



COUNTY LONGFORD **Local Economic and Community Plan** 2023-2029

Adopted on 13th December 2023
by Longford County Council





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Foreword

Councillor
Paul Ross



Councillor
Seamus Butler



As the Chairpersons of the Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Place-making Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) it has been a great honour to be involved with the preparation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

This LECP, is outcomes focused and represents the culmination of extensive research, policy analysis, public consultation, key agency workshops, and committee meetings. The development of the Framework Document and Implementation plan was guided by the members of the LECP Advisory Steering Group along with members of both the LCDC and the SPC.

Consultation and engagement lead to the development of a shared vision, that Longford is a county that capitalises on economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all.

Data from the previous two census shows that Longford had the fastest population growth of any county, and a 20% increase in the number of people aged 55+ years.

The population increase together with an ageing population will bring opportunities as well as challenges. The Longford LECP sets out an ambitious two-year implementation plan which will strive to capitalise on this population growth while improving all aspects of the county we live in, building on opportunities but also helping to overcome some of the challenges.

The Longford LECP sets out the six high level goals which were developed following extensive public consultation. Under each of the goals there are Sustainable Community Objectives (SCO's) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDO's) which are complementary to each other. The delivery of this LECP will require leadership from the various agencies and we look forward to working with these agencies, many of whom are represented by our colleagues on the LCDC. The LCDC members are committed to empowering and participating in the continued development of their communities throughout the county.

As Chairpersons of the LCDC and SPC we would like to sincerely thank all those who have participated in this process to date as we look forward to continuing the momentum and achieving our vision of enhancing the quality of life for all.

Chairperson of Longford LCDC Cllr. S. Butler and Chairperson of Place-making SPC Cllr. P. Ross

Executive Summary

Over the last decade, County Longford has undergone notable transformations, witnessing the highest population growth rate in the country, a substantial net immigration, proportional increases in both young (aged 15 years and younger) and older (aged 65+) populations, a rise in the diversity of nationalities residing in the county, and a surge in employment rates.

Despite these positive changes, the county has faced significant challenges such as an ageing population, a cost-of-living crisis, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the transition from a low-carbon economy. The Longford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for 2023-2029 aims to strategically position County Longford to navigate these changes

and leverage substantial opportunities for economic and community development. This plan outlines the county's strategy in these areas for the next six years, envisioning Longford as "A county that capitalises on economic, social, cultural, and environmental opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all."

The LECP is informed by a detailed socio-economic profile of the county, trends and drivers of economic and community development, and policy alignment. The Longford LECP is the primary mechanism for translating national and regional goals at the local level. As such, the Longford LECP has considered a wide range of national and regional plans and strategies. In particular, the Longford LECP is aligned



to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy prepared by Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, and to the Longford County Development Plan.

Along with the extensive research, a comprehensive consultation process with business, community and voluntary organisations, public agencies, and members of the public across the county was undertaken. Input from

these stakeholders guided the plan from its earliest stages and informed the development of the Framework document (overarching strategy) and the Implementation Plan (sets out the specific actions that will support the delivery of the overarching strategy).

A set of six High-Level Goals guide the plan (see below), these are accompanied by outputs and actions. The delivery of the

plan will be a collaborative effort that will continue to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders across the county.

The Longford LECP is structured into seven key sections, each contributing to the development of an evidence-based strategy and implementation plan:

- Introduction to the Longford LECP (Chapter 1): Defines the purpose and functionality of the Local Economic and Community Plan.
- Development and Preparation of the Longford LECP 2023-2029 (Chapter 2): Offers insights into the process and methods employed in crafting the plan.
- Longford Overview (Chapter 3): Presents a socio-economic and demographic analysis of County Longford, drawing from data collected from various national and regional sources.
- Community Participation (Chapter 4): Outlines the consultation process undertaken and illustrates how insights from the community have influenced the LECP's development.
- High-Level Goals SCO Analysis (Chapter 5): Provides an analysis of County Longford's strengths, challenges, and opportunities, organized around the six High-Level Goals of the LECP.
- Longford LECP Strategy and Implementation Plan (Chapter 6): Delivers a rationale for each High-Level Goal, coupled with a comprehensive implementation plan. This includes objectives, actions, responsibilities, time

frames, and key performance indicators.

- Monitoring and Evaluation (Chapter 7): Outlines the methods for evaluating the Longford LECP over its lifetime, emphasizing the mandatory updating of the Implementation Plan every two years.

In essence, the Longford LECP is guided by a commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all in the county, fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable environment for living, doing business, and visiting.



Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.



Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.



Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation.



Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.



Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.



Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources.

1 A local economic and community plan

Longford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), sets out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of County Longford. LECPs are the main tool for delivering actions from national and regional strategies at the local level. The LECP is designed to centralise actions and initiatives related to economic and community development in Longford into one strategy.

Over the lifetime of the County’s first LECP (2016-2022), substantial progress was made towards these High-Level Goals, through a coordinated effort between Longford County Council (LCC) and several other local agencies and organisations. The High-Level Goals for the Longford LECP 2023-2029 build on the foundation that was set by the first LECP (2016-2022) and include new components to ensure Longford keeps progressing and growing toward the vision set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) developed by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) – “*To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and well-being of our people and places, from urban to rural,*

with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all.”

1.1 Purpose of the Framework LECP document

This document, called the Framework LECP, is intended to provide the rationale and evidence-base for the LECP implementation plan.

This document will:

- Explain what an LECP is and who will deliver the actions in it
- Describe how the LECP was developed and prepared
- Provide a snapshot of economic and community statistics in Longford
- Provide an overview of key findings from public consultation
- Provide an analysis informed by findings from research and public consultation
- Present the six High-Level Goals that will guide the LECP over the next six years
- Provide a detailed outline of the objectives and actions under each High-Level Goal
- Explain how the LECP will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis

The Longford LECP 2023-2029 is...

- Informed by the knowledge and input of community members and stakeholders across the County,
- Outcomes-led: the High-Level Goals provide direction for the objectives and actions in the LECP,
- Ambitious, achievable, and realistic.

1.2 Structures for development and implementation

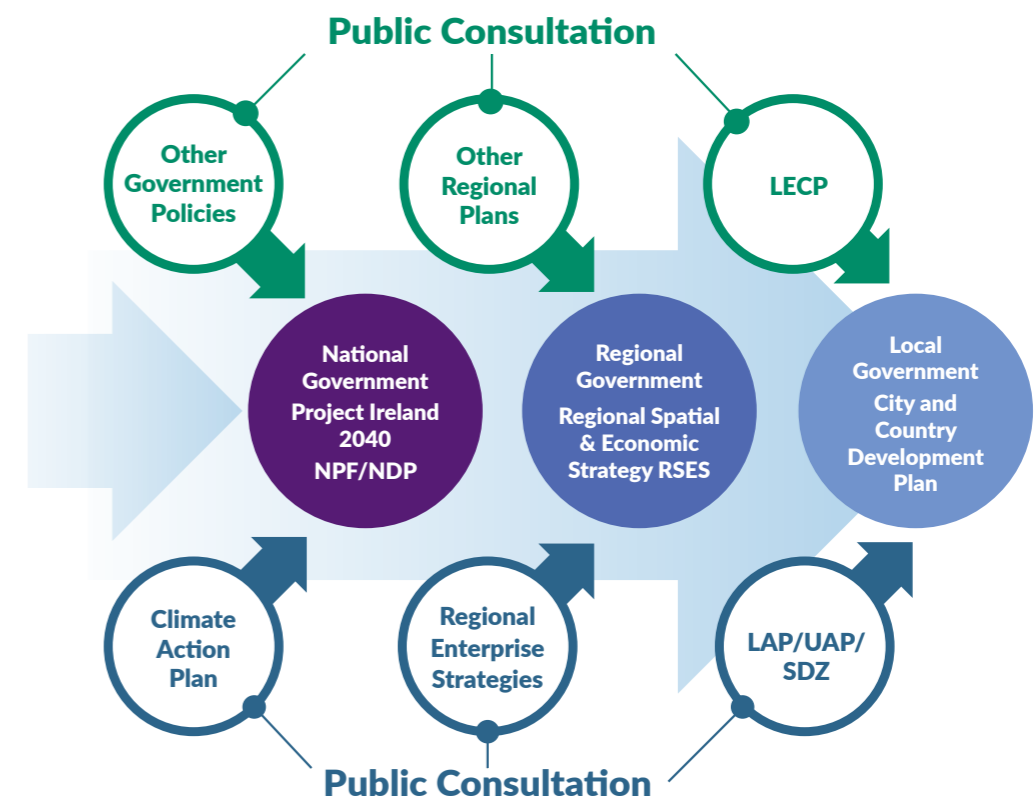
The Longford LECP is a multi-agency plan, which means that actions will be delivered by a wide range of service providers. Service providers include Longford County Council, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

1.3 Policy alignment

The LECP 2023-2029 is the primary mechanism for delivering national and regional goals at the local level. The figure below shows how the LECP fits into the policy context of Longford.

The figure below illustrates how national plans and strategies are acknowledged and articulated at the regional and local levels. The LECP is informed by the goals, objectives and best practices outlined in these and other plans and strategies (see Appendix A for a comprehensive list of related policy documents).

Figure 1: Policy Context



Source: Local Economic and Community Plans LECP, Guidelines 2021

An important element of the 2023-2029 LECP is an increased focus on climate action and sustainability. Look for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

in the introduction to each of the sections in Chapter 6 to see how Longford’s LECP aligns with the 17 SDGs.

Figure 2: National, regional and local Plans and Strategies

National Plans and Strategies	National Economic Plan (NEP)	Enterprise 2025 Renewed	National Development Plan 2018-2027	Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, Our Rural Future	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
	Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan	Housing For All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland	National Climate Action Plan 2023	National Migrant Integration Strategy	National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023
	National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS)	Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023	Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025	The Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027	20-Year Strategy for Irish Language 2010-2030
	Longford Local Development Strategy 2023-2028	Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for EMRA	Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027	Local Transport Plan for Longford Town
	Longford Corporate Plan 2019-2024	Longford Climate Action Plan	Longford Intercultural Strategic Plan 2018-2022	Longford Healthy County Plan 2018-2022	Longford Community Safety Plan 2022-2024
	Longford Age Friendly Strategy 2015-2020	Longford Digital Strategy 2021-2023	Longford and Westmeath Children and Young People’s Plan 2022-2024	Longford Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024	Longford Library Development Programme 2021-2025
Regional/ Local Plans and Strategies					

Figure 3: UN Sustainable Development Goals



1.4 Structure of the LECP

In line with the Local Economic and Community Plan Guidelines issued in 2021, the Longford LECP is comprised of two separate but related components:

- The Framework LECP: includes an evidence-base that is translated into High-Level Goals and objectives that will guide the LECP for the duration of the plan (2023-2029)
- The Implementation Plans: detail the actions to be implemented over the course of two years (for a total of three implementation plans) that will contribute to the achievement of the objectives and High-Level Goals outlined in the Framework LECP.

This structure aims to ensure that the LECP Framework will provide a strong, sustainable strategic direction. This in turn will allow the Implementation Plans to be flexible and adapted to suit emerging needs throughout the lifetime of the plan, guided by the vision, goals and remit provided by the LECP Framework.

The LECP plans for both the economic and the community development of Longford. These two components are interrelated, or dependent on each other, so there will be some overlap between them in the High-Level Goals, objectives, and actions.



High-Level Goals

The overall direction of the LECP is guided by High-Level Goals. These main goals provide the core aims of the LECP and represent how Longford should grow over the lifetime of the plan. The High-Level Goals were developed to reflect the socio-economic analysis undertaken (see chapter 3), and to align with existing policies and plans. The High-Level Goals were refined through consultation with the public, as well as internal and external stakeholders.



Objectives

Each High-Level Goal has related Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs). These SCOs and SEDOs are key priority areas within each High-Level Goal, and they start to narrow the plan down from aspirational to practical. Objectives provide an indication of how actions might be grouped in order to work toward achieving the High-Level Goals. Like the High-Level Goals, the development of the objectives was informed by consultation with the community and stakeholders, as well as by the socio-economic analysis.



Actions

Actions are the specific projects or initiatives identified to fulfil the objectives and contribute to accomplishing the High-Level Goals. Actions are designed within the SMART framework, which means they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Actions make the LECP operational and are designed to respond to community input and need. Actions were identified by the agencies responsible for implementing the LECP, and care was taken to ensure that the actions in the LECP would complement and support existing plans and strategies.

The LECP has also considered how it might impact several cross-cutting priorities. Cross-cutting priorities are topics that are identified as important and that affect, or cut across, most or all aspects of development. These topics were considered throughout all the stages of the LECP, and helped to inform the development of High-Level Goals, objectives, and actions:



Age



Disability



Equality



Poverty



Sustainability including Climate Change



Rurality

1.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

In accordance with the LECP Guidelines, the monitoring and ongoing evaluation of the LECP will be facilitated by the inclusion in this document of a set of outcomes and representative indicators that are suitable to measure progress towards the achievement of the High-Level Goals and sustainable objectives. These can be found in Chapter 6. It is required that progress on the LECP is reviewed every two years. See Chapter 7 for further detail on the monitoring and evaluation process for Longford's LECP 2023-2029.

1.5 Public sector duty

In line with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, Longford County Council is committed to promoting equality, preventing discrimination, and protecting the human rights of employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.

2 Development and Preparation of the LECP

The development of the LECP was a highly collaborative and iterative process. In line with the LECP Guidelines 2021, Longford LECP was developed over six stages.

Stage 1: Preparation

The first step in developing the LECP included a preliminary policy context review

of the previous LECP implementation plans, and a thorough socio-economic analysis of County Longford. This stage informed the development of the Socio-economic Statement, which included key findings from the socio-economic analysis, a summary of what was accomplished over the course of the previous LECP,

identification of key themes, and draft High-Level Goals.

Stage 2: Public Consultation

During the consultation stage, the Socio-economic Statement was issued for public review and comment. Feedback was sought from communities and stakeholders using a variety of online and in-person methods (see Chapter 4 for a detailed methodology). The consultation was an inclusive process and engaged with members of the public, marginalised communities, community groups, local service providers, specific sector representatives, statutory agencies, and local government.

LECP was developed. During this stage, further consultation took place with key stakeholders to identify detailed actions aligned with the agreed High-Level Goals, SCOs and SEDOs. This consultation formed the basis of the Implementation Plan, and like the development of the Framework LECP was a collaborative and iterative process. A completed draft of the Framework LECP and Implementation Plan was submitted to the SPC, LCDC and Municipal Districts for comment, and the draft was amended to reflect the feedback received. The Framework LECP and Implementation Plan was also submitted to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and a Statement of Consistency was provided. The final Framework LECP and Implementation Plan were adopted by the LCDC on 30th November 2023, the Place-making SPC on 4th December 2023 and formally adopted by Longford County Council on 13th December 2023.

Stage 3: Develop Objectives and Outcomes

Following the Consultation stage, the draft Socio-Economic Statement was revised and expanded to include a full policy alignment review, a socio-economic profile, an analysis of the consultation, and an updated SCO analysis. These components informed the revision of the High-Level Goals, and the development of Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) associated with each High-Level Goal. The revised Socio-Economic Statement was provided to the SPC and LCDC for comment.

Stages 5 and 6: Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation

The LECP was launched in 2023. Implementation will continue from 2023-2029, and will include regular monitoring and review (see Chapter 7 for further detail of the review process). Of note, in accordance with the LECP Guidelines 2021, Implementation Plans are to be developed for a two-year period (for a total of three Implementation Plans over the lifetime of the LECP). At the two-year mark, these Implementation Plans should be reviewed and revised to respond to emerging needs.

Stage 4: Finalise Plan

Based on feedback received from the SPC, and LCDC, a draft Framework

Figure 4: Framework of plan



Source: Local Economic and Community Plans LECP, Guidelines 2021

3 Longford at a glance

County Longford is Ireland's fourth-smallest county and covers an area of 1,091km². It is located in the Midlands of Ireland, bordered by County Westmeath, Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon. In a regional context, County Longford is positioned within the administrative boundary of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

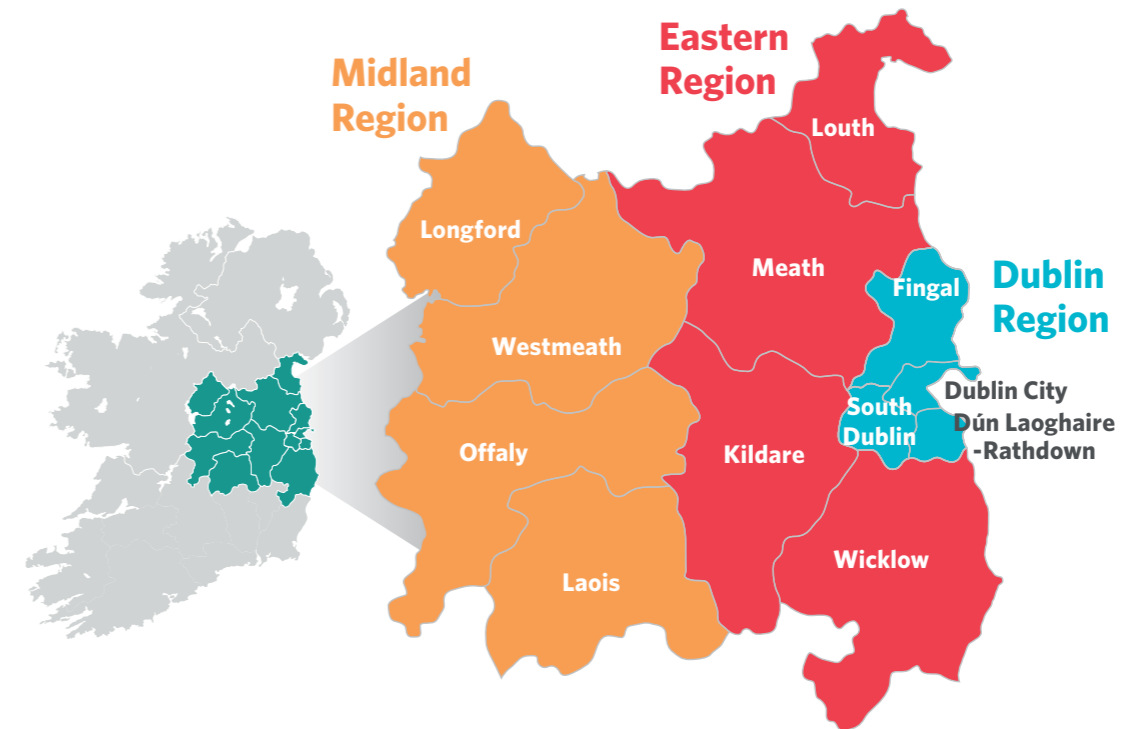
The north of the county is generally hilly and dominated by drumlin landscapes with the River Erne and Lough Gowna to the northeast. Lough Ree, Lough Forbes and the River Shannon are located towards the west, with extensive areas of raised boglands towards the south and east. These boglands represent an important habitat for biodiversity which forms part of the ecological corridor of the Midlands. Aquatic habitats are also numerous, and County Longford has a wealth of lakes, rivers and

canals, making it an ideal destination for fishing and water-based recreation. Centrally located, County Longford has good transport links including the N4 (Dublin-Sligo) and the N5 (Dublin-Mayo) routes. The N55 is the north to south artery linking Athlone to Cavan via Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown. Bus services are operated by Bus Eireann and a range of private operators. Rail services are available from Longford and Edgeworthstown which both operate on the Dublin-Sligo rail line.

Longford is divided into three Municipal Districts under the jurisdiction of Longford County Council and 55 Electoral Districts. The three Municipal Districts are Longford Town (nine Electoral Districts), Granard Area (28 Electoral Districts) and Ballymahon (18 Electoral Districts).



Figure 5: County Longford within Eastern and Midland Region.



Source: EMRA RSES 2019-2031

3.1 Socio-economic profile: How are we changing

In the process of formulating the County Longford LECP, a comprehensive socio-economic analysis has been undertaken. This encompassed an in-depth study across various domains, including analysis around what it's like to live, work, learn and invest in Longford. This analysis, combined with extensive consultations, has informed distinct Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats (SCOT) and in turn influenced the development

of the goals, objectives, outcomes and implementation plan.

The analysis delved into pivotal data derived from a diverse array of sources, spanning the 2022 and 2016 Census, relevant data such as the Labour Force Survey, Live Register, Pobal, Enterprise Ireland, Tusla, RSES, National household surveys, and other up-to-date statistics sourced from local governmental bodies and state agencies.

Specific patterns and needs were identified including ensuring social infrastructure,

housing and employment opportunities grow to match recent population growth securing community welfare and an elevated quality of life. The county must capitalise on its central location and support the regeneration and consolidated growth of Longford Town and other centres while safeguarding the environment and ensuring sustainable practices, and through the establishment of an all-inclusive county that adequately caters to essential services.

The statistics below provide key insights, facts and figures about the economy and communities of County Longford. These are the most current figures available at the time of analysis (July 2023). However, a subscription to DataHub a socio-economic platform provided by Hub Planning will ensure all key data sets are updated over the course of the LECP 2023-2029. The LCDC will monitor these statistics and update the LECP implementation plans every two years to respond to new trends and changes.

3.1.1 Longford's population

Longford has a relatively young, diverse and growing population. The Census 2022 recorded a population of 46,751, this was 14.4% higher than the previous census. In comparison, Ireland's population growth was 8.1% in the same period. Longford recorded the highest rate of population growth of any administrative county between the last two censuses. The growth

in population in the county has largely been driven by net migration.

With this population growth there is a need for Longford's housing provision to grow in parallel. Between 2016 and 2022, the housing vacancy rate did drop in Longford but remained above the State average. In addition, the number of households qualifying for social housing support in 2022 was less than half the number that qualified in 2017, with the number of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme properties being highest in Longford Municipal District. Over the span of six years from 2016 to 2022, County Longford witnessed a subtle yet noteworthy shift in its age profile. The average age of its residents increased from 37.4 to 38.8 years, mirroring the nation's average age precisely. The number of people aged 65 and over continues to grow. This age group increased by 26% to 7,332 in Longford, and by 22% to 776,315 at a national level since 2016.

Between the last two censuses, Longford had the highest rate of inwards migration in the State. The county also had the second-highest proportion of travellers in Ireland. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:

Longford's population is growing at a faster rate than the State

- In 2022, County Longford's population was 46,751, up 14.4% (5,878) from 2016.

This was the fastest growth rate in the State (8.1%) across that period.

- At the Municipal district level, the growth rate was significantly higher in Ballymahon (26.6%) than in Longford (8.0%) and Granard (7.7%) (CSO, Census 2022)
- Of this increase, 73% was due to migration and 27% due to natural increase. (CSO, Census 2022).

Shifting age structure

- Between 2016 and 2022, Longford's average age increased from 37.4 to 38.8 years. This was the same as the State's average age (38.8 years). This was reflected in the old age dependency ratio which increased from 15.0% in 2016 to 24.7% in 2022. (CSO, Census 2022)
- However, the young age dependency ratio in Longford (32.8%) still remained above the State ratio (30.1%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- Between 2011 and 2016, the fastest growing cohort in Ballymahon MD and Longford MD was 70 to 74 years and the fastest growing cohort in Granard was 65-69 years. (CSO, Census 2016)
- Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people aged 85 years and above increased in Ballymahon (9.4%), Granard (12.5%), and Longford (10.6%) compared to a total population growth of 4.8% in the county across the same period. (CSO, Census 2016).

Increasing health needs

- In 2022, the majority (86.6%) of Longford's population reported being in good or very good health. This was slightly lower than the State rate (88.9%). The rate of those reporting good or very good health decreased in both Longford (from 87.8%) and the State (90.8%). (CSO, Census 2022, 2016)
- Between 2016 and 2022, the disability rate in Longford increased from 14.5% to 21.1%, this in line with the State level (13.5% to 21.5%). (CSO, Census 2016, Census 2022)



- There were 1,760 carers in Longford, of which approximately 58% (1,013) are women, and 42% were men (747). (CSO, Census 2016)
- According to CSO, in 2016 people in Longford lived on average of:
 - 4.2km from a pharmacy (State average: 2.8km)
 - 3.9km from a general practitioner (State average: 3.1km)
 - 36.2km from an emergency department (State average: 20.1km)

Relatively high number of families, people separated and lone parent families

- In 2016, the proportion of single people was low in Longford (52.4%) compared to both the Eastern and Midlands



Region (55.0%) and the State (53.6%). At the Municipal District level, Longford MD had the highest proportion of single people (53.7%) followed by Ballymahon MD (51.7%) and Granard MD (51.3%). (CSO, Census 2016)

- At just over 7% each, Longford along with Wexford recorded the highest percentage of divorced and separated people in the Country
- In 2016, the proportion of widowed people was higher in Longford (4.7%) than the State (4.1%), particularly in Granard MD (5.2%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- Compared to the State (50.1%), the proportion of households with children was lower in Ballymahon MD (49.7%) and Longford MD (48.9%) and equivalent in Granard MD (50.1%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- Of those households with children, the proportion of lone parent families in the State was 25.4%. This proportion was higher in Longford County (26.7%) particularly high in Longford MD (30.2%). (CSO, Census 2016)

Growing diversity rates

- Between 2016 and 2022, County Longford saw a population increase of 4,134 people in net migration. The average annual inwards migration in Longford (16 persons per 1,000) was the highest in the State. (CSO, Census 2022)
- In 2016, Longford (15.0%) had a higher proportion of non-Irish Nationals



compared the State (11.6%). (CSO, Census 2016)

- At the 2022 Census, there were 913 Travellers resident in Longford, this constitutes a rate of 19.7 Irish Travellers per 1,000 of total population, the second highest of any administrative county in the State (6.5 per 1,000). (CSO, Census 2022)
- As of 7th June 2023, 668 arrivals from Ukraine have applied for a PPSN listing a Longford address. These applications were relatively evenly distributed across the county with 261 in Ballymahon LEA, 169 in Granard LEA and 238 in Longford LEA. (CSO, Ukraine Hub)

Decreasing crime rates

- There are eight Garda stations in County Longford. In 2022, these

stations recorded 1697 criminal offences (accounting for 60.9% of the total crimes reported by the Roscommon/Longford Garda Division). (CSO, Crime and Justice)

- Between 2017 and 2022, the recorded crimes in Longford saw a 9.8% decrease (CSO, Crime and Justice)
- In 2022, of the 1,697 crimes recorded in the county, more than 60% (1070) were recorded in the Longford town station alone. (CSO, Crime and Justice)
- In 2021, the reoffending rate in Longford (27.9%) was comparable to that in the State (27.9%)

Decreasing vacancy and social housing rates

- As of the 2022 census night, the housing stock in County Longford totalled 19,195. (CSO, Census 2022)

- Between 2016 and 2022, the total housing stock increased at a slower rate in Longford (3.2%) than the State (5.4%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- Despite decreasing from 16.7% in 2016 to 14.1% in 2022, the vacancy rate in Longford is still higher than the State average (10.9%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- As of 2022, there were 272 households in Longford that qualified for social housing support, a significant decrease from 655 in 2017. (The Housing Agency 2022, Households Qualified for Social Housing Support)
- In 2022, the number of properties on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme was highest in Longford LEA (182), followed by Ballymahon LEA (111) and Granard LEA (32). (CSO, Social Housing in Ireland)

3.1.2 Longford's economy

Longford is centrally located in the heart of Ireland, relatively close to Dublin and dissected by important transport corridors. Longford's key employment industries are commerce and trade, and manufacturing industries. As a predominantly rural county, there is also a large agricultural sector with high numbers, particularly in the more rural municipal districts of Ballymahon and Granard.

Longford includes regionally-recognised economic areas of importance. The retail hierarchy found in the EMRA RSES identifies Longford Town as Level 2 (Major Town Centres and County (Principal) Town Centres), and Granard as Level 3 (Town and/or District Centres and Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)).

Longford Town has been identified as a strategic portal to the Northwest and south in recognition of its location at the junction of the N55; M4/N4 Dublin/Sligo and N5; due to its proximity to the regional growth centre of Athlone; which supports its role as a strategic employment centre. The town is a priority area for compact growth, town centre regeneration, enterprise, employment and tourism.

Longford has a growing tourism industry due to its good proximity to natural amenities, recreational opportunities and the town's location on the Rebel Longford Trail. The county as a whole has a large



number of tourism opportunities from its cultural heritage and history as well as from new developments such as the recently opened Center Parcs resort. The location of the county and well-connected transport infrastructure allows easy access for tourists into Longford. The tourism potential of Longford presents opportunities to grow local employment within the county. However, there is a need for more specialist tourist accommodation outside of the Center Parcs resort.

Despite recent economic development the county has pockets of deprivation. Longford also has with the second-highest unemployment rate in the State a high proportion of people working in semi-skilled and unskilled manual employment,

particularly compared to the Eastern and Midlands region. This was reflected in the second-lowest disposable income within the country in 2016. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:

Centrally located and well connected

- County Longford boasts strong transportation connections, including the N4 (Dublin-Sligo) and N5 (Dublin-Mayo) routes, along with the pivotal N55 artery running from Athlone to Cavan via Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown.
- Longford Town and Edgeworthstown are both served by the Dublin-Sligo rail line.



Rural economic base with growing foreign investment

- Between 2013 and 2022, total employment in IDA companies in Longford has increased from 2,143 to 3,843. This constituted a 79.3% increase across this period, higher than the State average (61.6%) and second only to Leitrim (100.1%). (enterprise.gov.ie, Annual Employment Survey 2022)
- In 2022, the proportion of people working as farmers or agricultural workers was higher in Longford (7.0%) than in the Eastern and Midlands Region (1.9%) and the State (5.2%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- In 2016 the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Building and Construction, Manufacturing, and Public Administration industries all had higher employment proportion in Longford than the State average. (CSO, Census 2016)
- In 2016, Longford's largest employment industry for men was manufacturing (1,868), followed by commerce and trade (1,513) agriculture, forestry and fishing (1,075). For women, the largest employment industry was professional services (2,521) followed by commerce and trade (1,530) and manufacturing (698). (CSO, Census 2016)
- In 2016, the proportion of people in the farmers socio-economic groups was higher in Ballymahon MD (10.7%) and Granard MD (16.7%) but lower in Longford MD (3.8%) than the State (5.8%). (CSO, Census 2016)

Growing Tourism Industry

- As of 2021, the accommodation supply in Longford comprises 2,664 beds, however 2,330 of these are provided by the Center Parcs resort (Fáilte Ireland Database, 2021) Key tourism assets in Longford include:
 - Center Parcs Longford Forest
 - The Royal Canal Greenway
 - The National Famine Way
 - Extensive reclaimed Bord na Móna peatlands
 - Rebel Trail
 - Literary Trail
 - Corlea Trackway and Visitor Centre
- Under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) approximately €2.9m has been allocated to the Historic Granard Motte Project.

Increasing employment levels

- In 2022, 53.7% of working age people in Longford were at work (up from 48.6%), however this proportion was low compared to the Eastern and Midland Region (58.3%) and the State (56.5%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- Despite decreasing 8.9 percentage points between 2016 and 2022, the unemployment rate in Longford (10.7%) was the second highest in the State (8.3%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- In 2016, Longford had a Pobal deprivation index score of -6.01. This was the second highest deprivation rate in the Country. This represented a

decrease from -5.12 in 2011.

- In 2022, the proportion of people working in semi-skilled or unskilled labour was higher in Longford (15.4%) than in the Eastern and Midland region (10.8%) and the State (11.8%). (CSO, Census 2022)
- In 2020, the disposable income per person in Longford (€18,754) was less than 80% of the State average (€23,461) with only Donegal (€18,322) having a lower disposable income per person. (CSO, National Accounts)

Uneven education levels

- Compared to the State (13.3%) in 2016, the proportion of people with no formal or primary education only was higher in Longford (17.8%). At the municipal district level, the proportion was highest Granard MD (18.1%) and Ballymahon MD (18.0%) but lower in Longford MD (12.2%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- In 2016, the proportion of people with tertiary education qualification was highest in Longford MD (49.8%) followed by Ballymahon MD (46.2%) and lowest in Granard MD (41.6%). However, these proportions were all lower than the State average (51.4%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- When compared to the State (17.4%), the proportion of people with engineering, manufacturing and construction qualification was higher in Ballymahon MD (21.7%), Granard MD (20.8%), and Longford MD (20.4%). Similarly, the proportion of agricultural and veterinary

- was significantly higher in Ballymahon MD (12.5%), Granard MD (16.7%), and slightly higher in Longford MD (6.8%), than the State (5.1%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- Longford is home to 39 primary schools, including one special educational needs primary school and nine post primary schools. Longford College of Further Education is an expanding third level college located in the centre of Longford Town.

3.1.3 Longford's environment

County Longford boasts a stunning natural environment that greatly enhances the well-being of its community, enriches the quality of life, and enhances the county as a destination of choice to live work and invest. There are 18 sites in Longford protected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) with more potential sites in consideration. The county has also seen significant afforestation and has adopted a climate change adaptation strategy. The county is relatively unpolluted by litter but there is opportunity for increased waste management service provision, particularly in rural areas.

A number of large-scale renewable energy projects have been granted and there is also strong uptake of household level renewable energy installations across the county. However, there are opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of the county. The proportion of households with

good energy efficiency scores is relatively low and there is a reliance on personal vehicles for transport in the county. This presents opportunities for measures such as retrofitting schemes, improved public transport infrastructure and promotion of active transport. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:

Growing preservation and conservation efforts

- 18 NPWS protected sites including: (NPWS.ie)
 - 6 Natural Heritage Areas
 - 8 Special Areas of Conservation
 - 4 Special Protection Areas
- Between 2007 and 2022, 2,627 hectares of afforestation was completed

- in Longford. (CSO, Afforestation Area)
- Longford committed to a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in September 2019. (Longfordcoco.ie)

Low levels of litter pollution

- In terms of litter pollution in 2021, the majority of the area in County Longford is either unpolluted (21%) or slightly polluted (71%). Less than a tenth of the area of the county falls into the moderately polluted (7%), significantly polluted (1%) and grossly polluted (0%) categories. (NOAC, Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2021)
- In terms of litter pollution in 2021, the majority of the area in County Longford is either unpolluted (21%) or slightly

- polluted (71%). Less than a tenth of the area of the county falls into the moderately polluted (7%), significantly polluted (1%) and grossly polluted (0%) categories. (NOAC, Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2021)
- Approximately 71% of the households in Longford were covered by a licensed waste operator that provided a 3-bin service. (NOAC, Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2021)

Growing renewable energy capacity

- As of 2022, 37.9% (10,061) of private dwellings in Longford had some form of renewable energy source, this was higher than the equivalent proportion at the State level. (CSO, Census 2022)
- A number of renewable energy projects have been granted in County Longford with an estimated total capacity of between 63.3 and 78.3 MW. (Longford County development Plan 2021-2027)
- In 2022, Longford used 81 GWh of Residential Metered Electricity and 161 GWh of Non-Residential Metered Electricity. This was the third lowest total for any county in 2022. (CSO, Energy)
- Between 2009 and 2022, the proportion of households given an A or B Building Energy Rating was lower in Longford (16.9%) than the State (24.9%). (CSO, Census 2022)



Low usage of public transport

- In 2016, the proportion of people travelling to work by public transport was lower in Ballymahon MD(1.7%), Granard MD (1.8%), and Longford MD (2.0%), than the State (9.4%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- Conversely, the proportion who travelled by personal vehicle was higher in Ballymahon MD (83.3%), Granard MD (84.1%), and Longford MD (79.5%), than the State (73.1%). (CSO, Census 2016)
- The proportion of households with at least one motor car was higher in Ballymahon (87.7%), Granard (89.3%), and lower in Longford (78.0%), than the State (84.4%).




Key Findings socio-economic profile County Longford

46,751 
TOTAL POPULATION

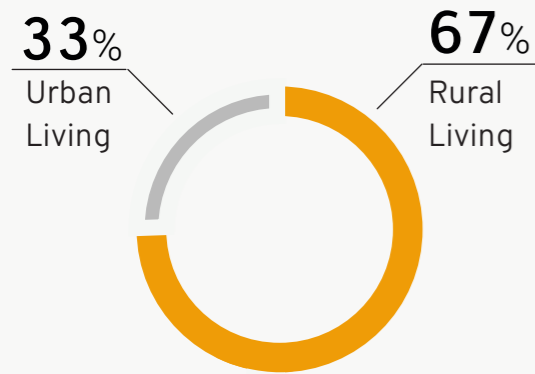
Population by age



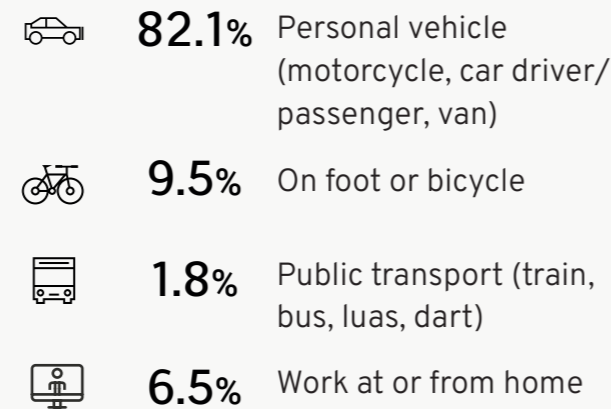
14.4% Highest population growth in the Country (between 2016 and 2022)



Urban/ Rural




Travel to Work




Environment


Landscape predominately consists of hills, rivers, boglands and agriculture



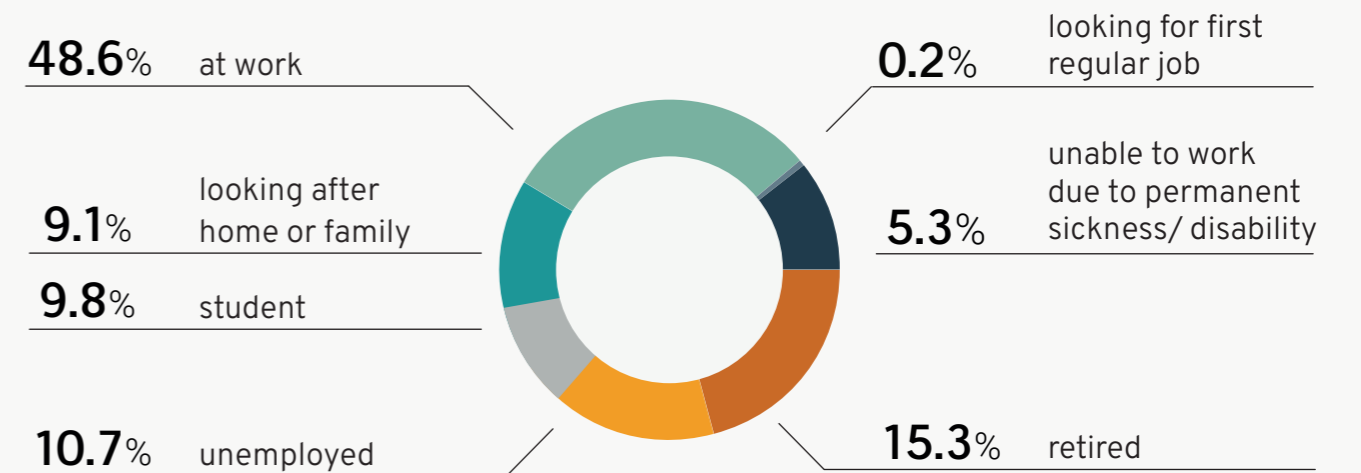
Green House Gas Emissions Target is to decrease from 36% to between 22%-30% by 2030



The Royal Canal Greenway at 130km is the most significant greenway crossing the County



Economic Status

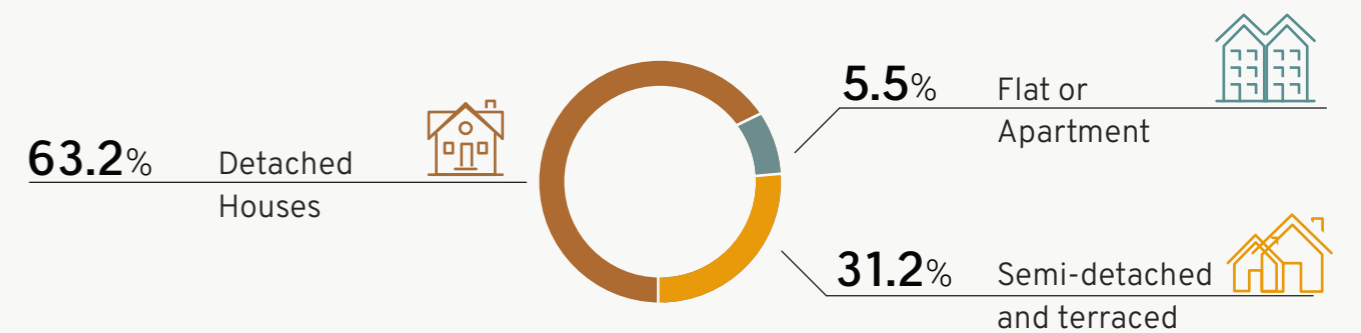


Housing

19,292 
TOTAL HOUSING STOCK

12.1%  VACANCY RATE

2,338 
VACANT DWELLINGS



4 Community Participation

Public consultation was focused on refining the draft High-Level Goals, as well as identifying potential objectives and actions to fit within each goal.

4.1 The consultation process

Participation in public consultation was invited during October and November 2022. A variety of engagement methods were provided to ensure access to the public consultation process was inclusive to as many people across the county as possible. The Socio-Economic Statement prepared by Longford County Council was utilised to support the public consultation phase and ensure people were informed of the LECP process.

Both in-person and online consultation methods were utilised. Invitation was extended to this process via press release, media activity, a social media campaign, and a dedicated web page on the Longford County Council website to engage in the following consultation opportunities:

- Specific stakeholder feedback focus group sessions were arranged with target community groups. Approximately 60 people participated across eight focus groups, which were held with representatives of the Traveller community, Ukrainian community, Roma community, Local schools and Childcare,

Comhairle na nÓg, Local businesses and multicultural groups.

- An online public survey was widely advertised where a total of 56 submissions were received.
- Three dedicated drop-in open information and feedback sessions were held, one in each Municipal District. Approximately 50 people attended across the three public information sessions in Longford Arms Hotel, Ballymahon Library and Granard Library.
- Submissions were invited via email or post. To facilitate submissions a dedicated email account was made to receive submissions electronically. Individual emails and phone calls were made inviting submissions from a range of service providers, business interests and community groups throughout the county. No submissions were received.

Survey Key Findings

The public consultation phase of the Longford LECP was carried out in October and November 2022.

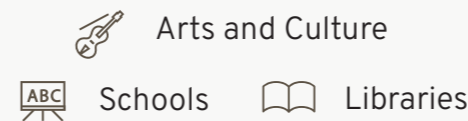
Most important for the community



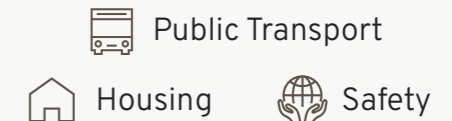
Most important aspects of the local economy



Areas to be protected

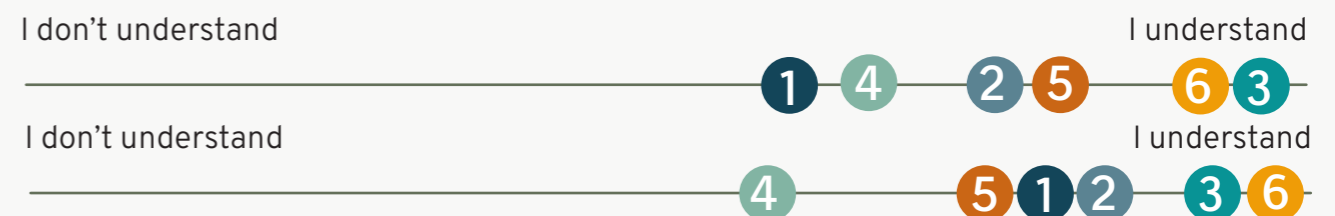


Areas to be improved



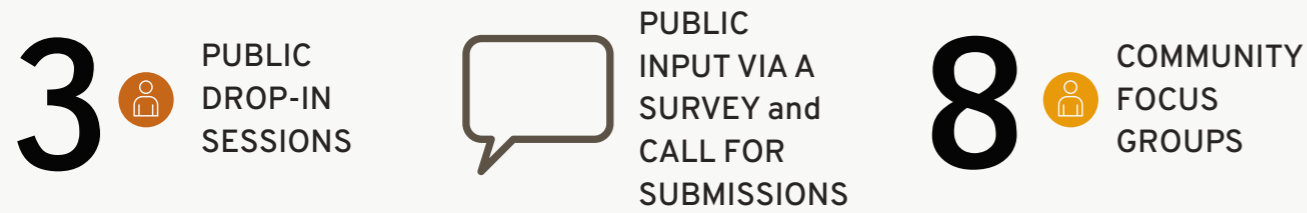
Ranking the Draft High Level Goals

- 1 Empower Communities to combat poverty and social injustice, while promoting social inclusion, equity and equality
- 2 Build resilient, sustainable, and connected communities
- 3 Improve the safety, wellbeing, physical and mental health, and quality of life in our communities
- 4 Support our county in the transition to a Green Economy
- 5 Realise Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn
- 6 Maximise economic opportunities through smart technology, digitalisation and education



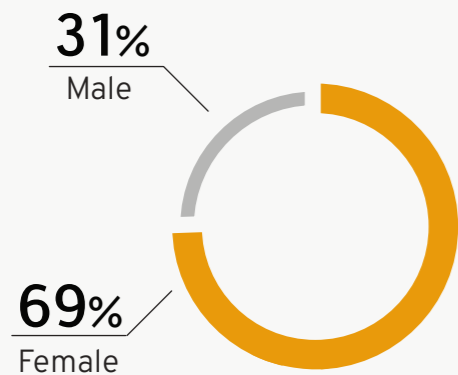
The Engagement Process

The public consultation phase of the Longford LECP was carried out in October and November 2022.

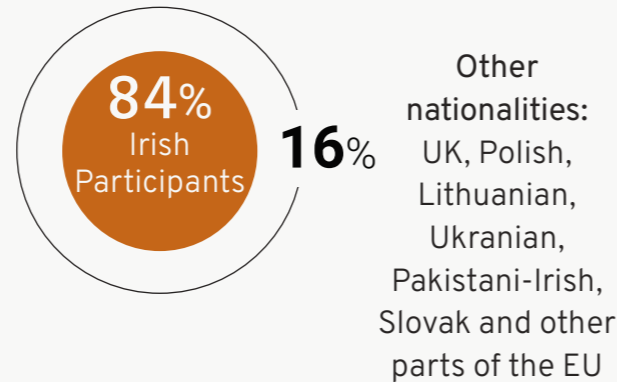


Survey Respondants

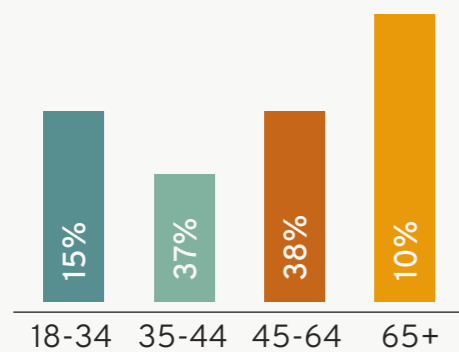
Gender



Nationality of Participants



Participation by Age



Some of the ways participants self identify



4.2 How public consultation shaped the High-Level Goals, Objectives and Actions

A crucial component of public consultation is ensuring the LECP reflects the feedback shared during the consultation process. The following table presents a summary of the feedback received around the draft High-Level Goals, and shows how the final

goals were adapted to reflect the input from the public. Of note, the language of all High-Level Goals was updated to reflect outcomes-driven language, in order to provide a strong strategic direction for the LECP. The High-Level Goals were also re-ordered (see section 4.3 for the revised order and key themes associated with each High-Level Goal). This re-ordering was informed in large part by the consultation feedback around perceived importance of the High-Level Goals.

Original High Level Goal	Participants said	What we did
Goal 1: Empower Communities to combat poverty and social injustice, while promoting social inclusion, equity and equality	Simplify the language but retain the sentiment of inclusion and equality and celebrate Longford being one of the most diverse counties in the country	The goal was changed to: Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.
Goal 2: Build resilient, sustainable, and connected communities	Sustainable is a confusing word in this context Make it clearer that this goal is about people and communities Community safety could fit within this goal	The goal was changed to: Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.
Goal 3: Improve the safety, wellbeing, physical and mental health, and quality of life in our communities	High priority More concrete language would be beneficial Could benefit from a narrower focus, safety could be moved to Goal 2	The goal was changed to: Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.

Goal 4: Support our County in the transition to a Green Economy	The sentiment is important Clearer language needed	The goal was changed to: Goal 6: A sustainable and green economy, building on the county's strengths and resources
Goal 5: Realise Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, invest and learn	This goal was relatively easy to understand and captures a key priority for the county, however, a little vague.	The goal was changed to: Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn
Goal 6: Maximise economic opportunities through smart technology, digitalisation and education	Sentiment important Language is easily understood	This goal was changed to: Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation.

4.3 Key objectives that emerged from consultation

In addition to shaping the High-Level Goals, feedback from the consultation process informed the Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs), the Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs)

and their associated actions. An overview of the SCOs and SEDOs can be found in Chapter 6, including specific actions. The table below is organized under the revised High-Level Goals (see section 4.2 above), and presents the key themes that emerged during consultation.

Revised High Level Goal	Key Themes
Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased early intervention and wellbeing supports Equitable access to and distribution of services in both rural and urban areas Community outreach health services, particularly for isolated areas Increased access to both adult and youth mental health services

Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing and promoting community safety Environmental sustainability and protecting biodiversity Sustainable transport and social infrastructure Effective communication and information sharing
Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting and supporting diversity and inclusion in employment, including through work experience and community employment schemes Increased skill development and training opportunities designed to match available roles Digital skills courses and classes available for all ages Supporting career progression and pathways to employment Supporting innovation and technology
Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support increased development of housing infrastructure Promote and provide education and learning opportunities, particularly encouraging progression to third-level education Supporting increased awareness of Longford's tourism attractions Increased tourism accommodation and other businesses related to tourism and hospitality Promotion of Longford's convenient geographical location to attract new visitors, employees and residents Town and village regeneration and revitalisation, including improving public realm
Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing and increased community engagement and inclusion efforts Support for cultural integration, including community events and cultural celebrations Ongoing and enhanced support for under-represented and new communities Supporting civic engagement, including participation in voting and policy making Effective communication and collaboration between community organisations/service providers/statutory bodies and the public
Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore centralising environmental and climate change information and resources for local businesses Support for increased digital infrastructure and connectivity Explore and promote sustainable transportation options, including improved public transportation, cycle infrastructure, etc. Support sustainable rural employment initiatives, including Just Transition initiatives

High-Level Goals SCO Analysis

The High-Level Goals have been informed by key findings from the policy review, socio-economic analysis, public consultation, and stakeholder engagement processes. They are listed below followed by a

Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities (SCO) analysis. This SCO analysis was used to inform the development of the High-Level Goals, strategic objectives, actions and key desired outputs.



Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.



Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.



Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation.



Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.



Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.



Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources.



Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.

STRENGTHS



Natural landscapes and activity facilities for people to pursue healthy lifestyles



Healthy County Plan and Healthy Longford steering committee promotes life cycle approach community health



Abundant access to outdoor recreation, sports and leisure amenities



People are living healthier for longer and relatively young population (below national average)



Emphasis is made to address health inequalities and improve health outcomes for all residents, while acknowledging specific needs

CHALLENGES



An ageing population (Old age dependency ratio of 24.7, up from 22.8 in 2016, and higher than the State's 23.1)



Long wait lists for mental and physical health services nationally, particularly in general practitioners, therapies and mental health supports



Generally poorer health with the national average with 76.2% reporting good or very good health in Longford compared to 82.9% across the State



Long travel times to reach hospital services

OPPORTUNITIES



Maximise gains from growth in population



Local services to address growing demand for drug and alcohol misuse, mental health and therapeutic services



Support the development of initiatives and facilities aimed at children and young people



Facilitation of increased community health supports



Appetite for increased pedestrian/cycle infrastructure



Underutilisation and lack of infrastructure to water amenities



Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.

STRENGTHS

- Untapped natural beauty – a ‘hidden gem’ with an abundance of natural assets (18 NPWS Protected Sites)
- High quality environment (Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH) rating the air quality as ‘Good’)
- Strong appetite from the community and economic sectors to address climate change
- Existing parks and green spaces highly valued by the community
- New Longford Local Community Safety Partnership pilot project to promote community safety

CHALLENGES

- Rural decline evident in many rural towns and villages in Longford
- Perception of low community safety, only 30% of people agreed Longford was a safe place
- Heavy reliance on social supports and services throughout the county (2,133 people on the live register as of May 2023, the 7th highest proportion in Ireland)
- Demand for increased access to green and recreational space, particularly for young people
- Perception that population growth exceeded supports and services delivery
- Negative perception of the county and limited marketing/ promotion of assets

OPPORTUNITIES

- Harness and promote natural and cultural heritage
- Increased and improved active travel infrastructure (pedestrian and cycle)
- Establishment of additional dedicated Family Resource Centres and additional Youth Supports
- Capitalise on clean, green rural image of the county.
- Support the Longford Community Safety Partnership to implement Community Safety Plan



Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation.

STRENGTHS

- The LWETB provides integrative education in the County (10+ locations across Longford)
- National diversity valued as a strength in local business (25.2% of Longford’s workforce were non-Irish compared to 19.4% of the State’s)
- Strong appetite for training education programmes to ensure employee skillsets match available jobs
- Active Local Enterprise network in Longford
- Continued rollout of countywide broadband infrastructure including BCP’s will promote future economic growth

CHALLENGES

- Low proportion of people with degree qualifications (20.9%) compared to the State (30.4%)
- No Third Level College in the county – young people leave the county/qualified individuals leaving Longford to work elsewhere.
- Low in key digital measures- innovation; skills; digital integration in business
- High proportion of households without a computer (35.6%) compared to the State (29.2%)





OPPORTUNITIES

- Promote the development of Smart Villages to develop and diversify the rural economy
- Opportunity to benefit from the new university status awarded to TUS in Athlone
- Potential to promote return-to-education schemes for unemployed persons and enhance life-long learning
- Potential to develop a centralised local employment platform, and to establish local forums to facilitate businesses sharing knowledge and resources
- Leverage the digital hubs and connectivity to enhance remote working opportunities in rural areas.









Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.






STRENGTHS

-  Location and accessibility of County makes it attractive to investors while the development of different co working facilities offers opportunity to localise employment for all
-  Unemployment rate in County Longford fell by 45.4% between 2016 to 2022
-  Strong industrial base particularly in environs of Longford Town with emergence of potential clusters in engineering, medtech and food processing
-  Availability of affordable large scale industrial space in central location to attract more businesses and employers to area

CHALLENGES

-  Population increased by 14.1% between 2016 and 2022, while housing stock only increased by 3.8% - demand for affordable housing stock
-  Low number of large multinational companies based in the County
-  10.7 % unemployment rate in Longford is higher compared to State rate of 8.3% in 2022
-  High levels of social disadvantage (-6.01 Pobal Deprivation Index in 2016, second lowest score of any county)
-  N4 route at capacity hindering access to east
-  Tourism potential underdeveloped






OPPORTUNITIES

-  Inter-Regional dependency of midland counties and settlements should provide opportunities arising from collaboration, clustering and strategic industrial partnerships
-  Strengthen the economic role of Longford Town in the region
-  Continue to build on Longford's tourism potential of the Shannon, Royal Canal and walkways and capitalise on the Center Parcs "Longford Forest" project
-  Encourage and facilitate remote working in Longford and develop coworking hubs
-  Capitalise on clean, green rural image of the county







Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.





STRENGTHS

-  Strategically located in the heart of Ireland
-  Location, accessibility, and connectivity to national routes
-  Rich cultural traditions, including music, literary and arts (11 locations on the Longford Literary Trail).
-  A strong and committed partnership approach between Community Groups, local stakeholders and agencies involved in economic and community development (514 member organisations in Longford PPN)
-  Strong community spirit and friendly neighbourhoods (6,832 people involved in voluntary activity in Longford)

CHALLENGES

-  High proportion of non- Irish nationals with poor English language skills inhibits social inclusiveness
-  Growing new communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, and people migrating to Longford to live (668 Ukrainian refugees as of 06/06/2023, and 4,299 new residents due to migration between 2016 and 2022)
-  Demand for more targeted social inclusion efforts for marginalised groups, including Travellers, Roma, and refugees and asylum seekers
-  Perception of limited public transportation, particularly in rural areas

OPPORTUNITIES

-  Use of govt. funded programmes to counteract social disadvantage, exclusion and promote health equity
-  The culturally diverse and vibrant population has positive impacts that would benefit from increased advertisement and celebration
-  Continued improvement and coordination of public facing communication including mapping of services, pathways into services, information clinics and sharing of information
-  Promotion of information, knowledge and resource sharing among agencies, organisations, businesses and communities



Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford’s strengths and resources.

STRENGTHS

- A good network of connected towns and villages gives Longford a service and resource spread
- Growing tourism product, capacity and reputation with a diverse offering covering experience, heritage, attractions etc (€117,756 funded to tourism projects by Fáilte Ireland between 2015 and 2019)
- Ability to develop the Food and Agri Industry to grow employment and benefit the carbon economy
- Longford was awarded €1.3 million in Just Transition Funding in 2022 to address the impacts of the transition from fossil fuels to greener alternatives

CHALLENGES

- Challenges utilising natural resources for development of renewable energy
- Accommodation capacity issues may undermine ability to grow tourism and business sector
- Perception of limited public transportation, particularly in rural areas
- Extractive industries are a significant part of the county’s economy, and their growth must be balanced with climate concerns

OPPORTUNITIES

- The geographically central location of Longford with good accessibility by road, rail and bus is a positive in terms of future enterprise development
- Increasing capacity to harvest ‘green energies’ especially through Smart Communities Initiatives and Just Transition Funding for Midlands region
- Better utilisation and advertisement of rail infrastructure
- Utilise spaces as biodiversity havens to support native species
- Centralised environment and climate change information for local business

Vision and Implementation Plan

The Vision for Longford;

“A county that capitalises on economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all.”



6.1 Sustainable Community Objectives and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives

An evidence-based approach was taken in order to develop the LECP High-Level

Goals, and the sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) associated with each goal. Development was informed by the key findings from the policy context, the socio-economic profile, and the public consultation. The table below provides a summary of the High-Level Goals and the related SCOs/SEDOs.

LECP High Level Goals	Sustainable Community Objectives and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives
Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.	<p>SCO 1.1 Promote and support health service providers and initiatives that promote health and well-being.</p> <p>SEDO 1.2 Promote and support active and passive recreation and associated industries.</p>
Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.	<p>SCO 2.1 Support communities, organisations and enterprises to participate in climate action.</p> <p>SCO 2.2 Support, encourage and promote community safety.</p> <p>SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.</p>
Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education and training, smart technology and digitalisation.	<p>SCO 3.1 Develop and support pathways for education, training and lifelong learning for all community members.</p> <p>SCO 3.2 Enable individuals and communities to optimise digital connectivity and proficiencies.</p> <p>SEDO 3.3 Promote and nurture a strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.</p> <p>SEDO 3.4 Capitalise on strengths of Longford through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation for businesses and enterprises.</p>

Goal 4: A strong economy that positions Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.	<p>SEDO 4.1 Increase employment opportunities.</p> <p>SEDO 4.2 Build on opportunities for clustering of key economic sectors, including Medtech, engineering, agri-food and tourism.</p> <p>SEDO 4.3 Maintain and promote a positive business environment for Longford that enhances its appeal as a viable business location.</p> <p>SEDO 4.4 Sustain/expand new and existing businesses, social enterprises and entrepreneurs in County Longford.</p> <p>SEDO 4.5 Enhance Longford as a tourism destination, attracting more visitors and improving the local economy.</p>
Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.	<p>SCO 5.1 Reduce barriers leading to social exclusion and celebrate our vibrant and diverse communities.</p> <p>SCO 5.2 Support increased community participation and social capital.</p> <p>SCO 5.3 Increase joined up thinking and collaboration among agencies and organisations across the county.</p> <p>SCO 5.4 Promotion and preservation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage of Longford.</p> <p>SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.</p>
Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources	<p>SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.</p> <p>SEDO 6.2 Support the development of the Green Economy.</p>

Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.



This High-Level Goal seeks to improve health and wellbeing across Longford, and ensure residents are supported to live active and fulfilling lives. This Goal includes the following themes: improved access to health and wellbeing services and providers, and increased access to active and passive recreational opportunities.

High-Level Goal 1 aligns with the following EMRA RSES RPO(s):

- RPO 9.23: Facilitate the development of primary health care centres, hospitals, clinics, and facilities to cater for the specific needs of an ageing population in appropriate urban areas in accordance with RSES settlement strategy and core strategies of development plans.

SCO 1.1 Promote and support health service providers and initiatives that promote health and wellbeing.

This objective aims to improve the availability and access to health supports and services, which is central to creating a happier and healthier Longford. To achieve this a holistic approach to health is needed. The LECP provides a key opportunity for collaborative working with key partners to identify community needs on an ongoing basis and address gaps and issues that may exist within the current service provision.

LECP consultation identified community needs gaps in Local and Region’s healthcare infrastructure, in particular a high demand and capacity for primary care, acute care and social care services which need to be addressed to meet the health care needs of the growing and ageing population and an increased focus on utilising Trauma informed practices as recommended by the Trauma Steering Group – A Trauma System for Ireland. Local consultation mirrored the same issues along.

According to analysis of the 2022 Census figures, County Longford had a similar age profile to the State, with an average age of 38.8 years. Between 2016 and 2022, the number of people aged 65 and over increased by 26% to 7,332 in County Longford, a higher rate of increase than the State (22%). This ageing population requires adequate healthcare, accommodation and services to enable independent living for as long as possible, and health supports to encourage active lifestyles and address isolation for our older residents.

In 2016, County Longford reported slightly worse health than at the State level. Longford also had a relatively high proportion of individuals with a disability, and a higher proportion of people unable to work due to permanent injury or illness. County Longford residents also have a longer distance to travel on average to reach other health services and longest travel times to an HSE Adult Emergency Department in the country.

Consultation indicated long waiting lists for physical and mental health services. As a county, Longford will continue to work collaboratively to ensure health inequalities are reduced and the health services are equipped to meet the needs of all its people.

SEDO 1.2 Promote and support active and passive recreation and associated industries.

Longford has a number of initiatives and strategies aimed at improving physical health, active and passive recreation and health and wellbeing across the county. Outlined by EMRA in RSES, enhancement of the quality of the built and natural environments can improve mental and physical health and reduce health inequalities and enable healthy choices to be made. This includes improved access

to green spaces and the provision of new Green Infrastructure.

This objective will support strategically developing recreational spaces, promoting regular physical activity, good nutrition, and encouraging a culture of wellness. County Longford aspires to not only enhance the quality of life for its residents but also attract investment and bolster its economic prospects through activity-based industries. This approach acknowledges the interplay between health and economic vitality, demonstrating a commitment to nurturing a thriving and resilient community in County Longford. The Longford Sports Partnership facilitates programmes and events that aim to “increase participation levels in sport and active recreation throughout County Longford” for all.

Key Desired Outcomes



- Increase in the number of people responding to the Census with good or very good health.
- Increase the level of targeted health supports and services to target communities.
- Record an improved Pobal HP Deprivation index across County Longford.
- Increase the number of people across age groups and communities engaging in active and passive recreation.

Goal 1



Objective **SCO 1.1 Promote and support health service providers and initiatives that promote health and well-being.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
1.1.1	Expand universal community health and wellbeing services by implementing programs like Stronger Together, Sláintecare, the Healthy Longford program, and other local, regional, and national strategies.	Increased mental and physical health service provision across the whole community.	HSE/LCDC	LCC, MRDATF, CADS, Tusla, PPN, LCC (Planning), LWETB, sport and community organisations, local schools, Sláintecare, PPN, FRCs, Age Friendly Ireland, DCEDIY, LEO, Tusla, LCRL	S, L Term	No. new programmes implemented
1.1.2	Support evidence-based, need-driven initiatives to provide a comprehensive range of targeted community health services.	Improvement in the accessibility and effectiveness of health service provision to target groups.	HSE	LCC, MRDATF, CADS, Tusla, PPN, LCC (Planning), LWETB, LCRC, LWL, sport and community organisations, local schools, Sláintecare, PPN, FRCs, Age Friendly Ireland, DCEDIY, LEO, Tusla, LCRL	M, L Term	No. needs-led infrastructure audits/assessments undertaken No. new initiatives supported No. existing initiatives supported

Objective **SEDO 1.2 Promote and support active and passive recreation and associated industries.**

1.2.1	Support initiatives that expand and promote recreational infrastructure and opportunities across County Longford including sports, safe play areas, active transport, and other indoor and outdoor recreation.	Increased number of people with access to and participating in active and passive recreation.	LSP	PPN, Age Friendly Ireland, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries, Disability services, Schools FRCs, Sports Hubs, CCRC, LCC (Planning, Regeneration), HSE, LCDC, LCRL.	S, L Term	No. recreation space audits undertaken No. new recreation spaces delivered No. recreational initiatives delivered
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Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued



This High-Level Goal seeks to create a balance between environmental stewardship and social harmony while fostering a resilient environment and cohesive communities. This Goal includes the following themes: participation in climate action, increased community safety, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and Longford's natural environment.

High-Level Goal 2 aligns with the following EMRA RSES RPO(s):

- RPO 7.7: To reduce harmful emissions and achieve and maintain good air quality for all urban and rural areas in the Region and to work with local authorities and the relevant agencies to support local data collection in the development of air quality monitoring and to inform a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emissions inventory.
- RPO 7.32: With the assistance and support of the Climate Action Regional Offices, local authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which shall address issues including local vulnerability to climate risks and identify and prioritise actions, in accordance with the Guiding Principles of the National Adaptation Framework,

- National Mitigation Plan.
- RPO 7.43: Climate Action Regional Offices and local authorities should consider the identification of critical infrastructure within their functional areas, and particularly of the interdependencies between different types of sectoral infrastructure, as a first step in 'future-proofing' services and to help to inform longer term adaptation planning and investment priorities.
 - RPO 7.16: Support the implementation of the Habitats Directives in achieving an improvement in the conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region and to ensure alignment between the core objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and local authority development plans.
 - RPO 7.17: Facilitate cross boundary co-ordination between local authorities and the relevant agencies in the Region to provide clear governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms to support the development of ecological networks and enhanced connectivity between protected sites whilst also addressing the need for management of alien invasive species and the conservation of native species.

SCO 2.1 Support communities, organisations and enterprises to participate in climate action.

This objective seeks to support the people and businesses of County Longford to contribute to climate action within their communities and industries.

Climate actions can include measures to reduce and reverse greenhouse gas emissions as well as making communities, businesses and environments resilient to the climate changes to come in the future.

Ireland is experiencing observable effects of climate change such as rising sea levels, higher temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increased extreme weather events. These changes will continue to impact Longford's environment, society, and economy, affecting ecosystems, agriculture and water resources. The EMRA RSES identifies energy supply, transport, residential and commercial buildings and industry as primary greenhouse gas emitters and within Longford, agriculture will also play a significant role.

Public consultation showed a strong appetite from the community and economic sectors to address climate change and incorporate eco-friendly spaces and practices. County Longford already has a number of renewable energy projects granted and more than a third of private households have a renewable energy installation. However, the energy efficiency ratings of residential household are low in the county compared to the national average.

Guided by the National Adaptation Framework, National Mitigation plan and the EMRA RSES actions under this objective will maximise Longford's active participation in positive climate action.

SCO 2.2 Support, encourage and promote community safety.

This objective aims to support the improvement of community safety in Longford. Community safety refers to people being safe and feeling safe in their community. The perception and experience of safety is an important element in fostering the welfare of current residents, while also serving to attract future residents and visitors to the County. The LECP is positioned to be the local driver of national and regional community safety efforts as outlined in the 2023 Landmark Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill, including making the prevention of harm and protection of people who are vulnerable or at risk an objective of An Garda Síochána and making the safety of communities a 'whole of government' responsibility.

There are currently eight Garda stations in County Longford. Overall, crime is decreasing in the County, and between 2017 and 2022, the recorded crimes in Longford fell by 9.8%. However, public consultation indicated there is still a perceived need for increased community safety supports, particularly around anti-social behaviour, crime and substance misuse. Participants noted that there are several positive safety initiatives happening across the County, and recognised the potential to build on these and advertise them more widely to raise awareness of safety resources.

There was an appetite for strengthening ongoing community safety initiatives, and identifying targeted community safety projects throughout Longford. Longford was one of three locations chosen to pilot the Local Community Safety Partnership model, which replaced the Joint Policing Committee in 2023. The Longford Local Community Safety Plan 2022-2024 was adopted in July 2022.

The LECP will promote community safety via the support of the Local Community Safety Partnership model, which aims to ensure communities are empowered to have a strong say in what actions are prioritised by the services operating in their area, and to have a key oversight role in ensuring those actions are followed through. The LECP will also promote the response of local Garda Stations to the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill, and support for additional collaborative approaches to enhancing community safety.

SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.

Longford's rural landscapes, waterways and the biodiversity they are home to need to be protected and enhanced in order for the county to retain its rich natural heritage. This objective focuses on ensuring development within the county does not jeopardise the natural resources and biodiversity. In addition, it promotes the active enhancement and restoration

of natural and built environments to host healthy and thriving ecosystems.

County Longford has 12 Natura 2000 sites and six Natural Heritage Areas. Other areas also support vital habitats for flora, fauna, and vulnerable species. These form a connected network of spaces contributing to the County's Natural Heritage. Public consultation also indicated that the community appreciated the wealth of natural resources in Longford and identified opportunities around their potential for increased local and tourist use. Many of these sites like rivers and bogs span the county, serving as crucial resources for species exchange and carbon cycling, which is vital for managing climate change. Notable features include rivers, canals, lakes, turloughs, hedgerows, peatlands, grasslands, eskers, important strands of trees and woodlands.

The Longford County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 outlines particular strategies for conserving the biodiversity, woodlands, wetlands and peatlands that Longford supports. Through the sustainable management of these and other strategies, the CDP seeks a wide range of socioeconomic benefits for protecting environmental quality and biodiversity. This strategy is also in line with the EMRA RSES which promotes the benefits of protecting designated sites such as preventing habitat loss, disturbance of local to local wildlife, spread of invasive species, reduced air and water quality, and impacts on natural

systems such as drainage, erosion and carbon storage.

This LECP intends to deliver complimentary efforts to support and expand these enhancement and protection measures within County Longford.

Key Desired Outcomes



- Record a reduction in crime rate and increase perceptions and feelings of public safety across Longford.
- Increase the number of Sustainable Energy Communities recognised within the County.
- Increase use of active and public transport and a decrease in car usage.
- Greater area committed to rewilding initiatives and an increase in biodiversity.
- Increase the cleanliness and quality of the water within Longford's waterways

Goal 2



Objective **SCO 2.1 Support communities, organisations, and enterprises to participate in climate action.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
2.1.1	Support initiatives for the enhancement of the sustainability of rural areas through rural economic development, enterprise, and diversification into new sectors and services.	Increased sustainability of County Longford's communities and economy.	LCC (Environment), MEA, LCDC, Coillte	DECC, LCRL	S, L Term	No. rural sustainability initiatives supported
2.1.2	Support communities to reduce their carbon footprint and implement sustainable, energy-efficient measures across County Longford.	Reduced carbon footprint and energy usage across County Longford's communities.	LCC (Environment, Climate Action), LCDC, SEAI	DECC, LCRL, DRCD, SEAI	M, L Term	No. carbon-reduction initiatives implemented Reduction of carbon-emissions

Objective **SCO 2.2 Support, encourage and promote community safety.**

2.2.1	Enhance Longford's public image as a safe and desirable place for living, working, and recreation, while actively engaging the community in public safety efforts through the Longford Public Safety Partnership and implementing the Public Safety Plan.	Reduced crime rates and increased perception of public safety.	LLCSP	LCC, local organisations and businesses, PPN, An Garda Siochana, LWL	S, M, L Term	Delivery of LCSP actions Improved perception of personal safety
2.2.2	Identify specific safety needs with evidence-based approaches and deliver safety initiatives and programmes to target these needs.	Decrease in crime and anti-social behaviour in target areas.	LCC, LWL, MRDATF, LLCSP, Probation Service, An Garda Siochana, LCSP	HSE CADS, MRDATF, FRCS	M, L Term	No. safety audits undertaken No. needs-led safety initiatives delivered
2.2.3	Promote and increase the availability of safety-related education and training opportunities across Longford's communities.	Increase in the number of people engaging with safety-related education and training.	LCC (Corporate Services), LLCSP	Statutory Agencies, LWL	M, L Term	No. safety-related trainings/workshops delivered

Goal 2



Objective **SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
2.3.1	Conserve, develop, and enhance the natural resources and landscapes of County Longford to ensure that they are protected and available for future generations.	Increased number of natural resource protection and enhancement initiatives.	LCC (Planning, Environment, Regeneration)	Just Transition Fund, EMRA, CARO, SEAI, SME's, SEC's, LCRL, LEO, Bord na Mona, LCDC	S, M, L Term	Delivery of Longford Climate Change Adaptation Strategy actions
2.3.2	Support and implement water quality improvement initiatives, including the River Basin Management Plans and LEADER rural development programs among others.	Increased water quality in Longford and effective flood risk management.	LCC (Water Services), LCDC		L Term	Increased water quality Delivery of River Basin Management Plan actions No. water quality improvement initiatives delivered
2.3.3	Implement conservation and preservation plans that protect and enrich the biodiversity of County Longford, such as the National Biodiversity Plan, Longford Heritage Plan and others.	Increased biodiversity within County Longford.	LCC (Regeneration, Climate Action, Biodiversity Officer), LCDC	DRCD, LAWPRO, NPWS, DHLGH	S, M, L Term	No. of Local Biodiversity Plans developed and implemented across the County Delivery of Longford Biodiversity Plan actions

Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation.



This High-Level Goal aims to encourage an innovative economy in Longford, and includes the following themes: promoting a culture of innovation, enterprise digitalisation, enhanced pathways to education and lifelong learning, and increased access to digital skills and infrastructure.

High-Level Goal 3 aligns with the following EMRA RSES RPO(s):

- RPO 9.22 To support the role of Higher Education Institutions and Educational Training Boards in addressing skills shortages and life-long learning needs in the Region, and to support the further development of multi-campus Technological Universities to drive research and innovation.

SCO 3.1 Develop and support pathways for education, training and lifelong learning for all community members

This objective aims to ensure that all residents of Longford have access to education, training and lifelong learning opportunities. The LECP will support access to high quality education and training, which the EMRA RSES recognises as having an important role to play in developing sustainable and balanced communities in the Region. The RSES points out that third level institutions and higher education

providers in the Region are a crucial component of economic development, providing continuing professional development, advanced research, and facilities to support business growth and clustering. Universities are also vital in providing higher-order skills necessary to attract and retain major international companies. The LECP provides the framework for promoting access to third-level education, further education and apprenticeship training.

The proportion of population in County Longford with some form of third-level education has increased since 2011. However, The percentage of the population in County Longford with third level education (22%) is below the national average (35.9%). Conversely, Longford has a higher proportion of the population with primary education only (17.5%) than the State (13%). This disparity in third level education attainment contributes to the county's employment profile, which exhibits a higher proportion of the population engaged in semi/unskilled employment categories compared to the national average. Of note, there is no third-level institution within County Longford, with the nearest third-level colleges being TUS Athlone and Cavan Institute. Public consultation highlighted the opportunity to develop training programmes specifically tailored to the prevalent employment sectors in Longford. Participants suggested that this would help to ensure that the skill sets of employees were well-matched with available jobs.

Local business representatives also noted the benefits of work experience and job placement programmes, particularly for young people who do not have the access or desire to enter third-level education.

Through this objective, the LECP will address the aforementioned challenges and opportunities by promoting a collaborative and holistic approach to increasing access to education, training and lifelong learning opportunities.

This objective aligns with EMRA RSES RPO 9.22.

SCO 3.2 Enable individuals and communities to optimise digital connectivity and proficiencies

This objective aims to help individuals and communities capitalise on the economic and social benefits of digital opportunities available to them. The LECP is positioned to support local-level implementation of national and regional digital strategies, including the National Broadband Plan, and Harnessing Digital - The Digital Ireland Framework. The LECP will also promote the implementation of the Longford Digital Strategy.

The number of households in County Longford with broadband internet has risen steadily since 2011, and according to the 2022 Census, approximately 71.5% of households had access to broadband. While this increasing access is a positive, County Longford still has the highest proportion of

households without access to broadband internet in the Country (28.5%). There are currently five remote working hubs within County Longford, and eight Broadband Connection Points available for public use. Additionally, there are 11 fast Wi-Fi connections in rural primary schools which are exclusively for educational purposes.

Public consultation highlighted the benefits of reliable internet service both for individuals and for organisations and businesses. It was also noted that digital skills training and education is a critical element of addressing the digital divide. The LECP will address the above challenges and opportunities through support for the implementation of the Longford Digital Strategy, and the promotion of pathways to work via enhanced digital training and education opportunities. This objective aligns with EMRA RSES RPO 9.22.

SEDO 3.3 Promote and nurture a strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation

Through this objective, the LECP seeks to ensure that Longford's economy is realising its full potential for innovation and enterprise within the county. Enterprise 2025 prioritised placing a spotlight on disruptive technologies and new products, services, and solutions, the LECP will support this vision.

Longford currently has a more traditional, rural economy however, there has been huge growth in employment in

IDA companies, and increased focus on innovation. Longford has benefited from innovation support from the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, InterTradelreland and the New Frontiers Programme in TUS among others. However, public and business consultation revealed an appetite to build on existing supports and see greater capacity for research, innovation and enterprise development. Guided by the nationwide Innovation 2020 strategy and as identified by the EMRA RSES, Longford will foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship to drive a resilient, sustainable and inclusive economy.

SEDO 3.4 Capitalise on strengths of Longford through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation for businesses and enterprises

Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation The LECP will work to support smart specialisation and digitalization. The Longford Digital Strategy (2021-2023) is built around four pillars: Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity, SMART Communities, Digital Economy and Enterprise, and Digital Transformation. These four pillars work together to deliver on national and regional digital objectives, and reflect the needs of the local communities and target groups addressed by the strategy.

Approximately a fifth of workers in Longford reported working from home in some capacity on the 2022 Census. This was

the second-lowest proportion in the State, in part owing to the fact that Longford had high employment in occupational groups less likely to be working from home (Elementary administration and service occupations, caring personal service occupations, process, plant and machine operatives, etc.). Those employed in the science, research, engineering and technology fields comprised 6.3% of Longford's workforce, a lower proportion than the State (8.16%).

In 2019, the Department of Rural and Community Development launched the Smart Community Initiative. Smart Communities seeks to enhance community engagement with digital content and technology by extending their presence within the community. Its goal is to help individuals recognize the benefits of integrating digital elements into their everyday routines, and build the skills and confidence necessary to do so. The Smart Community initiative, when paired with local authority Digital Strategies, has the capability to generate increased interest in adopting High-Speed Broadband services in both urban and rural areas. The Longford Digital Strategy and the CDP both support the development of Smart Communities in Longford.

Key Desired Outcomes: Goal 3



- Increase the number of organisations and employments stemming from home-grown entrepreneurship and enterprise.
- Increase the number of organisations participating in smart digitalisation training.
- Record an increase in the proportion of the County with access to high-speed broadband internet connections.
- Increase the number of people accessing digital hubs and co-working facilities.
- Increase the proportion of people engaging with and completing third-level education qualifications.
- Retain skilled and educated workers within Longford with high-quality employment opportunities.

Goal 3



Objective **SCO 3.1 Develop and support pathways for education, training and lifelong learning for all community members.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
3.1.1	Engaging proactively with education service providers and research institutes to develop the local workforce and to meet the identified needs of businesses	A workforce that meets the specific needs of local businesses.	LWETB/LEO	LWETB, LCRL, Chamber of Commerce, Regional Skills, TUS, LWL	S, M, L Term	No. of courses available No. enrolled No. of new programmes to address skills gap added Development of a range of programmes to up skill the workforce
3.1.2	Enhance early years, childhood and youth education through programs that supplement mainstream education like, Youthreach and 'Top Class,' programmes that foster children's engagement in early education and afterschool programs	Improve student retention.	CYPSC	FRCs, local schools, Dept. of Education, DCEDIY, LCRL, Tusla, HSE, Co. Childcare, LCC, FRCs, LEO	S, M Term	No. of youth engagement and training programmes delivered
3.1.3	Offer and promote educational and training opportunities for both youth and adults, emphasising lifelong learning	Improved educational attainment.	LWETB	ETB, LCCm LWL	M, L Term	No. courses and training programmes

Objective **SCO 3.2 Enable individuals and communities to optimise digital connectivity and proficiencies.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
3.2.1	Sustain Longford's strategic efforts to promote and enable digital transformation, connectivity, and infrastructure through the implementation of initiatives such as the National Broadband Plan (NBP), Longford Digital Strategy 2021-2023, and LEADER programs.	Enhanced digital infrastructure and connectivity.	LCC	LCDC, LCC, LEO, Midlands ICT, LCR, LCRL	S, M, L Term	No. buildings with broadband internet connectivity

3.2.2	Promote enhanced digital skills for all through adult digital skills programs and comprehensive digital ICT and STEAM training initiatives for children and young people, including Dream Space Academy in primary schools, as well as computer science and programmes in secondary schools	Growth in the number of individuals pursuing careers or further education in digital fields.	LCC, LWETB	Ericsson, Microsoft, PDST, FRCs, local schools, Dept. of Education, LWETB, LCR	S, M Term	No. of schools with Computer Science as a Leaving Cert option No. of public digital training and skills programmes delivered No. of people enrolled in digital skills programmes
3.2.3	Encourage the effective use of resources available in existing and new coworking facilities to support the digitalisation of local communities.	Enhanced utilisation of digital hubs and coworking facilities	LCC	The Connected Hubs Network	S, M, L Term	No. people/enterprises/ organisations using coworking facilities
3.2.4	Undertake an impact and scope review of the Longford Digital Strategy 2020-2023 and scope for future digital priorities	Develop a new Longford Digital Strategy.	LCC	LCC, NBI, DRCD, DECCA, Midlands ICT	S, M Term	Review of Longford Digital Strategy undertaken Future digital priorities identified

Objective **SEDO 3.3 Promote and nurture a strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
3.3.1	Support initiatives that promote growth in key regional sectors, as identified in the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027, including advanced manufacturing, creative industries, bioeconomy, biopharma, financial services, AgriTech, and ICT.	Increased number of innovative initiatives across the County.	LEO	LCC, LEO, EI, Chambers of Commerce	L Term	No. of new enterprises in key industries Increased employment in key industries
3.3.2	Identify opportunities to avail of EU funding specifically designed to support company innovation and research and development activities	Increased number of businesses accessing innovation, research and development funding.	EI	LCC, LEO, EI, Chambers of Commerce, IDA, LEO	S, M, L Term	Amount of EU funding secured
3.3.3	Implement pre-enterprise programs, entrepreneurship initiatives within schools, networking opportunities, local Business Forums, and enterprise development and capacity-building initiatives	Increased engagement in entrepreneurship and innovation programmes and networks.	LEO	LCRL, LWETB, DSP, Primary and Secondary Schools, Outreach, Longford Youth Service Chamber of Commerce, Trade Associations, EI	S, M, L Term	No. entrepreneurship programmes offered in schools No. local business forums No. enterprise development and pre enterprise programmes delivered

Goal 3



Objective **SEDO 3.4 Capitalise on strengths of Longford through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation for businesses and enterprises.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
3.4.1	Support the implementation of digital/lean processes in businesses and enterprises to enhance efficiencies and bolster the adoption of e-commerce platforms and technologies.	Increase in the number of local businesses participating in digital/lean training and e-commerce programs.	LEO	EI, TUS	S, M Term	No. of tailored programmes delivered
3.4.2	Continue to implement and build upon the four key pillars of Longford's digital strategy to (1) increase Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity, (2) deliver SMART communities, (3) grow the digital economy and enterprise, and (4) support digital transition.	Growth and increase in the number of digital businesses, job opportunities, and economic output of the digital sector.	LCC	LCC, NBI, DRCD, DECCAIE, Midlands ICT, PPN, LEO, LCR, USEFE	S, M Term	Delivery of Longford Digital Strategy actions

Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.



This High-Level Goal aims to ensure that Longford is a desirable place to live, visit, and do business. This Goal includes the following themes: supporting the clustering of key economic industries, increased promotion and encouraging new investment, ongoing support for enterprises and entrepreneurs, and improved strategic infrastructure.

High-Level Goal 4 aligns with the following EMRA RSES RPO(s):

- RPO 6.5: Local authorities shall explore projects in LECPs for the enhancement of the competitiveness of their rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.
- RPO 4.63: Support Longford Town as a strategic portal to the northwest and south in recognition of its location at the junction of the N55; M4/N4 Dublin/Sligo and N5; due to its proximity to the regional growth centre of Athlone; and support its role as a strategic employment centre.
- RPO 8.6: In order to give local expression to the regional level Transport Strategy within the Region in conjunction with the NTA, a Local

Transport Plan (LTP) will be prepared for Longford Town.

- RPO 4.61: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.

SEDO 4.1 Increase employment supports and opportunities

Under this objective, the LECP will seek to ensure that people in Longford have high-quality and accessible employment opportunities and the skills and experience to fulfil them. Longford has a distinctive economic landscape. Major employment sectors include the Wholesale and retail trade, Manufacturing, and Health and social work industries. The county also has a history of high employment across traditional sectors. Desktop research indicated that in 2022, the proportion of the population employed as farmers or agricultural workers in Longford was higher than the State rate (7.0% and 5.2% respectively). Across public consultation, there was a perceived need for employment supports, employment focused training and increased employment opportunities within the county and this was likely to be increased due to recent population growth.

The LECP will support the RSES key industries for job creation and sustainability identified which include Retail, Tourism,

Low Carbon Economy and Agriculture as guided by National strategies from Project Ireland 2040 as well as region policies from the RSES and Midlands regional enterprise plan, the LECP will take measures to improve employment opportunities and employability across the county.

SEDO 4.2 Build on opportunities for clustering of key economic sectors, including Medtech, engineering, agri-food and tourism.

This objective aims to expand the key growing sectors in Longford, including biomedical, pharmaceutical, agri-food and tourism to increase their positive impact on Longford's economy and employment landscape. Longford has a distinctive economic landscape. Major employment sectors include the Wholesale and retail trade, Manufacturing, and Health and social work industries. The county also has a history of high employment across traditional sectors. In 2016 The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector employed 6.1% of the workforce in Longford compared to 3.9% at the State level. There is also strong local employment in farming and agriculture. However, Longford has seen growth within other sectors, particularly in tourism, with the Center Parcs resort providing 2,330 of the 2,664-bed accommodation supply in Longford as of 2021. This objective aims to promote the success of key economic sectors within Longford and ensure that the infrastructure, training and other supports need to drive further growth are provided.

SEDO 4.3 Maintain and promote a positive business environment for Longford that enhances its appeal as a viable business location.

This objective seeks to improve the perception of Longford's economy within and beyond the county and to use this improved perception to attract investment into the County. Longford has seen improvement and growth within its economy. Between 2016 and 2022, the unemployment rate in Longford dropped from 19.6% to 10.7%. Longford saw a 79.3% increase in total employment by IDA client companies between 2013 and 2022. This was the second-highest rate of increase of any county in the State across the same period. Across public consultation, investment, growth and employment were three of the most important aspects of Longford's future economy. People also suggested that Longford needed more positive publicity showcasing the economic strength of the county.

Under the objective, the LECP will support local enterprise and economic potential as well as collaborate with local, regional, national and international authorities to ensure this potential attract inward investment.

SEDO 4.4 Sustain/expand new and existing businesses, social enterprises and entrepreneurs in County Longford

This objective seeks to provide supports to businesses in their potential to grow and

develop as part of Longford’s economy. The EMRA RSES promotes the development of an Enterprise Supporting Ecosystem in the region that Longford should strive to contribute to and benefit from. The RSES also outlines guiding principles for enterprise development that emphasise considering factors like human capital, education proximity, transportation, broadband, and sector diversity; densifying urban areas along public transport routes; optimising global services centers; facilitating data sharing and addressing specific sectors tied to locations. This objective aims to provide support to existing businesses and SMEs and supporting employment in the county. This objective build on strengths of existing industries and position Longford as a location for jobs of the future

SEDO 4.5 Enhance Longford as a tourism destination, attracting more visitors and improving the local economy

This objective aims to increase visitor numbers, revenue and the associated employment while protecting Longford’s natural, built and cultural assets. The LECP is positioned to implement national and regional tourism plans and strategies at the local level, including People, Places and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025, and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Regional Development Strategy.

Findings from the area profile, consultation process and policy alignment indicate that Longford’s tourism sector has the

potential to be further developed to benefit the county’s economy and environment. In 2018 Fáilte Ireland launched Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands regional tourism brand, which guides County Longford in building on the tourism assets of the county to create key visitor experiences and unique tourism offerings for the visitor. The implementation of the Shannon Tourism Master Plan will enable the development of key resources along the River Shannon, which runs along much of the western border of County Longford. The Hidden Heartlands Strategy also contains the objective of developing a Mid Shannon and Midlands (Westmeath, South Roscommon, Longford and Offaly) Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP). Development of this plan is schedule to commence in 2023.

The most recent Tourism Strategy for County Longford (2017-2022) promotes slow tourism and regenerative tourism, and notes that these approaches are key for the county to build its tourism sector in a way that protects and respects the natural surroundings. A similar approach can be applied to agriculture diversification. The consultation process brought to light the opportunities that exist to economically capitalise on the natural surroundings in a way that is respectful to the natural assets. Given the agriculture landscape there are opportunities for farmers and landowners to expand their existing farm/land portfolio and in some cases diversify into non-agriculture activities, including those that may support the tourism sector.

Public consultation indicated an appetite for encouraging tourism in Longford, with participants indicating they saw this as a potential benefit for Longford’s economy. Of note, participants indicated a perceived need for increased ancillary businesses related to tourism, including accommodation. The positive impact of Center Parcs on employment and tourism generation was identified by many participants.

The LECP will encourage the expansion and enhancement of tourism in Longford through the support for national and regional strategies designed to grow tourism numbers in the Midlands Region, and the promotion and advertisement of the unique tourism opportunities within the county.

Key Desired Outcomes



- Close the gap in unemployment levels between County Longford and the State.
- Grow the number of people employed in the biomedical, pharmaceutical, agri-food and tourism sectors.
- Record an increase in the amounts of regional, national and international investment within County Longford.
- Increase the number of successful social enterprises operating within County Longford.
- Increase the proportion of the population that has access to effective public transport.
- Increase the number and quality of local business premises within County Longford.

Goal 4



Objective **SEDO 4.1 Increase employment opportunities.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
4.1.1	Support the continued growth of the enterprise sector in County Longford to provide sustainable job opportunities for the community.	Higher employment rates	LEO	LCC, EI, IDA, LWL	S, M, L Term	No. of funded programmes identified and developed No. jobs clubs, jobs fairs, or other employment events delivered
4.1.2	Promote and facilitate remote working opportunities in Longford building a remote working community	Increased remote working opportunities	LCC	LEO	S, M, L Term	Increased no. of remote working opportunities Increased no. of people reporting to work remotely
4.1.3	Establish specific support measures and employment initiatives among key target groups	Increased employment supports and initiatives	LEO	LEO, ETB, DETE, EDI	S, M, L Term	Employment needs analyses undertaken No. needs-led employment supports and programmes delivered to target communities
4.1.4	Avail of opportunities presented through local and regional support bodies to upskill, reskill and grow the capabilities of the local workforce.	Increased local business networks	ETB	LCDC, LCC, LEO, Midlands ICT	M, L Term	No. upskilling/reskilling initiatives delivered

Objective **SEDO 4.2 Build on opportunities for clustering of key economic sectors, including Medtech, engineering, agri-food and tourism.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
4.2.1	Collaborate with key stakeholder groups to develop targeted enterprise initiatives in support of Regional and National plans to include the EU Just Transition Plan	Increased enterprise and employment within key economic sectors	LCC (Planning)	LEO	M, L Term	No. targeted enterprise initiatives delivered Amount of EU Just Transition funding secured

4.2.2	Build on the success of key economic sectors within Longford promoting further collaboration and partnership and contributing to the development of new regional clusters to include a food and drinks cluster	Increased economic development clusters	SPC	EIU, LEO, Other LEOs across the region, Enterprise Ireland, EMRA, LWL, LCDC	L Term	Food and drinks cluster established No. new enterprises joining existing business clusters
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Objective SEDO 4.3 Maintain and promote a positive business environment for Longford that enhances its appeal as a viable business location.

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
4.3.1	Support the delivery of strategic infrastructure within County Longford that will facilitate further inward investment and expansion of indigenous companies	Increased level of awareness within and outside the County of Longford's investment potential	IDA, RPPRO, DSP, LCRL, LCC, LEO	EIU, LEO, Other LEOs across the region, Enterprise Ireland, EMRA, LWL	M, L Term	No. of infrastructure projects
4.3.2	Implement initiatives that maintain and improve transport infrastructure in County Longford to maximise its economic potential.	Increased connectivity across Longford	LCC	EIU, LEO, Other LEOs across the region, Enterprise Ireland, EMRA, LWL	L Term	No. transport infrastructure improvement projects delivered
4.3.3	Promote the economic strengths and investment potential of County Longford targeting specific economic groups through dedicated promotional campaigns.	Dedicated economic groups and promotion	SPC	EIU, LEO, Other LEOs across the region, Enterprise Ireland, EMRA, LWL	S, M, L Term	No. promotional campaigns delivered
4.3.4	Support the growth and development of strong business and economic networks within and beyond County Longford.	Increased number of local economic groups	SPC	EIU, LEO, Other LEOs across the region, Enterprise Ireland, EMRA, LWL	S, M, L Term	No. business networks available in Longford No. businesses involved in one or more business network

Objective SEDO 4.4 Sustain/expand new and existing businesses, social enterprises and entrepreneurs in County Longford.

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
4.4.1	Assist new and existing businesses to maximise their potential through direct and indirect supports.	Improvement in the infrastructure and supports for enterprise within County Longford.	LCC (Planning, Housing)	DFE, TUS, Department of Enterprise, Enterprise Ireland. LWETB, IDA, LEO	S, M Term	No. businesses availing of supports Amount of capital support provided

4.4.2	Identify potential for development of innovative business partnerships to explore areas of growing relevance to our community such as climate change adaption, digitalisation, and community well-being.	Increased provision of targeted enterprise supports.	LCDC, LCC, LEO, Longford Co, Childcare, LCRL	DCEDIY, DEASP, LWETB, LWL, LCC, Leo, Arts Office, Businesses	S, M Term	No. partnerships established
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Objective **SEDO 4.5 Enhance Longford as a tourism destination, attracting more visitors and improving the local economy.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
4.5.1	Support the development of County Longford as a tourism hub having regard to its suitability as a tourism base allowing easy accessibility to key tourist destinations.	Increased number of development initiatives in key tourist destination.	LCC (Tourism), CLTC	Fáilte Ireland	S, M, L Term	Increased no. of tourists to Longford
4.5.2	Promote and advertise the unique tourism opportunities within the County, building on the strength of the Center Parcs Resort in particular.	More extensive and efficient transport solutions available to businesses and employees.	LWCT	DCEDIY, DEASP, LWETB, LWL, LCC, Leo, Arts Office, Businesses	S, M, L Term	No. of awareness and promotional campaigns delivered
4.5.3	Support the development of tourism projects that align with Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand, to include projects that support the EU Just Transition objectives and projects that provide an enhanced visitor experience.	Increased membership of Longford organisations within business and economic networks.	SPC	DCEDIY, DEASP, LWETB, LWL, LCC, Leo, Arts Office, Businesses	S, M, L Term	No. tourism projects delivered
4.5.4	Support the continued professional development of our tourism providers by offering training and mentoring supports specific to their sectoral needs.	Provision of Tourism related mentor and training opportunities	LEO	LCDC, Fáilte Ireland	S, M Term	No. professional development events delivered

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.



This High-Level Goal aims to ensure communities are a vibrant and inclusive across County Longford. This Goal includes the following themes: continued and increased social inclusion, encouraging community participation, promoting joined-up thinking and development, supporting the arts, heritage and culture, continued town and village revitalisation and regeneration.

High-Level Goal 5 aligns with the following EMRA RSES RPO(s):

- RPO 9.2: Support local authority and sectoral initiatives to increase active participation and social integration of minority groups, including non-Irish nationals and Travellers.
- RPO 4.61: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.
- RPO 6.12: Local authorities shall include objectives in development plans and local area plans supporting emphasis on placemaking for town centres, for example through inclusion of a Placemaking Strategy for towns and

implementation of Town Centre Renewal Plans.

- RPO 6.13: Local authorities shall support the preparation of Design Guidelines to provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and for revitalising vacant spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.

SCO 5.1 Reduce barriers leading to social exclusion and celebrate our vibrant and diverse communities

This objective aims to increase social inclusion and community cohesion in County Longford. Social inclusion is an important national, regional and local focus. The LECP will support the local delivery of objectives and best practices from national and regional documents including the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, the Migrant Integration Strategy, and the Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy among others. Census figures confirm that ethnic and national diversity continues to increase in County Longford. Approximately 19.5% of the population were born overseas, and 16.4% of the population are not of Irish nationality. Throughout 2022 and 2023, Ukrainian refugees settled in Longford, and it is expected that this newest community will continue to grow over the coming months. Richmond Court Hostel in Longford Town functions as accommodation for asylum seekers. Longford also has a the second-highest proportion of Irish Travellers in the State.

Public consultation highlighted the diversity of Longford's communities, and overall there was the perception that national and ethnic diversity were strengths across the county. There was an appetite to build on current social inclusion strengths, including the response to welcoming Ukrainian refugees. Many participants noted that they would welcome ongoing and increased social inclusion efforts for Irish Travellers. Participants also noted that it was important that future community and economic development initiatives were equitably distributed across the county between rural and urban areas.

As noted in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 policy, the diversity evident in County Longford brings with it a range of opportunities and potential to encourage civic engagement and ensure that all people have access to quality services. The LECP will support social inclusion and diversity through enterprise development, inclusive festivals, artisan food production and the provision of inclusive community supports and services.

The LECP will also promote increased social inclusion through support for the continuation of the SICAP programme, administered by the Longford Community Resources Clg. Additionally, the LECP will support the delivery on objectives within the Longford Intercultural Strategic Plan, the Traveller Accommodation Programme, and any other social inclusion strategies and plans developed over the lifetime of this LECP.

SCO 5.2 Support increased community participation and social capital

This objective aims to support residents in Longford to engage in their communities, and to build strong social networks. The LECP will echo the emphasis on the importance of community participation found in the EMRA RSES, which notes that social inclusion will be key to supporting greater participation in local community and economic development. The RSES notes that community participation is underpinned by a number of things, including educational attainment, build environment regeneration, and community/economic development initiatives.

Between 2016 and 2022, County Longford had the highest rate of population growth in Ireland. Analysis of the 2022 Census revealed that approximately 72% of the population increase between 2016 and 2022 was due to in-migration, or people moving to the county. This accounted for an estimated 4,136 new residents. During public consultation it was noted that language barriers can prevent people from engaging in their communities. Focus groups with new and minority community members representatives stated that they would like to see increased representation within Key Agencies.

The RSES includes an objective aimed at supporting the development and implementation of age-friendly and family-friendly strategies that ensure older people, disabled people and people with

young children can move around with ease, avoiding separation or segregation. While County Longford has the same average age as the State (38.8 years), it is important to note that between 2016 and 2022, the highest rate of population growth was seen in older adult age cohorts. As it is also important to acknowledge that in 2016, nearly half of all households in the county (49.4%) had children. County Longford had the highest proportion of non-Irish national children in the country. Longford has several programs and strategies supporting these diverse age brackets, including a Children and Young People's Plan, and the Longford Age Friendly Strategy.

According to public consultation, participants perceive social infrastructure as a key component of community participation. Consultation indicated a perception that there is a need for increased national investment in social infrastructure across Longford County. Many participants identified the need for increased supports and services to match the high population growth seen in Longford over the last five years. Participants also noted that early intervention and increased child and youth support may create a foundation of resilience early in the life cycle that would carry forward.

There is a strong national focus on volunteering, with the National Volunteering Strategy (2021-2025) developed to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contribution

of volunteers to Irish society. This is reflected in the strong volunteering ethos across County Longford. The Longford Volunteer Centre aims to help advance social inclusion in Longford through volunteering, and supports initiatives that involve upskilling, integration and inclusive volunteering. In 2022, Longford's volunteer rate (per total population) was higher than the State rate (14.6% and 13.8%, respectively). The highest proportion of volunteers were engaged in sport-related activities. However, public consultation highlighted that many people feel it is challenging to engage people in volunteer work and/or community groups. It was also noted that there is heavy reliance on volunteer work in the county to provide social supports and services, and facilitate community events. Participants identified a need for more volunteer support, including targeted engagement with members of new communities to help them get involved.

The LECP will promote increased community participation and greater social capital through support for related policies, strategies and programmes (including Age-Friendly Longford, and the Longford Children and Young People's Plan among others). The LECP will also support the ongoing work of Longford's Volunteer Centre, and promote the work of the Longford Public Participation Network. This objective is aligned with the following EMRA RPO 9.1 and RPO 4.61.

SCO 5.3 Increase joined up thinking and collaboration among agencies and organisations across the County

This objective aims to support collaboration and cooperation between statutory agencies, non-statutory agencies and organisations, and other public and private bodies to achieve cohesive community and economic development. Ensuring that initiatives are complementary but avoid duplication will allow for more efficient and effective use of resources.

County Longford has a robust network of service providers, with over 500 organisations and groups registered as members of the Public Participation Network. There are several examples of collaborative approaches to economic and community development, including the Local Community Development Committee (with 51% non-statutory and 49% statutory membership), the Longford Local Community Safety Partnership, and Longford Community Resources clg (LCRL), the integrated local development partnership company for County Longford, overseen by a board representing a number of organisations and sectors.

Public consultation indicated that both organisations and community members would welcome the continuation and growth of collaborative approaches to development. Participants representing the business sector suggested increased networking opportunities for those involved in local businesses, while community members

noted that clear communication from service providers about available supports and services was important. The LECP will drive this local collaboration and joined up thinking approach.

SCO 5.4 Promotion and preservation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage of Longford

This objective aims to protect and promote County Longford's arts, culture and heritage for the benefit of both residents of and visitors to the county. The LECP is well-placed to drive this objective through supporting the implementation of the Longford Heritage Plan, and promoting increased access to the arts across the county.

Longford has a notable presence of environmental, local food, cultural, and artistic elements. Various amenities like the county libraries and theatres such as the Backstage in Longford and the Bog Lane in Ballymahon showcase the work of local artists, food producers, and craft workers for visitors to enjoy. There are also smaller shared spaces with galleries and craft shops throughout the county. The people of County Longford have a keen enthusiasm for sports, with numerous facilities and venues available in every parish. The county also takes pride in its musical, drama, and dance talents, often showcased in local venues. The rich tradition of Irish, country, and contemporary music and dance is celebrated across the county in various venues, halls, and pubs.

Various activities and festivals provide opportunities for local communities to celebrate their cultural heritage and showcase local talents and distinctive attributes. While some festivals remain modest and cater primarily to local attendees, others aspire to expand into larger events that draw more visitors. This growth is predicted to have a positive impact on the local economy.

During public consultation, participants ranked arts and culture as the most successful community element in the County. They noted this as an area for protection, and identified the potential to build on current the current strengths. The EMRA RSES recognises that arts, culture, and language along with participation in cultural activity is directly linked to individual and societal wellbeing and quality of life. The LECP provides a framework for ensuring the protection and enhancement of local arts, culture and heritage.

SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages

This objective aims to support the development of vibrant towns and villages across the county through revitalisation and regeneration initiatives. The LECP will drive local delivery of national and regional plans, including Town Centre First Policy, Our Rural Future, and the National Development Plan. The EMRA RSES also has a focus on urban and rural regeneration, which will be supported locally by the LECP.

In 2016, approximately 65.6% of Longford's population lived rurally, with nearly a quarter of the population (24.2%) living in areas classified as highly rural/remote. Due to the rural geographical landscape of County Longford, communities require local services and facilities to combat isolation, provide access to meaningful experiences and address limited access to transport.

The EUs policy on Long Term Vision for Rural Areas highlights the importance of dynamic, diverse and inclusive communities, and County Longford is in a position to build on current strengths to ensure the delivery of these across the county.

Town and village regeneration is the main focus of Longford's CDP covering physical, social, and economic aspects that sometimes overlap. The goal of this plan is to improve areas facing issues like population decline, lack of investment, and derelict spaces. This will be done by integrating and implementing various strategies which aim to address physical, economic, social, and environmental challenges. The CDP encourages collaboration between the planning authority, public agencies, businesses, and the community to make these changes happen. The LECP will promote the revitalisation and regeneration of towns and villages through supporting placemaking initiatives, promoting the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites, and supporting public realm improvements.

The LECP recognises the importance of environmental sensitivity in all revitalisation and regeneration efforts, and will support alignment with the national policy outlined in the documents 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)', as well as the regional policy detailed in the guiding principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' and the 'Integration of Land Use and Transport' in the EMRA RSES.

Key Desired Outcomes



- Eliminate barriers that are causing social inclusion and isolation between County Longford's diverse communities.
- Increase the number of successfully implemented age and family-friendly initiatives.
- Increase the engagement with and number of facilities organisations and events showcasing the Arts, Culture and Heritage of County Longford.

Goal 5



Objective **SCO 5.1 Reduce barriers leading to social exclusion and celebrate our vibrant and diverse communities.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
5.1.1	Promote and celebrate cultural diversity and social inclusion across County Longford.	Increased social inclusion programs and initiatives.	LCDC	FRCs, LCRL, CYPSC, LCRL, LWL, LCSP	S, M Term	No. social inclusion programmes and initiatives delivered
5.1.2	Facilitate increased access to supports and services for new communities that are targeted based on their specific needs.	Increased number of communities with effective supports and services provision.	LCDC	LCRL, LCDC, PPN, LWL	S, M Term	No. of targeted supports available No. people from new communities availing of targeted supports
5.1.3	Support the social inclusion of children and young people in the County.	Increased number of inclusion initiatives targeted for young people.	LWETB, LCC (Community Development), CYPSC	Co. Childcare, FRC's, HSE, Tusla, LCRL, LWL, Comhairle na nÓg	S, M, L Term	No. of child and youth-focused social inclusion programmes delivered
5.1.4	Develop Longford as an age-friendly and family-friendly County, ensuring accessibility and provision for everyone including older people, people with a disability, those with young children and others.	Increased number of age and family-friendly initiatives and plans implemented within the County.	Longford Age Friendly Alliance, LCC (Housing, Community Development), LWETB	Tusla, HSE, DOSP, FRCs, Plobal	S, M, L Term	Delivery of Longford Age Friendly Strategy actions No. family support initiatives delivered

Objective **SCO 5.2 Support increased community participation and social capital.**

5.2.1	Support the increase in active participation and social integration of minority groups, including non-Irish nationals and Travellers.	Increased degree of participation and representation of target groups across Longford.	LCC (Community Development), LCRL, LCDC, LWETB, Longford Sports Partnership, PPN, HSE, FRCs	AGS, HSE, Longford Sports Partnership, PPN, LWL, Local sports clubs and GAAs	S, M, L Term	No. targeted social inclusion initiatives delivered No. of target group members actively participating
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Goal 5



Objective **SCO 5.3 Increase joined up thinking and collaboration among agencies and organisations across the County.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
5.3.1	Support the establishment, maintenance and effective communication between agencies, organisations, statutory bodies and the public.	Increased participation within interagency networks.	LCDC, SPC, PPN	HSE, Tusla, Community groups and representatives, local councillors, LCRL, HSE, LCC (Community Development, Arts), PPN, LEO, SPC, PP, CYPSC, LCSP	S, M, L Term	No. Interagency networks established No. meetings held between network members
5.3.2	Encourage interagency collaboration across different sectors and organisations.	Increased number and cross sectoral connections made.	LCC (Community Development), LCDC, PPN, LCRL.	Tusla	S, M, L Term	No. different organisations sitting on interagency networks

Goal 5



Objective **SCO 5.4 Promotion and preservation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage of Longford.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
5.4.1	Enhance the cultural and artistic vibrancy of Longford and ensure that the potential for economic and community development is fully realised.	Increased visitor engagement with facilities, events and initiatives around Arts, Culture and Heritage.	LCC (Arts), Edgeworthstown District Development Association	IHT, LCRL, GMCE, Fáilte Ireland, LCDC	S, M, L Term	No. arts programmes and initiatives supported No. art-related events held Amount of funding for arts/creative programming Delivery of The County Longford Culture and Creativity Plan

Objective **SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.**

5.5.1	Implement development plans and local area plans supporting emphasis on placemaking for town centres, including Placemaking Strategy for towns and Town Centre Renewal Plans.	Increased number of regeneration and placemaking development projects proposed and implemented.	LCC (Regeneration, Planning, Arts), Chamber of Commerce	HSE, CYPSC, Tidy towns, Community groups	S, M, L Term	No. towns with placemaking strategies Implementation of Longford Heritage Plan
5.5.2	Support the sustainable development and regeneration of towns and villages through urban and regional regeneration initiatives.	Improved range of residential, employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities.	LCC (Planning)	LCDC, PPN	M, L Term	No. renewable and regeneration initiatives

Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources.



This High-Level Goal aims to utilise Longford's current strengths to ensure eco-friendly industries and practices. This Goal includes the following themes: increased sustainability of existing enterprises and infrastructure, and support for the growth of the Green Economy.

High-Level Goal 6 aligns with the following EMRA RSES RPO(s):

- RPO 3.7: Local authorities shall have regard to environmental and sustainability considerations for meeting sustainable development targets and climate action commitments, in accordance with the National Adaptation Framework. In order to recognise the potential for impacts on the environment, local authorities shall address the proper site/route selection of any new development and examine environmental constraints including but not limited to biodiversity, flooding, landscape, cultural heritage, material assets, including the capacity of services to serve any new development.
- RPO 6.24: Support the Departments of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and Communications, Climate Action and Environment to enhance the competitiveness of the agriculture sector with an urgent need for mitigation as well as real and effective and adaptation mechanisms for the

long-term sustainability of the agri-sector.

- RPO 7.35: EMRA shall, in conjunction with local authorities in the Region, identify Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas.
- RPO 7.39: Local authorities shall report annually on energy usage in all public buildings and will achieve a target of 33% improvement in energy efficiency in all buildings in line with the requirements of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP). RPO 7.40: Local authorities shall include policies in statutory land use plans to promote high levels of energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in existing buildings, including retrofitting of energy efficiency measures in the existing building stock and energy efficiency in traditional buildings. All new buildings within the Region will be required to achieve the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). RPO 7.41: Support and promote structural materials in the construction industry that have low to zero embodied energy and CO2 emissions.

SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.

This objective aims to develop Longford as county that is resource and carbon efficient, enhances natural capital and creates a clean environment for a healthy society, as outlined in the National Planning Framework. The Longford CDP is committed to increasing the sustainability of existing infrastructure. The CDP notes that it is necessary to provide a range of sustainable transport opportunities, including buses, trains, cycling infrastructure and safe pedestrian infrastructure. Ensuring existing infrastructure is upgraded and can support advances in sustainability technology is key. Examples include the provision of accessible EV charging points, and retrofitting buildings to enhance energy efficiency.

The proportion of households with an A or B Building Energy Rating was lower in Longford than in the State (16.9% and 24.9% respectively), suggesting that there are opportunities for enhancing the energy efficiency of many buildings, both residential and commercial, across the county. Consultation with the public also showed an appetite for improved public and active transport infrastructure, which could alleviate the personal vehicle reliance seen within the county.

It is important to note that County Longford has a history of employment in traditional industries, including agriculture, forestry,

and extractive industries. As the economic landscape transitions to more eco-friendly practices, it is important that employees in these industries are not left behind. To this end, County Longford is eligible for funding through the EU Just Transition Fund, which totals €169 million. This fund will be allocated to projects across the Midlands providing new green jobs, the development of affordable green energy, the decarbonisation of local transport, and the roll-out of new tourism enterprises. It will also support investment in sustainable agriculture and forestry, the development of SMEs and start-ups, as well as support for research and innovation. The Programme is managed by the EMRA, and is focused on three strategic priorities:

- Generating employment in former peat communities by investing in the diversification of the local economy
- Supporting the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands and the regeneration and repurposing of industrial heritage assets
- Providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition
- Generating employment in former peat communities by investing in the diversification of the local economy
- Supporting the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands and the regeneration and repurposing of industrial heritage assets

- Providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition.

Under this objective, the LECP will be guided by the principles laid down in Project Ireland 2040 and the EMRA RSES to realise these sustainability and resilience outcomes within County Longford.

SEDO 6.2 Support the development of the Green Economy

The green economy sector includes a number of subsectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and waste management. This sector is identified as key feature of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 (MREP), this objective will support the MREP future-focused vision which is centred around a number of priorities including the policy objective identified for the Midlands Just Transition which is the development of enterprise capability in the region for green and sustainability initiatives.

The LECP intends to build on Longford's strengths. As of 2022, County Longford had a higher proportion of private dwellings using some form of renewable energy source than the State. Longford also represented the third-lowest residential and non-residential metered electricity use in the State in 2022. LCC has committed to developing a Renewable Energy Strategy (Including a Wind Energy Strategy) for the County. A number of renewable energy

projects have also been granted within the county with the potential to generate a combined output of between 78.3MW High Estimate of potential MW output to 63.3MW Low Estimate of potential MW output of clean renewable energy.

The growing emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resource efficiency presents a major opportunity for indigenous enterprises to grow and export innovative products and services. This is further supported in the National Planning Framework, where the transition towards a low carbon and climate-resilient society is identified as one of 10 National Strategic Outcomes.

The transition towards a low-carbon economy will act as a catalyst for significant economic development, employment and investment opportunities in the fields of disruptive technologies, renewable energy, building retrofitting, enhanced construction smart technologies and agriculture.

Key Desired Outcomes

- Increase the percentage of buildings with A or B Building Energy Ratings in County Longford to State levels.
- Decrease the volume of Greenhouse Gas emissions from the transport sector in County Longford.
- Increase the installed capacity of renewable energy in County Longford.
- Record an increase in the number of people employed within the Green Economy.
- Increase the prevalence of sustainable and low waste practices within County Longford businesses.



Goal 6



Objective **SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.**

Number	Action Description	Output	Action Lead	Action Partners	Timeframe Target	KPI
6.1.1	Support the use of national, regional and local funding streams to support climate change adaptation, energy efficiency and renewable energy usage (i.e. Just Transition Fund and similar).	Increased resource and energy efficiency across Longford enterprises and infrastructure.	LCC (Housing, Planning), LEO, LCDC/LCRL, SEAI	LCC, Enterprise Ireland, DAFM, Teagasc	S, M, L Term	No. education campaigns delivered No. new Green Economy enterprises Reduction in amount of waste, increase in amount recycled" No. renewable energy projects implemented
6.1.2	Support the development of more efficient transport infrastructure across County Longford, through promoting and facilitating public transport, active transport and other sustainable transport solutions.	Decreased GHG emissions from transport across County Longford.	LCC (Planning)	Dept of Transport, TFI	M, L Term	No. public and active transport initiatives delivered

Objective **SEDO 6.2 Support the development of the Green Economy.**

6.2.1	Support the development of education around sustainable energy, energy efficiency and waste management and foster new enterprise within County Longford's Green Economy.	Increased number of enterprises and people employed within the Green Economy.	ETB, LEO, LCC (Planning), PPN, Bord na Mona	LEO, DETE, Bord na Mona, SEAI, Energy providers, LWETB, LCDC, LCRL	M, L Term	No. education campaigns delivered No. new Green Economy enterprises Reduction in amount of waste, increase in amount recycled
6.2.2	Collaborate with energy providers and government agencies to implement renewable energy projects within County Longford.	Increased renewable energy capacity in County Longford.	ESB, LCC	LCC, EDI, ESB	M, L Term	No. renewable energy projects implemented

Monitoring and evaluation

7.1 Who will monitor and review the implementation and progress of the LECP?

Monitoring of these Implementation Plans will be undertaken regularly by an independent working group of local enterprise, innovation and community stakeholders.

7.2 How often will the LECP be reviewed?

The LECP will be delivered through a series of three two year Implementation Plans to achieve the targets set out. Monitoring of these Implementation Plans will be undertaken on an ongoing basis, with a report prepared and submitted to the Longford LCDC every two years.

Two interim reviews will be undertaken to further monitor progress and align relevant objectives and actions to evolving needs. These interim reviews will take place in 2025 and 2027.

7.3 How is the LECP evaluated?

The LECP includes High-Level Goals, each with several related objectives and actions. Each objective includes one or more success indicators to measure progress toward the achievement of the High-Level Goal (see the action tables above).

These will undergo ongoing monitoring based on the prioritisation of actions and the determination of outputs and indicators for each Implementation Plan.

In order to support comprehensive evaluation of LECP interventions the development of case studies will also form part of the monitoring process for the LECPs. To support a consistent approach to these case studies the case study template used for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) programme will be used as a template to use for LECP case studies.

A final review and support for the development of the subsequent round of LECPs will be informed by both the quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of the Implementation Plan and ongoing monitoring process.

7.4 Can the public access the monitoring and evaluation process?

The implementation reports will be published every two years.

Appendices

A. Policy Context

Economic National Policies and Plans

Employment

- Pathways to Work Strategy 2021 – 2025
- National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024
- Building Future Skills: The Demand for Skills in Ireland’s Built Environment Sector to 2030

Development

- Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland
- Project Ireland 2040
- Town Centre First Policy
- National Development Plan 2018 - 2027
- National Planning Framework
- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 – Our Rural Future

Connectivity

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan: Enhancing Public Transport Across Rural Ireland
- National Broadband Plan
- Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government

Economy and Enterprise

- National Economic Plan (NEP)
- National Recovery and Resilience Plan
- People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025
- Enterprise 2025 Renewed - Building

resilience in the face of global challenges

- National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022
- Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan

Sustainability

- Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020
- Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy

Regional and County Policies and Strategies

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for EMRA
- Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan for the Midlands to 2024
- Longford Local Development Strategy
- Longford County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Local Transport Plan for Longford Town
- Longford Corporate Plan 2019-2024
- Longford Digital Strategy 2021-2023

Community

National Policies and Plans

- Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024
- National Policy Statement the Bioeconomy CAP Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027
- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future

- Housing for all: A New Housing Plan for Ireland
- Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement 2019
- Town Centre First Policy
- Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan
- Youth Justice Strategy 2021 - 2027
- National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021
- Programme for Government: Our Shared Future
- Civil Defence - Towards 2030
- Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy
- IDA Ireland: Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021 – 2024
- Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020
- International Financial Services Strategy
- Ireland’s Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025
- Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023
- Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025
- Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025
- National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS)
- National Dementia Strategy
- National Carers Strategy
- Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government
- 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030
- National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021
- National Migrant Integration Strategy
- National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)
- LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021
- National Plan Against Racism
- Third National Strategy on Domestic,

- Sexual and Gender-based Violence
- National Strategy for Women and Girls

Regional and County Policies and Strategies

- Longford – Healthy County Plan 2018-2022
- Longford and Westmeath Children and Young People’s Plan 2022-2024
- Longford Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024
- Longford Climate Change Adaptation Strategy
- County Longford Heritage Plan 2019-2024
- Longford Intercultural Strategic Plan 2018 -2022
- Longford Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027
- Longford Library Development Programme 2021-2025

B. LCDC, SPC and LCDC Advisory Group Members

LCDC Membership

- Cllr Seamus Butler – Chairperson
- Cllr Colin Dalton
- Cllr Colm Murray
- Cllr Paraic Brady – Vice Chairperson
- Paddy Mahon – Chief Executive of Longford County Council
- Michael Nevin – Head of Local Enterprise Office
- Veronica Brennan – HSE
- Shauna Doherty – Longford Westmeath Education Training Board
- Aine Bohan – Department of Social Protection

- Francesca Pawelczyk – PPN Environmental
- Tara Farrell – PPN – Social Inclusion
- Eileen Finan – PPN – Community and Voluntary
- Rosalind Green – PPN – Social Inclusion
- Patrick McGivney – PPN – Community and Voluntary
- Deirdre Orme – County Longford Tourism committee
- Emmet Duffy – IFA
- Adrian Greene – CEO Longford Community Resources CLG
- Eamon Reilly – Ballymahon Traders Association
- Vacant - Longford Chamber of Commerce

SPC Membership

- Cllr Paul Ross – Chair
- Cllr Colm Murray
- Cllr Gerard Farrell
- Cllr PJ Reilly
- Cllr Martin Monaghan
- Matthew Farrell – Edgeworthstown District Development
- Vincent Fay – Construction Industry Federation
- Breda Murphy – EDI Centre
- Niamh Donlon – Longford Chamber of commerce
- Louise Lovett – Longford Womens Link

Members of the Advisory Steering Group

- Francesca Pawelczyk – PPN Environmental
- Cllr Colm Murray
- Tara Farrell – PPN

- Cllr Martin Monaghan
- Andrew McHugh - IFA
- Michael Tobin – TUS Technological University of Shannon
- Michael Nevin – Head of Local Enterprise Office
- Louis Herterich – Local Enterprise/ Traders Representative
- Barbara Heslin – Director of Services
- Ciaran Murphy – LCDC Chief Officer

C. Written Submissions

Written submissions were invited via email or post. To facilitate submissions a dedicated email account was made to receive submissions electronically. Individual emails and phone calls were made inviting submissions from a range of service providers, business interests and community groups throughout the county. No written submissions were received.

D. SEA/AA Screening

This Plan has been subject to Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) and is accompanied by a Screening for SEA Report; Screening for SEA Determination; Screening for AA Report; and Screening for AA Determination. Screening for SEA is the process for deciding whether a particular plan or programme, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA. Initial screening during the statutory consultation phase concluded that the SEA Directive did not apply to this stage plan and therefore SEA and AA are not required.

E. Longford LECP County Development Plan Alignment

	Longford CDP Key Principles	LECP Goals	LECP Objectives
1	Support the strengthening of the town and village network and rural communities throughout the county in accordance with the hierarchy outlined in the following sections and supported by the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and Ministerial guidance issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development act 2000, as amended, particularly the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas or their replacement guidance.	Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life	<p>SCO 5.1 Reduce barriers leading to social exclusion and celebrate our vibrant and diverse communities.</p> <p>SCO 5.2 Support increased community participation and social capital.</p> <p>SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.</p>
2	Create vibrant and thriving urban and rural communities, underpinned in the principles of sustainability and the development of environments which retain and foster a high quality of life.	Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.	<p>SCO 2.1 Support communities, organisations and enterprises to participate in climate action.</p> <p>SCO 2.2 Support, encourage and promote community safety.</p> <p>SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.</p>
3	Support and facilitate the transition towards a low carbon society.	Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources	<p>SCO 2.1 Support communities, organisations and enterprises to participate in climate action.</p> <p>SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.</p> <p>SEDO 6.2 Support the development of the Green Economy.</p>
4	Align future development with existing and planned investment in infrastructure within settlements.	Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources	<p>SCO 3.2 Capitalise on strengths of Longford through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation for businesses and enterprises.</p> <p>SEDO 4.2 Build on opportunities for clustering of key economic sectors, including Medtech, engineering, agri-food and tourism.</p>
5	Give effect to the principle of 'compact growth' by targeting at least 30% of all new residential development to occur within the existing built-up footprints of towns and villages within the county, with a focus on infill and brownfield land development, rather than peripheral development patterns.	Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life	SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.

6	Focus on the need for more balanced development amongst the network of higher order towns in the Settlement Hierarchy to support the role and function of Longford Town as the principal economic driver and focus of investment for the county.	Goal 4: A strong economy that positions Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.	SEDO 4.3 Maintain and promote a positive business environment for Longford that enhances its appeal as a viable business location.
7	Consolidate and enhance the self-sustaining attributes of settlements in the county in terms of housing and service provisions, infrastructure, environmental carrying capacity, amenity value, and other relevant criteria.	Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.	<p>SCO 1.1 Promote and support health service providers and initiatives that promote health and wellbeing.</p> <p>SEDO 1.2 Promote and support active and passive recreation and associated industries.</p> <p>SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.</p>
8	Protect key environmental and ecological assets by preserving the quality of the landscape, open space, recreational resources, biodiversity, architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage and material assets in the county.	Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.	SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.
9	Support and promote sustainable economic development and enterprise activity within urban and rural economies.	Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education and training, smart technology and digitalisation.	<p>SCO 3.1 Promote and nurture a strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.</p> <p>SCO 3.2 Capitalise on strengths of Longford through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation for businesses and enterprises.</p> <p>SEDO 4.1 Increase employment opportunities.</p> <p>SEDO 4.2 Build on opportunities for clustering of key economic sectors, including Medtech, engineering, agri-food and tourism.</p> <p>SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.</p> <p>SEDO 6.2 Support the development of the Green Economy.</p>
10	Manage urban generated growth in rural areas under strong urban influence and stronger rural areas and reverse the decline or stagnation of many rural communities.	Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.	SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.

11	Promote development within Rural Settlement Clusters as a viable alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, particularly in rural areas under strong urban influence.	Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.	SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.
12	Identify targeted renewal and regeneration schemes within settlements to address areas of decline and to act as catalysts for future investment and development within specific settlements.	Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.	SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages. SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.
13	Promote development that is commensurate in scale and character with receiving settlement environments.	Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.	SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.
14	Address the dependency on private car transportation through enhanced sustainable mobility measures and greater integration of transportation and land use spatial planning.	Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources	SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure
15	Foster a collaborative platform with key stakeholders and infrastructure providers in coordinating the quantum and location of development within the network of towns and villages throughout the county.	Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.	SCO 5.3 Increase joined up thinking and collaboration among agencies and organisations across the County.

