



# Longford County Council Chief Executive Report January 2023

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# January Highlights

## Road safety awards

Longford County Council received a joint Special Recognition Award, shared with other local authorities, at the Road Safety Authority Leading Lights in Roads Safety Awards. This recognises local authorities' role in recent road safety campaigns.



## Tourism Calendar is here

Longford Tourism's new 2023 calendar has been launched and distributed to libraries throughout the county. It includes a map of County Longford and some of the points of interest in the county.



## Inclusive communities

County Longford Youth Services undertook a mural to highlight the inclusive nature of their services, including for LGBTI+ people. This work was supported by funding secured by the Council from the Department of Rural and Community Development. Other works also took place at Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre and Bridgeways Family Resource Centre.



## Decrease in horses seized

A proactive and educational approach has led to a reduction in the number of stray and unwanted horses seized by the Council. The high of 56 in 2014 has been reduced to a low of four horses seized in 2022.



# Community and Enterprise

## Community Development

### Longford Local Community Development Committee

Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) meeting was held on 13 December.

### Community Support Fund 2022

In January, Longford LCDC invited online applications for the Community Support Fund 2022. This is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), with €276,585 allocated to Longford.

Grants will support community groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas with running or operating costs. Necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, and the purchase of equipment can also be funded. An amount is ring-fenced for the operating costs of Women's Sheds.

Closing date is 4pm on Tuesday, 7 February 2023. For Online Application, Terms and Conditions, and Guidelines visit the Community Support Fund page on [Longfordcoco.ie](https://longfordcoco.ie).

### LGBTI+ Initiatives

Longford County Council secured €21,500 from DRCD to support community organisations to ensure community infrastructure is inclusive of LGBTI+ people. Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre, Bridgeways Family Resource Centre and County Longford Youth Services undertook a variety of initiatives. This included workshops, information events and arts programmes.

### Local Economic and Community Plan

Work continues on the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029.

A report on the public consultation process was considered by Longford LCDC and the Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). It noted the variety of community members, agencies and sector representatives that engaged with the public consultation period. Their feedback indicated that the high-level goals represent a clear and agreeable strategic direction. However, it was also noted that to be meaningful to the community, the goals could become more specific to Longford.

The LCDC and the SPC noted the LECP steering group recommended an updated draft of the high-level goals. This update ensures greater clarification, simplicity of language and a stronger reflection of the priority areas identified during the consultation process. The report, including the updated draft high-level goals, was approved by the LCDC and SPC with one amendment.

The next stage of the LECP is to develop specific and measurable sustainable objectives and an outline of the desired outcomes over the six-year period. A final draft of the objectives and outcomes will then be presented for observation and consideration by the Municipal Districts and the Regional Assembly.

# Community and Enterprise

## Community Development (Contd)

### LEADER projects approved

Three LEADER projects were approved by the LCDC at the December meeting to a value of €164,160.12.

An expression of interest to develop a local development strategy (stage one) for the delivery of the LEADER 2023-2027 programme was submitted by Longford LCDC to the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). This has been deemed eligible, with progress now to stage two of the Local Action Group selection process. The signed funding agreement has been returned to the Department.

The next stage is to develop a Local Development Strategy for County Longford, to be submitted by 14 July 2023. The DRCD will provide €50,000 in funding towards the development of the Strategy.

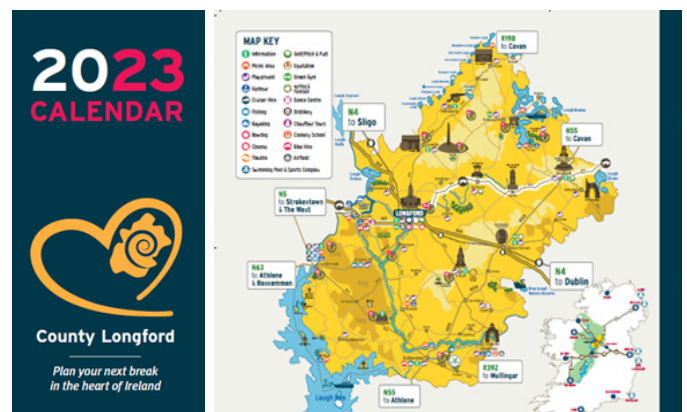
## Tourism

### Holiday World

Longford Tourism attended the Holiday World Show in the RDS in Dublin on 27-29 January. The Holiday World Show is Ireland's largest annual public travel exhibition, with over 30,000 attendees. County Longford was represented, alongside destinations from across the world and closer to home. The team promoted County Longford and all there is to do and see and meeting with and speaking to prospective holiday-makers.

### Calendar 2023

Longford Tourism's new 2023 calendar has been distributed to libraries throughout the county. It includes a map of County Longford and some of the points of interest in the county.





# Community and Enterprise

## Local Sports Partnership

### Longford Sports Awards

Longford Sports Partnership and the Longford Leader held the Longford Sports Awards. Award winners included:

- Ciara Dennigan
- Darragh Greene
- Cian McPhillips
- Melissa O’Kane
- Yemi Talabi
- Fiona Gettings
- Jack Macken
- Destiny Ogedengbe
- Jakub Pasieczny
- Ashley Weafer

In addition, Hall of Fame winner is Derick Turner, club volunteer coordinator with Longford Rugby Club. Team of the Year are Longford Slashers Senior Ladies Football Team.

Club Volunteer of the Year is Sean Dempsey, volunteer with Longford and District Schoolboy League. Junior Sportsperson of the Year is John Fitzpatrick, Longford Athletics Club member. Sports Ability Award winner are Melview Football Club Football for All initiative.



Winners have some unbelievable achievements, including competing at local, national and international levels, and competing in the Olympics, European Championships and breaking some long-standing records.

### Sports Bursary

Longford County Council Sports Bursary recipients were announced, recognising sportspeople with potential for success at national and international level. This year’s winners are:

- Cian McPhillips, a middle-distance runner from Ardagh. Cian set a new Irish Under-20 800m and Under-20 1500m record, and won gold in the 1500m at the European Under-20 Championships
- Darragh Greene, a Newtownforbes swimmer. He holds Irish senior records in 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke, is an Olympian and represented Ireland at European and World Championships.
- Jakub Pasieczny, a basketball player from Longford Town. He plays basketball with Longford Phoenix Basketball Club and the Irish under-18 basketball team.

### Indoor soccer programme

With Longford LEAP Project, Longford Sports Partnership are running an indoor soccer programme, targeted for children from disadvantaged areas. It is a supplement to the eight-week soccer programme ran last summer. It aims to support boys and girls in engaging with local sports clubs.

### Supporting Thomas on Operation Transformation

Longford Sports Partnership are proudly supporting Thomas, a Longford leader on RTE’s Operation Transformation. Thomas picked up some sports supplies to help him keep on track. Longford Sports Partnership also supported the Ireland Lights Up walk at Kenagh GAA by helping 200 people warm up with Thomas. Together with St Christopher’s Longford, Sport Partnership also held a walk with 90 people with disabilities taking part.

# Community and Enterprise

## Human Resources

### Employee Appreciation Day

In late-2022, Longford County Council held an Employee Appreciation Day thanking all employees for their continued service while focusing on motivation. Employees were presented with Long Service Recognition Awards and Health and Safety Awards. Employees who had completed third-level education as part of the Open Learning Scheme supporting lifelong learning were also recognized.



### Retirements

In late-2022, Longford County Council brought employees who retired since January 2020 and over the COVID-19 pandemic together. This was to thank and show appreciation to them for their dedicated service to the people of County Longford.



# Finance and Information Technology

## Information Technology

### Dream Space with Microsoft

A new science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education initiative has been launched. Longford is one of only two counties chosen to pilot this initiative. A collaboration between Microsoft Ireland's Dream Space, Our Kids Code, micro:bit foundation, and BCPs, it is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Dream Space provides immersive, research-based fun and educational experiences for students and teachers to enhance their STEM skills. It also helps with creativity, ethical decision making and collaboration skills. There are 12 primary schools in Longford participating in this initiative.

### Longford Text Alert

Longford Text Alert is live in 14 community alert areas, with four groups currently onboarding onto the system. Find out more at [LongfordTextAlert.ie](https://LongfordTextAlert.ie).

### Digital Services

Along with Dream Space and Longford Text Alert, progress continues digital services, including:

- ePlanning project has started, allowing planning applications to be made online. It is scheduled to go live in March 2023
- Blended working application is now live, allowing employees to apply for blended working via Microsoft Teams, as opposed to paper forms
- Phone system updates
- ePerformance Management Development Scheme (ePMDS) software updates
- eService software updates

### Town WIFI

The free Town WIFI in Longford, Ballymahon and Drumlish had 1,048 new and 1,979 returning users.

### Broadband Connection Points

County Longford Broadband Connection Points (BCP) had 24 new users and 223 returning users.

### Technology infrastructure

ServiceDesk dealt with 531 enquiries in January.

Information Technology (IT) has started the handover of community CCTV project. Windows 10 feature upgrade has been deployed. IT also support the Irish Water transition. The procurement for annual renewals is underway.

There has been continued progress and support of several infrastructural projects, including:

- Patching of client and server systems
- Hybrid meetings
- Mobile phone administration and support

### Geographic information systems

Data continues to be reported to support the Residential Zoned Land Tax. Support is also ongoing on the electoral register polling district review.

IT are also implementing water quality results online and preparing housing inspection app data.



# Infrastructure and Innovation Roads

## Municipal district works

Road maintenance, including drainage, footpath repairs and pothole repairs, continued in each municipal district (MD).

Area technical employees are preparing the Roads Programme for 2023, as well as preparing the necessary health and safety plans. Annual procurement tenders for plant and materials are also being prepared.

Allocations for Regional and Local Roads for 2023 are expected to be announced in February.

## National road schemes

Construction work on the N63 Majors Well Road Pavement Scheme are substantially complete. It includes the realignment the N63 and L3003 (Blind Man's Walk) junction, provision of footpath and cycle lanes, drainage improvements, public lighting upgrade and landscaping. It provides an improved approach to Longford Town and enhanced pedestrian and cycling amenities.



Advanced drainage works on the N4 Longford By-Pass Phase One Scheme are substantially complete. This is from N4/N5 Charlotte Brooke Roundabout to N4/N63 Leo Casey Roundabout. The successful tenderer, Roadstone Ltd, will start pavement works in March-April 2023. The value of the contract is €2.3m. The N4 Longford By-Pass Phase Two works will be tendered in the next few weeks.

Several National Road Schemes on the N4, N55 and N63 are progressing through various design stages.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland annual allocations are expected to be published shortly.

## Road Safety

The Road Safety Authority Leading Lights in Roads Safety Awards were held in Croke Park, Dublin. Twelve Road Safety Officers representing local authorities, including Longford County Council, were awarded a joint Special Recognition Award. This was for their role in recent road safety campaigns.

## Traffic and Paid Parking

Longford County Council Traffic section is responsible enforcing laws on illegal parking, non-display of parking tickets, permits or motor tax discs, and failure to pay parking fees. In 2022, the following fines were issued:

Offence	Fines Issued
Parking Fines	708
Non-Display of Tax	511
Breach of Parking Regulations 1997	624
Total	1843

# Infrastructure and Innovation Environment

## Certificate of Authorisation

An application for a Certificate of Authorisation for Ballymaurice historic landfill was lodged with the Environmental Protection Agency in December 2022.

## Hazardous Waste Collection

A hazardous waste collection took place in Longford Town in December. Items for collection included old paints, household cleaners, herbicides, pesticides, waste oil, medicines and batteries. Over four tonnes of hazardous waste was collected on the day.

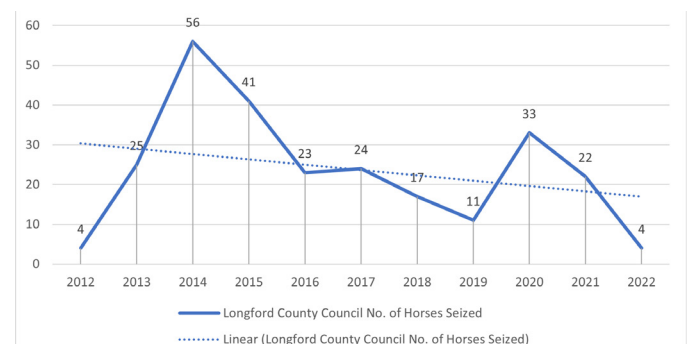


## Junior Litter Pick

Longford County Council, along with Longford Community Resources organised a series of junior litter picks in McEoin Park during December. Local children volunteer to help clean up their estate once or twice in that month.

## Animal Control

A proactive and educational approach has led to a reduction in the number of stray and unwanted horses seized by the Council. The high of 56 in 2014 has been reduced to a low of four in 2022.



The Council now faces with a similar crisis of unwanted and stray dogs, following a COVID-19 surge in dog ownership. A similar proactive approach has started to deal with this, including an accessible Rehome a Dog section [Longfordcoco.ie](https://www.longfordcoco.ie).

## Solid Fuel Project

Longford County Council received funding for pilot projects to support the implementation of the new Solid Fuel Regulations. This new law had come into effect in October 2022 and restricts retail, online and commercial sale of smoky fuels, including smoky coal, turf and wet wood.

A survey of 202 Longford Town households found that 116 (or 57%) burn solid fuel. Of those, 35% use solid fuel as their main source for heating. The remaining 86 (or 43%) of householders, don't use solid fuel at all, instead using oil to heat their homes.

As part of the survey householders were given information on the new Solid Fuel Regulations, including the reasons for the regulations, how to comply and penalties for non-compliance.



# Infrastructure and Innovation

## Civil Defence

### Duties and taskings

Civil Defence provided medical cover at seven events in December and January, including:

- Irish Blood Transfusion Service Longford clinics
- Longford Athletic 5k run
- Ardagh Community Games 10 mile and 5k run
- Longford Town Football Club soccer match
- Longford GAA match

### Training and operations

- A presentation night was held for volunteers. Volunteers received their training certificates, promotions were awarded, and long service medals were presented to two volunteers.
- Community First Responder Advanced course was held for four emergency medical technicians.
- Manual Handling training was provided for four volunteers.
- Probationary volunteers continued their mandatory training.
- Statutory inspections of equipment were completed.





# Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

## Housing

### Voids Programme 2022

Longford County Council received funding of €375,350 for 34 properties under the Voids Programme for 2022, which has now concluded. Funding of €11,000 was made available per property, with the emphasis on undertaking minimum refurbishment works to comply with required letting standards.

### Disabled Persons Grant Scheme

To meet the needs of our tenants, 28 adaptation projects were undertaken in 2022. Funding of €185,661 was provided under the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme.

### Vacant Property Refurbishment

Twelve Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant applications were received and are being assessed. A further 15 expressions of interest are being followed up with.

This follows an extension of the scheme in October 2022 to include eligible vacant and derelict properties in cities and rural areas, in addition to towns and villages which have been eligible since July 2022.

The scheme is still open for applications. Updated documentation is available on [Longfordcoco.ie](http://Longfordcoco.ie) and enquiries sent to [vacanthomesofficer@longfordcoco.ie](mailto:vacanthomesofficer@longfordcoco.ie).

### Choice Based Letting

Choice Based Letting will continue to be rolled out on a monthly basis and will include properties countywide. Properties are advertised on [Longfordcoco.ie](http://Longfordcoco.ie) and social media channels.

### Summary Social Housing Needs Assessment 2023

The Summary Social Housing Needs Assessment 2023 will commence in late January. Identified applicants will be contacted to have their information on iHouse updated.

### Changes to Income Eligibility Thresholds

On 1 January 2023, social housing income eligibility thresholds in local authorities increased by €5,000.

This will ensure social housing support is available to vulnerable households and will help protect those most at risk from increases in the cost of living. The change is being taken pending the development and rollout of a revised income eligibility model (and income thresholds) in 2023. The revised threshold for County Longford is €30,000 (Band 3).

The current income eligibility model includes allowances of 5% for each additional adult household member (subject to maximum of 10%) and 2.5% for each child. These adjustments have not been revised and will be considered under the new income eligibility model.

The revised thresholds for different household compositions are:

- Single adult: €30,000
- Two adults: €31,500
- One adult and one child: €30,750
- One adult and two children: €31,500
- Two adults and one child: €32,250
- Two adults and three children: €33,750
- Three adults and four children €36,000

# Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

## Housing (Contd)

### Housing Capital Programme

Project (Units)	Status
St Michael's Court, O'Hara's Site (14)	Complete
St Patrick's Court, Ballinamuck (8)	Completed in December
Cranleymore, Abbeylara (3)	Japanese knotweed works required. Tender to be advertised
St Rita's Park Road (12)	Stage 2 approved. Phase 1 (six houses) out to planning
24 Congress Terrace (2)	Stage 3 approved. Out to tender
Woodland Path, Keenagh (4)	Stage 4 approved. Contract awarded in Q1 2023
Drynan, Ballymahon (13)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly
Cnoc na Gréine, Granard (6)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly
2 Woodview, Newtownforbes (2)	Single stage approval received. Tender to be advertised.
2 Legion Terrace (4)	Tenders received and are being reviewed
Richmond Street (23)	Turnkey approved. Contracts signed. Started on site in January
Farrell's Ballinalee (4)	Department approval received, to be complete by Q3-Q4 2023
Forthill, Aughnaclyffe (13)	Department approval received, to be completed by Q3 2023
Radharc na Muileann, Lanesborough (22)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly
Longford Road, Ballinalee(14)	Turnkey approved. Aim to be completed by Q4 2023

Colmcille Terrace,  
Granard (19)

Tuath advised that four tenders were received. Tender assessment started by the design team, expected completion by end of January.

## Climate Action Initiatives

### Human Resources

Working with the Information Technology section, Human Resources has started rolling out a new blended working application. This method will cut down on paper use and waste.

### Information Technology

A new blended working application has been launched. This 'digital-first' approach will save on over 200 multiple-page paper applications and related processing, part of the key environmental metrics for blended working.

### Housing

In 2022, under the Midlands Retrofit Programme works were completed in four Council estates in Ballinalee: River Crescent and Camlin View, Cois na habhainn and Hill View


Tender in progress for St Matthew's Park, Ballymahon and assessment of the works required are being considered on the 46 local authority houses in the estate. In 2022 under the National Energy Efficiency Programme work has been completed on 19 houses in Slí na Móna.

# CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



Paddy Mahon  
Chief Executive







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