

DRAFT COUNTY LONGFORD HERITAGE PLAN 2015–2020



INCORPORATING THE LONGFORD BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN



For Public Consultation October 2015



A strategic plan for the protection and enhancement of the heritage of County Longford, prepared by the County Longford Heritage Forum

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



INTRODUCTION

LONGFORD'S HERITAGE

County Longford has a rich heritage steeped in the rural tradition. The county hosts sites of mythological, historic, archaeological, architectural, social and industrial importance, representative of Ireland's history and cultural heritage. Longford is an important location for events in Ireland's mythology, such as *An Táin Bó Cuailigne* (Cattle Raid of Cooley) and *Tochmairc Éitíne*, (the Wooing of Étain by Midir). A number of key events in Irish history took place here including the Battle of Ballinamuck, the last great battle of the 1798 Rebellion. Longford is associated with General Seán Mac Eoin, a key figure in the Ireland's War of Independence, and Kitty Kiernan, the fiancée of General Michael Collins.

Longford has a wealth of architectural and archaeological heritage, ranging from pre-history to the 20th century. Some of the most significant visible monuments include including the portal tomb at Aughnacliffe; ringforts; standing stones; timber roadways or *toghers*, like that seen at the Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre; and the linear earthworks that make up the Black Pigs Dyke in north Longford. Our landscape also bears the remains of our ecclesiastical heritage in the form of church and abbey ruins, graveyards, pilgrim paths and holy wells.

County Longford has many significant sites of built heritage. Many historic castle sites remain, the most-impressive of which is the Norman motte-and-bailey castle that dominates the town of Granard. Important country houses within the county include Castle Forbes and Carriglas Manor which is associated with Thomas Langlois Lefroy, a paramour of Jane Austen, and the Irish architect James Gandon. Longford is especially associated with St. Mel's Cathedral, a magnificent Neo-Classical building that was recently renovated following a devastating fire. A variety of industrial heritage sites can be also found within the county, including mills, bridges, railways, along with a number of active vintage vehicle clubs and societies.

County Longford is closely associated with a number of important writers and scientists. These include inventor and scientist Richard Lovell Edgeworth and his daughter, the writer Maria Edgeworth. Renowned playwright and poet Oliver Goldsmith was in the county as was the poet John Keegan "Leo" Casey. Another of Longford's sons is Padraic Colum, a writer and founding member of the Abbey Theatre, who and was a respected lecturer at Columbia University in New York City.

The county has an important resource of natural heritage, set within a subtle and varied landscape. Key features of this landscape include many lakes and waterways, in particular the Royal Canal, which connects Dublin with the River Shannon at Clondra, and features a spur towards Longford town, (not currently open for navigation). A number of protected Special Conservation Areas (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are found within the county, which help protect Longford's vibrant biodiversity.

It is the aim of this plan to protect, enhance and promote the rich tapestry of County Longford's heritage for the benefit of all and to safeguard it for future generations.

AIM OF THE COUNTY LONGFORD HERITAGE PLAN

It is the overall aim of the County Longford Heritage Plan to encourage engagement and appreciation of Longford's heritage for the enjoyment of all as well as developing and supporting its protection for future generations.

Heritage can be thought of as all of the elements of our shared history and environment, which make up how we live today. The Heritage Act, 1995, defines heritage as including:

- Landscape
- Flora
- Wildlife habitats
- Archaeological objects
- Heritage objects
- Inland waterways
- Wrecks
- Seascapes
- Fauna
- Monuments
- Architectural heritage
- Geology
- Heritage gardens & parks

In addition, the Heritage Forum has recommended that aspects of tangible and intangible cultural heritage which are of importance to County Longford be considered including:

- History and social development
- Genealogy,
- Placenames,
- The Irish language,
- Folklore,
- Crafts, sport and past-times
- Industrial and transport heritage
- Musical heritage.

ACHIEVEMENTS COUNTY LONGFORD HERITAGE PLAN 2004-2009

The first County Heritage Plan was adopted by Longford County Council in December 2003. The primary aim of that plan was *“That our heritage will be part of life for everyone”*. This aim was supported by seventy-two actions, furthering five objectives:

1. To protect and enhance our archaeological and architectural heritage.
2. To promote interest and pride in the county's culture.
3. Develop a heritage education and awareness programme.
4. Provide heritage information which is available to all.
5. Protect and enhance the natural heritage.

This plan was maintained until all of its objectives were achieved, by delivering the actions contained within the Plan and developing supporting projects to further these objectives. Where possible, these have been made accessible to the public through the Longford Library Service and on the Longford Heritage Office website. Key projects delivered include:

- The County Peatlands Survey,

- The County Hedgerow Survey,
- An all-Ireland smartphone application to recognise and report invasive species.
- Audits of the major archaeological and cultural heritage artefact collections relating to County Longford.
- Research projects on built heritage, including a desktop survey of Longford's industrial heritage; an archaeological survey of selected Anglo-Norman castles; Phase 1 of an inter-county cultural project on the Black Pigs Dyke/Dúncla monument.
- The development of themed schools educational packs on important elements of Longford's history and heritage, including the Royal Canal.
- Exhibitions to raise awareness of the local impacts of global events, including the Titanic disaster and World War 1.

The County Longford Heritage Plan 2015-2020 intends to build upon the foundation laid by the previous heritage plan in protecting and promoting the cultural and natural heritage within Longford for the benefit of all.

PREPARATION OF THE COUNTY LONGFORD PLAN 2015-2021

The Heritage Plan:

The Heritage Plan was prepared in accordance with guidelines set out by the Heritage Council. The Heritage Forum decided in 2009 to retain the current format of the Forum and agreed to proceed with the revision of the Heritage Plan. In May 2009 members of the public were invited to make submissions and observations on the Heritage Plan, primarily through the production of a newsletter and questionnaire promoted on the Heritage Office and Longford County Council website and local library network. The consultation process remained open-ended and submissions were encouraged over the course of the revision period.

Between 2010 and 2012 the Heritage Forum reviewed the first plan, and decided upon a format that would allow a more flexible approach to the actions of the plan. This would enable Longford County Council to effectively adapt to changes in available funding, changes in national policy and the emergence of new heritage issues. In January 2012, a draft Heritage Plan was produced for discussion with the Planning and Cultural Development Strategic Planning Committee, the responses from which were carefully reviewed. The first County Heritage Plan remained in place throughout this time, to fully ensure that all of the objectives of this plan were achieved.

In 2015, the process of reviewing the County Longford Heritage Plan was continued. The plan was adapted to reflect the changes in local governance that took place in June 2013 with the abolition of Longford and Granard Town Councils.

The consultation process will include further consultation with the Local Authority partners, Strategic Policy Committees, and Public Participation Network. Further consultation will be held through a public meeting and liaison with local heritage organisations and community groups. After the consultation process, any necessary revisions will be made and approved by the Heritage Forum. Once complete, the final Heritage Plan will be approved by Longford County Council and adopted.

The Biodiversity Action Plan:

The Draft Biodiversity Action Plan prepared by Dr. Amanda Browne, on behalf of the Heritage Council for the County Longford Heritage Forum. The original draft was prepared in 2007 and later revised and updated. At that time, it was decided by the Heritage Forum that the Biodiversity Action Plan form part of the Heritage Plan to afford equal protection and awareness of the cultural and natural heritage of County Longford.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The Heritage Plan will be implemented through an annual work programme by the County Heritage Office, agreed with the Heritage Council, and advised by the County Longford Heritage Forum. This will be co-ordinated on a day-to-day basis by the County Longford Heritage Officer. Where feasible, projects will be carried out in co-operation with partners within the county, or with neighbouring counties.

The Heritage Office will also seek to cooperate with heritage and community organizations on projects that further the aims and objectives of the Heritage Plan. The final projects will be made available to the public through the County Longford Library, Heritage & Archive Service and on the Heritage Office website, where possible.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COUNTY LONGFORD HERITAGE PLAN

1. Implement key Strategic Actions over the lifetime of the Heritage Plan to achieve greater awareness and protection of all aspects of the heritage of County Longford
2. To develop knowledge, appreciation and access to Longford's heritage through research and innovation.
3. Promote the protection and best practice in heritage management within the county
4. Promote heritage education and awareness.
5. Support organisations and communities in promoting sustainable enjoyment of Longford's countryside, waterways and heritage
6. Implement the County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan.

Objective 1: Implement key Strategic Actions over the lifetime of the Heritage Plan to achieve greater awareness and protection of all aspects of the heritage of County Longford

- 1.1 Develop and implement the Heritage-related policies within current and future County Longford Development Plans and Local Area Plans.
- 1.2 Seek and support the establishment of a County Museum for Longford.
- 1.3 Produce paper- and web-based publications on Longford's key heritage sites and features, and foster proposals for appropriate access to same.
- 1.4 Improve accessibility to heritage information through the Heritage Office website and emerging technologies, including the *Explore Longford* app.
- 1.5 Coordinate and develop Heritage Week events in partnership with heritage organisations and community groups.
- 1.6 Support and assist projects to promote and protect Longford's wetlands.
- 1.7 Support and assist innovations driving research and awareness of our cultural and natural heritage.
- 1.8 Form a County Placenames Committee.
- 1.9 Seek to provide appropriate access to key heritage sites within County Longford, in partnership with stakeholders and landowners.
- 1.10 Cultivate and promote education of best practice models in heritage protection and heritage management.
- 1.11 Implement the Public Realm Strategy for Granard and support the development of similar plans for historic town and villages in Longford.
- 1.12 Support and promote the regeneration of the historic core of Longford Town including Lower Main Street, Great and Lower Water Street, Bridge Street and the Connolly Barracks complex.

Objective 2: To develop knowledge, appreciation and access to Longford’s heritage through research and innovation.

- 2.1 Support the provision of specialist officers to ensure the protection of Longford’s heritage in a proactive manner, to include the maintenance of the Longford Heritage Office and the appointment of a Biodiversity Officer and Conservation Officer, subject to the necessary resources being made available.
- 2.2 Support the County Library & Archives Service and collections.
- 2.3 Develop exhibitions on aspects of Longford’s heritage.
- 2.4 Support local and national innovations for access to heritage information and sites, including those with disabilities.
- 2.5 Support the public’s use of the Royal Canal and its towpaths as walking and cycling routes.
- 2.6 Contribute heritage information to the creation and promotion of tourism and amenity trails within the region.
- 2.7 Develop accessible heritage information databases, including traditional skills practitioners; historic words and sayings; longford crafts and craftspeople.
- 2.8 Support and participate in innovative cultural and ecological tourism programmes.
- 2.9 Seek to provide heritage information in a wider range of languages and formats, including Irish, to encourage cultural tourism to the county.
- 2.10 Undertake and contribute to graveyard and memorial recording programmes.
- 2.11 Develop information and directional signage for publicly-accessible heritage sites, in partnership with key stakeholders.
- 2.12 Identify knowledge gaps in relation to Longford’s heritage and undertake projects to bridge those gaps.
- 2.13 Survey and promote Longford’s intangible cultural heritage, including oral history, social history, placenames and folklore.
- 2.14 Undertake surveys of Longford’s built and industrial heritage.
- 2.15 Research and promote Longford’s ecclesiastical heritage.
- 2.16 Support and participate in heritage research with partner organisations, community groups and individuals.
- 2.17 Foster further 3rd Level, post-graduate and independent research on heritage in Longford and the Midlands.

Objective 3 - Promote the protection and best practice in heritage management within the county

- 3.1 Promote the implementation of heritage policy for Longford County Council through their statutory documents, including Local Area Plans and corporate plans.
- 3.2 Engage with sections throughout Longford County Council to achieve joint aims and objects with regard to cultural, built and natural heritage awareness and protection.
- 3.3 Oversee and guide the implementation of regional, national and EU-wide heritage policies and legislation.
- 3.4 Continue to review and advise on the Record of Protected Structures.
- 3.5 Host workshops and lectures on conservation and maintenance of historic structures.
- 3.6 Advise on the potential heritage impacts on flood risk management and assessment in Co. Longford.
- 3.7 Provide information and assistance on grant and funding applications for the conservation and promotion of Longford's heritage.

Objective 4 - Promote heritage education and awareness

- 4.1 Support and promote the educational work undertaken by officers of Longford County Council and Heritage Forum partners.
- 4.2 Promote the use of heritage resources in education, in particular the *Heritage in Schools Scheme*, the National Monuments Services archaeological education packs, and local heritage-education packs.
- 4.3 Continue to develop schools education packs on aspects of Longford's history, cultural heritage, and architectural heritage.
- 4.4 Promote events in schools during awareness weeks, including *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, Biodiversity Week and Science Week.
- 4.5 Develop a summer training programme for teachers based on themes within Longford's history and cultural heritage.
- 4.6 Develop and support innovative initiatives for heritage education.
- 4.7 Promote heritage awareness and education at key local events.
- 4.8 Support education programmes for farmers and landowners on best practice heritage maintenance, including national monuments, hedge laying and conserving traditional farm buildings.
- 4.9 Support, promote and develop initiatives to encourage engagement with the Irish language.

Objective 5 - Support the sustainable enjoyment of Longford's countryside, waterways and heritage

- 5.1 Raise awareness of heritage as an asset to the community and rural development; support and encourage local and community heritage publications and events including oral history, placenames collection and local history.
- 5.2 Engage in projects to foster awareness, appreciation and protection of Longford's heritage including: cultural and literary heritage; industrial & transport heritage; history, oral history, folklore, archaeological and built heritage.
- 5.3 Host seminars and talks on aspects of heritage for community and local heritage groups.
- 5.4 Provide guidance and support to community and local heritage organisations on heritage projects.
- 5.5 Seek additional funding sources for implementing Heritage Plan objectives and community-based initiatives.
- 5.6 Engage with neighbouring Heritage Offices, Local Authorities, Regional Assembly and national agencies in projects to foster awareness and/or protection of the heritage of the Irish Midlands.
- 5.7 Support the development of walking, cycling and waterways routes within the county, and provide advice and guidance on appropriate access and interpretation. This is to include, but not be limited to, the high level strategic plans such as the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park; Rebel Longford Trail; literary trails, including the Edgeworth Literary Trail and the Royal Canal Blueway.

6.0 Objective 6 - Implementation of the County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan.

See County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan.

COUNTY LONGFORD BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

The aim of the Longford Biodiversity Action Plan is to promote, protect and enhance the biodiversity of County Longford.

The County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was devised to identify key actions to effectively promote Longford's natural heritage and to protect and enhance biodiversity in the county. It is an objective of the County Longford Heritage Plan 2015 - 2020 to implement the LBAP.

The definition of biodiversity

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of living things on the Earth. Biodiversity is fundamental to our daily lives, providing us with all our food, much of our raw materials and many of our medicines. Ireland is a land of varied habitats: a patchwork of farmland, woodland, sand dunes, caves, heath, grassland, wetlands, turloughs, lakes and ponds, rivers and springs, contained within 7,800 kilometres of coastline. These habitats contain a host of species, some of which are unique to Ireland.

The importance of biodiversity

All the living organisms on this planet have evolved over millions of years and adapted to their own role in their natural environment. Plants and animals depend on each other for survival. We depend on biodiversity to provide us with all the necessities of life including food, shelter, medicine and services such as air and water purification.

When biodiversity is damaged or compromised, this can interfere with the delicate balance of nature which may have far-reaching consequences for ourselves and the living world around us. The conservation of biodiversity through the implementation of this Action Plan preserve our unique biodiversity and prevent further loss of this valuable natural heritage. In turn, this will benefit the wider community by conserving biodiversity to improve the quality of life and provide a key asset for traditional and eco-tourism.

The purpose of a Biodiversity Action Plan

The LBAP is designed as a framework for conserving biodiversity at a local level. It will contribute to achieving national and international targets for the conservation of biodiversity, while at the same time addressing local priorities.

Biodiversity Action Plan Goals

- To help conserve the habitat and species diversity of Longford, in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders throughout the County.
- To increase the knowledge and awareness of biodiversity in the county by supporting projects and initiatives and facilitating and gathering the distribution of biodiversity information.
- To promote participation in biodiversity issues throughout all sectors of the community.

6.1 LBAP OBJECTIVE 1 – To put in place resources to ensure implementation of the Longford County Biodiversity Action Plan.

- 6.1.1 Set up a Biodiversity Working Group to assist and inform the implementation of the LBAP.
- 6.1.2 Support the appointment of a County Biodiversity Officer to implement the LBAP, and to accurately advise the Local Authority and local stakeholders on biodiversity-related issues and legal obligations, subject to funding being made available.

6.2 LBAP OBJECTIVE 2 – To research and conserve local-, national- and internationally-important species and habitats in Longford

- 6.2.1 Undertake audits on available information on biodiversity and habitats in County Longford to identify information gaps.
- 6.2.2 Carry out habitat mapping and surveys on key sites within the county, including woodland, riparian and wetland areas, including turloughs.
- 6.2.3 Develop criterion for the identification of sites that support high levels of biodiversity and produce habitat mapping and surveying on those sites.
- 6.2.4 Develop objectives and policies to safeguard biodiversity within County Longford for local and regional planning documents.
- 6.2.5 Seek the improvement of riparian corridors by promoting appropriate management for improved habitat viability.
- 6.2.6 Support the protection of biodiversity on the Royal Canal and its management as a navigation and ecological amenity.
- 6.2.7 Support local and national organisations in raising awareness of the cultural and natural heritage of Longford’s wetlands.
- 6.2.8 Promote the conservation Longford’s bogs, and the rehabilitation of Longford’s industrial cutaway bogs as biodiversity corridors.
- 6.2.9 Follow on from National Grassland Survey (O’Neill *et al.* 2009) by developing practical means of protecting and conserving species-rich grassland habitats.
- 6.2.10 To identify ecological networks or ‘econets’ in Longford linking with core conservation areas within the county and in neighbouring counties.
- 6.2.11 Develop practical ways to conserve and protect undesignated woodland sites throughout the county.
- 6.2.12 Improve awareness and protection of heritage hedgerows in the county. Develop policies and training for their protection and management.
- 6.2.13 Improve awareness of significant bird species within the county, e.g. the kingfisher and swift, and promote the protection and enhancement of their habitats.
- 6.2.14 Improve awareness and protection of protected species such as bats, the marsh fritillary, and the white-clawed crayfish and their habitats.
- 6.2.15 Facilitate the development of conservation management plans for biodiversity areas in the towns and villages in County Longford.
- 6.2.16 Undertake invasive species surveys. Develop a management strategy on invasives for Longford. Promote the use of the *Invasives Ireland* app.
- 6.2.17 Implement the appropriate national and international legislation regarding discharge into

lakes /waterways.

- 6.2.18 Implement the appropriate by-laws to restrict the use of high-powered boats and jet-skis from water bodies that may disturb sensitive wildlife, in cooperation with neighbouring local authorities.
- 6.2.19 Support initiatives for climate change research and management.

6.3 LBAP Objective 3 – To improve integration of biodiversity issues into Local Authority policy & planning

- 6.3.1 Provide biodiversity training for local authority staff and Members.
- 6.3.2 Provide training to key Local Authority personnel and contractors on biodiversity issues such as hedgerow and invasive species management.

6.4 LBAP Objective 4 – To promote best practice in biodiversity management & protection

- 6.4.1 Produce and disseminate information regarding best practice for biodiversity management for land owners, community organisations and the public.
- 6.4.2 Raise awareness of priority species and habitats in the county through the production of publications and community-based initiatives.

6.5 LBAP Objective 5 – To facilitate the dissemination of biodiversity information

- 6.5.1 Provide online access to information on biodiversity and related projects, including the supporting information from the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 6.5.2 Produce a glossary of scientific, common and local names of habitats and species.
- 6.5.3 Manage the Library of Flora & Fauna Illustrations, enabling access to local groups for the promotion of Longford's natural heritage.

6.6 LBAP Objective 6 – To raise awareness and encourage participation in Longford's biodiversity

- 6.6.1 Increase engagement with biodiversity among schools, communities and the public.
- 6.6.2 Support local, regional and national initiatives to raise awareness of biodiversity.
- 6.6.3 Support initiatives to make biodiversity more accessible and improving the biodiversity value of amenity sites. This is to be in partnership with key stakeholders and community organisations.

6.7 LBAP Objective 7 – To monitor & review the Local Biodiversity Action Plan

- 6.7.1 Continually monitor the progress of implementing the County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan and its effectiveness

LONGFORD HERITAGE FORUM 2015

Organisation	Representative
Longford County Council	Cllr Páraic Brady
	Cllr Séamus Butler
	Cllr Pádraig Loughrey
Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (National Parks & Wildlife Service)	Ms Susan Moles
Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (National Monuments Service)	Mr Paddy O' Donovan
The Forest Service, Department of Agriculture & Food	Mr Jhan Crane
Teagasc	Mr Ciaran Beatty (temp)
Shannon Regional Fisheries Board	Mr Fergus Lynch
Waterways Ireland	Ms Jean Errity
Bord na Móna	Mr David Fallon
Public Participation Network	Mr Paddy Howe
County Longford Historical Society	Mr Hugh Farrell (Chair)
Leo Casey History Group	Mr Paddy Egan
County Longford Tourism Committee	Ms Anna Delaney
Longford Community Resources Ltd.	Mr Adrian Greene
Irish Farmers Association	Mr Andrew McHugh
Representative, ASTI/ TUI	Mr William O'Meara