



# Chief Executive Report February 2024

Longford County Council

# Contents

---

January and February Highlights	3
Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives	4
Corporate Services	9
Local Enterprise Office	12
Fire Services	13
Regeneration	14
Planning	18

# January and February Highlights

## Thousands descend on Longford for spectacular 2024 Longford Lights festival

The combination of artists, community, schools, volunteers and local authority shines as over 11,000 people again attend the hugely successful Longford Lights festival for 2024.



## Longford Skatepark officially opened by Minister Humphreys

Longford Skate Park was officially opened by Minister Heather Humphreys on 16 February funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.



## New sustainable Tourism Strategy for Longford

With the principle of sustainable tourism at its heart, the "County Longford Tourism Strategy: Developing a connected sustainable tourism destination" was launched earlier this month by Longford Tourism.



## Well attended public workshops on funding scheme under Just Transition process

Longford County Council staged a series of workshops across the county to help locals to engage with the schemes under the Just Transition funding process.



# Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

---

## Age Friendly Programme

### 'Move Well for Health'

Longford, Ballymahon, Granard and Edgeworthstown Libraries are the venues for a free programme called 'Move Well for Health' featuring fall prevention and low impact exercise classes for older people.

This is for eight weeks and is organised by Longford County Council Physical Activity for Health Officer Stephen McNally in collaboration with Age Friendly, Longford Sports Partnership and Healthy Longford programmes. Feedback has been excellent with all classes having full attendance.

A further series of classes are now planned for another eight week programme commencing 25 March to the 17 May.

Lanesborough Library is now added

to the venue schedule due to local demand.

### Older Persons' Council

The first meeting of the Older Person's Council took place on 6 February. Chaired by Kitty Burchill, it included a very informative presentation from Mary Murtagh, Development Officer with Longford Citizens Information Centre.

A member of the Age Friendly Programme Team was invited to speak about programme initiatives at the recent Open Day for Older Persons held in Dolmen Centre, Aughnacliffe on February 7.

### ACORN Training

Several Acorn Tablet Digital Skills training sessions were held for older persons in Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough libraries in February.



# Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

A number of these Age Friendly designed Acorn Tablets will be available for loan in these branch libraries as part of the Longford Handy Helps Collection

## National Age Friendly Library Recognition Award Certificates

Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys TD, presented National Age Friendly Library Recognition Award Certificates to each County Librarian of all the library authorities in Ireland at the ceremony in Edgeworthstown Library on Friday, 16 February.

This recognition programme is managed by Age Friendly Ireland, a local government shared service hosted by Meath County Council.



Each library authority has taken part in the Age Friendly Library Training Programme, selecting Age Friendly Champions amongst the library staff, and highlighting a commitment to improving key areas to include the older person in the library environment. Here in Longford, the library is focusing on signage, Age Friendly seating, and Age Friendly programming. Minister Humphreys spoke glowingly about the

importance of libraries to communities and the feedback from the day was fantastic.

## Rocking and Bopping concerts

Following the success and popularity of our Rocking and Bopping series of concerts in 2023, Longford Age Friendly Programme has applied under the Live Music in residential Healthcare Settings Scheme 2024 fund to run another series of concerts in 2024 in nursing homes, day centres and libraries.

Planning is well underway for our Bealtaine Programme which will take place in May.

## Age Friendly Information Day

Save the date: The Age Friendly Information Day will be held on 30 September.

## National Programmes

### Right to Read

We are in the process of planning exciting events for our Right to Read programme 2024.

- Spring into Storytime in April
- Summer Stars during the Summer
- The Children's Book Festival
- Family Time at Your Library in December

Along with plenty of other events and competitions for children and adults to promote literacy in our county.

# Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

---

## Healthy Ireland

In January, under the Healthy Ireland initiative, Longford Libraries hosted another 'Art with Angela' workshop. The Mobile Health Unit from the Irish Heart Foundation was also at Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown libraries in February carrying out blood pressure and pulse checks as well as providing information on hearth health.

## Ireland Reads Day

On Ireland reads Day, storyteller Niall de Búrca facilitated a creative storytelling session to promote the joy of reading in Edgeworthstown. Niall had the children and adults (and staff) hanging on his every word. Other events included open mic sessions in Granard and Longford, "Battle of the books" in Ballymahon, Silent book club in Lanesborough and a coffee morning in Drumlish

## Healthy Ireland Books

Longford Libraries continue to promote Healthy Ireland (HI) book stock and in March there are five events organised so far for five branch libraries. Enhancing the HI reading areas/stock with more signage and promotion is also part of the work programme.



## Collaborations with Longford Sports Partnership and Local Community Safety Partnership

### Line Dancing Classes

Longford Sports Partnership is facilitating a 10-week line dancing course suitable for all ages. All classes are very popular, attendance is very good, and all classes are at full capacity.

### Text Alert Information Day

On 22 February An Garda Síochána held an information day on the Text Alert system. Information stands in from community groups such as Age Friendly Longford, Healthy Longford, ALONE and Longford Community and Safety Partnership were on display. There were two information sessions on the day. TY students from secondary schools in Granard were on hand to assist anyone who wanted the Text Alert app installed on their device and provided a tutorial on how to use it. It was a very successful event and created a great buzz in the library all morning

## Archives and Records Management

The following archives were deposited and sorted:

- A collection from Longford County Committee of Agriculture, 1902-88
- Items from Dr John F Keenan (1867-1945) and Patrick J Greene, folklore

# Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

collector; records from Colehill NS, 1994-2014

- Accounts from the Reynolds family, Druminacrehir, Granard, 1874-93
- Longford GAA minutes from 2023

The Archives Service is working on a national schools' folklore project, which will begin in Ballymahon MD in March.

It is also involved in work on a national publication to mark the 125th anniversary of the county councils.

The service is working on records in Library HQ and the Environment Department to identify those for disposal and advising other sections on records retention.

## Heritage Office

The Longford Heritage Office administers several built heritage conservation grants in County Longford on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). These include Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS), Historic Structures Fund (HSF) for structures on the Longford County Council's Record of Protected Structures.

The Heritage office also administers the Community Monuments Fund (CMF), for archaeological sites, on behalf of the National Monuments Section (NMS) of the DHLGH.

These grants were advertised in December 2023 and January 2024, with closing dates for all public and

community applications before 1 February 2024. The applications were reviewed by an internal assessment committee.

Both the HSF and CMF have upper limits to the number of projects the local authority may shortlist for consideration of funding. The Local Authority will be notified in March of the success of these applications, after which the applicants will be notified, and the projects may commence.

## Number of applications:

	Applications Received	Valid	Shortlisted
BHIS	15	12	12
HSF	6	6	3
CMF			
(Stream 1)	1	1	1
(Stream 2)	5	4	4

## County Heritage Plan Applications

The Heritage Office submitted applications for funding from The Heritage Council for three broad level projects to further the County Longford Heritage Plan 2019-2024:

1. Review of the County Longford Heritage Plan
2. Archaeological Research and Engagement Programme 2024
  - a. For LiDAR surveys of selected sites, with an emphasis on sites where other community projects or CMF applications are in train.

# Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Engagement events or projects during National Heritage Week is required

### 3. Longford Heritage Research and Engagement Programme 2024

- Longford Local Field Names Pilot Project. A joint project with the Longford Archives Office and Longford Historical Society. A public information session was held on the 29 February.
- Support of the Maria Edgeworth Centre's Edgeworth Tellograph public demonstration for Heritage Week.
- Support of printing Longford Rocks book based on Longford Geological Heritage Audit
- Development of a core exhibition on Longford's popular music heritage.

## Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund 2024

The Heritage Office is supporting the Longford Biodiversity Officer in the development of natural heritage research projects in County Longford for 2024, in particular a hedgerows survey, barn owl survey, biodiversity food-source survey and the AQUENS (Aquatic Environmental Services Ltd) mayfly survey, a cross-county collaborative project.

## Arts Service

### Longford Lights Festival 2024

Longford Lights was a huge success

again, taking place over the weekend from 23 to 25 February. It is an environmentally sustainable festival celebrating the illuminated art form and supporting a diverse range of communities and artists to create new, exciting art works.

In the third year of the festival, it has expanded in size, ambition and art forms. There are 26 artists and over 1,400 citizens from 35 community groups in Longford and the surrounding counties that made art for the festival this year.

The festival production team of Brendan Magan, Lisa Brady and Tommy Casby was steered by Artistic Director Caroline Conway. The festival was funded by Longford County Council, Creative Ireland, Arts Council via Mide Arts Group and Longford Tourism.

A new element of the show was the specular onsite performance by Cal y Canto Teatro (Spain), an invited artist group specialising in street theater performance and the use of handmade kites, creating site-specific shows that surprise the audience and invite audience participation.

In 2024, 80% of all artworks were produced locally using 75% natural and sustainable materials. All lantern-based artwork was recycled and re-used. In 2025, Longford Arts also aims to power the festival exclusively with renewable energy.



# Corporate Services

## Customer Services

Our Customer Services desk responded to over 1,800 calls during the months of January and February, as well as 236 emails received through the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) and many in person customers.

	Jan	Feb	YTD*
FOI requests	4	7	11
AIE requests	1	0	1
Ombudsman complaints	1	0	1

\*YTD: year to date

## Check the Register

January and February saw a huge increase in the number of new and updated applications on Check the Register in advance of the upcoming Electoral events, with a total of 1,457 applications being processed.

To ensure you are registered to vote in the Local and European elections, go to [www.checktheregister.ie](http://www.checktheregister.ie) to register or amend your details. You may include your date of birth, PPSN and Eircode to help make the register of electors more accurate.

## Official Languages Act

Work continues to meet the obligations under Section 10A of the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021. In the first two months of 2024, a total of 321 advertisements were placed, with 71 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:

## Data Protection

- 1 Data Subject Access Request received and completed within the statutory deadline of 1 month.
- 2 Data Breaches were investigated and closed.
- 1 Complaint received and resolved.
- 4 Data Protection Impact Assessments reviewed.
- 78 Data Protection queries received and answered

## Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

A mix of online and hybrid, the following meetings took place across January and February:

16 January	Corporate Policy Group (CPG)
17 January	Longford County Council
24 January	Longford Municipal District (MD) In Committee
13 February	Corporate Policy Group (CPG)

# Corporate Services

14 February	Longford County Council
21 February	Longford MD In Committee
22 February	Ballymahon MD In Committee
27 February	Granard MD In Committee

## Elected Member Events

Events attended by elected members included:

- LAMA Spring Seminar, 19-20 January
- LAMA Regional Conference, 20 January
- AILG Training, 25 January
- AILG Module 1 Training, 27 January
- Air Conference, 6-7 February
- AILG Regional Conference, 7 February
- AIR Annual Training Seminar, 7-8 February
- AILG Annual Conference 14-15 February

## Communications

### Press Releases

Fifteen press releases were issued, including:

- New Artistic Director appointed for Longford Lights 2024
- Longford County Council Arts

Bursary 2024 now open to applicants

- Launch of Longford Lights 2024 and County Longford Arts Strategy
- Three Longford Design businesses feature at Showcase event in RDS

## Events

- Communications provided support to the Regeneration Team for the official opening of the Longford Skatepark on 16 February, which was officiated at by Minister Heather Humphreys
- Communications also supported the Longford Library Service in their preparation for the National Age Friendly Library Recognition Awards ceremony which took place on the same day and was also officiated at by the Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys TD
- Support was also provided to the Pathways to Funding - Community Grant Information Events which took place in January in three local libraries.



# Corporate Services

## Social Media

Communications provided social media coverage at the official opening of Longford Skatepark in February as well as the fantastic Longford Lights 2024 festival at the end of the month.

The launch of the new five year Longford Arts Strategy was also highlighted on social media, as well as the series of workshops that took place to highlight the schemes available under the Just Transition Fund.

A live stream of one of the Pathways to Funding - Community Grant Information Sessions was also facilitated.

	*Reach or Impressions	Follower Count
Facebook	42K	6,765 (^98)
Instagram	3.4K	1,777 (^53)
Twitter	19K	3,474 (^25)

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

## Website Improvements

Communications continue to work with Council sections to update and improve content on Longfordcoco.ie. Most recently updates are being prepared to the Community and Fire Services/ Building Control sections.

## Health and Safety

### Health and Safety Inspections

There were 10 Safety Inspection completed by the Health and Safety section and the Management Team.

### Health and Safety Training

Ongoing risk assessment briefing sessions are held with each section of the council. The Housing Maintenance team briefing took place on 2 February.



The Roads Health and Safety Seminar took place on Friday, 23 February, also in the Rugby Club. The keynote speaker was Michael Murray, Public Safety Manager ESB Networks. The seminar was attended by approx. 52 staff.

### Digital Divide Pilot - Steering Group

Health and Safety is attending the Steering Group meetings to progress the trial of devices in north Longford area.

### Health and Safety internal audits

Uisce Eireann internal audit was completed on 21 February 2024. Audit schedule is in place for other sections.

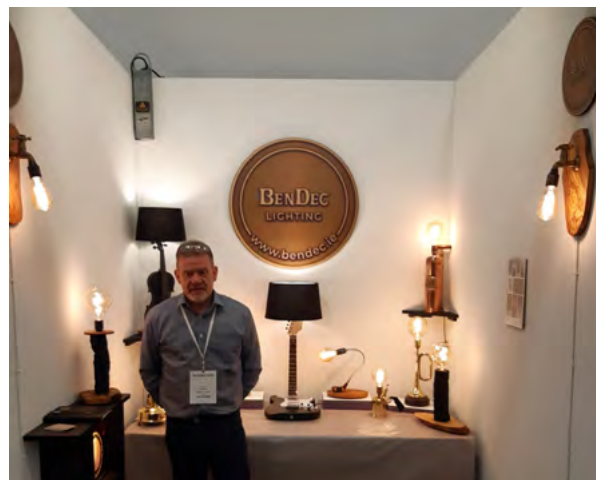
# Local Enterprise Office

## Showcase 2024

Local Enterprise Office Longford supported three local craft business exhibiting at Showcase 2024. This event attracts buyers from across the world, generating millions of euros of sales orders during the show.

Longford businesses included:

- Wendy Knight of Wendy Louise Designs Milliner
- BenDec, original lighting designed and made in Moyne by Declan O'Connor
- Shelley Corcoran of Tabitha & Norah, original art works through a range of media



## Employment, Training and Information Day

Local Enterprise Office Longford were one of the partner organisations behind this very successful information day, providing information around the full range of training and employment opportunities in the County. Over 500 were in attendance on the day.

# Fire Services

---

## Operations

All stations remained fully operational.

There were a total of 60 callouts during the months of January and February 2024.

## Fire Prevention

Eight fire safety certificates and one dangerous substance license application were processed.

## Health and Safety

No incidents to report.

## Training

One person completed a two week Breathing Apparatus Instructor course in Tullamore.

Five-day Junior Officer Incident Command course completed by twelve people in Lanesborough, with employees from both Longford and Roscommon Fire Services attending.

Six drivers/mechanics completed a two day Winch Instructor refresher training

course.

## Recruitment

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer has taken up his post at Fire Services HQ and the full time Station Officer post in Longford Town has been filled.

There are a number of further vacancies in all five fire stations with applications being accepted. A total of 33 expressions of interest have been received, and the shortlisting process has commenced. Interviews will be held in late March 2024.

## Equipment

The new battery operated road traffic cutting equipment has been delivered and is operational.

New LED lighting has also been installed in the appliance bay in Longford Town Fire Station.

## Major Emergency Management (MEM)

A regional Major Emergency Working Group meeting was held in January.



# Regeneration

---

## **Moyne Amphitheatre and Latin School**

Phase 1 - Works on the amphitheatre are fully complete, and it was officially opened by Minister Heather Humphreys TD on 8 September 2023.

Phase 2 – Works on Moyne Latin School, works on extension to interpretative centre are complete.

## **RRDF 2021 Granard Destination Town**

Tenders are being sought for the procurement of Project Management and Design Consultancy Services with Specific Skills in Urban Design and Public Realm Improvement Projects for the Granard Town Centre Public Realm and Car Park. It is anticipated to appoint a Design Team by the end of April 2024.

## **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)**

Applications have been submitted under ORIS and Town and Village Renewal for 2023 and announcements are expected in the next few weeks

Successful applications under the Project Development Measure of the 2023 ORIS were announced by Minister Heather Humphreys TD on 21 November 2023.

Longford County Council submitted the following two projects under this measure and were successful in receiving funding of €49,500 each for:

- Feasibility and environmental assessments, including appropriate assessment required for the development of water access points in Lough Gowna and North Longford
- Feasibility and environmental assessments, including appropriate assessment required for the development of water access points at Longford, Lanesborough and Ballymahon

## **ORIS M3 2022 North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2 - Monaduff to Ballinamuck**

Work is due to commence in the next two weeks

## **URBACT UR Impact**

UR Impact is an action-planning project co-funded by the URBACT IV European programme. Longford County Council is one of ten partners working together with the aim of addressing the promotion and measurement of the impact of social inclusion and community development in urban regeneration projects.

The network is led by Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and brings together partners from across Europe, including Municipality of Mértola (Portugal), Broumov Municipality (Czech Republic), Municipality of Targu Frumos (Romania), Municipality of Murcia (Spain), Municipality of Hannut (Belgium),

# Regeneration

---

Municipality of Longford (Ireland), Municipality of Bovec (Slovenia), Kamza Municipality (Albania), and Municipality of Bielsko-Biata (Poland).

The goal is to create an Integrated Action Plan that provides an evaluation of the social impact of urban regeneration programs within the municipality. By prioritising social impact, with a focus on community involvement, urban regeneration actions are rethought by placing citizens and their social, economic and environmental well-being at the centre of the processes. It also allows for an increased sense of belonging and civic participation.

The Longford project will focus on the town of Ballymahon, in the support of the delivery of the Pobal le Chéile project but also looking at the wider town area and to develop an Integrated Action Plan for the town, identifying regeneration projects with a focus on the social impact of those projects.

A ULG meeting was held on 8 February with members of the community to introduce and discuss the focus of the project. A Transnational Meeting will take place in Murcia, Spain in March, with a focus in measuring social impact. A further ULG meeting will be held following that meeting to bring the learnings to the local group and develop the first stages of the Integrated Action Plan.

## Longford Town Centre First

Longford Town Centre First Strategy is nearing completion following a series of Town Team meetings and public consultation events. Minister Heather Humphreys TD officially launched the Town Centre First Plans nationally on Wednesday 28 February in Adare, Co Limerick. The Town Team will then meet to discuss implementation of the plan. Minister Humphreys launched the second round of Town Centre First funding on 7 February, including funding for the next Town Centre First Strategy, funding for capacity building for Town Teams and funding under the Project Development Measure. Applications under the various funding streams will be submitted to the Department over the coming weeks, in consultation with the local communities. Expressions of Interest for the Project Development Measure from community groups are currently open until 8 March.

## Active Travel

### R198 Battery Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

January and February 2024 saw the continued installation of services and drainage along with kerbing and surfacing of footpath and cycle track on outbound side of the Battery Road on approach to Lisbrack junction. Junction tightening works are also well advanced at the Demesne Lane junction.

# Regeneration



The temporary traffic lights remain in place with carriageway reconstruction works also due to commence in this area.

When complete this Pathfinder sub project will deliver over 1.2 km of new footpath and cycle track along this key arterial route to Longford Town. Works will include the signalisation of the Lisbrack road junction, carriageway and junction tightening along the route and also the undergrounding of overhead services, public lighting upgrades and road surface renewal. Works are expected to run until September 2024.

## **N63 Ballinalee Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme**

This project has been brought close to

substantial completion in early 2024 with the cycle track and footpaths now fully constructed and in operation on both sides of the N63 Ballinalee road which total over 1.8km.

The last two months also saw the completion of junction tightening works at both the entrance and exits to St Emer's school which also included installation of school pencil bollards.

Other works recently completed include the construction of raised coloured priority crossings on the side road junctions giving an increased sense of safety and priority for cyclists and pedestrians over vehicular traffic. The new controlled pedestrian crossing adjacent to the N4 roundabout also came into operation in February.



# Regeneration

---

Another element of this project recently completed is the re-lining of the Ballinalee road which sought to reduce the carriageway lane width while also increasing the central island/right turning lane widths, all in an effort to reduce speeds and increase safety.

## **2024 Funding Allocation**

Longford County Council were pleased to learn of the National Transport Authority's announcement of increased Active Travel funding allocation to Longford in 2024 to €3.5 million. This sees the continued support for the rolling out of the Active Travel programme in Longford and will serve for the progression of both existing projects and also new additional projects.

A separate allocation of €500,000 was also announced for the rolling out of a Bus Stop enhancement programme in Longford in 2024.

# Planning

---

## Planning Applications

There are currently a large number of planning applications being considered by the Planning section at present. The extension application for Centre Parcs has been granted by An Bord Pleanála. This will result in an almost 50% increase in accommodation provision on the site.

ePlanning has been fully implemented and is running smoothly, significantly reducing our paper waste.

There have been several Part 8 development applications processed from Housing, Regeneration, and Active Travel.

The waiver scheme in relation to development contribution has been implemented with a modest uptake in applications.

## Longford Town Local Area Plan

Preparation of Longford Town Local Area Plan (LAP) is currently at pre-draft stage.

Preparation was paused pending the publishing of detailed Census 2022 results at the end of September. These results are now being analysed by the Planning team.

In January 2024, the draft LAP was sent to consultants for completion of environmental reports before publishing the draft plan.

## Derelict Sites

The Derelict Sites Act and process is being used as a vehicle to minimise dereliction and vacancy in the towns of Longford. The derelict site registration process has begun on seven sites.

## Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

The application to UNESCO for Biosphere Reserve status for Lough Ree is progressing. Consultants have been appointed to carry out a public consultation.

This project features in the National Climate Action Plan, Shannon Tourism Masterplan, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Programme for Government. It is a flagship project in the region and aims to help 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 commence in Spring 2024.

## Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT)

In December, the Planning section published a draft map which was required for Revenue Commissioners under the RZLT legislation.

Land appearing on the annual draft maps, which take into account the outcome of submissions and rezoning

# Planning

---

requests made in respect of the land on these maps, will be included on the annual final map of land in scope for the tax in the local authority area to be published on 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, as provided for in legislation.

# CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

---

Management Report for February 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 February 2024 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed   
Paddy Mahon  
Chief Executive

