



Chief Executive Report July–August 2024

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July–August Highlights

Workplace Excellence Awards for Mental Wellbeing

Longford County Council were shortlisted at the Workplace Excellence Awards 2024 as one of three finalists in the Excellence in Mental Health and Workplace Wellbeing.



Reopening of Mac Eoin Community Park

Over 200 people attended the reopening of Mac Eoin Community Park recreation area which took place on National Play Day.



Ambassador Visit

The United Arab Emirates Ambassador, HE Mohammed Homod Hamad Rahmah Alshamsi visited Longford County Council and toured thriving local businesses.



Urban Horse Project 2024

This year's Urban Horse Project, conducted by Longford Sports Partnership and LCRL Youth Services, focused on supporting young people in the Granard area.



Community Development

Longford Local Community Development Committee

A meeting of Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was held on 23 July 2024.

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme

Longford LCDC approved the midyear review of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) at its July meeting. Longford Community Resources CLG (LCRL) is the Programme Implementer.

In July, the LCDC was notified of additional funding of €8,947 for continuation of supports to new arrivals through the SICAP Programme. The revised 2024 budget stands at €746,017, which includes a budget of €102,973 for supports to new arrivals.

Bridgeways Family Resource Centre LGBTIQ+ and Allies Youth Group

Ballymahon Municipal District Cathaoirleach Cllr Paul Ross and Laura McPhillips from Longford County Council attended a community event in Bridgeways Family Resource Centre. This event celebrated the work of the LGBTIQ+ and Allies Youth Group. The event included an artwork display. The initiative is supported by Longford County Council with funding from Department of Rural and Community Development.

County Longford Agricultural Show and County Fair

Longford County Council supported County Longford Agricultural show and County Fair with a dedicated space highlighting diversity and the strengthening of connections between people from different cultures. People and groups displayed their arts, crafts, customs, and culture within this dedicated space at the event which took place in July in Killoe.

Longford LCSP, An Garda Síochána, Longford Public Participation Network (PPN) and colleagues from Sláintecare Healthy Communities, Healthy Longford, Longford Sports Partnership and Environment shared valuable information with attendees, including their services and ongoing activities.



Community Development

Healthy Longford

Period Poverty Initiative

Under the Period Poverty initiative, new dispensers and period products have been distributed to all community partners who signed up to the initiative. This is part of 2024 funding of €8,000 received from the Department of Health.

With the remaining funding, Healthy Longford will deliver menstrual health workshops in October to transition year (TY) students in Longford.

Free Period Products
Take what you need

Free period products are available at the following County Longford locations:

- All Longford County Council offices
- All six County Longford Libraries
- Longford Women's Link
- Bridgeways Family Resource Centre, Ballymahon
- Longford EDI Centre
- Ardnacassa Community Houses
- MacEoin Park Community House

The graphic features a pink background with a calendar icon showing a full month, a box of period products, and a sanitary pad. Logos for 'hi Healthy Longford', 'AN LONGFORD SERVICES', and 'An Roinn Sláinte Department of Health' are at the bottom.

We are Breastfeeding Friendly Longford

Planning is underway for the We are Breastfeeding Friendly Longford launch which is set to take place during National Breastfeeding Week in October.

This is a Healthy Longford initiative. It is lead out by a working group which includes representatives from Cuidiú, Healthy Longford, the Health Service Executive (HSE), HSE Health Promotion, Longford Libraries,

Sláintecare Healthy Communities, Longford Westmeath Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC), Longford Community Resources Clg (LCRL), Longford Women's Link, Bridgeways Family Resource Centre, Lus Na Gréine Family Resource Centre, TUS Athlone, Longford Westmeath Community Families, Foróige Longford (Leap Project) and Longford County Childcare Committee.

Healthy Longford Newsletter

The Healthy Longford Newsletter is published every quarter and includes information on many health and wellbeing events and programmes happening across Longford each month. Topics covered in the newsletter include mental and physical health, nutrition, workplace and family wellbeing and information specific to older people, children, and adolescents.

Sign up for this newsletter on the Healthy Longford page under the Community Development section of [Longfordcoco.ie](https://longfordcoco.ie) or email healthylongford@longfordcoco.ie.

Men's Health Fair

Great engagement was seen at the Men's Health Fair which took place in Longford Athletics Hub, as part of National Men's Health Week. The event was a collaboration project between Healthy Longford and Sláintecare Healthy Communities linking in with the Sláintecare food and nutrition.

Speakers on the day included representatives from the Irish Farmers

Community Development

Association and the Citizen's information Centre, as well as a pharmacist and Longford Sports Partnerships Physical Activity for Health Officer. Twenty-four information stands offered advice and services, including blood pressure checks, hair care from two local barbers and the HSE's stop smoking services.



Reopening of Mac Eoin Community Park

Over 200 people attended the reopening of Mac Eoin Community Park recreation area which took place on National Play Day. Officiated by Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey, there were many activities on the day including sports and games, a circus skills workshop, a fire show, face painting, and a sensory area with accessible play and activities.

The reopening of the recreational area follows months of close work with residents. The area benefits the

many local families. It has a multi-use games area (MUGA) which can be used for both soccer and basketball, and a grass soccer pitch.

Longford Local Community Safety Partnership

Kids Court St Matthew's National School, Ballymahon

Drivers caught speeding were brought before a Kids Court in St Matthew's National School in Ballymahon, organised by Longford Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) and An Garda Síochána.

The kids questioned the drivers on their speeding and emphasised the critical importance of safe driving. They faced some tough questions, such as 'Would you have been able to react if I stepped out in front of you?' and 'Do you realise you could have killed one of us today?'.



Recruitment of New Longford LCSP Chairperson

Expressions of interest have been sought for a new Longford LCSP chairperson. It is expected that the new chairperson will be in place in September.

Longford Sports Partnership

Urban Horse Project 2024

This year the Urban Horse Project, conducted with LCRL Youth Services, focused on the Granard area, and took place in July and August. It is designed to support young people from the Travelling and Roma communities, and those from low-income backgrounds. It provides education on responsible ownership, and potential career opportunities and promotes inclusion and community engagement.

Inclusive Kayaking Programme

Special Olympics Longford and Longford Autism Club took part in a six-week Inclusive Kayaking Programme with 19 people taking part in weekly sessions at Brannigan Harbour in Ballymahon.

It promoted inclusivity, physical activity, and social interaction among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Activities included paddling techniques, skill development, nature exploration and lots of fun with a helpful tutor.

The initiative enhanced participants' fitness, social skills, and confidence on the water. Positive feedback was received from participants and their families.

Water Sports Days for Primary Schools

Taster water sports days for primary schools were ran across the summer, starting in Leebeen Park, Aughnacliffe in May and finishing up in Lanesborough Harbour in June. Sessions were also held in Brannigan

Harbour in Ballymahon and Clondra. Activities included paddle boarding and kayaking.

It was primarily aimed at sixth classes to mark the end of their primary school days. Each group was made up of at least 15 students, with 25 primary schools sending over 400 pupils to enjoy the activities.



Prime Time of Life

Prime Time of Life was a 12-week in-person health education and exercise programme for older adults and adults with chronic conditions. Funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), this programme took place in the Longford Sports Hub.

Forty participants enrolled with 35 completing the programme. Group results were all positive with significant improvements in all attendees.

A testimonial from one participants gives positive feedback: "I found the tutors very supportive, helpful, encouraging, and good humoured. They gave some great tips and individual advice to help us along too. The participants were very nice and friendly too with fun to be had throughout our sessions. The course itself gave me huge benefits, mainly less pain, more movement, easier breathing, motivation, and weight loss."

Corporate Services

Register of Electors

Register of Electors applications received through [CheckTheRegister.ie](https://www.longford.ie/corporate-services/register-of-electors) continue to be processed as work continues to improve the accuracy of the Register.

Ensure your details are correct on [CheckTheRegister.ie](https://www.longford.ie/corporate-services/register-of-electors), including your postal address to ensure all correspondence is issued to the correct address. Dates of birth, Person Public Service Numbers (PPSN) and Eircodes must also be updated and included.

In addition, 16 and 17-year-olds can pre-register online to be automatically added to the Register of Electors when they turn 18 years.

Customer Services

Customer Services responded to over 1,400 calls in July and August, as well as 231 emails and many in-person customers.

Official Languages Act

In July and August, 373 advertisements were placed, with 87 in either Irish or bilingual. Work continues to meet commitments under the Official Language Act.

Access to Information and Office of the Ombudsman Complaints

The number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) requests and the Office of the Ombudsman complaints received are as follows:

	July	August	Year to Date
FOI requests received	6	6	47
AIE requests received	0	1	6
Office of the Ombudsman complaints received	1	0	4

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

A mix of online and hybrid meetings took place in July and August.

10 July	Corporate Policy Group (CPG)		Longford County Council
22 July	Granard Municipal District (MD)	Granard MD In Committee	Elected Members workshop
23 July	Longford MD		Longford MD In Committee
25 July	Ballymahon MD		Ballymahon MD In Committee
6 August	Longford MD In Committee		
13 August	Longford MD In Committee		
28 August	Longford MD In Committee		

Corporate Services

Communications

Websites

Communications continues to make progress updating [Longfordcoco.ie](https://longfordcoco.ie). Progress has started on the Finance and Motor Tax sections, working with these sections to make improvements.

[Longfordcoco.ie](https://longfordcoco.ie) had 21,955 visits in July and August. The most popular sections were:

- Planning (8.6K page views)
- Careers (7.4K page views)
- Housing (6.1K page views)

Other Council websites had 17,649 visits in the same period.

Media Queries

Twenty-three media queries were received and dealt with in July and August.

Press Releases

Seven press releases were issued in July and August.

Advertising

Communications continues to support sections across the Council with their advertising in newspaper, radio and on social media.

Social Media

Longford County Council continues to use social media as an effective tool to communicate with the public and other stakeholders. Social media communications was used to promote several recent public consultations, including for the new Corporate Plan.

Communications have also been working with the Environment section to progress their Bit It! cigarette butts campaign, which includes both social media and other digital advertising.

Platform	*Reach or Impressions	Follower Count
Facebook	159.6K	7,428 (+125)
Instagram	90.2K	2,017 (+39)
X (Twitter)	**	3,601 (+16)
LinkedIn	2.6K	1,089 (+21)
TikTok	606	273 (+47)

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

**Analytics are no longer available on the non-paid version of X.

Data Protection

New Starter Pack

New starter data protection induction packs were introduced for new employees joining Longford County Council.

New Elected Members Briefing

Data Protection presented at a representations briefing held with the new Elected Members of Longford County Council. This was held in the Council Chamber in June 2024.

Corporate Services

Data Protection Officers meeting

The Data Protection Officers Regional Network Meeting was held in Longford County Council offices in July.

Metacompliance Training

A video on email use and Longford County Council's Good Email Guide was issued via the online learning platform, Metacompliance.

Data Breaches, Subject Access Requests, Impact Assessments and Queries

	Year to Date
Data Breaches	5
Data Subject Access Requests	5
Data Protection Impact Assessments	8
Data Protection Queries	173

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Inspections

Six safety inspection were completed by Health and Safety and the Management Team.

Health and Safety Audits

Internal health and safety audits were completed in Roads, Road Design and Housing, in compliance with ISO 45001:2018.

Temporary Traffic Management (TTM) audit and inspections were completed

across all municipal districts by an independent auditor.

Health and Safety Training

Ongoing risk assessment briefing sessions are held with each Council section.

Eight new employees completed health and safety inductions.

Longford County Council is running a summer student placement for third-level education students for an eight-week placement. All 24 summer students completed a health and safety inductions before starting their placement.

Health and Safety Authority

The Health and Safety Authority (HAS) is focusing on all local authorities, with a plan to complete visits to all Longford County Council's depots, libraries, and offices in 2024. To date, seven HSE inspections have been completed.

The focus of these inspections has been on safe access and egress, separation of plant and pedestrians, first aid and emergency equipment, housekeeping, and the status of fire prevention equipment including fire doors, stairways, storage arrangements and storage of chemicals.

Human Resources

Learning and Development

Business skills training courses took place on the following topics:

- Competency based interviewee preparation
- Agresso
- Interview preparation skills
- European portal, contract award notice and contract notice
- Cyber security awareness training
- Employment tax
- Debt collection techniques
- Microsoft Project - Level 1
- Protected disclosures
- Human Resources Data and Analytics Workshop
- Disability awareness
- Microsoft Excel Level 3 - PivotTables and VLOOKUP
- eTenders
- Lime Mortars for Homeowners of Vernacular Buildings Workshop
- Mastering Senior Public Leadership
- Strategic Leadership Programme
- Temporary Traffic Management and Design

Health and safety training took place on the following topics:

- First aid responder
- Event management
- Manual handling (indoor)
- Mobile elevated platform

- Safe Pass
- Driver CPC Module 4
- Bridge engineering inspection
- Project Supervisor Design Process (PSDP)
- DSE - VDU Risk Assessors Course

Health and Wellbeing

Mental Wellbeing: Amber Flag, Workplace Excellence Awards and more

Longford County Council were notified by Pieta House that it was the first local authority in Ireland to achieve the Amber Flag. This award reflects the Council's commitment to promoting mental wellbeing and creating a supportive workplace environment. To recognize this initiative, we will be holding a flag-raising ceremony during the Employee Appreciation Day in December.



Human Resources

Longford County Council attended the Workplace Excellence Awards for Mental Wellbeing, where we were shortlisted among the final three in the Public Sector category.

To help to equip employees with the skills and knowledge necessary to support mental wellbeing, four employees who completed the Mental Health Champion training attended an online suicide prevention training session.

During Men's Health Week, all male employees were invited to attend the Men's Health Fair at Longford Athletics Centre. Organised by Healthy Longford, the event included talks, blood pressure screenings and information on many health and wellness resources.

Physical Wellbeing: Yoga and Swimming

Lunchtime yoga classes continued at Longford Sports Centre for 21 employees.

Eleven employees completed the employee beginner and intermediate swimming lessons at Longford Sports Centre.

Local Enterprise Office

Financial Assistance

The Evaluation Committee approved 13 applications for funding with a total of €117,500 awarded to start up and expanding businesses across County Longford.

Training and Mentoring

Over 140 businesses have availed of mentoring with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) since the start of the year. Almost 600 participants have availed of business training, including the following courses: Starting Your Own Business, Digital Marketing, Management Development, Export Markets and Business Growth Programmes.

Ambassador Visit

LEO facilitated a visit from the United Arab Emirates Ambassador, HE Mohammed Homod Hamad Rahmah Alshamsi to Longford County Council. The Ambassador was welcomed by Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Mark Casey, Longford Municipal District (MD) Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Butler and Longford MD Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr Uruemu Adejinmi.

The Ambassador also visited several local businesses, with LEO Head of Enterprise Michael Nevin and Business Advisor Rose McKenna accompanying the Ambassador on a tour of three thriving local businesses: Avery Denniston, N&E Precision and Goodness Grains.



Tourism

Fáilte Ireland National Quality Assurance Framework

Longford Tourism is working with Fáilte Ireland to help accommodation providers to register under the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF). The NQAF gives access the range of learning benefits and advertising, helping all providers to improve their offering. A number of different supports can be applied for through the NQAF.

What's On

Longford Tourism promotes local events and tourism businesses on Facebook, Instagram, X and on [Longford.ie](https://www.longford.ie), as well as through the monthly Events Guide advertised in the Longford Leader. Anyone with an events (great or small) that needs promotion can contact tourism@longfordcoco.ie to be included and to be featured on [Longford.ie](https://www.longford.ie).

EU Just Transition Fund

Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Private and Community SMEs

Longford Tourism is supporting to many private and community small and medium-sized businesses who have been approved at the expression of interest (EOI) phase and are progressing with a funding application under the **Just Transition Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme**.

The scheme aims to see the development of several new visitor attractions, small-scale accommodation offerings and improvements to the accessibility to existing tourism and hospitality businesses in Longford and across the Just Transition region.

As this fund is allocated on a first come, first served basis, successful EOI applicants are encouraged to submit their full applications as soon as possible to be considered. Only completed applications will enter the evaluation process to be approved for funding. Once all of the available funding is awarded to successful projects, the scheme will close.

The deadline for EOIs was 2 July. The deadline for completed applications is 13 January 2025, however it is not currently known if the fund will remain open right up to that date.

All projects must be completed and operational by summer 2026. If planning permission is required for projects, this and all other relevant statutory consents must be in place before completed applications are submitted.

Anyone preparing an application is encouraged to email tourism@longfordcoco.ie for guidance or assistance. Scheme guidelines remain available to view on [Failtelreland.ie](https://failtelreland.ie).

Information Technology

New Phone Systems

The roll out of a new cloud-based phone system is being progressed. This includes the migration of data and several training sessions with employees across the Council.

Information Technology Infrastructure

The Information Technology (IT) ServiceDesk had 1,312 tickets.

Work to maintain security is ongoing. Procurement for annual renewals and hardware replacements and upgrades is also ongoing. A Windows Server 2012 upgrade project has progressed. The digital divide initiative for outdoor staff is in progress. IT are providing support for the Irish Water transition project.

For the Community CCTV project, phase 1 is completed pending An Garda Síochána authorisation.

Following the Local Elections 2024, IT has worked to procure equipment, set up and provide access to newly elected county councillors. IT provided similar support for the Student Summer Employment Scheme 2024.

Ongoing IT infrastructural support includes:

- Regular patching of client and server systems
- IT support for statutory and Teams hybrid meetings

Digital Services

Under digital services, Planning enforcements have moved to SharePoint. This will automate mapping, as well as automating business flows.

Geographic Information Systems

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) works include:

- SQL database migration and consolidation
- GIS in house training
- Update of Land Parcel Identification System datasets
- Eircode API replacement
- N4 Emerging Preferred Road Corridor within inhouse GIS applications updating
- Tailte Éireann background mapping updating
- Data Processing and mapping for the Noise Action Plan 2024

Blended Working App

Now in its second year, the blended working app continues to be used as new employees start and existing employees make renew applications.

Planning

Longford Local Area Plan and Longford Town Local Transport Plan

Earlier this year, the draft Longford Local Area Plan (LAP) was sent to consultants for the completion of various reports. It is anticipated that the statutory process will formally start shortly with the display of the draft plan.

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

The UNESCO application for Biosphere Reserve status for Lough Ree is progressing. Consultants have been appointed to carry out public consultation which is due to start in January following a Ministerial launch.

This project features in the National Climate Action Plan, Shannon Tourism Masterplan, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Programme for Government and is a flagship project in the region in our efforts to combat climate change and reverse biodiversity loss.

Extensive discussions have been carried out between the consultants, the steering committee, and the secretariat regarding the boundary requirements. Public consultation is due to start shortly.

Planning Applications, Development Management

A large-scale extension to the Technimark facility has been granted.

ePlanning has been fully implemented with over 85% applications now received online.

The Waiver scheme in relation to development contribution has been extended with a modest uptake in applications. Planning continue to look to make as many as possible aware of this scheme.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

A Draft map for the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) has been published, as required for Revenue Commissioners under legislation. Land appearing on the annual draft maps (amended to account for the outcome of submissions and rezoning requests) will be included on the annual final map of land within scope for RZLT in the local authority area. This is to be published on 31 January 2025. This land will be subject to the tax in 2025 unless it is exempt as a residential property or qualifying for any other exemption as specified within legislation.

Derelict Sites

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

Housing

Social Housing

The social housing targets set by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Housing for All housing plan is 76 units for 2024.

Project (Number of houses)	Status
Cranleymore Abbeylara (3)	Stage 3 approved. Excavation and screening of Japanese knotweed is complete, awaiting licence for removal. Tender for contractor to follow.
St Rita's Park Road, Phase 1 (6)	Stage 2 approved. Part 8 planning approved for Phase 1. Excavation and screening of Japanese knotweed complete, awaiting licence for removal. Stage 3 submission and tender for contractor to follow.
St Rita's Park Road, Phase 2 (7)	Phase 2 draft plans agreed with the Department for seven units, to be agreed with Roads and Planning. Part 8 to be advertised.
Radharc na Muileann, Lanesborough (22)	Stage 2 approved. Updated documents just received from the consultants. To be reviewed and advertise for Part 8 planning.
Drynan, Ballymahon (13)	Stage 1 approved. Updated documents received from the consultants. To be reviewed and Stage 2 to be submitted. Planning to wait until wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) updated by Uisce Éireann.
Cnoc na Greine, Granard (8)	Stage 1 approved. Updated documents received from the consultants. To be reviewed and Stage 2 to be submitted shortly.
Clough Dillons Keenagh (4)	Unfinished estate. Stage 1 approved. Legal issues due to be sorted soon before proceeding.
Lamagh, Newtownforbes (6)	Stage 2 approved. Advertised for Part 8 planning in May. Further information and pre-connection enquiry submitted to Uisce Éireann for approval. Tender advertised for consultants.
2 Legion Terrace (4)	On site. On hold awaiting Uisce Éireann connection. Road closure applied for. Completion delayed until August 2024.
Richmond Street (23)	On site. All houses complete. Awaiting final connections. Completion of site works due August 2024.

Housing

Corneddan, Ballinalee (1)	Stage 4 approved. Contractor appointed. Due to start on site.
Houricans Hotel, Granard (8, and parking)	Preliminary pre-planning stage. Site investigation tenders being assessed. Housing Agency updating plans. Due to go to Stage 1 submission in August.
Butchers, Market Street, Granard (2)	Preliminary pre-planning stage. Structural survey complete. Housing Agency submitted preliminary plans are under review.
Aghaboy, Killoe, Ennybegs (4)	Planning approved. Site investigation tenders being assessed. Consultant to be appointed shortly.
Casey Court, Keenagh (2)	Infill site. Stage 1 approved. Out to tender for consultants.
Shanmullagh, Ballinamuck (10)	Planning approved. Site investigation tenders being assessed. Consultant to be appointed shortly.
Canal Court, Fondermans (2)	Existing building formerly used for district heating. Decommissioned and clearing out complete. Out to tender for consultants.
Willow Park halting site (2)	Proposals submitted to CENA (Culturally Appropriate Homes CLG). CENA to submit Stage 1 CAS application shortly.
Vacant and derelict houses, Great Water Street (15)	The Housing Agency submitted draft tender for consultants is to be reviewed and advertising for tender is to take place in August.
Farrell's Ballinalee (4)	Turnkey approved. Not started, awaiting contracts. New submission to be made.
Forthill, Aughnacliffe (13)	Project completed in June 2024.
Forthill, Aughnacliffe, Phase 2 (4)	Turnkey approved. Due for completion in Q4 2024.
Longford Road, Ballinalee (14)	Turnkey approved.
Market Square (2)	Turnkey approved. On site. Due for completion in Q3 2024
Colmcille Terrace, Granard, Phase 1 (19)	Stage 4 approved. On site. Four houses completed Q4 2023, seven complete to date in 2024. Eight due for completion Q3 2024.

Housing

Climate Change

The Energy Efficiency Retrofit Scheme is ongoing and focused on targeting houses with the lowest BER rating. In 2024, the Department has set a target of 45 units. To date works have started on six units at St Anne's Ballymahon. Contracts are to be awarded for six units at Abbeycartron Lane. Tenders are being prepared for 22 units at Casey Court, Kenagh. Energy Efficiency works are also planned for Council stock, with 12 units submitted for Department for approval to date.

Repair and Leasing

Works are underway on seven apartments at 42 Main Street, Longford this an Approved Housing Body (AHB) led scheme with Kilkenny Voluntary Housing Association. It comprises of four one-bed apartments and three two-bed apartments.

Vacant Homes

The Vacant Homes Unit is committed to executing the housing projects outlined in the Vacant Homes Action Plan 2023-2026. The primary goal is to identify and repurpose recoverable vacant properties to enhance housing supply and rejuvenate local communities.

Croí Cónaithe: the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The Croí Cónaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant offers up to €50,000 for vacant properties and €70,000 for derelict properties. To

date, Longford County Council has received 145 applications. Of these:

- 86 applications have received preliminary approval
- 4 applications have received final approval
- 3 grants have been successfully paid out
- 19 applications were withdrawn or refused
- 33 applications are pending further information from the applicants

Compulsory Purchase Order and Derelict Sites

The update of the Derelict Sites Register (DSR) is ongoing. Currently:

- Three properties have been entered onto the DSR with the intention of a compulsory purchase order (CPO) from Longford County Council.
- Ten properties were removed from the DSR as residents have addressed their derelict status.
- Ten properties have been served with a Section 8(2) Notice - Intention of Entry on the Derelict Sites Register. Property owners have been notified and are required to engage with the Council to repair the property. If no engagement is received within 30 days, these properties will be entered into the DSR, and the CPO process may start for suitable properties.

Housing

Efforts are underway to impose the Derelict Sites Levy on DSR listed properties to motivate owners to address dereliction.

The Vacant Property Survey is being updated in the Vacancy Activation Programme to reflect efforts to bring vacant properties back into use and activate derelict sites through available schemes.

Ready to Build Scheme

Participation in the Ready to Build Scheme is being explored, however, so far, no potential sites have been identified for sale and participation in this initiative. Once the data entry for the CPO activation program is completed and the DSR updated, details of proposed sites for participation in the Ready to Build Scheme will be provided.

Applications and Assessments

Currently, 265 new social housing support applications have been accepted and there are 637 approved housing applicants on the Council's waiting list. A further 168 are within the assessment process and 20 applicants have been allocated a property and await appointment.

New Tenancies

To date in 2024, 70 new local authority, AHB, Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) tenancies have started.

Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2024

A review of 139 approved housing applicants under the Summary Social Housing Assessment (SSHA) 2024 is ongoing. All applicants who have received notification must respond. If applicants do not engage with the SSHA, they risk their application being closed.

Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029

Longford County Council is required to prepare the next five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 2025-2029. It will replace the current 2019-2024 programme which expires on 31 December 2024. The draft is available for inspection at Longford County Council offices and on [Longfordcoco.ie](https://www.longfordcoco.ie) up to 4pm on Monday, 23 September 2024.

Regeneration

Camlin Quarter Regeneration Project

Under the Camlin Quarter Regeneration Project, the Mall Outdoor Facilities Upgrade (Sub Element 1) has seen the appointment of CQS Group. They have completed a construction cost estimate. Longford County Council are awaiting Gateway 1 approval from Housing Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) for this project element.

Under the Church Street project (Sub element 2), the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Housing URDF have agreed in principle that this can be combined with Lower Battery Road project as a co-funded Active Travel and Regeneration project. The preparation of tender documents for the procurement of consultants is ongoing.

Mall Complex Storeroom Extension and Changing Room Upgrade

For the Mall Complex storeroom extension, six quotations were sought from local builders, with no responses received. Procurement then moved onto eTenders through an open procedure. Tenders received have been assessed. It is intended to appoint the successful contractor in the next couple of weeks.

The Mall Complex changing room upgrade is now complete.

Ballymahon Phobail Le Cheile

Part 8 planning was issued for the Ballymahon Phobail Le Cheile project, with submissions closed in May. This planning submission is currently on hold. This project will now be phased and works are ongoing to submit a revised Part 8 planning application for the convent building and new community hall. This project is funded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) 2020.

Granard Destination Town

Under the Granard Destination Town project, tenders were sought for the procurement of project management and design consultancy services with specific skills in urban design and public realm improvement projects for the Granard town centre public realm and car park. Five tenders were received and have been assessed. This project is now awaiting Department of Rural and Community Development approval to appoint successful consultant. This project is funded under the RRDF 2021.

North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2: Monaduff to Ballinamuck

Under the North Longford Rebel Trail Phase 2: Monaduff to Ballinamuck project, works are ongoing. The expected completion of this project is November 2024. This project is funded under Measure 3 of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) 2022.

Regeneration

ORIS and Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023

Applications have been submitted under the ORIS and Town and Village Renewal (TVRS) for 2023 with approval of €180,000 for six Measure 1 projects.

Under ORIS 2023 specifically, Measure 2 applications have been approved, including the Granard lights and additional walkway, Moyne amphitheatre and Legga car park.

Under the TVRS 2023, two applications up to €250k have been approved. They are: Ballinalee playground and the Edgeworthstown Mahon building.

Further funding of €379,170 has been received under TVRS 2023 for a special needs' playground and parkland connection to the Royal Canal Greenway spur, Longford Town.

Fáilte Ireland Just Transition Fund

Commons North Amphitheatre, Lanesborough (Category 2)

Funding of €150,000 has been approved to progress detailed design and prepare a commercial plan for the Commons North Amphitheatre, Lanesborough (Category 2) project. Preparation of project brief for commercial plan is practically complete and it is intended to seek tenders from consultants soon.

Cloondara Village Enhancement and Cycleway Scheme (Category 3)

Funding of €370,000 has been approved to progress planning, a business case and construction for

the Cloondara Village Enhancement and Cycleway Scheme (Category 3) project. The proposed planning for this project is being combined with the Safe Routes to School Scheme. Preparation of the project brief for the business case is practically complete and it is intended to seek tenders from consultants in the next couple of weeks.

Cloondara to Tarmonbarry Cycle Scheme (Category 1)

For the Cloondara to Tarmonbarry Cycle Scheme (Category 1) project, funding of €84,000 has been approved to prepare a feasibility report.

Active Travel

R198 Battery Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

For the R198 Battery Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme, works are now substantially completed on the lower section of the Battery Road from the entrance to St Alban's up to Halls Motor Factors. This section has been returned to two-way traffic and the temporary traffic lights have been removed from both Abbeycartron and the tennis court lanes. The finished road surface has been installed and much of the new cycle tracks and footpaths have been opened to the public along this section.

The next phase of works from Halls Motor Factors outward to beyond Lisbrack road junction is now well underway. Drainage and services are currently being installed here with kerbing and surfacing to follow.

Regeneration

Temporary traffic management will remain in place for this phase and subsequent phases of works.

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



building. This scheme will include a new pedestrian crossing on the R194 along the route and involve carriageway narrowing and junction tightening works.

The second scheme will tie in directly to the above scheme and will see the construction of a footpath link from Market Street to Barrack Lane. This scheme will merge into the new car park works that are currently underway on Barrack Lane by the North Longford Municipal District which also incorporates Active Travel elements.

Active Travel Schemes in Granard

Detailed designs have been completed for two Active Travel schemes in Granard town: the Market Street to Barrack Lane scheme and the R194 Longford road scheme.

Tenders have been advertised for a works contractor to undertake these Active Travel projects and subject to successful appointment and availability, works could start as early as October 2024.

The first of these will see a new footpath link along the R194 Longford road in Granard to link from Ard Scoil Phádraig as far as the old Ulster Bank

Town Centre First

Longford Town Centre First

Under Longford Town Centre First, a successful funding application was submitted for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme project development measure. This included the conversion of yard space in Garvey's Yard to create additional artists' studio space to support the work of Engage Longford. The funding received will also be used to complete survey and engineering and architect costs to prepare a landscape design for Garvey's Yard area. Procurement will now start to appoint consultants.

Ballymahon Town Centre First

The collection of data and spatial information for the Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan continued over the summer months. Plans have been put in place for a walkability audit on 16 September, in conjunction with Age Friendly Ireland.

Derelict Sites

There are currently 26 properties on the Derelict Sites Register. Work is progressing on including a further three properties on the register. Engagement is ongoing with landowners to remedy their properties to get them taken off the register.

The Derelict Sites Levy will be applied from January 2025 on properties remaining on the register.

URBACT UR Impact

An online meeting with European partners took place in July. At this meeting, the testing actions, and the next stages of the development of the Integrated Action Plan were discussed.

Several testing actions have been identified by the stakeholders and discussed with our European partners. These include actions to encourage younger people to engage more with the project. These actions will be further developed in the coming months and the first testing action will take place also in the coming months.

Work is ongoing on the development of the communication plan and sharing information on the UR Impact Instagram page.



THRIVE

Following the award of THRIVE funding, a procurement competition was carried out with the successful tenderer due to be appointed in the coming weeks. The summer months allowed discussions to continue to define the final use of the building and engage with stakeholders around their needs.

Roads

National Road Works

The N4 Newtownforbes to Clonihir (4km) scheme has been tendered and is awaiting approval from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to award the contract.

Temporary traffic signals are reducing the N55 near Fowlard's Bridge to single lane traffic in the interest of public safety as a visual inspection identified embankment slippage in the vicinity of the bridge. Longford County Council are working with Roadplan Consultants and TII to agree emergency works.

N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Public Consultation

Public consultation in relation to the Emerging Preferred Route Corridor (EPRC) for the N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) started in July and included a series of in-person events. All relevant material is available on n4mullingartolongford.ie. Submissions can be made before Friday, 16 August.

Municipal District Works

Road maintenance works continued in each Municipal District (MD), including footpath repairs, drainage, and pothole repairs.

Restoration Improvement and Restoration Maintenance Works on Regional and Local Roads continued in each MD.

Bridge inspections and works are ongoing. Bridge works have been completed on the Tawnagh/Aghadowry bridge, Crott Smear bridge and Legga bridge. Bridge works are ongoing at Currygraney/Ballagh.

Other bridge works scheduled for this year include Drummeel/Breaghy and Liscahill/Gneeve.

Speed Limit Review

A speed limit review of rural local roads has started, as instructed by the Department of Transport in a circular. The review is to consider if there are local rural roads which should retain their current 80km/hr speed limit. It is proposed that all other local roads will default to 60km/hr in November 2024. An in-committee briefing for councillors was provided at the July municipal district meetings.

Road Safety

The Road Safety team called to several national schools in County Longford to present certificates and prizes to students who participated in a Bike Week road safety promotion and entered the Road and Bike Safety Colour Poster Competition.



Students of Sacred Heart Granard receiving their prizes.

The Road Safety team participated in the Longford Agricultural Day on Sunday, 7 July, with personal protective equipment available for attendees and virtual reality road safety headsets available for use on the day to promote road safety.

Roads

Traffic Fines Data

Offence	Fines Issued Q1 2024	Fines Issued Q2 2024	Total
Parking fines	45	97	142
Non-display of tax	69	77	146
Breach of Parking Regulations 1997	106	57	163
TOTAL	220	231	451

Paid Parking

Three parking meters have been upgraded to dual parking machines: two at the Longford Shopping Centre and one at St Mel's Cathedral car park. They will now accept both cash and card payments. It is intended that further machines will be upgraded on a phased basis.



Climate Action

The Department of Transport's Climate Adaption Strategy for Regional and Local Roads has been adopted. It aims to improve the resilience of assets on the regional and local road network to the impacts of climate change. The Roads Section have been liaising with the Department of Transport to identify the critical infrastructure routes in County Longford.

Environment

Gum Litter Taskforce Visit Longford

The Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT) and their campaign to tackle gum litter was launched in Longford Town. This campaign encourages the responsible disposal of gum litter in a bin to avoid a €150 litter fine.

This local authority campaign is supplemented by the 'Bin It!' school roadshow and a social media campaign targeting 16–24-year-olds.

Now in its 17th year, it is a collaboration between Food and Drink Ireland, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, the chewing gum industry, and Local Government. Longford County Council is proud to have been actively involved since the beginning.

GLT research found that 25% say they have changed their behaviour due to the Bin-It! campaign. Other research shows a decline in the percentage of gum litter as a proportion of overall litter.

The Council's Environment team continue to encourage the responsible disposal of gum litter through awareness activities, and in October the Bin It! School roadshow will visit selected Longford schools.



Annual Hazardous Waste Collection

A Hazardous Household Waste Collection was held on Saturday, 20 July in Pearse Park, Longford. This helps to prevent chemicals and harmful substances ending up in landfill or other areas where it can seep into groundwater and contaminate our water supplies.

Items for collection included old paints, old household cleaners, garden herbicides, pesticides, waste oil, obsolete medicines, and old batteries.

There was an exceptional response from the public, with demand exceeding expectations and was significantly up on previous collections. As a result, and to support public demand it is proposed to schedule a further collection of domestic hazardous waste in September or October this year.



AN LONGFORD CONNECTED

Household Hazardous Waste Collection

10am-12pm, Saturday, 20 July
Lower Car Park of Pearse Park, Longford
(entrance via the rugby club road)

YOU CAN BRING ALONG:

- OLD PAINTS
- OLD HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS
- HERBICIDES AND PESTICIDES
- WASTE OIL
- OBSOLETE MEDICINES
- OLD BATTERIES

50c per kg charge applies | Cash payments only
No commercial paint, asbestos, waste from garages or commercial
hazardous waste permitted

Environment

Ongoing Dumping Investigations and Council Cat Rescue Heroes!

The investigation of large and small incidents of littering and illegal dumping throughout the county continues.

In July, a customer complaint relating to illegal dumping at back of residential apartments in Longford town was responded to. The site had restricted access and was overflowing with illegally dumped domestic waste.

As the Environment team started to assess the area they noticed a trapped kitten in distress. The team, along with the Council's Community Warden and Facilities employees helped to rescue the kitten and bring it to the ISPCA for attention.

The waste is currently being investigated and enforcement will issue.

Climate Action

Biodiversity Working Group and Biodiversity Action Plan for County Longford

The Biodiversity Working Group has been established. It includes representatives from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Fisheries Ireland, Hedgerows Ireland, Birdwatch Ireland, Local Authority Water Programme (LAWPRO), Coillte, farming organisations and local representatives.

A draft Longford Biodiversity Action 2024-2029 public consultations period took place across July and August and included in-person public consultation days with the Council's Biodiversity Officer.

Community Climate Action fund

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications allocated €328,000 for 14 County Longford projects. Formal letters of offer and grant agreements have been issued to each of the successful project teams.

Longford Decarbonization Zone

The Climate Action team are working with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and Longford TidyTowns to create a Sustainable Energy Community. This is required to support the implementation of an Energy Master Plan for the Longford Decarbonization Zone (DZ).

Climate Action and Environment at the Longford Agricultural Show

Climate Action and the Environment team attended the Longford Agricultural Show in July. The team engaged with the public and shared advice on many topics relating to the environment, climate action, biodiversity.



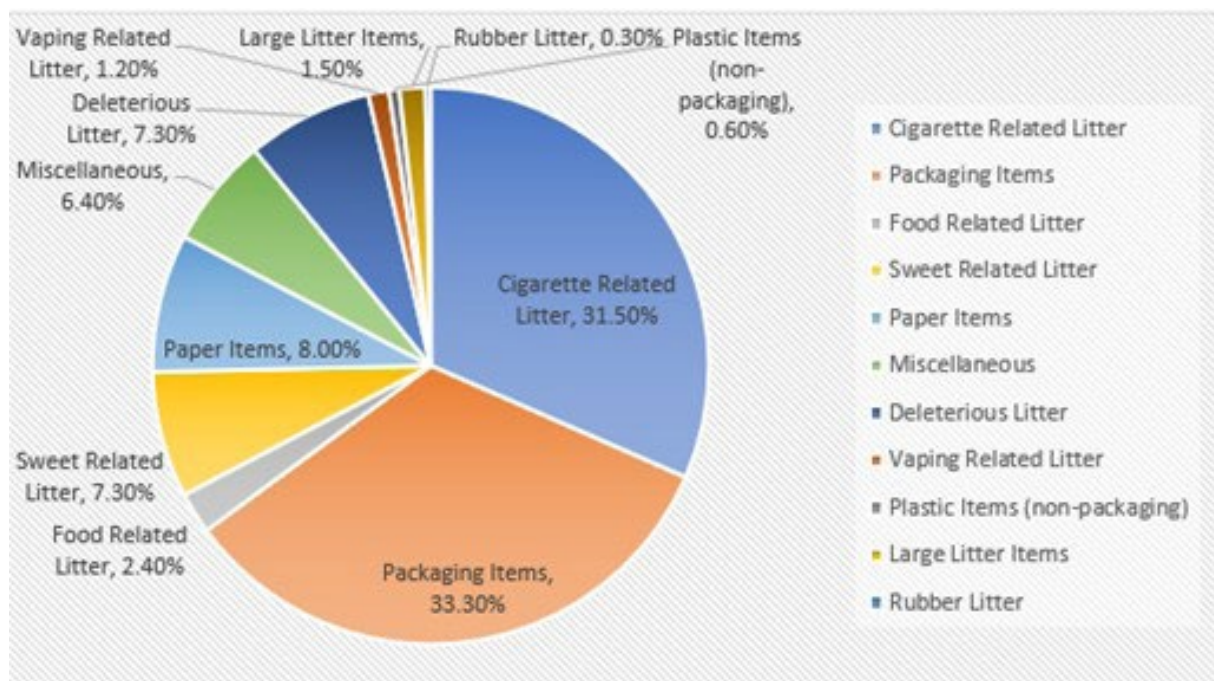
Environment

Tobin Litter Survey

The National Litter Pollution Monitoring System released its annual report. In the report, County Longford's results can be compared to results national. The report's data is based on litter quantification and litter

pollution surveys carried out by the litter wardens throughout the year.

The data highlights the significant problem of cigarettes and packaging litter, which accounts for 65% of County Longford's litter. This information will be used as a basis for ongoing anti-litter campaigns.



Fire Services

Operations

- Total callouts 74 (July 45 – August 29 up to 28/8/24).
- All stations remained fully operational.
- Four units of Longford Fire Brigade attended a large Commercial nighttime fire in Longford town Centre on the 28th of July. The building suffered Substantial damage and impacted the commercial centre of the Town.

Recruitment

Nine more people have completed the interview process for the position of firefighter in various stations. It is hoped to start recruit skills training in October for these recruits.

The recruitment process is still open as we will still have vacancies in Lanesborough, Granard and Ballymahon.

Training

Twelve firefighters completed a two-day water awareness refresher course in Ballymahon.

Health and Safety

There were no injuries to report in July and August.

Fire Prevention

Thirteen Fire Safety Certificates were processed. One District Court Licence was processed.

Approval was sanctioned for the Drumlish Festival. A during performance inspection was carried out.

Equipment

A second-hand Jeep has been put on the run for Granard fire brigade. This is to be used at Road Traffic incidents.

Eight new fire ground radios have been purchased.

Civil Defence

Duties

Longford Civil Defence provided medical and welfare cover at 19 events, including:

- Longford Vintage show
- Duathlon swim
- Local Elections 2024 (across three days)
- Three Longford Town Football Club soccer matches
- Ballinalee Connemara Pony Show
- Community Games Leinster Finals
- Longford Agricultural Show
- Longford Community Resources CLG (LCRL) fun day
- National Play Day
- Old School New School car show
- Ballinamuck Fair Day
- Irish Blood Transfusion Board blood bank clinic (across three days)



Training and Operations

The Civil Defence section was part of an internal Longford County Council health and safety audit.

A Road Safety Authority (RSA) inspection took place on the fleet.

Volunteers provided information stands and cardiac first responder demonstrations at a Roma community day and at a mothers mental and physical wellbeing day.

One volunteer and the Assistant Civil Defence Officer attended critical incident stress management and peer mentor training.

A missing person search instructor assisted Donegal Civil Defence with the delivery of their missing person search responder course.

A statutory inspection of vehicles and defibrillators took place.



