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Longford URBACT Local Group – September 2021 Update

ULG Meetings

The last meeting of the URBACT Local Group was held online on 17 May 2021 in line with the prevailing public health restrictions. Updates were provided on the transnational meeting hosted by Madrid in April that focussed on the use of CCTV and drones in the pursuit of enhanced urban security. The meeting was addressed by Garda Sergeant Darren Conlon of the Longford Community policing unit who outlined a new, hands-on approach to policing in the town centre, focussing on known problem areas by addressing anti-social behaviour and improving the perception of security for users of the town centre. A progress report was presented on the small-scale action, the art installation in Garvey's Yard. Details were also provided of ongoing initiatives in the town, that align with the URBSecurity Project and that are being undertaken by Longford County Council Regeneration. The next ULG meeting is scheduled for October.



Online attendees at the ULG meeting, May 2021





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Transnational Meetings

Longford hosted transnational meeting number four on 19 and 20 May 2021, focusing on security by design. Longford examples were presented, reviewed and experiences exchanged and discussed with the other partners. Kieran McCarthy from the committee of the regions addressed the network on urban policies while Werner Van Herle, Monica Visentin and the lead expert outlined synergies with the Urban Agenda Partnership. Issues relating to project management and IAP development were also explored. Transnational meeting number five? was hosted online by Szabolcs on 7 and 8 August 2021. It focussed on citizen participation in urban security. The next transnational meeting is to be hosted by Michalovce in October and will explore how to survey citizens and evaluate impacts of urban security actions.

Activities

The proposed TY survey and mapping project was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place at the time. Alternatives are being considered and will be explored in further detail with the ULG.

The community policing project outlined by Garda Sergeant Conlon at the May meeting of the ULG has had a significant and positive impact on the town centre and security perceptions. A successful visit of the mounted police unit in June highlighted this important work.





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Anti-social behaviour crackdown in Longford walkways underway

Gardaí and Longford County Council have joined forces in a bid to tackle anti-social behaviour and public loitering concerns along a string of laneways within the main county town.

Garvey's Yard, which acts as a linkway between [Annaly Park](#) and Main Street was chosen as a pilot project under the local authority's URBACT programme.

Regeneration Officer Lorraine O'Connor said the idea stemmed from a bid to make the laneway and others like it, more user-friendly as access routes into the heart of the town core.

"As part of the project, an art installation was proposed for [Garvey's Yard](#) by the voluntary arts organisation Engage Longford - which may also be used to facilitate a covered market," she said.

"The design on this element is now complete and it's hoped that construction work will commence in the coming weeks. Longford Community Sergeant Darran Conlon told of how a number of "security issues" have already been flagged, predominantly around public lighting, CCTV and layout, all of which he added will be addressed.

"I see Garvey's Yard as an outside office, where people can approach me and ask me questions or raise concerns," he said. Sgt Conlon, who took over the reins of directing community policing in Longford earlier this year, spoke of how increased garda visibility on the streets of [Longford town](#) was already starting to pay dividends.

"This is all about targeting all forms of anti-social behaviour, littering, loitering, public order and public drinking," he added.

"It's been very much about engaging with people, asking what their concerns are, educating people around the issues raised and then asking those individuals to desist from that type of behaviour."



This Article was published in the Longford Leader in June 2021, highlighting the ongoing cooperation between Longford County Council and the Garda Community Policing Unit.





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Improvements are ongoing in the Garvey's yard area, with the removal of the planter creating a much more open and inviting space (see left – before and after photos courtesy of *Engage Longford*).

Progress is ongoing on the art installation in Garvey's Yard, with the bespoke piece fabricated and groundworks imminent. The ENGAGE project hosted a well-attended event in the yard on Friday, 17 September 2021, illustrating the potential of the space to engage the community and work as a positive and vibrant element in the urban realm. Pictures and videos of the event are available at: [Engage Longford - Home | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/regenerationlongford/)

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