



Chief Executive Report April 2024

Longford County Council

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April Highlights

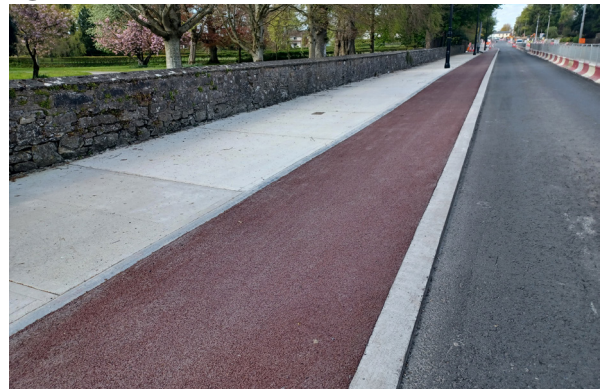
Granard Booktown Festival

The second Granard Booktown Festival was held in April. A fantastic weekend enjoyed by all, the festival brought books and literature to life in rural communities. There were many local and nationally renowned writers in attendance, as well as writers from as far away as the USA and the UK.



Active Travel progress

The outbound R198 Battery Road footpath was reopened to the public in April from the entrance to St Albans up to the Lisbrack Road junction. This 400 metres section has a new concrete footpath with adjoining cycle and running track. Red surfacing and public light has been installed.



Healthy and Safety Award

Longford County Council won the Public Sector Award at the recent Health and Safety Excellence Awards 2024. The second year winning this award, it recognises employees hard work creating and maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all our employees and wider community.



Fire Services training

Seven Longford firefighters completed a five-day junior officer incident command course. The second National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management approved course of this type held in County Longford, students also came from Wexford, Meath, Westmeath and Carlow Fire Services.



Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Spring into Storytime

The Spring into Storytime initiative was rolled out. Edgeworthstown Library hosted storytime sessions with Shelley Corcoran and Paul Timoney, as well as a bunting making workshop.

Maria Edgeworth Festival

Edgeworthstown Library hosted the launch of the Maria Edgeworth Festival which takes place on 10-12 May. Launched by Cllr Paul Ross, it was attended by the Maria Edgeworth festival committee and the public.

Community Groups

Community groups continue to use library spaces. This includes Ballymahon Book Club, Scribblers Writing Group and the newly formed Ballymahon Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) who all meet in Ballymahon Library.

The crochet and knitting group continue to meet on Tuesday mornings and the library continues to facilitate the Longford-Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) with English classes for Ukrainians held on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Falls Prevention and Step Classes

The Falls Prevention and Step Classes run by Longford Sports Partnership ended in March. A new booked up block began in April with classes

in Longford, Ballymahon, Granard, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough Libraries

Seachtain na Gaeilge

Seachtain na Gaeilge is an annual festival 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 which 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.

Healthy Ireland at Your Library

Healthy eating and Easter dining workshops with Fiona Egan were held in several libraries.

Two mindfulness workshops for adults with Pauline Rogers held in Granard and Edgeworthstown Libraries.

Activator Pole Workshop were held in

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Drumlsh Library thanks to Longford Sports Partnership. Following on from this, a number of activator poles were given to the libraries from Longford Sports Partnership. These can be borrowers as part of our Libraries Handy Helps Collection.

Granard Booktown Festival

The second Granard Booktown Festival was held in April. This was a fantastic weekend of bringing books and literature to life in rural communities. Writers joining in from as far away as the USA and the UK, with many Irish writers as well.

Noel Monahan was welcomed as the first artist in residence for the festival. Booker Prize winner Paul Lynch was also welcomed to the festival.



Granard Writers Group held a wonderful morning of poetry, prose and stories.

Huge thanks to Longford bestselling author John Connell, Ronan O'Toole and Longford Library team for all their hard work.

Creative Ireland

A review of applications under the Creative Ireland and Cruinniú na nÓg Grant Open Calls took place. In total, 50 applications were successful and this grant will now support many groups, artists, and creatives throughout County Longford during 2024.

Book Launch

There was standing room only in Longford library on Friday, April 5 for the launch of 'Twelve Sheep: Life Lessons from a Lambing Season', the latest book by acclaimed author John Connell.

Archives and Records Management

Extensive work has been undertaken to appraise records for disposal in the Environment section before this section moves to their new premises.

The disposal of records in the Roads section has also been authorised.

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

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Archives are working on several projects including an exhibition as part of the National Famine Commemoration, which takes place on Sunday, 19 May in Edgeworthstown.

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) in 2024. An additional ring-fenced thatch fund of €7,002 was allocated for historic thatch structures.

Longford County Council received 15 applications under the BHIS, including one for the ring-fenced thatch fund. Three were not valid, however, all eligible applications were successful.

Historic Structures Fund

Longford County Council received five applications from protected structures for Stream 1 of the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) 2024. Three of these were shortlisted, with the other two applicants successful in the BHIS funding stream.

The shortlisted applications were:

1. The iron railings to the Fetherston Memorial Clocktower (Ardagh Clocktower), Ardagh
2. Creevaghmore House, Creevaghmore, Ballymahon

3. Oldtown House, Ardagh Of the above shortlisted applications, Creevaghmore

House and Oldtown House were awarded funding. The applicants and their conservation advisors have been notified, with a total of €35,000 awarded to these homes.

Community Monuments Fund

Longford County Council received applications for archaeological monuments for the Community Monuments Fund (CMF) 2024 under two streams: Stream 1 for capital repairs and Stream 2 for assessment and conservation management plans.

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: Four eligible applications were received by Longford County Council and were shortlisted. They are:

- 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

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

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, and will be going to tender within the coming months.
- A conservation plan for the Gore Monument (aka Annaly Monument) at Holy Trinity Church, Tashinny. This was unsuccessful in receiving funding.

County Heritage Plan Review

A review of the County Longford Heritage Plan 2020-2024 is underway. Request for quotations were circulated via confined tender to four suitably experienced consultants, based on recommendations from other Heritage Officers. The responses are due in May 2024, after which the review and consultation programme will start.

A proposed make-up of the new County Heritage Forum has been developed and approved in principle. This will allow for greater community engagement, through the Longford Public Participation Network.

Longford Field Names Pilot

The Longford Field Names Pilot was

started by Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray, with a public information session in Longford Library. Kitty Hughes spoke on behalf of the Longford Historical Society, to a receptive audience.

Longford Historical Society initially appointed a project coordinator and data controller. However they can no longer continue with this project and a new project coordinator is being sought. In the interim, a number of volunteers and local contacts have been identified and a draft data recording sheet developed.

Edgeworth Tellograph

The Edgeworth Tellography project is being led by the Maria Edgeworth Centre, with 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 will take place during National Heritage Week with the relay being broadcast in Edgeworthstown.

Longford Archaeological Research Programme

This year's 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

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Portal Tomb and Drumbad ringfort. Photogrammetry is the use of photography in surveying and mapping to ascertain measurements between objects.

2. LiDAR surveys of a number of 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.

The specification is being developed and once approved by The Heritage Council, will be tendered between practitioners that have verified archaeological experience.

Oliver Goldsmith statue

The process for the stabilisation and removal of the historic Oliver Goldsmith plaster statue by John F Foley is underway. Maurice Ward Ltd will review the site for the removal the week beginning on Monday, 29 April.

Sophie Reynolds-Lerner will bind the statue to stabilise it and develop a mechanism for its safe removal to a location in Ballymahon. Sophie Reynolds-Lerner is the experienced conservator who undertook the conservation report on the sculpture.

Arts Service

Artist Bursary Award Scheme

The Artist Bursary Award Scheme for 2024 made offers to 12 Longford-based artists, an allocation of €22,000 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.

Project Award Scheme

The Project Award Scheme 2024 made offers to 10 Longford cultural organisations and individual artists, with €25,000 allocated under this scheme. An independent panel undertook the assessment process.

YPCE Award

Longford Arts Service, in partnership with Longford School Completion Programme and two local schools, were successful in applying for a €80,000 Arts Council grant to deliver 'Making Moving Art'. This ambitious 12-month programme seeks to work with Traveller and Roma children who are transferring from primary to secondary schools. The programme involves drama, circus skills, music and dance. Participating schools are St Joseph's Convent National School and St Michael's Boys National School.

Corporate Services

Customer Services

Customer services responded to over 1,500 calls in March and April, as well as 145 emails received and many in-person customers.

Check the Register

In the run up to the Family and Carers Referendum, there was a huge increase in new and updated applications on Check the Register, with 1,420 applications processed.

Letters and other communications were circulated to all electors who were affected by polling station changes resulting from the recent polling scheme review.

To ensure you are registered to vote in the upcoming Local and European Elections, visit [CheckTheRegister.ie](https://checktheregister.ie) to register or amend your details. You will need to include your date of birth, personal public service number (PPSN) and Eircode.

The closing date for postal voters applications is Saturday, 11 May.

The closing date for applications for inclusion on the Register of Electors is Monday, 20 May.

It is important to register to vote early, to ensure your application is complete before the closing date.

If you have changed address, please ensure you update your details on [Checktheregister.ie](https://checktheregister.ie). This will ensure you receive your polling card to the correct

address and that you are registered to vote at the correct polling station.

Official Languages Act

Work continues to meet our obligations under Section 10A of the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021. In the first four months of 2024, a total of 812 advertisements were placed, with 150 in Irish or bilingual.

Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) requests, as well as Office of the Ombudsman complaints received are detailed as follows:

	Mar	Apr	YTD*
FOI requests	4	4	20
AIE requests	1	1	3
Ombudsman complaints	0	0	1

*YTD: year to date

Data Protection

- Data Subject Access Request received and completed within the statutory deadline of 1 month: 2
- Data Breaches were investigated and closed: 2
- Data Protection Impact Assessments reviewed: 2
- Data Protection queries received and answered: 29

Corporate Services

Privacy Policy and Service Privacy Notices

Data Protection's Privacy Policy and Service Privacy Notices are available in Irish on Longfordcoco.ie.

Data Protection Newsletter

Data Protection's second quarterly newsletter was issued.

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

Meetings in March and April included:

19 March	Corporate Policy Group (CPG)
20 March	Longford County Council
26 March	Granard Municipal District (MD)
	Granard MD In Committee
27 March	Longford MD
	Longford MD In Committee
28 March	Ballymahon MD
	Ballymahon MD In Committee
10 April	CPG
	Longford County Council
15 April	Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
16 April	Governance SPC
17 April	Climate Action and Planning SPC
18 April	Strategic Infrastructure SPC

24 April	Longford MD
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Communications

Press Releases

Ten press releases were issued in March and April, including:

- Launch of the 'Perfectly Located Longford' investment brochure by Cathaoirleach Colm Murray
- Longford County Council highlights battle against illegal dumping
- Longford represented at New York St Patrick's Day celebrations and trade and tourism events

Events

Communications continue to help with Council events, including preparation for the National Famine Commemoration in May.

Social Media

Social media continues to be an important tool to reach Longford people. Posts included the new Increased Cost of Business Grant and the Local Enhancement Programme.

	*Reach or Impressions	Follower Count
Facebook	43K	7,161 (^185)
Instagram	2.7K	1,935 (^65)
Twitter	20.7K	3,538 (^64)

*Reach: Number of people who had post enter their screen.
Impressions: Number of times post entered a screen

Corporate Services

Website

Website improvements continue to be made. Across March and April, updates were made to the Roads section of Longfordcoco.ie.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Awards

Longford County Council won the Public Sector Award at the recent Health and Safety Excellence Awards 2024 which took place on Thursday, 18 April in Dublin. This is the second year Longford County Council have won this award.

This award recognises Longford County Councils employees continued hard work creating and maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all our employees and the wider community.

Health and Safety Briefing Session

Safety briefing for the to the new Housing Frameworks Contractors 2024-2026 were provided.



This included information on the role of project supervisor for the construction process. These briefings also covered Longford County Council's safety management system for house construction, maintenance, energy retrofit and refurbishment contracts and associated minor works.

Health and Safety Inspections

Eight safety inspection were completed.

Internal Health and Safety Audits

Internal health and safety audits were completed in the following sections: Local Enterprise Office, Community, Corporate, Information Technology, Human Resources, Finance, Planning, Longford Sports Partnership, Regeneration and Active Travel, and Uisce Éireann.

Health and Safety Training

Ongoing risk assessment briefings were held with each Council section.

Six new employee health and safety inductions were completed.

Local Enterprise Office

AI: The Way Forward

Longford Local Enterprise Office held an 'AI: The Way Forward' event at Backstage Theatre in March to kick off Local Enterprise Week 2024.

Attended by Longford business owners, the event focused on present and future implications of artificial intelligence (AI) on small businesses.

Guided by RTE's Carole Coleman, the event's keynote speaker was Anne-Marie Tomchak who was joined by panellists and AI experts Alan Farrelly, John O'Shanahan and Toby Farren. All shared their invaluable insights and emphasised the importance of a strategic approach to AI adoption.

Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray concluded the event by discussing the need for small businesses to embrace AI for competitive advantage.



County Enterprise Awards 2024

Harp Media took top prize at the County Enterprise Awards 2024. The Granard-based film production company will go on to represent Longford at the National Finals in Dublin on Thursday, 23 May. Harp Media is led by Robert Higgins and Patrick McGivney.



Other winners on the day included: Thermwall, Larkin Windows, Wilder and Gold, and Fabiani. Hugh Quinn from Edgeworthstown was recognised with the Spirit of Longford Award.



Local Enterprise Office

Student Enterprise Awards County Final

Students from across County Longford took place in the Student Enterprise Awards County Final for 2024. Part of the national competition, students set up and run their own business, with the winners going onto represent their county at the National Finals. The winners were:

Maria Kelly from Hat Scents at Ardscoil Phadraig, Granard



Grainne McKenna and Sarah Mollaghan from Trendy Threads at Moyne Community School



Kiera Hopkins, Lara Flood and Grace Cassells from Handle Holders at Ballymahon Vocational School



International Women's Day

On Friday, 8 March, close to 200 women gathered to celebrate International Women's Day at an event hosted by the Local Enterprise Offices of Longford, Leitrim and Westmeath.

The theme for this year's event was 'Inspire Inclusion.' The event MC was Longford's Pat Murphy, Chairperson of the Tri County Women in Business Network. Keynote speaker was Caroline Reidy, Managing Director of The HR Suite who spoke about asking the right questions and reaching your full potential.



Fire Services

Training

Seven Longford firefighters completed a five-day junior officer incident command course in Lanesborough. This is the second National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management approved course of this type held in Longford. Students were from Longford, Wexford, Meath, Westmeath and Carlow Fire Services.



Four persons completed a two-day hydraulic platform instructor refresher training course.

All stations completed a one day incident command refresher.

Recruitment

Nine people were interviewed for the position of firefighters in various stations. It is expected that seven vacancies will be filled from the panels created.

After the above interviews, there are now firefighter vacancies in four fire stations in order to meet the working arrangements. The pre-selection or short-listing process will continue in an

attempt to fill the remaining positions.

Equipment

All equipment in each section has been inspected by Irish Engineering Services for their six monthly inspections.

Operations

All stations remained fully operational.

There were a 72 callouts in March and April.

Fire Prevention

Five fire safety certificates were processed.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety incidents to report.

Regeneration

Camlin Quarter Regeneration Project

Part 8 has been issued in relation to the upgrade of the Mall outdoor facilities upgrade. Work is ongoing on the changing room upgrade at the Mall and this should be completed in the coming weeks. It has been proposed to seek five quotations from local builders for the store room extension at the Mall.

Ballymahon Pobal le Cheile

Part 8 planning has been issued for the Ballymahon Pobal le Cheile under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund 2020. Submissions must be received by Monday, 13 May.

Granard Destination Town

Under the Granard Destination Town project, tenders were sought for the procurement of project management and design consultancy services with skills in urban design and public realm improvement projects. This is for the Granard Town Centre Public Realm and car park. Five tenders were received and are currently being assessed.

North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2: Monaduff to Ballinamuck

Work has commenced on the under North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2: Monaduff to Ballinamuck. This is under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) 2023.

ORIS and Town and Village Renewal Scheme

Applications have been submitted under ORIS and Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2023.

Longford County Council have been approved €180,000 for six Measure 1 projects. Regeneration are awaiting decisions on all other submitted applications.

Active Travel

R198 Battery Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

The outbound R198 Battery Road footpath was reopened to the public in April from the entrance to St Albans up to the Lisbrack Road junction. This 400 metres section has a new concrete footpath with adjoining cycle and running track. Red surfacing and public light has been installed.



The outbound road has been reconstructed along this section with the final surfacing yet to be applied. Traffic is now shifted onto this side.

Regeneration

Since early April works have swapped to the inbound side of the Battery Road, again working between Lisbrack Road junction and Saint Albans. Installation of services and drainage are ongoing. ESB underground ducting network is advancing. This will allow for the removal of the overhead lines and poles in the coming weeks.

When complete this project will deliver over 1.2km of new footpath and cycle track for this key route into Longford Town.

Works include the signalisation of the Lisbrack road junction, carriageway and junction tightening along the route, undergrounding of overhead services, public lighting upgrades and road reconstruction.

Active Travel Scheme in Granard

Two active travel schemes in Granard had Part 8 planning approved in March.

The first of these will see a new footpath along the R194 Longford Road in Granard, from Ard Scoil Padraig to the old Ulster Bank building. This scheme will include a pedestrian crossing on the R194 and involve carriageway narrowing and junction tightening.

The second scheme will tie into the above scheme with the construction of a footpath from Market Street to Barrack Lane.

Detailed design works and site surveys are ongoing for both schemes.

Pencil Bollards at entrance to Sacred Heart National School Granard

The Active Travel section undertook enhancement works at the entrance to Sacred Heart National School in Granard. This project was carried out in conjunction with the school and completed in March.

Works included installation of 32 pencil bollards, pier removal with carpark entrance widening, kerbing and surfacing.

These measures have sought to regularise parking and turning movements at the school gate. This will provide a more clearly defined, safer and uncongested route for pedestrians going to school.



Regeneration

Town Centre First

URBACT UR Impact

UR Impact is an action-planning project co-funded by the URBACT IV European programme. For this, Longford County Council works with partners from across Europe to promote and measure the impact of social inclusion and community development in urban regeneration projects.

The ten European partners are:

- Municipality of Mértola (Portugal)
- Broumov Municipality (Czech Republic)
- Municipality of Targu Frumos (Romania)
- Municipality of Murcia (Spain)
- Municipality of Hannut (Belgium)
- Municipality of Longford (Ireland)
- Municipality of Bovec (Slovenia)
- Kamza Municipality (Albania)
- Municipality of Bielsko-Biala (Poland)

The goal is for each municipality to create an Integrated Action Plan that evaluates the social impact of urban regeneration programs.

By prioritising social impact, with a focus on community involvement, urban regeneration actions place citizens and their social, economic and environmental wellbeing at the centre of the processes.

The Longford project will focus on the town of Ballymahon, in the support of the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project. In addition, it is considering the wider town area and will develop an Integrated Action Plan for the town. This plan will identify regeneration projects, with a focus on their social impact.

A Transnational Meeting took place in Murcia, Spain in March. A public meeting and URBACT Local Group (ULG) meeting will be held on 30 April in Ballymahon library. This will inform the community of the UR Impact project and to build the capacity of the ULG.

Longford Town Centre First Strategy

Longford Town Centre First Strategy is complete and will be presented at the next Town Team meeting on 29 April for adoption. The Plan will then inform future projects to enhance Longford town centre.

Ballymahon Town Centre First

Minister Heather Humphreys announced the second round of towns that will develop Town Centre First Plans on 28 February at an event in Limerick. Ballymahon has been announced as the second town within County Longford for Town Centre First. A public drop-in clinic was held in Ballymahon library on 30 April to inform the community about Town Centre First and to begin to gather data on the current situation in the town.

Planning

Planning Applications

ePlanning has been fully implemented. Currently, over 80% of all applications are received online.

Development is due to start on the permitted extension to Center Parcs. When completed, there will be a 50% increase in accommodation.

The waiver scheme in relation to development contribution has been extended. There has been a modest uptake in applications. Planning will look to make as many people as possible aware of the scheme.

Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan

The Longford Town Local Area Plan (LAP) is in pre-draft stage. It is dependent on the Longford Town Local Transport Plan (LTP), which is being prepared. For this, detailed Census 2022 results are now being analysed.

In January, the draft LAP was sent to consultants for the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environment Assessment reports. It is anticipated to start the statutory process with the display of the draft plan.

Derelict Sites

The Derelict Sites Act is being used as a vehicle to minimise dereliction and vacancy in Longford Town. Derelict site registration has started on seven sites.

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

The UNESCO application for biosphere reserve status for Lough Ree is progressing. Consultants are appointed for the public consultation, which is due to start in January.

A flagship climate action and biodiversity project, it features in the National Climate Action Plan, Shannon Tourism Masterplan, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Programme for Government.

Extensive discussions between consultants, the steering committee and the secretariat regarding the boundary requirements and public consultation are due to start in Spring 2024.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

A draft map, required under the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) legislation has been published.

Land appearing on draft maps (which are amended to account for the outcome of submissions and rezoning requests) will be included on the final land map and will be within the scope for the tax in the local authority area. This is to be published on Friday, 31 January 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.

The Revenue Commissioners are the administration of the RZLT.

CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

Management Report for April 2024 prepared in accordance with Sec 136 (2) of the Local Government Act 2001, as inserted by Section 51 the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The report outlines key aspects of our service delivery and performance in April 2024 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed: 
Paddy Mahon
Chief Executive

