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Comhairle Chontae An Longfoirt
Longford County Council
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# Chief Executive Report
## October 2026

Longford County Council

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# Highlights

## Retirement of John McKeon, Director of Finance

John McKeon, Director of Finance with Longford County Council, retired in October after ten years of dedicated service as Director of Finance, ICT, Innovation and Emergency Services. John achieved national recognition for developing the 'Longford Model' which helped to unlock grants and funding for many regeneration and capital projects. Indeed, the 'Longford Model' became so successful that it was replicated by numerous local authorities throughout Ireland and John's unwavering commitment and dedication leaves a lasting legacy in Longford County Council. Well wishes were extended at the October meeting of Longford County Council and a farewell event also took place in Áras an Chontae to mark John's retirement.











# Highlights

## Leadership in the Age of Superhuman Technology- Local Enterprise Office Longford

Business owners, entrepreneurs, public sector leaders and community stakeholders from across Longford gathered at the Longford Arms Hotel in October to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping leadership, innovation and economic development. Organised by the Local Enterprise Office Longford, the 'Leadership in the Age of Superhuman Technology' event examined how organisations can prepare for rapid technological change while ensuring people remain at the centre of decision-making.

The event featured a keynote conversation between internationally recognised writer, entrepreneur, journalist and technology innovator Mark Little and acclaimed Irish journalist, broadcaster and author Carole Coleman. Together, they explored the opportunities and challenges presented by AI and discussed the leadership qualities that will be most important in an increasingly technology-driven world.

Mark Little, founder of Storyful and co-founder of Kinzen, shared his perspectives on the transformative impact of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies across society, business and public services. Drawing on his extensive experience at the forefront of digital innovation, he highlighted the importance of trust, adaptability and human-centred leadership.












# Highlights

## Longford County Council wins at the annual All-Ireland Occupational Safety Awards 2026

Longford County Council was announced as the winner of the Regional Award (Midlands) the Exceptional High Achiever Award at the Annual All-Ireland Occupational Safety Awards 2026.

Longford County Council received the prestigious awards at the 35th Annual NISO All-Ireland Occupational Safety Awards, held at the Great Southern Hotel, Killarney, on Friday, 09 October.

These awards celebrate outstanding health and safety workplace standards. Longford County Council has consistently been recognised as a top performer at these awards, with award wins every year since first entering in 2014.

The award ceremony is run by the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO) in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG).





# Regeneration and Active Travel

## Regeneration

### Connolly Barracks Reimagined

Works are now underway on the Connolly Barracks Reimagined project following the appointment of Bretland Construction and signing of the construction contract in September. The contractor has mobilised to site, with initial works including site establishment, clearance, services investigations and opening-up works within the existing buildings.

Connolly Barracks Reimagined is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ERDF Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-27.





### Regeneration Funding

September and October saw a number of positive developments across the Council's regeneration funding programmes. €900,000 was awarded under the Towns and Cities Regeneration Investment Fund (TCIF) for the Lower Main Street Public Realm Enhancement Scheme in Longford Town. The Council also submitted eight applications under the 2026/27 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), comprising six Measure 1 applications and two Project Development Measure applications. The 2026 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was also launched locally, with Expressions of Interest invited from communities across the county for projects supporting the regeneration and development of Longford's towns and villages.

### Derrycassin Woods Car Park

Construction was completed on the Derrycassin Woods Car Park and associated visitor infrastructure project, delivered under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) to improve accessibility, visitor management and user experience at one of County Longford's most popular outdoor recreation amenities. Located on the shores of Lough Gowna, Derrycassin Woods comprises over 6km of woodland trails and significant natural and heritage features, attracting more than 20,000 visitors annually according to independent footfall monitoring. The project supports the continued growth of nature-based tourism within Ireland's Hidden

# Regeneration and Active Travel

Heartlands while enhancing public access to a valued community asset that promotes outdoor recreation, along with health and wellbeing.



## Active Travel

### Ballymahon Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

Works are now nearing the second month of the construction phase on the Ballymahon Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme. The new surface water drain has been installed within the existing carriageway from Nally's Garage up to near the vocational school. Works have shifted to service duct installation between St. Matthew's NS and Dr. Coyne's old house in recent weeks with temporary traffic lights being removed from the carriageway for a period. Works are also underway on the front boundary treatment to Dr. Coyne's house. New kerbing is set to be installed to the front of St. Matthew's NS during the school Halloween break.

### StonePark to Silver Birches Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

Construction works are ongoing on the new shared pedestrian and cycle facility linking the housing estate at Silver Birches to Stonepark school and GAA grounds. Most of the new surface water carrier drain has now been installed along with service ducting for public lighting and telecoms. The shared path formations are progressing from the Silver Birches estate towards the GAA grounds.

### Drumlish Junction Tightening measures

Works are now substantially completed on the old school road junction at the Garda Station in Drumlish. This has seen the installation of a new raised uncontrolled crossing for pedestrians across the junction along with permanent junction tightening kerbing, landscaping and drainage. The reduced junction width works to slow traffic and shorten the road crossing distance for pedestrians on a new raised coloured surface.

### New Raised Zebra crossing Aughnacliffe

A new raised zebra crossing has been installed on the L1039 Rathmore road at Forthill, Aughnacliffe. This crossing will serve the residents of Forthill, the Dolmen estate as well as the créche but it will also act as a significant traffic calming feature for traffic approaching the village along this road.



# Regeneration and Active Travel

## Safe Routes to School

### Scoil Bhríde Killasonna

Works are now complete by Longford County Council's area staff on traffic calming and school zone features for the school. Works have involved the re-alignment of the Abbeylara Road junction adjacent to the school along with coloured road markings, additional street lighting and signage and resurfacing works. In the last month, two new speed ramps have been installed on both approaches to the school to serve as a traffic calming measure around the school.

### St. Earnan's NS Killashee

Works are now complete on the school zone in the vicinity of the school. The completed works now feature extended footpaths, a new raised zebra crossing, speed ramp, additional public lighting, road markings and signage. This marks phase one of the Safe Routes to School initiative for the school. Phase two of this project will be rolled out in the coming months and will involve further traffic calming features and footpath connections along the N63 approach route to the school.



### Round 5 schools announced

In the last month, two new additional schools were added to the Safe Routes to Schools programme in Longford. These schools are Meán Scoil Mhuire, St. Joseph's Road, Longford Town, and Scoil Eimear, Templemichael, County Longford.

This brings to 11 the total number of schools announced through this programme in Longford. It is expected Round 5 schools will go to construction in Summer 2028.



# Town Centre First

## CANVAS

Longford County Council Town Centre First Department has been successful in its application to become part of the Horizon Europe CANVAS project which kicked off in Vienna in October. CANVAS aims to transform and reimagine public spaces, by prototyping and demonstrating beautiful, inclusive, and sustainable street furniture solutions. Guided by the New European Bauhaus principles, the project seeks to strengthen local identity, inclusivity, and resilience while addressing societal and environmental challenges. Across eight pilot sites in diverse European cities, including Longford, the project will prototype and demonstrate inclusive, sustainable solutions that improve comfort, safety and accessibility year-round, integrate nature-based shading and planting, circular materials and low-maintenance design rooted in local heritage, and offer modular, adaptive features that serve diverse users. Connolly Barracks Parade Square is the pilot site identified in Longford with the proposal seeking to support and complement the redevelopment of the former Officer's Mess currently underway through THRIVE funding.



## Funding

Applications were submitted over the summer months under Just Transition START funding and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for projects in Granard and Newtownforbes. The outcome of those applications is awaited.

Negotiations are currently underway in relation to the purchase of property in Ballymahon funded under Town and Village Renewal Scheme Building and Land Acquisition Measure.

Photos below of the Newtownforbes project and vision for the site:






## Derelict Sites

Longford County Council continues its work to tackle derelict and vacant properties, with significant progress already made this year. A total of 11 properties have been subject to derelict site levies in 2026, building on a number of enforcement actions taken throughout 2025.

The Council continues to prioritise this area as neglected buildings have a direct impact on communities, affecting safety, appearance, and local confidence. Through

# Town Centre First

active enforcement and strategic interventions, Longford County Council is working to transform unused sites into assets that contribute to thriving towns and villages. The Council's initial focus is on town centres and re invigorating town centres.

Under the Derelict Sites Act 1990, the Council has a clear set of tools to address problem sites, including:

- Issuing notices requiring owners to clean up or improve their properties
- Taking legal action where owners fail to comply
- Using Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) when appropriate to ensure longterm dereliction does not continue unchecked
- The Council's approach combines enforcement with support. The aim is not only to address dereliction but also to encourage renewal, encourage owners to take action, and bring properties back into use—whether for housing, business, or community benefit.
- The Vacant Homes Team continues to engage with individuals in relation to supports through the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and evidence of this is visible throughout the county with many vacant and derelict properties being brought back into use.

## Vacant Homes Unit

Under the new Housing Plan, Delivering Homes, Building Communities a commitment was given by Government to provide additional support for the refurbishment and conversion of above the shop vacant space for use as homes.

The Vacant Homes Unit is consistently working with the public to support the upgrading of vacant and derelict properties throughout the County. The recently expanded Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant offers significant financial support for refurbishing of vacant or derelict properties. New expanded grants are:

- VPRG – Above the Shop Grant
- VPRG – Commercial to Public Use Building
- Expert Advice Grant Scheme

### Update on the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant as follows:

- Total Applications 325,
- 102 paid out to date
- 217 Approved in total
- 37 Withdrawn
- 18 Rejected

### Update on three new schemes as follows:

Above the shop Scheme:

Three applications received to date.

Commercial to Residential:

No applications yet.

Expert Advice Grant:

Two applications received.

# Tourism

## Ireland, Home of Halloween and The Samhain in the Heartlands Programme

September saw the official launch of the Samhain in the Heartlands programme of events which is taking place across counties Longford, Westmeath and into Roscommon. The launch took place on 10 September in Dún na Sí in Moate.

The programme is supported by Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland with Longford Westmeath included as one of seven hubs nationwide, alongside two key festival offerings: Púca in Meath and Derry Halloween.

While the planning and promotion of the Samhain in the Heartlands programme has been underway since February, significant progress was made throughout September particularly around coordinating stakeholders, supporting event organisers, refining visitor experiences and preparing marketing and promotional material to maximise opportunities for visitor engagement during the Halloween period.

Building on the summer launch of the Samhain Trail map and the launch of the SamhainHeartlands.ie website (a shared platform between the two counties), the marketing campaign underway throughout September and October has included publicity on national and local broadcast and print media, largescale billboard presence, digital advertising on public facing screens across both counties, roadside information screens and targeted press releases. A vivid and engaging social media campaign has also been underway linking social platforms for Samhain in the Heartlands with Visit Longford and Visit Westmeath to maximise reach and messaging opportunities. This has been amply supported by Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and Tourism Ireland platforms. All local events have also been listed on DiscoverIreland.ie

The programme kicked off in early October with events taking place all over the three counties. The final event of Samhain in the Heartlands is also the national season finale with the Samhain Fire being lit on The Hill of Uisneach in Loughnavalley at "An Tairseach – Samhain ar Uisneach" on 7 and 8 November.

The Longford Westmeath hub was also selected for a number of additional marketing and publicity opportunities this year as part of the Ireland, Home of Halloween campaign with multiple visits of content creators, influencers and film crew taking place through the month of October and continuing into the month of November.

Representatives also promoted the overall Ireland, Home of Halloween programme as part of a two-day pop up in Terminal Two of Dublin Airport.

# Tourism

Longford's Home of Halloween programme showcases the county's rich folklore, heritage and cultural assets.








## Destination Marketing

Longford Tourism continued the delivery of coordinated destination marketing activity throughout September and October, promoting local attractions, events, heritage experiences and outdoor offerings through digital channels, visitor publications and media partnerships. Preparatory work was also completed for key autumn and Halloween campaigns, positioning County Longford as a destination for seasonal short breaks and cultural tourism experiences.

## Tourism Product and Destination Development

Longford Tourism through VisitLongford.ie continued to support and promote the development of new and emerging visitor experiences and tourism enterprises across the county. In-person engagement took place with project promoters and stakeholders regarding tourism accommodation, heritage attractions and experience-based tourism opportunities aimed at strengthening the county's tourism offering and supporting sustainable visitor growth.



# Tourism






## Strategic Planning, Budget Management and Partnership Development

September and October included ongoing management of tourism budgets, advertising schedules, promotional contracts and tourism support initiatives. Collaborative work continued with Fáilte Ireland, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands partners, tourism businesses and community organisations to identify future funding opportunities, strengthen destination development and support delivery of strategic tourism objectives.

## Festival and Community Event Support

Tourism continues to work closely with community groups, festival organisers and tourism stakeholders in supporting the delivery and promotion of cultural, heritage and seasonal events across the year. These initiatives drive bed nights and contribute to local economic activity while enhancing the visitor experience and strengthening the county's year-round events calendar. The 2027 round of funding for Festivals and Events will open on Thursday, 12 November with applications being accepted until Thursday, 10 December. For full details see Longfordcoco.ie/Services/Tourism

## Future Tourism Development and 2027 Planning

Alongside current programme delivery, work commenced on future tourism development initiatives including destination enhancement projects, signage, research and collaboration on interpretation, tourism product development, event planning, funding opportunities and promotional activity for 2027. Focus was placed on building on the success of Home of Halloween, strengthening digital promotion and identifying opportunities for national and international market growth.

# Tourism

## Night Time Economy

Significant work is underway through Night Time Economy on the delivery of the Ireland, Home of Halloween Samhain in the Heartlands programme. The programme has already resulted in an incredible weekend of live music, business and activity for Longford's Night Time Economy.

From Thursday 22 October right through to Sunday, 25 October, Longford Town was buzzing with activity and fantastic crowds across the October Bank Holiday Weekend. With Spooky Live podcasts, Aindrias de Staic & the Latchikos, the Sunshine Sessions in Clarke's Bar and the headline gig of Boys from the Black Stuff featuring Mundy in a tribute to the music of Shane MacGowan, it was a fantastic line-up!

It was brilliant to see so many people out enjoying Longford, supporting local venues and making the most of everything happening in our town. The One at One bus service was again well used. The feedback gathered from attendees at the gigs has also clearly demonstrated the appetite for live music performances in Longford.













# Tourism

## EU Just Transition Tourism Activator Activity

EU Just Transition Tourism Activator Colm Croffy noted that the Fáilte Ireland and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands have now commenced their detailed conclusion strategy for the formal winding down of the Just Tourism Transition Activator Programme to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands at the end of December 2026 with the 79 remaining projects across the territory.

- Each Just Transition Tourism Activator is to do a detailed situational analysis of the project and in what ways it may need supporting through its final concluding months of construction / commissioning and opening.
- Situationally, of the 13 remaining live projects to the county, eight are concluded or in the very final stages of being drawn down, seven are still progressing, with all of the progressing ones achieving a timeline review until March 2027.
- Many of those who were able to trade during the latter end of the summer reported very strong demand.
- The Training of Volunteer Visitor Guides in June was offered to all in the Network and the five community sites as well as the PPN. Training concluded with the field trip on Sunday, 17 October and involved very stimulating and encouraging visits to the Fr Flanagan Centre in Ballymoe, County Galway; Lanesborough; Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre, and Abbeyshrule with a final visit to Longford's newest visitor attraction the 'Retail Therapy Museum.'












- On 30 September, the five Community Sites and Lough Ree Access For All took part in the first ever Schools Marketing programme at the Curragh Racecourse with over 50 Schools and some 4,000 Transition Year

# Tourism

Students. Longford was the only County to have Heritage and Activity Sites marketed at the show and interest is keen.









- The EU Just Transition Tourism Activator continues to liaise with all project promoters, regularly and has dealt with and advised a number of private promoters on developing their tourism proposals past planning and into feasibility.
- The Services/ Facilities emerging map of the Lough Ree Cluster Area is being finalised.
- The JT Activator in facilitating Tourism and Sustainable Community Development in Lanesborough/ Ballyleague with his Roscommon counterpart, delivered a series of "Re-imagining of our Community" Sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday, 22 and 23 September with a view towards a definitive plan for development, priorities, resources and governance to come for amendments.
- A follow up to this exercise involved a briefing evening with businesspeople of the area and a final joint group session on 14 October with a steering group empanelled to prioritise vision operations and governance to be reviewed by both communities in back end of November.
- Final preparations are being made by the Activator to produce a 2.5-day Familiarisation Trip for Key independent Tour Guides and key members of the Travel Writers Trade and Bloggers in the Lough Ree Cluster Discovery Area on for 17/18/19 November. All will be accommodated in Longford to create awareness

# Tourism

of the new EU Just Transition Funding projects and attractions in the area.

- A full programme of soft openings and official opening moments is being worked on for, Q4 and possible Q1 2027 with colleagues in Hidden Heartlands and Fáilte Ireland.
- The EU Just Transition Tourism Activator remains engaged in supporting when called upon to assist with key aspects of general Tourism Promotional Activity and indeed with advice and support to Night Time Economy.

# Community

## Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

A meeting of Longford LCDC was held on 8 September 2026.

## LEADER 2327 Programme

One LEADER project was approved at the September LCDC meeting to a value of just over €47,000 under the theme sustainable development of the rural environment and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

## Longford Comhairle na nÓg

### National Executive

On 19 September 2026 Daithí McLoughlin attended his first meeting as a National Executive member. At the meeting Daithí presented on the work of Longford Comhairle to other Comhairle representatives from around the country. A discussion was held on the areas of work which members would like to focus on in the coming year and the issue which received the most votes was Youth Spaces. Members also received feedback from the Department on the Transport Assembly and members will be represented at the Climate Assembly in October.



Daithí Mc Loughlin Longford Comhairle with members of the Comhairle National Executive.

### Gum Management Litter Event

On 24 September 2026 Comhairle Members attended a Gum Litter Management event in the Market Square. They participated in a variety of activities promoting the purpose of the Gum Litter Taskforce.




Comhairle members with Cathaoirleach Gerry Hagan and members of the Gum Litter Taskforce.

### Garda Youth Awards

Comhairle members had the honour of attending the Garda Youth Awards held on 7 October 2026 in Roscommon Arts Centre. They were nominated for their work in the local community to better the lives of young people in County Longford.




Comhairle members with An Garda Síochána.

# Community

## Healthy Ireland

Healthy Longford launched Longford Dementia Strategy funded by Healthy Longford in collaboration with HSE Older Persons Services.

More than 50 members gathered to celebrate and acknowledge the initiative at the EDI centre in Longford town on 29 September 2026 as part of activities linked to World Alzheimer Month.

Members of nine County Longford men's sheds —affectionately known as shedders—recently came together as part of The Dementia Understand Together campaign 'helping to create communities where people with dementia and their families feel valued, respected and supported'.

The nine local men's sheds received education on brain health with a focus on how small changes can make a big difference and reduce the risk of developing certain types of dementia.

## Longford Community Safety Partnership

Longford Community Safety Partnership held a meeting and workshop on 7 September 2026 to progress the development of the new Community Safety Plan. Preparations are continuing for the launch of the Longford Community Safety Plan in December. The LCSP also attended the Age Friendly Day at the Longford Arms Hotel, engaging with attendees and promoting community wellbeing, inclusion, and local initiatives.



# Longford Sports Partnership

## Sport Inclusion Disability Officer

Longford Sports Partnership was delighted to recently launch the new Inclusive Gym Space at St. Mary's Community Campus & Sports Hub, Edgeworthstown. This exciting project was made possible through funding from the Sport Ireland Dormant Accounts Fund and through the collaboration and support of the St. Mary's Community Campus & Sports Hub Committee and Centre Manager, Laura. The new inclusive facility will provide more opportunities for people of all abilities to participate in physical activity in a welcoming and accessible environment. St. Christopher's Services, Longford have been taking part in a Wheelchair Pilot Gym Programme, and LSP are delighted that additional inclusive gym programmes are now available for adults and teens of all abilities. A special thank you to Shane Crossan from Longford County Council Arts Services, who is supporting the project through funding for artwork in the space. Thank you to everyone involved in bringing this vision to life and helping create a more inclusive community facility for all.








# Longford Sports Partnership

## Outdoor Sports & Diversity Inclusion Officer

Over the month of September, 26 children aged 5-12 years participated in Athletics and Handball sessions at St. Mary's Community Campus, Edgeworthstown. The programme was characterised by excellent attendance, great enthusiasm, and strong participation throughout, with children fully engaging in all activities and enjoying a positive sporting experience. The sessions provided an enjoyable opportunity for participants to develop skills, stay active, and build confidence in a fun and inclusive environment. The energy and commitment shown by the children each week contributed greatly to the programme's success. Given the positive response, it is hoped to deliver a similar programme at another location in 2027. Sincere thanks to tutors, Jenny and Sarah, whose encouragement, dedication, and positive approach helped make the programme such an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.








## ESF+ Social Innovation in Sport Officer

As part of ongoing engagement with the Multicultural Men's Group, a kayaking taster session was delivered in late August/early September. The activity provided participants with an opportunity to try a new outdoor sport in a supportive and inclusive environment. For a number of the participants, this was their first experience of kayaking. The session was well received, with strong engagement from the group throughout. Participation in activities such as this helps to build confidence, encourage social connections, and introduce participants to local recreational opportunities that can support ongoing health and wellbeing. The session formed part of the continued work with the group and contributed positively to participant engagement and inclusion within the community.



# Longford Sports Partnership

## Outdoor Recreation Officer

Longford County Council's membership of 'Leave No Trace' represents a significant positive step in supporting the sustainable development and enjoyment of the county's outdoor recreation resources. This achievement has come about through strong collaboration between Longford Sports Partnership, the Environment Section of Longford County Council, and the Outdoor Recreation function, all working together towards a shared goal of promoting responsible outdoor access and environmental stewardship. Membership of 'Leave No Trace' demonstrates the Council's commitment to protecting Longford's natural landscapes while encouraging greater participation in outdoor activities. It also provides opportunities for staff, community groups, clubs, schools and outdoor enthusiasts to engage with nationally recognised best practice in outdoor ethics, helping to ensure that Longford's trails, waterways, forests and recreational spaces can be enjoyed and preserved for future generations. The ORO recently attended this training in Achill and this feedback will return to LSP.

## Physical Activity Officer for Health Officer

A recent study was published in the British Medical Journal, led in partnership with Longford Sports Partnership and County Longford Council, with funding from Sport Ireland. It examined the barriers and facilitators to physical activity among Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. The research found that discrimination, financial barriers, lack of access to facilities, cultural factors, low health literacy, and limited representation within sports and leisure settings significantly affect participation in physical activity. However, the study also identified strong community networks, culturally appropriate programmes, trusted local services, and community-led approaches as key enablers of engagement. The findings highlight the importance of designing inclusive, affordable, and culturally sensitive physical activity opportunities that are responsive to the needs of marginalised communities.

The findings are particularly relevant to Longford County Council and Longford Sports Partnership, given their ongoing commitment to reducing health inequalities and increasing participation in physical activity across the county. The research provides a strong evidence base for the continued development of targeted community programmes, outreach initiatives, women-only activities, subsidised physical activity opportunities and community-led interventions. Importantly, the study reinforces the value of partnership working between local authorities, health services and community organisations to build trust, improve accessibility and ensure that all communities can benefit from physical activity opportunities. The recommendations align closely with the Council's objectives around social inclusion, healthy ageing, community wellbeing, and the delivery of equitable services for all residents.

# Longford Sports Partnership

King, L., Mulligan, S., & McNally, S. (2026). 'You know they don't want you there': a qualitative study examining barriers and facilitators to physical activity among Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. *BMJ Open*, *16*(9), e115173. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2025-115173

## Community Sports Development Officer

The Cycle Right Programme is currently being delivered across numerous primary schools throughout the county, providing pupils with the skills, knowledge and confidence required to become safe and competent cyclists. The programme promotes cycling as a lifelong physical activity while equipping young people with practical skills in road safety, hazard awareness, signalling, bicycle handling and responsible cycling behaviour. Through a blend of practical and theory-based learning, participants are supported to develop competence and confidence in a safe and structured environment.

At present, the programme is being delivered to 206 pupils across seven schools. The schools currently participating in the programme are Melview National School (37 pupils), St. Michael's National School (35 pupils), Stonepark National School (29 pupils), Drumlish National School (28 pupils), Lanesboro Primary School (26 pupils), Fermoyle National School (26 pupils), and Ballinalee National School (25 pupils). Participation levels have been very positive, reflecting both the enthusiasm of students and the commitment of schools to supporting active travel and physical activity opportunities within their communities. A key strength of the programme has been the quality of delivery provided by tutors Madeline and Brendan, whose commitment, professionalism and ability to engage with pupils have been instrumental in the success of the programme to date. Their experience and enthusiasm have ensured that sessions are both educational and enjoyable, creating a positive learning environment where pupils can develop their cycling skills with confidence.

Throughout the programme, pupils have demonstrated increased confidence in their cycling abilities while developing a better understanding of safe cycling practices. The practical nature of the sessions allows participants to immediately apply the skills they learn, improving bike control, balance, communication and awareness of other road users. Delivery is ongoing and the programme is expected to further enhance cycling competence, promote active lifestyles and support sustainable travel behaviours among participating pupils.

# Environment and Climate Action

## Improvements to Longford County Council Dog Pound

Significant upgrades have been completed at the Longford County Council Dog Pound facility supported by funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) in 2024 and 2025.

The investment has delivered substantial improvements to both animal welfare and operational facilities. External works included upgraded and reinforced fencing, the addition of a fifth outdoor run, and the construction of outdoor kennels within each run to provide protection from adverse weather conditions. Privacy panelling was also installed between runs, reducing stress and helping to minimise aggressive behaviour by preventing dogs from constantly seeing one another.

The sewerage system was upgraded and the front car park was resurfaced with tarmacadam, to facilitate the installation of three new electric vehicle charging points, which were funded under a separate stream.

Inside the facility, additional kennels have been created, internal areas have been refreshed with bright décor, and improvements have been made to the layout to enhance both functionality and animal care. Office and staff facilities have also been upgraded, including new workstations, storage facilities and laundry equipment.

Dog comfort and welfare have been further enhanced through the introduction of raised beds and temperature monitoring, helping to provide a more comfortable environment for dogs while in the care and responsibility of Longford County Council. Security has been strengthened through upgraded CCTV and alarm systems.

These improvements represent a significant investment in animal welfare and ensure that Longford County Council's Dog Pound can continue to provide a safe, comfortable and modern environment for dogs in its care.

Longford County Council acknowledges the funding support provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, which has made these important improvements possible.

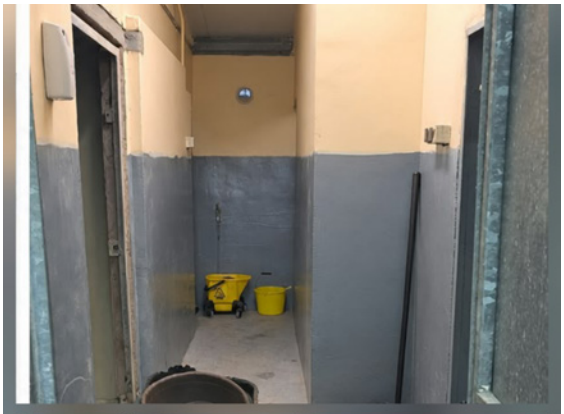


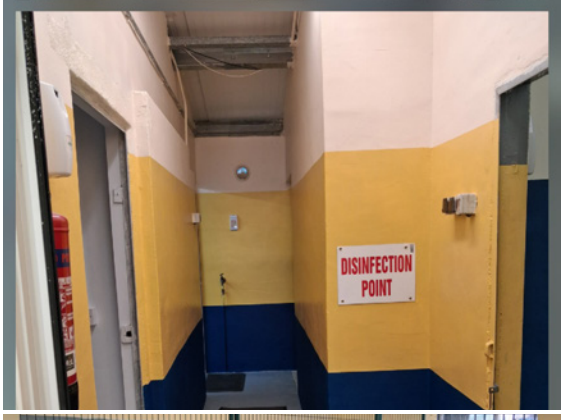


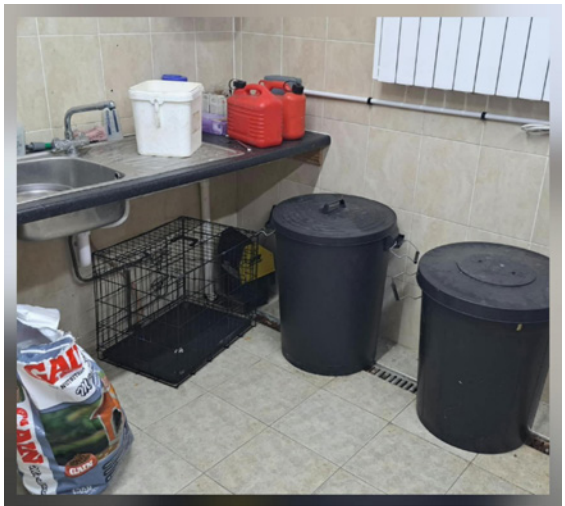


# Environment and Climate Action







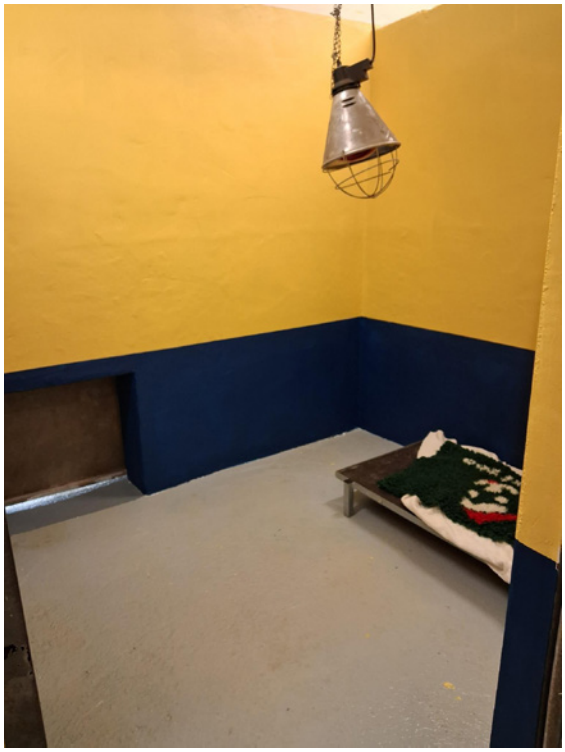









# Environment and Climate Action



## Longford Agricultural Show 2026

The Environment Section attended the Longford Agricultural Show 2026 to promote water quality awareness and encourage environmentally sustainable farming practices. Visitors to the stand received a range of water quality information materials, including booklets, factsheets, and promotional items highlighting good agricultural practices and their role in protecting local water resources.

A water quality competition was also held during the event, attracting a strong level of public interest and participation. Three winners were selected and each received a One4all voucher.

The Environment Section's Dog Control Unit was also delighted to sponsor two classes in the Dog Show. This provided an excellent opportunity to promote responsible dog ownership and raise awareness of the importance of effective dog control, particularly in relation to preventing sheep worrying and protecting livestock.









# Environment and Climate Action







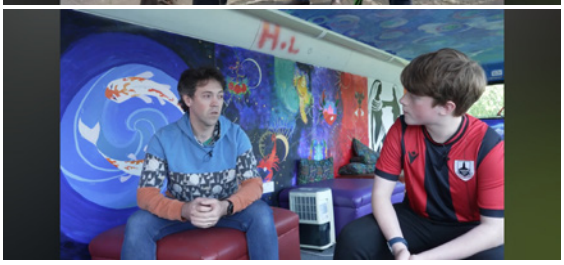
## Local Authority Supports Youth-Led Water Documentary

Midlands Science commissioned a short documentary exploring the importance of water in County Longford. The documentary was co-produced with young people from Attic House Youth Project, a Foróige initiative based in Longford Town.

The project focuses on water quality and biodiversity, encouraging greater awareness and understanding of local water resources. As part of the documentary, Adam Mulvihill, Biodiversity Officer, and Liam Rabbitte, Executive Scientist, Environment Section, generously contributed their expertise and participated in the filming.

The documentary is scheduled for launch in November 2026 and highlights the valuable role of young people in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability within their communities.





## Longford County Council Water Action Tracker

The Longford County Council Water Action Tracker showcases the work being carried out across the county to protect and improve water quality in support of Ireland's Water Action Plan 2022-2027.

The tracker provides an overview of local water quality, highlights the main pressures affecting rivers, lakes and streams, and outlines the measures being taken to address these challenges. It also demonstrates the role of Longford

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County Council in improving water quality through environmental monitoring, enforcement, catchment management, project delivery and community engagement.

Actions recorded within the tracker include river and catchment assessments; farm and septic tank inspections, public awareness campaigns, and collaborative projects focused on river restoration, nature-based solutions and invasive species management.

To make information more accessible and transparent, a dedicated Water Action Tracker webpage was launched on the Longford County Council website in September 2026. The webpage provides regular updates on local water quality priorities, ongoing actions and progress made across the county.

The Water Action Tracker reflects Longford County Council's commitment to protecting water resources, enhancing biodiversity and supporting sustainable communities for future generations.

## Targeted Clean Ups

The Environment Section completed an €18,500 Anti-Dumping Initiative project to address several locations across County Longford affected by persistent illegal dumping of household, bulky, commercial and construction waste. The accumulation of waste had resulted in environmental degradation, visual blight, pollution risks, and public health and safety concerns, while placing an ongoing demand on Council resources.

The project successfully removed 21.4 tons of illegally dumped waste, restored the affected sites, improved local amenity, and reduced environmental and public safety risks. The works have delivered positive environmental and community benefits for County Longford while supporting the Council's objectives in relation to environmental protection, waste management and the sustainable stewardship of public spaces.

The locations will continue to be monitored by the Environment Section through ongoing inspection and enforcement programmes. Where evidence of illegal dumping was identified, appropriate enforcement action is being pursued.





# Environment and Climate Action

## Longford Primary Schools Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Grant Scheme launched

Carla McGoey, Environmental Awareness Officer, has launched the new Longford Primary Schools Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Grant Scheme. Subject to a successful application process, schools will be eligible for grants ranging from €500 to €1,500 to support projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Green-Schools Programme. The scheme will fund practical initiatives that promote responsible resource consumption, waste prevention, energy efficiency, biodiversity enhancement, and environmental awareness within the school community. Successful projects must be completed by the end of May 2027. This initiative will empower schools to take meaningful environmental action, fostering a culture of sustainability and environmental stewardship among young people across County Longford.

## Longford County Council Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT) Campaign Launch

As part of ongoing environmental awareness initiatives, the Environmental Awareness Officer, Carla McGoey coordinated the Longford County Council Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT) Campaign Launch on 23 September 2026 in Market Square, Longford Town. The campaign emphasised the importance of responsible gum litter disposal and highlighted the potential for a €250 litter fine. The campaign was officially launched by Cathaoirleach Cllr Gerry Hagan, with attendees including representatives from St. Mel's College, Meán Scoil Mhuire, Templemichael College, Longford Comhairle na nÓg, and members of the Environment Section Team. Participation in this important national campaign secured a range of promotional supports for County Longford, including poster, digital, and radio advertising. The launch received coverage in the Longford Leader and was also promoted through Longford County Council's social media channels, helping to raise awareness of the environmental and financial impacts of gum litter. The campaign successfully engaged young people and the wider community, encouraging greater responsibility for litter prevention and contributing to a cleaner, more attractive County Longford.






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## Knowledge Transfer Talks

To support the protection and improvement of water quality across County Longford, a series of Knowledge Transfer Talks were delivered by Longford County Council's Agricultural Inspector. Ten two-hour presentations were provided to more than ten farmer discussion groups, reaching over 120 farmers from Longford and surrounding counties.

The sessions focused on the importance of water quality protection and outlined the regulatory framework governing agricultural inspections. Farmers were informed about the purpose of inspections, the areas typically assessed, and what to expect during an inspection. Practical guidance was provided through photographic examples of both good and poor farming practices, encouraging discussion on measures that can help reduce impacts on local watercourses.

Supporting materials, including booklets and factsheets, were distributed to attendees to provide ongoing reference and practical advice. The talks promoted awareness of best practice in nutrient management, farmyard management, slurry and manure handling, and the protection of rivers, streams and groundwater.

This collaborative approach helps farmers better understand their role in protecting water resources while supporting the long-term sustainability of agriculture and rural communities throughout County Longford.





## Longford Town Community Allotment Opening

On Thursday, 15 October, the Longford Town Community Allotments (LTCA) were officially opened. The event took place during Ireland's Climate Action Week and marked the beginning of a major community-led project on a previously unused two-acre site off the old Dublin Road at Aghadegnan. It offers people a place to grow fresh food, learn practical skills and meet others from across the community. The LTCA is a collaboration between Longford County Council's Climate Action Team, Longford Community Resources CLG and the Longford Town Community Allotment Committee. The project received

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funding from the Housing Finance Agency, the Local Environmental Action Fund, and the Longford Town Decarbonisation Zone Demonstrator Fund. The Housing Finance Agency's Social Investment Fund supports projects that improve neighbourhoods, promote inclusion, and improve quality of life.











## Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) Report Launch

Longford County Council officially launched the Longford Town Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) Report on Monday, 19 October, marking a significant milestone in Longford's ongoing commitment to climate action. The launch formed part of Climate Action Week, highlighting the importance of local leadership and community engagement in addressing climate change. The Decarbonisation Zone Report outlines the extensive range of actions already underway across Longford Town to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency, promote sustainable transport and strengthen community climate resilience. The report identifies Longford Town as a key climate action testbed, showcasing practical measures that can be replicated throughout County Longford and beyond.






# Environment and Climate Action

## Halloween Costume Swap

As part of Climate Action Week, a Halloween Costume Swap was held in the Temperance Hall to promote the circular economy and encourage sustainable consumption. The event provided an opportunity for the public to exchange pre-loved costumes, reducing waste and extending the lifespan of clothing rather than purchasing new items. The initiative demonstrated how simple changes in consumer behaviour can contribute to a more sustainable local economy and support climate action objectives. The Climate Action Team would like to thank all Longford County Council employees who donated costumes and accessories, helping to make the event a success.







## 2026 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition

The results of the 2026 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition were announced on 23 October at an awards ceremony in Croke Park, hosted by Marty Morrissey. The awards were presented by Dara Calleary, Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, together with representatives of SuperValu, the competition's long-standing sponsor. This year's competition attracted 936 entries from communities across Ireland, recognising the invaluable contribution of volunteers who work throughout the year to enhance their local environment, biodiversity, sustainability initiatives and community spaces.

County Longford was well represented in the 2026 competition, with 26 towns and villages participating. The county continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental improvement, biodiversity enhancement and community-led action. Communities of all sizes took part, ranging from Longford Town and Ballymahon to smaller rural villages such as

# Environment and Climate Action

Abbeyshrule, Newtowncashel, Abbeylara, Clondra and Stonepark.

Congratulations to all 26 towns and villages who participated in the competition. The breadth of participation highlights the ongoing dedication of TidyTowns volunteers across the county and their significant contribution to creating cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities. The competition remains one of Ireland's most successful community initiatives, celebrating the efforts of local groups in making their communities better places to live, work and visit.



# Fire Service

## Training

- One recruit successfully completed a QQI Accredited Using Breathing Apparatus (Initial Wearer) course in Hacketstown from 7 September – 18 September.
- Five, one day BA Refresher Courses to be held in Tullamore Training & Development Centre.

### Postponed Courses due to Industrial Action

- Two-day Working at Heights Instructor Course to be held in Lanesborough Fire Station.
- Three firefighters to attend a HYDRA Effective Decision-Making Course in Clonmel.

## Operations

- A total of 79 call outs for the month of September - October 2026 period.

## Fire Prevention & Dangerous Substance Licensing

- Two Fire Safety Certs were processed in September - October 2026.
- One Disability Access Cert was processed in September - October 2026.

## Recruitment

- Interview held for firefighter position in Lanesborough – One successful candidate.
- Two Driver Mechanic posts filled in Granard & Lanesboro.
- Recruitment is ongoing to fill the six outstanding vacancies across three Fire Stations (Ballymahon, Granard & Lanesboro).

## Equipment

- Tender successfully completed for three new incident support vans and one jeep.
- New decontamination tents purchased.
- Additional charging units for new Hand Portable Radio equipment.
- 32 new sets of training kit purchased.

## Major Emergency Management

- Midlands Region Working Group Meeting at TUS Athlone on Thursday, 3 September 2026
- Evacuation and Rest Centre Regional Training Exercise was planned for Saturday, 3 October 2026 in Mucklagh Community Centre, Tullamore, County Offaly but this was postponed due to industrial action. A new date will be scheduled and communicated to all participants as soon as it has been agreed.

# Fire Service

- Information Management Course to be held in Mullingar on 13 October 2026.
- Midlands Major Emergency Management Working Group meeting at Custume Barracks, Athlone on 28 October 2026.

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