



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH  
SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

# 2023

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# ANNUAL REPORT

**Sligo.**

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## OUR MISSION



**To maximise economic, social, cultural and community development, to harness Sligo's potential as smart city/community, deliver efficient and cost-effective services in a democratic, sustainable and transparent manner in partnership with local communities, voluntary and statutory agencies.**



# INTRODUCTION BY CATHAOIRLEACH & CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We are pleased to introduce Sligo County Council's Annual Report for 2023, which outlines the extensive scope of activities, services and supports provided by the Council in support of the communities that we serve.

2023 saw a continuation of the war in Ukraine and a worsening of the situation in the Middle East, added to an escalating climate crisis, which left the world facing challenges that ultimately impacted on our Country and delivery of services at a local level. However, ironically, the domestic economy continued to improve, with record levels of employment, booming Corporation Tax receipts and demographic growth.

July 2023 saw Uisce Éireann assume full accountability for the delivery of water and waste-water services, including the management and direction of staff in line with the Master Co-operation Agreement. The smooth transition of the service brought its own challenges to the Council.

Unexpected delays were experienced in delivering URDF projects relating to the public realm of Sligo Town and City Campus Project owing to the high level of governance regarding procurement and delivery of large capital projects by the Public Spending Code, however, it is proposed to advance these projects in 2024.

Sligo County Council received Government funding for specific projects such as Active Travel, Cranmore Regeneration Project, the Housing Delivery Action Plan and multiple tourism projects. The development of the former Stephen Street Car Park in Sligo as a festival and events venue continued, with Queen Maeve Square scheduled for completion in the second quarter of 2024.

2023 also welcomed the opening of the National Surf Centre in Strandhill, which was a joint enterprise between the Council, Failte Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development. This unique visitor experience is Ireland's first purpose-built surfing facility and will see Strandhill emerge as a world-class surfing destination.

We would like to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of the Elected Members and the Staff of Sligo County Council throughout 2023. We also wish to express our thanks and appreciation to all the voluntary and community organisations, which the Council interacts with on a daily basis for their on-going collaboration and support.



**CLLR GERARD MULLANEY**  
CATHAOIRLEACH



**MARTIN LYDON**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE





Ballygilcash Bridge



# MEMBERS OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

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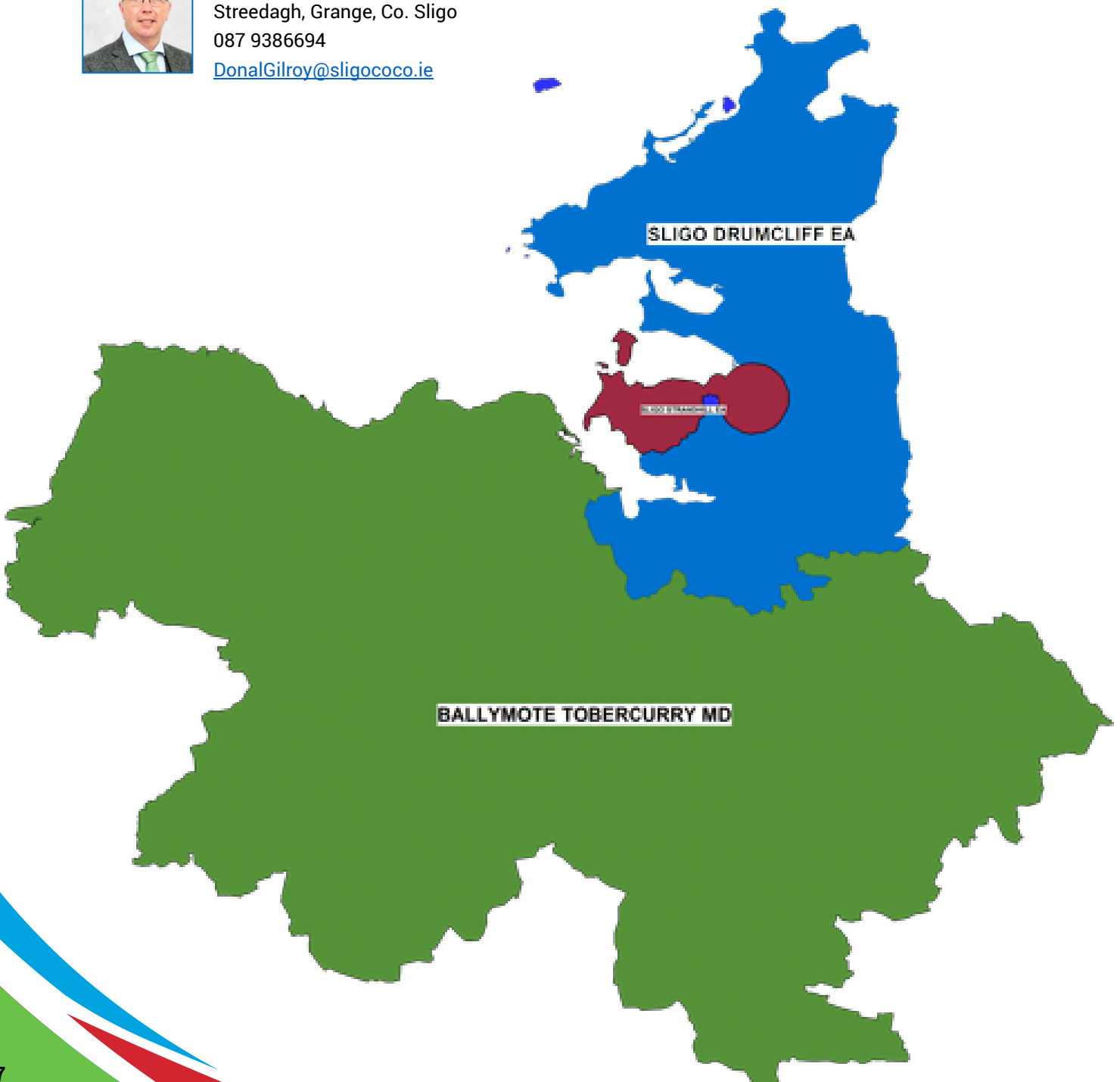
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# MANAGEMENT TEAM



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The old seaweed baths, Enniscrone

# STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES

There are 4 Strategic Policy Committees operating in Sligo County Council, details of which are as follows:

- SPC 1 – Housing & Corporate
- SPC2 – Environment & Infrastructure
- SPC 3 - Planning, Community & Economic Development, Arts & Culture
- SPC 4 – Climate Change

## SPC1 – Housing & Corporate

- Councillor Arthur Gibbons, Chairperson
- Councillor Martin Baker
- Councillor Declan Bree
- Councillor Tom Fox
- Councillor Gino O’Boyle
- Councillor Paul Taylor
- Alan McMenamin, PPN Community & Voluntary
- Pippa Black, PPN Social Inclusion
- Melinda Swann, PPN Environment
- Paschal Connolly, Trade Union Pillar
- Trevor McDaid, Business Pillar

## Meetings Held

- 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023
- 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023
- 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## Issues Considered

- Homelessness
- Housing First
- Work Programme List
- Housing Delivery 2022-2026
- Vacant Homes
- Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan
- Draft Home Heating Costs Paper
- Draft Sligo County Council Disability, Inclusion and Access Strategy 2024-2027
- Draft Right Sizing Paper
- Regulation of Lobbying
- Draft County Development Plan 2024-2030 Housing Strategy



## SPC2 – Environment & Infrastructure

- Councillor Thomas Walsh, Chairperson
- Councillor Michael Clarke
- Councillor Thomas Healy
- Councillor Dónal Gilroy
- Councillor Joe Queenan
- Councillor Rosaleen O’Grady
- Sharon Eastwood, PPN Community & Voluntary
- Joan Swift, PPN Environment
- Conor McCarthy, Business Pillar
- Michael O’Dowd, IFA

### Meetings Held

- 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023
- 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

### Issues Considered

- Transportation Grant Funding 2023
- Update on Major Infrastructure Projects
- Update on Active Travel Programme
- ‘Leave no Trace’ Campaign
- National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy
- Road Works Programme & House Fronts
- N17 Knock to Collooney Project
- Update on Major Infrastructure Projects
- Access to the Second Beach at Rosses Point
- Taking in Charge of Rural Roads
- Car Parking / Parking Places Bye Laws
- Review of Casual Trading Bye Laws

## SPC3 – Planning, Community & Economic Development, Arts & Culture

- Councillor Rosaleen O’Grady, Chairperson
- Councillor Marie Casserly
- Councillor Gerard Mullaney
- Councillor Arthur Gibbons
- Councillor Thomas Healy
- Councillor Thomas Walsh
- Councillor Tom Fox
- Councillor Tom MacSharry
- Aoife O’Toole, PPN Community & Voluntary
- Sheila Scanlon, PPN Social Inclusion
- Emer Knowles, PPN Environment
- Karen O’Hara, Trade Union Pillar
- Aidan Doyle, Business Pillar
- Des Morrison, IFA

### Meetings Held

- 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023
- 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

### Issues Considered

- Wayfinding Strategy
- Update of the E-Planning Project
- Town Centre Regeneration Programme
- Update on Local Enterprise Office Activities
- Draft County Sligo Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2023-2030
- Sligo Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027
- Review of the Contributions to the Arts Grant Scheme
- Age Friendly Libraries
- Cruinniú na nÓg 2023
- Tubbercurry Town Centre First Project
- Community Recognition Fund 2023
- Draft County Development Plan 2024- 2030
- Summer Stars Programme 2023



## SPC 4 – Climate Change

- Councillor Sinéad Maguire, Chairperson
- Councillor Dara Mulvey
- Councillor Martin Connolly
- Councillor Dónal Gilroy
- Councillor Paul Taylor
- Councillor Tom MacSharry
- Lisa Moore, PPN Community & Voluntary
- Yvonne Lang, PPN Environment
- Laura Gaffney, Business Pillar
- Bernard Finan, IFA

### Meetings Held

- 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023
- 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023
- 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

### Issues Considered

- Community Climate Action Plan
- Climate Action Fund
- Work Programme 2023
- Sligo Leitrim Energy Agency
- Local Authority Climate Action Plan
- Power to Change Project Update
- Funding Opportunities
- EV Charging Infrastructure
- Climate and energy related projects i.e. SCORE, FASTER





Spanish Armada wall mural, Grange



# OUR PRINCIPAL SERVICES

We have 4 service areas as follows:

1



## Planning and Community and Economic Development

- Community Development and Supports, Inclusion, and Wellbeing
- Economic development, Enterprise and Digital development, Tourism development and promotion, Town Centre and Rural Regeneration
- Land Use Planning, Development Management, Forward Planning, Enforcement and Vacant Homes Office, Heritage, Conservation and Biodiversity
- Cultural Development and Creativity, Library and Arts Services

2



## Housing, Corporate and Human Resources

- Social Housing Services
- Homeless and Traveller Services
- Capital Housing Delivery
- Corporate Services and Human Resources

3



## Infrastructure, Environment and Fire Services

- Transportation Infrastructure maintenance and improvement
- Water Services provision under SLA with Irish Water
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Environmental Protection
- Recreational areas maintenance and improvement
- Water Safety, beach and coastal management
- Veterinary Service
- Major Emergency Management
- Emergency fire and rescue and fire prevention
- Building Control

4



## Finance

- Financial Management and Income Collection
- Use of Information and Communication Technology
- Procurement Compliance and Planning
- Internal Audit independent assurance



Benbulbin Mountain



# PLANNING AND COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## ✓ Objective 1: Provide strategic Community development and Inclusion supports

- Work culminated on the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Sligo 2030 One Voice One Vision in 2023. The Plan was launched by Minister Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Community Development, Integration and Charities at City Hall, Sligo on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The vision is for a smart, sustainable and socially inclusive Sligo, one that cherishes its vibrant communities, protects and celebrates its unique environment and rich culture and is a champion of innovative growth and development. Sligo County Council was the first Local Authority in the country to adopt a new LECP. Further to the launch the implementation and monitoring of Actions commenced.



Minister Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Community Development, Integration and Charities at City Hall, Sligo on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Launching Sligo 2030 One Voice One Vision

- The Rural Development Programme 2014-2022 was concluded in 2023 having provided support to many rural businesses and communities through EU Funding of €7.6m for the Rural Development Programme and a further €2.2m funding for its Transitional Programme which was extended to the end of 2023. Funding for the new Rural Development Programme 2023-2027 was announced at the end of 2022 with the funding allocation for Sligo being set at €6.1 million. In 2023 Sligo Local Development Committee (LAG), Sligo Leader Partnership CLG as Implementing Partner and Sligo County Council as Financial Partner were approved to implement the programme for the coming 5 years. This major investment will continue to support a range of locally led rural development and enterprise projects over the next five years.
- The 2023 SICAP Budget was €689,501 with an additional allocation for Ukrainian supports of €167,473. In 2023, the SICAP Programme delivered a broad range of activities to promote social inclusion across the county to its diverse set of target groups. Activities included: Springtime garden design workshop in the grounds of Sligo Hospital, Sailing Summer Camp in Rosses Point for disadvantaged communities and St Nicholas day celebrations in Riverstown Folk Park with the Ukrainian Community. The Programme is implemented by SLPCo on behalf of Sligo LCDC with SCC as Financial Partner.

- The development and implementation of the Healthy Ireland Programme under Round 4 Funding advanced in 2023. This saw commencement of activities in local communities under two indicators: 1. Mental Health & Wellbeing and 2. Physical Activity. Successful programmes include Stronger for longer and Activation Poles.



Launch of Sligo Healthy Ireland Activator Poles Programme

- The Community Section oversaw the administration of various Community Grants Schemes to support Sligo communities such as the Community and Voluntary Grants Programme (€130,000) and the Community Support Fund (€280,000).
- Work progressed with Sligo LCDC, the Sligo PEACEPLUS Partnership and relevant stakeholders to co-design the Sligo PEACEPLUS Action Plan 2021-2027 for submission to the Special European Union Programmes Body for programme funding of €3.6m.
- The Sligo Age Friendly Alliance and Older Persons Council continued to meet in 2023 with various activities and projects including a walkability audit of Tubbercurry. The multi-agency Sligo Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2026 was completed and launched by Cathaoirleach Cllr Gerard Mullaney on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2023.



Launch of Sligo Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2026

- Sligo Comhairle na nÓg continued to progress its work Programme in 2023 and in particular to develop awareness of Mental Health for young people through a short animation for social media “Here for You”. This was funded by the DRCD through Dormant Account Funding for the LGBTI community. Facilitated by Foróige, the Comhairle worked with Studio Meala to develop the animation which was launched by Cathaoirleach Cllr Gerard Mullaney in November 2023. This project subsequently won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the LAMA Awards 2024 under the Mental Health Category, recognising its contribution to the community.
- Work commenced on the development of the Sligo County Council Disability, Inclusion and Access Strategy 2024-2027 under the auspices of the Disability Consultative Committee involving liaison with key stakeholders and in particular the Sligo Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO).
- Africa Day was overseen by the Community Section of Sligo County Council on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 and involved working collaboratively with partners such as the Model, the Aremoja Women’s Group and Diversity Sligo to showcase African Culture. The event was held in The Model and included African artefacts, educational presentations, melody drumming along with African cuisine which was provided by the Sligo Global Kitchen.



The Africa Day showcase was held in The Model on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023

- Sligo PPN engaged in an exciting new partnership with Sligo ATU delivering a county wide support programme for community groups to engage in positive climate action. The network also facilitated the establishment of 2 key local initiatives around equality and justice: Sligo Disabled Persons Organisation and Sligo Autism Friendly Programme. The PPN held its first participatory budgeting workshop which saw the creation of a programme plan for the 3 year strategic strategy.

## ✓ Objective 2: Provide strategic economic leadership

- The Sligo Economic Forum met on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at the National Surf Centre in Strandhill. The Forum, with members from both the public and private sectors, provides strategic leadership to ensure that all organisations work to improve employment and economic activity in Sligo in a collaborative and in the collective interest of the county. Items discussed included the Sligo Economic Dashboard, the development of the AIM Centre and the Destination Experience Development Plan.





The Official Opening of the National Surf centre in Strandhill, June 2023

- The Visit Sligo Tourism Marketing campaign continues its roll out with the publication of a Visit Sligo Brochure featuring spectacular high-resolution imagery; attendance at the Holiday World Show 2023 in the RDS, Dublin from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January, showcased all Sligo has to offer visitors and included exhibitions by 14 local businesses from Sligo; an iRadio Broadcast from Quayside on 27<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023; and the production and promotion of the Visit Sligo video featuring stunning imagery from around the county.



The "Visit Sligo" stand at the Holiday World Show, January 2023

- Sligo County Council provided grants to the organisers of Regional Festivals and Participative Events, which attracted a significant number of out of county and country visitors.
- Sligo County Council provided €25,000 to the Sligo St Patrick's Day Event for the implementation of a development plan, including a 3-day cultural programme, building partnerships and maintaining international connections.

- Sligo County Council is working to develop and deliver a Hubs marketing campaign to highlight flexible and remote working opportunities, world class facilities, inclusive communities, advanced infrastructure, and to promote the social, economic, and environmental benefits of remote working in County Sligo.
- The Sligo Business Network held a reception at the Embassy of Ireland in London on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to support and acknowledge the Sligo Diaspora living in London and to celebrate Yeats Day. Guests travelled from Sligo and assembled to hear the welcome from Ambassador Martin Fraser and the keynote address from Tommie Gorman, former RTE correspondent who talked of the evolution of Sligo during his lifetime so far.



**Martin Lydon, Chief Executive of Sligo County Council speaking to members of the Sligo Business Network at the Embassy of Ireland in London on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023, held to support and acknowledge the Sligo Diaspora living in London.**

- Sligo County Council continue to lead a cross-border cooperation project with partners in Leitrim County Council, Cavan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to develop an Economic Visioning Study to identify potential opportunities for business and job creation arising from the future Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway Project. The Report will identify potential opportunities for business and job creation opportunities, tourism, and economic potential of the proposed route corridor of the SLNCR greenway.
- Construction work was completed on the AIM Centre in the Market Yard in September 2023. The centre is fully operational with staff in situ and several innovative programmes are being progressed to implement technologies to advance manufacturing processes and supply chains in businesses. Construction was also completed on the 9000 ft<sup>2</sup> Strand Campus Digital Centre in Strandhill which will support start-up and expanding business in the Creative Technology industry.



Additional strategic collaborations with economic partners continued in 2023 through programmes such as Atlantic TIDE (Design Industry) initiative, the Littus US (market entry) programme and Creative Heartlands (creative industry) programme.

- Local Enterprise Office Sligo approved €631,658 in financial supports to local businesses in 2023. This included €479,586 of Business Start-up, Expansion and Feasibility Grants, €102,614 in productivity supports in the areas of Lean, Green, Digital and Exporting, and €49,458 to support companies develop their online business.
- Local Enterprise Office Sligo also delivered a wide range of enterprise training programmes and workshops with 1,215 participants taking part and a further 340 receiving mentoring supports in 2023.
- Sligo Local Enterprise Week 2023 was held between 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March and consisted of a range of training and events for small business in collaboration with local partners.
- The Student Enterprise Programme concluded in April with a total of 12 schools and 1074 Students participating during the academic year. LEO Sligo also supported businesses to attend and their products at the Showcase and the Ploughing Championships in 2023 and several international trade fairs throughout the year under its export development supports.

 **Objective 3: To realise the National Planning Framework’s growth ambitions for Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre in a manner which creates sustainable places and connected communities.**

### **Preparing and placing on public display the Draft County Development Plan 2024 – 2030**

- At their special meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023, the elected members of Sligo County Council considered the Draft CDP 2024-2030 and approved the publication of the Draft Plan. Public consultation was carried out from 13<sup>th</sup> October to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 with a total of 212 submissions received. The Chief Executive’s Report is expected to be issued to the elected members for their consideration by 22 March 2024.

### **Delivery of a high quality, customer focused, efficient and transparent planning system which is compliant with relevant European and National legislation and consistent with local, regional and national planning policies**

- A total of 488 planning applications were received in 2023 which represents a slight increase from 2022. The introduction of e-Planning and further digital transformation work in terms of internal processes and procedures allowed for the more efficient processing of these applications. One Large-Scale Residential Development (LSRD) application was processed in line with recently introduced national legislation, and several more LSRDs are progressing through the formal pre-planning application stage. Significant legislative changes are anticipated within 2024 which is likely to require further refinement of processes and procedures. When subject to appeal, 86% of planning decisions were confirmed by ABP.

## **Supporting the roll out of e-planning and delivering on the government strategy to move more public services online**

- E-Planning went live in Sligo in December 2022 and had a highly successful first year of implementation whereby 77% of applications received throughout 2023 were in digital format. The initiative has resulted in a considerable reduction in printing costs, paper consumption, postage costs and the physical need to visit the planning office. Not only is the initiative significantly reducing the carbon footprint of the Planning Section, but it is delivering on the government strategy of moving more public services online.

## **Support and co-ordinate the activity of the County Heritage Forum in the implementation of the County Sligo Heritage Plan**

- The Heritage Office continued to work with Sligo Heritage Forum to deliver the County Sligo Heritage Plan. The Forum meets quarterly and is a non-statutory advisory body established by Sligo County Council to advise on the preparation and implementation of the County Heritage Plan and associated actions. In 2023, the Forum advised on the preparation of the County Sligo Heritage Strategy 2023-2030 which was subsequently adopted by Sligo County Council on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The Heritage Council provides funding to support the operation of the Heritage Office and the delivery of heritage actions across the county. Heritage Council funded projects in 2023 included: Sligo Heritage Engagement Programme (Biodiversity Week, Heritage Week, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the evacuation of Inishmurray Island and, the ongoing delivery of the Sligo Community Archaeology Project).

## **Support and co-ordinate the activity of the County Heritage Forum in the implementation of the County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan**

- Sligo County Council appointed its first Biodiversity Officer in June 2023, through the Heritage Councils Biodiversity Officer Programme. The Heritage Council provides funding to support the Biodiversity Officer role and the delivery of biodiversity actions the county. A key focus of the role is engaging with and supporting local communities to take action for biodiversity. With funding secured through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, a management plan was prepared for the councils alluvial woodlands at Cleveragh and previous wetland survey work in the county was collated into an online storymap, see [Wetlands in County Sligo \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com). The preparation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for the county is now underway.

## **Work in partnership with DHLGH and key stakeholders to advance The PASSAGE Tomb Landscape of Sligo as a UNESCO World Heritage Site**

- Sligo County Council continued to engage with the World Heritage Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to progress an MOU and secure resources to support Sligo's World Heritage bid. Sligo County Council collaborated with the Sligo Neolithic Landscapes group in support of the 'Laying the Foundations' Conference in October 2023. The efforts of Sligo Neolithic Landscapes group in support of Sligo's world heritage ambition were recognised through the Cathaoirleach Awards in December 2023.



## **Support the conservation of Sligo's heritage through the delivery of national conservation grant schemes (BHIS/HSF/CMF)**

- The following conservation grant schemes are managed by the Heritage Office and are an important measure to support the custodianship of our historic built environment by owners and local communities.

### **Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2023 (BHIS)**

€107,006 allocated across 14 projects. 5 projects subsequently withdrew from the scheme. The total BHIS grant spent in Sligo for 2023 was €61,352.75 in support of the maintenance and repair of protected structures.

### **Historic Structures Fund 2023 (HSF)**

€95,000 allocated across 4 projects. Annaghmore House (€31,500), Ballysumaghan Church of Ireland (€16,000), Pollexfen House (€37,500) and Thatched Cottage, Coolaney (€10,000).

### **Community Monuments Fund 2023 (CMF)**

€285,127 allocated across 5 projects. Easky Abbey (€17,798), Moygara Castle (€113,829), St Feichin's Church, Ballysadare (€100,000 deferred to 2024), Enniscrone Castle (€23,500), Court Abbey, Lavagh - €30,000 (withdrawn).

## **Reduce the number of vacant homes within the County by implementing the actions set out in the Vacant Homes Action Plan and managing the processing of the Vacant Homes Refurbishment Scheme**

- In line with actions set out in the Vacant Homes Actions Plan, a Vacant Homes Officer was appointed, and the Vacant Homes Unit was established in Q2 2023.
- As required by the DHLGH, the vacant homes survey was completed in 2023. The data collected from the Vacancy Homes survey will be used as a baseline to enable Sligo County Council to commence a programme to tackle vacancy and dereliction throughout the County.
- Under the URDF Call 3, 20 derelict / vacant properties were approved for a programme of acquisitions with a focus on bringing them back in to use. The Compulsory Acquisition of 2 no properties under this programme commenced in 2023.
- A total of 234 no. applications under the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund Scheme (Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant) were received with 146 receiving approval by the end of 2023.

## **Use all available powers to reduce the number of Derelict Sites within the County**

- There are 31 no. properties on the Derelict Sites register. Sligo County Council issued a number of notices of valuations to property owners on this list and will commence the collection of the Derelict Sites levies due in 2024.
- Sligo County Council completed the compulsory acquisition of 7 no. properties under the Derelict Sites Act 1990 in 2023.

## **Put effective enforcement policies in place to ensure reduction in the incidence of unauthorised developments and monitor compliance with grants of planning permission**

- A new upgraded enforcement database was procured and implemented in 2023 which will enable the Enforcement section to deal with and progress complaints received more effectively. A total of 87 no. complaints were received and 58 no. enforcement files were closed in 2023.

## **Commence the taking in charge process following the receipt of an application from a developer or a request from residents to take in charge a housing estate**

- Sligo County Council resolved to take in charge 4 no. estates in 2023.

## **Objective 4: Support Cultural Development, Creativity and Education through the Library and Arts Services**

- Sligo Library visitor numbers continued to grow during 2023 with increase an 2022 across all areas: 32% increase in visitors to Sligo Libraries, 21% increase in items borrowed, 18% increase in WiFi sessions and 47% increase in numbers using Library PCs.
- My Little Library Book Bags and My Little Library Bedtime Story Books were promoted through the Right to Read programme and resulted in an increase in membership in the 4-5 years age category. The Right to Read national programme was delivered throughout the County.
- 1,756 children participated in Summer Stars 2023, a programme to encourage children to read for leisure during summer months. Participation rates equate to 2.5% of the population of County Sligo. 40 children's events were held during Summer Stars with 916 children attending.
- Supports in assistive technology was increased with the addition of C-Pen Readers to Sligo Libraries lending collection.
- Age Friendly Library status was awarded to all Sligo Library branches. A range of events including Digital Skills Classes, poetry and art workshops were held. Improved seating was introduced and reading glasses made available to use in all library branches.
- The Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme delivered a programme of events across all library branches, increased library seating, improved signage to showcase the HlaYL lending collection, and improvements to the outdoor event space at Sligo Central Library.
- Sligo Libraries in collaboration with Cáirde Sligo Arts Festival hosted events in Sligo Central Library and Ballymote Community Library.
- Science Festival events in collaboration with Science Festival, ATU Sligo, were held for schools in Sligo Central Library, Ballymote Community Library, and Tubbercurry Community Library.
- Citizen Science, a collaboration with The Heritage Council, saw the launch of kits in Sligo Central Library to make ecology equipment freely available to borrow and empower community groups interested in contributing to the preservation of biodiversity.
- My Open Library services in Tubbercurry Community Library were enhanced with the addition of a meeting room, teleconferencing facilities, public toilet, and full software upgrade. Re-launched in 2023, MOL continues to be a well-used resource for the community.



- The Word, monthly literary event held in collaboration with staff and students of the BA Writing and Literature, ATU Sligo, featured author readings and conversation, audience Q&A, music, and Open Mic. Two special editions were held: the launch of the Decade of Centenaries anthology *A Door Opening Sligo and the Legacies of Partition*, and a tribute to the late County Librarian and Historian John C. McTernan.
- Two applications were submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Libraries Capital Programme 2023 – 2027, for the relocation of Ballymote Community Library, and for the purchase of a Mobile Library vehicle.
- Cruinniú na nÓg was celebrated in libraries and locations throughout County Sligo with a full programme of events for children and young people. This National Day of Creativity gave access to art, badge-making, robotics, stained glass, nature craft, sock puppet, music composition and recording workshops, alongside shows and live music performance in collaboration with Music Generation Sligo.
- Sligo County Council's Decade of Centenaries 2012 – 2023 Programme, supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, culminated with the launch of the anthology *A Door Opening Sligo and the Legacies of Partition*, an anthology, co-edited by Susan McKay and Dr Keith Hopper, featuring thirty contributions across a variety of genres: poems, memoirs, essays, interviews, as well as excerpts from a novel, a libretto and a film script.

Notable Decade of Centenaries events throughout 2023 included the commemoration of the awarding of the Nobel Prize to W.B. Yeats, the commissioning of portraits of the first Republican County Council for Sligo County Council Chamber, and the launch of the Lest Sligo Forgets County Sligo Great War Memorial Garden.

- The Poetry as Commemoration Project, a two-year initiative led by UCD Library and supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries programme, delivered poetry workshops in Sligo Central Library. In partnership with Poetry Ireland, the workshops used material from Sligo Local Studies and Archive as creative prompts.
- The Arts Department continued in 2023 to support local artists through its Continuing Professional Development programme and other residencies such as the Pulled Print Studio Residency. Artist residency Dovecote Studio & Gallery (part of the Bealtaine Festival 2023) offered a chance for older artists to expand their practice by providing the artist with time and space to concentrate on work and develop new ideas.

The programme gave artists time to focus on their practice, find inspiration for new work, reflect and research while also affording an opportunity for artists to be in a natural environment in order to directly inspire work and to engage with and immerse themselves in a constantly changing landscape. Pulled Print Studio Residency included up to 30 Hours access to a studio and access to all studio equipment.

- Bealtaine 2023 festival was supported by the arts department through 15 festival events which included visual art exhibitions, screen printing workshop/demo, art chat/creative conversation sessions, spoken word, music session, online May Day visual image sharing and, day care centre workshops, community based mixed media and choir workshop. The festival paid 14 artists and partnered with Nursing Homes/ Day Care Centres/ Primary Care Markievicz, which were linked in through workshops and Bealtaine event session and exhibitions.

- Culture Night in 2023 was supported by the Arts Department and Music Generation Sligo. An Open Call event, funding and project support was offered to panel artists. This opportunity gave panel artists the chance to create an event, exhibition, performance or workshop in their local community that was part of the Culture Night Sligo Programming 2023. Projects/events that had a focus on young people were given a priority. One of the venues for Culture Night included the Gate Lodge Doorly Park where over 60 people attended an exhibition of text-based images which were based on the Garavogue area, the river and its stories.
- The Primary Colours Residency continued in 2023 with an artist in schools residency based over 8 weeks. The residency provided a selection of local artists to work with school groups throughout the County. Artists also worked on creating artwork for a two-person exhibition at the Hyde Bridge Gallery while the residency also provided gallery tours and workshops at the Hyde Bridge Gallery based on residency artists work on exhibition. Artists involved in 2023 included Celeen Mahe and Sarah Eilen Lundy (residency, exhibition artists), assist artist Viv Byrne, documentation artist Zenda Williams. The project was aimed at students from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class and in all, 311 school children from 12 class groups took part in the residency programme.
- Throughout 2023 the Archives section continued the ongoing work to remove records which had been stored in Sligo Gaol for processing. After the records had been processed, they were transported to a new storage facility where they were sorted and indexed.
- Sligo Chamber Music Festival review was carried out on behalf of Sligo County Council and the Arts Council in 2023 with an aim of seeking recommendations on how to increase audience numbers, broaden the scope of the festival in terms of participants and to revitalise the festival itself.
- The Arts Department undertook a review of the Contributions to the Arts Grant Scheme in 2023. The review highlighted the need for changes to the scheme and made recommendations on the restructuring of the scheme and the establishment of new criteria for assessment. The reviews recommendations were agreed by SPC 3 in June 2023.

Libraries Museum and Arts	2023
Issues on Spydus Library Management System	137,755
Digital issues	85,301
Registered borrowers	11,846
MOL Users	426
Summer Stars participants	1,765
Number of PC Users	6,191
Number of Wi-Fi Sessions	4,021
Number of Library Visitors	134,603
Number of Arts Grants paid	33
Value of Arts Grants paid	€292,000
Creative Ireland Open Call Grants Paid Value of Open	23
Call Grants paid	€96,000





Creevykeel megalithic tomb



# HOUSING, CORPORATE SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

## ✔ Objective 1: Process applications for Social Housing Support in a timely manner.

### Process applications, assessments and allocations for Social Housing Support

- 1,607 households are on the housing list as at 31/12/2023. 313 valid applications for social housing support were received during the year.
- Offers of tenancies of properties from the Council, in accordance with the Councils Allocations Scheme, are outlined in the Table hereunder.

Offers of Tenancy	Accepted	Refused	Pending
177	141	36	0

### Manage Tenant Incremental Purchase Scheme, Housing Loans Scheme and private housing grants

- Five no. Local Authority Home loans approved.
- Sales completed on 7 properties under the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme.
- Paid 253 housing adaptation grants totalling over €2.1 million to make existing private homes more suitable to live in for older people and for people with a physical, sensory or intellectual disability or mental health difficulty.
- Supported a total of 767 active Housing Assistance Payment tenancies (including enhanced HAP) in the County, together with 251 homes through the Rented Accommodation Scheme.

## ✔ Objective 2: Work Collaboratively with other agencies, voluntary housing bodies and community organisations.

### Implement the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP)

- The Table overleaf shows the Target and the number achieved under Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) July 2019- June 2024.



Accommodation Type	Target July 2019 to June 2024	Achieved July 2019 to December 2023
Group Housing/ Halting site	12	8
Specific Purchase	5	1
Upgrade of existing facilities	9	11
Council Tenancy	21	18
RAS/HAP	17	7
Voluntary Housing	2	13
Total	66	58

- Approved 3 loans for Traveller households under the Caravan Loans Scheme in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

#### **Deliver and manage the delivery of Homeless Services.**

- Agreed the North-West regional Homelessness Action Plan 2023 - 2028 and supported five new Housing First tenancies for long-term homeless people.

#### **Work with local agencies to provide housing supports to marginalised people in our community and to promote migrant integration in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Justice and Equality**

- The Sligo Ukrainian Community Response Forum, established in 2022 to bring together local service providers and local agencies, continued to meet regularly throughout 2023 to fulfil its main role of supporting the Sligo response to the Ukraine crisis. The Forum co-ordinated the provision of local supports required by refugees, including liaising with local service providers, identifying service gaps and developing solutions and encouraging collaboration among service providers.
- The Council worked in conjunction with implementing partners including the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), the Irish Red Cross (IRC) and the International Organisation for Migration [IOM] in activating pledges of accommodation made by members of the public via the Irish Red Cross national register of pledges.
- The Council participated in the “Offer a Home” Local Authority led call for pledges of vacant homes to accommodate Ukrainian refugees during 2023. By the end of 2023, a total of 87 vacant homes were pledged in County Sligo, 31 of which were viable. The Council assessed these properties and facilitated engagement between the property owners and Ukrainian families to secure temporary accommodation.

- The Council, in conjunction with the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), commenced the process of establishing a permanent Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT), which will provide support both to beneficiaries of temporary protection and International Protection applicants. The overall objective of this integration programme is to enable applicants to live independently in the community. The LAIT will have its own staffing structure (4 No), recruitment to these posts commenced in 2023, with the unit to be up and running in early 2024.

### ✔ Objective 3: Manage and maintain housing stock.

#### **Deliver estate management services, tenancy support and tenancy enforcement**

- Provided ongoing management and maintenance of the Council's social housing stock of 2,383 homes across the County.
- Refurbished 35 units under the Government Voids Funding Programme with the aid of funding of Department of €589,182. This Programme supports the refurbishment of void/vacant Council properties.
- Allocated €792,087 of Council resources towards the refurbishment of vacant properties to bring the houses to a suitable standard for re-letting.
- Retrofitted 36 social houses under the Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme with the aid of a Grant allocation from the Department of €1,154,059.
- Carried out adaptation works to 50 Council houses (to include funding towards two extensions) under the Housing Adaptation Works/Extensions/DPG'S Programme, with the aid of an allocation of €493,910.80 from the Department, with 10% (€49,391.08) of the allocation funded from the Council's own resources.

#### **Implement Regulations for provision of Standards in Private Rented Accommodation in both Local Authority and Private Rented accommodation**

- Undertook 1,016 inspections (894 houses) inspections of standards in private rented dwellings.
- Issued 429 Improvement Notices to landlords.

### ✔ Objective 4: Harness all opportunities to deliver additional accommodation in County Sligo.

#### **Manage and deliver accommodation using the various schemes available to qualifying applicants. Pursue every opportunity to deliver new housing opportunities**

- Provided accommodation for 23 households with medical needs under our Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with a Disability 2021 – 2025.
- Acquired nine units. This includes three houses acquired for tenants in situ.



## Pursuing every opportunity to deliver new housing opportunities:

### Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-26

#### 2023 Delivery:

Sligo County Council delivered 104 new housing units (94% of 2023 target of 111)

#### Municipal District delivery:

- 84 no. in Sligo Strandhill MD,
- 20 no. in Ballymote Tubbercurry MD

#### Forms of Delivery:

##### Turnkey:

- 73 no. units across 3 no estates: Sligo Town (66) Tubbercurry (5) Coolaney (2)
- Part V Delivery: 14 no units across 3 estates, Sligo Town (13) and Coolaney (1)
- SCC new build: 4 no units, Green Road, Coolaney
  
- Sligo County Council working in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies: 13 no units
- Newgrove H.A. delivered 5 no. units under C.A.S. Killeshin, First Sea Road
- Co-Op Ireland H.A delivered 8 no. units under C.A.L.F , Fairways, Tubbercurry

## ✔ Objective 5: To ensure the delivery of Services in accordance with Corporate Governance norms.

### To administer Local Authority Council and Committee meetings in accordance with legal/statutory requirements

- During 2023, meetings of the Council and Committee meetings were called and conducted in accordance with all relevant statutory requirements as enshrined in Standing Orders.
- Relevant advice on statutory requirements and corporate governance were provided to the Cathaoirleach and Municipal District Chairs and Committee chairs on an ongoing basis throughout the year.
- Statutory compliance and corporate governance compliance was monitored by the Corporate Services section throughout the year.
- Meetings of the Corporate Policy Group and Procedures Committee took place on the following dates, at which advice on issues concerning statutory obligations and proper procedures and Corporate Governance were addressed:

<b>Corporate Policy Group Meetings</b>	13 January 2024
	27 February 2024
	26 April 2024
	3 July 2024
	4 September 2024
	2 October 2024
	9 October 2024
	6 November 2024

<b>Procedures Committee Meetings</b>	19 September 2024
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**The following statutory meetings were held in 2023:**

<b>Meeting Type</b>	<b>Number of Meetings held in 2023</b>
Plenary Meetings of Sligo County Council	13
Annual General Meeting	1
Budget Meeting	1
Sligo Borough Municipal District	8
Sligo/Drumcliffe Municipal District	9
Ballymote/Tubbercurry Municipal District	8
SPC 1: Housing and Corporate	4
SPC 2: Environment and Infrastructure	4
SPC 3: Planning, Community & Economic Development, Arts & Culture	4
SPC 4: Climate Change	4
Corporate Policy Group	8
Joint Policing Committee	3
Local Community Development Committee	7
Local Action Group	7
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	4

- Over the course of the year, other non-statutory Committee meetings were also scheduled, as required, and attended by relevant members of the elected Council.
- Plenary Meetings, including the AGM and the Budget Meeting, which were held during 2023, were live streamed via the Council's website and the recordings are available to review at [www.sligococo.ie](http://www.sligococo.ie) These meetings were hybrid to allow councillors to attend either online or in person.



## To support the Council and its committees in playing an active role in developing and implementing policy

- Updates on policy matters, and draft policies, were presented to Strategic Policy Committees throughout the year for their consideration and for recommendation to the Council.

## International Contacts

- While Sligo has signed three formal Twinning Agreements – with Crozon, Kempton and Tallahassee – it has developed a range of international contacts and regularly welcomes Ambassadors, dignitaries and other guests to County Hall and City Hall.
- In 2023, Sligo County Council hosted students from Kempton for work experience under an Erasmus programme and welcomed a visiting group of students from Kempton to County Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- Also in 2023, Sligo County Council was honoured to receive a visit from the following foreign diplomats:



12 July 2023 – His Excellency, Ambassador Adriaan Palm, The Netherlands' Ambassador to Ireland



4 August 2023 – His Excellency, Ambassador He Xiangdong, China's Ambassador to Ireland



16 November 2023 – His Excellency, Mr Yong-Kil Kim, Republic of Korea's Ambassador to Ireland

## Civic Receptions

- Sligo County Council was delighted to honour the following with a Civic Reception during 2023:



Noel Coen, Special Olympics World Games Medallist – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023



Sligo Rovers Team that won the League Cup in 1998 – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023

### **Establishment of Clear Policies and Procedures:**

- Develop comprehensive policies and procedures outlining the governance framework for the HR Section. These policies and procedures should cover recruitment, employment relations, performance management, training and development and other relevant areas.

### **Compliance with Legal and Regulatory requirements:**

- Ensure that all HR practices adhere to relevant laws and regulations and guidelines from the LGMA.

### **Transparency and Accountability:**

- Promote transparency in decision making processes and ensure accountability at all levels within the HR Section. This includes clear communication of roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations.

### **Risk Management:**

- Identify and assess potential risks related to HR activities, such as legal liabilities, conflict of interests and data protection issues. Implement measures to mitigate these risks and regularly monitor compliance.

### **Ethical standards:**

- Uphold high ethical standards in all HR practices, including fair treatment of employees, confidentiality of sensitive information and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

### **Training and Development:**

- Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for HR staff to enhance their understanding of corporate governance principles. This will enable them to effectively implement and monitor compliance with the HR Section.

### **Internal Controls:**

- Ensure accuracy and reliability of HR data and reports.

### **Stakeholders Engagement:**

- Foster positive relationships with internal and external stakeholders including employees, management, unions, regulatory bodies and the wider community.

### **Continuous Improvement:**

- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of HR governance practices and make necessary adjustments to address emerging issues and improve performance.

By implementing these measures, Sligo County Council can ensure that its HR Section operates in accordance with corporate governance norms. Thereby enhancing accountability, transparency and effectiveness in service delivery.





Mullaghmore Beach



# INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND FIRE SERVICES

- ✓ **Objective 1: Provide appropriate and safe multimodal transport connectivity to and throughout Sligo**

## Finalise the Local Transport Plan for Sligo.

- Sligo County Council completed the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) in 2023. The plan was issued for public consultation as part of the review of the County Development Plan 2024 to 2030, from 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023. The Final Plan is expected to be adopted in Q2 of 2024.

## Develop and deliver Active Travel Infrastructure throughout Sligo.

- Sligo County Council's Active Travel (AT) Section for Non-National roads team has a multitude of projects at numerous different stages of development, each of which progressed in 2023. The following table outlines the stage of each Project at the end of 2023.

Project Name	Project Stage
Cycle Parking	Construction
Enniscrone & Tubbercurry Footpaths	Procurement
Low-Cost Junction Tightening	Design
Sligo Town Local Transport Plan	Closeout
Collooney to Ballisodare Active Travel Projects	Construction
Clarion Road - Active Travel Facilities	Statutory Process
Western Distributor Road Active Travel linkages to Sligo City	Preliminary Design
Strandhill R292 & R277 Cycle Scheme	Preliminary Design
Rosses Point Village Road Footpath Scheme	Preliminary Design
Collooney village Active Travel Scheme	Construction
Grange Village Active Travel Scheme	Feasibility/Options Assessment
Cleveragh Active Travel Scheme	Phase 1: Construction Phase 2: Detailed Design
First Sea Road Active Travel Scheme	Preliminary Design
Caltragh Newtown Holmes Active Travel Scheme	Preliminary Design
Ballygawley Village to Castledargan Footpath	Statutory Process – Public Consultation
Coolaney to Rockfield village Active Travel Scheme	Statutory Process – Public Consultation
Carraroe to GAA Pitch Active Travel Scheme	Statutory Process – Public Consultation
SRTS R1 St Johns National School	Preliminary Design

SRTS R1 Scoil Asicus, Strandhill School	Preliminary Design – Public Consultation
SRTS R1 Jesus and Mary Secondary School Enniscrone	Preliminary Design
SRTS R1 Scoil Ursula Sligo	Preliminary Design
Wine Street Active Travel Scheme	Closeout
Sligo City to Carraroe Active Travel Corridor - Pathfinder Scheme	Preliminary Design
Sligo City to ATU Active Travel Corridor - Pathfinder Scheme	Preliminary Design
Permeability projects	Preliminary Design
Shared e-bike enabling works - Pathfinder Scheme	Construction
Shared e-bike enabling works - Pathfinder Scheme	Construction

- The Sligo Regional Design Office team has worked collaboratively with the TII to progress early planning phases for Active Travel Schemes which will result in a continuous facility from Collooney to Castlebaldwin. This forms part of the Sligo Active Travel route included in the National Cycle Network Plan published in 2023.

### **Advance the development of the Sligo Greenway**

- In 2023, the Sligo Regional Design Office completed Phase 1 (Concept and Feasibility) for the Sligo Greenway from Collooney to Bellaghy and secured approval from the TII to advance the Project to Phase 2 (Options Selection). This proposed Greenway will assist the objective in the National Cycle Network Plan to provide an Active Travel route between Sligo and Ballina.

### **Progress the development of the Eastern Garvogue Bridge and Burton Street Link**

- 2023 saw the procurement and engagement of consultants to complete the Detailed Design and prepare Contract Documents for Scheme Construction. Construction is planned to commence in 2025.

### **Deliver the Annual Non-National Roads Maintenance and Restoration Programme**

- The Annual Road Works programme was successfully delivered in 2023. The expenditure on Restoration Improvement was €9.23m, which completed 61.9km of improvement (strengthening) works along the Non-National road network. A further €2.16m was spent on Restoration Maintenance, which enabled the completion of 100.5km length of Surface Dressing throughout the County.

### **Support the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project.**

- Sligo County Council is participating in the Northwest Region of the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP), together with Cavan, Donegal, Roscommon, Galway, Leitrim, and Mayo County Councils. This project involves replacing all remaining non-energy efficient public lights on the non-national road network with energy efficient LED lights. The contract is being managed by the Lead Authority, Mayo County Council, but the procurement process was paused in 2023 due to a challenge to the Tender Process.

### **Progress the development of the N17 (AEC) Knock to Collooney Project.**

- In 2023, the Project Team completed an appraisal process of the short list of options to determine the preferred corridor for the N17 (AEC) Knock to Collooney Project, which is listed in the National Development Plan (2021–2030). The emerging preferred corridor went through a public consultation in 2023. The Phase 2 deliverables for Options Selection were finalised and submitted in draft to the TII for review.

### **Progress to construction the N16 Lugatober Scheme.**

- The construction of the N16 Lugatober Scheme which consists of the realignment of approximately 2.54km of the existing N16 National Primary Road to Type 2 single carriageway standard commenced in early 2023 and continued throughout the year. This scheme also incorporates 2.9km of Active travel infrastructure.

### **Implement maintenance programme on roads and bridges.**

- The Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of 2,903 km of public road, including the maintenance and repair of 479 No. bridges. The annual road works programme sets out specific requirements for the maintenance and upkeep of the roads network. This includes interventions such as restoration improvements, restoration maintenance, drainage works, verge strengthening, provision of public lighting and safety improvement works. The inventory of bridges is maintained under the bridge rehabilitation umbrella. Sligo County Council carried out remedial works on 10 No. bridges in 2023 at a total cost of €484,578.91.

### **Plan and provide Winter Maintenance Service.**

- Sligo County Council prepared the Winter Maintenance Plan for the 2023/2024 season, in Autumn 2023. The Council's objective is to provide an effective and efficient winter service within the resources available, to minimise the negative impacts of frost, ice or snow on the travelling public. Sligo County Council ordinarily treats 468km of road, which equates to 100% of the National Primary network, 100% of the National Secondary network, 100% of Regional roads and approximately 62 km of the local/urban road network. Approximately 16.5% of the roads network is salted during periods of frost, ice or snow. During 2023, a total of 45 No. salting runs took place over the winter periods.

### **Maximise funding opportunities for schemes including L.I.S, C.I.S and Clár.**

- The demand for Schemes throughout the county continued to significantly outweigh the funding received, particularly for CIS Schemes. The Table below outlines the number of projects completed under each Scheme in 2023, based on the funding received, and the number of projects that remained unfunded at the end of the year.

Category	CLAR	LIS	CIS
Expenditure	€458,630.50	€975,385.63	€433,552.61
No. of Schemes completed	12	23	12
No. of Schemes remaining unfunded	N/A	26 (value €1.4m)	111 (value €5.1m)



## **Prepare and implement Road Safety Action Plan for Sligo.**

- A Plan was put in place towards the end of 2023 to advance the provision of the Road Safety Action Plan for Sligo in 2024.

## **Objective 2: Develop a Culture of Climate Action and sustainability both within Sligo County Council and in the wider community of Sligo**

### **Prepare and publish the Sligo County Council Climate Action Plan.**

- Significant work was carried out on the preparation of the Draft Sligo County Council Climate Action Plan throughout 2023, which included input from all Sections of the Council. There was a period of Public Engagement prior to drafting the Plan, and a Public Consultation of the draft Plan in November and December 2023 invited views from the public to help inform the final stages of the Climate Action Plan. The Plan outlines how Sligo County Council will implement, co-ordinate, and influence a wide range of Climate Actions, which will assist the Council in reaching our 2030 targets of a 50% improvement in energy efficiency and a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Progress the reduction in carbon emissions across Sligo County Council operations.**

- The SEAI's Gap to Target tool was used to determine the pathway required to meet our 2030 emission reduction targets. This focuses on our Significant Energy Users, which are buildings, fleet and public lighting. The Council signed up to the SEAI Pathway Programme, which is a 50:50 funding partnership for significant retrofitting projects in our largest energy using buildings. The Council are participating in the OPW's 'Optimising Power @ Work' Scheme and delivered energy savings in County Hall in 2023 of 35% versus the benchmark year of 2017. Sligo County Council Energy Policy was adopted which outlines the council's commitment to achieving our emission reduction targets.

### **Progress Energy Efficiencies in Sligo County Council operations.**

- The Council committed to working towards achieving ISO 50001 Energy Management Standard Certification in 2024 and commenced the process in 2023. This included the participation in SEAI's Accelerator training program which is designed to provide the required understanding to implement this Energy Management Standard across the organisation. This will assist all the Significant Energy User 'owners' within the Organisation, to manage energy more efficiently, and therefore reduce the associated emissions. The Council participated in the 'Reduce Your Use' campaign, aimed at improving all staff's awareness of simple actions and behavioural changes to improve energy efficiency at work and at home.

### **Support communities to become low carbon communities via initiatives including Sustainable Energy Communities and Community Climate Action Programme**

- Two Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) were provided with bridge financing during 2023 - Strandhill and South Sligo Energy Partnership. The Sligo SEC continued to advance studies on the potential of specific energy efficiency projects for Sligo including the preparation of a Business Case for the development of a biogas plant and the advancement of a Feasibility Study for the provision of a community owned solar farm.

Applications opened in December 2023 for the Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP). In advance of this, there was a significant amount of engagement with community groups to generate awareness about the CCAP and to provide relevant information to potential applicants.

### **Support Sligo Leitrim Energy Agency and the Regional Energy Bureau**

- One of the key projects the SLEA engages in, is home retrofitting, and the Agency were successful in 2023 in being included on the SEAI Energy Poverty Programme (Warmer Homes) Framework. As well as the Local Authorities, the SLEA receives funding from an EU Life Programme.

The Regional Energy Bureau is funded on a 50:50 basis between the Local Authorities and SEAI, and continued to assist Sligo County Council with internal energy management issues, including the SEAI Pathfinder Program and ISO 50001 Energy Management System.

### **Embrace 'circularity' as outlined in the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy**

- Actions relating to the Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy were considered and were included in the Draft Sligo County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.



## **Objective 3: Protect and Improve the quality of Sligo's environment**

### **Protect and improve water quality.**

- A total of 264 No. river samples and 244 No. lake samples were taken in 2023. The EPA analyse the WFD samples and produce water quality reports every three years. The 2023 results will feed into the EPA report for the years 2022-2024, which will report on the status of surface and ground water over that period.

### **Progress Catchment Management Measures in line with River Basin Management Plan priorities and RMCEI requirements.**

- The EPA's National Enforcement Priorities (NEP) 2022-2024, were reflected in the annual Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) Plan prepared and implemented by Sligo County Council in 2023. The EPA's assessment of Local Authority performance is based on the information and data contained in the RMCEI Plans, Data Returns and NEP Progress Reports which are submitted on an annual basis to the EPA.

In the EPA's report on performance in 2022, which was published in 2023, Sligo County Council had strong to excellent ratings in the following NEPs and will continue to strive to reach these ratings for all the NEPs going forward:

- Tackling significant illegal waste activity and Multi Agency Sites of Interest
  - Domestic Wastewater Treat Systems / Septic Tanks
  - Discharge Licences / Misconnections
  - Local Priorities & Water Quality Monitoring
  - Solid Fuel Regulations
  - Air & Noise Controls (Including Planning)
  - Ongoing Air & Noise Enforcement Work
  - Environmental Resource Planning
  - Complaints Handling
- Sligo County Council continued to liaise with the Environmental Protection Agency, LAWPRO, and other state agencies in relation to implementing the current River Basin District Management Plan and preparation of the new National Plan. The following areas were targeted in 2023:

**Discharge Licences:**

- 18 No. Section 4 licences were monitored, inspected and enforced.

**Planning Application Assessment:**

- 487 No. planning inspections and assessments were carried out focusing on environmental impacts of commercial, domestic and agricultural developments.

**Agricultural Inspections:**

- 62 No. agricultural inspections were carried out.

**Source Inspections:**

- 26 No. Source inspections were carried out within the drinking water source catchments of Lough Talt, Lough Easkey and North Sligo Public Water Supply Scheme, with a view to identifying issues of concern and protection of the raw water sources.

**Investigative Monitoring:**

- Monitoring was carried out within the Douglas River Catchment. Results indicate the sites had good water quality with no issues identified.

**Water Pollution Complaints:**

- Sligo County Council responded to a wide variety of environmental complaints and incidents during the year, all complaints received were addressed and dealt with in a timely fashion.

**Deliver Annual Statutory Monitoring Programme**

**Drinking Water**

- 5 No. Public Water Supplies (PWS), 17 No. regulated Group Water Schemes (GWS) and 7 No. Small Private Supplies (SPS) were monitored in accordance with Statutory Requirements in 2023.

**Public Water Supplies**

- Sligo County Council liaised with Uisce Éireann in relation to the PWS and on their behalf:



- Managed the PWS monitoring program
- Managed the appointed contract laboratory
- Managed and reported Drinking Water results
- Liaised with UÉ in relation to drinking water non-compliances and incidents

#### **Private Water Supplies**

- Sligo County Council continued to act as the Supervisory Authority in relation to the provision of drinking water by GWS and SPS and managed the monitoring of all such supplies. This included liaising with the water suppliers and the HSE when non-compliance was detected.

#### **Protect and improve air quality through enforcement of Solid Fuel Regulations**

- An inspection of every retail premises selling solid fuels in the county was carried out during 2023. 83 No. premises were inspected, and a high level of compliance was observed. A register of the different types of solid fuels stocked in each premises was prepared based on the findings of these inspections. 21 No. fuel samples were sent to a laboratory for testing in relation to compliance with the regulations.

#### **Facilitate and promote Recycling Facilities and activities – Civic Amenity Sites, Green Waste Composting Facility, Bring Banks and kerbside collections**

- There are 45 No. bring bank facilities situated throughout the county. These were monitored and maintained on a weekly basis in 2023. These facilities are used extensively by the public with a total of 1,576 tonnes of recyclables collected during 2023.
- Tubbercurry Civic Amenity Site and Ballisodare Composting Facility processed 626 tonnes of and 697 tonnes of materials respectively in 2023. The contracts for the running of both facilities expired in 2023 and were tendered during the year.

#### **Promote and enforce sustainable waste management practices in line with WERLA priorities and RMCEI requirements**

- Sligo County Council continued to liaise with the EPA and WERLA to enforce the National Enforcement Priorities as contained in Sligo County Council's RMCEI Plan for 2023. The following specific Waste Enforcement activities took place in 2023:

##### **Tackling illegal waste activities and Multi-Agency Sites/Operators of Concern:**

- 4 No. multi-agency inspections were carried out.

##### **Construction and Demolition Waste:**

- 29 No. Construction & Demolition inspections were carried out.

##### **End of Life Vehicles and Metals:**

- 11 No. End of Life Vehicle and Metal inspections were carried out.

##### **Household and Commercial Waste:**

- 36 No. Household and Commercial Waste inspections were carried out.

### **Producer Responsibility Initiatives:**

- 13 No. Producer Responsibility Initiative and additional local priority inspections were carried out.

### **Monitor and enforce illegal waste and litter activities**

- Our Waste Enforcement and Litter Warden staff continued to have a county wide presence monitoring our streets, beaches and amenity areas to ensure that Sligo continues to be an attractive place to live. They actively enforced waste and litter legislation as required. 44 No. fines were issued under the Litter pollution Act in 2023 and 3 No. prosecutions under the Litter Pollution Act were initiated in 2023.

### **Implement litter prevention measures**

- Additional signage was erected in 2023 to address littering and dog fouling at problematic locations and these sites were specifically monitored.
- The Council participated in the annual Anti-Dumping Initiative in 2023. A total of 28.68 tonnes of waste was collected during the bulky goods and hazardous waste collection days. The Council also managed the Anti-Litter Anti-Graffiti project with €12,098 being awarded to 8 No. different community projects.
- The Irish Business Against Litter final survey of 2023 saw Sligo jump from 17th to 3rd place in the ranking of 40 No. towns and cities nationwide.

### **Monitor and enforce licence and permit compliance for waste, water and air activities**

- The Environment Section continued to monitor and enforce the 18 No. Section 4 Discharge licenses, the 6 No. Certificate of Registrations and 1 No. Air Pollution Licence in the county in 2023.

### **Progress the landfill remediation at Finisklin including the development of a public amenity area**

- Following a procurement process, Priority Construction Limited were awarded the Tender for this construction project in December 2023. The contract duration is approximately six months and involves the construction of 6 Bio windows and a 100m long bio trench, along with the provision a 1km walking track, viewing area and some landscaping. This will be an additional valued outdoor amenity for Sligo.

### **Progress the provision of solutions to capacity issues at cemeteries.**

- A review of available grave spaces at Sligo Cemetery was undertaken in 2023 and it was determined that an extension to Sligo Cemetery would be required by the end of 2024 or early 2025.

### **Deliver Awareness Campaigns across all areas of environmental protection.**

- The Council coordinated the National Spring Clean for 2023 with 53 No. groups registering their collections. The Council also assisted with the Gum Litter Roadshow in O'Connell Street in August 2023.

## ✓ Objective 4: Protect and enhance Sligo's recreational and coastal amenity areas

### Maintain and manage public parks, pitches, open spaces and playgrounds

- To ensure the provision of quality playing surfaces, eight pitches were sanded and vertidraind in 2023. Annual playground inspections were completed for 15 No. playgrounds and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's) across Sligo. Improvement works to playgrounds included the provision of additional inclusive play equipment at Doorly Park playground.

### Progress improvements to Cleveragh Regional Park, Mitchel Curley Park and the Fairgreen Park

- An additional looped pathway was completed in September at Cleveragh Regional Park. Upgrading and resurfacing of sections of existing footpaths was also completed.

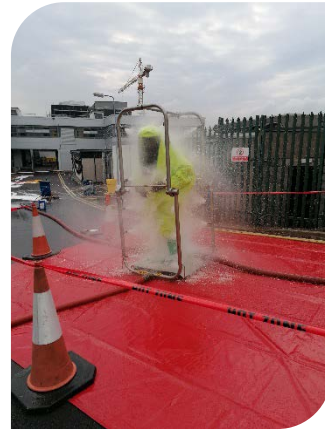
## ✓ Objective 5: Protect life and property

### Operate Emergency Fire and Rescue Services

- Sligo Fire Service delivers operational emergency fire and rescue services across 4 Fire Brigade Units located in Sligo, Ballymote, Tubbercurry, and Enniscrone.
- 2023 proved to be a challenging year for the Fire Services across the Country as members of the Retained Fire Service engaged in industrial action from 6<sup>th</sup> June until the 5<sup>th</sup> September, when SIPTU members voted to accept a new set of proposals prepared by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). The agreement included guaranteed minimum earnings, and also mandated that there be a minimum crew of 12 No. in every fire station. A recruitment campaign commenced to facilitate the increased crewing levels.
- In terms of the Special Services attended the biggest portion of these (104) were for attendance at Road Traffic Collisions.
- False Alarms saw an increase of over 20% in 2023. This is a matter of ongoing concern for Fire Service Management and steps are being introduced to counteract this as False Alarms tie up considerable fire brigade resources.
- The number of fire brigade incidents attended for 2023 are as follows:

Fire Operations activity in numbers 2023	Number
No. of fires attended:	165
No. of Special Services:	140
No. of False Alarms	143
Total incidents responded to:	448

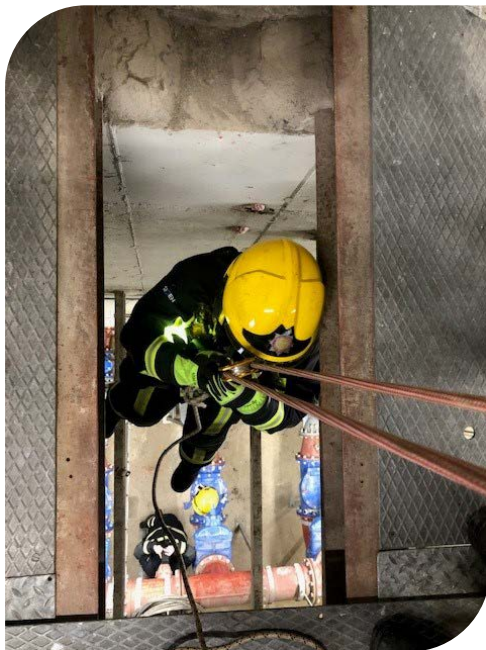




Special Service - Hazardous Material leak at ATU Sligo

## Implement Operational Training Programme

- The following in-house training was undertaken by Sligo Fire Personnel in 2023:
  - Regular on-station drill training programme
  - Swift Water Rescue & Flood Technician Training
  - Hydraulic Platform Driver/Operator refresher training
  - Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Refresher Training
  - Confined Space Training
  - Forklift Operator Refresher Course
  - Emergency Traffic Management Training
  - Hazardous Material Training
  - Casualty Rescue from Height
  - Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS) Driver Training



Confined Space Training – Tubbercurry Fire Station



Swift Water Rescue & Flood Technician Training

**Progress fire prevention activities including the management and implementation of responsibilities under Fire Safety and Building Control legislation.**

- Sligo Fire Service saw a significant uptake in the number of Fire Safety Certificates and Building Control Certificates for 2023 which reflects the strong activity levels within the construction sector in County Sligo.
- The number of Fire Safety Certificates, Disability Access Certificates, Commencement Notices and Certificates of Compliance on Completion for 2023 are set out in the table overleaf:



Fire Prevention Activities (2023)	Number
No of Fire Safety Certificates (FSC) received:	80
No. of Disability Access Certificates (DAC) received:	58
No. of Commencement Notices (CN) received:	195
No. of Certificates of Compliance on Completion (CCC) received:	55
No. of Danger Substances Licence applications received:	6

- In addition to the above, Sligo Fire Service carried out 45 No. inspections of Licensed Premises under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts, 1981, and associated Licensing Acts, and advised the Court on the suitability of the premises, with respect to fire safety, for the proposed licensed use.

**Promote community fire safety and deliver fire safety awareness campaigns.**

- National Fire Safety Week took place from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023. This year the theme for Fire Safety Week was 'Safer Together' with the focus being on fire safety, particularly in the home.
- People were encouraged to check in on their neighbours in the Community, particularly the elderly and vulnerable.
- Sligo County Council ran a comprehensive social media campaign to promote fire safety awareness throughout Fire Safety Week.





**Support the Regional Training Centre in delivering expert training to external fire authorities and to the National Directorate for fire brigade training courses.**

- The following courses were delivered by Sligo Fire Service during 2023:
  - Cardiac First Responder/First Aid Responder (FAR) & Emergency First Responder (EFR) to Sligo Fire Service
  - Breathing Apparatus Refresher Training
  - Compartment Fire Behaviour Training
  - Emergency Response Team Training (Private Sector)
  - NDFEM Module 1 Managing Fire Service Incidents
  - LASNTG QQI Level 6 Pump Operators Course
  - LASNTG QQI Level 6 Transport Incidents Course



**LASNTG QQI Level 6 Transport Incidents Course**



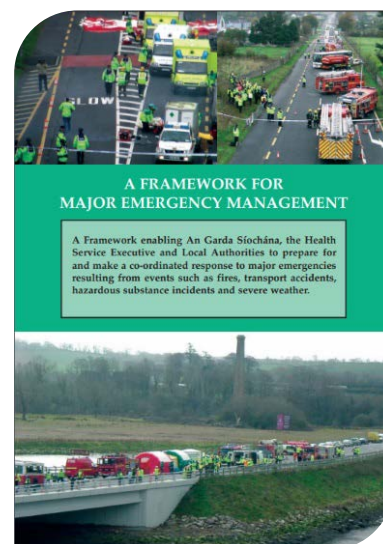
**NDFEM Module 1 Managing Fire Service Incidents**



**LASNTG QQI Level 6 Pump Operation Course**

**Manage, update and communicate Major Emergency Plan**

- As part of our ongoing Major Emergency Management (MEM) preparedness, Sligo Fire Service / Sligo County Council participated in regional MEM training in conjunction with our partner agencies; An Garda Síochána and the HSE / National Ambulance Service in the Northwest MEM Region.
- Representatives from Sligo Fire Service attended the live MEM exercise, *Exercise Vulcan*, which was run by our partner agency Leitrim County Council in Carrick-on-Shannon on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023. The simulation involved a structural fire at St. Patrick’s Hospital in Carrick-on-Shannon and was designed to test the systems and procedures that are to be used in the event of a major emergency being declared.
- Sligo Fire Service works with other statutory response agencies (Sligo County Council, An Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive, National Ambulance Service, Civil Defence etc.) in pre-planning and assessing Outdoor Event Licence applications for large crowd events.





## **Implement Service Level Agreement with Food Safety Authority of Ireland.**

- Sligo County Council have a contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) for the council to provide official controls on food safety. This work is carried out by the SCC veterinary surgeon.
- Agreement was reached in late 2023 to transfer the service and relevant veterinary staff from Local Authorities to the Department of Agriculture Food and Marine (DAFM) in 2024.





Mullaghmore Head



# FINANCE, IT, PROCUREMENT AND INTERNAL AUDIT




## Objective 1: Provide robust Financial Management and Risk Management Systems

- Adoption of 2023 Budget Strategy consultation process is now complete resulting in the adoption of 2023 Budget by the Members of Sligo County Council.
- The three-year Capital Budget for 2023 – 2025 has been prepared and included in the 2023 Budget Book.
- The 2022 annual financial statement was completed and presented to the Members of Sligo County Council. The Local Government Audit of the 2022 annual financial statement was completed and presented to the Audit Committee and Members of the Council.
- Information on the Council's actual revenue income/expenditure and variations with the adopted budget for 2023 was included in Management Reports circulated to the Members of Sligo County Council and submitted to the Department at the end of each quarter.
- A commercial rates incentive scheme was adopted by the Members and became effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.
- A rates vacancy scheme was introduced in 2022 and continued in operation during 2023 with increased vacancy charges for 2023.
- There is ongoing review of income from parking charges.
- There is ongoing review of Housing Loan arrears and engagement with customers regarding Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process and Local Authority Mortgage to Rent Scheme.
- There is ongoing monitoring of debtor balances outstanding. There is a review carried out at the end of each quarter to ensure that all recoupable revenue and capital expenditure has been recouped.
- Every effort is made to pay Suppliers efficiently and promptly and manage cash flow accordingly.
- The bank is monitored daily and all large recoupments are followed up.
- There is ongoing monitoring by Revenue Collectors of rateable properties and changes to commercial properties.
- Work is ongoing to continue to enhance the capital project monitor system.



- Work is ongoing on the identification and reconciliation of fixed assets.
- The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by the Management Team on an annual basis, with an Insurance review meeting held with Head of Finance, CEO and Insurers IPB on an annual basis.

 **Objective 2: Advance the Councils use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through secure, modern, and intelligent initiatives enabling better experiences and outcomes in Service Delivery.**

### Digital Transformation

- Procurement and Setup of a new Customer Services Portal has been completed with several paper-based processes digitised in the areas of Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology.
- Work on the first online grants application for Regional Festival & Events Funds for Co Sligo 2024 was also completed using the new customer services portal.
- Setup of a new Online Payments using the MyCoCo platform with the ability for customers to pay Housing Loans, Housing Rents and Commercial Rates.

### GIS

- A new Geographical Information systems (GIS) platform launched with a number of both public and private data sets published on the platform, these include Planning, Commercial Rates and other GIS data sets for staff.
- New data sets have continually been imported into the new online cloud-based system.
- We have worked with Assets and Facilities Team importing the Land Assets Management System Data into this new GIS platform.
- We have launched a new Corporate Browser using Arc GIS for staff to view our GIS data sets.
- Systems developed using the new GIS platform around the insurance space. The team developed a new Claims Management Application and Incident Management system.

### Cyber

- We successfully completed a cyber security audit by an independent 3rd party.
- A new privileged access system has been completed to enable secure access for 3rd parties.
- All servers now require multi factor authentication.
- We updated our Incident Response Plan.
- A dedicated Cyber Security officer was appointed in November.

### ICT infrastructure and support services

- We successfully procured a new Hyper converged environment to host our virtual servers.
- A new and revamped data backup system has been put in place to ensure business continuity.

### Communications

- IT Support have setup Blended Working for nearly 100 people.



### **Objective 3: To Ensure Compliance with Procurement Legislation, Policies and Green Procurement**

- Procurement Plan – Work is ongoing to develop a new Procurement Plan.
- Embed Green Procurement – Delivering Green Public Procurement Training to budget holders and Sligo County Council buyers has commenced.
- Staff in Sligo County Council are using the new e-tenders platform, with training provided to users.



### **Objective 4: To provide independent assurance that the organisations Internal Controls are working effectively through the existence of the Internal Audit Function**

- The Annual Work Plan 2023 was delivered.
- The Quality Assurance Statement on the Public Spending Code for the year ended 31st December, 2022 was completed and submitted to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).
- The mid-year and end of year Motor Tax stock counts were completed.
- The annual review of Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) for 2022 was completed.
- Reviews of the organisation policies and procedures are on-going.





Lissadell House

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# **APPENDICIES**

**Appendix 1: Statement of Internal Financial Control**

**Appendix 2: Performance Indicators**

**Appendix 3: Membership of Committees**

**Appendix 4: Training and Conferences attended by Councillors in 2023**

**Appendix 5: Protected Disclosures**

# APPENDIX 1:

# STATEMENT OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL (SIFC)

## Introduction

I, Martin Lydon, Chief Executive (CE) of Sligo County Council am responsible for the annual financial statement (AFS), prepared by the Head 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 financial statements of Sligo County Council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> 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 local authority under which they purport to have been carried out.*

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

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

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

	Current Year €	Previous Year €
Goods & Services	19,402,367	18,967,445
Grants & Subsidies	35,088,988	30,520,662
Other Contributions (as appropriate)	176,886	251,992
Rates	14,730,331	14,354,540
Local Property Tax	10,875,829	11,007,018

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

The Increase in Income is from Government Grants and subsidies in relation to the payroll compensation increase, the Town Regeneration post along with increased activity within housing and roads and other miscellaneous grants within the other divisions.

	Current Year €	Previous Year €
<b>Income</b>	80,274,402	75,101,657
<b>Expenditure</b>	77,392,741	73,015,233
<b>Transfers to Capital</b>	2,419,788	1,599,682
<b>Exceptional Item</b>	0	0
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for</b>	461,873	486,742
<b>Prior Year Adjustment</b>	0	0
<b>Opening Revenue Reserve</b>	10,100,811	16,536,991
<b>Closing Revenue Reserve</b>	9,638,938	16,050,249

€236,634 of the surplus for 2023 can be attributed to the repayment of principal on the revenue loan drawdown in 2012 to reduce the deficit.

The remainder of the surplus of €225,239 can be attributed to savings from payroll costs and small increases in income, resulting in an overall surplus for 2023 of €461,873.

The Opening Revenue Reserve has been restated to account for the application of the Revenue Loan Balance to reduce this. Other Balances within the Total Reserves of the Balance sheet has been increased as a result. Both of these balances are represented as the funding for the overall position of Net Assets within the Balance sheet as per below various reserves/balances. This has been agreed with the Finance section of the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage.

The *Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet)* represents the total financial activity of the council for the year 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 Net Assets of Sligo County Council at the end of 2023 total €1,968,415,516 and are as follows:

	Current Year €	Previous Year €
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	1,717,713,510	1,685,148,993
<b>Works in Progress</b>	300,996,358	285,485,440
<b>Long Term debtors</b>	18,152,766	19,914,783
<b>Current Asset</b>	16,328,233	25,504,100
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	20,707,917	31,054,255
<b>Net Current Assets/ (Liabilities)</b>	4,379,684	5,550,154
<b>Creditors (Amounts greater than 1 year)</b>	64,067,435	73,686,292
<b>Net Assets/(Liabilities)</b>	1,968,415,516	1,911,312,770

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 Sligo County Council, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Sligo County Council. This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to Sligo 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 Sligo 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 all key business processes have been documented.
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

## **Administrative Controls and Management Reporting**

As CE of Sligo 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**

Sligo 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 Sligo 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 Sligo 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 Sligo County Council has an effective audit committee which carries out an annual effectiveness review of their activities. 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 section 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 Sligo County Council.

### **Risk and control framework.**

Sligo 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 by 30 April 2023 and thereafter included in the published Annual Report prepared and adopted by the Council by 30 June 2023.



# APPENDIX 2:

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Section 126(c) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 sets out the functions of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) which includes examination of the performance of local government bodies against forty-two indicators. The Local Authorities Performance Indicators report in respect of 2022 was published by NOAC in September 2023. Sligo County Council's performance in each service area in 2022 compared to other local authorities is included in this report in each of the relevant sections. This report is available for viewing at [Report 58: NOAC Performance Indicator Report 2022 - National Oversight & Audit Commission](#)

# APPENDIX 3

## MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

<b>County Sligo LEADER Partnership Co. Ltd.</b>	Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Dónal Gilroy
<b>Enniscrone Leisure Ltd.</b>	Cllr Joe Queenan Cllr Michael Clarke
<b>Sligo North West Airport Co. Ltd.</b>	Cllr Martin Baker Cllr Sinéad Maguire Cllr Thomas Walsh Cllr Dónal Gilroy
<b>The Model</b>	Cllr Sinéad Maguire Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Tom Fox Cllr Michael Clarke
<b>Hawk's Well Theatre</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Sinéad Maguire
<b>County Sligo Heritage and Genealogy Society</b>	Cllr Declan Bree
<b>Sligo Regional Sports Centre</b>	Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Dara Mulvey Cllr Gerard Mullaney Cllr Paul Taylor
<b>Sligo Volunteer Bureau</b>	Cllr Dónal Gilroy
<b>Sligo BID</b>	Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership Co.</b>	Cllr Dónal Gilroy Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Marie Casserly
<b>Michael Coleman Heritage Centre Co Ltd</b>	Cllr Paul Taylor Cllr Martin Connolly Cllr Michael Clarke
<b>Sligo Music Fest Co. (trading as Sligo Live)</b>	Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Gino O'Boyle
<b>Arigna Enterprise Fund Ltd.</b>	Cllr Martin Baker

<b>Association of Irish Local Government (A.I.L.G)</b>	Cllr Michael Clarke Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady
<b>County Sligo Heritage Forum</b>	Cllr Dónal Gilroy
<b>Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim ETB</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)</b>	Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Dónal Gilroy
<b>Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)</b>	Cllr Martin Connolly Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Michael Clarke
<b>I.P.B. Insurance</b>	Cllr Martin Baker
<b>Sligo Joint Policing Committee (J.P.C.)</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady (Chair) Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Martin Connolly Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Dónal Gilroy Cllr Dara Mulvey Cllr Tom Fox Cllr Tom MacSharry Cllr Sinéad Maguire Cllr Gerard Mullaney Cllr Paul Taylor Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>Local Authorities Members Association (LAMA)</b>	Cllr Paul Taylor
<b>Local Community Development Committee – LCDC</b>	Cllr Joe Queenan Cllr Dara Mulvey Cllr Tom Fox
<b>Regional Health Forum West</b>	Cllr Dónal Gilroy Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Dara Mulvey
<b>Disability Consultative Committee</b>	Cllr Martin Baker Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Thomas Walsh Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Tom Fox Cllr Michael Clarke



<b>Sligo Harbour Advisory Committee</b>	Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Tom Fox Cllr Michael Clarke
<b>Chair Designate for SPC's</b>	
<b>Economic Development, Enterprise &amp; Planning</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady
<b>Environment, Transportation and Infrastructure</b>	Cllr Thomas Walsh
<b>Housing and Corporate</b>	Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>Climate Change</b>	Cllr Sinéad Maguire
<b>Procedures Committee</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Thomas Walsh Cllr Joe Queenan Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>Community &amp; Voluntary /Festivals and Events Grants Assessment Committee</b>	Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Dónal Gilroy Cllr Paul Taylor Cllr Dara Mulvey Cllr Martin Connolly
<b>Arts Assessment Panel</b>	Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Paul Taylor Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Tom Fox Cllr Martin Connolly Cllr Arthur Gibbons (replaced C. MacManus)
<b>Public Art Steering Group</b>	Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Dónal Gilroy
<b>Decade of Centenaries Steering Group (9 CC Members)</b>	Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Michael Clarke Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Dónal Gilroy Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Martin Baker Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Arthur Gibbons



<b>Western Inter County Railway Committee</b>	Cllr Thomas Healy Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>Sligo Town Twinning Committee</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady Cllr Declan Bree
<b>County Sligo Placenames Committee</b>	Cllr Declan Bree Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Tom Fox Cllr Marie Casserly Cllr Michael Clarke Cllr Gerard Mullaney
<b>Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee</b>	Cllr Martin Baker Cllr Gino O'Boyle Cllr Paul Taylor Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady
<b>North West Regional Drug &amp; Alcohol Task Force</b>	Cllr Tom Fox
<b>NUI Galway</b>	Cllr Sinéad Maguire
<b>Lifestart Childcare Board of Directors</b>	Cllr Martin Baker
<b>North West Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum</b>	Cllr Arthur Gibbons
<b>ATU Sligo Drug &amp; Alcohol Task Force Committee (REACT)</b>	Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady

# APPENDIX 4: TRAINING AND CONFERENCES ATTENDED BY COUNCILLORS IN 2023

Conference/Seminar Title	Venue	Date(s)
Celtic Conference	Carlingford, Co. Louth	6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Southern Regional Assembly Conference	Monaghan	7 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
AILG Training	Tullamore	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2023
AILG Training	Limerick	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
LAMA Spring Training Seminar	Bantry, Co. Cork	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
AILG Training	Co. Louth	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
AILG Annual Training Conference	Kilkenny	19 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
AILG Training	Mullingar	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
AILG Training	Sligo	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2023
AILG Training	Tralee	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2023
LAMA Autumn Training Seminar	Galway	25 <sup>th</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
AILG Training	Sligo	13 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> September
AILG Training	Galway	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
Celtic Conference	Cork	1 <sup>st</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2023

\*LAMA: Local Authority Members Association

\*AILG: Association of Irish Local Government



# **APPENDIX 5:**

# **PROTECTED DISCLOSURES**

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires the publication of an annual report relative to Protected Disclosures received.

Pursuant to this requirement, Sligo County Council hereby confirms that no reports were received in 2023.



**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH**  
**SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**COUNTY HALL**  
**RIVERSIDE**  
**SLIGO**  
**F91 Y763**



**@sligocountycouncil**



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# **Sligo.**