



**Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall**  
Donegal County Council

# ANNUAL REPORT

**2023**

## Foreword

We are very pleased to welcome Donegal County Council's Annual Report 2023. As a progressive Council, we continue to advance projects large and small the length and breadth of the county, working with our communities and stakeholders to deliver results for the people of Donegal.

As a Council, we are proud of what has been achieved over the last 12 months considering the ongoing and significant challenges including financial pressures, the cost of living, new and increasing demands on Council services and the adverse climate and ecological changes.

Donegal County Council had a combined expenditure of revenue and capital of €343.8m in 2023 and this level of expenditure has resulted in significant improvements throughout the county.

With housing one of the major challenges facing Ireland at the moment, housing has remained a top priority for Donegal County Council. Significant progress has been made, and we are committed to maintaining and building on our progress in delivering new housing solutions. Advancement continued in 2023 on further in-house schemes through tendering, design, planning and approval stages by the Council's architectural team, including schemes at 12 locations throughout the county. Departmental approved for 5 projects was approved in 2023 for a total of 123 social housing units at a value of €35m. In addition, a new county-wide turnkey procurement process was advertised in 2023.

A highlight for 2023 was the hosting by our Cultural Division of the annual National Famine Commemoration in Milford on Sunday the 21st of May with a keynote address by President Michael D. Higgins. Donegal has a proud creative tradition and an abundance of culture, heritage and a rich natural and built environment. Our Culture and Creativity team launched their new 5 year Strategy during 2023 - "working towards the individual, collective and national wellbeing of citizens and communities, and we will do this creatively, innovatively, and collaboratively"

A major milestone in 2023 was the completion of the N56 Four Lane, the primary and only functional two-way access route from the National/TEN-T comprehensive road network linking the Gateway town of Letterkenny to Derry, Dublin and the Atlantic Corridor.

One of the key aims cited in the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023 is to increase the number of walking and cycling networks so that walking, cycling and public transport will account for 50% of all journeys in 2023. To this end Donegal County Council has spent €4.3m on Active Travel projects in 2023 including commencement of construction works on Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Projects in Ramelton, Raphoe, St Johnston and Newtowncunningham, with 5 additional schools receiving approval to proceed under the SRTS Programme. Works also commenced on two greenway sections from Muff to Three Trees (5km) and Lifford to Castlefinn (7.5k) as part of the North West Greenway Network. This project, in collaboration with Derry City and Strabane District Council, when completed in 2024 will have delivered over 45km of cross-border Greenways giving our citizens the opportunities to move to active modes of travel between our two Council areas.

Following on from the welcome news in 2022 that the North-West City Region was awarded funding for a series of innovative projects under the Irish Government's Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme, our Economic Development Unit led out on four projects with feasibility assessments completed in November 2023. Our strategic location in the Border Region ensures that we have a unique opportunity to foster the main aims of the Shared Island Initiative, in particular further developing the all-island economy, deepening North/South co-operation, and benefiting from investment in the North-West and border regions.

The former Town Council offices in Buncrana saw the completion and delivery of the Inishowen Innovation centre in 2023. Delivering a combination of own door, open plan fixed and flexible hot desks, as well as being a centre for the delivery of innovation programmes for businesses, the centre has quickly become a focal point for both exiting and emerging disruptive and research oriented technology businesses in Inishowen.

The Draft County Development Plan 2024-2030 was published in 2023 incorporating Town Plans for Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Buncrana and Bundoran. This is a landmark document for the county which guides sustainable future development with a focus on the places we live, the places we work, and how we interact with these places while protecting our environment. November 2023 saw the adoption, for our Gateway Town, of the Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport Plan, 2023-2029.

As one of the most significant global challenges facing us all, Donegal County Council has remained committed to addressing environmental issues and promoting climate action. Climate adaptation and mitigation remain embedded in the work and services that we deliver on a daily basis. The development of Donegal County Council's first Climate Action Plan (2024-2029) was progressed during 2023 with the Council appointing a Climate Action Co-Ordinator and Climate Action Officer to assist with the delivery of our plan. We aim "to deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across Donegal County Council within our own organisation and services, through leadership, example and mobilising action at a local level."

The North-West Regional Development Group, comprising of Donegal County Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council continue to work together as detailed within the North-West Regional Energy Strategy with the ambition of decarbonising our energy systems and aiming for net zero carbon emissions by 2045.

We as a Council continue to support the Creeslough Community as they come to terms with the tragedy that unfolded in 2022. The LCDC, on behalf of the Council, entered a Funding Agreement in 2023 with Creeslough Community Association and the Department of Rural and Community Development with funding allocated towards the Creeslough Together Initiative.

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge in this year's report the sad passing of the late Cllr. Noreen McGarvey. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with Noreen's family and friends.

Looking forward, the Council will continue to focus on building vibrant communities living healthy lives, continue to implement public realm improvements post-covid, provide safe travel routes, local economic growth, and access to public services which are fit to meet the challenges of the future.

In conclusion, we thank the Members of the Council, our Senior Management Team, the Corporate Policy Group, members of the Strategic Policy and other Committees and the work of our five Municipal Districts for their continued input and insights towards the delivery of our essential public services during the year. Our sincere appreciation also to all staff for their dedication and commitment in assisting us in realising our achievements during the year. We look forward to all of us working together for the future of Donegal in 2024.



*John G. McLaughlin*

**John G. McLaughlin**  
Chief Executive



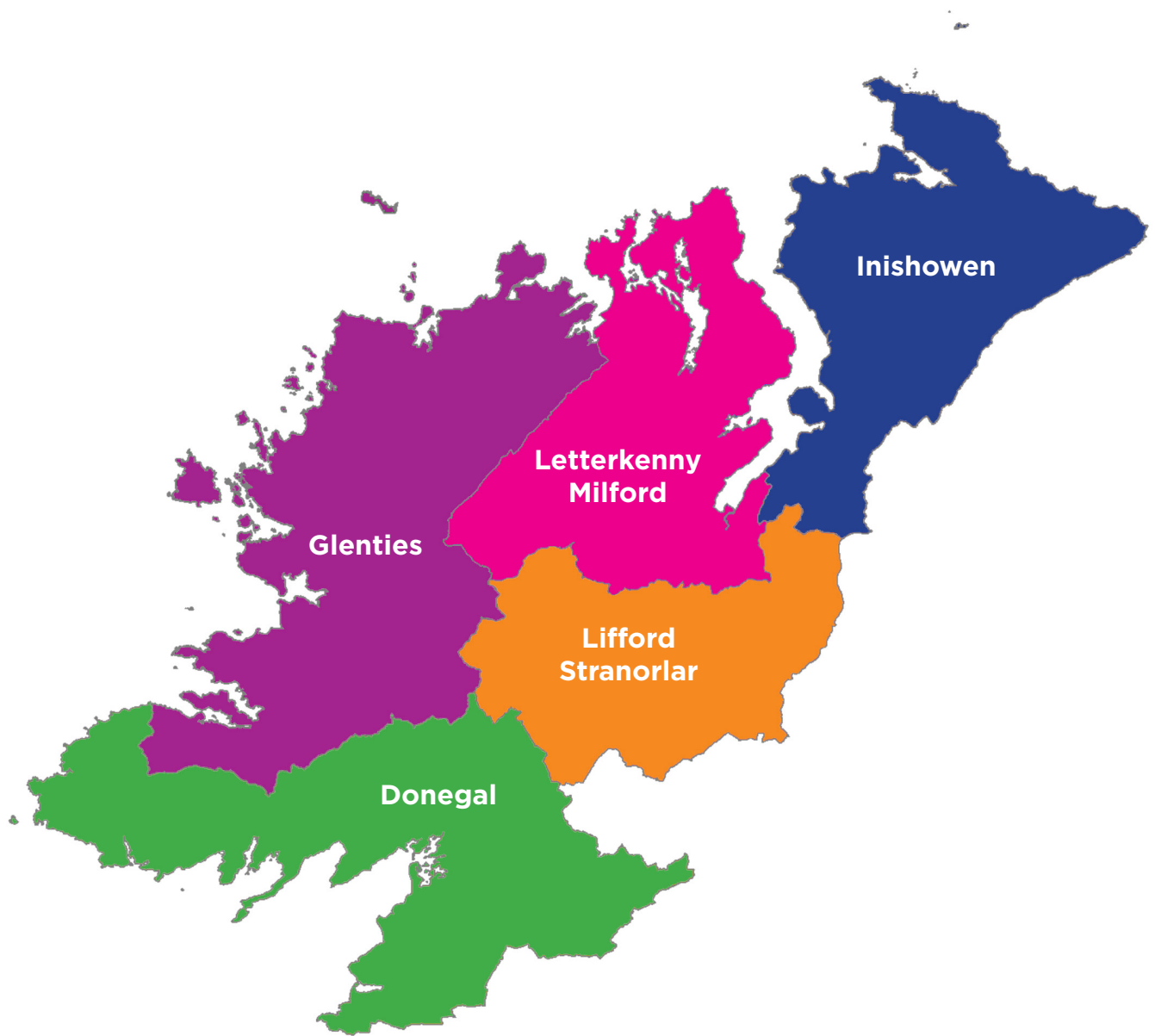
*Martin Harley*

**Cllr Martin Harley**  
Cathaoirleach

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# Municipal Districts of Donegal County Council



## Members of Donegal County Council

### Municipal District of Donegal



Cllr Tom Conaghan  
*Independent*



Cllr Noel Jordan  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
*Independent*



Cllr Michael McMahon  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Micheál Naughton  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Barry Sweeny  
*Fine Gael*

### Municipal District of Glenties



Cllr Marie Therese  
Gallagher  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Micheál Cholm  
Mac Giolla Easbuig  
*Independent*



Cllr Michael McClafferty  
*Independent*



Cllr Noreen McGarvey  
(RIP)  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Anthony Molloy  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr John Shéamuis Ó  
Fearraigh  
*Sinn Féin*

## Municipal District of Inishowen



Cllr Paul Canning  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
*Independent*



Cllr Terry Crossan  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Albert Doherty  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Rena Donaghey  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Martin Farren  
*Labour*



Cllr Martin McDermott  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Johnny McGuinness  
*Fine Gael*



Cllr Jack Murray  
*Sinn Féin*

## Municipal District of Lifford/Stranorlar



Cllr Gerry Crawford  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Gary Doherty  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Liam Doherty  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr Martin Harley  
*Fine Gael*



Cllr Frank McBrearty Jr.  
*Independent*



Cllr Patrick McGowan  
*Fianna Fáil*

## Municipal District of Letterkenny/Milford



Cllr Liam Blaney  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Kevin Bradley  
*Non-Party*



Cllr Donal Coyle  
*Fianna Fáil*



Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh  
*Fine Gael*



Cllr Michael McBride  
*Independent*



Cllr Pauric McGarvey  
*Independent*



Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
*Sinn Féin*



Cllr John O'Donnell  
*Independent*



Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
*Fianna Fáil*



# Donegal County Council Management Structure



## Council Meetings 2023



Donegal County Council, its Municipal Districts and its committees met throughout 2023 to discuss a wide array of topics as follows:

| Meeting Group                                    | Number of Meetings | Meeting Group  | Number of Meetings |
|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|
| Council Meetings                                 | 15                 | Donegal Health Committee                             | 0                  |
| Corporate Policy Group                           | 6                  | Brexit Committee                                     | 0                  |
| Donegal MD                                       | 11                 | Defective Concrete Blocks Committee                  | 3                  |
| Glenties MD                                      | 8                  | Donegal Youth Advisory Board                         | 0                  |
| Inishowen MD                                     | 8                  | Coiste na Gaeilge                                    | 2                  |
| Letterkenny/Milford MD                           | 12                 | LCDC/LAG   | 11                 |
| Lifford /Stranorlar MD                           | 8                  | Value for Money Committee                            | 3                  |
| Climate Action & Environment SPC                 | 4                  | Donegal County Council Joint Policing Committee      | 4                  |
| Community, Social & Cultural SPC                 | 3                  | Audit Committee                                      | 4                  |
| Roads & Transportation SPC                       | 4                  | Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee | 1                  |
| Housing & Corporate SPC                          | 4                  | Fisheries Committee                                  | 5                  |
| Planning SPC                                     | 4                  | Islands Committee                                    | 4                  |
| Economic Development, Enterprise & Emergency SPC | 4                  | Donegal Heritage Forum                               | 4                  |
| Emergency Response Committee                     | 3                  | Working Group on Constitutional Change               | 1                  |
| Agricultural Committee                           | 5                  | Disability Strategy Committee                        | 4                  |
| PEACEPLUS Partnership                            | 8                  | Donegal 2040   | 11                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                     |                    | <b>164</b>   |                    |

## Civic Honours & Receptions 2023

### Freedom of the County for Tim Kelly

On 1st December, 2023 Frosses born businessman Tim Kelly was awarded the Honorary Freedom of the County of Donegal for his outstanding achievements in the field of business, particularly in the telecommunications sector, for his long standing, and wide-ranging charitable efforts in Donegal and further afield, especially in supporting the Irish community in London. Mr Kelly's name was entered into the roll of persons so honoured making him only the 11th recipient of this distinguished award.



### Civic Reception for Finn Valley Vikings

On 23rd July, 2023 Finn Valley Viking were honoured at a Civic Reception for their outstanding achievements in the sport of powerlifting. The Team secured 150 Irish records and also have an impressive tally of over 30 European and World records.



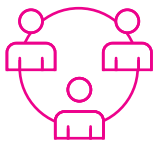
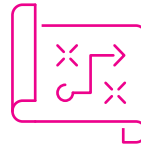
# Community Development & Planning Services

Empowering our Communities/Driving Growth



**235 projects** benefitted from **€740,000** under the **Development Fund Initiative**

**2,030** planning development applications received



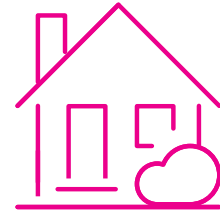
**€497,000** allocated towards the **Creeslough Together Initiative**

**€236,000** allocated to circa **346** **community groups/projects** from **Members Development Fund**



Launch of the **Donegal Outdoor Recreational Strategy** in June by **Minister Heather Humphreys TD**

## 2023 Highlights



**536**

applications processed under the

**Croí Cónaithe** vacant property refurbishment grant scheme with almost **300 approved** by year end to a total value **in excess of**

**€15 million**

**€3.01m** secured under the **Community Recognition Fund**

**€372,786** allocated to projects under the **Community Support Fund**



**€17.8m** announced for the new **Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2024-2028**

**€4m** secured under Call 3 of the **Urban Regeneration and Development Fund** to tackle vacancy and dereliction in **Letterkenny Town**

# Community Development

## Fund Management (Internal Funds)

### Members Development Fund

526 allocations benefitting 346 community groups/projects throughout the county were made from the Members Development Fund which had a budget of €236,000 for 2023.

### Development Fund Initiative

A total of €740,000 was allocated to 235 projects/groups across the five Municipal Districts during 2023.

## Donegal Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Donegal Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) comprises both public and private sector members (see appendices for full membership) and met 9 times in 2023. The LCDC also hosted a Special meeting on the Local Development Strategy 2023-2027 as well as two joint meetings with the Economic, Enterprise and Emergency Services SPC regarding the emerging Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP).

## Development of the Donegal Integrated Framework LECP 2023-2029

The Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan sets out, for a six-year period to 2029 the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic, local and community development of County Donegal and fulfils the requirements as set out in the Local Government & Reform Act 2014, informed by the Local and Economic Development Guidelines 2021.

The process for the development of the LECP initially consists of four broad phases: preparation, public consultation, development of High-Level Goals, objectives and outcomes, and finalisation of the LECP. This will be followed by a fifth stage for implementation that will include the Implementation Plan process and a sixth stage of monitoring, evaluation and review of the plan.

In 2023, the development of the Donegal Integrated Framework LECP 2023-2029 continued with the preparation, public consultation and development of High-Level Goals and work is now progressing with our stakeholders in developing objectives and outcomes towards finalisation of Stage 4 of the LECP before the end of Q1/2024.



*Marine Tourism Passenger Boat - LEADER*



*Arranmore Glamping Lodges - LEADER*

### Rural Development/LEADER Programme

Donegal LCDC delivers the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme. The LCDC also acts as the Local Action Group (LAG) working in partnership with Donegal County Council as Lead Financial Partner and with four implementing partners; Donegal Local Development Company, Inishowen Development Partnership, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Comhar na nOileán.

Donegal LCDC, in its role as the LAG, approved the full allocation of LEADER funding awarded to the county for the 2014-2020 programme to projects recommended by the Evaluation Committees of the local Implementing Partners. In March 2021, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, T.D. announced details of the €70 million Transitional LEADER Programme. €45 million funding for the Transitional LEADER Programme came into effect from 1st April 2021 and €20 million for the EURI (European Union Recovery Instrument) Programme which came into effect from 30th July 2021 following approval by the EU Commission.

The Transitional Programme ran from April 2021 to December 2022. The Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD) further extended both the Transitional & EURI Programmes to the end of December 2023 which allowed the LAG to approve an additional 6 projects with a total value of €152,998 and this funding became available for re-allocation because of de-committed funds from projects previously approved.

### New LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027

In its capacity as the Local Action Group (LAG), the LCDC will administer the Rural Development/LEADER Programme in 2024 through the LEADER Local Development Strategy 2023-2027. Donegal was awarded a €10.4m allocation for the delivery of the new LEADER programme to cover the period.

The new LEADER Local Development Strategy was submitted in July 2023 following nine public consultation events across the county in partnership with Implementing Partners and combined with the new LECP and PEACEPLUS programme consultation. Donegal County Council received notification in November 2023 that following consideration of the LEADER Local Development Strategy 2023-2027 the plan was deemed to be of an excellent standard. The LEADER funding agreement was signed by all partners and returned to the DRCD on December 14th, 2023.

### LEADER Food and Co-operation Projects

A new call for LEADER Food Projects was opened on 8th August 2023 with project proposals to be submitted to the Department by 31st August 2023. Donegal sent a total of 12 project proposals for consideration by the Department with 3 being approved in principle for progression to the LCDC/LAG for full approval by 31st December 2023. Donegal LCDC approved 2 additional new Food Projects on 13th December 2023 totalling €25,728.

### Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2023

Donegal LCDC continued to manage and oversee the implementation of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), with 2023 the final year of the five-year SICAP programme running from 2018-2022, following the addition of a year to the programme.

The SICAP Programme had a budget of €2,008,917 per year across the lifetime of the programme, however a budget increase was allocated in 2023, bringing the total budget for the three SICAP Lots in Donegal to €2,334,828.

Two Local Community Development Companies deliver the SICAP Programme on behalf of the Donegal LCDC across the three Lots in Donegal as follows:

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Lot 33-1 - Inishowen</b>         | <b>Inishowen Development Partnership</b> |
| <b>Lot 33-2 - Donegal Gaeltacht</b> | <b>Donegal Local Development CLG</b>     |
| <b>Lot 33-3 - Donegal</b>           | <b>Donegal Local Development CLG</b>     |

In 2023 the core SICAP Programme again extended to include delivery of supports to Ukrainian Refugees with an additional budget allocation of €507,816 to the Programme Implementers for provision of supports.

### New Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2024-2028

Donegal LCDC invited tenders for the provision of services under SICAP 2024-2028. During October 2023, the tenders were assessed by the LCDC SICAP Evaluation Sub-Committee and approved in line with guidance received from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Following evaluations, the SICAP Sub-committee recommended that the SICAP lots be awarded as follows:

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Lot 1 - Inishowen</b>         | <b>to be awarded to Inishowen Development Partnership</b> |
| <b>Lot 2 - Donegal Gaeltacht</b> | <b>to be awarded to Donegal Local Development CLG</b>     |
| <b>Lot 3 - Donegal</b>           | <b>to be awarded to Donegal Local Development CLG</b>     |

A resolution to agree the recommendations of the SICAP sub-committee was agreed at the LCDC on November 15th, 2023, with the respective Funding Agreements signed between all partners in December 2023. Donegal County Council will continue to administer the SICAP funding on behalf of and in accordance with the instruction of LCDC as the lead financial partner.

### The Community Recognition Fund 2023

The Community Recognition Fund 2023 aimed to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities in recognition of the contribution being made by communities across the country in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries. The funding was specifically targeted at projects that are in communities, towns and villages that are hosting the Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and/or International Protection Applicants ('new arrivals') across Donegal.

The Fund aims to support the development of facilities that will be used by all members of the community. It is separate in its objectives and scope to any other public funding streams and is administered by Donegal County Council on behalf of Donegal LCDC. Applications from 51 Community Groups seeking funding were successful, receiving funding totalling €3,014,395. This programme will run into 2024.



**Newtowncunningham First Responders – Community Recognition Fund 2023**

## The Community Support Fund

The Community Support Fund was provided by the Government to support a wide and diverse range of local community groups with energy bills and running costs particularly in disadvantaged areas:

- Non-pay running costs for example energy costs (electricity costs, refuse charges, heating charges) or other non-pay operating costs for example rental/lease costs, insurance bills.
- To carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities, purchase equipment such as tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops and printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment etc.
- An element of the funding was ring fenced for award to Women's Sheds for operating/running costs.

This funding helps communities, community groups and committees, allowing them to continue to provide valuable services and in the process strengthen the bonds that tie communities together. Funding totalling €372,786 has been rolled out across 2023 including €175,000 in large grants and €197,787 in small grants, supporting critical community infrastructure and groups.

## Creeslough Together Initiative

In 2023 the LCDC on behalf of Donegal County Council entered a Funding Agreement with Creeslough Community Association and the DRCD to ensure that funding in the sum of €497,000 be allocated towards the Creeslough Together Initiative. The funding will be allocated over three years and 2023 saw the delivery of the first tranche of funding which focused on the opening of a local centre for the group, as well as the recruitment of staff to develop, manage and oversee Pastoral care of the Community, Community Activation (development, support and funding of small community activities) and support future infrastructural development needs under the Creeslough Plan 2024-2027.

## Healthy Ireland Fund Round 4

The objective of the Healthy Ireland Fund 2023 - 2025 is to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages and abilities living in Ireland through the implementation of the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025. Donegal Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) has been approved a budget of €75,000 for 2023, €75,000 for 2024 and an indicative budget of €40,000 for 2025 under the Healthy Ireland Fund Round 4 Programme. In 2023, Donegal LCDC supported key priority target groups through local activities delivered under the Healthy Ireland Programme.

## Community Development Programme and Empowering Communities Programme

The LCDC continued to work in 2023 with the Department of Community and Rural Development (DCRC) on the roll out of several schemes initially developed in 2022 on behalf of the Department.

- In 2021, the DRCD awarded seven applicant organisations funding under a €1 million, three-year pilot Community Development Programme to trial community led interventions that address poverty, social exclusion, inequality and promote human rights. Donegal Intercultural Platform was approved funding under the theme Migrants to tackle racism and promote inter-culturalism, human rights, equality and inclusion across County Donegal. The LCDC has financial oversight of the development of the project locally and issued funding of €125,000 to Donegal Intercultural Platform in 2023.
- The Empowering Communities Programme targets a number of smaller areas experiencing challenges affecting the quality of life for those people living in them. Arranmore Island is a pilot location for the Programme and Donegal LCDC administers the annual funding of €120,000 for the programme and continues to work closely with Donegal Local Development Company (DLDC) who are delivering a programme of activities to the



**Liam Ward, Director of Service, Cllr Niamh Kennedy, Chair Donegal LCDC and Wendy McCarry, Manager Bluestack Special Needs Foundation**





**Healthy Ireland Moments of Happiness at your Library initiative**

Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, Cllr. Martin Harley, pictured above with Catherine McGeehan, Bluestacks Special Needs Foundation, launched the Healthy Ireland Moments of Happiness at your Library initiative which uses the innovative award-winning Tovertafel games system to positively influence the quality of life for children with autism, seniors living with dementia and adults with intellectual disabilities.

**Civic Dollars Project**

The Chair of Donegal Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Cllr. Niamh Kennedy launched the Civic Dollars project, a community reward platform designed to increase time spent in outdoor, local recreational spaces across Donegal. Through this community currency app, Donegal County Council aims to provide people with an incentive and support to improve their mental health, increase their physical activity levels, and encourage engagement with local community groups and support for the local business community.

**Donegal Playground Passport**

Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council Cllr. Liam Blaney was delighted to announce the launch of the Donegal Playground Passport to encourage active and healthy communities, as well as promoting positive mental, physical and emotional health. Donegal County Council, through the Healthy Ireland Programme, developed the Donegal Playground Passport - a free convenient, pocket-sized guide to playgrounds across Donegal. The resource comprises of a map of Donegal with forty playgrounds numbered and listed in each Municipal District.



**Pictured Below at the Launch of the Donegal Playground Passport:**

Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager; Cllr. Liam Blaney, Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council; Seamus Canning, Area Manager; Cllr. Donal Mandy Kelly, Mayor of Letterkenny-Milford Municipal District; Margaret Fitzgerald, Healthy Ireland Coordinator; and, Mr. John G. McLaughlin, Chief Executive, Donegal County Council



## Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme

Sláintecare Healthy Communities (SHC) Programme is a cross-government initiative to reduce health inequalities in Ireland. Launched as a three-year pilot in Donegal in two sites; Northwest Gaeltacht and Inishowen. This programme is a Healthy Ireland initiative to reduce health inequalities in Ireland. Two Community Development Officers deliver the programme in the pilot areas, with respective Seed funding per area annually as well as funding to cover staff costs.

Community Enhancement Funding and Seed Funding has been made available by the Department of Health to support the delivery. Donegal County Council have utilised the Community Enhancement Programme to undertake capital projects in each pilot site with a total value of €498,814.



**Boardwalk & Accessible Equipment Magherawarden Portsalon**

During 2023, in Northwest Gaeltacht the projects included the redevelopment of a playground in Dungloe, the enhancement of accessibility to the Muckish Greenway project and the Men's Shed Scioból na bhfeair on Tory Island. In Inishowen the projects included works at Barrack Hill in Carndonagh, the Tip O'Neill Trail and the Merville Playground.

In addition, €150,000 in Seed funding has supported projects and initiatives to positively impact on the health and wellbeing of those who live within the Programme Areas. Partnerships within Donegal County Council, Donegal LCDC, project partners, relevant agencies and local communities delivered improvements, initiatives and projects fostering a foundation for health and wellbeing.



**Dungloe Foreshore Playground Redevelopment**

## **PEACEPLUS Partnership Programme**

Work continued in 2023 on the submission of the PEACEPLUS Plan. Once submitted it will take the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) several months to assess the PEACEPLUS Plan. It will likely be Q3 in 2024 before the Partnership can move forward to tender for Programmes under themes 2 and 3 and commence the capital works programme under theme 1.

The three thematic strands that have been selected upon which to design the content of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan for Donegal are:

- Local Community Regeneration and Transformation
- Thriving and Peaceful Communities
- Building Respect for All Cultural Identities

Under Theme 1 Investment Area 1.1 Co-designed Local Community PEACEPLUS Action Plans have been allocated €110m, Donegal County Council has been awarded an indicative allocation of €7,635,396. The PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan provides the scope to incorporate projects which will span across a range of different sectors and activities including:

- Youth development Programmes
- Health and wellbeing
- Community Regeneration Projects
- Redevelopment and reimagining of new and existing community facilities for shared usage
- Initiatives to building positive relations
- Social innovation/enterprise initiatives
- Education and skills development Programmes
- Programmes that increase social inclusion and promotes civil leadership

Actions within the localised plans will span the range of social, environmental and economic interventions. These programmes will also increase social inclusion, promote civil leadership, and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

PEACEPLUS Action Plans will be implemented through models based on proactive local community engagement and collaboration Process.

## **Social Inclusion**

The Council continued to support various social inclusion initiatives in 2023 including Social Inclusion Week, Pride of Place, Donegal Youth Council, and the coordination of a wide range of various social inclusion projects right across the county.

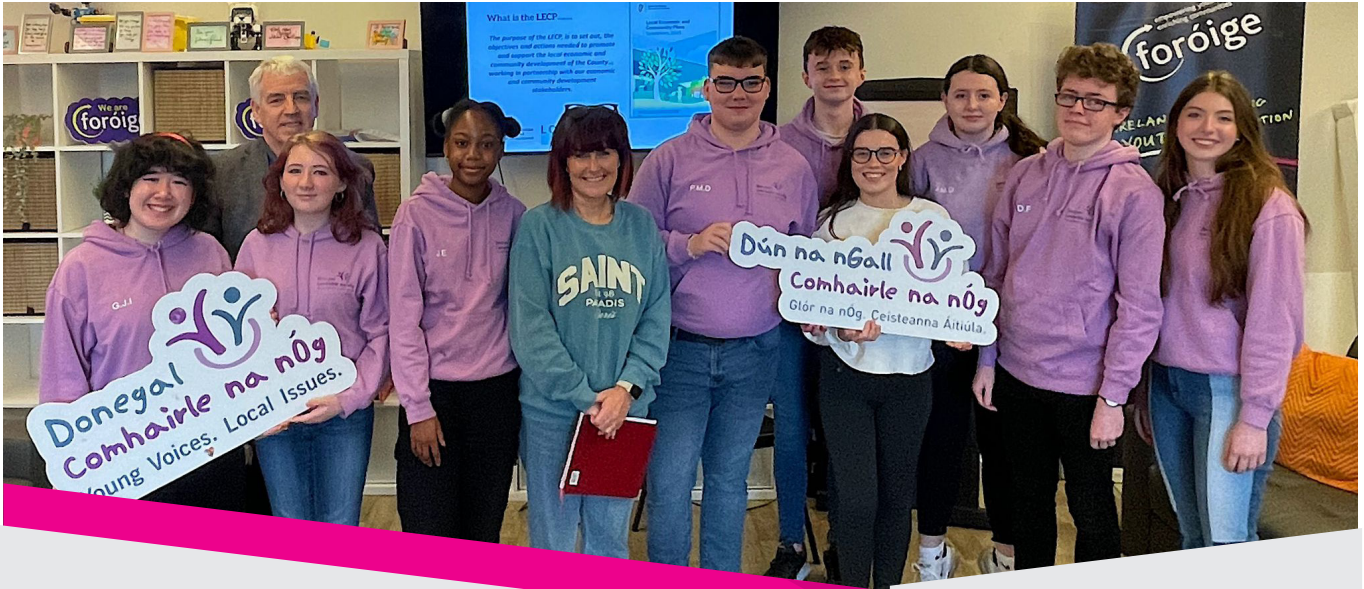
The Social Inclusion Unit continued to co-ordinate the implementation of the Donegal Age Friendly Strategy and the Black and Minority Ethnic Inclusion Strategy.

## **Donegal Youth Council**

The current Donegal Youth Council completed the first year of their term in 2023 and continue to deliver a consultative platform which ensures that youth perspective is reflective in the policies and practices of Council, participating in the preparation of the LECP and the Heritage Plan as well as Cruinniú na nÓg and Age Friendly walkability audits.



*Launch of Social Inclusion Week*



Donegal Youth Council - preparation of the LECP

### Donegal Joint Policing Committee

Donegal Joint Policing Committee (JPC) is a partnership between Government (represented by Council members and executives, and Oireachtas members) our local communities (represented through Donegal PPN) and An Garda Síochána.

The JPC continued to support the Donegal Garda Youth Awards in 2023. These awards celebrate outstanding young people between the ages of 13 and 21 years in the county with awards being presented in four different categories.

At the Awards Ceremony held in An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny the Award Winners were announced and presented with their Awards by Judge Éiteáin Cunningham, Chairperson of the Donegal Garda Youth Awards Adjudication Committee.

The award winners in 2023 (pictured below left to right) were:

| Individual Award      | Special Achievement | Group Award    | Community Safety Award                   |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| Darragh O'Shaughnessy | Adam Lough          | Mulroy College | Donegal Youth Diversion Project (Raphoe) |

The winners represented the Donegal Division at the National Youth Awards which took place in November 2023 with two of the County Award winners being awarded a National Award in their category. This is the fifth successive year category winners from Donegal went on to win a National Award.



## **Rannóg na Gaeilge (Irish Language Office)**

The Council's Rannóg na Gaeilge continues to perform three overall functions.

- It continues to carry out a supervisory and consultation role in relation to the implementation of Irish language obligations, commitments, regulations, and standards as provided for under the Official Languages Act 2003 (as amended 2021).
- Secondly, Rannóg na Gaeilge provide a wide range of support services and activities to other directorates of the Council, including daily translations, simultaneous translations at a range of Council meetings and committees, and co-operation in helping to increase and improve the number and quality of services in the Irish language from the Council.
- And thirdly, Rannóg na Gaeilge is involved in the organisation, development and/or promotion of Irish language events, schemes, and plans throughout the county and in the North-West, including as part of Seachtain na Gaeilge, Social Inclusion Week, National Heritage Week, the Northwest Cross-Border Irish Language Research Project, Gaeltacht Scholarship Scheme, Comhairle na nÓg, and other community events and activities through Irish.

## **Ferry Services**

In 2023 Donegal County Council made financial contributions towards the operation of two ferry services namely Greencastle-Magilligan (Foyle Ferry) and Buncrana-Rathmullan (Swilly Ferry).

## **Streetscape Enhancement Measure 2022 - Lifford**

A total of 33 projects received funding under the Streetscape Enhancement Measure 2022 with the work being carried out in 2023. The eligible works undertaken included upgrade work to residential and commercial building facades, building lighting, and the provision of street furniture. The scheme had a positive effect in transforming Lifford into a more vibrant and attractive place to live, work and visit. Many properties had fallen into disrepair and the Streetscape Enhancement Measure resulted in the decluttering of buildings, removal of old wiring and guttering and minor repairs to the properties to ensure the property could be power hosed, painted and restored.



*Streetscape Enhancement - Lifford Main Street*

## **Malin Head Visitor Management Plan**

The development and implementation of a Visitor Management Plan for the Malin Head Signature Discovery Point got underway in 2019. The plan will shape future development in Malin Head in the years ahead. The preparation of planning applications to develop the plan have been delayed with ongoing negotiations continuing with landowners. The Council is committed to progressing the construction of Phase 1 subject to securing planning approval and pending the availability of funding.

## **Bundoran as a Tourist Destination**

Work on the 'Developed & Emerging Tourist Destinations Investment Scheme' Bundoran continued in 2023 with the various project elements expected to be completed in 2024.

## Capital Projects

### Town & Village Renewal Schemes (2021-2023)

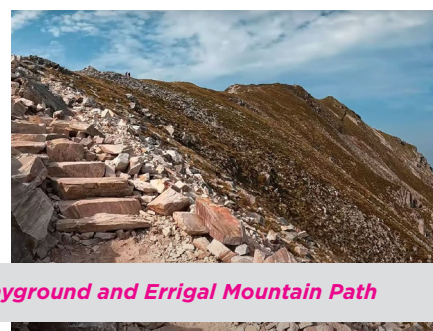
| Year | Details   |
|------|---|
| 2021 | Three towns were awarded funding under Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2021 (Main Scheme). Works are ongoing in Churchill, Moville & Newtowncunningham with all projects due to finish in 2024.   |
| 2022 | Five towns were awarded funding under Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2022 (Main Scheme) with one town awarded funding under the Streetscape Enhancement Measure 2022. Works funded in Lifford under the Streetscape Enhancement Measure were completed in 2023 and the remaining projects in Carndonagh, Convoy, Dungloe, Manorcunningham and Stranorlar are due for completion in 2024. |
| 2023 | Funding was approved under the 2023 Town & Village Renewal Scheme Building Acquisition Measure in July 2023 to acquire 2 properties on Main Street, Ardara. Announcement of the 2023 awards under Town & Village Renewal Scheme (Main Scheme) is expected in Q1 2024  |

### Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) (2020-2023)

| Year                   | Details   |
|------------------------|---|
| 2020 (Measure 3)       | Procurement of a bridge consultant is ongoing for the Burtonport to Letterkenny Greenway Phase I, Part 2: The Muckish Railway Walk Enhancement.   |
| 2021 (Measure 2 & 3)   | Two projects ongoing namely the Letterkenny to Burtonport Greenway Phase IV Part 4 and Sliabh Liag Cliff Experience with both projects due to be completed by the end of Q2 2024.   |
| 2022 (Measure 1 & PDM) | Five projects awarded funding under ORIS Measure 1 and two projects receiving funding under the Project Development Measure.  |
| 2023 (PDM)             | Two projects were awarded funding under the ORIS Project Development Measure 2023, Ballyconnell Estate & Gardens, Falcarragh and The Swilly Way - Riverside Walk. The announcement of the remaining ORIS Measures is expected in Q1 2024. |

### CLÁR (2020-2023)

| Year             | Details   |
|------------------|---|
| 2022 (Measure 1) | Fourteen projects were funded under CLÁR 2022 with six complete and those remaining due to be completed by Q2/Q3 of 2024. |
| 2023 (Measure 1) | A total of 15 projects were awarded funding under CLÁR 2023 and these will be advanced in 2024.                           |



*Tory Island Playground, Barrack Hill Playground and Errigal Mountain Path*

## Local Authority Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme

Donegal County Council received confirmation on 3rd January 2022 that an application for funding under the Local Authority Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme in Letterkenny was successful with €137,000 approved for the project adjacent to An Grianán Theatre. Part 8 planning approval has been obtained with the appointment of a contractor to undertake the construction in its final stages with construction to be complete by the end of Q1 2024.

## Platform for Growth - Fáilte Ireland

The development of facility centres for water sports activities in Bundoran and Downings funded under Fáilte Ireland's Platforms for Growth continued to be progressed in 2023. Both projects will be progressed further in 2024 with applications for planning approval and other statutory consents being sought in consultation with relevant stakeholders. (Total funding for both projects €2,400,000). Tullan Strand Beach access project to be developed in conjunction with the Platform for Growth project in Bundoran

## Development of Community Park, Stranorlar

The Council finalised the acquisition of land at Drumboe, Stranorlar to be able to submit a 'shovel-ready' project when further national funding calls are announced.



## Urban Adventure Sports Project

The Northern & Western Regional Assembly under the Designated Urban Centre Grants Scheme approved funding of €357,000 in early August 2022 to deliver the various elements of the projects to include a 'Pump Track' and a 'Performance Space'. Total funding (inclusive of 50% match funding) is €714,000. The 'Pump Track' and 'Performance Space' elements of the project were completed in 2023 with the final phase due to be complete in early 2024.

## Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023 -2029

The Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2029 was led by Community Development Division in conjunction with the Donegal Local Community Development Committee/Local Action Group and was officially launched by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD on 7th June 2023. Donegal's first outdoor recreation strategy is closely aligned with the ambitions of the National Strategy for Outdoor Recreation - Embracing Our Great Outdoors and supports the objectives of Donegal County Councils emerging County Development Plan, the Local Economic and Community Plan and the Tourism Strategy for Donegal.



*Launch of the Outdoor Recreation Strategy by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD*

# Planning Services

## Overview

Across the service there was a high level of activity in 2023 with a consistent demand for services across the key Planning functions.

New and emerging statutory obligations (e.g. Residential Zoned Land Tax) arising from changes to planning legislation and national policy during 2023. Preparations for the implementation of ePlanning and for the publication of the 2023 Planning and Development Bill demanded continued commitment from the service.

Conservation Services successfully implemented funding from the Historic Towns Initiative and other funds. Donegal County Council and its partners won the Urban Regeneration & Heritage Award for the Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative at the Irish Planning Institute's Irish Planning Awards at Clontarf Castle September 28, 2023.

## Enforcement Unit

The workload associated with enforcement has shown a 14% increase in cases since 2021. Approximately 50% of new cases are closed due to the instigation of enforcement proceedings under the Act.

| Total Number of New Enforcement Cases Opened in 2023 | Total Number of Active Enforcement Cases being pursued in 2023 | Total Number of Enforcement Cases Closed in 2023 |
|--|--|--|
| 204  | 1324   | 119  |

## Central Planning Unit (Forward Planning)

### Public consultation on Draft County Development Plan August-October

Between the 4th of August and 13th October 2023 the Council published the Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 (pictured right) incorporating Town Plans for Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Buncrana and Bundoran and the associated Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report, and Strategic Water Status Impact Assessment Report for public consultation in accordance with Section 12 of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended).

The Council engaged in a wide range of public consultation on the Draft Plan including:

- Publishing a statutory notice in newspapers advising of where the plan could be inspected and inviting written submissions on the Draft Plan and above environmental reports via, email, and post in accordance with S.12(b) of the above Act.
- Publishing the Draft Plan and above reports on the Council's dedicated development plan website [www.donegaldevplan.ie](http://www.donegaldevplan.ie)
- Making physical copies of the plan available at Council Offices and in public libraries.
- Forwarding copies of the Draft Plan and above associated report to inter alia the Minister for Housing, the Office of the Planning Regulator, An Bord Pleanala, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and other prescribed authorities.
- Advertising the publication of the Draft Plan via the Council's social media platforms.
- Holding Drop in Public Consultation Events to allow interested parties to view and discuss the contents of the Draft Plan. These drop-in events were also advertised in the press, radio and on social media.
- Holding student information and feedback sessions following an invitation to all secondary schools in the county. These included a presentation by the forward planning team and a group-based feedback session where students provided feedback on landscape, climate change, wind energy, and sustainable mobility issues. The issues raised by the students are summarised and responded to in the relevant sections of this report.

**Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030**

Including Area Plans for:

- Buncrana
- Ballybofey/Stranorlar
- Bundoran

August 2023

### Key Milestones

1. Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport Plan, 2023-2029 – adopted November 2023, following two earlier public consultation phases for publication of (a.) the Draft Plan (Jan. 2023); and Proposed Material Alterations (Aug. 2023).
2. Draft County Development Plan (incorporating Area Plans for Ballybofey & Stranorlar; Buncrana, and Bundoran), 2024-2030



Feedback from students of; St Eunan's College, Letterkenny, St Columba's Collage, Stranorlar, Crana College, Bunrana, Rosses Community School, An Clochán Liath, Coláiste Ailigh, Leitir Ceanainn, Deele College, Raphoe on these issues was highly insightful, very well informed, and constructive. The Council expresses its thanks to the students and schools involved and is delighted that Donegal's future rests in such capable hands.

During the public consultation, a total of 281 written submissions were received on a wide range of development plan issues. These submissions were published on: <https://consult.donegal.ie/en/node/419/submissions>.

### Preparation of statutory Chief Executive's Report

During late October, November and December 2023 the Central Planning Unit prepared the Chief Executive's Report on the submissions received during the public consultation on the Draft County Development Plan 2024 in accordance with Section 12(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Chief Executive's Report:

- Lists the persons or bodies who made submissions or observations.
- Summarises the issues raised by the persons or bodies in their submissions or observations.
- Provides a summary of the recommendations, submissions and observations made by the Office of the Planning Regulator.
- Provides a summary of the issues raised and recommendations made by the Regional Assembly.
- Gives the response of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised, taking account of any directions of the members of the authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the statutory obligations of the local authority and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government or of any Minister of the Government.

This CE report was subsequently submitted to the Elected Members in January 2024 for their consideration and was also published on [www.donegaldevplan.ie](http://www.donegaldevplan.ie) in accordance with Section 12(4)(aa) of the above Act.

### Other Matters

- County Development Plan Variation in respect of a Wind Energy Policy Framework - concluded in January).
- Residential Zoned Land Tax - publication of Draft Map and associated public consultation (February), and publication of Final Map (December)



**Saint Eunan's College**

20m · 🌐

A big thank you to our former student John McFeely from the Planning Section of Donegal County Council who gave 6th year students a presentation & workshop on the Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030. It's great to see our students have their say in the future of Donegal.



## Chief Executive's Report

on the  
**Submissions Received**  
during the  
**Public Consultation**  
on the  
**Draft County Donegal  
Development Plan  
2024-2030**

**January 2024**

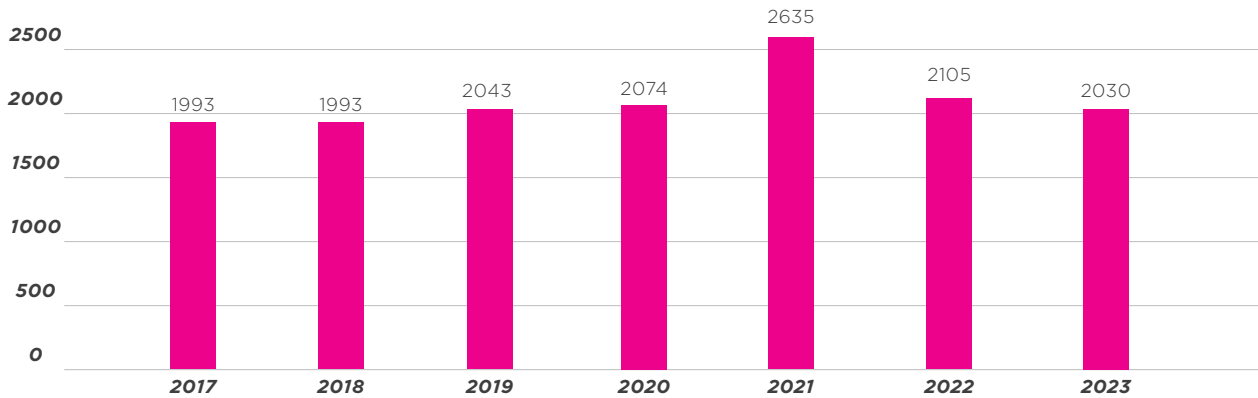
Community Development and  
Planning Services Directorate



## Development Applications Unit

A total of 2,030 new planning applications were received in 2023. In addition to the range of applications submitted the Service received a total of 289 formal pre-planning enquiries in 2023. Year-on-year the service has approximately 5,000 service requests (telephone, email, person-to-person). This reflects the continuing commitment to provide an advisory service to the public.

**Total Applications Received**



## Conservation Service

The Conservation Unit continues to administer grants and provide advice and support on the County’s built heritage. The Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative was a partnership between Donegal County Council, Ballyshannon Regeneration Group, Dedalus Architecture, local property owners, The Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. Within Donegal County Council, it was a joint initiative between the Community Development & Planning Directorate and the Housing, Corporate & Culture Directorate and co-managed by the Conservation Officer and Heritage Officer. This project was carried out in two phases. Nineteen historic buildings along The Mall, Main Street and on The Diamond, Ballyshannon benefitted under the Historic Towns Initiative. Most of the buildings are Protected Structures, or included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, and contribute to Ballyshannon’s historic streetscape. The conservation works undertaken included roof and chimney repairs, addressing structural issues, repair of the cast-iron and wrought-iron railings, reinstatement of timber sash windows and doors, and the repair and reinstatement of historic shopfronts using traditional materials and informed by best conservation practice and historical evidence.

## Regeneration and Development Unit

The work programme of the Regeneration and Development Team is to secure funding for transformational projects under both the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund; to administer the Croí Cónaithe initiatives to address vacancy and dereliction in the county and to implement the Town Centre First Policy to create vibrant and attractive locations to work, live and visit.

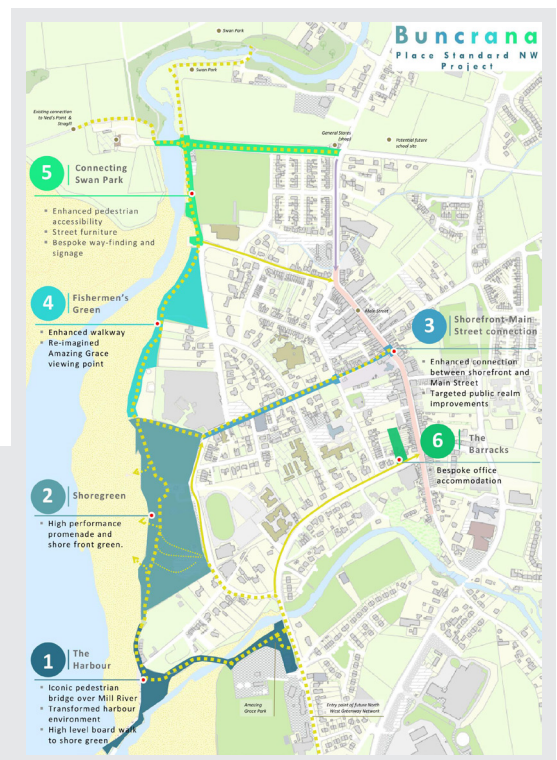
### Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

A call for funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is generally made each year and Local Authorities can apply for a maximum of three projects. The funding secured is subject to a co-funding requirement from the Local Authority which can range from 10% to 25% of the project value.

Our team is currently in the process of responding to the fifth call for funding under this Programme for Category 1 - capital/shovel ready projects. The positioning of a project for capital funding includes project concept development; public consultation; project design and cost analysis; securing planning consent and undertaking any appropriate assessments, and an economic appraisal of the project to ensure it is sustainable and value for money. Once the projects have secured funding they are handed-over to the Capital Project Delivery Unit for construction.

### Repowering Buncrana

Category 2 Funding of €1.17m was secured under the RRDF for the “Repowering Buncrana” regeneration Project (pictured right). During 2023 the Council reached agreement with the OPW to acquire the former Garda Barracks property which is an integral part of the overall project. Work progressed on preparing the tender documents to procure an architect led design team with the tender to be advertised in early 2024. The architect led design team will undertake extensive public consultation as part of their remit leading to the publication of a planning scheme. The project will be targeted for future Category 1 capital funding under the RRDF.





### Rathmullan (Community & Heritage) Regeneration Project

This project is a partnership with Rathmullan The Way Forward CLG and is focused around the Battery Fort, Rathmullan Abbey and a new community hub proposal. The project seeks to repurpose and transform under-utilised buildings of significant architecture and heritage. The project secured planning consent in February 2023 and consultants are currently undertaking an economic appraisal including a Business Plan and Financial Analysis of the project. An application for Category 1 funding under Call 5 of the RRDF is currently in progress to meet the February 2024 deadline.

### Back to Ballyshannon

RRDF funding to an overall value of €185,625 was secured to develop a transformational project to re-energise, re-imagine and sustain the social, cultural, historical, physical and economic fabric of Ballyshannon's historic town centre. A key regeneration site in the Market Yard has been acquired and the team continues to work towards the publication of a planning scheme to position the project for a future RRDF Category 1 funding call for capital works.

### Milford Town Centre First Plan

The Department of Rural and Community Development announced that Milford was successful in securing €100,000 as part of the 1st Phase of the Town Centre First Plan Initiative launched by Minister Heather Humphreys TD.

GM Design Associates Ltd were appointed as the successful consultancy service to deliver the Town Centre First Plan for Milford. During 2023 several public consultation events were held in Milford including a number of targeted workshops, community stakeholder group workshops, workshops with students and drop in events. The public engagement also centred on the launch of a dedicated project website [www.milfordtowncentrefirst.com](http://www.milfordtowncentrefirst.com). The participation of the local community has been fundamental to the process to ensure that the Plan is fully inclusive and representative of as many local voices as possible.

The Town Centre First Plan was launched at the end of November 2023 and identifies the key priority areas to be addressed over the lifetime of the Plan. The consultants are currently working to advance one of the priority projects to planning consent stage in readiness for future funding opportunities.



### Ramelton Re-Imagined

Funding was secured under the RRDF for project development and capital costs to a total value of €6.6m for the restoration and transformation of 5 key public spaces within the town centre of Ramelton.

The tender to complete detailed design and prepare a tender package is nearing completion, together with arrangements for handover to the Capital Projects Delivery Unit for onward delivery.



**Launch of the Milford Town Centre First Plan**

### Creeslough Village Plan and Community Regeneration Project

The Creeslough Village Plan and Community Regeneration Project have been prepared in association with the Creeslough Working Group, Creeslough Community Association and Arup, on a pro-bono basis. Planning consent for a community regeneration project on lands in the ownership of trustees was granted in September 2023. The proposal is to provide a multi-purpose community hub building, playing pitch, running track, public realm and community gardens. Consultancy services were appointed in November 2023 to undertake an Economic Appraisal including Business Plan and Financial Analysis of the project. An application for funding under Call 5 of the RRDF is currently in progress to meet the February 2024 deadline.



*Artists impression of Creeslough community project*

### Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

The Regeneration and Development Team continued to progress the projects funded under Calls 1 and 2 of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and to position projects for future funding opportunities.

#### Cathedral Quarter Park and Church Lane Shared Surface Scheme

The Council continued preparatory work to open a procurement process for an architect-led team to design the creative hub, with green urban parkland, public realm improvements and to repurpose a vacant building funded under this measure. Engagement with landowners to acquire the necessary lands commenced during the year and is ongoing.

#### Renewal at Lower Main Street, Letterkenny

Throughout 2023 valuations were obtained and land acquisition offers made to acquire vacant properties at Lower Main Street as part of the wider regeneration strategy. This work is ongoing.

#### Revival of the Courthouse

Consultancy services were appointed in 2023 to prepare a Visitor Experience Plan/Product Identification Plan and Business Plan for the development of a major visitor attraction at the Courthouse. Inception workshops and stakeholder engagement commenced in late 2023. Public drop in events and public consultation events are planned for 2024 to ensure that all ideas and suggestions can be captured.

#### Strategic acquisition to enable a Regional Transport Hub

The RRDF provided funding to acquire lands for a Regional Transport Hub in Letterkenny with a potential site identified on the Pearse Road. A brief to engage consultancy services to move the project forward to the next level as regards, scale and scope, including further engagement with transport providers has been prepared for review by the NTA, who are funding this element of the project. Valuation services were appointed in 2023 to take forward all previous engagements and act on the Council's behalf as regard land offers/acquisitions.

### Strategic acquisition to enable LK Green Connect (Phase 2)

The 1st phase of LK Green Connect was opened in June 2023. The development provides high quality walking, cycling and public realm infrastructure in the town centre. It forms the first phase of a wider planned network that will ultimately connect across a series of town centre destinations.

Planning consent for Phase 2 to improve the existing pathway and public spaces between An Grianan Theatre, the Regional Cultural Centre and Donegal County Museum to create a vibrant Cultural Quarter in Letterkenny was approved in 2023 (pictured as an artists impression below). This will position the project well for capital funding under a future URDF funding call. Our in-house team has commenced steps to develop a planning scheme for Phase 2 of the LK Green Connect (from constructed Phase 1 to Pearse Road). Valuation services were appointed to act on the Council's behalf in relation to land acquisitions.



### Call 3 URDF

In July 2023, the Council was successful in being allocated €4m under Call 3 of the URDF to address vacancy and dereliction in Letterkenny Town Centre. This funding will provide the Council with a funding mechanism to acquire long-term vacant properties or sites for onward sale and activation to bring properties back into productive use.

### Croí Cónaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme

The Croí Cónaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme was launched in July 2022 and provides grants to bring vacant and/or derelict properties back into use that have been vacant for two years or more and for use as the owner's primary residence or to be made available for rent. The value of the grants is €50,000 or €70,000 if the property is deemed to be derelict. The grant amounts are increased by 20% if the property is on an off-shore island having regard to the additional transport costs.

During 2023, the Council held drop in events in 17 locations throughout the county to promote and provide information on the grant scheme. Over 1,200 people attended these events with further drop in events planned for 2024.

### Compulsory Purchase Order Activation Fund and Survey of Vacant Properties

In April 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage launched the CPO Activation Programme for the activation of vacant and derelict properties. During the year the Council surveyed 1,723 properties within a 1km buffer of the town centre of 19 settlements in the county which represents 40% of the total surveys to be undertaken.

From these surveys 890 properties were identified as being vacant and a further 63 identified as being derelict. The Council commenced work to identify and engage with the owners of these properties to make them aware of the supports available to bring the properties back into use. For properties that are not brought back into use, the Council have legislative powers to impose a levy by including the property on the Derelict Sites Register or to acquire the property by agreement or through a compulsory purchase order.

### Croí Cónaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme in numbers

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Applications Received</b>  | <b>518</b> |
| <b>Applications Finalised</b>   | <b>289</b> |
| Approved  | 273        |
| Deemed not eligible (eligibility criteria not met - vacancy/proposed works)         | 16         |
| <b>In progress (first technical inspection/awaiting information from applicant)</b> | <b>221</b> |
| <b>Withdrawn (by applicant)</b>   | <b>8</b>   |

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Properties Refurbished</b>               | <b>8</b> |
| Grants Recouped                             | 1        |
| Requests for grant recoupment (in progress) | 7        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Breakdown of applicants received per Municipal District</b> |            |
| Donegal MD   | 90         |
| Glenties MD  | 97         |
| Inishowen MD   | 125        |
| Letterkenny/Milford MD   | 129        |
| Lifford/Stranorlar MD  | 77         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>518</b> |

## Capital Projects Delivery Unit

The Capital Projects Delivery Unit (CPDU) is responsible for managing and delivering a number of county-wide major capital projects through the detailed design and construction stages. CPDU projects include Tourism, Regeneration and Enterprise projects.

### Fort Dunree

A design team has been appointed to develop the Fort Dunree Project, which has secured €12.47m of funding, to improve and amplify the unique and distinctive mix of physical assets at the site. This design team has completed Stage 2a (Developed Design) and a Part 8 Planning application has been submitted. An Interpretive Consultant has also been employed to develop the story of Fort Dunree and enhance the visitor experience. Stage 2b (Detailed Design) has commenced and design progression and the construction tender process will continue in 2024.



Fort Dunree

### Riverine

This project has been developed using the €11.77m funding awarded by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) under their PEACE IV programme. Detailed design has been substantially complete, and all statutory consents are progressing. However, as this funding programme ended in December 2023, it wasn't possible to deliver the project within this funding window.

A new funding application has been submitted to the SEUPB under the EU PEACEPLUS Programme (Re-Imagining Communities) seeking funding to complete this project. A decision on this application is expected in Q2 of 2024.

### Burtonport Harbour to Arranmore Island Regeneration - Phase 2

The Burtonport Harbour to Island Regeneration (Phase 2) project proposes a ferry terminal building and enterprise space in the new harbour environment in Burtonport, which has a capital value of €2,060,752, and RRDF funding support has been awarded in the sum of €1,854,677.

Detail design and the tendering process for the construction stage is now completed, with a competent contractor selected. It is anticipated that, following approval to proceed from the RRDF, construction will commence in Q1 of 2024 with completion Q2 of 2025.

### Market Square - Letterkenny

The proposed development consists of the demolition and removal of the existing public realm environment, provides for the reimagining of the space through the construction of a new public realm environment inclusive of a new shared surface, traffic calming, stepped access to Main Street, 2 public plazas including water feature, connecting accessibility infrastructure and integrated low-level planting, modified carriageways/junctions/footpaths, new public seating, lighting, street furniture and cycle stands.

The proposed redevelopment will deliver an enhanced capacity for civic events and social purpose and will ensure all abilities access. Tendering processes were opened in Q4 2023 to appoint an Integrated Design Team.

Tenders have been returned and are being assessed. It is anticipated that this appointment will be made in Q1 of 2024 with consultation and design works commencing immediately upon appointment, and detailed designs/tender documentation to be completed by Q4 of 2024.

### Killybegs 2040

Killybegs 2040 is a transformative town centre regeneration project with the following elements:

- The change of use, extension and modification of Island House (currently an existing derelict and vacant building) to provide a tourist information and reception centre, digital hub, public conveniences, café space, and all associated site development works.
- Provision for a 1000 sq m civic space, alterations to road layout and car parking arrangements, including footpaths, open paved areas, planting, landscaping, public seating etc.
- Acquisition of key regeneration sites for the future delivery of appropriately located additional car parking



Construction works are currently ongoing with both the Island House and public realm elements at an advanced stage. It is anticipated that works will be substantially complete by Q2 of 2024.

The 'Coalyard' element of the land acquisition has completed, with the site currently being used as a temporary carpark for the duration of the project.

Pictured from the project is the Public Realm (left) and the Island House (above).

### Tús Nua Regeneration Project

The Carndonagh Tús Nua Regeneration Project is based on a partnership with Spraoi agus Spórt and will see the delivery of a Co-working Hub, Fablab, Creative Hub and public realm infrastructure. This project has a capital value of €9,542,852 and RRDF funding support has been awarded in the sum of €8,218,982.

The Integrated Design Team, Robin Lee Architecture, have been appointed and detailed design works are at an advanced stage. It is anticipated that construction stage tender documentation will be completed by Q1 2024.

The Land Valuation Services, Donal O’Buachalla & Co Limited t/a Avison Young, have been appointed and land negotiations are ongoing.

The Compulsory Purchase Order for the project will be published in Q1 of 2024.



*Tús Nua Regeneration Project (Computer Generated Images)*



### The SEED Project

The 'SEED' project in Ballybofey & Stranorlar (artists impression pictured above) proposes a public realm, car parking and enterprise development in the town center. This project has a capital value of €9,756,969 and RRDF funding support has been awarded in the sum of €8,781,272.

The Integrated Design Team, McCabe Architects Ltd., have been appointed and detailed design works are at an advanced stage. It is anticipated that construction stage tender documentation will be completed by Q2 2024.

The Land Valuation Services, Donal O'Buachalla & Co Limited t/a Avison Young, have been appointed and land negotiations are ongoing.

It is anticipated that the Compulsory Purchase Order for the project will be published in Q1 of 2024.

### LK Connect - Linear Park

Works have progressed well on the project and the contractor; ACS Civils Ltd. have been issued with a Certificate of Substantial Completion in June 2023. The Letterkenny Linear Park scheme was officially opened by Cathaoirleach Cllr. Liam Blaney on 23rd June 2023, in the presence of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue TD, members of Letterkenny MD, Council Officials and Contractor, after which the facility became fully operational and open to the public. The construction contract had a value of €1.1 million and was delivered within budget.



**Opening of the LK Connect - Linear Park**



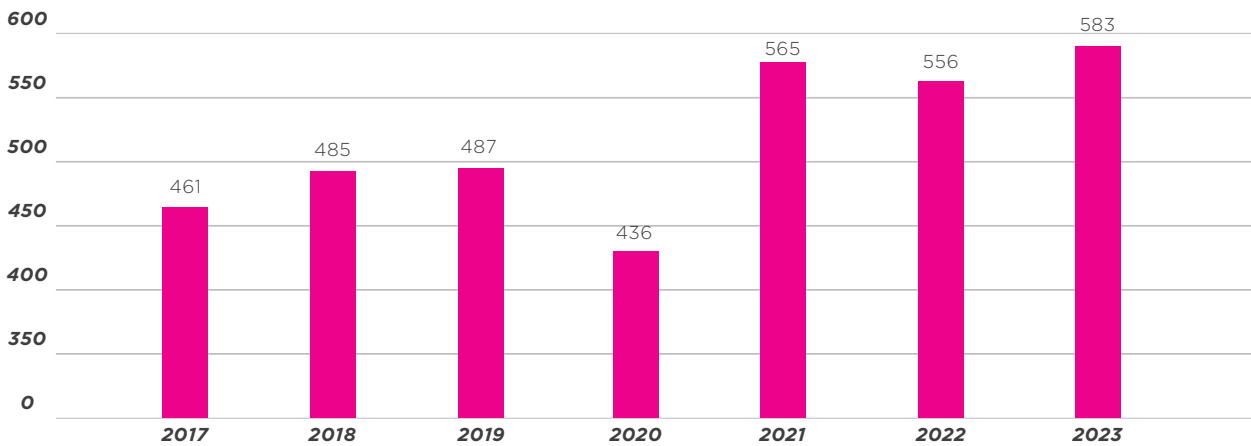
## Building Control and Taking in Charge of Residential Estates

### Building Control

It is a requirement of the Building Control Regulations that a person who intends to carry out works or to make a material change of use as regards a building shall give notice, in the form of a Commencement Notice, to the Building Control Authority, of their intention to commence works.

In 2023 there were 583 Commencement Notices received. These represented 783 building projects of which there were 616 new units. The Building Control Department carried out site inspections on 83 of these buildings for the intention of monitoring and enforcing compliance with the Building Regulations. This represented 13.5% of the new buildings notified to the Building Control Authority as having commenced in the year. 136 of these units were in “multi-unit developments”.

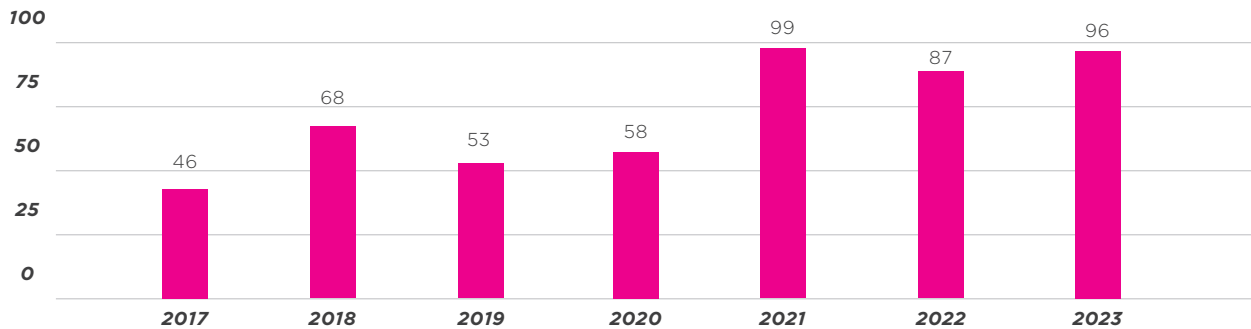
#### **Valid Commencements Received**



As a comparison, in 2022 there were 556 Commencement Notices received. These represented 686 building projects of which there were 531 new units. 132 of these were in “multi-unit developments.”

In 2023 the Building Control Department received 96 Disability Access Certificate applications. This compares with 87 applications in 2022, 99 in 2021, 58 in 2020 and 53 in 2019.

#### **Disability Access Certificates**



### Taking in Charge

The Council continued the taking in charge of residential estates throughout 2023. A significant number of estates have been sent to Irish Water seeking their consent to proceed to take in charge the water services infrastructure which will subsequently transfer to them.

In total, 51 estates were considered at Municipal District meetings during 2023 with the approval of Elected Members being sought to have them taken in charge, in accordance with Section 180 of the Planning Act. This brings the number of estates taken in charge since 2019 to 128.

The Planning Authority utilised security bonds and its own resources to carry out the remedial work within these and other estates to assist in their taking in charge. Where appropriate funding was also leveraged from Irish Water for completing a number of site resolution plans.

Throughout 2024, the planning authority will continue to maximise the number of estates taken in charge, while also aiming to deliver on the capital projects that have been allocated funding to date under the Multi-annual Developer Provided Infrastructure Resolution Programme.

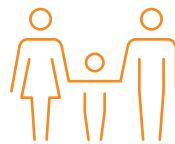
# Corporate, Housing & Cultural Services

Empowering our Communities/Driving Growth/Delivering Services



**222 properties** upgraded via the **Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme**

Approval obtained for **5 projects** to include **123 Social Housing Units** valued at **€35 million**



HR Department held **70 Competitions** attracting over **2,000 applicants** resulting in **235 appointments**

**737 housing grants** paid to the value of **€3.8 million** to assist people with disabilities and older people



## 2023 Highlights



More than **€12.8m** spent on maintaining, improving and upgrading our housing stock

**5,121** local authority rented units and **152** leased units

**150,000** bilingual (Irish and English) calls from our customers



**73** vacant properties refurbished and **122** properties adapted or extended

**2,202** extra followers on Facebook, reaching over **1.8m accounts** with **24.26%** engagement rate

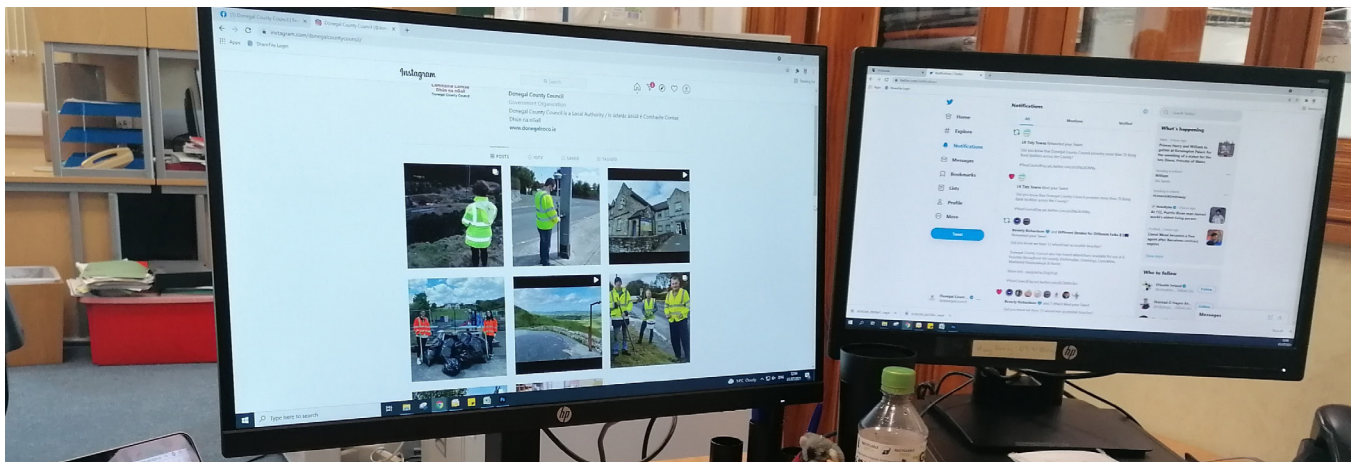


**President Michael D. Higgins** at the **National Famine Commemoration** in Milford

# Corporate Services

## Customer Service Centre

The Customer Service Centre at Donegal County Council offers a centralised hub for customer enquiries and information access via various communication channels such as phone, email, online platforms, and social media. In 2023, it maintained high activity levels, managing more than 150,000 bilingual (Irish and English) calls and over 10,000 online interactions from our customers.



## Communications Office

The Communications Office continued to proactively promote the services, supports and activities of the Council, managing the Council's online presence including website and social media sites, providing a media enquiry service and issuing official Donegal County Council comment to the media.

### Media Relations

The Communications Office continues to work closely with local print, broadcast and online media in conveying important messages from the Council to the general public. 189 press releases and news alerts were issued and approximately 500 queries from local and national media outlets were dealt with. There was also more than 80 Public Service Announcements issued via radio.

### Website

In 2023 the Council's website (donegalcoco.ie) was viewed in over 1 million unique sessions from across 133 countries including Tajikistan, Antigua & Barbuda and Maldives. The cross-directorate project continued between Communications and Information Systems on the Redevelopment of a new website which is expected in Q1 2024.

### Social Media

Donegal County Council's Facebook page grew by a further 2,202 followers, reaching over 1.8 million accounts at an engagement rate of 24.26%

2023 also saw @donegalcountycouncil on Instagram increase its following by 42.38% to 1,925, with a reach of over 14,000.

## Veterinary Service

Donegal County Council's Veterinary Service provides a statutory advisory and administrative role on matters relating to veterinary public health, responsible animal ownership and responsible animal management.

### Veterinary Public Health

Under service contract to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Donegal County Council provides the official control service in low throughput abattoirs, registered and approved poultry slaughtering establishments and meat processing establishments in the county. Fourteen establishments were under supervision in 2023. Veterinary Inspectors inspected 20,636 animals in 5 local abattoirs as well as carrying out ante and post-mortem sessions on 212 occasions in poultry establishments. A further 272 official control inspections were completed over all the establishments with 241 control samples taken.

### Animal Control

In 2023, 12 general dog licences, 128 lifetime dog licences and 6116 individual dog licences were issued. Ten inspections were carried out under the Dog Breeding Establishment Act. 165 dogs were either reunited with their owners or re-homed through the Donegal County Council Dog Shelter. 3 stray horses were reported to the Veterinary Service in 2023.

## Human Resources

### Recruitment

During 2023 the pipeline for new competitions continues to be busy and with significant increase in requests. Human Resources initiated and completed 70 competitions in 2023 filling vacancies across all service areas. These competitions were widely promoted attracting over 2000 applicants, with a total of 235 posts successfully filled. The recruitment competitions included a range of opportunities including new temporary posts for specified projects and areas of activity supported by external funding, seasonal work and to fill vacant posts in the Council's management and staffing structure that arose during the year. Like all employers, Donegal County Council is recruiting in a challenging market, with all regions registering job growth and employment. We have found recruitment and retention challenging throughout 2023 with some competitions only providing a 40% return on job offers. To offset this Human Resources have developed a new campaign on what it is like to work in Donegal County Council (#NotJustAJob) and attended a recruitment fair in the ATU Letterkenny on the 24th October 2023 and are due to travel to attend another event in the London Irish Embassy on the 16th of May 2024.

To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults, in 2023, the recruitment section vetted and re-vetted 51 people consisting of both employees and external service providers e.g. workshop facilitators.



Donegal County Council – WAM Leader Award

The Recruitment Section continues to explore new pathways to employment for graduates with a number employed through the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) Graduate Recruitment Programme and various Industrial Placements. Donegal County Council in collaboration with AHEAD received an award for promoting the employment of graduates with disabilities in the Willing Able Mentoring Programme (WAM) student placement which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace.

### Training and Development

The Council's Training Department, in partnership with the Stranorlar Regional Training Centre, delivered a range of courses for staff in 2023 with a particular emphasis on Health and Safety, Technical skills, Communication Skills, Legislation & Regulatory Control, Health & Wellbeing and Management & Supervisory Skills. The Training Department also continued to support the rollout of the Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme in 2023, working in partnership with the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG).

The Council's Staff Education Scheme continued to provide a mechanism for staff to undertake courses of study which can further aid and support their continued professional and personal development. In 2023, the scheme supported courses of study in a range of areas such as Cybersecurity, Environmental Management, Renewable Energy and Energy Management, Engineering, Financial Management, Business and Management, Construction Management, Library and Information Management, Occupational Health & Safety and Local Government Studies.

The Stranorlar Regional Training Centre has LASNTG, SOLAS, City & Guilds and ITSSAR accreditations to deliver training. Training has been provided to staff across a range of areas, including Health & Safety, Plant and Machinery, and specialised roads, water, and wastewater courses. New and reviewed courses continued to be rolled out and delivered during 2023 in collaboration with IT Carlow and IT Sligo.

The QQI Firefighting skills accredited programmes continues to be delivered to the new recruits of the Donegal Fire Service.

### Staff Welfare

The Staff Welfare Office continued to provide assistance to staff throughout 2023 and ensured employees had access to guidance and support related to the challenges presented by Covid-19. The Council continued to provide access to the Employee Assistance Programme, which is a free and confidential service available to all employees and their immediate family members. In 2023, the superannuation section of the Human Resources Department processed 46 applications for pensions including retirements, preserved pension benefits, dependent pensions, Firefighters gratuities and lump sum payments. On 31st December 2023, there were 661 persons in receipt of pension benefits from the Council. Arising from the launch of the Council's Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2024, the Council's Health and Wellbeing Team continued to run various programs and events throughout 2023. Our aim is to ensure that we all have an opportunity for optimal health and wellbeing so that we can participate fully in our work, family, and community life.

## Housing Services

The overall aim of our housing policy is to facilitate the provision of suitable, cost effective, quality accommodation and housing supports for people who need it.

The types of housing assistance provided during the year ranged from a combination of allocating tenancies under the Social Housing Programme (New Build, Turnkey, and Acquisitions), the Social Leasing Programme, and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), transfers, and approval of supports via the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP). Assistance was also provided in conjunction with Approved Housing Bodies (AHB).

The Council continued to manage and maintain tenancies and dwellings and provide support to our tenants including the refurbishment and upgrading of dwellings and estates via a range of initiatives and programmes.

Grant assistance was provided to older people and people with disabilities under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme, the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme and the Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme. Housing Loan options continued to be available for first time buyers under the Rebuilding Ireland Loan Scheme.

### Housing Need

The Housing Needs Assessment, undertaken at 1st November 2023, identified that there were 2,738 households approved for Social Housing Support in Donegal. 1,728 of these were already in receipt of social housing support and were seeking transfers from existing Council houses or from HAP tenancies. Therefore, the net need in the county was 1,010.

The Council continues to strive to meet the accommodation needs of housing applicants through a combination of different means including allocating existing or new social housing stock, leased properties, accommodation acquired under RAS and HAP, as well as accommodation provided in conjunction with Approved Housing Bodies.

### Housing Stock / Tenancies

At the end of 2023, the Council had responsibility for a housing stock of almost 5,229 properties. In 2023, over €12.8 million was spent on maintaining and improving our stock and the upkeep of our estates during the year. In addition to routine maintenance and repairs, this expenditure involved refurbishing vacant dwellings for re-letting, as well as various planned maintenance programmes such as the external painting programme, the energy efficiency works programme, and other specific remedial and refurbishment works.

| Breakdown of Housing Stock       |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Local Authority owned units      | 5,077 |
| Long Term Leased units (Private) | 152   |

In addition to expenditure of over €3.7 million on routine maintenance and repairs, the Council carried out improvements to the Social Housing stock under a number of programmes in 2023 as set out below:

#### Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme

A newly revised Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme commenced in 2021 which requires local authorities to move to a 'deeper retrofit' programme. Works eligible under the Programme include attic/cavity wall insulation or external wall insulation where required, windows and doors replacement, heat pump installation and ancillary and associated works. In 2023, 222 units were completed under this Programme at a cost of over €5.6 million.

#### Returning vacant properties to productive use

The Council spent over €2 million returning 73 vacant properties to productive use. This included funding assistance of €897,244 from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in addition to the Council's own resources.

#### Once off adaptation works and extensions

During the year the Council spent over €1.1 million carrying out small scale adaptation works to 122 units and extensions to 5 units of our social housing stock. These works assisted tenants with a disability to have necessary adaptations carried out in order to make their homes some suitable for their needs.

#### Specific refurbishment/remedial works

Over €400,000 was also spent on specific remedial/refurbishment works, in Council owned estates throughout the county.

In 2023, 188 new local authority tenancies were created during the year, bringing the total number of Council tenancies to 5,115 at year end. In addition, there were 1,696 tenancies in place under the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme by the end of the year and a further 197 households accommodated under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

## Estate Management

The Council has five Housing Assessment/Tenant Liaison Officers involved in Estate Management and €52,750 was made available for estate management initiatives during the year, including the Best Kept Housing Estate.

## Capital Assistance Scheme

The Council continued to engage with the Approved Housing Body Sector (AHB) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) in providing accommodation under this programme to meet the needs of the elderly and persons with special needs. The programme is specifically targeted to provide special needs accommodation where the traditional forms of social housing supports are not suitable.

## Social Leasing Programme

Under the Social Leasing Programme, suitable properties can be leased to the Local Authority under a long term lease agreement. There were 152 such units under lease at the end of 2023. The Council is also engaging with the Approved Housing Body Sector to provide leased units under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF)/Payment and Availability Agreement Scheme. At the end of 2023, the total number of leased units by the Approved Housing Body Sector in Donegal is 228.

## Traveller Accommodation

This is the fifth and final year of the current Traveller Accommodation Programme. The Council can look back on the implementation of a very successful programme to date. By direction of the Minister, the Council has commenced preparations for the drafting of a new Programme to cover the period 2025 - 2029. A varying range of Traveller-specific accommodation projects were completed throughout 2023 and additional accommodation solutions were provided through standard lettings, HAP etc. Mobile home and caravan replacements were provided in specific emergency cases.

The significant Traveller accommodation project delivered in 2023 was the delivery of two additional accommodation units at the Canal Road Group Housing scheme in Letterkenny (dwelling refurbishment, permanent bay). A programme for delivery of specific Traveller accommodation projects in 2024 has already commenced, these include two extensions to dwellings (overcrowding and medical reasons), delivery/replacement of two accommodation units on Ballintra and Big Isle sites where level access is required for tenants on medical grounds as well as other projects earmarked to improve living conditions for families. It is anticipated that targets and objectives as set out in the Traveller Accommodation Programme for 2024 will again be delivered, similar to all the previous years of the programme.

## Homeless supports

An interagency Homeless Action Team meets regularly to ensure that the appropriate support plans are in place for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In 2023 127 households were assisted with temporary or emergency homeless accommodation and assistance was provided through the other local statutory and voluntary agencies including the St. Colmcille Hostel in Letterkenny.

A Service Level Agreement for Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services is in place with Galway Simon Community. The overall objective is to provide a resettlement service to persons exiting emergency or short term accommodation, and to support households that are at risk of becoming homeless. The Service does not duplicate, replace or overlap with other relevant services, but will assist in accessing such services.

The implementation of the National Housing First Programme continued in 2023 and provides secure accommodation to persons who have experienced long term homelessness. Under the Programme, clients are provided with intensive housing and health supports to assist them in maintaining their tenancy and their well-being.

In 2023 the Council designated a Homeless Prevention Coordinator to manage the homeless services in the county and oversee the implementation of the North West Regional Homeless Action Plan. A designated HAP PlaceFinder officer was also assigned to help clients suffering from homelessness to source suitable accommodation through engagement with estate agents and accommodation providers.

## Housing Grants

Donegal County Council operates a number of grant schemes to assist people with disabilities and older people to live more comfortably or independently in their own homes. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government fund 80% of the eligible works with the Council funding the balance of 20%. In 2023 737 households benefited from these schemes and the total cost of the works was €3.8 million.

## Housing Loans

The Council administers the Local Authority Home Loan Scheme, which assists first-time buyers who are unable to source loan funding from other financial institutions. In 2023 seven loans were approved in principle in the sum of €774,600. One loan was drawn down to the value of €125,000.

## Inspection of private rented dwellings

The standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 and apply to all properties let or available for letting. All landlords, have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with the minimum standards specified in the Regulations in relation to a range of matters, such as structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, natural light, fire safety and the safety of oil, gas and electrical installations. Responsibility for enforcement of the Regulations rests with the Local Authority.

Donegal County Council Inspectors carried out 1,669 inspections on 1,571 private rented dwellings during 2023.

Following completion of the inspection of rental properties, a total of 1,318 Improvement letters were issued to landlords setting out specific contraventions of the Regulations & 11 Improvement Notices were served on Landlords in situations where efforts were not made to address ongoing contraventions.

Letters of compliance were issued to rental property owners in respect of 384 dwellings which achieved the required standard during 2023.



**Completed Scheme of 24 Social Housing Unit at Railway Park, Donegal Town (Phase 3)**

### Housing Capital

The Housing for All policy launched by the Government in 2021 continues to be rolled out throughout the county.

2023 saw a total of 103 social housing units completed and acquired via a number of delivery streams including in-house design and construction schemes, acquisitions, Part V's and AHB developments.

A scheme of 24 new-build houses was completed in Donegal Town. This phase completes the development of Council-owned lands at Drumrooske in Donegal Town and provides high-quality, energy efficient homes to 24 families. Separately, a family home was completed in Buncrana to meet the needs of a larger family.

During 2023, construction works progressed on site at Trusk Road, Ballybofey (19 units) and Lifford (29 units). Further schemes at Buncrana (1 unit), Letterkenny (11 units) and Bundoran (42 units) commenced on site.

Progress was also made on further in-house schemes through tendering, design, planning and approval stages by the Council's architectural team including schemes at:

|                                  |    |                           |    |
|----------------------------------|----|---------------------------|----|
| <b>Letterkenny (Killylastin)</b> | 11 | <b>Buncrana (Phase 2)</b> | 54 |
| <b>Bundoran</b>                  | 42 | <b>St Johnston</b>        | 30 |
| <b>Dungloe</b>                   | 43 | <b>Glenties</b>           | 3  |
| <b>Letterkenny (Oran Hill)</b>   | 30 | <b>Creeslough</b>         | 3  |
| <b>Tamney</b>                    | 10 | <b>Killybegs</b>          | 17 |
| <b>Stranorlar</b>                | 8  | <b>Lifford Common</b>     | 60 |



**Ongoing works at Gallows Lane, Lifford**



Ongoing construction works at Trusk Road, Ballybofey

The Design and Build model was utilised to progress further schemes at Barrack Hill, Carndonagh (19 units), Malin (9 units) and Gleneely (10 units).

The Council continued to deliver social housing through Turnkey developments during 2023 and successfully obtained departmental approval for 5 projects for a total of 123 social housing units at a value of €35m. These projects are located at Convoy, Letterkenny, Ballybofey, Donegal Town and Gweedore and will incrementally commence on site following the contract period.

A new county-wide turnkey procurement process was advertised in 2023. The process will remain open to Developers until December 2026. Council has, and will continue, to advise Developers on the operation of the programme and has received significant interest in the process to date.

The Council is actively pursuing the acquisition of new land parcels suitable for housing purposes in towns and villages across the county where there is currently a shortfall of viable options available for housing delivery. The Council has acquired two large parcels on lands at Ballymacool and High Road, Letterkenny with a further 2 land parcels at Oldtown, Letterkenny and Newtowncunningham at final contractual stages. Further parcels of land are sale agreed at various locations throughout the county and are subject to contract. The Council is working in conjunction with The Housing Agency to progress these acquisitions by utilising funding from the Land Acquisition Fund.



Site Layout Plan for Turnkey at Convoy



## Cultural Division

### Creative Ireland Programme

The Donegal Culture and Creativity team launched their new 5 year Strategy during 2023. A range of creative projects to the value of over €324,000 were supported throughout the year including Cruinniú na nÓg, Project Awards, Shared Island, Creativity in Older Age, Creative Communities Economic Action and Creative Health and Wellbeing.



*Launch of the Donegal Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027*

### National Famine Commemoration 2023

Donegal hosted the annual National Famine Commemoration in Milford on Sunday the 21st of May. Donegal County Council were co-organisers with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and other government partners. The ceremony included local community engagement with input by the Defence Forces, the Diplomatic Corps, and a keynote address by President Michael D. Higgins.



*President Michael D. Higgins at the National Famine Commemoration in Milford*

## Library Service

During 2023 There were over 278,000 library visits, 158,000 items borrowed from our libraries, and our online resources were accessed more than 136,000 times.

The festival and events programme included Seachtain na Gaeilge, Bealtaine and Wainfest.

The EU Direct Centre celebrated 50 years of Ireland in the EU with a successful conference in May.

The Right to Read Programme delivered two literacy programmes: The Little Library Bags and Little Library Bags at Bedtime programmes saw the provision of picturebooks to children under five years of age.



*Cathaoirleach, Council Staff and Speakers at the EU50 Conference*

Healthy Ireland at your library delivered a series of events and talks by health experts.

Home Energy Saving Kits were made available to borrow from libraries to help homeowners understand energy consumption and improve energy efficiency.

Libraries received over €28,700 from the Department of Rural and Community Development for the replacement of ICT equipment to support their role as digital enablers and facilitators of digital skills development.



*Pupils enjoying a mini animation master class during Wainfest 2023*

## Arts Service

The 23rd Donegal Bay and Blue Stacks Festival hosted Aislingí Dance Academy's presentation of Frances Browne's 'The Tale of Fairyfoot', at Drumboe, with a cast of up to 40 performers under the direction of Ballybofey choreographer Tanya Ward.

### Investing in New Artistic Work

The Arts Service supported the 120 member Inishowen Trad Orchestra and Choir, who enjoyed a sold-out performance at the National Concert Hall under the direction of Dr. Martin Tourish (Orchestra) and Lorna McLaughlin (Choir), in the presence of President Michael D. Higgins, in January 2023.



*The Inishowen Trad Orchestra and Choir perform at the National Concert Hall, Dublin*

RTÉ's special live Culture Night broadcast aired from Ionad Cois Locha, Dún Lúiche and Oileán Árann Mhór and included performances by The Murder Capital, LUXE Landscape Theatre and Ye Vagabonds with Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh and Nía Byrne. Award winning actress and singer Jesse Buckley performed with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, in a special tribute to the late Sinead O'Connor, at Ionad Cois Locha, Dún Lúiche.

Earagail Arts Festival's partnership with Aniar productions continued with a fresh series of concerts for TG4 featuring Donegal trio Fídil and a special tribute to the late Vincent and Jimmy Campbell of Glenties.

Among the highlights of An Grianán Theatre's year was its production of Kieran Kelly's 'Jimmy's Winning Matches', with Louise Connaghan.



*Jesse Buckley performing with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra*

## Regional Cultural Centre

The Regional Cultural Centre (RCC) enjoyed another successful year of festivals, concerts, exhibitions, film screenings, community arts and artist development.

Hosting over 60 evening events, the RCC also introduced Ireland's inaugural Soundtrack Festival in April, drawing nationwide audiences and garnering support from national broadcasters.

The bi-annual literary publication, The Pig's Back, strengthened its presence by featuring 13 authors and expanding its readership to over 22 countries.



*Exhibition opening at RCC*

The RCC developed a new relationship with the National Gallery of Ireland, bringing its annual Portrait Prize show to Donegal for the first time in summer 2023.

The RCC continued to work with local and intercultural community groups hosting over 500 Workshops and Classes with over 30 Community Groups.

The Arts Council of Ireland concluded in a review of the RCC in 2023, "The arts centre meets Arts Council strategic priorities to an exceptional degree through its engagement with audiences and participants and its support to artists in the development and creation of work."



*Little John Nee Performs at Sound Film Festival*

## Donegal County Museum

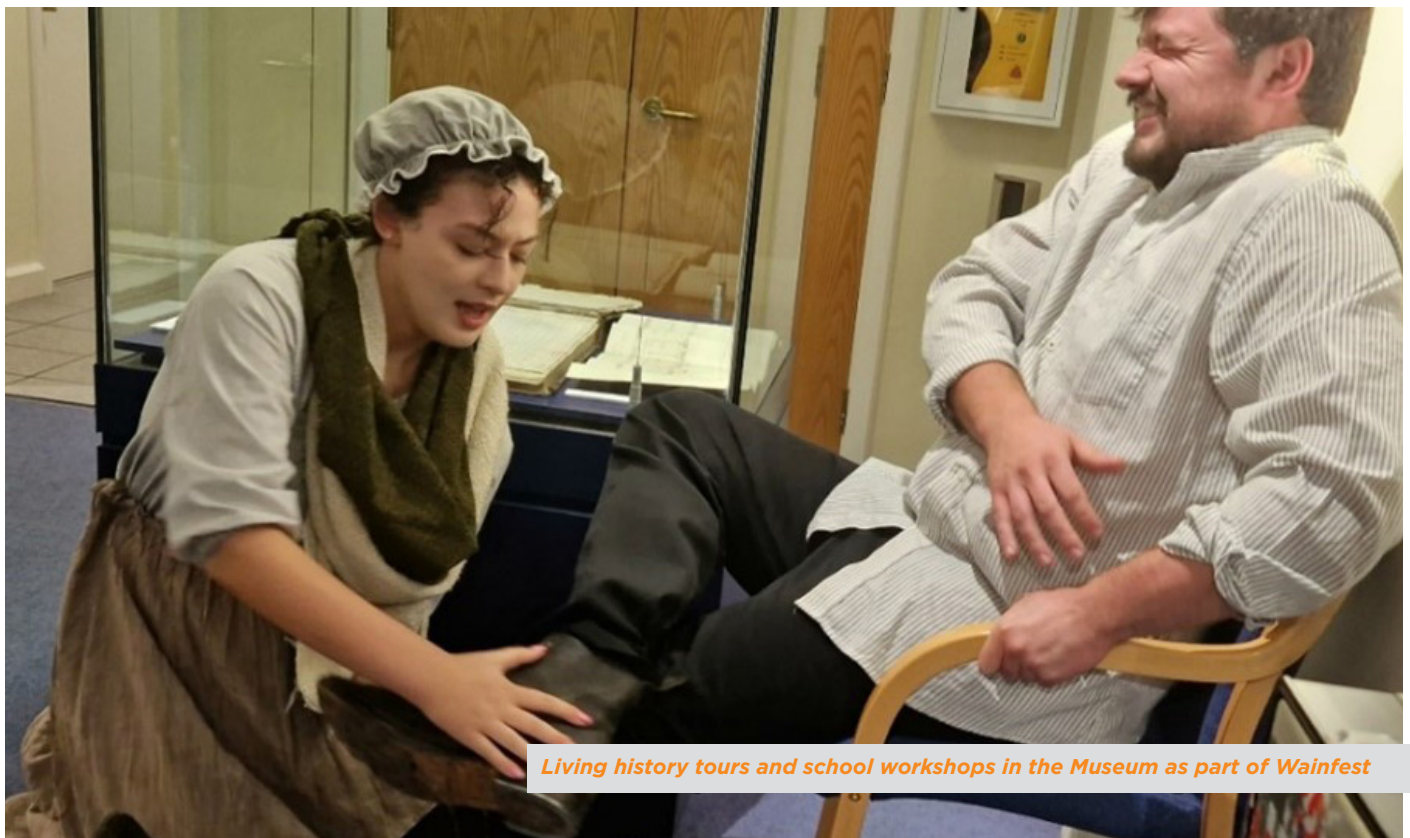
Donegal County Museum's exhibition programme included In Search of Colmcille, The Workhouses of County Donegal, Volunteering in the Community with the Donegal Volunteer Centre and The Irish Room a unique sound installation. The Colmcille 1500 exhibition began a tour of Scotland and the Museum coordinated the delivery of seven projects under the Decade of Centenaries Initiative. The Museum maintained full Accreditation in the Museums Standards Programme of Ireland.



*Wreath laying ceremony to commemorate the Drumboe Martyrs*

The events programme included a wreath laying ceremony to commemorate the execution of four men in Stranorlar in 1923. The Museum organised events during International Museums Day, the Bealtaine Festival, Heritage Week, Wainfest and Culture Night. The Museum hosted and organised a series of talks throughout the county.

Museum projects included the digitisation of the Donegal Archaeological Survey plans and slides, the launch of the Rainbow Revolutions Digital Podium and a new EU project, Digital Action on Climate Change with Heritage Environments (DACCHE).



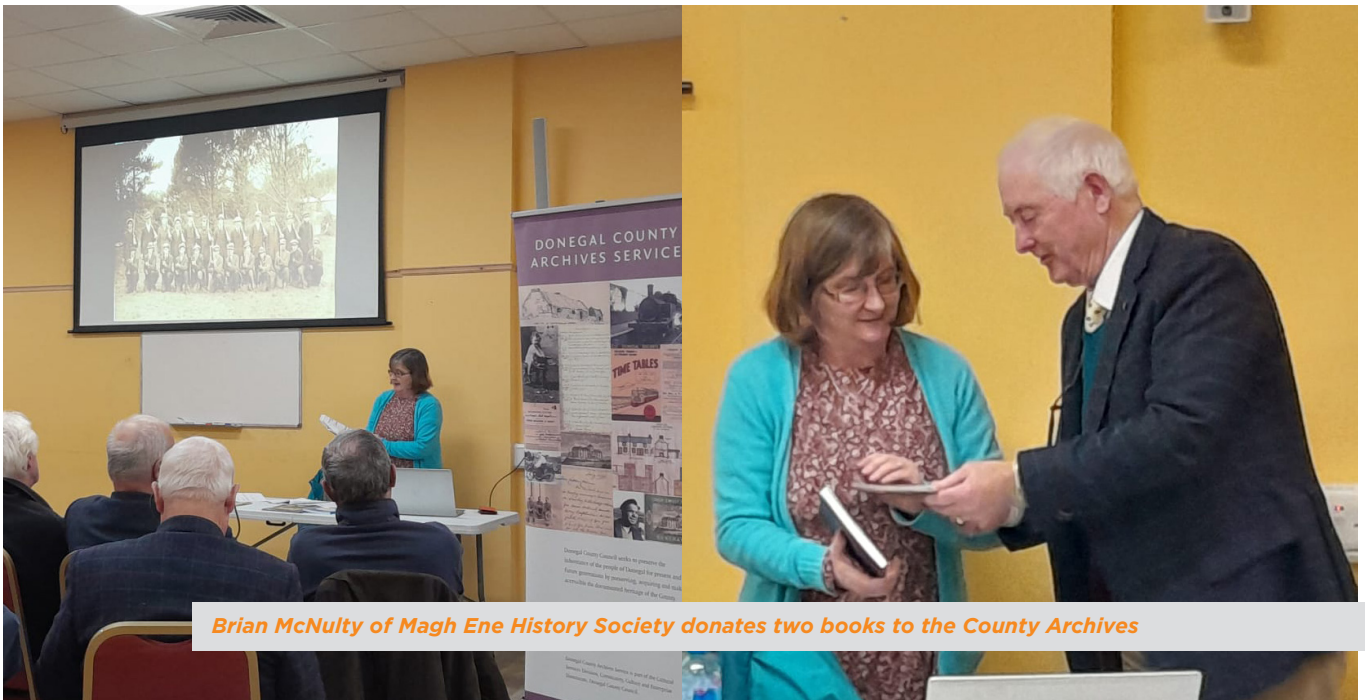
*Living history tours and school workshops in the Museum as part of Wainfest*

## Archives Service

The Archives Service assisted researchers and managed the Council's archives and non-current records. Two units rented by the County Archives suffered flooding and urgent preservation work was undertaken.

The Archivist gave presentations on various historical themes and took part in festivals including Bealtaine and Heritage Week.

The Archives and Museum published Annemarie Ní Churraéin's poems: Ghostgirl, funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports & Media under the Decade of Centenaries programme. With this funding, the Archives Service digitised more Rural District Council archives. Among collections deposited in the Archives was the oral history archive of Seoirse Ó Dochartaigh.



**Brian McNulty of Magh Ene History Society donates two books to the County Archives**

The Archivist collaborated with many external organisations including the National Archives and the Local Government Archivists Group on a variety of issues. As part of the National Famine Commemoration, the Archives and Museum commissioned Dr Hilary McLaughlin-Stonham to research and write a book of essays on the Great Famine in Donegal: *"The Consequences will be fearful: Donegal during the Great Famine, 1845 - 1850"*



**AlterPostcard of Railway View House, Manorcunningham, from the Wallace Brothers Archive collection**

## County Donegal Heritage Office

The new strategic County Donegal Heritage Plan was completed and adopted by Donegal County Council. Our award-winning Thatch Repair Grant Scheme supported 27 small-scale thatch repair projects. Funding of €20,000 was secured from The Heritage Council for the appointment of a part-time Community Archaeologist and €391,000 was secured from the National Monuments Service for seven projects under the Community Monuments Fund co-managed by the Heritage Office and County Museum.



*Doon Fort works under the Community Monuments Fund*

County Heritage Plan implementation included the commissioning of research on the experiences of Donegal people working in Scotland, the development of an online exhibition on Brian Friel's Ballybeg, 'Wild About Nature' and 'Save the Bees' workshops and support for Local Authority Pollinator Awards. Funding of €85,622 was secured from the National Parks and Wildlife Service for the ongoing survey of wetlands, projects involving the maintenance of predator-exclusion fences to protect breeding waders and monitoring the success of key bird species on Tory Island (in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland) and the publication of 'Native Woodlands of County Donegal' book (in partnership with Glenveagh National Park). Heritage Week in County Donegal saw 95 in-person events take place and was a success with recognition at the National Heritage Week Awards again.

Funding of €40,000 was secured from The Heritage Council for the preparation of a heritage-led regeneration plan for ten historic buildings in Ramelton and co-managed by the Heritage Office and Conservation Office. Our Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative won the Urban Regeneration & Heritage Award at the Irish Planning Institute's Irish Planning Awards.



*Celebrating the Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative*

# Economic Development, Information Systems & Emergency Services

Building Organisational Capacity/Driving Growth/Delivering Services

## 2023 Highlights



Planning approved for **30-acre Multi Use Park** at **The Common** in Lifford

A global reach of **over 3.5m** for the **Donegal Relocation Campaign 2023**



**40 new local jobs** supported under the approval of **51 LEO Measure 1 Grants** to the value of **€714,507**

Over **1 million** unique visits per year to the Council's website - New website to go live in 2024



Detailed designs completed for **Business and Innovation Quarter** in Letterkenny

**48** projects funded under the 2023 Minor Tourism Related Works Grant Scheme

**€188,050** provided for the purchase of 2 Vans and a 4 x 4 jeep for Fire Service



Volunteers from our Civil Defence assisted local communities and the Council at **35** non-emergency events

**897** students from **14** second level schools participated in the **2023 Student Enterprise Programme**



Opening of the **Malinbeg Digital Hub** by Minister **Heather Humphreys TD**



## Economic Development

The Economic Development Division delivers a range of initiatives to support economic development and job creation activity in the county, in conjunction with key stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

### Economic Development Unit

#### Lifford Lands

The development of lands at The Common in Lifford progressed in 2023. The planning application for enabling infrastructure for this 30-acre Multi Use Park was approved by An Bord Pleanála. The next phase is to deliver the enabling infrastructure works. This site will allow for the development of social housing, community health services, business sites, recreational facilities and supports business development and job creation in Lifford and the surrounding area.

#### Donegal 2040 Strategic Development DAC

Donegal 2040 has been established by the Council to oversee the development and management of a number of key strategic economic development initiatives. The board of Donegal 2040 was expanded in 2023 with the appointment of five elected members from each Municipal District and a number of new Directors with a range of skills and expertise also appointed to the board.

#### *Business and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny*

Donegal 2040 progressed the development of the Business and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny town centre with the completion of detailed designs and pre-tender construction documentation for the Alpha Innovation Centre (a 7-storey innovation centre with 17,500 sq./ft floor area) and the Beta Business Centre (an 8-storey business and enterprise building 43,000 sq./ft floor area) with each providing state of the art workspace facilities for a range of knowledge-based businesses in the region.



*Contract signing with VHA Architects for Alpha & Beta Buildings*

#### *Island House, Killybegs*

As part of the overall Killybegs Town Centre Regeneration Project, co-funded under the RRDF, construction works on the €2.3m Island House Building in Killybegs progressed in 2023. On completion, this building will be managed by Donegal 2040 and will accommodate a visitor facility as well as state of the art office accommodation.

#### *Burtonport Enterprise Building*

As part of the overall Burtonport Harbour Redevelopment Project, co-funded under the RRDF, procurement of the construction contractor on the Burtonport Enterprise Building was progressed in Q4, 2023. On completion, this building will be managed by Donegal 2040 and discussions are ongoing with the successful preferred tenant.

#### *The Ritz Building, Ballybofey*

As part of the overall Ballybofey Regeneration project, co-funded under the RRDF, the designs of the Ritz building were progressed in 2023. The building is being redeveloped to provide enterprise space to support economic development in the area. On completion, this building will be managed by Donegal 2040.

## ALPHA Innovation

ALPHA focuses on raising the innovation maturity of current and future businesses in Donegal, with a range of initiatives and programmes tailored to entrepreneurs, startups, scaleups, students and established businesses. ALPHA is engaging a growing community of innovators with over 1000 attending events and participating throughout 2023 at 27 workshops and meetups, 16 coaching clinics and 3 flagship initiatives

### *Disrupt By The Sea 2023*

This Dragon's Den-style event saw 6 Scaleups pitch to a panel of US Investors. Founders received tough love, feedback, and insights on scaling into export markets. They also competed for \$100,000 investment and access to soft landing space in the USA. The event was held at Rathmullan House in front of a live audience. This flagship event drew international attention to Donegal while demonstrating the high standard local startups must aspire to.

### *Bootcamp Accelerator for Startups*

This Accelerator programme sourced early-stage entrepreneurs and brought them through a series of weekend workshops which helped them validate their value propositions, fail quickly and often pivot to target larger opportunities and preparing participants to benefit from other ecosystem supports, with graduates progressing to Phase 2 of Enterprise Ireland's New Frontiers Programme, the Local Enterprise Office supports, and one progressing to the US, through the NW Pathfinder Programme.

### *Student Innovation Programmes*

Innovation Cadets programme saw ALPHA collaborating with Killybegs Marine Cluster businesses and Saint Catherine's Secondary School. Students were assigned businesses to conduct Customer Discovery style interviews to discuss innovation with cluster members before taking to the stage to present to a public audience at the Grand Finale.

ALPHA also engaged with over 700 students across 13 schools in collaboration with the Local Enterprise Office's Student Enterprise Programme. The workshops introduced students to design thinking and problem-solving techniques which will help the students think more entrepreneurially and engage effectively with the national programme in 2024.



*Panel Discussion at Disrupt By The Sea*

### Shared Island Funding

Funding of almost €1m was secured for feasibility assessment of a series of projects under the Government's Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme in partnership with Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC). The Economic Development Unit led on four projects, with feasibility assessment completed in November 2023. Funding supported project management and appointment of consultants to undertake feasibility studies, business cases/economic appraisals and related plans which were submitted to Shared Island.

- A Regenerative Tourism project to develop cross border trails and recreational hubs as a basis for the establishment of a strong regenerative tourism destination in the area of South and East Donegal and Fermanagh Omagh.
- A North West RegTech Initiative to develop an all-island national institute in regulatory technology, working with DCSDC, ATU and Catalyst to develop campuses in Letterkenny and Derry. A conference was held in October 2023 to share partners' vision to establish the world's first Regulatory Supercluster in the North West City Region.



*Attendees at the North West Reg Tech Event*

- A Cross Border Regional Regeneration and Innovation Plaza to develop cross-border hubs on the sites of the former workhouse buildings in Ballyshannon and Enniskillen, specialising in the areas of food, built heritage skills and climate adaptation.
- A 'Slí Cholmcille' pilgrimage route linking Colmcille sites across Donegal and Derry, with the ambition to link across NI to Scotland. Working with DCSDC and Slí Cholmcille CLG, feasibility assessment included branding and design toolkit as well as the scoping study and business case. A series of cross-border animation events also took place in October 2023.



*Attendees at the 'Slí Cholmcille' pilgrimage route*

## North West City Region

Work continued with Derry City and Strabane District Council on positioning the North West City Region as prime location for business and investment. Initiatives included:

### *Golden Bridges and the US Trade Mission 2023 14 - 17 November 2023*

This included a range of one to one meetings, site visits and engagements with potential collaborators and investors. The week concluded with the annual Golden Bridges Conference in Boston (pictured below). The 'Pathfinder Go To Market' programme was hosted in partnership with DCSDC, the LEO and Alpha Innovation and was facilitated by Catalyst. 10 businesses from the North West City Region travelled to the US to take part in this bespoke business development programme hosted by the Cambridge Innovation Centre.

### *Embassy of Ireland event in London*

This took place on 4th December 2023 hosted by Ambassador Martin Frazer at the Embassy of Ireland in London. The objective of this event was to promote trade and investment in Ireland's North West City Region. The event included a panel discussion moderated by 2023 Tip O'Neill recipient, Caroline McLaughlin, Executive Director at Morgan Stanley, UK. Panelists included Denis Curran, Head of Regions, Property and Enterprise Development at the IDA and Darragh McCarthy, CEO at FinTrU.



## Donegal DNA Placebrand

Work continued on building the Donegal DNA placebrand with a focus on digital marketing through the various social platforms which grew to have a collective following of over 15,000 with visits from over 109 countries to donegal.ie.

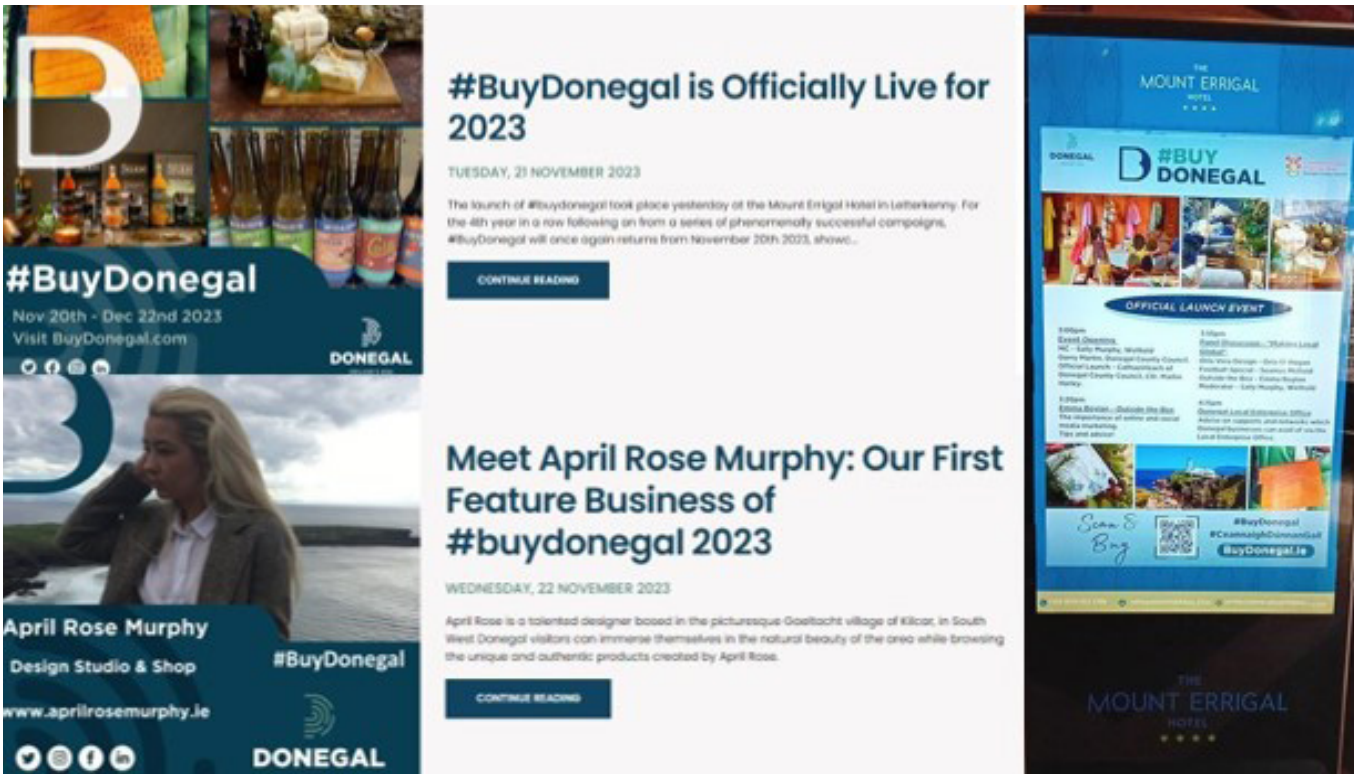
## Donegal Relocation Campaign 2023

#MovetoDonegal Relocation Campaign kicked off in January 2023 promoting Donegal as the perfect location to live, work, explore, study and invest. This campaign resulted in a global reach of over 3.5 million with 65 direct enquiries on relocating to Donegal from across the world. The associated videos which promoted the campaign were viewed over 90,000 times and over 46,000 engaged with the social media features.

## Caravan, Camping and Campervan Initiative (CCCMF)

Work to implement the recommendations of the KPMG Study into the Caravan, Camping and Campervan Sector continued as follows:

- CCCMF Grant Scheme: €180,000 was allocated to this grant scheme with 9 applicants including 7 businesses and 2 voluntary organisations
- Code of Conduct or 'Campers Code' was promoted on Govisitdonegal.com
- New signage was successfully trialled at pilot locations encouraging responsible disposal of waste
- A marketing campaign promoting the sector was undertaken.
- A review of Council owned Service Points concluded in 2023 and recommendations to be implemented in 2024



### #BuyDonegal 2023

#BuyDonegal 2023, an award-winning initiative, took place in November and December and showcased the range of high-quality and renowned Donegal brands across various sectors including creative, services, tourism, and retail. Over 300 businesses have been involved in the #Buydonegal campaign to date.

### Concierge Service

The Business Concierge Service continued to provide support and direct queries to relevant Council services in 2023.

### Property Solutions

Several businesses seeking property solutions using Council owned land or property were supported to achieve their aim of starting up, relocation or expansion. Two properties were approved for disposal by Donegal County Council in accordance with Section 183 with a view to completing the disposal of these lands in 2024.

### Donegal Diaspora Activity

#### London Irish Vintage Club Day

Donegal Diaspora team attended the London Irish Vintage Club Day in September promoting Donegal as a place to live, work and invest with a large number signing up to the newsletter.

#### Tip O'Neill Irish Diaspora Awards

Over 170 people attended the Tip O'Neill Irish Diaspora Awards in September in Buncrana to acknowledge the 2023 recipients of the award; Professor William C Campbell, Caroline McLaughlin, and, John T Fries.

#### Sistership Agreement with Plymouth US

Donegal County Council signed a Sistership Agreement with Plymouth County, Massachusetts in May in recognition of potential collaborative opportunities across a range of sectors including economic development, blue/green economy, tourism and culture.

## Tourism Unit

### Marketing Events 2023

Donegal Tourism was represented at a number of Events in 2023, including:

- Holiday World Show 2023, RDS, Dublin.
- St. Patrick's Festival Celebrations in Glasgow promoting the Donegal brand to visitors and diaspora.
- Balmoral Show in May 2023.

### Donegal Tourism Seminar 2023

The Donegal Tourism Seminar 2023 (pictured below) took place on 30th March in Letterkenny with approximately 100 in attendance. The event also featured several exhibitors offering tourism business advice.



*Cathaoirleach Cllr. Liam Blaney, Council Staff and Attendees at the Donegal Tourism Seminar*

### Chicago/Milwaukee 2023

Donegal Tourism and members of the trade in Donegal travelled to both Chicago and the Milwaukee Irish Fest in August 2023. A networking event with Tour Operators and Diaspora was held in Chicago, this was a unique opportunity to present Donegal to key tour operators who are decision makers for future trips. The group then travelled on to promote Donegal at the Milwaukee Irish Fest over 3 days.

### Go Visit Donegal Shoulder Season Campaign

'It's Ours' Shoulder Season tongue-in-cheek campaign launched on 20th October presenting the county as one of Ireland's best-kept secrets. The campaign reached a wide audience across many different channels, encouraging potential visitors to discover the wonders of Donegal. This campaign will run again in mid-February into March 2024.

### Launch of Donegal Travel Concierge Service

A new Travel Concierge Service for tour operators worldwide was launched in October 2023. The Donegal Tourism team has extensive knowledge of the county and aims to bring this to tour operators and travel agents in our key markets.

### Social Media Training for the Trade

A training course for the trade in Digital Marketing was held online over a four-week period October and November 2023. Many tourism businesses availed of the opportunity to upskill in relation to their social media presence.

## 2023 Minor Tourism Related Works Grant Scheme

48 projects were funded in total under this scheme in 2023. 32 Community groups and 18 Council Services. The Community allocation was €266,472, and the Council allocation €233,528. Since inception (2021) 147 projects have been funded (€1.5m)

## Festival and Events Funding 2023

Donegal boasts a year-round programme of festivals and events. 30 festivals were awarded funding totalling €49,750.

## Lonely Planet Award

Lonely Planet ranked Donegal as one of the best regions in the world to visit in October 2023, the only destination in Ireland. Lonely Planet commended Donegal for its solitude, wild landscapes, friendly atmosphere, and pristine coastal hiking trails along the Wild Atlantic Way.



## Laurentic Forum

The Laurentic Forum, Sustaining Coastal Communities took place in November. It focused on Food & Beverage Tourism and the Creative Economy, the value of the Blue Economy and Marine Clusters in a Global Context.

## European Projects 2023 - TOURBO and SUB

Overall budget for TOURBO European project is €212,841.80.

Overall budget for SUB European project is €428,715.52

## Strategic Funding Unit

The work of the Strategic Funding Unit focused on a number of key areas in 2023 as follows:

- The AER Summer Academy won the European Citizens Prize 2023 from the European Parliament.
- The EU YOUTHopia Future Fair was held in Donegal in April 2023.
- Continued participation in key networks such as the CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions), AER (Assembly of European Regions). Through network engagement the SFU has informed EU policy, secured EU funding, joined project consortia, attended and hosted EU events and developed strong partnerships in other member regions.
- The SFU secured two new Interreg Europe projects in 2023, renewable energy focused Green Hydra and EDIN promoting the region to digital nomads.

## Local Enterprise Office

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Donegal is the 'First Stop Shop' for people seeking advice, information and support when starting or growing a micro and small business. Services provided include business advice and mentoring, training, financial supports, enterprise promotion, networking opportunities, management programmes, supports aligned to sectors and economic challenges.

### Key Achievements 2023

- The 2023 Annual Employment Survey of LEO clients shows positive job creation with 1,539 employed in the 259 client businesses grant aided by the LEO. A total of 321 new jobs were created in 2023. When job losses are accounted for this results in a net employment gain of 78 in the year.
- A total of 51 LEO Measure 1 grants (10 Feasibility study grants, 8 Business Priming grants, 18 Business Expansion grants and 15 Export Marketing grants) were approved to the value of €714,507. This funding directly supported 40 new local jobs.
- 71 Trading Online Vouchers were approved to the value of €156,170. This support helps local businesses across all key sectors to expand and improve their online trading presence.
- 314 clients received business mentoring through one-to-one engagements.
- 1704 clients took part in training, seminars, management development programmes and networking events.
- 17 clients completed a "Lean for Micro" Project which is designed to encourage clients to adopt Lean business principles in their organisations to increase competitiveness.
- 897 students from 14 second level schools participated in a Student Enterprise programme. Overall winner Matthias Uhlich of Errigal College, Letterkenny with his business, Local Lino Art.
- LEO Donegal increased the focus on supporting small businesses prepare for the low carbon, resource efficient economy of the future with 21 Green programme applications approved.
- Through our referral process with Micro Finance Ireland, 10 client loan applications were processed for approval.
- Local Enterprise Week 2023 with a theme of "be inspired" was held in March with 20 events for new and existing entrepreneurs taking place.
- AMBITION, the pilot Pre-Accelerator to inspire more Female Entrepreneurs to start a business continued with 12 Female led Teams participating in the 12-week online Programme. The Donegal LEO initiated programme won the Chambers Ireland Diversity & Inclusion award at the Excellence in Local Government Awards in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dublin in November.
- 95 female entrepreneurs across Donegal, Leitrim Sligo participated in a Women's Enterprise Day event in Donegal town in October.
- The 2nd SCALE-X 11-week Accelerator Programme for the year finished in late November. This was a successful management training programme which saw 22 manufacturing and internationally traded service businesses from Donegal and Leitrim engage.
- The 2023 Donegal Enterprise Awards took place on Friday December 1st in Rockhill House Estate, Letterkenny, where 11 businesses received awards across a range of categories. Living Green was the overall winner and will now represent Donegal at the National Enterprise Awards in May 2024. At the 2023 National Enterprise Awards, the Donegal representative Silver Strand Ropes Ltd was a regional winner.
- A new strategy for Food Coast Donegal was launched in May 2023 with a Restaurant Group and a Food Producer Group established. A Taste of Collaboration is a joint initiative between Food Coast Donegal, and Enterprise Causeway, Northern Ireland. The Food Coast Donegal delegation enjoyed successful visit to Bushmills in September. The return visit to Donegal took place in November, at Castle Grove Country House.
- LEO Donegal secured Creative Ireland funding to deliver the IMMERSE project, a collaboration between Donegal County Council, Eirmersive, Connected Hubs, Regional Enterprise Offices (MidWest/Northwest/West), CREW, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Western Development Commission. The project, a multi-agency, pan-regional proposition across the Atlantic Innovation region, will focus on the Content Creation Sector. Funding of €68,000 was awarded from the Creative Communities Action Fund, and responsibility has been assigned to the Western Development Commission to handle project operations.
- The Engineering Network continues to meet monthly for peer-to-peer learning with invited expert guests on a range of relevant topics.
- Creative Coast Donegal organised "Meet the Makers" event in October at Lough Eske Castle. "Meet the Makers" offered Donegal designers and manufacturers in the consumer products sector valuable opportunities to present their unique products, allowing Donegal's innovative brands to connect with national and international O buyers. 40 craft businesses exhibited at the event to local and US buyers and a book to showcase the exhibitors was produced.
- LEO Donegal is the lead partner for the Local Enterprise Office Network in the Enterprise Europe Network project. The Enterprise Europe Network provides support for Small and Medium-sized enterprises with international ambitions. The Network's aim is to help businesses innovate and grow internationally. The Network is active in more than 60 countries worldwide.
- Bog and Brass attended SHOWCASE 2023 in January and O'Reilly's represented Donegal at the National Ploughing Championship in September.
- The Local Enterprise Office supported the Red Cross with the scheme to provide Emergency Humanitarian Support to Small Businesses affected by the Explosion in Creeslough. A total of €173,475 has been approved under the 2 Schemes. Under Scheme A, €109,940 was awarded to 25 businesses ranging in value from €840 to €5,000. 6 of these businesses were awarded additional funding of €63,535 under Scheme B, ranging in value from €2,894 to €15,000.



# Information Systems

## Overview

Donegal County Council's Information Technology infrastructure serves 106 locations countywide and is one of the largest Local Authority networks in Ireland.

The infrastructure comprises of:

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| - 84 Servers                                 | - 387 Tablets               |
| - 1,652 Desktop & Notebook Computers         | - 650 Mobile Phones         |
| - 352 Printers/Scanners/Plotters             | - 200 Other data devices    |
| - 29 Print Management Multi-Function Devices | - 255 IP Telephone handsets |
| - 84 Other Multi-Function Devices            |                             |

## Operational Planning

Annual Information Systems Operational Plans in Donegal County Council are formulated across the following key business areas:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Operations & End User Support (Networks/Systems/Telephony) | 2. Core Infrastructure & Networks, Corporate Data & ICT Security |
| 3. Capital Investment Programme                               | 4. Geographic Information Systems & Spatial Data                 |
| 5. Information Systems & Corporate Applications               | 6. Website Development & Design                                  |
| 7. Information Society & ERNACT Initiatives                   | 8. Broadband, Telecommunications & Digital Strategy              |
| 9. Management & Administration                                |  |

## Operations & End User Support

Following on from the business disruption of the Covid 19 pandemic, 2023 saw a return to more normal working arrangements. However, support of remote working and hybrid meetings consumed a high level of ICT resources during the past year. Also, the formal introduction of Blended Working in the Council drew significantly on Information Systems resources in 2023 at a number of levels including the implementation and support of the base infrastructure, technical support for staff and the cyber security challenges that working from outside of the corporate network by staff members brought to the fore. One metric to demonstrate the increase in activity through our Helpdesk over the past number of years is that 9,124 IS Support tickets were raised in 2023 which is a 64% increase on the number of tickets (5,584) raised in 2019.

## Capital Investment Programme

As in 2022 an additional work area entitled Capital Investment Programme has been included to reflect the major investment which is required in the Council's ICT infrastructure, software platforms, cyber security, and digital transformation. This is a very substantial multi-annual project that will require support at various levels from Council business areas including the Corporate Services Directorate. Corporate Governance frameworks and rule sets will be key underpinning building blocks.

Investment in networking improvements, a telephony system and information and cyber security continued in 2023. During 2022 the Information Systems Department commenced upgrading the telephony system and Contact Centre Support solution from an Analog PBX Telephone System which was originally installed over 20 years ago to an IP telephony system. The rollout of that solution was completed in early 2023. 675 staff members have been moved to the new system, and the majority of the traditional type handsets have now been replaced with headphones and a PC workplace client.

Over the last number of years cyber-attacks and similar forms of criminal activity have wreaked havoc across the globe for organisations and businesses, including the public sector. The Council, in common with other public authorities, needs to keep abreast of these threats by using the best defence mechanisms available. The need for continual investment in this area to both protect Council systems and data as well as ensuring compliance with GDPR Regulations is now a given across the public sector so capital investment in our core Compute and Storage infrastructure and also in cyber security solutions and services is a priority for the Council.

To address this pressing cyber security need, tender documentation was drafted during Q3 & Q4 2023 for the procurement and installation of a new Compute, Storage, Backup and Disaster Recovery infrastructure for the organisation.

## Systems Programme

The Council's Corporate Plan provides a valuable local context for Information Systems operational planning which is geared to supporting its strategic objectives and priorities. The Systems Programme in 2023 included the continued upgrade of CRM 2011 solutions to Dynamics CRM, rollout of SharePoint Online, Power Suite, MS Forms, and the continued support of MS Teams.

2023 saw the introduction of the Members' Reps solution, an online application to allow the submission of representations to the various services, with a facility for the elected members to view and download responses. Additionally, apps were developed for a variety of service applications, including blended working, shorter working year, and fleet hire.

The continued development of SharePoint Online allowed for the expansion of ShareHub for projects where there is ongoing collaboration with external contractors or agencies.

With the introduction of the Enhanced Grant Scheme for Defective Concrete Blocks, the development team has been fully committed to the redevelopment of the online portal and Dynamics CRM to support the application process.

The national ePlanning system was implemented in 2023 which will enable developers and agents to submit planning applications and associated documentation, such as maps and drawings in a digital format, thereby improving efficiency and enabling us to provide more public services online as outlined in government strategies. This reduces printing costs, enables payment online, and reduces visits to offices.

Information Systems also played a significant role in Donegal's participation in a successful pilot of the Expenses ERR (Enhanced Reporting Requirements to Revenue) led by the LGMA (Local Government Management Agency).

## Redesign and Redevelopment of Donegal County Council Website

Donegal County Council's current website was designed and implemented in 2013. The website has been highly successful in communicating information to the public and has seen tremendous growth in online traffic that is now over 1 million unique visits per year. However, the intervening ten years has also seen major changes in how citizens expect to engage with our services in an online environment. Our new website is therefore focused on providing a platform where a full range of services can be fully transacted in a secure online environment. The website is also being designed to utilise the most recently available technologies to continue to build our online engagement and communication with our customers. The new website will go live in Q1 2024.

## Geographic Information Systems

The adoption of GIS as a key tool by the Council continues with the development of the ArcGIS platform. Data presentation strategic dashboards have been developed in 2023 to help the Planning department visualise the 8-week planning process and the Roads department to communicate the winter maintenance plan to the public.

GIS analysis and mapping played a key role in delivering the following plans and planning policy applications; Donegal County Development Plan 2024 - 2030 (Inclusive of the Buncrana, Bundoran & Ballybofey/Stranorlar Local Area Plans), Letterkenny Plan & Local Transport Plan, TEN-T Variation to the 2018 - 2024 CDP, Wind Energy Variation to the 2018 - 2024 CDP and Residential Zoned Land Tax.

## Broadband & Telecommunications

In 2023 considerable progress was made on the Broadband and Digital agenda. Work continued on the delivery of the National Broadband Plan, the further development of Broadband Connection Points, completion of Digital Innovation Hubs as well as the progression of the inter-agency Donegal Digital project. The Digital programme will continue to be prioritised in 2024 as the National Broadband Plan progresses fibre rollout in Donegal.

The Information Systems Department continues to work with relevant Government Departments and Telecommunications Companies to assist the rollout of high-speed broadband throughout Donegal.

## Donegal Digital Programme

Through the ERNACT network, the Council will continue to seek EU project funding opportunities in the field of ICT and Digital technologies. A wide range of Digital Projects are currently being managed by ERNACT. A range of strategically important projects involving Donegal County Council got underway in 2023, including.

- INNOCAP - Capacity Building on Internet of Things networks, Virtual & Augmented reality, funded through the Northern Periphery and Arctic (2021 - 2027), launch at Fanad Lighthouse pictured below .
- ENABLER - Capacity Building on Artificial Intelligence in the public sector, funded through Interreg Europe (2021 - 2027).
- COPOWER - Using technology to link renewable energy systems and operate them in co-ordination like a utility-scale power station to balance energy demand and production, i.e., develop a Virtual Power Plant for Community and Council use funded by Northern Periphery and Arctic (2021 - 2027).
- CIVITEC - Citizen and civic inclusion and the digital transformation of public decision-making processes, through Interreg Europe (2021-2027) was approved in late 2023.



**Launch of INNOCAP project at Fanad Lighthouse**

A number of strategically important Digital Hub projects were completed in 2023.

- Inishowen Innovation Hub involved the renovation of the former Buncrana Town Council office with a modern extension to provide space for over 70 x people with first class facilities and support services.
- Malinbeg Digital Hub (pictured below) involved the restoration of An Sean Scoil Malinbeg to act as a local high-speed broadband focus point providing 3 x office spaces and 8-9 hotdesking spaces and support facilities.



**Launch of Malinbeg Digital Hub by Minister Humphreys**

# Emergency Services

## Fire Service

Donegal County Council as the Fire Authority for the county continues to discharge its operational and fire safety functions. The operational service is provided by 15 Retained Fire Brigades, by voluntary units on Arranmore Island and on Tory Island and by Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) which provides the operational service to defined parts of the county, primarily in the vicinity of Bridgend and Lifford. Donegal County Council Fire Service also provides the operational service to parts of counties Leitrim and Sligo.



### Incidents

Donegal Fire Brigades and Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) responded to 803 incidents in 2023 as against 854 incidents in 2022, a decrease of 5.97%.

These incidents covered a spectrum of activities that include fires, road traffic collisions, flooding, and other special services. In 2023 Donegal brigades mobilised on 962 occasions while NIFRS mobilised into Donegal on 40 occasions. Data for 2023 is provisional.

### Industrial Action

Following 3 months of Countrywide industrial action by retained firefighters an agreement was reached on the main issues of concern namely recruitment, retention, and a work life balance. The Agreement provides for an increase in the rate of pay, new pay areas and an increase from 9 to 12 in the number of firefighters in one pump stations to allow for two crews of six with a crew having the option of not responding to alerts every second week. A business case will have to be made for an increase in the number of firefighters for brigades which have a complement of 12 or more firefighters.

The estimated additional funding needed to manage the post agreement Service will be of the order of €3,829,030 with an additional once off cost of €1,738,829 to cover personal protective clothing, training, and station reconfiguration to allow for the additional firefighters.

### Training

Training courses are provided for Fire Service personnel having regard to their roles and functions within the service. Some courses are cyclic in nature and courses provided vary in duration from one day to 15 days. €359,766 was spent on fire brigade training in 2023 which is exclusive of the cost of the twice monthly drills that each retained brigade did. Due to the firefighter industrial action, training expenditure in 2023 was less than in 2022.

In 2023 each retained brigade did two three hour drills each month. The drills covered a spectrum of activities which, in conjunction with other training, provided the necessary skill sets required to deliver statutory operational functions.

### New Vehicles and Appliances

Funding in the sum of €188,050 was provided by the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) for the purchase of 2 No. vans and 1 No. 4 x 4 jeep. It is expected that the Fire Service will take delivery of these vehicles in early 2024. In addition, the NDFEM also sanctioned funding in the sum of €1,029,971 for 2 No. Class B appliances and funding in the sum of €281,157 for 1 No. Water tanker. Delivery of the latter 3 No appliances is expected in late 2024 or early 2025.

### Vehicle Storage Facility

In 2023 the NDFEM provided funding in the sum of €500,000 plus VAT for the construction of a building at Letterkenny Fire Station to provide secure storage for Fire Service vehicles and facilities for fire brigade training.

### Fire Prevention

229 Fire Safety Certificate applications were received in 2023 which represented an increase of 30.9% as against 2022. 239 decisions (219 granted, 5 refused and 15 invalidated) were made in 2023 which represented an increase of 91.2% from 2022.

174 inspections of 149 premises were carried out under the annual licensing programme.

### Primary School Programme

As part of its community fire safety programme Donegal Fire Service delivers the Primary Schools Programme (PSP) each year to 3rd year classes in the county's primary schools. The PSP was delivered to 54 schools during the 2022/2023 academic year.

### Major Emergency Management

Donegal County Council continues to work with its partner Principal Response Agencies and with other statutory and voluntary agencies, in major emergency related activities through the North West Regional Working and Steering Groups for Major Emergency Management.

## Civil Defence

Donegal Civil Defence, a volunteer-based organisation, continues to support the Principal Response Agencies while also assisting where feasible, the local communities in non-emergency activities. The operational services, delivered through the Civil Defence Officer (CDO) of the Donegal Local Authority, was provided by 52 volunteers.

| Community Engagements   | No. of Tasking's  | Volunteer Man Hours |
|---|---|---------------------|
| Assistance provided to the Irish Blood Transfusion Services with administration and social spacing at the blood donor clinics in Ballybofey, Carndonagh, Buncrana, Donegal Town and Letterkenny | <b>61</b>   | <b>610</b>          |
| Provision of transport for patients to GP appointments  | <b>1</b>  | <b>7</b>            |
| Patient Transfers to Sligo, Dublin, Hospitals Cardiology interventions.   | <b>2</b>  | <b>36</b>           |
| <b>Supported Agencies</b>   | <b>Health Service Executive, Irish Blood Transfusion Board, MS Society, ALONE</b> |                     |

## Major Emergency Management

As part of the MEM structure, Civil Defence continues to support the Principal Response Agencies (PRAs) when the need arises. Civil Defence Auxiliary Fire Services Crews and Flood Response units assisted the Donegal Fire Service with the filling and deployment of sandbags along residential and business premises in Donegal Town, Lifford and Stranorlar in advance of Storms Callum, Debi and Emma.

## Missing Person Searches

On Thursday 24th July, An Garda Síochána requested assistance from Civil Defence to assist with the multi-agency missing person search operation being carried out at the Fanvolty Area of Fanad Head. Civil Defence deployed their tasked Drone Unit, Communications Support Unit and Land Search team to carry out an extensive shoreline and land search of the area. The search was stood down on Friday 25th July, following the recovery of a body. The multi-agency search involved An Garda Síochána, Civil Defence, Coastguard Rescue 118 Helicopter and Donegal Mountain Rescue.

On Saturday 4th November, Civil Defence were tasked by An Garda Síochána, Letterkenny Station to assist with a missing person search in the waters of the River Swilly. Civil Defence Kayak Unit, Boat Unit, Drone Team land Search team and Communications support were deployed to assist. A body was removed from the river by the Civil Defence Boat Team.

## Radiation Monitoring Service

A National Radiation Monitoring Exercise was held on the 10th June by the RPII in conjunction with the Civil Defence Branch. The objectives of the Exercise were to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the Radiation Monitoring Service and to inform Civil Defence Branch of issues that may need attention in the coming year.
- Assess the effectiveness of CD TETRA Radio Communications system in support of an operation at National level.

Donegal Civil Defence Unit was tasked with collecting Soil and Grass Samples and a background Radiation reading from the Coravaddy Woods, Letterkenny and Ballynacarrach, Ballintra . The selected co-ordinates of each of these locations was recorded in Latitude/Longitude, using the GPS radios. All background radiation readings were communicated directly from the site via CD TETRA Radio Communications system and the Civil Defence National Talk Group to the RPII. Training in preparation for the exercise, was held in the EPA offices on 20th May.

## Non-Emergency Community Support

Civil Defence assisted local communities with a number of non-emergency events including: ambulance and medical cover at 35 events, the Drumboe Martyrs Wreath Laying Ceremony on Sunday 5th March. and, the National Famine Commemoration event in Milford on 27th May. Over the course of these events, volunteers provided 1240 volunteer manhours supporting their communities.

Civil Defence in partnership with the Raphoe Diocesan Society, delivered their Cardiac First Responder (CFR) and Defibrillator Programme to 16 parishioners to have them in a state of preparedness to use their Defibrillators in the various churches around the parish, should the need arise. CPR Training was also delivered to members of Naomh Colmcille, Sean MacCumhaills and Convoy GAA Clubs as part of the Irish Heart Foundation, "Save a Life" campaign, which raises awareness of the importance of good CPR in the chain of survival for persons suffering a heart attack in the community.

## Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS)

In 2021 the Department of Defence entered a contract to develop a new online Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS) for Civil Defence. The system went live for Civil Defence on 19th July and a comprehensive training programme was rolled out to all Civil Defence Officers.

The new system will enable volunteers to receive messages about upcoming training events and duties, where they will be able to respond to confirm or decline attendance at events. They will receive timely reminders to help ensure their Garda vetting, mandatory training skills and certifications are kept in date.

VEMS will help CDOs in their day-to-day work of managing, training, and deploying volunteers. They will have access to dashboards with key information about their volunteers, their skills, and their training. It will also help them manage their equipment, for example vehicle maintenance and inspections. They will also use the system to order stocks such as uniforms and PPE from our central stores.

VEMS will provide the Department of Defence with accurate and up to date information on Civil Defence across the country. It will help the department to efficiently manage ordering and distribution of stocks and equipment. It will assist in organising central training and in certifying training across the country, including of Garda vetting our volunteers. It will provide accurate reports on the large number and wide range of duties undertaken by Civil Defence Units on an almost daily basis.

## Civil Defence Officers Association Conference

The 3-day National Civil Defence Officers Association Conference was held in Farnham Estate, Cavan on 7th, 8th and 9th November. In attendance were, 234 delegates, including senior instructors from Donegal Civil Defence who heard presentations delivered by Mr. Conal Haughey: Inspire Wellbeing, Ms. Fusun Kocaman, Executive Director, Turkish Alzheimer Association, Ms. Olha Khoroshevska, Ukrainian Action Ireland, Mr. Kealan McMoreland: Assistant Principal, Office of Emergency Planning, Ms. Siobhan Carroll: CEO and Founder of ACT for Meningitis and Ms. Cep Carty, Principal Officer, Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence, who spoke on Towards 2030 for Civil Defence. Over the course of the event, 33 traders exhibited their latest equipment.

## Additional Staff

Departmental sanction was approved by the LGMA to approve the appointment of Assistant Civil Defence Officers to counties that required same. The Local Authority were successful in their application to the Department of Defence for funding of the position on a 70/30 basis by the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage.



**Civil Defence Training**

| <b>Training Activities</b>   | <b>No. of Tasking's</b> |
|--|-------------------------|
| Weekly Auxiliary Fire Fighting<br>(Flood Response and Wild Land Fire training)   | <b>16</b>               |
| Emergency First Responder Medical (EFR) Training   | <b>7</b>                |
| Refresher Emergency First Responder Training continued monthly for certified EFR's.  | <b>18</b>               |
| A successful PHECC Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) course was held by the Civil Defence College during the first and second quarter of the year with a 100% pass rate for the participating students, providing the service with an additional 4 EMTs | <b>1</b>                |
| Swift Water and Life Jacket Competency refresher training was delivered  | <b>23</b>               |
| Induction training was delivered to 2 new recruits   | <b>2</b>                |
| Radio Communications Instructor  | <b>1</b>                |
| Missing Person Search Instructor   | <b>1</b>                |
| Swift Water Instructor   | <b>1</b>                |
| Radio Communications L1, Introductory Training and L2 - Network Operator   | <b>15</b>               |
| The Civil Defence Officer attended the Civil Defence College, Civil Defence Branch, Roscrea and received training on the Volunteer Equipment Management (VEMS) Services which went live on 19 July 2023.   |                         |

| <b>Funding</b>  | <b>Amount</b>     |
|---|-------------------|
| An operational grant of €98250.93 as provided by the Department of Defence for the overall running costs of Civil Defence for 2023. | <b>€98,250.93</b> |
| The Civil Defence Branch secured funding under the Dormant Accounts Fund to purchase a Swift Water Flood Response Crew Cab Van      | <b>€36,000</b>    |
| Income from Non-Community Support Charges   | <b>€6,200.00</b>  |

# Finance

*Building Organisational Capacity/Driving Growth/Delivering Services*

## 2023 Highlights



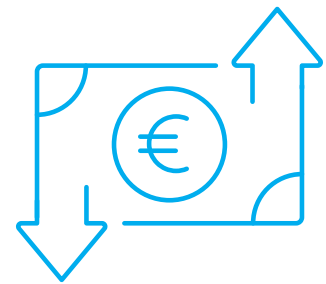
**147 Tenders published** on eTenders and **11 tender requests** in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)

**€13.5m** collected from **5,400** rent accounts representing a collection rate of **88%**



Around **50% of rates customers** availed of the **Small Business Grant (Early Payment Incentive Scheme)** at a cost of approximately **€462k**

**€1.6m** collected from approximately **376 borrowers** repaying Council Housing Loans



**Annual Revenue Budget** of over **€175m**

**€516,791** collected under the Non-Principal Private Residence (NPPR) charge

**€82.7m** processed via payroll for 1,900 staff past and present



**6,037** commercial rates bills totalling over **€37m** issued to businesses with a collection rate of 78%

Over **€202m** payments processed through the Council's Accounts Payable (AP) and Central Invoice Matching (CIM) sections





## Donegal County Council Statement of Internal Financial Control (SIFC)

### Introduction

I, John G. McLaughlin, Chief Executive (CE) of Donegal County Council am responsible for the annual financial statement (AFS), prepared by the Director of Finance, in accordance with the accounting code of practice issued by the Minister under section 107 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

I certify that the unaudited financial statements of Donegal County Council for the year ended 31 December 2023, are in agreement with the books of account and have been prepared in accordance with the accounting requirements of the Minister of Housing Local Government and Heritage.

The AFS is subject to external audit, by an auditor of the Local Government Audit Service, whose purpose is to form an independent opinion of the accounts and state whether the annual financial statement presents fairly the financial position of the local authority and of its income and expenditure for the period in question, and whether the transactions of the audited body conform with the statutory or other authorisation under which they purport to have been carried out.

The key sources of income for Donegal County Council are as follows:

|  | 2023<br>€  | 2022<br>€  |
|--|------------|------------|
| Goods & Services                           | 54,494,313 | 50,514,813 |
| Grants & Subsidies                         | 72,362,986 | 63,025,076 |
| Contributions from other Local Authorities | 402,347    | 259,476    |
| Rates                                      | 38,413,966 | 37,293,095 |
| Local Property Tax                         | 26,379,846 | 26,809,500 |

Activity on the Income and Expenditure account for 2023 is as follows:

|                                   | 2023<br>€   | 2022<br>€   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Income                            | 192,053,458 | 177,901,960 |
| Expenditure                       | 182,207,493 | 169,529,675 |
| Net Transfers to Capital/Reserves | 8,693,966   | 7,175,274   |
| Exceptional Item                  | -           | -           |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for Year        | 1,151,999   | 1,197,011   |
| Prior Year Adjustment             | -           | -           |
| Opening Revenue Reserve/(Deficit) | (4,895,529) | (6,092,540) |
| Closing Revenue Reserve/(Deficit) | (3,743,530) | (4,895,529) |

The year-on-year increase in income from 2022 to 2023 is €14,151,498. Income from Grants & Subsidies increased by €9,337,910 (primarily related to the Roads and Housing work programmes). Income from Goods & Services increased by €3,979,500, reflecting additional income from Parking Charges, Housing Rents, Uisce Éireann, and employee pension contributions, among other miscellaneous headings.

The surplus in the draft unaudited accounts for 2023 is €1,151,999. The surplus has the effect of reducing the carried forward revenue deficit to (€3,743,530). Cumulative surpluses for the five-year period 2019 to 2023 total €4,643,053, which had the effect of reducing the deficit from (€8,386,583) to (€3,743,530) over that period.

The Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) represents the closing financial position of the council at year-end, together with comparative year figures as appropriate.

The statement includes assets and liabilities as follows:

- Assets both recently constructed/purchased and historical assets
- Work in progress and preliminary schemes – mainly roads and housing
- Long Term Debtors – housing loans
- Current Assets – including Stock, Debtors, Cash at Bank
- Current and long-term liabilities – mortgage and non-mortgage loan borrowings
- Various Reserves/Balances

The Annual Financial Statement for 2022 has been audited. The figures reported herein for 2023 form part of the unaudited Annual Financial Statement for 2023. The Local Government Auditor commenced the audit of the Donegal County Council's Annual Financial Statement on 22nd April 2024. When the audit is concluded, the audited accounts will be presented to Donegal County Council's Audit Committee and the Elected Members of Donegal County Council. The audit is expected to conclude by July 2024.

The AFS reports on the day-to-day activity of Donegal County Council in the form of the Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure, summarised by Division. The Statement of Financial Position outlines Donegal County Council's overall financial position as of the 31st of December 2023.

The Statement of Comprehensive Income represents expenditure and income on the day-to-day running of Donegal County Council.

The Net Assets of Donegal County Council at the end of 2023 total €3,575,350,485 and are as follows:

|   | 2023<br>€     | 2022<br>€     |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Fixed Assets                            | 3,477,946,361 | 3,455,058,036 |
| Works in Progress                       | 133,829,135   | 107,670,941   |
| Long Term debtors                       | 43,128,540    | 45,736,002    |
| Current Assets                          | 102,127,264   | 96,940,788    |
| Current Liabilities                     | 69,612,081    | 50,215,068    |
| Net Current Assets/ (Liabilities)       | 32,515,183    | 46,725,720    |
| Creditors (Amounts greater than 1 year) | 112,068,734   | 102,993,196   |
| Net Assets/(Liabilities)                | 3,575,350,485 | 3,552,197,503 |

A Statement of Funds Flow was introduced as part of AFS 2011. While the guidance of International Accounting Standard 7 Statement of Cash Flows has been followed, the business of local authorities is substantially different to most private sector organisations and therefore some minor changes to the format have been agreed to ensure the data displayed is meaningful and useful within the local government sector.

### System of Internal Financial Controls

As CE of Donegal County Council, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by Donegal County Council. This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to Donegal County Council. Also, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

### Financial control environment

As CE of Donegal County Council, I confirm that a financial control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- Financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability.
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- Formal procedures have been established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.
- There is an Audit Committee which as part of its work programme regularly review the internal financial control system.
- Procedures for key business processes have been documented.
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

### Administrative Controls and Management Reporting

As CE of Donegal County Council, I confirm that a framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability and, in particular, that:

- Procedures for key business processes have been documented
- There are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets of the local authority, and
- There are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines in operation.

### Procurement compliance

Donegal County Council ensures that there is an appropriate and ongoing focus on good practice in tendering and purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant procurement guidelines.

### Internal audit and Audit Committee

As Chief Executive, I can confirm that Donegal County Council has an internal audit function with appropriately trained personnel, which operates in accordance with a written charter. Its work is informed by analysis of the financial risks to which Donegal County Council is exposed and its annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. I am satisfied that there are procedures in place to ensure that the reports of the internal audit function are followed up.

I can confirm that Donegal County Council has an effective audit committee. I can also confirm that an audit committee is in place in accordance with the requirements of Section 122 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

The statutory functions of audit committees as set out in sections 59 and 60 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 are as follows:

- I. to review financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within the local authority that has established it;
- II. to foster the development of best practice in the performance by the local authority of its internal audit function;
- III. to review any audited financial statement, auditor's report or auditor's special report in relation to the local authority and assess any actions taken within that authority by its chief executive in response to such a statement or report and to report to that authority on its findings;
- IV. to assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the local authority's performance of its functions; and
- V. to review systems that are operated by the local authority for the management of risks.

I recognise that the audit committee plays a crucial role in the governance framework of local authorities, particularly in the context of increased public sector accountability. They have an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the local authority.

I acknowledge the Audit Committee's role in the risk management process and in the continuing review of the control environment and governance procedures in Donegal County Council.

### Risk and control framework

Donegal County Council has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, mitigate those risks.

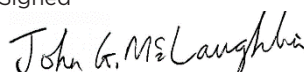
A corporate risk register is in place which identifies the key risks and evaluates and grades them according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the Management Team on a regular basis. There is also a risk register in place for each service division and these are also reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level. The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks, and responsibilities for the operation of controls are assigned to specific staff.

As Chief Executive, I confirm that key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

The Statement of Internal Financial Control will be included in the draft Annual Report submitted to Council members and thereafter included in the published Annual Report prepared and adopted by the Council by 30 June 2024.

Signed



**John G. McLaughlin**  
Chief Executive

Dated: 8th May 2024

## Management Accounts Division

The Management Accounts Division has primary responsibility for the preparation, management and oversight of the Annual Revenue Budget and the rolling three-year Capital Budget.

The 2023 Revenue Budget was adopted by the Elected Members on the 21st of November 2022, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) and within the period prescribed by the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

The 2023 - 2025 Capital Budget was prepared in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) and was considered by the Elected Members at the Council Meeting held on 28th of November 2022.

The Management Accounts Division is also responsible for preparing and submitting quarterly EU/IMF Financial Returns and other statutory returns on a periodic basis. The Management Accounts Section coordinated Donegal County Council's submission under the Public Spend Code, which was completed by the deadline of 31st May 2023 and is published online.

Amongst other things, the Management Accounts Section also manages the Council's Insurance Book, Loan Book, Procurement Office, recoupment of costs under the terms of the Service Level Agreement with Uisce Éireann, and the many ongoing day-to-day budgetary matters affecting the organisation at large.

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>Annual Revenue Budget 2023</b>          | <b>€175,555,907</b> |
| <b>Three-Year Capital Budget 2023-2025</b> | <b>€937,283,449</b> |

### Procurement Section

The Procurement Section continues to provide support, training, and guidance to all staff who are involved in the procurement of goods, services, and works across all divisions of the Council. The Procurement Section also plays a key role in the development of procurement solutions that support value for money purchasing. Areas of note in 2023 included:

- The introduction of the new eTenders platform (electronic tendering platform administered by the Office of Government Procurement) which was rolled out in May 2023. Ongoing support was provided in the onboarding of new and existing users to this new system, including internal training and troubleshooting sessions
- The ongoing administration and support to staff using centralised purchasing systems SupplyGov and Buyerzone
- The publication of 147 tender requests by Council staff across the old and new eTenders platforms.
- The publication of 508 mini-competitions and quotations by Council staff on the SupplyGov portal for Plant Hire and Minor Building Works categories.
- The publication of 11 tender requests in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) for high-value procurements.
- Updating of the council's Green Public Procurement Strategy and ongoing support to staff in line with new compliance guidelines and updated criteria with support from the OGP and EPA.
- The completion of the Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report.
- Ongoing maintenance and updating of Donegal County Council Procurement Policy and Procedures to ensure that, irrespective of purchase method, the Council achieves value for money.

# Financial Accounting Division

## Payroll and Timesheet Processing

The Payroll Section and Timesheet Processing Team are responsible for processing payroll and pensions payments to approximately 1,900 staff past and present. This amounted to gross payments of over €82.7 million in 2023, with all the associated deductions, both statutory and voluntary.

Donegal County Council's Payroll Section continues to work with 'MyPay' shared services to manage ongoing payroll processes, as well as deal with national issues common to the sector.

During the year the Revenue Commissioners introduced Enhanced Revenue Reporting. A specific project was undertaken within payroll to specifically prepare for the new reporting requirements.

## Accounts Payable and Central Invoice Matching

The Accounts Payable (AP) and Central Invoice Matching (CIM) sections were responsible for the processing of payments totalling over €215m in 2023. The AP & CIM section also manages all the indirect taxes, Vat, Intra-Community Acquisitions, Relevant Contracts Tax, Professional Services Withholding Tax, and Income Tax, together with all the associated regulatory and compliance requirements.

As part of Revenue's commitment to eServices, additional reporting requirements were digitised. This required substantial technical and process adjustments.

## Financial Accounting

Financial Accounting has primary responsibility for the following:

- Producing the Annual Financial Statements
- Managing the annual audit process
- Reporting on General Government Balances (GGB) and submitting quarterly department returns
- Tax returns
- Providing financial/systems guidance to other Council sections
- Accounting changes (introducing new procedures in response to accounting changes)

## Financial Management Systems

The FMS Section is responsible for:

- Financial Management System maintenance (technical upgrades)
- External systems interface maintenance (Giant Leap, DCB, AnPost Dog Licencing, etc)
- Providing advice to other sections in respect of finance/system requirements relating to new IT systems
- During the year the Section helped with the implementation of:
  - ePlan in collaboration with the Planning Section
  - Paypal facilities in collaboration with the Marine Section
  - Rates Revaluation technical implementation in collaboration with Income Collection
  - Development Charges Waiver Scheme in collaboration with Planning Section
  - Non-Resident Landlord Withholding Tax reporting systems
  - Enhanced Revenue Reporting in collaboration with Payroll and HR
  - Provided all the technical input for the changeover to a new supplier for banking services

## Bank & Treasury Management

The Financial Accounts section manages the Council's bank accounts, cash-flow, and investments with a view to ensuring ongoing and adequate financial resources are available for the Council's activities. During the year, the section carried out ongoing reviews of investment options, and has successfully allocated its resources to achieve the highest rate of return possible, while simultaneously ensuring that the Council's assets are prudently safeguarded in recognition of, amongst other things, the Bank Resolution and Recovery Directive.

During the year, the Council successfully moved its banking services to AIB from Ulster Bank, which had exited the Irish market. In a large, sophisticated organisation with numerous ancillary systems, this required careful planning and execution. Significant controls were required throughout the process to ensure the Council's assets were protected while maintaining full functionality with respect to payments of creditors and staff.

# Income Collection Unit

## Commercial Rates

In 2023, 5,938 Commercial Rates bills totalling €38,413,966 were issued to businesses in County Donegal.

The percentage collection rates for Commercial Rates in 2023 was 78%. It is recognised that businesses continue to face financial challenges, most notably significantly higher energy costs. Additionally, the cost-of-living challenges for customers, high inflation generally, labour challenges (both in terms of increased cost and a challenging jobs' market), and the continuing global economic impact of the war in Ukraine, have proven very challenging for many businesses.

Despite these challenges, €31,380,494 was collected in 2023. This collection figure is the highest value of Commercial Rates receipts ever achieved in County Donegal.

## Small Business Grant (Early Payment Incentive Scheme)

In 2015, the Elected Members adopted a Small Business Grant (Early Payment Incentive Scheme) which provides a grant, subject to certain terms and conditions, to customers who discharge their Commercial Rates liability in full and have no arrears on their Commercial Rates account at the 31st of October. The scheme has been repeated each year since 2015.

The grant is applied by means of a credit to the customer's account to help offset the following year's bill. In 2023, the scheme provided a grant at a rate of 7.5% of the 2023 Commercial Rates bill, subject to a maximum grant of €375, to customers who had no arrears on their account at the 30th of October 2023. In 2023, 2,282 customers (approximately half of all customers) availed of the Scheme, at a total cost to the Council of approximately €462k.

## National Revaluation Programme

The valuation of property for Commercial Rates is a function of the Valuation Office, which is now part of the new state agency named Tailte Éireann and is independent of local authorities.

In 2023, the National Revaluation Programme concluded its work in Donegal and six other counties. The Revaluation process has resulted in greater equity and transparency in the commercial rating system. Following Revaluation there is a much closer and more uniform relationship between contemporary rental values of properties and their commercial rates liability. Revaluation has resulted in a redistribution of the overall Commercial Rates liability within the County, with approximately two-thirds of properties in Donegal experiencing a reduction in the annual rate bill from 1st January 2024.

## Housing Rents

€13,581,730 was collected from approximately 5,400 rent accounts in 2023. This represents a collection performance rate of 88%.

## Housing Loans

€1,656,997 was collected in 2023 from 376 borrowers who are repaying Council loans. Several options are available to borrowers who are experiencing financial difficulties in maintaining their loan repayments, and in this regard the Council is guided by the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP).

The Council continues to support home ownership by facilitating mortgage loans for tenants purchasing council houses and those seeking to purchase homes on the open market. The Local Authority Home Loan is a government-backed mortgage facility, targeted specifically at first time buyers, which can be used to purchase a new or second-hand property or for self-build.

The Council also continues to progress the Shared Ownership Restructuring Scheme, which allows borrowers to restructure their existing Shared Ownership Loans

## Non-Principal Private Residence (NPPR) Charge

€516,791 was collected in 2023 from property owners who were liable for arrears of the Non-Principal Private Residence (NPPR) charge. While this charge ceased in 2013, there remains an obligation to discharge any outstanding arrears and penalties prior to the liable property being sold or transferred. A certificate of discharge or exemption is required to complete the sale or transfer of relevant property. With the number of property-related transactions increasing, the NPPR Section continues to be a busy section of the Income Collection Unit, and a significant amount of income is still being collected from this source. The phased expiry of the NPPR charge commenced in June 2021. Liability to the charge will expire in full after 31st March 2025.

## The Property Management Section

The Property Management Section was set up to systematically record and manage the Council's land and property assets. This includes the recording of leases, lettings, rights-of-way, wayleaves, etc. A sophisticated new IT system was developed and has been in use for several years. All new property transactions (additions, disposals, etc.) are being recorded on this system. There is a large body of work required to record all historically acquired assets on the new system. This will be done incrementally in the years ahead.

The Property Management Team has responsibility for:

- Provision of guidance and support with respect to property disposals and acquisition, and advice with respect to the proactive prevention of claims for adverse possession, and so on
- Long-term leases of property and 11-month agistment leases
- Provision of guidance and support to other Council services on property related issues
- Ongoing liaison with the Property Registration Authority, Council solicitors, and third-party legal representatives
- Maintaining the property management database

# Roads & Transportation

*Building Organisational Capacity/Driving Growth/Delivering Services*



**18,000 tonnes** of salt secured for the **Winter Service Plan** with an approximate spend on Winter Maintenance of **€1.4m**

**€4.3m** expenditure for **Active Travel Projects**



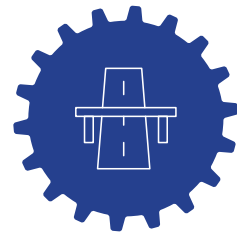
**7km** of the national road network resurfaced under the Pavement Asset Repair & Renewal (PARR) programme to the value of **€3.7m**

Works commenced on **2 Greenway** sections; **5km Muff to Three Trees** and **7.5km Lifford to Castlefinn**



The **N56 Four Lane Road** was completed in Letterkenny in 2024

## 2023 Highlights



Works completed on **25 bridges** with an allocation of **€824,703** under Specific Improvement Grant for Bridge Rehabilitation on Regional Roads

**373** new lights installed increasing the Council's Public Lighting inventory to **19,437**

Over **48,000** students have attended our Award-Winning Road Safe Road Show since 2007



**€350,000** secured for the cleanup and repair to public roads following July flooding

**79%** of total light inventory consists of LED lights delivering a reduction in annual energy usage of **37,605Kwh**

# Donegal National Roads Office

## TEN-T Donegal Priority Route Improvement Project (PRIP)

The TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project (PRIP) remains the most important strategic project for Donegal. The Preliminary Business Case was issued to the Department of Transport (DoT) in June of 2023 and is currently progressing through Department of Transport processes and procedures for major projects. Given the scale of the project a decision will be required by government to allow progression to the statutory consent phase.

### N56 Four-Lane Road

Construction was completed on the N56 Four-Lane Road in Letterkenny in 2023 which included safety works, improved junctions and new bus stops as well as cycle and pedestrian facilities. The works also enabled the signalisation of the Polestar Roundabout, the provision of a signalised right turn at both the Bunagee Lane and Cullion Road and controlled pedestrian crossings. The works were fully funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

### Pavement Asset Repair & Renewal (PARR) programme

Three sections of the national road network, totaling 7km in length, were resurfaced under the Pavement Asset Repair & Renewal (PARR) programme to the value of approximately €3.7M. These sections were at;

- N56 Mountain Top to Illistrin
- N56 Creeslough to Cashelmore
- N56 North of Termon



*Piledriving works on the N56 Letterkenny Four Lane*



*N56 Letterkenny Four Lane Road*

## Central Technical Services Division

### Road Safety

The Road Safety team completed the assessment and design of many Low Cost Accident (LCA) schemes to improve road safety which were constructed by the Roads Area teams. Other safety schemes on the National Roads were further progressed through the development phases in accordance with the TII project management requirements.

The Road Safe Road Show was held in October 2023 and was well received by the 2,000 students who attended over the 2 shows. This brings the total number of students who have attended this award-winning show since its inception in 2007 to over 48,000.

Donegal County Council and the Donegal Road Safety Working Group (DRSWG) continue to work with Finn Harps Football Club to assist with the promotion of Road Safety in Donegal with the Primary School Road Safety Art competition. i-Radio continue to promote an annual initiative to engage the younger demographic through social media to record TikTok videos about road safety. In 2023 the DRSWG continued its collaborations with Highland Radio, Donegal Daily, Donegal Sports Hub website and CLG Dhún na nGall Health and Wellbeing Committee to highlight road safety issues and promote road safety awareness across Donegal.

### Greenways

Works commenced on two greenway sections from Muff to Three Trees (5km) and Lifford to Castlefinn (7.5km, pictured below) as part of the North West Greenway Network during 2023. This project, in collaboration with Derry City and Strabane District Council, when completed in 2024 will have delivered over 45km of cross-border greenways giving our citizens the opportunities to move to active modes of travel between our two council areas.

Donegal County Council have 6 major greenways projects at initial planning and/or route selection stage. These are :

- Barnesmore Gap Greenway
- Burtonport to Letterkenny Greenway
- Carrigans to Lifford Greenway
- Inishowen Greenway - Bunrana-Carndonagh
- Inishowen Greenway - Three Trees to Carndonagh
- Inishowen Greenway - Bridgend to Bunrana & Newtowncunningham



### Active Travel

€4.3m was spent on Active Travel projects in 2023 including the commencement of construction works on Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Projects in Ramelton, Raphoe, St. Johnston and Newtowncunningham.

An additional five schools, listed below, received approval to proceed under SRTS Programme and the Council received Outline Delivery Plans for these schools in 2023 from the Green Schools team in An Taisce.

- Carndonagh National School (St Patrick's Boys)
- Carndonagh Community School
- Creeslough National School
- Creeslough (St Mary's) National School
- Donegal Town National School (Aodh Rua & Nuala)



*Sod turning on Lifford Castlefinn Greenway*





### Bridge Maintenance

In 2023 Donegal County Council was awarded Specific Improvement Grant for Bridge Rehabilitation on Regional Roads of €824,703, with a further €250,000 allocated for the specialist strengthening or replacement of bridges throughout the county. Works were successfully completed on 25 bridges in 2023, with consultants appointed on 3 bridge projects progressing through more complex design or Natura Impact Statement planning processes.

### Letterkenny Southern Network Project

Route corridor options were developed for the Letterkenny Southern Network Project and public consultation events were held in 2023. This resulted in the shortlisting of a number of options with an emerging preferred route corridor to be identified through the Transport Appraisal Framework assessment process in 2024. This is a complex project which must deliver on a wide range of objectives to meet the needs of Letterkenny to facilitate its sustainable growth and development.

### Public Lighting

By year-end the Council's Public Lighting inventory had increased to 19,437 lights overall (373 new lights incorporated into the Council's stock). Of these 15,332 are LED lights (an increase of 1,645 over 2022 figures), representing approximately 79% of the total inventory. Despite the increasing public lighting stock, the Council's LED upgrade programme has delivered a reduction in its annual energy usage of 37,605KWh.

### Piers & Harbours

The Brexit Adjustment Local Authority Marine Infrastructure (BALAMI) funded piers and harbours programme commenced in 2022, with a total funding allocation of €27.91m inclusive of 5% Council match funding for 28 projects. By the end of 2023 21 projects were completed under the BALAMI programme. It is expected that the remaining projects will be completed during 2024/2025 with support from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The largest project completed under the BALAMI programme was the completion of a breakwater at Greencastle Harbour (pictured below). This project has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Irish Construction Excellence Awards 2024.

### Machinery Yard & Stores

#### General Stores

The Stores team played its role in the procurement and management of stock for council use including storage and delivery of 5.45 million litres of bitumen in support of the road surfacing programme.

#### Salt Management

18,000 tonne of salt was used in the Council's 2022/2023 winter service. This salt stock was managed by the Machinery Yard team including collating usage/need data through the TII National Salt Management System and arranging necessary salt collection and distribution to the depots to meet the demand.



# Roads Area Services

## Municipal Districts Road Works Programme

Our Surface Dressing programme resurfaced 220km of local and regional roads in 2023 with the help of a Restoration Maintenance grant of €5.04m from the Department of Transport. An additional 188km of local and regional roads were strengthened and resurfaced utilising €19.4m in funding from the Department of Transport under the Restoration Improvement programme.

Grant funding of €1.32m was provided by the Department of Transport in 2023 for works to alleviate road drainage problems either through new or remedial works, enabling 19 separate drainage improvement projects across the county to be carried out.

Works to improve the climate resilience of our road network were completed in 12 locations to the value of €918,750. This included sections of road realignment, embankment stabilisation and improved drainage works.



*Retaining Wall at Gleann Gheis*

Community Improvement Schemes were introduced by the Department of Transport to provide more flexibility in delivering road improvements and enabling the local community to contribute to the upgrade of roads that may not be prioritised under other programmes. These schemes enabled local communities to assist with the improvement of 24 roads in collaboration with DCC to the value of 891,000.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) provided funding of just under €2m to Donegal County Council in 2023 under the Local Improvement Schemes initiative. This enabled the improvement of 66 private roads which service the local communities and would not otherwise qualify for any other source of funding. This brings the total of private roads completed under the programme since 2017 to 536.

Almost €500,000 was spent in 2023 on surfacing roads on Árann Mhór Island under a programme funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

An allocation of €350,000 from the Council's Own Resources, to improve and repair footpaths, back lanes and roads in Council housing estates enabled improvement works to be carried out in the estates throughout the 5 Municipal Districts.

€60,000 in funding was provided by DCC in 2024 to address legacy signage that no longer complied with Irish language requirements.





## Winter Service

Donegal County Council’s winter service policy for roads is “to endeavour within the limited resources available to maintain traffic routes in a passable condition in the interest of maintaining road communication.” In practical terms this generally means the gritting and snow ploughing of priority routes, which are clearly identified in advance of each winter. The primary responsibility for road safety remains at all times with drivers of vehicles and while the Council will endeavour to maintain the major routes in a passable condition, each driver must exercise sufficient caution to take account of the prevailing road conditions.

In keeping up with developments in social media, the Council maintain a live Winter Maintenance ‘portal’ where members of the public can view live cameras, and access the latest information regarding weather and roads treated. Expenditure in 2023 on Winter Maintenance was of the order of €1.4m.

## Parks, Open Spaces and Biodiversity

2023 saw an increase in various biodiversity projects through the county and within the public parks in Letterkenny, Buncrana, Carndonagh and elsewhere. The ongoing treatment of Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed along public roads resulted in over 1,000 individual roadside infestations of knotweed being treated in 2023. Pictured below is a Biodiversity and Pollination project along the Neil T Blaney Road, Letterkenny.

## Pay and Display Car Parking

The Council operates a Pay & Display Car Parking services in a number of towns in the county. The income from this service helped fund staffing and other fixed costs associated with the pay parking operation and also helped fund other works within the towns in which the monies were collected. A partnership between Donegal County Council and the Ballybofey and Stranorlar Chamber of Commerce continued throughout 2023 which sees the Chamber carrying out maintenance and improvement to the public realm in the Twin Towns. This is partially funded through parking charges generated in Ballybofey.



## Severe Flooding

July saw the east of the county experiencing severe flooding mostly in and around the Raphoe, Killygordon and Castlefinn areas of the Lifford-Stranorlar MD, with several roads having to be temporarily closed due to damage caused. The Department of Transport provided €350,000 for cleanup and repair to public roads.

## Roads Management Office

Donegal County Council, in partnership with Cork County Council, are responsible for managing the The Road Management Office (RMO) which provides services to the local authority sector, utilities, government departments and agencies. The office is mandated by the Department of Transport to carry out certain activities including the development of software, coordination of road condition survey works, implementation of guidelines and reporting of outputs.

One key area of work is to support roadworks licensing nationally. More than 40,000 road openings licences were applied for in 2023 which is a 33% increase on 2019. Applications were made by 512 organisations who were supported by the RMO. This has resulted in collection of an average monthly sum of over €960,000 throughout 2023 on behalf of Local Authorities.

The RMO has worked closely with the Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications, National Broadband Ireland and all local authorities to support and monitor the licensing of road opening and section 254 licences for construction of the National Broadband Plan’s underground and overground network.

The RMO has also continued to expand on the range of services it offers including the mapping of all large scale pavement improvement projects on the National Road Network, capturing an inventory of cycling and pedestrian facilities and working on systems to co-ordinate the management of public lighting.

# Water & Environment

Delivering Services/Driving Growth/Moving to Low Carbon Climate Resistance



€2.7m funding secured for the **rural water** in the county

**6 of 6** landfill sites have been **fully remediated**

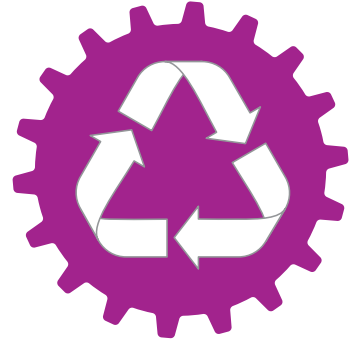


€110,493 secured under the **Anti Dumping Initiative**

**100% microbiological compliance level** in public water supplies



## 2023 Highlights



Over **14 tonnes** of Bulky Goods and **196** mattresses were collected during a 2 week promotional period

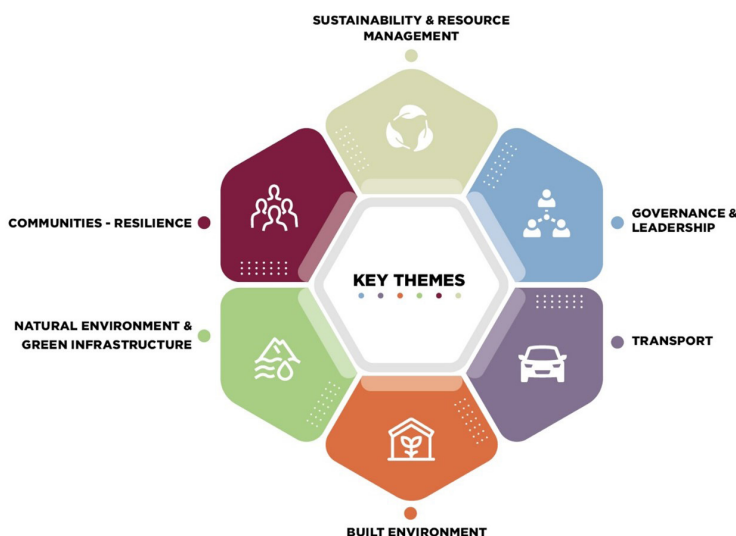
**450 Bring Banks** at **73 sites** around the county

**135 Bikes** collected under the School Bikes Africa campaign



**14 Blue Flags** awarded to Donegal **12 Beaches** and **2 Marinas**

**2000 copies** of Donegal County Council's household recycling pocket guide distributed to householders and local communities



**Draft Climate Action Plan (2024-2029)** developed based on **6 key emerging themes**

## Water Services

### Drinking Water Supplies

Service responsibility for the direct management of Public Water Services transferred to Uisce Éireann (UÉ) on a phased basis from each Local Authority on an “Effective Date”. The Effective Date for DCC was the 13th of September 2023. From that Effective Date the SLA will fully cease and the future delivery of Public Water Services in Donegal will then be carried out by the Management & Direction of Uisce Éireann, up to 2026.

The transfer of service accountability and responsibility does not relate to Staff transfer. This will be an individual decision for each eligible Staff member following on from one-to-one briefings with the Uisce Éireann HR team.

Water from public water supply sources is also provided to consumers through public Group Water Supply schemes (GWS). A Lead Replacement Programme and a Pressure Management Programme were progressed on behalf of Uisce Éireann during 2023.

A significant number of regulated private water supplies operate across the county. Donegal County Council is the supervisory authority for these supplies and must report results of compliance monitoring at the consumers tap to the EPA annually. These include 5 private Group Water Supplies, 1 Public GWS with 37 wholly private water supplies supplying a public/commercial activity. Donegal County Council commenced formal inspections of private supplies in 2020 with 3 private supplies audited and 6 exempt supplies were monitored in total in 2023.

Donegal County Council secured approximately €2.7m in funding for the rural water sector in the county from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government under the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019 to 2021. This programme was extended due to delays experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A new three year Multi-Annual Programme has been announced and the work done by Donegal County Council since 2019 will support a strong application for this programme.

The Council operates an annual subsidy scheme on behalf of the Department as a contribution towards operational costs for GWSs, a Well Grant Scheme for individual potable drinking water wells and a grant scheme for the refurbishment or replacement of domestic wastewater treatment plants.

## Water Services Capital

### Water Supply Projects

#### Lettermacaward and Killybegs Regional Water Supply Scheme

Construction continues on the Lettermacaward and Killybegs Regional Water Supply Schemes involving construction of a new Water Treatment Plant (WTP) at Lettermacaward, a dam at Derkmore Lough, upgrade of the existing WTP at Killybegs and construction of a new sludge treatment hub at Killybegs. This project will address deficiencies in the water and sludge treatment for both supplies.

#### Glenties/Ardara Regional Water Supply Scheme

Construction commenced on a new WTP for the Glenties/Ardara water supply. This supply is currently on the EPA's Remedial Action List (RAL) and the works will address deficiencies in the water treatment process and facilitate removal from the RAL list.

#### Pollan Water Supply Scheme

Construction commenced on upgrade works at Illies WTP which supplies the Pollan water supply. The works will address deficiencies in the treatment process and provide additional treatment capacity.

#### Other Water Supplies

Work commenced on feasibility and design for a number of water supply upgrades in Donegal including works to supply additional water to Letterkenny and work to address treatment deficiencies at a number of WTPs.

| Production of Drinking Water 2023 |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Municipal District                | Drinking Water (cubic metres) |
| Inishowen MD                      | 8,210,748                     |
| Donegal MD                        | 5,982,636                     |
| Glenties MD                       | 4,787,303                     |
| Letterkenny/Milford MD            | 6,727,150                     |
| Lifford/Stranorlar MD             | 3,174,020                     |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>28,881,857</b>             |

## Water Network Programme

Pipeline replacement continued under Uisce Éireann's water network programme with sections of pipeline replaced across the county at Donegal Town, Liscooley/Castlefinn, Clonmany, Stroove, Bundoran, Drumkeen, Lunniagh Beg and Letterkenny. These new pipelines replaced existing problem pipelines and will help to reduce water leakage, reduce interruptions to supplies and address water quality issues.

## Wastewater Upgrade Projects

By the end of 2023, three major contracts had been awarded for Wastewater upgrade projects under the Donegal Towns and Villages Programme, with each at a different stage of delivery:

### Contract No. 2 - Buncrana and Ballybofey/Stranorlar Networks (BBS)

The project includes for the upgrade of the Buncrana and Ballybofey/Stranorlar sewer networks in order to address deficiencies in flooding, overflows and capacity.

#### Ballybofey/Stranorlar

Upgrading of network Pump Stations, upgrading of Storm Water Overflows, upgrading of emergency overflows from Pump Stations, and addressing network deficiencies.

#### Buncrana

Provision of adequate storm water holding capacity at Westbrook Pumping Station and Buncrana Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), upgrading of Storm Water Overflows, and addressing network deficiencies.

Construction scheduled for completion before end of 2024.

### Contract No. 4 - Ramelton Milford and Rathmullan (RMR)

The project includes new wastewater infrastructure (Pump stations, rising mains and Treatment plant) to treat sewage from the Ramelton, Milford and Rathmullan agglomerations in a single WWTP which will be located centrally (at Tirroddy, Ramelton).

These works principally include four new Pump Stations, two in Rathmullan and one each in Ramelton and Milford, which will deliver wastewater to a new state of the art Wastewater Treatment plant at Tirroddy, Ramelton, via 19km of rising main. In addition, the existing treatment works at Milford, septic tanks in Rathmullan and holding tank in Ramelton will all be decommissioned as part of the project.

A 2-year construction contract commenced in January 2023 and is scheduled for completion in January 2025.

### Contract No. 3 - Kilmacrennan, Carrigart and Mountcharles (KCM)

The project includes for the upgrade of the Kilmacrennan and Carrigart Wastewater Treatment plants, as well as replacement of 2 No. wastewater treatment plants in Mountcharles with pumping stations to deliver effluent to Donegal Town WWTP for treatment.

#### Kilmacrennan

Construct a new WWTP on existing site to provide secondary treatment and increased capacity, site works to include flood protection measures, modified internal road layout and landscaping, as well as decommissioning existing WWTP infrastructure.

#### Carrigart

Upgrade Carrigart WWTP (including additional capacity, screening and primary treatment), provisions of storm storage, decommissioning of the existing Umlagh WwTP, provision of new pumping station at Umlagh and new rising main, provision of 600m of new gravity sewer, as well as relining and rehabilitation works.

#### Mountcharles

Construction of two new wastewater pumping stations on sites of the two existing wastewater treatment plants (Mountcharles Main WWTP and Hall Demesne WWTP), to pump all collected effluent via new rising mains to the existing Donegal Town WWTP for treatment, as well as decommissioning of the two existing WWTPs.

## Wastewater Projects

Construction/commissioning progressed on a range of wastewater projects during 2023:

### Gweedore Sewage Scheme

- Demonstration project fully operational with 40 properties connected, significant works were completed on private properties to complete all separation works and installation of pods, pumps & controls.
- Wastewater treatment plant upgrade works are substantially complete, with plant fully operational since March 2023.

### Kerrykeel Sewage Scheme

- Construction complete – plant is operational since June 2023.

### Kilcar Sewage Scheme

- Construction complete – plant is operational since Nov 2023

### Burtonport Sewage Scheme

- Construction substantially complete – plant is currently in process proving stage, operation period will commence, estimated to be April/May 2024

### Coolatee Sewage Scheme

- Construction substantially complete – plant is operational since December 2023.
- A constructed wetland treatment process is being used here.

Detailed design and planning continued and/or recommenced on other Uisce Éireann Capital Investment projects during 2023. Most advanced of these is a planned upgrade of Buncrana WWTP, to include for replacement of Fahan WWTP with a pumping station to pump to Buncrana WWTP. Work on developing a wastewater solution for Bridgend & Burnfoot recommenced in 2023.

## Wastewater Schemes

89 municipal wastewater scheme discharges have been identified for authorisation by the EPA and of these 37 out of 38 scheme discharges in Donegal have been granted discharge licenses to date, while the remaining 51 smaller scheme discharges hold Certificates of Authorisation. Donegal County Council continued to operate the majority of these plants under the Service Level Agreement with Uisce Éireann, who are the responsible Water Services Authority. 939 wastewater samples were collected and tested by Donegal Central laboratory in 2023, while a further 826 samples were collected and tested under the ambient monitoring programme, which looks at the impact of the treated wastewater discharge on the receiving environment.



*Aerial photograph of the dam at Lettermacaward WTP*

## Landfills

The Council continues to fulfil its extensive obligations under its six Waste Licences (Ballynacarrick, Balbane, Churchtown, Drumaboden, Glenalla and Muckish). All six licensed facilities have now been fully remediated. Commissioning of the Integrated Constructed Wetland at Balbane Landfill Site continues.

Department grant funding support was again confirmed for 2024 and the planning and design of an Integrated Constructed Wetland for Ballynacarrick Landfill Site is progressing with the first phase of works currently being procured.

Historic Landfill Sites (i.e. legacy municipal landfill sites) are progressing through the Environmental Risk Assessment and Certification Process with Departmental grant funding support. Work will be finalised and an application for certification will be made for Dungloe Historic Landfill Site early in 2024. Applications for certification for Carrick and Dunkineely were submitted in 2021.

The Council continues to operate and maintain pollution control infrastructure at the six licensed facilities together with an extensive monitoring programme in conformance with Licence requirements.

## Pollution Control

The Council's Central Laboratory undertakes a range of monitoring programmes aimed at environmental protection and pollution control in the areas of Water, Air and Noise, including:

- Commercial/Industrial discharges – 66 samples to sewers for UÉ and 109 inspections of licenced discharges to waters completed.
- Rivers and Lakes – a total of 957 samples were collected & delivered to EPA Labs
- Septic tank inspections under the National Inspection Plan – 111 Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems inspected and 26 follow-up verification inspections.
- Bathing water monitoring, (Blue Flag and Green Coast beaches) in line with bathing water calendar
- Farm inspections – an additional 42 inspections were completed by an Agricultural Consultant on behalf of the Council in 2023, funded by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Air pollution – enforcement of the Petroleum Vapour, Deco paints & Solvents Regulations, Solid Fuel Regulations (low smoke zone)
- Investigating 1097 environmental complaints (96 water, 959 air & 42 noise) including sampling & testing of 57 samples.

A new initiative began in 2022 was continued in 2023 with the Central Laboratory staff setting up a Council stand at three public events:

- (i) the 3-day New Build & Rebuild exhibition in Letterkenny
- (ii) an Inishowen Rivers Trust event
- (iii) the 2-day Clonmany Agricultural Show

A total of 517 engagements were completed focusing on; desludging your septic tank, using Integrated Constructed Wetlands for treatment of soiled water, drinking water wells, how to dispose of spent sheep dip, and how the number of River Bugs helps see how to gauge river water quality.



*Inishowen Rivers Trust Event attended by members of the Lab*



## Air Quality Management

### Monitoring New Solid Fuel Regulations - Pilot Enforcement

The Council was successful in another application for funding from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) under the Solid Fuels Pilot Enforcement Grant in 2023. The work carried out built on that completed the previous years to mark the introduction of the New Solid Fuel Regulations on the 1st November 2022. The main focus in 2023 was again on raising awareness, retail visits, surveillance, ramping up of coal sampling and air quality monitoring. Air quality monitors have been in place and continue to operate at suitable sites in both Letterkenny and Bunrana, with the latter showing good results for PM10 and PM2.5, key indicators of air pollution from the burning of smoky coal. In the case of Letterkenny, the onset of the burning season again gave rise to large spikes in these indicator parameters, confirming that the burning of smoky coal in the “ban area” may still be a challenge.

In Q4 2023, a number of Clarity Sensors received from DECC, were installed in the Municipal Districts not served by an existing monitor, with the following locations chosen - Stranorlar, Lifford, Donegal Town and Dungloe. These solar powered monitors gave good data for PM10 and NO2, (related to traffic). It was found that air quality is influenced by topography and population density, with Letterkenny and Lifford/Strabane exhibiting higher levels of air pollutants than smaller settlements like Dungloe.



*Air Quality in Dungloe measured by new clarity sensor*

## Drinking Water Quality

The EPA is the supervisory authority for Uisce Eireann (UÉ) in relation to Public Water Supplies (PWS) whilst Donegal County Council is the supervisory authority for private supplies, which comprise of public Group Water Schemes (GWS), private Group Water Schemes and Small Private Supplies (SPS). Compliance Monitoring in the network was carried out by Uisce Éireann’s framework laboratory for Public Water Supplies and by the Health Service Executive on behalf of Donegal County Council for Private Water Supplies.

In 2023 the microbiological compliance level in Donegal Public Water Supplies remained at 100%, with compliance for chemical and indicator parameters at 99.73% and 99.27% respectively. The overall compliance level with the drinking water legislation was approximately 99.6%. 3 supplies remain on the Remedial Action List (RAL) for Donegal at year end.

47 regulated private supplies were monitored in County Donegal in 2023 with 92 compliance samples taken. The overall compliance rate for these supplies remained at 97%.

The overall Microbiological compliance for all regulated private supplies also stayed at 92%, with 70% of supplies obtaining 100% compliance with microbiological parameters.

Four premises opted to abandon use of their private drinking water supplies and use the public mains with a fifth supply making a new connection to the public water supply.

This will lead to improved water quality for these supplies although they are not included in the above compliance rates.

The overall compliance rate for Chemical parameters was 99.8% with improvement observed in one supply for Trihalo-methanes compliance from 2022. Works to allow connection to the Mains for the remaining supply has commenced. The overall compliance for Indicator parameters was 94%.

Communication issued to 2 supplies this year along with boil water notices following receipt of poor-quality results - a review of the results of their supplies shows the impact that climate change and increased rainfall from the catchment appear to be having on these potable supplies. Possible connection to neighbouring compliant potable supplies is being examined if additional treatment is not feasible.

Additional work included carrying out of 3 audits of regulated private supplies and monitoring of 6 unregulated private supplies to inform applications under the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme for improved treatment or connection to the public mains, where feasible.

# Environment

## Paint Reuse

The paint reuse service that was originally piloted at one recycling centre in 2022 was rolled out to all six recycling sites in 2023 supported by funding through the anti-dumping initiative. 500kgs of paint were reused throughout the year.

## Household Recycling Pocket Guide

In 2023 Donegal County Council Environment Section reprinted an extra 2,000 copies of the 'Donegal County Council household recycling pocket guide' for distribution to householders and local communities. The aim of the household recycling pocket guide was to achieve greater awareness of, and participation in, sustainable waste management practices including waste segregation, recycling and use of the food waste receptacles.

## Waste Recycling

There are 6 Recycling Centres at Carndonagh, Dungloe, Milford, Laghey, Letterkenny and Stranorlar operated under contract by Bryson Recycling Ltd. These sites provide a recycling service for a range of waste items including household waste, paper, cardboard, soft plastics, rigid plastic, garden waste, tyres & paint.

In June and July 2023, a half price Bulky Goods Promotion was held for a 2 week period funded under the Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI). 196 mattresses and other Bulky Goods including sofas, carpet, furniture were collected during this period.

There are over 450 Bring Banks at 73 sites around the county allowing for the collection of glass and cans. Other recycling services provided by Donegal County Council include collection points for Textiles.



*New Bring Banks in Donegal Town*

## Environmental Education and Awareness

The Council continued to deliver a comprehensive awareness programme targeting schools, householders, businesses and organisations and community groups. This was carried out through various methods such as radio advertising, digital advertising, social media, press releases and interviews.

2023 was the 25th anniversary of Green Schools. The Donegal Green Schools Awards took place on 9th May where 4 schools were awarded their first Green Flags, while 36 schools renewed their Green Flags in 2023. 176 schools were registered with the Green Schools Programme in total.

National campaigns such as 'Stop Food Waste' and WEEE Ireland collection days were also supported. Donegal County Council supported WEEE Ireland to deliver four collections days for waste electrical and electronic items (pictured below). These events were organised by WEEE Ireland and promoted by the Council. Collection days took place in Buncrana, Killybegs, Falcarragh & Carrigart.



*WEEE Collection Day in Carrigart*



*Compost Giveaway event 2023*

### National Food Waste Recycling Week

Donegal County Council once again supported National Food Waste Recycling Week. A number of compost giveaway events were held. Compost and food waste starter packs were distributed to members of the public across six different locations over three days. Over 300 food waste starter packs were distributed during the events.

### Holidaymaker Campaign Anti-Dumping Initiative

For a second consecutive year the Environment team, with the assistance of the Tourism Unit, delivered a county wide online campaign targeting visitors to the county to raise awareness about responsible waste disposal and keeping our environment litter-free. The "Go Visit Donegal" social platforms were utilised in the delivery of the message.

### Anti-Dumping Initiative

In 2023 Donegal County Council received €110,493 from the Anti-Dumping Initiative which was invested in additional equipment, including technological solutions, a bulky goods amnesty and also in addressing areas where littering and illegal dumping was occurring. This expenditure was in addition to the Council's own resources and funding provided by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications for waste enforcement activities.

### School Bikes Africa

September also saw the launch of the successful 'School Bikes Africa' campaign in partnership with Letterkenny Rotary Club and Bryson Recycling. 135 suitable bicycles were collected for repair and refurbishment before being shipped to Africa.





Donegal Town Green Hub Launch

### Green Hub

Donegal County Council participated as one of six national pilots for the Green Hub campaign in February (pictured above). This initiative was led by Donegal County Council in partnership with the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices supported by the Local Enterprise Office, Donegal ETB, Donegal Town Community Chamber and the Donegal Town Business Focus Group.

Over 30 businesses and organisations were represented at the launch, showing an incredible interest in learning about reducing their waste and sustainability actions for business. This project was highlighted on the Council’s social media pages & a press release was issued to local media.

### Litter Management

A Litter Team comprising 11 staff continues to work closely with Tidy Towns and Community Groups in preventing litter and co-ordinating clean ups throughout the County. March saw the launch of the Big Donegal Clean-up at Fintra beach.



Big Donegal Cleanup Launch 2023 at Fintra Beach

## Flood Relief Schemes

The Donegal County Council Flood Relief Schemes (FRS) Unit are project managing the development of schemes in 7 locations; Burnfoot, Castlefinn, Na Gleannta, Na Dúnaibh, Ballybofey and Stranorlar, Buncrana and Luddan, and Ramelton.

### Donegal Bundle 1 FRS

The Engineering and Environmental Consultants with responsibility for Burnfoot, Castlefinn, Na Gleannta and Na Dúnaibh, substantially completed Stage I on both Burnfoot and Castlefinn during 2023.

A preferred option for Na Dúnaibh and a Public Information Day was held in May 2023. A pilot study was sanctioned for Glenties with the intention of exploring Nature-based Solutions in the upstream catchment with very positive early engagement from Coillte and Forestry Service.

Land discussions required in advance of planning submissions for both Castlefinn and Burnfoot were ongoing through 2023. These discussions are crucial to successful delivery of the preferred options. It is expected that subject to successful resolution of some of these key discussions, planning submissions will be made in summer 2024.

### Donegal Bundle 2 FRS

The schemes in the remaining towns include Buncrana, Ballybofey and Stranorlar, and Ramelton. Intricacies associated with hydraulic modelling have required more time than expected on both the Buncrana and the Ballybofey and Stranorlar schemes. This has resulted in the need to complete further iterations of hydrological assessment and required revisions as well as alternative hydraulic modelling methodologies to be examined. There have unfortunately been some delays associated with this, but these are hopefully nearing resolution.

A Ground Investigation (GI) contract was completed for Ballybofey and Stranorlar, with the focus being on the Ballybofey embankment. This was the first step in the process of assessment of these embankments and will be a key driver for their adoption as part of the eventual scheme. Further GI is proposed in both Ballybofey and Ramelton in 2023. A public participation event for Ramelton FRS was held in June 2023. A clear take away from the event was the status of the existing wall along Shore Road and The Quay and how it would interact or indeed be part of the scheme. A specialist in heritage structural assessment has been appointed by the scheme to inform design considerations on this element of work.

The FRS Unit continued to support the OPW on their delivery of Lifford and Kerrykeel FRS during 2023. The Unit has led liaison efforts between adjacent projects such as the Riverine Community Park and Ten-T within Donegal County Council and also driven co-ordination with colleagues across the border working on the A5 Western Transport Corridor to ensure joined up delivery on all projects.

In May 2023 Minister with responsibility for the Office of Public Works, Patrick O'Donovan TD, launched new FRS for Letterkenny and Donegal Town. These schemes are expected to commence in 2024 with the initial 18 months thereafter to be focused on piloting a new model for data gathering and project scoping.

## Beaches

### Magherawarden Boardwalk

The boardwalk was co-funded by Minor Tourism and Age Friendly funding. It is a fantastic addition to this very popular Blue Flag beach giving excellent access for everyone, pictured below before and after.



## Lifeguards

Donegal had the required number of Beach Lifeguards for the 2023 season to patrol all our Blue Flag Beaches. A new Beach Lifeguard Supervisor was a welcomed addition to the Beach management team.

Lifeguards were in place all summer from 1st June on Bundoran and Rossnowlagh beaches between 11am and 7pm. Lifeguards were in place at weekends in June and for all of July and August on beaches at Murvagh, Fintra, Portnoo/Narin, Carrickfinn, Killahoey, Marblehill, Downings, Portsalon, Rathmullan, Culdaff and Stroove.

The total number of accidents/incidents reports recorded for the 2023 season was 169 and the total number of rescue reports received was 10 (of which 4 were a family group in a single incident) and we had 10 missing child reports.

## Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards

In 2023 Donegal retained its 12 Blue Flag beaches, (Culdaff, Bundoran, Carrickfinn, Downings, Fintra, Killahoey, Marble Hill, Murvagh, Narin, Portsalon, Rossnowlagh and Stroove) and 2 Marina Blue Flags, (Greencastle and Rathmullan) as well as 4 Green Coast awards (Dooley, Magheroarty, Drumnatinney and Ballyheirnan).

These international awards recognise excellent bathing water quality and promote sound environmental management of beaches and marinas.

## Blue Flag Beach Restrictions for Dog Owners

In 2023 the rules restricting access for dogs, other than assistance dogs, to blue-flag beaches (or in the blue-flag area if it is part of a larger beach) came into effect. The rule applies during the Bathing Season (1st June to 15th September) and is intended to maintain Health and Safety for beach goers and bathers alike.

Site specific signage was installed outlining the new byelaw at all the beaches included in the byelaws. When the Lifeguards were on duty they advised dog owners of the new byelaws. To date there has been a welcomed adherence to the new byelaws.

## Minor Tourism Related Works Grant Scheme Grants

An application was also made for funding from the Minor Tourism Related Works Grant Scheme 2023 for an Eco-Loo at Carrickfinn beach carpark.

This funding was granted and the accessible Eco-Loo was installed in mid-August.

An upgrade of the decking at Thrupenny Pool, Bundoran also took place under this Grant Scheme in July 2023.



## An Roinn 2023 Island Programme

An application was made to An Roinn 2023 Island Programme for two Eco/Dry Loos; one for Gola Island and one for Owey Island as a pilot project. These types of accessible Loos do not need a water or sewage connection. In August we successfully installed one Eco Loo on Gola with a wormery that breaks down the waste material. We are hopeful that in 2024 we will be able to acquire suitable land on Owey island for a similar Eco/Dry Loo.



*Tory Island Recycling Facility Fencing and Gola Island Dry Loo were completed under the Roinn 2023 Islands Programme*

## Accessibility

Donegal County Council were delighted to be shortlisted for the 'Most Inclusive Project' at the LAMA all Ireland Community & Council awards. This Council initiative exemplifies the influence of community and resources on overall well-being, showcasing how strategic partnerships and infrastructure improvements can foster inclusivity. The project's vision aimed at creating a replicable plan across the county, aligning with various county strategies. These efforts demonstrate Donegal County Council's commitment to creating a more inclusive community while also advancing broader county strategies and goals.



*Accessibility Audit of Beaches*

Accessibility audits of five blue flag beaches, funded by Donegal County Council's Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme, have been a significant part of this process. They provide a roadmap for short, medium, and long-term actions. These audits serve as a template for identifying and addressing accessibility barriers across all beaches in the county.



*Opening of the first Donegal 'Changing Place' Facility*

## Local Authority Climate Action Plan

The development of Donegal County Council's first Climate Action Plan (2024-2029) was progressed during 2023 in line with our statutory duties under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2021. In February 2023, the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD, asked each Local Authority to prepare a Climate Action Plan for adoption by Council no later than 23rd February 2024.

To deliver the Plan, Donegal County Council appointed a Climate Action Coordinator and Climate Action Officer. Their roles are focused on delivering our Climate Action Plan and ensuring its implementation, building on the previous work of our Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 to 2024.

The Plan sets out how Donegal County Council will be responsible for enhancing climate resilience, increasing energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, across its own assets, services, and infrastructure, for which it is fully accountable, whilst also demonstrating a broader role of influencing, advocating, and facilitating other sectors, to meet their own climate targets and ambitions.

Public Consultation on the Draft Climate Action Plan, and its accompanying Environmental Reports (Strategic Environmental Assessment and Natura Impact Statement), was completed during November and December 2023 with positive and constructive engagement from Elected Members, stakeholders and members of the public. The adopted Climate Action Plan is on schedule to be published Q1 2024.

During 2023 Donegal County Council, in partnership with the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), built the evidence base for Donegal in relation to Greenhouse Gas emissions and energy usage, and commissioned a Climate Change Risk Assessment to indicate the key climate hazards we face. Having determined these baselines, and following a pre-draft public consultation held in July 2023, the draft Climate Action Plan was developed based on six key emerging themes around which climate mitigation and adaptation actions were identified.

## Community Climate Action Fund

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) launched Strand 1 and Strand 1a of their Community Climate Action Fund. Donegal was allocated €699,000 under Strand 1 - Building Low Carbon Communities. This fund is aimed at community groups ready to take climate action on the ground with a focus on home/energy, active travel, food and waste, shopping and recycling or local climate and environmental action. Nationally, €3m is available for Strand 1a (Shared Island) for community-based climate action projects with partners in Northern Ireland. Donegal County Council are administering the Community Climate Action Fund on behalf of DECC and opened both funding strands for applications on 29th December 2023. Recruitment of a Community Climate Action Officer to oversee this funding programme was also undertaken during 2023.

## Energy Efficiency Upgrade Works

Energy Efficiency Upgrade Works at Ballyshannon Leisure Centre were completed under the Sports Capital Programme (pictured right).

The project involved ongoing decommissioning of Oil and Installation of Air to Water Heat Pumps, LPG (Gas) Back Up, New Pool Pumps, PV Solar Panels.

Full completion will achieve Savings of 160 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per year when completed as well as energy savings in excess of €100,000 per annum.



## CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



### OUR VISION

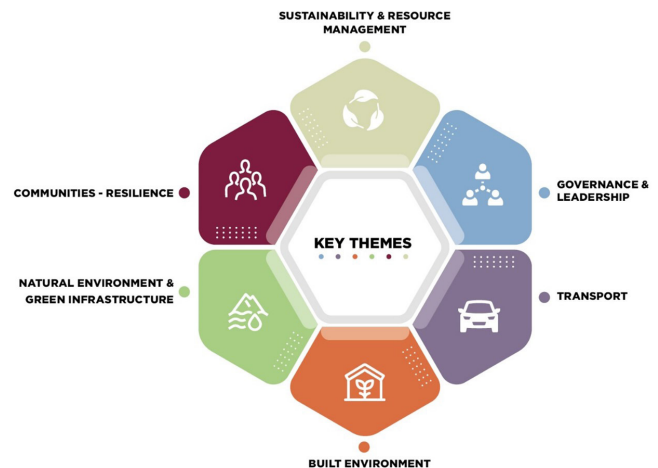
To be a Climate Resilient, Biodiversity Rich, Environmentally Sustainable and Carbon Neutral Donegal by no later than the end of 2050.



### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across Donegal County Council within our own organisation and services, through leadership, example and mobilising action at a local level.

## Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 Key Themes





## North West Energy Agency

The North-West City Region consists of Donegal County Council (DCC) and Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC). The two Local Authorities have committed to work together, as detailed within the North-West Regional Energy Strategy, with the ambition of decarbonising their energy systems and aiming for net zero energy emissions by 2045.

The North West Regional Development Group adopted the following Green Transformation – Statement of Intent:

*'This Statement of Intent speaks to the North West City Region's ambition for the green transformation of this functional cross-border area, a transition that will enhance the environmental, economic, social and quality of life attributes of the region in a way that will do no harm, and ensure no place or person is left behind'*

The two Local Authorities have previously agreed that the next step in the implementation of the Strategy was the establishment of a North West Regional Energy Agency - drawing experience from other successful energy agencies, including the Tipperary Energy Agency; The South East Energy Agency (Carlow, Kilkenny; Wexford and Waterford) and City of Dublin Energy Management Agency (CODEMA).

The Regional Energy Agency will act as a 'one stop shop' for citizens; businesses; communities and the public sector who want to transition to a low carbon economy and attract supports which are available, including through SEAL.

### Progress Update

Progress in the development and implementation of the 'Energy Agency' has generally focused on funding. The following elements are currently work in progress:

- The North West Regional Energy Agency C.L.G was registered with the CRO with support from the EU LIFE Programme and LEAP Project. The company has been branded as the 'North West Energy Agency' (NWEA) with an interim office secured (for up to 6 staff) at the BASE, Stranorlar for up to a 3-year period.
- A cross Directorate Steering Group led by the Senior Management Team has overseen the development of the 'Energy Agency'. That role will now be handed over to an interim Board of Directors for the Company (Interim 1 for Donegal only). We will progress when appropriate, to a version of that with Donegal and Derry City and Strabane DC membership (Interim 2, Donegal & Derry / Strabane). When the 'NW Regional EA' is on its feet and attracting funds to sustain its existence, i.e., when it becomes established and separated from DCC & DCSDC, the Board may be reconfigured then.
- The LEAP Project which launched in February (pictured below) has provided limited resources including a Project Manager and part time roles for a Project Officer and Admin support. The LEAP Project is essentially paving the way for the delivery of the work of the North West Energy Agency, focused on retrofit of domestic buildings in limited estates. This work is providing both Local Authorities with a clear understanding of what is needed in terms of funding and supports, in order for the NWEA to deliver the regional services intended.



### Funding

Donegal County Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council have jointly been successful in attracting the following funding:

- NW Regional Development Group – have approved the following funding to support the ongoing development of this work:
  - (Phase 1) £45,000 secured in Feb 2021
  - (Phase 2) £90,000 secured in Sept 2022
- €312,500 secured for the North-West Decarb Exemplar Decarbonised Public Buildings & Transportation Project. 30 No. detailed Energy Audits were completed in Phase 2 (15 each in DCC and DCSDC areas) and a Feasibility Study was completed in October 2023. That was submitted to Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- EU City Facility - a successful application was made in December 2021 with a €60,000 grant secured to develop an 'Investment Concept' (IC) for return to the EU by May 2023. The EUCF confirmed in July 2023, that the IC was fully validated. This provides a blueprint detailing the plans for the decade ahead and will help with ongoing funding applications.

Unfortunately, arising from Brexit, Northern Ireland (& DCSDC) are excluded from certain EU funding programmes. However, Donegal County Council has been successful in attracting the following funding to support the development of the NWEA in Donegal:

- EU LIFE Programme – LEAP Project secured, which was part of a joint bid led by ATU Sligo (DCSDC excluded following Brexit). This project will establish 3 Energy Agencies, one each in Donegal; Sligo-Leitrim and for the Aran Island /Galway Gaeltacht. The LEAP Project will provide €540,000 for the NWEA over 3 years, commencing in November 2022.
- Share-RES – a joint application was made with EU Partners (DCSDC excluded following Brexit). This project will fund a Community Officer and provide linkage with the Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC's). Approval was received in December 2022 for €252,850.
- OwnYourSECAP – this project in conjunction with Tipperary Energy Agency and their EU Partners, will provide advice + mentoring to select Local Authorities, including DCC on developing our Sustainable Energy Climate Action Plan (SECAP).

# Appendices

## Council Membership of Committees & Other Bodies

### Corporate Policy Group

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Marie Therese Gallagher  
Cllr John O' Donnell  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Niamh Kenned/Cllr Tom Conaghan  
Cathaoirleach of the Day

### Planning SPC

Cllr Paul Canning, Chairperson  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Tom Conaghan  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle

### Planning SPC - Sectoral Reps

Agriculture/Farming - James O' Donnell  
Environment - Anne Mc Gowan  
Development/Construction - Barry Mc Menamin  
Business/ Commercial - Bernard Gallagher  
Social Inclusion - Vacant

### Roads & Transportation SPC

Cllr John O' Donnell, Chairperson  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr John Sheamuis Ó Fearraigh  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride

### Roads & Transportation SPC - Sectoral Reps

Agriculture/Farming - Gareth Whitmore  
Development/Construction - Bernard O' Donnell  
Business Commercial - George Mills  
Community/Voluntary - Vincent Callaghan  
Fishing/Aquaculture - Vacant

### Housing & Corporate SPC

Cllr Johnny McGuinness, Chairperson  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Martin Mc Dermott  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh  
Cllr John S Ó Fearraigh  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Kevin Bradley

### Housing & Corporate SPC - Sectoral Reps

Agriculture/Farming - Vacant  
Development/Construction - John Gildea  
Business/ Commercial - Vacant  
Trade Union - Anne Wilkinson  
Social Inclusion - Hugh Friel

### Community Social & Cultural SPC

Cllr Marie T Gallagher, Chairperson  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Ian Mc Garvey  
Cllr Jack Murray  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh  
Cllr Martin Harley

### Community Social & Cultural SPC - Sectoral Reps

Environment - Ethna Diver  
Business/ Commercial - David Roche  
Trade Union - John C Quinn  
Social Inclusion - Paul Kernan  
Community & Voluntary - Mary Shields

### Climate Action & Environment SPC

Cllr Gary Doherty, Chairperson  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Marie Therese Gallagher  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Barry Sweeney  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Kevin Bradley

### Climate Action & Environment SPC - Sectoral Reps

Agriculture/Farming - Francis Burns  
Environment - Michael Chance  
Development/Construction - Vacant  
Business/ Commercial - Arthur McMahon  
Fishing/Aquaculture - Vacant

### Economic Development, Enterprise & Emergency SPC

Cllr Ciaran Brogan, Chairperson  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Barry Sweeney  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Martin Farren  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness

### Economic Development, Enterprise & Emergency SPC - Sectoral Reps

Agriculture/Farming - George Starrett/Andy McShea  
Environment - Jimmy Scott  
Development/Construction - Michael Kelly  
Business/ Commercial - Phillip Mc Glynn  
Trade Union - Martin O' Rourke  
Community /Voluntary - Jerry Early  
Fishing/Aquaculture - Vacant

### Mica Redress Committee

Cllr Martin Mc Dermott  
Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Frank Mc Brearty  
Cllr John O' Donnell  
Cllr Martin Farren  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh

### Brexit Committee

Cllr Michéal Naughton  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan (SPC Chair)  
Cllr Paul Canning (SPC Chair)  
Cllr Gary Doherty (SPC Chair)  
Cllr Marie T Gallagher (SPC Chair)  
Cllr John O' Donnell (SPC Chair)  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness (SPC Chair)  
Cathaoirleach of the Day

### Fisheries Committee

Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Martin Mc Dermott  
Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr John S O' Fearraigh  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Martin Farren  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Barry Sweeny

### Fisheries Committee - Sectoral Reps

NIFA & NIFO - John Menarry/Kevin Byrne  
Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation - Seán O'Donoghue/Ted Breslin  
Islands Rep - Jerry Earley  
Fish Processors Rep - Kenny Ward  
Crad/Lobster Sector - Eddie Kelly/Gerry Kennedy  
National Salmon Commissioner - John O'Brien  
Fish Retail Sector - Michael O'Donnell  
Inland Fisheries Ireland - Milton Matthews/  
Francis O'Donnell  
Salmon Fish Farming Rep - Jan Feenestra  
Shell Fish Farming Rep - Gerry Gallagher  
Shell Fish Producers/Processors - Vacant

### Agriculture Committee

Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Tom Conaghan  
Cllr Ian Mc Garvey  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness

### Agriculture Committee - Sectoral Reps

Brendan Mc Laughlin - IFA  
Pheilim Molloy - INHFA  
Henry O' Donnell (Deputy)- INHFA  
Harry Mallon - ICMSA  
John Barron - ICESA  
Lawrence McManus - ICESA  
Martin Mc Cullough - Teagasc  
Barry Caslin - Teagasc  
Maureen Mc Laughlin - ICESA  
Gary O' Donnell - Dept. of Agriculture  
Aidan O' Donnell - Dept. of Agriculture  
Johnny Meehan - Donegal Beefplan  
Eoin Gallagher - ACA

### Emergency Response Committee

Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cathaoirleach of the Day

### Donegal Health Committee

Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride  
Cllr Pauric Mc Garvey  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness

### Donegal Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Micheál Cholm Mc Giolla Easbuig  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh

### Traveller Reps

Hugh Friel  
Siobhan McLaughlin  
Rose Mc Donagh

### Coiste na Gaeilge

Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr John Sheamus O' Fearraigh  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Micheál Cholm Mc Giolla Easbuig  
Vacancy  
Vacancy  
Vacancy

### County Donegal Joint Policing Committee

Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Barry Sweeney  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cathaoirleach as Ex Officio Member

### Oireachtas Members

Pearse Doherty, TD  
Charlie McConalogue, TD  
Joe McHugh, TD  
Padraig MacLochláinn TD  
Thomas Pringle, TD  
Marc McSharry, TD  
Senator Niall Blaney  
Senator Eileen Flynn

### County Donegal Joint Policing Committee - Sectoral Rep

Chief Superintendent Aidan Glackin - An Garda Síochána  
James Trearty - PPN Rep  
Margaret Toner - PPN Rep  
Joe Boland - PPN Rep  
Jimmy Scott - PPN Rep  
Mary Mc Gowan - PPN Rep  
Billy Banda - PPN Rep

### Audit Committee

Cllr Martin Mc Dermott  
Cllr Noel Jordan

### Audit Committee - Sectoral Reps

Henry Mc Garvey  
Micheál Mac Giolla Easbuig  
Paul Carr

### Islands Committee

Members of Glenties MD and the Milford Electoral Area

### Islands Committee - Sectoral Reps

Owey - William Boyle  
Iniscaorach - Hughie Gallagher  
Island Roy - Maire Uí Dochartaigh  
Inishinney - Seamus Rodgers  
Inishboffin - John O' Brien  
Tory - Marjorie Carol  
Aranmore - John Mc Cafferty  
Aranmore - Níorín Uí Mhaoldomhnaigh  
Gola - Eamonn Seosamh Mac Aoidh  
Rutland/Inis Mhic a Doirn - Rosaleen Mc Shane  
Inis Oirthir - Pádraig Mac Garbheith  
Inishmeane - Charlie O' Domhnaill  
Comharchumann na nOileán Beag - Mairín Uí Fhearraigh  
An Roinn Ealaíon Oidhreacht & Gaeltachta - Brid Ni Chonaghaile

### Donegal County Council Value for Money Committee

Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Pauric Mc Garvey  
Cllr Barry Sweeney  
Cathaoirleach of the Day

### Disability Strategy Committee

Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Micheál C Mac Giolla Easbuig

### Working Group on Local Government & Constitutional Change

Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Pauric Mc Garvey  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey

### Donegal Local and Community Development Committee

Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Martin McDermott  
Cllr Marie Therese Gallagher

### Donegal Local and Community Development Committee - Sectoral Reps

Micheál Mac Giolla Easbuig - Údarás na Gaeltachta  
Maria Ferguson - Health Service Executive  
Anne Mc Hugh - Education & Training Board  
Paul Hannigan - Atlantic Technological University  
Shauna McClenaghan - Inishowen Development Partnership  
Padraic Fingleton - Donegal Local Development Company  
Charlene Logue - PPN Rep  
Joe Boland - PPN Rep  
Andrew McNulty - PPN Rep  
Siobhan Mc Laughlin - PPN Rep  
Aengus Kennedy - PPN Rep  
Liam Mc Elhinney - ICTU  
James O' Donnell - Farmers Rep ICMSA  
Maire Uí Mhaoláin - Comhar na nOileáin Teo

### Cultural Committee

Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Tom Conaghan  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Martin Farren  
Cllr Marie Therese Gallagher  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Micheál C Mac Giolla Easbuig  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Martin Mc Dermott  
Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Gerry Mac Monagle  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Jack Murray  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr John S O' Fearraigh  
Cllr Barry Sweeney  
Frank O' Donnell  
Joe Birney  
Sean Mc Clafferty  
Joe Monaghan

### Donegal Youth Council Expert Advisory Committee

Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr John S O' Fearraigh

### Donegal Youth Council Expert Advisory Committee - Sectoral Reps

HSE - Anne Mc Ateer  
HSE - Lisa O' Hagan  
TUSLA - Anne Meehan  
An Garda Síochána - Anne Marie Mc Grath  
An Garda Síochána - Patrick Mc Glynn  
Donegal Education Centre - Sean Groarty  
ETB - Paddy Muldoon  
ETB - Sandra Buchanan  
Foróige - Claire Gavigan  
Foróige - Kate Jones  
Foróige - Kerry Gallagher  
Foróige - Maura Gallagher  
Foróige - Michael Mc Devitt  
Foróige - Susan Mc Loughlin  
Donegal Youth Service - Lorraine Thompson  
Involve - Martin Mongan  
Jigsaw - Damien Coyle  
Active Donegal - Myles Sweeney  
Spraoi agus Sport - Helen Nolan  
Marginalised Intercultural Youth - Fatima Byrne  
Donegal Intercultural Platform Rep

### PEACE PLUS Partnership

Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Barry Sweeney  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Paul Canning

### Working Group - Creeslough

Liam Ward, Director of Service - Chairperson  
Paul Kelly - Senior Executive Planner  
Aideen Doherty - Senior Executive Officer  
Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr John Sheamus O' Fearraigh

**Board of Donegal 2040 Strategic Development Company**

Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Niamh Kennedy  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty

**Board of Donegal 2040 Strategic Development Company - Sectoral Reps**

Sally Anne Sherry  
Caroline McGroary  
Fiona Doohan  
Aisling McDevitt  
Ian Ireland  
Michael Heaney

**Donegal Heritage Forum**

Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Barry Sweeny  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Paul Canning (Chair Planning SPC)  
Heritage Officer - Joseph Gallagher  
Curator Donegal County Museum - Judith Mc Carthy  
Conservation Officer - Colette Beattie  
Roisin Kelly - Executive Planner  
Environment Section - To be confirmed

**Donegal Heritage Forum - Sectoral Reps**

Leader Rep - Padraic Fingleton  
Coillte - To be confirmed  
National Monuments Service - Paddy O' Donovan  
National Parks & Wildlife - Ger O' Donnell  
Fáilte Ireland - Joan Crawford  
Teagasc - Carolyn Patterson  
Údarás na Gaeltachta - Séamas Ó Gallchoir  
ATU - Marie Kelly  
IFA - Michael Chance  
PPN Heritage Linkage Group - Michael Mullen  
PPN Heritage Linkage Group - Molly Reynolds  
An Taisce - Ethna Diver  
Donegal Heritage Network - Ralph Sheppard  
Donegal Heritage Network - Niall McCaughan  
Donegal Historical Society - Lachlann McGill  
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society - Caroline Dickson (RIP)

**Representation on External Bodies 2022****County Donegal Education and Training Board**

Cllr Noreen Mc Garvey  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Terry Crossan  
Cllr John S O' Fearraigh  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride  
Cllr Pauric Mc Garvey  
Cllr Martin Farren  
Cllr Barry Sweeny  
Cllr Martin Harley

**Regional Health Forum West**

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Tom Conaghan

**Northern & Western Regional Assembly**

Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Jack Murray  
Cllr Frank Mc Brearty

**County Enterprise Fund**

Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon

**Association of Irish and Local Government**

Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle

**Local Authority Members Association**

Cllr Liam Blaney (2019 - 2022)  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh (2022 - 2024)

**Inishowen Development Partnership**

Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Albert Doherty

**Donegal Local Development Company Ltd**

Cllr Noel Jordan  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr John O' Donnell

**ERNACT EEIG**

Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Jack Murray

**Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances**

Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty (2019 - 2022)  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride (2022 - 2024)

**North West Regional Development Group**

Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan/Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Albert Doherty  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan

**ICBAN**

Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Frank Mc Brearty

**Donegal Sports Partnership**

Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon

**Conference Peripheral Maritime Regions**

Cllr John Sheamus O' Fearraigh  
(2021 - 2024)

**LATCH**

Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Martin Harley

**Colmcille Heritage Trust**

Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Michael Mc Bride  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty

**Erne Enterprise Development Company**

Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Micheál Naughton

**Board of Fort Dunree Military Museum**

Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan

**Earagail Arts Festival**

Cllr Martin Mc Dermott  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Pauric Mc Garvey

**Letterkenny Theatre Management Company**

Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr John O' Donnell  
Iarla Mc Gowan

**Management Committee Ballyshannon Leisure Centre**

Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Barry Sweeny

**Board of Bundoran Waterworld**

Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Barry Sweeny  
Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
1 nominee to be confirmed

**Letterkenny Sports Complex Development Ltd**

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle

**Strengthening Families Advisory Board - NW Alcohol Forum**

Cllr Martin Harley

**Finn Valley Leisure Centre**

Cllr Liam Doherty  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan  
Cllr Gary Doherty

**Údarás na Gaeltachta**

Cllr Anthony Molloy

**Comhar na nOileán Teoranta**

Cllr Anthony Molloy

**Donegal Tourism Associate Members Committee**

Cllr Micheál Naughton  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr John O' Donnell  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Martin Mc Dermot  
Cathaoirleach of the Day

**Board of Donegal Tourism**

Cathaoirleach of the Day

**A5-N2 Cross Border Committee**

Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Paul Canning

**Western Inter-County Rail Committee**

Cllr Michael Mc Mahon  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness  
Cllr Michael Mc Clafferty  
Cllr Jimmy Kavanagh

**North West Regional Drug & Alcohol Taskforce**

Cllr Micheál Naughton

**Cross Border Working Group - Donegal County Council & Fermanagh and Omagh District Council**

Members of Donegal MD  
Members of Lifford/Stranorlar MD

# Attendance of Members at Conferences & Other Events Paid in 2023

## Training

### AILG Module 1 - 23rd February 2023 (Tullamore)

Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Johnny McGuinness  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr Jack Murray  
Cllr John O'Donnell (Limerick)  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan (Limerick)  
Cllr Kevin Bradley (Limerick)  
Cllr Donal Coyle

### LAMA 2nd-4th March 2023 (Bantry)

Cllr Jack Murray  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Johnny McGuinness  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr John O'Donnell

### AILG Module 2 - 25th March 2023 (Dundalk)

Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Donal M Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Martin McDermott  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Johnny McGuinness  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr John O'Donnell

### AILG Training Conference 19 & 20th April 2023 (Kilkenny)

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Donal M Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Johnny McGuinness  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr John O'Donnell

### AILG Module 3 2023 (15th June Mullingar/17th Kilkenny)

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Gary Doherty (out of region)  
Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Donal M Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle

### AILG Module 4 (22nd July) Sligo

Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Rena Donaghey  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr John O'Donnell  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Jack Murray

### AILG Autumn Seminar (13th & 14th Sept) Sligo

Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Donal M Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr Anthony Molloy  
Cllr John O'Donnell

### AILG Module 5 (Cavan) 19th October 2023

Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Martin McDermott  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle  
Cllr John O'Donnell

### AILG Module 5 (Tralee) 21st October 2023

Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Gary Doherty (out of region)  
Cllr Jack Murray

### LAMA Autumn Seminar (Tuam) 25th & 26th October

Paul Canning  
Nicholas Crossan  
Donal Mandy Kelly  
Michael McClafferty  
Jimmy Kavanagh  
Kevin Bradley  
Johnny McGuinness  
Gerry McMonagle  
Martin Harley  
Patrick McGowan  
Gary Doherty  
Gerry Crawford

### AILG Module 6 (Galway) 18th November

Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Gerry Crawford  
Cllr Nicholas Crossan  
Cllr Gary Doherty  
Cllr Donal Mandy Kelly  
Cllr Michael McClafferty  
Cllr Paul Canning  
Cllr Johnny McGuinness  
Cllr Gerry McMonagle

## Conferences

### AIR Regions in Focus - 7th-9th February 2023 (Monaghan)

Cllr Kevin Bradley  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan  
Cllr Donal Kelly  
Cllr Patrick McGowan  
Cllr John O'Donnell

### Suck Valley Way - 5th - 6th April 2023 (Roscommon)

Nicholas Crossan

### IPB Insurance Conference 4th May 2023 (Cork)

Cllr Michael McClafferty

## Other Travel

### Donegal Local Development Company Ltd

Cllr Noel Jordan - Jan & Feb 2020  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 26/02/2019  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 26/09/2019  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 27/01/2022  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 28/04/2022  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 28/07/2022  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 28/11/2019  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 29/03/2019  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 29/09/2022  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 29/10/2019  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 30/06/2022  
Cllr Noel Jordan - 31/03/2022

### Delegation to Dublin, Custom House, (Fire Stations) 8th July 2022

Cllr Michael Naughton

### Irish Public Bodies Conference, 4th May, Cork

Cllr Michael McClafferty

### Irish Public Bodies Meeting, Limerick, 6th October 2023

Cllr Michael McClafferty

### North West Regional Development Group

Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness - 11/03/2022  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness - 01/04/2022  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness - 23/08/2022  
Cllr Johnny Mc Guinness - 28/09/2022  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle - TBC

### TII Delegation - 8th December, Dublin

Cllr Michel Naughton

## 2022 Travel Paid in 2023

### AILG Module 1 - 17th February 2022 (Westmeath)

Cllr Donal Coyle

### AILG Spring Seminar - 23rd & 24th March (Buncrana)

Cllr Johnny McGuinness

### LAMA Spring Seminar 11th&12th April 2022 - (Kilkenny)

Cllr Donal Coyle

### AILG Module 3 - 16/06/2022 (Roscommon)

Cllr Donal Coyle

### AILG Autumn Seminar - 14th & 15th September 2022 (Navan, Co. Meath)

Cllr Donal Coyle

### LAMA Autumn Conference 9 & 10th November 2022 (Monaghan)

Cllr Donal Coyle  
Cllr Johnny McGuinness

## Travel Abroad

### CPMR Fisheries Working Group - Meeting - Brussels 25th January 2023

Cllr John S O' Fearraigh

### IAB Network Meeting - Philadelphia - 22nd -24th February 2023

Cllr Liam Blaney

### St Patrick's Day Events in the USA - Philadelphia, New York & Boston - 11th-21st March 2023

Cllr Liam Blaney  
Cllr Micheál Naughton

### CPMR Meeting - Cartagena, Murcia, Spain - 9th -10th March, 2023

Cllr John S O' Fearraigh

### Networking Event - Donegal Association, London 18th -20th May, 2023

Cllr Liam Blaney

### Launch Donegal Book of Honour - Leuven , Belgium

Cllr Liam Blaney

### London Irish Vintage Club- Diaspora Event, London - 2nd September, 2023

Cllr Martin Harley

### Blue Economy Conference - Plymouth MA, USA -1 6th-17th October, 2023

Cllr Martin Harley

### AER European Citizen's Award Ceremony, Brussels - 7th November, 2023

Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle

### CPMR General Assembly Meeting - St Malo, France - 15th -17th November, 2023

Cllr John S O' Fearraigh

### London - Excellent Award at the Landscape Institute Awards (Letterkenny 2040)

Cllr Kevin Bradley

### Brussels - 125th Anniversary Peace Park - 11th November, 2023

Cllr Martin Harley

### New York, Philadelphia & Golden Bridges Event, Boston - 13th - 17th November, 2023

Cllr Martin Harley

### NW City Region Event - Irish Embassy London - 4th December, 2023

Cllr Martin Harley  
Cllr Gerry Mc Monagle  
Cllr Ciaran Brogan

## Members and Related Expenses 2023

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Annual Allowance                                    | €213,098.62          |
| Local Representation Allowance                      | €118,784.73          |
| Representational Payment                            | €1,028,173.87        |
| Cathaoirleach's Allowance                           | €32,426.34           |
| Leas-Chathaoirleach's Allowance                     | €6,474.16            |
| Municipal District Chair Allowance                  | €35,826.82           |
| Insurance   | €7,436.27            |
| Members Gratuity Scheme                             | €110,780.89          |
| Strategic Policy Committee Chairs Allowance         | €35,875.38           |
| Conference Attendance (Home) - Travel & Subsistence | €1,619.86            |
| Attendance at Training Events -Travel & Subsistence | €47,204.03           |
| Other Travel - Travel & Subsistence                 | €5,012.13            |
| Conference & Training Fees                          | €14,105.00           |
| Travel outside Ireland                              | €23,620.92           |
| Contribution to Members Representative Associations | €27,000              |
| Expense of Non-Councillors on Committees            | €439.45              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>€1,707,878.47</b> |