



Chief Executive Report December 2024 – January 2025

Longford County Council

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Storm Éowyn Response

On Friday, 24 January Storm Éowyn landed under a red weather wind warning issued by Met Éireann. Civil Defence volunteers prepared for the arrival of the storm and were activated in the immediate aftermath, working to reach and assist as many affected individuals as possible. As soon as the Red Warning was lifted, Longford County Council roads crews were mobilised to tackle fallen trees and re-open the road network. Longford County Council Fire and Emergency Services, Civil Defence and all other departments worked together throughout the weekend and into the following week to try and reduce the impact of the storm on the citizens of Longford.



Storm Éowyn Response



Longford Sports Partnership

Inclusive Gymnastics Programme

In partnership with Longford Gymnastics Club, Longford Sports Partnership have launched an Inclusive Gymnastics Programme designed specifically for adults with additional needs. The programme aimed to foster fitness, coordination, and enjoyment within a supportive and inclusive environment. Service users from St Christopher's and the Irish Wheelchair Association school leavers group participated in this public initiative.

Participants had the opportunity to engage in structured physical activities that were adapted to their individual abilities, promoting personal growth and a sense of achievement. This collaboration underscores our commitment to inclusivity and highlights the positive impact of community partnerships in creating opportunities for everyone to participate in meaningful physical activities.



Couch To 5K

The Couch to 5K programme runs over eight weeks with group sessions taking place twice weekly and participants given a third session to do by themselves. The programme started on January 21, with 50 participants signed up. A weekly programme is provided along with ongoing support and advice.

Designed for beginners, the programme gradually takes participants from a sedentary lifestyle to jogging a 5K, after eight weeks. Over the course of the programme participants see improvements in cardiovascular health, as the incremental increase in physical activity enhances heart and lung function. It also encourages the development of a consistent exercise habit, providing a sustainable framework for long-term health and fitness.

The nature of the program makes it accessible to a diverse range of people, accommodating different fitness levels. This gradual approach helps to prevent injuries and build confidence, making walking, jogging, and running enjoyable and rewarding experiences for beginners.

Pilates for Chronic Conditions Programme

The Pilates for Chronic Conditions Programme is a specialised initiative designed to support individuals living with chronic health conditions such as arthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia, and other long-term conditions.

The programme leverages the principles of Pilates to improve

Longford Sports Partnership

physical strength, flexibility, and overall wellbeing, making it a valuable resource for managing symptoms and enhancing quality of life. It will be delivered over six to eight weeks through weekly in-person classes with BeWell Studio Longford. There will be ongoing opportunities for progression.

Programme objectives include improve physical function and focusing, reducing pain and stiffness, supporting mental wellbeing and empowering participants with exercises which can be integrated into daily life. Participants receive access to exercise guides to continue practice at home.



Looking ahead this programme aims to:

- Expand accessibility through additional class locations and online options.
- Partner with healthcare providers to offer integrated support for chronic condition management.
- Develop advanced modules for participants seeking to continue their Pilates journey.
- Continue to empower individuals to take control of their health and enhance their quality of life through safe, supportive, and effective physical activity.

County Longford Outdoor Recreation Plan

The development of the County Longford Outdoor Recreation Plan is well underway, with a consultant now appointed to lead the process. Initial meetings have commenced, and three public consultations are in the pipeline to ensure community input and collaboration.

This plan aims to identify and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across the county, promoting health, well-being, and tourism while aligning with national and local development strategies.

The aim of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan is to provide a 5-year effective and sustainable framework to maximise current and future opportunities for outdoor recreation in the County, thereby increasing

Longford Sports Partnership

participation in outdoor recreation. Concurrently it will strive to conserve and protect the County's natural environment and cultural heritage.

The Plan will take cognisance of the need to align with the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors' which was launched in 2022.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Embracing Ireland's Outdoors National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027



Corporate Services

Customer Services

Customer Services received over 3,500 calls, 145 emails and dealt with many in-person customers in November and December 2024.

Register of Electors

Longford County Council are processing applications received through CheckTheRegister.ie daily. There was a marked increase in applications in advance of the General election on the 15 November 2024. All applications received in advance of the statutory deadline were processed before polling day, ensuring those electors were enabled to vote. Over 1,400 applications were processed in the two weeks prior to polling day alone.

Work continues to improve the accuracy of the Electoral Register. If you have changed address recently, you must change your details on [CheckTheRegister.ie](https://www.longfordcoco.ie/CheckTheRegister). This helps to ensure that any correspondence is issued to the correct address and

that you are at the correct address on the Register for electoral event purposes.

Even if you are already registered, you need to add your date of birth, PPSN and Eircode. This enables us to ensure accuracy of the Electoral Register. In addition, everyone aged 16 and 17 years can now pre-register online and will be automatically added to the Register when they turn 18 years. Visit [CheckTheRegister.ie](https://www.longfordcoco.ie/CheckTheRegister)

Official Languages Act

Work continues to meet our obligations under Section 10A of the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021. In September and October, 433 advertisements were recorded, with 187 in Irish or bilingual.

As of the end of 2024, Longford County Council has exceed the 20% Irish ad placement and 5% spend in Irish Language media under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. Final figures will be submitted to An Coimisinéir Teanga.

FOIs, AIE and Office of the Ombudsman complaints

See below table for details of the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) requests and the Office of the Ombudsman complaints received.

	November	December	Year to Date
FOI requests received	3	3	63
AIE requests received	1	1	13
Office of the Ombudsman complaints received	0	1	5

Corporate Services

Meetings Administration

Meetings which took place in November, December and January were both online and hybrid, and detailed below.

13 November 2024	Longford County Council Meeting
26 November 2024	Longford Municipal District Committee
	Longford Municipal District Meeting
4 December 2024	Ballymahon Municipal District Committee
6 December 2024	Longford County Council
16 December 2024	Granard Municipal District Committee
	Granard Municipal District
12 January 2025	Longford County Council
27 January 2025	Granard Municipal District
28 January 2025	Longford Municipal District Committee
	Longford Municipal District

Communications

Storm Éowyn

Communications have worked with teams across the Council to highlight public safety messages, the newly set-up Emergency Response Hubs, reporting tools for road obstructions in light of Storm Éowyn.

Press releases

Press releases issued in the period cover work from across the Council including on the upcoming Longford Lights 2025, then Minister Heather Humphreys visit to County Longford, and the new Night Time Economy Safe & Sound campaign.

Data Protection

Data Protection introduced new signage to remind people to respect staff privacy, new data protection introduction training for new starters and rolled out the new 2024 Q4 newsletter.

Data Protection Breaches, DSAR, Impact Assessments and Queries

See the below table for the number of data protection breaches, Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs) and queries received.

Data Breaches	11
DSARs	9
Data Protection Impact Assessments	9
Data Protection queries	252

Corporate Services

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Inspections

There were six inspection completed by the Health and Safety and the Management Team since the last report.

Health and Safety Audits

A Temporary Traffic Management (TTM) audit and inspections were completed within road design and active travel projects by an independent auditor.

Health and Safety Training

Ongoing risk assessment briefing sessions are held with each section of the Council. Safety rep and fire warden training was completed.

Grafton Court Christmas Fair

To support local business, Longford County Council organised their first Grafton Court Christmas Fair to coincide with turning on of the Christmas lights in Longford town. Health and safety assisted in developing the event management plan, completing inductions for stewards and volunteers.

Human Resources

Learning and Development

The following training courses were arranged in December 2024 and January 2025:

Business skills training:

- A-Z In Local Government with the IPA
- Debt Collection Techniques – IPA
- Courtroom Skills – IPA
- Capability and Competency Based Interviewee Prep - IPA
- Public Community Warden Training
- PMDS Reviewer and Reviewee
- Blended Working Training for Managers
- Blended Working Training for All staff
- Climate Action Delivering Action
- Climate Action – Raising Awareness
- Custom ARCGIS Training

Health and safety training:

- CSCS 180 Degree Excavator Training
- CSCS Signing, Lighting, Guarding
- Winter Service Operator Training
- Manual Handling Training for Indoor Staff
- Personal Safety at Work Training
- Safe Pass
- Abrasive Wheels

Health and Wellbeing

Employee Appreciation Day

On Thursday, 5 December Longford County Council held an Employee Appreciation Day thanking all

employees for their continued service while focusing on motivation. Keynote speaker Nikki Bradley shared 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.

Amber Flag Awarded

As part of the Employee Appreciation Day event, a Pieta representative attended to raise the Amber Flag which has been awarded to the Council to recognise 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.

Upcycling Christmas Jumper Competition

In collaboration with the Climate Action team there was a Upcycled Christmas Jumper Competition which encouraging everyone to get creative and give new life to old jumpers, promoting sustainability and creativity.

Christmas get together for retired employees

A Christmas get together was held for all retired employees of Longford County Council on Thursday, 12 December. The afternoon gave past and present employees to meet and maintain friendships.

Tourism

Shannon and Shannon Erne Interpretation Project

This new interpretation project aims to increase time spent by visitors along the Shannon and Shannon Erne. This will include a number of discovery points and creative interventions along this area. Three of these discovery points will be located in Longford along the banks of the River Shannon as part of the project, which is by Waterways Ireland.

These will be located at Clondra, Red Bridge and Lanesborough/Ballyleague. Clondra and Lanesborough/Ballyleague will see large 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

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.

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.

Festivals and Events

The Fáilte Ireland Regional Festivals and Participative Events fund is open for applications from volunteers or community groups organising events or festivals between 1 January and 30 June 2025. Applications may be submitted online through the [News section of Longford.ie](https://www.longford.ie/news).

Anyone with queries is welcome to contact Longford Tourism on 043 334 35 09 or email tourism@longfordcoco.ie.

The deadline for the receipt of applications has been extended due to Storm Éowyn and is now 6pm on Wednesday, 5 February.

Grafton Court Christmas Fair

The Grafton Court Christmas Fair was held on 29 and 30 November. This was organised by Longford Tourism, Longford Night Time Economy and Local Enterprise Office. It was also supported by Longford Community Safety Partnership, Longford Municipal District area crew and Health and Safety of Longford County Council.

Held in Grafton Court to help to support businesses affected by a fire in July, it also celebrated those that were reopening in time for the

Tourism

Christmas season. Thousands of people attended the market, the first day of which coincided with the turning on of the Christmas Lights in Longford Town.

There was 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.

Christmas Lights

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 from 5-7pm each day from 20-23 December. The display which promoted localities and tourism destinations around Longford, was a sneak peak of the spectacle coming up in Longford Town on 20 February when the Longford Lights festival makes its return for 2025.



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 late February 2025.

Holiday World 2025

Despite the challenges of Storm Eowyn, the Longford Tourism team represented Longford as a vibrant and rich visitor and tourism destination at the Holiday World Show in Dublin from Friday 24-Sunday 26 January. This promotional project has been worked towards for a number of months, in terms of the planning, coordination and marketing materials.



The feedback was extremely positive and quite illuminating – a mailing list was gathered thanks to the kind support of donated prizes from Cathedral View Apartments and

Tourism

Lough Ree Distillery as well as the lure of a sample of a Torc Chocolate Whiskey Truffle for anyone who completed our survey. Sincere thanks to Alan Barr of Alan's Yippee Kayaking for his assistance with promotion over the weekend also.

Data will be collated and presented on this work at a later date. The key takeaway from the event was the consistent desire for a serviced caravan and camper site to be developed within the county and for better connectivity between our towns and villages, areas of infrastructure that Longford Tourism is keen to progress with. Significant interest in our history as the second most active rebel county in the country was also registered.

Just Transition Fund

County wide, Longford officially has three successful Just Transition applications, two in relation to the provision of bikes and one in new accommodation.

Evaluation is continuing at Failte Ireland level, with currently a further 20 applications in the system at the close of deadline (13 January 2025) that Longford Tourism is aware of.

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.

The Just Transition Tourism Activator will now help those applicants who are dealing with further information requests and support them in

converting their planned offerings into reality on the ground in County Longford.

As regards successful applicants under the Just Transition Fund, we 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 JT Activator is also trying to get those who might have LEADER supportable projects to apply to the limited funding available. And 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.

Tourism

Learning & Networking

Longford Tourism and the Just Transition Activator attended the following learning and networking events:

- Tourism Officers Network Meeting – Kilkenny County Council
- Failte Ireland Tourism Officers Marketing & Promotion Update, Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone
- Midlands Ireland Food and Drinks Food Tourism & Awareness Group – gathered in Co:Worx Edgeworthstown
- Just Transition Tourism Activators Workshop, Tullamore
- Pathways to Funding events, Longford, Ballymahon & Granard Libraries

Finance

Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Summary by Service Division

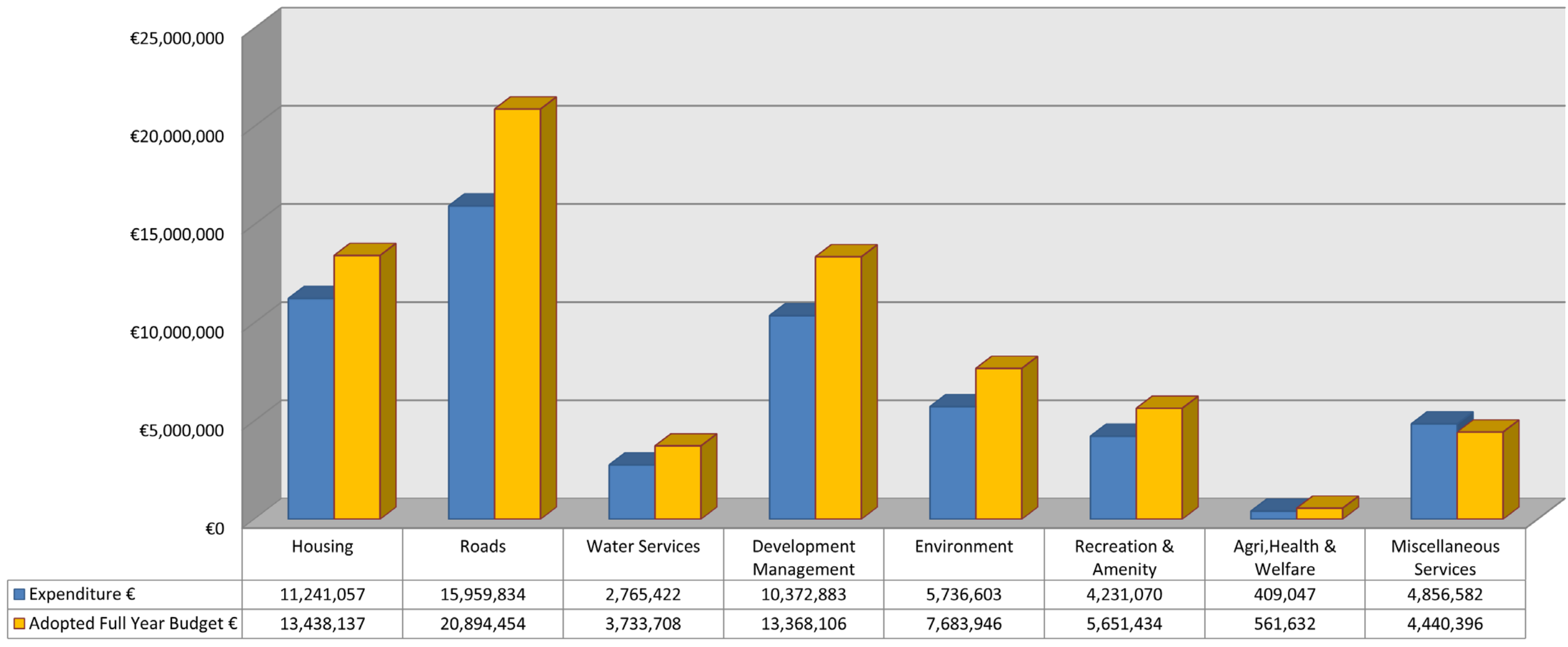
Year to Date to Quarter End 30/09/2024

	EXPENDITURE				INCOME				NET
	Expenditure €	Adopted Full Year Budget €	% Budget Spent to date	Budget Remaining €	Income €	Adopted Full year Budget €	% Budget Raised	Budget outstanding €	Actual Overall Surplus/ (Deficit) €
Housing	11,241,057	13,438,137	84%	2,197,080	11,557,325	12,736,928	91%	1,179,603	316,268
Roads	15,959,834	20,894,454	76%	4,934,620	11,700,263	16,507,927	71%	4,807,664	(4,259,571)
Water Services	2,765,422	3,733,708	74%	968,286	1,965,153	3,527,710	56%	1,562,557	(800,269)
Development Management	10,372,883	13,368,106	78%	2,995,223	6,084,974	7,199,080	85%	1,114,106	(4,287,909)
Environment	5,736,603	7,683,946	75%	1,947,343	837,302	1,861,508	45%	1,024,206	(4,899,301)
Recreation and Amenity	4,231,070	5,651,434	75%	1,420,364	925,201	1,100,368	84%	175,167	(3,305,869)
Agri, Health and Welfare	409,047	561,632	73%	152,585	235,946	264,213	89%	28,267	(173,101)
Miscellaneous Services	4,856,582	4,440,396	109%	(416,186)	7,166,427	6,469,629	111%	(696,798)	2,309,845
Local Government Fund					8,046,421	10,728,561	75%	2,682,140	8,046,421
*Commercial Rates					6,939,945	9,375,889	74%	2,435,944	6,939,945
	€55,572,498	€69,771,813	80%	€14,199,315	€55,458,957	€69,771,813	79%	€14,312,856	(€113,541)

These figures were submitted to the Department on Friday 22nd November 2024

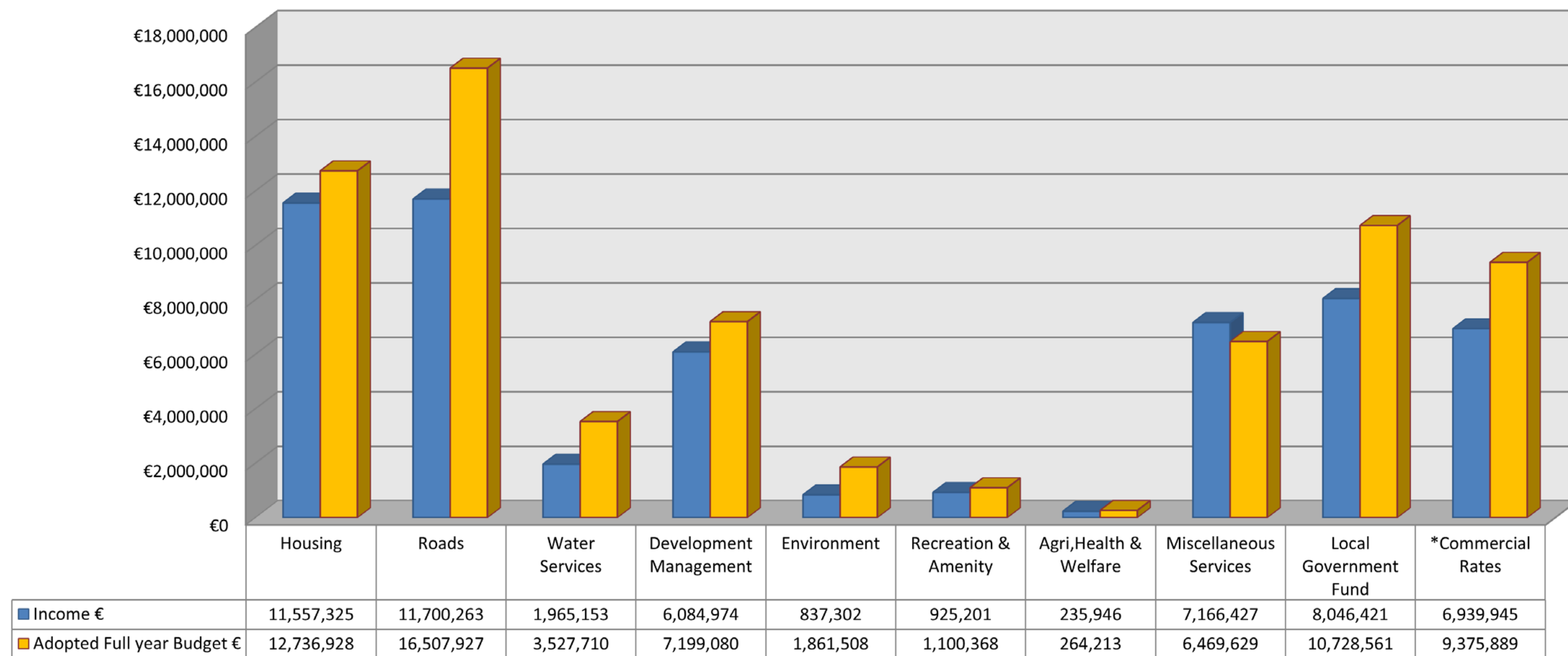
Finance

Expenditure V Budget – Quarter 3, 2024



Finance

Income V Budget – Quarter 2, 2024



Finance

Summary of Major Revenue Collections: Quarter 3, 2024

	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
Quarter 3, 2024	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	€1,200,532	€9,257,889	€10,451,376	€7,431,263	€3,020,113	71%
Rents (inc. RAS)	€907,238	€8,003,501	€8,888,039	€7,102,659	€1,785,380	80%
Housing Loans	€350,875	€846,821	€1,196,455	€913,541	€282,914	76%
	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
Quarter 3, 2023	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	€859,492	€9,258,578	€10,107,936	€6,917,286	€3,190,064	68%
Rents (inc. RAS)	€882,623	€5,633,720	€6,491,747	€5,619,881	€871,866	87%
Housing Loans	€346,022	€851,329	€1,197,350	€867,174	€330,176	72%
	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
VARIANCE YOY	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	€341,040	(€689)	€343,440	€513,977	(€169,951)	3%
Rents (inc. RAS)	€24,615	€2,369,781	€2,396,292	€1,482,778	€913,514	-7%
Housing Loans	€4,853	(€4,508)	(€895)	€46,367	(€47,262)	4%

Planning

Longford Local Area Plan and Longford Town Local Transport Plan

The Longford Town Local Area Plan (LAP) is currently at draft stage. A draft Local Area Plan was prepared, and public consultation undertaken between 6 September and 18 October 2024.

The Chief Executive's Report in relation to the submission on the draft document was presented to the elected members and was accepted by them

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

The application to UNESCO for Biosphere Reserve status for Lough Ree is progressing. Consultants have been appointed to carry out public consultation which is due to start in January following a Ministerial launch.

This project features in the National Climate Action Plan, Shannon Tourism Masterplan, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Programme for Government and is a flagship project in the region in our efforts to combat climate change and reverse biodiversity loss.

Extensive discussions have been carried out between the consultants, the steering committee and the secretariat regarding the boundary requirements and public consultation is due to start in Spring 2024

Planning Applications and Development Management

ePlanning is running smoothly, with 85% applications currently received on online.

A number of large-scale renewable energy applications have been received in relation to both solar and wind energy and will be assessed on their merits.

Numerous Part VIII applications have been processed from Housing, Regeneration, and Active Travel.

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

Residential Zoned Land Tax

Planning have published a draft map which was required for Revenue Commissioners under the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) legislation. Land appearing on the annual draft maps, amended to take into account the outcome of submissions and rezoning requests, will be included on the annual final map of land in scope for the RZLT in the local authority area. This will be published on 31 January 2025.

This land will be subject to the tax in 2025 unless it is exempt. The administration of the RZLT is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners

Housing

Project (Number of Houses)	Status
Cranleymore, Abbeylara (3)	Stage 3 approved. Tender for contractor to be advertised shortly.
St Rita's Park Road Phase 1 (6)	Stage 2 approved. Part 8 Planning approved for Phase 1 (6 houses). Stage 3 submission to be made shortly. Tender for contractor to follow.
St Rita's Park Road Phase 2 (7)	Phase 2 draft plans under review.
Radharc na Muileann, Lanesborough (22)	Stage 2 approved. Awaiting Part 8 planning approval
Drynan, Ballymahon (13)	Stage 1 approved. Changes to layout required and resubmit for Stage 2 approval. Planning to wait until WWTP updated by Uisce Éireann.
Cnoc na Greine, Granard (6)	Stage 2 approved. Part 8 advertised in December 2024. Awaiting approval.
Clough Dillons, Keenagh (4)	Unfinished estate. Stage 1 approved. Legal issues to be sorted before we can proceed.
Lamagh, Newtownforbes (6)	Stage 2 approved. Part 8 planning approved. Consultants updating drawings and costs for Stage 3 submission.
2 Legion Terrace (4)	Substantially complete December 2024. Snags, painting and commissioning ongoing.
Richmond Street (23)	Complete.
Corneddan, Oghill, Drumlish (1)	Substantially completed in December 2024. Snags, commissioning, and painting remaining.
Houricans Hotel, Granard (8, and parking)	Stage 1 submitted. Awaiting approval. Road safety audit and flood risk assessment, AA and EIA to follow for Stage 2 submission.
Butchers, Market Street, Granard (2)	Stage 1 approved. Review entrance and parking and prepare Stage 2 submission.
Aghaboy, Killoe, Ennybegs (5)	Stage 1 approved. Consultant updating layout for Stage 2 submission.
Casey Court, Keenagh (2)	Infill site. Stage 1 approved. Consultant updating layout following discussions with planning for Stage 2 submission.
Shanmullagh, Ballinamuck	Stage 1 approved. Consultant preparing plans for Stage 2 submission.
Canal Court, "Fondermans" (2)	Existing building formerly used for district heating, now decommissioned. Consultant preparing plans for Stage 1 submission.

Housing

Project (Number of Houses)	Status
Willow Park Halting site (2)	Proposals submitted to CENA. CENA to submit Stage 1 shortly.
Vacant/derelict houses, Great Water Street (15)	Tender advertised for structural assessment of vacant buildings. Masterplan to be developed for entire Great Water Street Area by Regeneration and Town Centre First.
Farrells, Ballinalee (4)	Turnkey approved. On Hold – New submission to be made.
Forthill, Aughnacliffe, Phase 1 (13)	Complete.
Forthill, Aughnacliffe Phase 2 (4)	Turnkey approved. Substantially complete in December 2024. Snags, commissioning, and painting remaining.
Longford Road, Ballinalee (14)	Turnkey approved. On Hold – New submission to be made.
Market Square (2)	Complete.
Colmcille Terrace Granard Phase 1 (19)	Complete.

Energy Retrofit Programme

The Energy Efficiency Retrofit scheme is ongoing. Longford County Council will continue to target houses with the lowest BER rating. In 2024, energy retrofitting works were completed on 45 units throughout County Longford.

2024 County Longford Social Housing Applications

In 2024, 539 social housing applications were accepted, 107 applicants were added to the Housing list and 421 applications were closed as they did not qualified, were ineligible or were withdrawn.

County Longford Housing List

There are 582 households currently on the housing waiting list, with a further 156 within the assessment process across County Longford.

New Tenancies

In 2024, 201 new local authority, Approved Housing Bodies and Rental Accommodation Scheme tenancies were commenced in County Longford. In addition, 268 households are currently supported via the Housing Assistance Payments scheme.

Housing Stock County Longford

At the end of 2024, there were 2,268 properties in the local authority housing stock.

Of that, 61 properties are currently vacant, 57 are being prepared for new tenants and the remaining four are the Phase two Colmcille Terrace properties which require major refurbishment. This is a very low vacancy rate of 2.68%.

Town Centre First

THRIVE

Under the THRIVE funding, €199,020 was received for the preparation of Part 8 planning drawings, detailed design and business case for the redevelopment of Connolly Barracks. Robin Lee Architecture have been appointed to prepare the design and associated documents.

This has involved engaging with the steering group within Longford County Council, as well as a wide group of stakeholders. A public consultation event was held in Connolly Barracks on 10 December 2024, which was attended by over 60 people with very positive input and feedback received which has informed the final design of the project.

A Part 8 application is lodged at the end of January.



Ballymahon Town Centre First

Final surveys and assessments have been carried out to inform the development of the Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan, including a series of Town Team meetings and workshops in both the Mercy Secondary School and Vocational School, Ballymahon.

These meetings were to identify the issues and challenges facing the people of Ballymahon and to work together to co-create the opportunities that are available to enhance Ballymahon as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest in.

Compulsory Purchase Order

The Compulsory Purchase Order process has commenced on one property in Longford Town. This process will allow Longford County Council to acquire a property that has been on the Derelict Sites Register and that currently detracts from the environment in which it is located. Work is continuing on the identification of further properties for Compulsory Purchase in the coming months.

Croí Cónaithe

The Croí Cónaithe grant continues to be administered to support people to redevelop properties addressing vacancy and dereliction in our towns and villages. There are currently 181 applications received under the Croí Cónaithe grant scheme, of which 114 have been approved, 12 paid out to date, 7 withdrawn and 20 rejected.

Derelict Sites Levy

The Derelict Sites Levy is being applied by Longford County Council from January 2025. Four properties have been initially identified as liable for the levy. Owners of the properties have been informed and the levy will begin to be collected from January 2025.

Roads

Storm Éowyn

On Friday, 24 January Storm Éowyn landed and led to a red weather wind warning to be issued by Met Éireann. The public were advised not to travel and to shelter in place, including by working from home. Gale and storm force winds caused damage to power lines resulting in power and water outages, and loss of phone and broadband coverage. There was also structural damage and blocked roads which led to extremely difficult travelling conditions.

As soon as the Red Warning was lifted, Longford County Council roads crews were mobilised to tackle fallen trees and re-open the road network on a priority basis. Longford County Council Fire and Emergency Services, Civil Defence and all other departments worked together throughout the weekend and into the following week to try and reduce the impact of the storm on the citizens of Longford.



National Road Schemes

Advance works were carried out on a section of the N4 which was in very poor repair west of Newtownforbes. The main pavement overlay contract from Newtownforbes to Cloniher will commence in February 2025. Roadstone are the appointed contractor and the scheme is 4km in length.

The N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) is currently at Phase 2 - Option Selection. The Preferred Route Corridor will be identified in Quarter 1 of 2025 and the Scheme progressed into Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation (subject to funding).

2025 TII Allocations for National Roads are expected to be announced in February.

Design work continued on a number of national road schemes throughout the county.



Roads

Municipal District Works

Works on footpaths, drainage, pothole repair and general road maintenance continued in each municipal district during December and January.

Area staff are currently preparing annual procurement tenders for plant and materials, health and safety files, and preliminary traffic management plans.

2025 Allocations for Regional and Local Roads are expected to be announced in February.

Speed Limit Review

In April 2024, local authorities were notified by the Department of Transport of new road traffic legislation which was enacted. It now requires the default speed limit for rural and local roads be reduced from 80km to 60km per hour. This default speed limit is due to be commenced on 7 February 2025.

Longford County Council commenced a review of the speed limits for rural local roads and from this review Longford County Council published the County Longford Road Traffic (Special Speed Limits) Rural Local Roads Supplementary Bye-Laws No.1 of 2024.

In June 2024, notification was sent to An Garda Síochána, adjoining local authorities, Longford County Council elected members and Longford County Council district engineers of the proposed speed limit review of speed limits on rural local roads.

Presentations were made to the meetings of the three municipal

districts in July 2024. At these meetings the changes being implemented by the new legislation was outlined and the amendments to special speed limit byelaws being proposed were outlined. The local elected members agreed with the publication of draft special speed limit byelaws.

The public consultation was launched in August 2024 and submissions were open until the end of September 2024. The byelaws included special reference to speed limits in certain areas including speed reductions at rural schools.

Following consideration of the submissions, the Roads team met with each of the municipal districts at the end of 2024 to present their report and final byelaws. Issues specific to their areas were considered and discussed.

The municipal district elected members approved the byelaws and recommended them for adoption at the January Council meeting. The elected members unanimously adopted the byelaws as presented. Roads crews are working on the installation of new speed limit signs throughout the County.

Road Safety

A Road Safety Working Together Group (RSWTG) are currently reviewing and updating the Local Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024 for the new phase of 2025-2027. This new phase aligns for the next phase of the Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.

Roads

The RSWTG committee includes Longford County Council, An Garda Siochana, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the Road Safety Authority and the HSE.

A review of the 2024 actions contained in the Local Road Safety Plan 2022-2024 was conducted by the RSWTG and published on Longfordcoco.ie in January 2025.

Traffic Fines

See below table for the number of fines issued under each offence for quarter three, quarter four and all of 2024 below.

Offence	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	2024 Total
Parking Fines	108	101	351
Non-Display of Tax	73	68	287
Breach of Parking Regulations 1997	43	79	285
Total	224	248	923

Climate Change

Along with the Climate Action team, Roads have started a fleet review with a view to achieving reduced energy usage. Roads are also introducing an element of green procurement into a number of their annual tenders in 2025.

Fire Services

Retirement

After a 30-year career in the fire services of Mayo, Galway and Longford, Chief Fire Officer Declan Kilcline retired on the 5 December 2024. Declan joined Longford Fire Service in 2001 as Assistant Chief Fire Officer and became Chief Fire Officer in 2006.



Operations

Total callouts were 43 in December 2024 and 22 in January 2024 (up to 23 January 2025).

It was noticeable that Longford Fire Service did not have to attend to any road traffic accidents during the recent cold snap in early January. This was likely due to a combination of the public heeding safety warnings and the excellent work of the Roads Section in treating the county's road network.

Flexible time arrangements have been introduced to all stations on a trial basis. It is an interim arrangement as we work towards implementing the full Workplace Relations Commission agreement for the retained fire services in Ireland.

Storm Éowyn

The Fire Service remained operational throughout the recent Storm Éowyn and its aftermath despite severe communication challenges and restricted water supplies.

Longford County Council Local Coordination Group met for multiple meetings late January as part of the Major Emergency Management efforts in the wake of Storm Éowyn and the recovery efforts.

Health and Safety

There are no injuries to report. The latest revision to the fire service safety statement was circulated to all stations in December 2024.

Training

Firefighter skills training has been rolled out to four of our five stations. The training in the fifth station had to be rescheduled due to Storm Éowyn.

Compressed air foam training will be carried out in Longford Fire Station on the 29 January.

The fire service annual training course and the drill night training programme for 2025 have been issued to all fire stations.

Fire Prevention

Four fire safety certificates were processed, and 13 district court licence applications were processed.

A Fire Safety Open Day was held in Lanesborough Fire Station in early December.

Fire Services

Recruitment

The recruitment process remains open as we still have vacancies in Edgeworthstown, Lanesborough, Granard and Ballymahon.

Interviews were held for Acting Chief Fire Officer, Sub Officer and Driver Mechanic positions in December. Tomás Ó Maonaigh was appointed the new Acting Chief Fire Officer.

Equipment

Capital funding was approved late last year for road traffic collision cutting equipment and a breathing apparatus decontamination unit. This equipment was purchased, installed and is now in use in the county.

Civil Defence

Duties and Operations

In December and January, Longford Civil Defence provided essential medical cover and support for various community events including at the Shane Brennan 5k, Ardagh Challenge 5k and 10-mile race, and two GAA matches.

Longford Civil Defence also worked extensively during the ongoing Storm Éowyn response

Storm Éowyn Response

Volunteers prepared for the arrival of Storm Éowyn and were activated in the immediate aftermath. Volunteers remained active in the community for seven days, working to reach and assist as many affected individuals as possible.

This work included carrying out welfare checks for vulnerable members of the community. Uisce Éireann provided drinking water, which was delivered to those in need. Civil Defence helped to deliver this water.

For those unable to access the base due to storm damage, volunteers checked in with local residents to assess their needs. One volunteer also responded to a medical injury in their locality.

Civil Defence also completed a safety assessment of the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (The Mall) to ensure its security post-storm.

The equipment utilised by the team included Tetra radios, 4x4 wheel drive jeeps, a van, and emergency supplies, such as blankets and lighting equipment.

The unit collaborated with various local organizations, including elected members, local authority employees, the Roads Section of the Council, Longford Public Participation Network, Longford Libraries, and various community groups.

Civil Defence Presentation Evening

The Longford Civil Defence Presentation Evening was held to recognize the efforts and achievements of volunteers. Marie Hand was presented with a 30-year service medal. Volunteers also received certificates acknowledging their achievements throughout the year.

Training and Development

Mandatory training for new recruits took place as and will continue into the first quarter of 2025. Four first aid responder trainees also successfully completed their course.

The Civil Defence College's Missing Person Search Seminar in Roscrea included a presentation delivered by the Civil Defence Officer and Assistant Civil Defence Officer.

Statutory vehicle fleet checks were completed to ensure operational readiness and safety.

