DIGITAL
strategy 2021-2023

Centred & Connected
DIGITAL LONGFORD

AN LONGFORT

Comhairle Chontae An Longfoirt
Longford County Council

CONNECTED
People · Place · Opportunity

Longford Connected Communities

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'Longford Centred & Connected' is the blueprint for bringing digital into all aspects of life in Longford and in doing so, creating a connected, inclusive and dynamic future for all its citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

Longford Centred & Connected, is the title for the Longford Digital Strategy. It will coordinate all activities for the development of a collaborative digital society and economy over the coming three years to the end of 2023. Being the first Digital Strategy for the county, Longford Centred & Connected will create the foundation, and set the direction, for digital development in the county over the coming decade. The strategy will build on existing resources, knowledge, networks and plans to create **a blueprint for bringing digital into all aspects of life in Longford and in doing so, creating a connected, inclusive and dynamic future for all its citizens.**

Longford Centred & Connected will also act as a resource for supporting core priorities and plans as set out in the local policy and strategy context. For example, the LECP, CDP, Area Action Plans, Sector Strategies, Climate Action Plans, Urban & Rural Development Plans, Tourism & Recreation and the Local Authority Corporate Plan.

Most importantly the Digital Strategy will inform future strategic planning and policy to help shape Longford in the future. It will also reflect and embrace what is happening with digital at a national and international level including the roll-out of e-Government Strategy and other strategic actions. Ultimately the Digital Strategy must ensure that local communities and economies are making the most of digital for their competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability.

Why Develop a Digital Strategy?

Digital Workspaces
Modern, efficient, collaborative & connected workspaces & hubs to serve flexible work trends, remote workers and entrepreneurs.

High Speed Broadband
The NBP will roll-out high speed broadband to every home and business in rural areas and BCP's & Public WiFi in the short-term.

Utilising Digital Technologies
The use of digital technologies such as IoT, Apps & local data to support planning & inform sector strategies & promote to Longford.

Access to Digital Skills
Every citizen, community and business will be able to access digital learning in their locality.

Set Targets for Digital
The Council will set targets for digital development of services e.g. e-planning / housing and internal IT/IS practices e.g. Cloud / Sharepoint.

It is worth noting that, in advance of a number of strategy prescriptions, Longford has already made significant strides to deliver digital solutions internally in local government Information Systems and interfacing with citizens, clients and stakeholders. A number of online services and tools have been launched in recent times including ePlan, Electoral Register, Longford 'Open Data Portal' (covering a variety of data sets) Longford Nua (APP to share local community led information using UGC). Longford is also participating on the HEAnet Eduroam platform for access to online services for researchers and students. The platform provides secure access for users from any location.
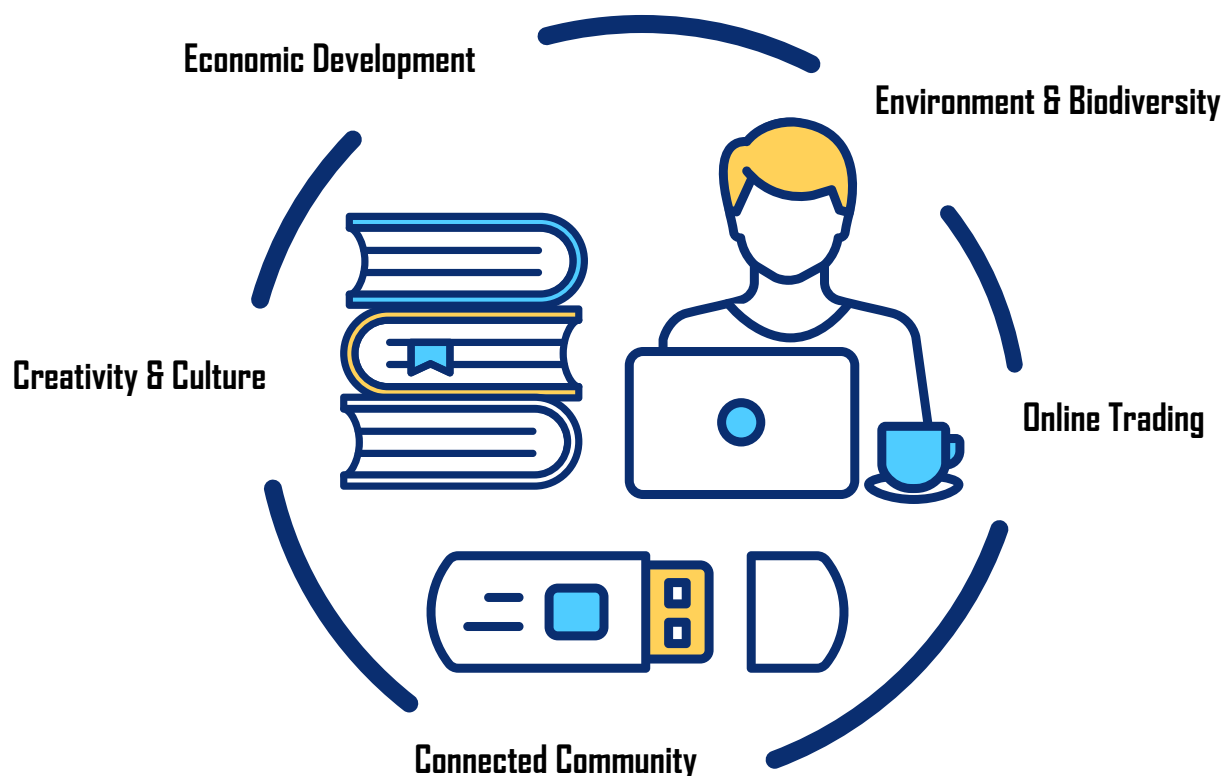
Longford is also a partner in an EU Learning Network with organisations from Finland developing best practice around **Rural Working Hubs** to support rural enterprise and community development initiatives e.g. Smart Communities. Longford is also participating on the EU Interreg project **next2met** through EMRA to find solutions for regions close to large metropolitan areas to assist them attract enterprise and investment through soft digital solutions. Another exciting digital initiative led by the community in Longford is the DELSA project which supports digital empowerment through digital skills in an innovative way. It is a European wide Erasmus+ project with the Longford Women's link (LWL) as the local partner.

Longford is transforming the public facing aspect of the local authority through its websites www.longfordcoco.ie and www.longford.ie to make engagement more relevant and informative in an interactive medium. Longford County Council is now routinely interacting with, and assisting, citizens on with a multitude of digital applications and tools.

A critical intervention by Longford County Council, in conjunction with National Broadband Ireland (NBI) under the Connected Communities Initiative, is the activation of 8 Broadband Connection Points (BCP's) in rural areas to deliver high speed WiFi ahead of the rollout of the NBP to individual homes and businesss. A full profile of the BCP's and their role in supporting digital and smart communities is provided in the strategy section of this report (pages 22 & 23).

Key Themes that a Digital Strategy will address

Economic Development

Environment & Biodiversity

Creativity & Culture

Online Trading

Connected Community

COVID-19 Implications for this strategy
The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly changed the way we work and interact. Digital resources will aid collaboration, effective communication and relationship building. Local Authorities have a key role to play in supporting their employees and local SMEs looking for solutions to retain their staff and keep productivity in a climate where 'the office' is partially restricted. Policies around remote working were already in formulation from a wider regional development objective but now the COVID-19 Crisis has brought this into sharp and rapid focus. Hub's and other workspaces can offer a blended work model to accommodate functions that remote workers can't do from home but also offers employers a 'dispersed office' solution with potentially significant savings in cost, time and carbon terms. More widely, local authorities and community partners can play a crucial role by supporting a 'Digital Recovery' through Smart Community Initiatives, Local Digital Strategies and implementation of the national Remote Work Strategy (Making Remote Work - January 2021) at a local level.
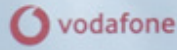
THE DIGITAL CONTEXT

The internet and digital devices and services now provide us with an endless set of opportunities. It provides us with free communication resources like email, video conferencing, instant messaging and social media. It allows to stream entertainment content from any device at any time. It helps us save money on the cost of services and transactions and finding the best prices and products.
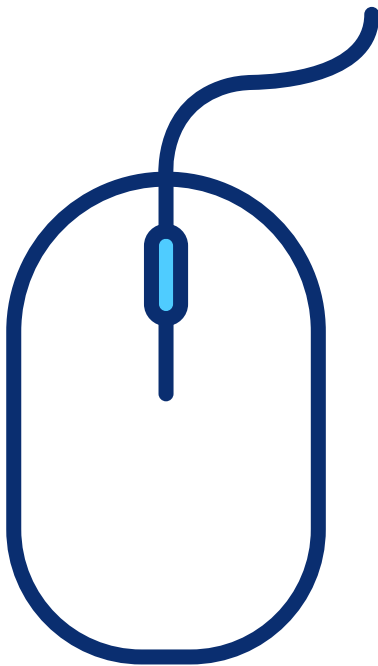
The Digital Society

We are increasingly bound in the digital society, in which every aspect of our lives is profoundly affected by digital applications; the digitalisation and proliferation of data; how we communicate, socialize, work, learn, stay healthy and participate in politics and the economy.

Digital technologies are rapidly evolving and emerging to advance each of these factors. A healthy digital society will promote opportunity and access, protect citizens, drive efficiencies and knowledge and support better and more democratic policy making.

The Digital Economy

The digital economy has rapidly become the real economy with digital products, services and resources defining enterprise and commerce rather than just an element of the economy. All industries are undergoing digital transformation and the largest corporate organisations in the world have built their fortunes on it, over the past decade. Digital ecosystems are redefining the enterprise landscape. Tech giants have become the drivers of economic growth and value creation.

The Digital Citizen

Digital Citizenship is a term used to define the appropriate and responsible use of ICT in society. It is an important area of policy and regulation to ensure that democratic structures, systems and norms are upheld and citizens rights and opportunities are protected. Three principles underpin the digital citizen; respect, educate, & protect.

Digital Transformation

Digital Transformation (DX) refers to the integration of digital technology into all areas of an organisation resulting in fundamental changes to processes and operations and delivering value to customers, clients, citizens and internally to the organisation and its workforce. Longford County Council has embraced the Digital Transformation challenge with a strong sense of focus and delivery in recent times and is now a leading local authority in the areas of Open Data, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), cloud IT & document management and virtual communications tools.

Smart Communities

Digital technology can help to create places and communities that manage spatial development, population growth, mobility, effects of climate change and transition to greater sustainability.
Smart Communities will promote safety and liveability, and connect communities. In Longford, Smart Communities Initiatives will play a key role in the areas of rural regeneration, agri-tech, sustainable energy networks, tourism & heritage promotion, health & wellbeing and a range of other local priorities. Appendix 2B provides illustrative information and guidance on Smart Community Initiatives.

THE DIGITAL POLICY AGENDA

The Digital Policy Environment

Phase 1 of the National Digital Strategy sets the foundation step in helping Ireland to reap the full rewards of a digitally enabled society. It focuses on cross-government measures, trading online and entrepreneurship, citizen engagement and education & learning. The strategy focuses on promoting digital technology take-up, digital skills development and increasing the level of citizen interaction with government and online services and information.

The Public Sector ICT Strategy aims to improve the use of technology and in so doing, improve service delivery to customers of Government services. It includes designing eGovernment around customer needs, digitalisation of key transactional services and the increased use of ICT to deliver improved efficiency within Government organisations and provide new digital services to citizens, businesses and public servants on a Build to Share principle for integrated ICT infrastructure.

The EU's Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) has been in existence and evolution for almost a decade and is one of seven flagship initiatives under the Europe 2020 strategy. It focuses on technologies and online services that will allow Europe to create jobs and promote economic prosperity. It aims to improve the daily lives of EU citizens and businesses through the realisation of the Digital Single Market.

The headline areas of digital progress under the DSM goals are:
1. Connectivity (Broadband & Telecoms Infrastructure);
2. Human Capital (Digital Skills & Literacy);
3. Use of Internet Services (Digital Participation);
4. Integration of Digital Technology (Enterprise adoption of ICT & Innovation);
5. Digital Public Services (Accessible and Efficient e-Services).

Progress towards the Digital Agenda and the Digital Single Market are also measured and monitored annually by the National Digital Scoreboard.

At the EU level the policy towards digital development is evolving to incorporate the Digital Decade to 2030 and an EU Digital Compass, both building on the 2020 EU Digital Strategy which seeks to promote 3 key goals – (1) Technology that works for the people; (2) A fair and competitive Digital Economy; and (3) An open, democratic and sustainable society.

National Digital Strategy Phase 2

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 includes a commitment to the completion of a framework for the development of a new National Digital Strategy (NDS) to provide a coherent view across sectoral policies to position Ireland to maximise economic and societal benefits from digitalisation. It will develop policy and action around four key strands

Strand 1 – Trading Online & Entrepreneurship for indigenous businesses.
Strand 2 – More Citizen engagement
Strand 3 – Education & eLearning
Strand 4 – Cross-Government measures & eGovernment Strategy

National Broad Plan (NBP)

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) was signed on 19th November 2019 with National Broadband Ireland (NBI) to build, operate and maintain the network. The rollout will involve the delivery of fibre connections to 537,595 rural homes, farms, businesses and schools.

In the first phase fast fibre infrastructure will be delivered to over 300 community centres, schools, library, hubs and local sports facilities in the intervention areas, known as Broadband Connection Points (BCP's) under the Connecting Communities Initiative.

Longford's 8 BCP's are outlined on pages 22 & 23. The BCP's will enable communities to quickly get free public access to high speed broadband while the NBP itself is being rolled out to individual homes, businesses and other facilities. It is worth noting that almost 1.9m homes and premises across the country are already connected, or to be connected, with fibre broadband by commercial telco and utility providers.

Remote Working Report / Future Jobs Ireland
The DETE launched the first national strategy around Remote Working in January 2021 (Making Remote Work) which formulates government policy towards accommodating flexible and responsive models for work and competitiveness. The strategy has significant implications and opportunities for local and rural communities and the role they play through Co-working Hubs and Enterprise Hubs in shaping their future. This policy will form a core part of the digital agenda and economic development for Longford and other largely rural counties over the coming years.

Future Jobs Ireland is a strategy and framework of focused medium-term ambitions which form a key part of Ireland's future economic agenda. It is the most prominent piece of national policy for employment creation and enterprise stimulation over the coming decade. Future Jobs Ireland, along with Project Ireland 2040, Global Ireland 2025 and the Climate Action Plan represents an integrated approach to prepare for the opportunities and challenges of the future economy.

Five Key Pillars of Remote Working
1. Embracing Innovation and Technological Change
2. Improving SME Productivity
3. Enhancing Skills and Developing and Attracting Talent
4. Increasing Participation in the Labour Force
5. Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy

A number of other national policies and strategies related to a digital development agenda, including:

- eGovernment Strategy 2017 to 2020
- Remote Work in Ireland–Future Jobs Ireland 2019
- Our Public Services 2020
- Irelands National Skills Strategy to 2025
- The Digitalisation of SME's in Ireland 2019 (DBEI)
- Mobile Phone & Broadband Task Force Report 2017 & Progress Reports

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Project Ireland 2040

Building Ireland's Future

gov.ie/2040

Longford Connected Communities

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STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Analysis of Longford's Digital Context

This section will examine a number of areas of digital development in County Longford together with information gathered and assessed through consultation and other areas of research conducted in the development of this strategy.

County	Total No. of Premises	NBP Connections	Commercial (already done)	Scheduled commercial
Longford	22,540	8,698	13,842	121
National	2,391,559	537,595	1,838,932	15,032

County Longford National Broadband Plan Map

Key
NBP
COVERSTAT
AMBER
BLUE
LIGHT BLUE

LONGFORD DIGITAL strategy 2021-2023
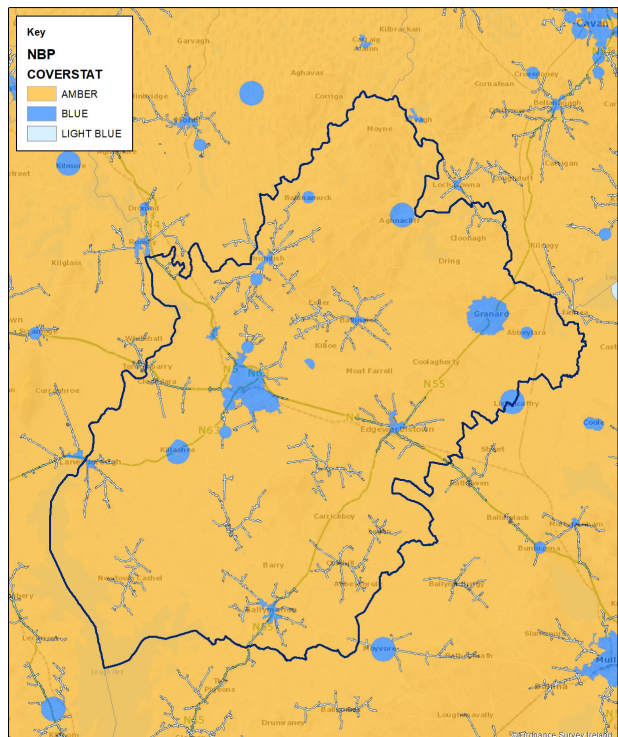
39% of all broadband connections will be delivered through the NBP Intervention in County Longford, as a percentage of overall premises in the county. The total investment in the county will be circa €32m and will include FTTH and other fast broadband solutions to 8,698 homes, business premises, farms, schools and community facilities. As the county broadband map shows there is a significant commercial coverage in Longford around populated urban areas. The intervention rate under the NBP is significantly higher than the average for the state at 22% but is less than that of some comparable midlands counties. For example, Leitrim has the highest intervention rate in Ireland at 52% followed by Roscommon at 49% while Cavan has roughly the same NBP coverage as Longford at 38% of all premises. Interestingly Westmeath is much closer to the national average at 26% owing largely to its population concentration and distribution across two large urban areas. The county has a fairly extensive fibre infrastructure around the urban centres. In Longford Town there is a high speed fibre service with speeds of up to 400 Mbps in operation and a number of other services providing up to 150mbps to businesses and homes in the non NBP intervention areas delivered by a variety of local and national broadband providers.

Longford Digital Readiness Index / Assessment 2018
As part of the Local Digital Strategy process at the local authority level a Digital Assessment assignment was under taken by Indecon Consultants in 2018 supported by the DRCD. The assessment led to the full Digital Readiness Index being produced in July 2018 of each county or city council area which measured digital development on a series of criteria and indicators.
Helping counties and cities move towards Digital Maturity is the core objective of the DRI and allowing for managed and monitorable progression through the stages of development. Central to this progression, and connected to the section above on NBP, is digital connectivity and infrastructure as this will ultimately allow for access and participation online. The summary scoring on the 7 pillars of digital development or maturity for Longford were as follows:

Pillar I: Transitioning to Digital, Longford was classed as Formative
Pillar II: Digital Economy & Employment, Longford was classed as Developed
Pillar III: Digital Skills, Longford was classed as Emerging
Pillar IV: Digital Services, Longford was classed as Emerging
Pillar V: Infrastructure, Longford was classed as Formative/Emerging
Pillar VI: Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Longford was classed as Developed
Pillar VII: Community & Culture, Longford was classed as Formative

Appendix 4A presents the results of the full Digital Readiness Assessment of County Longford.

Consultation & Engagement
The consultation and engagement for the Longford Digital Strategy has a number of strands and some preceding the strategy assignment itself. The core strands of consultation are presented below in chronological order:
• July 2018 > Digital Readiness Assessment engagement with Indecon Consultants
• June 2019 > Digital Workshop with LCC department heads and key stakeholders
• July – Sept 2019 > Digital Strategy surveys with citizens, businesses and not for profit orgs
• Oct 2019 > USEFE Digital Briefing for Business with Minister Canney, Ballymahon
• Feb 2020 > Digital Futures Community Workshops in Granard, Ballymahon & Longford

Key Priorities & Messages
Appendix 4B provides full details of consultation process and outcomes. The SWOT analysis highlights the key points and findings from the consultation process together with other research.

SWOT Analysis of Longford's Digital Position

STRENGTHS

Location & Accessibility of county for investment and remote working is positive inc good transport connections E/W and improving N/S;

Regional Partnerships and collaborations in USEFE & AEC benefiting from programmatic funding and resources for digital;

High levels of Entrepreneurship & Selfemployment are evident in Longford which is a strong basis for the digital economy;

Higher than average population and employment growth rates showing natural regeneration trends;

A strong and committed partnership structure and progressive and inclusive local authority;

Growing tourism product, capacity and reputation with a diverse offering covering experience, heritage, attractions etc;

A good network of connected towns & villages gives Longford a service & resource spread.

● ○ ○ ○ ○

WEAKNESSES

Low population base will make service delivery difficult and inefficient;

Low in key Digital measures - innovation; skills; digital integration in business. Below average score in DRI;

Low or no clustering at present in tech sectors – but signs of emerging tech community around hubs e.g. Hive;

No IOT / Tech Uni present in county and limited post-secondary education provision;

Secondary location for FDI and small numbers of large SME's;

Rural decline evident in many rural towns & villages in Longford – vacancy rates, aging population and service decline.

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OPPORTUNITIES

Digital Strategy provides of new model of innovation and collaboration;

Longford Connected Regeneration project will drive Digital/Creative cluster development in Longford Town;

BCP's offer new meeting, social and information points in the community for local collaboration;

Increasing capacity to harvest 'green energies' especially through Smart Communities Initiatives and Just Transition Funding for Midlands region;

Digital Strategy implementation will drive Digitalisation of Public Services;

Global growth in the digital economy and Longfords's positioning for investment capture;

Smart Initiatives across the county through partnerships and community ownership; External Digital Champions forum as ambassadors for digital in their community.

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THREATS

Potential lack of resources to drive the development projects to desired level;

Potential lack of partnership from key stakeholders and community groups;

Competition from other regions to capture investment in digital sectors and knowledge services;

Macro-economic climate and threat of recession – Covid 19 & Brexit in particular;

Talent retention and development for Longford's benefit will be challenging.

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National Broadband Plan

www.broadband.gov.ie

What is the National Broadband Plan?

The National Broadband Plan is a government strategy designed to deliver high speed broadband services to all businesses and households in Ireland.

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Central and Connected
Digital Longford

LONGFORD DIGITAL STRATEGY

Strategy Rationale

Longford will use this Digital Strategy 'Longford Centred & Connected' to bring together a number of actions and objectives from the community and civic society, enterprise, education, cultural and environmental fields and apply a digital dimension to all aspects of development. Longford County Council will lead on the activation and implementation of the digital strategy. However, a range of partners from the statutory and community sector will be fundamental to the partnership for digital development.

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Digital Champions from across civic society, the business community, education and other fields will help bring the digital agenda to their networks and ensure that the projects and resources are relevant and targeted to meet the objectives of Longford Centred & Connected.

Values & Guiding Principles

The strategy must reflect the principles and qualities of our position in the world and what we stand for. In this regard, Longford is positioning itself as an open, inclusive and progressive place that will promote change and continuous learning. We have identified four values that embody our vision and are cornerstones for guiding our strategy over the coming three years. These values are designed to inspire and provide uniqueness of purpose for the strategy and its partners.

Inclusive & Progressive
Longford will use the digital Strategy as a means of promoting inclusiveness and a progressive society to reach out to all it's citizens and support their ambitions and integration for the betterment of the county and its profile.

Tourism & Visitor Service
Longford is home to the largest tourism facility in Ireland, Centre Parcs. There are many other attractions & assets in the county that sits at the centre of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Longford Connected will promote the county as a must visit location.

Embracing Change & Technology
Longford Connected will signal a new era in development and change with digital and technology at the fore. The strategy will create a strong sense of openness to new ideas and the adoption of a digital future in all aspects of life in Longford.

Learning & Skills
The digital skills agenda is the future of new skills and learning. All training and reskilling will be digitally led. Longford will ensure that all citizens and businesses are able to access the skills they need for a digital world.

Vision Statement
"Longford Centred & Connected is the blueprint for bringing digital into all aspects of life in Longford and in doing so, creating a connected, inclusive and dynamic future for all citizens"

Strategy Pillars

The strategy pillars are where the values, priorities and objectives are turned into action and projects. The strategy pillars are the themes that represent groups or categories of activity. It helps to communicate the strategy and provide channels of projects and activity that can be managed and monitored in a more organised manner. The Strategy Pillars are also a reflection of the needs of the community or target groups that are being addressed by the strategy. They allow for a headline to frame the detail that lies beneath. Our strategy Pillars are consistent with what the strategy is attempting to achieve, in both a national policy context and specific local terms. They are also created from what the needs and opportunities are on the ground.

The four strategy pillars for Longford Centred & Connected are as follows:

Pillar 1: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity

a. NBP rollout / Telecoms infrastructure & 5G / Service
b. BCP's & WiFi4EU / Public WiFi hotspots and investment in IoT technologies
c. Digital Hubs investment in digital facilities and connectivity

Pillar 2: SMART Communities

a. Digital Skills & Literacy programmes targeting all sectors of the community.
b. Citizen Engagement & Awareness of digital – Digital Champions / BCP's / Schools / other community touch points.
c. Smart Initiatives & Data – Creating a Smart Longford through initiatives that are collaborative, technology led & address local need & opportunity.

Pillar 3: Digital Economy & Enterprise

a. Digital Skills for Business – engagement with business by type and sectors to identify digital skills gaps and perform a training needs analysis.
b. E-commerce & Digital Marketing – Online Trading Voucher's, social media and digital marketing support, networks of knowledge / know-how.
c. Tech Clusters & Entrepreneurs – services & supports to embed & enhance the digital ecosystem in Longford – replicating the success of the leaders.
d. Digital Hubs & Remote Working – current and future needs for accommodating startup's, entrepreneurs and remote workers?

Pillar 4: Digital Transformation

a. Council leadership in digitalisation and e-service delivery – leading by example
b. Internal IT systems integration and cloud based – training for staff
c. Development of single portal for engagement with citizens

Longford Centred & Connected Strategy Framework (The Pillars)

Pillar 1: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity	Pillar 2: SMART Communities	Pillar 3: Digital Economy & Enterprise	Pillar 4: Digital Transformation
NBP Rollout & Information; Public WiFi Hotspots; Digital Infrastructure & Assets Register; Digital Champion.	Digital Skills & Literacy; Citizen Engagement & Participation in Digital; Smart Communities Initiatives (multi-themed); Digital Champions.	Digital Skills for business; New Tech & Innovation; Digital Hubs / Remote Working; Digital Networks & Champions.	Digitalisation of public services / eGov; Internal IT / IS Transformation; Digital Champion.

The graphic above is an illustration of the type of activity that will be planned and implemented under each of the key thematic pillars of the strategy. These activities and projects will have different timelines and different lead partners as well as different funding and resource requirements. In essence, the project portfolio for the Longford Centred & Connected Strategy will reflect priorities, capacity, resources and readiness.

This is Longford's first digital strategy and as such it will have a three-year lifespan (2021 – 2023) to reflect the need for building capacity and tackling immediate priorities. Naturally this strategy will be revised in 2023 with a further three-year strategy and plan produced at that stage.

The graphic below provides a visual timeline of the strategy in action over the initial period with key action identified as the strategy matures over its lifespan.

Longford Centred& Connected Activity Plan

Build Capacity & Momentum

BCP Activation Plan & Public WiFi Hotspots
Digital Skills Needs Assessment conducted
Covid 19 Digital Recovery Policy – focus on LEO clients & Remote Workers
Local Authority e-Services Plan (Longford DX)
Longford Digital Diaspora – online events, content, information & support

Implementation

Longford Smart Communities Operational Plans & activation
Digital Innovation Fund Future Projects plan
Host national seminar on Digital Transformation (DX) in local government
NBP Strategic Review – 2 year Progress

2021 **2021** **2022** **2022** **2023**

Development

Digital Strategy in place
Digital Forum established
Digital Champions identified & recruited
Smart Communities networks & Initiatives identified / scoped
Longford Centred & Connected Virtual longford.ie full integration & Longford 'Open Data Portal' expansion

Implementation

Visit Longford Touch screens in public spaces and across Libraries Network
Digital Skills Rollout (Business & Citizen)
My Open Library rollout + ICT Fitout
Longford Remote Working Portal on Longford.ie & via LEO service
Enterprise Hub / co-working provision

Review & Refocus

Continue implementation of all activity
Review rollout of digital supports – training / TOL Vouchers / Workplace Innovation etc
Review Smart Communities Initiatives for impact and value added
Scope future priorities for LC (part 2)

LONGFORD DIGITAL strategy 2021-2023

What will Longford Centred & Connected look Like?

The activity and projects will define Longford Centred & Connected. This activity will also form the basis of the partnerships, collaborations and networks that will now form around the strategy.

Again, the Digital Forum and network of Digital Champions is a critical first step and the binding for the strategy as it is phased out over the coming three years. The illustrations below provide a snapshot of the project activity and the rationale for that action under Longford

Centred & Connected.

Community Cohesion & Community Learning

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
Longford will utilise its BCP's and Library network to support and promote digital opportunities for citizens

Longford has a modern and well used library network. Libraries have been at the forefront of community learning, civic events and a range of collaborative projects for many years and will continue to lead this function in the digital age through Longford Centred & Connected. The BCP Network will also provide communities with local venues for digital services.

Longford will utilise its BCP's and Library network to support and promote digital opportunities for citizens. Longford has a modern and well used library network. Libraries have been at the forefront of community learning, civic events and a range of collaborative projects for many years and will continue to lead this function in the digital age through Longford Centred & Connected. The BCP Network will also provide communities with local venues for digital services.

Much of the community focused activity of Longford Centred & Connected will build on the work and projects being pursued by the Longford Libraries Service and the Longford PPN around community learning and building capacity in the community sector to undertake new initiatives.

Longford has identified 8 rural Broadband Connection Points (BCP's) under the DRCD Connected Communities Initiative. In addition to these community broadband points there will be 9 fast WiFi connections in rural primary schools in the NBP intervention area. These connection points will add a new layer to the community infrastructure and capacity in developing digital solutions and learning. The BCP's will deliver 150 Mbps broadband and will act as a public WiFi network in the communities they serve. The map and table on the following page profiles the locations of the BCP's in the local communities.

The Smart Communities Initiatives will provide further supports and funding for communities to drive local community development and cohesion projects from local sustainable energy projects to tourism, culture and heritage initiatives and health & wellbeing or sports and recreation activities in the community.

New Apps and other digital supports will activate greater information, data and communication for communities to plan activity and deliver benefit to their citizens. Greater community cohesion and opportunities for collaboration will come through an invigorated and digitalised network of community facilities in the form of the BCP's in the most isolated part of the county. New Public WiFi hotspots in town and villages will add vitality to the centre of the communities as the post offices and pubs have done in the past and open new possibilities for technology to make these spaces more attractive, informative and safer places to inhabit and congregate in.

Broadband Connection Points in County Longford

There is a full profile and information section on www.longfordcoco.ie devoted to the rollout of community broadband Longford Connected Communities - Broadband Connection Points - LongfordCoCo
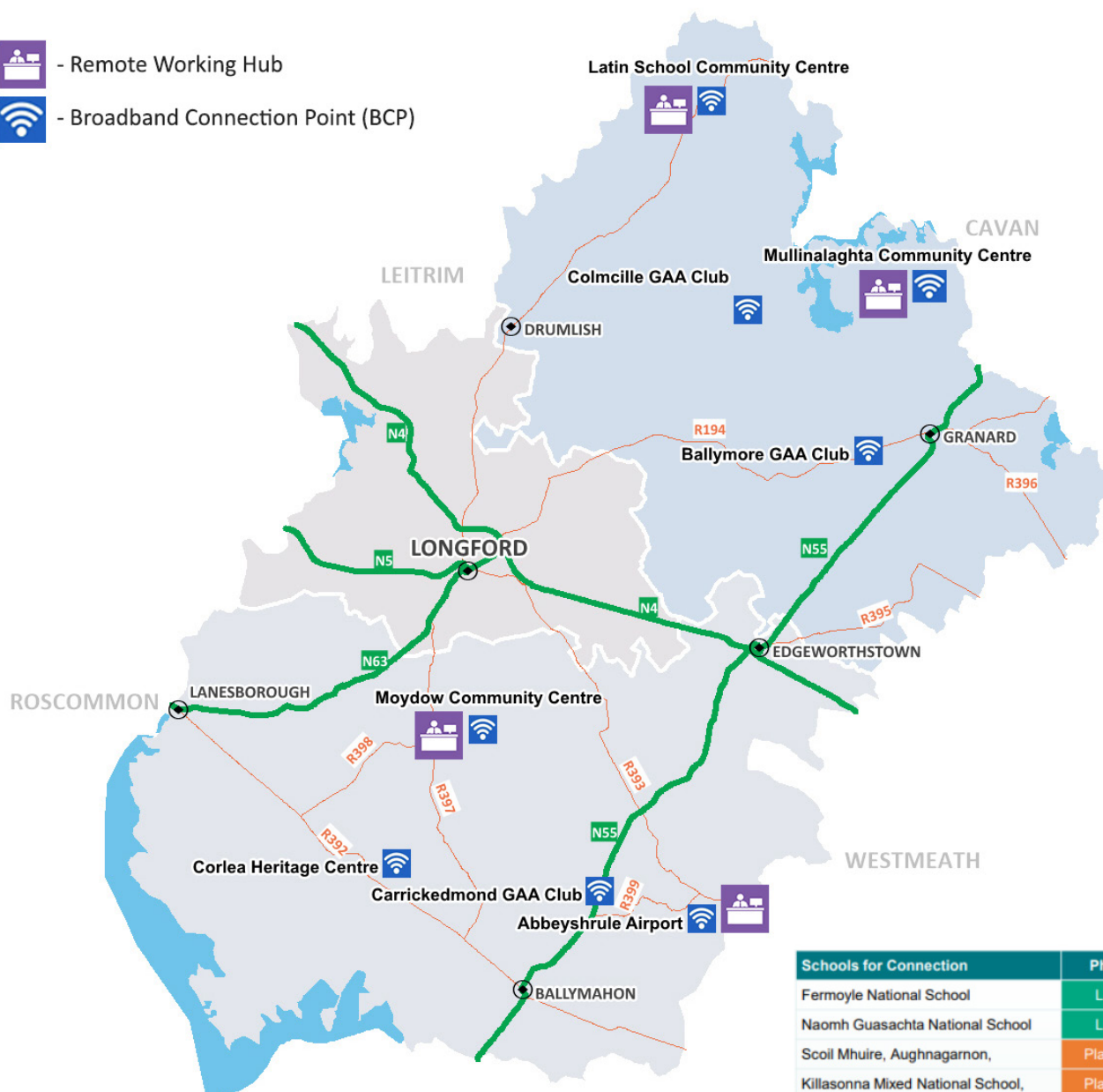In addition to the 8 BCP's there are 11 fast WiFi connections in rural primary schools in the NBP intervention area in Longford which will not operate as public access WiFi points but exclusively for educational purposes. The table below provides a list and status.

- Remote Working Hub

- Broadband Connection Point (BCP)

Schools for Connection	Phase
Fermoyle National School	LIVE
Naomh Guasachta National School	LIVE
Scoil Mhuire, Aughnagarnon,	Planned
Killasonna Mixed National School,	Planned
Naomh Earnain N S, Killashee,	Planned
Muckerstaff National School,,	Planned
Gaigue National School, Gaigue,	Planned
Scoil Bhríde, Glen	Planned
Forgney National School,	Planned
Saint Patrick's National School,	Planned
Cloontagh Mixed N S	Planned

DIGITAL ECONOMY & ENTERPRISE

Digital Skills | Digital Innovation | Digital Workspaces | Digital Networks

There has been extensive engagement with the business community around enterprise supports and the digital agenda. Planning for start-up and remote working Hubs and Tech Enterprise Networks is ongoing. Longford LEO is leading on the digitalisation of SME's through a number of support schemes including Covid 19 response and Longford Business Online.

Longford is a progressive partner in the Midlands Ireland 'Gateway to Growth' initiative and in the delivery of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (Powering the Regions). Workspace provision and Remote Working supports are a key part of this as well as investment readiness and talent and skills development.

Building digital clusters and sector networks will form much of the efforts over the coming years to help embed a culture of innovation and collaboration in the enterprise base in a true digital ecosystem in Longford.

Longford will use this digital strategy to build strength and capacity in the digital economy and it enterprise base. Harnessing talent and knowledge in niche areas of strength to attract external investment and sustain a dynamic enterprise base. This will include a vibrant start-up community, a critical mass of large firms, R&D and innovation, specialised 3rd level education programmes, a dynamic and skilled labour market, and proactive support network.

This can only be done by offering entrepreneurs an outstanding suite of services and some compelling quality of life factors in order to compete with other locations. Alongside this focus on attracting digital and technology talent from outside the county, this strategy will create awareness and support structures for local companies in the digital / technology space to identify commercial innovation and collaboration opportunities to Longford.

An example of this type of investment is 'The Yard Hub' project in Abbeyshrule village which involves the redevelopment of a derelict site to create a new village hub. The facility will create space for enterprise and remote working. It will also enhance the heritage and visitor amenity along the Royal Canal Greenway to the village of Abbeyshrule and the county. The Yard Hub will provide an opportunity for local people currently commuting to Dublin and other large urban centres to work remotely and bring activity to the village centre.

Another technology focused enterprise hub is currently being created in Edgeworthstown. The 'co:worx' facility will open later this year providing space for up to 40 tech entrepreneurs in a coworking environment as well as IT and digital training through its collaboration with Athlone IT Learning Gateway. The co:worx hub will also help with town centre regeneration by utilising the former Ulster Bank premises on Main St which has been closed for over three years.

This strategy recognizes the scope for flexible enterprise space and co-working facilities in other locations in the county where need and resources are identified. This could incorporate some of the 8 BCP's and other multi-functional service centres, visitor centres and community hubs. In particular, Longford town and Lanesborough will present opportunities for the creation of new facilities and services through town centre regeneration initiatives currently under development. Longford hosted the launch a new 'Grow Remote' Chapter on 23rd September 2020. The chapter will support remote workers through network development, information and awareness of remote working positions and access to services and other supports.

IMPLEMENTATION & MANAGEMENT

The scheduling of project activity under Longford Centred & Connected is the subject of a more detailed implementation plan. The following section outlines the general approach to governance, management, delivery and monitoring over the coming three years.

1. Establishing the Digital Forum (Steering Group) and appointing / inducting the panel of Digital Champions.
2. Communication and negotiation with policy & delivery partners.
3. Scoping the scale and resources to drive each project or action.
4. Scheduling the projects into a portfolio plan (short – medium – long-term)
5. Marketing & Awareness of Longford Centred & Connected internally and externally.

The schedule below provides a brief profile of the project activity under Longford Centred & Connected highlighting the project by Pillar and it lead partner(s) and timescales for delivery. More detailed project portfolio's will be developed into a project management plan at the time of implementation.

Project Implementation Schedule

Project Title	Strategic Activity	Lead Partner	Timescale
Pillar 1: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity			
NBP Progress Reporting	Quarterly updates and briefings on the rollout of the NBP across Longford to be presented to the Governance SPC.	DCCAE, & Longford CC	Ongoing from 2021
BCP & Public WiFi networks	Delivery of 8 BCP connections and IT/AV equipment & fitout; Launch town based public WiFi hotspots through WIFI4EU vouchers and other schemes.	DRCD / NBI / Vodafone / LCC	Q4 2020 to Q2 2021
Digital Infrastructure Assets Network	Establishment of a Digital Infrastructure providers forum / network to share critical information on ICT assets and resources.	LCC	Q4 2021 / Ongoing
Pillar 2: SMART Communities			
Digital Skills & Literacy	Formal and informal Digital & IT Skills courses and training programmes for Citizens	Various providers	Ongoing
BCP Demand Stimulation (Citizen Engagement)	BCP Activation Plans for community participation in digital society and investment in enabling equipment	Longford CC in conjunction with PPN	Q2 2021
Smart Communities Initiative Longford	Build capacity across community & NFP sector to create local SCI's that address specific local issues (micro version of USEFE)	Longford CC / DRCD / Local Community sector	Ongoing
Pillar 3: Digital Economy & Enterprise			
Digital Skills for Business	Establish a Digital Skills Network for Longford to oversee IT / Digital skills programme for enterprise; Digital Skills Needs Assessment; Digital Skills Training Prospectus.	Longford LEO Midlands Regional Skills, private training providers	Q2 2021 / Ongoing
Trading Online Vouchers Scheme + Covid 19 Digital Supports	Implement national supports for SME digital development and Digital Recovery.	Longford LEO	Ongoing
New Tech & Innovation Workplace Innovation	Establish online format for innovation demonstration of new tech applications and other knowledge resources for Micro Enterprises; Support SME's to develop Workplace Innovation plans and strategies through WIP Assessment Tools and Mentoring / Training Programme.	Longford LEO & USEFE	Q4 2021 / ongoing
Enterprise Hubs & Remote Working – Future Plan	Identify need and provision for coworking spaces and enterprise hubs in the county – building on existing plans in Edgeworthstown & Abbeyshrule; Develop Longford Remote Working Policy & Strategy. Longford County Council will also enable Remote Working in line with workplace policies through the use of digital technologies and training for staff.	Longford CC / LEO / USEFE	Q2 2021 / Ongoing
Pillar 4: Digital Transformation			
e-Services Rollout	Continued rollout of services and supports online and development of open source data portals	Longford CC	Ongoing
Internal IT / Digital Transformation	Implement a secure document/file management system for all LCC documentation & resources and provide training for all staff. Strive towards a 'paperless' office and meetings solution across the authority and provide training for all staff. Develop and implement a Citizen Notification Tool and provide training for key staff.	Longford CC	Ongoing
Ongoing development of longford.ie	Continue to expand the information remit and content of www.longford.ie as a digital platform for engaging with citizens, enterprise, investors, diaspora and visitors.	Longford CC	Ongoing

Glossary
Acronyms

AI – Artificial Intelligence
AR – Augmented Reality
BCP – Broadband Connection Point
CDP – County Development Plan
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
DAE – Digital Agenda for Europe
DCCAE – Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment
DESI – Digital Economy & Society Index
DMI/DRI – Digital Maturity / Readiness Index
DSM – Digital Single Market
DRCD – Department for Rural & Community Development
DX – Digital Transformation
EI – Enterprise Ireland
ETB – Education Training Board
FDI – Foreign Direct Investment
FTTP – Fibre to the Premises
Gbps – Gigabits per second
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GDS – Global Distribution System
GIS – Geographic Information System
HSBB – High Speed Broadband
IDA – Industrial Development Authority
IT – Information Technology
IS – Information Systems
ICT – Information & Communication Technology
IoT – Internet of Things
IOT – Institute of Technology
LCC – Longford County Council
LCRL – Longford Community Resources Ltd
LECP – Local Economic & Community Plan
LEO – Local Enterprise Office
Mbps – Megabits per second
MNC – Multi National Corporation
NBI – National Broadband Ireland
NBP – National Broadband Plan
NDS – National Digital Scoreboard
NFP – Not for Profit
SCI – Smart Communities Initiatives
SME – Small & Medium Enterprises
SPC – Strategic Policy Committee
UGC – User Generated Content
USEFE – Upper Shannon & Erne Future Economy
VR – Virtual Reality
Wi-Fi – Wireless Fidelity
WIP – Workplace Innovation Programme
5G – 5th Generation Mobile Network

Digital Terms & References

Big Data   – Extremely large datasets that can be analysed automatically.

Decarbonisation   – Reducing greenhouse gas emissions produced as a result of transport.

Digital Economy   – Online business activities and digital service enterprise.

Digital Ecosystem   – A group of interconnected information technology resources.

Digital Media   – Media that is enabled and transferrable by digital technologies.

Digital Society   – A society that adopts and integrates ICT into everyday life.

Digital Transformation   – Cloud computing and integrated ICT across the organisation.

FabLab   – A learning and demonstration platform for new technologies for enterprise.

Machine Learning   – The study of computer algorithms that improve automatically through experience.

Online Trading Vouchers   – An grant scheme run by Local Enterprise Offices for businesses to go online.

Remote Working   – The activity of employees working remotely from their host employer premises. Other terms include telework, e-working, co-working, virtual office etc.

Smart Communities /Cities – Communities or Locations active in the integration of technology into planning and delivery of services and supports.

WiFi4EU   – An EU funded programme to deliver public wifi networks in towns and villages.

3D Printing   – The process of making a physical object from a three-dimensional digital model, typically by laying down many thin layers of a material in succession.

Severe weather updates

Water outages

Road works

Planning updates
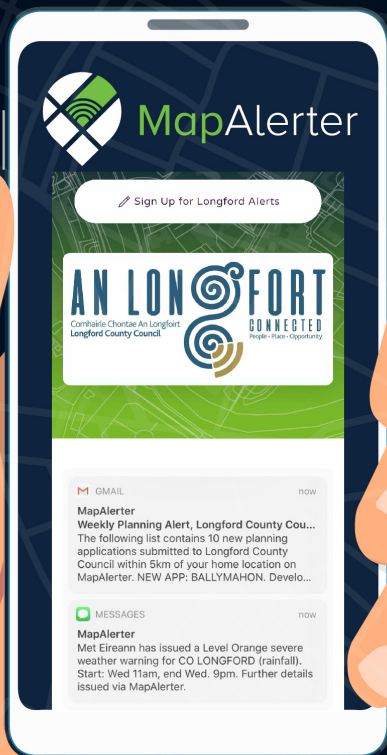
Area Alerts
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