

2017-
2022

County Longford Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme



FOREWORD BY CATHAOIRLEACH AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The County Tourism Strategy is prepared by Longford County Council working in partnership with County Longford Tourism Committee, the representative body of all tourism interests within County Longford. This Strategy sets out the overall Vision for tourism in County Longford over the next 5 years. To place Longford Tourism into context, Fáilte Ireland figures from 2013 show that while 772,000 tourists visited the Midlands Region in 2013 only 3% (22,000) visited County Longford. Therefore, the aim of this Strategy is to grow that percentage share by developing a thriving tourism sector in a planned, co-ordinated and cohesive manner as set out in this Strategy. It includes an ambitious programme of work to be undertaken within the County over that period in order to build local products and services that appeal to the marketplace. Centrally it also recognises the collective contributory role the County has to play in facilitating and supporting planned regional tourism development and complementing national tourism initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East. A review of the programme of work outlined and completed under previous strategies undertaken from 2010 to 2016, combined with an analysis of the current strength of the tourism sector within the County helped us to prioritise actions going forward.

Since 2010, the County Longford Tourism Committee has refocused attention and energy on the potential for the tourism sector to be the key economic driver for County Longford. It has been the catalyst for the development of a number of key tourism infrastructure projects such as the Royal Canal Walkway and the South County Cycle Trail. It has also delivered a marketing strategy for the County which included development of a new website, an active social media presence, new promotional materials, along with maps and brochures designed to inform and educate visitors on the wide variety of tourism experiences available in County Longford. County Longford Tourism Committee continues to operate a year round Tourist Information Office in Longford Town. As well as acting as a promoter of all local festivals and events, County Longford Tourism Committee also facilitates the delivery of training to tourism providers and has sought to increase the investment in tourism locally by accessing funds from as many funding sources as possible. The Local Authority also continues to work with community and specific interest groups on initiatives and events designed to build tourism products, and will have a vital oversight role in the implementation of the current LEADER programme and its associated heavy emphasis on local tourism development.

While tourism resources are limited at present, different stakeholders involved in tourism are looking forward to a new chapter where tourism will be better recognised as an economic contributor and will accordingly, benefit from greater resource allocations. We believe that County Longford has enormous potential as a visitor destination. Naturally scenic with an accessible diverse landscape, the County offers visitors an authentic experience, seeing Ireland at its most natural. There are some excellent visitor attractions and accommodation options across the County offering visitors a chance to explore local history and heritage, experience the great outdoors through leisure pursuits, enjoy family time and explore a range of natural waterways including the Royal Canal, River Shannon and Lough Ree.

In terms of regional collaboration another ambition is to explore with neighbouring counties the potential to establish a National Wetlands Park that will hopefully materialise once a large tranche of commercial bogs is exhausted by Bord na Mona. In this regard there is a commitment from all the key stakeholder groups to work together on forwarding this plan over the duration of this new strategy. Separately, Longford County Council is also a key partner in the Upper Shannon Blueways project which has attracted funding to promote the Blueways brand along our extensive network of waterways.

This further potential for growth of the County's tourism sector will be greatly augmented by the Center Parcs decision to locate its only Irish resort in County Longford, a flagship project which has the potential to transform the tourism landscape in the whole midlands region. The Center Parcs Longford Forest Resort will be one of the largest single tourism investments ever made in this country, and as such will firmly place County Longford front and centre of future tourism promotional and marketing campaigns. The challenge for local tourism stakeholders is to embrace opportunities that will be presented through the expected increase in visitors to the region by offering experiences that assist in retaining those visitors in the region for an extended period. As a County, we are all mindful of the potential impact that the proposed

development of the Center Parcs holiday village will have on all the citizens of the County, and we look forward to challenges presented by having such a significant project in our County.

Consequently we need to ensure that the product offering to visitors is of a high standard, appeals to its target market and exceeds expectations where possible. While focusing on customer needs we also want to ensure that we do not lose our own identity as a County with unique, authentic tourism offerings, and not become a generic visitor destination. Once coordinated visitor experiences are developed, it is important that we allocate resources to adequately market and promote them and ensure that there is a clear message to the market detailing what County Longford has to offer.

While we recognise that financial constraints place limits on our ambition and will in many ways dictate the implementation of this current strategy, we will continue to put our best foot forward and work with all partners and interested stakeholders in vying for the necessary resources to help us achieve our objectives. As tourism continues to grow in prominence within national government strategies, Longford will seek greater resource allocation to develop our tourism sector. The strategy overleaf outlines a series of actions that have been identified in order to lift County Longford onto a higher tourism plane and bring increased economic prosperity by 2022 and beyond.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Cahill".

Councillor Michael Cahill
Cathaoirleach



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paddy Mahon".

Paddy Mahon
Chief Executive

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County Longford

Information on the heritage sites of County Longford can be found on the 'Explore Longford' App available to download for both Android and Apple Devices: <http://bit.ly/1m0KCYV> Apple Store: <http://bit.ly/1m0KCYV>

CO. CARRON

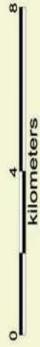
CO. LEITRIM

CO. ROSCOMMON

CO. WEXFORD

- North Longford Tour**
1. Drumlish Mill
 2. Ballinacorney, Ballymore
 3. Toberpatrick Cemetery and Holy Well
 4. Cleenacilly Portal Tomb
 5. Aughnacilly Portal Tomb
 6. Derrymasson Wood
 7. Carrigrohane Wood
 8. Graard Town Hall, Library & Market House
 9. Greville Arms Hotel
 10. Abbeylara Cistercian Abbey
 11. Clonilla Castle
 12. Clonilla Memorial
 13. Sean MacEoin's Forge
 14. Titanic Memorial and Garden
 15. Corn Hill Cairns
 16. Baltimore Statue

Silgan, Carrick-an-Shannon, Lough Key Forest Park



South Longford Tour

1. Ardagh Clock Tower and Estate Village
2. Ardagh - Old St. Mel's Cathedral
3. Ardagh - Old St. Mel's Cathedral
4. Foxhall Stone Man
5. Royal Canal
6. Royal Canal Whitworth Aqueduct
7. Abbeylara House
8. Neweastle House
9. Ballymahon Community Library
10. Ledwithstown House
11. Barley Harbour
12. Barley Harbour
13. Incheleraun Monastic Sites
14. Rathcline Church & Sheela-na-Gig
15. Rathcline Castle
16. Rathcline Castle
17. Ballinacilly Cemetery, Killashoe
18. Kenagh - King-Harman Memorial Clock Tower
19. Kenagh - Mastown Dovecote or Pigeon House
20. Carrigrohane
21. Carrigrohane
22. Mornia Tower House
23. Glen Lough - Bird Sanctuary

Legend

	Railway Line		Boat Mooring Point
	County Boundary		Canoeing/Kayaking
	Main Roads		Heritage Site
	Minor Roads		Picnic Area
	Lake		Car-Parking
	Canal/River		Scenic Viewing Point
	Bagland Area		Visitor Centre
	Special Area of Conservation		Bird-Watching Area
	Natural Heritage Area		Toilet Facilities
	Wooded Area		Fishing Area
	Northern Tour Route		Cycling Trackway
	Southern Tour Route		Canal Boating

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context

While tourism forms an important part of County Longford's economy, tourism figures are very modest both in absolute terms and relative to other counties. County Longford received 22,000 overseas visitors in 2013 which is significantly lower than its neighbouring counties. Longford is located within the Midlands East region, along with counties Kildare, Laois, Louth, Meath, Wicklow, Offaly (East) and Westmeath. In 2013, this region attracted 772,000 overseas visitors, of which Longford only attracted 3% of these visitors to the County. In terms of domestic visitors, where Longford is amalgamated with neighbouring counties Westmeath and Roscommon, there were 226,000 trips by Irish residents to the three counties accounting for €37m in expenditure to the region (*Fáilte Ireland Tourism Facts, 2013*).

The potential for tourism to be a key economic driver is now fully recognised and tourism development is a priority sector for support going forward. Importantly, the different authorities in Longford involved in tourism are not solely focused on making impact locally but rather looking at ways that regional and national initiatives can be best supported. Strong national product such as Ireland's Ancient East or regional product such as the Lakelands has the potential to bring benefit to all Counties and it is therefore incumbent on the Longford tourism sector to put its full weight behind such initiatives developing product and services that support agreed national and regional themes.

County Longford is centrally located making it both attractive as a destination and/or as a base for exploring large parts of the country. The County is easily accessible from any part of Ireland and just 1½ hours from the capital city, Dublin. Dotted with sparkling lakes amid rolling hills, wooded walks, the Royal Canal on its way to the River Shannon, and award winning villages, Longford offers the visitor an authentic holiday experience. Its rustic and tranquil nature together with its sense of history appeals particularly to the market segment identified by Fáilte Ireland as 'culturally curious' and it has the capacity to build its product portfolio to support the Ireland's Ancient East brand.

Of course the new Center Parcs resort will make a huge impact on the landscape once it opens, qualifying the County for destination status but also presenting opportunity to keep visitors in the region for extended periods. This resort gives added incentive to everyone involved in tourism to build or improve local tourism infrastructure and it is expected that the tourism sector will dramatically increase its relevance and importance to local economic growth during the period of this strategy.

1.2 Vision of County Longford Tourism Strategy 2017-2022

The Longford Tourism Strategy 2017-2022 has a vision to create tourism product that provides increased linkages and targeted integration of key tourism opportunities with the settlement structure and its hinterland. This will be achieved by creating alignment with tourism infrastructure provision and the optimisation of economic benefits for the County and region.

This strategy is designed to deliver one common goal for 2022 and beyond.



County Longford will be a high quality, desirable destination that offers memorable visitor experiences by fusing our long cultural tradition with Ireland's rich history.

A key objective at the heart of the strategy is growth that can be achieved by developing and promoting products and assets that are unique to Longford and by working with neighbouring counties on regional products that retain visitors and spend in the locality. It is important then that a shared vision on the way

forward is agreed with all partners committing to common goals that will deliver high quality visitor experiences that consistently exceed customer expectations.

It is a goal of the Longford Tourism Strategy to achieve positive outcomes in a set of identified actions over the 6 year life of this strategy. This will be achieved through the fulfilment of the following key objectives:-

- Developing tourism infrastructure
- Delivery of visitor centric experiences
- Development of a Longford Tourism Brand
- Generating greater awareness of Longford as a tourism destination

The development of a number of key flagship attractions for County Longford will help raise the status of County Longford as a tourism destination. Flagship attractions by their nature have the potential to attract large numbers of visitors but also to provide positive spin-offs to smaller attractions and facilities that help those facilities become sustainable in their own right.

Delivering growth will require the development of innovative and strategic partnerships across the tourism spectrum. The creation of partnerships particularly those around identified priorities for the sector will require a top-down approach with Longford Local Authority taking the lead in ensuring that initiatives remain coordinated and properly focussed. Longford County Council is committed to working with other relevant statutory agencies, private sector groups, community associations and individuals to develop a coherent and sustainable approach necessary to successfully market Longford County on a national and global stage.

1.3 Links with other Policies, initiatives and objectives

In developing the tourism sector within the County it is critical to promote a sustainable approach that supports the provisions of national policy and initiatives, regional objectives and the objectives of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

1.4 National Policy– People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025

People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025 is the Government's national tourism policy and its sets out ambitious goals for tourism in Ireland. The policy commits to "an enhanced role for Local Authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism."

Specifically, the policy envisages that Local Authorities will:

- Continue to act as primary developer of a range of public tourism infrastructure, including outdoor tourism infrastructure and urban and rural heritage;
- Act as a link between the State tourism agencies and communities by supporting community effort with regard to major national tourism initiatives such as the Gathering;
- Support community effort in destination development, including assisting communities to align their efforts with the tourism agencies brand architecture and consumer segmentation model;
- Provide a competitive environment for tourism enterprises through continued focus on high quality maintenance of public infrastructure frequently used by visitors;
- Contribute to capacity building in tourism nationally by co-ordinating exchange of knowledge between established and developing tourism destinations; and
- Provide a range of advice and support through the Local Enterprise Offices.¹

¹People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, March 2015.

While the national focus is on building Ireland's international reputation as a top tourist destination, it is recognised that the stability and growth of the domestic market is paramount to ensure that a strong tourism base is established to build on. A healthy domestic market is considered key to underpinning tourism enterprises on the ground. Fáilte Ireland has reported that domestic trips and the number of holiday nights have steadily increased, thereby supporting the necessity to sustain the domestic market at a local level. It is considered that the vibrancy of the domestic travel market is linked to and supports Ireland's capacity to attract overseas visitors. It provides a strong tourism product platform and serves to maintain off peak business for the industry and ensures quality services, products and experiences.

1.5 Ireland's Ancient East

In terms of marketing and promotion, the Longford Tourism Strategy shall align closely with Fáilte Ireland's Brand Proposition for the region – Ireland's Ancient East. The objectives of the Ireland's Ancient East Brand Strategy are listed as:

- Move Ireland's Ancient East from a transit zone to a touring zone.
- Grow International Revenue.
- Disperse visitor traffic across the area by encouraging exploration of signature and lesser known sites and stories.
- Demonstrate thought leadership on the brand.

In terms of attracting international visitors, it is recognised that the success of the County is dependent on the success of the region as a whole and that this will require close working relationships between tourism providers and other counties in order to maximise brand impact on the region.

In addition, it is an objective of this strategy to successfully grow Longford's share of domestic and international visitors to the region and increase visitor duration. It is therefore proposed that Longford develop actions that shall essentially serve as sub-products to Fáilte Ireland's primary objectives for the Ireland's Ancient East region.

1.6 Regional Planning Guidelines – Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

The Regional Planning Guidelines emphasise the need to promote and market *"the natural, heritage and cultural resources of the area and its high quality of life"* identifying this as a valuable contribution to the identity of the region as a whole.

It is recognised that the Midland Region has many natural and heritage assets that should be utilised to enhance the tourism appeal of the region. In addition, the position of the Midland Region in the heart of the country, with strong links to all other regions, provides passing trade opportunities that should be exploited. However, it is essential that any such growth be managed in a sustainable manner.

Contained in the guidelines is recognition that the midland region has a diverse range of tourist attractions that offer enormous potential to be further developed and exploited. Key areas identified in which the midland region exhibits strength and potential for development include:

- Lakelands and Waterways
- Heritage Trails
- Beyond Dublin
- Outdoor Activities and Pursuits

This strategy takes cognisance of these key areas and is confident that scope exists to develop further product that will help to raise the profile of Longford County as a significant tourist destination.

1.7 Action Plan for Jobs for the Midland Region 2015-2017

In the Action Plan for Jobs for the Midland Region 2015-2017 the four Local Authorities in the Midlands, consisting of Westmeath, Offaly, Laois and Longford, are recognised as working in partnership with national and regional agencies and organisations, in particular Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Ireland's Ancient East to develop and promote the tourism offering of the region. The tourism sector is job-intensive and offers the potential for the creation of new jobs in a variety of areas, including accommodation, food services, sport and leisure activities and even new products and experiences using digital technologies.

The specific tourism actions identified in the Action Plan for Jobs to support jobs growth in the Midlands in the Tourism sector have a focus on:

- Developing and marketing *Ireland's Ancient East* and *Lakelands and Inland Waterways* tourism offering in relation to the Midlands attractions.
- Exploring the use of digital technologies to enhance the tourism experience for visitors.
- Maintaining and promoting existing tourism assets.
- Developing recreational tourism offerings.

Coordination of effort among the local authorities includes direct support for emerging and existing festivals, joint promotion of the Lakelands and Inland Waterways and further development of related activities including walking, canoeing, cruising, angling, golf and gastronomy.

Other areas of focus in the operational plan include the development and promotion of quality heritage and culture-based tourism products, exploitation of the region's proximity to Dublin, and tourism business enterprise support.



Cistercian Abbey, Abbeylara, Co. Longford

1.8 Longford County Development Plan 2015 -2021

The Development Plan is the single most important policy document for County Longford as it represents an agreed economic, social, cultural and environmental blueprint for the future planning, growth and development of County Longford.

In regards to tourism development it promotes a sustainable approach that supports the provisions of the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Settlement Strategy for the County.

It recognises the need to strengthen tourism infrastructure in County Longford, including promoting the distribution of tourism products and improving the readiness of the County for the tourism market. Encouraging the development of tourism products that are consumer focused, having the potential to attract visitors, while at the same time are environmentally sustainable is a key objective of the plan. Other objectives include:

- To encourage the development of more opportunities for visitors to enjoy and learn more about the natural beauty, biodiversity, culture and heritage of the area.
- To promote the utilisation of the cultural, historical, natural, aesthetic and economic assets presented by Lough Ree, its islands and environs, through the designation of the area as a National Park and identification of Lanesboro as a base for a Visitors' Centre for the park subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
- To maximise the potential of tourism as a pillar of economic growth that will contribute to the balanced economic development of the County and the Tourism Industry in the Region.
- To maximise benefits for the Tourism sector and improve the visitor experience and tourism product, the Council promotes the need to seek inter-authority and inter-agency co-operation and collaboration, providing an integrated approach involving local authorities, the private sector and Government agencies, exploring a wider regional and national perspective and identifying and prioritising key initiatives.
- To build on existing activities and services and develop new businesses and services to produce and bring a comprehensive set of active locations and holiday products.
- Improve the function of settlements throughout Longford as tourism destinations from land or water.
- To develop master plans to improve the function, capacity and sustainability of Longford's settlements to service tourism including accommodation facilities.
- To develop a comprehensive and integrated system of Longford visitor trails for walking, cycling, riding and canoeing including the provision of supporting infrastructure.
- To consider and bring forward programmes both to protect and raise the profile nationally and internationally of the Lough Ree, Lough Gowna, Royal Canal and the proposed Mid Shannon Wilderness Park areas.

1.9 Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022

The recognition of tourism as a priority in the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) was identified as a policy priority in *People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025*. Every Local Authority has developed an LECP and they each have a strong tourism dimension.

Longford's LECP sets out specific goals, objectives and actions related to tourism, outlining the Local Authority's projected tourism outputs and identifying tourism partners. Longford County Council has created this detailed tourism strategy to build upon the main tourism actions outlined in its LECP under the broad tourism objective '*develop a thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to economic, social and cultural development*'

Principal objectives contained therein include:-

- Build and promote a Longford Tourism Brand around products that have capacity to deliver significant visitor numbers to the County
- Support the development of the tourist accommodation product in Longford
- Explore the potential to utilise worked-out bog lands to develop a National Wetlands Park
- Harness and develop the potential of the Blueway Brand
- Complete the development of a network of integrated themed trails e.g. Rebel, Literary, Edgeworth, South Longford & Food trails

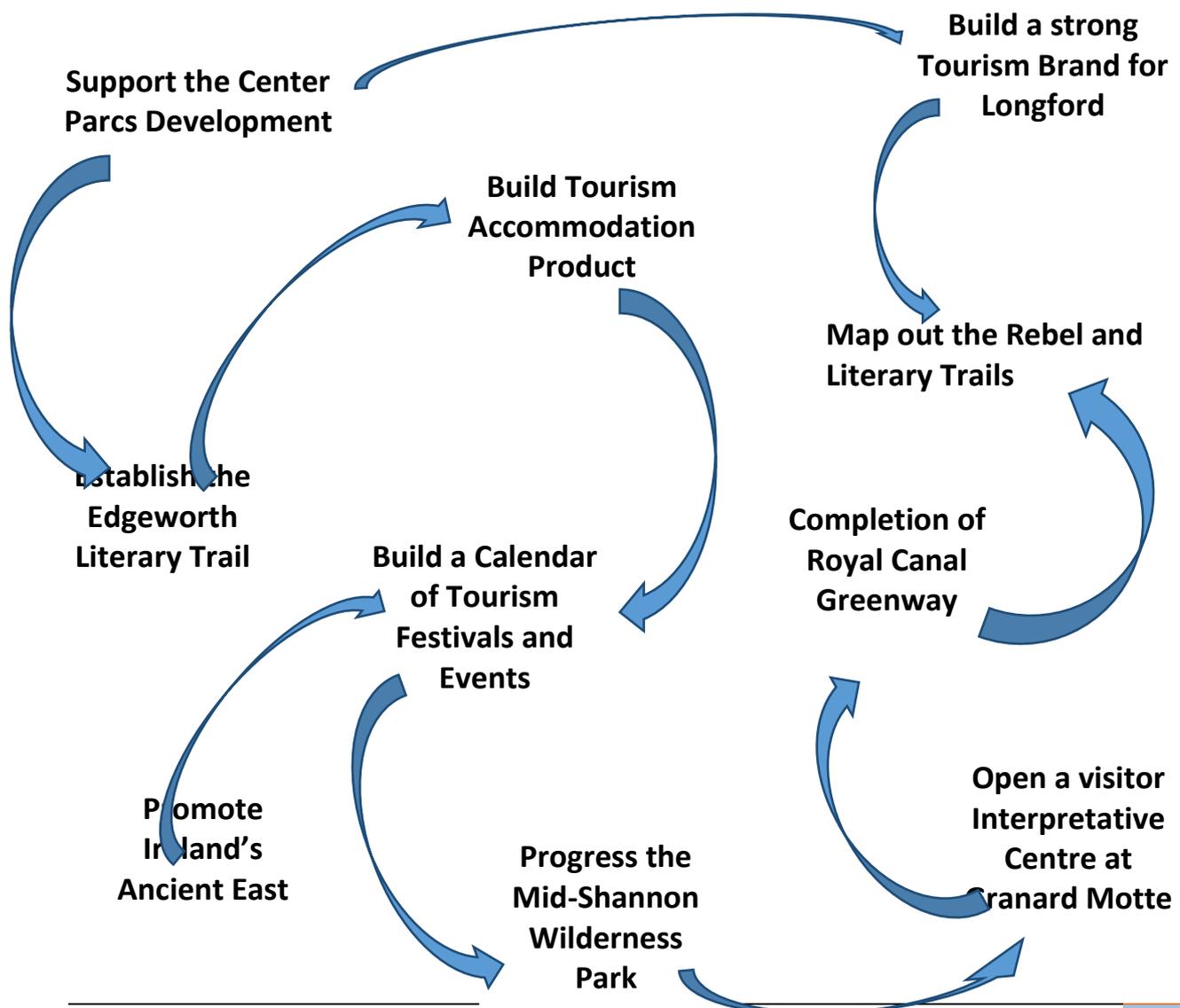
- Support water tourism by sustainably developing the infrastructure on our watercourses and the development of Lanesborough as a premier water recreation and fishing destination
- Support the development of a tourist visitor centre in Granard based around the Motte
- Support the development of restoration works to the ‘White Bridge’, Newcastle Woods, Ballymahon

2.0 Tourism Work Programme 2017 – 2022

In accordance with National and Regional plans, Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 and the County Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 the Tourism Work Programme is presented for 2017 – 2022 .

Priority will be given to the key project areas listed below. A number of them will become Flagship Attractions that have the potential to transform the tourism landscape in County Longford while others reflecting our strategic location in the heart of Ireland will see us become a key part of a more coherent regional tourism map.

2.1 Key Actions



2.2 SWOT Analysis

A Swot analysis helps to contextualize the issues facing Longford Tourism at present

Strengths

- Central Location: ease of Access (N4-near M6, Rail & Bus links)
- Royal Canal Greenway runs through the County
- Untapped natural beauty in the County – County Longford is a ‘hidden gem’ with an abundance of natural assets e.g. Wetlands/peat lands, Lough Ree & other waterways
- Rich cultural traditions in the County, including literary & arts
- Many heritage/historical sites located within the County
- Active Tourism Committee with a ‘Longford Tourism’ brand & website overseen by the Committee
- Proximity to 2 International Airports (Dublin, Knock)
- Full-time tourism office with knowledgeable and accommodating tourism officer employed by LTC

Weaknesses

- Longford is not seen as a traditional holiday /break destination
- County Longford has a relatively poor image/reputation outside of the County
- Current tourism products and amenities are under developed and industry is fragmented
- Lack of people with adequate hospitality & tourism skills
- Severe lack of quality hotel accommodation, wedding & conference venues within the County
- Poor supply of alternative accommodation/bed nights
- No full-time Tourism Officer employed by Longford County Council which undermines the effective co-ordination of all tourism efforts.

Opportunities

- Prioritise the employment of a full-time tourism officer by Longford County Council and consolidate ties with the existing tourism committee to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to tourism development
- Aid the development of and promote a range of quality accommodation types
- Leverage funding streams such as Fáilte Ireland (major & minor capital grants), LEADER, Rural regeneration etc. and encourage communities to do self-drive local projects
- Continue to build a strong brand identify for ‘Longford- the Heart of Ireland’ and tie this into the Fáilte Ireland Ireland’s Ancient East Brand proposition
- Link with other midland counties to create a ‘Destination Midlands’ and create synergies from cooperative projects
- Support and develop diaspora links with key overseas markets
- Develop, promote and support activity based attractions/holidays
- Capitalise on the Center Parcs Longford Forest development in Ballymahon
- Develop links with 3rd level Institutes which have strong hospitality & tourism courses and develop outreach programmes to increase local labour skills

Threats

- Alternative destinations located nearby in the Midlands including Westmeath, Cavan, Roscommon which are further developed in terms of tourism amenities, accommodation and branding
- Lack of infrastructure investment in the County over a long period of time means much has to be done in a short space of time to place the County on a competitive tourism level
- Insufficient profile in National and Regional promotional campaigns
- Low levels of collaboration between tourism industry providers
- Poor uptake of education courses/up-skilling courses to ensure sufficient numbers of trained people to develop or work in newly developed tourism amenities and accommodation

3.0 Product / Experience Development

3.1 Center Parcs

Very occasionally a Local Authority gets involved in a project that seems to transcend all other projects in terms of its uniqueness and its potential impact on the local community. The announcement in April 2015 that Center Parcs had chosen Newcastle Woods, outside Ballymahon, to establish its only Irish based resort caused a stir in tourism and business circles, and was enthusiastically welcomed in County Longford and the Midlands region.



Center Parcs is the premier short break destination in the U.K. with five villages offering the perfect opportunity for families to get back to nature and spend quality time together. The Irish location, to be called Center Parcs Longford Forest, will require an investment of over €200m to build a resort village of over 400 lodges, a sub-tropical swimming paradise, a luxury spa, shops and restaurants all nestled in a carefully protected and enhanced environment.

Construction on the resort began in autumn 2016 with the village expected to open in 2019.

The potential spin-offs from Center Parcs are enormous in terms of **employment and sub-supply opportunities** but real potential exists to help transform the tourism sector as County Longford becomes a **tourism destination** in its own right. With up to 2,000 extra visitors to the County expected every week of the year the opportunity to tap into this dramatic increase in visitor numbers offers real scope for complimentary tourism development.

Increased passing trade and more visitors looking to extend their stay in the Midlands region will provide incentive to **increase the accommodation base** in County Longford, to support the provision of **artisan shops and craft outlets** that appeal to visitors and to facilitate **new coffee shops and restaurants** particularly in towns such as Ballymahon and Lanesboro. In addition the completion of a **network of walking and cycling** the upgrade of the River Inny as a **kayaking centre** and the availability of **bike hire, canoe hire and equestrian experiences** all help to keep visitors. In relation to wooded walking trails the reinstatement of the '**white bridge**' in Newcastle woods will create attractive network of wooded walks adjacent to the Center Parcs resort.

Longford needs to build on the potential of Center Parcs to add to tourism product and to brand and market the County in a more positive way. The profile and image of County Longford can be lifted by **association with the Center Parcs brand** and a **campaign** that promotes Longford as a vibrant location that hosts the Center Parcs resort can increase our appeal to national and international audiences.



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Longford Local Authority will continue to work with Government departments, local support agencies and others to **access funding streams** that help to improve the tourism infrastructure needed to meet the expected increase in visitor numbers.

3.2 Ireland's Ancient East - St. Mel's Cathedral and Corlea Interpretative Centre

In early 2016, Fáilte Ireland introduced a new destination brand for the East and South of the country. Ireland's Ancient East is a world class brand that will impact the same as the Wild Atlantic Way and which promises an enthralling journey of exploration through 5,000 years of history, in lush green landscapes, with stories told by the best storytellers in the world.

County Longford as part of the Ireland's Ancient East gateway currently has two reference sites in the IAE portfolio, namely St. Mel's Cathedral and Corlea interpretative Centre.

St. Mel's Cathedral is now Longford's largest Individual tourist attraction. Restored following a devastating fire in 2009, the finished building is an awe inspiring display of craftsmanship, dedication and love. The official re opening of St Mel's Cathedral place at Christmas 2014, when the newly restored Cathedral was finally unveiled to the public. It has been dubbed 'The Longford Phoenix' following its spectacular rise from the ashes. The **crypt** Mel's is currently being **redesigned to house a museum** and the cathedral is open to visitors all year round who must be conscious it is an active place of worship.

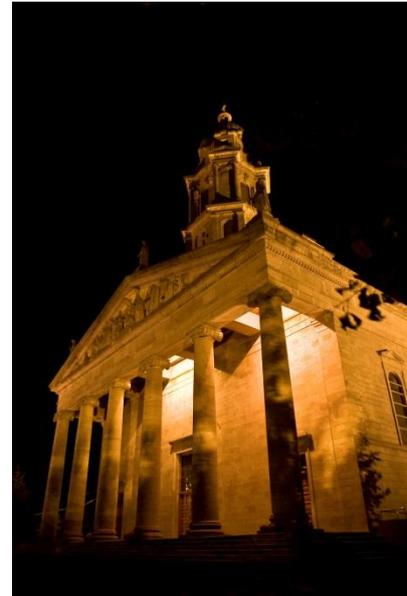
An **historic walking trail** around **Longford Town** will be developed to compliment a visit to Longford Cathedral and highlight the many buildings of interest in the County Town. A visitor centre for **St. Mel's brewery** will be an important element of a **Longford Town Trail**.

Corlea Visitor Centre is currently Longford's second biggest individual attraction with approximately 5,000 unique visitors per year. It is an Office of Public Works facility and the challenge for Longford County Council over the period of the next plan is consider how responsibility for the running and marketing of the facility might evolve to allow its **significance as one of Europe's premier iron-age facilities can be maximised** to its full potential.



In addition, Longford County Council working with local community groups will seek to expand the curtilage of the centre to develop **walkways on the adjacent cutaway bog**, to support any proposal that seeks to **recreate Iron-Age type settlement and to present the archaeology and biodiversity** of the area as a visitor attraction. Initial trails will be focussed around the centre itself and **help link it to the Royal canal**. In time a whole series of trails across exhausted bog-land might be developed to support the **Wetlands Park** concept and help the visitor traverse from the East to West of the country across a rich magical landscape.

In support of the **Ireland's Ancient East brand**, the challenge for Longford County Council and others is to **develop further attractions** to the point that they can be added to the brand portfolio.



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new

Obvious attractions are the **Edgeworth Literary trail** and **the Motte in Granard**. However, County Longford is rich in history and lesser known monuments and facilities such as the **Abbeyderg Monastery, Saints Island Priory, and Ballinamuck Heritage Centre** are all deserving of special status in creating tourism trails.

In fact a key objective locally is to use Ireland's Ancient East brand to help the industry **create itineraries** that can keep visitors in the region for an extended stay. There is opportunity **to link heritage sites, activity providers and the service industry** in a manner that results in structured itineraries designed to explore a linked chain of local attractions. Industry partners working together, **cross selling**, knowing the locality and engaging in positive referrals will benefit all stakeholders. During the period of this strategy Longford County Tourism Committee will roll out a **series of training courses and seminars** to encourage such partnerships.

3.3 Edgeworthstown Literary Centre and Longford Literary Trail

Edgeworthstown takes its name from the Anglo-Irish **Edgeworth Landlord Family**. The family were



celebrated in the fields of Literature, Science, Politics, Education and Engineering. The town also has a close association with Oliver Goldsmith and the **Oscar Wilde** family. Over the period of this plan it is proposed to build a tourism offering to tell the **story of Anglo-Irish Ireland** through the Edgeworth family and in particular the renowned novelist **Maria Edgeworth**, from the time of the Reformation to Emigration in the 1950's. The story will be told in a new proposed **Edgeworth Visitor Centre** that

should complement perfectly Fáilte Ireland's "Ireland's Ancient East" brand.

The focus of the Maria Edgeworth Centre will be St. John's Rectory a Georgian three story building set in its own private surroundings and hidden away from the hustle and bustle of life. The building will contain an extensive collection of Edgeworth Family portraits which can only be seen in Edgeworthstown, it will also include memorabilia and some Edgeworth first editions and signed documents.

It will also contain a marble table presented to Maria Edgeworth by Sir Walter Scott. The building has a close association with the Edgeworth's and is the house where Oliver Goldsmith received his early education and the house where Isola Wilde, sister to Oscar, died. The house will tell the story of all these remarkable connections. Maria Edgeworth wrote a number of novels based on landlordism in Ireland and its demise in the early 19th century. The house is attached to St. John's Church and Graveyard, and is the location of the Edgeworth Family vault and the grave of Isola Wilde.

As well as developing an **Edgeworth Literary Trail** around the town of Edgeworthstown, a larger and broader Longford Literary Trail will be developed around the County to interpret the important locations related not only to the Edgeworth family and Oscar Wilde but also other Longford literary luminaries such as **Oliver Goldsmith in Ballymahon, John Keegan Casey in Keenagh and Padraic Colum in Longford Town**.

3.4 The Rebel Trail - Granard Motte Centre, Ballinalee, Ballinamuck and Longford Town

The 1798 battlefield sites in Ballinamuck and Granard are important landmarks that helped to shape this nation's history and identity, and as such have appeal on an international scale. A key objective therefore and one that supports the storytelling theme associated with Ireland's Ancient East is to find the optimum



way to tell the story of 1798 in a manner that both informs and appeals to visitors. Further development of **Interpretative Centre at Ballinamuck** is merited as well as **mapping out the routes** followed by the different armies of the time.

North Longford is steeped in history and direct association with historical events and the 1798 experience is one element of a **proposed Rebel Trail** that stretches back in time to the **Black Pigs Dyke** and the **Norman Motte in Granard** forward to the events around the War of Independence (1919-1921).

Granard Community Motte Enterprise Ltd. has purchased two buildings and five hectares at the foot of **Granard Motte** and acquired funding to develop a visitor centre that is planned to open in 2018. It can tell

the story of Rebel Longford through the ages with particular emphasis on the wonderful story of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan that is currently the subject of an **EU programme application** based on connecting classic 'love stories' throughout Europe.

The exploits of **General Sean McKeon** with opportunity to develop the **Ballinalee Rose Cottage** as a visitor Centre, the military connections in Longford Town through **Connolly Barracks** in Longford Town and the relationship between **Michael Collins and his great love from Granard Kitty Kiernan** are stories that need to be told and the proposed Rebel Trail will be an **informative cycling/driving trail**.

A key objective is to see the re-establishment of a **County Museum** to publically display the wide range of historical artefacts that are currently held in storage. A museum in **Longford Town** could be the catalyst to develop some further historical product in Longford Town to include an underground tunnel that once linked the courthouse and the prison cells in Connolly Barracks.

The Rebel Trail will touch on areas of great beauty particularly areas like Lough Gowna and the necklace of lakes dotted around the northern half of the County. It is planned to **enhance the wooded walking trail in Derrycassan Woods** to include more of the shoreline of Lough Gowna connecting it to the parking facilities at Dring. A walking trail at the **summit of Cairn Hill** will be developed to allow a view of a dozen other Counties and other trails will be considered of development including a potential trail from **Abbeylara to Finea** in Co. Westmeath.

3.5 Royal Canal Greenway

It is expected that the full section of the Royal Canal Greenway in County Longford will be **accessible to walkers and cyclists by mid-2018**. The expected completion of the full canal walk from Dublin to the River Shannon at Clondra harbour in County Longford will provide a major and important off road **national walking/cycling artery** across the County which will have major tourism benefits for Longford.



The canal spur into Longford Town, already a popular walking and cycling route will bring more visitors to Longford once the full walk is established and the beautiful relatively flat landscape along the canal should have particular appeal to those tourists that are interested in active but leisurely outdoor pursuits.

Abbeyshrule and Ballymahon located on the River Inny present a wonderful opportunity to develop a **National Kayaking Centre** in the County. The River Inny is a very popular Grade 3 and 4 kayaking River at present with people travelling from all over the Country to kayak every weekend. Both Towns are also located beside the Royal Canal and Lough Ree and the River Shannon are nearby and with small upgrade works County Longford could have a **National Centre of Excellence**.

3.6 Lanesboro/Ballyleague Angling Centre of Excellence

Situated on the North of Lough Ree with a famous hot stretch of water emanating from Lough Ree power station, the different community groups in Lanesboro and Ballyleague recognise the potential for the area to recapture the glory days of the past when the area was considered one of the **premier fishing destinations in Europe**.

The objective now is to broaden the appeal of the area to include fishing, but also **water based sporting activities**, access to the **heritage islands** on Lough Ree and the development of **fishing and food festivals**. Work begun on developing a **Taste of the Lakelands brand** will be reinforced by developing close working relationships between micro-food producers in the region, the hospitality sector and fishing and watersports' representatives. This development of this regionally focused brand will itself support the ambition to develop a Wetlands National Park that will appeal to National and International visitors.

A number of **international fishing competitions** will be run each year to help rebuild knowledge and appeal of the upper Shannon and Lough Ree as fishing destinations and **new accommodation providers** will be encouraged to establish to house targeted market segments such as international fishermen or visitors to the Center Parcs who want to stay in the area for an extra few days.

Improving the connection between the Shannon and the town, **improving access** to the river, enhancing the **riverbanks** and riverside walks, and exploring potential projects in areas along the river that don't ruin

contrary to its SAC status will all be objectives during the course of this plan. Supporting new facilities such as a **Lough Ree Visitor Centre** a **planned distillery** that has the potential to be a significant tourism attraction in its own right are other actions that will be pursued.

3.7 Accommodation

An underlying weakness in County Longford's effort to attract more visitors and encourage them to stay in the County for an extended period of time is the severe lack of tourist accommodation. A direct comparison with similar sized counties shows how much of a disadvantage Longford has in competing for overnight stays². While planned developments like that at Newcastle House are welcome and will add greatly to our accommodation offering much work is needed to build up the accommodation base to the required level.

A key action then as part of this strategy is to **support existing accommodation providers** and to **encourage the development of new tourist accommodation product** in County Longford. It will be achieved by:

- **Promoting in digital and print format** all the existing tourism accommodation in County Longford;
- Encouraging and assisting all accommodation providers to achieve the **Fáilte Ireland Welcome Standard** as a minimum quality threshold for the sector;
- Working with the sector to develop specific **itineraries** that encourage overnight stays in the County;
- Working with **potential new entrants** into this sector to help build their capacity to provide additional tourism accommodation for County Longford;
- Promoting and incentivising primarily through the development levies scheme **potential hoteliers** to establish additional hotel accommodation in the County;

LECP Actions – The following actions are included in the Longford LECP plan that support product and experience development in the Tourism Strategy.

LECP Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timeframe
<i>E6.4.9 - Support the development of a tourist visitor centre in Granard based around the Motte</i>	An interpretive centre opened adjacent to the Motte in Granard; Enhance the experience of visitors to the town and North Longford	LCC	Granard Traders Association, CLTC, Fáilte Ireland, LCRL	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.7 - Support the development of the tourist accommodation product in Longford</i>	Additional accommodation stock to satisfy growing need	LCC	CLTC, LCRL, Fáilte Ireland, Private Sector	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.10 - Support water tourism by sustainably developing the infrastructure on our watercourses and the development of Lanesborough as a premier water recreation and fishing destination</i>	Lanesborough regains its reputation of one of the premier fishing destinations in Ireland; Increased accessibility to the River Shannon	WI	CLTC, Fáilte Ireland, LCC, Lanesboro Traders Assoc. LCRL	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.12 - Complete the development of a network of integrated themed trails e.g. Rebel, Literary, Edgeworth, South Longford & Food trails</i>	Fully signed, branded & mapped series of cycling, walking and driving trails in place;	LCC	CLTC, LCRL, CoC	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.13 - Support the development of</i>	Increased accessibility to	LCC	Coillte, CLTC,	2017-2022

²County Wexford has 14 no. 4-star hotels; County Longford has 1 no. 3-star hotel and 2 no. smaller hotels

*restoration works to the 'White Bridge',
Newcastle Woods, Ballymahon*

woodland trails

LCRL, Fáilte
Ireland

4.0 Regional and Bespoke Initiatives

4.1 The Lough Ree and Mid Shannon Wilderness Park

Lough Ree and the Mid Shannon Wilderness is a relatively undiscovered area of rich history, heritage and nature. It is an absolute treasure trove of beautiful rivers, lakes, Islands, bogs and rich pasture land. The four local authorities of Offaly, Westmeath, Roscommon, Longford and Waterways Ireland, Bord na Mona, National Parks and Wildlife Services and Coillte have now come together in a Intra Regional Project to open up this long forgotten piece of hidden Ireland for the enjoyment and delight of locals, visitors and tourists.

The **Mighty Shannon** is centrally located between Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way and has always acted as a central hub for the rest of Ireland. This heart of Ireland has for thousands of years acted as a transport centre between east and west, and north and south of the Island. The Shannon River has since the earliest of times been the main access route right into the centre of Ireland. Our many visitors and settlers over the ages have sailed its waters to raise their castles, and to build towns and monasteries along its shores.

The large areas of **bog land** on either side of the Shannon also offer wonderful opportunities in relation to recreation and biodiversity. Most of these bogs, up to 8,000 hectares, are owned by Bord Na Mona and are reaching the end of their peat harvesting life. Once they revert back to nature other compatible uses will include renewable energy, flood attenuation and carbon sequestration.

In association with the Shannon and Lough Ree they present a one off opportunity for Ireland to develop a unique visitor experience of **social, cultural and natural biodiversity value of international importance**.

Lough Ree covers an area of 110 sq.km (11,000 hectares) and has over 50 islands, a dozen of which are highly significant. The waterway area of Lough Ree and Shannon River is also in state ownership. The **lake and its islands** are important in terms of mythology, literature, architecture, place-names, ecclesiastical and secular buildings, demesne landscapes, boating, modern island living, bogs and archaeology. These themes provide a rich fabric from which a wealth of stories and experiences can be developed. The lake and, in particular, the islands have been underdeveloped and underutilised from a tourism perspective.

Despite its location and its tourism assets, the Mid Shannon Waterway has yet to exploit its position in terms of tourism potential and it is underdeveloped relative to other visitor destinations in Ireland. This strategy now proposes to **promote and develop Lough Ree and the Mid Shannon Area** as a tourist destination of international attraction and repute. The various visitor and tourism assets will be developed and presented to make them more easily accessible and a more exciting and memorable experience for the visitor.

As a first step Longford County Council proposes to work with Bord na Mona and Keenagh Co-operative Association to develop a Bog Land Park with amenity walks around the **Corlea Trackway Centre** to enhance the tourism offer at this important location. This Corlea Project represents a first step in the development of a potential Mid Shannon Wilderness Park.

4.2 Regional Blueway Brand

The **Upper Shannon Blueway project** is a collaborative project between the four North Midland local authorities of Longford, Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Waterways Ireland designed to promote the rich

tapestry of water courses in the region as a key natural resource that encourages on and off water leisure pursuits. The growing interest in water based activities has resulted in a renewed focus on the potential for one of our key natural resources to deliver increased visitor numbers to the region.



Waterways Ireland is committed to supporting public and private initiatives designed to develop water based products and services and real opportunity exists to significantly increase County Longford's profile as a location that caters for a wide variety of activities linked to the different water channels. Recent projects include the Camlin/Shannon kayaking loop, the continued development of the Royal Canal walkway, the upgrade of Clondra harbour etc.

Longford County Council will continue to work with its regional partners, local community groups and private individuals on building new product to support the continued development of the Blueway brand. The linking of individual on and off water **trails across County borders** will be a priority action to improve accessibility and ease mobility through some of the region's most unspoilt landscape. Projects that **facilitate access** to our rivers or lakes, that **provide water based activities** such as boating, canoeing or kayaking, that **support walking or cycling** along the river and canal banks or seek to **develop small tourism based businesses** under the Blueway brand umbrella will be supported over the course of this Plan.

4.3 Pilgrim Routes

By 2019 County Longford will have a fully developed network of trails to include wooded trails, water-based trails, walking, cycling and driving trails. A key objective over the course of this plan will be to **achieve accreditation** for each of these trails through the National Trails office.

Longford County Council is currently working with other authorities on a plan to **develop Spiritual Trails** to rival the Camino in Northern Spain. County Longford could benefit enormously from such trails providing us with the opportunity to highlight our wide range of **ecclesiastical and pre-Christian infrastructure**. A proposal is now being developed by Limerick County Council in association with all the other relevant Counties to develop a **Shannon Pilgrim Way** running the length of the River Shannon from Mungret Abbey in Limerick through all the early Christian sites including the monasteries at Clonmacnoise and Inisclearaun in Longford up to the Erne River System in Northern Ireland. This north-south route will link in Longford/Roscommon with a proposed east west route from **Croke Park to Croagh Patrick** providing countrywide trails of international significance with County Longford at the crossroads.

Two other trails with regional dimension that will be enhanced over the course of this plan are the **Táin Trail** that stretches from Rathcraughan in Co. Roscommon to the Cooley Peninsula in Co. Louth and the

Famine Trail that originates in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon and proceeds along the Royal Canal via Clondra to Dublin.

LECP Actions– The following actions are included in the Longford LECP plan that support regional and bespoke product development in the Tourism Strategy.

LECP Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timeframe
<i>E6.4.1 - Explore opportunities for the development of EU tourism projects which can create viable inter-regional connections</i>	Stronger connections with European Partners developed and the potential for EU funded projects explored to deliver connected themed projects	CLTC	LCC, RPPRO, Fáilte Ireland, LCRL	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.8 - Explore the potential to utilise worked-out bog lands to develop a National Wilderness Park</i>	A significant natural attraction developed from depleted bogland	LCC	Bord na Mona, Fáilte Ireland, OPW, LCRL	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.11 - Harness and develop the potential of the Blueway Brand</i>	Significant numbers of water-based activity tourists attracted to the Blueway and visitors focussed on water based activities	WI	Fáilte Ireland, CLTC, LCRL, UESFE	2017-2022

5.0 Festivals and Events

5.1 Culture and the Arts

Longford has a rich cultural history, as reflected in the number of annual festivals celebrating the Arts, Music, Literature, History and other aspects of life in County Longford. Many of these festivals are well established with National and International appeal and an objective of the plan is to assist festival committees to stretch their ambition and reach out to even wider audiences. This objective is greatly enhanced with the launch of the new **Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022**, a Government initiative designed to promote participation in cultural activity and drive collective creativity.

Existing festivals that will be prioritised for support include:

- **The Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival**
- **The Aisling Children’s Arts Festival**
- **The Goldsmith Summer School**
- **The Marquee in Drumlish Music Festival**
- **The Granard Harp Festival**
- **The Lough Ree Environmental Summer School**
- **The Cruthu Arts Festival.**

Other festivals will continue to be supported as well as **new festivals** that might emerge during the course of the plan.

Of course quality infrastructure is critical for a vibrant arts and culture sector and it is essential that we continue to invest in infrastructure that allows us showcase our talents in their best light. Existing facilities such as the **Backstage Theatre**, **Bog Lane Theatre** and the **Creative Ardagh Heritage Centre** are key pieces of infrastructure that need further capital investment while private centres such as the **Shawbrook Dance School Academy**, individual music schools, musical and drama societies and arts organisations such as **Engage Longford** need support structures that increase their appeal to their target audiences.



A key piece of infrastructure that will hopefully be realised over the course of the plan is a **Creative Hub** space that can accommodate artists across all the disciplines. This **Showcase and Exhibition Space** should become part of the tourism fabric allowing visitors an opportunity to engage directly with artists and their portfolios.

LECP Actions– The following actions are included in the Longford LECP plan that supports festivals and events development in the Tourism Strategy.

LECP Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timeframe
<i>E1.3.9 - Support the potential development of the Creative industries</i>	Cultural and tourism potential enhanced through the development of Arts, Crafts and Creative industries; Increase in no. of new and expanding businesses in these sectors	LCRL	LEO, LCC, CoC	2017-2022
<i>E6.2.1 - Support the development of key arts, cultural and tourism facilities that underpin local economic performance</i>	Key arts and tourism venues upgraded and promoted as key elements of Counties economic fabric	LCC	LEO, LCC, CoC	2017-2022
<i>E6.2.2 - Strengthen relationships and partnership agreements with government agencies to protect and sustain national investment in arts infrastructure regionally</i>	Sustain support and develop arts infrastructure locally	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council	2017-2022
<i>E6.2.3 - Support the development of a dedicated gallery for the exhibition of visual arts and research the potential delivery of an arts hub with artist's studios and supports for the creation of work</i>	Harness the creativity and talents of visual artists and film-makers locally and promote the work of these artists	LCC	Dept. of Arts, Arts Council	2017-2022
<i>C6.2.4 - Promote and encourage a stronger appreciation of our heritage and culture through a participatory programme of cultural activities and encouragement of collaborations with educational institutions and health services</i>	Promote and encourage a stronger appreciation of our heritage and culture through a participatory programme of cultural activities and encouragement of collaborations with educational institutions and health services	LCC	HSE, LWETB	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.14 - Co-ordinate and support a calendar of festivals and events that have ability to attract visitors from outside County Longford.</i>	Annual calendar of quality coordinated festivals and events scheduled and promoted to a wide audience	CLTC	LCC, Fáilte Ireland, CoC	2017-2022

6.0 Marketing and Promotion

As County Longford continues to build tourism product and infrastructure the challenge now is build a promotion and marketing campaign that maximises impact in the market-place. The increasing influence of digital and social media marketing offers opportunity to cost effectively market the County on a par with competing destinations. Much of our concentration will be focused on ensuring that we have a professional global 'digital window'.

Key actions in enhancing our current promotional efforts include:

- Build a **Tourism Brand** around products that have capacity to deliver significant visitor numbers to County Longford.

- Strengthen and integrate a **tourism branding, and communications strategy** for County Longford.
- Build an effective **promotional campaign** to help grow visitor numbers to County Longford.
- Promote all the tourism offering in the County in a **cohesive and unified manner** under a banner that people associate with quality.
- Assess each facility's ability to **add value** to the County Longford Tourism Brand.
- Support the promotion of each facility Identified as a **tourism asset** for the County.
- Identify a **range of media** channels that allows the effective communication of our marketing activities.
- Manage the **marketing activities** to ensure that they continue to engage our target audiences.
- Offer **training and capacity building** to tourism providers to ensure a cycle of continuous product improvement.
- **Bundle product offering** to help enhance the visitor experience and retain visitors in the area for an extended duration.
- Build an **enhanced web presence** through more professional websites that inform the potential visitor, promote Longford's appeal as a tourism destination and facilitate a visit to the County. Ensure that www.longfordtourism.ie and www.visitlongford.ie are maintained to the highest possible standards.
- Build an enhanced digital media presence that provides a **wholly interactive platform** to connect effectively with target markets.
- Build **graphical and video content** that can be used across various media to capture attention and help sell the County as a tourism destination.
- Continue to use **local media outlets** to sell our story to local and regional audiences.
- **Partner in promotional campaigns** with stakeholder groups that have responsibility for promoting the County or region as a tourism destination.
- **Attend a number of showcase/trade events** that provide the right platform to engage with our target audiences.
- Produce a **range of printed promotional** material for distribution to all the tourism providers and tourism ambassadors in the County to ensure the visitor is well informed on our product offering.
- Create a **clear brand association** between Longford Tourism and the proposed Center Parcs Resort 'Longford Forest' which greatly enhances our potential to become a tourism destination.
- Ensure an **effective system** for capturing and relaying positive news stories, events or experiences connected with Longford Tourism.

Tourism Officer

Longford County Council will employ a **full-time Tourism Officer** to oversee the successful implementation of this work plan. This dedicated resource is seen as essential to ensure the effective coordination and promotion of tourism activity in County Longford over the course of the plan.

LECP Actions– The following actions are included in the Longford LECP that support marketing and promotion development in the Tourism Strategy.

LECP Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timeframe
<i>E6.4.2 - Support and underpin National & Regional Strategies designed to grow tourism numbers in the Midlands Region</i>	Regional branding such as Ireland’s Ancient East promoted; A range of integrated trails for the Midlands developed	LCC	Fáilte Ireland, CLTC, LCRL, WI, RPPRO, Private Sector	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.5 - Support the development of National/European Tourism Project(s) to become a significant tourism destinations In Ireland</i>	Develop a tourist market leader in its field which provides a significant increase in Tourist numbers	LCC	Fáilte Ireland, CoC, CLTC	2017-2022
<i>E1.1.11 - Continue to develop a strong “Brand Longford” which portrays Longford County as an attractive place to invest, live & work</i>	A range of marketing materials that support the brand image of the County as an attractive place to invest, live & work	LCC	LEO, Longford Business forum, CoC, LCRL	2017-2022
<i>E6.4.4 - Build and promote a Longford Tourism Brand around products that have capacity to deliver significant visitor numbers to the County</i>	A Communications Strategy and a clear marketable brand developed; Relevant marketing material produced	CLTC	LCC, Fáilte Ireland, LCRL	2017-2022
<i>C6.1.5 - Support efforts to improve performance and participation by groups and businesses in National benchmark awards e.g. IBAL, Tidy Towns, National Pride of Place</i>	National recognition for our towns and villages; Improved marks and rating in relevant awards	LCC	Tidy Towns Committees, Traders Associations, PPN, LCRL	2017-2022



Ardagh Heritage Village

7.0 Monitoring and Review

This work programme is aligned with the objectives of the LECP adopted by the Economic SPC of Longford County Council and presented to the Local Community and Development Committee. Importantly, it will form an important element of the annual presentation made to the Council on the status and delivery of the LECP. In this regard it is noted that monitoring and review of the actions set out in the LECP will be critical to measuring progress and ultimately achieving the Vision of this Plan.

The actions included in the Annual Implementation Strategy are subject to an annual monitoring and review process, which will inform the subsequent Annual Work Programmes. Monitoring of the completion/partial completion of actions committed to by the Lead Agencies in the Annual Implementation Strategy will also take place throughout the year. Further detail in relation to the format of this monitoring and review process will be developed as part of the remit of the Local Community Development Committee, the Economic Strategic Policy Committee and Longford County Council. Record will also be taken of the various Lead Agencies that commit to tourism deliverables in each year of the Implementation Strategy over the 6 year lifetime of the LECP.

The meetings of Economic Development and Enterprise SPC and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) are fora where the on-going implementation of the Longford LECP will also be discussed. The Council will also report on the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan as part of its annual reporting process and as such it will form part of the Annual Plan. The Local Authority's performance in implementing this plan will also be subject to the examination and report by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).

Furthermore the implementation of this Strategy will involve collaboration between Longford County Council and all those who play a role in tourism development in County Longford:-

County Longford Tourism Committee	County Longford Tourism Committee runs a full-time tourism office in Longford Town, employs a part-time tourism officer and implements the tourism development plan for County Longford
Tourism Ireland	Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a holiday and business tourism destination.
Fáilte Ireland	Fáilte Ireland supports the tourism industry to sustain Ireland as a high quality tourist destination. It provides practical business supports and assists in the implementation of strategies that benefit tourism.
East and Midland Regional Assembly	The East and Midland Regional Authority supports the development of the tourist industry in accordance with the relevant regional strategies.
Waterways Ireland	Waterways Ireland is responsible for developing the Blueway along the River Camlin and the Royal Canal which is an important new tourism development within County Longford.
Office of Public Works	The Office of Public Works own a number of important sites in County Longford including Corlea Trackway Centre.
Coillte	Coillte own a number of attractive forests within County Longford that are open to the public and are now key attractions to visitors.
Rural Recreation Office	Rural Recreation Office has supported County Longford Tourism to develop trails across the County that have achieved National Trail Standard Accreditation.

Longford Community Resources Ltd (LEADER)	Through the operation of the Rural Development Programme, Longford Community Resources have supported the work of County Longford Tourism Through the funding of marketing and development initiatives. They have also funded some of the most important tourism development projects in County Longford in recent years including the Royal Canal Walkway.
Rural Economic Development Zones	Developed under the Commission for Economic Development in Rural Areas, two successful tourism projects were funded in 2015 including refurbishment works to Connolly Barracks and promotion of the Blueways in the region.
Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy	This working group comprising of Local Authorities from Longford, Cavan, Roscommon and Leitrim work on a regional basis to promote tourism and other sectors.
Tourism Service Providers	Most importantly, the providers of visitor attractions, accommodation and services are the key element in the development of tourism in County Longford as without these community and private initiatives there would be no tourism industry.

ACRONYMS

COC –	Chamber of Commerce / Traders Associations.
DAHG –	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DECLG –	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
ER -	External Resource
EMRA -	East and Midland Regional Authority
FI -	Fáilte Ireland
HSE –	Health Service Executive
LCC –	Longford County Council
LCEB -	Longford County Enterprise Board
LCRL -	Longford Community Resources Limited
LTC -	Longford Tourism Committee
LWETB –	Longford Westmeath Education Training Board
TI -	Tourism Ireland
TO -	Tourism Office
TT -	Individual Members of Tourism Trade
WC -	Wider Community
WI -	Waterways Ireland

Appendices

