



Chief Executive Report February 2025

Longford County Council

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Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

Right to Read

Battle of Wits

The County Final of the Battle of Wits 2024 took place in Longford Library on Thursday, 7 November. Teams from Moyne Community School, Mercy Secondary Ballymahon, Meán Scoil Mhuire Longford, Cnoc Mhuire Granard, St Mel's College Longford, Lanesborough Community College and Ardscoil Phádraig Granard competed on the day.



After a keenly contested quiz Lanesborough Community College emerged as winners. Mercy Secondary School Ballymahon were the runners-up. Both teams went on to represent County Longford in the regional final in Athlone on 5 December where they competed against teams from Westmeath, Laois and Offaly.

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, Westmeath were crowned Battle of Wits champions, with Tullamore College, Offaly in second place and Banagher College, Offaly in third place.

Family Time at Your Library

The Family Time at your Library Winter programme for children ran during November and December. A variety of events were organised, including arts and crafts, print making workshops. Storytime with Mrs Claus proved as popular as ever with parents and children alike.

Community Reading Project

In conjunction with Human Resources' Health and Wellbeing team, a new Community Reading Project was announced to run over the winter months. This initiative aims to promote literacy and encourage everyone to engage with reading. The first book selection is *Travelling in a Strange Land* by David Park. Books can be collected at the Longford Branch Library and an e-book version is available on the BorrowBox App

Employee Training

The library employees completed a number of essential health and safety training courses during the year including first aid and safety representative training.

Work is ongoing to address some outstanding actions of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) inspections which took place earlier in the year. These areas are being addressed in all branches. All reports were shared with the Council's Health and Safety team and Facilities and there is on-going process.

Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

Age Friendly

Eamonn Brennan is our new Longford Age Friendly Ambassador. Eamonn succeeds Declan Nerney and special thanks is extended to Declan for his contribution to our Age Friendly Programme over the past number of years. Well wishes are also extended to Eamonn in his new role.

The Older Person's Council met on 26 November and the Age Friendly Alliance met on 12 December. A number of initiatives have been planned for 2025 including self-defence classes, walkability audits, Bealtaine programme, storm ready packs in collaboration with Longford Public Participation Network (PPN) and Longford Community Safety Partnership, refresher driving lesson and talk for older drivers in collaboration with An Garda Síochána and Age Friendly Ireland, brain health initiatives such as memory boxes and memory Walk in collaboration with HSE Dementia Service.

Mo Bosca Beo

Longford Age Friendly are working on a collaboration with Laois Age Friendly on a project called Mo Bosca Beo. There have been two focus groups, and the design is now gone to an illustrator and graphic design to create the final product.

Digital Literacy Support Programme

Longford Age Friendly partnered with LWETB and Westmeath Libraries in the roll out of a free eight-week digital literacy support programme in library branches in Longford and Westmeath. Currently work has started on a joint application for funding opportunities to expand this project in 2025.

Walkability Audit

Longford Age Friendly and Town First staff carried out a walkability audit in Granard on 7 November. This is the second walkability audit completed in 2024. A walkability audit assesses how easy or difficult it is to get around your town, and how easy or difficult it is to access services. In a walkability audit, members of the community walk a route to identify and prioritise things that could be improved.

Movement for Better Balance

The fourth cycle of Move Well for Health exercise classes is continuing in our five libraries. This modified eight-week exercise programme was developed to suit those with chronic conditions and older persons. These classes are running at full capacity with attendees enjoying both the health and social interaction benefits of the programme.

This programme was shortlisted for a National Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Award in Active and Healthy Ageing Category collaboration between HSE, Longford Sports Partnership and Longford Libraries.

Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

Creative Ireland

The Creative Ireland Community Open call is now closed for 2025, and letters of offers will be going out to the communities in the coming days.

Our Creative Ireland team is working with Comhairle na nÓg to create and curate the Cruinniú na nÓg programme, a day of creativity, which will be hosted on 8 June this year.

Healthy Ireland

In November and December, the Health Ireland programme included talks on healthy eating for winter, healthy eating for heart health with Sinead Costello and Sharon Murtagh HSE Dieticians, perimenopause and menopause talks, some Christmas cookery classes and sensory play sessions for pre-school community.



STEAM

November will see a lot of activity in all branches as part of Science Week. Events include interactive sessions with Go Fly your Kite, Midlands Science and Anyone4Science. The local schools were delighted with the programme.

Archives and Records Management

Work continued records in the Roads Section and in one of the records stores. Two important deposits were received: a collection of photographic negatives from the *Longford Leader* (1979-86) and a collection of slides relating to Ballycloghan National School.

Commemorations

The Harp Media documentary *Sir Henry Wilson: The Man Who Was Empire* had its premiere in Granard Library on 5 December. The Transition Year project on the First World War was concluded with a presentation ceremony on 19 December. Students were asked to imagine serving in the war and to write home outlining their experiences. The top three received prizes.

Arts Office

Funding Awards

Grant Awards totalling €70,000 were awarded to artists and arts organisations to support their work in the County for 2025. Awards were made to 19 artists, two filmmakers, four arts festivals, and five arts organisations. Their proposed work is very ambitious and greatly enhance arts and cultural opportunities and experiences for citizens in the coming year.

Heritage

The closing date for the Historic Structures Fund is now closed for 2025. A decision on the Built Heritage

Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage

Investment Scheme is due shortly. Delays are due to the change in government.

The county heritage plan for 2025 was submitted to Heritage Council.

The public consultation for the Longford County Heritage Strategy should be starting shortly.

Longford Lights

Longford Lights took place across four days from Thursday, 20 to Sunday, 23 February. A longer and larger event than previous years, for the first time the festival expanded outside of Connolly Barracks and included artwork up to Longford Court House.

Audiences were entertained by 33 separate art exhibits and many performances and interactive elements. It was all produced by 54 artists, led by Caroline Conway and Tommy Casby. As always, a signature component of the festival is its substantial engagement with community groups. This year 26 primary schools and 6 community groups will be involved in making approximately 2,000 art components for the festival.

Just under 6,800 people attended the festival. This figure would likely have been much higher if not for the inclement weather. Over 60 volunteers supported the festival delivery including many from Longford County Council and Longford Volunteering Centre. The festival was supported by a broad range of departments within the Council including housing and infrastructure, Communications,

Tourism, Libraries and Night-Time Economy. The principal funders were Longford County Council, Arts Council and Creative Ireland.



Information Technology

Longford STEM Passport for Inclusion

The All-Ireland STEM Passport for Inclusion programme is a joint initiative by Maynooth University, Microsoft Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the Department of Education that addresses inequalities with access to STEM careers among secondary school students in socially disadvantaged communities.

On the 31 January, 15 students from Lanesborough Community College graduated with a level 6 Maynooth University qualification in 21st Century STEM skills through the STEM Passport for Inclusion Programme.

On the day, Chloe Finnerty received the STEM Passport for Inclusion Outstanding School Engagement Award which recognises schools that have shown exceptional commitment to the programme. Chloe supported students every step of the way with dedication and collaboration and has helped to create a positive, inclusive environment where students are empowered to achieve their goals.



National VEX IQ Robotics Finals

The National Final of the VEX IQ Robotics competition takes place in Munster Technological University Cork on 26 February. Two post-primary Longford schools are participating this year: Meán Scoil Mhuire, Longford Town and Moyne Community School. These competitions enable students to take part in battles of engineering coding and teamwork collaboration.

Information Technology Infrastructure

Information technology infrastructure works completed include:

- ServiceDesk stats for December 2024 and January 2025: 1,224 tickets
- Mobile phone administration and support
- IT support for statutory and Teams hybrid meetings
- Handover of community CCTV responsibilities
- Support for Irish Water transition project
- Procurement for annual renewals and hardware replacements/upgrades
- Windows Server 2012 upgrade project progressed
- Digital divide initiative for outdoor staff in progress
- Second phase of telephony migration project in progress
- Library technology upgrades commenced

Information Technology

Information Security

Information Security work completed includes:

- In person Cyber Security Training started for all new members of staff.
- Ongoing Phishing simulations and training of staff.
- PEN Test ran on network & clearing of vulnerabilities ongoing.
- Implementation of PAM Solution started.
- Implementation of XSoar solution ongoing.
- Quarterly Information Security Committee meeting.

Geographic Information Systems

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) works completed include:

- SQL database migration and consolidation ongoing
- GIS user training
- MapAlerter internal subscriber cleanup
- Mapping and Dashboards for STEAM Education Programmes
- Development of Storm Éowyn response application
- Development of Broadband Outage reporting application
- iReg analysis and reporting on dwellings within Local Electoral Areas
- Development of Farm Inspection Application

Broadband Connection Points (BCPs)

In January and February, there have been 17 new guests and 258 returning guests at County Longford's Broadband Connection Points (BCPs).

Digital Services

Ongoing Digital Services projects include:

- Rollout of new cloud-based phone system completed
- ePMDS and Blended Working software being used by all employees.
- Planning Enforcements moved to SharePoint to automate mapping & automate business flows.
- Migration of planning registers to SharePoint to allow mapping & fulfil open data requirements.
- Initial phases of procuring a new Online Digital Forms platform for Longford County Council.
- County roll out of Longford Text Alert is ongoing. This is an app and accompanying website which sends local people crime prevention text alerts and community notices from across County Longford. Sign up on LongfordTextAlert.ie.

Information Technology

Town WIFI: Longford, Ballymahon and Drumlish

	New Guests	Returning Guests	Average dwell time
January	1,359	1,453	9
February	1,195	1,439	9

National Broadband Plan

The National Broadband Plan update is as follows:

<div> <div>€34M Investment</div> <div>9K Premises</div> <div>8,521 Premises Passed</div> <div>2,763 Connections</div> </div>			
Deployment Area	Premises*	Status	Anticipated Date for Connection
AUGGNACLIFFE	2105	Available to Order/Pre-Order	Available to Order/Pre-Order
BALLYMAHON	1403	Available to Order/Pre-Order	Available to Order/Pre-Order
CARRIGALLEN	175	Network Build in Progress	October 2025 - December 2025
LISMACAFFREY	1812	Available to Order/Pre-Order	Available to Order/Pre-Order
LONGFORD	3325	Available to Order/Pre-Order	Available to Order/Pre-Order
ROOSKEY	120	Network Build in Progress	April 2025 - June 2025
(Additional Premises)	85	N/A	TBC

Community

Longford Local Community Development Committee

A meeting of Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was held on 14 January 2025.

LEADER 2327 Programme

One LEADER project was approved at the January 2025 LCDC meeting to a value of €112,512.42.

SICAP 2024-2028

At the January meeting of the LCDC, the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) Annual Plan 2025 was approved. In 2025, Longford Community Resources CLG who are the Programme Implementers will receive a total budget of €747,166 to deliver SICAP which includes the core SICAP budget of €663,300 and a budget for 'New Arrivals' of €83,866.

The programme has two main goals: Goal 1, Contribute to Building more Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities and Goal 2, Empower Disadvantaged People to Improve the Quality of their Lives. Longford Community Resources CLG will use this funding primarily for staffing and activities to work with community groups and individuals throughout County Longford.

Longford Comhairle na nÓg

Longford Comhairle na nÓg members are busy representing the voice of young people from County Longford at a number of events. Members participated in a consultation process hosted by Longford Community Safety

Partnership on developing a Family Resource Centre in Longford Town.

Members also participated and gave valuable insight at a consultation hosted by Healthy Longford called "Not Around Us" campaign which is about working towards a tobacco free generation.

Comhairle member Daithí Mc Loughlin travelled to Dublin as a guest delegate to attend a National Rural Assembly Meeting. The National Youth Assembly of Ireland is a Government of Ireland consultative forum and an overarching structure that captures the voices of young people in Ireland on issues that are important to them.

All events provided great learning opportunities for the members who attended.



Comhairle Member Daithí Mc Loughlin attending Rural Assembly meeting in Dublin

Community

Empowering Communities Programme (ECP)

This Empowering Communities Programme (ECP) runs in the Ardnacassa Ave area of Longford town. The community engaged in a number of activities in December. A group of residents were facilitated to attend the "Land of Light" event in Mullingar and enjoyed walks around Belvedere Gardens.

A trip was organised to Multyfarnham Cookery School where the chef showed residents how to prepare and cook Christmas dinner, giving tips in relation to herbs and spices. Everyone enjoyed the trip and especially the meal at the end. Santa Claus also visited the estate for Christmas providing great excitement in the area, as children got their photograph taken and received selection boxes.



Empowering Communities Programme (ECP) staff and residents of Ardnacassa Ave estate enjoying a Christmas event in Mullingar.

Pride of Place Awards 2024

Two Longford groups, the 1798 Ballinamuck Commemoration Committee and Clonbalt Woods Estate, were honoured at the prestigious Pride of Place community awards on 2 November at a gala ceremony in the Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan.

Both groups received runners up awards which was a great achievement and once again demonstrates the huge community works taking place in County Longford.

Sponsored by IPB Insurance, the Pride of Place competition was initiated 22 years ago through a Co-operation Ireland programme to acknowledge the invaluable work undertaken by volunteers and those involved in local community development. It has grown into the largest competition recognising community development achievements on the island of Ireland.



IPB Pride of Place 2024: Co-operation Ireland CEO Ian Jeffers (centre, left) presents the runner up award in the Areas with a Population of 300-1000 category to Ballinamuck.



IPB Pride of Place 2024: Co-operation Ireland Director of Programmes Paul Boylan presents Clonbalt Woods with the runner up award in the Urban Neighbourhoods and Housing Estates category.

Community

Longford Community Safety Partnership

Kids Court up for a Leading Lights Award

Kids Court, a unique project run in partnership with the Longford Community Policing Unit and Longford County Council, was awarded a Road Safety Authority Leading Lights Award for the best Public Sector Initiative. Kids Court has been a fantastic way to engage with primary school children across County Longford while tackling important issues like speeding and road safety.



Through Kids Court, drivers caught exceeding the 50 km/h limit are given a choice: accept a fine and penalty points or explain their actions to the students in our Kids Court. It's been incredible to watch the enthusiasm and insight that children bring to these sessions, making a real difference in their communities. So far, nine Kids Court sessions have been held, with outstanding participation from schools across the county.

Longford Community Safety Partnership accepted the award at Dublin Castle alongside members of An Garda Síochána, Longford County Council, and students and teachers from St Matthew's Primary School, Ballymahon, and Sacred Heart Primary School, Granard. They represented all the amazing schools that have embraced this project and made it such a success.



Pathways to Funding

Over 100 community representatives attended our Pathways to Funding: Community Grant

Information Sessions which were held between 14 and 16 January 2025 in Longford, Ballymahon and Granard libraries.

These information sessions were hosted in each of the Municipal Districts in collaboration with the

Community

LCDC, Public Participation Network (PPN), Longford County Council and Longford Community Resources Clg.

Presentations delivering information and advice were provided on a wide range of available funding streams including the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme. The community representatives were able to meet those who administer the schemes and explore opportunities to support projects in their area.

Environment and Climate Action

Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Information

The Environment Team continued to carry out their role and function during 2024 with the support of the public. It was another busy year dealing with incidences of environmental pollution. 1,710 environmental complaints were received and actioned as follows:

Litter and Waste	Air	Water	Noise	Other
1653	7	31	14	5
96%	0%	2%	1%	0%

Management of Litter and Waste during 2024

In 2024, the litter and waste team took significant steps to address dumping in County Longford. The team investigated 1,653 litter and waste complaints, demonstrating a strong commitment to keeping our environment clean.

As a result of these investigations, 206 litter fines were issued, generating income of €18,050. Failure by a cohort of individuals to pay fines, resulting in the initiation of 29 prosecutions under the Litter Pollution Act. A further 78 enforcement actions were initiated with 35 warning letters and 43 statutory notices issued under the Waste Management Act and Litter Pollution Act.

Enforcement actions not only serve as a deterrent to potential offenders but also reinforces the importance of responsible waste disposal and

polluter pays principle. The figures represent a significant increase year on year, which reflects the hard work and dedication of the litter team in addressing littering more effectively throughout county Longford.

To further tackle illegal dumping, the Environment Team commenced the rollout of CCTV monitoring at various sites throughout the county in Q4 2024. To date this initiative has resulted in 37 litter fines and the initiation of additional prosecutions. The introduction of CCTV has resulted in reduced dumping at the monitored sites. Further sites will be identified during 2025 for this programme of work.



Environment and Climate Action

Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) results

The 2024 Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) results were announced on 6 January 2024, with Longford Town improving its IBAL results, to 23 and is now Clean to European Norms. This is a very good result for Longford, one of the best in a long number of years with over half (6 out of 10) of the survey sites getting an A grade and 3 further sites getting a B grade.

This achievement was because of the hard work and commitment of a number of people and organisations, including Longford County Council Environment Section and Municipal District, Longford Tidy Towns and the Probation Service.

Examples of areas that achieved an A grade include Camlin River Walk, Longford Court House and Mall Amenity Park – the latter is a wonderful park environment with an extensive range of facilities, all in very good order.



Sheep Worrying Campaign and IFA “No Dogs Allowed” campaigns

The Environment Section are committed to supporting farmers and raising awareness of the devastation caused by dog attacks on sheep all year round, but particularly during lambing season.

A sheep worrying radio campaign is currently being aired on Shannonside radio from the 6 January-28 February 2025. The radio advert is also supported by a social media campaign and a dedicated webpage.

The dog wardens attended the launch of the County Longford IFA “No Dogs Allowed” campaign on the 13 February 2025. Those timely campaigns raise awareness and emphasise the:

- financial and emotional impact on farmers,
- legal responsibilities of dog owners, and
- importance of keeping dogs under control to prevent harm to sheep



Environment and Climate Action

Christmas Environmental Awareness Campaign

During the festive period the Environment Section launched a Christmas environmental awareness campaign across social media channels. Informative posts covering topics such as food waste, green recycling, WEEE and a free real tree recycling scheme were issued. The campaign also included a dedicated council webpage. The campaign was very successful and boosted environmental awareness about Christmas planning and appropriate waste management.

National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP)

Ireland is required by Council Directive 91/676/EEC (the 'Nitrates Directive') to establish and implement action programmes to reduce water pollution from agricultural nutrients. As part of Ireland's Fifth Nitrates Action Programme Ireland must significantly increase agricultural inspections of farms by local authorities to a level of at least 4,500 per year nationally.

Following a review by the CCMA of resources required to carry out these inspections, under the Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Waters Regulations and the National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP), Longford County Council was allocated funding up to the end of 2027 for a Scientific Officer dedicated solely to the NAIP.

In early January 2025 the Scientific Officer for the NAIP commenced with the Environment team with

responsibility to deliver on the specific targets and priorities, including the number of inspections to be carried out per annum set by the EPA.

It is anticipated that 77 inspections will be carried out in 2025. The initial area for inspection is the Shannon (Upper) _090 river catchment, as it is currently at Poor status and needs to reach at least Good status by 2027 at the latest to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (2000).

There are 38 farms which have been selected for inspection in relation to water quality in the area. Nutrients particularly, for example, phosphorus and sediment have been highlighted as the main issues impacting on water quality in this river catchment.

Control of Dogs (XL Bully) Regulations 2024 SI No 491/2024

The Control of Dogs (XL Bully) Regulations 2024 SI No 491/2024 require the owners of XL bully type dogs, to register them with the local authority within which the dog resides by 31 January 2025.

From 1 February 2025, it will be illegal to own an XL bully type of dog without a Certificate of Exemption or proof that one has been applied for. The Certificate of Exemption allows the owner of an XL Bully type dog to keep that dog at a particular premises until the natural end of the dog's life.

The Environment Section have been working with XL Bully type dog owners to ensure they are compliant with the legislation by the 31 January deadline. In addition to contacting all

Environment and Climate Action

known XL Bully type dog owners, the council has launched a social media campaign to highlight the registration deadline, which is supported by a [dedicated council webpage](#).



Energy Road Show

Longford County Council hosted the LOETB Energy Road Show from the 25 to 29 November 2024. The roadshow provided information on energy retrofitting and ran a variety of short courses on related topics. The roadshow was attended by over 300 visitors.



Opening of the Energy Road Show

Our Shared Plate: Stop Build Reflect Workshop

Longford County Council Community Climate Officer Linda Beirne attended the Stop Build Reflect workshop which took place in Wood Quay, Dublin on 21 January 2025. This workshop was organised to review progress in the Neighbourhood Networks' Our Shared Plate initiative. This initiative has projects supported by Longford County Council in Old Ardnacassa, Killoe Men's Shed and Longford Women's Link.



Our Shared Plate workshop

Environment and Climate Action

Our Shared Plate: Composting Workshop

On 23 November 2024, residents of old Ardnacassa took part in a composting workshop under Our Shared Plate initiative.

Biodiversity Talk

On the 23 January 2025, Council Biodiversity Officer Adam Mulvihill gave talk on aquatic invertebrates for all classes in St Michael's National School, Longford. The school children were fascinated by the life visible through magnifying glasses in samples from local streams.

Pathways to Funding

Community Climate Officer Linda Beirne presented on the Community Climate Action Fund and other funding streams at three workshops in Granard, Longford and Ballymahon on 14 to January 2025.

Sustainable Energy Communities

In January 2025, Lanesborough Sustainable Energy Community completed procurement of an energy consultant for its Energy Master Plan. Longford Council has agreed to provide bridging finance over the course of the project.

Tree Planting Project

In January Climate Officer Gary Brady coordinated tree planting in Alderfield, Longford and Woodview, Newtownforbes. The trees were made available by Active Travel in lieu

of trees removed during the construction of cycleways in Longford town.



New trees at Alderfield, Longford

Community Climate Action Fund

The first recoupment of the Community Climate Action Fund was completed in December and payments of €77,679 were made to six projects, four of which are complete.



Community Climate Action project in Lus na Gréine family resource centre, Granard.

Environment and Climate Action

Powering Change

Under the Powering Change internal energy awareness programme, Climate Officer Gary Brady met with Human Resources, Information Technology, Environment and Community during December and January.

He emphasised the need to switch off all appliances when not needed, in particular in the evenings and weekends before going home. This programme also emphasises the need for improved waste management – particularly in the area of recycling in the Council offices.

EV Charging

Eir/EasyGo and Longford County Council completed the final EV charging station under the current programme at the new carpark in Granard. Under this programme four 75kw chargers, ten 50kw chargers and two 22kw chargers have installed across the county in locations in Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Longford.

