

Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015 - 2021

Socio Economic Statement



Prepared and Adopted by Longford LCDC and Economic Development and Enterprise SPC

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support both the economic and community development of the local authority area, both by itself, and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. As such the LECP shall identify and implement such actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of the local authority area in a manner which both reflects and supports the implementation of the existing Regional Planning Guidelines, proposed regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, Development Plan and other relevant plans. As such it is recognised that the LECP is being developed and implemented within an evolving national policy context.

The LECP is to consist of two shared elements, both Community and Economic. The community element of the plan is to be developed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), while the economic element of the plan is to be developed by the Local Authority through the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). Accordingly as part of the process Longford County Council has established a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) (appendix 1), and an Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) (appendix 2).

2.0 THE LECP PROCESS

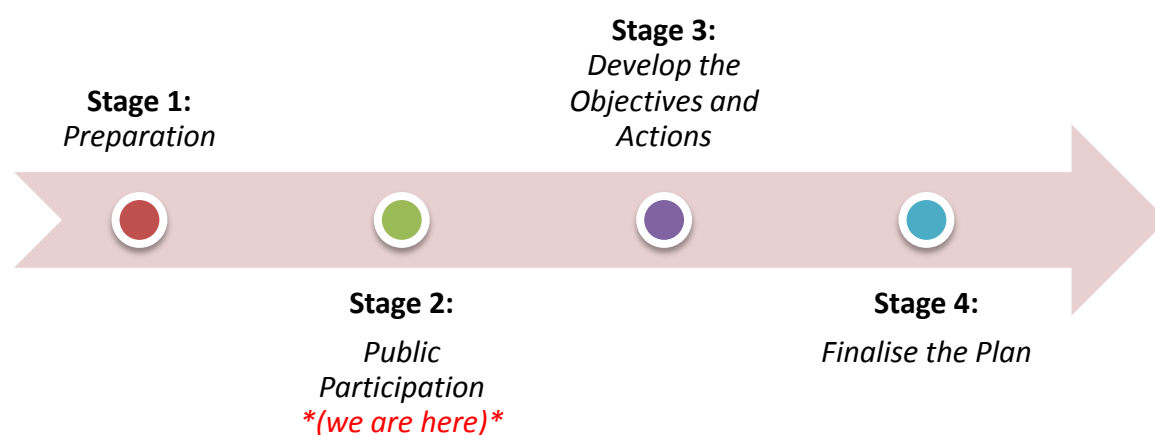


Figure 1: Schematic Representation of LECP Process

Stage 1: Preparation:

This consists of the establishment of a socio-economic evidence base and analyse of same. On foot of this evidence, a socio-economic statement for the county is to be developed containing high level goals for the integrated LECP. The Advisory Steering Group is to prepare the SPC and LCDC to adopt the statement for public consultation.

Stage 2: Public Consultation (*we are here*):

This consists of a 4 week public consultation on the socio-economic statement and high level goals. If necessary the Statement is to be revised, and subsequently referred to the Municipal Districts and Regional Authority. The Advisory Steering Group is to prepare the SPC and LCDC to adopt the revised statement for submission to the Municipal Districts and Regional Authority.

Stage 3: Develop the Objectives and Actions:

This consists of the development of detailed objectives for the economic and community elements of the plan underpinned by clear, measurable actions. The SPC and the LCDC are to agree the objectives and actions. The Advisory Steering Group is to submit a final draft incorporating the statement and goals, objectives and actions for consideration by the Municipal Districts and Regional Authority.

Stage 4: Finalise Plan:

The SPC and LCDC are to consider and adopt the final draft (revised as necessary following consideration by the Municipal District's and Regional Authority). The Local Authority to adopt the final draft of the LECP, and the final Plan is to be submitted to the Minister and published by the Local Authority.

3.0 WORK TO DATE – Stage 1: Preparation

3.1 Consultation

An array of consultation has been carried out to date ranging from a facilitated consultation session with the LCDC, consultation with the community in Municipal Districts across the county, and consultation with business interests and key stakeholders/agencies. An online survey was also conducted with various relevant stakeholders.

The following were among the main themes raised:-

- Job creation and business development
- Education, training and skills development.
- Improvement and provision of services, infrastructure and utilities.
- Capitalise on central location and good road networks.
- Renewal and Regeneration.
- Health, safety and well-being.
- Tourism, culture, arts, leisure and heritage.
- Inclusion and equality for key target groups.

3.2 Socio-Economic Baseline Study:

A Socio-Economic Baseline Study has been prepared as part of the preparation of the LECP, which provides a profile of County Longford. This aims to provide the LCDC and SPC with important socio-economic information that will assist in the development of goals, objectives and targets in the preceding phases of the LECP Plan process.

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

This profile is largely based on data collated from the Census 2011, including the CSO POWSCAR database. The data is also supplemented where appropriate with other CSO reports and available departmental statistical results, such as the Live Register and Quarterly National Household Survey and Department of Social Protection data, the Pobal HP Deprivation index, Fáilte Ireland datasets and the Longford GeoDirectory.

The Socio-Economic Baseline Study is available to view and download at: [Socio-Economic Baseline Study](#)

3.2.1 Key Findings

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

Population

- County Longford occupies an area of 1,091km² and is the fourth smallest county in the State.
- With a population of 39,000 (CSO, 2011), Longford has the second smallest population nationally.
- County Longford recorded the sixth highest birth rate nationally in 2013, with 612 births. This equates to 15.7 births per 1,000 population.
- In the revised population forecasts in the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010–2022*, the population of Longford is expected to increase by approximately 5,600 people over the period 2011-2022.

Age Distribution

- Approximately 23% of County Longford's population are under 14 years of age (9,045 children). This is marginally higher than the national average of 21%. Of persons in this age group; 36% are in the pre-school age group of 4 years and under, while 53% are of primary school age (5-12 years).
- 4,883 persons are aged 65 years and over, comprising 13% of the County's population, and similar to the national average.
- 29% of persons over 65 years of age live alone. The highest proportion is within the 80 to 84 age group, and approximately 65% of all those living alone and over the age of 80 years are female (655 persons).
- In County Longford, the total age dependency ratio is 55% in 2011, an increase of 3% on Census 2006 figures. The Longford rate is above both the national average of 49.3% and Leinster figure of 47.3%.

Household Formation

- The average age of first time mothers in County Longford in 2013 was 28 years, the youngest average age of mothers at first maternity nationally.

- County Longford has an average household size of 2.7 persons, identical to that of the national average.
- Longford has 1,941 lone parents. The rate of lone parents is slightly higher in Longford at 17% compared to neighbouring counties and the State average (15%).
- There are marked differences in the proportion of lone parents on an urban-rural basis, with urban areas possessing a higher rate. The settlements of Longford, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Granard possess the highest rate of lone parents in the County, with Longford town possessing a lone parent rate of 44.8%.
- The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index identifies 13 no. ED's in the County which have a lone parent rate of below 10%, the majority of which are rural.

Nationality, Ethnicity and Language

- 14.1% of the population of County Longford comprised of non-Irish nationals, which was higher than the national average (12%) (CSO, 2011).
- Approximately 55% of all non-Irish nationals living in County Longford are composed of three nationalities; Polish (27%), British (19%) and Lithuanian (8%). The Polish population is the largest non-Irish population in the County, reflecting the national trend. The proportion of non-Irish nationals varies considerably throughout the County.
- Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon possess the highest proportion of non-Irish nationals at 33% and 28% respectively, while Lanesborough-Ballyleague has the lowest proportion at 16.8%. This is still above the county and national average.
- Latvian nationals comprised the highest community of non-Irish nationals in Edgeworthstown, while in all other profiled settlements, Polish nationals comprised the highest number. The high rate of non-Irish nationals in the County offers both challenges and opportunities in terms of social inclusion and cultural diversity.
- 4,897 persons speak a language other than Irish or English at home, of which 1,312 persons stated they were unable to speak English well or at all.
- 33% stated they spoke Polish, while 8% spoke Lithuanian, 8% spoke French and 51% spoke another language.
- 59% of the County's population were unable to speak Irish, while 39% were able to. Of those, 32% spoke it daily within the education system only; while just 2% spoke it daily within the home, 33% speak it very infrequently, while 25% never speak it.

Irish Traveller Community

- Longford has the highest Irish Traveller population per capita in the Country.
- Census 2011 identified 743 no. Irish Travellers in County Longford, making up 1.9% of the County's population. This is almost three times the national average.
- The largest community of Travellers is in Longford Town where they account for 5% of the population (522 persons).
- In the remaining profiled settlements, 2% or less of the population comprised of Irish Travellers.

Health / Disability:

- 5,404 people in the County were identified as having a disability, which represents 14% of the total population (CSO, 2011).

- 8% of those with a disability are aged 0-14 years, while 19% are aged 25-44 years, 31% are 45-64 years and 34% are aged 65 or over.
- Lanesborough-Ballyleague had the highest proportion of population with a disability, at 17% of the population. However, it also has a higher proportion of persons aged 65 years and over compared to the other main settlements in the County. All other profile settlements had a population disability rate ranging from 14-16%.
- There are 2 no. disability centres in the County, Phoenix Centre and St. Christopher's, which provide a range of services to support people with disabilities. Phoenix Centre provides day care services, while St Christopher's provides both day care and residential/respite services.
- There are 1,688 people in the County providing regular unpaid personal help to a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability, representing 4.3% of the total population of the County. 23.1% of these provide care in excess of 6 hours per day.
- Approximately 60% of all carer's are female.
- 96% of the county's population consider their health as 'Very good' to 'fair', while only 1.7% consider their health as 'Bad' or 'Very bad'.
- In 2014, there were 4 no. suicide related deaths recorded in the County, which is 10.1 suicides per 100,000. This rate is similar to that of the national rate.
- The HSE provides a number of services to support older persons; St. Joseph's long stay, palliative and day care centre; 108 home help staff; and 235 home care packages.

Affluence and Deprivation

- The Midlands Region is the third most deprived region of Ireland, and County Longford is the most deprived local authority area within the Midlands Region (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2011).
- County Longford experienced a change in relative HP Index score of -0.19 between 2006 and 2011, compared to the Midlands region and State change in the relative index score of -.88 and .47 respectively.
- Edgeworthstown experienced the most significant change in relative HP index score between 2006 and 2011, with a score of -17.35.
- As per absolute HP deprivation scores, of the 54 no. ED's in County Longford, 44 no. ED's are categorised as 'marginally below average', while a further 4 ED's are 'disadvantaged'.
- Only 4 no. ED's are categorised as marginally above average.
- As per the 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index the more affluent areas are situated in the wider environs of Longford Town and the northwest of the County.
- The east of the County in general is determined to be below the national average.
- The most disadvantaged ED's in the County are Longford No. 1 Urban ED, Foxhall and Lislea, all of which are identified as 'disadvantaged'.

Disposable Income

- In 2011 the disposable income of Longford residents was €17,158 per capita, compared to the State average of €19,055 and Dublin figure at €21,329 (CSO, 2011).

- Longford possesses the third lowest disposable income level of all Leinster counties, marginally ahead of Kilkenny and Offaly; however it is similar to that of surrounding counties, such as Leitrim and Cavan.

Education

Primary Schools

- There are 38 no. mainstream primary schools and 1 no. 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.
- There are currently 5,205 children enrolled in the County's primary schools.

Post-Primary Schools

- 68% of residents in the County have completed up to secondary level education
- There are 9 no. post-primary schools in the County; 5 of which are inter-denominational, and none of which are in the Irish medium.
- The 9 no. post-primary schools have a total of 3,723 students enrolled, with the largest Moyne Community School (605 students).
- 9 no. primary schools and 4 no. post-primary schools are part of the DEIS programme (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) i.e. the Department of Education and Skills policy instrument which supports the educational needs of children from disadvantaged communities.
- There are a significant proportion of international students in schools within the County; 998 students in primary schools and 570 in post-primary schools, comprising approximately 18% and 15% of the total student population respectively.

Third Level

- 29% of residents in the County have completed third level education or higher.
- Third level education levels are highest in the environs of the main County settlements and in those areas along the main transport corridors.
- There is no third level education institute in County Longford, with Athlone Institute of Technology the closest. However further education and training courses are available in the County, through the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, which provide training from literacy and numeracy skills to QQI certified courses.
- Of the County Longford residents out-commuting for employment, a higher proportion of those possess a third level or higher educational attainment, compared to those living and working in the County. This suggests more skilled persons leaving the County for employment.

Employment Profile

- The largest proportion of workers from the County are employed in the *Commerce and Trade* industrial group, followed by *Professional Services*.
- The highest proportion of people employed in '*Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation & Storage, Accommodation and Food Service*' is in Longford Town.

- The highest proportion employed in *'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing'* is in the northeast and southwest of the County.
- Only 24% of residents working in the County have a third level qualification.
- 50% of those working in *'Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities'* have a third level qualification.
- 19-20% of people working in *'Manufacturing, mining and quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water supply and Waste Management by Education'* and *'Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities'* have a third level qualification.
- 42% of those who commute in or out of the county have a third level qualification.
- Approximately 40% of those commuting to either Dublin or Leitrim are employed in *'Information and Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, administration and support service'* activities, in contrast to other nearby counties where less than 15% are employed in this sector and *'Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities'* is the main sector of employment.
- Journey times to work, school or college generally tend to be low; 41% taking less than 15 minutes and 31% taking 15-30 minutes. 46% of those working outside the county have a commute of 30-60 minutes.

Unemployment

- County Longford experienced significant high levels of unemployment after the economic collapse with an unemployment rate of 24.7%, compared to 19% nationally (CSO, 2011).
- Unemployment levels varied considerably throughout the County with some settlements experiencing far higher levels of unemployment than others. Longford Town and Edgeworthstown had the highest levels of unemployment by settlement at 35% and 30.7% respectively, significantly above the County and State averages.
- While in general there are more males on the County Longford Live Register than females; there is an increase in the proportion of females in the under 25 year age group of persons on the Live Register, compared to over 25 years of age.
- The number of people on the Live Register in the County has recently declined and is now at 4,289 persons (May 2015), of which 2,602 (61%) are male and 1,687 (39%) are female. 13.8% of these are under 25 years, which is in line with proportions in surrounding counties and similar to the national average (13.6%).
- As of May 2015, the largest group on the live register are those from the construction and craft related sectors. The largest figures from occupations last held are *'Construction, woodwork and metal and related industries'* (770 people), *'General operatives'* (590 people), and *'Block layer, bricklayer, builder, building contractor, dry liner, ganger, glazier, mason, painter (construction), plaster, stonemason, tiller'* (410 people). This shows the large amount of unemployment related to the decline in the construction industry.
- The highest ranking occupation group on the Live Register was *'no occupation'* (970 persons). This indicates the need for up-skilling and further education of this cohort.

Housing

- The main tenures are *Owner Occupied No Mortgage*, and *Owner Occupied with Mortgage*, which together account for two thirds of all households in County Longford. This is similar to other counties in the region.
- 475 no. households in the County received rent supplement in 2014, while there was 176 no. Rental Accommodation Scheme tenancies at the end of April 2015.
- Drawing upon the revised population forecasts in the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010–2022*, the population of Longford is expected to increase by approximately 5,600 people over the period 2011-2022. This population increase will require approximately 215 no. additional houses per annum.
- The Longford County Council *Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability* (May 2015) identified 65 no. persons in need of social housing support that have some form of intellectual, physical, sensory or mental health disability. A need has been identified for social housing for people with disabilities and elderly people, so more independent and supervised housing for these groups will be required.
- In April 2015, the government announced housing targets for each local authority area up to 2017, which is part of the DECLGs 'Social Housing Strategy 2020'. Longford County Council has a target figure of 210 housing units to be built between 2015-2017. It is estimated that this will reduce the housing list numbers by 35%.
- Longford County Council housing department estimate that approximately 400 social housing units will have to be delivered by 2021.
- There are approximately 176 Traveller children aged between 10 – 19 in Longford; 93 of whom will be aged 18 and over by 2018. As such, suitable future Traveller accommodation needs will also have to be considered.
- There are approximately 6 no. Approved Housing Boards providing residential housing support services in County Longford, in addition to Longford County Council.
- In the first 6 months of 2015, 35 persons have presented as homeless in the County.
- There are 2 no. homeless centres in the County, operated by the Society of St. Vincent De Paul; Bethany House provides emergency accommodation support to women and children (19 no. beds); St. Martha's Hostel provides emergency accommodation support to homeless men (11 no. beds).

Enterprise

- 27% of enterprises in County Longford are in the '*Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles*' category.
- There are 6 no. IDA supported multinationals in the County, encompassing sectors such as Engineering, BioPharma and Medical Devices, and Internet and Computer Technology industries. Combined these employ approximately 650 people.
- The largest 24 no. enterprises in the County employ approximately 2,500 people.
- State and semi-State organisations employ approximately 1,140 people.
- The health services employs approximately 1,000 people.
- Between 2008 and 2012, there was a 20% decline in the number of industries in the County. Directly from the economic collapse, the mining and quarrying (-400%), and construction (-70%) sectors were most severely impacted. However other sectors, such as information and communication, financial and insurance activities, and education experienced growth during that period.

- In 2014, there were 72 no. new start-up companies established in the County with 9 no. insolvencies recorded.
- The number of start-ups in 2015 is 35 (from Jan to June 2015), with 2 no. insolvencies recorded.
- In 2014, the most popular industry for corporate start-ups was the motor and hospitality sectors. Wholesale and retail and construction related sectors also feature prominently
- The Longford Local Enterprise (LEO) Office supports start-up and existing small businesses in the county to grow and increase their number of employees. Its support includes financial grants, training and mentoring. In 2014, €211,504 was provided in grants, significantly lower than the €352,000 provided in 2013.

Agriculture

- 2,601 farms in the county, covering 72,73ha.
- Farm income is estimated to be €16.9 million with direct payments worth €31 million.
- The value of agricultural output in the County amounts to €88.5million.
- 626 no. food and drink processing jobs are supported by the agricultural output of the County.

Crime

- County Longford has the third highest number of Gardaí per capita nationally.
- Crime has been increasing at a higher rate than many other counties in the region, with theft related crimes experiencing a particular increase, with a rise of 275%.
- Edgeworthstown and Granard both had a high change in deprivation between 2006 and 2011 and also experienced the highest levels of reported crimes in the County.
- Crime rates generally have decreased across all profiled settlements since 2012.

Retail

- Under the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022* and the *County Retail Strategy 2015-2021*, Longford Town is designated as a principal town.
- Longford town is the most important retail centre within the County and the retail offer is much greater than that available in other settlements across convenience, comparison and bulky goods. It is the location for the majority of the retail floor space within both the comparison and bulky goods retail categories.
- The *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022* has designated Granard and Edgeworthstown both as a 'key service town and service town, respectively. They have a concentration of cafes, restaurants and convenience retail in their centres, with some limited comparison and bulky retail on the periphery.
- Ballymahon and Lanesborough are designated *local service towns* and provide a range of convenience retail for their communities as well as a limited amount of comparison retail on a smaller scale.
- Longford appears to provide the necessary retail services required by the community.

Tourism

- Tourism forms an essential part of the economy; however figures are significantly lower compared to other counties both regionally and nationally.
- Longford only attracted 3% of visitors to the Midlands East tourism region.
- In 2010, 45% of all overseas visitors to the County were visiting friends or family, with 33% holidaying.
- Substantially more tourists from Britain visit friends and family in the region, while visitors from other overseas markets are more likely to be on holiday and therefore more likely to generate revenue in the locality.
- The Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre in Keenagh was the most visited tourist attraction (4,209 visitors in 2013).
- County Longford has 2 no. hotels (1 no. 3*Star and 1 no. 2*Star), with a total capacity of 146 beds. The County has 1 no. guesthouse (11 beds) and 3 no. Bed & Breakfasts establishments (39 beds).
- UK firm Center Parcs intend to submit a planning application on a 375 acre forest site for a major holiday resort complex near Ballymahon, which subject to planning permission, is to be operational by Summer 2019. The development is expected to have a capacity for approximately 2,500 guests and employ potentially up to 1,000 people. It also has the potential to create additional indirect employment in the locality in the agriculture, food, catering and retail sectors. When operational, it is estimated that the new holiday village will add approximately €32 million to the Irish GDP per annum.

Broadband and Internet

- Census 2011 identified 51.3% of households with broadband connectivity compared with the State average of 63.8%. This is one of the lowest rates nationally; however nearby counties also have low levels of broadband connectivity; Leitrim (51.5%) and Roscommon (53.4%).
- Edgeworthstown (60.7%) has the highest rate of household broadband connectivity of the main settlements, followed by Longford (56.2%).
- While the main settlements have a higher rate of access to high speed broadband services, in more rural areas, the low population density poses a problem for suppliers.
- As such broadband availability throughout the County is a key aspect of its future enterprise and employment development potential. Failure to provide quality access will inhibit commercial development and discourage potential investors from establishing or expanding current operations within the County.

Analysis by County Settlement

Longford Town

- Population of 9,601 persons in 2011; a 6% increase on 2006, making it the largest town in the county by a significant margin.
- A higher than average young population, with 20.6% aged 12 and under.
- The proportion of people aged 25-34 years is higher than the national average.
- 29.2% of households in the area are single person households.
- 26.3% of the population are non-Irish nationals, with Polish accounting for 9.8%.

- 6.4% of the town cannot speak English well or at all.
- Deprivation in the town varies depending on proximity to the town centre; with the centre of the town classified as very disadvantaged, the surrounding areas disadvantaged, the outskirts marginally below average, and the surrounding rural area marginally above average.
- 45% of the town's population has attained up to a 2nd level qualification, while 45% has attained a 3rd level qualification or higher.
- 3 no. small areas which were classified as very disadvantaged had a high proportion of people with primary education only.
- Between 2006 and 2011, the level of unemployment in the town increased significantly from 18% to 35%, giving it the largest proportion of unemployment for any of the main towns in the County.
- 33% of all residents working are employed in the non-manual Socio-Economic Grouping (SEG), which is significantly above all other SEG's.
- Similarly of all persons working in Longford Town (residents and in-commuters), 35% are working in non-manual SEGs.
- 35% of all residents are employed in the '*Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage*' activities and 20% in '*Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities*', proving the highest employment sectors in the town.
- 68% of residents work within the town, while 4% commute to Edgeworthstown, the second highest place of employment for Longford Town residents.
- Of those working in the town, residents from the surrounding area account for 58% of the workforce, while the remainder commute from locations across the county and other regional settlements such as Mullingar, Athlone, Carrick-on-Shannon and Tullamore.

Edgeworthstown

- Population of 2,008 persons in 2011.
- 26% of the population are under 15 years, which far exceeds the national average.
- Nearly half the population were aged between 15 and 40 years.
- The proportion of people aged 45-74 years is significantly lower than the national average.
- 33% of the population were non-Irish nationals, with 12.7% consisting of Latvian and Polish nationals.
- 7.8% of people stated their ability to speak English was poor.
- Edgeworthstown has an unemployment rate of 32.2%, the second highest of the main towns in the county.
- The majority of the town is classified as marginally below average and disadvantaged, with one area of the town classified as extremely disadvantaged. This area has a level of unemployment twice the county average, and a high proportion of people with disabilities.
- Edgeworthstown has up to a secondary level educational attainment of 49%, while the proportion of persons with third level or higher is 41%.
- 36% of the population are employed in the semi-skilled socio-economic group, which is in contrast to other towns in the county, where the non-manual group is the largest.

- The largest proportion of those employed are in '*Manufacturing, Mining and Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water supply and Waste Management*' (37%), followed by '*Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities*' (24%).
- 52% of Edgeworthstown residents are employed within the town, with over half of these people categorised as semi-skilled.
- 8% are employed in Longford, 3% in Glenlough, with the remainder varied.
- 60% of those working in the town are resident there, while 15% commute from Longford and 4% commute from Mullingar.

Granard

- Population of 1,317 persons in 2011; an increase of 6% since 2006.
- A large population in the 25-34 age cohort; approximately 5% higher than the County average.
- Significant low population in the 35-49 age cohort in comparison to the state average.
- 26% of the population are non-Irish nationals; the lowest proportion of the settlements analysed, but significantly higher than the state average of 12%.
- The highest proportion of non-Irish nationals comprised of Polish nationals making up 14% of the population with 149 no. persons.
- 24% (252 persons) of the population were identified as speaking a language other than Irish or English at home, while 9% have either *poor* or *no* English language skills.
- The unemployment rate was 27.9%; 3.2% above the county average and almost 9% above the State average.
- Affluence and deprivation vary, with the town centre classified as very disadvantaged and the surrounding land classified as marginally below average.
- One small area in the town has a very high proportion of disabled people (21.2%).
- 44% of people in the town have attained up to a 2nd level qualification, while 43% have attained a 3rd level qualification.
- The '*Manufacturing, Mining and Quarrying, Electricity and Gas*' industrial grouping accounts for 40% of the workforce, while the *Wholesale, Retail, Trade, Transportation and Storage* sector accounts for 20%.
- The daytime working population of the area was 677 no. persons.
- 58% of residents commuting to work are employed within Granard, with 5% employed in Longford Town.
- Granard's employee base is localised in the environs of its urban area, however, over 320 no. people in-commute for employment. This is nearly a 100% increase in the amount of persons working in the town, and significantly higher than other settlements.

Ballymahon

- 2011 population of 2,327; an increase of 23% since 2006.
- Has a younger population with 9.5% of people aged 0-4 and 13% aged 5-12 years.
- 11.8% of the population speak Irish on a daily basis
- 28% of the population are non-Irish nationals; significantly higher than the county average of 14.1%.

- Polish people make up 15.8% of the population.
- 9.5% of the town has poor English language skills.
- Unemployment rate of 30.7%; 11.7% above the State average.
- Affluence and deprivation varies across the town, with the town centre classified as very disadvantaged and disadvantaged, the surrounding lands classified as marginally above average to the west, and marginally below average to the east.
- 40% of the population have attained up to 2nd level education, while 45% have attained a 3rd level qualification.
- The highest number of people are employed in the *non-manual* socio-economic grouping (28%), followed by *manual skilled* (20%).
- The largest proportion of those employed are in 'Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities' (40%), while 39% are employed in the 'Manufacturing, Mining and Quarrying, Electricity, Gas' sectors.
- 60% of residents commuting to work are working in Ballymahon, while 16% are working in Athlone.
- Of those commuting into Ballymahon, the highest concentrations are from within Ballymahon itself, Athlone, Longford and Mullingar.

Lanesborough-Ballyleague

- 2011 population of 1,377; an increase of 19% since 2006.
- Older population with 18.7% aged 65 years or over; the oldest proportion of this age cohort of all settlements analysed.
- 17.3% of the population are in the 0-12 year old cohort.
- 29% of households are single person households.
- Number of children per family is 1.2; lower than the national average of 1.4.
- 16.8% of the population are non-Irish nationals; lower than other towns in the county.
- 4.8% of the population could not speak English well or at all.
- Unemployment rate of 21.3%; one of the lowest for any settlement in the county.
- Similar to other towns in the County, affluence and deprivation varies, with the town centre classified as *very disadvantaged* and surrounding land as *marginally above average*.
- Unemployment is higher in the town centre.
- 40% of the population have attained up to a 2nd level qualification; 35% have attained a 3rd level qualification.
- The largest SEG is '*non-manual*', which accounts for 29% of the population.
- 28% of the population are employed in 'Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities'; 21% in 'Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities' and 19% in 'Manufacturing, Mining and Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water supply and Waste Management'.
- Of residents commuting to work, 28% work in Lanesborough-Ballyleague while 27% work in Cloontuskert.
- Of people in-commuting, 27% are from the area, 21% from Cloontuskert and 17% from Longford Town.

3.2.2 Comparative Indicators between Longford and the State

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

Indicator	County Longford	State
Population Indicators		
Population	39,000	4,588,252
% Population Change 2006-2011	+13%	+8.2%
% of population living in a Rural Area	66.9%	38%
Age Dependency (pop. aged 0-15 years & 65 years plus as % of total pop.)	35.7%	33.1%
Births per 1,000 (2013)	15.7	15.0
Average age of mothers at first maternity (2013)	28.0	30.2
Health Indicators		
% of pop. that considers their health 'good' or 'very good'	86.4%	88.3%
% of population with a disability	13.9%	13%
Suicide Rate Total Figures (2014)	4	459
Suicide Rate Per 100,000 (2014)	10.1	10.0
Employment Indicators		
Total Population at work	13,871	1,807,360
Labour Force Participation Rate (CSO 2011)	61.5%	61.9%
Unemployment rate (CSO 2011)	24.7%	19%
Numbers on Live Register (July 2015)	4,487	363,628
Numbers on Live Register under 25 (July 2015)	646	50,316(13.8%)
Disposable Income Level (per capita)	€17,158	€19,055
Social Inclusion		
Lone Parent Rate	22.3%	21.6%
% Change in Lone Parent Rate 2006-2011	3.4%	1.3%
% Local Authority Housing 2011	13.8%	7.9%
% Change in Authority Housing Rented Accommodation 2006-2011	21.9%	6.5%
Total number of Irish Travellers	743	29,573
% of Resident population that are from the Traveller Community	1.9%	0.6%
Total Persons classified other than 'White Irish'/'White Irish Traveller' in Census 2011 (non Irish-national pop.)	6,385 (16.5%)	673,791 (15%)
% of Non-nationals	14.1%	12.0%
Largest Minority Group	Polish	Polish
% of Polish Population	4.2%	2.7%
Proportion of Population aged 15+ with 3 rd level education	16.7%	24.3%
Absolute HP Index Score 2006	-4.93	-.23
Absolute HP Index Score 2011	-12.12	-6.78
Change in Absolute HP Index Score 2006-2011	-7.19	-6.55
Change in Relative HP Index Score 2006-2011	-.91	-.47
% pop. providing regular unpaid personal help to a friend/family member with long-term illness/health problem/disability	4.3%	4.0%

Language Skills

% Population able to speak Irish	59%	41%
% Population who speak Irish daily outside of the education system	1.5%	2.1%
% that speak a language other than Irish or English at home	12.5%	11.2%
% of Persons who stated that they spoke a language other than Irish or English at home and also stated they were unable to speak English well or at all	26.7%	17.4%

Religion

Catholic	87.9%	84.1%
Another Religion	8.0%	8.3%
No Religion	2.7%	5.8%

Household Indicators

% of households with at least one motor car	82.5%	82.4%
% of households with two or more cars	38.8%	41.8%
% of people aged 15 and over who travel to work/ school in ½ hour or less	69.5%	55.9%
Vacancy in Housing ratio	23.2%	14.5%
% of households living in a house (detached/Semi-D/Terrace)	94.2%	86%
% of households living in a flat/apartment	3.7%	10.7%
% of households with a PC	65.2%	72.7%
% of households with a broadband connection	51.3%	63.8%

3.2.3 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis of the findings of the Socio-Economic Baseline Study is provided below. This provides guidance as to the key areas where the LECP should focus and the additional services and facilities which may be required.

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong population growth between 2002 – 2011 (higher than national average) • Sixth highest birth rate nationally in 2013 • Significant population growth in inter-regional settlement towns. • Higher than state average youth pop. (0 – 14 years) which will be of working age in the future. • Cultural diversity in County with above national average proportion of non-Irish nationals • High percentage of person with good and fair health (Census 2011) • Annual Live Register figures March 2014 – 2015 show decrease in under 25 years unemployment figures • Overall increase in employment in Longford • High inter-regional dependence and migration of workers • High number of workers employed as Higher Professionals • 42% of persons commuting into Longford have 3rd level education • Less persons receiving rent supplement than surrounding counties • More social housing schemes than neighbouring counties • Decrease in overall crime incidents 2013 • Diverse set of community services • Good access to northwest, west and east of Country via main national road transportation network • High usage of public libraries • High quality environment including unique flora and fauna composition, including 3 no. designated Special Protection Areas (SPA); 6 no. Special Areas of Conservation (SCA); and 6 no. Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of unemployment compared to State average • High number of DEIS schools per 1,000 population of school going age • Lower than the average national rate of 12.9 childcare facilities for 0 - 4 year olds • Higher level of persons with higher education qualifications out-commuting from the county compared to persons living and working in the County • Interregional employment brain drain • Decrease in total enterprise grant expenditure in 2014, 33% decrease in grant support for micro enterprise funding 2014. • 20% decrease in the number of industries operating in Longford between 2008 – 2012 • Requirement for additional funding to support social housing requirements • Inter-annual 2013-2014 increase in crime rates in the County in theft and robbery • Underdeveloped and under promoted tourism potential • High proportion of non-Irish nationals with poor English language skills in some County settlements, which has the potential to inhibit social inclusiveness • Low number of large multinational companies based in the County • Underdeveloped rural transportation and connection linkages • Retail vacancy rates in settlement towns mirrors national averages outside of eastern region • Number of vacant houses in some settlements • Presence of unfinished and derelict residential developments • Failure to utilise natural resources for development of renewable energy • Poor ICT infrastructure in low density areas of the County and smaller towns/villages will inhibit social and economic development

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-Regional dependency of midland counties and settlements as shown in POWSCAR analysis should promote regional development in the context of inter-county industrial conglomeration • The geographically central location of Longford with good accessibility by road, rail and bus is a positive in terms of future enterprise development • Strengthen the economic role of Longford Town in the region • Higher than average youth population • Potential to promote return-to-education schemes for unemployed persons (e.g. construction workers) • The culturally diverse population should be promoted both at a micro and macro level • Potential to promote bottom-up, as opposed to traditional approaches to regional development • Harness and promote natural and cultural heritage • Development of greenway projects including Royal Canal walking and cycling route • Cultural inclusiveness and diversity • Potential to develop FDI opportunities • Develop broadband infrastructure throughout the County to promote future economic growth • Improvement of road networks • Agri-business employment and investment opportunities • Harness natural resources for renewable energies • Potential of renewable energy sector for the development of the rural economy • Tourism potential with proximity to the Shannon waterway and the Royal canal traversing the County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underinvestment in enterprise growth • Insufficient investment in target disadvantaged youth and youth population will have implications for the future • Insufficient support and investment in childcare services • Remaining unfinished and derelict estates could have detrimental social and environmental consequences • Retail sector in larger regional settlements attracting spending outside of County Longford • Weak broadband infrastructure in some parts of the County may threaten capacity into the future and inhibit economic growth • Failure to address high crime rates will have adverse implications on social and economic development • Lack of capital funding to support social housing needs of County • Failure to acknowledge cultural diversity may have social implications • High rate of unemployed females in some Small Areas identified as disadvantaged • Environmental pollution may threaten the tourism sector • Management of farm waste

4.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Based on an analysis of the aforementioned evidence-base, the Socio-Economic Statement contains the Vision and the Integrated High Level Goals for the overall Local Economic and Community Plan.

4.1 Policy Context of Vision and High Level Goals

The aim of the High Level Goals is to represent the broad outcomes to be achieved by the LECP within the overarching purpose stated in the *'Action Programme for Effective Local Government- Putting People First'* (2012), of promoting well being and quality of life.

Both the economic and community elements of the LECP must also be cognisant of the 5 no. targets contained in EU 2020, and accordingly how these are embodied into the National Reform Programme. As such these have been taken into account in the development of the integrated high level goals (see figure 2).

Figure 2: EU 2020 and National Reform Programme Targets

Key Target	EU Target 2020	National Reform Programme
Employment	- 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed	- To raise to 69-71% the employment rate for those aged 20-64, including through greater participation of young people, older workers and low-skilled workers, and better integration of legal migrants.
R & D / Innovation	- 3% of EU GDP (public & combined) to be to be invested in Innovation	- To raise combined public and private investment levels to 2.5% of GNP (approximately 2.0% of GDP).
Education	- Reduce school drop-out rates below 10%. - At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds to complete third level education	- To reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%; - To increase the share of 30-34 year olds completing tertiary or equivalent education to at least 60%.
Poverty / Social Exclusion	- At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion	- To reduce the number experiencing consistent poverty to 2% or less; - To reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in combined poverty.
Climate Change / Energy	- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990 - 20% of energy to come from renewables - 20% increase in energy efficiency	- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the non-traded sector by 20% compared to 2005; - Increase the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 16%; - Move towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency.

4.2 Vision of the LECP and High Level Integrated Goals

Taking account of the aforementioned the overall Vision of the Longford LECP is to :-

‘support and encourage economic growth and regeneration, improve quality of life through collaborative and sustainable community and rural development, strengthen sense of place and provide equality of opportunity for all residents of County Longford’.

This is to be supported by the following integrated High Level Goals¹:-

- Increase the level and quality of employment and income across all sectors of society;
- Maximise economic activity, performance and pursue new growth opportunities;
- Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit, work and transact business;
- Improve educational attainment levels and support pathways to economic participation and opportunity;
- Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community;
- Improve prosperity, health/well-being and quality of life of the community;
- Improve the level and quality of community identity and solidarity, civic pride and participation;
- Ensure protection and enhancement of the environment;
- Utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

¹ *In terms of economic and community components, it was found that the county application of high level goals overlaps and as such they have been dealt with as integrated.*

Figure 3: Integrated High Level Goals



Vision:

'Support and encourage economic growth and regeneration, improve quality of life through collaborative and sustainable community and rural development, strengthen sense of place and provide equality of opportunity for all residents of County Longford'.

5.0 'MOVING FORWARD' – THE NEXT PHASE

Both the LCDC and the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC have adopted this Socio-Economic Statement, Vision and High Level Goals in accordance with the relevant Government Circular LG 1/2015. It is this Socio-Economic Statement and goals which is now the subject of public consultation for 4 weeks.

In the next phase of the process these high level integrated goals will be supplemented by objectives, and specific, time-bound and measurable actions, in which the economic and community elements will be categorised. Specific objectives and actions will be designed and appropriate benchmark measurements assigned under the respective economic and community streams (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Plan Evolution



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

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

Submissions must be received by **4pm on Wednesday, 11th November, 2015.**

Appendix 1

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

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

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

- Implementation of the community elements of the LECP.
- Revision of the plan at least every three years.
- Monitoring and evaluating of the plan as appropriate.
- Input into the economic element of the plan.

The members of Longford LCDC are as follows:-

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

Appendix 2 – Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

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

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

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

- Implementation of the economic elements of the LECP.
- Revision of the plan at least every three years.
- Monitoring and evaluating of the plan as appropriate.
- Input into the community element of the plan.

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

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