



Longford County Council Chief Executive Report October 2022

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October Highlights

Dead of Night success

The return of Dead of Night drew crowds to Longford Town to celebrate Halloween. The Parade, Spook Walk, Beacon bonfire-alternative, fire dancers, storytelling and more entertained everyone who braved the rain in search of a scare!



Are you registered to vote?

Longford County Council employees are encouraged to visit checktheregister.ie to check that you are registered and make sure your details are up to date.

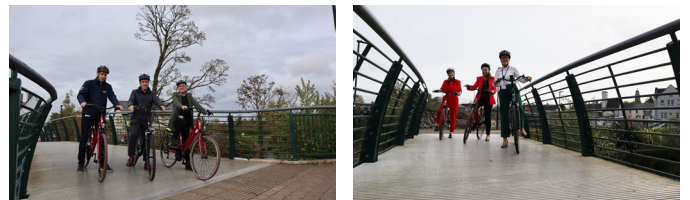


Are your Register of Electors details correct?

Register of Electors 2023/24

Bike to work (and in work!)

Part of Innovation Week, Longford County Council have introduced new bicycles for employees and elected members. The bikes can be used for work and recreation, with positive environmental, economic and health impacts for users.



Better Estate Awards

Local people and groups were honoured at the Better Estate Awards held to celebrate their hard work in maintaining local housing estates.



Community & Enterprise

Library, Heritage and Archives

Libraries

Primary and second-level class tours and visits re-started. This included hosting Ballymahon Vocational School students to watch *Les Intouchables* in celebration of European Languages Day.

Edgeworthstown Library is one of four Longford County Council projects shortlisted for the Excellence in Local Government Award. It is shortlisted under the Building Sustainable Communities category.

Longford Library welcomed the return of the Knit and Stitch group for the first time since COVID-19 began. Granard Book-town Festival was launched by author Michael Harding in Granard Library.

Cultural Night was celebrated with the launch of *Sunflower Lion* by Halyna Bodilova, an award-winning Ukrainian journalist living in the community. This bilingual Ukrainian and English poetry book was a collaboration with writer Eileen Moynihan.

Ballymahon Library reopened as a My Open Library (MOL) which offers extended library access. Preparations continue on MOL services in Granard and Edgeworthstown. The MOL tender was awarded for Lanesborough with installation to start soon.

Libraries continue literacy and social inclusion programmes supported by the Dormant Accounts Fund. It includes Welcome Space Art Therapy Programme for displaced communities, with art psychotherapists Emily Cuddy and Loretto McGarry.

Longford Age Friendly

Longford Age Friendly hosted an Information Day for older persons living in County Longford. Age Friendly Chief Officer Catherine McGuigan delivered the opening address. Longford and National Older People's Councils (OPC) Chair Kitty Hughes spoke on challenging ageism and celebrating older people's contribution to society.



The Council's Broadband Officer held a Longford Text Alert information session, as part of Positive Ageing Week. Organisations in attendance included Citizens Information, Longford Healthy Homes, and the Irish Countywomen's Association (ICA).

Making Music in the Midlands continued. Local musicians Dan Brouder and Angelina Carberry provided tuition to people re-engaging with their love of playing the tin whistle. This initiative is a collaboration between Music Network and Age Friendly Ireland.

Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2028 preparations continue, with a review of the current strategy now complete. Feedback was provided at the Age Friendly Information Day. Public consultation sessions are planned.

Community & Enterprise

Creative Ireland

Ballymahon Library hosted the Live and Local traditional weekend. It included workshops on set dancing, sean-nós dancing and traditional singing. People had opportunities to play traditional instruments and the weekend finished with a trad concert filled with local talent.

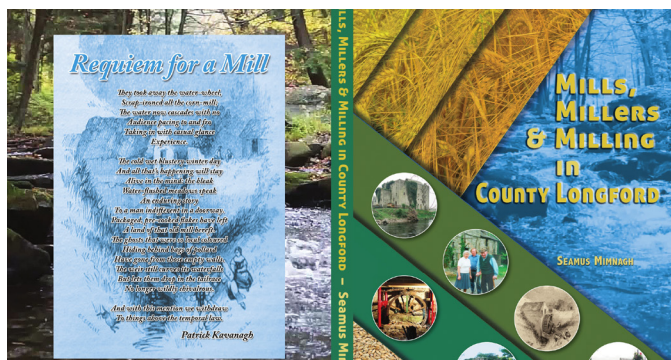
Other events funded through Creative Ireland included a five-week writers' course with author John Connell in Ballymahon Library and Luke Casserly's play *Root* held in Backstage Theatre.

Heritage

Longford Popular Music Heritage Project continues with the draft text for a core exhibit provided by the oral historian. This will be reviewed with images selected before going to the designer.

The Black Pig's Dyke LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) survey is to be reengaged, with the monument flown in November when the hedgerows have less leaf cover.

The *Mills, Millers and Milling* book by Dr Seamus Mimmagh has been printed. Dr Clare Glanville is making final reviews to the *Longford Rocks* book on the geological heritage of the county.



The Built Heritage Conservation grants are close to completion. St Paul's Church in Newtownforbes have now incorporated biodiversity supports into their design to help manage a significant population of bats and swifts.

The Community Monuments Fund research project at St Brendan's Clondra is near completion. This project is led by the Clondra Graveyard Committee. The research has uncovered interesting initial results suggesting the church ruin is older than initially thought. Additionally, the capital repair project at Abbeyshrule has gone to tender for a main contractor, to be in place for the next funding round.

Under the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund, the Quagga Mussel Research Project is complete. The research will be disseminated once its report is finalised. This project is a partnership between University College Dublin and local authorities which border the River Shannon.

Archives

Digitisation of Longford ICA Oral History Collection and some cassette recordings from Jude Flynn has started. Contributions continue for the Pakenham Papers management plan in Tullynally Castle, County Westmeath. The collection contains a wealth of material relevant to Longford, with some of this digitised.

Decade of Centenaries Programme

An exhibition to mark the centenary of An Garda Síochána was held in Longford and Granard libraries. In October, Professor Colum Kenny gave a lecture on Arthur Griffith in Longford Library. Work is progressing on the film on the 'big houses' of Longford, with extensive use of images from the archives facilitated.

Community & Enterprise

Local Enterprise Office

Women's Enterprise Day 2022

Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Longford joined LEO Laois, Offaly and Westmeath to celebrate National Women's Enterprise Day 2022. This was the first regional in-person celebration of this day since the start of COVID-19. The event took place in Glasson Lakehouse, with the theme of 'Our Future, Our Way'.

At the event, Longford's Aine's Boutique owner Aine Farrell gave great tips around dressing from the business day to the evening. Aine Reilly, also from Longford, spoke about their design business, Zobi. Zobi specialises in bespoke pieces. The company most recently designed and made the dress worn by Rose of Tralee Rachel Duffy, who was also in attendance.

This sold out event was a huge success. It provided many networking opportunities for the business women in attendance. Speakers included influencer and business woman Suzanne Jackson. This year's 'Leading Light' was author Patricia Gibney. RTÉ correspondent and SJF Productions owner Sarah



Corporate Services

Customer Services

Customer Services responded to 901 calls in September and 811 calls in October.

Franchise

The new version of Check the Register went live on 13 October, resulting in several requests from the public. The public can go to [Checktheregister.ie](https://checktheregister.ie) to update their registration. A nationwide Check the Register promotional campaign is due to start in November.

Official Languages Act

An amendment to the Official Languages Act 2021 came into force on 10 October. This amendment sets out our requirements in relation to advertising through the Irish language. This includes a requirement that 20% of all advertising from Longford County Council must be through Irish and 5% of the Council's advertising budget must be through Irish language media.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

	Sep	Oct	YTD*
FOI requests received	4	6	60
Access to Information on the Environment requests received	0	0	7
Office of the Ombudsman complaints received	0	0	4

*Year-to-date

Community & Enterprise

Health and Safety

Health & Safety Inspections

Nine safety inspections were completed in September and October.

Health and Safety Internal Audits

Internal health and safety audits were completed: Community and Enterprise, Local Sports Partnership, Corporate Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Planning and Ballymahon Fire Station.

Safety Monitoring Consultative Committee

Safety Monitoring Consultative Committee meetings with relevant Directors of Services and Council Safety Representatives were held in September.

Health and Safety Training

Several employees completed Visual Display Unit assessor training and the quota for assessors needed for the organisation has been reached.

National Standards Authority of Ireland audit

The surveillance audit for the Council's Safety Management System took place. Sections audited included Roads, Water and the Safety Management System. The auditor had no findings - the first time this has happened for the Council. The closing meeting was positive, with the auditor recognising the safety culture of the organisation and the knowledge and the engagement of employees.

Dead of Night Festival

Health and Safety assisted with the event management plan for the Dead of Night Festival which took place in Connolly Barracks on 31 October.

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

The following meetings took place:

13 September	Corporate Policy Group (CPG)
14 September	Protocols and Procedure Committee
14 September	Longford County Council
26 September	Granard Municipal District (MD) Granard MD Committee
27 September	Longford MD Longford MD Committee
28 September	Ballymahon MD Ballymahon MD Committee
11 October	CPG
12 October	Protocols and Procedure Committee
12 October	Longford County Council
17 October	Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
18 October	Governance SPC
19 October	Climate Action and Planning
20 October	Strategic Infrastructure SPC
24 October	Longford County Council Committee
25 October	Ballymahon MD Ballymahon MD Committee
25 October	Granard Municipal District Granard MD Committee.
26 October	Longford MD Longford MD Committee

Disability awareness training and an elected members workshop were also held in September and October.

Community & Enterprise

Communications

Press Releases

Twenty-seven press releases were issued in September and October. These included:

- Longford Community Safety Plan 2022-2024 launched by Minister Helen McEntee TD
- Public consultation for the Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029
- Better Estate Awards 2022 winners announced
- Halloween in Longford Dead of Night Festival returns

Media Enquiries

Communications received and replied to 22 media enquiries in the months of September and October.

Communications Working Group

The first and second monthly Communications Working Group meetings were held in September and October. Representatives from sections across the Council outlined what is coming up for their section in the following month. This allows the Communications team to better plan and support each sections' communications.

Halloween in County Longford

Communications were involved in the promotion of how to have a safer Halloween in County Longford this year. This included Dead of Night Festival, which got a new logo, and a dedicated Halloween section on Longfordcoco.ie. Within this online space, practical advice on how to keep your pets safe and how to protect your environment during Halloween was given.

Social Media

Social media continues to be an effective communication. In September and October, Communications shared updates on things that are happening around the county, including the Longford Culture Night, Longford Multi-Cultural Show and Our Kids Code events. Through social media, information on different funding was also shared, including how to apply for the latest Sports Bursary. The Council also shared national campaigns including information on Make Way Day and Reuse Month.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Posts and Stories	224	186	124
New followers	488	53	82
Reach/Impressions	126K	28.9K	37K

*Reach: number of people who had a post enter their screen

**Impressions: number of times a post entered a person's screen

Events

Events held in September and October included:

- Garda Youth Awards
- Official visit of Romanian Ambassador Dr Laurentiu-Mihai Stefan

Data Protection

Nine data protection queries were closed in September and October. Data Protection delivered improvements to cookie transparency on Longford County Council websites.

Data Protection delivered data protection guidance on recording images at events. Section records for processing activities for 2022 took place. Guidance and advice was provided in relation to data protection impact assessments. There were also file management improvements made in Corporate Services.

Infrastructure, Housing & Innovation

Social Housing

Changes to Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme

Following Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme eligibility criteria revisions, an updated application form and Tenant Information Handbook is available on Longfordcoco.ie.

The criteria changes include:

- a revised minimum income from €15,000 to €12,500 per annum, and
- the time an applicant is required to be in receipt of social housing supports to qualify for the scheme has changed from one to 10 years

Applications received on or after 1 February 2022 will be assessed in accordance with the new requirements. Applications received before this date will be assessed in line with previous requirements.

Pilot Caravan Loan Scheme

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage extended the pilot Caravan Loan Scheme to the end of 2022. The Scheme supports the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation. It provides loans to members of the Travelling community to purchase a caravan or mobile home on halting sites for use as their primary residence.

This expanded scheme increases the loan amount available. Loans are offered at a preferential rate based on the ability to pay and the lifespan of the purchase. Application forms are available on Longfordcoco.ie.

Summary of Social Housing Assessments

Social Housing Assessments continued in October, with all assessments to be completed by 1 November.

Data collected will then be reviewed for a submission to the Local Government Management Agency in late November.



Choice Based Letting

Housing are currently planning to routinely advertise properties available for letting under the Choice Based Letting scheme from November. Choice Based Letting provides for efficiency and transparency in the allocation process. Advertising will initially focus on properties in the Longford Town area.

Infrastructure, Housing & Innovation Water

Find and Fix Programme

The Find and Fix team are operating in the Ballinalee, Newtowncashel and Colehill district metered areas (DMAs). Significant water leakage savings of approximately 5,000 litres per hour have been achieved through leak detection activities.

The Find and Fix team also installed network improvement infrastructure, such as additional bulk water meters, flow loggers and sluice valves to aid water conservation.



Capital Network Schemes

A 2023 priority list for network watermain rehabilitation schemes and backyard or lead service replacement schemes has been submitted to Irish Water. This will aim to maintain and improve the water network within the county.

Water also continues to liaise with Irish Water on the following capital network rehabilitation schemes:

- Reservoir cleaning and repair, with the cleaning of the Carrowmore now complete
- Ballywillan to Creevy, Granard replacement of problematic watermain, which is also complete

Fire

Health and Safety

There are no injuries to report. The Fire Service also retained its accreditation ISO:45001 accreditation as part of the National Standards Authority of Ireland audit of the Longford County Council Safety Management System.

Operations:

There were 55 callouts in September and 29 up to 26 October. All stations remained fully operational.

Longford and Edgeworthstown units attended a major fire at a Longford town premises. Lanesborough, Longford and Ballymahon units attended a major road traffic accident.

Fire Prevention

Eight fire safety certificates have been processed for October. Nine court licence applications were also processed.

Recruitment:

Applications have been received for Lanesborough fire brigade. The Station Officer position in Granard has been advertised, with applications received.

Equipment

Tender documents have been received and reviewed for new fire tunics. The six-month statutory inspection for all equipment has been completed by Irish Engineering Services.

Training

Pump training was completed in five fire stations. One person completed Compartment Fire Behaviour training in Exeter.

Planning & Project Delivery

Regeneration

Longford Connected

Longford Connected is underway with construction ongoing at the Market Square, Grafton Court and Longford Shopping Centre carpark. The main body of the work is due for completion by the end of November, with some works at the shopping centre carpark continuing to mid-December.

These works will improve connectivity and accessibility between established focal points in the town centre. There will be high-quality paving, enhanced signage and dedicated wayfinding elements. The pedestrian experience will also be enhanced with improved surface treatments, more efficient lighting and new street furniture and soft landscape installations.

The publicrealm2022@longfordcoco.ie email address has been set up to address operational queries, such as works programme and traffic and pedestrian arrangements.



Active Travel

Several active travel schemes are complete. The entrance to The Mall in Longford Town now has a raised crossing giving priority to pedestrians. At Marian Avenue and Auburn Park in Edgeworthstown, two raised priority crossings were installed, along with junction tightening works.

There is a pedestrian and cycle link to the N63 at Ballyminion, and a light segregation cycle scheme along Granard road in Edgeworthstown which links to St Mary's School. Works are underway on the construction of a footpath at Legan and on the Cloone Road in Drumlish.

Rural Working Hub and Enterprise Space, Abbeyshrule

Redevelopment of Abbeyshrule's old canal stores into a rural working hub is ongoing, with expected completion in December. It will offer individual and co-working spaces. The project also includes a purpose-built unit for Abbeyshrule Canoe Club.

This is an example of a project to bring vacant and derelict buildings in towns and villages back into active use. It creates space for economic and enterprise development within the community.

Newtownforbes Bog Walk

Newtownforbes Bog Walk is complete, creating a 2km looped walk around the village, through agricultural land and forestry. Beehives and benches are installed along the trail also.

The Council worked closely with the local community, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Coillte for this project. It is part of the work by the local community to raise awareness of biodiversity.

Planning & Project Delivery

Planning

County Development Plan

Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 policies and strategies are being implemented. Design and print consultants have been engaged.

Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan

Issues paper public consultation is underway for the Longford Local Area Plan (LAP). Consultants for Longford Town Local Transport Plan (LTP), Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the Longford Town LAP and LTP are engaged. Work is progressing on the Longford Town Transport Study.

Active Travel and Regeneration

Guidance continues to be provided to the Active Travel team for the Mall Park bridge eastern access, the dog track and church street proposals. Part 8 planning applications are currently live.

Guidance has been provided for design work undertaken on the preparation of a regeneration drawing for the dog track (Part 8). This is for presentation to the Municipal District elected members in November.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Several Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) reviews are underway. Planning reports on the acquisition of semi-derelict properties and provides administrative backup relating to CPOs, working with Housing, Regeneration and legal representatives.

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve proposal is out to tender for consultants to prepare the UNESCO application.

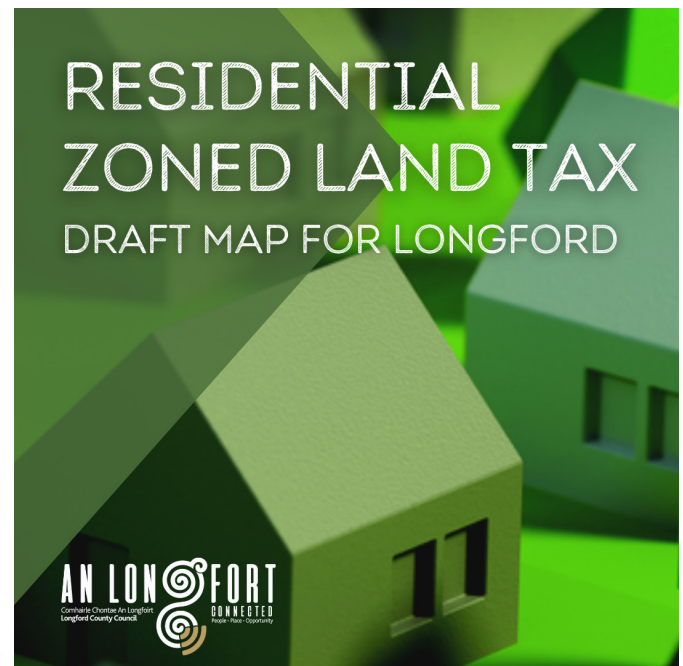
Planning Applications, Enforcement, Mid Shannon Wilderness Park

There are several large planning applications being considered by the Planning Section at present. The Enforcement section's work continues.

Work with external bodies on the designation of the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park as a designated UNESCO site is also ongoing.

Residential Zoning Land Tax

Planning is currently working on the statutorily-required map for the Revenue Commissioners under the Residential Zoning Land Tax legislation.



Planning & Project Delivery

Climate Action Initiatives

Library, Heritage and Archives

Within the Age Friendly Information Day welcome pack, 16,000 pollinator friendly bulbs were distributed to attendees. This pack also included an Age Friendly hat, and Healthy Ireland, Winter Ready and Citizen Advice information.

Libraries are currently reviewing their event programme and, where possible, including events on the late-night opening of the participating library branches. This is an effort to reduce the energy bill for each of the libraries.

From October, library employees will be submitting meter readings for all library branches to ensure an accurate energy bill.

Library employees are part of both the climate action and the energy teams in Longford County Council. Library employees then ensure the information gathered at these meetings is circulated to all library employees.

Regeneration

Works are ongoing in Longford Town to promote an enhanced and accessible pedestrian-prioritised environment. This promotes walking as the primary transport mode within the town centre. Interconnected initiatives will promote inward investment in the core area in the longer term. This will support sustainable and compact urban growth that helps public transport development and prioritises walking and cycling.

Active Travel

The Active Travel team, working within the Regeneration section, seek to reduce dependence on cars and decrease the numbers of cars on roads. It aims to do this by giving people an attractive and safer option so they can leave the car at home on daily commutes and other journeys. Their work will bring other benefits including:

- reduced noise from traffic
- improved air quality
- improved mental and physical health
- increased social interaction
- reduced congestion
- zero carbon emissions
- more affordable modes of transport



CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

Management Report for October 2022 prepared in accordance with Sec 136 (2) of the Local Government Act 2001, as inserted by Sec 51 the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The report outlines key aspects of our service delivery and performance in October 2022 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed:



Paddy Mahon
Chief Executive





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Longfordcoco.ie

A Longford County Council Publication 2022