

Longford People's Park – Comprehensive Project Summary (Phases 1–4)

Overview

The Longford People's Park project is a transformative, community-led initiative to redevelop the former greyhound track in Longford Town into a vibrant, inclusive, and accessible recreational hub. Since its closure in 2020, Longford County Council, in collaboration with elected representatives and local stakeholders, has delivered a phased masterplan that aligns with national and local strategies including *Our Rural Future*, the *Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)*, and *Longford 2040 – A Town Centre First Strategy*.

The site was officially named **Longford People's Park** in July 2025, reflecting its role as a shared space for all residents.

Phase 1 – Skatepark (Completed January 2023)

Responding to a long-standing absence of skate facilities in County Longford, the Longford Skatepark Committee and local elected members championed the development of a 750 sq.m street-style skatepark. Located adjacent to Park Road and the Royal Canal Greenway spur, the skatepark was designed for visibility, accessibility, and passive surveillance.

Key highlights:

- Delivered under Part 8 Planning No. 100, adopted in November 2022
 - Acoustic report completed to address planning concerns
 - Budget constraints limited initial connectivity works
 - Widely praised by youth organisations and community groups
 - Serves as a catalyst for further recreational development
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Phase 2 – Sunflower Special Needs Playground (Opened July 2025)

This phase focused on inclusivity and accessibility, driven by the Longford Special Needs Parents Group and community advocates. The playground provides a secure, engaging environment for children with complex needs and includes a wide range of accessible play features.

Key components:

- Demolition and site preparation
- 240m shared pathway connecting to the Royal Canal Greenway
- Public lighting, drainage, and fencing

- Recreational features: table tennis, climbing structures, benches
- Special needs playground with embankment slide, trampoline, sensory tunnel, accessible swings, and more
- Landscaping with native trees and biodiversity enhancements

Strategic impact:

- Supports an Autism Friendly Community
- Enhances connectivity and public space usability
- Strengthens community cohesion and inclusion

Phase 3 – Infrastructure and Amenity Expansion (Current Application)

With unprecedented use of the skatepark and playground, Phase 3 addresses the urgent need for supporting infrastructure, particularly parking, and lays the groundwork for future amenities including a full-size astro pitch and exercise track.

Scope of works:

- Demolition of remaining spectator stand and ancillary structures
- Construction of car park with:
 - 40 standard spaces
 - 2 coach bays
 - 3 accessible spaces
 - 3 EV charging bays
- Youth play areas with new equipment
- Boules court, climbing net, and 3x3 basketball court
- Landscaping, planting, and screen hedging
- Perimeter fencing and lighting

Strategic alignment:

- Revitalises a derelict site into a multifunctional public space
- Promotes health, wellbeing, and youth engagement
- Enhances accessibility and environmental sustainability
- Supports economic and social resilience

The site's central location and integration with the Royal Canal Greenway make it a key asset in Longford's urban fabric, particularly for underserved southern residential areas.

Phase 4 – Community Hub and Changing Facilities (Future Phase)

The final phase envisions the development of a **Community Hub** and **Changing Rooms/Spaces**, providing essential indoor infrastructure to support year-round recreational and social activities.

Proposed features:

- Multi-purpose indoor community space
- Accessible changing rooms and toilets
- Storage for sports and recreational equipment
- Covered outdoor seating and gathering area
- Solar panels and energy-efficient design
- Potential café or social enterprise space

Objectives:

- Support active recreation and future masterplan elements
- Enable community programming and youth services
- Foster social inclusion and accessibility
- Strengthen resilience and event hosting capacity

Strategic alignment:

- Reinforces the Town Centre First Strategy's goals of community-led regeneration, public realm enhancement, and tackling vacancy
- Complements existing and planned outdoor amenities
- Serves Longford's diverse population and supports vulnerable groups

Part 8 Application

To ensure the timely delivery of essential infrastructure supporting the existing amenities at Longford People's Park, it is requested that this Part 8 planning application be progressed for consideration at the upcoming Longford Municipal District meeting scheduled for 23 September 2025. The unprecedented public use of the skatepark and Sunflower Special Needs Playground has created an immediate and pressing need for supporting infrastructure, particularly parking and youth-focused recreational facilities. Advancing this application in time for the September meeting will allow Longford County Council to respond proactively to community demand, secure alignment with funding timelines under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and maintain momentum in the phased development of this vital public space.

Conclusion

The Longford People's Park project exemplifies community-driven regeneration, transforming a disused site into a dynamic public space that reflects the needs and aspirations of Longford's residents. Each phase builds upon the last, delivering inclusive, accessible, and sustainable infrastructure that promotes health, wellbeing, and social cohesion.

This phased approach ensures the long-term viability and adaptability of the park, positioning it as a cornerstone of Longford's urban and community development strategy.