the Longford Local Development Strategy for the LEADER Programme 2023-2027, themes/sub-theme budgets, actions and targets set for consideration by the LCDC as LAG.

LEADER Monitoring Committee

Membership – The membership of this committee will be taken from and decided by the LCDC members when the group is established. It is also acknowledged that this committee may require additional expertise in relation to the ongoing monitoring of trends, outputs, outcomes, and impact of the LEADER programme.

Purpose – The overall purpose of the LEADER Monitoring Committee will be to review annual progress in the implementation of the Longford Local Development Strategy and to make recommendations to the LCDC in relation to these reviews. These reviews will include measurement, monitoring and evaluation of the spend and impact against the LDS priorities, monitoring local trends and issues that may impact the aims and objectives of the LDS and ensure that the processes used in reviewing and monitoring the LDS are participative and inclusive of relevant stakeholders (members of the target groups of the LEADER Programme; relevant members/staff of the LAG, Implementing Partner and Financial Partner; and other agencies and organisations relevant to LEADER in Co. Longford).

Frequency of LAG and Sub-committee meetings

Longford Local Community Development Committee currently meets on a bi-monthly basis. However, if necessary, the frequency of meetings may be extended to a monthly basis in order to appraise all project applications. A schedule of meetings for the following year will be organised on an annual basis every December to ensure that there is no delay in appraising projects.

The LCDC has established a LEADER Policy Group which will meet as required during the course of the programme, however initially this group will meet on a regular basis to devise, review and recommend policies to the LCDC for decision.

Once established it is recommended that the Evaluation Committee will meet every 8 weeks or on a more frequent basis as required. A minimum of six meetings will be held each year during the course of the programme. As detailed above, a LEADER Monitoring Committee will be established at the commencement of the Strategy, and it is envisaged that this committee will meet bi-annually.

1.4 LAG Roles and Responsibilities

Key agreements will be put in place to ensure clear separation of duties and the various roles and responsibilities within the LAG:-

Local Action Group	<p>Approval of the LAG partners role in the implementation of the LDS.</p> <p>Drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoid conflict of interest, ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by partners which are not public authorities, and allow selection by written procedure.</p> <p>Approve, generally, calls for proposals in accordance with the priorities and objectives set out in the Local Development Strategy.</p> <p>*Selecting operations and fixing the amount of support, and, where relevant, presenting the proposals to the body responsible for final verification of eligibility before approval.</p> <p>Decision making body for all LEADER funded applications.</p> <p>*Monitoring the implementation of the community-led local development strategy and the operations supported and carrying out specific evaluation activities linked to that strategy.</p> <p>Monitoring and review performance of LCRL as sole implementation partner as per service level agreement with the LCDC.</p> <p>Monitor the performance of Longford County Council as lead financial partner.</p>
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*Joint Actions with Implementing Partner.

Lead Financial Partner	Implementing Partner
<p>An agreement will be written between Longford LCDC and Longford County Council to set out the County Council's role as the Lead Financial Partner for the LEADER Programme.</p> <p>The Lead Financial Partner will be responsible for the draw-down of programme funds from the Department of Rural and Community Development.</p> <p>It will provide advance administration and animation funding to the Implementation Partner, and it will make payments to promoters on behalf of the LAG.</p>	<p>An agreement will be written between Longford L.C.D.C. and Longford Community Resources Clg (LCRL) in relation to LCRL's role as the sole Implementing Partner in the LEADER Programme. As the Implementing partner, LCRL will be responsible for :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Programme of Work Plan • Managing all Animation Activity • Developing and Issuing Calls for Proposals • Developing proposals with promoters • Receiving and processing applications in line with LDS • Project development, management, and monitoring • Developing and implementing in house projects • Resourcing of Evaluation Committee and following evaluation, the submission of projects to the board of LCRL and the LCDC. • Prepare and issue contracts and letters of offer. • File management, audit compliance and collating of documentation for Article 48 checks. • Submission of files for Article 48 checks

1.5 LAG Financial Management

LAG Lead Financial Partner Financial Control

Longford County Council will be the Lead Financial Partner for the LEADER programme in Longford. In terms of local government finance, the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government oversees the financial well-being and effective financial management and accountability of local authorities and the promotion of value for money principles in the sector. The Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) sets out the legislative basis for local authority financial control. Expenditure by Local Government falls into two main categories, Capital and Current.

Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure is expenditure that results in the creation of an asset beyond the year in which that asset is provided e.g., houses, swimming pool, library etc. It is financed largely by grants with the balance being funded from development levies and borrowings and own internal resources and property sales. In the case of some projects (e.g., local authority offices) they may be funded entirely by local authority own resources and borrowing. In recent years capital expenditure by Longford County Council has been of the order of €40m per annum.

Current Expenditure

A local authority's annual budget represents current expenditure (sometimes referred to as revenue expenditure) which covers the day-to-day running of the local authority (including staff salaries, housing maintenance, pensions, operational costs of treatment plants etc.).

The annual budget is adopted by the elected council at its budget meeting. Current expenditure is funded from a variety of sources. At the end of each year the local authority prepares an Annual Financial Statement. Current expenditure by Longford County Council is of the order of €60m per annum.

Expenditure Control Policies

Longford County Council has in place financial management systems, policies and procedures which cover authorisation, internal controls, procurement, and statutory compliance.

Audit and Oversight of Local Authorities

The accounts of local authorities, both current and capital, are audited by local government auditors who are independent in the performance of their functions and are under the general control of a Director of Audit. Local authority staff and elected members have a statutory duty to co-operate with them. Following receipt by the local authority of the audited Annual Financial Statement, and any auditor's report, the Chief Executive must submit both for consideration by the Elected Council. The audit of Local Government financial statements is undertaken in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, published by the Local Government Audit. Longford County Council also has an Internal Audit system whose work is overseen by an external Audit Committee.

Value for Money (V.F.M) reports covering a broad area of local authority activities have been issued promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness in local authorities. Where appropriate, the implementation of recommendations contained in the reports is monitored at the annual audit of the individual local authority annual financial statements. Longford LCDC, as a committee of the Council, operates under the same financial control system.

Longford County Council will also underwrite/indemnify the LAG and its members for actions taken in implementing the LDS. The financial partner will have a robust verification role in respect of processes around decision-making to allow it underwrite LAG activities with confidence. This will be largely facilitated through the Article 48 verification process.

LEADER Programme Financial Control

Longford County Council (Financial Partner) and Longford Community Resources CLG (Implementation Partner) will operate the ICT System. The proven Information and Communications Technology systems and the skill base of both partners are seen as critical to the daily operations of the programme. The accounting administration for programmes will be based on:

- Recognised accounting principles, which have been translated into clear practical procedures
- Public Accountability.
- E.U. and State funding conditions including EU Commission Regulations.

To ensure robust, transparent, and efficient financial management, the following tools will be adopted:-

Procedures Manuals

Each partner will contribute to the development of a Procedures Manual, guided by the previous LEADER programme, and the Operating Rules for LEADER 2023-2027. The purpose of the Procedures Manual is to comply with accreditation requirements as referenced in E.U. and Government Regulations and to guide employees and the employer on the procedures laid down by the LAG in relation to the overall operation of programme. The procedures outlined in the manual may be updated from time to time to reflect changing circumstances.

Procurement

The Implementing Partner staff have undertaken procurement procedures training to become familiar with the requirements of public procurement however from time to time, the Implementation Partner, Longford Community Resources Clg may seek the services of external providers to aid in delivering the LEADER Programme In all instances of tendering, it will adhere to the guidelines for Public Procurement. When appointing consultants, fees will be paid for a fixed amount for a specified period and task as set out in a signed contract. It will be a policy of the LAG to ensure that all contracts are fully adhered to.

1.6 LEADER Staffing

Longford Community Resources Clg, as Implementation Partner, will be responsible for the day-to-day management and co-ordination of the LEADER Programme under the direction of their CEO. Longford Community Resources will appoint competent administration staff to provide administration of the programme. Unfortunately, due to the limited financial resources available through the LEADER Programme the LAG and Financial Partner, Longford County Council, will not be in a position to fund staff under the programme and Longford Community Resources will be unable to retain the full staffing compliment throughout the lifetime of the LEADER Programme.

At the outset of the LEADER Programme Longford Community Resources will have staff employed in the following roles to deliver and implement the programme; CEO, Finance Co-ordinator, Finance Officer, Secretary, Development Workers, Project Administration Support Worker, and LEADER Programme Office Assistant/Clerical Support.

The positions of CEO, Finance Co-ordinator, Finance Officer, and Secretary are shared with additional development programmes within the company, initially these staff are allocated to the LEADER Programme for 45% of a 35-hour working week. The other proposed roles of Development Workers, Project Administration Support Worker and LEADER Programme Office Assistant/Clerical Support are allocated 100% of their time to the delivery and implementation of the LEADER Programme.

During the life cycle of the programme Longford Community Resources will be forced to reduce the staffing compliment employed in the delivery and implementation of the LEADER Programme due to the limited financial resources available.

Below please find a table demonstrating the staffing full-time equivalents by year through the life cycle of the programme:

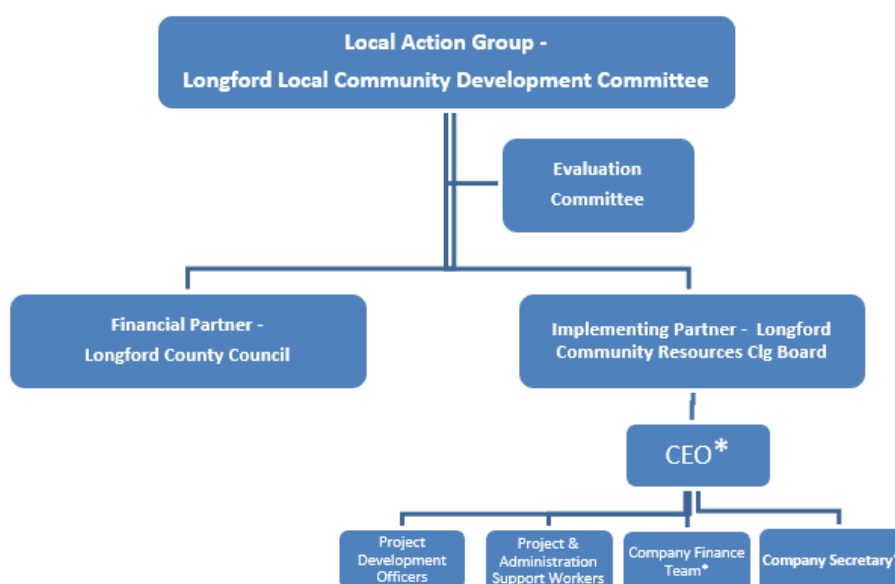
LEADER FTE (based on 35-hour working week)	Staffing
2023	3.42
2024	6.44
2025	5.72
2026	5.72
2027	3.33
2028	3.33
2029	3.33

The CEO is responsible for the management of the Implementing Partner and all of its functions including the delivery of all programmes being implemented. The CEO will be assisted by key staff members in implementing the LEADER Programme 2023-2027. The

CEO has 26 years' experience in administration and management with Longford Community Resources Clg, this involved the implementation and delivery of many social, economic and rural development programmes including the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and its predecessors, Rural Transport Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Tús Community Work Placement Initiative, County Longford Youth Service, and the LEADER programmes from Leader II up to and including the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

The current three Development Workers have 27 years collective experience in delivering and implementing the LEADER Programme and have an excellent working knowledge of the issues facing the county. Through their work they have also built valuable contacts with key community organisations and with relevant staff working in local statutory agencies. The administration of the LEADER Programme is also supported by a Project Administration Support Worker who has 18 years' experience in supporting the Development Workers and project promoters with compliance, rules, and regulations, under the various iteration of the LEADER programme. All the programme staff will also be ably assisted by two Administration Support Staff who have 5- and 3-years' experience respectively in assisting with all aspects of programme administration and have a detailed understanding of the rules and procedures in implementing the LEADER Programme.

The Finance Team and Secretary have a vast amount of experience with Longford Community Resources, this extends to the financial management and reporting on the programmes/initiatives delivered and implemented by Longford Community Resources and the strong internal controls and procedures laid down by the organisation and funding agencies. The team also ensure that the high standards of corporate governance and accountability are maintained. The Finance Co-ordinator and Secretary have 17 and 14 years of experience respectively working on the various LEADER Programmes.



Note: * These positions are shared with additional development programmes within the company. CEO, Finance Co-ordinator, and Secretary for 45% of a 35-hour working week, and Finance Officer 12.5% of a 35-hour working week.

1.7 Project Selection Procedures for LEADER

As part of the delivery of the LEADER Programme, Longford LCDC has given responsibility to Longford Community Resources Clg (LCRL) in order to build the capacity and co-ordinate an animation campaign to develop local actor's project management capabilities. Longford LCDC in conjunction with LCRL will devise non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedures and objective criteria for calls for proposals and ongoing project submission in line with the objectives and actions set out within this Local Development Strategy. LCRL will have responsibility for preparing; publishing, developing, issuing, and managing calls for expressions of interest, proposals, and ongoing project submissions. All expressions of interest for funding will be recorded on the LEADER ICT System and all expressions of interest will be notified to Longford LCDC including those which do not proceed to a formal application for funding.

LCRL will support local actors in developing proposals and will also receive funding applications from potential project promoters. LCRL will subsequently submit project applications and assessments to the Evaluation Committee for scoring, evaluation and recommendation to Longford LCDC.

As outlined above in point 1.3, Longford LCDC will establish an independent Evaluation Committee which will assess and evaluate all applications for LEADER funding. The Evaluation Committee will be solely responsible for making recommendations for funding or otherwise to the LAG. Evaluation Committee members will not be LAG members.

As part of the evaluation process each project application will be assessed in terms of being an eligible activity for the receipt of funding which will include adherence to relevant EU Regulations, the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 objectives and the specific theme and sub theme for which funding is sought, the Operating Rules for the programme and the objectives and actions identified in the LDS for Co. Longford. The Evaluation Committee members will then complete a formal evaluation scoring record with their marks and supporting comments on each project application presented for evaluation. The criteria for project evaluation and scoring will include the following:

- Compatibility with the Local Development Strategy
- Displacement & Deadweight
- Innovation
- Promoter Experience
- Financial Viability
- Sustainability
- Requirement

Prior to evaluating a project Evaluation Committee members must declare if they have an interest and the nature of the interest in a proposed project, should a member of the Evaluation Committee declare an interest then that person must absent themselves from any deliberations in relation to the project. All recommendations of the Evaluation Committee must be made post dealing with any declarations of interest. A minimum score of 65% of the total marks must be achieved in order for a project to be recommended by the Evaluation Committee for approval by the LAG. A detailed record of the Evaluation Committees assessment and recommendation must be maintained on the project file.

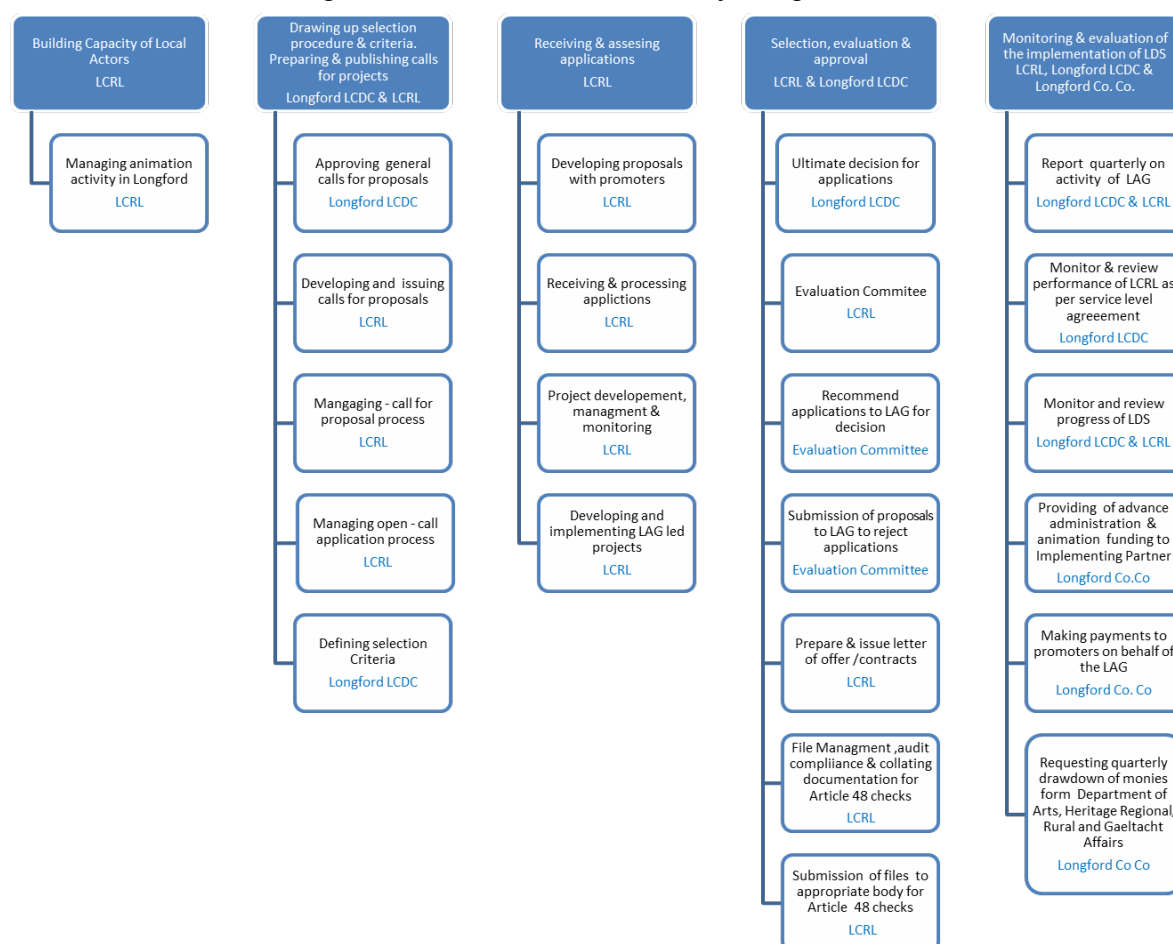
LCRL have been delegated responsibility by Longford LCDC to provide secretarial support to the Evaluation Committee and as part of this responsibility LCRL will forward the project scoring records and recommendations of the Evaluation Committee to Longford LCDC through the Chief Officer. These scoring records and recommendations will be forwarded directly to Longford LCDC for decision by the LAG within 10 working days of the Evaluation Committee recommendation. It is noted that the evaluation score records and

recommendations provided by the Evaluation Committee for each project application cannot be revised, amended, approved, or rejected by any other group/body before they are submitted to Longford LCDC for decision. The decision-making procedures of the LAG are detailed in section 1.3 above. In making a decision, should the LAG require, they may ask the Evaluation Committee to reconsider its recommendation or seek further information on the project before reaching a decision. The LAG may also perform a full evaluation of a project submitted by the Evaluation Committee. In such cases, the LAG must adhere to the full selection process prescribed for the Evaluation Committee.

Following the LAG decision, LCRL will inform the project promoter of the outcome of their application for funding, in the case of successful applications, and subject to administrative checks being performed, LCRL will prepare and issue letters of offer and contracts on behalf of Longford LCDC to the successful project promoter. The general file management for project applications will be the responsibility of LCRL. The LAG and its financial and implementation partners, Longford County Council and Longford Community Resources Clg will be governed by the LEADER Operating Rules in the operation and the implementation of the Local Development Strategy in respect of their various responsibilities.

Further detail on the project selection process and procedures are contained in Appendix 1 of this Local Development Strategy, which includes developing and building the capacity of local actors, issuing, and managing calls for proposals, receiving, and assessing applications for support, selecting operations, and monitoring the operations.

Table 1.7.1 –Proposed Implementation for LEADER element of the LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027 in County Longford



1.8 Relevant Experience

Local Action Group: Longford Local Community Development Committee

The members of the Longford LAG possess a wealth of experience in the public and private sector along with extensive and community and rural development knowledge, that it makes them eminently suitable for their role in operating the LEADER Programme.

The public sector membership includes the CEO of Longford County Council, the Longford Local Enterprise Officer and senior management from Longford Westmeath ETB, the Department of Social Protection and the HSE, all bringing their experience of strategic development and programme implementation.

The private and commercial business sector is represented by members whose business interests include banking and tourism facility management. The farming sector is represented by a member of the IFA. Along with four experienced elected representatives who possess excellent local knowledge and information about the needs of the county, there are five community representatives whose experience in community led development will be invaluable to the LAG. They represent the range of interests that are reflected in the programme and are active members of the PPN.

In addition to their individual areas of expertise, the members have had long-standing involvement on all the key working groups in the county, including Chambers, Business Forums, Residents Associations, Tidy Towns Groups, Environmental Groups, County Childcare Committee, County Longford Tourism, and the many agency committees that manage resources in the county.

Relevant experience of LAG Members relating to programme implementation and managing of public funds is below:

Colm Murray has been a member of Longford County Council since 2013. He is Chair of Longford Local Community Development Committee, a group leader on the Eastern and Midlands Regional Authority and was a board member of the former County Enterprise Board. He is a current member and former Chair of Ballymahon Vocational School board of management.

Colm has been heavily involved in the community and voluntary sector over the years and served as Development Officer (2016-2019) and Vice Chair (2019-2021) of Longford GAA County Board as well as Chair of Kenagh GAA club (2018-2022). Colm is a member of Kenagh & District Development Association. Colm Murray was appointed to the Board of Backstage Theatre CLG in 2019. He has also been involved in amateur dramatics for a number of years in his local community and is a founder member and former Chair of Pillar Box Drama Club. Colm studied Materials & Engineering Technology and Maths at University of Limerick and is a former lecturer at Technical University of the Shannon (AIT). He currently works as a healthcare administrator.

Adrian Greene is employed by Longford Community Resources since 1997, firstly in the position of Financial Controller and from 2009 as the Chief Executive. He has been actively involved in the many rural, social, and economic development programme delivered by Longford Community Resources, including the previous LEADER and Social Inclusion Programmes in Co. Longford. In his current role, he is responsible for determining and formulating strategies and policies and provides the overall direction for Longford Community Resources within the guidelines set up by and agreed with the Board of Directors. He is also responsible for planning, directing, and coordinating operational activities for the organisation with the help of the senior management team to deliver on the organisation's mission and vision.

Seamus Butler is Managing Director of BMS Ltd in Longford, which he established in 1986. It exports worldwide, with product in over 50 countries. Seamus brings a wide breadth of experience locally, nationally, and internationally to his current roles and he has been active in local community organisations in Longford for over 45 years.

His past positions included:

Chairman of the St Mel's Cathedral Project Committee
Member of the Small Business Task Force
Chairman of ISME
Member of the Ireland Newfoundland Partnership
President of Longford Chamber of Commerce, on and off for nine years.
Founder member and Chairman of Longford Community Resources Clg
Chairman of Longford Community Resources Ltd Evaluation Committee for 5 years
Chairman of Longford Community Resources Ltd for 7 years
President of the Forum on Public Procurement
Member of Longford Co Co, 2003 to 2009, 2014/2019
Leas Cathaoirleach Longford Co Co 2014/2015, 2017/2018
Cathaoirleach Longford Municipal District 2015/2016
Leas Cathaoirleach Longford Municipal District 2017/2018
Cathaoirleach Longford Municipal District 2018/2020
Chairman of Templemichael College and Longford College of Further Education BOM
Vice Chairman of Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board

Currently:

Member of and Leader of Fianna Fail on Longford Co Co
Chairman of Longford Joint Policing Committee, now vice Chair of the Local Community Safety Partnership (pilot)
Chairman of Longford Town F.C. Supporters' Trust
Member and former Chairman Governance Strategic Policy Committee
Vice Chairman of Local Community Development Committee
Founder member of Longford Tidy Towns
Director of Longford Enterprise Development Company Clg
Member of LCC Heritage Forum
Member of LCC Regeneration Committee

Veronica Brennan is currently the HSE County Manager for County Longford. This involves oversight of all Primary Care Services (Non ECC) in the County. Veronica has over 20 years' experience in the management and delivery of health services ranging from acute services in Tallaght Hospital to community-based services in Disabilities and now in Primary Care. From her previous role as a Project Manager in HSE Disability Services Veronica brings expertise in change management, having both developed new services under the Genio Social Reform Fund (SRF) and reconfigured existing services under the Progressive Disability Services (PDS) Implementation program for the HSE. She was a member of the Evaluation Committee under the previous Longford Leader program 2014-2020 until appointment to her new role in 2022. Veronica represents the HSE on several interagency groups including the Longford Westmeath Children & Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC), the Local Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) and the LCDC.

Aine Bohan is the Department of Social Protection Assistant Principal, with responsibility for Employer Relations in the Western/Midlands Division. Longford is part of this area. She represents the DSP on the LCDC. The DSP have been involved in identifying beneficiaries for Leader Funding in consultation with Local Partnership Companies in previous LEADER programmes and will take that knowledge & experience to the LAG for the LEADER Element of RDP 2023-2027.

Eileen Finan is part of a busy team at Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre Clg based in Granard, Co. Longford. Eileen holds the position of CEO within the organisation. She has extensive experience in the area of management and leadership. She holds a Degree in Training & Education and a Masters in Family Support Practice/Community Development and has worked for over 15 years in the area of Community Development and Family Support in the North Longford area. Eileen is a member of the LWCYPSC representing FRCs in Longford and Westmeath, she is also a member of LCDC, the Longford PPN Secretariat and sits on the Longford SICAP Monitoring Committee.

Paddy Mahon is currently Chief Executive of Longford County Council. He has a wide range of experience in both the public and private sectors. Paddy previously worked as Director of Services with Mayo County Council where he directed the operations of the Water Services and Roads Programmes. In July 2016, he was appointed as Chief Executive with Longford County Council.

Francesca Pawelczyk is an Environmental Representative for the Longford Public Participation Network (PPN). She has been a member of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) since September 2019. As part of the LCDC, she sits on the LEADER Policy Group, the Evaluations Committee, and is Chair of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Steering Advisory Group. Francesca spent over fifteen years working in the retail sector which involved store management and, after moving to Longford, business development for products throughout the Midlands and Northwest region. She is involved in many community activities which include being Chair of the Longford Environmental Network; Co-Chair of the Longford Town Darkness into Light Committee; Secretary of the Ardagh Preservation Society; and Communications Officer for Longford Green Earth. As a PPN Environmental Representative, she is also a member of the PPN Secretariat, and the Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). Her qualifications include an MA in Technical Communication and E-Learning; a BSc in Environmental Studies; and she is completing a Post-graduate Certificate in Social Economy Enterprise Development. She is passionate about the creation of initiatives and businesses that will support people and communities in the development of a local and national circular economy.

Déirdre Orme is Longford Tourism Representative and Manager of Knights and Conquests Heritage Centre - a community social enterprise project.

Déirdre takes great pride in our heritage, people & place. Her professional qualifications are in art, visual communications, and television production. Déirdre has many credits to her name, working on productions for RTÉ & documentaries for TG4 as well as various acting roles. Déirdre has also worked with various government bodies, including the OPW at Brú na Bóinne, Newgrange & Sliabh na Caillí and also with Fáilte Ireland as a IHH Tourism Advisor. She is a highly motivated volunteer, volunteering with the department of defence & various sporting bodies. Déirdre was recently awarded a national award for Volunteering in Sport by the Federation of Irish Sport. Amongst other roles Déirdre is also a member of Granard Town French twinning team with East Rouen. Déirdre is deeply dedicated to cultural integration, rural regeneration, and community enhancement.

Colin Dalton is a member of Longford County Council, member since May 2020 seated on 5 committees of Longford County Council. Worked in Mc Carricks wholesale for 32 years, now working with BWG in Mullingar as a sales Rep covering the County of Longford. Colin is a member of the local football club Sean Connolly's, He was involved with Longford County teams for 30 years and as a coordinator and selector for 8 years. Colin set up the Ballinalee Tidy Towns Committee in 2020, he is also a member of the community group in Ballinalee village, the pony show committee, and supports groups in surrounding areas.

Michael Nevin, Acting Director of Services, Longford County Council and is Head of Enterprise with the Local Enterprise Office. He has held this role for the last 23 years and has an intricate knowledge and understanding of the local enterprise environment and a strong relationship with local entrepreneurs and business owners. He works to support the economic development of County Longford, working with partners to attract investment to the county, to support business development and expansion and help create a pro-business environment that facilitates economic growth. Michael also has a wide breadth of community experience serving for many years on the LEADER board, the LCDC, the County Childcare committee, local voluntary and community boards to include the Backstage Theatre, the Co:worx Facility in Edgeworthstown, and the Temperance Hall Committee. He has helped shape local policy and has led the development and implementation of many local actions and initiatives that have benefited different individuals and community groups.

Shauna Doherty has over twenty years' experience of working in the Further Education and Training sector. She was appointed in 2016 as the Adult Education Officer for the Further Education and Training Service of LWETB. She previously held the position of Community Education Facilitator for 10 years with Louth and Meath ETB. As Adult Education Officer she has the responsibility for the management and development of a number of provisions across Longford and Westmeath. These services include Adult Literacy, ESOL, Family Learning, Skills for Work, Community Education, Back to Education Initiative and the Adult Guidance Service. Her main focus is ensuring the provision of high quality, flexible programmes with a focus on engaging those who have not traditionally accessed education and to provide a safe and informal means for them to re-engage with lifelong learning. In addition, she has also previously led and managed a number of other projects including The Smart Skills Labour Market Activation Fund programme, Momentum, SkillVEC/SkillETB, Equality for Women Projects, Digital Inclusion Projects, and European Projects.

Patrick McGivney is currently an active member of St. Marys Granard GAA. He recently moved back to Longford after spending 10 years working as a Management Consultant in Dublin with PWC. He is also the Co-Founder of Harp Media LTD who produced the recent feature film Lakelands which was shot entirely in Longford and received critical acclaim nationally. Harp Media runs numerous film and writing courses as well as Camps for teenagers and young people in disadvantaged areas around the county. He also works closely with Primary and Secondary Schools around Longford to promote creativity and the Arts amongst students. He has worked with the local community in Granard to promote and protect its various heritage sites and is active in fundraising and supporting the development of the Knights and Conquest Heritage Centre.

Tara Farrell is the Chief Executive Officer of Longford Women's Link (LWL).

A native of Roscommon, Tara has over 20 years' experience in the Community, Voluntary and Education sectors, working in a variety of areas including Project Management, Adult Education, Women's Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and engaging in Broadcast and Social Media. Tara is the Chairperson of Irish Rural Link and former Chair of AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation and a Director of Roscommon Women's Network. She is a member of the Steering Group of The New Common Charter and part of the Ad-Hoc Group for North-South East-West Co-operation. Tara lectures in Human Rights and Equality at St. Angela's College (ATU). She holds an LLM in International Human Rights Law and Diploma in Technology Enhanced Learning and has lectured in Political Science in the University of Limerick and Management Development at Dublin City University.

Paraic Brady was elected to Longford County Council in 2019 and previously held the post of Leas-Cathaoirleach. Current member of Granard Municipal District and previously held the post of Cathaoirleach of the MD. Community group involvement includes Drumlish\Ballinamuck Town Team and membership of the Board of Management of Drumlish

National School. Also Involved in the Community Games locally, GAA locally and 1798 commemorations in Ballinamuck as well as other community activities, Tidy Towns Enhancement etc.

Emmet Duffy is the IFA Rural Development Officer for Longford and has a wealth of knowledge, experience, and interest in rural business and in his community.

1.9 Implementation Partner: Longford Community Resources Clg

Longford Community Resources Clg was established in 1995 and is a company limited by guarantee and without share capital. The company was formed for the purpose of implementing the LEADER programme and has the main objective of promoting rural development and tackling social exclusion. The work of the company is managed by a voluntary board, comprising of directors who are representing sectoral interests including, Business and Farming Sector, Community and Voluntary Sector and Statutory Agencies. It has successfully managed the planning and implementation of multiple rural, social, and economic development programmes over the last twenty-eight years.

Since inception, Longford Community Resources Clg has gained extremely valuable experience and knowledge of good practice and innovative approaches – approaches that work. It has worked with almost every community across County Longford and has instigated area-based economic, social, cultural and enhancement projects that have generated employment, social benefit, improved living conditions and economic activity.

Importantly, the company has, both individually and through working in partnership with key statutory and community organisations, gained particular expertise and respect in working with hard-to-reach communities and is currently working in the most disadvantaged areas of the county implementing initiatives that assist in reducing poverty and ensuring that people have better access to services and supports. In order to resource this work effectively, the company has leveraged additional funding from various agencies including the Health Service Executive, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Department of Social Protection, Department of Rural and Community Development, Youth Work Ireland, Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board and Longford County Council.

Through the implementation of four LEADER programmes, the company has successfully designed and implemented development strategies for the benefit of the county over the last twenty-eight years. It has initiated LAG led projects and it has administered calls for projects from private and community promoters that were in line with LEADER strategies.

Historically, the company was involved in the delivery of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, LEADER II, LEADER +/- National Rural Development Programme, Rural Transport Initiative, the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, and the Millennium Fund, Eircode and Digital Switchover.

Currently, the company is managing the following development programmes:

- **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** - The SICAP programme is a national programme with the aim to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. Its' vision is to improve life chances and opportunities for those who are marginalised. This is achieved through the application of Community Development approaches, targeted supports, and inter-agency collaboration.
- **Tús Community Work Placement Initiative**—An activation initiative for those who are unemployed. Tús provides quality work opportunities for those who are unemployed while at the same time providing beneficial services to communities. There are

currently 100 people approved to participate on LCRL managed Tús schemes operating across County Longford.

- **Rural Social Scheme**—The RSS supports community-based projects by harnessing the skills and talents of small farmers who undertake projects of relevance to their local communities. The RSS currently has 55 participants working across County Longford.
- **Primary Health Care Project**— This project provides basic primary healthcare information and training to members of the Travelling community. There are seven Healthcare workers, all from the Traveller community employed on the health promotion project. They work alongside a Project Co-ordinator, Traveller Men's Worker, and a Community Development Worker all aiming to improve the participation and inclusion of members of the Travelling community in Co. Longford.
- **Empowering Communities Programme** – a community development approach to address social exclusion and the impacts of poverty in specific geographic areas. The programme aims to strengthen, develop, and facilitate relationships between the existing community stakeholders, and between community groups and statutory agencies and structures with the aim of addressing exclusion and lack of meaningful and effective engagement between the community and local services.
- **Community Development Programme** – County Longford has become a very diverse county with a range of cultures and ethnic groups making it their home. This programme supports these communities to address the varying degrees of exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination and challenges that they may face.
- **Longford Volunteer Centre** –exists to provide positive, inclusive, and well managed volunteering in County Longford. It offers a free liaison service to connect volunteers with high-quality volunteer placements in community-based organisations.
- **Social Prescribing** – this project aims to help people connect with sources of support and activities within their local community, with the purpose of improving health and wellbeing.
- **County Longford Youth Service**- Offers valuable services to young people living in County Longford and has a specific focus on disadvantaged and marginalised youth. This is undertaken by providing Youth Worker led initiatives aimed at promoting equality and social inclusion.

Due to their expertise and working knowledge of key socio-economic development issues in County Longford, LCRL is represented on the following county-based committees:

- Employment Development and Information Centre
- County Longford Tourism
- County Childcare Committee
- Heritage Forum
- Children's and Youth Services Committee
- Midland Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce.
- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Traveller Inter-Agency Committee

As Implementing Partner in the delivery of the Local Development Strategy, Longford Community Resources Clg recognises that the nature of our activities and the environment in which we operate expose us to risk which have the potential to impact or harm our staff, community, stakeholders, reputation, finances, operation, and success of our organisation. Longford Community Resources Clg believe that effective risk management provides assurance regarding the risks that may threaten the achievement of stated objectives, including the delivery of the LEADER Local Development Strategy. Specifically, the analysis and management of uncertainty surrounding these objectives will assist Longford Community Resources Clg in ensuring that threats are mitigated whilst opportunities are advanced. It is and has been our policy to adopt best practice in the identification, analysis, evaluation,

control, monitoring and review of risk to ensure that they are avoided, reduced, shared or accepted. To ensure this, we:

- Embed full and effective consideration of risk within the planning and management of new and existing activities across the organisation.
- Engage with our stakeholders and use our knowledge and understanding to identify our risks.
- Determine the level of risk for our organisation by considering the likelihood and impact of identified risks.
- Ensure that acceptable net risk thresholds are clearly defined and managed.
- Effectively manage risk to ensure that our objectives, goals and purpose are achieved.
- Create and maintain a risk register and management plan.
- Monitor and review the risk register on a regular basis.
- Put a contingency plan in place in case of a severe business disruption.

Longford Community Resources Clg have a Risk Management Policy and Procedures in place with the purpose of providing a risk management framework to ensure levels of risk and uncertainty are identified and managed in a systematic, structured way, so any potential threat to the delivery of our services is appropriately managed and completed successfully. The procedures involved in risk management are as follows:

- Establish the context.
- Identify the risk.
- Assess the risk in terms of likelihood, impact, and risk level.
- Managing and controlling the risk through one of four options;
 - avoid the risk
 - reduce the risk
 - share the risk
 - accept the risk

In terms of managing risk at a LEADER project level, at both application stage and grant drawdown stage various Implementing Partner (IP) staff conduct checks on project file documentation to ensure eligibility and minimise risk.

- 1 Application/Claim is reviewed and processed by the Project Development Officer in line with Operating Rules, Circulars, LDS and LAG Policies and IP Procedures etc. Subsequently,
 - (a) IP documentation required is placed on file
 - (b) Where additional documentation or information is required from the promoter this shall be requested and file will not progress until such time as this documentation is received.
 - (c) Finalised application file is prepared for IP pre-administrative validation checks.
- 2 File is then forwarded to Project Admin staff for inspection to ensure file is complete and in compliance with all relevant rules and regulations, and ready for administrative validation checks. On completion of same, the Project Admin staff member will sign the relevant checklists indicating that the inspection was completed and the file may be uploaded onto the ICT System and progressed for IP Manager Approval. However, if the Project Admin worker is dissatisfied with any of the file documentation, the CEO/ Project Development Officer will be notified and if necessary the promoter will be contacted requesting relevant items be submitted prior to Admin sign off on file.

- 3 After Project Admin has signed off on the application/claim all documentation associated is uploaded to the LEADER ICT system. All documentation is filed as per the repository sub-structure.
- 4 Relevant checklist on the LEADER ICT system is completed and project application/claim is progressed for "IP Manager Sign Off"
- 5 LEADER ICT System "IP Manager" ensures file is satisfactory for progression to administrative validation checks. When satisfied the project is approved and moved forward to administrative validation checks. If the IP Manager is dissatisfied with any documentation or checklist responses, the relevant LEADER Staff member will be notified and the issue will be addressed prior to IP Manager approval on the file.

Appendix 1 provides additional information on:

- Longford Local Community Development Committee Standing Orders and Conflict of Interest Policy
- Heads of Agreements
- Job Descriptions for LEADER implementation partner staff members

SECTION 2: LDS AREA PROFILE

2.1 Geography & Accessibility

County Longford is Ireland's fourth smallest county and covers an area of 1,091km². It is located in the Midlands of Ireland, bordered by County Westmeath, Cavan, Leitrim, and Roscommon and within the administrative boundary of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. A map of the County along with towns and villages can be found in Appendix 2.1.

The north of the county is generally hilly and dominated by drumlin landscapes with the River Erne and Lough Gowna to the northeast. Lough Ree, Lough Forbes, and the River Shannon are located towards the west, with extensive areas of raised boglands towards the south and east. These boglands are in relatively pristine condition and they represent an important habitat for biodiversity which forms part of the ecological corridor of the Midlands. Aquatic habitats are also numerous, and County Longford has a wealth of attractions including lakes, rivers, and canals, making it an ideal destination for fishing and water-based recreation.

Roads

Centrally located, County Longford has good transport links including the N4 (Dublin-Sligo) and the N5 (Dublin-Mayo) routes. The N55 is the north to south artery linking Athlone to Cavan via Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown. Bus services are operated by Bus Eireann and a range of private operators.

Rail

Rail services are available from Longford and Edgeworthstown which both operate on the Dublin-Sligo rail line.

2.2 Population and Trends

The population of County Longford has seen the largest increase between 2016 and 2022 than anywhere else in the country. Based on the preliminary results of the 2022 Census, the county's population stands at 46,634, 23,302 of which are female and 23,449 of which are male. The increase in population between 2016 and 2022 is 14.1%. In comparison, Ireland's population growth for the same period was 7.6%. The growth in population in the county has largely been driven by net migration.

Municipal Districts

Longford is divided into 3 no. Municipal Districts under the jurisdiction of Longford County Council and 54 Electoral Districts. A map of the Municipal Districts including reference to disadvantaged areas is included in Appendix 2.2.

For the purposes of this Local Development Strategy, all 54 Electoral District of County Longford are included in the proposed action plan for the LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027 and the analysis that underpins that plan.

The 3 Municipal Districts are Mid-Longford, Granard Area and Ballymahon Area as described below.

Table 2.2.1 Breakdown of Municipal & Electoral Districts

Municipal Districts	Electoral Districts	2016 Population¹
Mid-Longford Area (9 Electoral Districts)	Breanrisk, Caldragh, Clondara, Cloonee, Corboy, Longford No.1 Urban, Longford No.2 Urban, Longford Rural, Newtown Forbes	16,046
Granard Area (28 Electoral Districts)	Abbeylara, Aghaboy, Ballinalee, Ballinamuck West, Bunlahy, Columbkille, Coolamber, Creevy, Crosagstown, Currygrane, Dalystown, Drumgort, Drumlish, Drummeel, Firry, Gelshagh, Granard Rural, Granard Urban, Killoe, Knockanbaun, Lislea, Miltown, Moatfarrell, Moyne, Mullanlaghta, Newgrove, Sonnagh.	10,674
Ballymahon Area (18 Electoral Districts)	Agharra, Ardagh East, Ardagh West, Ballymahon, Ballymuigh, Cashel East, Cashel West, Doory, Forgney, Foxhall, Kilcommock, Kilglass, Kilashee, Ledwithstown, Meathas Truim, Mountdavis, Moydow, Rathcline.	14,153

¹Based on 2016 CSO Data

Despite Longford town joining the category of +10,000 population (i.e., large towns), the county remains heavily populated in rural areas with 66.9% of population living in rural areas. 33.1% of the population live in urban areas with the largest towns identified below:

Table 2.2.2 Population of main settlements in County Longford (Source: CSO)

Town	Total Population 2011	Total Population 2016	% Change
Longford Town	9,601	10,008	+4%
Edgeworthstown	1,744	2,072	+19%
Ballymahon	1,563	1,877	+20%
Lanesborough (incl Ballyleague, Co. Roscommon)	1,377	1,454	+6%
Granard	1,021	816 ¹	-20%

¹ CSO changed the settlement boundary between 2011-2016, using the same boundaries as 2011, population of Granard would be 1,096 (+7% population growth)

Housing

Based on preliminary results from the 2022 Census data, there has been a 3.8% increase in housing stock in County Longford (6% Nationally) despite the 14.1% increase in the population in the same period. Actual housing stock is 19,292 in the county.

While vacancy rates have reduced in County Longford between 2016 and 2022, unused buildings remain an issue across the county. According to the 2022 Census vacancy rate is 12.1% compared with 8% at a national level.

In 2022, in Longford 61% of households owned their own home, with a further 31% renting. This compared with 66% of households owning their home nationally and 28% renting.

Between 2011 and 2016, there was an increase in the percentage of privately rented housing, while the percentage of local authority rented housing remained static between the two periods. According to the Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2021 from the National Oversight and Audit Commission, at the end of 2021, there were 2,196 dwellings in the ownership of the local authority and between 2020 and 2021, County Longford saw the greatest decrease in long term homeless adults.

The average household size was 2.7 persons based on 2016 Census data. There is a relatively high proportion of one and two person households within the county.

In 2016, there were 2,010 one-parent households in Longford; 86% lone mothers, 14% lone fathers (source: Onefamily).

According to Trutz Haze, the lone parent rate in Longford in 2016 was 20.4%, slightly down from 2011 (21.4%) but above national average 19.9%

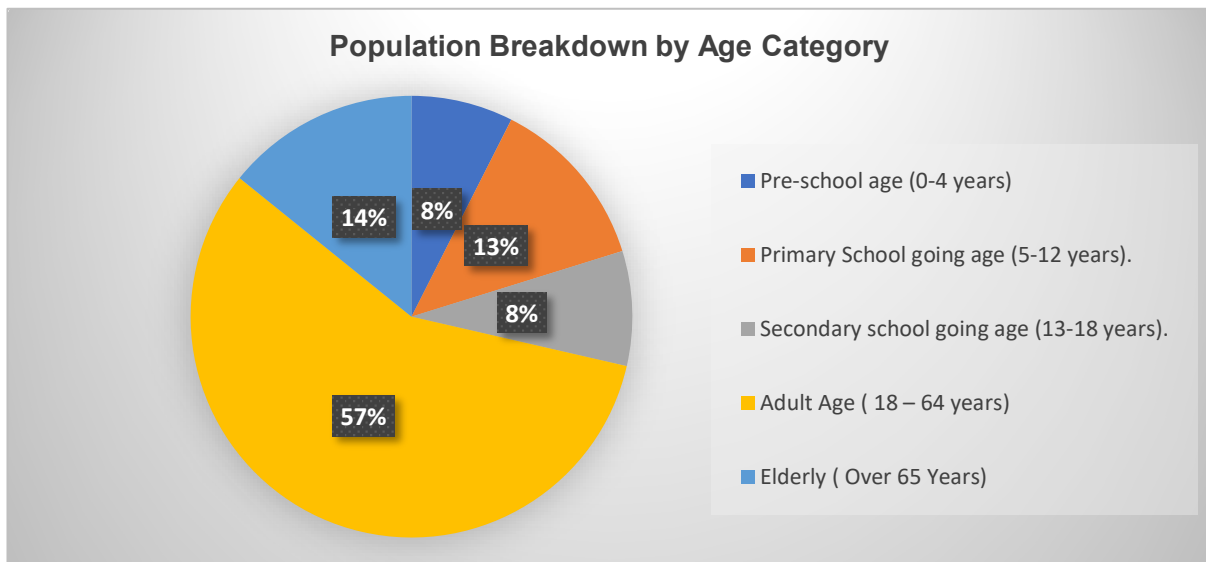
Age Profile

The average age of Longford's population in April 2022 was 38.8 years, compared with 37.4 years in April 2016. Nationally, the average age of the population was 38.8, up from 37.4 in April 2016.

The number of people aged 65 and over continues to grow. This age group increased by 26% to 7,332 in Longford, and by 22% to 776,315 at a national level since 2016.

Given the aging population, the County Development Plan acknowledges that there is a need to plan for adequate healthcare, accommodation, and services to enable independent living for as long as possible, encourage active lifestyles and address isolation for older residents.

Table 2.2.3 Population Breakdown by Age Category (Source: 2016 CSO)



Diversity & Minority Groups

Between 2016 and 2022, County Longford experienced an increase in net migration of 4,134 and recorded an average annual net inward migration of 16 persons per 1,000 population, the highest in the country.

In Longford, the number of dual Irish citizens increased from 752 to 1,523 between 2016 and 2022 while non-Irish citizens accounted for 13% of the county's population. A breakdown of the different nationalities is listed below based on 2016 CSO data:

Table 2.2.4 Population Breakdown by Nationality (Source: 2016 CSO)

Resident by Nationality	Population
Ireland	34,000
Poland	1,903
United Kingdom	1,155
Lithuania	540
Other EU28	1,483
Rest of World	917
Not Stated	657

In 2016 there were 10 towns where more than 26 per cent of the population were non-Irish. and 3 towns (Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Longford) within the top 10 towns identified nationally with the highest proportion of non-Irish nationals. Initiatives and supports are required to fully integrate different nationalities into communities and the county.

Table 2.2.5 Breakdown of Residents (Source: 2016 CSO)

Town	Number of Residents	% of Non-Irish Nationals	Number of Non-Irish Nationals	The Largest Non-Irish Group (number)
Edgeworthstown	2,062	32.3%	667	Polish - 163
Ballymahon	1,866	32.1%	599	Polish – 273
Longford	10,011	27.4%	2,740	Polish – 1,004

According to the 2016 census, the biggest increase in Travellers living in permanent housing occurred in Longford, where the number increased by 43.1 per cent (or 295 people) since 2011. Unemployment rates among the Traveller community are extremely high as is a prevalent low educational attainment and low levels of participation in mainstream employment support services. Specific supports will be required under the LEADER LDS 2023 - 2027 to develop initiatives that will encourage participation and reduce levels of social exclusion experienced by members of the Travelling community.

According to the 2016 Census, there were 5,916 people with a disability in Longford., a rise from 5,404 in 2011. The proportion of the population with a disability in County Longford (14.5%) in 2016, rose from 13.9% in 2011 and 9.5% in 2006 and is above the national average of (13.5%).

Youth

According to Census 2016, the population aged 19 years and under in County Longford accounted for 12,111 persons, equating to 29.6 % of the total county population and an increase of 1.8 % (695 persons) since the 2011 Census. The largest age group in the County comprising of the 5-9 years cohort. This generates requirements for provision of adequate childcare, educational facilities, and other associated infrastructure provision.

Currently there are 38 childcare services in the county (16 community and 22 private) and 11 Childminders now known to the CCC but not registered with Tusla since May 2023.

County Longford has the highest proportion of non-Irish and traveller children in the country:

- The county has the highest proportion of non-Irish national children in the country, at a rate of 118.3 per 1,000 children, higher than Dublin County at 97.0 and the national average of 82.5.
- In addition, County Longford had the highest proportion of Traveller children in the country with 3.5% of all children in the county being Traveller children, which is almost three times higher than the national average of 1.2%.

Deprivation Levels

According to the latest national deprivation index, County Longford is the third most deprived county in the country behind only Donegal and Limerick City. The report draws on Census data and scores areas based on indicators such as unemployment rates, educational

attainment, housing, and lone parent ratio. This is seen as a contributor to anti-social behaviour and related problems within the county.

The Relative Index Score for County Longford was -6.0. This compares with neighbouring counties as follows:

Table 2.2.7 2016 HP Relative Index Score (Source: Trutz Haase)

County	2016 HP Relative Index Score
Longford	-6.0
Cavan	-3.9
Leitrim	-3.2
Roscommon	-2.4
Westmeath	-2.1
National Average	0.6

Table 2.2.8 Disadvantaged Electoral Districts Areas in the County (Source: Trutz Haase)

Electoral Districts	HP Relative Index Score	Population	% of County Population
Foxhall	-12.53	528	1.3%
Granard Urban	-11.27	1,096	2.7%
Killoe	-10.49	274	0.7%
Lislea	-12.39	145	0.4%
Longford No. 1 Urban	-15.82	3,592	8.8%

Longford No.1 Urban is the most disadvantaged area and contains small areas of Bannon Terrace and Annaly Park which are considered very disadvantaged. Of note: -

- Lone parents account for 36.1% of all families living in the area
- Unemployment rate was 43% amongst males
- 25.8% have a primary education only while 15.5% have a third level education

Additional supports will need to be targeted at disadvantaged areas to support marginalised and hard to reach individuals and families.

Education

County Longford has lower than national levels when it comes to the percentage of population with third level education. 22% of the population has a third level education in comparison to 35.9% at a national level. In terms of primary education, the percentage is 17.5% versus 13% at a national level. The low levels of third level education feed into the employment profile with higher levels of the population in semi/unskilled employment classes than the national average.

Primary Schools

- There are 38 mainstream primary schools, a number of which now have dedicated special needs units 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, a number of which have dedicated special needs units; 5 of which are inter-denominational, and none of which are in the Irish medium.

Focuses on Green & climate change initiatives and youth initiatives are evident at school level across the county. The percentage of schools that have been awarded / renewed green flags status in the two years to 31/12/2021 in County Longford was 38%, while average for the country was 35%. In addition, the percentage of schools involved in the local Youth Council/Comhairle na nÓg schem in County Longford was 100%.

Significant to the education profile in the county is that there is no third level institution with the nearest third level colleges being TUS Athlone and Cavan Institute. The lack of third level institute in the county could be seen as a contributory factor in the high levels of semi/unskilled workers in the county.

2.3 Employment Market

According to the 2022 census data, there were 19,695 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Longford, an increase of 4,523 people (+30%) between 2016 and 2022. Nationally, there were +16% additional people at work. Of those working, 4,110 people (aged 15 and over) worked from home at least one day a week in 2022. This represented 21% of the workforce. The national figure was 32%.

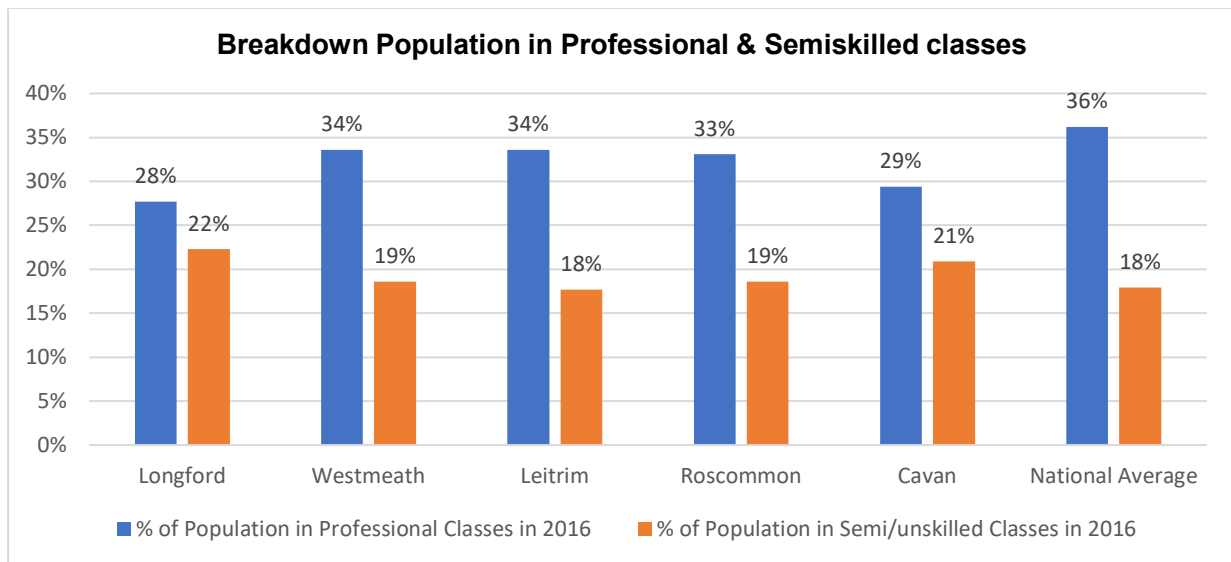
It is expected that the profile of workers across industry captured in the 2022 census data will be similar to that seen in the 2016 census as identified below.

Table 2.2.9 Breakdown of Workers by Industry (Source: 2016 CSO)

Workers by Industry	Working Population	% Population
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1,159	8%
Construction	841	6%
Manufacturing, Mining & Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water Supply and Waste Management	2,566	17%
Commerce and Trade	3,108	20%
Transport and Communications	756	5%
Public Administration	929	6%
Professional Services	3,314	22%
Other	2,499	16%
Total	15,172	100%

County Longford has the lowest % of population in professional classes in comparison to neighbouring counties.

Figure 2.2.10 Breakdown Population in Professional & Semi/Unskilled Classes (Source: Trutz Haze)



Unemployment

According to April 2023 CSO data for County Longford, there were 2,185 people on the Live Register. This figure was up slightly on the previous year (2,124 Apr 2022).

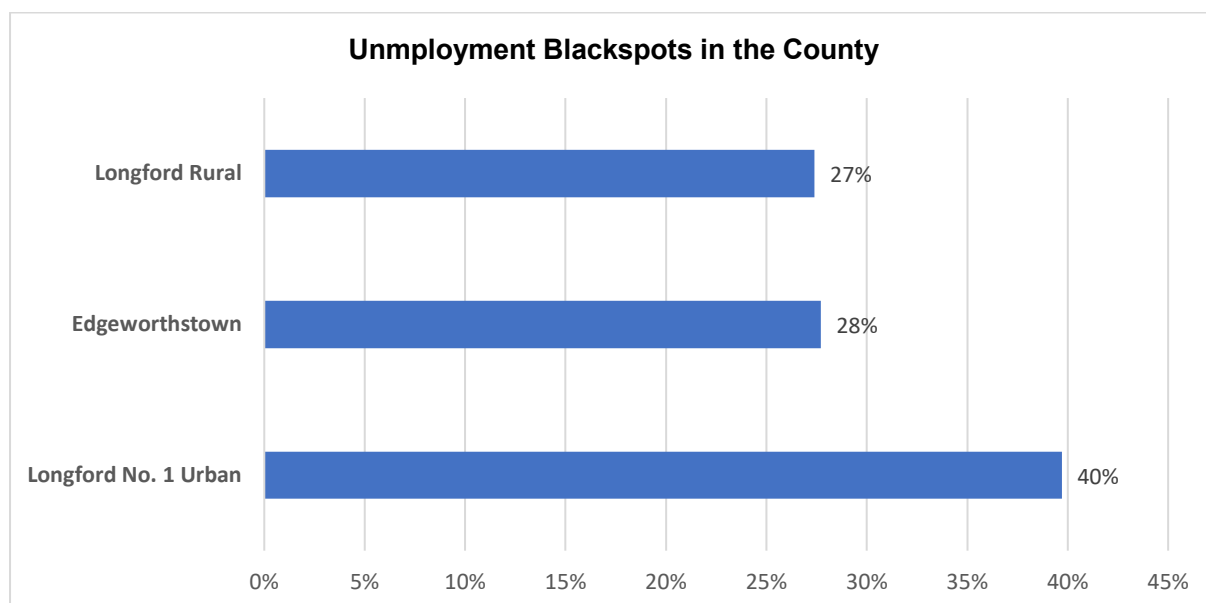
Table 2.2.11: Live Register Figures: April 2023, County Longford. Source CSO

Age	Area	Male & Female	% of Male & Female	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
Under 25 years	Longford County	282	12.9%	159	56.4%	123	43.6%
25 Years and over	Longford County	1,903	87.1%	1,063	55.9%	840	44.1%
All Ages	Longford County	2,185	100%	1,222	55.9%	963	44.1%

In 2016 census, Longford town had the highest unemployment rate at 30.6% versus an average of 13.9% for other large towns in the country (large town population +10,000).

Unemployment blackspots in County Longford include:

Figure 2.2.12 Unemployment Blackspots in the County (Source: 2016 CSO)



2.4 Economic Activity

County Longford is a key stakeholder in the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, collaborating with partners in Westmeath, Laois and Offaly on strategic objectives and agreeing concrete actions in three main areas, namely: Climate action - transition to a zero-carbon economy; Capitalising on strengths of the Midlands through smart specialisation and digitalisation; and Positioning the Midlands as the destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.

County Longford is centrally located in the heart of Ireland, relatively close to Dublin and dissected by important transport corridors. As a rural County, many of its enterprises are Agri-based but there is also a strong range and healthy mix of large, medium, and small enterprises that help to sustain vibrant towns and villages across the County. Longford Town is the main industrial hub with several key employers supported by the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in areas such as MedTech, Food Processing and Engineering. Each of the main satellite towns has at least one key employer although Lanesboro has been impacted in this regard with the cessation of peat harvesting and the closure of the ESB power station in the town in 2021.

The small business sector is of vital importance with approximately 2000 micro enterprises scattered across the County. Most of these enterprises employ less than 10 persons with the majority involved in provision of local products and services. In a small percentage of cases micro-enterprises have a national or international reach and all small firms are supported in their development ambition by agencies such as the Local Enterprise Office and Longford Community Resources CLG.

According to the Social Enterprises in Ireland Baseline Data Collection Exercise by the Department of Rural and Community Development, there are 50 Social Enterprises across the county.

Retail Space

25 no. planning applications have been granted for commercial properties in County Longford in the five years up to 2021. These were mostly associated with smaller mixed use or retail units, minor extensions, or change of use applications within the larger settlements, along with a notable trend towards petrol and service stations.

Tourism

A reoccurring theme throughout the county is the lack of tourism accommodation and visibility of tourist attractions. As a response to the shortcomings, the County Longford Tourism Strategy 2023-2027 has been developed is closely aligned to Failte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Strategy with emphasis on positioning the Midlands as one of Europe's leading regenerative tourism destinations. The approach to building tourism in County Longford will be on slow tourism based around culture, heritage, and landscape and on outdoor recreation and adventure that is both water and land based.

Table 2.4.1: Accommodation Supply. Source Failte Ireland Database 2021

Accommodation Type	Properties	No. Rooms / Units	Bed Spaces
B&Bs	3	12	33
Guesthouses	2	17	40
Holiday Camps	1	932	2,330
Hotels	3	92	225
Self-Catering	2	3	18
Irish Welcome Standard	1	6	18
Total	12	1,062	2,664

Key Tourism Assets Include:

- Center Parcs: Following an estimated investment of over €230million, the Longford Forest resort Center Parcs was opened in the Newcastle Forest adjacent to Ballymahon in July 2019. The resort employs over 1,200 employees leading to economic and social benefit across a wide catchment area. In 2022 it surpassed 1 million visitors and is currently attracting over 3,500 visitors to County Longford weekly. Center Parcs has ambitious plans to increase its capacity further and it operates a very successful business model based on shared family time and experiences.
- The Royal Canal Greenway at 130km is the most significant greenway crossing the county and is supplemented with a series of beautiful walking trails that allow for gentle exploration of many different parts of County Longford.
- The National Famine Way is a trail of historical significance, tracing the route walked by emigrants from Strokestown to the quays in Dublin during the time of the Great Famine. It follows the route of the Royal Canal Greenway and captures the story of that ill-fated journey with its captivating layers of history and culture, presenting a truly immersive and reflective experience.
- The extensive Bord na Móna peatlands give the county a canvas that appeals to many visitors, including ecologists and environmentalists and now reclaimed, it will become a significant biosphere that will allow for responsible exploration, but also contribute significantly to our climate change agenda.
- Longford has a unique history of involvement in insurrections and rebellions from the Normans up to the War of Independence, the Rebel Trail identifies important locations

with 10 stops starting in Longford Town, Drumlish, Ballinamuck, Moyne, Aughnacliffe, Dring, Granard, Clonfin, Ballinalee and back to Longford Town. The 1798 battlefield sites in Ballinamuck and Granard are important landmarks that helped to shape this nation's history and identity, and as such have appeal on an international scale.

- The literary tradition in Longford is very strong and includes connections with Jane Austin, Oscar Wilde, Oliver Goldsmith, Maria Edgeworth, Leo Casey and Padraic Colum, the Literary Trails identify significant sites across Co Longford including Longford Town, Carrickglass Manor, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Abbeyshrule, Corlea Trackway, Kenagh and Ardagh.
- Corlea Visitor Centre, an 18m-long section of the original trackway, the largest of its kind ever excavated in Europe dating back to the Iron age is on display in the visitor centre. The bog at Corlea has undergone conservation work to keep it wet so that you get the true experience of what life and work were really like in boglands of ancient Ireland. Corlea Visitor Centre is currently Longford's second biggest individual attraction with approximately 5,000 unique visitors per year.
- The re-furbished St. Mel's Cathedral in Longford Town which is known as a "flagship cathedral" in the Irish midland's region, is now a major tourist attraction since it re-opened in 2014.
- The Shannon has been a tourist destination since the Victorian period offering bathing, angling, and boating to visitors. From the 1970's through to the 1990's, the Shannon focused mainly on coarse angling, water sports and the emerging cruise hire industry. This focus has facilitated the development of vibrant towns and villages along the waterways in County Longford.

Another key tourism offering in Longford is the county's rich heritage and culture. Given the diversity of cultures in the county along with the numerous, things to do and places to see in Longford, there is opportunities to support not only additional tourism to Longford but also support inclusive intercultural activities that will benefit all.

Agriculture and Farming

Across the Roscommon and Longford area, according to the 2020 census there are a total of 8,604 farms which has fallen from 8,914 farms in 2010, a decrease of 3.5%. The average agriculture area per farm is 28 Ha with 45% of all holdings being less than 20 Ha. The average age of the farmers is 58 years and 13% of farm holders are female.

Over 80% of the farmers have a beef enterprise, while dairy is at a low with only 3% of farmers having a dairy enterprise. There are 695 specialist sheep producers according to the census but there are 2,253 flocks in the region representing the importance of sheep farming.

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing farmers over the next decade with ambitious targets in place to reduce the Green House Gas Emissions from 36% to between 22%-30% by 2030. While Teagasc has designed a roadmap to help achieve this target, it requires buy-in from farmers.

In Longford, forestry accounts for 8.6% of land area of 9,517 Ha. These are both privately owned forestry and Coillte owned. In 2020 a further 124 Ha was planted of which 36 Ha was planted by farmers.

Broadband

The rollout of the National Broadband Plan to individual householders, farms and businesses in the Intervention Areas has commenced after some initial delays with set up and then Covid restrictions. However, all broadband connection points (BCP's) and WiFi in schools have been delivered and some recent progress on the fibre network itself.

By February 2023, over 9,000 premises (homes, farms, businesses, community facilities etc) in County Longford area were some ways towards an actual connection. This includes 6,335 residential homes, 1,317 commercial / residential units, 1,006 farms and 286 commercial only units. There were still 33% or 2,945 premises available for connection at the end of February 2023 and a further 279 where network build is in progress and more entering this phase as surveys are completed.

Communication and awareness of the infrastructure and service availability continues to be key to driving connection numbers under the NBP as the rollout continues.

Key Services

There are several key services and programmes provided across the county which help support enterprises and are relevant to LEADER. Some of those are included in the table below and more detail can be found in Appendix 3:

Longford County Council	Fáilte Ireland	Waterways Ireland
I.D.A Ireland	Waterways Ireland	County Childcare Committee
Enterprise Ireland	Office of Public Works	National Broadband Ireland
Teagasc	County Longford Tourism	The Public Participation Network
Longford Community Resources Clg – SICAP, Tus, RSS, Youth Service, Volunteer Centre, Traveller Health Project	Department of Social Protection	Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board
Longford Westmeath Rural Transport Ltd	Employment Development and Information Centre	Health Service Executive
Rural Recreation Office	Key Services supporting people with Disabilities	Inland Fisheries Ireland
Community Organisations	Family Resource Centres – Ballymahon & Granard	Solas
Longford's Women's Link		

2.5 LEADER Interventions – Area Profile

LEADER Impact to Date

As per figure 2.5.1 below, while LEADER has impacted all geographical areas and target groups, it is recognised that the hard-to-reach communities (including but not limited to; long term unemployed, refugees, people with disabilities, Travellers, Roma) are those that have benefited least as direct beneficiaries from the LEADER programme. The intention is that LEADER funding 2023 – 2027 will continue to build capacity across all of County Longford, as the county is the third most deprived county in the country. This will include building the capacity of business and community and also to target hard-to-reach groups, that are

highlighted with the area profile, through both direct and indirect interventions that are aligned with the objectives set out in this LDS. This is also evidenced in the priorities of the LDS which includes 'Enhance supports for the most 'hard to reach' in the county'. Figure 2.5.2 shows the split between community and private interventions from the LEADER 2014 – 2022 programme.

Figure 2.5.1 Grant Aided through Longford LEADER 2014 – 2022

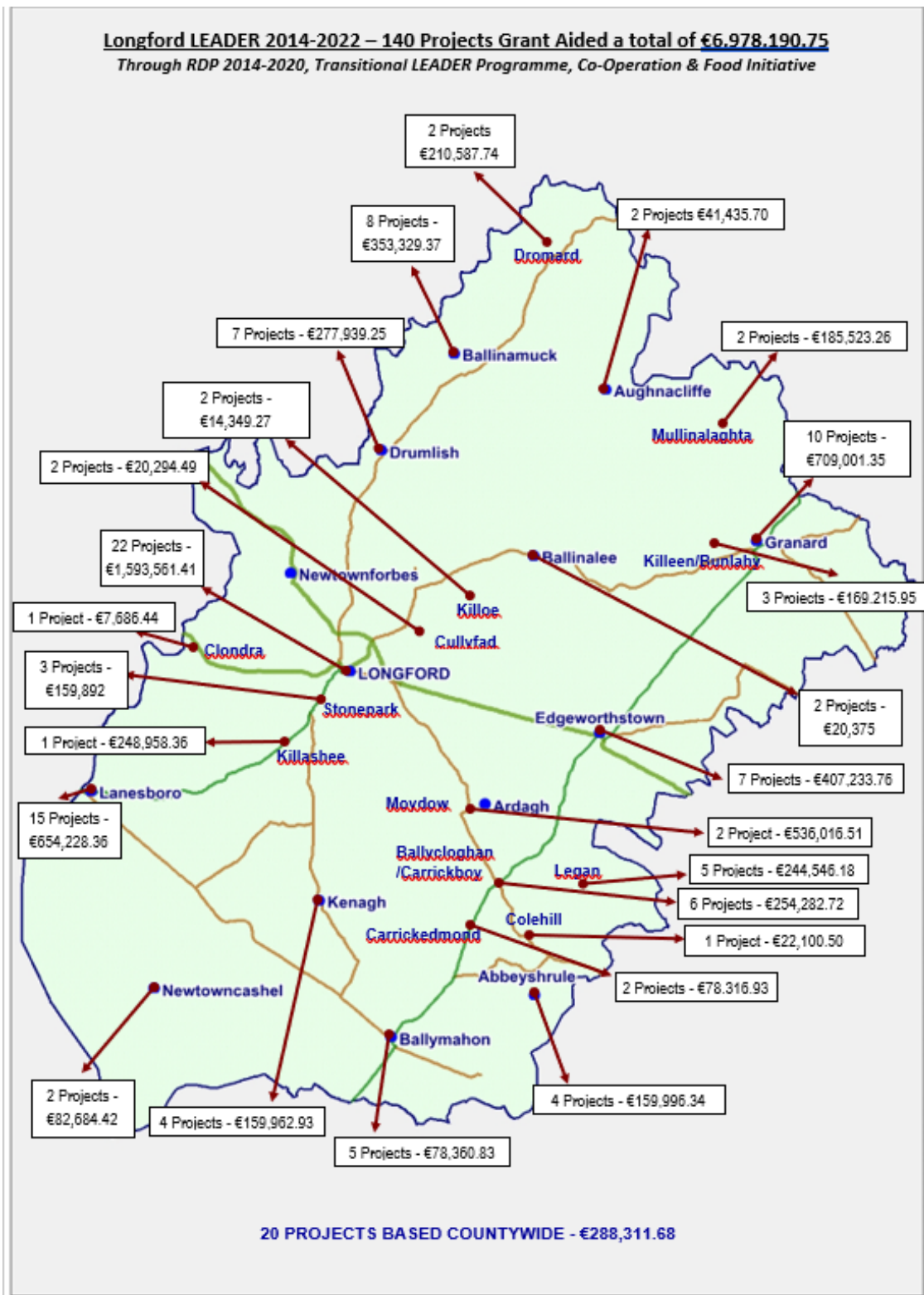
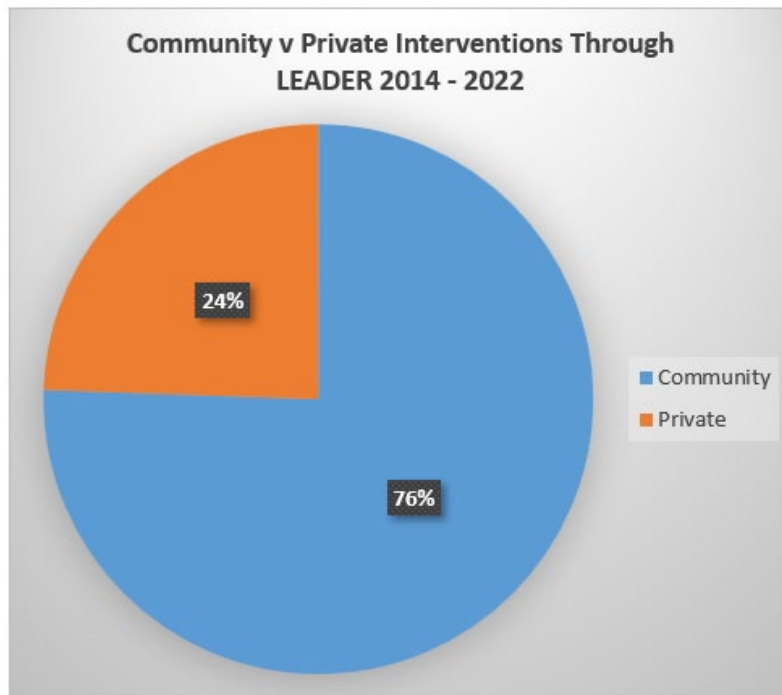


Figure 2.5.2 Community v Private Intervention LEADER 2014 – 2022



2.6 Area Needs Analysis Key Points

The needs analysis for County Longford is based on research and consultation process while taking account of the LEADER Themes for 2023 – 2027. Key points for the area needs analysis is identified below:

Geography & Accessibility

- Fourth smallest county in the country
- Landscape predominately consists of hills, rivers, boglands and agriculture land
- Located in midlands of country with access to main roads, rail, and bus services
- Issues with public transport availability especially in rural areas

Population

- Largest growth in population over last six years than anywhere else in the country
- Highest net inward migration in the country
- Majority of people living in rural parts of the county
- Significant number of vacant houses
- Average age slightly below national average
- Significant percentage of non-Irish nationals living in the county

Skills & Education

- Eighth most deprived region in the country
- Lower than national levels for percentage of population with third level qualifications
- No third level institute in the county

Labour Market

- High levels of unemployment
- Lowest % of population in professional classes in comparison to neighbouring counties
- Losses in traditional skills

Tourism

- Low levels of tourism accommodation
- Slow tourism approach
- Rich heritage, history, and culture offering

SECTION 3 - CLLD and PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING

3.1 Consultation Process

Overview

A comprehensive bottom-up consultation process was undertaken for the LEADER Local Development Strategy over a five-week period between April and May 2023. The consultation process focused on a range of activities including:

- Public and community consultations (face to face and online forms)
- Consultation with under-represented groups
- Facilitated multi-sector focus groups
- Facilitated workshops with interest groups
- One-to-one consultations key stakeholders

In all consultations a brief background to LEADER was given and an understanding of the importance of active participation by local communities and representatives in generating ideas that would be used to focus objectives and actions of the LDS going forward.

Using an external consultant to facilitate sessions over 2-3 hours, the format of the public and group/sector consultations followed a similar process throughout and included:

- Introductory presentation
- Explanation and focus on three cross cutting key areas (Smart Villages, Climate Change Mitigation and Social Inclusion and Equality)
- Individual exercise for participants to consider three questions on each of the focus areas:
 - What opportunities are there to develop a Smart Village approach to your area/county?
 - What Climate Action Mitigation Projects would you like to see in your area / county?
 - What opportunities are there in your area / county for Social Inclusion & Equality projects?
- Once time was given for individual reflections, the full group was divided into sub-groups to generate ideas for each of three key focus areas
- when sub-groups were finished, the full group came together to go through all ideas generated and were given a final prompt for any additional thoughts
- At the end of each consultation, individuals and groups were encouraged to ask questions or seek clarity on any elements of the LEADER LDS which they felt were relevant.

The format of the group consultations ensured an inclusive process where participants had an opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts before getting a group perspective and all participants ideas and voices were heard.

In one-to-one consultations, a similar format was followed in that background was provided, questions were asked around the three key areas and participants were encouraged to share any additional thoughts based on their own organisation's priorities.

Public Consultation

In March 2023, 240 consultation forms were sent to recipients of LEADER funding in the past or individuals or groups who expressed an interest in LEADER funding. The forms focused on areas including issues facing the county, ideas on job creation and how LEADER could help support young people, rural development, and climate change. In total, 30 consultation forms were received back from individuals.

Public consultation meetings were held between the 4th and 24th of April 2023 at six community venues between 7 – 9pm across County Longford. The six locations that were used for the public consultations included Edgeworthstown, Longford Town, Ballymahon, Granard, Dromard and Lanesboro. The wide geographical spread of public consultation opportunities ensured that people living in remote areas did not have to travel long distances.

The events were well advertised across social media, local press, Shannonside radio, localised publicity and distributed through the PPN. Some community leaders were contacted prior to each meeting and asked to assist in facilitating a wide audience at the public consultations.

A total of 33 participants turned up for public consultations across the county and although lower than expected turnout, due to the format of the consultation process many ideas were generated.

Consultations with Underrepresented Groups

In recognition that underrepresented and hard-to-reach groups are the least likely to have a strong voice in advocating for themselves, consultations were held with other agencies to speak on their behalf. Focus group consultation sessions were held with special interest groups to include the views of hard-to-reach individuals, families and communities and provide them with an opportunity to participate and feed into the consultation process. These focus groups gave the opportunity to give voice to the marginalised, disadvantaged, and isolated and feed their ideas and needs into the consultation process. Of particular focus were lone parents, young people, disabled, Irish Travellers, Non-Irish Nationals and the unemployed. Challenges faced by these groups were discussed as well as realistic initiatives that will impact change for these groups across the three focus areas of Social Inclusion and Equality, Smart Villages, Climate Change Mitigation

Multi-Sector Focus Groups

To ensure that all sectors had an opportunity to contribute into the consultation process, there were six multi-sector focus groups held in April. The Focus Groups included individuals, services, businesses, community groups and public bodies across six areas including Tourism, Enterprise & Farming, Social Inclusion, Youth, Longford County Council and Environment.

A total 36 participants turned up for the focus groups and although lower than expected turnout, due to the format of the consultation process many ideas were generated.

Interest Group Workshops and One-to-One Consultations

Crucial to the consultation process and development of the LDS was input from statutory agencies, interest groups and key stakeholders along with reviews of state agency development plans for the county and region. Some of the state agencies and initiatives that engaged in this process either through workshops or one-to-ones include:

Longford County Council including LEO, Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, Department of Social Protection, Teagasc, Enterprise Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Fáilte

Ireland, Health Service Executive, Rural Recreation Scheme, Longford Sports Partnership & Longford Westmeath Community Transport Ltd.

3.2 Summary of Outcomes

Despite extensive efforts to encourage individuals and organisation representatives to public consultations, focus groups and workshops, turnout at consultations was lower than expected. Some feedback received on why this may have been the case is potentially due to a knock-on effect of Covid-19 pandemic and people's resistance to turn up to face-to-face meetings. In hindsight perhaps a hybrid approach to some elements of the process may have been beneficial. Additional feedback suggests that there is also an element of consultation fatigue with so many funding initiatives being rolled out and finally that as LEADER is so well established at this point, people may not have seen the value-add in attending the consultation sessions.

There was productive discussion amongst those in attendance and feedback received from various consultation sessions was recorded and analysed. For the most part, issues and initiatives were applicable to the LEADER funding programme and could be aligned with the proposed Themes and Sub-themes. In some instances, a few issues arose that were more appropriate to other existing services/programmes.

A summary of the key outcomes regarding the key finding and areas/themes for local development are detailed below:

- Increased need in the availability of community transport options to address the issues that those have when living in rural areas or those in a disadvantaged position with limited access to public and private transport
- Initiatives required to encourage the re-using and refurbishment of vacant / closed / derelict buildings across the county for multiple purposes
- A desire across different individuals and groups for better understanding, awareness and education in climate change, biodiversity, and waste management
- Promote and facilitate opportunities for intergeneration and intercultural education and training in traditional skills for young people and adults
- Greater accessibility to community walkways, running paths, cycle paths and bridal paths
- Opportunities to support community generated schemes
- Opportunities to support the development of tourism across the county including accommodation and attractions with a focus on regeneration, climate and biodiversity
- Increase in renewable energy supports for businesses and community groups
- Additional community facilities and programmes to support marginalised, isolated, and disadvantaged groups
- Feasibility supports and project management capacity building for large scale community projects
- Improved access to digital information sources that can act as centralised information access points
- Increased programmes and supports for young people (16-18 year olds) and creating better links between young people and employers

3.3 SWOT Analysis

Following a review of the area profile, socio-economic analysis and feedback/inputs from the different consultation groups and individuals, a comprehensive SWOT was prepared. This was compared to other similar analysis for the county, including for the draft Longford County Development Plan, LECP/Socio-Economic Statement for the county and the draft County Tourism Strategy.

The SWOT analysis was discussed and analysed with a LEADER Advisory Group and elements were agreed. The SWOT was again analysed and updated based on feedback from LCRL clg and LCDC review sessions. Agreeing the different elements of the SWOT analysis supported the development of the priorities and objectives in the next section.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><i>Strategically located in the heart of Ireland</i></p> <p><i>Location, accessibility, and connectivity to national routes</i></p> <p><i>Rural unspoilt natural beauty and flat landscape with ‘Hidden Gems’ that remain relatively unexplored</i></p> <p><i>Value for money housing, attractions, activities, and accommodation</i></p> <p><i>Availability of affordable large scale industrial space in central location to attract more businesses and employers to area</i></p> <p><i>Proactive community engagement across the county</i></p> <p><i>Good provision of community-based infrastructure</i></p> <p><i>Significant number of different industries and enterprises including Agri, Manufacturing and Trade</i></p> <p><i>Rich history, heritage, literature, and cultural offerings with many nationalities’ resident in the county</i></p> <p><i>Slow tourism approach – grounded in respect for the natural and heritage assets that are to be protected for future generations</i></p> <p><i>Good quality sports and leisure amenities</i></p> <p><i>Experience of integrating different cultures and nationalities into communities</i></p> <p><i>Improvements in access to broadband across the county</i></p> <p><i>Extensive number of government support services for county with second smallest population</i></p>	<p><i>Significant levels of unemployment with high youth unemployment in pockets</i></p> <p><i>No Third Level College in the county – young people leave the county</i></p> <p><i>Need for better public transport links throughout the county</i></p> <p><i>Vacant, derelict sites and buildings</i></p> <p><i>Low levels of tourism accommodation</i></p> <p><i>Lack of knowledge on how to preserve the natural assets and biodiversity in the county</i></p> <p><i>Difficult to be competitive in terms of bringing inward investment into the county</i></p> <p><i>Negative perception of the county</i></p> <p><i>M4 does not come as far as Longford</i></p> <p><i>Underutilisation and lack of infrastructure to water amenities</i></p> <p><i>Poor transport provision for unemployed people</i></p> <p><i>Lack of alternative approaches to encourage education and employment for those not in mainstream</i></p> <p><i>Lack of Community Development and Youth Workers in the county</i></p> <p><i>Low levels of professionally skilled workforce</i></p> <p><i>Losing traditional skills</i></p> <p><i>Lack of sources of centralised information for services, tourism, local events etc</i></p>

Opportunities	Threats
<p><i>Promote central location of county for enterprise and trade and provide the infrastructure and services to attract new enterprise</i></p> <p><i>Expand on the existing tourism product in the county</i></p> <p><i>Key stakeholder in the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024</i></p> <p><i>One of the most impacted counties in the Just Transition Region</i></p> <p><i>Young population (below national average).</i></p> <p><i>Additional community infrastructure and services to create opportunities for development activities in rural areas.</i></p> <p><i>Community and county wide interest in energy development and environmental issues.</i></p> <p><i>Opportunities for farm diversification.</i></p> <p><i>Support high potential small businesses and traditional sectors through different programs and activities</i></p> <p><i>Be best in class ‘intercultural model’ for different counties in the country</i></p> <p><i>Derelict and vacant buildings to be converted and more appealing to look at</i></p> <p><i>Opportunity to grow FDI sector in the county.</i></p> <p><i>Capitalise on clean, green rural image of the county.</i></p> <p><i>Leverage the digital hubs and connectivity to enhance remote working opportunities in rural areas.</i></p> <p><i>Maximise gains from growth in population</i></p>	<p><i>Level of unemployment, lack of jobs is leading to high levels of economic disadvantage and subsequent problems.</i></p> <p><i>Local resources are stretched as more people come to live in County Longford.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of housing to meet the needs of a growing population</i></p> <p><i>Move to urban living will make services un-sustainable in rural areas.</i></p> <p><i>Media reports on crime and anti-social behaviour in Longford, rival families bringing negative attention to the county.</i></p> <p><i>Other counties focusing on areas of expertise will leave Longford behind.</i></p> <p><i>Cycle of disadvantage becoming entrenched.</i></p> <p><i>Confusion over services, people not getting clear information.</i></p> <p><i>Environmental threats, such as invasive species, and lack of awareness of protecting our biodiversity.</i></p> <p><i>Difficulty to consolidate County Longford as a tourism destination.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of cultural identity and sense of belonging for people living in the county</i></p> <p><i>Inability to attract FDI to the county due to lack of skills, labour, and accommodation.</i></p> <p><i>Insufficient infrastructure to meet the needs of the population growth in the county</i></p> <p><i>Climate Change</i></p>

3.4 Local Development Strategy Priorities

Themes and Sub-Themes

Due to the format of the consultation process which focused on the three key areas of Smart Villages, Climate Change Mitigation and Social Inclusion and Equality, it became evident that the ideas being generated were linked with and cut across all the LEADER Themes and Sub-themes. In addition, the area profiling, socio-economic and SWOT analysis all supported the development of priorities, objectives and actions that linked to the Themes and Sub-themes. The result is that all Themes and Sub-themes are supported and incorporated through this LDS.

Rationale for including each of the themes and sub-themes is discussed below:

Theme	Sub-theme	Rationale for inclusion
Theme 1 – Economic Development and Job Creation	Agricultural Diversification Rural Recreation Rural Food Production	Due to the natural landscape of County Longford and the diversity of cultures that are resident, there is an opportunity and a need to capitalise on agriculture diversification, support artisan food production that represents the multicultural diversity of the county and embrace a range of inclusive recreation activities.
	Rural Tourism	Tourism is underdeveloped across the county and there are a vast range of opportunities to promote the natural landscape, attractions, and additional accommodation.
	Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprise	There are well established social, community & cooperative enterprises across the county, however due to the demographic and rural landscape of the county, additional supports in the social, community and co-operative space are required.
	The Green Economy & Enterprise Development	There is a strong desire across the county to ensure the county has sustainable employment opportunities however additional supports are required to enable it.
Theme 2 – Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion	Rural Infrastructure	To support people to live and work in the county, additional infrastructure is required and desired e.g. (Transport, accommodation, business & community premises)
	Accessible Services	Social exclusion is a significant risk for those living in rural areas. There is a need for additional supports across the county to build capacity in existing services and provide new services.

	Optimising Digital Connectivity	Despite advances in broadband across the county more is required in the IT infrastructure space. The benefits of broadband and digital technology are not impactful without supports in digital skills, digital literacy, and training, all of which are desired and required.
	Rural Youth	Giving the youth in the county a sense of belonging, purpose and encouragement is crucial for the future of county and more supports are required to enable this.
Theme 3 – Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment	A range of supports is required and being asked for to help encourage the sustainable use of water resources, protection of biodiversity and implement new green energy solutions.
	Climate Change Capacity Building	There is a desire across the county to support initiatives in climate change, biodiversity, and waste management however capacity building through training, and capacity building programs is required to support people with these initiatives.
	Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption	There is a need and desire across the county to implement interventions to protect the climate, waterways, biodiversity on boglands and other natural areas. Supports and resources are required to help people to implement these interventions.

Priorities and Objectives of LDS

As indicated, an extensive consultation process focusing on the three cross cutting key focus areas of Smart Villages, Climate Change Mitigation and Social, Inclusion and Equality was undertaken. The outcomes from this process, in addition to area profiling, socio-economic analysis and SWOT analysis, formed the basis for the development of the priorities, objectives and actions as set out in in this LDS. The priorities, objectives and actions were developed by the Chief Executive and LEADER team in LCRL, along with the LCDC Advisory Committee and these were subsequently presented and approved by the LCDC on 27th June 2023 before the LAG gave final sign-off of the LDS on the 11th of July 2023.

The concept of Smart Villages has been interpreted and applied based on a broad definition informed by the National Rural Network

“Smart Villages are rural areas and communities which build on and enhance their existing strengths and assets through creative thinking and by embracing innovation to create desirable places for rural people to live and work.”

This strategy seeks to develop the Smart Village concept across Longford, by looking at opportunities for digitisation but also looking beyond digitisation and identifying what innovative approaches can be applied to rural development in the county that will encourage people to want to live, work and visit and bring a sense of pride to the area.

Vision	County Longford is an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable destination where people want to live, work and visit
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be recognised as an attractive, sustainable and biodiversity friendly rural destination. • Create and encourage sustainable employment opportunities for all genders across the county • Improve and initiate community services to meet the needs of people living in Co. Longford • Enhance supports for the most 'hard to reach' in the county • Meeting the needs of local communities and capitalising on emerging opportunities
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support enterprises, start-ups, and entrepreneurs in Co. Longford 2. Promote sustainable tourism across County Longford 3. Support communities to further enhance the lives of those living in County Longford 4. Embrace and encourage the diverse and multicultural demographic within the county 5. Enable individuals, businesses, and communities to optimize digital connectivity and proficiencies 6. Improve the livelihoods and opportunities for young people in County Longford 7. Support the enhancement and protection of natural heritage and natural resources 8. Capitalise on the natural surroundings in a way that protects nature and benefits those living in the county 9. Support and encourage the Development of Renewable Energy Potential and Energy Conservation

Rationale for Priorities

The consultation process focused on the three cross cutting focus areas of Smart Villages, Climate Change Mitigation and Social, Inclusion and Equality. This process generated a significant number of ideas, initiatives, and suggestions. By reflecting on the Themes and Sub-themes and analysing these outputs along with the area profiling, socio-economic analysis and SWOT analysis generated the priorities below:

Priority	Rationale
Be recognised as an attractive, sustainable and biodiversity friendly rural destination	There is a desire across the county to protect the natural environment and biodiversity that exists in lakes, in boglands, along canals and wooded areas. There is also an acknowledgement for more green energy solutions for businesses, community settings and villages and towns. While being recognised as a clean, green and biodiversity friendly rural destination will be an enabler to sustainable tourism, it will also give people living in the county a greater appreciation for the natural assets in the county and how residents can ensure they are respecting those assets in a sustainable way for the future.
Create and encourage sustainable employment opportunities for all genders across the county	Over the last six years there has been a significant increase in the population growth in the county. To capitalise from this growth employment opportunities, need to be developed to ensure that the population is not only living in the county but is also working, doing business and shopping within the county also. Measures need to be in place to encourage all genders to seek employment, develop start-ups and grow businesses across the county.
Improve and initiate community services to meet the needs of people living in Co. Longford	Across the county there are substantial community groups and services established, however they fall short on meeting the needs of those living in the county. With trends such as aging population, isolation from living in rural areas, prohibiting transport options and high levels of inward migration, new and existing community services need additional supports to meet the needs of people living in the county.
Enhance supports for the most 'hard to reach' in the county	It is recognised that underrepresented and hard-to-reach groups are the least likely to have a strong voice to advocate for themselves and that additional supports to give voice to the 'hard to reach' and provide them with the appropriate assistance that they need. The focus is on providing initiatives that can impact change for groups such as lone parents, young people, disabled, Irish Travellers, Non-Irish Nationals and the unemployed.
Meeting the needs of local communities and capitalising on emerging opportunities	There are a range of creative and innovative initiatives, opportunities, and projects that individuals, community groups and businesses are looking to develop and capitalise on across the county. Given the landscape of the county and entrepreneurial mindset of many livings in the county, there is a need to support individuals, community groups and businesses through additional resources and capacity building.

SECTION 4: STRATEGIC INTEGRATION

4.1 LEADER Policy Alignment

The overarching policy context for LEADER 2023 – 2027 includes:

- Rural Development
- Sustainable Development
- Climate Change Mitigation
- Equality & Inclusion
- Smart Villages Concept
- Local Economic Community Plans (LECP's)
- County Development Plan

Throughout the consultation process and in compiling this LDS, each of those policies have been incorporated. Generating and brain storming ideas during the consultation process came from focusing on three key areas – Climate Change Mitigation, Equality & Inclusion and Smart Villages. The priorities, objectives and actions have been developed by putting the policy of Rural Development and Sustainable Development at the forefront and the output from the LECP and County Development Plan has been integrated into this LDS as detailed in the next section.

LEADER is cross linked with the Objectives of CAP 2023-2027 and specifically Objective 8 – Vibrant Rural Areas. This objective focuses on promoting growth and jobs in rural areas, developing the rural and bio-economies, digitising the rural economy and promoting social inclusion.

It has been identified through the consultation process, area analysis, socio-economic analysis, and SWOT that County Longford currently has a number of shortcomings in meeting Objective 8 mentioned above however the broad and inclusive approach to rural development that has been incorporated in this LDS seeks to support that Objective.

The priorities, objectives and strategic actions as outlined in Section 3.4 of this plan cut across the 2023 – 2027 LEADER Themes (Economic Development and Job Creation, Rural Infrastructure and Social Inclusion, Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation) and its subsequent Sub-Themes. With additional support, resources, and targeted actions through this next round of LEADER funding, there are significant opportunities that can be capitalised on and will support this Objective in being met for County Longford.

Throughout Section 3.4 of this report, it has been demonstrated in more detail how the priorities, objectives and actions are congruent with LEADER programme themes and sub-themes and the overall programme priorities.

4.2 Policy Alignment

The Local Development Strategy is aligned with relevant Local, Regional, National and European Strategies and Policies and ensures the objectives and actions included in the LDS are complementary in achieving mutual outcomes. Specific consideration has been given to the following:

EU/European Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development • The European Green Deal • The EUs Long Term Vision for Rural Areas • EU Charter for Fundamental Rights
National Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Rural Future • Project Ireland 2040 • Climate Action Plan 2030 • Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 • Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities
Local and Regional Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023 - 2029 • Longford County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 • Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 - 2031 • Just Transition Fund • Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 • County Longford Tourism Strategy 2023 – 2027 • Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 - 2030

4.2.1 EU / European Perspective

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Throughout the consultation process, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came up as a point of reference when brainstorming initiatives and projects and this LDS reflects those discussions. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises that:

‘Ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.’

The priorities, objectives and actions identified in this LDS are focused on areas such as climate change, economic growth, improving lives and livelihoods in different facets and protecting the natural landscape. This LDS shares the same broad focus areas as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is closely aligned with its goals.

The European Green Deal

Recognising that climate change and environmental degradation are existential threats to Europe and the world, The European Green Deal is striving to have Europe as the first climate-neutral continent. Its aim is to ensure that:

- no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- economic growth decoupled from resource use
- no person and no place left behind

Some of the benefits that The European Green Deal are seeking to achieve are very closely aligned to priority areas and outcomes sought in this LDS. Benefits of The European Green Deal that have commonality with the outcomes sought in this LDS include:

- fresh air, clean water, healthy soil, and biodiversity
- renovated, energy efficient buildings
- cleaner energy and cutting-edge clean technological innovation
- longer lasting products that can be repaired, recycled and re-used
- future-proof jobs and skills training for the transition

‘More public transport’ is a further benefit expected by The European Green Deal and while public transport is outside the scope for LEADER funding, within this LDS there is an acknowledgement that additional community transport can and should be provided. Therefore, the LDS is supporting this priority in a way that is in scope according to LEADER funding.

The EUs Long Term Vision for Rural Areas

Recognising that rural areas provide people with food, homes, jobs and essential ecosystems services, the EUs Long Term Vision for Rural Areas identifies areas of action towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities. There are ten shared goals within the rural vision, nine of which closely align and are complimentary to the objectives and actions identified in this LDS.

- Attractive spaces, developed in harmonious territorial development,
- Providers of food security, economic opportunities, goods, and services for wider society,
- Dynamic communities focusing on well-being,
- Inclusive communities
- Flourishing sources of nature
- Fully benefiting from digital innovation
- Entrepreneurial, innovative, and skilled
- Lively places equipped with efficient, accessible, and affordable public and private services
- Places of diversity

EU Charter for Fundamental Rights

The foundation from which the objectives and actions identified in this LDS, particularly around social, inclusion and equality and youth are grounded in the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights. The Charter contains rights and freedoms under six titles including dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizen’s rights, and justice. All these rights underpin the ambitions described throughout this LDS.

The alignment of the rights, freedoms and principles of the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights with the LDS are further supported and evidenced through the LDS vision and by the LAG and the Implementing Partner having a clear commitment to equality and human rights and non-discriminatory practices. This is demonstrated through the Equality & Human Rights Statements of both organisations. The LAG’s commitment to equality and human rights is motivated by the following set of values; dignity, autonomy, democracy, inclusion and social justice which are similar to the rights and freedoms as outlined in the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights. In addition, the LAG also showed this commitment in the criteria for the assessment of potential LEADER projects by the Evaluation Committee in the previous LEADER programme, the criteria included ‘does the project address one or more of the values

in the Longford LCDC Equality & Human Rights Statement?', and it is envisaged that this criterion will once again be use in the evaluation of project in the LEADER 2023-2027 Programme.

To further evidence the commitment to the vision and principles of the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights, as Implementing Partner, Longford Community Resources Clg's vision of 'County Longford as a place where individuals and communities, in particular those experiencing inequality, thrive and achieve outcomes of equality and where values of dignity, autonomy, inclusion, participation, social justice, and environmental sustainability are prioritised and pursued across society, communities, and institutions.' is evidently aligned with the LDS vision of County Longford as "an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable destination where people want to live, work and visit" and the vision of the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights.

4.2.2 National Perspective

Our Rural Future

Our Rural Future, Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025 is a framework for the development of Rural Ireland over five years that has several clear ambitions. Many of those ambitions are directly linked to the objectives and actions identified in this LDS; these include:

- Optimising Digital Connectivity
- Supporting Employment and Careers in Rural Areas
- Revitalizing Rural Towns and Villages
- Enhancing Participation, Leadership and Resilience in Rural Communities
- Transitioning to Climate Neutral Society
- Supporting the Sustainability of Agriculture, the Marine and Forestry

The vision for County Longford as set out in this LDS is to be "*an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable destination where people want to live, work and visit*". The focus is on focused on enhancing individual, communities and businesses social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing and quality of life.

Each of the ambitions from 'Our Rural Future' identified above are required to support County Longford in its vision and as such are reflected in the priorities, objectives and actions discussed throughout this LDS.

Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. By 2040, there will be approximately one million additional people living here in Ireland. This population growth will require hundreds of thousands of new jobs, new homes, heightened cultural, and social amenities, enhanced regional connectivity and improved environmental sustainability. Project Ireland 2040 sets out to deliver these.

County Longford is already seeing significant increases in its population growth with a 14.1% increase versus national average of 7.6% for the same period between 2016 – 2022. The LDS addresses the improvements that are required across the county to meet the needs of this population growth. With a focus on employment, digital connectivity, inclusion, integration and

environmental sustainability, the objectives and actions detailed in this LDS are aligned and support the ambitions for Project Ireland 2040.

Climate Action Plan 2030

The Climate Action Plan 2030 for Ireland sets out how Ireland will accelerate the action required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development. Measures in the plan include:

- enough renewable electricity to power every home and business in the country by 2030
- 70% of people in rural Ireland to have buses that go three times a day to the nearest town
- 500,000 homes retrofitted to BER B2 to make them warmer
- 1 in 3 private cars on our roads to be electric by 2030
- walking, cycling and public transport to account for 50% of all daily trips
- tillage farming to cover up to 400,000 hectares by 2030

Despite some of these measures being outside the scope of LEADER funding, the outcomes from the consultation process are very much aligned with measures identified in the Climate Action Plan 2030. Of particular significance to this LDS is the requirements around renewable energy and further opportunities for walking, cycling and transport. Objectives included in this LDS such as 'Support and encourage the Development of Renewable Energy Potential and Energy Conservation' align closely with the measures set out in the Climate Action Plan 2030.

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025

The ambition of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion is to reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less of the population and to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive States in the EU.

County Longford is a diverse county with many nationalities living in towns and villages and has had the highest inward migration in the country between 2016 and 2022. In addition, there are regional pockets of significant unemployment and a number of hard-to-reach communities across the county. The LDS addresses the impact of this demographic through its objectives such as embracing and encouraging the diverse and multicultural demographic within the county, development of accessible amenities and youth facilities, support for social enterprises, and improving the livelihoods and opportunities for those living in the county. These objectives are aligned to a number of the high-level goals as set out in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 including:

- Extend employment opportunities to all who can work
- Support families - reduce child poverty
- Reduce poverty among people with disabilities – help them to maximise their ability
- Build inclusive communities – encourage active citizenship
- Ensure that all people have access to quality service

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities 2019 - 2024

This strategy sets a general direction for Government policy in relation to community development, local development and the community and voluntary sector. Within the strategy there are several objectives that align with the objectives and actions identified in this LDS. The CLLD actions and objectives in this LDS are cross cutting across social inclusion and

equality, climate change and smart villages and focus on areas such as supporting communities to further enhance the lives of those living in the county, addressing climate change mitigation, and embracing the diversity already existing in the county. These focus areas are also explored in the objectives from the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities plan below:

- Support and facilitate communities to participate in community development and local development.
- Develop and strengthen processes and mechanisms to secure meaningful consultation, inclusion, and participation in local, regional, and national decision-making structures, particularly by non-engaging and marginalised communities and their representative organisations.
- Develop capacity of organisations supporting communities to participate in community development and local development, with a specific focus on marginalised communities.
- Strengthen and build understanding and capacity to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan.
- Support community development and local development to engage with Climate Change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

4.2.3 Local and Regional Perspective

Draft Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023 – 2029

The vision for the draft LECP 2023 – 2029 is supported by high level goals including:

- Vibrant, inclusive, and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life
- Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.
- Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health
- A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn
- Sustainable and green economy, building on the county's strengths and resources
- Innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology, and digitalisation

This LDS and the LECP are strategically aligned and complimentary and the objectives in the LDS are clearly linked to the high-level goals in the LECP. Many of the LECP and LDS objectives will be delivered in partnership with local and regional stakeholders.

Longford County Development Plan 2021 - 2027

Longford County Development Plan sets out 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. There are twelve overarching aims within the plan and many of these bear relevance to the objectives contained in the LDS. Of particular relevance is the aims outlined in the County Development Plan around;

- Climate Change,

- Transport, Energy & Communication
- Regeneration
- Placemaking
- Economic Development
- Rural Economy
- Tourism
- Built and Cultural Heritage
- Natural Heritage and Environment

This LDS is written in alignment with the Longford County Development Plan and will provide a mechanism for the county to reach many of its goals.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development to sustainably grow the region to 2031 and beyond. One of the key challenges identified as facing the Region is the need for better alignment between population growth, location of residential development and employment to create healthy and attractive places, and this is reflected in the Vision Statement *“To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all”*.

This LDS sets to prioritise areas such as access to employment opportunities and services, addressing climate change and protection of the rural area’s natural habitat and the overall well-being of County Longford residents. These priorities are reflected in the vision statement and subsequent priorities, objectives and actions and correspond with the three key principles for growth in the Eastern and Midland RSES which are:

- Healthy Placemaking - to promote people’s quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.
- Economic Opportunity - to create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.
- Climate Action - the need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy, recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

Just Transition Fund

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) is the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM). It will be a key tool to support the territories most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality providing them with tailored support. The fund will back productive investments in small and medium-sized enterprises, the creation of new firms, research and innovation, environmental rehabilitation, clean energy, up- and reskilling of workers, job-search assistance, and active inclusion of jobseeker’s programmes, as well as the transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations when these investments lead to substantial emission cuts and job protection.

The consultation process generated a significant number of ideas and initiatives in the area of climate neutrality and a desire for support in turning the ideas and initiatives into reality. There are a number of objectives that address this area in particular in the LDS namely, support the enhancement and protection of climate, biodiversity, natural resources, and waterways; Support and encourage the Development of Renewable Energy Potential and Energy Conservation; Capitalise on the natural surroundings in a way that protects nature and benefits those living in the county.

These objectives along with a further objective to support enterprises, start-ups, and entrepreneurs in Co. Longford assist in the advancements that are trying to be made with the Just Transition Fund.

Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (MREP) aims to build on positive regional collaboration and to take account of the changed and improved economic circumstances nationally, the emergence of new challenges to enterprise development and competitiveness both domestically and internationally in origin, including Brexit, and the persistence of uneven economic progress across the regions in Ireland.

The MREP contains seven Strategic Objectives, all of which speak to the vision set out in this LDS *“County Longford is an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable destination where people want to live, work and visit”* and several which are aligned with the priorities and objectives as set out in this LDS. These include:

- Ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy
- Position and support the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence
- Enhance the collective offering of the Midlands as a place to live, work, and invest in
- Strengthen the attractiveness of the Midlands as a destination to visit
- Harness the potential of the food and beverage industry in the Midlands
- Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the Region’s economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

County Longford Tourism Strategy 2023 -2027

The County Longford Tourism Strategy 2023—2027 represents a road map for tourism in the county aligned with a five-year vision for Longford and a county-wide commitment to sustainable tourism. Central to the approach is the development of a sustainable destination, an important element of Ireland’s Hidden Heartland’s, delivering a unique destination and unique Longford experiences.

The goal for County Longford Tourism Strategy is ‘developing Longford as a connected, sustainable, and slow tourism destination in Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands’ and there are seven strategic development focuses all of which align with the objectives in this LDS particularly ‘Promote sustainable tourism across County Longford’. The seven include:

- Attractions
- Accommodation
- Activities

- Amenities & Services
- Authenticity
- Accessible Outdoors
- Active Industry

As the tourism sector is in an early stage of destination life cycle, the complimentary tourism related actions in this LDS will support the Tourism Strategy in achieving its vision.

Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 - 2030

As a major tourist destination, the Shannon and particularly Lough Ree is a key tourism asset in the county. The Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon considers the tourism and visitor development opportunities for the entire length of the Shannon Navigation and the Shannon Erne Waterway.

Longford is identified as part of 'Discovery Zone 2; Mid Shannon' in the Shannon Tourism Masterplan. This area stretches from Clondra in the north to Portumna in the south of the region. The area is described as an elemental zone where lakes, rivers and canals meander through wetlands, peatlands, and lowland farms, creating the distinctive 'soft' landscapes of the region. Lough Ree is described as the beating heart of Mid Shannon, a wonderful mosaic of open waters, hidden bays, monastic islands, and wooded shorelines, renowned for angling, cruising, sailing, and kayaking.

Specifically, for Longford, the Shannon Tourism Masterplan recommends Priority Project DZ2.3 Wet'n'Wild Peatlands of Mid Shannon. This involves developing an integrated Discovery Zone focused on peatlands, environmental and industrial heritage, recreational opportunities such as walking, hiking, cycling, guided tours and outdoor classrooms to demonstrate nature, biodiversity, and the impact of climate change.

4.3 Innovation

Innovation is a key aspect of the LEADER programme and enables communities and businesses to initiate innovative approaches to tackle issues of rural disadvantage, unemployment, enterprise development and protection of the environment. When designing strategic actions in this LDS allowances have been made to support innovative solutions that may arise in response to local opportunities and challenges during the LEADER programme.

Throughout the consultation process there were several larger innovative solutions identified, particularly around climate change mitigation and protection and smart villages. These have been considered through the relevant strategic actions. Irrelevant of the size of the project, there is an acknowledgement that without creative and innovative approaches to the challenges facing County Longford and rural communities, limited improvements can be achieved.

Smart Villages

As Smart Villages strategies is a central concept of the LEADER Programme, it has been acknowledged and explored throughout all phases of developing this LDS. Throughout the consultation process and the subsequent development of the priorities, objectives and actions in this LDS, significance was given to understanding how local communities can actively

participate in improving their economic, social, and environmental conditions through innovative methods.

Climate Change Mitigation

Within the priorities, objectives, and strategic actions there is support for different climate change mitigation initiatives through promoting circular economy, bio-based business models and the bio-economy. Circular Economy actions are designed to close material loops through the recycling and reuse of products, effectively reducing virgin raw material use and associated environmental pressures. Bio-based business models involve economic activity that use renewable biological resources sustainably to produce food, energy, and industrial goods. The bio-economy exploits the untapped potential stored within millions of tons of biological waste and residual materials.

4.4 Networking

Networking and information sharing are a very important component of the LEADER Programme. The LAG (Longford LCDC) recognises the value and benefits that can result from the dissemination of learning and information sharing and how it can enhance the delivery of the Leader programme.

Across Europe there is a wealth of innovation, problem-solving and synergy that is all leading to the improvement of rural areas and the sharing of this information can act as both an inspiration and at times a blueprint for communities in County Longford.

The LAG through its representatives from local government, various state agencies and community and voluntary organisations will contribute to the implementation of local, national, and international policies by engaging in rural development policy creation through policy submissions and interdepartmental working groups.

Local Networking

As LAG members are drawn from both statutory and a wide ranging non-statutory sector this has enabled Longford LCDC to create and develop strong linkages across multiple community and economic stakeholders both public and private. This will enable a consolidated approach to policy development and implementation of community led local development.

The implementing partner (LCRL) has demonstrated its commitment to engaging in networking from previous Leader Programmes and is aware how this activity leads to best practice being developed and adopted. At a local level, highlighting and communicating local successes and outcomes can act as a motivator to groups across the county and can show pathways to how “bottlenecks” can be alleviated. It is intended to highlight work undertaken under the LEADER Programme to the public through press releases, case studies, and our website and through a strong and active social media presence.

The production and publication of an Annual Report will also highlight what has been achieved locally by LEADER on an annual basis. The Members of Longford LCDC and LCRL will share and exchange information with communities and organisations in relation to the outcomes of the programme through their involvement and membership of other organisations.

A number of the actions outlined in the LDS have a built-in networking element which will ensure that groups involved in the actions come together and share information. The following

is a sample of the local organisations and groups that the LAG will network with in order to disseminate learning, innovation, and good practice:

PPN – Public Participation Network

The PPN was developed in Co Longford to enable the public to take an active formal role in local policy and decision making. It provides a structured forum to network and engage with Community Groups and organisations. This network (PPN) will facilitate an opportunity to locally disseminate information and learning throughout the lifetime of the programme while also encouraging and developing good practice amongst communities in the county. The PPN contributed to the consultation process in the development of the LDS and will continue to do so in the implementation of the programme. The PPN has five representatives on Longford LCDC and it will use this network to enhance the delivery of the LEADER programme through engaging with local community groups.

Longford County Council

As outlined, Longford County Council is a key partner in the implementation of the programme and across all actions of the Local Development Strategy. This will require working in a complementary way with all departments within Longford County Council and in particular with the Local Enterprise Office, Planning Office, Department of Community Development, Environment, Sports Partnership, Heritage Officer, Arts Officer, Regeneration Office.

Co Longford Tourism

County Longford Tourism is a voluntary organisation comprising of tourist providers, state agency representatives and interested parties. This committee lends itself to providing very beneficial linkages both locally and nationally and both the Financial Partner and Implementation Partner are represented on this group.

Longford Women's Link

Longford Women's Link (LWL) which was established in 1995 is a dynamic Social Enterprise which provides many services to women and their families. LWL's priorities are Crisis Support, Choice & Opportunity, Economic Independence, and Women's Leadership. Within these priorities LWL provides a myriad of Women-centred supports and services including Education, Training (including acting as Lead Sponsor for the DSP County Wide Childcare Community Employment Scheme), Group Supports, Childcare including Mobile Childcare Solutions, Domestic violence support, Counselling, Female Entrepreneurship, Capacity-building, Local/National Advocacy, and significant local employment.

EDI Centre

Employment Development and Information centre's overall aim is to help meet the needs of people who are unemployed and provide a range of education and support services to unemployed people living in Co Longford.

Regional and National Networking

Longford LCDC and implementing Partner LCRL will continue to maintain and participate in networking activities and events on a regional and national level, based on the general principals of the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 and the objectives of the LDS.

Study trips will form part of actions relating to our work and have been specifically incorporated into the Rural Youth, Community Development and Employment Support Initiatives. These visits to other parts of Ireland and to other Leader projects will act as inspiration as to what can be achieved. This will be very beneficial for projects to assist or support disadvantaged groups and hard to reach communities. While continuing to build on the linkages already created with different organisations, we will also endeavour to form new network groups where appropriate.

Staff working on the programme will be encouraged to engage with their colleagues in Local Action Groups around the country and to visit projects that are examples of good practice.

LCRL will ensure that information is shared between the other programmes it delivers and the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 in order to avoid any duplication of services and enable an improved targeting of development efforts.

The following is a list of a number of the Regional and National organisations and groups that the LAG will network with in order to disseminate learning, innovation and good practice, further Regional and National groups are detailed in the table below.

Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) is the representative body of Local Development Companies and has played an essential role in the sharing of information. They will continue to facilitate national information sharing and networking. The implementing partner is a member of ILDN and will play an active role in the network activities, sharing of information and the development of policy papers.

City and County Management Association

The County and City Management Association (CCMA) is the representative voice of the local government management network. It is a non-statutory body that works to ensure that the influence of local authority Chief Executives is brought to bear on the development and implementation of relevant policy. It operates through a number of established committees (e.g.: Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development EETD, Environment, Climate change and Emergency Planning ECCEP). Each Committee is made up of County and City Council Chief Executives, Directors of Service and Heads of Finance. The Chief Executive of Longford County Council, the Lead Financial Partner is a member of the City and County Management Association.

The National Rural Network

The National Rural Network (NRN) is a component of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP) led by Irish Rural Link in partnership with the Wheel, NUI Galway, and Philip Farrelly & Co. The overall aim of the NRN is to build and sustain a membership-based network that maximizes the beneficial outcomes of the Rural Development Programme.

The table below is a non-exhaustive list of local, regional, and national agencies and organisation which the LAG intends to network with.

Local	Regional	National
PPN	Fáilte Ireland	IDA Ireland
Longford County Council	Longford Westmeath Community Transport Ltd	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Co Longford Tourism	Athlone IT	Department of Social Protection
Longford Women's Link	Maynooth University of Ireland	Irish Water
Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board	Employ Ability Service Midlands	Enterprise Ireland
St Christopher's Services	MABS	Teagasc
TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency	Other Leader and Development Companies	Waterways Ireland
Co Longford Childcare Committee	ICA	OPW
Citizens Information Centre	IFA	Arts Council of Ireland
Longford Warmer Homes		Coillte
Longford Environmental Alliance		Bord Na Mona
Longford Local Enterprise Office		National Learning Network
Heritage Office Longford County Council		Inland Fisheries
Employment, Development, and Information Centre for the unemployed		Solas
Family Resource Centres		National Broadband Plan
Irish Wheelchair Association		HSE
Intreo Longford		Rural Recreation Office
Irish Farmers Association		National Parks and Wildlife Services
Longford Chamber of Commerce		ILDN
ICA		National Rural Network
Sporting Organisations		Pobal
		Heritage Council

International Networking

It is encouraged that members of Longford LCDC, the Implementation Partner and Financial Partner register with the European Network for Rural Development which acts as a hub that

connects rural development stakeholders throughout Europe and provides information on LEADER projects across Europe.

LCRL are represented on the ILDN Broadband Working Group which has joined forces with Finnish Regional Networks, North Karelia Data Network Co-operative, and Central Karelia LAG in Finland on a Connected Communities application to Europe regarding rural broadband initiatives.

The LCDC and LCRL are also represented on County Longford Tourism (A Committee hosted by Longford County Council) who are part of a European network of seven “romantic” tourist locations that are submitting a joint application for Interreg funding.

International organisations with which the LAG will network:

European Rural Development Network (ENRD)

As with the National Rural Network at national level, there is also a European Rural Development Network (ENRD) established to facilitate networking for the duration of the programme. Networking activities at this level will present when required opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and trends at European and International level.

European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)

ELARD consists of national, regional, and local associations active in LEADER method in 23 countries. Presently ELARD represents 1075 LAGs. Members of ELARD are usually the voluntary National or Regional Networks of LAGs, however individual LAGs are also admitted where national networks haven't been established. The organisation works with representative networks of LAGs and LEADER type organisations as well as any other entity that works for the development of their area and shares the objectives of ELARD. ELARD pursues rural development as a vitally important policy area and sees the strengthening of rural development policy as a significant platform for economic diversification in rural communities.

4.5 Co-operation

The LCDC and LCRL are keen to engage in the co-operation element of LEADER and can see opportunities for maximising resources available under the programme and to acquire new learning from working in partnership with other LEADER implementing bodies and LAG's.

SECTION 5: LDS ACTION PLAN

5.1 Vision

County Longford is an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable destination where people want to live, work and visit

5.2 Strategic Approach

This strategy has taken a bottom-up approach which is aligned with the LEADER philosophy. This strategy represents the outcomes of consultations with rural communities and special interest / multisector groups, analysis of area profiling and a SWOT analysis. It is also influenced by national, regional, and county based strategies.

The approach encourages innovative and creative multisector initiatives to the opportunities and challenges faced in rural Ireland and across the county of Longford.

5.3 Overview of Strategic Objectives and Actions

Objective	Strategic Action
Local Objective 1 Support enterprises, start-ups, and entrepreneurs in County Longford	Strategic Action 1.1 Development of micro small and medium enterprises Strategic Action 1.2 Development of potential in the bio and circular economy Strategic Action 1.3 Development of social, community and cooperative enterprises
Local Objective 2 Promote sustainable tourism across County Longford	Strategic Action 2.1 Support tourism product and infrastructure development Strategic Action 2.2 Tourism Marketing and Capacity Building
Local Objective 3 Support communities to further enhance the lives of those living in County Longford	Strategic Action 3.1 Development of local community facilities and infrastructure Strategic Action 3.2 Initiatives to improve the quality of lives of those living in County Longford
Local Objective 4 Embrace and encourage the diverse and multicultural demographic within the county	Strategic Action 4.1 Build vibrant local inclusive communities
Local Objective 5 Enable individuals, businesses, and communities to optimise digital connectivity and proficiencies.	Strategic Action 5.1 Optimise opportunities that support digital connectivity and smart technologies

Local Objective 6 Improve the livelihoods and opportunities for young people in County Longford	Strategic Action 6.1 Development of Infrastructure Strategic Action 6.2 Support young people to take an active role in shaping their future
Local Objective 7 Support the enhancement and protection of natural heritage and natural resources	Strategic Action 7.1 Initiatives to support the enhancement and protection of natural resources Strategic Action 7.2 Initiatives to address challenges posed by climate change
Local Objective 8 Capitalise on the natural surroundings in a way that protects nature and benefits those living in the county.	Strategic Action 8.1 Build on natural assets in County Longford in a sustainable and regenerative manner
Local Objective 9 Support and encourage the Development of Renewable Energy Potential and Energy Conservation.	Strategic Action 9.1 Development of renewable energy and energy conservation potential in the county

Local Objective 1	
Title of Local Objective	Support enterprises, start-ups, and entrepreneurs in County Longford
Financial Allocation (€)	€945,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	3
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>The socio-economic profile and area analysis identifies that the population in County Longford is growing at a rate quicker than anywhere else in the country and that there are significantly high unemployment rates in regions dotted across the county. There is a need for additional enterprises and start-ups to be supported in the county to enable the population to not only live in the county but to work in the county also.</p> <p>The consultation process generated several enterprise and start-up ideas that would benefit the county and raised the need for more mentoring and ambassador supports for entrepreneurs. The establishment of digital hubs across the county as well as the number of vacant buildings also provides opportunities for new and existing businesses to set themselves up across the county. Acknowledging the diverse nature of the county also raised ideas around artisan / cultural food production opportunities.</p> <p>There is a need for promotion and support of employment opportunities particularly for those unemployed or those looking to educate themselves to move into more skilled employment.</p> <p>It was also acknowledged through the consultation process that some industries are under-developed and may require investment and resources to ensure they are sustainable for the long term.</p> <p>The LEADER 2023 – 2027 can help support new and existing businesses within County Longford as well as encouraging people to fulfil their potential when it comes to job opportunities and employment.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<p><u>Sub Theme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Green Economy - Agriculture Diversification - Enterprise Development - Rural Food Production - Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises

Strategic Action 1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Development of micro small and medium enterprises
Brief Description of the Action	This strategic action will support the development of new and existing enterprises through capital investment in infrastructure, workspace, equipment, introduction of new and emerging technologies, specialist equipment, energy saving measures and renewable energy. Funding will also be targeted at training, analysis and development, marketing, online promotion, and networking events. Projects supported will lead to sustaining existing employment and/or creating new employment. Projects that support female entrepreneurs, innovative and creative industries, Green Businesses, New business sectors with growth potential and artisan food enterprises to be prioritised.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurs, new and existing • Enterprises, new and existing • Farmers • Artisan Food and Craft sector
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Teagasc, LWETB, DAFM, Waterways Ireland, Longford County Council, Private Sector Trade Association, Chambers & Sectoral Networks</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of enterprises funded – start-ups - 3</u> <u>Number of enterprises funded – existing - 5</u> <u>Number of Jobs Created (FT/PT/Seasonal) – 10</u> <u>Number of Jobs Sustained (FT/PT/Seasonal) - 30</u>

Strategic Action 1.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Development of potential in the bio and circular economy
Brief Description of the Action	This action will support local engagement, networking, and development of bio-based business models through possible research and development. Opportunities for collaboration, participation, knowledge building and expertise in this highly specialised area will be sought.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurs, new and existing • Enterprises, new and existing • Food Enterprises • Farmers • Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc, LWETB, DAFM, Waterways Ireland, SEAI, Board Bia, Longford County Council, Private Sector Trade Association, Chambers & Sectoral Networks</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of enterprises funded – start-ups - 3</u> <u>Number of enterprises funded – existing - 4</u> <u>Number of Jobs Created (FT/PT/Seasonal) – 3</u> <u>Number of Jobs Sustained (FT/PT/Seasonal) - 10</u>

Strategic Action 1.3	
Title of Strategic Action	Development of social, community and cooperative enterprises
Brief Description of the Action	<p>The delivery of a suite of supports to facilitate the development and growth of new and existing social enterprises, community, and co-operative enterprises. Recognise the important role social enterprises can play in community activities and markets that are not attractive to profit oriented companies.</p> <p>Support capacity building in this sector and the development of innovative projects that may emerge in particular in the areas of the bio and circular economy, renewable energy, and climate change adaptation.</p>
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	<p>Population of County Longford including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Social Enterprises & Co-operative Enterprises • New Social Enterprises & Co-operative Enterprises • Farmers • Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford Local Enterprise Office, SEAI, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc, PPN, LWETB, DAFM, Board Bia, Longford County Council, DSP</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of enterprises funded – start-ups - 2</u> <u>Number of enterprises funded – existing - 2</u> <u>Number of Jobs Created (FT/PT/Seasonal) – 2</u> <u>Number of Jobs Sustained (FT/PT/Seasonal) - 5</u>

Local Objective 2	
Title of Local Objective	Promote sustainable tourism across County Longford
Financial Allocation (€)	€995,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	2
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>Findings from the area profile, consultation process and policy alignment highlight the tourism sector as having the potential to be further developed in a way that will benefit the county economically and environmentally.</p> <p>The overarching ambition of the County Longford Tourism Strategy 2023 – 2027 is to develop and promote County Longford as a high-quality desirable destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands that offers memorable visitor experiences. LEADER 2023 – 2027 can provide an opportunity to individuals, community groups and businesses to support this ambition by developing and promoting tourist attractions, amenities, activities, and sustainable accommodation options.</p> <p>As County Longford is in the early stage of destination life cycle, it has options in terms of how it builds its tourism industry. The approach which has been decided on focuses on slow and regenerative tourism. There is an appreciation that growing the tourism sector needs to take account of its social and environmental impact.</p> <p>The anticipated growth in tourism will generate a number of specialist and general employment opportunities and enable community groups to operate tourism facilities in a sustainable and meaningful way.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Tourism & Recreation - Rural Infrastructure - Accessible Services - Sustainable Development of Rural Environment - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Strategic Action 2.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Support tourism product and infrastructure development
Brief Description of the Action	<p>This action will support tourism initiatives that help to attract additional visitors to Co Longford.</p> <p>Actions can include sustainable development of new and existing indoor and outdoor activities such as water-based activities, walkways, equestrian and greenway projects, festivals, and events etc.</p> <p>Action can focus on leveraging our natural resources, innovative tourism initiatives including regenerative and food tourism, preservation and renovation of heritage attractions and amenities and the development of new and existing tourism accommodation.</p>
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	<p>Population of County Longford including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism entrepreneurs, new and existing • Tourism enterprises, new and existing • Tourism networks • Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>County Longford Tourism Committee, Failte Ireland, Longford County Council, PPN, Waterways Ireland, National Trails Office, OPW, Coillte, Bord na Mona, AOIFE, SEAI</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - new - 5</u> <u>Number of projects funded – existing - 5</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 12</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 20</u> <u>Number of Visitors - 30,000</u>

Strategic Action 2.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Tourism Marketing and Capacity Building
Brief Description of the Action	<p>This action will support the marketing and promotion of new and existing tourism attractions, amenities, events, and initiatives.</p> <p>Action will also support relevant training and capacity building initiatives for the different stakeholder groups in areas such as IT, marketing, financial management, online resources development, climate change, tour guiding and festival/event planning and delivery.</p>
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	<p>Population of County Longford including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism entrepreneurs, new and existing • Tourism enterprises, new and existing • Tourism networks • Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDCC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>County Longford Tourism Committee, Failte Ireland, Longford County Council, PPN, Waterways Ireland, National Trails Office, OPW, Coillte, Bord na Mona, AOIFE</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - new - 2</u> <u>Number of projects funded – existing - 8</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 2</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 20</u> <u>Number of Visitors - 20,000</u>

Local Objective 3	
Title of Local Objective	Support communities to further enhance the lives of those living in County Longford
Financial Allocation (€)	€1,210,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	2
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>Due to the rural geographical landscape of County Longford, communities require local services and facilities to meet the needs of individuals living in communities to combat isolation, provide access to meaningful experiences and address limited access to transport.</p> <p>The EUs policy on Long Term Vision for Rural Areas shines a light on the importance of dynamic communities focusing on wellbeing, inclusive communities and places of diversity that are relevant across all of rural Ireland and County Longford is no exception.</p> <p>The consultation process brought to the forefront the dependency on volunteers to prop up facilities and services to meet the needs of individuals and families living in rural Ireland and the additional support that is required to make local communities and those who live in them thrive.</p> <p>Funding will be targeted at development of community facilities and building capacity to deliver services needed specific to the rural area.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises - Rural Infrastructure - Accessible Services - Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment - Climate Change Capacity Building - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Strategic Action 3.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Development of local community facilities and infrastructure
Brief Description of the Action	To support the development and upgrading of new and existing community facilities to meet the needs of the community concerned. Priority will be given to innovative projects which will be sustainable, multi-use, and clearly targeted at hard-to-reach communities.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Communities & Groups • Rural Dwellers • People with Disabilities • Travelling Community • New Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford County Council, PPN, Coilte, DAFM, SEAI, DSP, HSE, Sports & Social Organisations</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded new - 5</u> <u>Number of projects funded existing - 10</u> <u>Population in towns receiving funding - 46,751</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 1</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 5</u>

Strategic Action 3.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Initiatives to improve the quality of lives of those living in County Longford
Brief Description of the Action	It is clear from the outcome of the public consultations that communities want to build their capacity to deliver services they need in their area. This action will focus on initiatives to support the development of Rural Towns and Villages, the provision of community based rural services for rural dwellers who now are experiencing isolation and disadvantage by the withdrawal of or lack of services, initiatives which address rural transport issues, focus on improved safety and access to local amenities, facilities, town, and village centres. It was also noted older people in rural areas can have a very positive contribution to intergenerational knowledge transfer, training initiatives, multi-generational initiatives, and development programmes to support social inclusion.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Communities & Groups • Rural Dwellers • People with Disabilities • Travelling Community • New Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford County Council, PPN, Coilte, DAFM, SEAI, DSP, HSE, Sports & Social Organisations</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded new - 3</u> <u>Number of projects funded existing - 9</u> <u>Population in towns receiving funding - 46,751</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 1</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 3</u>

Local Objective 4	
Title of Local Objective	Embrace and encourage the diverse and multicultural demographic within the county
Financial Allocation (€)	€180,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	1
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>County Longford is a diverse county with many nationalities living in towns and villages. Approximately 19.5% of the population were born overseas, and 16.4% of the population are not of Irish nationality.</p> <p>In line with the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 policy, the diversity evident in County Longford brings with it a range of opportunities and potential to encourage active citizenship and ensure that all people have access to quality services.</p> <p>There are opportunities to embrace and encourage the diverse and multicultural demographic in the county through enterprise development, inclusive festivals, artisan food production and inclusive community services.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Infrastructure - Accessible Services - Optimising Digital Connectivity - Rural Youth

Strategic Action 4.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Build vibrant local inclusive communities
Brief Description of the Action	The Socio-economic analysis and public consultation identify many issues across communities which may be targeted through social, cultural, and recreational actions. Leader funding will be targeted towards supporting the development and promotion of unique social, multi-cultural events, festivals and activities including food related events, networking, training, and capacity building. Use of technology methods in the provision of information services.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Communities & Groups • Rural Dwellers • People with Disabilities • Travelling Community • New Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford County Council, PPN, Coilte, DAFM, SEAI, DSP, HSE, Sports & Social Organisations</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded new - 2</u> <u>Number of projects funded existing - 8</u> <u>Population in towns receiving funding - 46,751</u>

Local Objective 5	
Title of Local Objective	Enable individuals, businesses, and communities to optimize digital connectivity and proficiencies
Financial Allocation (€)	€50,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	1
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>As per the area profile, there have been significant advancements in broadband over the last number of years for households, community groups and businesses. A discussion point that came up several times during the consultation process is that while increased access to broadband is a positive, the benefits become depleted if users do not fully optimise the potential that comes with broadband and digital connectivity.</p> <p>As well as an increase in digital literacy and digital skills being requested by participants during the consultation process, there was also innovative and creative ideas around how greater digital connectivity can promote tourism, businesses, and social and community enterprises.</p> <p>The outcomes from this objective are expected to enable business and social and community enterprises to provide better access to services and centralised information sources.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible Services - Optimising Digital Connectivity

Strategic Action 5.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Optimise opportunities that support digital connectivity and smart technologies
Brief Description of the Action	Support initiatives that enhance digital connectivity through capital investments, training, and capacity building. Create opportunities to leverage technology to reduce rural isolation, initiatives to tackle coverage issues, remote working opportunities, access to services, centralised information sources.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Communities & Groups • Rural Dwellers • People with Disabilities • Travelling Community • New Communities
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Longford County Council, PPN, DSP, HSE, Sports & Social Organisations</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - 6</u> <u>Population benefiting - 46,751</u> <u>Number of new jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) 0</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) 2</u>

Local Objective 6	
Title of Local Objective	Improve the livelihoods and opportunities for young people in County Longford
Financial Allocation (€)	€350,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	2
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>County Longford has a young population and has the highest proportion of non-Irish national children in the country along with the highest proportion of children from the Traveller Community.</p> <p>During consultations sessions and particularly consultations with special interest groups, reoccurring issues came up in the context of young people in County Longford. Those issues included access to employment, education and participation in climate change measures, access to additional social and community services and addressing the needs of 16–18-year-olds who are neither in school nor in employment.</p> <p>Supports are required to provide interventions at a critical time in young people's development. Additional youth infrastructure and facilities will assist the youth of today and the future for the county with the training, life skills and confidence to reach their potential.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> - Rural Youth

Strategic Action 6.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Development of Infrastructure
Brief Description of the Action	Capital support towards the development of appropriate youth facilities, youth clubs, cafes, and IT hubs.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population in County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Sector • Community & Voluntary Sector
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Youth Organisations, Community Organisations, Family Resource Centres, Tusla, LWETB, PPN, Longford County Council</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded new -3</u> <u>Number of projects funded existing - 5</u> <u>Number of young people participating - 3000</u>

Strategic Action 6.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Support young people to take an active role in shaping their future
Brief Description of the Action	Supports towards training/capacity building to improve youth skills not covered in mainstream education, IT programmes, language skills, promotion of entrepreneurship and business skills to help them realise their full potential while creating much needed jobs, novel projects which could include job fairs promoting employment opportunities, volunteering fairs promoting volunteering and education fairs promoting education. Youth Projects that promote climate change and green clubs, initiatives supporting health and well-being of young people and supporting youth arts initiatives will be important.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Sector • Young entrepreneurs and graduates • Community & Voluntary Sector
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>Youth Organisations, Community Organisations, Family Resource Centres, DSP, Tusla, LWETB, PPN, Longford County Council</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	Number of projects funded – <u>2</u> Number of young people participating - <u>1000</u>

Local Objective 7	
Title of Local Objective	Support the enhancement and protection of natural heritage and natural resources.
Financial Allocation (€)	€260,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	2
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>There is a strong drive from an EU and National perspective to address the existential threats to the country and Europe and to promote and implement policies such as The European Green Deal and Climate Action Plan 2030.</p> <p>Longford is a county that is rich in biodiversity and natural resources. The county enjoys an un-spoil and attractive natural environment and there is a vital need to protect the biodiversity and reduce the threat from invasive species.</p> <p>Throughout the consultation process there was a continuous message from participants that more is needed to be done across the county to protect biodiversity, wildlife, natural resources, and waterways. There was a call from the public and groups to be better educated on climate change mitigation and protection and to be provided with the supports required to action meaningful change.</p> <p>Additional education and awareness programmes, capacity building and incentives for groups to implement solutions is needed to ensure that meaningful change can be made to undo the damage caused and prevent further destruction being caused to the planet and the county in the future.</p> <p>The outcome of this objective will be for more education opportunities and small-scale infrastructure that will appreciate and enhance the natural resources across the county.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green Economy - Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment - Climate Change Capacity Building - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Strategic Action 7.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Initiatives to support the enhancement and protection of natural resources
Brief Description of the Action	Actions such as awareness building, training, analysis and development, projects which support local communities and business to protect, enhance and promote natural resources. Analysis and development and capital investment in renewable energy projects
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Voluntary Sector • New & existing Enterprises • Tourism Sector • Farming Community
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>SEAI, LAWPRO, Longford County Council, Waterways Ireland, IFI, IFA, PPN, OPW, NPWS, DAFM, Environmental Pillar, Board na Mona, Coillte, Teagasc, Longford LEO, County Longford Tourism Committee</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - new - 2</u> <u>Number of projects funded – existing - 5</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 1</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 4</u>

Strategic Action 7.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Initiatives to address challenges posed by climate change
Brief Description of the Action	This action will target projects which address climate change mitigation through capital investment, analysis and development, training, and capacity building. For example: Funding of projects in local communities reducing the need to travel and reducing carbon footprint and waste management, upcycling, and recycling, retrofitting buildings to renewable energies.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Voluntary Sector • New & existing Enterprises • Tourism Sector • Farming Community
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>SEAI, LAWPRO, Longford County Council, Waterways Ireland, IFI, IFA, PPN, OPW, NPWS, DAFM, Environmental Pillar, Board na Mona, Coillte, Teagasc, Longford LEO, County Longford Tourism Committee</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - new - 2</u> <u>Number of projects funded – existing - 4</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 1</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 2</u>

Local Objective 8	
Title of Local Objective	Capitalise on the natural surroundings in a way that protects nature and benefits those living in the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€130,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	1
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>The County's natural landscape lends itself to a vast array of opportunities for residents and tourists to enjoy. The latest Tourism Strategy for County Longford speaks about slow tourism and regenerative tourism. These approaches are key for the county to build its tourism sector in a way that protects and respects the natural surroundings.</p> <p>A similar approach is required for enterprise development and agriculture diversification. The consultation process brought to light the opportunities that exist to economically capitalise on the natural surroundings in a way that is respectful to the natural assets. The process also identified the dying out of traditional skills and the opportunities in circular and bio economy particularly in light of the skills accessible through the diverse range of cultures living in the county.</p> <p>Given the agriculture landscape there are opportunities for farmers and landowners to expand their existing farm/land portfolio and in some cases diversify into non-agriculture activities.</p> <p>The LEADER 2023 – 2027 can support all of these initiatives with outcomes anticipated to be an increase in employment opportunities, more wealth being generated and a greater sense of pride from residents from what the county can offer.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture Diversification - Rural Tourism & Recreation - Rural Infrastructure - Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment - Climate Change Capacity Building - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Strategic Action 8.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Build on natural assets in county Longford in a sustainable and regenerative manner
Brief Description of the Action	Support for businesses and communities to capitalise on the natural surrounding while protecting the environment through capital investment, analysis and development, marketing, and training projects. Protection and enhancement of natural habitats, protection and re-generation of rivers, lakes, and bogs.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Voluntary Sector • New & existing Enterprises • Tourism Sector • Farming Community
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>SEAI, LAWPRO, Longford County Council, Waterways Ireland, IFI, IFA, PPN, OPW, NPWS, DAFM, Environmental Pillar, Board na Mona, Coillte, Teagasc, Longford LEO, County Longford Tourism Committee</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - new - 2</u> <u>Number of projects funded – existing - 6</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 1</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 2</u>

Local Objective 9	
Title of Local Objective	Support and encourage the Development of Renewable Energy Potential and Energy Conservation.
Financial Allocation (€)	€230,000
No. of Strategic Action under this Local Objective	1
Rationale for the Local Objective	<p>The European Green Deal seeks to transform Europe into the world's first climate neutral continent. To enable this, several renewable energy projects need to be established.</p> <p>There is a strong will across the county to embrace innovative and creative opportunities to develop renewable energy potential and energy conservation for businesses and community groups in a way that is efficient and benefits the planet. With vast amounts of agriculture land, waterways and boglands, the county is well positioned to respond to this opportunity.</p> <p>Due to the capital investment that is required with some of these renewable energy and energy conservation projects, it is likely that further research will be required to ascertain the feasibility of such projects. The rising demand for renewable energy solutions also has the potential to create employment in the county.</p> <p>The outcomes from this objective will be to increase awareness and understanding of the renewable energy and energy conservation solutions that are available, to enable feasibility studies for such solutions and support individuals, business, and community groups where possible in delivering the solutions.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	<u>Sub Theme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green Economy - Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment - Climate Change Capacity Building - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Strategic Action 9.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Development of renewable energy and energy conservation potential in the county
Brief Description of the Action	This action will support community organisations, businesses, and farmers to reduce their energy costs through capital investment, analysis and development, and energy audits. Supporting training in alternative energy, energy reduction initiatives and green businesses.
Primary Target Groups for this Strategic Action	Population of County Longford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Voluntary Sector • New & existing Enterprises • Tourism Sector • Farming Community
Geographic Area	It is envisaged that the whole of Co. Longford will benefit from this action, in addition the implementation of this action will endeavour to prioritise and support the geographic areas most disadvantaged, including but not limited to the geographic areas listed in Table 2.2.8 of this strategy.
Organisations delivering this Strategic Action	Longford LCDC & Longford Community Resources Clg
Collaborating Organisations	<u>LAWPRO, SEAI, Longford County Council, Waterways Ireland, IFI, IFA, PPN, OPW, NPWS, DAFM, Environmental Pillar, Board na Mona, Coillte, Teagasc, Longford LEO, County Longford Tourism Committee</u>
Timeframe for Delivery	<u>2023-2027</u>
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<u>Number of projects funded - new - 1</u> <u>Number of projects funded – existing - 5</u> <u>Number of jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 1</u> <u>Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal) - 4</u>

5.4 Sustainability

The objectives and strategic actions have been decided on to ensure that there is economic, social, and environmental sustainability within Longford over the period 2023 – 2027 and beyond. The outcomes from the objectives and actions are focused on:

Ensuring sustainable employment opportunities for all persons from all backgrounds and of all working age	The objectives and actions in this strategy set up to support the development of new and existing enterprises through different capital investment including renewable energy investment. There are targeted measures to support the development of regenerative tourism through attracting visitors including the sustainable development of new and existing indoor and outdoor activities and through the promotion of tourism initiatives. The plan also focuses on creating opportunities to leverage technologies to reduce rural isolation, support remote working and increase access to services.
Inclusive and accessible participation opportunities for all community, business, and individuals from all backgrounds	<p>The objectives and actions in this strategy seek to provide inclusive opportunities for all those living and working in the county. The actions will enable the delivery of a suite of supports to new and existing social enterprises, community, and co-operative enterprises. In addition, there is a focus on capital support towards the development of appropriate youth facilities, youth clubs, cafes, and IT hubs as well as the development and upgrading of new and existing community facilities. Funding will be used where possible to support the development and promotion of unique social, multi-cultural events, festivals and activities including food related events, networking, training, and capacity building.</p> <p>Many of the initiatives set out in this strategy seek to improve the quality of lives of those living in the County including supporting the development of Rural Towns and villages and identifies those hardest to reach communities, those who are isolated and those who are disadvantaged by the withdrawal of services. As part of this there is a particular focus on supporting young people to take an active role in shaping their future.</p>
Implementing measures that will support climate change mitigation and adaption	<p>Central to a lot of the objectives and actions set out in this strategy is a commitment to supporting climate change mitigation and adaption and to build on the natural assets in the county in a sustainable manner. This includes initiatives to support capital investment, the enhancement and protection of natural resources such as awareness building, projects which support local communities and business to protect, enhance and promote natural resources. Actions will also target projects which address climate change mitigation through capital investment, analysis, and development.</p> <p>This strategy also commits to actions to support businesses and communities in the development of renewable energy and energy conservation potential in the county as well as the potential for bio and circular economy.</p>

SECTION 6: LDS FINANCIAL PLAN

The 2023 – 2027 LEADER funding allocation for County Longford is €5.8 million. Within this, there is a requirement to allocate 25% of the funding to LAG Administration and Animation Costs. The impact of this allocation and approach results in there being insufficient funding available to pay the necessary number of staff required for the programme to be implemented and viable.

To ensure that there are adequate numbers of staff in place to implement the 2023 – 2027+2 yrs. LEADER programme across the county, the financial plan in Table 6.1 below shows the actual funding required and as such, the total funding requirement exceeds that which has been initially communicated. The financial plan in Table 6.1 below allocates the €5.8 million, including the 25% Administration and Animation costs, for the period 2023 to 2027. These figures allow for Administration and Animation costs for the Implementation Partner and do not allow for any administration costs for the LAG and Financial Partner. In addition, the Administration and Animation Costs for the years 2028 and 2029 are included as an estimated cost for the Implementing Partner (the period required for the closure of the programme) which are unfunded under the LEADER programme budget available.

To meet the requirements as per the guidance document for developing a LEADER Local Development Strategy, the LAG revisited the financial plan to develop a forecast of expenditure for the implementation of the LDS for 2023 – 2029. The financial plan detailed in Table 6.2 below outlines the expected expenditure for the period 2023 – 2029 which anticipates the commencement of the programme being 2024 and takes account of the period 2028 – 2029, the period required for the closure of the programme. The overall budget costs of this financial plan do not exceed the maximum budget allocated by the Department for the sub-regional area covered by LAG and these figures allow for Administration and Animation costs for the Implementation Partner and do not allow for any administration costs for the LAG and Financial Partner. The financial plan as per Table 6.2 allows for the following staffing full-time equivalents (based on 35-hour working week) by year through the life cycle of the programme:

LEADER FTE	Staffing
2023	0
2024	6.44
2025	5.72
2026	3.88
2027	1.88
2028	1.88
2029	1.38

Table 6.1 – Financial Plan for the delivery and implementation of the LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027 which allocates the €5.8 million budget including the 25% Administration and Animation costs, for the period 2023 to 2027 and the Administration and Animation Costs for the years 2028 and 2029 as an estimated cost for the Implementing Partner (the period required for the closure of the programme) which are unfunded under the LEADER programme budget available.

Implementation of the CLLD Strategy								
	2023 (€)	2024 (€)	2025 (€)	2026 (€)	2027 (€)	2028 (€)	2029 (€)	Total €
Theme 1: Economic Development and Job Creation								
Sub-theme 1a. The Green Economy	0.00	30,000.00	50,000.00	30,000.00	0.00			110,000.00
Sub-theme 1b. Agricultural Diversification	0.00	50,000.00	35,000.00	40,000.00	20,000.00			145,000.00
Sub-theme 1c. Rural Tourism & Recreation	0.00	420,000.00	230,000.00	105,000.00	20,000.00			775,000.00
Sub-theme 1d. Enterprise Development	0.00	100,000.00	140,000.00	110,000.00	100,000.00			450,000.00
Sub-theme 1e. Rural Food Production	0.00	0.00	60,000.00	60,000.00	0.00			120,000.00
Sub-theme 1f. Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises	0.00	30,000.00	80,000.00	70,000.00	20,000.00			200,000.00
Total Theme 1: Economic Development and Job Creation	0.00	630,000.00	595,000.00	415,000.00	160,000.00			1,800,000.00
Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion								
Sub-theme 2a. Rural Infrastructure	0.00	370,000.00	270,000.00	110,000.00	100,000.00			850,000.00
Sub-theme 2b. Accessible Services	0.00	100,000.00	90,000.00	75,000.00	40,000.00			305,000.00
Sub-theme 2c. Optimising Digital Connectivity	0.00	0.00	25,000.00	20,000.00	0.00			45,000.00
Sub-theme 2d. Rural Youth	0.00	130,000.00	110,000.00	90,000.00	50,000.00			380,000.00
Total Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion	0.00	600,000.00	495,000.00	295,000.00	190,000.00			1,580,000.00
Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation								
Sub-theme 3a. Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment	€0	€70,000	€130,000	€60,000	€15,000			275,000.00
Sub-theme 3b. Climate Change Capacity Building:	€0	€60,000	€60,000	€60,000	€45,000			225,000.00
Sub-theme 3c. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	€0	€135,000	€190,000	€100,000	€45,000			470,000.00
Total Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	0.00	265,000.00	380,000.00	220,000.00	105,000.00			970,000.00
LAG Administration & Animation Costs								
	53,780.68	391,058.81	366,143.75	373,314.23	265,702.53	270,063.82	277,476.18	1,997,540.00
Total Budget Cost	53,780.68	1,886,058.81	1,836,143.75	1,303,314.23	720,702.53	270,063.82	277,476.18	6,347,540.00

Table 6.2 – Financial Plan for the delivery and implementation of the LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027 which allocates the €5.8 million, including the 25% Administration and Animation costs, for the period 2023 to 2029.

Implementation of the CLLD Strategy								
	2023 (€)	2024 (€)	2025 (€)	2026 (€)	2027 (€)	2028 (€)	2029 (€)	Total €
Theme 1: Economic Development and Job Creation								
Sub-theme 1a. The Green Economy	0.00	30,000.00	50,000.00	30,000.00	0.00			110,000.00
Sub-theme 1b. Agricultural Diversification	0.00	50,000.00	35,000.00	40,000.00	20,000.00			145,000.00
Sub-theme 1c. Rural Tourism & Recreation	0.00	420,000.00	230,000.00	105,000.00	20,000.00			775,000.00
Sub-theme 1d. Enterprise Development	0.00	100,000.00	140,000.00	110,000.00	100,000.00			450,000.00
Sub-theme 1e. Rural Food Production	0.00	0.00	60,000.00	60,000.00	0.00			120,000.00
Sub-theme 1f. Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises	0.00	30,000.00	80,000.00	70,000.00	20,000.00			200,000.00
Total Theme 1: Economic Development and Job Creation	0.00	630,000.00	595,000.00	415,000.00	160,000.00			1,800,000.00
Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion								
Sub-theme 2a. Rural Infrastructure	0.00	370,000.00	270,000.00	110,000.00	100,000.00			850,000.00
Sub-theme 2b. Accessible Services	0.00	100,000.00	90,000.00	75,000.00	40,000.00			305,000.00
Sub-theme 2c. Optimising Digital Connectivity	0.00	0.00	25,000.00	20,000.00	0.00			45,000.00
Sub-theme 2d. Rural Youth	0.00	130,000.00	110,000.00	90,000.00	50,000.00			380,000.00
Total Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion	0.00	600,000.00	495,000.00	295,000.00	190,000.00			1,580,000.00
Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation								
Sub-theme 3a. Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment	€0	€70,000	€130,000	€60,000	€15,000			275,000.00
Sub-theme 3b. Climate Change Capacity Building:	€0	€60,000	€60,000	€60,000	€45,000			225,000.00
Sub-theme 3c. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	€0	€135,000	€190,000	€100,000	€45,000			470,000.00
Total Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	0.00	265,000.00	380,000.00	220,000.00	105,000.00			970,000.00
LAG Administration & Animation Costs								
	0.00	386,058.81	361,143.75	249,126.52	161,337.56	161,318.72	131,014.64	1,450,000.00
Total Budget Cost	0.00	1,881,058.81	1,831,143.75	1,179,126.52	616,337.56	161,318.72	131,014.64	5,800,000.00

SECTION 7: MONITOR AND PERFORMANCE

Monitoring and evaluation of LEADER interventions is not simply viewed as a mandatory task but an important tool to guide those implementing the programme as to whether the proposed actions of the L.D.S. are meeting their objectives. On-going monitoring and evaluation will also allow for changes or adaptations of the L.D.S. to be made if necessary and will highlight what elements of the programme are working particularly well and what might need extra attention.

7.1 Monitoring & Review

When designing actions and awarding a financial allocation to them, indicators, expected outcomes and targets have also been considered. This will set the preliminary benchmark of expected results to be achieved for each action outlined in the L.D.S.

In order to monitor the programme various data sources will be utilised which will include:

- At project level information will be collated, including the programme indicator data and linkages to the LDS objectives relevant and associated with the theme and sub-theme from which the project's is funded, at the following stages:
 - application stage;
 - LAG assessment of application;
 - final payment stage where outcomes / outputs will be gathered both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective
- At each year end, a full End of Year Report of the LEADER programme will be produced and will capture a range of information as per the Operating Rules; this report will highlight the previous year's achievements including the progress made and issues or challenges encountered. The report will also include a minimum of three individual case studies covering three sub-themes on projects funded during the previous twelve months. This report will also provide information on the LAG's organisational structure, operations, and decision-making.

The data collection from local projects in relation to the programme indicators set will be collected systematically across all stages of interaction with project promoters. The designing of the application forms, evaluation documents, final claim, and payment documents, etc. will ensure the information is captured in relation to the programme indicators. This data will also be inputted in the LEADER ICT system as required. In addition, the Implementing Partner will establish and maintain an internal database which will record programme indicators across all themes and sub-themes.

The CEO of Longford Community Resources CLG, as the Implementing Partner, will be responsible for the review and collation of data and its maintenance and will be supported by the LEADER staff team within Longford Community Resources CLG. In order to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data provided sufficient evidence will be required at each stage of interaction with project promoters as mentioned above. The evidence required may include:

- business plans
- memorandums/articles of association or constitutions
- audited financial statements
- bank statements
- cash flow projections
- community plans
- Company Registration Office checks and verifications
- photographs
- attendance sheets for training events

- training plans
- marketing and promotional materials
- asset register
- relevant compliance confirmation with agencies/bodies

This information will be gathered by Longford Community Resources through the following methods:

- liaising with project promoters when developing, receiving, assessing, and managing project applications
- project site visits
- spot checks
- annual in operation letters
- attendance at training courses, workshops, events, and festivals to monitor the outcomes of the actions

In terms of monitoring programme implementation and ensuring actions are prioritised based on needs, a monthly review of the programme will take place with all the implementing partner staff to ensure that a programme of work is planned and delivered, this will be co-ordinated by the CEO.

As stated above, an End of Year Report of the LEADER Programme will be produced which will form the basis of the annual review on progress in relation to the LDS. A LEADER Monitoring Committee (as referenced in point 1.3) will be established, which will report directly to the LAG, and the annual review of the LDS will be conducted by this committee in tandem with preparation of an annual implementation plan. Based on ongoing work and consultation with project promoters, communities, enterprises etc. Longford LCDC will, where appropriate, identify new priorities and amend the LDS as required.

The review of the Annual Implementation plan will be conducted by assessing to what extent the LAG has/is delivering on local objectives and strategic actions identified in the LDS. This will be conducted on a quarterly basis through gathering information on programme indicators as outlined above.

While annual reviews of the strategy will take place, an independent mid-term view will be undertaken. This will be a useful reference for all those involved in implementing the programme to ensure that the LDS continues to be of relevance and that proposed actions remain the most effective way of gaining the maximum benefits for our communities. At this stage, we will also review the implementation of the programme from a service-user perspective as this is a community led process; we want to ensure that our beneficiaries are satisfied with their level of participation in the programme and also with their interaction with the programme implementers.

The framework the Longford LAG will utilize to monitor, and review is identified below in Figure 7.1

Figure 7.1.1 Longford LEADER 2023 – 2027 Monitor and Review Framework

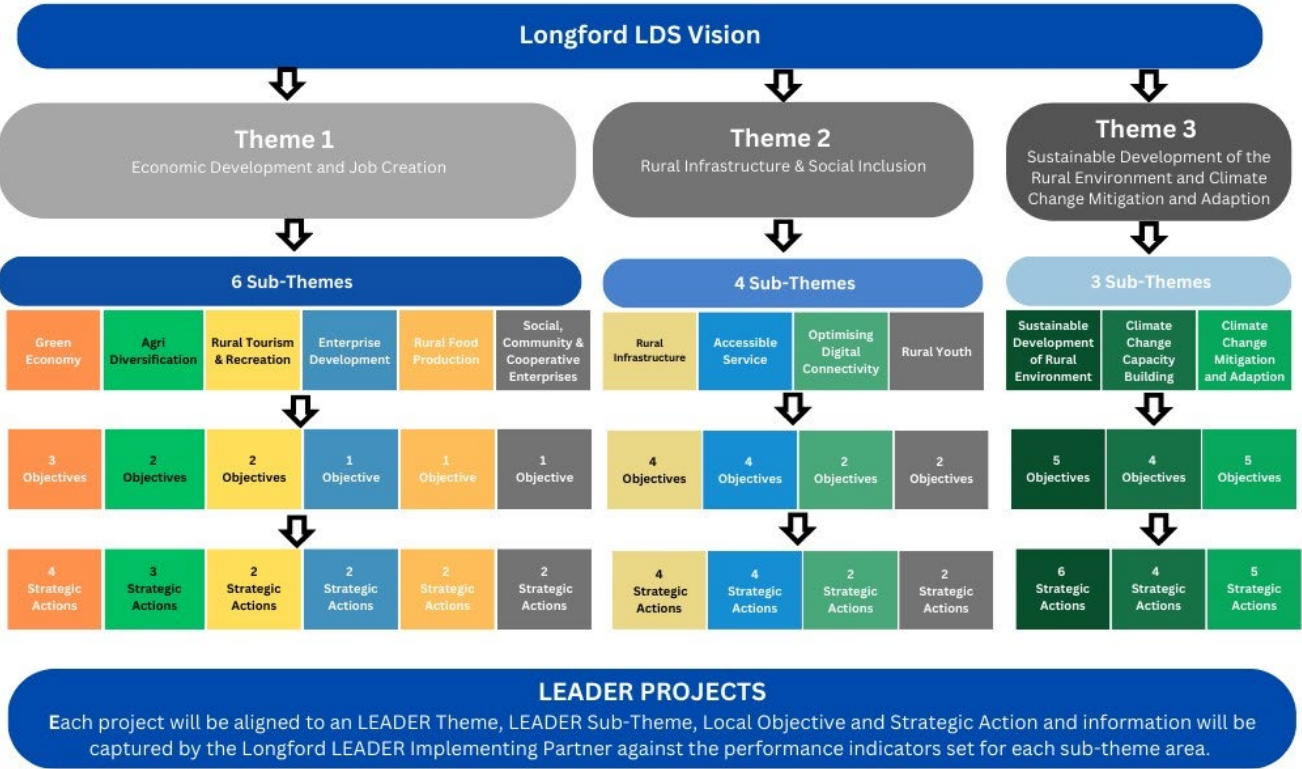


Table 7.1.1 – Summary of Data Collection for LEADER Projects

DATA SOURCE	FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION	INFORMATION COLLECTED
Project Promoters EOI – LEADER Expressions of interest Form and any supplementary documentation will include basic information in relation to the project promoter and the proposed project.	Expression of Interest Stage- Basic information necessary at the outset to identify basic eligibility of project & promoter -	All Expressions of Interest are captured on the LEADER ICT System including basic promoter details and project idea
Project Promoters Application – Applications received will include all the necessary information on the Project and Project Promoter will be captured	Application Stage – This will be both on Rolling Basis and Time-Limited Calls.	All relevant application information supplied by promoter will be captured on the LEADER ICT System at the point of application
Implementing Partner project Assessment & Verifications – Information in relation to Project Promoter and proposed Project from other sources e.g., other funding agencies, revenue, CRO, etc. as part of various consultations	Application and Assessment Stages & periodic stages post project approval – coinciding with key project development milestones including assessment, approval, contract, project implementation, project completion & payment stages.	All relevant project information necessary to assess, approve and monitor the Project/Promoter eligibility will be captured on the LEADER ICT System at the various points required.
LAG, Implementing Partner & Financial Partner – LAG and Programme Partners Records (from financial systems & internally generated documentation, e.g., Project Officers Project Assessment Reports, Evaluation Committee Minutes Extracts, LAG Minutes Extracts, Project Payment EFT's, Programme Reports etc.	Project approval & Periodic Stages throughout project - coinciding with key project development milestones including assessment, approval, contract, project implementation, project completion & payment stages.	Including details of Amount of funding approved, type of funding approved, amount of funding drawdown, type of activity/project funded etc. Additional information collected will depend on the individual project or thematic area to which the project is assigned
Project Promoter Reports & Supporting Documentation – Interim, Final and Post Completion Reports and supporting documentation such as invoices, receipts, bank statements and financial accounts etc.	Project Implementation, Completion and Post Completion Stages – During project implementation, at project completion stage and at periodic intervals post completion as required (dependent on the size, complexity and nature of the project funded).	All relevant project information necessary to verify and monitor the Project/Promoter eligibility and deem expenditure eligible for drawdown will be captured on the LEADER ICT System grant claim stages. Other information necessary will be collected as required dependent on the project/promoter/thematic area. Inputs, outputs, and outcomes are collected for each LEADER funded intervention.

7.2 Data Protection

Information that will be collected from project promoters and other potential clients over the duration of the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 will include personal data and sensitive personal data, as defined in the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. Requirements regarding data protection will be met and Longford LCDC will comply with all registration requirements as an authorised data controller and abide by the provision of the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. Longford LCDC will maintain a robust system for ensuring the security of data received. Compliance with the Data Protection Acts and the processing of personal data on a day-to-day basis will be overseen by the Rural Development Programme Administrator and, as part of Longford LCDC's role to monitor and review the performance of the implementing partner, the LCDC will ensure that all data protection requirements are met.

The LAG's procedures manual will outline the procedures and controls for maintaining the security of personal data and sensitive personal data received and processed in relation to LEADER.

At the time of providing personal information a transparency and informed consent will be the basis of the approach used in engaging with project promoters as they provide their information or their organisation's information. Project promoters as part of the application process will be made fully aware that the data supplied will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and signed consent forms will be required from each project promoter, this will ensure that project promoters are made fully aware of:

- The identity of the persons who are collecting the information
- To what use the information will be put
- The persons or category of persons to whom the information will be disclosed.

Other secondary or future uses of project promoter's personal data, which may not have been obvious, to the promoters will be brought to their attention at the time of obtaining personal data. Promoters will be given the option of saying whether or not they wish their information to be used in these other ways.

In regard to the procedures for handling personal data, Longford LCDC, Longford County Council and Longford Community Resources Ltd will follow and abide by the guidance from the Department of Finance and the Data Protection Commissioners office.

7.3 Evaluation

In terms of evaluation the LAG's objectives are to measure the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability of the LDS. The specific objectives are to:

- analyse the process of implementing the annual implementation plan,
- analyse the impact or changes that have occurred as a result of the programme,
- identify problems and challenges that have been encountered,
- identify any important lessons to be learnt and make recommendations for the implementation of future programmes

As detailed in the Heads of Agreement and the proposed Service Level Agreement for the implementation of the LDS, Longford LCDC will review the performance of Longford Community Resources Ltd as the implementing partner and in conjunction with the review process outlined above and with the support of the LEADER Monitoring Committee, (as referenced in point 1.3), Longford LCDC have responsibility to evaluate the performance of the LDS. In order to undertake this evaluation Longford LCDC will coordinate annual, midterm and final programme evaluations as well as contributing to Department's reviews and

evaluation as required. The final programme evaluation will take place at the end of the programme and will document learning, challenges and what actions had the most benefit. It may also identify outcomes that were not anticipated that are having a positive effect on people's lives. It is envisaged that all aspects of the LDS and LEADER themes and sub themes will be evaluated as part of this process.

The data requirements for evaluating the LDS will be consistent with the programme indicators and anticipated outputs, indicators and targets as outlined in the LDS action plan. The data collated as part of the ongoing monitoring of projects and LDS implementation will be utilised to prepare the programme evaluations.

The tools and methods employed to support the evaluation of the programme will be both self-evaluation and the engagement an external evaluation expertise and will include qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Quantitative

- Utilising data collected from projects (e.g., jobs created and/or sustained; numbers trained; numbers of visitors, etc.)
- Data relating to local indicators

Qualitative

- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Case studies
- Consultation with other local agencies assessing impact of programme
- Participation in local research

It is anticipated that these evaluations will take place in parallel with the annual review and at both midterm and end of the programme.

We anticipate that in addition to written reports which will be made widely available to all relevant stakeholders, we will produce a visual report upon completion of the LEADER Programme. 2023-2027. It is also our intention to make greater use of social media to communicate our findings as this is an effective tool used widely by the community sector in County Longford.

To ensure a robust evaluation of the programme the evaluator will be required to have the relevant skills and expertise to fulfil the role, in the case of procuring external evaluators a clear and concise role description and specification will be devised. Funding, which has been included in the financial plan, will be required to undertake the evaluation process and a willingness of all relevant stakeholders to participate in the evaluation process is essential.

APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1.1 Longford Local Community Development Committee Standing Orders and Conflict of Interest Policy

STANDING ORDERS

Regulating the proceedings of the

Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Includes Conflict of Interest Policy



Version: 2

1. Method of doing business and function of the LCDC

1.1 The work of the LCDC must be done on the basis of constructive co-operation between all Committee Members, and active participation based on a partnership approach.

1.2 The LCDC is an official Committee of Longford County Council in accordance with section 49A (1) & (2) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014:

(1) Subject to subsection (3), there shall be established, in accordance with this section and Chapter 2 of Part 13 (including any regulations made or general policy guidelines issued under that Chapter) by resolution of each local authority in respect of its administrative area a committee, to be known as the Local Community Development Committee, for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

(2) Subject to this section and Chapter 2 of Part 13, each Local Community Development Committee is independent in the performance of its functions

1.3 All members have equal standing.

1.4 The functions of the LCDC are:

- (a) To prepare and adopt the community elements of every 6 year local economic and community plan concerned in accordance with section 66C and any regulations made, or general policy guidelines issued, by the Minister for the purposes of that section,
- (b) To implement, or to arrange for the implementation of, the community elements of the Plan (as the case may be) as made by the local authority in accordance with section 66C (4),
- (c) To undertake a review of the community elements of the Plan at least once within the period of 6 calendar years after the Plan was adopted or last amended for the purposes of this paragraph and, if the Committee considers it necessary after any such review—

(i) To amend the community elements of the Plan, or

- (ii) To prepare and adopt new community elements of the Plan to be made by the local authority under section 66C, and any such amendment or adoption shall be in accordance with any regulations made, or general policy guidelines issued, by the Minister for that purpose,
- (d) To monitor and review on an ongoing basis the implementation of the community elements of the Plan, including performance against any benchmarks or indicators of performance set out in the community elements of the Plan or other relevant indicators and, if the Committee considers appropriate, to revise the actions and strategies set to achieve the objectives of those elements of the Plan,
- (e) In furtherance of paragraph (b), to co-ordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of local and community development programmes that have been either:
 - (i) Approved by resolution from time to time for that purpose by the local authority concerned in respect of all or part of its administrative area, or
 - (ii) Agreed for that purpose between the Committee and a public authority, and to ensure that any plans and strategies related to those programmes are implemented in accordance with the community elements of the Plan.
- (f) To seek to ensure effectiveness, consistency, co-ordination and avoidance of duplication between the local and community development programmes to which paragraph (e) applies and the functions of the local authority in relation to promoting the interests of local communities or in other related functions under Section 66 (as provided for by subsection (2)) or otherwise,
- (g) In addition to those programmes to which paragraphs (e) and (f) apply, to pursue the co-ordination generally of all local and community development programmes within the functional area of the Committee, so as to optimise resources for the benefit of local communities in that area and improve the efficiency with which publicly-funded local and community development resources are used,

- (h) To consider and adopt a statement in respect of the economic elements of a draft of the Plan prepared by the local authority in accordance with section 66C, and
 - (i) not later than 31 March in each year, to prepare, adopt and submit to the local authority a report in relation to the performance of its functions during the year immediately preceding the year in which the report is submitted.
- (i) The functions of a local authority under Section 66, shall be deemed to be delegated to a Committee, in so far as those functions are necessary for the performance by the Committee of its functions otherwise provided for by this section.
- (j) The Committee may enter into an agreement in writing with a public authority, local development or community development body, or other person for the carrying out of those functions by such an authority, body or person, as the case may be, which the LCDC considers appropriate to be carried out by such an authority, body or person, subject to such terms, conditions, restrictions and other requirements as the LCDC considers necessary and specifies in the agreement.
- (k) In this subsection a 'local development or community development body' includes a not-for-profit organisation that provides programmes, offers services or engages in other activities that promote and support the interests of a local community or any part of a community or group within a local community.
- (l) The Minister may, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, by order confer on a Committee or Committees such additional functions connected with the functions for the time being of a Committee, class of Committees or Committees generally (as the case may be) as the Minister determines, subject to such conditions (if any) as may be specified in the order.
- (m) The Minister may make such provision as he or she considers necessary or expedient in respect of matters ancillary to or arising out of any of the functions referred to in paragraph (l).

1.5 Substitutes for Board Members will not be allowed for.

- 1.6 Members of the Board are encouraged to place items on the agenda. This can be done by contacting the nominated the Chief Officer in writing at least 10 working days before the Meeting.
- 1.7 All communications will be routed through the Chief Officer in the first instance, including the circulation of documents and/or other items relating to Agenda items
- 1.8 If considered appropriate by the LCDC, a non-member may be invited to attend a meeting and speak to a specific agenda item.

2. Operation issues regarding meetings

- 2.1 Bi-monthly meetings should prove adequate in most circumstances. But in any event the LCDC should meet no less than six times in one calendar year. The Chairperson may decide that for urgent reasons an additional meeting would have value, such a meeting may exceptionally be held.
- 2.2 In so far as is practicable the place for holding meetings of the Committee shall be the principal offices of the County Council and meetings shall normally be held there, provided that the Committee may from time to time by agreement appoint an alternative location for a particular meeting.
- 2.3 The address of the principal offices for the purposes of these Standing Orders is Arás an Chontae, Longford.
- 2.4 A schedule of meetings shall as far as possible be agreed on a regular basis. Meetings shall, so far as possible end 2 hours after commencement.
- 2.5 A date for the following meeting shall be confirmed at each meeting, save in exceptional circumstances. Members of the LCDC must be notified via email of the date, time and place of a meeting no less than 7 days of the meeting. The agenda listing the business of the LCDC will be circulated at least 3 working days before the meeting.

- 2.6 A meeting, when arranged, shall not be cancelled, save in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the chairperson. When the meeting is cancelled, the date, time and place of the next meeting shall be fixed, with the agreement of the chairperson.
- 2.7 The quorum for a meeting of the LCDC is 50% of the membership plus one, rounded up to the nearest whole number. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned to a date to be fixed by the Chairperson. Where there is requirement for specific quorum in relation to decision making, such as under the Operating Rules for Leader- wherein the LCDC operates as the Local Action Group (LAG)- those Operating Rules will supersede these Standing Orders
- 2.8 The Chairperson and vice chairperson of the LCDC will be selected by majority decision from among the members of the LCDC if there is more than one candidate proposed. The Chairperson and vice chairperson will be appointed for a maximum period of three years, whereupon s/he shall retire as Chairperson. A member may not serve two consecutive terms as Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson and vice chairperson the members shall select a member to act as Chairperson for that meeting.
- 2.9 Members of the public and the media shall not be permitted to attend meetings of the LCDC except and until by invitation of the Chair, majority of the LCDC or the Chief Officer with the prior approval of the Chair.
- 2.10 In the event of a Board Member failing to attend three consecutive meetings without adequate reason, the appropriate nominating body will be formally requested to review the situation.
- 2.11.1 The LCDC may establish appropriate sub-committees/task groups or other sub-structures to effectively carry out their functions. The members may delegate their powers to these committees or task-groups in accordance with 2.11.2. However, in considering the need for such committees and structures, regard should be had to the following:
 - sub-structures should be kept to a minimum in order to avoid excessive administration and meeting fatigue;

- sub-structures should have clear remits and tasks in order to avoid duplication of effort – the establishment of ad hoc groups that are task-specific and wound-up once the task is completed is encouraged; and
- input or representation from community and voluntary groups or sector specific organisations should be facilitated.

2.11.2 In delegating responsibility to a sub-committee, the LCDC will ensure that terms of reference are clearly set down. The Chair of sub-committee will be a member of the LCDC. A sub-committee should not incur any liability, financial or otherwise without the prior, express approval of the LCDC. The LCDC at its discretion will contract external technical expertise, including training, research, and facilitation, in accordance with proper public procurement procedures. Final decisions on matters referred to sub-committees/task groups is a matter for the LCDC on the recommendation of the Committee/Group with interim reports as required.

3. Participation and Decision-making.

- 3.1** The Chairperson will endeavor to ensure meaningful, focused and inclusive participation by all LCDC Members in the decision-making process. Matters for discussion at Board Meetings will be related to the functions of the LCDC as set out in 1.3.
- 3.2** The standing order and operational issues may be amended by the LCDC from time to time.
- 3.3** The LCDC should arrive at decisions, as far as possible, by agreement, and votes should be avoided. Where this is not possible, Committee members shall agree to vote using roll call.
- 3.4** Where there are specific requirements and/or rules in relation to decision making under any funded programme overseen by the LCDC, those requirements will supersede these Standing Orders
- 3.5** Where the Chairperson has not formally declared the result of a vote, or is in doubt as to whether his/her declaration is right or wrong, s/he is entitled if s/he thinks fit to take a second vote on the matter, especially if s/he considers that through some misunderstanding the first vote did not properly represent the sense of the meeting at that time.
- 3.6** Each member present at a meeting of the LCDC shall have a vote unless prohibited by any enactment. A member may abstain from voting, and such abstention shall be recorded in the minutes. Where there is an equality of votes, a matter before a meeting shall be determined by a second or casting vote of the person chairing the meeting.

3.7 A proposal to revoke or amend a resolution of the LCDC can only be made if submitted in advance for inclusion in the Agenda. The Agenda item shall state the resolution to be revoked or amended and detail the terms of the new proposal to be made. No such proposal may appear on the Agenda to revoke or amend any resolution of the LCDC within six months of the date of the adoption of such resolution except with the written assent of not less than 13 members of the LCDC. A resolution may not be revoked at the meeting at which it has been adopted.

3.8 In order to adopt a proposal to revoke or amend a resolution of the LCDC at least nine or more of the total number of members of the LCDC must vote in favour and subject to any statutory requirements.

3.9 Each member must complete and return each year a form setting out his or her interests. A member who has actual knowledge that s/he or a connected person² has a pecuniary or other beneficial interest in a matter arising at a LCDC meeting or a sub-committee meeting must disclose that interest, withdraw from the meeting for so long as the matter is discussed and take no part in the discussion or consideration of the matter and cannot vote.

² *Brother, sister, parent, spouse, partner or child of the person or of the spouse/partner.

4. Membership of the LCDC

- 4.1 As far as possible, the LCDC should aim for a minimum membership of 40% men and 40% women respectively with a total membership of no more than 19 members. The membership of the LCDC shall consist of:

Local Government – 6 places total

4 Local Authority elected members

The CEO or his/her nominee

The head of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

State Agencies – 3 places total

Longford Westmeath Education Training Board (LWETB)

Department of Social Protection

Health Service Executive

Community & Voluntary Interests-10

Local Development Company – 1 place

Social Inclusion –2 places

Community & Voluntary –2 places

Environmental Interests – 1 place

Agricultural and farming Interests – 1 place

Business Sector – 2 places

Tourism- 1 place

- 4.2 The Chief Officer of the LCDC shall seek and select nominees to the Committee, from time to time, in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group, in accordance with section 128C Subsection 2 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 and any regulations made, or general policy guidelines issued, by the Minister and shall submit a list of the recommended nominees to the members of the local authority for their consideration.

- 4.3 The nominees shall be appointed to the LCDC, without omission or addition, by resolution of the local authority.

- 4.4 If the recommended nominees have not been appointed in accordance with section 4.3 either because:

4.4.1 The local authority did not pass the resolutions concerned on the 2 days upon which it has met after submission of the list of recommended nominees under section 4.2, or

4.4.2 60 days have elapsed since submission under section 4.2 of the list of nominees,

Then the recommended nominees shall be deemed to have been appointed on the day following the last day to which sub-section 4.4.1 or 4.4.2 relates, whichever occurs first.

- 4.5 The term of membership of the Local Authority Members of the LCDC will be continuous with the terms of office of the Local Authority.

- 4.6 The membership of the Local Authority Members of the LCDC will be reconstituted following each Local Election of the Local Authority.

- 4.7 When retirement or other vacancy arises, the member shall be replaced from within the sector s/he represented on the LCDC. If a member retires and is not eligible for reappointment, the Chief Officer of the LCDC shall make the necessary arrangements that member to be replaced, as may be appropriate for the sector represented. The various roles of retiring members will automatically become vacant and will be a matter for the LCDC to determine the filling of these roles subsequently.

- 4.8 Nominating bodies may de-select their representative members on the Committee

- 4.9 The Chief Officer, in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and the Chairperson, will review the membership of the LCDC at least once every three years to ensure the membership is relevant and representative of the work of the LCDC, its aims and objectives.

The review should consider whether particular State agency representation at the time of the review remains relevant and appropriate to the work of the LCDC.

There is no requirement to rotate or renew members who are local authority officials, local authority members or local development company representatives.

Members representing the following interests shall serve no more than 2 consecutive 3-year terms.

- community and voluntary interests;
- social inclusion interests;
- environmental interests; and
- local community interests and social partners.

5. Partnerships with other Bodies

- 5.1 The LCDC will recognize and respect the important role that other organizations and agencies play in economic and social development. The LCDC will seek to ensure that strong partnerships are maintained with these organisations to ensure collaboration and reduce duplication of effort and resources.
- 5.2 If the LCDC considers it appropriate to co-operate and agree joint action with another LCDC, it may do so by resolution of each of the LCDCs involved.

6. Confirmation of Minutes and Record of Attendance

- 6.1 Minutes of all LCDC meetings will be drawn up by the nominated County Council official.
- 6.2 Draft Minutes of a meeting shall be circulated to all LCDC Members 3 working days in advance of the next meeting.
- 6.3 When the Chairperson asks for confirmation of the minutes a member may object to any part of the minutes as not being an accurate record. The minutes may then be altered by the LCDC by majority vote of those members who were present at the appropriate meeting, provided that no entry shall be made in the minutes of any protest other than a record of dissent, save in the form of a motion or an amendment.
- 6.4 When confirmed with or without amendment, the minutes of a meeting shall be signed by the chairperson to whom they shall be submitted for confirmation and minutes claiming to be so signed shall be received in evidence without proof.

- 6.5 A copy of the minutes shall be provided to any person applying for them on payment of such reasonable sum, being a sum not exceeding the reasonable cost of supplying the copy.

- 6.6 Appropriate arrangements will be made for safe keeping of the minutes by the nominated County Council official.

- 6.7 A record of attendance at meetings shall be maintained by the nominated County Council official. The attendance of each member at a meeting shall be entered by that member in a record kept for that purpose by the nominated County Council official on behalf of the LCDC.

7. Disorderly Conduct

- 7.1 If in the opinion of the chairperson, any member of the LCDC has been or is disorderly by persistently disregarding the ruling of the chair, or by behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively, or by otherwise obstructing the business of the meeting, and the Chairperson has conveyed his/her opinion to the members present by naming the member concerned, then the Chairperson, or any member may move "that the member named leave the meeting" and the motion, if seconded, shall be determined without discussion.

Where the LCDC decides in accordance with the above that a member leave a meeting, that member shall immediately leave the meeting and shall not be entitled to speak or to take any further part in that meeting on that day.

Where in the opinion of the Chairperson –

- (a) there is general disorder which impedes the orderly transaction of the business, or
- (b) where a member against whom it was resolved that he/she leave the meeting by virtue of this paragraph refuses to do so

The Chairperson may adjourn the meeting for such period as she /he considers necessary in the interests of order.

APPENDIX 1

Longford Local Community Development Committee Conflict of Interest Policy

To: Each member of Longford LCDC and associated sub-committee(s)

Given that the Local Community Development Committee* ¹ (LCDC) will be responsible for managing and dispersing public monies, there is a need for transparency in all discussions and decisions by the Committee. From time to time, members may find that personal, family or professional/business interests may touch upon LCDC functions.

Accordingly, the potential for a conflict of interest situation (or perceived conflict of interest) arising is very real in the context of the LCDC. The matter needs to be carefully managed and monitored in order to ensure the effective and transparent operation of the Committee.

To this end, this documents sets out the policy to be applied in the Longford LCDC in order to ensure that potential conflict of interest scenarios are identified as early as possible, and that they are managed appropriately so as to ensure that the potential conflict is avoided and that the workings of the Committee stand up to the greatest possible standards of probity, integrity and transparency.

1. Definition of "Conflict of Interest"

A conflict of interest can be defined as "a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest". In the case of the LCDC, a conflict of interest could arise where a member's role to further the work of the LCDC is, or could potentially be, unduly influenced by a secondary employment/business interest which could benefit the secondary interest and be in conflict-or in potential conflict- with the business of the LCDC.

Any body corporate with which the LCDC member is associated, and which could materially influence the member in the performance of her/her functions on the LCDC, should be disclosed at the relevant time.

¹ * Note: Reference to Committee shall be read to include LCDC and any sub-committee/appraisal oversight groups established under the auspices of an LCDC

This Conflict of Interest Policy is intended to establish procedures under which individuals who have a conflict of interest will be excused from being involved in, discussing and/or voting on such matters.

2. Background Legislative/Regulatory References

The Local Community Development Committee (Section 128E) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No 234 of 2014)

Regulation 20 specifies that:

- (1) Procedures should be set out in the standing orders of the Committee to deal with matters of conflict of interest in the carrying out of Committees functions.
- (2) The standing orders of the Committee may also set out procedures in relation to members of any sub-committees or task groups established by the Committee, and advisors to the Committee, to govern matters of conflict of interest in the carrying out of the Committees functions.

DECLG Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of LCDCs (190th July 2014)

Section 6.5 (Membership and Conflicts of Interest) specifies that:

The potential for conflicts of interest among members is an important consideration for the Chief Officer and the CPG when seeking nominees to the LCDC. While a potential conflict of interest is not an automatic ground for disqualifying a person from being an LCDC member, it is an important consideration in deciding whether or not to accept a nomination.

A conflict may arise, for example, in the case of dual membership of the LCDC and a community or voluntary organisation, community development body or local development body that delivers programmes on behalf of the LCDC (or is likely to deliver or apply to deliver programmes in the future). Such a conflict is inevitable given the nature of the membership of the LCDC, however, it is essential to the effective operation of the LCDC that such risks are reduced as much as possible.

Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that no more than one board member and/or employee of any single community or voluntary organisation, community development body or local development body represented on the LCDC may be a member of the LCDC. The Chief Officer should address this matter with nominating bodies when requesting nominees in the first instance.

Local authority members and officials, who are board members of any community or voluntary organisation, community development body or local development body represented on the LCDC, cannot be members of the LCDC.

Furthermore, **Section 10.2 (Decision Making Process)** specifies that:

Procedures should be put in place to deal with conflict of interest situations involving LCDC members. It is important to ensure that these procedures deal with situations where LCDC members must absent themselves from the consideration of, or decision-making in respect of, matters before the LCDC because of a conflict of interest. In any event, members with a conflict of interest should be prohibited from participating in deliberations and other decisions related to the conflict of interest.

The balance of members attending and eligible to vote on issues must be weighted in favour of the private sector members at all times. If a private sector member has to absent themselves from deliberations and decision making processes in respect of a particular issue, the balance of members remaining eligible to vote is must still weighted in favour of the private sector members.

Arrangements should be put in place to provide for such scenarios and may require, in some circumstances, some of the public sector members absenting themselves from a vote on issues to ensure that the appropriate balance is maintained. The exact process or arrangements in this regard should be set out in the standing orders.

3. Policy Approach to dealing with Conflict of Interest

(i) Membership Selection

- Over-representation by any one body/interest group on an LCDC. The Chief Officer should monitor this.
- Dual representation raises the potential for conflict of interest and would hinder the effective discharge of members' responsibilities on the LCDC. Accordingly, no more than one board members and/or employee of any single community or voluntary organisation, community development body or local development body represented on the LCDC may be a member of the LCDC.
- LCDC members should be conscious of any changes to their personal circumstances in this regard, and notify the Chief Officer if in any doubt.

Local Development Company (LDC) Boards

There is real risk of a conflict of interest for local authority Elected Members and officials who are both members of LCDCs and the boards of LDCs tendering for delivery programmes. The following policy approach is to be implemented to address this:

- Elected Members and officials who are on a company board must not also be a member of the LCDC
- Similarly Longford County Council Elected members and officials who are members of the LCDC must not be board members of the LDC.
- The Chief Officer must not be a board member of the LDC.

Upon appointment to the LCDC

Upon appointment and where any change occurs, each LCDC member shall furnish full particulars of his/her interests. These interests shall include his or her employment, all business interests and community involvement, including voluntary work for charities hereinafter referred to as "Interests"), which might involve a conflict of interest or might materially influence the LCDC member in relation to the performance of his or her functions, or his or her partiality. This duty to disclose interests is without prejudice to the on-going obligation to make specific disclosure of interests relating to any decision or project which comes before the LCDC.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

LCDC members, LCDC subcommittees and/or working groups members, and in relation to Government funded programmes overseen by the LCDC- the staff of LAGs//implementing partners must complete both an annual conflict of interest declaration and a register of interests declaration, and this must be reviewed annually. The Chief Officer will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this.

(ii) Meetings

Personal Responsibility

- Each LCDC member has personal responsibility in avoiding conflict of interest by disclosing or notifying any potential conflict of interest situations prior to them arising. Such notifications should be made, insofar as is practicable, in advance to the Chief Officer and/or Chairperson.

General Procedure

- Each LCDC member should declare (before the meeting and/or at the relevant point during the meeting) any interest they have in:
 - An application for funding or other support for decision by the LCDC;
 - Any initiative taken by the LCDC
 - Any contract (Service Level Agreement) or proposed contract that the member, or a person connected with the member, may be directly or indirectly involved; or
 - Any matter from which the member and/or any person or organisation connected with the member, might benefit directly or indirectly from as a member of the LCDC.
- Where a conflict of interest is declared by an LCDC member, that member will leave the meeting prior to the commencement of the discussions on the relevant agenda item. The member must not be present for any discussion and/or vote on the matter in which they have an interest. Upon returning to the meeting, the LCDC member will be notified by the Chairperson of any decision by the Committee. No further discussion will take place.
- The minutes of the meeting will record the name(s) of any members absenting themselves from the meeting for conflict of interest reasons. The time of departure and time of return of the member will be noted.
- In all cases, members with a potential conflict of interest will be prohibited from participating in deliberations and other decisions related to the conflict of interest.

(iii) Opinion of Chief Officer

- If, in the opinion of the Chief Officer and/or Chairperson, a conflict of interest situation may arise during a meeting, the LCDC member may be asked to comment on the matter, and may be invited to absent themselves from the consideration of, or decision-making in respect of the specific matter before the LCDC.

- If the Chief Officer is satisfied that a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest will arise, the Chief Officer will discuss the matter with the LCDC member and outline the potential implications. The LCDC member will be requested to consider their involvement in that aspect of the meeting.

(iv) Disagreement re: potential Conflict of Interest

- Where there is disagreement between the LCDC member and the Chief Officer in relation to a potential/perceived conflict of interest arising, the Chief Officer will raise the matter with the Chairperson.
- The potential/perceived conflict of interest will be recorded in the minutes, as well as the member's response. This will form a public record of the conflict of interest having been identified
- Where an LCDC member is requested to absent themselves from that part of the meeting due to potential conflict of interest, the member will be obliged to so do. Where an LCDC member refuses to absent themselves from that part of the meeting, the 'Disorderly Conduct' procedure set out in the Standing Orders will be initiated.

(v) Balance of representation

- The Chief Officer will ensure that the balance of members attending and eligible to vote on issues will be weighted in favour of the private sector (non public) at all times.
- Where a private sector member has to absent themselves from deliberations and decision making processes in respect of a particular issue, the Chief Officer will check to ensure that the balance of members remaining eligible to vote continues to be weighted in favour of the private sector.
- In some circumstances, a public sector member(s) may be required to absent themselves from a vote on issues in order to ensure that the appropriate public/private balance is maintained.
- The minutes of the meeting will include a record of absentees from the meeting (or part thereof) due to conflict of interest reasons.

Appendix 1.2 Heads of Agreement

Heads of Agreement

Between Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) as Local Action Group (LAG), Longford Community Resources Clg. (LCRL) as Implementing Partner and Longford County Council (LCC) as Financial Partner on proposed implementation arrangement for the delivery of the EU co-funded LEADER programme for the period 2023-2027.

The LEADER programme is a key intervention of Our Rural Future, the Government's Policy for rural development launched in 2021, which aims to deliver a range of actions to rural communities over the lifetime of the policy. It is a multi-annual programme for rural development co-funded by the EU through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan (CSP). The programme is based on a community-led approach to rural development and plays an important role in supporting communities and enterprises.

In County Longford the LEADER programme will provide €5,800,000 to promote job creation, social inclusion and environmental projects at local level. 25% of the allocation will be required to cover administration, project development and monitoring costs. The programme is a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) approach to the delivery of rural development interventions that will be supported by a Local Development Strategy.

Longford LCDC - Role will be to:

The LCDC as LAG will have ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the LEADER programme. The LCDC will have responsibility for overseeing the development of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) for County Longford and have ultimate responsibility for approving the LDS prior to its submission to the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Where the LCDC as LAG has had its LDS submission approved, its role will be to –

- Set the overall strategic direction and the main Local Development Strategy priorities;
- Delegation of the sole implementation role to Longford Community Resources Clg.
- Delegation of the financial partner role to Longford County Council including responsibility for Article 28 and Article 48 checks, payment of funds and indemnification of the LAG and the designated implementing partner;
- Monitor and review the performance of Longford Community Resources Clg as the implementation partner as per service level agreement between the LCDC and Longford Community Resources Clg;
- Monitor and review the performance of Longford County Council as lead financial partner;
- Monitor and review on an ongoing basis the progress under the Local Development Strategy and agree corrective action, where required.

Principles of the Partnership Approach

The proposed arrangements will operate on the following basis –

- The LCDC will ensure coherence with the community-led local development strategy when selecting operations, by prioritising those operations according to their contribution to meeting that strategy's objectives and targets;
- Longford Community Resources Clg.'s role will be as the implementing partners of the LCDC for the duration of the LEADER programming period, subject to continued compliance with the requirements of the Managing Authority (Department) and as per a service level agreement to be agreed with the LCDC;
- The implementing role will be assigned to Longford Community Resources Clg for all project implementation elements of the programme i.e. there will be no fragmentation of the programme delivery role and funding among other local action group partners. The LCDC will be responsible for the delivery of the LEADER programme as a whole and will be accountable for same;
- The operating methodology will be based on the CLLD (Community Led Local Development) and will be pro-active, flexible, and responsive to local needs and opportunities. This methodology will follow the LEADER approach, which is based on seven specific principles which, when combined to deliver rural development initiatives, distinguish LEADER from simply being a grant funding programme.
- The seven principles of LEADER are:
 1. Bottom-up approach;
 2. Area based local development strategies;
 3. Local partnerships;
 4. Integrated and multi-sectoral strategies;
 5. Networking;
 6. Innovation;
 7. Cooperation.
- The total required for the administration, project development and monitoring costs of the Programme will be 25%

Role / Task	Implemented by
Local Development Strategy Development	
Preparation of Local Development Strategy including strategic priorities	Lead role by Longford Community Resources Clg in collaboration with LCDC Partners
Agreeing the Local Development Strategy and strategic priorities and objectives and overseeing the development of the strategy.	LCDC
Approval of the final strategy prior to submission to the DECLG	LCDC
Approval of the Local Action Group partners role in the implementation of the Local Development Strategy.	LCDC to approve Longford Community Resources Clg as sole implementing partner and Longford County Council as the lead financial partner.
Regulatory framework 2023-2027 Tasks	
<i>(a) building the capacity of local actors to develop and implement operations</i>	
Implementing, managing and co-ordinating animation activity in the Local Action Group's area	Longford Community Resources Clg
<i>(b) drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoid conflicts of interest, ensure that no single interest group controls selection decisions</i>	
Drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoid conflicts of interest, ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by partners which are not public authorities, and allow selection by written procedure	LCDC in consultation with the Longford Community Resources Clg
<i>(c) preparing and publishing calls for proposals</i>	
Approve, calls for proposals in accordance with the priorities and objectives set out in the Local Development Strategy	LCDC
Developing and issuing calls for proposals	Longford Community Resources Clg
Managing call for proposals processes	Longford Community Resources Clg
Managing open-call project application processes	Longford Community Resources Clg
Developing funding proposals with project promoters	Longford Community Resources Clg
Receiving and processing funding applications	Longford Community Resources Clg
Project development, management and monitoring work with project promoters	Longford Community Resources Clg

Developing and implementing local development company-led projects	Longford Community Resources Clg
Assessing applications for support	Longford Community Resources Clg
<i>(d) selecting operations and fixing the amount of support and presenting the proposals to the body responsible for final verification of eligibility before approval</i>	
Formal evaluation of projects (Evaluation Committee)	Leader Evaluation Committee - Refer to Appendix 1 for Evaluation Committee Composition
Preparing and submitting all recommendations of the Evaluation Committee for LEADER funding applications to Local Action Group (LCDC) for decision.	Longford Community Resources Clg
Preparing and collating documentation for Article 28 and Article 48 checks	Longford Community Resources Clg
Submission of files to appropriate body for Article 28 and Article 48 checks	Longford Community Resources Clg
Decision making body for all LEADER funding applications	LCDC
Preparing and issuing Letters of Offer and contracts with project promoters on behalf of the Local Action Group (LCDC)	Longford Community Resources Clg
General file management, audit compliance and administration related to above actions	Longford Community Resources Clg
<i>(e) monitoring progress towards the achievement of objectives of the strategy</i>	
Report quarterly on activity to Local Action Group	Longford Community Resources Clg and Longford County Council
Monitor, on an ongoing basis, progress achieved in the advancement of the strategic objectives of the local development strategy	LCDC and Longford Community Resources Clg
Where necessary, agree corrective actions to further enhance the achievement of the objectives of the local development strategy	LCDC
<i>(f) evaluating the implementation of the strategy</i>	
Evaluate progress achieved and outcomes obtained under the local development strategy	LCDC and Longford Community Resources Clg

Monitor and review performance of LCRL as sole implementation partner as per service level agreement with the LCDC	LCDC
Monitor and review performance of Longford County Council as financial partner	LCDC
Administrative Tasks	
Providing advance administration and animation funding to implementing partner	Longford County Council as lead Financial Partner
Submitting claims to the appropriate body for Article 28/Article 48 administrative checks	Longford Community Resources Clg
Submitting claims on in-house projects to the appropriate body for Article 28/Article 48 administrative checks	LCDC
Making payments to promoters on behalf of the local action group	Longford County Council as lead Financial Partner
Requesting quarterly drawdown of monies from Department of Rural and Community Development	Longford County Council as lead Financial Partner

Approved by the Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Signed: 

Chairperson, Longford Local Community Development Committee

Approved by Longford Community Resources Clg (LCRL)

Signed: 

Chairperson, Longford Community Resources Clg

Approved by Longford County Council

Signed: 

Chief Executive, Longford County Council

Appendix One

LEADER Evaluation Committee composition in relation to the delivery and implementation of the EU co-funded LEADER programme for the period 2023-2027 in County Longford

LEADER Evaluation Committee

The Role of an RDP Evaluation Committee is to assess and evaluate all applications for LEADER funding. The Evaluation Committee will be solely responsible for making recommendations for funding, or otherwise, to the LAG. The structure, membership and specific arrangements for the Evaluation Committee are a matter for the LAG, the agreed structure and membership of the Evaluation Committee are set out below.

The LAG must ensure the integrity of the evaluation process and put in place arrangements that are fair and non-discriminatory - all applicants being treated equally; and, open and transparent - applicants must be informed of the methodology and approach to evaluating each application, and the results of the evaluation should be made available to the applicant together with the LAGs final decision.

LEADER Evaluation Committee composition

- The Evaluation Committee will be independent of the LAG and a sub-committee of the implementing partner, who will undertake the secretarial and administrative duties of the Evaluation Committee.
- The number of members will be 12.
- The quorum to hold and conduct meetings will be 5 members, unless otherwise directed by the rules governing the LEADER programme.
- The Evaluation Committee members cannot be LAG members.
- As the LAG has assigned implementing responsibility to LCRL as Implementing Partner, and where member of the Implementing Partner are members of the Evaluation Committee, these members must absent themselves from any discussion, deliberation and recommendation when considering in-house projects.
- All members of the Evaluation Committee will be nominated by Longford Community Resources Clg for the approval of the LAG. Nominated representatives for the Evaluation Committee must have a level of expertise in the area they are representing, and they should be capable of engaging and making decisions as part of the Evaluation Committee. In the event that a suitable person cannot identified from a sector, LCRL, in consultation with the LCDC, will identify another relevant sector or representative to be nominated to the Evaluation Committee.
- The following sectors are identified and agreed as sectors where Longford Community Resources Clg will seek a nomination for inclusion on the Evaluation Committee:
 - Longford Local Enterprise Office
 - Longford County Council Director of Finance
 - Longford Public Participation Network – Community & Voluntary Pillar
 - Longford Public Participation Network – Social Inclusion Pillar
 - Longford Public Participation Network – Environment Pillar

- The following sectors are identified as suggestion area where Longford Community Resources Clg will seek a nomination for inclusion on the Evaluation Committee, these sectors are subject to change following the development of the Local Development Strategy and consultation between the LAG, Implementing Partner and Financial Partner:

- Heritage
- Youth
- Disability
- Tourism
- Business
- Farming
- Finance

Appendix 1.3 Job Descriptions for LEADER staff members of the LAG & Implementation Partner

Chief Executive Officer

Job Purpose

Longford Community Resources is engaged in the planning and delivery of programmes across a range of rural development and community development initiatives. The CEO of Longford Community Resources will be responsible for:

- Determining and formulating strategies and policies and provide the overall direction for Longford Community Resources within the guidelines set up by and agreed with the board of directors;
- Planning, directing, and coordinating operational activities for the Organisation with the help of the senior management team to deliver on the Organisation's mission and vision.

Major Areas of Responsibility

- Develops, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, the strategic plan and direction of the Organisation to ensure the Organisation delivers on its overall purpose of 'effecting change in the county;'
- Secures funding for existing programme and new programmes and initiatives from traditional and non-traditional funding sources;
- Represents and markets the Organisation at local and national levels to various bodies with a view to promoting services, exchanging ideas, and accomplishing objectives;
- Works with local stakeholders to identify and develop new opportunities for the partnership to support wellbeing of communities in the county;
- Develops strategic alliances with relevant bodies and networks to jointly explore and generate new economic and social opportunities for the county;
- Draws on lessons from local experience, work with external bodies to influence public policy relevant to the county. Provides research and position papers in support of same;
- Develops the overall culture of the Organisation to create a climate / environment that reflects the vision and values laid out in the organisation's mission / values document;
- Establishes and manages the strategic direction of the Organisation;
- Establishes departmental responsibilities, and coordinate functions among departments and sites;
- Confers with board members, organisation officials, and staff members to discuss issues, coordinate activities, and resolve problems;
- Reviews operations on an ongoing basis to evaluate performance of the organisation and its staff in meeting objectives, and determines areas of potential opportunity and areas of potential risk;
- Ensures the necessary structure and resources are in place to meet the Organisation's strategic and governance agendas;
- Any other responsibilities as set by the Board.

Reporting to: Chairman and Board of Directors of Longford Community Resources Clg

Finance Co-ordinator & Finance Officer

Main purpose

To assist the CEO in the financial management and reporting on the programmes/initiatives delivered and implemented by Longford Community Resources (LCRL) as is required by the Board of LCRL and its funding agencies.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Working with the Finance/Administration Team and supporting Finance Structures

- To co-ordinate the process of generating budgets and operating financial plans throughout the organisation.
- To prepare, oversee and assist where necessary, the preparation of the monthly management accounts for presentation to the Board.
- To ensure the processing of payments is completed in a systematic and efficient manner according to the agreed procedures of LCRL and compliant with the funding agency rules.
- To update and maintain the day-to-day books and records of the organisation, including recording and verifying all income and expenditure.
- To identify cost reduction measures to the CEO, Finance & Audit Committee and Board, as appropriate, and implementing agreed measures throughout the organisation.
- To check that the updating of all project documentation for all Programmes has occurred on a regular basis.
- To maintain a robust reporting and recording process in order to achieve a high standard of quality, accuracy, consistency, and timeliness.
- To be responsible for the payroll function within the organisation, including the maintenance of employment records in line with the organisation's requirements.
- To ensure that staff contracts of employment, as agreed by the Board, are up to date and in place for all members of staff.
- To provide advice to the CEO, Finance Committee and Board on alternative ways in which the financial requirements of LCRL can be met.
- To provide management with accurate financial and non-financial information to carry out their assigned responsibilities in an efficient manner.
- To assist in the preparation of annual statutory financial statements to audit stage.
- To prepare end of year documentation for the External Auditor, Longford LCDC, and any other agency which may require same
- To ensure that the organisation meets its financial reporting responsibilities to its funders.
- To support the CEO, and Board of LCRL, in ensuring that the obligations and requirements of the organisation in relation to governance are maintained, e.g., company Constitution, Charities Governance Code.
- To ensure that the obligations and requirements of the Company in relation to the Companies Registration Office are met e.g., Annual Companies Office Return (B1), Change of Directors Return (B10), etc.

Implementing and assuring strong internal controls

- Safeguarding the assets of LCRL by maintaining strong internal controls within the organisation e.g., asset register.
- To maintain effective financial management and administration reporting, policies, and procedures throughout the organisation.
- Overseeing the effectiveness of internal controls and making recommendations for improvements.

- Ensuring the efficient and professional processing of Programmes administered by the Company.
- Ensuring that all the insurance requirements of the Company are in place.

Involvement with other Longford Community Resources Clg staff

- To work as part of the Finance/Administration team and plan and participate in regular meetings of the Finance/Administration team.
- To meet with the project co-ordinators and other staff in order to monitor project budgets and the progress on same including project documentation.
- To work as part of the overall team within LCRL to ensure the integration and co-ordination of the work into the programmes and initiatives of LCRL.
- To ensure that all staff are aware of the documentation required in relation to the payment of funding as per the regulations set out by the Board of LCRL and the funding agencies.

Other accountabilities

- To maintain good relationships with relevant funding, regulatory and grant-making agencies.
- To maintain relationships with LCRL's banks.
- To liaise with Local Authority, Department, European Commission and other inspectorate or auditors as required.
- To make a positive contribution to the overall achievement of the organisation's mission.
- To attend development and training events organised or specified by LCRL.
- Carrying out such other reasonable tasks as will be determined by the CEO and the Board of LCRL.

Reporting to: CEO of Longford Community Resources CLG.

Secretary

Main purpose

To assist the Chief Executive in the overall management of the affairs and the operations of the Longford Community Resources CLG's Board in the fulfilment of its objectives and those of its intermediary bodies and to provide secretarial support to the various members of staff, management and Company Board in the management and administration of Programmes of the organisation.

Duties & Responsibilities:

- To deal with applicants, clients, visitors, and other interested parties contacting Longford Community Resources CLG, either on the telephone, email, or face to face, with courtesy, respect, and efficiency at all times.
- Be familiar with the overall work of Longford Community Resources CLG and have an understanding and knowledge of the programmes it manages to enable the provision of general information to the clients and public.
- To assist with the secretarial duties involved in the management and administration of Programmes managed by Longford Community Resources CLG by providing secretarial support to the various members of staff, management, and Company Board.
- Provide administration assistance to members of the staff team of Longford Community Resources regarding new/existing programmes.
- Ensure all procedures and secretarial assistance for all Programmes are effective, efficient and operates smoothly.

- Ensure all postage and filing procedures are in place and are relevant to each Programme managed by Longford Community Resources CLG
- Ensure all office supplies are managed cost-effectively and that adequate stocks are on hand at all times.
- Ensure all office machines are operating efficiently, are secure and confidential and that adequate maintenance is planned to ensure no breakdowns.
- To complete the workload set in a flexible manner and vary it as required by the Chief Executive to facilitate urgent workloads so priorities are handled.
- To deal with bookings of venues for training, meetings, etc. efficiently and to be up to date with all computer software applications.
- To highlight any weaknesses in the LCRL Secretarial support area.
- To assist in the preparation of annual implementation plan and Strategic plans of LCRL.
- To support the SICAP staff team in maintaining and updating the IRIS performance management system and providing review documentation from the IRIS system.
- To carry out such other duties as may be assigned by the Company Chief Executive from time to time.

Reporting to: CEO of Longford Community Resources CLG

LEADER Programme - Project Development Officer

Main purpose

To assist the CEO and the LEADER Programme staff team of Longford Community Resources (LCRL) in the development of community projects, rural development projects, and support of private enterprises projects in County Longford and to process applications for the LEADER Programme.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- To have a strong awareness and understanding of and provide up to date information relating to the LEADER Programme throughout Co. Longford.
- To support the animation and capacity building of private individuals, rural dwellers and Community/voluntary and special interest groups who may have an interest in the LEADER Programme.
- To work closely with potential and existing project promoters, be it individuals, community groups, or specific interest groups who wish to apply for eligible, sustainable, LEADER projects.
- To work as part of a team on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the LEADER Programme and in compliance with EU regulations and the Operating Rules for the LEADER Programme.
- To work with the other LCRL staff members on the LEADER Programme and keep informed on the various project proposals and prepare project assessments for the attention of the LEADER Programme Evaluation Committee and Longford Local Community Development Committee.
- To research, prepare, support and co-ordinate the implementation of the initiatives and projects to be brought to the LEADER Programme Evaluation Committee and Longford Local Community Development Committee.
- To provide follow up support enabling the successful implementation of the many LEADER projects.

- To provide appropriate supports and build the capacity of community and special issue groups in Co. Longford, through the provision of business advice, training initiatives, referrals to key agencies, etc.
- To provide training and education initiatives for the development of the sectors such as Community /Rural/ Environment/ Information Technology/ Tourism/ Food and Business Development/Local Services/ Heritage/Culture etc to local communities and groups, private individuals etc
- To link closely with and ensure the integration and co-ordination of programmes, initiatives, and other staff within LCRL, i.e., under LEADER Programme, Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Youth Service, Volunteer Centre, Traveller Primary Health Care Project, and any other initiatives secured by LCRL, and other local agencies and community organisations to ensure value for money and dissemination of information and no duplication of activities.
- To ensure a focus on social inclusion, equality and economic sustainability is to the forefront of the work of LCRL.
- To support the review and evaluation in order to monitor progress and challenges in relation to the work programme for the LEADER Programme.
- To work closely with statutory agencies and community and special issue groups to ensure integration of activities and to actively network with individuals and agencies at a local, regional, and national level relevant to the work at hand.
- To undertake to train and use the IT system that is in place for the LEADER Programme by the Department of Rural & Community Development
- To be prepared to undertake any training as deemed essential by the C.E.O.
- To participate in working groups of the Irish Local Development Network, as deemed essential by the C.E.O. and Board of LCRL.
- To assist in the preparation of annual implementation plan and strategic plans of LCRL.
- To provide reports as required by the C.E.O. and Board of LCRL, the Longford Local Community Development Committee, the Department of Rural & Community Development, and the EU.
- To ensure that all documentation and files are maintained for the use of the Company Administrator and for inspection by the C.E.O. and the Company's Auditor, Department Inspectors and EU.
- To carry out such duties as may be assigned from time to time by the C.E.O. and/or Board of LCRL.

Reporting to: CEO of Longford Community Resources CLG.

LEADER Project Administration Support Worker

Main purpose

To assist the CEO and the LEADER Programme staff team of Longford Community Resources (LCRL) in the development of community projects, rural development projects, and support of private enterprises projects in County Longford and to process applications for the LEADER Programme.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- To assist with the administration of the LEADER Programme implemented by Longford Community Resources (LCRL);
- To assist the C.E.O. in the financial management and reporting on the LEADER Programme as is required by the Board of Longford Community Resources, Longford Local Community Development Committee, and the Department of Rural & Community Development;

- To assist in the production and monitoring of internal and external reports and implementation of continuous improvements in the reporting processes to achieve a high standard of quality, accuracy, consistency and timeliness;
- To assist in ensuring that Longford Community Resources meets its financial reporting responsibilities to its funders, e.g., Department of Rural & Community Development, and other agencies as required;
- To provide management with accurate financial and non-financial information to carry out their assigned responsibilities in an efficient manner;
- To prepare documentation for the External Auditor, Longford Local Community Development Committee, Department of Rural & Community Development, and any other agency which may require same;
- To assist in the process of generating budgets and operating plans for the LEADER Programme;
- To ensure LEADER Programme project files are compliant with the Department and EU rules and regulations;
- To assist in ensuring that all LEADER Programme staff are aware of the documentation required in relation to the awarding and payment of grant aid as per the regulations set out for the LEADER Programme;
- To assist in complying with all reporting guidelines on the LEADER Programme as set down by the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To ensure that all budgets and costing are monitored and adhered to as per the Operating Rules of the LEADER Programme;
- To undertake to train and use the IT system that is in place for the LEADER Programme by the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To be prepared to undertake any training as deemed essential by the C.E.O;
- To deal with applicants, visitors, and other interested parties in the LEADER Programme, either on the telephone or face to face with courtesy and efficiency at all times;
- To work closely with potential and existing project promoters, be it individuals, community groups, or specific interest groups who wish to apply for eligible, sustainable, innovative projects;
- To provide reports as required by the Finance Team, CEO and Board of Longford Community Resources, Longford Local Community Development Committee, and the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To ensure that all documentation and files are maintained for the use and inspection of the Finance Team, CEO, the Company's Auditor, Longford Local Community Development Committee, and the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To be informed on the various LEADER Programme projects;
- To fully observe the principles of confidentiality;
- To carry out such other duties as may be assigned by the CEO from time to time.

Reporting to: CEO of Longford Community Resources CLG.

LEADER Programme Office Assistant/Clerical Support

Main purpose

To assist the CEO and the LEADER Programme staff team of Longford Community Resources (LCRL) in the administration and implementation of the LEADER Programme in relation to:

Duties and Responsibilities:

- To assist with the administration of the LEADER Programme administered by Longford Community Resources CLG;

- To assist the C.E.O. in the financial management and reporting on the LEADER Programme as is required by the Board of Longford Community Resources CLG, Longford Local Community Development Committee and the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To assist in the production and monitoring of internal and external reports and implementation of continuous improvements in the reporting processes to achieve a high standard of quality, accuracy, consistency and timeliness;
- To assist in ensuring that Longford Community Resources CLG meets its financial reporting responsibilities to its funders, e.g. Department of Rural & Community Development, and other agencies as required;
- To assist in the process of generating budgets and operating plans for the LEADER Programme;
- To provide administration assistance and support to members of the staff team on the LEADER Programme in Longford Community Resources.
- To assist in complying with all reporting guidelines on the LEADER Programme as set down by the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To undertake to train and use the IT system that is in place for the LEADER Programme by the Department of Rural & Community Development;
- To be prepared to undertake any training as deemed essential by the C.E.O.;
- To deal with applicants, visitors, and other interested parties in the Rural Development Programme, either on the telephone or face to face with courtesy and efficiency at all times;
- To be informed on the various Rural Development Programme projects;
- To fully observe the principles of confidentiality;
- To carry out such other duties as may be assigned by the C.E.O. from time to time.

Reporting to: CEO of Longford Community Resources CLG.

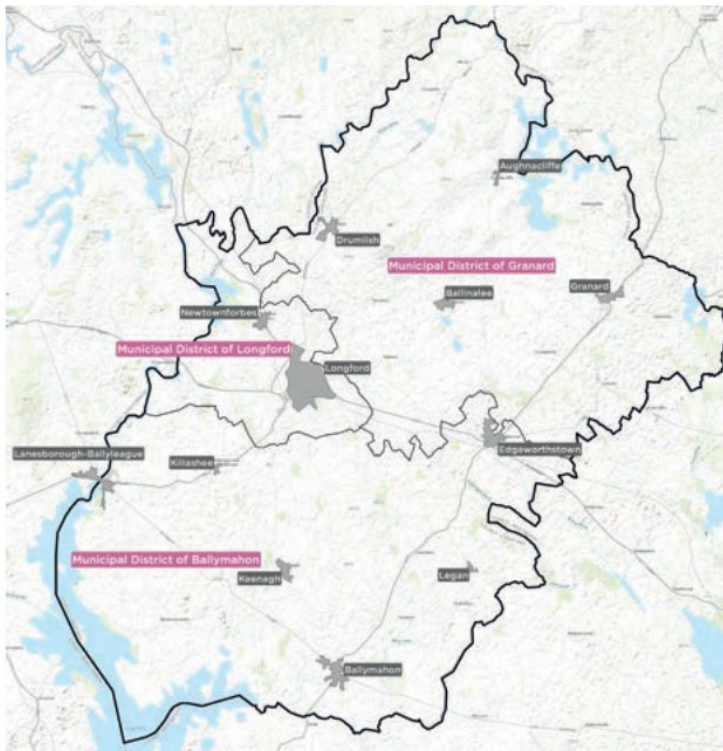
APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2.1 Map of County Longford Towns & Villages



Co. Longford Towns and Villages

Appendix 2.2 Overview of County Longford including the Municipal Districts



There are five **disadvantaged** Electoral Districts in County Longford. They are Foxhall, Granard Urban, Killoe, Lislea and Longford No.1 Urban. Ten small areas are considered **very disadvantaged** and forty-two small areas are considered **disadvantaged**.

County Longford Electoral Districts along with population number and deprivation scores for 2011 and 2016 are listed below.

ED Name	ED ID	Total Population 2011	Total Population 2016	Deprivation Score 2011	Deprivation Score 2016
Abbeylara	9013	340	298	-6.21	-8.24
Aghaboy	9037	684	681	-5.85	-6.52
Agharra	9003	456	444	-3.67	-3.66
Ardagh East	9038	613	670	1.53	-0.15
Ardagh West	9039	460	450	-2.26	0.18
Ballinalee	9014	598	625	-3.19	-4.41
Ballinamuck East	9040	546	599	-6.17	-3.94
Ballinamuck West	9041	501	437	-7.64	-8.29
Ballymahon	9004	2327	2674	-4.06	-5.11
Ballymough	9015	252	250	-7.45	-5.17
Breanrisk	9042	816	839	-4.09	-4.97
Bunlahy	9016	188	195	-5.37	-4.53
Caldragh	9043	2061	2172	3.4	2.87
Cashel East	9005	323	302	-7.79	-6.79
Cashel West	9006	572	589	-0.48	1.36
Cloondara	9044	616	687	-1.83	-2.71
Cloonree	9045	727	738	-1.54	-0.47
Columbkille	9017	597	592	-6.68	-5.89
Coolamber	9018	371	382	-0.24	0.4
Corboy	9046	399	388	-0.36	-4.38
Creivy	9019	313	308	-8.49	-3.83
Crosagstown	9020	241	247	3.66	0.5
Currygrane	9021	128	139	-0.89	-4.89
Dalystown	9022	188	196	-6.78	-8.39
Doory	9007	457	424	-4.77	-1.7
Drumgort	9047	428	422	-6.55	-5.77
Drumlisk	9048	1387	1475	-4.04	-4.82
Drummeel	9023	138	116	-5.45	-7.83
Firry/Newgrove	9701	217	196	-8.17	-5.73
Forgney	9008	497	491	0.19	0.77
Foxhall	9009	525	528	-13.37	-12.53
Gelshagh	9025	338	351	-2.79	-1.43
Granard Rural	9026	296	301	-3.16	-6.11
Granard Urban	9027	1021	1096	-8.98	-11.27
Kilcommock	9010	953	1062	-2.24	-4.91
Kilglass	9011	707	709	-3.3	-4.73
Killashee	9049	432	437	-3.69	-4.65
Killoe	9050	293	274	-5.21	-10.49
Knockanbaun	9028	151	169	-4.77	-2.5
Ledwithstown	9012	356	363	-3.02	-6.72
Lislea	9029	139	145	-12.63	-12.39
Longford No. 1 Urban	9001	3163	3592	-14.71	-15.82
Longford No. 2 Urban	9002	943	1029	3.01	3.83
Longford Rural	9051	5492	5704	-7.33	-9.97
Meathas Truim	9030	2008	2335	-7.54	-9.75
Milltown	9031	377	344	-7.74	-5.42
Moatfarrell	9032	218	217	-1.71	-4.38
Mountdavis	9052	250	252	1.82	3.38
Moydow	9053	668	730	-1.54	0.19
Moyne	9033	315	326	-9.92	-1.38
Mullanlaghta	9034	299	298	-5.19	-4.98
Newtown Forbes	9054	902	897	-4.52	-8.1
Rathcline	9055	1428	1443	-3.06	-4.03
Sonnagh	9036	285	245	-11.84	-7.93
TOTAL		39000	40873	-5.12	-6.01

(source; Pobal Maps)

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3.1 Key Services

There are several key services and programmes provided across the county which help support enterprises and are relevant to LEADER. Some of those are included in the table below:

Longford County Council	<p>As outlined, Longford County Council will be a key partner across all actions of the Local Development Strategy including protection and enhancement of the local environment. Longford County Council currently deliver a number of relevant environmental initiatives including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Pollution & Control • Waste Management • Pollution Incident Response <p>Environmental Awareness & Education Local Enterprise Office (LEO) The Longford Enterprise Office, which supports businesses with ten or less employees, has financially supported an average of 32 businesses per annum over the last four years. They also offer a range of support and advisory services to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and existing businesses. Services include a First Stop Shop for all business information, Financial Support including Micro-Finance, Soft Support Training, Mentoring and Business Networking. The LEO is also facilitating the occupation of vacant commercial premises incentive scheme to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises within the County.</p>
I.D.A. Ireland	<p>As Ireland's inward promotion agency, the I.D.A. assist companies to achieve a successful set up of their operations in Ireland. There are currently six I.D.A. supported companies in County Longford. The companies are involved in Engineering, Biopharma, Medical Devices and Internet and Computer Technology. The total number of people employed in IDA supported companies in County Longford is 650.</p>
Enterprise Ireland	<p>Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Their priority is the achievement of export sales growth from Irish owned companies. The regional office base for Enterprise Ireland is in Athlone, Co. Westmeath.</p>
Teagasc	<p>Teagasc, the national farm advisory body, is an important medium for us to engage with the farming community and we have previously participated in the Teagasc Options Training Programme delivered to farmers. We hope to extend this contact with farmers so that they will consider alternative farm enterprises to a greater extent across the county.</p>
LCRL & DSP	<p>Through the delivery of the BTWEA, LCRL and DSP support long term unemployed people to establish their own enterprise, this is an important element of the overall</p>

	Enterprise strategy within the county as it supports over 100 people each year and the subsequent establishment of over 100 businesses in the county.
Fáilte Ireland	Fáilte Ireland provides support to tourism businesses through training on e-commerce, market segmentation and accreditation and through participation in the Ancient East brand and associated marketing. Limited festival funding for large scale events is also available but up until 2015, this has not been applicable to County Longford. An annual grant of €6,000 is provided to County Longford Tourism towards the operation of the full-time Tourist Information Office.
Waterways Ireland	Waterways Ireland is playing an increasingly important role in tourism development, and they are a vital driver of the development of key tourist attractions in County Longford. In 2014, they launched their second national Blueway along the River Camlin in County Longford. This looped canoe trail also encourages people to avail of nearby walking and cycling trails and has the potential to attract significant numbers of tourist to this part of County Longford. Waterways Ireland are also a key partner in the development of the Royal Canal Cycleway and ancillary services, all aimed at attracting tourists.
Office of Public Works	The Office of Public Works owns a number of important sites in County Longford, including Corlea Trackway Centre which attracts annual visitor numbers in excess of 4,000. It is hoped to increase visitor numbers to this visitor attraction by supporting initiatives that would give the site a higher profile nationally and meet the demands of today's discerning tourist.
County Longford Tourism	County Longford Tourism is a voluntary organisation comprising of tourist providers, state agencies representatives ¹ and interested parties. It manages a Tourist Information Office in Longford town and employs a full-time Tourist Information Officer who manages a year-round service providing information to tourists and tourist providers. In addition to a promotional grant received from Fáilte Ireland, County Longford Tourism receives an annual grant from Longford County Council towards operational costs. In recent years, the organisation has produced new promotional material for the County and developed a website and social media presence. In 2014, it organised a number of events to help promote the county including Walking Festivals, a Blue-way Festival and members of the committee have been instrumental in the development of the Royal Canal Cycleway and its approval as a National Trail. They also work closely with the National Trails Office, Waterways Ireland, Longford Community Resources Ltd and Longford County Council on the development of walking and cycling trails within the county. Given the

¹Longford County Council Planning Dept., LEO, Sports Partnership & Local Development Company Representative.

	<p>importance of trail development within the county, the National Trails Office and in particular the relevant Rural Recreation Officer have worked closely with County Longford Tourism to ensure that newly developed and existing trails within the county are built to the highest specification and achieve National Trails status. Similarly, the importance of Heritage projects within the county is reflected in the close co-operation between County Longford Tourism and the County Heritage Officer.</p>
Department of Social Protection	Community Employment Schemes
Community Organisations	Family Resource Centres, Chambers and Traders Associations, Community Development Associations, Youth Groups, Tidy Towns, TUS, Rural Social Scheme, EDI Centre, Longford Women's Link
Waterways Ireland	Where relevant development work is undertaken by Waterways Ireland, we will ensure that any action undertaken through the LDS will be in full co-ordination with Waterways Ireland.
National Broadband Plan	As all rural areas anxiously await the implementation of the NBP, we will remain informed as to the current status of the programme to ensure that we can maximise the benefit of next generation access to rural towns and areas.
Department of Social Protection	Any measures supporting long term unemployed people and those who are social welfare dependent will complement existing services provided by the Department of Social Protection, such as provision of transport to centrally located services, childcare support, community development supports and personal development initiatives. The role played by the Department of Social Protection has changed significantly in the last twenty years and new dimensions to their work are being developed all the time. Our research process has taken account of their work in County Longford and the particular focus of the measures they are currently implementing and plan to do so in the future.
Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board	<p>Third level education services were formally the remit of Longford VEC until 2014 and are now under the auspices of Longford Westmeath Education & Training Board (LWETB). Due to the lack of a third level institution in the county, the services delivered by the LWETB are the only available third level options in the county for school leavers. LWETB Post Leaving Certificate accredited training courses are on offer across the county in three venues, Longford Town, Granard and Lanesboro.</p> <p>Additional services delivered by Longford Westmeath Education & Training Board include, an Adult Educational Guidance Service operating from Longford Town, Adult Learning, Back to Education Initiatives, VTOS, Community Education and YouthReach.</p> <p>Given the critical influence that educational attainment has on securing employment, it will be critical to work closely</p>

	with LWETB in the full implementation of the Local Development Strategy.
Solas	<p>Solas is the Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland. It is responsible for the funding, planning and co-ordinating of training and further education programmes. To achieve this, SOLAS work closely with a wide range of stakeholders including learners, employers, Education & Training Boards, Government departments, state bodies, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Institutes of Technology (IOTs), AONTAS and representative organisations.</p> <p>The objectives and actions outlined in this Local Development Strategy seek to enhance the work of Solas and the E.T.B. so that their training initiatives reach a wider audience. Development work needed to prepare people to access entry level training will be a key component of the Local Development Strategy alongside transport and childcare initiatives.</p>
Key Services supporting People with Disabilities	<p>In respect of the key target group, people with disabilities, the work undertaken by the following organisations will be of relevance.</p> <p>National Learning Network - provides training services for clients aged between 18years and 60years with particular learning needs or who may be recovering from an illness or addiction. On a daily basis in Longford, sixty people are attending services which include six training courses.</p> <p>Employ Ability Service Midlands - this agency exists to support people with disabilities source paid employment, work experience or job sampling.</p> <p>St. Christopher's Services - provide residential, day, training, respite, and pre-school services to people with intellectual disabilities. It is a voluntary run organisation funded by the HSE and voluntary donations.</p> <p>The Phoenix Centre - provides day services for children and adults with a physical or sensory disability, living in County Longford. Services include rehabilitative therapies, wheelchair sports training, I.T. training and other life and employability skills.</p> <p>Longford Centre for Independent Living – this community-based organisation promotes the philosophy of independent living for people with disabilities and gives people with disabilities the opportunity to access greater independence and life choices through the assistance of a Personal Assistant.</p> <p>Our work with the agencies listed above will be largely in respect of removing barriers for people with disabilities who wish to gain employment and improving quality of life for those who are unable to work.</p>
TUSLA- The Child and Family Agency	<p>In particular, their work with Children and Young Peoples Service Committees, Family Resource Centres in Granard and Ballymahon and the School Completion Programme. TUSLA also provide significant resources to Longford</p>

	Women's Link towards the provision of its Domestic Violence Support Service.
County Childcare Committee	In their capacity as service developers in areas of disadvantage and their contact with key target groups.
The Public Participation Network	The new framework for public engagement and participation within local government which includes representation from all areas of County Longford.
Health Service Executive	Through their close contact with our mutual target groups, including members of the Travelling Community, young and older persons, across a wide range of programmes delivered or funded within County Longford which aim to improve the health and wellbeing of the population and include Alcohol, Healthy Eating & Active Living, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Tobacco Free Ireland under the implementation of Healthy Ireland Framework.
Longford Westmeath Rural Transport Ltd	Formed in 2015, the amalgamated rural transport services of counties Longford and Westmeath operate rural bus routes and a community car scheme.
Longford Women's Link	Through their role of linking women with resources to help improve and change their own and their families' lives which provides a knock-on transformative effect on the local community.
Employment Development and Information Centre	As part of their overall aim to help meet the needs of people who are unemployed and provide a range of education and support services to unemployed people living in County Longford and surrounding areas.
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) the state agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources. Current projects of relevance in County Longford include the removal of invasive species and the development of angling hubs in Lanesboro.
Rural Recreation Office	A number of projects within County Longford are identified in the National Countryside Recreational Strategy Operational Plan and Longford Community Resources have worked closely with the Rural Recreation Office in the region on the delivery of key projects such as trail development and enhancement in the county. A co-operative approach to our work will continue on the further development of trails and key sites within the county, and also training for communities in managing trails in a manner that protect local biodiversity.
Family Resources Centre	The aim of the FRC programme is to combat disadvantage and improve the functioning of the family unit. Each FRC operates autonomously working inclusively with individuals, families, communities, and both statutory and non-statutory agencies. FRCs are an integral part of the Child and Family Agency's Local Area Pathways model and act as a first step to community participation and social inclusion.

APPENDIX 4

Appendix 4.1 Feedback from Consultation Process

Economic Development and Job Creation

Green Economy

- Training in climate change / biodiversity for young people
- Training in climate change / biodiversity for adults
- Provide practical skills to young people and adults (welding / craft etc)
- Encourage opportunities for regenerative tourism
- Regenerate equipment from peat production to visitor attraction
- Needs analysis for local regions and communities
- Promote and provide training on the concept of smart villages
- Creation of a local circular economy support social enterprise
- Utilise power stations that are closing and turn into other attractions such as heritage facilities
- Support small local craft businesses
- Circular economy hub - training on upcycling and opportunity to get items upcycled
- Longford shopping centre converted into shops that only upcycle (model in Sweden)
- Upskilling and retraining for the circular economy
- Development of the centre of Excellence for circular economy
- Scaling REVAMP with further innovation project, and become centre of excellence for Circular economy in Longford and the midland and western region
- Support Longford to advertise and improve the image of the town and county as an attractive place to live and work to improve investment by companies to provide employment opportunities in the town

Agriculture Diversification

- Increase opportunities for locally produced food
- Community Solar Farms
- Encourage farmers to engage in Biodiversity Projects
- Encourage renewable energy opportunities (e.g., solar panels on milking parlours)
- Use farmland for glamping opportunities (tourism)
- Invest in social farming initiatives
- Support alternative farming initiatives such as using sheep wool for insulation
- Support initiatives aimed at farmers by providing information at Farming marts
- Promote Open Farms / Farming
- Provide sheep and goats to rent for grass eating
- Farming community / landowners - build corridors rather than pockets to repair areas along streams and rivers
- Training in Citizen Science - National Database on Environment to be used for tracking changes in nature by citizens
- Encourage slurry separators to prevent run off
- Vending machines for milk and food produce
- Address fears of young farmers in relation to climate change through information events - outreach at farmer marts / utilise existing structures to engage farming community
- Opportunities for farmers to produce cellulose
- Farm diversification - farm shop, cafe, petting farm, tourism buildings
- Use agriculture land for growing herbs and alternative remedies
- Awareness and education for farmers (biofuels, replacing plastic with cellulose)
- Need to seriously invest in and co-ordinate a concerted effort to improve the image of the town

- Support sustainable Insulation products – One such is the SHEEPS WOOL attic insulation that sheep farmers get nothing for and yet it is the most hypoallergenic, organic, and natural by-product of sheep farming that is not valued

Rural Tourism & Recreation

- Environmentally based integration events e.g. tree planting while sharing different foods
- Promote fishing activities
- Famine Walks
- Additional Tourist Accommodation
- Access to WiFi in Tourist locations
- Museum & Heritage Centres
- Consistent signage across the county
- Interactive online map available with information on facilities and suggested tourist routes
- Self-service information points for visitors
- Remote working opportunities for tourists (Digital hubs)
- Camper vans / boats points
- More rentabike initiatives
- Signage for tourism facilities (attractions & accommodation etc)
- Investment in social media for restaurants
- Encourage more restaurants (fine dining)
- Legan trail to connect heritage, canal, river, and bog - connect village and link up with canal
- Provide water stations to refill reusable water bottles
- e-charging stations for cars and bikes
- Improved website & advertising for tourism and recreation activities
- Use farmland for glamping opportunities (tourism)
- Regenerate equipment from peat production to visitor attraction
- Investment in new sporting facilities that represent the different cultures living in Longford
- Support more diverse friendly sport and physical activities for all genders and disability
- Improve marketing of what Longford provides as a tourist destination
- Promote ways of holding festivals in carbon friendly ways
- Organised walks
- Encourage tourism at Royal Canal (kayaking and opportunities for waterways Ireland)
- Convert post offices into community shops and tourism spaces
- Open days to visit locations
- Increased Park and Ride opportunities
- Provide walkways and cycle ways that embrace and are reliant on clean waterways / no littering (all positive for the climate)
- Procure protected structures for public ownership and tourism opportunities
- Support improved Open Water Swimming initiatives (Access & Facilities for all ages and bodies)
- Use waterways for Kayaking and different water sports including safe swimming, paddle boards (non-motorised water sports)
- Develop festivals around annual sporting events
- Joint approach to tourism to include e.g. All North Longford
- Create bridle path for walking / riding ponies
- Skateparks
- Autism friendly playgrounds
- Cultural festivals to showcase different cultural diversity (own it and promote it)
- Promote and resource tourism opportunities and the green economy and target these sectors to motivate people living in rural communities to engage and buy in
- Investment in the parklets outside cafes and restaurants has improved signalling to passing traffic of their existence. Better signage and promotion of facilities in the urban areas could improve footfall from passing traffic.

- Funds could be used to develop the area at the entrance to the Longford stem of the greenway beside the railway bridge and park road to include supervised, safe toilet facilities, good signposting to restaurants and accommodation nearby, a picnic area with a warden and cover from rain, bike ports, water stations along the route, markers at each kilometre to enhance the experience on the Longford route, greater investment in the width of the cycle paths, clearance of hedgerows, clearance of canal to be more attractive, playground space along the route to encourage families to use the Longford branch as a place to start or complete a short section of the route, public art sculptures along the route, support for small businesses to provide facilities at intervals along the route at 5k, 10k etc, photograph opportunities with a unique and artistic sign at the gateway to the greenway which attracts people to start the greenway at the iconic 'instagrammable' spot
- Invest in a better 'Longford social media presence'.
- Creating Food Tourism. identifying Artisan Food Producers using Lough Ree as the tourist attraction and creating a digital visitor trail/App around the lake, reducing air miles and making businesses sustainable in their own region.
- Cross promote with other rural regions
- Invest in tidy towns, they will put money to improving the appearance of small towns and villages, making them more attractive for people to visit, or for cafes and small shops to open

Enterprise Development

- Provide training and financial incentives to disadvantaged families on how taking a climate change approach can be beneficial
- Increase number of food banks (toys, uniforms, schoolbooks) to reduce waste and cost to families
- Encourage start-ups to support for retrofitting buildings to renewable energy sources
- Support business in home visits / home supports for older population
- More rentabike initiatives
- Encourage more restaurants (fine dining)
- Remote working hubs for locals
- Provide transport supports for the transport of freshly grown food (appropriate vehicles for farm to shop)
- Reopen harbour to regenerate cafes in area
- Business innovation centre for Midlands based in Longford for start-ups / tech
- Support feasibility studies to support projects / initiatives
- Encourage more flexible employment opportunities / employ more migrant workers
- Additional childcare facilities to encourage more parents back to work
- Analytical devices (being developed and used)
- 'Health Anywhere' schemes - digital health for older people to give an extended engagement (not just GPs but Physios, Speech and Language, Therapy)
- Mentoring program for female entrepreneurs
- Affordable childcare solutions (which will help with female entrepreneurs)
- Role model workshops for female entrepreneurs
- Confidence building workshops for female entrepreneurs
- Workshops to support females entrepreneurs in generating big ideas that have export potential rather than business ideas with local focus
- Accessible digital and working hubs for community groups and small businesses with limited resources
- Access to seed funding
- Support small local craft businesses
- Accessible 'One Stop Shops' for childcare, health, IT
- Provide units for small businesses to work out of
- Ambassador program for female entrepreneurs
- Women in Business initiative
- Independent living villages for older people and vulnerable people

- Pre-employments / short engagement programmes– to seek out those not engaging in activation,

Traineeships

- A broader range of apprenticeships for young people tiling, upholstery, painting and decorating

- What's missing from Longford Town is good hotel, shopping centre, IT and computer services, B&B, Catering company, Food Truck

- Construction jobs for tourism demands

- Fund 'young entrepreneur' and 'young female entrepreneur' competition

- Provide equestrian facility to cater for cross country trekking, livery services

- Provision of training and on-going mentorship for people who want to start their own business.

- Support better coordination between the myriad of employment support schemes to make it easier for people to navigate and avail of opportunities that are missed due to the bureaucratic requirements that block participation for people who are not engaged on social media, who do not possess literacy, or digital literacy skills.

- Greater emphasis on and funding for apprenticeships and internships

- Encourage financial outlets in rural communities e.g., credit unions

- Focus on funding micro businesses in line with the LEO definition of less than 10 employees and under €1m in turnover

- A micro business campus with no rates, cheap rents, internet, and office facilities

- Tools, machinery, and shared workspaces. The local “Fab Lab” or Fabrication Laboratory model in the US could be used. Paid membership or pay as you go.

Rural Food Production

- Support increase in farm shops and 'farm to fork' food initiatives

- Support initiatives for food markets encouraging cuisines representative of different cultures living in the county

- Use community gardens to grow own vegetables

- Access to 'kitchens to rent' enabling artisan food businesses to produce food

- Provide transport supports for the transport of freshly grown food (appropriate vehicles for farm to shop)

Social Community & Cooperative Enterprises

- Support young people in employability skills at an early age (options for careers / how they present themselves / confidence building)

- Additional mental health support services

- Youth Information Services Centre

- Additional transport supports to Centre Parks to support employment opportunities for people who cannot drive

- Support investments in drama and acting investments

- Support additional sporting events such as Annual summer 5/7 aside soccer leagues

- Art and Cultural programmes to activate marginalised communities to engaged in broader community

- Age Friendly Initiatives (e.g., Bridge, Stay Active)

- Deposit Return Schemes at Community / Business locations to support climate change

- Language Courses - Ukrainian etc

- Support Community run projects with investing in infrastructure that will reduce the operational costs

- Support feasibility studies to support projects / initiatives

- Convert post offices into community shops and tourism spaces

- Mental health / isolation supports for those in retirement or recently retired

- Support and advice for people going into retirement

- Mixed Arts Centre (Similar to HIVE in Carrick on Shannon)

- Access to case studies and good practices for LEADER program

- Opportunities for the establishment of Social Enterprises in climate change and biodiversity area to rely less on community groups who do not have resources required
- Creation of a local circular economy support social enterprise
- Community gardens in green spaces in estates - managed by resident's association
- Develop indigenous employment through co-operatives
- Additional drama supports for young people
- New Mother Meet-Up groups
- Computer classes for the elderly
- Capacity Building opportunities for volunteers (e.g., project management)
- Grant aided music lessons
- Develop 'Climate Change Innovation Centre' - understanding best in class and building awareness of new scientific research developments
- Food truck initiatives in rural areas supporting local shops
- Intergenerational and education inclusion for traveller women whilst still being part of their own culture
- Inclusion should include awareness of all disability and the need for accessible transport
- Men and Women's sheds with transfer of skills and knowledge
- Affordable childcare solution
- Accessible digital and working hubs for community groups and small businesses with limited resources
- Promote active healthy lifestyles
- Respite facilities for the elderly
- Cafes for elderly to visit
- Organised family fund days
- Organised 'fair' days
- Organised festival for different community groups to celebrate family and community
- Accessible 'One Stop Shops' for childcare, health, IT
- Recording studio / media equipment available
- Community cars in Co-op with health services - provide people with opportunity to travel to healthcare provider
- Provide outreach health care solutions
- Car pooling / community cars
- Human libraries - well governed spaces that allow people to speak about their lives and the listeners to be educated
- English language classes
- Provide a booklet on empowering rural communities, recognising the diversity of rural Ireland
- Facilitate the Mobile Health Units visit to Longford
- Support our community kitchen, and gain access to space for community garden to assist those most in need to obtain healthy meals for a small cost of €5 or under
- "Too good to go" type system where any food left over is given to those who need it
- A "Pride in Longford" programme
- Provide training and education for unemployed people to help them acquire new skills and qualifications that are in demand by local employers
- Offer follow up funding initiatives to past projects.

Rural Infrastructure and Social Inclusion

Rural Infrastructure

- Additional local link services to give more people access to employment opportunities
- Youth Information Services Centre
- Use closed building for use e.g. (homeless hostels, Mother & Children only facilities)
- Additional transport supports to Centre Parks to support employment opportunities for people who cannot drive
- Digital Hubs (education in graphic design etc) harvesting creativity

- Create 'community houses' across the county where people can understand what community supports are available using closed buildings
- More inclusive design / infrastructure in buildings (disability friendly)
- More cycle paths / walkways / running tracks - expand Active travel routes
- Additional Tourist accommodation
- Accessible transport for tourists beyond car hire
- Remote working opportunities for tourists (Digital hubs)
- e-charging stations for cars and bikes
- Community run electric buses
- Reusing closed / derelict buildings (pop up services, community buildings etc) - ensure fit for use for older generations
- Investment in new sporting facilities that represent the different cultures living in Longford
- Investing and improving community infrastructure
- Increase in Family Resource Centres
- Have sports and recreation facilities that are fit for purpose
- Ensure community centres have appropriate technology infrastructure
- Broaden community networks beyond individual villages
- Community transport to support community member in need of hospital and GP appointments
- Convert post offices into community shops and tourism spaces
- Capital funds for conversion of post office / old shops to housing facilities
- Increased Park and Ride opportunities
- Community cafes for inclusion and networking
- Access to more buildings for community services
- Extended hours to community walkways / cycle lanes and running lanes
- Community centre in Longford
- Group scheme for solar energy (in local estates for community houses)
- Independent living villages for older people and vulnerable people
- Use buildings for multiuse

Accessible Services

- Specific climate change /biodiversity Youth Community Groups
- Opportunities for intergenerational & multicultural groups with emphasise on Climate Change / Traditional Skills / Digital
- Provide training and financial incentives to disadvantaged families on how taking a climate change approach can be beneficial
- Training in climate change / biodiversity / waste management for young people
- Training in climate change / biodiversity / waste management for adults
- Green Spaces for Biodiversity
- Waterside Walks - have QR Code that educates people on the biodiversity
- Provide education on climate justice
- Education on harmful effects of plastic
- Feasibility studies for climate change initiatives that affect community (e.g., community anaerobic digesters)
- Use bogland walkways to education people on biodiversity and history
- Promote Climate Change Youth Projects and Green Clubs
- Communal composting
- Deposit Return Schemes at Community / Business locations
- Green Festival - light installations energised through renewable energy
- Promote ways of holding festivals in carbon friendly ways
- Awareness programs on effects on the environment of pollution and littering
- Promote Open Farms / Farming
- Project Management support for climate change and biodiversity initiatives

- Provide walkways and cycle ways that embrace and are reliant on clean waterways / no littering (all positive for the climate)
- Encourage community groups (e.g., young people etc) to use art murals to use subtle messaging to help protect the planet
- Provide signage in multiple languages
- Support improved Open Water Swimming initiatives (Access & Facilities for all ages and bodies)
- Provide cookery courses with basic ingredients
- Food truck initiatives in rural areas supporting local shops
- Additional childcare facilities to encourage more parents back to work
- Provide outreach health care solutions
- Satellite clinics (health / social welfare, doctor, banking, physio etc)
- Tech support and skills building for older people
- Intergenerational projects
- Provide a booklet on empowering rural communities, recognising the diversity of rural Ireland
- Investment in integration activities to support the high-volume migrant and refugee population, particularly recreational opportunities for people living in direct provision and coordination of activities to help these people put in a fulfilling day.
- More parent and baby group activities provided in local Halls and areas to reduce the isolation and improve the education of young parents about child wellbeing, nutrition, and the importance of education.

Optimising Digital Connectivity

- Waterside Walks - have QR Code that educates people on the biodiversity
- Digital Hubs (education in graphic design etc) harvesting creativity
- Improve medical access (help and appointments)
- Opportunities for intergenerational groups with emphasise on Climate Change / Traditional Skills / Digital
- Access to WiFi in Tourist locations
- Interactive online map available with information on facilities and suggested tourist routes
- Self-service information points for visitors
- Remote working opportunities for tourists (Digital hubs)
- Investment in social media for restaurants
- Improved website & advertising for tourism and recreation activities
- Remote working hubs for locals
- Community 'Smart App' including text alert system, strengthening relationships with community groups
- Support initiatives for rural broadband
- Use broadband to help bring people together - e.g., access to movies for older people
- Training to older people on the benefits of broadband and what can be achieved
- Use technology methods to support translation services for new nationalities
- Use technology to broaden community networks beyond individual villages
- Centralised information sources
- High speed broadband available in houses and communities
- Community tv and media opportunities for different nationalities
- Water quality testing and digital boards to report results
- Computer classes for the elderly
- Smart TV Screens for community buildings to advertise local events be they social or fundraising
- Digital access for all people
- Analytical devices (being developed and used)
- Develop methods of connectivity through digitisation
- Accessibility to all (digital)
- Remote education spaces (using technology)

- Digital hubs to be used for hybrid / remote education and training
- 'Health Anywhere' schemes - digital health for older people to give an extended engagement (not just GPs but Physios, Speech and Language, Therapy)
- Adequate affordable broadband
- Digital community noticeboards, linked to website and app (for public, for tourists, opportunities for advertisements)

Rural Youth

- Need for additional activities and supports for 16–18-year-olds who are not attending school, cannot get jobs and cannot access social welfare
- Training in climate change / biodiversity for young people
- Specific climate change /biodiversity Youth Community Groups
- Increase number of food banks (toys, uniforms, schoolbooks) to reduce waste and cost to families
- Support young people in employability skills at an early age (options for careers / how they present themselves / confidence building)
- Provide subsidised supports for children where cost is a barrier to sport
- Youth Information Services Centre
- Initiative to get more young people involved in politics (register to vote, education on why voting is important, represent their communities)
- Encourage factories / businesses to take on apprentices
- Promote awareness of the dangers of using drugs
- Educate teachers on cultural differences for young people
- Provide practical skills to young people and adults (welding / craft etc)
- Digital Hubs (education in graphic design etc) harvesting creativity
- Additional training and group support in computer programming and drama and arts
- Investment in new sporting facilities that represent the different cultures living in Longford
- Provide cookery courses with basic ingredients
- University outreach
- Additional supports for liaison officer for social inclusion to support young people in universities
- Additional youth services across the county
- Organised family fund days
- Dedicated youth spaces throughout the county and in all large villages and towns
- More non sport club / activities to engage all youths
- Encourage volunteers to work with young people
- Explore a needs analysis for 18–25-year-olds, male/female, preparing young people for employment
- Organise workshops and classes that allow the young people to upskill and potentially prepare for employment e.g., more catering courses, workshops on creating a CV and interview tips
- Getting schools involved in recycling, offering a competition to schools that will give them an opportunity to update something old and transform it, this done annually would provide a wide scope, educate pupils on greener change
- Volunteering time at non-profit animal shelters, elderly, local senior centre
- Support for mentoring and education around work opportunities, open days, talks from local businesses that would keep young people in our areas
- Provide professional youth workers who are regularly available to work with local schools, family resource centres and youth services within their own local area
- Funding for youth forums, youth councils, community projects, and youth-led initiatives
- Support initiatives that promote the health and well-being of young people in Longford. This could include funding for sports and fitness programs, mental health services, counselling supports and initiatives that address issues such as substance abuse and addiction.

- Support initiatives that promote social inclusion and equality for young people in Longford. This could include funding for projects that address issues such as discrimination, racism, and social isolation.

- Make better use of Transition Year to support young people into more co-ordinated internships

- Availability of play therapy in primary schools.

- Availability of psychological support counselling in all second-level schools

- Setting up a Leader Oige group on a monthly basis

- Provide training in life skills, positive psychology, goal setting etc

Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment

- Community Solar Farms

- Community Composters

- Community Anaerobic Digesters

- Community Wind Energy generators

- Hydro energy initiatives

- Ensure no invasive plants are used by Tidy Towns and households

- Support for retrofitting buildings to renewable energy sources

- Community Gardens / Allotments

- Encourage move towards HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) instead of kerosene

- e-charging stations for cars and bikes

- Encourage climate change initiatives with farmers - e.g., renewable energy opportunities (e.g. solar panels on milking parlours)

- Support energy audits for buildings and community regions

- Water harvesting investments

- Water protection schemes (protect against impact of fertilisers and animal waste leeching)

- EV Charging points in Community Buildings

- Walking routes on community land lit by solar charged motion sensors

- Support the renovation and investment in machinery for maintaining land and spaces

- Lighting at sports grounds and walkways to be solar powered

- Solar street lighting around local villages

- Connect with sports organisations and use land for rewilding

- Increased Park and Ride opportunities

- Battery storage for solar panel energy

- Greening city and towns (green roofs) and absorbing water as it moves through towns and villages

- Village wells - clean water

- Skip days for local areas / villages

- District heating (Air to Water)

- Develop 'Climate Change Innovation Centre' - understanding best in class and building awareness of new scientific research developments

- Community gardens in green spaces in estates - managed by resident's association

- Biodiversity information hub / centre (staffed with outreach opportunities)

- Group scheme for solar energy (in local estates)

- Offshore wind turbines

- Establishing Co-ops for energy generation

- A grant to instal energy efficient windows/doors to meet increased energy costs

- Support sustainable Insulation products – One such is the SHEEPS WOOL attic insulation that sheep farmers get nothing for and yet it is the most hypoallergenic, organic, and natural by-product of sheep farming that is not valued

Climate Change Capacity Building

- Specific climate change /biodiversity Youth Community Groups
- Opportunities for intergenerational & multicultural groups with emphasise on Climate Change / Traditional Skills / Digital
- Provide training and financial incentives to disadvantaged families on how taking a climate change approach can be beneficial
- Training in climate change / biodiversity / waste management for young people
- Training in climate change / biodiversity / waste management for adults
- Green Spaces for Biodiversity
- Waterside Walks - have QR Code that educates people on the biodiversity
- Provide education on climate justice
- Education on harmful effects of plastic
- Feasibility studies for climate change initiatives that affect community (e.g., community anaerobic digesters)
- Use bogland walkways to education people on biodiversity and history
- Promote Climate Change Youth Projects and Green Clubs
- Communal composting
- Deposit Return Schemes at Community / Business locations
- Green Festival - light installations energised through renewable energy
- Promote ways of holding festivals in carbon friendly ways
- Awareness programs on effects on the environment of pollution and littering
- Promote Open Farms / Farming
- Project Management support for climate change and biodiversity initiatives
- Provide walkways and cycle ways that embrace and are reliant on clean waterways / no littering (all positive for the climate)
- Encourage community groups (e.g., young people etc) to use art murals to use subtle messaging to help protect the planet
- Outdoor classrooms to embrace nature (Newtown Forbes front runner)
- Training in Citizen Science - National Database on Environment to be used for tracking changes in nature by citizens
- Creation of a local circular economy support social enterprise
- Education / Awareness of water quality / water catchment areas / effect of run off from slurry
- Identify ways to incentivise recycling
- Address fears of young farmers in relation to climate change through information events - outreach at farmer marts / utilise existing structures to engage farming community
- Circular economy hub - training on upcycling and opportunity to get items upcycled
- Longford shopping centre converted into shops that only upcycle (model in Sweden)
- Deliver programs on food wastage and making the right amount of food for people (for businesses e.g., restaurants as well as individuals and families)
- Provide training on bird boxes
- Training and workshops on rainwater harvesting training
- Biodiversity skills training (back to basics)
- Awareness and education for farmers (biofuels, replacing plastic with cellulose)
- More training and education on recycling, what is reusable
- Subsidise recycling efforts
- Education on what is the best option for heating e.g., Air to Water
- Provide funding to move from oil to wood pellets or away from fossil fuels
- Native tree awareness
- Getting schools involved in recycling, offering a competition to schools that will give them an opportunity to update something old and transform it, this done annually would provide a wide scope, educate pupils on greener change
- Support REVAMP with developing further projects and training in sustainability
- Fund sustainability surveys for community buildings and support community building with bridging funding to access grants to increase climate change activities

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

- Increased access to waste disposal / recycling for people who cannot drive
- Addition of bins (recycling and street bins)
- More cycle paths / walkways - expand Active travel routes
- Environmentally based integration events e.g., tree planting while sharing different foods
- Encourage reduction in individual transport for school transport (encourage walking and cycling, turn cars off when parked)
- Provide initiatives for manufacturers to reduce plastic
- Support active tidy town groups
- Community run electric buses
- Support alternative farming initiatives such as using sheep wool for insulation
- Tree planting
- Rent sheep and goats to eat grass
- Farming community / landowners - build corridors rather than pockets to repair areas along streams and rivers
- Opportunities for the establishment of Social Enterprises in climate change and biodiversity area to rely less on community groups who do not have resources required
- Rewilding and restoring green spaces 'no mow, let it grow'.
- Ban herbicide use
- Encourage native woodlands
- Support UNESCO Biosphere application (bog restoration)
- Develop bee opportunities
- Rewilding along canals
- Planting of native berry trees in bogs
- Clean up lakes to encourage more open water swimming
- Encourage slurry separators to prevent run off
- Water quality testing and digital boards to report results
- Refund for plastic and glass scheme
- Encourage and incentivise ditching plastic in manufacturing
- Grow orchards
- Market simple messaging educating people on 'what can I do', 'what can we do'.
- Feasibility studies for renewable energies
- Encourage bird boxes
- Car pooling / community cars
- Edible forests
- Native tree and plant initiatives
- Other initiatives maybe updating clothes, shoes, leather, making handbags