



# Longford County Council Chief Executive Report February 2023

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# February Highlights

## Longford Lights Festival

Thousands turned up for Longford Lights Festival which took place across the weekend of the 24-26 February. Visitors were met with a great display of lights and sculptures. A partnership between artist Tom Meskell and the Longford County Council Arts Office, Longford Lights was co-funded through the Arts Council of Ireland and its Project Award Scheme.



## Health and Safety Training

Training for managing a serious incident where there is a risk of a criminal investigation, and safe vehicle driving training took place, with 110 Council employees attending. Organised by the Council's Health and Safety team, it was facilitated by IPB Insurance.



## Young people celebrated

All Ireland Intermediate Club Champions 2022 Longford Slashers GAA Ladies Club and Junk Kouture World Designer of the Year 2022 winners, Solomon Eduard and Joshua Osabuehien were celebrated with a civic reception. It recognised the successes achieved by both groups of young local people.



## Awards Shortlisting

Longford County Council has been shortlisted in the Health and Safety Excellence Award 2023 under the Public Sector category. These awards recognise outstanding health and safety achievements in Ireland



# Community and Enterprise

## Library, Heritage, Archives and Arts

**Creative Ireland Strategy 2023-2027**  
The Longford Creative Ireland Strategy 2023-2027 was adopted by the elected members in January.

In February, the roll out of 31 new Local Authority Creative Ireland Culture and Creativity Strategies (2023-2027) was announced by Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin TD and Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning Kieran O'Donnell TD.

Ahead of these new strategies, the first Creative Ireland Strategy (2017-2022) was reviewed. The new strategies reflect the evolving priorities of the community. They are:

- A sense of place: Making Longford a great place to live, work, visit and invest in
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Maths) programme development in schools
- Local Cultural Economy
- Creation of Longford legacy projects
- Climate Action and Biodiversity

### New Sensory Resources

This year will see sensory resources enhanced in all libraries. So far, Granard Library has hosted play therapy sessions, with this to be extended to all libraries. Longford Library has now lends out sensory equipment. This includes a C-Pen, handheld assistive technology that helps users with dyslexia or other literacy needs, including when reading printed text.



This work builds on previously successful initiatives, such as the Tovertafel sensory table and the sensory wall unit in Longford Library, and the mobile sensory wall in Granard Library.

### Ireland Reads

Ireland Reads took place on Saturday, 25 February. This is a national day to encourage reading. Longford Libraries hosted Storytime for Children event and a Let's Talk Books event aimed at adults who want to get back into reading.

### The Art of Reading Book Club

The Granard Book Club took part in The Art of Reading monthly book club on. The book under discussion was *Trouble* by Philip O' Ceallaigh, with the author in attendance. This is a national online book club hosted by the Laureate for Irish fiction, Colm Tóibín. A different book club is met with each month to discuss a novel by an Irish writer.

It is an Arts Council of Ireland and the Laureate for Irish Fiction initiative, in partnership with Libraries Ireland. A new instalment of the book club is released on the last Thursday of every month. Granard Book Club's edition of the Art of Reading will be available from Thursday, 30 March on [Facebook.com/LaureateIrishFiction](https://www.facebook.com/LaureateIrishFiction).

# Community and Enterprise

## Library, Heritage, Archives and Arts (Contd)

### Arts and Crafts Sessions

Since January, Longford Libraries have held weekend arts and crafts sessions for children. During the sessions participants are encouraged to explore their library and all it has to offer.

### Archives

Archives is involved in a pilot electronic file management project with Corporate Services.

The following archives were added recently:

- archives of Longford Town Irish Countrywomen's Association guild, 1977-2015
- archives related to the Granard area, 1889-1930

### Book on Irish in American Civil War

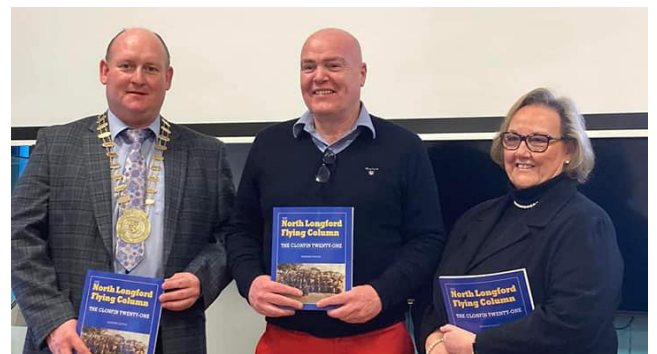
*A Damn Yankee, Am I? Thanks!* by local author and historian Aidan O'Hara was launched in Longford Library. Launched by historian Dr Fergus O'Ferrall, the book is a major work on the Irish experience during the American Civil War. It considers emigration, as well as Longford people and their part in the War.

*Requiem for the Big House* premiere Ballymahon Library premiered *Requiem for the Big House*. Exploring the 'Big Houses' of Longford, the film looks at historical country estates of the Anglo-Irish landed class, focusing on houses from the early twentieth-century. Stories are told through interviews with historians and the relatives of owners and workers, with images and archival footage.

It was made by Dr Charles Lambert and Ronan Daly of Kilglass House, Legan. It was commissioned by Longford County Council Library, Heritage and Archives Services as a Decade of Centenaries project.

### North Longford Flying Column book

*The North Longford Flying Column: The Clonfin Twenty-One*, a book by Bernard Sexton, was launched in Granard Library by historian Dr Mel Farrell. The book is for sale in Longford Libraries.



### Longford Lights Festival

Longford Lights Festival, Ireland's largest community-based lantern festival, took place in Connolly Barracks in Longford on 24-26 February. Opened by Cathaoirleach Cllr Turlough McGovern, the festival drew crowds into Longford Town for the fantastic displays.

### Arts Bursary Awards 2023

The Arts Bursary Awards 2023 help local artists of any discipline in the development of their artistic practice. Applicants can apply for bursaries up to €4,000 before 5pm, Thursday, 23 March. Find out more on the Arts section of [Longfordcoco.ie](http://Longfordcoco.ie).



# Community and Enterprise

## Corporate Services

### Customer Services

Customer Services had 1,700 calls and 129 emails since January, along with in-person customers.

### Franchise

Longford County Council processed 193 new and updated applications from [checktheregister.ie](http://checktheregister.ie) in January and February. Registrations need to be updated to include a date of birth, Personal Public Service number and an Eircode. Everyone aged 16 and 17 can pre-register to be automatically added to the Register at age 18. More information is on [checktheregister.ie](http://checktheregister.ie).

Registering and updating details was promoted by:

- An online advertising campaign
- Information provided to Public Participation Network groups
- Presentation to Mean Scoil Mhuire students, with plans to attend all County Longford schools
- Assisted Newtownforbes Active Retirement Association members with updating their details
- Information desk in Edgeworthstown Library

### Freedom of Information (FOI)

	Jan	Feb	YTD*
FOI requests received	4	4	8
Access to Information on the Environment requests received	2	1	3
Office of the Ombudsman complaints received	1	0	1

\*Year-to-date

### Data Protection

Longford County Council's enhanced Privacy Policy along with 14 Service Privacy Notices was launched. Transparency training was delivered as part of the Data Protection Awareness Framework. 27 data protection queries received since January 2023.

### Official Languages Act

Work is continuing on meeting our obligations under Section 10A of the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021. For this, public bodies must ensure that at least 20% of all advertising is in the Irish language and that at least 5% of advertising spend is done through Irish language media.

### Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

The following meetings took place:

17 January	Corporate Policy Group
17 January	Protocol and Procedures Committee
18 January	Longford County Council
24 January	Granard Municipal District (MD)
25 January	Longford MD
26 January	Ballymahon MD
31 January	Governance Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
1 February	Climate Action and Planning SPC
2 February	Strategic Infrastructure SPC
7 February	Corporate Policy Group
7 February	Placenames Sub-Committee
8 February	Longford County Council
21 February	Placemaking SPC
22 February	Longford MD In-Committee
	Longford MD

# Community and Enterprise

## Corporate Services (Contd)

**Elected Members Training**  
Elected members attended Electoral Reform Act training.

**Events**  
A Civic Recognition event was held for All-Ireland winning Longford Slashers Ladies GAA and Junk Kouture World Final winners Joshua Osabuehien and Solomon Eduard, on 24 February.



### Communications

**Press Releases**  
Eleven press releases were issued. These included:

- Longford Lights Festival takes place from 24-26 February
- Longford Slashers Ladies GAA champions and Junk Kouture winners honoured at Civic Reception
- Longford craft and design businesses set to take part in Showcase 2023

**Media Enquiries**  
Communications dealt with 12 media enquiries in January and February.

**Communications Training**  
Media training for the Cathaoirleach and Management Team, as well as for selected employees of the Council took place. Smartphone video training also took place for employees using social media in their work. This will help in the creation of short video content that is critical for growth and reach on social media.

**Social Media**  
Communications shared updates on how the new Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, help with how to register to vote, dogs for rehoming, the Longford Lights Festival and much more of the work of the Council.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Posts and Stories	119	131	61
New followers	85	31	70
Reach/Impressions	95.4K	30.2K	18.7K

\*Reach: number of people who had a post enter their screen  
\*\*Impressions: number of times a post entered a person's screen

**Longfordcoco.ie improvements**  
Longfordcoco.ie underwent improvements. These include accessibility changes completed with the Content Management System (CMS) provider. Longfordcoco.ie now has a 95% accessibility score. This score is reported though the CMS and compares to a previous score of 47%.

Longfordcoco.ie now also host fonts locally, and not through Google. This is an important update to the website to maintain compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Longfordcoco.ie now also have a translation option on the header of the website so users can easily toggle between the English and Irish language.

# Community and Enterprise

## Corporate Services (Contd)

### Health and Safety

#### Award Shortlisting

Longford County Council is delighted to confirm that it has been shortlisted in the Health and Safety Excellence Award 2023 under the Public Sector category.

#### Health and Safety Inspections

There were 11 safety inspections completed by the Health and Safety section.

#### Internal Audit

Health and Safety Internal Audits were completed in the Environment and Civil Defence sections.

#### Health and Safety Training

Training for managing a serious incident where there is a risk of a criminal investigation, and safe vehicle driving training took place. Attendees were a mix of our outdoor and technical employees including from Roads, Housing and Water sections, along with Senior Officers and the Council's Management Team. The training was facilitated by IPB Insurance. Speakers included former Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Eddie Sheehy. Charlie Kerr, Tobar Segais and Noel Gibbons delivered the Safe Vehicle Driving training. David Copping and Kenneth Rigney updated the fleet drivers regarding machinery yard protocols, fleet fuel and climate action. 110 employees were in attendance.

Health and Safety briefings were held with the Environment and Roads sections in relation to the section risk assessments.

## Local Enterprise Office

### Businesses awarded €66,000

€66,000 was awarded between four businesses in County Longford. These businesses are in the process of starting and expanding their business and increasing employment opportunities.

### Longford businesses impress at Showcase Ireland 2023

Local businesses met with over 4,000 buyers from across the world at the Local Enterprise Showcase 2023. Longford companies joined over 100 Local Enterprise Office supported businesses, with Craft Around the Clock winning in the Showcase Best Product in the Wellness category at the event.



### Workplace Relations Commission information session

Over 25 businesses attended a Workplace Relations Commission information session on services available to both employers and employees. It covered all aspects of the workplace relations environment, with the aim of ensuring harmony, trust, goodwill, fairness, non-discrimination and good work practices within the workplace.



# Infrastructure, Housing & Innovation

## Water

### Find and Fix Programme

Longford County Council's Find and Fix team continue to achieve significant water leakage savings across the county. This is expected to be outlined in the soon-to-be published Irish Water National Leakage Report for 2022.

Monthly targets continue to be met and can report a 93% availability of the district metered areas (DMAs) network for the county in the second half of 2022. A new programme of DMA leak detection work has been scheduled for 2023.

For leakage reduction, Find and Fix are installing network improvement infrastructure such as bulk water meters, flow loggers and sluice valves. Find and Fix also give regular updates on:

- DMA familiarization, i.e. watertightness and the correct working of meters in the network
- Step test layout plans and results review
- Leaks found in both the public and private infrastructure in each DMA
- Enabling works identified and completed within each DMA
- Estimated timelines to repair leaks found and leaks already repaired
- Issues affecting leakage targets being reached and timelines to close out DMAs

### Pressure Management Programme

A new pressure management programme funded through the 2020 stimulus for the upgrading of pressure reducing valves (PRVs) is ongoing within the county. The PRV upgrades are proposed for Granardkill and Gelsha.

A review of future pressure management opportunities is ongoing with the optimization of existing PRVs and control systems also under consideration

### Capital Network Schemes

Water continues to liaise with Irish Water to progress the following capital network rehabilitation schemes:

- The 150mm asbestos-cement watermain to Glannagh Public Service is under review. A proposed replacement with a new service connection is being considered for this location
- Reservoir cleaning and repair: workshops are ongoing to agree temporary and permanent repair works for Carrowroe reservoir



# Infrastructure, Housing & Innovation

## Fire

### Training

- The 2023 drill programme started in all fire stations
- A new recruit for Lanesborough has started their three-week recruit induction course in Hackettstown, Carlow
- Manual Handling training has been completed in all Fire Stations.
- Rope Rescue training took place in the power station site in Lanesborough

### Health and Safety

There are no injuries to report.

### Operations

There were 38 callouts in January and 41 in February. All stations remained fully operational. Capital Funding has been sought for a new road traffic collision jeep for the county.

### Fire Prevention

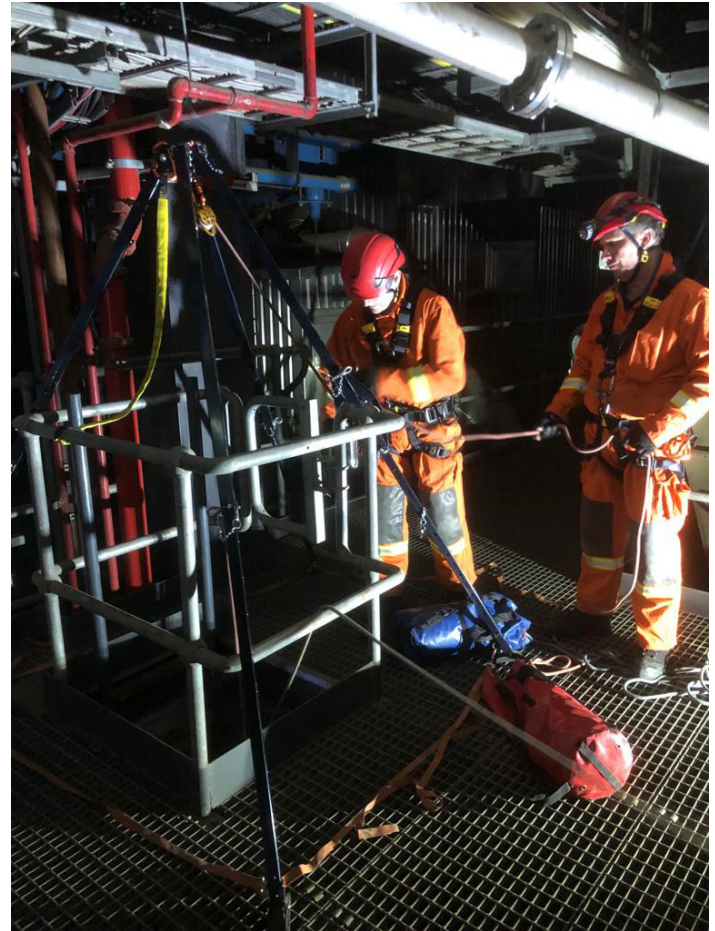
Six fire safety certificates and two court licence applications were processed.

### Recruitment:

Applications are being sought for fire fighter vacancies in Granard, Longford Town and Lanesborough.

### Equipment

Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) has started for our fleet and is expected to be completed by March.



*Longford Fire Service Rope Rescue training in Lanesborough Power Station*



# Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

## Regeneration

### Rath River Walk complete

The Rath River Walk is the development of a trail at Lough Kinale in north County Longford. The trail is 400m long. It has two wheelchair accessible fishing stands, opening up the River Inny for fishing at this location.

The trail is expected to be the first phase of the project, with consultation ongoing with Westmeath County Council to explore how the trail can be brought across into County Westmeath and connecting up with the village of Finea.

This project was funded under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme through the Department of Rural and Community Development and Longford County Council. It is in collaboration with the area's landowners.



### Moyne Amphitheatre and Walkway

The Moyne Amphitheatre project is nearing completion. This new community space offers people a place for outdoor activities, including classes, performances and events. It is complemented by a trail linking Slí na Sláinte around Moyne Secondary School and the recently-completed footpath from Legga graveyard towards the school. This creates a safe environment for children to walk to school and new opportunities for people to get active in their local area.

It has transformed a previously overgrown and unused site. This is a collaboration between the local communities and primary and secondary schools and Longford County Council. It was funded under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme through the Department of Rural and Community Development and Longford County Council.

### The Yard Hub near completion

The Yard Hub in Abbeyshrule is nearing completion and is expected to open in March. Involving the redevelopment of a derelict site, this project creates a new village hub for enterprise, tourism and social community spaces. It will include new office and meeting spaces overlooking the Royal Canal and Greenway. It will house a Waterways Ireland service block for greenway and blueway users. It will also be the new home of the Abbeyshrule Canoe Club.

The project is funded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund through the Department of Rural and Community Development, Longford County Council and Just Transition. It was supported by Waterways Ireland and the local community.



# Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

## Planning

### County Development Plan

The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 has now been printed. It is available on [Longfordcoco.ie](http://Longfordcoco.ie). It can also be purchased from Longford County Council.

The Plan was adopted on 30 November 2021. A two-year review of the Plan will be required in November 2023.

### Longford Town Local Transport Plan

A combined scoping and screening report for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) were completed and referred to environmental authorities in February. There is a four-week response period.

The draft Local Transport Plan and its associated SEA report are set to go on public display for a four-week period from mid-March. This will also include referral to statutory bodies.

### Longford Town Local Area Plan

A Longford Town and Environs 2016-2022 Local Area Plan review and research into the preparation of a new Longford Town Local Area Plan started in late-2022. An issues paper was prepared, and was the subject of public consultation.

This Local Area Plan is to be informed by the Local Transport Plan. As such, the Local Area Plan statutory process will start after the Local Transport Plan is finalised (circa June 2023). Environmental and flood risk consultants have been secured for both the Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan.

### Just Transition and Regeneration

Planning has worked with the Just Transition Fund working group, including providing plans and details on the Midlands Strategic Trail Plan, funded under Just Transition.

Planning also continues to offer support and guidance for Regeneration. Specific design work has been undertaken on the preparation for several projects. This includes work on an inclusive playground, a skate park and a possible pump track for presentation to municipal district elected members in 2023.

### Compulsory Purchase Orders

A review of several Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Planning reports regarding the acquisition of semi-derelict properties is underway. Planning section is providing the administrative backup relating to the CPO process. This involves collaboration with Housing, Regeneration and Council legal representatives.

### Planning Applications

A number of large planning applications are being considered by Planning, including in the renewable energy and quarrying area.

### Enforcement

The enforcement team work continues and includes progressing cases for legal action.

### Residential Zoning Land Tax

Planning is working on the statutorily required map, reports, and public consultation for the Revenue Commissioners under the Residential Zoning Land Tax legislation. This work continues into 2023.

# Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

## Climate Action Initiatives

### Water

Water Service's Find and Fix team continue to achieve significant water leakage savings with monthly targets met. A new programme of DMA leak detection work has been scheduled for 2023.

For leakage reduction, Find and Fix are also installing network improvement infrastructure such as bulk water meters, flow loggers and sluice valves.

### Planning

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve, the largest County Longford biodiversity project, continues to progress. Planning are part of the tender and procurement team. Planning also sits on the steering group on behalf of the Council. The Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve consultants will shortly be appointed to prepare the UNESCO application.

### Regeneration

The Moyne Amphitheatre project, which is nearing completion, will further enhance a trail linking Slí na Sláinte around Moyne Secondary School and the recently-completed footpath from Legga graveyard towards the school.

This will create a safe environment for children to walk to school, instead of using more environmentally-harmful modes of transports. It will also create new opportunities for people to get active in their local area.



*Moyne Amphitheatre*

# CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

Management Report for February 2023 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 February 2023 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed:



Paddy Mahon  
Chief Executive







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A Longford County Council Publication 2023