





Longford County Council Chief Executive Report December 2020



Chief Executive Report

December 2020

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December Highlights

A Happy Christmas with New Free Wi-Fi Available Longford Ballymahon and Drumlish St. Stephen's Day Performances for Local Longford Nursing Homes, as part of Creative Ireland's Christmas Events





Alderfield Near Completion



Minister for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke visited the Alderfield Housing Development in Farnagh, Longford Town, which is near completion. When finished, the development with consist of 24 homes.

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Community & Enterprise

Community

Longford Community Development Committee

Two meetings of the LCDC were held on the 8 and 17 December 2020.

LEADER

Eight LEADER projects were approved for funding of over €726,000 at LCDC meetings in December.

A Transitional LEADER Programme of an additional €20m was announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, T.D. The Minister also announced an extension to the deadline of approvals of the current 2014-20 programme to 31 March 2021.

Longford has been allocated €690,693 from the €20m budget and an additional amount for the continued administration and animation of the programme, bringing total allocation of additional funding to €933,381.

ICT Equipment Presented to Longford Comhairle na nÓg by Cathaoirleach Cllr. Paul Ross

Funding was secured under the Capital Grant for ICT Hardware Scheme rolled out by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. This funding secured ICT Hardware to support the development and implementation of a blended approach, following government guidelines. This will enable young people throughout Longford to engage and participate in Comhairle na nÓg, ensuring their voices are heard in matters that affect them.



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Supporting Diversity in Local Government

The Community Department, in conjunction with the PPN and Longford Women's Link, secured funding of €5,000 from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This will facilitate the delivery of an Information and Capacity Building Programme for women, with the goal of increasing the presence of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds in local government by 2024 and beyond.

Dormant Accounts Funding for LGBTI Groups

Funding of €10,000 was secured from the Department of Rural and Community Development to work with LGBTI groups in an awareness campaign, completed in December. Granard Youth LGBTI Support Group, under the auspices of Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre and Longford LGBTI Youth Group under County Longford Youth Services, successfully rolled out the programme, which included the design of posters and booklets, art work and information workshops to young people, parents, schools and to their communities.

Second Round of the COVID-19 Emergency Fund 2020

LCDC invites applications from community groups for funding under the Department of Rural & Community Development for the Second Round of the COVID-19 Emergency Fund. The First Round was launched in April, with funding of €2.5m. This Second Round has funding of €1.7m, with €42,964 allocated to Longford LCDC. The Department recommends ring-fencing 30% of the fund for small grants of €1,000 or less.

Eligible projects include adapting services to COVID-19 realities. For example, adaptions to allow for social distancing, offering online activities and providing social supports. Groups can also use the funding to assist their involvement in the Government's 'Keep Well' campaign.

More information is on Longford County Council's website. Closing 25 January 2021.



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Community & Enterprise

Longford Sports Partnership

Keep Well Campaign

This campaign included the following:

4 For 4 Parish Walking Challenge

979 people took part in the 4 For 4 Parish Walking Challenge which took place over four weeks in November and December, in association with Longford GAA. 70,000K was walked by all clubs. Dromard won the overall club distance challenge with 7,708K. Ardagh Moydow won the club prize for the greatest average distance with an average of 101K for each of their 65 members. Many thanks to Community Sport Development Officer Donal Mulligan for managing this fantastic initiative.

Operation Keep Well Edgeworthstown

This couch to 5K programme started on 11 January. Participants will receive their exercise plans weekly to do in their own time. The Sports Hub will also be delivering the regular morning fitness classes online.

Keep Well Programme for People with Disabilities

This online home fitness programme will commence in mid–January, along with a seated Pilates and a dance programme for people with disabilities. In partnership with Roscommon and Westmeath LSP.

2020 Sports Capital & Equipment Programme Open

€40m is now available under a new round of the SCEP, to assist voluntary and community organisations, national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport, local authorities, education and training boards and schools to develop high quality, accessible, safe, well-designed, sustainable facilities in appropriate locations and to provide appropriate equipment to help maximise participation in sport and physical recreation. Clubs can register online at sportscapitalprogramme.ie. Apply online before 1 March 2021.



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Corporate Services

Corporate Services COVID-19 Business Response Plan continues to be implemented. Our Customer Services Desk responded to 866 calls in December. The Community Call Helpline continues to operate, helping the most vulnerable in society. The Register of Electors Claims Courts were held this month.

Data Protection

Two policies approved and circulated to all employees, the Data Protection Policy and the Elected Representatives Representations Policy.

Two Data Subject Access Requests received and responded to in 30-day deadline.

Presentation delivered to the CPG on the Elected Representatives Representations Policy, which was adopted at the November Meeting of Longford County Council.

Freedom of Information

Disclosure Log for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 2020 are available on the Council's website

Freedom of Information	Dec 2020	YTD
FOI Requests Received AIE Requests Received	5 0	62 2

Keeping Longford Informed

The Council has been communicating with Longford citizens throughout December, especially concerning COVID-19, as well as shopping locally this Christmas. There is also continued use of the COVID-19 section of longfordcoco.ie.



Social Media

Created Longford-focused messages and updated social media channels with unique content to engage the public. Primary focus continues to be COVID-19 and ensuring that the most up to date information is available. Shopping locally this Christmas was also important message for December.

- Posted 81 messages on a corporate Council's Facebook page, now with 3,542 followers. Posts were seen 56K times
- Tweeted 78 messages on a corporate Council's Twitter page, now with 2,761 followers. Tweets had 57K impressions.

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Community & Enterprise

Risk Assessments

In 2020, 94 existing risk assessments were updated, and 47 new risk assessments were developed in consultation with LCC employees.

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

Longford County Council Meetings held in December 2020 were held in a physical place, adhered to HSE advice regarding social distancing, and all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were in place. These meetings were held at the temporary meeting venue of Longford Rugby Club. The December Corporate Policy Group Meeting was held on 8 December, in-person, as was the December Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council, held on 9 December.

The following meetings were also held: Joint Policing Committee (7 December, held via MS Teams)

Health and Safety

In 2020 the organisation completed 325 Health & Safety Inspections, including: Management Team (16)
Line Managers/Safety Representatives (253)
Health & Safety Section (56)

Human Resources

Christmas Table Quiz

Employees and Elected Representatives took part in the first Christmas Table Quiz over Microsoft Teams. 11 teams battled in a tough quiz, with our quizzers all having an enjoyable morning of interaction and learning.

Learning & Development

Longford County Council celebrated the achievements of its employees through an inaugural "Virtual" Ceremony of Recognition held on 2nd December.

The Ceremony was held to recognise the achievements of employees who had undertaken 3rd level studies in further education. With the assistance of the Council's Open Learning Scheme, 24 employees graduated in 3rd level studies during the years 2017 to 2020.

Recruitment

The recruitment programme progressed during the month of December with the interviews being held online using Microsoft Teams. 26 candidates were interviewed over 5 days for 3 competitions.

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Community & Enterprise

Local Enterprise Office

Measure One

Applications Received:

Feasibility, Priming, Business
Expansion and TAME Grants 27

Measure Two

Training and Development Programmes (All Training and Networking Events)

Total Programmes 64
Total Participants 1311

Mentoring

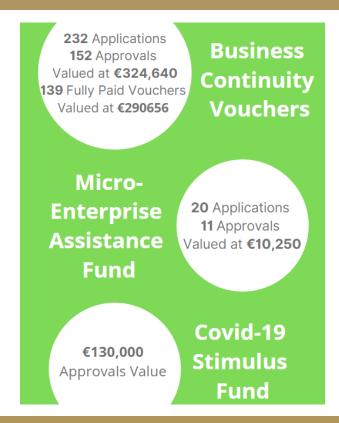
Total Individual Engaging in Mentoring 104

Other

Trading Onlin	e Vouchers
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Applications Submitted155Approvals118Value of Approvals€280,296

LEO COVID-19 Supports



Tourism

Work is completed on the new EZxploring Trails around the five Longford towns of Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Longford and Lanesboro. This is a fun way for families to explore these town's history and heritage. Each trail has its own brochure and brings the explorers all around the town. EZxploring in County Longford will be launched in Spring this year.

We continue to positively promote and Longford attractions and businesses on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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Community & Enterprise

Longford County Library, Heritage & Archives Edgeworthstown Library

Work progressed well, however, under Level 5, the site is due to close in January for three weeks. Windows are installed and work has commenced on the plaza at the entrance.

Longford Age Friendly Keep Well Programme

Due to COVID-19, this programme focuses on keeping our older citizens active and connected, providing activities to help them mind their mood. Online events are being rolled out weekly, including gardening, art, singing and cooking. The first in a five-part series of radio programmes called Saturday Miscellany was launched on 18 December on Shannonside Radio. Aimed at those isolated or living alone, there is a mix of information, stories, music and history. Bishop Colm O Reilly, Kitty Hughes, Eamonn Brennan and children from St. Matthews NS Ballymahon took part in the first episode.

Longford Decade of Centenaries

An online lecture to commemorate the centenary of the burning of Ballinalee in mid-December 1920 was the final event of the year. The lecture was given by Bernard Sexton, a relative of one of the North Longford Flying Column.

Creative Ireland

Two Creative Ireland events took place over Christmas. On St. Stephen's Day, local musicians performed for patients in three local nursing homes. On New Year's Eve, Longford Pipe Band, who have welcomed in the new year every year for the past 55 years, performed on the steps of St. Mel's Cathedral. This was live streamed on Creative Ireland Longford Facebook and YouTube pages and now has 33,000 views.



County Library Service

The library reopened for three weeks in December. The housebound service for older people has been reactivated and the schools are being supported through loans of class novels, Zoom and Teams workshops and literary competitions. Online events to engage adults, particularly those isolated or living alone, is being developed. Basic digital skills training is running on a pilot basis with members of Longford OPC. From 23 December, the library went back to Call and Collect and is working with primary teachers to develop literary programmes for schools.

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Finance & Regeneration

Finance

Year to Date to Quarter End 30/06/2020

	EXPENDITURE				INCOME				NET
	Expenditure €	Adopted Full Year Budget	_	Budget Remaining €	Income €	Adopted Full year Budget	% Budget Raised	outstanding	Actual Overall
		€	Spent to date			€		€	Surplus/ (Deficit) €
Housing	4,924,371	9,531,177	52%	4,606,806	5,422,374	10,415,527	52%	4,993,153	498,003
Roads	5,960,964	11,455,775	52%	5,494,811	3,214,307	6,455,754	50%	3,241,447	(2,746,657)
Water Services	2,034,368	3,769,218	54%	1,734,850	1,968,435	3,569,405	55%	1,600,970	(65,933)
Development Management	4,605,086	9,487,625	49%	4,882,539	2,416,954	4,954,354	49%	2,537,400	(2,188,132)
Environment	2,978,635	5,802,869	51%	2,824,234	311,460	534,239	58%	222,779	(2,667,175)
Recreation & Amenity	2,037,569	4,207,740	48%	2,170,171	219,899	563,739	39%	343,840	(1,817,670)
Agri, Health & Welfare	210,678	449,029	47%	238,351	74,788	204,768	37%	129,980	(135,890)
Miscellaneous Services	2,091,384	3,335,187	63%	1,243,803	1,693,549	2,820,018	60%	1,126,469	(397,835)
Local Government Fund					4,612,356	9,224,711	50%	4,612,355	4,612,356
* Rates					4,337,747	9,296,104	47%	4,958,357	4,337,747
	€24,843,055	€48,038,620	52%	€23,195,565	€24,271,869	€48,038,619	51%	€23,766,750	(€571,186)

* The above figures <u>do not</u> take into account the Covid-19 related lost Rates Income, these will be accounted for at the end of 2020.

Estimated lost rates income for full year 2020 currently amounts to circa €5.5m

Estimated lost rates Goods & Services income for full year 2020 currently amounts to circa €2.7m

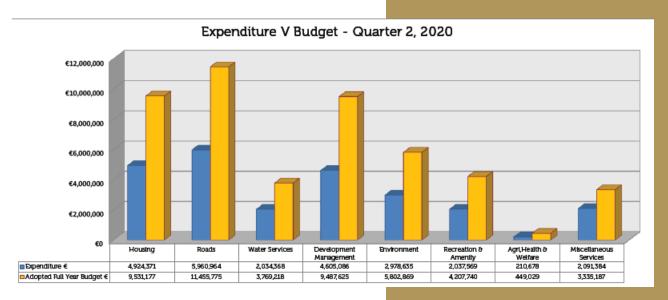
Estimated extra Covid-19 related expenditure for full year 2020 currently amounts to circa €815k

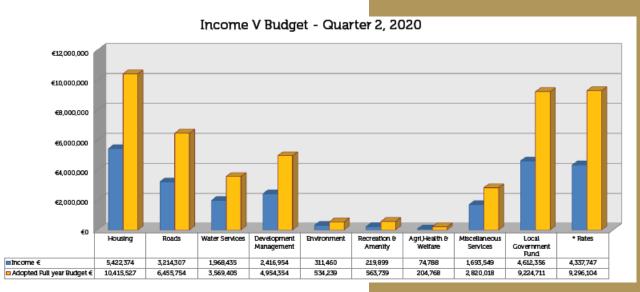
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Finance & Regeneration

Finance (Contd.)





Chief Executive Report

December 2020

Finance & Regeneration

Finance (Contd.)

SUMMARY OF MAJOR REVENUE COLLECTIONS - QUARTER 1, 2020									
	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected			
Quarter 1, 2020	€	€	€	€	€	%			
Rates	€1,033,827	€8,681,974	€9,715,085	€1,386,944	€8,328,141	14%			
Rents (inc. RAS)	€736,999	€1,772,479	€2,509,478	€1,758,440	€751,038	70%			
Housing Loans	€624,595	€239,661	€864,256	€222,567	€641,689	26%			
	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected			
Quarter 1, 2019	€	€	€	€	€	%			
Rates	€1,410,968	€8,187,639	€9,563,752	€1,113,489	€8,450,263	12%			
Rents (inc. RAS)	€415,696	€1,381,063	€1,795,626	€1,408,462	€387,164	78%			
Housing Loans	€672,732	€220,392	€893,124	€208,410	€684,714	23%			
	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected			
VARIANCE YOY	€	€	€	€	€	%			
Rates	(€377,141)	€494,335	€151,333	€273,455	(€122,122)	3%			
Rents (inc. RAS)	€321,303	€391,416	€713,852	€349,978	€363,874	-8%			
			1. 11,000						
Housing Loans	(€48,137)	€19,269	(€28,868)	€14,157	(€43,025)	2%			

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Finance & Regeneration

Regeneration

Knappogue Bog Walk

Work recently completed on a new trail of approximately 2.5K in length, accommodating walking and cycling through Knappogue Bog. This key piece of tourism infrastructure in Longford links the Royal Canal Greenway at Clondra with Lanesborough. This project is a significant and important addition to Longford's tourism infrastructure and to the Hidden Heartlands and is an important element in the delivery of the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park Greenway.



Mosstown Mill, Keenagh

Work completed on the repair of stonework and carpark at Mosstown-Limetree Avenue access road, part of a larger plan to connect local villages to the Royal Canal Greenway and Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park. Funding was provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the 2019 Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme and Longford County Council.

Killashee Car Park

Completed this month, this carpark accommodates thirty-eight car parking spaces adjoining the church in Killashee. The works required excavation and removal of topsoil and roadside material, importing suitable fill material, laying kerbing, erection of lighting and a retaining wall along the roadside to the front of the church. This project enhances the safety for carpark and road users at this busy traffic location.

Funding Applications

Two projects were submitted within the RRDF Third Call which seeks to support large-scale, ambitious capital projects that have planning in place and are ready to commence at the application date with a minimum funding request of €500,000. We look forward to funding announcements from the Department early in 2021 regarding applications submitted in 2020.

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Finance & Regeneration

Information Systems

IT Section works completed:

- New Hyper Converged Infrastructure Implementation commenced
- Regular monthly patching of client systems and servers and deployment of hardware and software to employees
- Windows 10 feature upgrade progressed
- Hybrid Teams Council meetings facilitated
- ServiceDesk Stats for December: 414
- Community CCTV
- Design and implementation report completed for Edgeworthstown and Granard CCTV
- Tender Process completed for Longford Town CCTV

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) works completed:

- Restart Grant appeals software support
- Ongoing Database migrations from SQL 2008 to SQL 2016
- Mapping of 25 playgrounds and development of playground app https://arcq.is/0ab0yG

Digital Service works completed:

- Longford's Broadband Connection Points and Community WIFI
- Town & Village Funding: work well advanced at Moydow Community Centre
- WIFI4EU Launched: free Wi-Fi now available in Longford, Ballymahon and Drumlish
- Eduroam (education roaming) pilot project commenced in Longford Ballymahon and Drumlish



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Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Action

Housing

Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke visited Longford on 14 December to officially open 25 new houses in the Granada View, Carragh, Granard. The development consists of a mix of 2, 3 and 4-bedroom houses. Minister Burke also visited the site at Ballinalee, to view the progress of a housing development currently under construction, consisting of six two-bed bungalows for the elderly, due for completion mid-2021. On this same site, Minister Burke visited Rose Cottage, which is currently is being restored as a Heritage Centre and Tea Rooms to commemorate General Sean McEoin.

The Minister also viewed the Alderfield Housing Development at Farnagh, in Longford Town, which consists of 24 houses, with a mix of 2 and 3 bedrooms. 16 units were completed by end of December with the final 8 for completion in 2021.

Works are progressing well on a number of projects on site currently including six OPDs at Rose Cottage, Ballinalee; one unit at Fairgreen View, Longford and one unit at Cloonahard, Longford. Five units at Church Street, Edgeworthstown and the 18/22 units at Legan were completed by year end.

Longford County Council has appointed consultants CS Pringle to carry out surveying works as part of the Energy Retrofitting Program. It proposed to survey 50 houses per Municipal District. Currently the survey work is complete in Ballinalee village and Matthews Park Ballymahon on authority owned property. This work has now ceased temporarily due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Longford County Council has a very positive working relationship with Midlands Simon Community which has led to positive outcomes for the people that are supporting throughout our services in Longford. Over the Christmas period, the Midlands Simon out of hours service provided cover for the Midland Authorities. This operated from the 23 December to the 2 January and had the discretion to place homeless people in private emergency accommodation, if needed.



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Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Action

Environment

Recycling of Christmas Trees

Longford County Council are collecting real Christmas trees free of charge at Westlink Civic Amenity, Longford Town and Mulleady's Civic Amenity, Drumlish from 4 January to 23 January.



Opening hours are as follows:

- Westlink Longford: Wednesdays 9am-5pm, (closed for lunch 1-2pm) and Saturday 9am-1pm
- Mulleady's Drumlish Monday-Friday 8am-5pm and Saturday 9am-1pm

Bottle Banks, Longford Clean-Up

This is an ongoing issue with the bottle banks, and the Environment Department will continue to encourage the public to bring their cans and bottles home when the bottle banks are full.

Vehicle Refinishing

The Environment Section is currently running a programme to improve compliance with the Deco Paints Regulations. The regulations stipulate that garages and body shops involved in spray painting have several obligations and are obliged to hold a Certificate of Compliance. Over 90 premises have been written to and a number of garages have been inspected to date. Operators are being asked to register if obligated under the regulations and if subcontracting work, to ensure they only use certified contractors. Additionally, operators can report noncompliance to the County Council or the EPA's Environmental Complaints Lines. The Council wants to ensure a level playing field for all in the motor trade.

RMCEI

At the recent National RMCEI Coordinators Conference, major changes in RMCEI reporting for 2021 was flagged. The Council will submit its annual report using the new format by February 2021.

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Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Action

Planning Services

Applications and Enforcement

Statutory requirements were maintained, including managing planning applications, housing, retail, industrial proposals, Part 8 Planning Schemes and CPOs. Planning administrative office, public counter and technical advice and reports kept fully functioning. Also assisted in implementation of the housing and regeneration programme.

Development Plan

Statutory requirements were maintained, including, the ongoing Development Plan Review, setting out the template for County Development until 2027. Draft Plan out for public consultation until mid-January. All sectors of Longford's future development potential analysed and detailed strategies, policies and GIS mapping developed.

Planning Projects

UNESCO Mid-Shannon Biosphere Reserve presented and approved by Council. Biospheres are sites of excellence where active conservation sits alongside responsible development; 'living landscapes' with a more balanced relationship between people and nature. The area of the proposed for the Mid-Shannon Biosphere & Environs totals 2,081.87 Sq. Km and in Longford is 652.43 Sq. Km (Core Zone Area of Natura 2000 Sites 59.89 Sq. Km).

Roads

In Longford Town, work on the N63 Market Square to Flancare Scheme continued in December. Road Pavement works at Market Square and Harbour Row were completed before Christmas.

Construction Works on Active Travel Measures Schemes, Climate Change Adaption Schemes and Community Involvement Schemes continued in various MDs.

Routine Works such as street cleaning, hedge cutting, winter maintenance, patching, pothole repair and drainage works also continued in each MD.

On 23 December, Longford County Council were notified of an allocation of €5,953,790 for the Improvement and Maintenance of National Roads in the County.

Road Schemes to be progressed in 2021 include N4 Newtownforbes, N63 Majors Well Road, N55 Ballymahon Main Street and N63 Farranyoogan.



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Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Action

Water Services

The business continuity of the Water Service Section is considered a high priority for both the county and the state at the present time. Longford County Council, in conjunction with Irish Water, continues to plan and deliver the functions of the Water Services section throughout the county.

The Water Services Capital Section also continue to provide essential services during COVID-19, ensuring the continuation of high-quality drinking water for Longford, particularly focusing on areas with capacity concerns.

Capital Network Scheme

Longford County Council, in partnership with Irish Water, are currently progressing the installation of approximately 1400m of new watermain, replacing existing old problematic watermain at Ballymakeegan and the installation of a new watermain and connections to Templemichael and Bannon Terrace. Both schemes will improve the water network and security of supply in these areas and are due for completion in early 2021.

ECI Water Programme

In cooperation with Irish Water, Water Services are continuing the roll out of extensive upgrades to a number of the Water Treatment Plants in Longford. This is a national programme aimed at enhancing infrastructure involved in the delivery of water quality. The programme is currently at detail design and planning stage for the Lough Forbes WTP, while the works are already in the advanced stage at Lough Kinale (Granard) WTP and Lough Gowna (Smear) WTP.



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Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Action

Flow Meter Stimulus Works

Water Services Capital section have recently completed the installation of reservoir inlet flow meters at four of our reservoir sites in County Longford. These works will enable accurate recording of water flows from the water treatment plants into the reservoirs and network which will greatly aid with leakage management of the water distribution system.



Pressure Management & Leakage Control Improvement Works

Water Services Capital section have recently secured funding for pressure reduction improvement works and have identified two sites which will benefit from pressure reduction at Gelsha & Granardkill. Funding has been secured to replace two problematic pressure reducing valves (PRVs) in the network which when completed will aid pressure management of the water network and improve access to the PRVs for future maintenance works.

Veterinary Services

Veterinary and Dog and Horse Control services are an essential service to support safe local food production and animal welfare and animal control during COVID-19.

Dog Control Services have joined An Garda Siochana at checkpoints in Longford recently and in other operations to assist in counteracting illegal animal movements and dog thefts.

The Dog Wardens continues to care for stray and unwanted dogs all though December.

Stray dogs are hazardous to people, farm animals and other pets and our service keeps our community safe while also being very committed to the welfare of these dogs

Responsible dog ownership and each person's dog having a Dog License are the two most important actions that individuals can make to support our great Dog Control Service in County Longford. 1392 dog licenses have been purchased to date.

People acquiring new dogs should only purchase from people they know or who are recommended to them and rescue dogs, if available from the Dog Pound are always glad of a good home.

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Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Action

Fire & Emergency Services

Business Continuity Planning

The Fire Service prepared and implemented business continuity measures for operational personnel and HQ staff. These measures are managed by the Longford Fire and Rescue Service Action Tracker Plan for COVID-19. The Fire Brigade HQ is also continuously manned. Due to COVID-19, two fire service personnel had to self-isolate over the Christmas period.

Operations

43 total callouts in December. All stations remained fully operational and staffed accordingly in Level 5.

Fire Prevention

Four Fire Safety Certs have been processed in December. Five licence applications processed. Fire Service inspections and community fire safety activities have been suspended for the duration of COVID-19.

MEM

Regional Working Group meetings are now held Monthly by teleconference working on COVID-19 measures. The MEM working group will also have a new chair from January 2021 from a Garda Siochana.

Training

Training courses are been rescheduled on an ongoing basis due to COVID-19. Courses completed in December were as follows: two people attended a Compartment Fire Behaviour refresher course which was held in Ballinrobe and five students completed an initial 5-day Compartment Fire Behaviour Course held in Ballinrobe.

Health & Safety

No injuries to report in December 2020.

Civil Defence

Volunteers provided three days assistance at the IBTS Blood Bank Clinic. Procedure Manuals were reviewed and updated, and the Training Plan was drawn up for 2021.



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CONNECTED People • Place • Opportunity

Management Report for December 2020 prepared in accordance with Sec 136 (2) of the Local Government Act 2001, as inserted by Sec 51 the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The report outlines key aspects of our service delivery and performance in December 2020 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed:

Paddy Mahon

Chief Executive





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