



Longford County Council Chief Executive Report March 2023

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March Highlights

Awards and Shortlistings

Longford County Council won the prestigious Public Sector category at the Health and Safety Excellence Awards. The Council has also been shortlisted under two categories for the All Ireland Community and Council Awards for Connected Communities Longford Text Alert and the Urban Horse Project.



Celebrating women with inverted Council meeting

International Women's Day was highlighted with a reversal of the existing gender make-up of the Council for an inverted meeting comprised of 16 women and two men.



Innovation funding for Longford schools

Following the allocation of €44,000 under the Public Service Innovation Fund 2023 for computers for primary schools in Longford, it's hoped we will be the first county nationally with Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate option in all nine secondary schools.



Piano for the People

A new public piano has been introduced in Longford Shopping Centre. The brightly coloured 'Piano for the People' was unveiled by Longford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Turlough McGovern in time for International Piano Day on Wednesday, 29 March.



Community, Libraries, HR and Corporate Community Development

Longford Local Community Development Committee

Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) meetings were held on 14 February and 14 March.

Community Support Fund 2022

Online applications for the Community Support Fund (CSF) closed in February and at the Longford LCDC March meeting funding for 131 community groups were approved.

These grants will support groups with running or operating costs, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The grants also help with necessary repairs and improvements to facilities and the purchase of equipment.

An amount was also ring-fenced for the operating costs of Women's Sheds. It is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme

At the LCDC's February meeting, the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) Annual Performance Review 2022 and the SICAP Annual Plan for 2023 were both approved.

In 2023, Longford Community Resources CLG will receive €602,411, with an additional allocation under the Ukraine Response Fund of €90,478.

Longford Comhairle na nÓg

Congratulations to Comhairle na nÓg members for supporting and contributing to winning the Chamber of Commerce Best Float award for Autism Awareness Day and Turn Longford Blue.

As part of their Autism awareness project, Longford Comhairle na nÓg joined forces with the Autism awareness charity Turn Longford Blue to facilitate an Autism-friendly 'quiet zone' during the St Patrick's Day parade in Longford.

Comhairle members also delivered their first Autism awareness workshop to fifth and sixth-year students in Templemichael College. They will be rolling out workshops in all schools in the coming weeks.



Members of Longford Comhairle na nÓg with Turn Longford Blue

Playgrounds

The refurbishment of Newtownforbes playground is almost complete.

This project was partly funded by Longford County Council and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Community, Libraries, HR and Corporate

Community Development (Contd)

Community Grant Support Scheme
Longford County Council opened online applications for the Community Grant Support Scheme (CGSS) towards the end of March.

The CGSS supports activities or projects focused on any of the following areas:

- Active elderly,
- Arts
- Community involvement
- Environment
- Events
- Heritage
- Inter-cultural
- Sport and recreation

Online applications must be completed by the chairperson, secretary or treasurer of the community group and submitted by 4pm on Thursday, 27 April 2023.

For more information see the Community Grant Support Scheme page on Longfordcoco.ie under the Community Development section.

Local Sports Partnership

Volunteers in Sport Awards

Longford Smashers Volleyball Club volunteer Grzegorz Greg Wiecheć won this year's Longford Volunteers in Sport Award. These awards are proudly supported by the Longford Local Sports Partnership and the other Local Sports Partnerships.

Minister of State with responsibility for Sport and Physical Education Thomas Byrne was the special guest speaker at the awards. Minister Byrne presented the recipients from each county with a medal recognising their dedication to volunteering across a variety of different sports.

Overall, 37.3 million hours of volunteering was recorded across Ireland's 13,000 registered sports clubs and associations, according to Sport Ireland's 2021 Researching the Value of Sport in Ireland report. The value of this dedication is worth an estimated €1.5bn to the exchequer. These awards show that we are all #dedicatedtothededicated.



Longford Smashers Volleyball Club Grzegorz Greg Wiecheć won this year's Longford Volunteers in Sport Award

Community, Libraries, HR and Corporate

Local Sports Partnership (Contd)

Try Track and Field

Try Track and Field is an exciting new programme for Longford Local Sports Partnership. It is being run with every secondary school in County Longford.

The programme offers an opportunity to try track and field in a fun and positive environment. It aims to encourage young people to try a different experience, get active and to see the possibilities outside of traditional invasive sports.

Eight hundred children, aged between 13 and 16, have received high quality coaching in Longford's new Athletics Centre. The coaching included high jump, long jump relay, sprints, hurdles, and throws.

Depending on the needs of the school, the programme varies with participants getting a two-hour taster session or an introductory programme of one-and-a-half hour sessions over three to four weeks. The programme ran from 22 February and is due to finish after the Easter Break.

The programme will see 91 hours of quality training delivered to the young people of Longford.



International Women's Day:

Longford Local Sports Partnership is proud to announce that Longford was the first county to launch the @hermoves.ie campaign.

It coincided with the Sport Ireland National Launch on Wednesday, 8 March, which was also International Women's Day.

A total of 130 teenage girls from around the county came to Edgeworthstown Sports Hub. The tutors were all female role models who excel in their industries. Even the music chosen on the day celebrated everything that it is to be female.

The girls got to take part in dance, yoga, functional fitness and teamwork activities. It was a positive day with everyone supporting each other.

Longford Afro Dance:

Favour Odusola, from Official PAK, instructs traditional African dance courses with the intention of reaching every member of the Longford community. Favour acted, danced and worked extensively on many stage and film production sets in Nigeria and now in Dublin.

Sessions are a fusion of Nigerian traditional and modern dance styles expressed through the dancer's own vision. Fifteen people took part in this six-week programme.



Community, Libraries, HR and Corporate Human Resources

Learning and Development

Training held in February and March included:

Business skills training, including:

- Courtroom Skills
- Protected Disclosures for Public Sector Bodies
- Information session on Procurement Essentials
- Metacompliance e-learning tool update
- Data Sharing in the Public Sector
- Media and social media bootcamp
- Key priorities in Human Resources during a cost-of-living crisis
- Workplace Relations Commission workshop on effective union meetings and communications
- Institute of Public Administration Leadership in Local Government
- Women in Leadership four week programme
- Climate Action: Delivering Action
- Green Public Procurement Awareness webinar

Health and Safety training, including:

- Chainsaw training for Local Authority Operatives
- Driver Certificate of Professional Competence: Module Four
- Road Services Supervisor course
- Construction Skills Certification Scheme: Health and Safety at Roadworks
- First Aid Responder Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council and refreshers course
- Derelict Sites and Dangerous Structures
- Manual Handling for office-based employees
- Confined Spaces City and Guilds
- Serious Incident Response
- Occupational Health and Safety Awards Workshops

Health and Wellbeing

Longford County Council's Health and Wealth Programme reflects the four pillars of mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing. This is aligned to the Local Government Management Agency's Wellbeing Strategy.

Health and Wellbeing delivered a Spring Fitness Challenge 2023 in partnership with Longford Local Sports Partnership. This is an eight-week lunchtime Couch-2-5K programme, with walking and training tips. This will help people to prepare for the Noel McManus walk, run or cycle on Good Friday. So far, 55 employees have signed up to take part.



A planning for retirement course was also delivered. This two-day course helps anyone planning to retire within the next few years. It focuses on the areas of life that are likely to change in retirement and helps dispel the myths that surround retirement. Eleven employees registered to take part.

Health and Wellbeing initiatives also were delivered in February and March included:

- Lunchtime Yoga in the Mall in Longford Town
- Ensuring a Work Life Balance
- Menopause and Physical Activity Webinar

Enterprise and Tourism

Tourism

Longford Hamper

To celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, Longford Tourism hosted a Facebook competition to win a Longford Hamper. The winner of the competition was announced on Facebook on Monday, 20 March.

This hamper was launched in 2022 in conjunction with Wilder and Gold. It is filled with products and produce from County Longford and is the perfect gift for anyone with a connection to the county. It also makes for a great corporate gift. The logo was designed by local business Rusty Lemon Design.

It is available for purchase from Wilder and Gold in Ballymahon.



Social Media Promotion

Longford Tourism continue to promote County Longford, including events, local businesses and activities through social media. In March, this included promotion of County Longford's St Patrick's Day parades.



Finance and Information Technology

Finance

Revenue and Account Income and Expenditure Summary by Service Division Year to date to quarter end 31 December 2022

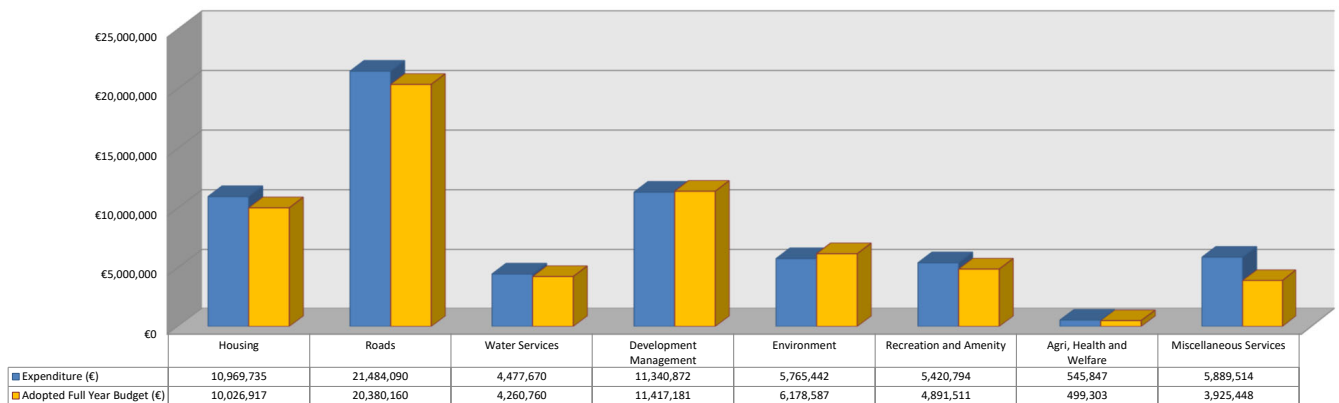
	Expenditure				Income				Net
	Expenditure (€)	Adopted Full Year Budget (€)	Budget Spent to Date (%)	Budget Remaining (€)	Income €	Adopted Full year Budget (€)	Budget Raised (%)	Budget Outstanding (€)	Actual Overall Surplus/(Deficit) (€)
Housing	10,969,735	10,026,917	109%	(942,818)	11,125,305	11,032,967	101%	(92,338)	155,570
Roads	21,484,090	20,380,160	105%	(1,103,930)	16,653,330	15,289,857	109%	(1,363,473)	(4,830,760)
Water Services	4,477,670	4,260,760	105%	(216,910)	4,220,537	4,158,150	102%	(62,387)	(257,133)
Development Management	11,340,872	11,417,181	99%	76,309	7,166,089	6,058,853	118%	(1,107,236)	(4,174,783)
Environment	5,765,442	6,178,587	93%	413,145	753,701	729,751	103%	(23,950)	(5,011,741)
Recreation and Amenity	5,420,794	4,891,511	111%	(529,283)	1,422,338	853,625	167%	(568,713)	(3,998,456)
Agri, Health and Welfare	545,847	499,303	109%	(46,544)	288,785	255,030	113%	(33,755)	(257,062)
Miscellaneous Services	5,889,514	3,925,448	150%	(1,964,066)	6,301,454	5,027,742	125%	(1,273,712)	411,940
Local Government Fund					9,244,476	9,244,474	100%	(2)	9,244,476
*Commercial Rates					8,723,254	8,929,416	98%	206,162	8,723,254
	€65,893,964	€61,579,867	107%	(€4,314,097)	€65,899,269	€61,579,865	107%	(€4,319,404)	€5,305

These figures were submitted to the Department on Wednesday, 1 March 2023
Where COVID-19 related expenditure has been incurred, corresponding deferred income from central government has been accounted for.
*The amount of commercial rates waived under the 2022 three-month waiver scheme for Q1, 2022 was €465,872.

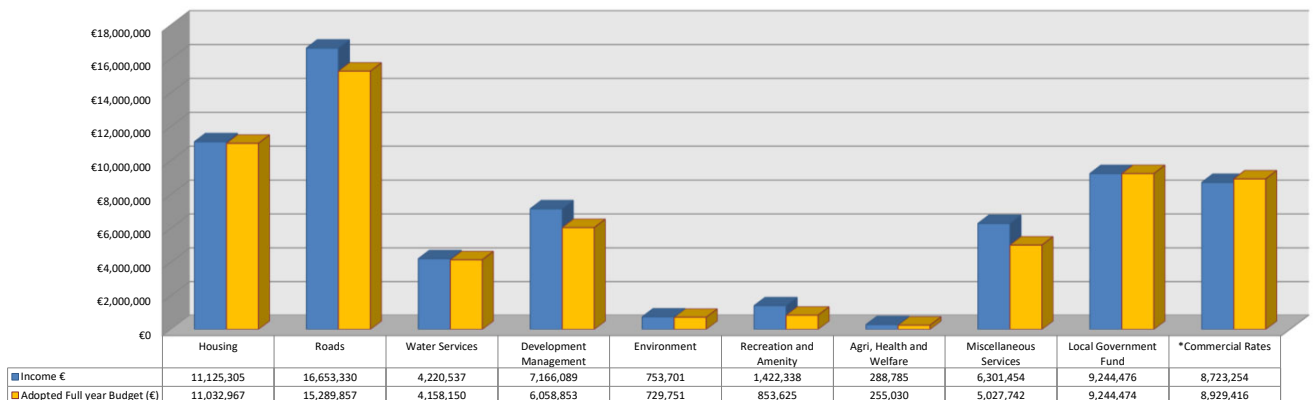
Finance and Information Technology

Finance (Contd)

Expenditure versus Budget Quarter 4, 2022



Income versus Budget Quarter 4, 2022



Finance and Information Technology

Finance (Contd)

Summary of Major Revenue Collections Quarter 4, 2022

	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
Quarter 4, 2022	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	€966,941	€8,695,458	€8,276,750	€7,416,808	€859,942	90%
Rents (inc. RAS)	€800,153	€7,417,014	€8,196,218	€7,313,595	€882,623	89%
Housing Loans	€457,955	€1,017,285	€1,475,240	€1,129,218	€346,022	77%

	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
Quarter 4, 2021	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	€1,124,618	€9,974,823	€6,015,200	€5,048,260	€966,940	84%
Rents (inc. RAS)	€839,673	€7,246,939	€8,070,198	€7,270,045	€800,153	90%
Housing Loans	€481,344	€998,116	€1,479,460	€1,021,506	€457,954	69%

	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
VARIANCE YOY	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	(€157,677)	(€1,279,365)	€2,261,550	€2,368,548	(€106,998)	6%
Rents (inc. RAS)	(€39,520)	€170,075	€126,020	€43,550	€82,470	-1%
Housing Loans	(€23,389)	€19,169	(€4,220)	€107,712	(€111,932)	7%

*COVID-19 Commercial Rates waivers amounted to €465,872 in Q1, 2022.
These have been taken account of in the 'To be Collected' figures above.

Finance and Information Technology

Information Technology

Award Shortlisting

Longford Connected Communities Longford Text Alert has been shortlisted for the All-Ireland Community and Council Awards 2023 for the Best Communications Initiative. The award are supported by the Local Authority Members Association and IPB Insurance and take place in April.



Public Service Innovation Fund 2023

Under the Public Service Innovation Fund 2023, €44,000 was secured as Longford seeks to be the first county with Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate option in all of its secondary schools.

To help this, the Council will collaborate with industry experts Microsoft and Ericsson and upskill teachers through learning network and providing equipment.

Town WIFI

The free Town WIFI in Longford, Ballymahon and Drumlish had 392 new and 1,676 returning users.

Broadband Connection Points

County Longford Broadband Connection Points had 22 new guests and 256 returning users.

Geographic Information Systems

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) work includes:

- Residential Zoned Land Tax data reporting
- Electoral register polling district review support
- National database of sport and recreation amenities data gathering
- ePlanning roll out support

Digital Services

The Blended Working application is live, allowing employees to apply for blended working via Microsoft Teams.

The Customer Relationship Management system is now being tested within Environment following a successful adoption within Corporate Services.

The new ePlanning system went live in March. This allows for a modernisation of the planning process through online applications.

Information Technology had a stand at the Jobs and Training Fair in the Longford Arms which took place in March. This was an opportunity to highlight remote working hubs and the jobs available through Grow Remote.

Grow Remote Longford Chapter held their first in person Grow Remote work course in CO:WORX Edgeworthstown.

Digital Services projects also continuing include:

- Housing inspections app
- Phone system update
- Longford Text Alert rollout
- Microsoft Ireland's Dream Space

Technology Infrastructure

The Service Desk dealt with 633 enquiries in March.

The Technology Infrastructure team also continue to support the transition to Irish Water. Procurement for annual renewals and hardware replacements and upgrades are also taking place.

Security information and event management proof-of-concept started, as did a GIS infrastructure upgrade plan.

Infrastructure and Innovation

Roads

Regional and Local Road Allocations
Longford County Council has been notified of the Regional and Local Road Grant Allocations for 2023. The total allocation was €9,770,900, a 0.628% decrease on the 2022 allocation. The Roads Programme is currently being prepared. The allocation per grant is:

Restoration Improvement	€4,860,000
Restoration Maintenance	€709,500
Supplementary Restoration Maintenance	€557,500
Discretionary Grant	€1,297,500
Bridge Rehabilitation Grant	€429,500
Specific Improvement	€525,000
Safety Improvement Works	€223,500
Speed Limits (Housing Area Signage)	€6,600
Cycle Signs	€2,200
Former National Roads	€250,000
Climate Adaption	€307,500
Training Grant	€34,000
Community Involvement Scheme	€224,100
Drainage Works	€332,000
Pavement Surface Condition Index: Survey Support	€12,000

National Road Schemes

A €6,660,790 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TTI) allocation for national roadworks in 2023 was received. This consists of Capital Investment (Protection and Renewal), and Active Travel funding of €5,875,000, Current Maintenance (Protection and Renewal) at €413,790 and greenways at €372,000.

Realignment of pedestrian crossings at roundabouts on the N4 Longford By-Pass Phase 1 is ongoing. The main overlay works are due to start in April.

Longford County Council met with TII to highlight the importance of the proposed N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Project and the need for funding to progress the project without further delay.

Local Improvement Schemes

For 2023 Local Improvement Schemes, €304,736 has been allocated to the Council by the Department of Rural and Community Development. This funds the construction or improvement of non-public roads.

Municipal District Works

Within the Municipal Districts, footpaths, drainage, pothole repair and road maintenance continued. Road were involved in opening and clearing water-cuts along regional and local primary roads, and Roads Schedule for 2023 preparations continued.

Bridge works were carried out at several locations including Ballyduffy Bridge, Cartron Bridge and Tady Bridge. Roads are involved in the construction of Active Travel projects, including constructing a footpath and cycleway between Clontumpher School and Ennybegs Village.



Roads laying of ducting for Ennybegs Active Travel Project

Infrastructure and Innovation

Environment

Climate Action Plan

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Eamon Ryan TD launched a set of statutory guidelines to assist local authorities in preparing their climate action plans.

Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, each local authority is required to prepare a local authority climate action plan for its respective administrative area. The plans will be consistent with the most recently approved climate action plan and national adaptation framework. The process started in February, with a 12-month timeframe for completion. Once adopted, each plan will be valid for five years.

Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections Plan

The 2023 Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections Plan was submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in February. This plan includes an assessment of all environmental inspection work carried out in 2022. In total, 4,182 inspections were completed.

A similar programme has been submitted for 2023. This is the core work of the section and inspections are mainly scheduled for litter, waste, water, water pollution, air, odour and noise enforcement. The inspections will continue on a phased manner throughout the year, in accordance with the Inspection Plan. It will contribute towards the EPA Performance Indicators for the Council.

National Spring Clean 2023

National Spring Clean 2023 registrations opened on 1 March. Throughout April the National Spring Clean will encourage communities from across Ireland to tackle the problem of litter in local areas and to see the benefits of a litter-free environment.

Taking place for over 24 years, the National Spring Clean is focused on the message of collective responsibility in tackling and preventing the national litter problem. By participating in organised clean-ups, groups and individuals of all ages come together to make a meaningful and positive change in their communities. To date, almost 45,000 tonnes of litter across Ireland has been collected thanks to the National Spring Clean.

In 2023, the National Spring Clean is also raising awareness on how the adoption of a circular economy model will help to reduce litter and climate impact.

National Spring Clean is operated by An Taisce in partnership with local authorities, including Longford County Council. It is supported by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and Mars Wrigley.



**NATIONAL
SPRING
CLEAN**

 An Taisce

Infrastructure and Innovation

Civil Defence

Duties and taskings

Civil Defence provided medical cover at 14 events in February and March, including:

- Medical cover to three Longford GAA matches
- Medical cover at three Longford Town Football Club matches
- Medical cover at Longford Lights event
- Administrative and welfare cover to Irish Blood Transfusion Board
- Medical cover at St Patrick's Day parades in Longford, Ballymahon and Ballinamuck

Training and operations

Five volunteers passed their emergency first responder exam and move forward for practical exams in April

Two casualty instructors passed their recertification exams.

The Civil Defence Officer attended training in Navan for the volunteer equipment management system.

A decommissioned ambulance from the National Ambulance Service was delivered and will be added to Civil Defence's fleet once it passes all statutory inspections.

Assistant Civil Defence Officer interviews took place.



Civil Defence pictured in Longford Town before the St Patrick's Day parade

Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

Housing

Vacant Homes

An advertising campaign for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant was launched by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It generated positive interest and engagement with the public.

The second phase of this advertising campaign highlights the Repair and Leasing Scheme and supports for those who wish to convert vacant commercial property into homes.

Summary Social Housing Needs Assessment 2023

The Summary Social Housing Needs Assessment 2023 continues over the coming months. Identified applicants will be contacted to update their information and to have their eligibility for housing support reviewed. It is essential that applicants engage with this process, or they risk their housing application being closed.

Choice Based Letting

Choice Based Letting have new properties advertised monthly. Interest from approved housing applicants has been positive. Properties are advertised via Longfordcoco.ie and Council social media channels.

Private Housing Grants

Private housing grants for older people and people with a disability target works needed to enable applicants to continue to live in their own homes. In 2022, Longford County Council awarded 200 such grants at a cost of over €1.15m, an increase of 28% on the number of grants awarded in 2021.

Grants available are 80% funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and 20% funded from Longford County Council.

Such grants are deemed a financial contribution. Grants do not necessarily cover the full cost of the works. Applications are assessed on its merits, the works required and funding available. Key to the scheme's success, is ensuring there is sufficient budget available to ensure that as many households benefit from the scheme as possible.

Income Eligibility Thresholds

Following the €5,000 increase for the income eligibility threshold which came into effect on 1 January, there has been an increase in applications for social housing.

This change was taken pending the development and rollout of a revised income eligibility model in 2023. It helps to ensure social housing is available to vulnerable households.

The new income eligibility threshold for County Longford is €30,000. The current income eligibility model includes allowances of 5% for each additional adult household member (subject to 10% maximum) and 2.5% for each child. This allowance has not been revised and be the same for the new income eligibility threshold and model.

The revised thresholds for different household compositions are:

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

Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

Housing (Contd)

Housing Capital Programme

Project (Units)	Status
Cranleymore, Abbeylara (3)	Stage 3 approved. Additional Japanese knotweed works required. Tender to be advertised shortly after.
St Rita's Park Road (12)	Stage 2 approval received. Part 8 Planning approved for Phase 1 (6 houses). Additional Japanese knotweed works required.
24 Congress Terrace (2)	Stage 4 submitted to Department. Awaiting approval to award Contract. To be completed by Q4 2023
Woodland Path, Keenagh (4)	On site. Due for completion Q3/4 2023
Drynan, Ballymahon (13)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly
Cnoc na Gréine, Granard (6)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly
2 Woodview, Newtownforbes (2)	Single stage approval received. To be completed by Q4 2023
2 Legion Terrace (4)	Contracts signed. To start on site shortly. Due for completion by Q4 2023
Richmond Street (23)	Turnkey approved. Contracts signed. Site set up and site clearance commenced. Q2 2024 completion.
Farrell's Ballinalee (4)	Turnkey approved, project to be completed by Q3 2024
Forthill, Aughnacliffe (13)	Turnkey approved, to be completed by Q4 2023

Radharc na Muileann, Lanesborough (22)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted shortly
Longford Road, Ballinalee(14)	Turnkey approved. Aim to be completed by Q4 2023
Colmcille Terrace, Granard (19) Phase 1	Stage 4 submission due to be sent to the Dept shortly
Corneddan, Oghill, Drumlish (1)	Consultants appointed. carrying out surveys
Abhainn Glas, Edgeworthstown (4)	Turnkey approved. Aim to be substantially completed by Q2 2024
Cluain Rí, Ballymahon (16)	Turnkey approved. Aim to be substantially completed by Q2 2024
6A Park Road (1)	Turnkey approved. To be completed by Q4 2023
Colmcille Terrace, Granard (19)	Tender assessment completed and stage 4 submission submitted to the Dept for approval.

Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

Climate Action

Roads

Longford County Council received an allocation of €307,500 for works under the 2023 Climate Change Adaption and Resilience Works allocation. This will facilitate embankment stabilisation works on the:

- R198 at Townagh
- R392 Lanesborough: Ballymahon Road at Derryad
- L-1048 Aughnacliffe-Ballinalee (Aghacordrinan)
- L-1156 Derraghan to Caltragh Beg
- L-1048 Aughnacliffe-Ballinalee (Carrickadorrish)
- L-1042 Aughnacliffe-Arva (Smear).

Funding is also provided for rock armour works on the causeway road at Saints Island (L-1140-2) and improvement works to the Newtownforbes storm drainage outfall.

Human Resources

Human Resources continues to implement environmentally friendly practices in all recruitment and new starter processes.

Information Technology

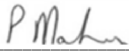
- Continued progression and implementation of several paperless projects
- Major update of the ePMDS software completed,
- Launch of new Blended Working App
- Continued work with business areas to ensure all new schemes are rolled out on a digital first basis

CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

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

Signed: _____



Paddy Mahon
Chief Executive





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