



# Longford County Council Annual Report 2024

**Prepared in accordance with Section 221 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended. Adopted by the elected members of Longford County Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, 9 April 2025.**









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# Message from the Cathaoirleach

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As Cathaoirleach of Longford County Council, I am delighted to present to you the Longford County Council's Annual Report 2024. This report gives us an opportunity to reflect on the progress and achievements made throughout the last year, as well as the challenges we have faced and overcome in serving County Longford.

A record budget of €69.7m for 2024 was adopted by the elected members, allowing us to meet the needs of County Longford. The Roads Programme for 2024 delivered projects and roads works to the value of €16,260,731. Across our service areas funding was secured, including €459,775 under CLÁR 2024 for 12 community projects, €200,000 under THRIVE towards the redevelopment of Connolly Barracks, and €328,000 to 14 community groups under the Community Climate Action Fund.

Climate change continues to be a growing concern with local implications. This year, our Climate Action team was set up and the new Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 was adopted by the Council in February. This plan outlines the actions we are committed to so that we can deliver transformative change and measurable climate action in our towns, villages and rural communities.

County Longford displayed its welcoming nature in hosting many notable events throughout the year. In May, Edgeworthstown hosted the National Famine Commemoration, the first state ceremony to be held in County Longford. Taoiseach Simon Harris TD officiated at the event, which included military honours and a wreath-laying ceremony in remembrance of all those who died during the Famine.



# Message from the Cathaoirleach

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We also welcomed Minister Heather Humphreys TD for the opening of Longford Skate Park in February and back again in December for the opening of the Cullyfad Walkway and phase two of the North Longford Rebel Trail. In May, Minister Jack Chambers TD opened three active travel projects: at Scoil Mhuire in Newtownforbes, in Ennybegs and on the N63 Ballinalee road in Longford Town.

Further notable events took place, including thousands lining the streets and filling Connolly Barracks for Longford Lights in February and the Dead of Night Festival in October. Students from across the county participated in the Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase and the Longford Post Primary Tech Championships, and the Community Safety and Wellbeing Expo showcased the many services of the Council and our community partners.

As Cathaoirleach, I would like to thank all Longford County Council employees for their continued hard work and dedication in serving the county and people of Longford. I want to acknowledge the cooperation and dedication of our Chief Executive, Paddy Mahon, and his senior management team. I extend thanks to the elected members for their contributions throughout the year. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the people of Longford, including our many local community and voluntary organisations, local businesses and all other stakeholders for their continued collaboration and engagement with our services.

– Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey



# Message from the Chief Executive

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As Chief Executive, I welcome you to this Longford County Council Annual Report 2024. This report reflects on the many and varied services delivered through the course of 2024. This report allows us to look back at our achievements and also look forward as we continue our work to make County Longford a better place to live, work, visit and do business.

2024 saw an increasingly challenging global picture, including the ongoing and new conflicts in Ukraine, Palestine and elsewhere, which has led to increased immigration into Ireland. This will no doubt increase into the future as climate change-related migration is expected. As part of the national effort to assist those coming to our country and county, the Longford Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) was established in 2024. Their work provides an integrated response and supports our new communities.

Housing also continues to be a critically important issue. In 2024, Longford County Council continued a major drive to reduce the vacancy rate within its housing stock, with the vacancy rate successfully reduced from 5.6% in 2022 to 2.65% in 2024. Strides have also been made in terms of energy retrofitting Council housing stock. However, challenges are ongoing with an increase in our homelessness services, particularly evident in 2024.

Regeneration and investment in our towns and villages continues to be important to the work of the Council. In 2024, the Town Centre First team was set up and introduced the Longford 2040: A Town Centre First Strategy. This ambitious plan sets out a pathway for the revival and revitalisation of Longford Town. Further Town Teams and plans are being developed for other areas of the county.

# Message from the Chief Executive

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After the Local Elections in June, we welcomed a new Council, with some fresh and some familiar faces. We look forward to the next five years of progress with our elected members. This work will be aligned to the new Corporate Plan 2024-2029, a strategic framework for action, which was adopted by the Council in November.

In 2024, Longford County Council was celebrated on the national stage. Winning the Regional (Midlands) Award and the Exceptional High Achiever Award at the Annual All-Ireland Occupational Safety Awards 2024 and the Public Sector award at the Health and Safety Excellence Awards. Longford County Council also became the first local authority in Ireland to be awarded an Amber Flag by Pieta House, a testament to the supportive and inclusive working environment which has been developed throughout the organisation.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey, and his predecessor Colm Murray, for their work across 2024. I want to thank all Longford County Council elected members for their support as we work together for a better Longford. I also thank my senior management team and all employees of Longford County Council. Their professionalism and dedication are second to none. I look forward into the new year knowing the people of Longford will be well served by Longford County Council, our elected members, management team and employees.

— Longford County Council Chief Executive Paddy Mahon



# 2024 in Pictures









# 2024 in Pictures









# Elected Members of Longford County Council

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## Ballymahon Municipal District



Cllr Mick Cahill



Cllr Mark Casey



Cllr Sean Mimmagh



Cllr Pat O'Toole



Cllr Paul Ross



Cllr Martin Skelly

## Granard Municipal District



Cllr Paraic Brady



Cllr. David Cassidy



Cllr Turlough McGovern



Cllr Padraig McNamara



Cllr Garry Murtagh

# Elected Members of Longford County Council

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## Longford Municipal District



Cllr Uruemu Adejinmi



Cllr Seamus Butler



Cllr Niall Gannon



Cllr Gerry Hagan



Cllr Kevin Hussey



Cllr Martin Monaghan



Cllr Peggy Nolan



# Ballymahon Municipal District

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**Meetings:** Seven meetings took place, including an Annual General Meeting and a General Municipal Allocation meeting.

**Cathaoirleach:** Councillor Pat O'Toole was elected Cathaoirleach, and Councillor Martin Skelly was elected Leas Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June.

**2024 Register of Electors:** 12,252 were registered to vote in the Ballymahon Electoral Area (Rolling Register).

€100,000 **General Municipal Grant Allocation**

€90,340 in funding awarded under the **Community Grant Support Scheme**

## Item Adopted by Members were:

- General Municipal Allocations 2024
- Municipal District Works Programme for 2024
- Community Grants 2024

For project updates, notices of motion discussed by elected members, items highlighted and discussed by members, estates and roads taken in charge, bye-laws adopted, and Ballymahon Municipal District road works programme 2024, **see Appendix 1 on page 212.**

# Granard Municipal District

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**Meetings:** Eight meetings took place, including an Annual General Meeting and a General Municipal Allocation meeting.

**Local Election, June 2024:** The following Elected Members were elected in the Local Elections: Councillor Paraic Brady, Councillor David Cassidy, Councillor Turlough McGovern, Councillor Padraig McNamara and Councillor Garry Murtagh.

**Cathaoirleach:** Councillor Garry Murtagh was elected Cathaoirleach, and Councillor Paraic Brady was elected Leas Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June 2024.

**General Municipal Grant Allocation:** €90,000 funding was allocated to community groups and organisations to support and deliver projects in the Municipal District.

## Presentations were given to the Elected Members on:

- Guidelines for setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland
- Local Age Friendly Healthy Homes Coordinator

## Items Adopted by Members were:

- Draft Municipal District Report for inclusion in Longford County Council 2024 Annual Report
- Schedule of Granard Municipal District Works
- Nomination for Cathaoirleach Awards
- Standing Orders of Granard Municipal District meetings
- Special Projects and Discretionary Fund 2024
- Community Grant Support Scheme 2024
- General Municipal Allocation 2025
- Proposed dates for 2025 MD meetings
- Nominations of Elected Members for the Biodiversity Working Group
- Proposed Civic Recognition event to honour Erin Ross and Fiona Gettings
- General Municipal Allocation 2025
- Restoration Improvement Programme (3 Years)

# Granard Municipal District

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- County Longford Road Traffic (Special Speed Limit) Rural Local Roads Supplementary Bye-Laws No 1 of 2024

For notices of motion discussed by elected members, Part VIIIs approved, estates taken in charge, items highlighted and discussed by members, estates and roads taken in charge, bye-laws adopted, and Granard Municipal District road works programme 2024, **see Appendix 2 on page 218.**



# Longford Municipal District

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**Meetings:** 10 meetings took place, including 1 Annual General Meeting and 9 committee meetings.

**Cathaoirleach:** Councillor Seamus Butler was elected Cathaoirleach, and Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi was elected Leas Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June.

**2022/2023 Register of Electors:** 13760 were registered to vote in the Longford Local Electoral Area.

€100,000 **General Municipal Grant Allocation**

€98,250.09 in funding awarded under the **Community Grant Support Scheme**

## **Other funding awarded:**

- Longford Town Centre First Plan was launched in May 2024.
- Successful funding application for THRIVE Strand 1 for €200,000 and consultants appointed for Connolly Barracks project.
- Successful funding application for €50,000 for Town and Village Renewal Scheme project development measures – the redesign of Garvey’s Yard and Annally Car Park area.
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023 Special Needs playground and parkland connection to Royal Canal Greenway Spur Longford Town for €379,170.

## **Works completed**

- Official opening of Longford Skate Park.
- Official lease signing of Michael Neary Peace Park.

# Longford Municipal District

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## Item Adopted by Members were:

- Community Grants support scheme for €95,119.42
- Schedule of Longford Municipal District Works.
- Multi Annual Restoration Improvement Programme.
- Draft Municipal District Report for inclusion in the Longford County Council 2023 Annual Report.
- Standing orders for Longford Municipal District.
- Multi Annual (3-Year) Restoration Improvement Programme.

## Presentations were given to the Elected Members on:

- Ian Lacey gave a detailed and insightful presentation on the Longford Purple Flag Night-time Economy.
- Newly appointed Local Age Friendly Healthy Homes Coordinator Caroline Doyle provided the Members with a brief overview of the Programme.
- Michael Keenan delivered a comprehensive presentation regarding Longford Tidy Towns.
- Lorraine O'Connor a detailed update and progress report on the THRIVE project.

For notices of motion discussed by elected members, items highlighted and discussed by members, estates and roads taken in charge, Part VIIIs approved, bye-laws adopted, and Longford Municipal District road works programme 2024, **see Appendix 3 on page 221.**



# Strategic Policy Committees

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Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) assist policy development and review and help the work of the Council. SPCs are made up of county councillors and sectoral representatives. Following the Local Elections and the election of a new Council, a new Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029 was formed, with the following SPCs in place since its adoption on Wednesday, 11 September 2024:

## Governance SPC

**Chairs:** PJ Reilly, Mick Cahill (Acting in July)

**Met:** Three times (January, April, and July)

### Discussions included:

- Longford County Council Digital Strategy
- Protected Disclosures
- Cyber Security update
- Data Protection Code

## Climate Action and Planning SPC

**Chair:** Gerry Hagan

**Met:** Two times (January and April)

### Discussions included:

- National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy
- Longford Town Local Transport Plan (LTP)
- County Longford Active Travel Strategy (ATS)
- Climate Plan
- Active Travel Complete Schemes
- Active Travel Pathfinder Scheme

# Strategic Policy Committees

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## Placemaking SPC

**Chairs:** Paul Ross

**Met:** One time (March)

**Discussions included:**

- Just Transition Fund and Fáilte Ireland funding
- Longford investment brochure

## Strategic Infrastructure

**Members:** Paraic Brady

**Met:** Two times (January and April)

**Discussions included:**

- Housing and Disability Steering Group Quarterly Report
- Road Safety Action Plan 2023 Annual Review
- Review of Traffic Ramp Policy
- Speed Review

## Social Development SPC

**Chairs:** Paul Ross

**Met:** One time (November)

**Discussions Included:**

- Overview of the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029
- Standing Orders
- Work Programme
- SPC Member Training



# Strategic Policy Committees

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## Physical Development SPC

**Members:** Turlough McGovern

**Met:** One time (November)

### Discussions Included:

- Overview of the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029
- Standing Orders
- Work Programme
- SPC Member Training

## Economic, Enterprise and Rural Development

**Members:** Garry Murtagh

**Met:** One time (November)

### Discussions Included:

- Overview of the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029
- Standing Orders
- Work Programme
- SPC Member Training

## Governance SPC

**Chair:** Seamus Butler

**Met:** One time (November)

### Discussions included:

- Overview of the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029
- Consideration of Draft Standing Orders
- Work Programme
- SPC Member Training







A night scene of a park with large illuminated sculptures of a swan and lotus flowers, with a building in the background. The scene is dimly lit, with the sculptures glowing in a warm, golden light. The background shows a multi-story building with several windows, some of which are lit. A string of small, warm-toned lights hangs across the middle ground. The overall atmosphere is serene and artistic.

# Community, Library and Cultural Services, Human Resources and Corporate

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# Community

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## Longford Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Longford Community Development Committee (LCDC) is a committee of Longford County Council. It brings together local authority elected members and officials, state agencies and people actively working with local development, community development, and economic, cultural and environmental organisations. Together, they implement a joined-up, cross-sectoral approach to local and community development programming.

Seven meetings were held in 2024. The committee's main tasks are to develop and implement the Local Economic and Community Plan for the county. The LCDC also coordinate, plan and oversee local and community development funding.

## Rural Development Programme (LEADER) 2023-2027

LEADER is a community-led approach to development delivering EU funding to rural businesses and communities through Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2023-2027.

County Longford was allocated €5.8m under the Programme to support sustainable development. The programme promotes social inclusion, poverty reduction, economic development and addressing the challenges posed by climate change in rural areas.

It does this through targeted supports that focus on themes and priorities identified in the Longford Local Development Strategy – a community-led action plan for Longford. Implementing Partners (IP) are responsible for delivering actions on behalf of the Local Action Group (LAG) and are a point of contact for enquiries and applications.

In Longford, Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the LAG (Local Action Group), [Longford Community Resources Clg](#) is the IP (Implementing Partner) and Longford County Council is the financial partner of the LEADER programme.

# Community

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A large number of Expressions of Interest have been received since the commencement of the new LEADER programme and funding of €28,291 was approved for the first two projects at the October 2024 Local Action Group (LAG) meeting.

## **Longford Local Economic and Community Plan**

[The Longford Local Economic and Community Plan \(LECP\)](#) sets out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of County Longford. Local Economic Community Plans (LECPs) are the main tool for delivering actions from national and regional strategies at the local level. The Local Economic Community Plan is designed to centralise actions and initiatives related to economic and community development in Longford into one strategy. The Local Economic Community Plan has been adopted and is available on [Longfordcoco.ie](http://Longfordcoco.ie) and in libraries throughout the County.

There is also an [Implementation Plan](#) for the Local Economic Community Plan. It details the actions planned for the two-year period from 2024 to 2025, a second implementation plan will be created for 2026-2027 and a third for 2028-2029. This flexible approach ensures alignment with the LECP's overall vision and goals, allowing for adjustments based on changing circumstances.

## **Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)**

The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) provides funding to tackle poverty and social inclusion at local level through engagement and partnerships between new arrivals, disadvantaged groups, individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

Following a request for tender in 2023, the Local Community Development Committee awarded Longford Community Resources Clg. (LCRL) the contract to implement the programme in County Longford for the period 2024-2028.



# Community

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In 2024, the overall SICAP budget allocated was €746,017, which includes a core SICAP budget of €643,044. There was a 'New Arrivals' allocation of €102,973.

Longford Community Resources Clg will use this funding for staffing and activities to work with community groups and individuals throughout County Longford to deliver the two goals of the programme which are:

- Goal 1: Contribute to Building more Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities and
- Goal 2: Empower Disadvantaged People to Improve the Quality of their Lives.

## **Community Development Programme**

The Community Development Programme is a pilot programme delivered by Longford Community Resources Clg. It is delivered under the guidance of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Local Community Development Committee. The aim of the programme is to develop an autonomous community development project managed and run by members of the Roma community. It aims to support them to engage directly with decision making structures and work in partnership with service providers.

In 2024, the Department of Rural and Community Development allocated an annual budget of €125,000. On the 3 November, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development Joe O'Brien TD announced the extension of the seven Community Development Pilot Programmes nationally, this included Longford Roma and New Communities project for 2025 and 2026.

## **Empowering Communities Programme**

The Empowering Communities Programme is a pilot programme targeted at smaller areas experiencing challenges. Longford Community Resources Clg deliver the programme in an area of Longford town under the guidance of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Local Community Development Committee.

# Community

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In early 2024, €81,000 was allocated to Longford Community Resources Clg. who employ two community workers to take a community development approach in supporting the local community.

## **Local Enhancement Programme 2024**

The 2024 Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) was launched by then Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys TD in May 2024. Funding of €6m was available. This included €1m in funding ring-fenced specifically to support women's groups.

The funding provided capital supports essential for the many small community groups and organisations, particularly those who serve disadvantaged areas in rural and urban areas. There was a particular focus on small capital works and improvements, and the purchase of equipment for community use. The funding could be used but not limited to:

- improved access for persons with a disability
- enhancing community participation for disadvantaged and marginalised groups
- improving energy efficiency of community facilities to reduce ongoing costs.

The scheme was administered by Longford Local Community Development Committee. In total, 66 projects received funding of €112,762.52 and a further 13 women's groups received €15,360.79.

## **Sláintecare Healthy Communities**

Funding of €75,000 was secured for the ongoing delivery of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities programme. Now in its third year, this programme aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the people living in Longford Town. It continued to develop projects such as the community houses initiative, targeted homework clubs and social exercises initiative.

# Community

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Sláintecare Healthy Communities works alongside Longford Community Safety Partnership to oversee the community houses based in Ardnacassa and MacEoin Park. Engagement with local communities is progressing well in both areas.

The consultation for a needs assessment for a Family Resource Centre in Longford Town has been completed and work is ongoing to support any future application that may be made.

A large part of the work of Sláintecare Healthy Communities is building relationships and trust with some of the more disadvantaged groups in our society and now three years into this programme these relationships are getting stronger.

Following the success of the initial three years of Sláintecare Healthy Communities the Department of Health has extended the programme for an additional five years.

## Healthy Longford

Healthy Ireland aims to create a country where everyone can enjoy good physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential. It also aims to create a county where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.

In 2024, funding of €75,000 was secured for the ongoing delivery of Healthy Longford through the Healthy Ireland Fund overseen by Pobal. Healthy Longford, through consultation, set the following outcomes for Healthy Ireland period 2023-2025:

- Increase in % of adults and children meeting physical activity guidelines
- Increase in individual's level of positive mental health as per Energy and Vitality Index



# Community

Under these outcomes, projects that received funding in 2024 were:

- Lus Na Gréine Family Resource Centre
- Bridgeways Family Resource Centre
- Longford Traveller Health Care Project of Longford Community ResourcesClg
- Longford Women's Link
- Longford Sports Partnership
- Longford Libraries
- Cuidiú Longford/Roscommon
- Longford Westmeath Down Syndrome Branch
- Aurora Hall Development Association
- Rath Mhuire and Dolmen Community Services
- EDI Centre Longford
- Drumlish/Ballinamuck Men's Shed
- Lough Ree Access for All
- Mental Health Longford

## Period Dignity Initiative



The Department of Health provided funding of €8,000 for the Period Dignity Initiative in 2024. This funding allowed Longford County Council to provide free period products and install dispensers in community facilities that now require them. Services who work with disadvantaged and vulnerable people were identified.

A programme of menstrual health workshops took place with four secondary schools and the Foróige

Leap Youth Justice Project. It is hoped in 2025 to roll out these workshops further linking with more youth projects and targeting young adolescent girls.

# Community

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## **We're Breastfeeding Friendly Longford and Longford Breastfeeding Project**

We're Breastfeeding Friendly Longford was launched in Edgeworthstown Library. It aims to promote businesses and other organisations which are breastfeeding friendly. There was great engagement at the launch event from parents, families, services who support communities and families, HSE representatives and Longford County Council. The launch took place in October during National Breastfeeding Week 2024, which had the theme of 'From Bump to Baby and Beyond'.

We're Breastfeeding Friendly Longford is an initiative of the Longford Breastfeeding Project. This is an interagency group made up of representatives from the following organisations: HSE, Cuidiú Longford/Roscommon, Longford County Council, Sláintecare Healthy Communities, Healthy Longford, Longford Libraries, Longford Community Resource Centre, TUS Midland Midwest, Longford County Childcare Committee, Longford Westmeath Child and Young Person Service Committee (CYPSC), Longford Westmeath Community Families, Longford Women's Link, Foróige Leap Youth Diversion Project, Bridgeways Family Resource Centre and Lus Na Gréine Family Resource Centre.



# Community

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The group aims to build awareness of the role of breastfeeding, along with other forms of feeding, to support parents. It aims to normalise breastfeeding and work with local businesses and organisations so that they can become better able to help breastfeeding mothers.

This work includes creating more comfortable environments and greater accessibility for mothers who need to breastfeed when out and about. This includes ongoing work with Longford Shopping Centre and all County Longford libraries. The group also focuses on education, linking in with communities across Longford to raise awareness of the support available for breastfeeding mothers.

## **Men's Health Fair**

Men's Health Fair took place on 11 June in Longford Athletics Centre. The event was run and facilitated by Healthy Longford and Sláintecare Healthy Communities, working with the local community food and nutrition worker.

The event involved speakers covering topics such as farming life, loneliness and isolation and the supports the IFA has for farmers. A pharmacist spoke about health concerns and by how accessing support early on most of these problems can be reversed. Citizen's Information Centre provided information on the services they have for members of the public and the Physical Activity for Health Officer spoke about the importance of aerobic, strength and mobility as we age.

There were information stands from a variety of agencies and topics and there was also a stop smoking clinic, blood pressure checks and free haircuts available for attendees.

## **Community Safety and Wellbeing Expo 2025**

Healthy Longford worked with the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme and the Longford Community Safety Partnership to host a Community Safety and Wellbeing Expo on 15 November. This event took place in St Mary's Edgeworthstown.



# Community

The event showcased the initiatives of the three programmes but also to highlight all of the services available to communities in Longford to help improve a sense of community safety, health, and wellbeing.

There were over 50 exhibitors including:

- Civil Defence
- Longford Fire Services
- An Garda Síochána
- Music Generation Longford
- Longford County Council Road Safety Team
- Comhairle na nÓg
- Longford Sports Partnership
- Longford MABS
- Bridgeways Family Resource Centre
- Merchants Quay Longford
- Longford Women's Link
- Longford Community Resource



# Community

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There were interactive taster sessions including try an instrument with Music Generation, tai chi, athletics and balance bikes with Longford Sports Partnership, CPR demonstration with Civil Defence and Longford Fire Service gave a demonstration on the day.

Dr Katriona O’Sullivan (author of bestseller Poor) was the keynote speaker on the day. She spoke about her struggles growing up in poverty and how she worked hard to overcome adversity. Katriona’s story was motivational and inspiring to the audience with her story of resilience. She provided a lessons learnt along her journey, and ideas on how we can all be a support to one another.

450 people attended the event, including transition year students from five secondary schools and three national schools in the county. The event was a great success with lots of learning and plans for it to take place again in 2025.

## CLÁR 2024

In October, the Department of Rural and Community Development announced that 12 projects in County Longford were approved for funding totalling €459,775 under Measure 1 of the 2024 CLÁR programme.

CLÁR is a targeted investment programme for designated rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects. The approved projects include a community walkway, an outdoor sensory space, the provision of a wheelchair accessible toilet block, and resurfacing community tennis and basketball courts.

Projects are delivered by sports clubs, schools and community groups, with Longford County Council also providing up to 5% funding. They will have a really positive impact on the lives of our citizens throughout County Longford.

# Community

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## Community Grant Support Scheme 2024

Longford County Council, through the Municipal Districts, is committed to working in partnership with the community to encourage, develop, support and sustain a wide range of activities and projects (for example., recreational, artistic, cultural, social and community support and business group initiatives) that:

- Make a positive contribution to County Longford
- Promote the development of strong local communities
- Improve the quality of life of our citizens

The Community Grant Support Scheme 2024 was reviewed and approved by the elected members and the grants awarded under the scheme supported activities and projects under the following headings:

- Active elderly
- Arts
- Community involvement
- Environment
- Events
- Heritage
- Inter-cultural
- Sport and recreation

In 2024, funding was awarded to various community groups under the Community Grant Support Scheme as follows:

- County-wide Members Fund €50,000
- Longford MD €90,076.75
- Granard MD €69,275
- Ballymahon MD €90,340

List of grants awarded is available on [Longfordcoco.ie](https://www.longfordcoco.ie).



# Community

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## Intercultural Grants

In 2024, funding of €20,000 was allocated for a variety of projects and initiatives to support new communities to actively engage and participate in community life in County Longford.

## Africa Day 2024

Africa Day celebrations are organised by Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with African embassies in Ireland and local authorities around the country. In recognition of this day, Longford County Council secured funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs on behalf of Longford African Network to organise events for Africa Day.

On Saturday, 25 May 2024, Longford Africans Network hosted an event at Longford Athletics Centre. In line with the 2024 theme, Fit for Africa: Showcasing the unique offerings of African countries, there were dance performances, music entertainment, craft displays and staple foods. Entertainment by local artists and musicians provided a day of celebrations for all.



## Longford Comhairle na nÓg

In 2024, Longford County Council secured a budget of €25,000 from the Department. Cllr Niall Gannon was appointed as chair of the Comhairle Steering Committee which held four meetings in 2024. Foróige is contracted to support the work of Comhairle by employing a coordinator based in the Attic House for two days a week.

# Community

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In 2024, members attended the Dáil na nÓg in the houses of the Oireachtas, where they were addressed by the then Ceann Comhairle Sean O’Féargail and Minister Mary Butler TD, with a surprise meeting with the Taoiseach in waiting at the time Simon Harris TD. Members deliberated and voted on aspects of mental health that directly affect young people. The key topic that went forward to be addressed was school stress. Comhairle members have an important role in ensuring the voices of young people are heard and represented on various local and national committees.

Comhairle hosted their Youth Conference in the Longford Arms Hotel on Thursday, 24 October. All nine secondary schools, youth services and family resource centres were in attendance. the event was opened by Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey.

Proceedings went on into the early afternoon with discussions on issues for young people, digital games and a photo booth which provided great entertainment on the day. Comhairle Chairperson Cllr Niall Gannon closed the proceedings by encouraging young people to have their say in matters in their county that affect them.

## Dormant Accounts Funding for LGBTI Groups

LGBTI+ Dormant Accounts Funding of €21,562.90 was successfully secured following an application submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Bridgeways Family Resource Centre and Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre ran many events and workshops throughout the year in support of the LGBTI+ community. These included talks, writing classes and arts and crafts workshops.



In late 2024, €17,000 was secured for Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre to continue a programme of work in 2025.

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## IPB Pride of Place awards 2024

Two Longford groups, the 1798 Ballinamuck Commemoration Committee and Clonbalt Woods Estate, were honoured at the prestigious Pride of Place Award in November at a gala ceremony in the Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan.

The awards, hosted by RTE's Brendan McArdle, took place in front of 400 community volunteers from across the island. They were delivered in partnership with Monaghan County Council.

Both groups received runners up awards which was a great achievement and once again demonstrates the huge community works taking place in County Longford.

Sponsored by IPB Insurance, the Pride of Place competition was initiated 22 years ago through a Co-operation Ireland programme. It acknowledges the invaluable work undertaken by volunteers and those involved in local community development. It has grown into the largest competition recognising community development achievements on the island of Ireland.



## Green Flag Award 2024/25

The Green Flag Award is the international quality benchmark for the public green spaces. The 2024 Green Flag Awards celebrate the recognition of Ireland's best parks and green spaces with Green Flags being awarded to 120 parks, gardens, greenways and wildlife sanctuaries around the country. The award acknowledges excellence in the management of those green spaces which are freely open to the public.



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The Albert Reynolds Peace Park was again awarded the Green Flag for the year 2024/25 as one of 120 public parks. The Albert Reynolds Peace Park is a beautifully landscaped park on the banks of the River Camlin situated in the heart of Longford town. It offers so much for families and children with an indoor swimming pool, gym, recreational hall, playground, outdoor gyms and an adventure trail.

The 1.9km walking trail and running track on tarmac paths is used by thousands of visitors each year. There are 16 outdoor gym machines with QR codes available to scan to give access to a video demonstration by a qualified tutor with instructions on how to use each machine along with Irish sign language and subtitles.

## Playgrounds

Longford County Council continued to maintain 26 playgrounds across the county. This includes the playground in Drumlish, which was identified as the place where refurbishment works would be carried out in 2024.

The playground was given a major overhaul and is the first playground in County Longford to be equipped with an accessible seesaw for children with disabilities. New equipment was installed in the playground and works included a senior slide, monkey bars, communication board, an interactive trail timer and a pedal roundabout.

This has greatly enhanced the experience for children visiting the playground and local families. More than €50,000 was spent on the refurbishment works with funding from Longford County Council and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

## Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces Byelaws

At the April 2024 meeting of Longford County Council, the members adopted the Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces Byelaws under Part 19 of the 2001 Local Government Act (as amended). The byelaws are intended to control, regulate, protect, and manage the operation and day to day use of parks, playgrounds,

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sports pitches, open spaces, multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and recreational playing grounds which are owned, controlled by or in the charge of Longford County Council, whether open or enclosed.

These Byelaws are in force to ensure that parks, open spaces and all recreational playing grounds and their facilities are used to the maximum extent, in safety and comfort and for the protection of parks, open spaces and recreational playing grounds which are provided as a public amenity and for respect and consideration for park users to ensure as much enjoyment as is possible of these amenities.

## National Play Day and Reopening of MacEoin Community Park

National Play Day on 16 July was extra special this year as we celebrated the reopening of MacEoin Community Park. After months of collaboration between Longford County Council, local residents, and our partnership, it was amazing to see the park come alive with families and children enjoying the day.



Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey officially reopened the park. Over 200 people turned out to mark the occasion. There was something for everyone, including sports and games, face painting, and even a sensory play area for inclusive fun. The reopening of the park follows the close work with residents over the past number of months.

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Mac Eoin Community Park recreational area benefits the many young families living in the greater Farnagh area. It has a multi-use games area (MUGA) which can be used for both soccer and basketball. There is also a grass soccer pitch. The Council hopes to build on this in 2025 with further upgrade works subject to the availability of funding.



## Longford Local Community Safety Partnership

Longford Community Safety Partnership held four plenary meetings and three working group meetings in 2024. Eight small public engagement sessions happened in Granard, Edgeworthstown, Longford Town (MacEoin Park, Ardnacassa, Longford Arms, Abbeylara, Clondra).

Martina Moloney stepped down from her role as Independent Chairperson in June 2024, in preparation for the national roll out of the scheme. Expressions of Interest were sought for a new chairperson in June with interviews held in early September. Following this process, Seamus Boyle was appointed by the Minister for Justice as Chairperson for a three-year period.



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Two members of staff, the Community Safety Coordinator and Administrator were appointed to the Partnership on a permanent basis in October 2024, as the LCSP moved out of pilot phase and the appointments have been hosted by Longford County Council.

Longford Community Safety Partnership was awarded funding of €217,000 in November from the Community Safety Fund 2024 for eight projects to be rolled out across 2025 and 2026.

A number of new members will be appointed to the Partnership in Q1 2025 as the new regulations are rolled out by the National Office for Community Safety.

## Kids Court

Kids Court is run in partnership with the Longford Community Policing Unit and Longford County Council. It has been a fantastic way to engage with primary school children across County Longford while tackling important issues like speeding and road safety.



Through Kids Court, drivers caught exceeding the 50 km/h limit are given a choice: accept a fine and penalty points or explain their actions to the students in our Kids Court. It's been incredible to watch the enthusiasm and insight that children bring to these sessions, making a real difference in their communities. So far, nine Kids Court sessions have been held, with outstanding participation from schools across the county.

The initiative was recognised nationally at the Road Safety Authority Leading Lights Awards Ceremony in December 2024. Longford Community Safety Partnership accepted the award at Dublin Castle alongside members of An Garda Síochána, Longford County Council, and students and teachers from St

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Matthew's Primary School, Ballymahon, and Sacred Heart Primary School, Granard. They represented all the amazing schools that have embraced this project and made it such a success.



## All-Ireland Community Safety Network Road Safety Event

Longford Community Safety Partnership hosted the second All-Ireland Community Safety Network event, which focused on how communities can work together to improve road safety. There were over 80 participants, including road safety officers, PCSP representatives from Northern Ireland, community groups, and support organizations.

The event featured inspiring presentations from the PSNI, An Garda Síochána, and the Road Safety Authority. Interactive sessions were also run with the Fire Service Northern Ireland, the Road Ahead Support Group, and showcased our own Kids Court initiative.

The highlight of the day was a hands-on workshop where participants worked together to brainstorm fresh ideas to make roads safer for pedestrians, schoolchildren, cyclists, and e-scooter users.





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## Dead of Night Festival 2024

The incredible Dead of Night Festival 2024 brought Longford Town to life over the October Bank Holiday Weekend.

The festivities kicked off with Samhain Town Family Fun Days on Saturday and Sunday at Connolly Barracks. Families had a blast picking pumpkins, exploring the haunted house, and enjoying activities like face painting, climbing walls, and archery. The entertainment tent was full of energy, with amazing performances from Kyle Riley, street performers, a snake charmer, and puppet shows.

The weekend wrapped up with the Fire and Shadows Procession on Monday night, and what a finale it was! Starting at Earl Street, a parade of mythical creatures and performers captivated the crowd as they made their way to Connolly Barracks. The night ended with a spectacular bonfire, a live DJ, and unforgettable performances by Spraoi Street Theatre and local artists.





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## County Longford Public Participation Network (PPN)

### Membership

County Longford Public Participation Network (PPN) registered 82 new member groups in 2024 bringing the total to 601. The membership consisted of 510 community and voluntary, 75 social inclusion and 16 environmental interest groups.

### Representation

A total of 42 voluntary PPN representatives participated in decision and policy-making committees both within and outside Longford County Council in 2024. The distribution of representatives across committees is as follows:

- Local Community Development Committee (5)
  - LEADER Evaluation (2), SICAP (2)
- Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs):
  - Place Making, to include Economic SPC (2)
  - Strategic Infrastructure SPC (3)
  - Climate Action and Planning SPC (3)
  - Good Governance SPC (2)
- Local Community Safety Partnership (9)
- County Longford Tourism (2)
- Longford Sports Partnership (4)
- Longford Volunteer Centre (1)
- County Longford Childcare Committee (1)
- County Longford Drug and Alcohol Forum (1)
- Longford Community Resources clg (2)
- Sláintecare Healthy Communities (2)
- Transport of Ireland (TFI) Local Link (1)

Additionally, Longford PPN had 17 disability representatives on their Disability Network and 12 PPN representatives on their Intercultural Forum in 2024.

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## **PPN Community Well-being Vision Statement Revisions**

In March 2024, Longford PPN groups reviewed their Community Wellbeing Vision Statements for each municipal district (MD). High levels of engagement and attendance were noted. Each MD opted to use the revised visions as the foundation for their Local Election Mandates 2024. Dr Harriet Emerson, alongside the PPN Secretariat and staff, supported members in this process.

## **PPN Local Elections Mandates 2024**

Mandates developed for each MD were circulated to all election candidates. Members involved in the process engaged candidates, requesting their commitment to working with Longford PPN to implement these mandates.

## **Submissions**

Longford PPN contributed submissions to:

- Longford County Councils Corporate Plan 2024-2029
- Longford County Councils Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029
- Longford County Councils Customer Service Charter 2024-2029
- Department of Rural and Community Development Pre-Budget Submission

## **Strategic Policy Committees**

In October 2024, Longford PPN conducted elections and ratified 9 representatives to Longford County Council's four Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs).

## **Leinster House**

31 PPNs were invited to Leinster House by then-Senator Micheál Carrigy. Longford PPN Coordinator Siobhán Cronogue, alongside Offaly PPN, presented on the benefits and challenges faced by PPNs, particularly concerning funding and

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staffing. Former TD Joe Flaherty raised the issue of PPN Coordinator grading in a parliamentary question, earning widespread appreciation for both politicians from PPN representatives nationwide.





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## Midlands Regional PPN Meeting

Longford PPN hosted the Midlands Regional PPN (MRPPN) meeting at the Longford Arms Hotel in March 2024. It was attended by representatives from Offaly, Laois, Kildare, Westmeath, and Meath. Siobhán Cronogue promoted the work of Longford PPN, Longford County Council, and the county itself. Longford PPN also participated in MRPPN meetings in Laois and Westmeath.

## 10 Year of PPNs

31 PPNs launched a social media campaign celebrating 10 years of PPNs and a decade of achievements. Longford County Council's management, elected members, and staff supported Longford PPN in marking this milestone.

## County Longford PPN Plenary Meetings

Well-attended successful County Longford PPN Plenary meeting were held in July and December 2024 with keynote speakers Longford County Council Director of Services Barbara Heslin and Public Participation Network Development Officer/Age Friendly Coordinator at Offaly County Council, Bridie Costello-Hynes.





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PPN Representatives Eileen Finan, Kathleen Dowd, Karen Reilly, Maria Keelty and Kerri Pendergast also spoke on their experiences as PPN Reps who sit on decision making boards and committees. These experiences range from involvement with the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), and boards and committees concerning safety, community employment, disability, integration and childcare.

During the December Plenary, Longford PPN celebrated its 10th anniversary, with PPN Secretariat Tess Murphy and Barbara Heslin receiving special recognition for their decade-long contributions. PPN Coordinator Siobhán Cronogue was also honoured for her dedication over the past ten years.

## **National Public Participation Network Conference**

Two Secretariat members and staff attended the National PPN Conference in Limerick in October 2024.





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## Laois County Council PPN Community Awards

PPN Coordinator Siobhán Cronogue was invited to adjudicate the Residents Association category of Laois County Council's Community and Voluntary Awards, in association with Laois PPN.

## Longford PPN Strategy Plan 2024-2029

Longford PPN Secretariat and staff, in collaboration with Social Justice Ireland, developed a the 5-year Longford PPN Strategy Plan 2024-2029. Implementation will take place in partnership with Longford County Council and other key agencies.

## Longford Town Family Resource Center Feasibility Study

Longford PPN partnered with Longford Community Safety Partnership, Healthy Ireland, and Sláintecare Healthy Communities to conduct public consultations on the necessity of a Family Resource Centre in Longford Town.



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## **Funding**

County Longford PPN was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Longford County Council in 2024. The Memorandum of Understanding between Longford County Council and Longford PPN was signed in February 2024.

Annual reports and income and expenditure returns were submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development to facilitate funding allocations in two tranches.

This report highlights the achievements, engagement, and progress of County Longford PPN in 2024, reflecting its ongoing commitment to community representation and development.

## **Longford Sports Partnership**

Every day in communities across the country, Sport Ireland through its network of Local Sports Partnerships (LSP) helps people to get active and removes barriers to sport and physical activity. Working with trusted professionals and valued volunteers the Local Sports Partnership network engages communities across the country to deliver inclusive, impactful, and sustainable opportunities tailored to local needs, getting Ireland more physically active, involved in sport, and improving the mental and physical health of the nation.

2024 was an extremely active and productive year for Longford Sports Partnership. New developments included the creation of our County Outdoor Recreation Committee and work beginning on the development of a County Outdoor Recreation Plan for Longford.

As the year ended a new European Social Fund (ESF) and Sports Innovation Development Officer took up a new role which will target people with fewer opportunities and aim to address some of the barriers faced by these user groups through innovative design thinking strategies.

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Our Sports Inclusion and Disability Officer, Physical Activity for Health Officer, Outdoor Sports and Diversity Inclusion Officer and Administration staff all worked together to provide a suite of opportunities right across the whole life spectrum of participants in Longford.

During 2024 Longford Sport Partnership supported almost 200 sports and physical activity initiatives with over 25,000 participants engagements. Below is a selection of the participation programmes and activities Longford Sports Partnership offered during 2024.

## Community Programmes

A wide variety of community programmes, initiatives were held in 2024. Many of our regular programme and events proved popular again. These included the

- Zero to Tri Beginners Triathlon programme
- Water sports initiatives
- Longford Trail Run Series
- Longford Walking Series
- Bike Week events
- Cycle Right programmes

Many tailored physical activity and sports programmes with community groups, sports clubs, and schools.

## Zero to Tri Triathlon

This programme saw 28 beginner participants take part in three sessions of swim, bike and run, each week for 10 weeks leading up to a Try a Tri event where 60 participants took on the challenge of a beginner's triathlon in Coral Leisure Longford and Albert Reynolds Peace Park. A number of participants have gone on to join Longford Triathlon club.



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## Women on the Water

Throughout the summer months over 100 women experience the joy of paddling County Longford's lake and rivers as part of our popular women's kayaking programme.

## Schools Kayaking and Water Sports Taster Session

Primary and secondary schools right across County Longford participated in introductory kayaking programmes and water sports taster days. Secondary school participants on introductory kayaking programmes went on to complete Canoeing Ireland Level One and two kayaking proficiency assessments.

Hundreds of other secondary and primary school children and teenagers took part in water sports taster days at several locations throughout the county, including the Royal Canal, the River Shannon, Leebreen Lake and River Inny. Longford Sports Partnership also supported a number of beginners kayaking programmes with Inny Kayak Club and Abbeyshrule Canoe Club.



## Sports Hall Athletics

Sports Hall Athletics was again very popular in 2024. Primary schools participated in school-based taster sessions in the lead up to our exciting County Longford sports hall events days in March. Primary school children experience the benefit of run, jump, throw activities in what is a friendly and participation focused environment. Twenty-nine schools and 2,000 primary school children participated in the programme.

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## **Trail Run and Summer Walking Series**

The Longford Trail Run and Summer Walking Series held in conjunction with Longford Tourism proved extremely popular in 2024, with over 450 participants. The series sets out to encourage runners and walkers to use some of the wonderful walking trails in Longford.

Longford Tourism, Longford Slashers, Mullinalaghta and Forgney GAA clubs, Coillte, Centre Parks, Civil Defence, Longford County Council, An Garda Síochána and host club, Longford Athletics Club all worked with Longford Sports Partnership to ensure the series was a huge success.

## **Girls Get Active Day and Transition Year Programme**

The Girls Get Active Day programme in March saw almost 200 teenage girls participate in an exercise and wellness day in St Mary's Sports Hub. This was then followed by our Girls Get Active programme with transition year students in secondary school across Longford. Over the course of four weeks students experienced a range of exercise and fitness class options designed to improve confidence and encourage greater participation.

## **MenoWell**

MenoWell is our six-week online physical activity and health education programme for women in all stages of menopause. In Longford in 2024, 65 women participated in the programme.

Two 40-minute online exercise classes and one 40-minute 'MenoModule' health education workshop was held per week. The MenoModule health education workshops are delivered by experts every week focusing on different topics relating to the menopause journey!

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## Bike Week

Bike Week in Longford was filled with a variety of cycling events and workshops designed to promote great levels of bike usage and cycling for leisure and active travel. In 2024 Longford Sports Partnership on behalf of Longford County Council hosted employee, community, club, schools, and family cycles. Bike maintenance and safe cycling workshops were also held. Almost 1,200 people participated in Bike Week events.

## Cycle Right Programme

The Cycle Right programme delivered through Longford Sports Partnership provides safe cycling training to primary school children across County Longford. The programme takes place over eight weeks, leading up to a supervised safe road cycle where students were supported to put into practice safe cycling skills and knowledge gain over the previous seven weeks. In 2024, 10 primary schools participated in the Cycle Right Programme with 250 children benefiting

## Diversity Programmes



In County Longford, 2024 community initiatives continued to bring people together, reaching individuals from a wide array of backgrounds, including those facing social or economic disadvantage. This year, there were 1,309 participants across these programmes, creating opportunities for connection, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and supporting overall wellbeing. These efforts have strengthened community bonds and promoted inclusivity across the county.



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## **Roma Men's Soccer Programme**

This year, the Roma Men's Soccer Programme was launched. This 12-week soccer programme is specifically for the Roma community and engaged 30 men from Longford and Edgeworthstown.

The initiative offered an opportunity to improve physical health, foster camaraderie, and promote social inclusion through the universal appeal of soccer. Participants developed teamwork, discipline, and a stronger sense of belonging within their community.

## **Ukrainian Community Fitness**

In collaboration with Longford Community Resources Limited, we facilitated a fitness programme at Longford Fitness for twelve Ukrainian teenage refugees. Tailored workouts led by experienced trainers focused on both physical fitness and mental health, providing a safe and supportive space to foster resilience, empowerment, and well-being as participants adapted to their new surroundings.

## **Girls' Guide Kayaking**

Approximately 100 girls from Ardagh, Longford, North Longford Girl Guides, and Ardagh Brownies took part in kayaking sessions. The programme encouraged outdoor physical activity, teamwork, and an appreciation for nature, creating a fun and engaging experience for the participants.

## **Brazilian Teen Soccer Week**

Longford Sports Partnership ran an intensive week-long soccer programme for 15 Brazilian teenagers, promoting physical activity and cultural integration. The programme fostered teamwork and social connections while encouraging healthy habits among the participants.

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## **Beginners' Boxing Programme**

From 19 June to 14 August, 60 children participated in an eight-week boxing programme in partnership with the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA). The initiative focused on teaching discipline, enhancing fitness, and building self-confidence through structured boxing training, offering a positive outlet for physical and mental development.

## **Men's Multicultural Archery**

Between 23 September and 14 October, 15 multicultural men took part in archery classes in Edgeworthstown. The programme encouraged concentration, teamwork, and physical activity, providing a platform for participants to connect and share experiences in a supportive environment.

## **Women's Multicultural Yoga**

Over ten weeks, ten women from multicultural backgrounds joined a yoga programme aimed at improving both mental and physical wellbeing. The sessions created a calming space for relaxation, stress reduction, and self-care, fostering community connections among participants from diverse cultural backgrounds.

## **Traveller Girls' Boxing Programme**

In a four-week initiative, 10 Traveller girls at risk engaged in a boxing programme designed to enhance self-esteem, fitness, and personal safety. This structured activity provided a safe and empowering environment, offering participants a positive outlet for physical activity and peer interaction.

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## Physical Activity for Health Programme

In 2024, the suite of Physical Activity for Health Programmes has made significant strides in promoting health and well-being across diverse populations. These programmes include Tai Chi, yoga, Pilates, pulmonary rehabilitation, and the Prime Time of Life programme – all contributing to the overall health improvement and support for individuals with specific health needs.

The Moving for Better Balance programme has continued to deliver impactful outcomes in 2024, solidifying its reputation as a vital community-based initiative for enhancing balance, mobility, and overall well-being in older adults and adults with chronic conditions.

## Moving for Better Balance

Key Achievements in 2024 for the Moving for Better Balance programme included:

- Shortlisting for the National Age Friendly Alliance Award, emphasising its contribution to community health and wellbeing
- Expanded reach with the programme having over 100-120 participants in each of the five block of sessions across six community sites for eight weeks.
- Increased collaboration with local health services and libraries, helping to foster inclusive access to tailored exercise classes.
- There was a 90% satisfaction rate reported by programme participants.
- 85% of participants experienced improved balance and confidence, highlighting the programme's effectiveness in fall prevention.



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## **Tai Chi Thursdays**

Tai Chi Thursdays has a target group of older adults, individuals with chronic conditions, and those seeking stress reduction and balance improvement. The programme increased participation and engagement in local community centres. As a result of taking part, many participants reporting a reduction in fall incidents and improvements in overall confidence.

## **Yoga and Pilates Programmes**

Yoga and Pilates programmes has a target group of individuals looking to improve flexibility, strength, and posture, especially those recovering from injury or managing chronic conditions. In 2024, over 75% of participants reported improved flexibility, and 80% expressed increased mental clarity and stress relief. A strong focus on mindfulness has contributed to emotional wellbeing as well.

## **Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programme**

The Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programme had a target group of individuals with respiratory conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, or other lung diseases. As a result of the programme, participants have shown significant improvements in breathing control, reduced dyspnoea, and enhanced daily functioning. Feedback indicates greater self-management of chronic respiratory symptoms.

## **Prime Time of Life Programme**

The Prime Time for Life Programme has a target group of older adults looking to improve overall health and quality of life. It took place twice per week for 12 weeks with over 90% of participants report feeling more energised and empowered in daily life. The programme's focus on social connections has reduced feelings of isolation, contributing to mental health improvements. This programme has been a cornerstone of efforts to improve active aging in both older adults and adults with chronic conditions, focusing on long-term health benefits through consistent engagement and exercise.

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All of the above programmes work in synergy, with an integrated approach to ensure that participants have access to a diverse range of activities catering to different needs, from fall prevention (Moving for Better Balance and Tai Chi) to strength and mobility (Yoga and Pilates) to improving lung function with Pulmonary Rehab.

In terms of outreach and accessibility, efforts have been made to offer flexible delivery methods. These include in-person and digital formats, making the programmes more accessible to those with limited mobility or transportation issues.

When evaluating the impact of these programmes, there has been regular monitoring of participant progress, satisfaction, and feedback to fine-tune the programmes and ensure they meet evolving community needs.

Looking ahead for these programmes into 2025, there will be a focus on:

- Expanding the range of options such as Healthy Heart Longford, expanding the Prime Time of Life to more locations and improved digital delivery options, enabling remote participation for those unable to attend in person.
- Further integrating mental wellbeing components across all programmes, promoting holistic health.
- Building stronger connections with local healthcare providers to ensure better access to these services for individuals with chronic health conditions.

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These programmes collectively enhance overall physical and mental wellbeing, contributing to healthier communities, particularly for older adults and those with chronic conditions.

## **Sports Inclusion Disability Programmes 2024**

In 2024, the Longford Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO) engaged 1,465 children and adults with additional needs through a diverse range of inclusive sports programmes. These initiatives were delivered in collaboration with disability services, schools, local clubs, and public programmes. The programmes were supported by funding from HSE, Healthy Ireland, and Sport Ireland. Key highlights Included:

### **Inclusive Gymnastics Programme**

In partnership with Longford Gymnastics Club, Longford Sports Partnership introduced an inclusive and tailored gymnastics programme for adults with additional needs. It focused on promoting fitness, coordination, and enjoyment in a supportive and inclusive environment.

### **Inclusion Athletics for Children with Autism**

Working with Longford Athletics Centre, Longford Sports Partnership launched a sensory-friendly, adaptive athletics programme. This initiative enabled children with autism to engage in track and field activities at their own pace, fostering confidence and participation in athletics.

### **Inclusion Sports Days and Ability Friendly Cúl Camps**

Collaborating with Longford GAA, Longford Sports Partnership delivered inclusive sports days for primary schools with special education and autism classes. These events ensured every child could participate in sports. Additionally, the Ability Friendly Cúl Camp in August offered children with additional needs the chance to enjoy the GAA Summer Camp experience in an accommodating environment.



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## **Disability Services Boccia League and Tournament**

Five disability services participated in a Boccia League, with seventeen teams competing over an eight-week period. The league culminated in the Boccia Final Tournament, where eight teams vied for the title of Longford Sports Partnership Boccia Winners 2024. All participants were celebrated, receiving medals presented by Healthy Ireland Coordinator Laura McHugh. Boccia proved to be a highly accessible and enjoyable social sport for all involved.

## **Seasonal activities**

Throughout the year, a variety of seasonal activities were organised for children and teens with additional needs, these included: Inclusive teen kayaking, multi sports summer camps and the Halloween learn to cycle programmes for children and teens with additional needs.

## **Workshops and Training**

Workshops facilitated by Active Disability Ireland empowered local clubs and coaches to foster inclusivity. These included Disability Inclusion and Autism in Sport.

## **Programmes for Adults with Additional Needs**

Both local disability services and public programmes benefitted from a wide array of activities tailored for adults with additional needs, these included:

- Chair Exercise Programmes
- Inclusive Gym Programmes
- Zumba Programmes
- Inclusive Tai Chi
- Balance Bike Ability
- Archery
- Inclusive Handball Programmes
- Horse Riding
- Activator Walking Poles Programme

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- Inclusive Soccer
- Taster Sports Days
- Community Walking Leader Training Programme.



## **Governing Body (NGB) Sport in the Community**

Longford County Council support the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) to provide National Governing Body (NGB) community programmes in Longford, managed by Longford Local Sports Partnership.

The initiative is provided by each organisation through local development officers who plan and organise programmes and initiatives that focus on supporting clubs and coaches, increasing participation, and improving retention rates. Each

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development officer works with community sport clubs and local primary and secondary school and community groups. In 2024 schools and clubs throughout County Longford benefited from NGB Development Officer support.

## **Community Sports Hubs**

Longford Sports Partnership continue to support Community Sports Hubs in Drumlish, Edgeworthstown and Longford. Community Sports Hubs are managed independently by local committees with community sports facilities. Community Sports Hubs focus on increasing physical activity and sports participation rates at a local level. Particular attention is placed on participation rates amongst less frequent users.

In 2024, a wide range of activities and initiatives took place in County Longford hubs. These included schools' programmes, sports club programmes, community fitness programmes, older adult programmes, minority and inclusion programmes, coaching and leadership programmes.

## **Club Development and Volunteer Support Grant**

The Club Development and Volunteer Supports Grant supports not-for-profit organisations. In 2024, 58 organisations secured grants of €26,537 to support their structures, coaching, education, and target group initiatives. Organisations benefitting from this grant include many local GAA and football clubs, as well as many other sports clubs.

## **Longford Sports Star Awards 2024**

The 2024 Sports Star Awards, in association with Longford Leader were held on Saturday, 30 November in the Longford Arms Hotel. This was a brilliant event which recognised the achievements of Longford's high performing athletes and dedicated coaches' volunteers and officials.



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Overall Sports Person of the Year Award was presented to Darragh Green for his exceptional achievement of representing Ireland in swimming at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. Other category winners on the night included:

- Renowned Longford Town player and coach Zac Hackett was the Hall of Fame award recipient.
- Volunteer of the Year was presented to Karen Lennon, for her dedicated work with Longford Rugby Club.
- Team of the Year was won by the Longford Minor Football team that were crowned Leinster Champions in 2024.
- Junior Sports person of the Year was awarded to Joe Shannon for his outstanding performances in snooker.
- The Sports Ability Award was presented to Derek Rutherford for his outstanding achievement of representing Ireland in soccer at the world transplant games.



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In addition to the above the following sportspersons were awarded for the talent in their sport: Jake Bermingham for Kayaking, Andrew Fitzpatrick for Athletics Fiona Gettings for Athletics, Darragh Greene for swimming, Michaela Hand for soccer, Shane McGuigan, for rugby, Robin Og Murphy for athletics, Goodness Ogbonna for soccer, Grace Shannon for Gaelic Football and Robbie Smyth for Gaelic Football

## Longford Sports Bursary 2024

Longford County Council provide €10,000 to be awarded to some of Longford's outstanding sports people in 2024. These sports bursaries are awarded to help support local athletes that are performing at an elite international level and bringing positive recognition to Longford. This year's recipients were Ashley Weafer, Cian McPhilips, Darragh Greene, Jake Bermingham, Jakub Pasieczny, Joe Shannon, Nelvin Appiah and Yemi Talabi.

## Resourcing and Funding

Longford Local Sports Partnership secured €773,047 for sport and physical activity in 2024.

Sport Ireland	
Core Funding	€360,000
Dormant Accounts	€102,207
Physical Activity for Health	€86,000
Outdoor Recreation	€66,000
Capital Projects	
Outdoor Swimming	€28,000
Outdoor Sport	€56,250
Research and Consultation	
County Outdoor Recreation Plan	€28,000
Participation Research Project	€15,000
<b>Healthy Ireland</b>	<b>€31,590</b>



# Community

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A heartfelt thank you to the Longford Sports Partnership board, all partners, funders, and participants who made these programmes possible in 2024. With your support, Longford Sports Partnership are paving the way for a more active future in sports and physical activity.





# Corporate Services

## Customer Services

Customer Services responded to over 12,000 calls in 2024. In addition to the calls, there were also walk-in customers and over 1,000 customer emails sent to the dedicated customer services email. These emails were responded to through the Longford County Council Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

### Customer Services Charter

Longford County Council's revised Customer Services Charter was adopted by the Elected Members in October 2024. It contains the standards of service our citizens, customers and elected representatives can expect, and a clear description of the behaviour we expect from our customers in return. The Customer Service Charter provides an outline of response times for various method of contact with Longford County Council.

We continuously strive to ensure that customers obtain the highest standard of service. Our Charter contains feedback and complaint forms, which are available on Longfordcoco.ie and in Council offices to enable customers comment or make a complaint if they are not satisfied with the service.



### Protected Disclosures Act 2014

No protected disclosures were made to the Council under the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022. The Protected Disclosures Annual Reports are available on the Council website at Longfordcoco.ie.

# Corporate Services

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## Register of Electors

The rolling register that enables people to register to vote online at any time is in place since October 2022. Those aged 16 and 17 can pre-register online and will be automatically added to the Register when they turn 18.

Longford County Council processed approximately 6,500 applications received through [checktheregister.ie](https://checktheregister.ie) for both new registrations and the updating of existing electors over the course of 2024 and processed over 1,000 paper applications.



Longford County Council undertook varied publicity initiatives throughout the year. In March 2024, a communication campaign and letter were circulated to all electors who were affected by changes to polling stations, as a result of the most recent review to the Polling Scheme for County Longford.

In September, the Franchise team sent a third contact attempt letter to over 500 electors in County Longford who had previously returned

undelivered correspondence such as polling cards or letters in relation to their entry on the Register. Those electors who did not contact the department within the timeframe specified in the letter were removed from the Register.

A pop-up registration desk was facilitated by the Corporate team in Longford Post Office in October where members of the public could register to vote, update their details, or get information on the Register of Electors in County Longford. Following that, an information leaflet was circulated to every household in the county encouraging electors to check their entry on the Register of Electors and update their details. Local and social media campaigns ran at various stages throughout the year, in particular in the run up to the electoral events.

# Corporate Services

The Corporate Services team helped the Local Returning Officer and the European Returning Officer in the lead-up to the Family and Care Referendum in March, the Local and European elections in June and the General Election in November. This included preparing the register and postal votes in advance of polling days, ensuring all applications received in advance of the statutory deadlines were processed in advance of the electoral events and providing assistance to electors and presiding officers on Polling Day.

## Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2022

From 1 January to 31 December 2024 public bodies are required, under Section 10A of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, to meet targets relating to advertising placement and spend in the Irish language. Public bodies are also required to furnish a report on these activities to An Coimisinéir Teanga (due by the end of March 2024).

Longford County Council is required to place 20% of advertisements, including social media advertising, in the Irish Language or in English and Irish, and to allocate 5% of advertising spend to advertising in Irish language media outlets.

Total advertisements placed	3,414
Irish or bilingual advertisements placed	788
Percentage of advertisements in Irish or bilingual	23%
Percentage of advertising spend in Irish language media	5.3%

## Irish Language Officer

Cumann na nOifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge (COFG) is the Irish Language Development Officers Association. Longford County Council’s Irish Language Officer attended a meeting organised by COFG in Dublin in May. This year the guest speaker was the Welch Language commissioner who spoke about the implementation of Language Standards in Wales.



# Corporate Services

In 2024 Longford County Council's Irish language Officer also:

- Provided translations of signs and notices and other items and proofread materials for various sections of the Council.
- Organised a programme of events for Seachtain na Gaeilge.
- Supported three Irish language conversation groups which meet in Longford, Ballymahon and Lanesborough libraries.
- Selected Irish language materials for all six Longford Libraries.
- Acted as a direct point of contact for any correspondence in Irish from members of the public or Irish language organisations such as Foras na Gaeilge.

## Meetings Administration

2024 meetings	
Longford County Council	12
Ballymahon Municipal District (MD)	7
Ballymahon MD In Committee meetings	7
Granard MD	8
Granard MD In Committee meetings	5
Longford MD	10
Longford MD In Committee meetings	9
Finance	2
Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)	
Placemaking SPC	4
Governance SPC	4
Climate Action and Planning SPC	4
Strategic Infrastructure SPC	4
Corporate Policy Group	11
Protocol and Procedures Committee	3
Members of Oireachtas for the Longford-Westmeath constituency met with Longford County Council Cathaoirleach and Management Team	1

# Corporate Services

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Following the Local Election 2024, at the Longford County Council Annual Meeting on 21 June 2024 Councillor Mark Casey was elected Longford County Council Cathaoirleach and Councillor Peggy Nolan was elected Longford County Council Leas-Cathaoirleach.



Longford County Council meetings included presentations by Music Generation Longford.

## Civic Receptions

Civic receptions are held to honour and recognise achievement by communities. Three civic receptions held in 2024:

- Civic Reception in honour of Aughnaccliffe Community Group
- Civic Reception in honour of Erin Ross and Fiona Gettings
- Cathaoirleach Awards held on 22 May 2024



# Corporate Services

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## Communications

Throughout 2024, the Communications team continued to work with sections from across the Council to effectively promote the work of the organisation to our audiences, primarily County Longford citizens.

### Press Releases

Communications issued 95 press releases throughout 2024. Some of these headlines included:

- Longford County Council adopts new Corporate Plan 2024-2029
- €459,775 in CLÁR 2024 funding for 12 County Longford community projects
- 732 Longford businesses received €2,077,215 under the Increased Cost of Business grant scheme
- County Longford students take part in National Finals of the Student Enterprise Programme
- Launch of Longford 2024: A Town Centre First Strategy takes place
- Longford County Council is the first local authority to be awarded an Amber Flag by Pieta House
- McEoin Community Park recreational area reopens on National Play Day

### Press Release Protocol

The Press Release Protocol was approved by Management in 2024. This outlines the internal process for the issuing of press releases.

### Media queries

Communications processed 94 media queries in 2024.



# Corporate Services

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## Social Media

Throughout 2024, Longford County Council's corporate social media pages continued to grow. Follower count at the end of 2024 was as follows:

- Facebook: 7,726 (up 981)
- Twitter: 3,613 (up 96)
- Instagram: 2,164 (up 397)
- LinkedIn: 1,194 (up 348)
- TikTok: 546 (up 436)

The most engaged periods of activity on social media for the Council included:

- Longford Lights 2024: content seen over 190,000 times with over 13,000 positive reactions
- Local Elections: over 50 different social media posts, reaching people over 41K times
- Dead of Night 2024: content seen over 130,000 times with overwhelmingly positive engagement on posts

## Social Media Policy

The new Social Media Policy was approved by Management in 2024. This outlines how employees and others representing Longford County Council should use social media appropriately.

## Official Languages Act

In 2024, Longford County Council Communication section met its Official Languages Act obligations regarding advertising in the Irish language on the Council's corporate social media channels.

# Corporate Services

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## Website

In 2024, Longfordcoco.ie had 158,385 visits (up 30,974 from 2023) with 349,361 page views (up 131,303 from 2023).

The most popular sections were:

- Voting and Elections (57,344 page views)
- Planning (54,115 page views)
- Housing (38,041 page views)
- Careers (33,027 page views)
- News (20,71 page views)
- Roads (17,357 page views)
- Environment (17,059 page views)

## Events

Communications assisted with the coordination and promotion of many Council events which took place in 2024. These included the visit of Minister Heather Humphreys to open two community and regeneration projects, the visit of Minister Jack Chambers to open the Safe Routes to School and Active Travel schemes and the official opening of Moyne Latin School Heritage Centre.

Communications also supported other events happening across the Council by way of press releases, coordinating media interviews, social media communications and radio and newspaper advertising.

## Publications

Communications produces the monthly Chief Executive Report which detail the ongoing work of the different sections of Longford County Council.

Communications also helped in the publication of the Annual Report 2023 and the Service Delivery Plan 2024.

# Corporate Services

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## Freedom of Information and Access to Information on the Environment

In 2024, there were the following number of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) requests and internal reviews.

FOI requests	63
Internal review on FOI requests	2
AIE requests	13
Internal review on AIE requests	0

## Data Protection

Data Breaches	11
Data Agreements	12
Data Subject Access Requests	10
Data Protection Impact Assessments	9
Data Protection Queries	263

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) continues to sit on the National DPO Network and the Regional DPO Network. Longford County Council DPO is also a member of the National DPO Working Group that reviews National Data Agreements on behalf of all 32 Local Authorities.

During 2024, Longford County Council DPO presented to:

- Management Team
- Senior Officer Group
- Council Members
- Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Governance Committee
- Audit Committee.



# Corporate Services

## Guidance and Awareness Training

The following Data Protection guidance and awareness training was rolled out in 2024:

- Privacy Policy
- Privacy Notices in English and Irish
- Guidance on Processing Children's Personal Data
- Data Protection Newsletter
- Data Protection Induction Pack
- Data Protection signage for events
- Respect Staff Privacy signage



# Corporate Services

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## Data Protection Staff Survey

A Data Protection Staff Survey was conducted in 2024. The results showed that:

- 95% of respondents thought that the new Newsletter was a good format for delivering Data Protection Awareness.
- When asked 'Which format would you prefer the Data Protection team to use to deliver training and awareness?':
  - 38% said via Metacompliance videos
  - 33% said via quarterly newsletters
  - 24% said in person with the Data Protection Officer
- On a satisfaction scale of 1-5, the Data Protection training and awareness programme received a score of 4.81, indicating a clear interest among staff.

## Health and Safety

### Certification to ISO 45001:2018

In 2024, Longford County Council continued to maintain its certification to ISO 45001:2018 following a 2-day surveillance audit completed by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI).

All departments within the Council are included within the scope of the audit. The NSAI did not report any audit findings for 2024 and complemented the Council on the safety culture within the organisation.

This is a very important certification for Longford County Council and demonstrates the commitment to the management and continuous improvement of health and safety to make Longford County Council a safer place for all employees and the wider community.

# Corporate Services

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## **Regulatory Inspections**

There were six inspections carried out by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in 2024. Inspections took place at Longford Library, the Machinery Yard Depot, Áras an Chontae, Esker Depot, Ballymahon Library and Granard Library. Reports of inspection were issued for all locations. Action items were logged on Mirashare. Where possible actions were closed, however, due to funding and time required to plan and carry out the works some actions remain open into 2025. Progress on progression of closure is tracked at the safety monitoring consultative committee meetings.

Statutory inspections for lifting equipment, for example, chains, slings, tail lifts, are completed by Irish Engineering Services. Inspections such as harness inspection, weekly inspections of safety showers and eye wash stations and daily vehicle inspections are also carried out. Compliance with the above required inspections is monitored through the Safety Auditing programme.

## **Summary of Accident and Incidents Reports for 2024**

The reporting of accidents and incidents is an important element of the safety management system and is used as a tool for identifying areas for continuous improvement. In 2024, 46 accidents and incidents were reported.

The greatest number of incidents were reported in relation to Violence and Aggression, with 35 reported incidents. The Council reported three accidents and no Dangerous Occurrences to the Health and Safety Authority.

## **Safety Statement and Risk Assessments**

Longford County Council and Fire Services Safety Statement were updated and communicated to employees in 2024. In 2024, the Council's safety statement template was used by the Northwest Local Authority Safety Officers Group (LASOG) as the template for developing a regional safety statement template.



# Corporate Services

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## **Safety Inspections**

Longford County Council's Safety Inspection Program was carried out by each Directorate at fixed and mobile work locations with 143 safety inspections completed in 2024. These safety inspections are a useful tool for determining compliance with Health and Safety requirements.

## **Health and Safety Auditing**

Longford County Council continued auditing of the health and safety management system. In 2024, 11 days of internal auditing were completed. The audits are completed against the ISO 45001:2018 standard.

The National Standards Authority of Ireland carried out two days of auditing, for the re-certification of ISO 45001:2018.

In line with temporary traffic management (TTM) design guidance manuals the Council complete temporary traffic management audits and inspections. As well as using Council employees to complete TTM auditing and inspections, the Council also engaged an external TTM consultant who completed two days of TTM auditing within the Roads section.

## **Communication and Consultation**

The Council consults and communicates with employees using the following methods:

- Preparation of Risk Assessments and Standard Operating Procedures
- Health and Safety Inductions
- Monthly safety reports
- Safety representatives
- Steering Group
- Safety Monitoring Consultative Committee meetings
- Safety Management Committee meetings
- Management Team meetings

# Corporate Services

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## **Safety Seminars**

On 23 February, the Health and Safety section organised a seminar on Avoiding Dangers from Electricity and Climate Action. Speakers included ESB Public Safety Manager Michael Murry and Longford County Council Climate Action Officer Bernard Shea. Fifty outdoor employees attended this half-day seminar. This seminar highlighted the risks associated with the work we carry out in the vicinity of overhead lines and underground services.

## **Contractors**

Longford County Council continues to assess contractors that work on their behalf in accordance with the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations, 2013. In 2024, 44 contractors were assessed.

Every contractor completes a health and safety questionnaire. This is assessed by Longford County Council to determine their competency and compliance with health and safety requirements.

On 24 April, the Council invited our framework housing construction contractors who work on behalf of the Council to attend a health and safety briefing session. The agenda included information on the scope of works involved and responsibilities under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013. Twenty-two representative from housing contractors attended this event.

## **Health and Safety Awards 2024**

2024 was the tenth consecutive year the Council won awards at the annual National Irish Safety Organisation/Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISO/NISG) All Ireland Safety Awards.

The Council were awarded Regional (Midlands) Award and Exceptional High Achiever Award.

# Corporate Services

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The Council also won the Health and Safety Award for Public Sector category at the Health and Safety Excellence Awards. The Council was also finalists in the Health and Safety Excellence Grand Prix. This is the second consecutive year the Council won this award.

The awards highlight the Council commitment to continually improve our safety management system to the highest level. They are positive recognition of the hard work that all employees have put into the safety management system.



# Human Resources

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The Human Resources section operates in accordance with the Local Government People Strategy focusing on three priority areas:

- Workforce of the future
- Capacity and Capability
- Effective Management

This in turn supports the delivery of the objectives of the Corporate Plan.

The Human Resources delivered on work programmes in the following areas:

- Policy development
- Employment law and compliance
- Workforce planning and succession planning
- Recruitment and selection
- Learning and development
- Employee engagement
- Health and wellbeing
- Equality and diversity
- Contract management
- Attendance management
- Performance management and development
- Payroll and Pensions
- Statutory reporting and departmental returns
- Record and document management
- Employee assistance and support



# Human Resources

## Employee Appreciation

In December 2024, Longford County Council held its Annual Employee Appreciation Day thanking all employees for their continued service while focusing on equality and mental health. Employees were recognised for the following:

- A representative from Pieta attended to raise the Amber Flag in recognition of our commitment to the promotion of positive Mental Health in the Workplace.
- Employees who were members of The Amber Flag Committee were presented awards in honour of their participation of the Amber Flag initiative.
- Nikki Bradley was invited as a keynote speaker to share her inspiring journey and work as a disability advocate.
- Long Service Recognition Awards were presented for staff of 20- and 25-years' service.
- Employees who had completed third-level education as part of the Open Learning Scheme supporting lifelong learning were recognised.
- A Christmas get together of retired Longford County Council staff took place on 12 December 2024.



# Human Resources

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## Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection procedures are operated in a fair and transparent manner in line with good practice for recruitment and selection standard, employment legislation and relevant departmental circulars and guidelines.

The following is a summary of the recruitment programme for 2024:

Competitions advertised	56
Applications Received	1,276
Interview Days	69
Appointments	116
Promotions	29
Retirements	10
Resignations	28

## Learning and Development

Longford County Council enables continuous and lifelong learning. Organisational and personal development training under 44 different competencies was delivered during 2024, with 647 attendees. These competencies included skill development in areas such as leadership, management and supervisory, business, information technology, legislation and governance.

During 2024, training for 21 health and safety competencies was delivered with 347 attendees. Statutory health and safety training is required by law or deemed necessary through risk and/or organisational needs assessment. This is to ensure the Safety, Health and Welfare of employees and others who may be affected by Longford County Council's work activities.

As part of the external audit process of the Safety Management System, the National Standards Authority of Ireland recognised the health and wellbeing programme as a strength within the organisation.

# Human Resources

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## Open Learning Scheme

This year, 14 Longford County Council employees started their participated in the Open Learning Scheme for the 2024/2025 academic year. This scheme supports employees who wish to undertake studies in further education building capacity across the organisation. Graduates from the scheme are recognised for their personal contribution and engagement in the development of a culture of lifelong learning at Longford County Council.

## Employee Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy was developed in 2024 and embodies our unwavering commitment to enhancing the quality of life for every member of our community. At its core, this strategy is about creating an environment where all individuals can thrive, regardless of age, background, or circumstance.

The employee Health and Wellbeing programme is delivered under four pillars:

- Mental Wellbeing
- Physical Wellbeing
- Social Wellbeing
- Financial Wellbeing

In 2024, 32 programmes were designed and delivered through the Health and Wellbeing programme.

These included Couch to 5km running and walking challenge, preparing for retirement training, Marie Keating health screening and collaboration with Longford Sports Partnership for lunchtime fitness programmes, winter flu vaccinations.

It supported National No Smoking Day, National Day of Reading, Pride Month, Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Mental Health Awareness Month through information sessions and sharing of materials.



# Human Resources

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## Statutory Reporting and Departmental Returns

Statutory and Departmental Returns were submitted to the relevant Government departments on time during 2024.



# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## Longford Libraries Services

2024 was a busy year for Longford Libraries and this is reflected in our visitor numbers. Since 2021 our visitor numbers are steadily rising with a 300% increase.

	2024	2023	2022	2021
Visits to County Longford Libraries	179,388	143,046	133,502	43,308

## My Open Library

The My Open Library service was launched in Lanesborough Library in December 2024. One-third of all County Longford library branches now have the My Open Library service in operation. This is an additional service which provides access to the library for 96 hours per week. Applicants for the service must be over 16 and be a member of Longford Libraries.

During the My Open Library service, people can borrow books, use the PC, printers, scanners and photocopiers, study, read the paper or just enjoy 5 minutes of peace in a library. Each applicant must take part in the enrolment process which includes a health and safety briefing, instructions on how to use the various technology in the library and a detailed review of the terms and conditions of the service.

## Ireland Reads Day

Ireland Reads Day is a national promotion of reading. This is an initiative of the Government of Ireland to celebrate the joy of reading. It is funded by Healthy Ireland and supported by public libraries and other organisations that promote reading, literacy, and the arts.

The theme in 2024 was get lost in a good book. In today's world, taking time off to relax is so important for us all. Reading is a great way to relax, whether you are physically reading a book, listening to an audiobook, or just enjoying the illustrations, this time doing something you enjoy is so important for mental health and stress management. Reading relaxes your body, lowering the heart rate and easing tension in your muscles. The library staff actively encouraged our

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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community to lose themselves for a few minutes or hours in an adventure, thriller, romance, comedy or all of the above.

Storyteller Niall de Búrca facilitated a creative songtelling session to promote the joy of reading in Edgeworthstown. Niall had the children and adults (and staff) hanging on his every word. Other events to promote reading included open mic sessions with local writers in Granard and Longford, 'Battle of the books' event in Ballymahon, a silent book club in Lanesborough and a coffee morning in Drumlish.

## Seachtain na Gaeilge

Seachtain na Gaeilge is the largest annual Irish language festival in the world, held from 1-17 March to promote Irish language and culture. The library service and Longford County Council Irish Officer organised events with local schools to encourage students to use the Irish language outside the classroom. These events included puppet shows, bilingual science workshops, storytelling, creative writing classes, quizzes and a lunchtime celebration of Irish music, dance, storytelling, and poetry. It was funded by Creative Ireland.

A lunchtime celebration was open to the public and brought together people of all ages who shared a love of Irish language, literature, music, storytelling, and dance. It was beneficial for students to be at such a gathering, speaking, and hearing Irish.



# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## Right to Read

Right to Read is a national programme to promote literacy and reading development for people of all ages and backgrounds. Launched as part of the *Opportunities for All: The Public Library as a Catalyst for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2013-2017* libraries strategy, it currently includes four national programmes designed to promote children's reading and literacy: Spring into Storytime, Summer Stars, Children's Book Festival and Family Time at your Library.

**Spring into Storytime:** This promotes storytelling to younger children. The focus is on the importance of reading for five minutes every day which improves reading fluency tremendously. The staff highlight all the wonderful picture books available from Longford Libraries.

**Summer Stars:** Over 1,100 children signed up for this initiative, reading nearly 7,000 books. This is an average of six books per child over the two months. To encourage more reading, 76 events took place during the Summer Stars Festival across all six library branches. Events included arts and crafts, Roma literacy camp, DEIS literacy and numeracy camps, Zumba classes, bookmark-making workshops, teddy bear's picnic, coding, art workshops, storytelling, children's book launch, bee and the all-Ireland pollinator plan, biodiversity workshops, and FAI booklet launch.



# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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**Children's Book Festival:** 27 events were organised to celebrate October Children's Book Festival. These workshops cater to primary, secondary students and members of the public. Events included:

- Workshops with author Halyana Budilova dedicated to the topic of environmental protection based on the book 'The Snow Giant and Climate Change' with arts and crafts, storytelling and arts and craft sessions with staff members
- Storytelling with Hannah Carleton
- Storytelling workshop with author Orla Mc Govern
- Halloween storytelling by Maggi
- Spooky movies
- The annual 'Design your own Bookmark' competition with two age categories: 4-8 years and 9-13 years. Kyaan Narain from Lanesborough was the winner for the 4-8 age category. Nadwah Moin from Longford was the winner in the 9-13 age category. The first-placed entry in each age category was printed professionally and available in all library branches.

**Family Time at Your Library:** This is a winter programme for children which is run during November and December. With a variety of events including arts and crafts, printmaking workshops. Storytime with Mrs Claus proved as popular as ever with parents and children alike. This programme is so important to the library service, the staff in Longford Libraries also took part in several national and regional and local initiatives to promote literacy and numeracy in the local community.

## My Little Library Book Bags

My Little Library Book Bags are filled with books which aim to help children prepare to take the big step of starting school this year. There is a free bag for every child starting 'big school' in September.

The bags were available for collection by children and parents and guardians from any County Longford library. Each My Little Library Book Bag contains a book on starting school, making friends or being comfortable with being yourself, and a library card and special My Little Library cardholder. Book bags are available in both Irish and English.



# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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This is an initiative between libraries, the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as part of the First 5 Strategy.

## **Battle of Wits**

This year the Battle of Wits resumed for the first time since 2019. This is a quiz for transition year (TY) students run in conjunction with Westmeath, Offaly, and Laois libraries. Eight schools in County Longford take part in the quiz. There are three rounds to the competition: The school selects their best team, who then go onto the county final and then the top two teams from the county final go to the regional final in Athlone.

Mercy Secondary School in Ballymahon and Lanesborough Community College represented Longford in the regional finals in Athlone on 5 December. After a very exciting and close table quiz, the Longford teams finished joint fourth overall, one point off third place.

## **Community Reading Project**

Longford Library Service in conjunction with the Health and Wellbeing section of Longford County Council announced a new Community Reading Project. The initiative aimed to promote literacy and encourage everyone to engage with reading. The first book selection is 'Travelling in a Strange Land' by David Park. Books can be collected at the Longford Branch Library and an e-book version is available on the BorrowBox App

## **Healthy Ireland at Your Library and Healthy Longford**

Longford Libraries secured funding of €6,500 to deliver a programme of events to promote health and wellbeing in the community. Some of the events included:

- Guided activator pole walks from Drumlish Library
- Healthy eating with Sinead Costello and Sharon Murtagh, Health Service Executive (HSE) dieticians

## Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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- Perimenopause and menopause talks
- Advice for teachers and parents from play therapist Elenor Glennon, a specialist in sensory play and supports children with additional needs.



The library is a proud member of the **Breastfeeding Friendly Longford** group. The libraries are working towards providing breastfeeding-friendly support for nursing mothers in all our branches. These supports range from supplies, nappy changing facilities, comfortable seating for breastfeeding and a freshwater supply.

**We're Breastfeeding Friendly Longford** was launched in Edgeworthstown Library on 7 October. It is a Healthy Longford initiative, led by an inter-agency Longford Breastfeeding Project. This is a working group including members from the following organisations:

- Cuidiú
- Healthy Longford
- the HSE, and HSE Health Promotion

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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- Longford Libraries
- Sláintecare Healthy Communities
- Longford Westmeath CYPSC
- Longford Community Resources Clg
- Longford Women's Link
- Bridgeways Family Resource Centre
- Lus Na Gréine Family Resource Centre
- Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) Athlone
- Longford Westmeath Community Families
- Foróige Longford (Leap Project)
- Longford County Childcare Committee

## Longford STEAM

There are ongoing activities in the Longford STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and maths) programme throughout 2024 with events for Engineers Week, Biodiversity Week, Space Week and Science Week.

The **STEAM book collection** is continuing to grow with new additions each quarter. The Lego clubs are now running in Edgeworthstown, Granard and Longford Libraries. There were ongoing coding classes with Siobhan Greally to support children taking part in the Longford MS Dream Space Showcase initiative. These classes are always well attended.

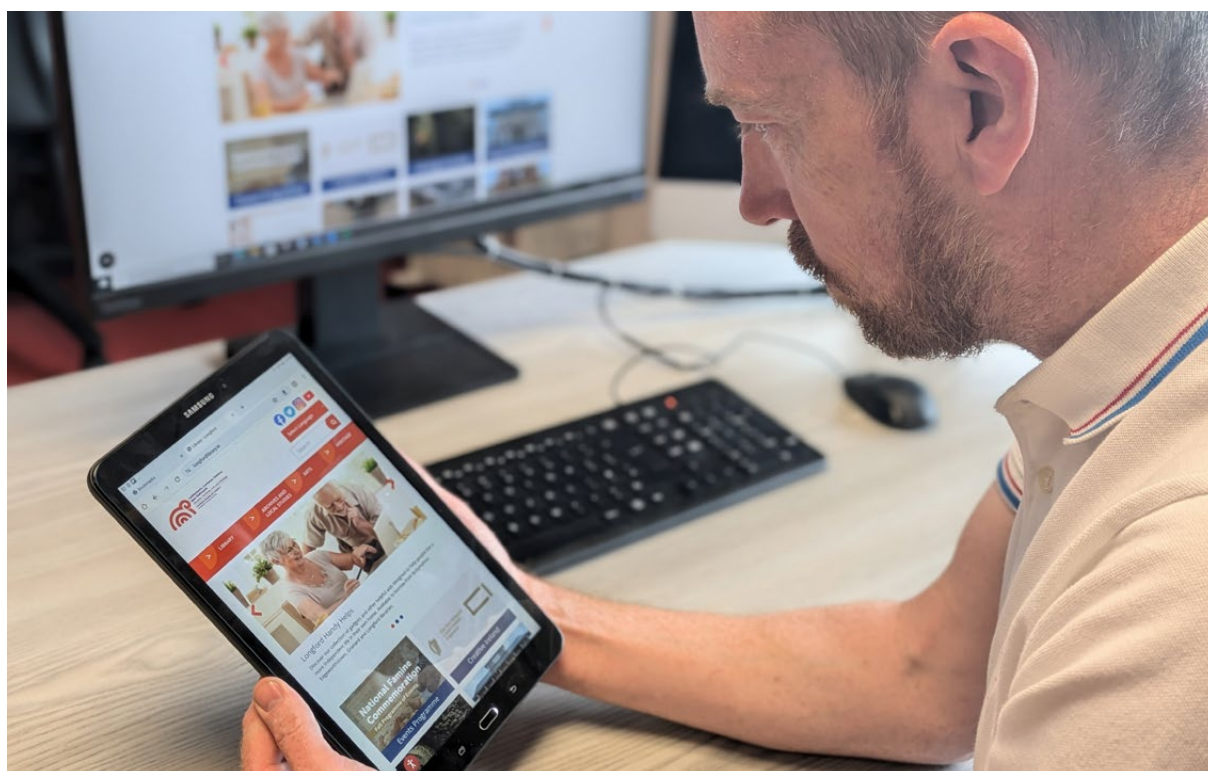
**ACORN tablet training** was provided for the older people in Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough in February and March. Sixteen older people took a series of classes to learn how to use the ACORN tablet. This device was specially designed for older people, it is easy to use, and has its own SIM card so WIFI is needed in your home. The ACORN tablet is the latest addition to the Longford Handy Helps Collection.

**Digital Support Hub One-To-One:** Longford Libraries partnered with Longford Westmeath Education Training Board (LWETB) and Westmeath Libraries in the rollout of a free eight-week digital literacy support programme in all library branches in Longford and Westmeath which commenced in August. The tutor-led

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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thirty-minute one-to-one digital skills classes for anyone who needs help with their computer, smartphone, or tablet. This project was very successful with 191 attending the sessions over the 8 weeks. The sessions have proved very popular with library customers who are delighted to have individual attention from an expert tutor provided by LWETB as part of the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy on the device of their choice.



## Grant funding

Longford Libraries received a grant of €14,519.42 from the Dormant Accounts Fund 2024 from the Department of Rural and Community Development. This grant was matched with funding by Longford County Council.

This funding was used to purchase wheelchair friendly shelving for Lanesborough and Longford libraries. This shelving will increase accessibility to the great book selection available in our libraries. It will also allow for a greater flexibility of space in our branches. Wheelchair-friendly shelving is a universal design feature which will improve accessibility and inclusion for all members of the public.



# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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In Longford branch, the new shelving was part of the beginning of a revamp of the children's area. The lower shelf height enables children to reach all the available book options, offering more display space and provides more flexibility within this area as well.

## Training

The library staff are completing several essential training courses including first aid and safety representative training.

There was also an all-staff training half-day in December focusing on the promotion and marketing of digital resources including BorrowBox, Freegal, Transparent Languages, Universal Class, and PressReader, to name a few. Our online issues are increasing each year and now account for nearly 33% of all issues in the library service. This training is essential for staff to assist our members using all the resources provided by the library service.

## Longford Age Friendly Programme

Eamonn Brennan is our new Longford Age Friendly Ambassador who succeeds Declan Nerney, who had held this role for a number of years.

## Longford Age Friendly Information Day

The Longford Age Friendly Programme hosted a very successful Information Day in the Longford Arms Hotel on 30 September. Longford County Council Chief Executive and Longford Age Friendly Alliance Chair Paddy Mahon and Longford Older Person's Council Chairperson Kitty Burkhill welcomed over 200 attendees to the event from all parts of County Longford.

There was an EXPO element to the day which highlighted local services for older people, with representatives from the following organisations present:

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- Alone, Alzheimers' Society of Ireland, Citizen's Information Centre, Community Gardaí, HSE, Longford Community Resources, Longford Local Link, LWETB, and Longford ICA.
- The day also focussed on services provided by Longford County Council to support older citizens and included presentations from:
- Regional and Local Age Friendly Healthy Homes Coordinators Ann Moran and Caroline Doyle
- Libraries staff Nicola Kenneally and Genevieve Montgomery
- County Archivist Martin Morris
- Longford Community Safety Partnership Coordinator Janine Bartley
- Physical Activation for Health Officer Stephen McNally
- Healthy Longford Coordinator Laura McHugh
- Sláintecare Healthy Communities Coordinator Patricia Forde
- HSE Longford Westmeath Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons by Clinical Nurse Specialist Eunice Eminike

Attendees were treated to some fun chair exercises led by the Longford Sports Partnership tutor Mags Cummins. Mags delivers the Moving for Better Balance Exercise classes in five Library branches.

Closing remarks were delivered by Longford County Council Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr Peggy Nolan. The afternoon concluded with a table quiz organised by the Longford County Council Archives team. The quiz proved very popular and went to a tie break with a team from Ballymahon Day Care Centre winning out.

## **Launch of the National Age-Friendly Libraries**

Then Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys TD presented the National Age Friendly Library Recognition Award to each County Librarian in the Republic of Ireland at a ceremony in Edgeworthstown Library on Friday, 16 February. This recognition programme is managed by Age Friendly Ireland, a local government-shared service hosted by Meath County Council.

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Each local authority has taken part in the Age Friendly Library Training Programme, selecting Age Friendly Champions amongst the library staff, and highlighting a commitment to improving key areas to include the older person in the library environment. Here in Longford, the library is focusing on signage, age-friendly seating, and age-friendly programming. Minister Humphreys spoke glowingly about the importance of libraries to communities and the feedback from the day was fantastic.



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## **Age-Friendly Recognition Awards**

Longford County Council have been shortlisted in this year's National Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Awards in the Active and Healthy Ageing Category for our Movement for Better Balance series of classes.

These classes began in January 2024 with weekly classes in three libraries: Ballymahon, Granard and Longford. Due to demand, there are now classes in five libraries and the EDI Centre, Longford. The classes are designed to improve balance and reduce the risk of falls or the impact of a fall. This modified eight-week exercise programme was developed to suit those with chronic conditions and older persons. The classes are running at full capacity with attendees enjoying both the health and social interaction benefits of the programme.

This is a collaboration between Age Friendly Longford, Longford Libraries, Longford Sports Partnership and Sláintecare Healthy Communities and is organised by our Physical Activation for Health Officer. Judging for our initiative took place in Ballymahon Library in mid-September.

Rosemount GAA Social Initiative won the Age Friendly Active and Healthy Ageing Award sponsored by the Department of Health and the HSE. Our team was disappointed, however, there is great planning for the project in 2025 as part of our Age-Friendly programme. We congratulated our neighbours in Westmeath on their win.

Ireland's national public libraries received a Judge Special Recognition Award. This was to acknowledge the exceptional dedication of library staff nationwide.

## **Mo Bosca Beo**

Longford Age Friendly Team are working in collaboration with Laois Age Friendly Team on a project called Mo Bosca Beo. This project is designed to record everyone's life story using prompts and booklets. There are over 80 questions curated by the older person councils in Laois and Longford. These prompts will be illustrated. A booklet will be designed to record the answers. The box will source



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additional items including your favourite perfume, chocolate bar wrapper, and medals to name a few. The box will be completed by the older person with their family so there is a lasting memory of their lives.

## **Walkability Audits in Ballymahon and Granard**

Longford Age Friendly and Town Centre First staff carried out a walkability audit in Ballymahon on 16 September and Granard on 7 November 2024. The audit used the Age Friendly universal design walkability template and focuses on a mobility and access survey.

A walkability audit assesses how easy or difficult it is to get around your town, and how easy or difficult it is to access services. In a walkability audit, members of the community walk a route to identify and prioritise things that could be improved. These routes are pre-selected beforehand by the organising team.



Over 40 and 30 participants respectively took place and included students from the secondary school, older people, people from the business community, tidy town volunteers, and representatives from Longford County Council. Students from Queen's University, Belfast and TUS Athlone also took part in the walkability audit as part of their course work.

There was great positivity after the walks with several new initiatives and features not previously known or noticed by the group being discussed. A report was issued to Longford County Council, Age Friendly Team in Meath and to the National Town Centre First team.

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## **Musical Memories Project**

The Musical Memories Project aimed to capture and share the personal stories of Longford musicians and the impact of music on their lives. It was a creative collaboration between CO:WORX Edgeworthstown, Creative Ireland, Longford Libraries and Longford Age Friendly. It is funded by Creative Ireland, Longford and led by CO:WORX.

The aim was to create a digital archive of Longford musicians from across the county. The project features Sean Marshall (flute), Jimmy Whelan (accordion), Mary Brady (fiddle), Noel Sweeney (fiddle and saxophone), Olive Kilbane (fiddle and singing), Bernardine Farrelly (harp), Michael Owens (guitar), and Brendan Daly (keyboards).

Jimmy Connell from the Jimmy Jests interviewed each musician, while Lee Williamson from Shuttermanic Productions filmed the event and music sessions. Clare Frances Photography captured portraits of the musicians with their instruments. It concluded with an impromptu ceilí.

On 18 June, friends and families of the musicians gathered at Edgeworthstown Library to watch the short film 'Musical Memories: Echoes from Longford April 2024'. Longford County Council Chief Executive Paddy Mahon presented each participant with their portrait and a copy of the video. The evening was filled with lively music and community spirit.

## **Creative Ireland Longford**

In early January 2024, three 'Pathways to funding' public information sessions were held to give information on grant funding, with attendees having the opportunity to speak to the different people who managed the different streams of funding. Due to these sessions, the Creative Ireland Community Open Call received more applications in 2024 than in 2023. 25% of the funding awarded was given to new community partners and events.

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In 2024, Creative Ireland, Longford supported 34 community projects and festivals. This was an investment in community art and included projects like Granard, Camlin Keys Piano Festival, Maria Edgeworths Festival and Goldsmith Family day. This included support for three community choirs.

Creative Ireland provided funding for Council lead initiatives including Longford Lights, Dead of Night and Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase. One of the legacy projects that Creative Ireland is funding over the five years of the strategy is the cataloguing and digitisation of the Fr Quinn music collection.

The new Culture and Creativity team meet with a representative of Creative Ireland in November to evaluate the programme here in Longford.

## Granard Booktown Festival

The second Granard Booktown Festival was held in April. A fantastic weekend enjoyed by all, the festival brought books and literature to life. This was a Creative Ireland funded community festival.



There were many local and nationally renowned writers in attendance, as well as writers from as far away as the USA. Noel Monahan was welcomed as the first artist in residence for the festival. One of the many highlighted authors speaking at the festival was Booker Prize winner Paul Lynch.

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Granard Writers Group held a wonderful morning of poetry, prose, and stories. Huge thanks to Longford bestselling author John Connell, Ronan O'Toole, and the Booktown Committee for all their hard work.

## **Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase**

Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase is in its second year with 450 students from 18 primary schools demonstrating over 100 STEAM projects. The event took place on Friday, 24 May in Edgeworthstown.

This initiative is co-funded by the Government of Ireland, the European Union through the EU Just Transition Fund Programme 2021-2027 and Creative Ireland. The equipment was supported by Longford County Council and the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan (NDP) Delivery and Reform under the Public Service Innovation Fund 2023. The event was supported by Microsoft, Ericsson, Computex, and FIT (Fasttrack into Information Technology) who exhibited on the day.

Other exhibitors included 14 different teams from across Longford County Council including the Libraries and the Arts Office, the Environment, Longford Sports Partnership, the Fire Service, Civil Defence, Community, Roads, Information Technology, Local Enterprise Office and local organisations including Comhairle na nÓg, Music Generation and digital team from Foróige. Connectivity was supported by Eir Broadband.

Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase is the culmination of months of engagement with schools including hands-on STEM sessions from the Microsoft Dream Space teaching team and a 10-week Dream Space TV programme. This included teaching school children computer science, micro: bit technology and artificial intelligence.



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## Cruinniú na nÓg

Cruinniú na nÓg Ireland is the first and only country to have a national day of free creativity for children and young people. In 2024, it was held on 15 June. With 21 events in eight locations, over 500 children tried music, art, crafts, circus skills, dance and more.

For the first time, there was a night element to Cruinniú, with the first PRIDE parade through the town, followed by a music concert until 9 pm. This project received funding and support from the new night-time economy (NTE) element of the Cruinniú na nÓg programme.

This event was an enormous success with over two hundred people in attendance. There was also a writer retreat organised by the African network with an open mic for participants to share their work. Cruinniú na nÓg is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme's Creative Youth Plan to enable the creative potential of children and young people.



## Creative Health and Wellbeing in the Community Scheme 2024

Longford and Westmeath Creative Ireland teams submitted a joint application for the Creative Health and Wellbeing in the Community Scheme 2024. The project 'Interwoven Threads: Ireland's Migrant Stories' was awarded €140,000 over two years.

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This project will explore the similarities between the Irish emigrant stories and those of the immigrant stories of the new Irish. It will highlight similarities between these stories, and show the benefits of integration and social inclusion, including creating social cohesion and reducing social isolation. The stories will show the customs and cultures of both communities and their common threads.

This project will work with new and established communities to explore the impact of anti-immigrant behaviour, on mental well-being, perceptions of safety and inclusion in local community groups.

## **National Famine Commemoration Day**

On 19 May, the National Famine Commemoration took place in Edgeworthstown, a first for County Longford and a first public engagement for the new Taoiseach Simon Harris TD, who officiated at this formal State ceremony and gave a keynote address. The Taoiseach also took part in a wreath-laying ceremony in remembrance of all those who died during the Famine and military honours.

His Excellency The Most Reverend Luis Mariano Montemayor and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Apostolic Nuncio and Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray planted a Longford oak tree and laid a wreath with the Taoiseach. Then Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, and ambassadors from over 70 counties were also in attendance on the day.

Music was provided by Streancán and musicians Dr Conor Ward, Noel Carberry and Meadhbh Carberry. Amy Rooney Maguire, Emma Mihai and Aaron Ó Míacháin from St Mary's National School, Edgeworthstown performed the poem An Píobaire Uillinn. This was composed specially for the event by Noel Monaghan, a local poet. Matt Farrell read extracts from the letters of Maria Edgeworth written during the famine, which painted a vivid picture of the conditions people were living through at that time.

Freya Lilly O'Connor, Jack Garrett Cuffe and Thomas Denniston from St John's National School assisted the Taoiseach, our Cathaoirleach and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps with the planting of the tree oak trees. These oak trees were re-planted, one in each Municipal District.



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The ceremony was broadcast on the RTÉ News channel and is available to watch on the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media's YouTube channel.

Over 600 people were seated in the grounds of The Green with another 200 to 300 people attending outside the grounds. The library was the host venue after the event with light refreshments for everyone attending including music and dancing from local talent.





## Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## Longford County Archive

New archive standard shelving was installed in the archive research room. The room will be completed in 2025 with new carpets, research desks, public computers, and a microfilm reader. The research room will be used as a venue for book launches and lectures during 2025.

## Padraic Colum Gathering

The annual Padraic Colum Gathering celebrates the work of Padraic Colum, one of Longford's greatest writers and his wife, Mary, who was also a writer and literary critic.

This long-standing event promotes the excellent work and legacy of Padraic Colum, an Irish playwright, poet and novelist born here in Longford in 1881. His work is important for our heritage and culture. This event was supported by the Commemoration programme, run by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media.

The morning session featured two speakers: local historian Gearoid O'Brien and University College Dublin (UCD) Prof Margaret Kelleher. Gearoid O'Brien will speak about his memories of Padraic Colum's visits to Athlone which took place mainly in the 1960s. UCD Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama Chair, Prof Margaret Kelleher gave the audience an insight into her findings which she discovered while writing a joint biography of Padraic and Mary Colum. She previously spoke at the Gathering in 2021.

A poetry reading by local writers started the afternoon session and the Gathering closed with a performance of an adaptation of the Colum's play Thomas Musker from children of the Sacred Heart National School, Granard. The performance was directed by drama facilitator Hannah Carleton.

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## Film Screening

The Archives team in partnership with the Arts Office and Creative Ireland hosted a film screening night in Granard Library on 5 December. The short films shown included:

- Documentary on Eamon Creamer
- An Interview with Jimmy Donoghue (RIP)
- *Henry Wilson: The Man Who was Empire* all produced by Harp Media, and
- an award-winning short film called *All That's Carried* by local scriptwriter Eimear Reilly.

This evening showcased the talented young filmmakers, producers, editors, and scriptwriters in the county. All these short films were funded via grants administered by Longford County Council.

## First World War Letter Writing Competition

This was a Transition Year project on the First World War. Students were invited to write a letter back home from the frontline from the perspective of a soldier, nurse, doctor, or member of the clergy outlining their experiences. Judges were very impressed with the high standard of entries. There was a presentation ceremony on 19 December in Longford branch library. Students were asked to imagine serving in the war and to write home outlining their experiences.

## Records Management

Extensive work has been undertaken to appraise records for disposal in the Environment, Roads, Motor Tax, Corporate and Library sections and authorise the destruction of records according to the National Retention Policy.

Archives are responsible for conducting searches in connection with claims under the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme. This scheme opened in March 2024.

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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The Archives service is working on the metadata for the development of a major digitisation project with the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland, involving the archives of the boards of guardians of the poor law unions.

## Longford County Arts Service

County Longford Arts Strategy Art for People Art for Place [2023-2028] has six main themes or objectives as follows:

- Arts Contribution to the Development and Promotion of County Longford
- Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability
- Connecting Artists and Citizens
- Collaboration and Engagement
- Infrastructure Development
- Supporting the Living Artist
- Longford County Arts Service's work in 2024 supported these objectives.

## Longford Lights 2024

Longford Lights is an environmentally sustainable festival celebrating the illuminated art form and supporting a diverse range of communities and artists to create new, exciting artworks. In the third year of the festival, it has expanded in size, ambition, and visual art.

There are 26 artists and over 1,400 citizens from 35 community groups in Longford and the surrounding counties that made art for the festival this year. The festival production team of Brendan Magan, Lisa Brady and Tommy Casby was steered by Artistic Director Caroline Conway. The festival was funded by Longford County Council, Creative Ireland, Arts Council via Mide Arts Group and Longford Tourism.

A new element of the show was the specular onsite performance by Cal y Canto Teatro (Spain), an invited artist group specialising in street theatre performance and the use of handmade kites, creating site-specific shows that surprise the audience and invite audience participation. 80% of all artworks were produced locally using 75% natural and sustainable materials. All lantern-based artwork was recycled and reused.



## Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## **Grant Funding**

Longford Arts Service was successful in securing funding of €38,296 under a funding call promoting reuse and repair, which is known as R.A.C.E. (Repaired Arts Circular Economy). The project will support the delivery of repair and reuse initiatives led by the local authority sector and has the potential to create a new circular economy network in the arts sector.

## **Bursary Awards**

The Artist Bursary Award Scheme made offers to 12 Longford-based artists, with an allocation of €22,000 under this scheme. The Project Award Scheme made offers to 10 Longford cultural organisations and individual artists, with €25,000 allocated under this scheme. An independent panel undertook the assessment process. This bursary is a key part of the County Longford Arts Strategy and supports the work of independent artists in County Longford.

## **Young People, Children and Education Project Award (YPCE)**

Longford Arts Service, in partnership with the Longford School Completion Programme (LSCP) and two local schools, successfully applied for a €80,000 Arts Council grant to deliver the Making Moving Art initiative. This ambitious 12-month programme worked with Traveller and Roma children who were transferring from primary to secondary schools. Participating schools are St Joseph's Convent National School and St Michael's Boys National School.

Making Moving Art is designed to support young Roma and Traveller children to make a successful transfer to secondary school by involving them in an innovative performance programme to learn new skills and be able to represent themselves and their culture. The programme involves learning drumming, drama, dance, and circus. LSCP is the lead partner.

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## Culture Night

Culture Night is an annual, all-island public event which takes place each year on the second last Friday in September. This is a celebration of culture, creativity, and the arts. All events are free to promote the arts in all its many formats. With over 20 events to select from, the people of Longford County had plenty of choices. Culture night was celebrated on Friday 20 September.

## First Fridays

First Fridays is a programme of late-night music, comedy, dance, and public art on the first Friday of every month in Longford Town from April to October. The initiative aimed to bring people into the county town to enjoy a night of entertainment in venues in Longford Town. This was a huge success, and it was an opportunity for many young performers to showcase their talents.

This programme was coordinated by Backstage Theatre in partnership with Longford County Council, with funding support from the Arts Council and Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media.

## Longford County Heritage Office

### Built Heritage Investment Scheme

Longford County Council was allocated €96,000 for repairs to protected structures in the county under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS).

Total Applications	15
Applications that Secured Funding	12
Total Funding Awarded	103002

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## Historic Structures Fund

Longford County Council received five applications from the protected structures for Stream 1 of the Historic Structures Fund (HSF). Three were shortlisted with the other two applicants being successful in the BHIS funding stream. The total grant awarded to Longford County Council under Stream 1 was €35,000.

## Community Monuments Fund

Longford County Council was awarded €130,102.50 for projects under both streams. These projects are as follows:

### Under Stream 1:

- Clondra Cemetery Committee received €51,000 to continue the repairs to the medieval chapel at St Brendan's Church, Clondra which started in 2023.

### Under Stream 2:

- A conservation plan for Abbeylara Cistercian Abbey, Abbeylara, by the Abbeylara Tidy Towns Committee. This received €23,985.
- A conservation plan for the Cistercian Abbey at Abbeyshrule for the Abbeyshrule Cistercian Abbey Preservation Committee. This was awarded €29,212.50.
- An updated conservation management plan for the ruined Augustinian Priory complex on Saints Island for Longford County Council, supported by the Cashel Cemetery Committee. This was awarded €28,905. This project is being led by the Longford Heritage Office.

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## **Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2025**

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme has been revised by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Housing for 2025. This included making amendments to the maximum grant and co-funding amounts. The application process closed at the end of September 2024.

Nine applications were received for protected structures in County Longford, two of which are new applications. The majority are for domestic buildings, with one application for windows in an educational building, and one ecclesiastical building. The applications were assessed by an internal committee and recommendations were submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in December 2024. It is anticipated that the Department will approve these applications in early 2025.

## **Longford Field Names Pilot Project**

Longford Field Names Pilot Project was launched by then Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray, with a public information session in Longford Library. This project had to be revised due to the lack of availability of a suitable coordinator. This project is focusing on the parish of Killoe, but with volunteers welcome from elsewhere in the county.

The Heritage team are working with the County Longford Historical Society on this project, and their member Kitty Hughes is the key contact. The geographic information systems (GIS) team of Longford County Council has been invaluable for this project. The team have produced detailed and useful maps for the recorders, in addition to a very straightforward ArcGIS smartphone app, which two members in Killoe are trialling. This will allow the information to update the national [meitheal.logainm.ie](http://meitheal.logainm.ie) website, but also the Longford County Council GIS system, available across all sections.



# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## **County Longford Heritage Plan**

Revision of the County Longford Heritage Plan was tendered, and a very experienced coordinator was procured. They are reviewing the existing Heritage Plan, and the consultation process will start in 2025.

## **Edgeworth Tellograph**

The Edgeworth Tellography project is being led by the Maria Edgeworth Centre, with technical assistance from former Eircom engineer Ray Jordan. The signal from Galway City to Dublin is to be replicated using modern visual methods, utilising Edgeworth's code. This project took place during National Heritage Week with the relay being broadcast in Edgeworthstown.

## **Longford Archaeological Research Programme**

The 2024 Longford Archaeological Research Programme has two elements:

1. Funding support to Drumlish History and Heritage to undertake their aerial photographic survey and photogrammetry of Melkagh Portal Tomb and Drumbad Ringfort. Photogrammetry is the use of photography in surveying and mapping to ascertain measurements between objects.
2. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) surveys of several archaeological sites: Abbeylara Abbey, the Black Pigs Dyke, the Moat of Granard Motte and Bailey Castle and the Augustinian Priory on Saints Island. These projects will help inform Community Monuments Fund projects also taking place.

# Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

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## **Local Biodiversity Action Fund**

Longford County Council received funding of €71,560 across nine different projects. These projects included:

- 'No Mow May' promotion and public awareness campaign
- Nine-county may fly project
- Barn owl survey and public awareness campaign
- Swift conservation
- Mammal survey in three woodland locations across the county
- Hedgerow project
- Survey of invasive plant species on primary road routes
- Children's workbook focusing on bogs and wetlands for education and public awareness
- Bat survey in three locations around the county



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# Finance and Information Technology

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# Finance

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**Revenue Budget for 2024:** €69.7m, adopted by Elected Members

**Rates Collection:** \*unaudited figure

**Rents Collection:** 83% \*unaudited figure

**Housing Loans Collection:** 82% \*unaudited figure

**Housing loan applications received:** 58

**Housing loan applications approved:** 27

**Housing loan applications refused:** 18

**Housing loans advanced:** 17

**Interest Penalties Incurred:** (to be provided)

**Statement of Internal Financial Control Year End 31 December 2024:** Not available until the Annual Financial Statements (AFS) is finalised at the end March 2025 (to be provided)

**Payments to Councillors in 2024:**

Local Government Act 2001 Section 142 Expenditure	
Mayor and Other Allowances	€65,999.98
Entertainment and Associated Expenses	€11,523.05
Representational Payments, Expenses of Members and Representation at Conferences	€879,551.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>€957,034.38</b>

# Finance

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**Motor Tax Transactions:** 13,678 to a value of €2,036,574

Motor Tax Transactions	2024 (Number)	2024 (€)	2023 (Number)	2023 (€)
Vehicle Licence Discs	10,667	1,859,647	10,494	1,878,614
Vehicle registration certificates, trade plates and other transactions	3,011	176,927	2,991	189,550
Total motor tax transactions	13,678	2,036,574	13,485	2,068,164

# Finance

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# Information Technology

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The Information Technology (IT) section provides and is responsible for the operational and strategic information and communication technology (ICT) and digital infrastructure and services of the Council. The team also help with digitisation in our communities. This includes responsibility for multiple ICT systems spread across the county in a Wide Area Network (WAN) infrastructure.

2024 was a challenging but rewarding year for the section with completion of Strategic Workforce Plan and further significant progress made in relation to County Longford's Digital Strategy, cybersecurity, blended working support and maintenance of our hybrid cloud infrastructure. The below were the key areas of focus in 2024.

## Network Infrastructure: IT Applications and Development

Longford County Council's ICT network is made up of several complex components which require ongoing management, maintenance and monitoring. This work includes:

- Community CCTV upgrade process, which was completed for 22 existing locations.
- Irish Water transition process was fully supported with the completion of key data migration project.
- Geographic Information System (GIS) had a major version upgrade completed in 2024.
- New national SIEM/SOC (Security Information and Event Management/ Security Operations Center) system was implemented.
- Digital divide project recommenced.
- Maintenance of all mobile devices on new mobile device management software.
- Additional video conferencing rooms were set up to facilitate hybrid meetings and remote working in new offices.
- Windows server 2012 migration project was completed.
- Updated cybersecurity awareness training implemented for all employees.
- Incident Response Plan testing completed.
- A dedicated Cybersecurity Officer was appointed to the Council.



# Information Technology

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- Software upgrades and procurement competitions were carried out for licensing and hardware purchases.
- Local Election Count Centre had IT set up and support provided.
- There were 5,624 IT helpdesk calls/issues resolved in 2024.

## GIS and Database Systems

GIS continued to play a fundamental role throughout all business areas in 2024. Some notable projects and work completed during 2024 include:

- Mapping application to support Residential Zoning Land Tax (RZLT)
- Mapping and data analysis to support electoral register cleansing and redefining of polling districts in Longford Town
- Data processing and mapping for the Noise Action Plan 2024-2028
- Development of mobile applications to support Heritage Field Name Survey, Road Programme Survey and Farm Inspection Survey.
- Development of mapping application to support STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and maths) programme.
- Continuing to support the rollout of Longford Text Alert around County Longford.

## Digital Projects

Digital services and technology continue to play a fundamental role in how the organisation works. Some notable projects and work completed during 2024 included:

- Enhancement of the eService Planning and electronic Performance Management and Development System (ePMDS) apps. This included allowing senior staff to digitally enter and review service plans based on the organisation's Corporate Plan. The apps are used by all indoor based employees for performance management and planning.
- Procurement of a new Customer Online Portal was commenced.

# Information Technology

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- New cloud-based phone system procured and implemented throughout the organisation.

## Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase

Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase was held for the second year running in Edgeworthstown in May. It saw over 450 primary school children showcase their technology work. The event is run in partnership with Longford Libraries and is a part of Longford's Digital Strategy.

This event, which fosters an interest in technology in primary school children, is part of an ambition to see Computer Science a Leaving Certificate option in all nine County Longford secondary schools. In 2024, €840,000 from the Just Transition Fund was secured by the Council, which helps to pursue this ambitious target.



## Longford Post Primary Tech Awards

The second Longford Post Primary Tech Awards were held in December. For this, three secondary schools with Leaving Certificate Computer Science students presented their projects designed to help solve real world problems. The event was

# Information Technology

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sponsored by IPB Insurance and attended by Microsoft and Ericsson. Students from Ballymahon Vocational School scooped the overall award at a very enjoyable evening for students and teachers in Áras an Chontae.



## Work Experience at Ericsson

2024 also saw the start of our Just Transition transport funded work experience. County Longford transition year (TY) students attended Ericsson's facility in Athlone for a weeklong work experience in software development.

## Launch of Longford Works

The official launch of Longford Works took place in September with Minister Peter Burke unveiling this new brand to promote County Longford's network of eight remote working locations.

These facilities include hot desks, individual and team offices, meeting and collaboration rooms, and event spaces. These working hub locations offer a thriving community of entrepreneurs and professionals, making it easier to expand your network. Additionally, you can grow through easy access to educational opportunities via the TUS Learning Gates and Transition Year programs available at Longford Works locations.

# Information Technology

The development of the Longford Works brand was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.



## STEM Passport for Inclusion Initiative

The STEM Passport for Inclusion initiative for TY students started in Longford in 2024. The innovative initiative is jointly led by Maynooth University, Microsoft Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), and the Department of Education. It saw over 100 TY students completing the program.

## Longford Text Alert

The rollout of Longford Text Alert continued in 2024. The app and accompanying website sends local people crime prevention text alerts and community notices directly to their phone.

## Broadband Connection Points

Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) are public locations which have high-speed connectivity. Longford has nine BCPs. All offering external access to high-speed broadband, which some also offer internal access.







# Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

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# Housing

## Social Housing Capital Investment Programme 2024

The Social Housing Capital Investment Programme supports the delivery of social housing. The Housing Capital Section of Longford County Council successfully delivered 44 units under this Scheme in 2024:

Project Name	Units Delivered
Richmond Street, Longford	5 (Total units in the scheme is 23)
Forthill, Aughnaccliffe, Phase 1	7 (Total units in the scheme is 13)
Forthill, Aughnaccliffe, Phase 2	4
Cluain Rí Ballymahon	4 (Total units in the scheme is 16)
Market Square, Longford	2
Legion Terrace, Longford	4
CAS Colmcille Terrace	15 (Total units in the scheme is 19)
Corneddan, Ballinalee	1



## Energy Retrofitting Scheme

In 2024, under the national Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme, Longford County Council's Housing Section completed works in three of its housing estates:

- 17 in Canal Court, Longford
- 6 in St Anne's Ballymahon
- 6 in Abbeycartron Lane, Longford

# Housing

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Longford County Council sought and received funding to complete energy retrofit works to 16 houses within the Council's housing stock. This included one new acquisition and 15 houses successfully refurbished through our Pre-letting Repairs Programme.

## Maintenance and Refurbishment

In 2024, Longford County Council continued a major drive to reduce the vacancy rate within its housing stock. The work of the Housing Section in 2024 resulted in the rate being successfully reduced from 5.6% in 2022 to 3.84% in 2023 and to 2.65% by year end 2024. The Housing team responded to more than 2,500 repair requests in 2024.

Housing also carried out pre-letting repairs to approximately 50 properties. This programme of work resulted in these properties being brought to a high standard in preparation for new tenants taking up residence in their new homes.

## Voids Programme

Longford County Council successfully sought and received departmental funding to the amount of €506,000 to complete necessary works on 46 approved Council properties within the county. These properties had been vacant and in disrepair, the Council focussed on undertaking essential refurbishment works to bring the properties to sound letting standards.

## Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and Disabled People

To meet the needs of older and disabled people, 210 housing grants valued at €1,298,212.37 were paid across the three categories:

- Mobility Aids: €195,233.66 awarded
- Housing Adaptation: €469,803.84 awarded
- Housing Aid for Older People: €633,174.87 awarded

This is a 16% increase on the number of grants awarded in 2023.



# Housing

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A revised Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and Disabled People scheme came into effect of 1 December 2024. A total of 36 adaptation projects were undertaken in 2024 to meet the needs of affected tenants.

The Council's Housing Section successfully sought Departmental funding amounting to a total of €491,682 under the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme. Adaptation works completed included making bathrooms accessible, installation of stair-lifts and other specialised equipment, and the building of extensions on four approved properties to accommodate specific individual needs.

The works completed as a result of this funding greatly improved the quality of life for the affected homeowners and their families. In many cases the completed works allowed the property owners to continue to live independently and outside of a residential care setting.

## Private Rented Property Inspections

Inspections of private rented property help to enforce standards in the private rental sector. In 2024, Longford County Council conducted 275 private rented property inspections and successfully completed 225 inspections. This fell short of the 2024 Department target of 511 properties. The Council reviewed its resource capability and is working to significantly increase its inspection targets in 2025 to maintain property compliance.

In 2024, Longford County Council also engaged with the national roll-out of the IT application +AddJust Asset Management and Private Rental Inspections System. This work will continue into 2025. This implementation of this system will streamline the private rented property inspection process, provide support to the housing team and increase our reporting capability.

# Housing

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## Social Housing Support

Social housing support is provided to people who are assessed as being unable to afford housing from their own resources. From the Approved Housing List, 202 new local authority tenancies commenced in 2024. Social housing support is being provided through various options including:

- Tenancy of a Council property: 2,242 active tenancies
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), SHL/ Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), PAA/Mortgage to Rent (MTR) scheme, Repair to Lease Scheme, MTR Lease, Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF): 306 active tenancies
- Housing provided by approved housing bodies (AHB): 27 new AHB tenancies
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): 273 currently availing of HAP

The output figures represent the continued commitment of the Council to delivering for those on the Approved Housing List.

Also in 2024, 538 new housing applications were accepted throughout 2024. This is consistent with the increase seen in applications in 2023.

## Traveller Accommodation

The Longford Traveller Accommodation Plan 2025-2029 was adopted by the Council in 2024. The programme includes agreed targets for the number and type of accommodation to be provided. Longford County Council continues to exceed targets set for standard LA housing. HAP and RAS targets have proved more challenging in the context of the current housing crisis, and the availability of private rented accommodation.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) continues to work on progressing the development of a Traveller accommodation group housing project. CENA Approved Housing Body has completed a feasibility study and made recommendations to the LTACC regarding the development of a group scheme and also completed a housing needs assessment with the Traveller

# Housing

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population in Longford town. This was possible with funding provided by Longford County Council, SICAO and the HSE. It is anticipated that CENA will shortly submit a CAS application in relation to the Traveller specific group housing project.

## Homelessness

Homelessness is dealt with on a collaborative basis in the Midlands. Westmeath County Council is the lead agency, in partnership with Longford, Laois and Offaly County Councils. Advice and assistance are provided to those who present as homeless to Longford County Council.

In 2024, 229 people presented as homeless to Longford County Council. This is an increase of over 48% on 2023. Additionally, many other queries were dealt with by phone and email where advice and guidance were provided.

Longford County Council acquired 16 properties in 2024 (3 in 2023) under the Tenant in Situ Scheme, where social housing applicants had been issued with a valid Notice of Termination preventing these households from entering homelessness.

A further 69 households issued with a valid Notice of Termination since the moratorium on evictions was lifted have been accommodated in various forms of social housing also averting their entry into homelessness.

Seven households who exceeded the income threshold for social housing supports and where a valid Notice of Termination had been issued were referred by LCC to the Housing Agency for consideration under the Cost Rental Tenant in Situ (CRTiS) Scheme. Again, this supported these households who were at risk of homelessness.

# Planning

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## Development Management

### Part 8 Planning

Part 8 planning applications is when the local authority apply to themselves for permission for various projects. Such works can include developments including housing, roads and public amenities. In 2024, nine Part 8 planning applications were processed.

### Section 5 Applications

Section 5 applications are made where the applicant want the answer as to whether or not a development is considered exempted development. In 2024, 17 Section 5s were assessed by the Planning Section, many of which related directly to the vacant homes grant.

### ePlanning

The Local Government Online Planning Portal was designed to streamline the application for planning permission across all local authorities in Ireland. The online portal is easy-to-use and moves the process into an environmentally friendly one that is also user-friendly.

Anyone can register their own account, submit documents online with their application, and submit further documentation at a later stage if necessary. People can view previously submitted applications on their dashboard, as well as the status of applications quickly and easily. Planning permission in Ireland is moving towards a paperless and environmentally friendly model where applicants have 24/7 access to their planning applications.

### Planning Applications

Planning applications cover different types of developments including residential, employment, retail, agriculture and amenities. In 2024, 386 planning applications were received an increase of 22% on 2023. 225 were granted, with 22 refused and 14 appeals to An Bord Pleanála.

Some of these applications included the granting of a significant extension to Technimark. The granted applications will see an increase in capacity of the warehouse and manufacturing facility, renewable energy projects and a number of independent tourism facilities.



# Planning

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## **National Housing Policy**

Planning work with the Housing Section to identify suitable housing land to be developed under the New Housing Policy. This work includes site assessments, designs for several sites to determine the potential development. Planning also help to acquire sites, including preparing and implementing Compulsory Purchase Orders.

## **Development Contributions**

The Development contribution Scheme 2023-2027 came into effect from 1 June 2023. Its primary objective is to generate funds for infrastructure, including the acquisition of land, provision of open spaces, recreational and community facilities, roads, car parks and footpaths. This Scheme was updated in 2024 to reflect indexation.

The Development Contribution Scheme team continue to pursue outstanding development contributions by issuing invoices as commencement notices are lodged and following up on existing accounts to ensure payments are up to date.

## **Forward Planning and Enforcement**

### **Longford County Development Plan 2021–2027**

The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted at the end of 2021. The plan is available to view on Longford coco.ie and is also available from the Planning Section of Longford County Council, where it can be purchased.

The elected members were provided with a 2-year review of the progress of the objectives of the Development Plan in Q4 of 2023.

The implementation of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 is ongoing. 2024 represented the mid-point (year 3) of the 6-year Development Plan. No Variations have been carried out to date on the Plan.

The preparation of a new County Development Plan is due to commence the statutory process in Q4 2025.

# Planning

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## **Draft Longford Town Local Area Plan 2025-2031**

During 2024, the Draft Longford Town Local Area Plan (LAP) was prepared taking account of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) which was required to inform it, and which was completed in October 2023. The Draft LAP also included and considered Census 2022 small area statistics published at the end of September 2023.

Furthermore, it was informed by the Longford Town Centre First Strategy completed in Q1 2024. In Q1 2024, the draft LAP was sent to environmental consultants for the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA), Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) reports.

The statutory public consultation of the Draft Local Area Plan was undertaken in Q4 and included a public consultation event in the Longford Town Library. The Draft Plan was available to view in all County Longford libraries and online.

Following the public consultation period, a total of 34 written submissions were received. A Chief Executive Report on the submissions received was completed and sent to the elected members in late November for their consideration.

## **Submissions and Input to Plans and Strategies**

The Forward Planning Unit made submissions and/or provided input into the preparation of a number of other documents including:

- Longford Town Centre First Strategy
- Longford Biodiversity Action Plan
- Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework (NPF)

## **Planning Enforcement**

The Planning Enforcement team investigates complaints from the public regarding unauthorised developments and non-compliance with planning conditions attached to planning permissions.

In 2024, 39 new cases were opened, 26 warning letters were issued and eight enforcement notices were issued. There were no referrals for prosecution and 41 files were closed.

# Regeneration and Active Travel

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## Regeneration

### Pobal le Cheile

Ballymahon Pobal Le Cheile Project, a €7.5 Million project, continued to be progressed in 2024. It receives funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). The project required extensive surveys of existing buildings, agreement on the schedule of accommodation, design and planning under Part 8. The planning for this project will progress in Q1 2025.

### Camlin Quarter: The Mall

Gateway 1 approval was sought in Q3 of 2024 from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) for the upgrade works to the Mall, including an astro pitch, parking and lighting. This project will go to construction in 2025.

### Church Street

The appointment of a consultant to develop Church Street along with the Lower Battery Road was advertised on eTenders in Q4, 2024 with a consultant expected to be appointed in Q1, 2025. This project will be a joint funded project under URDF and the National Transport Authority (NTA).

### Longford Playground and Sensory Garden

Over €400k was received under Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) for this project in 2024. In Q4, 2024 a contractor was appointed to the project. The works are expected to be completed in Q2, 2025. This project will also provide a link from the skate park to the playground and onto the Royal Canal.

# Regeneration and Active Travel

## North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2: Monaduff to Ballinamuck

The North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2: Monaduff to Ballinamuck project was officially opened by Minister Heather Humphreys in the presence of Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey in December 2024. Phase 2 of this project now connects Drumlish to Ballinamuck with a greenway. It was funded under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS).



## Active Travel

In 2020, active travel funding was announced by the Department of Transport for projects involving walking and cycling in towns and villages. At that time, these projects were delivered by the municipal districts. The level of increased funding that followed resulted in the establishment of the Active Travel section in 2021. Since 2020, Active Travel have progressed 21 projects totalling approximately €13 million.



# Regeneration and Active Travel

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## Ballinalee Road

The Ballinalee Road project involved the construction of a cycle track in the verge along the N63 Ballinalee Road between the junction of Ard Michael estate and the N63/N4 junction for a total distance of approximately 920m. The project included junction tightening works on both sides along the route, provision of a new controlled pedestrian and cycle crossing point and the planting of native hedge screening and trees, provision of upgraded street lighting, road signage and markings, landscaping, and all ancillary site works. This project was completed at the end of February 2024. It was officially opened by Minister Jack Chambers in May 2024. Funding was received from the NTA.



## Ennybegs

The construction of the Ennybegs Pedestrian and Cycle Improvement Scheme includes an approximately 840m-long, and 3m wide shared pathway, and ancillary site works along the L-1040-0 from St Teresa's National School to St Mary's Burial Ground at Clontumpher/Aghaboy, Ennybegs, County Longford. The Project was officially opened by Minister Jack Chambers in May 2024. Funding was received from the NTA.

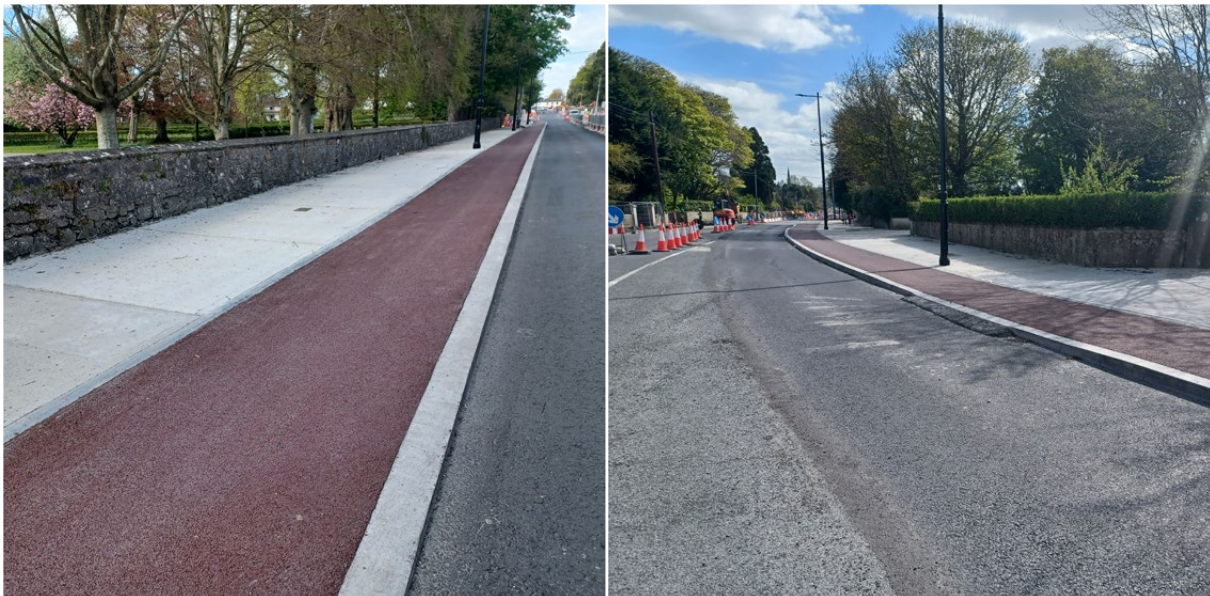


# Regeneration and Active Travel

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## Battery Road

The Battery Road project involves the complete upgrade of existing road carriageway with separate cycle track and footpath on each side, as well as new public lighting and drainage. The project also includes for a signalised junction at the entrance to Lisbrack, right turning lane at the entrance to Abbeycartron Demense and the construction of various pedestrian crossing points. The project commenced in 2023 with expected completion date in Q2 2025. Funding was received from the NTA.



## Granard

Two schemes progressed to construction stage in Q4 2024 in Granard: the Market Street to Barrack Lane, Granard – Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme and the R194 Longford Road, Granard – Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme.

The first scheme will see the opening of the link road from Market Street to Barrack Lane and when both schemes are completed in Q2 2025, there will be a pedestrian cycle link from the speed limits on the R194 into Barrack lane. Funding was received from the NTA.



# Regeneration and Active Travel

## Newtownforbes

The active travel project in Newtownforbes involved the construction of a 'school zone' and ancillary works at Scoil Mhuire, along the L-1004-0 road. It also included



the construction of a new controlled crossing on the N4 near the school. The project includes the provision of a school bus bay at the front of the school, relocating and upgrading the pedestrian crossing point to a controlled pedestrian crossing, junction tightening and the provision of road signage and marking. The Project was officially opened by Minister Jack Chambers in May 2024. Funding was received from the NTA.



# Town Centre First

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The Town Centre First initiative aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit. Through the development of a tailored Town Centre First Plan, these spaces are also to function as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. Each plan is developed at a local level, underpinned by diagnosis of local strengths and challenges, driven by local community and businesses as part of a Town Team.

The Longford Town Centre First (TCF) Strategy launched in 2024 is an ambitious plan that sets out a pathway for the revival and revitalisation of the county town of Longford. This strategy sets out the following 16-year vision for the town, outlining ambitions to be realised by Longford by 2040.



The Longford Town Team was established to support the development and implementation of the Strategy and continues to meet to work towards its implementation. Actions identified within the strategy included the



# Town Centre First

proposed redevelopment of Connolly Barracks. €200,000 was secured under THRIVE funding to develop preliminary design and Part 8 application for the redevelopment of Connolly Barracks as a community, cultural and museum space.

Outside of the county town, the Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan process commenced with the strengthening of the Town Team, extensive public consultation and surveys including walkability audit and town centre health check which will inform the development of the Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan to lay the foundation for the future development of the town.

## URBACT – UR Impact

The URBACT programme facilitates the sharing of knowledge and good practice between cities and other levels of government, promoting integrated sustainable development in cities. The UR Impact project aims to prioritise social impact in urban regeneration projects and enhancing community-based practices by reimagining the way urban regeneration actions are conducted. This means putting the citizen and their social and ecological well-being at the heart of urban regeneration strategies.



# Town Centre First

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In Ballymahon, the UR Impact project aims to support the Pobal le Cheile project, aiming to put the needs of the community at the heart of the delivery of this project. The URBACT Local Group (ULG) have identified a number of actions that will support and inform the development of the Pobal le Cheile project and aims to deliver for the community, including identifying good governance models for the Pobal le Cheile project, the feasibility of a Men's/Hen's Shed and identifying good practices in the development of youth facilities.

## Residential Zoned Land Tax

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) is a new tax aimed at increasing housing supply by activating zoned, serviced residential development lands for housing. Greenfield and brownfield land identified and zoned for housing will be potentially subject to tax. The tax is a commitment under the Government's *Housing for All* plan.

Longford County Council is required to prepare annual draft maps of the land considered to be in scope for the RZLT. Interested individuals or parties may make submissions in respect of land on the annual draft map. Residential properties, although included on the map, are not subject to RZLT if they are subject to Local Property Tax. Land appearing on the annual draft maps, unless amended following the outcome of submissions and rezoning requests made, will be included on the annual final map of land showing where the tax applies in the local authority area.

This final map was published in February 2025. This land will be subject to the tax in 2025 unless it is exempt as a residential property, or qualifies for any other exemption, as provided for in legislation. The administration of the RZLT is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners.

## Derelict Sites

Derelict sites can have a detrimental impact on the social, economic, commercial and visual aspects on the surrounding neighbourhood. It is important that they are reported, investigated, and rendered non-derelict. The Derelict Sites Act requires that the owner and occupier of land ensure that the land or structures do not become or remain a derelict site.

# Town Centre First

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The Act defines a derelict site as any land which detracts, or is likely to detract, to a material degree from the amenity, character or appearance of land in the neighbourhood of the land in question because of:

- structures which are in a ruinous, derelict or dangerous condition, or
- the neglected, unsightly or objectionable condition of the land or structures, or
- the presence, deposit or collection of litter, rubbish, debris or waste.

The Act imposes duties on the local authority to:

- maintain a Derelict Sites Register
- make the register available for public inspection.
- serve a notice on the owner/occupier specifying works to be carried out to prevent or stop dereliction
- acquire by agreement or compulsorily any derelict site
- impose an annual levy on any derelict site in an urban area

The Derelict Sites Act and process is being used as a vehicle to minimise dereliction and vacancy in the towns of County Longford. Notably, this year, the imposition of the Derelict Sites Levy on properties listed as derelict on the register aims to incentivize property owners to address dereliction and take necessary action. See below table for a breakdown of activities on derelict sites in 2024.

Section 8(2) Notice of Intention to enter on the Derelict Sites Register	11
Section 8(7) Notice that property has been entered on the Derelict Site Register	3
Section 11 Notice of Measure to be taken in relation to the Derelict Site.	3
Derelict Sites removed from Derelict Sites Register	10
Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) initiated	1
CPO ongoing and near completion	1

# Town Centre First

## Compulsory Purchase Order and Derelict Sites

The Town Centre First Department are actively executing the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) Activation Program, launched in early January 2023. This aims to swiftly identify and activate vacant and derelict properties across the county. Additionally, proactive measures are being taken to update the Derelict Sites Register (DSR).

Notably, this year, the imposition of the Derelict Sites Levy on properties listed as derelict in the register aims to incentivize property owners to address dereliction and take necessary actions. This has resulted in the initiation of one CPO in 2024 and preparation of a number of other properties for CPO in 2025.

## Vacant Homes Unit

The Vacant Homes Unit remains committed to executing housing projects outlined in the Vacant Homes Action Plan 2023–2026. It aims to identify and repurpose recoverable vacant properties to enhance housing supply and rejuvenate local communities.

## Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (Croí Cónaithe)

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme (Croí Cónaithe) continues to support property revitalization, offering up to €50,000 for vacant properties and €70,000 for derelict properties.

As of the latest update, details of applications for Longford County Council are below:

Applications were withdrawn or refused	27
Applications are pending further information from the applicants (some of these are not on the Geographical Information System (GIS) presently as they have not been fully validated yet due to missing documentation)	25
Application approved	121
Grants successfully paid out	12







# Infrastructure and Innovation

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# Roads

## Roads Expenditure

Road expenditure for 2024 for County Longford was €16,260,731. As part of this, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) contributed €4,892,451 to Longford County Council for national roads in 2024. This was used for:

Improvement Works	€3,578,845
National Primary and National Secondary Maintenance	€376,584
Highway Design Pavement Renewals and Surveys	€491,584
Winter Maintenance	€133,570

Longford County Council contributed €940,620 to non-national Roads in Longford in 2024. The Department of Transport contributed €10,427,660 for non-national roads in County Longford in 2024. This included:

Specific Improvement Grant	€56,000
Restoration Improvement Works	€5,430,927
Restoration Maintenance Works	€1,267,470 (RM+SRM)
Discretionary Maintenance Grant	€1,305,000
Low-Cost Safety Improvement works	€164,415
Drainage	€298,995
Bridge rehabilitation	€400,806
Training Programme	€34,000
Community Involvement Scheme	€218,698
Speed Limit Signage	€19,908
Climate Change Adaption and Resilience Pavement Survey Condition Index Survey Support	€282,981
Pavement Survey Condition Index Survey Support	€12,000
Former National Roads	€260,000



# Roads

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## N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky)

The N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Scheme is currently at Phase 2 – Options Selection.

The draft Option Selection Report (OSR) has had to be reviewed on a number of occasions to take into account Government policy changes including:

- The National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)
- The Climate Action Policy (CAP), and
- The Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF).

It is anticipated that Preferred Route Corridor will be identified in Quarter 1 2025 and the scheme will be progressed into Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation (subject to funding).

## National Road Pavement Improvement Schemes

National Road Pavement Improvement Schemes are selected on the basis of recent condition surveys of the network. The following works under this scheme were carried out in 2024:

- **N55 Meeltanagh:** Pavement resurfacing of a 4km section of the N55 between Edgeworthstown and Carrickboy took place in spring 2024. Project cost €2.6 million



# Roads

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- **N4 Deerpark:** Pavement resurfacing of a 700m section of the N4 west of Newtownforbes in December 2024. Project Cost: €260,000.
- **N55 Carrickboy:** HD28 pavement resurfacing of a 400m section of the N55 at Carrickboy village in November 2024
- **N63 Market Square:** HD28 resurfacing of the junction of New Street, Earl Street and Market Square in November 2024.

## Defects Maintenance Pavement Repairs

TII Ordinary Maintenance Defects Allocation (Category A) funding for 2024 was used on the following schemes:

- N4 Kilsallagh
- N55 Ballymahon at Athlone Road/Creevagh Beg/Rathmore
- N5 Aghareagh Drainage
- N4 Newtownforbes Drainage
- N55 Granard Drainage

## Regional and Local Roads

2024 was the third year of the Multi-Annual Restoration Improvement Programme 2022-2024 for non-national roads. An ambitious programme of works was implemented in the Municipal Districts and included the following notable achievements in 2024:

- Regional and local road improvement works to a value of €5.4 million.
- A total of 90 regional and local road projects were completed under the Restoration Improvement Programme resulting in over 52.651km of road being improved.
- Restoration maintenance works (surface dressing) to a value of €1.2 million.
- A total of 60 regional and local roads were completed under the Restoration Maintenance Programme resulting in over 53.617km being surface dressed.

# Roads

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## Bridge Rehabilitation Works

Longford County Council received an allocation of €429,500 in 2024 for bridge rehabilitation works. This was used to carry out on the following bridge improvements in 2024:

- **Leggagh Bridge:** Rehabilitation of a single span masonry bridge
- **Lissameen:** Reconstruction of a collapsed single span masonry arch bridge
- **Liscahill, Gneeve:** Rehabilitation of a double span masonry arch bridge
- **Townagh Aghadowry:** Rehabilitation of a single in situ concrete bridge
- **Currygranny, Ballagh:** Rehabilitation of a single span masonry arch bridge
- **Crott/Smear:** Rehabilitation of a single span masonry arch bridge
- **Drumeel Breaghy:** Replacement of an existing masonry clapper culvert with pre cast concrete box culvert structure



# Roads

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## Specific Improvement Grants

Road re-alignment works were carried out on the L-1105 at Drumanure near Colehill and design works were carried out on the R392 Abbeyshrule Road Junction.

## Former Nation Roads

Resurfacing works were completed on the L-1172, formerly the N4 Main Street/ Pound Street Edgeworthstown.

## Low-Cost Safety Improvement Grants

The Low-Cost Safety Improvement Grants enable low-cost safety improvement works on regional and local roads. Work under this scheme included completion of junction improvement, traffic calming, new footpaths, additional line marking and signage to a value of €220,550. Three schemes were completed in Granard Municipal District (MD) and two in Longford MD as follows:

- **Drumlish:** Large-scale safety scheme in Drumlish village involving the realignment of the crossroads in the centre of the village and narrowing of approach roads to reduce speed on all approaches.
- **Drumlish:** New raised controlled pedestrian crossing at the north end of the village near the playground.
- **Aughnacliffe:** Junction sightline improvement projects at two junctions on the Smear Rossduff road to Arva.
- **Knockloughlin:** Installation of signage.
- **Gleann Riada:** Installation of speed ramps for traffic calming.

## Climate Change Adaption and Rehabilitation

Under a Climate Change Adaption and Rehabilitation allocation, two projects were constructed for Ballymahon MD, four for Granard MD and one for Longford MD. They are:

- **L-1164 Tureen:** Embankment construction along the verge.
- **R-392 Gorteengar:** Storm drainage improvement works.



# Roads

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- **L-1051-0 Gelsha, Aughnacliffe:** Embankment construction along the verge.
- **L-10841 Coolagherty:** Flooding relief works and road damage repairs.
- **St Mel's Road:** surface water/sewer upgrade.

## Local Improvement Schemes

The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) provides funding to help local authorities carry out improvement works on private and non-publicly maintained roads. It is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development. In 2024, the Council was allocated €564,965 under the Local Improvement Scheme and 11 schemes were completed across the county.



## Community Involvement Schemes

Three approved schemes were completed under the Community Involvement Scheme in 2024. All schemes were in the Granard MD. The schemes included a mix of sightline improvements at junctions, drainage works and new footpath construction. The works were completed in conjunction with local community groups.



# Roads

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## Drainage

Drainage works to the value of €332,089 were carried out at various locations throughout the County.

## Public Lighting

Of the 6,009 public lights taken-in-charge by the Council, 4,867 are now upgraded to more energy-efficient LEDs. The Council will continue upgrading public lighting to LEDs in 2025.

## Parking Fines

Longford County Council issued 652 parking fines, also called fixed charge offence notices, in 2024. These fines help to tackle careless or illegal parking. There were also 288 fines issued for not displaying a of tax disc.

## Parking Permits

The Council issued 58 quarterly permits for off-street car parks, 60 resident permits, seven over-65s permits and 377 Council employee carpark permits.

## Road Opening Licenses

A map road opening licensing system for works by statutory organisations and others through this system is operated by the Council. This supports the improvement of service infrastructure and the rollout of broadband in the county.

## Road Safety

Longford County Council's Road Safety Team coordinated and attended a number of events over the year to promote road safety including the following:

- Longford Microsoft Dream Space showcase, targeting over 400 primary school children

# Roads

- Longford Community Safety and Wellbeing Expo targeting over 700 transition year (TY) Students
- National Ploughing Day Road Safety Stand
- Participation at the road safety event in support of An Garda Síochána Community Police Unit in Granard Mart targeting TY Students from two Granard secondary schools
- Colour competitions for Bike Week



## Road Safety Plan

Longford County Council is dedicated to promoting road safety. A Road Safety Working Together Group (RSWTG) has been established in County Longford to coordinate road safety activities. It was designed to ensure a collaborate and consistent approach to improve road safety.

In 2023, representative members of the committee from Longford County Council, An Garda Síochána, TII, Road Safety Authority (RSA) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) prepared and adopted a new Local Road Safety Action Plan to cover the period 2022-2024 in line with the Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. The current Plan is being reviewed and updated for the next phase 2025-2027 to align with the Governments National Road Strategy.

A review of the 2024 Actions contained in the Local Road Safety Plan was conducted by the Road Safety Working Together Group and published on the Longford County Council website in January 2025.

# Environment and Climate Action

## Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) Plan

Longford County Council adhered to the procedures for environmental inspections and mandatory reporting to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Environment Section compiled an inventory of all County Longford’s waste data for timely submission to the EPA.

In 2024, the Litter Wardens continued to carry out their role and function. The Environment Section’s waste inspections focused on three priority areas of waste, water and air that included:

- **Waste:** Tackling significant illegal waste activity, household and commercial waste collection, and tracking waste flows.
- **Water:** Farm inspections, monitoring regular private water supplies, septic tank inspections , river and lake sampling programmes, investigation of water pollution complaints and incidents.
- **Air:** Inspections relating to compliance with Solid Fuel Regulations, investigating air and noise complaints, implementation of Petroleum Vapours, Deco Paints and Solvent Regulations.

It was another busy year dealing with incidences of environmental pollution. 1,710 environmental complaints were received and actioned as follows:

Litter and Waste	Air	Water	Noise	Other	Total
1,653	7	31	14	5	1,710
96%	0.5%	2%	1%	0.5%	100%

## Management of Litter and Waste

In 2024, the litter and waste team took significant steps to address dumping in County Longford. The team investigated 1,653 litter and waste complaints, demonstrating a strong commitment to keeping our environment clean. As a result of these investigations, 206 litter fines were issued, generating income of €18,050.

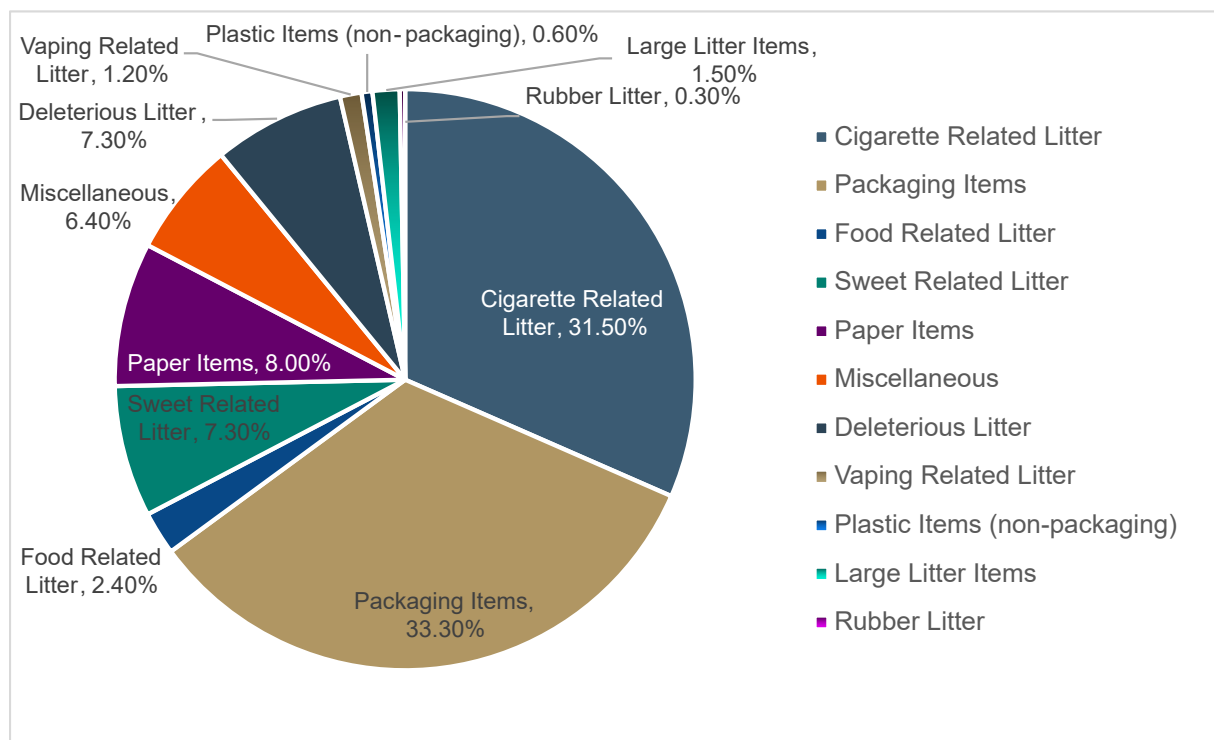
# Environment and Climate Action

Failure by individuals to pay fines, resulted in the initiation of 29 prosecutions under the Litter Pollution Act. A further 78 enforcement actions were initiated with 35 warning letters and 43 statutory notices issued under the Waste Management Act and Litter Pollution Act.

Enforcement actions not only serve as a deterrent to potential offenders but also reinforces the importance of responsible waste disposal, and adherence to the 'polluter pays' principle. These figures represent a significant increase year on year, which reflects the hard work and dedication of the litter team in addressing littering more effectively throughout County Longford.

## National Litter Pollution Monitoring System

The Annual Report for the National Litter Pollution Monitoring System was released in June. The results for County Longford are compared to national results for all local authorities.





# Environment and Climate Action

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Data presented in this report is based on Litter Quantification and Litter Pollution Surveys which are carried out by the litter wardens throughout the year. While any amount of litter is too much, it is worth noting that cigarette related litter and packaging items together form 65% of litter surveyed in the county.

## Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) results

Longford Town improved its ranking in the 2024 Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) results and is now ranked 23rd and Clean to European Norms. This is a very good result for Longford, one of the best in a long number of years with over half (6 out of 10) of the survey sites getting an A grade and three further sites getting a B grade.

## Multihog Mini-Sweeper

To tackle the issue of micro litter on footpaths in Longford town, the Environment Section arranged a seven-week trial of a Multihog mini-sweeper. The sweeper was used by Longford Municipal District staff in Longford Town.

Areas which the sweeper focused on included, Market Square, Longford Shopping Centre Carpark and Grafton Court. It was also trialled on the new cycleways and in the lanes and alleyways around the town.

The machine was a huge success, and the Municipal District subsequently leased the machine to the end of the year. It is hoped that the use of this vehicle, or similar, will help in keeping our public realm clear of litter and improve Longford Town's standing in the national IBAL litter league and the National TidyTown competition.

## Deposit Return Scheme

The Deposit Return Scheme came into effect from 1 February 2024. From that date, a fee applies to all plastic bottle, aluminium and steel cans that feature the Re-turn logo. When you return your empty, undamaged container to any retail outlet, you get your deposit back in full.

# Environment and Climate Action

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It aims to move away from the 'take, make and dispose' culture to one of returning valuable materials and keeping them in the economy for as long as possible. The Environment team's Waste Enforcement Officers enforce the legislation.

## Rural Water Programme

The Rural Water Programme is managed by the Rural Water Team in Environment and includes individual private water supplies, Group Water Schemes, and domestic wastewater treatment systems.

Rural Water Programme Grants issued during 2024 as follows:

- Seven Well Grants totaling €37,728
- Six Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems Grants totaling €47,946
- Three Group Water Scheme Subsidy Grants totaling €20,651

## Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026

The Rural Water Team submitted an application in April 2024 to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, for funding under the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme (MARWP) 2024-2026 on behalf of two Group Water Schemes (GWS).

Environment worked with and supported a number of other community connections and Group Water Schemes throughout the county, to develop applications for submission as part of the process.

Unfortunately, due to the restricted criteria requiring a minimum of 25 houses for community connection applications, a restriction in grant aid of €15k per house, and strict criteria in relation to the development of options reports, it was not possible to progress applications for a further five schemes.

# Environment and Climate Action

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Funding was received under the MARWP for one GWS, while at the end of 2024 the Rural Water Team were actively progressing further information in relation to the second GWS application.

## Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems Grant Increase

From 1 January 2024 the grants available for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (commonly known as septic tanks) increased from €5,000 to €12,000, a 140% increase.

Grants are only available in instances where a wastewater treatment system inspection has been carried out and the system fails the inspection. There are no general grant available and property owners may not apply to have a domestic wastewater treatment system inspection carried out. Inspections are allocated across the country through the National Inspection Plan, with the greatest focus on areas where there is the most risk to groundwater, surface water or human health.

## Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI)

Illegal dumping remains high on the agenda for Environment Section, working in conjunction with colleagues in Longford County Council and communities across the county. While enforcement action in this area is a matter for the Environment Section, the continued provision of Government funding under the Anti-Dumping Initiative facilitates a multi-faceted approach to tackling instances of litter and waste across the county. Projects are assessed based on their potential impact on prevention, abatement, education, and enforcement.

The Environment Team were successful in receiving approximately €78,200 in funding for a variety of projects including:

# Environment and Climate Action

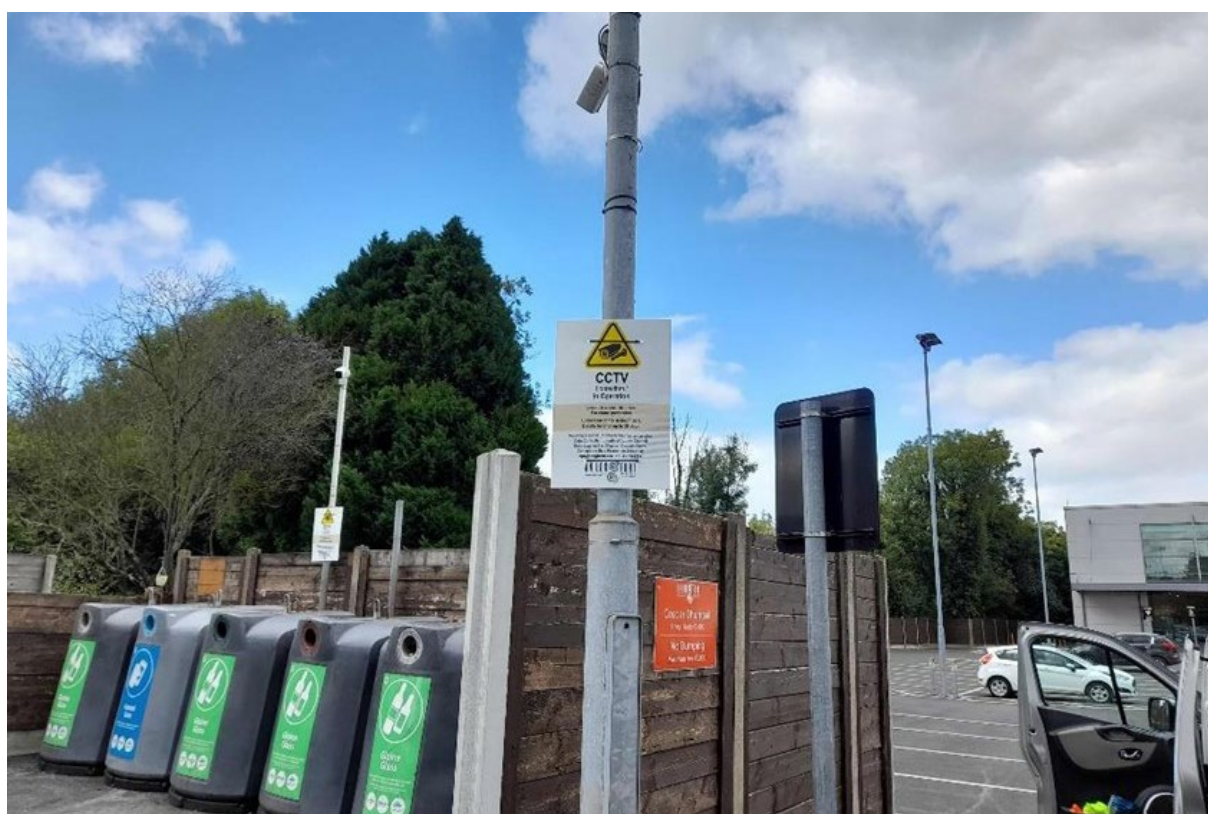
## Implementation of CCTV

Following on from the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022, which amended the Litter Pollution Act, local authorities may use CCTV in certain circumstances to combat the problem of littering and illegal dumping.

Longford County Council's Environment Section initiated a pilot programme to install CCTV at multiple locations throughout Longford town and county. This has been accomplished with funding provided under the Anti-Dumping Initiative.

The aims of this programme include:

- Identifying and prosecuting polluters.
- Keeping our streets and natural heritage clean and safe for use by the public.
- Demonstrating Longford County Council's ability to quickly adapt to changing legislation and technologies.
- Determining whether CCTV can act as a deterrent to those who may consider littering.





# Environment and Climate Action

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Due to the success of the initial pilot, CCTV has become part of the solution to prevent and detect instances of littering and dumping. To date this initiative has resulted in 37 litter fines and the initiation of additional prosecutions. The introduction of CCTV has resulted in reduced dumping at the monitored sites. Further sites will be identified during 2025 for this programme of work.



## Bulky Goods and Mattress Collection

In September, working in partnership with local upcycling enterprises, the Environment Section in conjunction with Longford Municipal District provided a Bulky Goods and Mattress Collection at McEoin Park and Ardnacassa housing estates in Longford Town.

The initiative aimed to assist in the prevention and abatement of illegal dumping in rural and urban areas, providing a free-of-charge collection service for the public's convenience, while facilitating the upcycling of their large goods for the benefit of the circular economy.

In total, 33 tonnes of bulky goods including furniture, carpets, metal, bicycles, wood and hard plastics, in addition to 54 mattresses were collected for upcycling on the day.

Separately, the Environment Section with the assistance of the Municipal District staff, held our annual one-day large goods collection service in April, to assist the public in responsibly disposing of their large goods.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## Education and Awareness in relation to the 3 Rs

The Magical Three Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) educational show was attended by over 700 students from St Patrick's National School in Coolarty, Scoil Mhuire National School in Granard, St Teresa's National School in Clontumpher, St Michael's National School in Longford and St Sinneach's National School in Colehill.

The show captivated the students with its blend of magic, comedy, catchy songs and colourful characters. The show actively inspired the students to protect the environment and make a positive difference. This was organised with funding from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications) Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant.



## Digital Environmental Awareness Campaign

The Environment Section launched an eight-week digital public environmental awareness campaign, with two main messages: to encourage the public to dispose of cigarette butts responsibly, and to raise awareness of illegal dumping by appealing to the public to refrain from this unacceptable behaviour and report any illegal dumping in the county.

The adverts were shown to Longford citizens across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Google Ads, and websites including the LongfordLeader.ie and Shannonside.ie. The campaign was also mirrored across Longford County Council social media channels. The campaign was extremely successfully as the adverts were shown over 1.7m million times and there were 1,721 clicks to the dedicated Longford County Council webpage.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## Longford County Council Hazardous Waste

Longford County Council recognise the importance of properly disposing of hazardous waste to help protect our environment. The safe removal of hazardous waste from our environment ensures it does not end up in landfills or other areas where it is able to seep into groundwater. Contaminated groundwater is not only dangerous to humans, but also to wildlife, animals, and ecosystems.

The Environment Section held two hazardous waste collections during 2024. Items for collection included old paints, old and out of date household cleaners, garden herbicides, pesticides, waste oil, obsolete medicines, and old batteries. There was a very positive response from the public.



## Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT)

The Environment Section welcomed the Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT) to Longford Town on Thursday, 27 June. Working to tackle gum litter, this awareness campaign encourages the responsible disposal of gum litter in a bin and avoiding a €150 litter fine. This local authority campaign is supplemented by the 'Bin It!' school roadshow and a social media campaign to target 16-24-year-olds.



# Environment and Climate Action

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Longford County Council is proud to have been involved in this influential campaign since its inception. GLT research found that the biggest deterrent of gum litter is peer pressure, with 1 in 4 stating they have changed their behaviour due to the educational messaging from the Bin-It! campaign.



## TidyTowns Engagement Event

Longford County Council's first TidyTowns engagement event was held in Edgeworthstown Library on Saturday, 27 April. Organised by the Council's Environment Section, 16 local TidyTowns groups were in attendance. Guest speaker Ann O'Leary engaged the audience with an informative and thought-provoking presentation as she shared her experience as a TidyTowns adjudicator for the past 43 years. The Biodiversity Officer and Environmental Awareness Officer also gave presentations on the day.

County Longford currently has over 30 active TidyTowns groups. Each group plays a crucial role in keeping local towns and villages well-maintained for both local people and visitors. They promote community engagement and build pride in our shared spaces.



# Environment and Climate Action

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The Environment Team would like to extend our sincere thanks to all TidyTowns groups for the work they carry out throughout the year to improve and enhance the appearance of the public realm.



## Pollution Control and Water Quality Management

Pollution control and water quality management covers water quality, air quality and noise control as follows:

### Water Quality

In 2024, Longford County Council completed 24 farm inspections in areas identified as Areas for Action by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Local Authority Water Programme Office (LAWPRO). Two farmland inspections resulted in cross reporting to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, for significant non-compliances, and 15% penalties being applied to the farmers in

# Environment and Climate Action

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both instances. The completed inspections focused on better regulation of use of fertilisers on land, and identifying surface water pathways from farmyards to watercourses.

Longford County Council also undertook septic tank inspections in the high risk areas identified in National Inspection Plan to prevent nearby water supplies being impacted due to effluent from poorly functioning tanks. Grants are available for remediation works refer to Rural Water Programme above.

Longford County Council monitored 15 small private water supplies and two group water supplies throughout 2024 and undertook an extensive sampling programme of rivers and lakes outlined in the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan.

The Environment Section of Longford County Council facilitated a focus group comprising of representatives from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, the EPA, LAWPRO and other stakeholders. As part of this focus group, Longford County Council investigated the causes of high levels of acid herbicide MCPA in the Lough Forbes catchment area.

## **Historic Landfill Sites**

The Environment Section carried out quarterly surface and groundwater monitoring at 3 historic landfills in the reporting year. The purpose of the monitoring is to provide baseline data for Certificate of Authorisation (CoA) applications.

In Q3/Q4, the Environmental Protection Agency completed their assessment of Ballymulvey, Cartron Big and Ballymaurice Historic Landfills in accordance with the Waste Management (Certification of Historic Unlicensed Waste Disposal and Recovery Activity) Regulations, 2008 and issued the CoA's for each of these sites. The Environment Section have two years to implement the remediation measures as per the CoAs received.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## Air Quality

In 2024, the Environment Section continued its work of increasing awareness and enforcing Solid Fuel Regulations. Longford County Council carried out regular inspections of fuel merchants and other retail premises.

## Noise Action Plan 2024-2028

Longford County Councils Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 was completed in Q3 2024. It was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive. The only noise source that is applicable to County Longford is major roads with a flow threshold of 3,000,000 vehicles per year.

Ten Priority Important Areas (PIAs) have been identified in County Longford for investigation of potential noise mitigation measures: Mainly proposing the resurfacing of roads and/or the N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) new route – 52km of road, which diverts from the current N4 route south of Edgeworthstown and rejoin the current N4 north of Newtownforbes.

## Community Warden

Longford County Council's Community Warden successfully worked with local schools, community groups, businesses and agencies to improve the physical environment within the town. The Community Warden maintained a visual presence out and about on the streets, open spaces, parks, and local housing estates, to provide reassurance and to become a point of contact for citizens, businesses, and community groups.

They worked closely with An Garda Síochána and the Community Police to promote safety in Longford town. They also engaged in education and awareness sessions as well as enforcement to support local festivals, sporting and community events and local community groups including TidyTowns.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## Green Schools

Twelve schools in County Longford renewed their Green Schools Green Flags in 2024. This recognised the work of these schools to tackle litter and waste, to improve energy and water conservation. The programme helps to raise awareness of the impact of travel, biodiversity and global citizenship on the environment.

## Burial Grounds

Longford County Council is responsible for a large number of burial grounds in the county, of which a total of 40 are currently operational. The Environment Section completed essential works at a number of cemeteries across the county, to the value of €200,000, including:

- Granardkille Cemetery Wall Remedial Works – €28,000
- Shrule Cemetery New Wall and Footpaths – €68,000
- Abbeyshrute cemetery new access and railing – €50,000
- Legan Cemetery – investigative works – €7,000
- Footpaths Works in Moydow and Ardagh cemeteries – €23,000
- Tree Works in Ballymacormack, Purth, Edgeworthstown, and Carrickedmund cemeteries – €24,000

Monetary assistance was provided to Longford Community Resources Limited (LCRL) to assist local cemetery committees with the maintenance of common areas, general clean up and mowing. Grants of €7,400 issued to 17 local community groups during the year to support their work.

## Veterinary Services

Longford County Council's Veterinary Section focuses on Food Safety, Dog and Horse control as follows:

### Food Safety

Longford County Council Veterinary Section implemented a regular programme of monitoring and inspection of registered meat premises and approved abattoirs in 2024.



# Environment and Climate Action

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The inspections covered general conditions of operational and structural hygiene, verification of Food Safety Management Systems, including Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP), veterinary medicines residue sampling, animal health and animal welfare checks.

On 1 January 2025 the County Veterinary Officer transferred to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine. All Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) work also transferred at that time.

## **Dog Control Service**

The Environment Section's Dog Control Service continues its' emphasis on public safety and rehoming stray and seized dogs. All missing and stray dogs notified to the Council are uploaded to the Dog Rehoming section of [Longfordcoco.ie](https://longfordcoco.ie). There is also an online application form for people who are interested in giving a dog a forever home. Social media campaigns in relation to sheep worrying and dog rehoming were ran throughout the year.

In 2024, 107 dogs were in the care and responsibility of Longford County Council. Of these, the Council successfully coordinated the re-homing of 73 dogs, 21 dogs were reclaimed by their owners and 10 dogs were euthanised.

In 2024 also, the Council's Dog Control Service provided significant assistance to An Garda Síochána in relation to the control of restricted breeds of dogs. The Council does not rehome restricted breed dogs directly to the public and is reliant on animal welfare charities to accommodate such dogs on its behalf. The Council is very grateful for the help and support received from those charities.

Longford County Council ran social media and radio campaigns to raise awareness of sheep worrying and attacks by dogs on pregnant ewes and their lambs, and the resulting impact on the farming community.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## XL Bully Type Dog Regulations

The XL Bully type dog Regulation came into effect on 1 October 2024. The owners of XL Bully type dogs, had between 1 October 2024 and 31 January 2025 to apply for a Certificate of Exemption, from the local authority in which the dog resides. From 1 February 2025, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully type dog without a Certificate of Exemption.

The Dog Control Service, purchased Longford County Council's first Electric Vehicle, emphasising our commitment to making Longford a greener and safer county.



## Climate Action Plan

In February 2024, Longford County Council adopted its five-year Climate Action Plan. The plan contains 53 actions to help Longford County Council meet its energy and carbon targets and to demonstrate leadership through example.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## Community Climate Action

Climate Action approved grants totalling €328,000 to 14 community groups under strand 1 of the Community Climate Action Fund. A further €61,100 was approved for one project under strand 1a (Shared Island). The community groups have 18 months to complete and drawdown the grants.

## Biodiversity

In May, the first meeting of the Biodiversity Working Group was held involving local representatives, representatives from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Hedgerows Ireland, Coillte, Bord na Móna, Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) and Swift Conservation Ireland. The Biodiversity Working Group agreed draft actions for the upcoming Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan which is scheduled for completion in 2025.

## EV Charging

Under an Eir/EasyGo Longford Council programme at total of:

- Four 75kw chargers were installed in Longford at Longford Library
- Eight 50kw chargers were installed and shared across Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Longford
- Two 22kw chargers in Granard

In addition, the Housing Section installed a further four 50kw chargers at their new housing development on Connaught Road, Longford.

Work is ongoing on the development of a regional EV charging strategy involving the 5 midland counties Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Longford and Roscommon.

# Environment and Climate Action

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## Pathfinder and Energy

Through the Midland Energy Agency and support from Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Longford County Council tendered out the detailed design for a project to decarbonise Áras an Chontae and Camlin Court. Appointment of the successful consultant is expected in Q1 2025.

Climate Action continues to monitor and report on the Council's energy usage to SEAI. In 2024, Climate Action completed a project in the Library HQ which resulted in significant energy savings following the repair of 28 'tilt and turn' windows.

## Energy Roadshow

Climate Action hosted the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) Energy Roadshow at the Barracks, Longford Town from the 25-29 November 2024. The roadshow was attended by 300 people who were interested in PV panels, heat pumps, insulation and energy efficiency. Introductory courses were also offered to interested participants during the week.





# Environment and Climate Action

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## Our Shared Plate

Longford County Council partnered with Neighbourhood Networks in piloting the Our Shared Plate programme in County Longford. Three community groups took part that included, Longford Women's Link, Killoe Men's Shed and Old Ardnacassa Residents Association. The programme focused on food production and preparation and included workshops on tree planting, baking, wickerwork composting and also included some farm visits.

## Tree Planting

In March 2024, Climate Action distributed 300 trees to various community groups, supplied by Coillte through An Taisce. In addition, Climate Action participated in a number of tree planting events such as in Alderfield, Longford and Wood View, Newtownforbes.

## Public Engagements

The Climate Action Team participated in many community Engagements over the course of the year such as Biodiversity Week, Heritage Week, Longford Show, Microsoft Dream Space Showcase and Pathways to Funding, and Tidy Towns events.

# Fire and Emergency Services

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The Fire and Emergency Service have fire stations in Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Lanesborough and Longford. These stations are manned by retained firefighters who respond to both fire and rescue incidents.

See call outs and staffing figures for each County Longford Fire Station below.

Fire Station (Call Sign)	Staff	Fire Service Callouts*
Longford (LD11)	12	233
Granard (LD12)	8	49
Ballymahon (LD13)	10	71
Edgeworthstown (LD14)	10	108
Lanesborough (LD15)	8	42
Total Callouts:		503

Longford Fire Service cost €3,451,000 to operate for 2024 for both its operational response and mitigation work streams. This figure is likely to rise in the future when the current vacancies are filled.

## Fire Safety Certificates

In 2024, there were 46 Fire Certificates processed by the Fire and Emergency Services team. The team assesses and processes these applications, as well as planning applications and court licence application referrals.

## Promoting Fire Safety

Promoting fire safety by bringing the fire safety message to all primary schools in the county, including at the Microsoft Dream Space Showcase and the Longford Community Safety and Wellbeing Expo, was also part of our work in 2024.

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\* Figure refers to both first turnout and assisting fire brigade units

# Fire and Emergency Services

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## Recruitment and Retirement

Recruitment of firefighters has been an ongoing issue both in Longford and nationally. Retained firefighters went on strike in 2023 and secured better pay and conditions of employment. It is hoped that these new conditions of employment will attract new personnel into the service.

Longford Fire and Emergency Services recruited nine new retained firefighters in 2024 and organised and ran a recruit firefighter skills course for them in Lanesborough in October 2024. Recruitment to the fire service is ongoing with 13 retained firefighter vacancies still outstanding at the end of 2024.

After a 30-year career in the fire services of Mayo, Galway and Longford, Chief Fire Officer Declan Kilcline retired on 5 December 2024. Declan joined Longford Fire Service in 2001 as Assistant Chief Fire Officer and became Chief Fire Officer in 2006. Firefighter William Connaughton left to join An Garda Síochána in December 2024 after 14 years with the Edgeworthstown unit of the brigade.

# Fire and Emergency Services

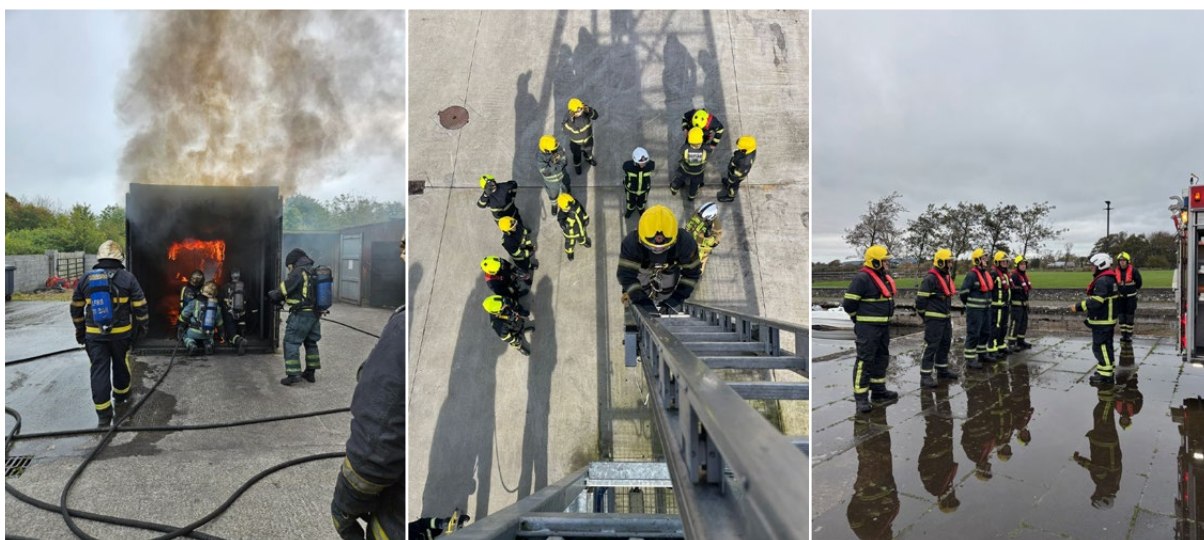
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## Equipment

The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management in the Department of Housing provided capital funding to purchase thermal imaging equipment, Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV) fans, drills, a breathing apparatus decontamination washer unit and a replacement jeep in 2024. Contracts were signed in 2024 with HPMP to build a new class B fire engine for Longford Fire Service. It is hoped to have the new fire engine completed by early 2026.

## Training

The Firefighter Training and Drill Programme was completed in accordance with the Fire Service Annual Operational Plan 2024. Crew members in each station attended 40 drill nights throughout the year. Two Managing Fire Service Incidents Module 1 courses were run in Lanesborough to train up new junior officers for the county. Water Awareness Training, Compartment Fire Behaviour Training Incorporating Fognails and Compressed Air Foam (Instructor) training courses were also completed in 2024.





# Building Control

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The Building Control Management System (BCMS) facilitates the electronic administration of building control matters. Owners, builders and construction professionals may use the BCMS to upload building control forms, design and compliance documents, and statutory certificates. The system was modified in early 2024 and online training was provided.

## 2024 Building Control Notices and Certificates

The Building Control team process Commencement Notices, Disability Access Certificate applications and Certificates of Completion. It also issues the Fire Safety Certificates. In 2024, the following building control notices and certificates were issued:

Building Control Notices and Certificates issued in 2024	
Commencement Notices	132
Fire Safety Certificates	46
Disability Access Certificates	28
Certificates of Completion	24

Building Control also carry out site inspections and monitor work standards and materials on site.

# Civil Defence

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Civil Defence is a voluntary based organisation that supports the principal response agencies of An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Local Authority, as well as Government departments and state agencies to assist with the national, regional and local emergency and non-emergency events. The five core services as set out in the 'Towards 2030' Policy are:

- Emergency Response
- Search and Rescue
- Medical Response
- Community Assistance
- Radiation Monitoring

Volunteers are recruited and trained locally and attend the Civil Defence college in Roscrea for more advanced training. Training is provided in first aid up to emergency medical technician level and in areas such as manual and people handling, communications, missing person search, severe weather driving, child protection and radiation monitoring and critical incident stress management.



# Civil Defence

Civil Defence supports principal response agencies in dealing with emergency situations such as severe weather events, major emergencies, and displaced persons. Civil Defence also supports locally held community events and assists other counties, where required. There are currently 31 volunteers in Longford Civil Defence.

## Activities

Longford Civil Defence completed 112 duties in 2024. These involved:

- 32 local authority events
- 23 sporting events
- 37 community events
- 12 welfare events
- 10 emergency taskings

Duties and taskings included provision of medical cover at community and sporting events such as:



- Sporting matches including Longford Town Football Club soccer matches and GAA matches.
- Other sporting events including the Longford Marathon, 5k runs, and swimming, cycling and fishing events.
- Longford County Council events such as the National Famine Commemoration, Microsoft Dream Space Showcase, civic receptions, and Longford Lights 2024
- The Local Elections 2024.
- St Patrick's day parades.

Welfare cover was provided at the Irish Blood Bank Transfusion Service clinics in Longford and emergency taskings included a missing person search.



# Civil Defence

## Training

Training provided to volunteers in 2024 and included:

- Cardiac First responder
- Cardiac first responder advanced
- First Aid responder
- Manual Handling
- Missing person search
- Tusla child protection
- Multi disciplined weekly training.
- Critical incident stress management peer to peer mentor
- Mappyx mapping user training
- Mandatory training for new recruits
- Recertification training for instructors



Local exercises were also held in Connolly Barracks and Bishopsgate Stadium. Cardiac first responder training was also provided to Longford Town Football Club stewards and the local gymnastics club.

## Vehicle Fleet

Statutory inspections took place on all vehicles.

The Road Safety Authority conducted an onsite compliance inspection on all fleet.





# Civil Defence

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There was also an enhancement of internal fit out of vehicle for equipment removal to ensure safer manual handling for volunteers and upgrading of tyres to all terrain in 4x4 vehicles.

## Policy and Operations

Civil Defence is 70% funded by the Department of Defence and 30% by the Local Authority. Grant funding from the Department of Defence in 2024 was €98,017.95. The expenditure incurred by Longford County Council in relation to the Civil Defence section in 2024 was €154,574.

The Civil Defence section was included in the local authority National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) health and safety audit. Statutory inspections of equipment were carried out.

A prehospital emergency care council (PHECC) audit was conducted in the unit. Inspectors visited the unit and looks at safety systems, how duties are conducted and spoke to volunteers. Inspectors also accompanied Civil Defence on duty to the Longford Town Football Club soccer match. This is part of the governance validation framework.

One volunteer attended a presentation of long service medals in Trinity College Dublin, where she received a 30-year service medal. The medals were presented by Taoiseach Michéal Martin.

Volunteers took part in a national radiation exercise. This is part of the core service that we provide. Volunteers took soil, grass, and air samples from different areas of Longford. These were transported to the Environmental Protection Agency for analysis. This exercise also tests our communications network on the TETRA system.

The Civil Defence Officer and Assistant Civil Defence Officer gave a presentation to search managers and volunteers at the missing person search seminar hosted by the Civil Defence College.

## Civil Defence

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A presentation evening was held for volunteers where they were presented with their training certificates earned during the year. One volunteer was presented with their 30-year service medals.

Four new recruits joined the unit and are now undergoing probationary training.

Civil Defence rolled out the new workwear uniform for volunteers. This year's issue included new workwear trousers, a half zip top, polo shirt and shirt. Volunteers welcomed this investment into improving workwear.











# Ukranian Reponse, Enterprise and Tourism

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# Local Enterprise Office

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## Job creation

In 2024, the number of client companies in the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Longford portfolio was 258. Over the course of 2024, a total of 38 additional new jobs (201 gains and 163 losses) were created in companies who are clients of the LEO Longford.

## Business Training and Mentoring

Local Enterprise Office, Longford provided 55 business training courses in 2024, with the majority delivered online. A total of 1,004 employers and/or employees attended these courses which varied in duration and intensity. In 2024, there was a strong demand for courses in finance and digitalisation and a growing interest in training supports around climate change responsibilities.

In Longford in 2024, 217 business owners and managers availed of mentoring. Mentoring involves experts from different disciplines offering guidance to individual businesses during the year.

## Start Your Own Business Programme

The Start Your Own Business Programme (SYOB) is a core LEO product. In 2024, nine SYOB programmes were delivered and 139 people participated.

## Financial supports

A total of 42 businesses were approved €316,537 in financial assistance through the financial supports on offer to new or expanding businesses. This included:

- 14 small grants to new or expanding enterprises totalling €208,000
- €58,685 in Energy Efficiency Grants to seven small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- 2 Technical Assistance Grants totalling €4,217
- 19 Trading Online Vouchers totalling €45,635

LEO Longford also assisted 10 businesses to successfully apply for funding from Microfinance Ireland.

# Local Enterprise Office

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## New Supports Introduced

Two new supports were designed and launched for the small business sector in the autumn 2024. The Energy Efficiency Grant provides incentive to replace or upgrade energy efficiency equipment and machinery, and the new Grow Digital Voucher offers SMEs with up to 50 employees financial support to embrace digital technology. Both these products should be popular in 2025.

## Local Enterprise Week 2024

Local Enterprise Week is celebrated nationally every March. In Longford, events were held to highlight the LEO supports available to small businesses and to focus on the value of enterprise and entrepreneurship to our local economies.

## County and National Enterprise Awards



The County Enterprise Awards is a spotlight event during Local Enterprise Week. It helps recognise the achievements of our small business sector. The overall winner of the awards, 2024 went to Granard based firm, Harp Media. This business specialises in short and feature-length films, factual TV programming, corporate videos and filmmaking training.

Harp Media went on to represent LEO Longford at the National Enterprise Awards ceremony in Dublin in May.

## National Women's Enterprise Day and Women in Business Events

National Women's Enterprise Day (NWED) took place in October. This event was organised by the four Local Enterprise Offices of the Midlands: Laois, Longford, Offaly, and Westmeath. This year's event took place in the Crypt in St Mel's Cathedral where over 150 businesswomen from around the Midlands came together for the event, which focussed on the theme of 'Making it Happen'.

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In addition to NWED, two other Women in Business events were organised by LEO Longford, Leitrim and Westmeath, including an event to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2024.



## AI: The Way Forward Event

LEO Longford hosted a successful 'AI: The Way Forward' event in March 2024. Attended by many businesses from across the county, it included a keynote address by Longford-born and London-based broadcaster, editor and artificial intelligence trailblazer Anne-Marie Tomchak. This was followed by a panel





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discussion with three other leading AI experts and business leaders, namely Alan Farrelly, CitySwift, John O'Shanahan, LeanBPI and Toby Farren, Waypoint Software. The event provided local businesses with the opportunity to hear from experts in the area of artificial intelligence and instil confidence for those businesses to adopt digitalisation and AI tools to benefit their businesses.

## Student Enterprise Programme

The Student Enterprise Programme is run by the network of Local Enterprise Offices. It introduces secondary school students to the real-life skills needed to run their own enterprises.

In 2024, over 250 students from seven secondary schools participated in the programme. Exceptional quality was seen in the county final which took place in March. From this, three projects proceeded to the Student Enterprise National Final which took place in The Mullingar Park Hotel on Thursday, 9 May. They were:

- 'Handle Holders' from Ballymahon Vocational School (Senior category).
- 'Trendy Threads' from Moyne Community School (Intermediate category)
- 'Hat Scents' from Ardscoil Phádraig, Granard (Junior category)





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## EU Just Transition Fund

2024 was an exciting year for Longford Tourism, with a lot of change and industry development activity underway. Fáilte Ireland is responsible for delivering the Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme for Ireland's Midlands 2023-2026 as part of the European Union (EU) Just Transition Fund. It includes a series of funding programmes. Longford is one of the primary counties affected by the move away from the peat burning industry and stands to benefit under many of the schemes. The range of schemes includes:

- Investment Grant-Aid for Private and Community Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Trail Network Development Scheme
- Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Local Authorities
- Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Strategic Partners
- EU Just Transition Digital Programme
- EU Just Transition Tourism Learning Network

Longford particularly has benefited from the appointment of a Just Transition Tourism Activator for the County. The role of Activator provides support to private and community SMEs as they navigate the Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Private and Community SMEs under the EU Just Transition Fund.

Opportunities were made available for the funding of sustainable new or expanding visitor attractions or activities, the development of tourist accommodation, capital project planning and design and accessibility enhancements to visitor accommodation and attractions.

The deadline for receipt of expressions of interest (EOI) was 30 June 2024. Those deemed eligible following EOI were then invited to submit a full application requiring any planning permission and/or statutory consents to be in place by 13 January 2025.

By year end, County Longford officially had three successful Just Transition applications, two in relation to the provision of bikes and one in new accommodation.

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Evaluation was continuing at Fáilte Ireland level with some 20 more Longford based applications due to be submitted by the mid-January deadline. While many more expressions of interests were submitted, planning issues, financial issues and changes in circumstances would have significantly reduced the number of those that were in a position to progress to application stage.

The Just Transition Tourism Activator is now helping those applicants who are dealing with further information requests to support them in converting their planned offerings into reality on the ground in County Longford.

Our successful applicants under the Just Transition Fund are also now working through their milestones, including letters of approval, e-tendering, public procurement processes and hopefully successful grant draw downs.

There is a significant reporting commitment that is also required on foot of the receipt of Failte Ireland Just Transition funding which will require invested time and effort, and the Longford Tourism team will do all it can to support those who need help and/or guidance on that front.

In the interests of further developing the tourism offering around the county, the Longford Just Transition Activator is also trying to get those who might have LEADER supportable projects to apply to the limited funding available. We are also building a network for sustainable and regenerative tourism businesses in the county to cross collaborate among themselves and to facilitate better linkages with our neighbouring counties of Westmeath and Roscommon.

The Just Transition Officer continues to offer advice, capacity building and support to a variety of community and private tourism concerns and is working closely with the Tourism Officer and the Night-Time Economy Advisor in Longford on current and upcoming projects.

Following the significant number of project promoters that have come forward, there is a clear opportunity for the development of an enhanced tourism network or cluster in this region, especially with the LEADER Programme also open to

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accepting certain tourism related applications. This will emerge as a significant priority for this role in the year ahead, with ample opportunities for developing the tourism industry throughout the county.

In addition to the work being done to support private SMEs and community groups with applications under the Just Transition Fund, the Longford Tourism Officer is also working closely with the Regeneration Team in Longford County Council in support of the identified strategic projects being funded under the Investment Grant Aid Scheme for Local Authorities.



## Just Transition Digital Transformation

Longford Tourism has been deemed eligible to participate in the Digital Transformation programme, which includes 100 per cent funding for a new website. Longford.ie will be redeveloped and updated through this fund.

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## Holiday World 2024

Longford Tourism attended Holiday World Dublin in the RDS for three days. The Holiday World Show is firmly established as Ireland's largest and best attended annual public exhibition. It's a rich global marketplace for deals and destinations, featuring exhibitors from close to home and overseas. Longford Tourism promoted County Longford as a tourism destination at this event. All maps, booklet, videos were made available to the public over the weekend and a new pocket size calendar for 2024 was also presented.

## Fáilte Ireland Regional Festival and Participative Events Fund 2024

Longford Tourism funded nine festivals over two rounds of the Fáilte Ireland Regional Festival and Participative Events Fund 2024 to the tune of €16,088. Fáilte Ireland provided €5,000 and Longford County Council funds the balance for the scheme. The aim of the scheme is to support festivals and events that drive both domestic and international tourism and to support community and voluntary groups organising a diverse range of projects and events. A maximum of €3,000 per organisation could be received in any one year with a maximum of three events funded.

To meet the criteria of the scheme, the event must take place in County Longford, be a minimum of two consecutive days in duration and aim to attract international visitors. The categories included are 'General festivals' (including literary, historic, fairs, traditional culture or family focused), as well as arts, music and theatre events, family sports and outdoor events.

Event	Funding
Longford Lights	€2,800
Maria Edgeworth Festival	€2,305
Brian Boru	€600
Granard Booktown	€1,730
Goldsmith Literary Festival	€1,150
Longford Panto	€1,456
Dead of Night	€2,730
Grian Ard – Granard Sun Festival	€2,094
Ballinamuck Olde Fair Day	€1,223



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## Launch of the County Longford Tourism Strategy

The [Longford Tourism Strategy](#) was launched on Thursday, 1 February. This strategy is a roadmap for Tourism in County Longford up to and including 2027.

Sustainable tourism forms the basis of this strategy accounting for the needs of visitors, tourism industry stakeholders, local communities, and the environment. The key tourism assets in Longford are outlined and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands vision and objectives are highlighted along with the relevant policies and plans that this strategy supports.

Overall, this new County Longford Tourism Strategy is about developing a connected sustainable tourism destination. Longford as a county has the foundations and have built on these foundations in recent years. We just need to keep building.



## Longford Tourism launch the Longford Literary Trail Audio Tour

Longford Literary Trail Audio Tour was launched at The Maria Edgeworth Centre in Edgeworthstown on Wednesday, 21 February 2024. Including interviews from local people and actors from Backstage Theatre, this Audio Tour covers the exciting and interesting story of Literature in County Longford.

The literary tradition in Longford is very strong and includes connections with Jane Austin and Oscar Wilde. Maria Edgeworth was based in Edgeworthstown, and her story is well presented in the Edgeworth Visitor Centre. Oliver Goldsmith was born

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in Longford also and was educated in Edgeworthstown. You can visit his birthplace and many of the locations included in his poems and plays. The Literary Trail encompasses the south of County Longford including Ballymahon.

The whole Longford Literary story can be explored through this driving trail with an option of audio in English and Irish. There are QR codes at each of the nine stops to access the audio. The addition of the audio to this trail enhances and brings the experience to life.

In 2022, Longford Tourism also enhanced the Longford Rebel Trail with the addition of QR codes and audio at each stop. The audio for the Longford Rebel Trail is available in English, Irish and French. All audio is available on the audio section of Longford.ie.

County Longford has three driving trails, The Longford Literary Trail with a distance of 73km, The Longford Rebel Trail with a distance of 71km and the Mid Shannon Trail with a distance of 98km.



Work has also now been completed on the enhancement of the Mid Shannon Trail which is due to be launched in early 2025. This will give County Longford three excellent driving trails all with their own story to tell and a high-end product for visitors to the county.

## Longford County Twinning Workshop

Longford Tourism presented at the annual Longford Twinning Committee workshop which was held in Ballymahon Library in early May. The event was attended by members of the Town Twinning committees from Longford, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Ballinamuck and the fledgling committee that is being established in Lanesborough.

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Longford Tourism presented the new vision for tourism in the county as per the County Longford Tourism Strategy 2023-2027. Slow tourism and encouraging groups to allow their visitors free time to enjoy the attractions and businesses in their own localities was encouraged. Information on festivals, events, attractions and activities was also provided, along with details of the trails and itineraries available around the county.



Honorary French Consul with responsibility for Twinning Catherine Gagneaux was in attendance on the day and invited everyone to reflect on how Twinning Committees can work together to create greater celebrations of the French-Irish connection.

## National Famine Way Commemorative Walk

Longford County Council Chief Executive Paddy Mahon, then Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray, and the Longford Tourism team greeted the Irish Ambassador to Canada, Eamon McKee and the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, Nancy Smith, and Liverpool Irish Famine Trail representatives as they made their way along the 32.6km of Royal Canal Greenway in Longford on 21 May on the National Famine Way Commemorative Walk.

School children from Scoil Mhuire, Clondra joined walkers to walk to the bronze shoes for the school's ceremony which was supported by Enchanted Croí Theatre. Lively trad music and lunch was provided in Foigha Bar and Lounge. More Longford hospitality was on offer at the Ticket Office in Ballybrannigan while Canada flags were flying at thefarmhouse.ie to welcome the ambassadors on their approach of Abbeyshrule that evening.

A very special surprise organised by Knights and Conquests of Granard awaited the walkers there with a display of famine time replicas. These included a replica famine ship, a Handmade cart by Martin Briody while Historian and



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restoration specialist Eamonn Creamer created a replica sliding coffin as a special commemoration to the missing 1490. Eamonn talked the walkers through a demonstration of the sliding coffin which would have been used in workhouses during the famine.

The day ended with a fitting reading of the poem Vanished by historian Grey Quierly from the Liverpool Irish Famine Trail. The recording of his recital is available to watch on Longford Tourism's Instagram page.

The walk took place over six days from Monday, 20 to Saturday, 25 May 2024 passing through six counties in total and culminating in the launch of the Global Irish Famine Way at EPIC Museum in Dublin's Docklands.



## Global Irish Famine Way Initiative

The Global Irish Famine Way is an extension of the National Famine Way and will be the largest heritage trail in the world. It will eventually follow the journeys of all the Irish Famine emigrants around the world, including the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, the United States, South Africa, and Australia. The Bronze Shoes that mark the National Famine Way will also mark each significant location on the Global Irish Famine Way. It begins in 2024 with Canada and the UK (Liverpool).



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Fifteen locations have already been secured in Canada including Grosse Île, St John's Newfoundland, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara, Saint John Partridge Island, Saint Coloman and Hamilton. Evoking the initial journey, these bronze shoes travelled by sea from Galway to Newfoundland on the Marine Institute vessel the RV Celtic Explorer. A series of commemorative events will mark their arrival.

The National Famine Way is open to walkers at any time and the route and associated stories can be followed through a free app. Walkers can also purchase an official passport to get stamped along the route. The National Famine Way is a collaboration between Waterways Ireland, the Irish Heritage Trust and the county councils along the route. The local authorities involved are Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Meath, Kildare, Fingal, and Dublin.

## **Fáilte Ireland National Quality Assurance Framework**

Longford Tourism is working with Fáilte Ireland to support existing accommodation providers to register under the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF) in order to access the range of learning benefits and advertising available through it, as well as to help all providers improve their offering. There are a number of different welcome standards that can be applied for. See [FailteIreland.ie](http://FailteIreland.ie) for more information.

## **St Patrick's Day Delegation**

Longford County Council was represented at the St Patrick's Day celebrations in New York by the then Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray and Director of Services Barbara Heslin. The visit included a series of meetings on tourism, trade and enterprise as well as representing Longford at some key celebrations of the county diaspora in the United States.

The visit afforded an opportunity to link in with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland as they launched major campaigns around the St Patrick's Day festivities. The County Longford Tourism Strategy was presented to Tourism Ireland officials with Longford's cutting-edge walking and cycling trail network piquing great interest.

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IDA Ireland representatives were presented with the brochure on investing in Longford called “Longford, Perfectly Located” with emphasis placed on the potential of the Just Transition Fund as well as the Longford Works network of remote working hubs and key links with the third-level sector.



## Longford Tourism What's On What's App Channel

The latest information and updates from Longford Tourism is available on Facebook, Instagram, X and on Longford.ie. For those not on social media who want to keep up to date with the latest in local events and festivals, Longford Tourism has established a What's On WhatsApp Channel which can be found in the Updates Section of your WhatsApp on your phone. An up-to-date monthly events guide also appears in the Longford Leader. Anyone with events (great or small) to share is invited to contact [tourism@longfordcoco.ie](mailto:tourism@longfordcoco.ie) to be included and to be featured on Longford.ie.

## Longford operators experience the Royal Canal Greenway

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in association with Longford Tourism organised a familiarisation trip on the Royal Canal Greenway in County Longford and County Roscommon for public-facing hospitality operators and team members. The trip offered the chance to experience first-hand the visitor experience of cycling parts of the Royal Canal Greenway in County Longford as well as some of the visitor attractions and experiences along the way.

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The morning kicked off with a visit to the working farm, demonstration kitchen and a beautiful breakfast at Fiona Egan's Cloughan Farm and Cookery School in Abbeyshrule. Next stop was Ballymahon's Greenway Cycles where John kitted out all cyclists with their hire bikes and shared some of his insights of dealing with Greenway visitors since their business opened before cycling with us to guide us on our way to Corlea.

A short pedal brought us to Brannigan Harbour in Ballymahon, Alan Barr of Alan's Yippee Kayaking talked us through the experience he offers visitors on the Royal Canal at Ballymahon, Abbeyshrule and Mullingar for daytime and nighttime paddles. Lunch was provided by Foigha Bar and Lounge before the party continued on to the stunning Corlea Bog and Trackway Visitor Centre.

From there, the bus transferred us to Killashee where we met with Robert Crilly of Midlands Cycle Hub, another bike hire operator on the canal who shared his insights on the Greenway experience. Cycling from Killashee to Clondra, the next stop was The Richmond Inn where Niamh McPartland laid on a wonderful spread and joined us to discuss the opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy Longford as well as the challenges faced by operators along the Greenway.

The bus then brought all participants to Strokestown Park House for a whistlestop tour of the National Famine Museum there, one of the biggest attractions on the Royal Canal Greenway and the starting point for the National Famine Way.



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## **Longford's Microsoft Dream Space 2024**

Longford Tourism had a stand at the Dream Space 2024 event held in Edgeworthstown at the end of May. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the activities and natural amenities available in Longford to school pupils and for them to take that information home to share with their families.

## **Longford Agricultural Show**

Longford Tourism also had a presence at Longford Agricultural Show in 2024, a wonderful opportunity to promote the staycation opportunities for people choosing to visit Longford or see and experience their own locality in different ways.

## **Launch of Longford Works**

Longford Tourism provided support to the launch of the Longford Works remote working campaign, promoting the wonderful network of hubs offering better work-life balance to those who want to work smarter and live better here in County Longford.

## **Dead of Night and Samhain Procession**

The Tourism Officer also supported the promotion of the Dead of Night Festival and the Samhain Fire and Shadows Procession which took place from 26-28 October in Connolly Barracks and Longford Town.

## **Grafton Court Christmas Fair**

On 29 and 30 November, Longford Tourism, Longford Night Time Economy and Local Enterprise Office with support from Longford Community Safety Partnership, Longford Municipal District Area crew and Health and Safety team of Longford County Council, hosted the Grafton Court Christmas Fair.



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The Market was held on Grafton Court, a laneway that had been decimated by fire in July, to celebrate the businesses there that were reopening in time for the Christmas season. Thousands of people attended the market, and the turning on of the Christmas Lights on Main St in Longford Town, with music, entertainment and sweet treats for all. The market was very well supported by local traders with a keen desire expressed for future events of this nature to be hosted here in County Longford. Significant social media coverage was developed in the build-up and throughout this event, encouraging people to come into the heart of Longford Town from all around the midlands region.



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## Christmas Lights Projection

Longford Tourism, Longford Night Time Economy and Longford Lights joined forces at Christmas to produce a new and exciting Christmas lights display at the Market Square. It was projected onto the Market Square Building above the Longford Tourism Office on the weekend of the Grafton Court Christmas Market and each evening from 20-23 December.

The piece of seasonal street spectacle, which promoted localities and tourism destinations around Longford, was commissioned by Longford Tourism. It was a very popular attraction bringing people into Longford Town and we hope to repeat the process on future occasions.

## Waterways Ireland Shannon and Shannon Erne Interpretation Project

This new interpretation project aims to increase the dwell time of visitors in the area, by introducing a series of 'discovery points' along the Shannon and Shannon Erne and to interpret the Shannon through creative interventions.

Three discovery points will be located in Longford along the banks of the River Shannon as part of the Waterways Ireland Shannon and Shannon Erne Interpretation Project. These will be located at Clondra, Red Bridge and Lanesborough/Ballyleague. Clondra and Lanesborough/Ballyleague will see double sided totems erected, while a lectern will be erected at the Red Bridge. Clondra Harbour is also set to benefit from a proposed artistic feature on the lock wall.

## Táin Trail Update

Fáilte Ireland is to present a Táin Trail proposal paper to its Investment Committee. Longford is to be represented on the Táin Trail Steering Committee, alongside all other relevant local authorities and Fáilte Ireland. Louth County Council will lead with a Táin Trail Officer to be appointed to lead out on the project and terms of reference for the steering committee to be established.

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## Visitor Information Signage

Work is continuing on the design and installation of a new sign to highlight the position of the Longford Tourism Office on Market Square as a tourist information centre. Updated visitor information signs have also been prepared for St Mel's Cathedral and Corlea Bog Trackway Visitor Centre highlighting Longford as part of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Work is also continuing on the upgrading of visitor information boards in towns and villages throughout the county.

## Longford County Tourism Committee

The final meeting of 2024 was held in Castlecor House, Ballymahon on 16 December, with kind thanks to hosts Loreta Grogan and Brian Ginty. The meeting was well attended, with significant interest expressed in the support of planning for the annual Holiday World Show in the RDS in Dublin. A working group meeting was set up to continue this planning in early January. The next Committee meeting is being scheduled for Q1 2025.

## Learning and Networking

Longford Tourism Officer and/or the Just Transition Tourism Activator attended the following learning and networking events:

- Tourism Officers Network Meetings. The inaugural meeting was hosted by Kildare County Council in April. Subsequent meetings were hosted by Dublin City Council (in June) and Cork City Council (in October).
- The launch of the 'Feasibility study on the future development and Greening of the Cruise Hire Sector'
- Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' Community Tourism Workshop
- Fáilte Ireland Festival and Events Masterclass
- Tourism Hospitality Research in Ireland (THRIC) and International Regenerative Tourism Conference
- Midlands Ireland Food and Drinks Food Tourism and Awareness Group in Tyrellspass, County Westmeath



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- Fáilte Ireland Tourism Officers Marketing and Promotion Update in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone
- Midlands Ireland Food and Drinks Food Tourism and Awareness Group – gathered in CO:WORX Edgeworthstown
- Just Transition Tourism Activators Workshop, Tullamore
- Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' Network Development Workshop





# Intergration and Ukrainian Humanitarian Response

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## Local Authority Integration Teams Established

In 2024, the Government authorised the establishment of Local Authority Integration Teams (LAITs) in each local authority. They were established to enable Local Authorities to coordinate a local response to the growing demands placed by increased numbers of migrants coming to Ireland seeking sanctuary.

The LAIT in Longford County Council was established in April 2024 under Acting Director of Services Michael Nevin. It initially worked alongside the Ukrainian Crisis Humanitarian Response team before the full integration response was subsumed into the LAIT team.

The LAIT team was primarily established to support the International Protection Applicants (IPAs) community, but the resources of this team can readily be used to support all new communities.

The Local Authority was also tasked with the establishment of a Community Integration Forum to allow all agencies involved in integration to meet and discuss challenges, experiences and responses associated with the integration of our new communities. This forum met four times in 2024.

## Ukrainian Humanitarian Response

The Ukrainian Humanitarian Response continued during 2024 with the numbers of Ukrainians situated in County Longford remaining relatively stable during the year (approximately 1,000 persons).

The 'Offer a Home' Scheme continued through the year with a steady stream of vacant properties offered under the Scheme. At the year-end, 375 Ukrainian people were accommodated under the Scheme in 136 otherwise unoccupied houses.

# Intergration and Ukrainian Humanitarian Response

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Two vacant properties, one in Ballymahon and one in Edgeworthstown, were refurbished during the year and opened as multi-occupancy centres for Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BoTPs). A number of other local centres closed during the year as the numbers of Ukrainians contracted across the country.

It has been very encouraging to see the positive reception that the Ukrainian community and other communities have received from local communities across the County and Longford can stand proud of its humanitarian response during the year.

## Community Recognition Fund

The Community Recognition Fund was first rolled out by the Department of Community and Rural Development in 2023 to recognise the huge efforts made by local communities in welcoming and supporting Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Ireland.

Nationally a budget of €50m was set aside in both 2023 and 2024. In 2023, County Longford received a fund of €693,00 that was administered by the Integration section in Longford County Council. A total of 22 community-based organisations successfully applied for funding of €623,800 under the scheme in 2023 and most received their funding in 2024.

In 2024, the funding allocated to County Longford was €893,486 and approvals were broken into three application windows. To date, one project was approved funding from window one and five projects have been forwarded to the Department for approval from window two. The final application window closes in February 2025.









# Appendix 1 – Ballymahon Municipal District

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## Project Updates

### Ballymahon Pobal le Cheile Project

Part 8 planning was issued – date for submissions with respect to the proposed project closed on 13 May 2024. This planning submission is currently on hold. This project will now be phased and works are ongoing to submit a revised Part 8 planning application for the convent building and new community hall.

### URBACT UR Impact Project

Longford County Council are continuing the implementation of the URBACT UR Impact project with ongoing engagement with the URBACT Local Group (ULG) and development of an Integrated Action Plan encouraging the embedding of social impact in urban regeneration projects. This includes the development of testing actions to examine the interest in the establishment of a Men's Shed in the town and supporting the community in youth engagement activities.

### Town Centre First

Ballymahon was identified as the second town for the development of a Town Centre First Plan in County Longford. This has supported the expansion of the Town Team and meeting with them on a regular basis during 2024. A Town Centre Health Check and Walkability Audit were carried out during 2024, along with public consultation events in May and June to gather background data and community concerns to inform the development of the forthcoming Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan.

### Active Travel: R392 Pedestrian and Cycle improvement scheme

This project aims to provide dedicated cycle connection and improved pedestrian footpaths along the R392 between St Matthews National School and the Moygh Road junction.

# Appendix 1 –Ballymahon Municipal District

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The project also aims to introduce traffic calming measures through narrowing and realignment of the R392 and the introduction of raised pedestrian crossing points. Preliminary designs have been prepared through the appointed consultant CST group and it is expected to advance to Part VIII planning in Q1 of 2025.

## **Active Travel: Bus Stop Enhancement Programme**

Preliminary designs have been developed for the upgrading of the existing bus stops on both sides of the R392 Main Street Ballymahon adjacent to St. Matthews Park Junction.

The proposals include provision of wheelchair accessibility, bus shelters and necessary kerb build outs. It is expected these upgrade works will be rolled out from Q2 2025.

## **Notices of Motion discussed by the Elected Members were:**

- That Longford County Council apply for a low-cost safety scheme at the townland of Aghintemple/Killenastra, Ardagh on the R393 to install a crash barrier Resurface the road from the 4 roads at L1168 (Lisreevah road) to the Rathcline Road
- That Longford Co Council in conjunction with The OPW reinstate the timber post and rail fence at the Royal Canal, Terlicken, Ballymahon.
- That a pedestrian crossing be installed at junction of The Park House Hotel and Kilbride Park in the interest of public safety.
- To upgrade the lighting over the pedestrian crossing at St. Matthew's Church Ballymahon.
- Carry out an assessment of St. Anne's Housing Estate off Main Street Ballymahon (6 houses) with a view to carrying out a deep retrofit of same.
- Apply for an active travel scheme at the primary school in Legan up towards the N55 in front of the GAA grounds to slow traffic into the village and make it a safe area for cyclists.
- That a crash barrier be installed at Quinns Bridge, Cloonbrin, Abbeyshrule on the airport side in the interest of public safety.
- That Longford County Council provide an an update for the Retrofit scheme.
- To provide ramps at the entrance and throughout the Creevaghbeg Estate, Mullingar Road, Ballymahon.

## Appendix 1 –Ballymahon Municipal District

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- To carry out an upgrade to the pedestrian crossing lights at Mercy Secondary School, Main Street, Ballymahon.
- Review the speed limit at the Moor Ardagh on the R393 and reduce to a 50KM limit at the Football pitch in the interest of public safety.
- Introduce a solid white line on the R393 on the approach to Carrickboy from Ballycloughan.
- To carry out a low-cost safety scheme at the junction of the L1133 and the L1130 at Shrute Junction to improve the sight lines and in the interest of public safety.
- To assess the feasibility of putting a footpath in place from the Silver Birches Estate to Young Grattan's GAA grounds at Dunbeggan Longford.
- Council to place bollards on the new footpath outside Ardagh GAA grounds to prevent dangerous parking at match days.
- To work with stakeholders to secure a new suitable site for Ballymahon Playground as the existing site is not fit for purpose and is not a safe place for children to play due to heavy littering and anti-social behaviour at the site.
- An update on proposed works on the N55 on the Ballymahon side of Fowler's Bridge to deal with the road subsidence.
- To install flashing speed signs at Taghshinny school in the interests of road safety.
- To install additional traffic calming signs to create greater awareness to motorists in Kenagh particularly at the school.
- To repair the fencing and upgrade same at Cashel graveyard in the interest of public safety.
- To install traffic calming measures at Cloontagh School and Derryhaun cross as these are prone to speeding traffic.
- To assess the feasibility of carrying out some remedial work on the L1120 in Forgney (the Ballymore Road) with the view to lowering a blind spot on the road and erecting a safety barrier on the same stretch of road. The work to be considered under a Low-Cost Safety Improvement Scheme or have the work included in next year's roads programme.
- To look at potential development site on the outskirts of Edgeworthstown with a view to purchase for Housing Development.

## Appendix 1 –Ballymahon Municipal District

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- To continue with four extra, energy efficient lights at Barnacor Lanesboro N63 along the footpath, in the interest of public safety and confidence, for the homeowner's and the people using the footpath to exercise.
- To resurface the roadway at the public car park from the playground down to the harbour in Lanesborough.
- An update on the extension of the footpath from Silver Birches to the school in Stonepark.
- To look at potential development site on the outskirts of Edgeworthstown with a view to purchase for Housing Development
- To give a commitment to replace the windows and doors in all local authority houses in St. Matthew's Park Ballymahon.
- To immediately repair the harbour in Lanesborough as it has fallen into disrepair and is now dangerous.
- To write to Bord na Mona in Mount Dillan in Lanesborough and request them to remove the trees that are over hanging the wall in Clonbonny graveyard and also request that they cut the hedges that are running parallel to Clonbony/Clonflower road.
- To include a new pathway linking Kilashee to the canal via Clondra in the 2025 budget.

### **Items highlighted and discussed by Elected Members were:**

- Schedule of Ballymahon Municipal District Works
- Consideration of Part 8 – No. 115 change of use of and renovation of existing derelict building known as Mahon's on Main St. Edgeworthstown to a charity shop and social enterprise and all ancillary site works at the Townland of Edgeworthstown Services and associated Site works.
- Presentation from Ardagh Clock Tower Committee
- Introduction to new Local Healthy Age Friendly Healthy Homes Co Ordinator
- Consideration of Community Memorials Application, to commemorate Ballymahon Workhouse 1852-1921



# Appendix 1 –Ballymahon Municipal District

## Estates Taken in Charge were:

- There were no estates taken in charge in Ballymahon MD in 2024

## Roads Taken in Charge were:

- There were no roads taken in charge in Ballymahon MD in 2024.

## Bye-Laws Adopted:

- There were no bye-laws adopted in Ballymahon MD in 2024.

## Ballymahon Municipal District Road Works Programme 2024

The Ballymahon Municipal District has responsibility for the maintenance and repair of 70km of Regional Road, 519km of Local Road 46km of National Road. The below Road Works Programme 2024 was approved by the Municipal District.

### Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Grant

Pavement Schemes	
N4 Newtownforbes to Clooniher (Works started Q4 of 2024 and to be completed in Q1/Q2 2025)	€260,000
N55 Meeltanagh	€2,530,000
N4 Kilsallagh	€41,000
HD28 Schemes	
N55 Carrickboy	€210,000
N63 New Street/Earl Street Junc	€53,000

# Appendix 1 –Ballymahon Municipal District

TII Ordinary Maintenance Defects Allocation (Category A) funding for 2024 was used on the following schemes:

- N4 Kilsallagh
- N55 Ballymahon at Athlone Road/Creevagh Beg/Rathmore
- N5 Aghareagh Drainage
- N4 Newtownforbes Drainage
- N55 Granard Drainage

## Restoration Improvement Grant

Ballymahon Regional Road	€391,032
Ballymahon Local Road	€1,754,213

## Restoration Maintenance Grant and Supplementary Restoration Maintenance Grant

Ballymahon Regional Road	€91,260
Ballymahon Local Road	€409,403

## Discretionary Grant

### Local Road Maintenance

includes patching, repair, drainage, verge trimming, culverts road markings	€251,209
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### Regional Road Maintenance

includes patching, repair, drainage, verge trimming, culverts road markings	€111,228
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Low-Cost Safety Scheme	€50,000
Bridge Rehabilitation Grant	€98,300
Specific Improvement Grant	€200,000
Drainage Grant Allocation	€99,666
Climate Adaption Allocation	€65,000

## Appendix 2 – Granard Municipal District

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### Notices of Motion discussed by Members were:

- Review the speed limit in Ennybegs, to move the 50kmph back towards the School from Hagan's Lane.
- Include Clonbroney, Edgeworthstown Road on the Winter Gritting Programme 2024
- Review the traffic calming measures in Ballinalee village at St. John's Estate and Ballinalee National School
- Bus parking bay on the R194 to Ballyjamesduff to be marked out for Health and Safety reasons
- Low-Cost Safety Scheme at R198 intersected via Legga Road Junction
- Low-Cost Safety Scheme on the Aughnacliffe to Granard L-10451-0 road at Sonnagh Road L5089
- Traffic calming measures to make footpaths wheelchair accessible in the village of Drumlish
- Construction of a footpath from the village of Ballinamuck, to Balliamuck graveyard
- Traffic Calming Measures Section 38 Road Traffic Act 1994
- Engagement with ESB Networks in relation to the level of Power Outages in Granard Town and surrounding area's
- Installation of public lights at Ballinamuck new cemetery and Legga cemetery
- Installation of public lights on the exiting footpath from Gaigue to Ballinamuck village
- Engage with TII with regards to the main N55 at the junction of Toneywarden approaching from Lisryan
- Safety Scheme at Glannagh Ballinalee
- GMCE joint project funded since 2018
- Traffic calming measures in Abbeylara Village
- Pedestrian crossing in Ballinalee at the entrance to the forest walk on the Ballinalee/Granard Road
- Pedestrian crossing Aughnacliffe school to church and the junction at Leebeen park
- Install wheelchair accessible swing in Leebeen Park and any other suitable equipment
- Traffic speed survey in the villages of Ennybegs, Aughnacliff and Ballinamuck

## Appendix 2 – Granard Municipal District

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- Overgrowth for pedestrians on the Drumlish to Monaduff walkway
- Re-alignment at the crossroads in Drumlish and resurfacing of the village of Drumlish on the R198
- Wheelchair parking in Granard
- Improving road safety on the N55 to Cavan Road at Creevy turn off
- Signage at the start of the Road L-10502-0 Mullinalaghta
- Drainage and culvert works on the L-1062-0 Aughagreagh, Ballinalee for the prevention of flooding
- Dumping in Granard and surrounding areas
- Houricans Hotel Granard
- Works at Ballywillan Bridge and the Creevy Turn off

### Part VIIIs approved:

- No. 116 – Granard shared footpath and cycleway.

### Estates Taken in Charge:

- There were no estates taken in charge in Granard MD in 2024

### Roads Taken in Charge:

- There were no Roads taken in charge in Granard MD in 2024

### Bye-Laws Adopted:

- No bye-laws were adopted in Granard MD in 2024



## Appendix 2 – Granard Municipal District

### Granard Municipal District Road Works Programme 2024

The Granard Municipal District has responsibility for the maintenance and repair of 59km of Regional Road, 636km of Local Road and 13km of National Road. The below Road Works Programme 2024 was approved by the Municipal District.

Restoration Improvement Grant (Extra funding approved during 2023 by the Department of Transport)			
Granard Regional Road	€379,172	Final outturn was	€368,898
Granard Local Road	€1,899,131	Final outturn was	€1,914,267

Restoration Maintenance Grant (now includes Supplementary)	
Granard Regional Road	€185,195
Granard Local Road	€346,521

### Department of Transport Discretionary Grant

Local Road Maintenance	
includes patching, repair, drainage, verge trimming, culverts road markings	€284,262

Regional Road Maintenance	
includes patching, repair, drainage, verge trimming, culverts road markings	€83,421

Low-Cost Safety Scheme	€105,000
Bridge Rehabilitation Grant	€201,576
Drainage Grant Allocation	€99,666
Climate Adaption Allocation	€145,000
Patch and Repair	€265,720
Bridges: Small works	€20,000

## Appendix 3 – Longford Municipal District

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### Notices of Motion discussed by Elected Members were:

- Due to frequent parking on the Ballinalee Road entrance to College Park causing difficult ingress and egress, it is proposed that double yellow lines be added from the Ballinalee Road at least 50m into College Park on each side of the road.
- It is proposed that the Courthouse Alley off Main Street be taken in charge by Longford County Council, using a CPO if necessary.
- To include the stretch of road (L1011), from Kiernan's Forge Crossroads to the crossroads at Melview on the winter salting/gritting program.
- It was proposed that the parking times be revised in Longford town from 9am to 5pm. It was believed that this amendment to parking times would benefit businesses and the public.
- It was proposed that the manhole covers on the east side of the Market Square at the junction with Earl Street be made level with the road surface.
- A Low-Cost Safety Scheme was proposed to facilitate safe crossing of pedestrians in front of the Cinema and the apartment buildings across the road.
- It was proposed that Abbeycartron Lane, all the way down to Brickfield, be included in our 2024 roads programme for repairs and resurfacing. The inadequate lighting also requires enhancement. The signage on the Battery Road should be revised to the new town finger posts listing all the estates branching off Abbeycartron Lane. As there are some unusual numbering systems in some estates here, there should be a rolling programme of house numbering signage like College Park and Templemichael Glebe.
- A speed review on the L1171 Clondra road from the entrance close to Tarmonbarry down to the bridge. There is an 80km stretch and residents living along the road have complained about speeding.
- Call on Irish Water to extend the sewage system out to the homes with septic tanks on the L1171 Clondra Road.
- Call on the National Transport Authority to introduce a bus route through Clondra to connect the village to other communities, schools, shops and improve connectivity to other Regional transport networks to facilitate onward travel to cities and colleges.
- Conduct an inspection of footpaths in Ardnacassa Lawns and Midara Gardens and carry out upgrade works on the footpaths as needed.

## Appendix 3 – Longford Municipal District

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- To introduce speed reducing measures in Ardnacassa Lawns and Battery Court Estates and erect signage for safety of children and elderly residents in the areas.
- Agree a 5-year footpath rehabilitation programme with the Executive and Engineering staff commencing in Autumn 2024.
- Carry out resurfacing works and re-instatement of road markings on the Newtownforbes to Rooskey Road at Ballagh Bridge. This stretch of road is in a very poor state of Repair and is an accident waiting to happen as road markings are completely disappeared.
- Request Bus Eireann to move bus stop from outside the church in Newtownforbes Village to further up the street near what was formerly Bohan's.
- Review of the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) to ensure that during assessment of LIS applications received, each Municipal District is given an annual allocation under the scheme.
- Tidy the footpath and cut back the hedging between the Red Cow roundabout and the Leo Casey roundabout, this part of the bypass is in urgent need of attention.
- Repair the road surface at the roundabout at McDonalds as it is in very poor condition.

## Appendix 3 – Longford Municipal District

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### Items highlighted and discussed by Members were:

- Agreed proposal to give the 9 declined community grant applications €450 each.
- Update given on Active Travel Works on the Battery Road.

### Estates Taken in Charge were:

- None

### Roads Taken in Charge were:

- Roads, Footpaths and Green Areas in the Longford Business and Technology Park.

### Part VIIIs approved were:

- No. 118 – The Mall Outdoor Facilities Upgrade.
- No. 119 – Lamagh, Newtownforbes, Co. Longford
- No. 121 – Playground Upgrade MacEoin Park
- No.122 – N63 Farranyoogan, Longford, Co Longford.

### Bye-Laws Adopted:

- None



## Appendix 3 – Longford Municipal District

### Longford Municipal District Road Works Programme 2024

The Longford Municipal District has responsibility for the maintenance and repair of 25km of Regional Road, 238km of Local Road and 37km of National Road. The below Road Works Programme 2024 was approved by the Municipal District.

#### Restoration Improvement Grant

Longford Regional Road	€64,933
Longford Local Road	€931,677

#### Restoration Maintenance Grant

Longford Regional Road	€16,224
Longford Local Road	€109,174

#### Supplementary Restoration Maintenance Grant

Longford Regional Road	€14,196
Longford Local Road	€98,527

#### Discretionary Grant

Local Road Maintenance	
includes patching, repair, drainage, verge trimming, culverts road markings	€95,007

Regional Road Maintenance	
includes patching, repair, drainage, verge trimming, culverts road markings	€30,225

Low-Cost Safety Scheme	€16,201
Bridge Rehabilitation Grant	€45,264
Specific Improvement Grant	€
Drainage Grant Allocation	€98,949

## Appendix 4 – Town Twinning

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Town Twinning is a long-term partnership to help to foster a spirit of cooperation between County Longford and various countries, cities, communities and schools. Longford County Council endeavours to support and encourage these partnerships, through which many cultural, educational, business, and technical exchanges take place.

County Longford Town Twinning arrangements include:

- Ballinamuck and Essert, France
- Longford Town and Noyal-Châtillon-sur-Seiche, Brittany, France
- Ballymahon and Landévant, France
- Granard town and East Rouen in Normandy, France

### Ballinamuck and Essert, France

This year a group of 27 adults and children travelled to France for the 27<sup>th</sup> twinning anniversary of Essert and Ballinamuck. Most of that group were newcomers and it was an intergenerational group, all of which contributes to the Twinning's dynamism and longevity.

The group of ten children and 2 leaders travelled out on the 23 July and initially spent three days at a water sport centre in Malsaucy. This was where civic commitment in the form of first aid training and raising awareness of Olympic values and sporting activities were developed. There was a focus on environmental awareness, getting around by bike or walking and a focus on art where a large graffiti painting was created. The group then returned to spend the remainder of the trip with host families around Essert. This group had met for the first time in 2024 when a group travelled to Ballinamuck.

The second group of mainly adults arrived on Saturday 27 July, where they were met with a barbeque at the ever-familiar Le Logis D'Amitie in Essert. Sunday was a family day spent with host families.

## Appendix 4 – Town Twinning

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On Monday, the adults visited Besançon, the capital of Franche-Comté and took a little train to the citadel and walked in the city centre. The youth group took part in a heritage game in and around Essert and made a visit to the citadel, the lion, the old town, including some shopping.

Tuesday was spent in Épinal, the capital of Vosges and nicknamed the city of print. The children travelled by bus to a theme park in Fraispertuis City.

Wednesday started with a cookery demonstration in Logis followed by lunch and some exercise with a pétanque tournament, Cllr Gary Murtagh and Longford County Council Chief Executive Paddy Mahon joined in. The children worked to complete their projects of art and first aid. That evening there was a reception in Essert Town Hall hosted by Dominique Jeannin and followed by music and dancing. That was the final night to what was a very enjoyable trip to Essert.



## Appendix 4 – Town Twinning

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### **Preparation for trip**

The group met regularly to prepare for the trip. This included raising funds by holding events such as grocery bag packing, a table quiz, and a church gate collection. On the return from Essert, the group linked in with the French group to evaluate the trip. The group are grateful to Longford County Council for their annual funding for the Twinning. Preparation is already taking place as Ballinamuck looks forward to welcoming 25 adults and children from Essert.

### **Longford Town and Noyal-Châtillon-sur-Seiche, Brittany, France**

On Friday, 15 March 2024, a delegation of 14 Noyal-Châtillon-sur-Seiche citizens, led by Mayor Sébastien Guéret and Noyal-Châtillon-sur-Seiche Town Twinning Chair André Guyomard, arrived in Dublin Airport. They were met by Cllr Seamus Butler and proceeded to the Kane's coach.

They then drove to the Guinness Storehouse for the tour including the Gravity Bar and lunch in the Brewer's Dining Hall. The party departed at 3pm and arrived 5.30pm at Longford County Council to meet the host families, who they spent their first night with.

On Saturday, 16 March, a Twinning business meeting was hosted in the Boardroom of Butler Manufacturing Services Ltd at 11am. Afterwards, the party departed for a trip to Carrick-on-Shannon in Leitrim. They returned to Longford Rugby Club for dinner, with singing and camaraderie. The group spent the night at hotels in Longford Town.

On St Patrick's Day, the French delegation assembled for the parade and were led by Mayor Sébastien Guéret who was awarded Grand Marshal in honour of 25 years of this Twinning. The Parade was followed by the prize giving in the Temperance Hall. Guests were then free for the evening to enjoy the entertainment around the Town.



## Appendix 4 – Town Twinning

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On the Bank Holiday Monday, 18 March, a tour to the award-winning village of Abbeyshrule was followed by lunch in the Rustic Inn. Later that evening, a much-enjoyed music session was held at Lyons Pub on Main Street which went on into the night.

The guests and hosts all assembled at St Mel's Cathedral carpark at 8am on Tuesday 19 March for a send off before their return flight.

A Quote by the André, Noyal Chatillon organiser after their return to France:  
"I know how difficult, stressful and tiring it is to organise such events. You did very well, and all participants will have excellent memories of this stay!"

This event incurred costs just under the budgeted €5,000. A big thank you to Lorraine and especially to all the generous home hosts.

### **Ballymahon and Landévant, France**

The Ballymahon twinning group just wrapped up a great expedition to Landévant, their twinned town in the north-west of France. It was a week full of water-based adventures, high-end textiles, and fabulous French food. The 19-strong delegation from Ballymahon, including two officials from Longford County Council, went all out to make the trip a roaring success.

The group ditched airplanes in favour of a ferry ride from Cork to Roscoff aboard Brittany Ferries. As soon as the group landed on French soil, the Landévant Twinning Group rolled out the red carpet. The trip started with fishing on the picture perfect River Blavet, with not many fish caught but with plenty of coffee and pastry breaks. The day culminated in a four-hour French feast at the Quai Tabarly angling centre.

Next, the group went to Quimper in Brittany where they saw the Cathedral of Saint Corentin, a 13th-century cathedral and national monument which is unique in that it slightly bends in the middle to match the contours of its location and to avoid an area that was swampy at the time of its construction.

## Appendix 4 – Town Twinning

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Then it was off to the town of Guidel and the group toured Le Minor, a high-end textile factory which produces beautiful clothing and also runs daily tours, combining tourism with industry.

The Landevant and Ballymahon twinning groups had their annual meeting where important matters such as connecting schools and sporting clubs, work experience opportunities, new initiatives, and cross-cultural projects were discussed. Ballymahon twinning group's Breege Murray thanked the Landévant group for their hospitality and everyone sat down for more French cuisine.



Mayor Pascal Le Calvé hosted the group at the Mairie town hall. During the speeches, there were many heartfelt comments about Ballymahon and Landevant. Mayor Le Calvé spoke about exciting EU programs and how twinning brings communities together. Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey followed with his speech which emphasised the importance of fresh new initiatives around the twinning partnership.

## Appendix 4 – Town Twinning

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### Granard town and East Rouen in Normandy, France

2024 has been an exciting year for the Granard town twinning group with great progress made on the group's aims and a growth in numbers. Connections to East Rouen citizens have developed, included relationships between public representatives and Longford County Council.

It was a busy year with three main events taking place: the County Town Twinning event hosted by Longford County Council in Ballymahon, the Bastille Brunch in July, and a trip to East Rouen in September. These events happened because of the very active committee. Granard secondary schools are now also preparing for an exchange in 2025.

Longford County Council granted €1,500 to the group and the Bastille Brunch raised €1,300. €1,000 of this was used for our trip to East Rouen in September and the group are saving towards the schools' exchange in 2025. For this exchange to be a huge success, it is anticipated that further funding will be needed from Longford County Council community grant to support Irish students and their teachers traveling to France in January and French students to Granard in March. The Town Twinning Association will meet in January to start planning for each visit.



## Appendix 5 – Council Membership of Committees

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Committee	Councillor
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	Paul Ross, Garry Murtagh
Strategic Policy Committees Chairpersons	Paul Ross, Turlough McGovern, Garry Murtagh, Seamus Butler
Longford Local Community Development Committee	Martin Skelly, Garry Murtagh, Pairic Brady , Seamus Butler, Padraig McNamara
Longford Local Community Safety Partnership – Steering Group	Niall Gannon, Paul Ross, Padraig McNamara, Peggy Nolan, Uruemu Adejnmí, Seamus Butler, Pairic Brady
Longford Sports Partnership	David Cassidy, Niall Gannon, Martin Skelly
Association of Irish Local Government	Paul Ross Pairic Brady, Mick Cahill
Local Authority Members Association	Gerry Hagan
Longford and Westmeath Education Training Board	Peggy Nolan, Niall Gannon, Padraig McNamara, Pat O'Toole
Regional Health Forum, Dublin Mid- Leinster	Peggy Nolan, Paul Ross, Uruemu Adejnmí
Midlands Regional Transition Team	Mark Casey
Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force	Gerry Hagan
Midlands Energy Agency	Martin Skelly
Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd	Garry Murtagh
County Longford Tourism Committee	Sean Mímnagh, Peggy Nolan, Padraig McNamara
Longford Pool Construction Ltd	Peggy Nolan, Martin Monaghan, Paul Ross
Longford Enterprise Development Company	Uruemu Adejnmí, Garry Murtagh, Martin Skelly



## Appendix 5 – Council Membership of Committees

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Committee	Councillor
Backstage Theatre	Niall Gannon (Director) Paul Ross, Kevin Hussey
Longford County Council Audit Committee	John Browne, PJ Reilly
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Mark Casey, Martin Monaghan, Gerry Hagan, Peggy Nolan, David Cassidy, Martin Skelly
County Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Garry Murtagh, Paul Ross, David Cassidy
Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee	Niall Gannon
Regeneration Committee	All
Creative Ireland Culture Team	Sean Mimmagh, Niall Gannon, Garry Murtagh
Heritage Forum	Mick Cahill, Gerry Hagan, Pairic Brady
Biodiversity Working Group	Uruemu Adejnmí, Martin Skelly, Pairic Brady
County Business Incentive Scheme Committee	Seamus Butler, Padraig McNamara, Paul Ross
Tender Committee	Kevin Hussey, Peggy Nolan, Mark Casey
Place Naming Committee	Mark Casey, Paul Ross, Turlough McGovern, Garry Murtagh, Seamus Butler
Protocol and Procedures Committee	Mark Casey, Paul Ross, Mick Cahill

## Appendix 6 – Conferences attended by Elected Members

Date in 2024	Conference	Location	Attendance
19-20 January	LAMA Spring Seminar	Abbey Hotel, Donegal	Mark Casey, Mick Cahill, Gerald Farrell, Colm Murray, Turlough McGovern, Colin Dalton, Paraic Brady, Garry Murtagh, PJ Reilly, Peggy Nolan, Gerry Hagan, John Browne
25 January	AILG Module 1	Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Louth	Paraic Brady, John Browne, Mick Cahill, Turlough McGovern, Colm Murray, PJ Reilly, Paul Ross
27 January	AILG Module 1	Greenhill's Hotel, Limerick	Gerry Hagan, Garry Murtagh, Colin Dalton, Gerald Farrell
7-8 February	AIR Regions in Focus Training Event and Seminar	Woodlands Hotel, Adare, Limerick	Paraic Brady, Mick Cahill, Garry Murtagh, Peggy Nolan, Paul Ross, Colin Dalton, John Browne, PJ Reilly,
14-15 February	AILG Annual Training Conference	Arklow Bay Hotel, Wicklow	Paraic Brady, John Browne, Mark Casey, Colin Dalton, Colm Murray, Peggy Nolan, Paul Ross, Gerald Farrell, Turlough McGovern, PJ Reilly
23 March	AILG Module 2	Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone	Paraic Brady, John Browne, Mick Cahill
11 July	AILG Induction Training	Mullingar Park Hotel, Westmeath	Uruemu Adejinmi, Paraic Brady
13 July	AILG Induction Training	Radisson Hotel, Cork	Paul Ross, Paraic Brady, Martin Skelly, Mick Cahill, Mark Casey, Gerry Hagan, Turlough McGovern, Garry Murtagh

## Appendix 6 – Conferences attended by Elected Members

Date in 2024	Conference	Location	Attendance
18-20 July	MacGill Summer School	Highlands Hotel, Glenties, Donegal	Turlough McGovern, Mark Casey, Peggy Nolan, Niall Gannon, Martin Skelly, Gerry Hagan, Paul Ross, Garry Murtagh, Paraic Brady, David Cassidy, Sean Mimmagh
11-12 September	AILG Autumn Training Seminar	Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan	Mick Cahill, David Cassidy, Peggy Nolan, Martin Skelly, Paraic Brady, Niall Gannon, Gerry Hagan, Kevin Hussey, Turlough McGovern, Pdraig McNamara, Sean Mimmagh, Garry Murtagh, Paul Ross
26 September	AILG Overview of Planning	Horse and Jockey Hotel, Tipperary	Niall Gannon, Sean Mimmagh, David Cassidy
28 September	AILG Overview of Planning	Bridge House Hotel, Tullamore, Offaly	Paraic Brady, Gerry Hagan, Garry Murtagh, Martin Skelly
3 October	IPI Autumn Planning Conference	The Gibson Hotel, Dublin	Gerry Hagan, Turlough McGovern
17-18 October	LAMA Autumn Seminar	Newgrange Hotel, Navan, Meath	Paul Ross, Martin Skelly, Paraic Brady, Garry Murtagh, Peggy Nolan, Gerry Hagan, Niall Gannon
24 October	AILG Module 5	Sligo Park Hotel, Sligo	Paraic Brady, Mick Cahill, Paul Ross, Martin Skelly
2 November	AILG Module 5	Radisson Blu, Limerick	Sean Mimmagh, David Cassidy, Peggy Nolan, Niall Gannon, Kevin Hussey, Gerry Hagan, Mick Cahill
16 November	AILG Module 6	Claregalway Hotel, Galway	Paraic Brady, Mick Cahill, David Cassidy, Gerry Hagan, Martin Skelly

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Housing (indicators H1–H7)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Housing: H1, H2 and H4	A. Number of dwellings in the ownership of the local authority at 1/1/2023	2,205
	B. Number of dwellings added to the local authority owned stock during 2023 (whether constructed or acquired)	49
	C. Number of local authority owned dwellings sold in 2023	31
	D. Number of local authority owned dwellings demolished in 2023	0
	E. Number of dwellings in the ownership of the local authority at 31/12/2023	2,223
	F. Number of local authority owned dwellings planned for demolition under a DHLGH approved scheme at 31/12/2023	0
	A. The percentage of the total number of local authority owned dwellings that were vacant on 31/12/2023	3.82 %
	The number of dwellings within their overall stock that were not tenanted on 31/12/2023	85
	A. Expenditure during 2023 on the maintenance of local authority housing compiled from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, divided by the no. of dwellings in the local authority stock at 31/12/2023, i.e. the H1E less H1F indicator figure	€1,079.03
	Expenditure on maintenance of local authority stock compiled from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, including planned maintenance and expenditure that qualified for grants, such as Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) grants for energy efficient retro-fitting works but excluding expenditure on vacant properties and expenditure under approved major refurbishment schemes (i.e. approved Regeneration or under the Remedial Works Schemes).	€2,398,685.18



## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Housing: H3 and H5	A. The time taken from the date of vacation of a dwelling to the date in 2023 when the dwelling is re-tenanted, averaged across all dwellings re-let during 2023	58.71 wk
	B. The cost expended on getting the dwellings re-tenanted in 2023, averaged across all dwellings re-let in 2023	€46,913.28
	The number of dwellings that were re-tenanted on any date in 2023 (but excluding all those that had been vacant due to an estate-wide refurbishment scheme)	90
	The number of weeks from the date of vacation to the date the dwelling is re-tenanted	5,284 wk
	Total expenditure on works necessary to enable re-letting of the dwellings	€4,222,195.54
	A. Total number of registered tenancies in the LA area at the end of June 2023	1,975
	B. Number of rented dwellings inspected in 2023	458
	C. Percentage of inspected dwellings in 2023 not compliant with the Standards Regulations	91.69 %
	D. Number of dwellings deemed compliant in 2023 (including those originally deemed non-compliant)	125
	E. The number of inspections (including reinspections) undertaken by the local authority in 2023	545

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Housing: H6	A. Number of adult individuals in emergency accommodation that are long-term (i.e. 6 months or more within the previous year) homeless as a percentage of the total number of homeless adult individuals in emergency accommodation at the end of 2023	<b>81.25 %</b>
	The number of adult individuals classified as homeless and in emergency accommodation on the night of 31 December 2023 as recorded on the PASS system	<b>16</b>
	The number out of those individuals who, on 31/12/2023, had been in emergency accommodation for 6 months continuously, or for 6 months cumulatively within the previous 12 months	<b>13</b>
Housing: H7	A. (1) Total number of houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	<b>51</b>
	A. (2) Number of houses that achieved a BER rating of B2 or above between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	<b>51</b>
	A. (3) Number of heat pumps installed in those houses between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	<b>50</b>
	B. Total annual energy savings in MWh from houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	<b>796.9 MWh</b>
	C. Total carbon emission reduction tCo2 from houses retrofitted between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023 under the Social Housing Retrofit Programme	<b>203.6</b>

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Roads (indicators R1–R3)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Roads: R1 and R2	A. (a) The percentage of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	98.56 %
	A. (b) The percentage of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	95.37 %
	A. (c) The percentage of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	95.27 %
	A. (d) The percentage of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	95.93 %
	B. (a.1) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	0.03 %
	B. (a.2) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	3.09 %
	B. (a.3) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	51.46 %
	B. (a.4) The percentage length of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	43.97 %
	B. (b.1) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	0.10 %
	B. (b.2) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	5.94 %
	B. (b.3) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	39.02 %

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Roads: R1 and R2	B. (b.4) The percentage length of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	50.32 %
	B. (c.1) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	0.42 %
	B. (c.2) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	10.24 %
	B. (c.3) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	37.23 %
	B. (c.4) The percentage length of Local Secondary roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 24 month period prior to 31/12/2023	47.38 %
	B. (d.1) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 1-4 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	4.44 %
	B. (d.2) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 5-6 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	11.20 %
	B. (d.3) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 7-8 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	29.07 %
	B. (d.4) The percentage length of Local Tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating of 9-10 in the 60 month period prior to 31/12/2023	51.21 %
	A.1 Kilometres of regional road strengthened during 2023	5.3 km
	A.2 The amount expended on regional roads strengthening work during 2023	€991,807.00
	A.3 The average unit cost of regional road strengthening works per square metre (€/m2)	€27.15



## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Roads: R1 and R2	B.1 Kilometres of regional road resealed during 2023	7.1 km
	B.2 The amount expended on regional road resealing work during 2023	€238,945.00
	B.3 The average unit cost of regional road resealing works per square metre (€/m <sup>2</sup> )	€4.96
	C.1 Kilometres of local road strengthened during 2023	63.5 km
	C.2. The amount expended on local road strengthening work during 2023	€4,699,192.00
	C.3 The average unit cost of local road strengthening works per square metre (€/m <sup>2</sup> )	€17.87
	D.1 Kilometres of local road resealed during 2023	66.7 km
	D.2 The amount expended on local road resealing work during 2023	€1,187,597.00
	D.3 The average unit cost of local road resealing works per square metre (€/m <sup>2</sup> )	€4.36
Motor Tax: R3	A. The percentage of motor tax transactions which were dealt with online (i.e. transaction is processed and the tax disc is issued) in 2023	77.89 %

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Water (indicators W1–W2)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Water: W1 and W2	Percentage of drinking water in private schemes in compliance with statutory requirements	98.11 %
	The number of registered schemes monitored by each local authority as a percentage of total schemes registered	100 %
	How many local authority registered schemes were monitored in 2023	17
	Total number of registered schemes in 2023	17

### Waste/Environment (indicators E1–E6)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Waste: E1	A. The number of households which availed of a 3-bin service offered by a licensed operator at 31/12/2023	4,902
	B. The percentage of households within the local authority that the number at A represents (based on agglomerations of more than 500)	87.33 %
Environmental Pollution: E2	A. Total number of pollution cases in respect of which a complaint was made during 2023	1,578
	A. Number of pollution cases closed from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	1,533
	A. Total number of pollution cases on hands at 31/12/2023	111
	The opening number of pollution cases carried forward from the year end 2022	66

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Litter Pollution: E3	A1. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was unpolluted or litter free	21 %
	A2. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was slightly polluted	64 %
	A3. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was moderately polluted	12 %
	A4. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was significantly polluted	3 %
	A5. The percentage of the area within the local authority that when surveyed in 2023 was grossly polluted	0 %
Green Flag Status: E4	A. The percentage of schools that have been awarded/renewed green flag status in the two years to 31 December 2023	59.57 %
	Schools which attained a Green Flag for the first time in 2023	
	Schools which renewed their Green Flag in 2023	16
	Schools which held a Green Flag from 2022 and therefore do not require renewal until 2024	12
Energy Efficiency: E5	A. The cumulative percentage of energy savings achieved by 31/12/2023 relative to baseline year (2009)	-14.20 %
Public Lighting: E6	A. Total annual consumption of the public lighting system	1,563.00 MWh
	B. Average wattage of each public light	68.00 W
	C. Percentage of the total system that LED lights represent	79.00 %
	Number of LED lights in the public lighting system	4,726
	Number of non-LED lights in the public lighting system	1,271

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Planning (indicators P1–P5)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Planning: P1	A. Buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority	100 %
	Total number of new buildings notified to the local authority i.e. buildings where a valid Commencement Notice was served in the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 by a builder or developer on the local authority	59
	Number of new buildings notified to the local authority in 2023 that were the subject of at least one on-site inspection during 2023 undertaken by the local authority	59
Planning: P2 and P3	A. Number of local authority planning decisions which were the subject of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála that were determined by the Board on any date in 2023	14
	B. Percentage of the determinations at A which confirmed (either with or without variation of the plan) the decision made by the local authority	78.57 %
	Number of determinations confirming the local authority's decision (either with or without variation)	11
	A. Total number of planning cases referred to or initiated by the local authority in the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 that were investigated	47
	B. Total number of investigated cases that were closed during 2023	35
	C. Percentage of the cases at B that were dismissed as trivial, minor or without foundation or were closed because statute barred or an exempted development	45.71 %
	D. Percentage of the cases at B that were resolved to the local authority's satisfaction through negotiations	0 %
	E. Percentage of the cases at B that were closed due to enforcement proceedings	54.29 %



## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Planning: P2 and P3	F. Total number of planning cases being investigated as at 31/12/2023	83
	Number of cases at B that were dismissed as trivial, minor or without foundation or were closed because statute barred or an exempted development	16
	Number of cases at B that were resolved to the local authority's satisfaction through negotiations	0
	Number of cases at B that were closed due to enforcement proceedings	19
Planning: P4 and P5	A. The 2023 Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme D data divided by the population of the local authority area per the 2022 Census	€36.92
	AFS Programme D data consisting of D01 – Forward Planning, D02 – Development Management, D03 – Enforcement (inclusive of the relevant Programme D proportion of the central management charge) for 2023	€1,726,077
	A. The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt	79.41 %
	B. The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant	17.65 %
	The total number of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were not withdrawn by the applicant	34
	The number of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of the date of receipt of the application	27
	The number of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2023 that were decided (granted or refused) within an agreed extended time period	6

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Fire Service (indicators F1–F3)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Fire Service: F1	A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme E expenditure data for 2023 divided by the population of the local authority area per the 2022 Census figures for the population served by the fire authority as per the Risk Based Approach Phase One reports	€59.60
	AFS Programme E expenditure data consisting of E11 – Operation of Fire Service and E12 – Fire Prevention for 2023	€2,786,202
Fire Service: F2 and F3	A. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of fire	
	B. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of fire	7.59 min
	C. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	
	D. Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	8.29 min
	A. Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at scene is within 10 minutes	27.91 %
	B. Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	60.47 %
	C. Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	11.63 %
	D. Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	27.27 %

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Fire Service: F2 and F3	E. Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	56.57 %
	F. Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	16.16 %
	Total number of call-outs in respect of fires from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	215
	Number of these fire cases where first fire tender attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	60
	Number of these fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	130
	Number of these fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	25
	Total number of call-outs in respect of all other emergency incidents (i.e. not including fire) from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	99
	Number of these non-fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	27
	Number of these non-fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	56
	Number of these non-fire cases in which first fire tender attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	16

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Library Service (indicators L1–L2)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Library Service: L1	A. Number of visits to libraries per head of population for the local authority area per the 2022 Census	3.06
	B. Number of items issued to library borrowers in the year	109,748
	C. Library active members per head of population	0.21
	D. Number of registered library members in the year	7,578
	Number of visits to its libraries from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 per automatic counters if used	143,046
Library Service: L2	A. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS) Programme F data for 2023 divided by the population of the local authority area per the 2022 Census	€58.30
	B. The annual per capita expenditure on collections over the period 1/01/2023 to 31/12/2023	€2.46
	A. AFS Programme F data consisting of F02 – Operation of Library and Archival Service (inclusive of the relevant proportion of the central management charge for Programme F) for 2023	€2,725,661
	B. The annual expenditure on new stock acquired by the library in the year	€115,221



## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Youth and Community (indicators Y1–Y2)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Youth and Community: Y1 and Y2	A. Percentage of local schools involved in the local Youth Council/Comhairle na nÓg scheme	100 %
	Total number of second level schools in the local authority area at 31/12/2023	9
	Number of second level schools in the local authority area from which representatives attended the local Comhairle na nÓg AGM held in 2023	9
	A. The number of organisations included in the County Register at 31/12/2023 and the proportion of those organisations that opted to be part of the Social Inclusion College within the PPN	13.96
	Total number of organisations included in the County Register (maintained in accordance with section 128 of the Local Government Act 2001) for the local authority area as at 31/12/2023	523
	Total number of those organisations that registered for the first time in 2023	78
	Number of organisations that opted to join the Social Inclusion Electoral College on whatever date they registered for the PPN	73

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Corporate (indicators C1–C5)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Corporate: C1, C2, C4 and C5	A. The wholetime equivalent staffing number as at 31 December 2023	355.96
	A. Percentage of paid working days lost to sickness absence through medically certified leave in 2023	3.76 %
	B. Percentage of paid working days lost to sickness absence through self-certified leave in 2023	0.21 %
	Total number of working days lost to sickness absence through medically certified leave in 2023	3,132.93 day
	Total number of working days lost to sickness absence through self-certified leave in 2023	167.5 day
	Number of unpaid working days lost to sickness absence included within the total of self-certified sick leave days in 2023	1 day
	Number of unpaid working days lost to sickness absence included within the total of medically certified sick leave days in 2023	94.5 day
	If any staff are on long-term sick leave (i.e. a continuous period of more than 4 weeks), include a text note of the number of staff on long-term sick leave	5 are currently on long term sick leave as of 31/12/2023
	A. All ICT expenditure in the period from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023, divided by the WTE no.	€3,069.19
	Total ICT expenditure in 2023	€1,092,509.79
	A. All ICT expenditure calculated in C4 as a proportion of Revenue expenditure	1.62
	Total Revenue expenditure from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 before transfers to or from reserves	€67,464,193

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Corporate: C3	A. The per capita total page views of the local authority's websites in 2023	<b>11.03</b>
	B. The per capita total number of followers at end 2023 of the local authority's social media accounts (if any)	<b>1.26</b>
	The cumulative total page views of all websites operated by the local authority for the period from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 obtained from a page tagging on-site web analytics service or equivalent	<b>515,719</b>
	The total number of social media users who, at 31/12/2023, were following the local authority on any social media sites	<b>58,924</b>
	The number of social media accounts operated by the local authority	<b>29</b>
	Indicate if there was a change to the cookie policies on the local authority sites and the date this came into effect	<b>A change in Longford County Council cookie policies came into effect on 3 January 2023.</b>

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Finance (indicators M1–M4)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Finance: M1 to M4	A. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2019 in the Revenue Account from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€246,348
	B. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2020 in the Revenue Account from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€250,963
	C. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2021 in the Revenue Account from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€359,729
	D. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2022 in the Revenue Account from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€365,106
	E. Cumulative surplus/deficit balance at 31/12/2023 in the Revenue Account from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€384,471
	F. Cumulative surplus or deficit at 31/12/2023 as a percentage of Total Income in 2023 from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	0.55 %
	G. Revenue expenditure per capita in 2023	€1,443.05
	H. Revenue expenditure per capita in 2023 excluding significant out of county/shared service expenditure	
	The 2023 Total Income figure from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€69,613,894
	The 2023 Total Expenditure figure from the Income and Expenditure Account Statement of the AFS	€67,464,193



## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Finance: M1 to M4	The 2023 Revenue expenditure excluding county/ shared service expenditure for the service providers of HAP, MyPay, DRHE and Dublin Fire Services and is only applicable to Dublin City, Laois and Limerick	
	A. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	88.0 %
	A. (b) Collection level of Rent and Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	90.0 %
	A. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2019	59.0 %
	B. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	81.0 %
	B. (b) Collection level of Rent and Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	89.0 %
	B. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2020	65.0 %
	C. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2021	84.0 %
	C. (b) Collection level of Rent and Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2021	90.0 %
	C. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2021	69.0 %
	D. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2022	90.0 %
	D. (b) Collection level of Rent and Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2022	89.0 %
	D. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2022	77.0 %
	E. (a) Collection level of Rates in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2023	87 %

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Finance: M1 to M4	E. (b) Collection level of Rent and Annuities in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2023	89 %
	E. (c) Collection level of Housing Loans in Appendix 7 of the AFS for 2023	77 %
	E. (d) Collection level of HAP SSC for 2023	
	A. Per capita total cost of settled claims for 2023	€12.77
	IPB Insurance: Number of notified claims for 2023	47
	IPB Insurance: Number of settled claims for 2023	29
	IPB Insurance: Total cost of settled claims for 2023	€596,918.89
	Total cost of claims settled under excess for 2023	€0
	Self-insured: Number of notified claims for 2023	
	Self-insured: Number of settled claims for 2023	
	Self-insured: Total cost of settled claims for 2023	
	A. Overall central management charge as a percentage of total expenditure on revenue account	16.01 %
	B. Total payroll costs as a percentage of revenue expenditure	40.83 %
	Overall central management charge from the Local Authority FMS and defined in the Annual Budget	€10,802,318
	Total payroll costs from Appendix 1 of the AFS for 2023 (including Salaries, Wages and Pensions)	€27,543,019

## Appendix 7 – Performance Indicators

### Economic Development (indicators J1–J5)

Topic	Performance Indicator	Value
Economic Development: J1 to J5	A. The number of jobs created with assistance from the Local Enterprise Office during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 per 100,000 of population	106.95
	The number of jobs created with assistance from the Local Enterprise Office during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	50.0
	A. The number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in 2023 per 100,000 of population	29.95
	B. The number of trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2023 per 100,000 of population	12.83
	The number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in 2023	14
	The number of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2023	6
	A. The number of participants who received mentoring during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023 per 100,000 of population	233.15
	The number of participants who received mentoring during the period 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023	109
	A. Does the local authority have a current tourism strategy?	Yes
	B. Does the local authority have a designated Tourism Officer?	Yes
	The spend on local economic development by the local authority in 2023 per head of population	€214.28
	The spend on local economic development by the local authority in 2023	€10,017,842.48

## Appendix 8 – Corporate Plan Progress Report

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### Strategic Objective: A Thriving County

<b>Corporate</b>	<p>Establishment of the new Council in June 2024. Successful local elections held in June 2024. Three recounts were carried out with no errors or discrepancies found.</p> <p>Corporate Plan 2024-2029 adopted by elected members.</p> <p>Promotion of Longford County Council in a positive image through the use of our social media channels and our website, press releases and engagement with media queries and our civic reception function.</p>
<b>Finance</b>	<p>Budget 2025 adopted.</p> <p>The audit of the 2023 Annual Financial Statement (AFS) by the Local Government Auditor had no significant findings and no audit adjustments required.</p>
<b>Information Technology</b>	<p>Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase: 3 out of 9 secondary schools now have computer science in place.</p> <p>Post Primary Tech Awards: Schools with Computer Science in place.</p>
<b>Library, Arts, Archives, and Heritage Services</b>	<p>Implementation of the Art's Strategy, development of the Night Festival and Mid Summer Festival</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<p>Longford Town Draft Local Area Plan published.</p> <p>Longford Transport Plan has been completed.</p> <p>ePlanning currently running at 80% online applications.</p>
<b>Town Centre First</b>	<p>Securing €199,020 in funding under THRIVE for the development of a plan for the redevelopment of Connolly Barracks.</p>



## Appendix 8 – Corporate Plan Progress Report

<b>Roads</b>	<p>A full programme of works was delivered in each municipal district, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional and Local Road Improvement Works €4,941,500</li> <li>• Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing) €676,000</li> <li>• Supplementary Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing) €591,500</li> <li>• Drainage works to the value of €299,000</li> <li>• Footpath repairs and construction works were carried out at various locations</li> <li>• Local Improvement Scheme: Funding of €564,961 received, 11 schemes completed</li> <li>• Longford County Council continued to promote and support the N4 Mullingar to Longford Scheme which is currently at Phase 2 – Option Selection</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism</b>	<p>The Just Transition Fund has allowed both public organisations and private operators to develop several tourism related project ideas. These projects once delivered should enhance our reputation as a tourism location.</p>
<b>Enterprise</b>	<p>A new brochure promoting Longford as an ideal location for inward investment was produced. The brochure highlights the key assets and strengths of County Longford with particular reference on how our community has become enriched through diversity and inclusiveness</p>
<b>Finance</b>	<p>The Increased Cost of Business Scheme (ICOB) grant was processed by the Rates team in 2024, issuing grants in excess of €2.067m to Longford ratepayers.</p> <p>The Power Up Grants are being processed, which will result in the issue of additional funding in excess of €1.9m to Longford ratepayers</p>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>168 applications for vacant home grants received.</p>

## Appendix 8 – Corporate Plan Progress Report

### Strategic Objective: A Safer County

<b>Health and Safety</b>	<p>Recertification to ISO 45001:2018 in 2024 following a two-day audit completed by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI).</p> <p>Longford County Council won the Regional (Midlands) Award, and Exceptional High Achiever Award at the annual National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO)/Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG) Awards</p>
<b>Information Technology</b>	CCTV: Sign off for Longford Town
<b>Fire and Emergency Services</b>	Continued to maintain current level of operational response to fire and other emergencies.
<b>Community</b>	<p>Community Safety and Wellbeing Expo held in October in conjunction with Healthy Longford and Sláintecare Healthy Communities programmes.</p> <p>The renewal of the Crime Prevention Ambassador programme to Community Safety Officers in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership and the Gardaí.</p>
<b>Roads</b>	<p>Road Safety Improvement Works to the value of €220,550 at various locations throughout County Longford.</p> <p>The Road Safety Working Together Committee, made up of Longford County Council, An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), worked in a coordinated approach throughout 2024 to implement the actions in the Local Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024. An action review process was underway in 2024, and work has commenced on a revised plan for the next phase of the National Strategy 2025-2027.</p>
<b>Environment, Climate Action, Veterinary and Animal Welfare</b>	Longford Dog and Horse Control Services an exemplar for well managed and administered service nationally.

## Appendix 8 – Corporate Plan Progress Report

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### Strategic Objective: A Greener County

<b>Community</b>	The Community Climate Fund opened in February and 14 applications were approved for a total of €328,000.
<b>Environment, Climate Action, Veterinary and Animal Welfare</b>	<p>The Climate Action Plan was adopted in February 2024. There are 53 actions which will be progressed during the lifetime of the Plan. An annual report will be produced in Q1 2025.</p> <p>Longford County Council, in conjunction with EasyGo, installed 20 high speed electric vehicle (EV) chargers in County Longford in 2024. There are 50kW chargers now located in Longford, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Granard.</p> <p>Longford County Council appointed a Biodiversity Officer in 2024.</p> <p>Longford County Council's first EV was acquired and used by the Dog Control Service.</p>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>The development of energy efficient homes supports local business to diversify and upskill skills.</p> <p>Vehicle charging points installed on Richmond Street in conjunction with the A2 rated social housing scheme.</p>
<b>Information Technology</b>	Cloud base phone system, paperless process and hybrid meetings are ongoing.
<b>Roads</b>	Construction of Climate Change Adaption and Resilience Works to a value totalling €283,000.
<b>Corporate</b>	File management system moved towards electronic systems, with a view to moving away from paper based.

## Appendix 8 – Corporate Plan Progress Report

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### Strategic Objective: A County for Everyone

<b>Ukrainian Humanitarian Response and Integration</b>	<p>The successful integration of the Ukrainian community has demonstrated the wonderful generosity of the Longford community in welcoming, supporting and fully embracing a community in crisis.</p> <p>Continuous support to members of the Ukrainian community through the Offer A Home Scheme. Inspection of properties under the scheme took place. Suitable families and individuals were placed in these properties. Renewal of leases took place.</p> <p>117 Ukrainian people in State Provided Accommodation in Longford as off the 4 December 2024.</p> <p>There are currently 140 international applicants residing in two Centres, Richmond Court and Bridge Street, in Longford Town.</p>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>Significant progress was made in providing affordable housing in the county, with approval received for 25 affordable units in Longford Town.</p> <p>An additional 41 social homes were delivered to support families in need of housing supports.</p> <p>The vacancy rate of the housing stock was reduced from 7% to 4%.</p>
<b>Human Resources</b>	<p>Longford County Council was the first local authority to receive the Amber Flag from Pieta House. This recognises the embedding of a culture of mental wellbeing across the organisation.</p>
<b>Environment</b>	<p>Environment work with community groups throughout the county to promote pride of place. In addition to annual funding, Longford County Council hosted the first TidyTowns event in 2024 and Tidy Towns achieved significant success at the National TidyTowns Awards.</p>



## Appendix 8 – Corporate Plan Progress Report

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<b>Community</b>	<p>Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) were awarded €128,123.31 funding towards 79 successful local projects in Longford under the Local Enhancement Programme 2024.</p> <p>There was a successful delivery of many programmes were support diversity, disability, community and a healthy Longford.</p>
<b>Enterprise</b>	<p>The Local Enterprise Office continue to provide a full range of supports to include financial advisory and mentoring supports to help sustain and grow the small firms sector.</p>
<b>Veterinary and Animal Welfare</b>	<p>Successful Longford Urban Horse Education Project in 2024.</p>
<b>Community</b>	<p>The Department of Rural and Community Development awarded €459,755 to 12 community projects under CLÁR 2024 in the area of Developing Community Facilities and Amenities. The upgrade of Drumlish playground is ongoing. The reopening of Mac Eoin Park community recreational facility took place.</p> <p>Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) funding increased to over €746,000 in 2024.</p>

# Appendix 9 – Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Progress Report

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The purpose of this short document is to list selected extracts from Longford County Councils Assessment which link to the Council's duty under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 – which is referred to as the Council's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. The Extracts are listed below:

## Corporate Services

### Our Customer Services – Ensuring Social Inclusion and Equality

Our Customer Services Charter details what our citizens and customers can expect from our service delivery. It sets out the standards of service you can expect and outlines the way we continuously monitor and improve our service for all our customers.

We are committed to making our services more diverse and accessible to all service users, providing equal treatment to all, providing trusted people and processes to help all of our customers, and providing new and better technologies to make our services more accessible and to be able to communicate and reach our audiences through our social media platforms.

We encourage engagement and feedback through our consultation and evaluation processes to allow us to further develop our services to meet our customer needs. We allow a choice of service through Irish, aiming to have employees available who can help do business through Irish. Where there is a language barrier identified in the delivery of our services, we will aim to facilitate service delivery to allow for this, which may mean use of translation services or interpreters.

We work in partnership with local community groups etc to reach our audiences and include representation on our committees to ensure diversity of opinion and needs are being catered for and represented.

## Appendix 9 – Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Progress Report

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Every effort is made to ensure that people protected under the duty can easily access the information we provide. This will be reviewed by the Communications Team in the development of our new Strategy. Our commitment to accessibility of information is outlined within the Communications Strategy 2019-2024 (which is the current strategy). We use a variety of communication methods to engage with our customers and service users, including digital, printed, radio and in person.

We are continually working to ensure compliance with Official Languages Act with respect to advertising in the Irish language. We try to allow for consideration for future actions: All plans to be presented in accessible format. All major plans and policies to be comply with plain English standards. Irish Sign Language facilities to be made available for service users when requested.

Our Customer Service Charter aims to promote our willingness to help individuals access services where there is intellectual, literacy, learning difficulties, and/or sensory impairments issues by ensuring this is catered for in all aspects of service delivery.

### **Policy Making**

We work in partnership with local community groups and others to reach our audiences through the Longford Public Participation Network (PPN) and include sectoral/voluntary representation on our committees to ensure diversity of opinion and needs are being catered for and represented in all policy making decisions.

Our Strategic Policy Scheme allows for our Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) to assist policy development and review and help direct the work of the Council and ensures there is a 50/50 representation which equates to five electoral and five sectoral members on each of the four SPCs.

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## **Our Digital Strategy 2021-2023, extended to 2025**

Equality and Social Inclusion: Promote opportunity and access for all. Inclusive and Progressive Longford will use the Digital Strategy as a means of promoting inclusiveness and a progressive society to reach out to all its citizens and support their ambitions and integration for the betterment of the county and its profile.

The strategy will build on existing resources, knowledge, networks and plans to create a blueprint for bringing digital into all aspects of life in Longford and in doing so, creating a connected, inclusive and dynamic future for all its citizens.

Longford Centred and Connected will also act as a resource for supporting core priorities and plans as set out in the local policy and strategy context. For example, the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), County Development Plan (CDP), Area Action Plans, Sector Strategies, Climate Action Plans, Urban and Rural Development Plans, Tourism and Recreation and the Local Authority Corporate Plan.

Most importantly the Digital Strategy will inform future strategic planning and policy to help shape Longford in the future. It will also reflect and embrace what is happening with digital at a national and international level including the rollout of e-Government Strategy and other strategic actions.

Ultimately the Digital Strategy must ensure that local communities and economies are making the most of digital for their competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability.



# Appendix 9 – Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Progress Report

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## Human Resources

The elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity are addressed as follows:

### Recruitment and Promotion:

- Addressed in candidate information booklet.
- Accommodations put in place when requested or required.

### Working Conditions:

- Contracts of Employment for all employees in place.
- Occupational Health arrangements in place with accommodations made when required for employees.

### Staff Training and Career Development:

- Learning and Development Programme in place
- Open Learning Scheme in place
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy in place
- Health and Wellbeing programme in place

# Appendix 9 – Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Progress Report

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## Community Development

The Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 outlines the objectives of Longford County Council and Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in relation to community development. The following programmes support people protected under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty:

- **Longford Sports Partnership Programmes** including Sports Inclusion Disability Programme, Physical Activity Programme for Health, and Diversity Inclusion Programme.
- **Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion at a local level. A number of local priority target groups have been identified including people who are long-term unemployed, refugees and members of the Travelling community.
- The **LEADER Programme 2023-2027** is a community-led approach to delivering EU funding to rural businesses and communities. It promotes social inclusion, poverty reduction, economic development and addressing the challenges posed by climate change in rural areas.
- The **Community Development Programme** is a pilot programme aimed at developing an autonomous community development project managed and run by members of the Roma community supporting them to engage directly with decision making structures and work in partnership with service providers.
- Other programmes and activities include: the Local Enhancement Programme, Community Grant Support Scheme, Intercultural Grant Scheme, Africa Day, LGBTIQ funding, CLÁR Programme, Healthy Longford and Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programmes, Local Community Safety Partnership, Public Participation Network and Comhairle na nÓg.

# Appendix 9 – Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Progress Report

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## Budgeting and Grant Procurement

Currently in when designing and implementing procurement, we state all concerned must adhere to Treaty Of Rome Five Principals of Equality, Non-Discrimination, Mutual Recognition, Proportionality and Transparency. These aim to address this issue also.

There is also EU Document (2021/C 237/01) which states Procurement and Tenders should promote employment opportunities for disadvantaged people. This would include all groups in the Duty Group as outlined in the 2014 Act.

## Planning

In relation to Forward Planning section, as part of the preparation of land use plans, equality and social inclusion are considered with the inclusion of relevant policies (for example, in the Development Plan and Local Area Plans policies are included regarding social inclusion, traveller accommodation, age friendly, universal accessibility). This is also tied in with an objective under our Annual Service Delivery Plan.

## Housing

Housing needs considered under the following policies and actions to ensure social inclusion and equality and prevention of discrimination:

- Social Housing – Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2025
- Traveller Accommodation – Adopted Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029
- Homeless Services – Draft Midlands Regional Action Plan 2025-2029





