



Chief Executive Report July-August 2023

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July-August Highlights

Longford hosts wonderfully successful Rose of Tralee Tour

The 2023 Longford Rose Grace Kemple brought the Rose Tour home with her on 14 August, showcasing some wonderful attractions to an international audience - well done Grace - Longford is very proud!



Healthy Longford on display at Longford Show

Healthy Longford toured events over the summer including the Longford Agricultural Show, Granard Show and a coffee morning in Ardnacassa Community House.



Culture Con showcases world cultures to Longford youth

Intercultural event CultureCon took place in the Longford Arms Hotel on 28 June showcasing different cultures and producing art work for Longford Youth Services.



400 come out to play for "National Play Day"

National Play Day 2023 saw 400 children taking part in Drumlish Sports Hub, Longford Sports Hub and Edgeworthstown Sports Hub. The event included games, dance, face painting, a crafting corner, and balloon modelling.



Community Development

Longford Local Community Development Committee

Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) meetings were held on the 27 June and 11 July.

Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029

The Advisory Steering Group which is guiding the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) met on 19 June and 31 July.

The LECP process has six stages, including preparation, public consultation, development of high-level goals, objectives and outcomes, and finalisation of the plan.

This process is now at stage three which involves establishing objectives and outcomes which will form the basis for the implementation plan, which will be developed at the fifth stage.

Meetings of the Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) and Longford LCDC to review draft objectives for the plan were held on 10 and 11 July.

An action planning workshop involving agencies and other stakeholders was held on 11 July.

Work will continue to finalise a draft Framework LECP and an initial two-year implementation plan for further consideration by the Placemaking SPC and the LCDC prior to consideration by Longford County Council.

Longford Local Development Strategy

The Longford Local Development Strategy for the delivery of the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 has been approved at a July meeting of Longford LCDC.

Longford LCDC are the local action group for the LEADER Programme.

The strategy has been submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development for their approval.

Sláintecare Healthy Communities

Longford LCDC approved its Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee recommendations for activities to be carried out by the Longford Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme.

This includes funding for the following six actions, following consultation with community groups:

- A 'grow it yourself' programme
- A social exercise programme for older adults and people with chronic health issues
- Initial works to the McEoin Park outdoor recreational space
- Community learning hubs

Community Connections, local community programmes supporting the development of strong, healthy and vibrant communities, in Ardnacassa and McEoin Park community houses.

Community Development

Healthy Longford Programme

Longford LCDC approved its Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee recommendations for activities to be carried out by the Healthy Longford Programme. Healthy Longford will focus on:

- lifestyle and behaviour risk, including on physical activity actions and programmes
- wellbeing factors, including mental health-focused actions and programmes

The acting Healthy Longford coordinator attended events, including the Longford Agricultural Show, Granard Show and a coffee morning in Ardnacassa Community House.

Attendees at these events also included representatives from the Sláintecare Healthy Communities and Longford Local Community Safety Partnership.



Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme Review

The mid-year review of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was approved by Longford LCDC. Longford Community Resources CLG have a 2023 budget of €730,319 to implement the programme.

The current SICAP programme will conclude in December 2023.

A request for tender for SICAP 2024-2028 was published on eTenders on 10 July.

Comhairle na nÓg

Longford Comhairle na nÓg secured funding under the Longford County Council Intercultural Fund for 'CultureCon', an intercultural event in the Longford Arms Hotel on 28 June.

The event showcased different cultures, including entertainment, team bonding activities and producing a cultural art work for Longford Youth Service offices. Young people could also join Comhairle na nÓg to take part in future activities.

Comhairle also visited Leinster House, facilitated by Senator Micheál Carrigy.



Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Summer Stars

Summer Stars encourages children to read during the summer with plenty of events to keep up this good habit. All children who drop in their Summer Stars card will have a chance to win one of six hampers of books.

In Longford, 1,443 children have registered for Summer Stars, a 46% increase on the target set in the Right to Read Action Plan for 2023.

Each library in County Longford promoted this initiative with Summer Star show window. In late September, Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray will officiate the draw for the six book hampers.

Summer events

Longford Libraries held 48 free summer events which included storytelling, arts and crafts, dance, and puppet-making workshops with Jay Ryan from RTÉ. All were well attended and appreciated by the children and their parents.

New opening hours

Longford Libraries extended their opening hours by 9% in August, in response to increased customer demands. There is now more opportunities to avail of our customer service, book selection, computers, wifi, study desks, and events.

Check Longfordlibrary.ie for more details on opening hours for your local library.

July Workshops

Longford Libraries provided workshops to 18 school based summer programme camps in July, which are connected to local DEIS schools.

This included bunting-making workshops using recycled materials. Talks focusing on numeracy and literacy, promoting library events, including Summer Stars were held.

My Little Library Bag

My Little Library Bag contains books, reading tips and information on starting school.

It is available to all children who are starting school in September and are available in both English and Irish from Longford Libraries.

Art exhibitions

Traveller paintings, photographs and arts and crafts, including a miniature wagon, were displayed during Traveller



Pride Week. Local artist Pat Hourican launched an exhibition of his paintings on Monday, 14 August.

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Count Pawel Strzelecki Exhibition **Sensory equipment funding**

Longford Library hosted an exhibition honouring Count Pawel Strzelecki, commissioned by the Polish Embassy. Strzelecki was a renowned explorer and scientist who worked in Ireland to combat the Famine from 1847 to 1849. For this, he was the main agent of the British Relief Association. He developed an exceptionally effective mode of assistance by feeding around 200,000 starving children daily. This was done directly through the schools and increasing daily food rations. Distributing clothes and promoting hygiene was also a part of this work.

Healthy Ireland at your library

Longford Libraries hosted the Irish Heart Foundation blood pressure testing mobile unit, with hundreds of blood pressure and heart monitoring checks taking place. Information sessions were also held on good heart health.

The Dementia mobile information bus visited Ballymahon and Longford libraries.

This was in conjunction with Age Friendly Longford. It was well attended by members of the public.

Longford Libraries and Healthy Ireland Longford have many events coming up. These include an information session by a doctor from a specialised menopause clinic, a talk by life coach Mark Fennell, mindfulness painting sessions for adults and sensory play with play therapist Eleanor Glennon.

Longford Libraries secured €5,000 from the Dormant Account Fund for sensory equipment from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

To communicate the great work done by the library's sensory team, an employee training day focused on the sensory equipment, as well as the new Sensory support resource packs, the AsIAm Autism accreditation process, and the introduction of an employee-led sensory play programming for each library.

Town Twinning

Longford County Council welcomed French visitors from Landevant Twinning Group at Ballymahon Library. Between speeches was a seisiúin of Irish traditional music from local group Tanglewood, under the direction of Geraldine McLynn. The event finished with a operatic performance from Dasho Kostapenko, a young Ukrainian resident of County Longford.

Longford County Council will welcome visitors from East Rouen in September in Granard Library.



Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Library employee training

Library employees received Personal Safety at Work and Dealing with Aggressive Customers training. This included information on the Safety, Health and Welfare Act, advice and techniques for increasing personal safety at work, diffusing threats and the different supports available. It also included training to deal with protestors and ensure personal safety. This included a debriefing session with a trained counsellor and a self-care and mindfulness session.

Living Well at Home Programme

Older Persons Council Chair Kitty Hughes and Longford Age Friendly Assistant Coordinator Paula Mulry attended a meeting of the Living Well at Home Programme. This was chaired by Pat Mooney Longford/Westmeath Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons lead.

At this meeting, updates were given on a new Age Friendly Directory of Services. This is being finalised by HSE for the Midlands region, including Longford/Westmeath.

Other issues discussed included an increase in older people not attending routine hospital appointments due to lack of transport.

Possible solutions include liaising with Local Link, Irish Hospice Foundation, and local volunteer centres to progress transport options around medical appointments.

Age Friendly Information Day

The annual Age Friendly Information Day will take place on 9 October from 11am to 4pm in the Longford Arms Hotel. This year's theme is 'Be Wise and Well'. It is a collaboration between Longford Age Friendly and HSE Longford Primary Care Programmes.

At the event, health professionals will give short talks. They will also be available at the information booth area to give advice on diet, exercise and other issues. Information booths will also be held by Local Links, An Garda Síochána, Longford Sport Partnership, Longford Community Safety Partnership and many more support organisations.

Fall prevention assessments are also available. Longford County Council Physical Activity for Health Officer will also be present. This is a 18-month pilot funded by the Department of Health.

Longford Handy Helps launch

At the Age Friendly Information Day, Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray and Chief Executive Paddy Mahon will launch Longford Handy Helps. A collection of gadgets and other items to help people to live a more independent life in their home for longer, Longford Handy Helps items can be borrowed from Longford Libraries by members. This is an initiative of Longford Libraries and Age Friendly Longford, in consultation with the HSE Longford Primary Care Programme.

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Rocking and Bopping across Longford

Part of the Age Friendly Programme, Longford County Council secured funding of €15,000 for the Creativity in the Older Age Scheme. This funding is for the 'Rocking and Bopping across Longford' proposal.

This includes concerts in nursing homes, daycare centres and libraries for older persons. Local musicians will be championed and Longford's rich heritage of music in Longford will be celebrated through these concerts. Plans are underway for these concerts set to take place in autumn.

Arts Office

Cruthú Arts Festival

In its tenth-year, Cruthú Arts Festival took place from 18-23 July. This festival is funded by Longford Arts Office and Creative Ireland Longford. The festival is committed to fostering a sense of unity and shared appreciation for artistic expression. It celebrates cultural and creative expression and diversity.

It included music, visual art, dance and storytelling. Strasbourg Youth Symphony Orchestra's preformance in St Mel's Cathedral, followed by a circus performance on the steps of the Cathedral closed the festival. Special thanks to Catherine Gagneux for helping to bring such acts to Longford.

Children's Drama Workshops

Summer drama workshops with Maggi McKenna were delivered over four days in August in Granard and Edgeworthstown Libraries. The children experienced lots of fun activities while learning skills needed to speak in public and perform different roles while acting.

Arts Strategy 2023-2029

County Longford Arts Strategy 2023-2029 will be presented at September's Council meeting. This strategy is a year in the making and will provide a road map for arts development in the County for the coming years.

A Poem for September

Since All Ireland Poetry Day back in April, Longford Libraries have been working with local poets and issued an open call for Longford poets of all ages to submit their work to be showcased on our social media platforms and on the library's digital screens throughout September. A fantastic response was received.

'A Poem for September' is a literacy programme that will feature a new poem each day in September featuring both local and international poets. This project will start on Friday 1 September. We also hope to exhibit all poems in our libraries in October. Don't forget to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for your daily poetry supplement.

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Heritage

Heritage Week 2023

Heritage Week took place between 12-20 August, with events organised by community groups and Longford Library, Archives, Arts and Heritage. The Heritage Office funded some events via the Heritage Week Community Call.



Barn owl awareness sessions were funded via the Local Biodiversity Action Fund. Families were able to get up close to owls, which was a first for many. This was only possible because the owls were hand-raised by the Raven Haven facilitators Shay and Elaine. They spoke about barn owls being a protected species. Their talks also included details on owl habitats and how to report owl sightings for Birdwatch Ireland to have an up-to-date database of sightings.

Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre hosted children's creative workshops on mythology and bog ecology. Talks were held on bogland ecology. There was a weekend Éigse, with traditional music workshops and performances, set in the stunning acoustics of the main rotunda.

Drumlish History and Heritage hosted an interesting talk on the Melkagh megalithic tomb at Drumlish Library. The Maria Edgeworth Centre held a walking tour of Edgeworthstown.

Knights and Conquests Heritage Centre in Granard hosted the annual family day, which drew in 800 people. It featured local, traditional crafts and musicians, including John Dungan CCÉ and Éamonn Creamer. There was foraged nature and medieval reenactments from The Horsemen of Éire.



There was also a Leonardo da Vinci-designed cart made by The Granard Men's Shed. Talks on water heritage by John Connell and An Taisce Clean Coasts Campaign representatives and University College Dublin ancient textiles students in attendance.

Longford Garden Centre's Laura Shaw hosted a session on traditions and folklore associated with native plants. Herbert Farrell, in association with Local Authority Waters Programme and Lough Ree Access for All, hosted a visit to Inchcleraun (Quakers Island) with local people and a representative from the Society of Friends in Dublin.

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023

Longford Heritage Office secured funding for five projects under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023.

Projects include a 'plant a pollinator pot' project, hedgerow survey and hedge laying workshops and a nine-county quagga mussel monitoring survey.

Thirteen Tidy Towns committees have expressed interest in these projects. Workshops will take place in Longford Libraries in September and October. Check LongfordLibrary.ie for details.

Archives

Progress has been made to organise a dedicated store for the archives in Library headquarters.

Two donations for the the County Longford GAA Archive were received: a collection of match programmes, and items from St Mary's Gaelic Football Club, Granard.

Decade of Centenaries Programme

A talk on the 1923 General Election with Dr Mel Farrell in Longford Library took place. Hosted by the Longford Historical Society, it was funded via the Heritage Week Community Open Call Fund.

Padraic Colum Day

Celebrations are planned in Granard Library and Colmcille GAA Centre on 7 October to showcase the many talents of Padraic Colum.

Film screening

Ballymahon Community Library hosted the first screening of *The Assault on and Capture of Ballymahon RIC Barracks* on Saturday, 19 August. This documentary focused on the capture of Ballymahon Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks in 1920. The film was produced by locals, Rónán Ó Ceallaigh and Michael Conlan and funded by Longford County Council via the Decade of Centenaries.

Battle of Ballinamuck Commemoration

Plans are underway for a major commemoration of the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Ballinamuck is to take place on 7-10 September.

Funding was secured from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for several events, including:

- History and art projects with four local schools in Ballinamuck, Drumlish, Granard and Cloone, with help from local historians and artists
- A twinning project and sculpture commission with artist Kevin Flood
- Launch event with speaker Professor Kevin Whelan (University of Notre Dame)
- Traditional craft demonstrations
- Poetry reading by Noel Monahan
- Music, including the Ukrainian choir

Tourism

Tourism business visits

Longford Tourism visited Ballymahon Greenway Cycles, to promote the company on social media.



The company provides bikes, including e-bikes, children's bikes and trailers, helping visitors enjoy the wonderful Royal Canal Greenway cycle trail.

Longford Tourism also visited Longford Garden Centre and their new Bosca Beag coffee trailer to promote on social media.

Summer activities

Longford Sports Partnership and Longford Tourism launched many summer activities.

These include the Longford Trail Run Series with local 5K runs taking place at 7.30pm every Wednesday in August.

It also includes the Summer Walking Series with eight walks taking place at 6pm every Monday and Wednesday throughout August.

Go West magazine

Longford Tourism featured in Go West Ireland West Airport Magazine 2023 edition, with a two-page article showcasing Longford attractions.

Over 20,000 copies of the magazine are distributed to airports, hotels, attractions and tourist offices and read by travellers thinking of their next destination.

The feature will hopefully persuade some travellers to visit Longford.



Travel Tales with Fergal

Longford was spotlighted by journalist and podcaster Fergal O'Keeffe features with Tipp FM and Clare FM emphasising County Longford walking trails.

Fergal also recently interviewed Longford native Senator Micheál Carrigy, Seanad spokesperson on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport, and Media for his popular Traveltaleswithfergal podcast series, the number one travel podcast in Ireland.

Longford Local Sports Partnership

Urban Horse Project

Around 15 children who are members of the Travelling community participated in the Urban Horse Project in 2023. Participants learned about horse ownership and equestrian skills, fostering community connections.



Longford Sports Partnership engaged with Youth Services to help children from Traveller, Roma, and Brazilian communities engage in activities including kayaking and swimming.

Ukrainian, Traveller, Roma, African, Polish, and Lithuanian communities were helped to engage with The Attic House and Longford Community Resources for an eight-week sports introduction initiative.

This included archery, horseriding and kayaking to encourage lasting connections.

It offered 20 women who are members of the Travelling community four weeks of kayaking with the Longford Traveller Primary Healthcare Project.

National Play Day 2023

National Play Day 2023 took place in Drumlish Sports Hub, Longford Sports Hub and Edgeworthstown Sports Hub. Fun games, dance, face painting, a crafting corner, and balloon modelling all took place with 400 participants.

Physical Activity for Health Programme

Longford has been chosen as one of the six pilot sites for the Physical Activity for Health Programme. This includes working with Sláintecare, the HSE, the local authority and other stakeholders to help those with chronic conditions to get active.

So far, an advisory group has been established. Programmes have started including step and Pilates classes with walking sessions starting soon.

Introduction to Exercise course

A five-week Introduction to Exercise course was held in Drumlish Sports Hub. It was aimed at people who were interested in starting their exercise journey but didn't want to go into an established class. It is hoped the course will start again in autumn.



Corporate Services

Customer Services

Customer Services responded to over 1,600 calls in July and August, as well as walk-ins and internal customers. There were 244 emails into customer services.

Official Languages Act

Work continues to meet our obligations under Section 10A of the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021. So far this year, 417 advertisements have been placed, with 156, or 33%, in Irish or bilingual, surpassing the 20% target.

Check the Register

Longford County Council processed 324 applications through checktheregister.ie, including both new and updated registrations.

Registration and updating of details were encouraged, including with attendance at Longford Agricultural Show, Traveller Pride Day, and Granard Agricultural Show. Pop up registration desks were also held in the Intreo offices and with the Department of Social Protection employees.



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 below:

| | July | August | YTD |
|----------------------|------|--------|-----|
| FOI requests | 9 | 4 | 42 |
| AIE requests | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| Ombudsman complaints | 1 | 0 | 4 |

Data Protection

The Data Protection Officer attended national and regional Data Protection Officer meetings.

Presentations were made to management and the Senior Officers Group. Flyers on protecting personal data were produced.

One data processing complaint was resolved, two Data Subject Access Requests were completed; 25 data protection queries received and closed.

Here at Longford County Council, your privacy is taken seriously. For further information on how your personal data is processed, please see the Council's Privacy Policy on our website www.longfordcoco.ie.

Remember, your personal data belongs to you and no one else.

Top tips for protecting your personal data:

- 1 Don't share photos and information on social media that you wouldn't want a stranger to see.
- 2 When asked to provide your personal data, don't be afraid to ask why it is needed, how long it will be held and how safe it will be. If in doubt, ask to see the organisation's Privacy Policy.
- 3 Understand what you are accepting by agreeing to the cookie statement when visiting a website – some cookies are necessary to access a website, others are just gathering your data.
- 4 When installing apps on your mobile phone, consider limiting the amount of personal information you provide where possible.
- 5 Use strong passwords that don't include personal information and don't use the same password for all your accounts. It's also best not to allow websites to store your login details for you.

If you have any Data Protection Queries, the Data Protection Unit can be contacted on dpo@longfordcoco.ie.

Corporate Services

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

Meetings

July meetings of Longford County Council, the municipal districts (MDs) and other meeting are detailed below. No meetings took place in August.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 3 July | Meeting with Oireachtas members |
| 10 July | Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee |
| 11 July | Placenames Subcommittee |
| 11 July | Corporate Policy Group |
| 12 July | Longford County Council |
| 17 July | Governance Strategic Policy Committee |
| 19 July | Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy Committee |
| 20 July | Strategic Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee |
| 25 July | Granard Municipal District |
| 26 July | Longford Municipal District |
| 27 July | Ballymahon Municipal District and In Committee |

Training

Association of Irish Local Government Module 4 training took place on 22 July.

Commemoration

A commemorative plaque in honour of General Humbert was approved for the Garden of Remembrance, Ballinamuck.

Town Twinning

An official welcome for the Ballymahon-Landévant Town Twinning Committee, took place on 8 August.



Communications

Press releases

Fifteen press releases were issued. These included:

- Strasbourg Youth Orchestra to play St Mel's Cathedral, Longford
- Longford County Council rolls out 'Check the Register' campaign

Media queries

Fifteen media queries dealt with throughout July and August.

Events

The Communications team also worked in support of the following events:

- Official Welcome to French Twinning visitors from Landévant
- Rose of Tralee tour visit to Longford
- PR Planning for Battle of Ballinamuck 225th Commemoration

Corporate Services

Cross-Council projects

The Communications Team is working with:

- Longford Community Safety Partnership on the 'We are Longford' video series, and
- IT and Longford LEO on a remote working hubs branding and marketing campaign project.

Publications

Communications has provided graphic design support in formatting both the Longford Sports Partnership Annual Report and Environment's Litter Management Plan to align with the new Brand Standard guidelines.

Social media

Longford County Council kept the public updated on its work via social media with updates on the Local Authority Home Loan Scheme, HER Outdoors Week, and more. Longford County Council social media statistics for July and August are as follows:

| | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| Posts and Stories | 112 | 42 | 53 |
| Reach or Impressions* | 49.8K | 20.5K | 2.2K |
| New Followers | 149 | 33 | 54 |

*Reach is the number of people who had your page's post enter their screen, whereas impressions are the number of times your page's post entered a person's screen.

Health and Safety

Health and safety inspections

Sixteen inspections were completed by Health and Safety and management.

Health and Safety Authority inspection

Two Health and Safety Authority inspections were completed in July:

- Richmond Street housing project inspection with report completed and all items actioned
- Lough Forbes Water Treatment Plant with report completed and all items actioned.

Internal audits

Health and Safety internal audits were completed in Roads, Housing and the Fire Service.

An internal audit schedule is in place for other sections.

Health and safety training

Health and safety briefings were held with Library and Housing employees in relation to the section risk assessments and relevant standard operating procedures.

Local Enterprise Office, Longford

Ministerial visit to Longford

Local Enterprise Office, Longford welcomed Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Neale Richmond TD to Longford County Council.

This visit created an important opportunity for a number of local businesses that have received support from local enterprise office to showcase their products and services.

Minister Richmond engaged in dialogue with the promoters behind four small enterprises, namely:

- GreenCube, located in Longford Town
- Scopy located in Edgeworthstown
- Harp Media from Granard
- Lough Ree Distillery who are from Lanesborough

Local Enterprise Office, Longford Head of Enterprise Michael Nevin gave a presentation highlighting the important work of the Local Enterprise Office. It also highlighted the economic issues and opportunities that are currently relevant in County Longford.

Minister Richmond endorsed the work being done by the LEO office at local level and said that he was extremely impressed with the quality of entrepreneurs he had met.

Financial support to Longford businesses

€51,000 was awarded between three businesses in County Longford who are in the process of starting and/or expanding their business and also working to increasing employment opportunities.



Human Resources

Student Summer Employment Scheme 2023

Longford County Council launched a Student Summer Employment Scheme 2023.

This scheme facilitate work placements for third-level students and provides additional temporary resources for the Council over the summer months.

The online application process was widely advertised and Human Resources liaised with senior officers to identify 21 placements, including in:

- Community, including Local Sports Partnership
- Corporate Services
- Finance
- Housing
- Emergency Services
- Environment, including Veterinary
- Human Resources

- Information Technology
- Library, Archives, Arts and Heritage
- Planning
- Roads
- Tourism

Overall, 77 applications were received and accessed, with 21 students processed for employment. An online briefing session for all line managers was held.

The students were welcomed by Longford County Council Chief Executive Paddy Mahon, and Director of Services Barbara Heslin. Their induction covered what to expect from the placement, online training, as well as guidance on time and attendance. A health and safety induction was also included.

The scheme exposes students to the many services and career opportunities offered by the Council.



Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Colm Murray, Chief Executive Paddy Mahon, management and Human Resources employees with students who participated in the Student Summer Employment Scheme.

Human Resources

Payroll: Pension actuarial report data extract

On the recommendation of the County and City Management Association (CCMA) Finance Committee, the CCMA Executive approved starting a project to provide an overview of projected pensions costs for the local authority sector.

The project will compile an actuarial analysis of pension liabilities for the sector, including anticipated development of those liabilities into the future and projected cashflows.

In July 2023, the Payroll and Pensions Unit worked together to complete pension actuarial report data extract relating specifically to its employees and pensioners. This included:

- Verifying head count count for employees and pensioners
- Sorting by age, assess random sample and verify data
- Sorting by fulltime equivalent assess random sample and verify data
- Verify the salary roll excluding single pension members
- Check superannuation status of all employees with less than ten 10 years service
- Employee salary scales, assess random sample and verify data

This work was completed on 7 July and returned for inclusion in the national report being prepared for the CCMA.

Training and Development

Interview preparation training

To assist employees to achieve their career goals, interview preparation training was delivered to 67 staff during quarter one and two of 2023.

Attendees were brought through all stages of the interview process. Training was interactive and attendees were encouraged to recognise their achievements, strengths and role in Longford County Council.

Managing your personal safety at work workshops

A Managing your Personal Safety at Work workshops was attended by 21 employees in June.

These workshops are delivered regularly to build awareness of the legal and organisational requirements involved in maintaining personal safety at work. It provides guidance to minimise risk and outline supports available to employees.

Train the Trainer course

A Train the Trainer three-day course was attended by Human Resource employees in July.

This course enables participants to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to undertake training. It is designed to enhance existing skills and prepare to deliver training sessions in a dynamic and thought-provoking way.

Human Resources

QCI Domestic BER course

Two employees within the Housing section completed a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Domestic building energy rating (BER) course which enables them to carry BER assessments on all Longford County Council properties which are scheduled for refurbishment.

International Men's Health Week

International Men's Health Week ran from Monday, 13 June to Father's Day, Sunday, 19 June. The week puts a spotlight on men's health issues to increase awareness and encourage healthier lifestyle choices.

The week was promoted by Human Resources' Health and Wellbeing team with the Longford County Council Men's Soccer Tournament and blood pressure readings.

Men's Soccer Tournament

In conjunction with Longford Sports Partnership, the first-ever Longford County Council Men's Soccer Tournament was organised.

There were four five-a-side teams taking part in a 'round robin' format. Heats took place on Tuesday, 13 June with both the two semi-finals and the final taking place on Thursday, 15 June. The tournament was enjoyed by the players and their supporters.

Blood pressure reading

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke, heart attack and heart failure, with men having a higher risk of stroke than women.

Blood pressure reading clinics were arranged for all male employees on two separate days. Overall, 83 male employees attended the clinics.



Information Technology

Microsoft Dream Space Showcase

Local students working with Our Kids Code at Colmcille broadband connection point (BCP) and from St Joseph's National School and Scoil Bhríde Glen won awards at the first Microsoft Dream Space Showcase. The event took place at Microsoft Ireland's campus in Dublin on 16 June.

From Longford, Tipperary and Kildare, 320 children showcased their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths) projects.

At the event the Longford winners were:

- Scoil Bhríde, Glen, awarded the 'Digital Creativity Award',
- St Joseph's National School, named 'Longford's Rural Future Champion'
- Colmcille BCP Our Kids Code Club won the 'Most Collaborative Project'

Dream Space Showcase 2024

Following the first Longford Microsoft Dream Space Showcase in May 2023, planning has started for its return in 2024, with meeting with Microsoft and project partners taking place in July.

Next year's Showcase and associated projects will be supported through micro:bits and laptops. These will be purchased through the Public Service Innovation Fund from the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform (PENDR).

Longford students complete scratch software Ericsson pilot

Around 170 Longford primary students received their INFUSE (Investing in Future Software Engineers) schools programme certificate from Ericsson.

This Midlands pilot programmes included Longford, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath. Participants took part in an Introduction to Scratch software programme on coding. Scratch is a visual programming language used to create interactive stories, animations, games, music, and art.

This schools programme was developed by Ericsson in response to proposals brought forward by a Midlands information and communications technology (ICT) cluster, the skills and talent working group. This group is made up of industry, education providers and local authority employees working to build an ICT career pathway for the Midlands and its digital future.

In Longford, the following primary schools completed this Introduction to Scratch software programme:

- St. Teresa's National School, Killoe
- St. Mary's National School, Edgeworthstown
- Scoil Mhuire National School, Newtownforbes
- St Patrick's National School, Dromard
- Scoil Bhríde Killasonna National School, Granard

Information Technology

Technology Infrastructure

Security information and event management (SIEM) and Security Operations Centre (SOC) projects have started with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA).

Testing of new primary firewalls has been completed. In addition, virtual desktop infrastructure for temporary employees has been implemented.

The migration process to a new mobile device management software has been completed.

The ServiceDesk dealt with 1,281 queries in June and July.

Ongoing technology infrastructure work includes:

- Procurement for annual renewals and hardware replacements and upgrades
- Mobile phone support
- Community CCTV project support
- Uisce Éireann transition work progressed
- Patching client and server systems

Digital Services

Customer Relationship Management software rollout has started for managing email queries. Corporate Services, the Chief Executive Office, the Environment section and the Motor Tax Office have all been successfully migrated.

An electronic Performance Management and Development System (ePMDS) software update is complete.

The rollout of Longford Text Alert is ongoing. This app and accompanying website sends people crime prevention text alerts and community notices.

The blended working app continues to be used by employees.

Geographic Information Systems

Processing of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Development Plan layers continues in preparation for publishing as open data.

ArcGIS platform upgrade and migration project is taking place.

Development of a map viewer for use by the Local Enterprise Office, Longford is underway.

Procurement and implementation of digital communications platform is taking place.

Broadband Connection Points

County Longford BCPs had 70 new guests and 553 returning guests.

Housing

Capital Housing Update

| Project | No of Houses | Status |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Cranleymore Abbeylara | 3 | Stage 3 approved. Tender to remove Japanese knotweed advertised. Once removed will advertise for main contract. |
| St Rita's Park Road | 12 | Stage 2 approval received. Part 8 Planning approved for Phase 1 (6 houses). Tender to remove Japanese knotweed advertised. When costs known will submit stage 3. Once JK removed will advertise for main contract. |
| 24 Congress Terrace | 2 | Stage 4 approved 19 April 2023. Started on site 2 May 2023. For completion Dec 2023. |
| Woodland Path, Keenagh | 4 | On site. Due for completion Q4 2023 |
| Radharc na Muileann, Lanesborough | 20 | Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly. |
| Woodlawn Path, Keenagh | 5 | Turnkey on site due to be completed in Q3 2023. |
| Drynan, Ballymahon | 13 | Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly. |
| Clough Dillons Keenagh | 4 | Stage 1 approved. Legal issues to be sorted before can proceed. |
| Cnoc na Gréine, Granard | 6 | Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly. |
| 2 Woodview, Newtownforbes | 2 | Single stage approval received. Contract signed. Started on site 25 April 2023. For completion Q4 2023. |
| Lamagh, Newtownforbes | 6 | Stage 2 approved. To submit for Part 8 planning Q2 2023. |
| 2 Legion Terrace | 4 | On site. For completion Q1 2024. |
| Richmond Street | 23 | Turnkey approved. Contracts signed. On site. Due for completion June 2024. |
| Farrell's Ballinalee | 4 | Department approval received, project to be completed Q4 2023. |

Housing

| Project | No of Houses | Status |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Forthill, Aughnacliffe | 13 | Turnkey approved. On site. To be completed by Q4 2023 |
| Longford Road, Ballinalee | 14 | Turnkey approved. Not started, awaiting contracts. |
| Colmcille Terrace, Granard Phase 1 | 19 | Department approval received in April 2023. Works commenced in late June 2023 and due for completion for by Q4 2024. |
| Corneddan, Oghill, Drumlish | 1 | Combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 approval received from the Department at the end of June 2023. To advertise for Part 8 shortly. |
| Abhainn Glas, Edgeworthstown | 4 | Turnkey approved. On site. Due for completion Q4 2023. |
| Cluain Rí, Ballymahon | 16 | Turnkey approved. On site. Due for completion Q4 2023. |
| Creevaghbuí, Creevaghbeg, Ballymahon | 4 | Turnkey approved in May 2023. Due for completion Q4 2023 |
| Houricans Hotel, Granard | 4+ incl. parking | Demolition has commenced and feasibility study being prepared by the Housing Agency for apartments/town houses and parking. |
| 6A Park Road, Longford | 1 | Turnkey approved. Unfinished house. Due for completion Q4 2023. |
| Silver Birches, Stonepark | 12 | Turnkey submitted to Department 22 May 2023. Awaiting approval. Due for completion Q2 2024. |

Vacant Homes Unit

The vacant homes unit continues to work on a range of supports available under the national Vacant Homes Action Plan.

Launched in July 2022, this project aims to return as many recoverable vacant properties back to viable use as possible

and increase the supply of housing available, whilst also revitalizing the vibrancy of local communities.

CPO and Derelict Sites

Early this month, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) introduced the

Housing

Cumulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Activation Program as part of the 'Housing For All' plan which aims to promptly identify and activate vacant and derelict properties.

Such an approach is already in place in some local authorities. The main steps of the programme include:

- Identification of vacant and derelict properties,
- Identification of and engagement with owners,
- Communication regarding the various schemes and measures in place to support bringing the property back into use, and
- Where owners of vacant and derelict properties cannot be identified or where they are unwilling to engage, use of available legislative powers to compulsory purchase or acquire such properties using either the Housing Act, 1966, or the Derelict Sites Act, 1990.

The acquired properties may subsequently be used for social housing, made available for sale on the open market, or used for other purposes, for example, community use.

Additionally, in March 2023 the GIS team in the DHLGH developed a map-based mobile application to capture data. Since the launch, Longford County Council have visually inspected 700 vacant properties and identified them on the GeoDirectory in settlements with a 1km buffer from towns and villages within the county.

Works are underway to bring six properties back into use and make the units available for social housing through the CPO process. Ongoing update on our Derelict Sites Register to apply the annual derelict sites levy of 7% of market value on property that remains in a state of dereliction.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (Croí Cónaithe)

The scheme continues to support those who wish to refurbish their vacant/derelict property to bring it back to use in the housing stock. Applications are accepted with respect to all areas in Longford. Further changes to the scheme were proposed in May 2023.

The grant offers up to €50,000 for vacant properties and €70,000 for derelict properties, extended to cover houses built up to 2007, and will be available for properties intended for rental as well as owner-occupied.

To date:

- 55 applications have been received
- Nine have been approved
- Ten are under revision
- Two were withdrawn by applicants
- 34 awaiting further information

From 1 July 2023, additional support is available under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant to support vacant and derelict properties located on qualifying islands to help bring them back in to use.

Housing

The maximum rate of grant available is 20% higher for eligible properties located on qualifying islands. This brings the maximum grant rates for refurbishing properties on islands up to €60,000 for vacant properties, and up to €84,000 for properties confirmed to be derelict.

Homelessness

Longford County Council is undertaking a number of measures to ease the impact of the end of winter emergency period for those in Private Rented Accommodation with valid Notice of Termination and who are assessed as at risk of homelessness:

- Assist to secure alternative accommodation through Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Place Finder, if appropriate
- Allocate social housing tenancy, if appropriate
- Guide towards First Home Scheme if the household wishes to purchase the property www.firsthomescheme.ie
- In some cases, it may be appropriate to guide household towards the Local Authority Home Loan which is available for second hand properties.

Where the individual/household is assessed as being at risk of homelessness (as defined by Section 2 of the Housing Act 1988) and that they are either eligible for social housing or are already a HAP/Rental

Accommodation Scheme (RAS) tenant; and if they are not in a position to buy the property; then the local authority can consider whether it may be appropriate to acquire the house under the existing social housing tenant-in-situ scheme.

This is in order to prevent the individual/household from entering emergency accommodation, taking into account the availability of alternative accommodation such as a HAP or social housing allocation.

Cost Rental Tenant In-Situ Scheme

The Cost Rental Tenant In-Situ (CRTiS) Scheme is a new scheme that is available where a tenant household faces the termination of their tenancy due to the landlord's intention to sell the property. The scheme is available if the tenant household:

- is not able to purchase the property from the landlord
- is at risk of homelessness
- is not eligible for, or currently in receipt of social housing supports (that is in receipt of HAP or in the RAS).

Local Authorities have responsibility for the assessment of applicant tenant households in receipt of a valid notice of termination due to the landlord's intention to sell the property.

Potential applicants should contact their local authority and make an appointment to see the Housing Officer.

Housing

The Housing Officer will assess the applicant's risk of homelessness and whether they may be eligible for social housing.

When they get an appointment to meet the Housing Officer they will need to bring:

- a valid Notice of Termination
- proof of their income
- evidence that they have a long term right to reside in the country

An applicant tenant household must have net annual income of below €53,000. Net income means that income tax, Universal Social Charge, PRSI and superannuation contributions are deducted from the relevant assessable gross income.

If the local authority is satisfied that the applicant tenant household is eligible for CRTiS they will pass the details of the tenant and the property to the Housing Agency for consideration for potential acquisition under the CRTiS Scheme. The Housing Agency will then engage with the tenant and the tenant's landlord with a view to acquiring the property.

Applications and Assessments

Applications

A total of 299 new social housing support applications have been accepted up to the 30 June 2023. This

is a 21% increase in the same period last year.

At the end of June 2023, there are 703 approved housing applicants on our waiting list.

A further 144 are within the assessment process.

Allocations

At the end of June 2023, there were 89 offers of local authority, approved housing body (AHB) or leased housing that had been made.

30 offers of housing have been refused, 24 of which were deemed to be unreasonable refusals.

New Tenancies

As of the end of June 2023, 78 new local authority, Approved Housing Body or leasing tenancies have commenced. A further 7 new RAS/leased tenancies have also commenced.

Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA) 2023

The SSHA must be returned by each local authority by 29 November 2023. Review assessments have been underway across the year. It is essential that applicants requested to update their application respond to this request, or they risk their housing support application being closed.

Roads

National Road Schemes

The N4 Longford By-Pass Phase 1 resurfacing works (N4/N5 Charlotte Brooke Roundabout to N4/N63 Leo Casey Roundabout) commenced in April and are now substantially complete.



Resurfacing work on the N4 Longford By-Pass Phase 2 (Leo Casey Roundabout to Padraic Colum Roundabout) has commenced and will continue through August and September.

Construction work on the N63 Aghnaskea Scheme commenced in July and will continue into August. This scheme involved the resurfacing of 700 metres of the N63 near Killashee village.

A 5km resurfacing scheme on the N55 at Meeltanagh is currently at tender stage.

Municipal District Works

Road Maintenance Works continued in each Municipal District in June/July. These works include footpath repairs, drainage, pothole repairs etc.

Restoration Improvement and Restoration Maintenance Works on Regional and Local Roads continued in each of the Municipal Districts. Additional funding of €367,000 was provided by the Department of Transport for a number of additional Restoration Improvement Projects.

Bridge works are ongoing at Fostragh. Triur Construction are replacing an existing culvert at this location.

Road Safety

The Road Safety Team took part in a number of presentations at schools in Longford during the month of June.

Medals and certificates were presented by the Road Safety Officer in conjunction with local community Gardaí to children in Scoil Mhuire NS, Newtownforbes and St Mary's NS, Drumlish in recognition of their involvement in the Junior School Warden Scheme over the 2022/2023 school year.

A number of presentations were made to children in a number of Longford schools who took part in the Road Safety Bike Week poster competition.

Roads



Pictured above are children from Scoil Mhuire NS Newtownforbes. Pictured below are the children of Sacred Heart NS, Granard who received their certificates and prizes from the Road Safety Officer and also the children from St Mary's NS Drumlish.



Environment

Longford County Council would like to pay tribute to Longford Tidy Towns Committee, Local Businesses, the Probation Services, Longford County Councils Municipal District and Environment Section for the significant contribution they made to present Longford in its best light and ensure it is a town that we are all proud to call our county town.



Ireland's Best Kept Town 2023

The results of the Ireland's Best Kept Town 2023 competition were announced on Tuesday, 20 June during an award ceremony at Farmleigh House in Dublin. Longford Town was one of only three large towns nominated for an award.

While Longford did not win an award on the day, it was nevertheless a significant achievement to be nominated.

Litter Management



Cosc ar Dhumpáil

Fíneáil Uasta €3,000

No Dumping

Maximum Fine €3,000

- 976 pollution complaints have been received to date in 2023.
- 79 litter fines have been issued in 2023, with 34 paid to date and a further 20 cases referred for legal proceedings.
- At a recent sitting of the District Court, there was a total of seven convictions relating to litter or waste.

Environment

The Environment section continues to work with all stakeholders in an effort to eradicate litter from our towns, villages and open spaces.

A new bilingual 'No Dumping' sign has been designed, and will be rolled out



over the coming months.

Roadshow takes to Longford to tackle gum disposal

The Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT) took to the streets of Longford on 4 July as a part of its Summer Roadshow.

The interactive Roadshow works with local authorities and communities across the country to carry out fun and engaging education and awareness initiatives that demonstrate the proper means of gum disposal and raise awareness of the environmental and fiscal impacts of gum litter.

Now in its sixteenth year, the campaign is a collaboration between Food Drink Ireland, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, the chewing gum industry, and local authorities.

Research published recently to coincide with the National Launch of the 2023 GLT Campaign revealed that 87% of people now report proper gum disposal, versus 49% when the campaign began in 2007 – an increase of 77.5%, demonstrating the positive impact the campaign has had on attitudes towards gum litter.

Peer pressure was found to be the key contributor to this shift in attitudes, followed by knowledge of the €150 fine.

Climate Action Plan

Preliminary work on the development of the local authority Climate Action Plan has commenced, including a Climate Change Risk Assessment and Baseline

Gum Litter Taskforce Summer

Environment

Emissions Inventory.

Climate Action Training has also been completed.

A consultant has been appointed to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The following stakeholder and public engagement has taken place:

- Climate Action Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
- Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Public Participation Network (PPN)
- Though Longford County Council social media

Inspections and enforcement of Waste water treatment systems

County Longford has relatively few zones where septic tanks pose a high risk to water quality.

Therefore, Longford County Council carries out a relatively small number of septic tank inspections each year in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Inspection Plan for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems 2022-2026.

Inspections are risk based and are focused on areas where the risk to waters is greatest.

The Council has just completed its septic tank inspections for 2023.

The failure rate was 63%, the main

causes of which were householders not servicing their systems and/or forgetting to desludge their septic tanks routinely.

Longford County Council ranked 8 out of 31 local authorities for closing out enforcement actions on non-compliant wastewater treatment systems by the end of 2022, in the EPA's recent interim report "Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems Inspections 2022".

The council also has a public engagement role and is planning to improve awareness about septic tank maintenance on its website and on social media during Q3 2023.

Longford Veterinary Service

Certificates of Compliance

Following successful training provided by the Veterinary Section at Co:Worx, Edgeworthstown in 2022, subsequent practical checks were carried out by the section and ultimately the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

Fire Services

Health and Safety

No incidents or injuries to report.

Training

All drills and training have been postponed since 6 June due to industrial action taken by firefighters nationwide.

Operations

Total callouts: 56 (as of 29 August).

Due to industrial action, Senior Officers were required to conduct the role of Command Support by providing all radio messages to the regional control centre in Dublin.

Phase 2 of the industrial action involved rolling non-availability of Fire Crews in two stations per day.

Industrial action is now suspended following the intervention of the Workplace Relations Committee who have issued a new proposal to solve the industrial action. This proposal is to be balloted nationally.

Fire Prevention

- Nine fire safety certificates were processed
- Two Section 24 licencing applications were processed

Recruitment

A full time Station Officer position has been advertised recently.

Longford County Council have a number of vacancies within the Fire Service and are accepting applications of interest.

Equipment

New fire kit has been issued to all firefighters.

Climate Action

Green areas were maintained at fortnightly intervals to promote biodiversity.

Civil Defence

Certificates of Competence Training under EU Regulation 1099/2009 were issued by the Department in relation to welfare at time of slaughter to eight candidates from County Longford.

Congratulations to all on their participation and their achievement of this important and very high standard of animal welfare.

Duties

Civil Defence provided medical cover at 14 events during June and July.

These included:

- Longford Town Football Club – five matches
- Community Games - two events
- Irish Blood Transfusion Service blood bank clinic - three evenings
- Ordination of Bishop Paul Connell
- Longford Summer Festival - two evenings
- 'Old School New School' car show



Civil Defence



Longford Civil Defence volunteers also provided assistance to Roscommon Civil Defence at the Two Province Triathlon and Roscommon Harriers 10 mile road race.

Civil Defence Community First Responder instructor provided Community First Responder training to the Longford Vintage Club committee.

Training and Operations

Civil Defence welcomed the appointment of Assistant Civil Defence Officer Mr Peter Keenan. We wish him the best of luck in his career with Longford Civil Defence and Longford County Council.

Five new volunteers attended for their induction evening.

The VEMS (Volunteer and equipment management system) software package training was completed for all Civil Defence Officers and Department of Defence staff. The system is now live and will be used to track all training, events, and equipment for all counties.

The Civil Defence Officer and missing person search instructor attended a missing person search seminar held in the Civil Defence College in Roscrea.

A national radiation monitoring exercise was carried out.

Volunteers in Longford took grass, soil and air sample readings and transported them to Tullamore for analysis by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Volunteers travelled to all of the outdoor staff depots to provide blood pressure checks to outdoor staff.

This was well attended by staff and run in conjunction with the Health and Wellbeing section.

Regeneration

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) Measure 1 2021 and Measure 2 2021

Aughnacliffe Heritage Trail

Under ORIS Measure 1, Longford County Council received funding of €20,000 for the enhancement of the accessibility of the Aughnacliffe Amenity Trail through enhanced signage, accessibility measures and seating at Aughnacliffe.

Under ORIS Measure 2, Longford County Council received funding of €200,000 for the development and enhancement of a 4.2km trail connecting the Dolmens and Deserted Village in Aughnacliffe.



Both projects are complete and are to be opened by Minister Humphreys on Friday 8 September 2023.

Moyne Amphitheatre

Under the Town and Village Renewal 2021 Longford County Council received funding of €240,843 for a project consisting of two developments in Moyne. The development of an amphitheatre was one part of the project.

The Amphitheatre is fully complete and will be opened by Minister Humphreys on 8 September 2023.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2021

Lanesborough Food Hub and Sensory Garden

Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2021 Longford County Council received funding of €100,000 for the development of food pods, as an incubation campus for new Food Hub and Community Sensory Garden, bringing activity back to a vacant and derelict area of Lanesborough Town Centre.

This project is now complete. The impact of this project has been the creation of a space to allow food businesses to test and grow. In the short time since completion, one such company, Nature's Gold, has rented a space within the building with the intention of growing their business to move into the future Food Hub. They are initially bringing two jobs to Lanesborough with the intention to grow to ten.

Regeneration



Nature's Gold is an Australian honey maker and it is their intention to make Lanesborough their European headquarters for UK and Ireland. Nature's Gold will take the larger section of the unit, with their intention to grow into the Food Hub in the future.

LanesBrew, a local coffee shop, which is located to the front of this site is going to lease one unit, which will allow it to expand its offering and grow its business.

Active Travel

Safe Routes to School Newtownforbes

Over the school summer holiday period, substantial progress has been made on front of school enhancement works at Scoil Mhuire Newtownforbes under the NTA's Safe Routes to School Programme supported by An Taisce Green Schools.

The essence of this project is to

improve student safety in front of the school and along immediate pedestrian approach routes to the school.

Works to date have included the removal of parking in front of the school and the setting back of the school's front boundary wall to allow buses to park off the carriageway and the installation of the trademark coloured pencil bollards.

When completed two new zebra crossings will be in place along with new coloured road surface finishes and signage. Works are expected to be completed in October 2023.

Ennybegs Shared Path to St Teresa's School

With the removal of the overhead utility lines, construction works continued in Ennybegs over the summer period with the installation of road side kerb and public lighting along the scheme extents.

Regeneration



Road and footpath surfacing works are expected to be undertaken from mid September with the footpath expected to be open to the public by end of October 2023.

Pathfinder Projects: Longford's core cycle network

Contracts were signed with the appointed Contractor Noel Regan and Sons (Plant hire) Limited on 19 July 2023 for the first of Longford's pathfinder sub projects – The R198 Battery Road pedestrian and cycle scheme. Construction work commenced on 14 August.

This project will see the creation of over 1.2km 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 June 2024.

Contracts were also signed for Longford's second Pathfinder sub project - the N63 Ballinalee road Pedestrian and cycle scheme on 19 July 2023. The appointed contractor for this project is Priority Construction Limited and works commenced on 8th August 2023.

Almost 1.7km of new footpath and cycletrack will be constructed as part of this project which will see improved pedestrian and cycle priority across side road junctions along with new public lighting and a controlled crossing point on the N63. Works are expected to run until June 2024.

Planning

Planning Applications

There are currently a number of large planning applications being considered by the planning section at present.

A large application for the construction of a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) at the Lanesborough power plant site has been approved.

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

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

County Development Plan

The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 policies and strategies are currently being implemented. The Planning Department is about to commence the two-year review of the County Development Plan.

Longford Local Area Plan (LAP) and Longford Town Local Transport Plan (LTP)

Consultants with responsibility for the Longford Transport Plan and the associated assessments (including Strategic Environmental, Appropriate and Strategic Flood Risk assessments) have provided a draft document which will soon be made available to the public.

Work is now progressing on the production of the Longford Town Local Area Plan and is in an advanced stage of production.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Work is currently underway on the review of a number of Compulsory Planning Orders (CPO's) planning reports pertaining to the acquisition of semi-derelict properties.

A number of properties have been identified for potential CPO in 2023.

The planning section is moving forward with the process of providing administrative backup and liaising with the Housing Agency in relation to the CPO process which involves significant collaboration with both the housing section, Regeneration and also legal representatives.

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

Consultants have been appointed to prepare the application to UNESCO for Biosphere Reserve status for Lough Ree. A public consultation process is due to begin in the near future.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

Under the RZLT legislation, submissions were invited and reviewed regarding any changes required from the draft map initially published. No additional land was identified, so no supplemental map is required to be published. A final map will be published on 1 December, 2023.

Climate Action

IT

The section continues to progress and implement several paperless projects which will have an instant positive impact on the organisation's carbon footprint.

A major update of the ePMDS software was completed and rolled out, with over 220 employees using the system, saving paper, time, and travel.

A new Blended Working App was launched, the app saves on over 200 multiple page paper applications and related processing and catches key environmental metrics for blended working.

The section continues to work with business areas to ensure all new schemes are rolled out on a digital first basis.

Human Resources

Climate Action is included in all recruitment competitions and contracts of employment issued.

Housing

Plans to retrofit twelve houses in St Matthew's Park, Ballymahon have been put on hold due to excessive costs for the project.

Additional funding is being requested from the Department, but no approval has been given to date.

Roads

Warm mix asphalt is being used as a binder layer material in the road reconstruction project on the N63 Aghnaskea.

Warm mix asphalt is an asphalt product that is produced at a lower temperature than that of a standard asphalt mix. As a result of the ability to reduce the temperature in the mixing plant, less energy is required to produce the material and a reduction in carbon emissions of approximately 20% can be achieved.

For the N63 Aghnaskea project, approximately 200 tonnes of binder material are required.

Environment

The Climate Action Coordinator and the Climate Action Officer are both in place. A Community Climate Officer has been appointed and it is anticipated they will be in place for Q3 2023.

Preliminary work on the development of the local authority Climate Action Plan has commenced, including a Climate Change Risk Assessment and Baseline Emissions Inventory. Climate Action Training has also been completed.

A consultant has been appointed to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

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

Signed: 

