



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

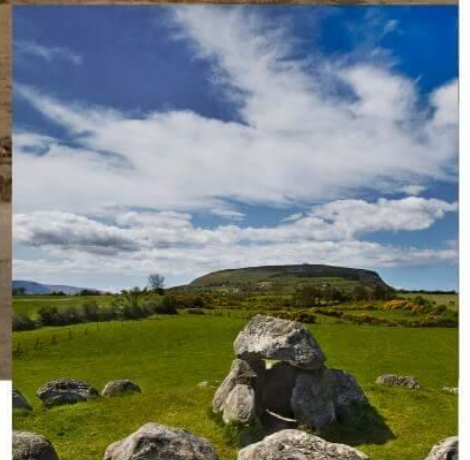
ANNUAL REPORT 2019



071 911 1111
info@sligococo.ie
www.sligococo.ie



County Hall
Riverside
Sligo



City Hall
Quay Street
Sligo

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Mission Statement

“To maximise economic, social, cultural and community development, deliver efficient and cost effective services in a democratic, accountable and transparent manner in partnership with local communities, voluntary and statutory agencies.”



**County Hall, Riverside, Sligo,
F91 Y763**



**City Hall, Quay Street, Sligo,
F91 PP44**

Introduction by Cathaoirleach

Unprecedented investment in Sligo



Councillor Tom MacSharry
Cathaoirleach

The unprecedented investment in our county's roads infrastructure is just one of many reasons to be positive about Sligo's future. The various projects planned for the coming years shows what can be achieved when key agencies work in dynamic partnership towards a common objective.

Taken in conjunction with the progress being made right across our service areas, I believe Sligo County Council is making a real impact on people's lives, and communities all over the county are energised and enhanced by schemes such as the Town and Village Renewal Programme.

In addition to the capital roads programme, we are progressing exciting proposals for O'Connell Street and the Stephen Street Cultural Plaza, the Yeats Trail, Armada Centre, Grange, Enniscrone Bath House, Pavilion and Promenade and Greenways. I believe our designation as a centre for economic growth will be the catalyst and driver as we deliver on our status as economic, tourist and cultural capital of the Northwest.

Sligo's many attractions combine to frame that elusive concept known as 'quality of life.' - outstanding natural scenery, first class service and hospitality sector, progressive and dynamic third level colleges.

Add to that wonderful mix: iconic literary figures, a treasure of ancient monuments, rich musical tradition across all genres, enchanting trails and scenic walkways. Taken in isolation, these jewels would enhance any setting, collectively they mark out Sligo as an optimum location for people in which to live, invest or visit.

Sligo County Council looks forward to working with our communities and local agencies to continue to grow and develop our wonderful county.

Councillor Tom MacSharry
Cathaoirleach

Introduction by Chief Executive



Ciarán Hayes
Chief Executive

Positioning Sligo to fulfil its potential

The outlook for Sligo at the end of another year is promising, a year when investment and growth became more dominant than retrenchment and cutbacks. 2019 marked the fifth year in succession for the Council to return a revenue surplus, amounting to more than €8m over that 5-year period. It also marked a strategic move towards the development of the Council's land holdings to facilitate the economic growth of Sligo, while retaining a strong focus on innovation and efficiencies to address legacy financial issues and provision of enhanced public services.

A significant milestone in this evolution was its' growth centre designation under the National Planning Framework (NPF) as it signalled a confidence in Sligo's role as a regional capital, a role that has been supported by a cumulative €250m investment in roads, bridges, housing, water, wastewater and tourism infrastructure projects. Many of these projects address long standing infrastructural deficits that have served to inhibit access, both to the major urban centre and from the factory floor to the market place. Projects include the €150m Collooney to Castlebaldwin N4 upgrade, €19m Western Distributor Road, both of which went to construction, while planning and design of the Eastern Garavogue Bridge was advanced during 2019.

In tandem with the advancement of infrastructural investment under the NPF, collaboration with other statutory agencies and the private sector resulted in a revision of priorities whereby Sligo is now positioned and marketed as a Smart Region and has attracted a variety of Information Communication Technology (ICT) industries providing quality jobs in a sustainable and innovative environment. The new collaborative environment was manifested in the launch of the Landing Space, a 66 desk facility for new companies in the heart of Sligo with 1 gigabyte upload and download speed in a unique project led by the IDA and with IT, Sligo and Sligo County Council as partners.

The return of employment opportunities in such city centre developments and the ongoing enhancement and reimagining of the public realm are critical components for the sustainability of a vibrant urban core. Retail in the heart of Sligo will benefit from the progression of the O'Connell Street enhancement project and will be complemented by the proposals for the Cultural Plaza to be advanced in 2020 in what is now Stephen Street Car Park.

The Council's ambition and vision for Sligo is matched by other statutory agencies and private sector organisations and is finding its expression through the Sligo Economic Forum. Established by the Council and working closely with the Institute of Technology, Sligo, Industrial Development Authority (IDA), Enterprise Ireland (EI), Chamber of Commerce, private industry, services sector and community groups, it set about charting a path for the development of Sligo by 2030 and is availing of the support and advice of a wing of the European Investment Bank, Joint Assistance Supporting Projects in the European Regions (JASPERS).

Having addressed many challenges, Sligo looks forward with confidence and ambition.

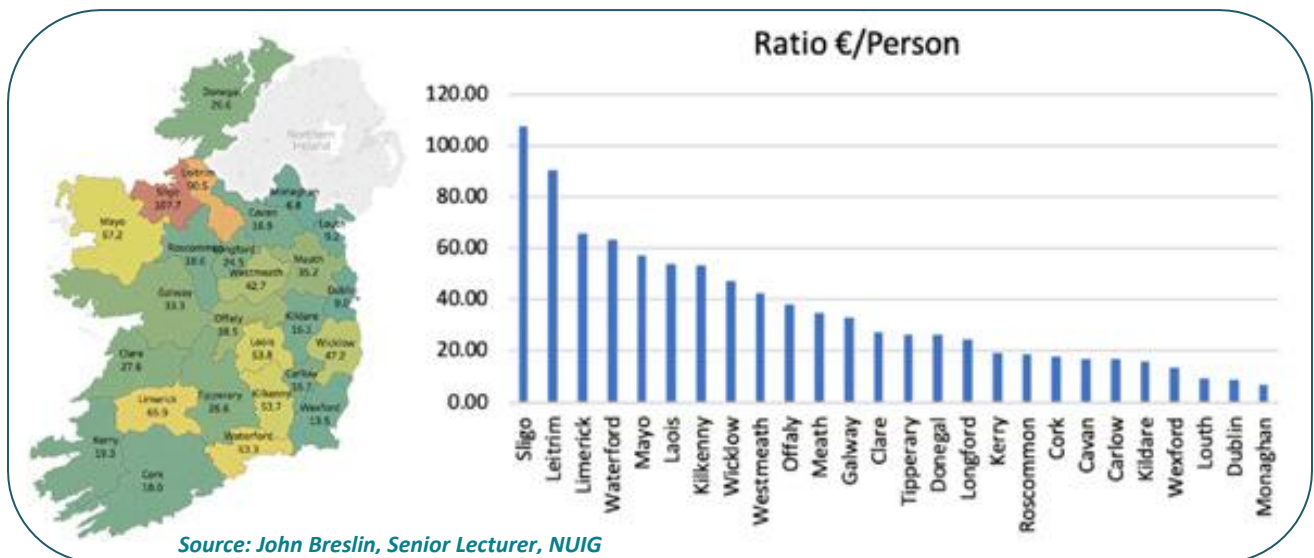
Ciarán Hayes
Chief Executive

UNPRECEDENTED INVESTMENT IN SLIGO

'The range and scale of investment coming into Sligo is unprecedented'. That's according to Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive of Sligo County Council as he detailed the benefits to Sligo from a wide variety of job announcements and infrastructure, tourism and public realm projects, all set to advance with committed funding streams in 2019.

Describing the projects as 'transformative for Sligo', he was fulsome in his praise for the Council and staff for the stark contrast in Sligo's fortunes when compared to the period immediately prior to the last local elections in 2014. 'Sligo can now look forward to a period of growth', he said, adding that 'the infrastructure now being delivered will contribute to the growth of Sligo for many years to come.'

Over €220m is presently committed for investment in projects as diverse as the Western Distributor Road, Eastern Garavogue Bridge, N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin upgrade, Surf Centre of Excellence in Strandhill, O'Connell Street upgrade, a cultural plaza in place of Stephen Street Car Park, development of a Yeats Trail around Sligo and a Mountain Bike Centre in Coolaney. There is also funding of over €1.1m for the enhancement of eleven of County Sligo's towns and villages plus additional finance for waste water treatment plants and four social housing schemes throughout the County.



Councillor Martin Baker, Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, believes that the level of investment announced for Sligo in recent weeks will have a major impact on the county and the region. 'I have long been concerned with the issues facing rural Ireland, but by working in partnership with other key local agencies, we have responded to the challenges and positioned Sligo as the economic driver of the region.'

'The formal designation of Sligo as a 'Growth Centre' under the National Planning Framework has the capacity to see all areas of our county grow and develop', he said, adding that 'a renewed sense of optimism and vibrancy is palpable at local level'. He considers the ability of the Council to attract significant funding for flagship projects, often in direct competition with other local authorities, to be a critical factor in this success.

'The investment and development proposals presented at the January Council meeting shows how far we have come in recent years and outlines a roadmap for positive times ahead. This investment will see work get underway on a range of tourism and infrastructure projects that will create around 300 construction jobs in the short term. After a number of very challenging years, we welcome the opportunity to harness local energy, ambition and pride, and to work together to secure our status as the economic, tourist and cultural capital of the Northwest.'

ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE		
Project	Status	Project Value €m
N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction commenced Q1, 2019 	150
Western Distributor Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction commenced Q4, 2018 For Completion Q2, 2020 	22
N4/N15 Urban Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction commenced Q4, 2019 For Completion Q1, 2021 	8
Eastern Garavogue Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project included in National Capital Plan Land acquired for road access in Q4, 2018 Detailed design by Q2, 2020 Tender process complete by Q4, 2020 Construction to commence by Q1, 2021 	24
PUBLIC REALM		
O'Connell Street Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project commenced Q3 2019 For Completion Q2, 2020 	3
Stephen Street Cultural Plaza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design Team to be appointed Q4, 2019 Detailed Drawings by Q2, 2020 Tender process complete by Q3, 2020 Commence Construction by Q4, 2020 	3
TOURISM		
Yeats Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tender process complete by Q4, 2019 Construction to commence by Q1, 2020 Construction complete by Q2, 2020 	0.6
Collooney to Bellahy Greenway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultants appointed to advance NIS Consultants appointed to advance detailed design Project to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála following consultation with Iarnród Éireann and adjoining landowners 	TBD
Surf Centre of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design Team appointed Q3 2019 Tender process to be completed Q1 2020 Construction to Commence Q2 2020 Completion by Q1 2021 	2
Coolaney Mountain Bike Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase I to be complete and ready for operation by end of Q2, 2020. 	6
HOUSING		
Cranmore Urban Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnered with IT, Sligo to advance a community wide education initiative aimed at easing the pathway to third level education. Physical works including road junction/traffic calming design and housing upgrades commenced Q3, 2019 and to continue throughout 2021 Part 8 Planning decision for new Community Centre to be advanced in Q1 /2020 	21
Rosses Point Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 Housing Units For Completion in Q1, 2020 	4.5
Knappagh Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 Housing Units For Completion in Q2, 2020 	7.2
Collooney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 Housing Units Completed in Q4, 2019 	3.7
Total		€255m

SLIGO SELECTED AS 2019 DIGITAL TOWN

Sligo has been selected as this year's Digital Town. Pioneered and led by IE Domain Registry, the Digital Town initiative seeks to highlight the economic, social and cultural benefits of the internet to towns across the country, and to ensure SMEs and local economies are realising the full potential of digital technology, particularly e-commerce.

Sligo has been chosen for its achievements in cultivating a truly digital environment in the town, and for its ongoing success in fully embracing digital for its residents and local businesses. IE Domain Registry believes that in showcasing Sligo's efforts, it can inspire other Irish towns to begin their journey to becoming fully digital. Gorey was chosen as Ireland's Digital Town 2018.

Bringing local towns online

Findings from IE Domain Registry's SME Digital Health Index 2018—research conducted among 1,000 SMEs—show that Irish SMEs are not maximising their full e-commerce potential. Ireland's e-commerce economy is worth €12.3 billion, but just 3 in 10 SMEs (30%) can take sales orders, and even fewer can actually process payments for transactions through their website (26%). Almost two-thirds (61%) of SMEs do not promote their services online and just 1 in 10 SMEs have taken part in a digital skills training or business funding programme.

In 2018, there were approximately 254,929 SMEs and micro-businesses in Ireland, accounting for 99.8% of total enterprises. IE Domain Registry research shows that each of these businesses stand to lose up to €25,761 a year on average if they do not have a website.

Digital technology can bring benefits to all sections of a town: businesses, community groups, and citizens. It can transform the delivery of public services, making it possible to do more with the same available resources, and enhance workplace productivity, allowing employees to work remotely from anywhere. From a social perspective, connecting people through digital technology fosters a sense of community and positivity. Research shows that 78% feel more connected and 80% feel happier when using digital technology.



Ciarán Hayes, Sligo County Council; Oonagh McCutcheon, IE Domain Registry; David Curtin, IE Domain Registry; Cleo Devaney, Aurivo; John Reilly, Sligo Local Enterprise Office

Members of Sligo County Council

BALLYMOTE - TOBERCURRY MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Cllr. Martin Baker
Fianna Fáil
2 Ardkeerin,
Riverstown, Co Sligo
071 9127472 / 086 1608334
cllrmbaker@gmail.com



Cllr. Michael Clarke
Non-Party
Knocknacullen,
Dromore West, Co Sligo
087 7708691
cllrMichaelClarke@eircom.net



Cllr. Martin Connolly
Fine Gael
Powellsboro,
Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo
087 2054930
connollymartin63@gmail.com



Cllr. Gerard Mullaney
Fine Gael
Moytura East, Kilmactranny,
Boyle, Co. Sligo
086 8221995
mullaneygerard1@gmail.com



Cllr. Dara Mulvey
Fine Gael
Rockfield, Coolaney,
Co Sligo
087 6885050
dfmulvey@gmail.com



Cllr. Joseph Queenan
Independent
Lacknaslieva,
Enniscrone, Co Sligo
096 36449 / 087 6214422
queenanjoseph@eircom.net



Cllr. Paul Taylor
Fianna Fáil
17 Cluain Dara, Gurteen,
Co. Sligo
087 6794509
paultaylorSligo@gmail.com

SLIGO - STRANDHILL MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Cllr. Tom MacSharry
Fianna Fáil
Teeling Street, Sligo
087 4163730
tommacsharry@hotmail.com



Cllr. Declan Bree
Independent
1 High Street, Sligo
071 9145490 / 087 2470802
dbree@eircom.net
www.declanbree.com



Cllr. Chris MacManus
Sinn Féin
3 Mountain View,
Maugheraboy Road, Sligo
086 8119550
chris@chrismacmanus.ie
www.chrismacmanus.ie



Cllr. Sinéad Maguire
Fine Gael
Seafield, Knocknahur,
Ransboro, Co. Sligo
087 4194039
sineadmaguire@yahoo.com









Cllr. Gino O'Boyle
People Before Profit
1 Stephen McDonagh Place,
Sligo
086 0757915
ginopbp@outlook.com



Cllr. Rosaleen O'Grady
Fianna Fáil
2 Kevinsfort, Strandhill Road,
Sligo
086 8060171
cllrrosaleenogrady@gmail.com

Management Team

	<p>Mr. Ciarán Hayes Chief Executive chayes@sligococo.ie 071 911 1111</p>		<p>Ms. Dorothy Clarke Director of Planning, Community and Economic Development dclarke@sligococo.ie 071 911 4411</p>		<p>Mr. Bartley Gavin A/ Director of Housing & Corporate bgavin@sligococo.ie 071 911 1111</p>
	<p>Mr. Tom Kilfeather Director of Infrastructure, Environment & Fire Services tkilfeather@sligococo.ie 071 911 1450</p>		<p>Mr. John Reilly Head of Enterprise Local Enterprise Office john.reilly@leo.sligococo.ie 071 911 1111</p>		<p>Ms. Marie Whelan Head of Finance mwhelan@sligococo.ie 071 911 1121</p>

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 Chris MacManus, Chairperson
- Councillor Martin Baker
- Councillor Declan Bree
- Councillor Tom Fox
- Councillor Gino O’Boyle
- Councillor Joe Queenan
- Alan McMenamin, PPN Community & Voluntary
- Pippa Black, PPN Social Inclusion
- Seat Vacant, PPN Environment
- Pat Fallon, Trade Union Pillar

SPC2 – Environment & Infrastructure

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

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

- Councillor Rosaleen O’Grady
- Councillor Marie Casserly
- Councillor Gerard Mullaney
- Councillor Chris MacManus
- Councillor Thomas Healy
- Councillor Thomas Walsh
- Councillor Tom Fox
- Councillor Tom MacSharry
- Corena Ward, PPN Community & Voluntary
- Sanja Ivandic, PPN Social Inclusion
- Suzanne Tynan, PPN Environment
- Aidan Doyle, Business Pillar
- Des Morrison, IFA

SPC4 – Climate Change

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



HOUSING & CORPORATE DIRECTORATE

Director: Mr. Bartley Gavin



INTRODUCTION

The Government's Social Housing Strategy sets out a vision that every household should have access to secure good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price and in a sustainable community.

A target of 384 units is set for Sligo County Council's Housing Programme under Rebuilding Ireland for the period 2017 – 2021. Among the major schemes delivered in 2019 was the Harbour View apartments at Cartron, Sligo, and it is proposed to 'showcase' this excellent development by hosting meetings of the Sligo Municipal District at this location in early 2020. Other significant projects delivered over the course of the last year included a 15 unit development in Collooney, with a 28 unit scheme at Knappaghbeg due to be completed in 2020 and a further 8 units in Ballymote being developed by St Vincent De Paul.

While the capital programme is one of the high profile social housing functions delivered by the Council, other important services are delivered by housing staff on a daily basis. These services include approving households for social housing support, allocation of houses to those on the Housing List, house maintenance and improvements, estate management, homelessness and traveller accommodation – the full range of services is detailed in the report. There is also outstanding work being delivered by the Cranmore Community under the Regeneration programme and we have outlined the key projects in this section of the report.

Following the local elections in 2019, we welcomed 'new' Members to County Hall, Councillor Dónal Gilroy, Councillor Martin Connolly, Councillor Thomas Walsh, Councillor Tom Fox, and Councillor Gerard Mullaney, who had served previously as an elected Member. Three former Councillors sadly passed away in 2019, Councillor Margaret Gormley, Councillor Leo Conlon and Councillor Joe Shannon. An election year is a particularly busy time for Corporate Services, with the establishment of a number of committees, and the introduction of an additional Municipal District area, Sligo -Drumcliff.

One of the civic highlights of the year was the Cathaoirleach's Awards presentations hosted in December by Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry. This event provides an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the many outstanding volunteers who are an invaluable resource in our communities.

Bartley Gavin
Director of Services

HOUSING AND BUILDING

The Council's Housing Section is active in the following areas:

- Approving households for social housing support
- Allocation of houses to those on the Housing List
- House maintenance and improvements
- Estate Management
- Homelessness
- Traveller Accommodation
- Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability and also the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme
- Private Rented Tenancy Inspections
- Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans and Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme
- Provision of new homes

The range of housing options now available to households approved for social housing support includes:

- Local Authority owned or Leased Social Housing
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)
- Voluntary Housing Schemes
- Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans

Social Housing Strategy

The Social Housing Strategy was launched by Government in late 2014. It sets out to support the vision that every household should have access to secure good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price and in a sustainable community.

Rebuilding Ireland-Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

'Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness' was published on 19th July 2016. Its aim was to ramp up the delivery of housing across all tenures, to help households meet their housing needs and also address homelessness. It set ambitious targets to double the annual level of residential construction to 25,000 homes, to deliver 47,000 social housing units in the period to 2021 and to make the best use of existing stock (a lot of vacant units in the country). In the latter part of 2017, the figure for delivery of social housing units was revised to 50,000 by 2021, through build (33,500), acquisition (6,500) and leasing (10,000) with a Government commitment to funding of €6 billion to support the delivery.

Repair and Leasing Scheme

A key component of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is a new scheme, the Vacant Housing Repair and Leasing Scheme, which targets the delivery of social housing and also ensures that existing housing stock is used to the maximum degree possible. The Scheme is open to owners of houses or apartments that have been vacant for at least one year (proof required) and which require an amount of repairs to bring the property to the required standard for rented properties. Repair and improvement works necessary to suitable vacant properties are to be funded by Local Authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (A.H.B.) in return for the property being made available for social housing through a lease for a period of between 10 and 20 years. The cost of the works is deducted from lease 7 (rent) payments over an agreed lease period.

The maximum cost of repairs allowed under the Scheme will be €40,000. The Council will consider properties in all areas but will in particular be interested in properties in its high demand areas. There will have to be a social housing demand for a property and also the property has to be assessed as being viable to provide social housing. Details of the Scheme are on the Council Website. The Council is currently considering a small number of applications under this Scheme.

Buy and Renew Scheme

Under this Scheme the Council can buy and renew housing units in need of remediation, and make these available for social housing use. The focus will be on older stock, particularly as part of the response being made in tackling dereliction and improving streetscapes/supporting renewal. It is expected that Buy and Renew properties would have been vacant for a period before being acquired for social housing purposes. The Council purchased one house under this Scheme in 2018 and has not been able to secure any other units under this initiative since then.

Maintenance and Repairs of Local Authority Housing Stock

The budget provided for the maintenance and repairs of Local Authority Housing Stock in 2019 is €956,812. The Council prioritises repair requests that pose a health or safety risk to the tenant and also requests from older people and those with special needs. The Housing section processed over 1,700 repair requests in 2019.

Adaptations and Extensions to Local Authority Stock

Each year the Department provides funding to the Council to enable it, where necessary, to carry out adaptations and extensions to Council stock. Works in a number of cases facilitated tenants in being able to leave hospital and return to their homes. 10% of funding is provided from the Council's own revenue resources with the balance of 90% funded by the Department.

The original allocation from the Department for 2019 was €361,111, which included the Council's contribution of 10%. The Council during the year was also successful in securing an additional allocation of €35,831.95. Adaptation works were carried out to 33 houses in 2019 and 2 no. extensions were also completed.

Housing Assessment, Allocation and Transfer

Housing Assessment

The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended, sets out the procedure for assessing households who are seeking social housing support. The assessment shall determine if the household is eligible and in need of social housing support.

There are 1,425 households on the housing waiting / transfer waiting list at 31st December, 2019.

No of Households	Details
676	HAP Accommodated and approved for a transfer
208	Other households approved for a transfer i.e. Council Tenants, AHB and RAS Tenants
541	Nett need - number of households not in receipt of any form of social housing support
1,425	Total

The Housing Section also offers advice on other housing options and supports that households may be eligible to avail of in lieu of social housing and/or while they are awaiting a housing allocation.

Allocations

The Council allocates properties in accordance with its "Allocation Scheme" which was adopted by the Members of Sligo County Council in June 2011. A total of 226 offers of tenancy issued in 2019, of which 128 (56%) were accepted.

Disability

The Council, in conjunction with the HSE, has completed a Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability. The preparation of the Strategic Plan involved the identification of current and future needs (over the next five years) for people with disabilities. The overall need was identified at 528. A significant challenge identified is dealing with the accommodation needs of people residing in the two learning disability congregated settings located at Cregg House, Rosses Point and at Cloonamahon.

The potential supply options were identified in the Plan. A minimum of 15% of all units in developments of ten units or more constructed by the Local Authority or by an Approved Housing Body are to be designed specifically for people with a disability. It is envisaged, in developments of less than ten units, that consideration will be given to providing one unit in each such development. The Plan is time lined to run from 2016 - 2020.

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP)

The implementation of the above payment (HAP) is a key Government priority and a major pillar of the Social Housing Strategy 2020. It is a new form of social housing support where the Council can provide housing assistance for households with a long term housing need including long term rent supplement recipients. The scheme will remove a barrier to employment by allowing recipients to remain in the scheme if they gain full-time employment. HAP will also improve regulation of the rented accommodation being supported, and provide certainty for landlords as regards their rental income.

HAP went live in Sligo on the 16th November, 2015 and at 31st December, 2019, there are 758 active tenancies. It is the intention of the Council over a period and in line with Government policy, to transfer all rent supplement applicants and recipients in the County into HAP.

The target of units set for delivery for the Council for HAP under Rebuilding Ireland for 2019 is 160 units. 222 no. were delivered.

Traveller Accommodation

Sligo County Council, under the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, was required to prepare and adopt a new Traveller Accommodation Programme (T.A.P.) for the five year period of 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018. This Programme was adopted in April 2014.

The table below shows the targets for and the numbers achieved in relation to the target set out in the TAP 2014-2018.

Tenure of Accommodation TAP 2014 - 2018		
Accommodation Type	Target	Achieved
Group Housing/ Halting site	11	0
Specific Purchase	7	7
Upgrade of existing facilities	4	4
Council Tenancy	5	30
RAS/HAP	35	23
Voluntary Housing	2	3
Total	64	67

Despite the economic difficulties faced by the Council, it managed to exceed its overall accommodation targets set out in the TAP 2014-2018 by three. The number of Council tenancies would indicate a preference for families to be accommodated in Standard Council housing and to move away from traditional halting site/group housing schemes.

In addition to the 67 households accommodated, two extensions to dwellings were completed in order to better accommodate families with special needs requirements, as well as 17 bathroom adaptations for Traveller families with disabilities.

Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 1st July 2019 – 30th June 2024

Sligo County Council, in accordance with Circular 35/2018, has prepared a new Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) for the period 1st July, 2019 - 30th June, 2024. This programme was approved by the Members of Sligo County Council on 2nd September, 2019. The Table below shows the targets to be achieved under this Programme.

Targets for Delivery						
Accommodation Type	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Total
Group Housing Scheme / Halting sites	2		5		5	12
Specific Purchases	1	1	1	1	1	5
Upgrade of Existing facilities / Serviced sites		6			3	9
Council Tenancy	4	4	4	5	4	21
RAS/HAP	3	3	3	4	4	17
Voluntary Housing	1			1		2
Total	11	14	13	11	17	66

26 traveller families were housed in 2019 but the for purpose of recording the data for the new TAP, only the figures from 1st July can be counted-16 families. This figure already exceeds the target of 11 for the period July 2019 - June 2020.

Works have started on the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Glenview Halting site, Ash Lane. This project will provide an upgrade of 6 no. existing bays, accessed by a new entrance road serving this portion of the site. Four households moved from an unauthorised halting site at Connaughton Road into the Alma Terrace Halting Site. The Council continues to liaise with the households on their future accommodation needs.

Housing Rent and Tenant Purchase Administration

Differential Rent Scheme

The Council operates a Differential Rents Scheme on the basis that tenants are charged a weekly rent in accordance with their ability to pay.

Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme

A new Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 was introduced on the 1st January, 2016 to enable tenants buy their homes.

Tenants must meet the eligibility criteria set out under the Scheme in order to be eligible to purchase their house. The new scheme involves discounts for purchasers linked to household income (40%, 50% or 60%) and a discount-related charge on the property that reduces to nil over a period, unless the house is resold or the purchaser fails to comply with conditions of the sale. Where the tenant purchaser resells the property before the end of the charge period, he or she is required to pay back to the Council, a portion of any profits arising from the sale.

18 no. households have availed of the Scheme to date with a further 4 no. in the pipeline.

Housing Community Development Support

Estate Management Programme

This Council currently manages housing stock of over 2,200 dwellings and 5 halting sites. The Council, in managing its housing stock, uses the resources of its Estate Management Officers, Housing Investigation Officer and Community Wardens and it also co-operates with Residents Associations and An Garda Síochána, to ensure that, in so far as possible, all Council estates are pleasant and safe areas to reside in.

The Council has a duty to manage and control its tenancy dwellings and accommodation let under the Housing Acts and to secure and protect the interests of its tenants, tenant purchasers and licensees, as far as is reasonably possible, in the peaceful occupation of those units. A new Anti Social Behaviour Strategy was adopted by Sligo County Council on 1st October, 2018.

All complaints in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and Estate Management issues are documented and followed up on in terms of Estate Management policies and strategies. The Estate Management Unit has developed policies designed to be consistent and fair in its approach to dealing with all complaints and aims to resolve issues in accordance with housing legislation and functions. It should be emphasised that due to current estate management initiatives, the incidence of anti-social behaviour in Council estates and sites is very low and most Council tenants are able to enjoy living in their dwellings free from any difficulties associated with anti-social behaviour.

Resettlement Tenancy Support and Sustainment

The Council, to minimize the instances of homelessness occurring and to assist in cases where homelessness does occur, has put in place a commissioned Resettlement Tenancy Support and Sustainment Service with Focus Ireland CLG. The aim of this service is to support individuals and particularly families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The Service is provided for General Needs clients and also for clients experiencing diagnosed mental health issues and/or addiction issues.

Private Rented Accommodation Standards

All landlords have a legal duty to ensure that their rented properties comply with certain minimum physical standards. These minimum standards are set out in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 137/2019). Responsibility for the enforcement of the Regulations rests with the Council. The Council is active in this area, and carried out 801 inspections in 2019. The Council also issued 423 Improvement Notices and 4 Prohibition Notices to Landlords during the year.

Administration of Homeless Service

Every effort is made by the Council to respond effectively and appropriately to those who present as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Sligo County Council has a Homeless Action Team (HAT) which regularly meets to assess individual cases and to adopt approaches to best support and assist homeless individuals or those at risk of becoming homeless and to put in place support services for them. This case management approach is key to achieving the principle contained in national policy of a housing led approach whereby homeless persons should be accommodated, in the first instance, in suitable accommodation with or without supports, rather than in so called expensive emergency accommodation. This has proven very effective for the Council. Households are also assisted with moving on to independent living. Assistance can also be provided in certain instances by way of hostel or B & B accommodation.

Services are available at the following locations:

- Maryville, Finisklin, Sligo (Sligo Social Services Council CLG) – Capacity 15 beds.
- Ballytivnan, Sligo (Sligo Social Services Council CLG) - capacity 5 beds.
- Shalimar, Finisklin, Sligo (Finisklin Housing Association Ltd) - capacity to provide total no. of beds of 23 beds.
- Provision of 23 units of transitional supported housing at Citygate, Mail Coach Road, Sligo.
- 2 units in Sligo Town for families requiring intensive supports under SLA with Focus Ireland CLG.

Sligo County Council has a dedicated worker in the Place Finder Homeless HAP role who is working to source HAP accommodation for those in homeless accommodation for prolonged periods. This person is working to explore new opportunities with landlords, agencies and the general public and is matching places with clients. However, there are still issues with the limited supply of private rented housing in the key areas of demand, and the disparity between HAP caps and rent levels for properties in these demand areas.

The Housing First National Implementation Plan (2018-2021) was launched at the end of September 2018 by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government Eoghan Murphy T.D and Minister for Health Simon Harris T.D. The Implementation of the Plan is critical to the State's response to supporting rough sleepers and long-term users of emergency accommodation into sustainable and independent tenancies. An integrated delivery Programme across housing and health will be essential for the success of Housing First. This Programme of work seeks to provide wraparound tenancy and health supports aimed at securing stable housing whilst also addressing individuals' underlying physical health, mental health and addiction challenges.

Accommodation and tenancy supports will be funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government through the delegated funding arrangements for homeless services in place with regional lead authorities. Physical health, mental health and addiction supports will be funded by the HSE through the relevant CHOs.

This model will provide accommodation for 24 long term homeless single people in Sligo, during the three year period from 2019/20 to 2021/22.

Sligo County Council continues to be the lead authority for Homeless Services for the North West Region (Sligo, Donegal and Leitrim) and is responsible for budget management and the co-ordination of funding for the region.

Support to Housing Capital and Affordable Programme

Housing Capital Programme

The target of units set for delivery for the Council for this Programme under Rebuilding Ireland for the period 2017-2021 is 384 units. The target could be met by:

- LA Housing (Construction, including Part V, and acquisitions)
- Capital Assistance Scheme (C.A.S.)
- Returning Vacant Social Housing Properties to Productive Use Programme (Voids programme) and Long Term Vacant/Derelict Social Housing Units (Derelict Voids)
- Leasing and Capital Advanced Leasing Facility with Approved Housing Bodies.

Housing Programme Summary Delivered to date-271 (target 384)	
2017	135 no.
2018	71 no.
2019	68 no.
Total	274 no.

Housing Projects

Sligo County Council is actively advancing a number of projects to provide housing to those most in need. The schemes are being advanced through a four stage Social Housing Approval Process for the delivery of Social Housing Construction Projects. Each stage requires approval from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government:

Stage 1	Project Feasibility and Capital Appraisal
Stage 2:	Project Design, Costs Planning approval, followed by a Part 8 Planning submission to the Members of the Council
Stage 3	Project Detail Design Development and Cost Plan for Pre-Tender
Stage 4	Project and Tender Review of Costs & Tender Submission. The Stage 4 approval allows the project to proceed to construction and for the Council to appoint a contractor.

27 no. Units were delivered in 2017/2018 with a further 42 no. delivered in 2019. These also include Part V Units.

The following Housing Schemes continue to be progressed:

Knappagh Road, Sligo: 28 units:

Works commenced on site on 15th October 2018 - to complete in 2020.



View towards Block B: Knappagh Beg Court, Knappagh Road

Rosses Point Road, Sligo - 14 apartments:

Works commenced on site on 26th November 2018 - completed in Quarter 4/2019.



View across bay towards Harbour View Apartments: Rosses Point Road, Cartron

Collooney - 15 Dwellings:

Works started on site on 19th November 2018 - completed in Quarter 4/2019.



View across housing site at Owenmore Drive: Collooney

St Josephs Terrace, Sligo - Single Dwelling Infill:

This is a Pilot project which has used new construction detailing to achieve Near Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standard. Works started on site on 21st December 2018 - completed at the end of October 2019.



Pilot Project NZEB infill house: St Josephs Terrace

Connolly Park, Tubbercurry: Phase 1 - 10 new dwellings:

The Council is currently endeavouring to get Department support to complete a Programme of works. A number of refurbishments have happened in recent years to accommodate a reletting programme.

A Stage 3 Capital Appraisal approval with regard to demolition works to four vacant houses together with proposals to construct 10 new dwellings was received from the Department on 9th October 2019. It is expected that the Scheme will commence in the first half of 2020.



3d view of proposed new units for Connolly Park, Tubbercurry

Refurbishment and redevelopment of Glenview Halting Site, Ash Lane, Sligo (6 no. bays):

Works started on site on 22nd July 2019 – to be completed in Quarter 2/2020.



View of refurbishment works underway: Glenview Halting site

St Farnan's Drive Dromore West, Co. Sligo - Phase 2 - 10 Dwellings:

This project will provide 8 two-bed dwellings and two three-bed semi-detached dwellings at St Farnan's Drive Dromore West. A Stage 4 Capital Appraisal approval was received from the Department dated 3rd October 2018. The Contractor started on site on the 3rd December 2019.



Maugheraboy, Sligo

A scheme is being prepared for Council property at Maugheraboy. A Stage 1 Capital Appraisal approval was received from the Department dated 23rd November 2018. This Scheme will continue to be progressed in 2020.

Rathellen, Finisklin, Sligo:

The Department sought proposals with regard to council owned land where houses could be designed and procured in a national contract. Council owned land at Rathellen was submitted in response to the Department request. The Department issued a letter dated 24th October, 2019 advising the Council that the site at Rathellen, Finisklin, has been identified as a preferred candidate site for use in Social Housing PPP bundle 3.

Group Housing Traveller Accommodation Scheme at Glenview, Sligo:

Designs have been prepared for a Group Housing Scheme at Glenview. This scheme will be advanced subject to the support of the current occupants of the site and the Department.

Future Capital Projects:

It is also the intention to develop a programme for further projects at a number of other locations including Connolly Park Tubbercurry (Phase 2), Bunninadden, a rural house at Dromore West, Carney, Geldof Drive, Cranmore, Sligo and the Centre Block site at Cranmore, Sligo. These projects will be demand lead and will be assessed on the basis of Stage 1 Capital Appraisal submissions to the Department.

Extensions Programme.

Two further extensions are currently being progressed.

Acquisitions, including Part V acquisitions

47 no. houses were acquired by the Council in 2017 and 2018. The Council has also acquired a further 13 houses in 2019. A further 3 units were also purchased by the Housing Agency on behalf of the Council.

Capital Assistance Scheme (C.A.S.)

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) in August 2017 announced a 'Call for Proposals, 2017' under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) to Approved Housing Bodies (A.H.B.s) to submit proposals to Local Authorities for the delivery, through either construction or acquisition, of housing accommodation, to cater for priority groups including;

- elderly;
- homeless persons (including 'care leavers' exiting state care on reaching the age of 18); and
- people with a disability, with a particular emphasis on moving people with disability from a congregated setting into community based living.

There is no deadline for submission of applications in what is effectively an open 'rolling' call for applications.

15 no units were delivered in Sligo in 2017 and 2018. A further 2 units were delivered in 2019.

C.A.S. Projects being developed

Cuan Íosa, Ballymote, Co Sligo - 8 units: St Vincent de Paul Housing Association

Works started on site in December 2018 – to be completed in Quarter 2/2020.



Works on site at Cuan Íosa, Ballymote

Returning Vacant Social Housing Properties to Productive Use Programme (Voids Programme)

This Programme is directed at housing units where the cost of remediation greatly exceeds the cost of the normal end-of-lease maintenance and is capped at €30,000 of Department funding per unit. A total of 67 units were remediated in 2017. A total of 53 units were remediated in 2018, 14 of which were included in the overall Rebuilding Ireland delivery target for 2018, as directed by the Department.

54 further units were remediated in the current year, 5 of which are included in the overall Rebuilding Ireland delivery target for 2019, as directed by the Department.

Long Term Vacant/Derelict Social Housing Units

The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government announced in July 2016 that funding would be made available to Councils to fund the remediation/ return of a number of long term vacant/derelict social housing units to productive use. The cost of Unit repair had to exceed €30,000. 20 units were remediated in 2017 and 2018. 4 no units have been remediated in 2019 but are not included in the overall Rebuilding Ireland delivery target for 2019, as max of 5 only voids allowed - included under Voids Programme above.

Leasing

Units under this Programme can be delivered in a variety of ways to include,

- Multi-unit developments directly leased by Councils,
- Individual units either leased or through rental arrangements that can be acquired using Council delegated sanction, and
- Units leased, purchased or constructed by Approved Housing Bodies.

The Council is currently in discussions with developers and Approved Housing Bodies for a number of units. 3 units having already been delivered in 2019 and a further 6 no. units are to be delivered in 2020.

Capital Advanced Leasing Facility with Approved Housing Bodies.

One unit was delivered in 2018.

RAS Programme

Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

The Rental Accommodation Programme assists households who are in receipt of Rent Supplement for more than 18 months and who have been assessed by the Housing Authority as having a long term housing need (excluding asylum seekers or other non-nationals who do not have leave to remain in the State permanently).

25 units were delivered by the Council in 2019 – target 18. There is declining numbers of RAS units available. Property owners in a large number of situations are tending not to offer units for contract renewals.

Housing Loans

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is a new Government backed mortgage for first time buyers. It is available nationwide from all local authorities from 1st February 2018.

A first time buyer can apply for a Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan to purchase a new or second-hand property, or to build their own home. The loan is a normal Capital and Interest-bearing mortgage which is repaid by direct debit on a monthly basis. A person can borrow up to 90% of the market value of the property.

Maximum market values of the property that can be purchased or self-built are:

- **€320,000** in the counties of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow, and
- **€250,000** in the rest of the country.

17 households have received a loan under this new Scheme to date.

Housing Grants

Housing Adaptation Grants for older People and People with a Disability Schemes

The Allocation under this heading for the Council for 2019 is €1,405,298 of which €281,060 (20%) is provided from the Councils own revenue resources. The Council during the year was also successful in securing an additional allocation of €47,507.13.

The applicable schemes are,

- Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability.
- Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme.

Adaptation works were carried out to 155 houses in 2019.

CRANMORE REGENERATION PROJECT SLIGO EAST CITY, CRANMORE AND ENVIRONS REGENERATION MASTERPLAN

Sligo County Council and the Cranmore Regeneration Project Office are continuing to press forward with the implementation phase of the Sligo East City, Cranmore and Environs Regeneration Masterplan 2016.

The Regeneration Vision is:

To make the area a more attractive place to live with better, convenient connections to existing and new facilities, locally and in the rest of Sligo.

To enable individuals and communities in the area to avail of emerging opportunities and access to employment, education, health and family support services.

To secure the area as a location of choice for future generations in which to live, work and visit.

The three elements to deliver the Regeneration Vision are:



The Masterplan describes a number of physical projects and social and economic initiatives to address needs. These projects will provide much needed investment to improve housing in the area, open spaces and roads, as well as investment in community facilities.

Funding has been secured for some elements of the Plan from the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), the European Regional Development Fund and other sources.

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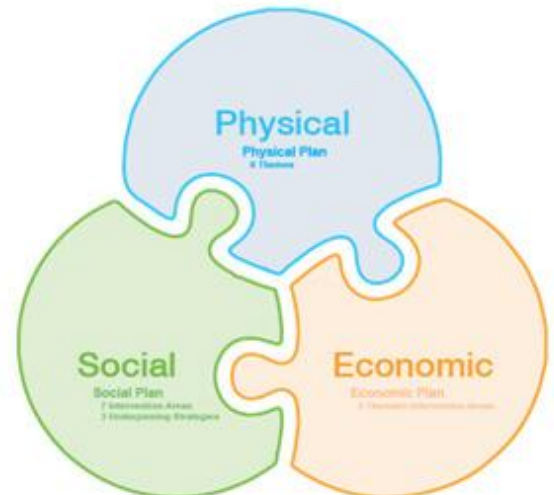
Funding has been secured for some elements of the Plan from the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), the European Regional Development Fund and other sources.

The following are details of projects progressed from the [PHYSICAL PLAN](#):

Provide quality spaces for community facilities

New Community and Enterprise Centre and Urban Park

Key to developing a new Community Centre in Cranmore is the continuing support and involvement of existing agencies and service providers, specifically the two long-established organisations delivering services in the Cranmore and East City area; Cranmore Community Co-Op Ltd and the Abbeyquarter Community Centre. The views and opinions of these two organisations were critical to informing a vision for the new centre and the future management and operation of the facility.



The needs identified by organisations, agencies and service providers working in the area were analysed and a proposed design for the new Community and Enterprise Centre (the Centre) has been prepared by the Cranmore Regeneration Architectural Design Team. The innovative and unique new Centre will be a space that has the potential to become a real beacon for the community and a landmark for Sligo.

The Part VIII Planning Process commenced in December 2019. The approval of the members of Sligo County Council will be sought at the March 2020 Council meeting.

The building works will consist of:

- 2 Storey Community Centre
- Upgrading works to car parking and carriageway, footpaths and street lighting
- Installation of 4 no. serviced containers within the site boundary to facilitate social enterprise and provide storage
- Sports and Play Area, Cycle Ways
- Landscaping to the existing green area, new footpaths where necessary, car parking spaces, traffic calming measures etc.



View of the New Community Centre looking from Devins Drive

Devins Drive/Cranmore Road Junction, Pedestrian Safety Upgrade Work

The works to the Junction at Devins Drive and Cranmore Road commenced in Q3 2019 and are due to be completed in Q1 2020. The design of the new junction has taken on board concerns raised by residents at many community consultation events held over the years. The idea behind the layout is to reduce the speed of traffic on Devins Drive, to provide safe pedestrian crossing points and a bus shelter. There are three controlled pedestrian crossings which provide access for residents with disabilities to cross both Devins Drive and Cranmore Road safely. Pedestrians are being prioritised over cars, with cars having to give way.

A road traffic safety audit was conducted of the junction design proposals and, to conclude the final stage of this process, a further road traffic safety audit is to be completed on site after a period of use. This project received funding from the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government and Sligo County Council's Roads Department.

Building and Energy Efficiency Works – Phase One, Pilot Project

The first phase of works to 96 homes in Cranmore Place, Cranmore Drive and Cranmore Villas received funding approval of €3.6m in October 2019. Following negotiations with the Department, Sligo County Council was successful in securing additional funding for the installation of Air to Water Heat Pumps in line with the recently published Government Strategy on Climate Change. Works were tendered in October 2019, with the successful contractor being appointed in December 2019, with work due to commence in Q1 2020.

Residents affected by the works were consulted and families whose houses are benefiting from internal works will be decanted early in 2020 to alternative houses for the duration of the works. The works are planned to take ten months over three stages and consist of environmental improvements and building energy upgrades.

Sligo County Council has been successful in leveraging capital from these works through the Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme. It is estimated that this will realise €275,000 across the planned three phases of building energy upgrades that will be allocated to the funding package for the Community Centre.

Housing at Joe McDonnell Drive and Link to Chapel Hill Road

Consultations were ongoing with residents during 2019 in relation to the above project.

Detailed construction plans, specifications and budget costs were submitted to the DHPLG in July 2019 and Stage 3 approval was received in August 2019. In agreement with the families this project was suspended for a short period, re-engagement with the families will commence early in 2020 with a view to progressing the project to the tender stage and commencement on site in 2020.

Restoration of Riverside Lodge, Doorly Park

It is an objective in the Masterplan that the restoration of the Lodge be explored as it provides an opportunity to create a new public/community space close to the river, adjoining park and recreation areas. This building is a piece of local heritage, a protected landmark structure, at a key location within the area. Work to protect the building from further decay was carried out in 2018. During 2019 work continued on the preservation on the building with a view to completion in Q2 2020. Work commenced on securing funding for the fit-out of the building. This building when complete will provide tourism, community and enterprise facilities in the Doorly Park / Garavogue areas.

Improve access to Quality Amenities and Open Spaces



Angling Stands

The Masterplan contains an objective to support the development of water-based recreational opportunities and associated facilities at Doorly Park.

The development of angling facilities is a key resource in improving the attractiveness of the area and maximising use and potential of a key local amenity. The Council is working in partnership with Sligo Tourist Development Association (STDA) on this project and planning permission was granted in May 2019 for the erection of four floating angling stands along the Garavogue Riverside Walk. STDA, in conjunction with Sligo County Council are seeking funding from Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) to fund the works.

The following are details of projects being progressed under various strategies contained in the **SOCIAL PLAN**:

Education and Learning Strategy

The delivery of the Cranmore Regeneration Project's Education and Learning Strategy continues to provide the community with a wide range of educational supports, activities and initiatives across the lifecycle. These are all being delivered in partnership with local childcare services, schools, colleges, support agencies and community organisations. An eight week DIY Course was delivered during the Autumn of 2019 in the Abbeyquarter Men's Group. The course was funded by the Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education Training Board and the Cranmore Regeneration Project in partnership with Cranmore Community Co-op.

Cranmore Regeneration Project also partnered with St Angela's College Access Office for College Awareness Week in November 2019. Other supports being delivered in the community include study support workshops, parenting courses and community education courses.

The following are some examples of the educational initiatives and supports that are available:

Right to Read Programme

Funding for the delivery of the Time to Read programme was received from the DHPLG in June 2019. The Time to Read programme, run by Business in the Community Ireland, partners local organisations with children in second class to assist them to increase their enjoyment of books and improve fluency and comprehension when reading. Eight Employees from Sligo County Council began reading with second class Children from St. Johns National School in November 2019. The duration of the programme is eighteen weeks. It will finish in April 2020 with a workplace visit to the Council and Sligo Library by the children, teachers and volunteers.

Cranmore Education Mentor Programme

The Cranmore Education Mentor Programme is a joint initiative between Cranmore Regeneration and the Institute of Technology, Sligo. It is a key element in the implementation of the Sligo East City, Cranmore and Environs Regeneration Masterplan. It is part of the Higher Education Authority Attract - Transition - Succeed (ATS) project set up to increase the diversity and social mix of the student population within the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the West and North West of Ireland.



Celia Keenaghan, Cranmore Education Mentor Programme

Celia Keenaghan took up the post of Education Mentor in Cranmore in August 2019. She has been providing one to one mentoring support to students, young people and adults as well as engaging with the wider community by providing accessible one to one support sessions, community based study support workshops and online learning support. The mentor's

role is to support anyone in the community who is interested in exploring their educational needs.

Music Generation Programme

This programme is continuing very successfully, in schools in the Regeneration Area. Thirty seven Transition Year students took part in the end of year Music Generation event held by the Mercy Secondary School in May 2019. A number of these students were from the Regeneration area.

Health and Wellbeing

A number of initiatives were progressed under this strategy, during 2019 to meet the actions in the Masterplan such as:

- Support for the Abbeyquarter Men's Group and Community Garden
- Support for Cranmore Age Friendly Group – development of a Time Capsule
- Funding applications submitted for a number of projects under various funding initiatives

Family Support

The following initiatives are continuing under this strategy:

- Breakfast Club
- Tenancy Support and Sustainment Project

Arts and Culture Strategy

Members of the Regeneration Team, in partnership with Cranmore Co-op and the community, worked with Artist, Locky Morris to explore various ways in which the Journey and Story of Cranmore and its People across the Decades, could be depicted through Arts and Culture. A number of focus groups and individual meetings with members of the community were held during 2019, with the final report due from the Artist in early 2020.

Community Safety and Housing Management Strategy:

Cranmore Community Safety Group

This group involves state agencies and community and voluntary groups in identifying projects and initiatives to improve community safety for residents of the east City area.

During Q4 2019 – from September to December the group, in partnership with the Community Policing Unit at Sligo Garda Station, held Garda Community Information Clinics, in the Abbeyquarter Centre, on a pilot basis. The purpose of the clinics was to give the community the opportunity to avail of general services provided at traditional Garda Stations along with information on a range of other services.

The first Clinic took place on Monday 9th September, 2019 and subsequent Clinics were held on every second Monday. Each clinic was held for 2 hours.

Other organisations providing a service in the area were also in attendance, in particular, organisations represented on the Community Safety Group and the Illegal Money Lending Group

Illegal Money Lending Group

The Illegal Money Lending Group is a sub group of the Cranmore Community Safety Group.

An information leaflet and accompanying poster were developed, in early 2019, to provide information on the cost of different types of borrowing, the various organisations that can support people in making good borrowing decisions or help if they have money problems

The group also commissioned a newspaper article which was the lead story in the Sligo Champion on 19th March, 2019

Membership and geographical boundaries of the group were expanded to include other areas of Sligo City, as this issue is much broader than the Regeneration Area



The following are details of projects progressed from the **ECONOMIC PLAN**

Economic Development

The overall vision for the Economic Plan is to enhance employment and economic development in the area. The Economic Plan complements and is complemented by the actions and strategies of the Social and Physical Regeneration Plans. Proposals in the Social Plan, particularly in the areas of Education and Learning and Unemployment and Training seek to create the conditions for successful economic regeneration by ensuring that people of all ages receive the supports they need to avail of opportunities. In order to progress actions identified in the Economic Plan the following work has been undertaken:

Cranmore Working Initiative

- The East City Jobs Fair took place on Tuesday 26th March, 2019
- It was organised by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEA&SP) in conjunction with Cranmore Regeneration Project and Cranmore Community Co-op.
- The event was attended by ninety six jobseekers
- Twelve employers, and a range of support agencies and guest speakers were present
- A follow up clinic was held by the DEA&SP to facilitate clients wishing to explore employment opportunities arising from the Jobs Fair

Conclusion

The social, economic and physical strategies of the Masterplan can achieve a transformative impact for the East City area, providing an action plan for change with benefits for both the local and wider community, which includes the development of Sligo as Designated Regional Growth Hub. This will be achieved through continued consultation and collaboration with the Community, in particular building on the strong links that the Regeneration Project have with the Cranmore Community Co-op and Abbeyquarter Community Centre and the Sligo Family Resource House project.

CORPORATE SERVICES

The range of services provide by Corporate Services include:

- Administration of Council and Municipal District meetings
- Providing administrative services for the Cathaoirleach and chairs of Municipal Districts
- Support for elected members
- Preparation of the register of electors
- Freedom of Information
- Provision of media and Information Services, administration and the delivery of customer services
- Town Twinning etc.

Council Meetings

The meetings coordinated by Corporate Services include monthly Plenary meetings, bi-monthly Municipal District meetings for Sligo and Ballymote-Tobercurry, Corporate Policy Group, Joint Policing Committee, Disability Consultative Committee, Procedures Committee, Twinning Committee and Audit Committee.

Annual Meeting

At the Annual Meeting of Sligo County Council held in June 2019, Councillor Tom MacSharry was elected as Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council for a one year term. Councillor Gino O'Boyle was elected as Leas-Cathaoirleach. Councillor Gino O'Boyle was appointed as Mayor of Sligo Municipal District and Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady as Deputy Mayor. Councillor Tom Fox was appointed Cathaoirleach of Municipal District of Sligo (Sligo-Drumcliff) with Councillor Marie Casserly as Leas-Cathaoirleach. Councillor Paul Taylor was appointed Cathaoirleach of the Ballymote-Tobercurry Municipal District with Councillor Dara Mulvey as Leas-Cathaoirleach.



Back Row (left to right): Ciarán Hayes Chief Executive SCC; Councillor Gerard Mullaney; Councillor Michael Clarke; Councillor Martin Baker; Councillor Martin Connolly; Councillor Joe Queenan;
Front Row (left to right): Leas Cathaoirleach Councillor Dara Mulvey; Marie Whelan, Director of Services SCC; Cathaoirleach Paul Taylor; Dorothy Clarke, Director of Services SCC;



**Back Row (left to right): Councillor Dónal Gilroy; Councillor Thomas Healy;
Front Row (left to right): Councillor Thomas Walsh; Councillor Tom Fox Cathaoirleach of Municipal District of Sligo (Sligo-Drumcliff); Councillor Marie Casserly (Leas Cathaoirleach)**

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**Back Row (left to right): Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive SCC; Marie Whelan, Director of Services SCC; Councillor Declan Bree; Councillor Chris MacManus; Dorothy Clarke, Director of Services SCC;
Front Row (left to right): Councillor Sinead Maguire; Mayor Councillor Gino O'Boyle; Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady (Deputy Mayor)**



Back Row (left to right): John Moran, Senior Executive Officer SCC; John Reilly, Head of Enterprise Local Enterprise Office SCC; Councillor Paul Taylor; Councillor Joe Queenan; Councillor Thomas Healy; Councillor Gerard Mullaney; Councillor Tom Fox; Councillor Thomas Walsh;

Middle Row (left to right): Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive SCC; Dorothy Clarke Director of Services SCC; Councillor Martin Connolly; Councillor Dónal Gilroy; Councillor Declan Bree; Councillor Martin Baker; Councillor Michael Clarke; Councillor Dara Mulvey;

Front Row (left to right): Councillor Marie Casserly; Councillor Gino O'Boyle; Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry; Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady; Councillor Chris MacManus;
(Missing from photo - Councillor Sinead Maguire)

Local Representation and Civic Leadership

Corporate Services provides Administrative support for the Cathaoirleach and the chairs of the Municipal Districts. In 2015 the 'Cathaoirleach's Awards Scheme' was revived, an initiative which was devised to reward the special volunteers who have given exemplary service to their community. At a ceremony in County Hall in December 2019, awards were presented in the categories of Arts and Culture, Community Group, Community Individual, Environment and Heritage, Schools, Spirit of Sligo, Sports and Young Enterprise.

Cathaoirleach Award Winners 2019

Category	Winner	Presented by
Arts & Culture	Seán Walsh	Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady
Community Group	Carney Ladies Mini Marathon Team	Councillor Marie Casserly
Community Individual	Teresa Flaherty	Councillor Tom MacSharry
Environment/Heritage	Adrian O'Neill	Councillor Chris MacManus
Schools	Coláiste Iascaigh Transition Year	Councillor Joe Queenan
Spirit of Sligo	Innisfree Wheelers Trishaw Project	Councillor Declan Bree
Sports	Lucy Conlon Oates	Councillor Thomas Walsh
Young Enterprise	Conor Stinchon	Councillor Gino O'Boyle



Seán Walsh, Arts & Culture



Carney Ladies Mini Marathon Team – Community Group



Teresa Flaherty, Community Individual



Adrian O'Neill, Environment/Heritage



Coláiste Iascaigh Transition Year, Schools



Innisfree Wheelers Trishaw Project, Spirit of Sligo



Lucy Conlon Oates, Sports



Conor Stinchon, Young Enterprise

The Council also hosts Civic receptions and receptions hosted by the Cathaoirleach to honour people who have given distinguished service or have excelled in a particular endeavour. The following is a representation of events which were hosted by Sligo County Council during 2019.



Sligo County Council held a Civic Reception for Feis Shligigh to honour the organisation during their 90th anniversary celebrations.



Cathaoirleach Councillor Martin Baker hosted a reception for Easkey GAA team to honour their achievement on becoming the first team from Sligo to reach the final of All-Ireland Club Championships



Mayor of Sligo Councillor Gino O'Boyle hosted a reception at County Hall to honour the volunteers involved in junior football in the region



Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry hosted a reception at County hall to honour the successes of the Lisa Cooper Dance Academy at the World Championships in August.



A delegation from Ningbo Province in China visited Sligo on 18th December



Sligo Hurlers were honoured by Mayor Councillor Gino O'Boyle and Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry on being crowned Nicky Rackard Champions for 2019

Register of Electors

The 'County of Sligo Local Electoral Areas and Municipal District Orders 2018' provided for the alteration of the Local Electoral Areas and the Municipal Districts in County Sligo. There is an increase in the number of Municipal Districts to three:

Municipal Districts in Sligo

Name	Number of Members
Municipal District of Ballymote-Tobercurry	7
The Municipal District of Sligo	5
The Borough District of Sligo	6

Sligo County Council currently employs ten Field Officers to submit amendments to the Electoral Register in advance of its publication.

An information campaign is undertaken every year to remind people of their responsibility to check the Register. The campaign includes advertisements in local papers, notices circulated on social media and on the Council's website. Posters are displayed in Post Offices, Garda Stations, Libraries and Area Offices to encourage the public to check if they are registered.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is currently carrying out a review of the electoral registration process, including a simplification of the forms and process, a rolling Register and continuous registration, optional on-line registration and enabling a single national register database.

Details of the review are available on www.registerreform.gov.ie

Information Services

Corporate Services provide information services to the Elected Members, staff and media, monitors and updates our website in conjunction with IT Section. The section is also responsible for issuing media releases and coordinating responses to media queries. Among the publications produced are the Annual Report and the Corporate Plan.

Freedom of Information

Since Freedom of Information legislation was introduced in 1997, there is a right of access to official records held by the Council, and the right to have personal information held corrected or updated where such information is incomplete, incorrect or misleading. In 2019, 83 applications were received.

Corporate Policy Group

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) consists of the Cathaoirleach and the Chairpersons of the SPCs and is supported by the Chief Executive. The role of the CPG includes advising and assisting the Elected Council in the formulation, development, monitoring and reviewing of policy for Sligo County Council. Full decision making power however remains with the Elected Council.

Disability Consultative Committee

Sligo County Council's Disability Consultative Committee was re-established as a sub-committee of the Authority's Housing and Corporate Strategic Policy Committee. Its main function is to advise the Local Authority on policies and improve services, to make recommendations on disability proofing of policies, projects and actions. The Committee is made up of elected members, representatives of the disability sector and community organisations, and members of Council staff.

Launch of Sligo County Council Disability, Inclusion and Access Strategy

Sligo County Council's Disability, Inclusion and Access Strategy 2019-2022 was launched in Sligo County Hall in May, 2019. The launch was attended by the Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, Councillor Martin Baker, Chair of the Disability Consultative Committee, Councillor Declan Bree, and Susan Carton, Lecturer and Programme Director St Angela's College.



Cathaoirleach Councillor Martin Baker, Chair of the Disability Consultative Committee Councillor Declan Bree and members of the Committee at the launch of Sligo County Council's Disability, Inclusion and Access Strategy

The Cathaoirleach Councillor Baker said

'Issues surrounding access and inclusion are among the most important to be addressed by this Authority, and I am especially pleased that this Strategy is being launched in the lifetime of this Council. I know the incoming Council will be fully supportive of your important work as the various actions set out in the plan are delivered.

A measure of any society is the extent of our actions in the areas of disability and inclusion. The objectives you have agreed have been framed from the collective experience and expertise of your committee members. However the delivery of a society where the rights of people with disabilities are respected is not the sole responsibility of the local authority - every person has a duty to work towards a fair, inclusive society.

The development of the plan was a thorough and inclusive process, and this was shown in the scope and quality of the submissions received which form an integral part of the strategy. The local authority has a responsibility to provide the resources required to ensure the targets are delivered and people with

disabilities are supported and encouraged to realise their full potential. While the general public are supportive of this agenda, they need a formal structure and a clear roadmap to guide their endeavour and this is the true value of this document.'

Chair of the Disability Consultative Committee, Councillor Declan Bree said

'I regard today's launch, not as the culmination of a process, but as a pivotal starting point to introduce the measures and oversee the actions outlined in the strategy. It is one of the most important documents published by this Council over its five year term. It is estimated that 15% of County Sligo's population have a disability, and they encounter various challenges in their every-day lives.

It is our duty as a Local Authority, in conjunction with other stakeholders, to help people overcome these barriers and deliver a society where people with disabilities enjoy the same services and opportunities as other citizens. When the National Disability Inclusion Strategy was launched in July 2017, the Minister of State for Disability Issues Finian McGrath noted the distinction between actions and outcomes. It is an important distinction. The various actions we have agreed and documented must result in tangible outcomes, and our committee will be vigorous in monitoring the delivery of the strategy's recommendations.

It is also important that identified actions must be accompanied by a specific timeframe, the measures we have agreed are not just aspirational, but real and achievable. A document of this scale and significance would not have been possible without the valued input from a number of people. An extensive public consultation process ensured meaningful engagement with all stakeholders and the wider community in developing a new plan. These contributions have resulted in many welcome amendments to the plan being agreed, all of which are now incorporated in the re-titled "Sligo County Council Disability Inclusion & Access Strategy 2019 - 2022".

I offer sincere thanks to my colleagues on the committee, who have worked tirelessly to bring this strategy to fruition. While we brought various perspectives and priorities to our committee meetings, we shared a common vision to improve our society, and I believe this consensus is reflected in the final document. The social model perspective on disability outlines a vision of an inclusive society, where people with disabling conditions are facilitated to participate equally and fully in all aspects of social life.

In promoting and delivering these actions, we adopt the guiding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, foremost among them respect for inherent dignity and individual autonomy. The membership of our committee may change following forthcoming local election and the Council's AGM, but the incoming Council and our committee will remain firmly focused and fully committed to the ideals and objectives set out in the Strategy.'

Joint Policing Committee

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 provides for the establishment of a Joint Policing Committee in each Local Authority. The purpose of the Joint Committee is to develop greater consultation, co-operation and accountability between An Garda Síochána, Local Authorities and elected members, with the participation of the Community and voluntary sector, on the management of policing issues. Revised Guidelines governing the operation of Joint Policing Committees were issued in August, 2014. In accordance with the Guidelines, the Joint Policing Committee consists of 25 members, i.e. 13 elected members of the Council, 5 Oireachtas members, 2 Local Authority Officials, 2 nominees of the Garda Commissioner, and 6 Community nominees. The JPC's Strategic Plan 2017-2022 sets out the strategic priorities to be addressed during the life of the Plan. An Annual Action Plan was adopted which outlines actions for delivery on the strategic priorities.



Sligo Joint Policing Committee hosted a public meeting in the Sligo Park Hotel on Thursday 10th January, 2019.

The purpose of the meeting was to enable members of the public to have their views heard on policing issues and to put questions to the committee.

Chief Superintendent Aidan Glacken outlined the issues and challenges facing the Sligo/Leitrim Division, Superintendent Raymond McMahon gave an overview of policing in Sligo, and Mike Smyth from the Garda National Protective Services Bureau made a presentation on the issues of child exploitation and human trafficking. Senior Executive Officer Sligo County Council John Moran discussed the role and objectives of the Joint Policing Committee.

In September 2018 the Commission on the Future of Policing published its report setting out a vision and roadmap for the future of An Garda Síochána. The report advocated a new approach to policing and community safety, based on a modern and professional service that is well managed, cost effective and properly trained and equipped.

Chair of the Committee Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady updated the meeting on Telesis property marking unit, which was acquired by Sligo County Council on the recommendation of the JPC. The unit works by engraving the Eircode of the property owner on to an item, which provides traceability in the event of an item being stolen and recovered.



Sergeant James Fox demonstrates the Telesis property marking unit

The Sligo Joint Policing Committee has overseen a significant programme of work in recent years, and the themes and objectives prioritised at national level are reflected in the JPC's Strategic Plan. The Committees' Mission Statement is 'To enhance the crime prevention and public safety work of An Garda Síochána, community groups, and Sligo County Council by adopting a collaborative approach.'

Information Services/Media Requests

This section provides information services to the Elected Members, staff and media, monitors and updates our website in conjunction with IT Section. This section is also responsible for issuing media releases and coordinating responses to media queries. Among the publications produced are the Annual Report and the Corporate Plan, the current Plan expires in 2019.

Social Media Channels

The Council continued to proactively use social media channels to communicate with our customers and promote local authority events and initiatives. The number of followers on the Council's social media channels continued to grow in 2019.

Emergency Alerts

The Corporate Services Department works with the Information Technology Section to coordinate and issue 'out of office' emergency alerts, particularly in relation to roads and water services.

Customer Services

The staff at the Customer Services desk in County Hall continue to provide front-line services to the public whether it be in person, by email or by phone. In 2019 no formal customer complaints were received.

Performance Indicators

The council's performance is measured by a series of Performance Indicators, set nationally by the National Oversight and Audit Commission. While the indicators for 2019 are still being compiled, the indicators for 2018 are available on <http://noac.ie/noac-reports/>

International Contacts/ Town Twinning

While Sligo has signed three formal Twinning Agreements – with Crozon, Kempten and Tallahassee – it has developed a range of other international contacts and regularly welcomes Ambassadors, dignitaries and other guests to County Hall and City Hall.

Kempten Festival Week

A delegation led by Deputy Mayor Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady travelled to Kempten for their August Festival as guests of Mayor Thomas Kieschle. The delegation attended a number of events during their stay.

Kempten Students Welcomed to County Hall

Mayor Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady welcomed students from Kempten University of Applied Science to Sligo County Hall in April 2019. The students were visiting Sligo as guests of Sligo IT.



The first contact between Kempten and Sligo involved a student exchange programme, and the networks and friendships established by that initiative provided the inspiration to develop other projects. The association was formalised with the signing of a Charter in Kempten in February 1990 and two months later in Sligo. The Charter expressed our shared ambition that ‘personal contacts be strengthened’ and focused on the important role to be played by young people in particular in fostering and nurturing this friendship.

Erasmus Programme

At the request of the Mayor’s Office in Kempten, two students, Claudia Reichart and Daniela Straub were engaged by Sligo County Council on a two month work placement programme, concluding on 31st October, 2019.

In addition to gaining experience on general administration, the students also attended a number of civic events, including a visit to the German Embassy on German Unity Day.

This is the second year the Council has hosted Erasmus students from Kempten on a two month placement.

Civic visits

There were a number of ‘international’ visits to Sligo in 2019:

- February 2019: Indian Ambassador Sandeep Kumar
- June 2019: Augsburg Liturgical Choir
- July 2019: Hungarian Ambassador Istvan Palffy
- July 2019: Georgian Charge d’affaires George Zurabashvili
- November 2019: Republic of Korean Ambassador Woon-Ki-Lyeo
- December 2019: Delegation from Ningbo Province, China



The Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry welcomed the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Mr Woon Ki Lyeo to Sligo City Hall



Mayor Councillor Rosaleen O’Grady welcomed the Indian Ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency Sandeep Kumar, to Sligo City Hall

Chinese Delegation Meet Local Agencies

A delegation from Ningbo Province in China visited Sligo on 18th December, 2019, with their full itinerary including meetings with key local agencies to discuss Sligo's progress in the areas of tourism, commerce and enterprise.



The seven strong delegation was led by Chairman of Ningbo Municipal District, and were welcomed to County Hall by Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council Councillor Tom MacSharry. The guests received presentations from Head of Local Enterprise Office, John Reilly, John Neary of Fáilte Ireland, and Conor McCarthy President of Sligo Chamber of Commerce.

In his address the Cathaoirleach said 'Our remote location on Europe's western frontier causes us to place a special value on international links and friendships, and in that context we are privileged to welcome our guests here today. We have a proud record of associations with the republic of China, and in recent years we have welcomed delegations from Gansu Province and Henan Province.

At a recent travel and tourism summit in China, Ireland was named as one of the 'top ten most promising overseas destinations' for Chinese travellers. By developing a global network of friendships, we avail of the opportunity to highlight and showcase the many attractions of our wonderful county. My hope is that through this initial engagement we can nurture contacts in the areas of enterprise, education and tourism.

To provide a brief local context, Sligo is the key centre of economic growth in the Northwest, and we are currently overseeing an unprecedented level of investment in our transport infrastructure. We have very progressive ambitions for the future, we are excited about our ability to promote Sligo as the optimum place to live in, invest or visit.

While we are confident about our capacity to deliver on these objectives, we acknowledge that the key to our success is the quality of our partnership with key local agencies. They share our conviction about Sligo's potential, and we have an excellent working relationship as we work towards agreed goals.'



Chairman of Ningbo Municipal District receiving presentation from Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry



**Chairman of Ningbo Municipal District
Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry signing the distinguished visitors book**



Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry receiving presentation from Chinese delegation



The Chinese delegation visiting W.B. Yeats grave

National Famine Commemoration

The National Famine Commemoration, which took place in Sligo in May 2019, has been described as “a recognition of the horror that was inflicted on Sligo so long ago,” by a local Sligo historian.

The Famine, which devastated large parts of the country between 1845-'49, resulted in the population of Sligo being reduced by one third. Thousands of people lost their lives through illness and starvation, and thousands more were forced to emigrate, taking the often dangerous journey from the Port of Sligo to seek a better life in England, America and elsewhere.

Member of the Sligo Famine Committee, Joe McGowan said that Sligo was “one of the worst affected counties in Ireland. It was absolutely devastating. People died on the side of the road. The hearts just went out of people, it was a great calamity.”



Speaking in a video produced by Sligo County Council to mark the National Famine Commemoration, Mr. McGowan says that despite the Famine being largely forgotten for many years, it is of great significance that the National Famine Commemoration was brought to Sligo, and he hopes that it will encourage people in the county to engage with our Famine past.

“It’s a proud day that the Famine Commemoration has come to Sligo,” he said. He adds that for the Sligo Famine Committee, it was important that the book of the county’s famine history – which they compiled 20 years ago - was reprinted as part of the event.

“Once Sligo County Council told me that they were going to republish the book, I thought that’s fantastic to have that book in circulation again.” Having the commemoration take place in Sligo was “an affirmation of the work that was done then and a recognition of the horror that was inflicted on Sligo so long ago.”

The Sligo Famine Book provides a detailed insight into the tragic history of the Famine in Sligo, and draws on much of the printed source material of the time.

The National Famine Commemoration video was produced by Sligo-based production company Omedia in conjunction with Sligo County Council.

The late Margaret Gormley

In April 2019, Sligo County Council elected members and staff were mourning the passing of one of the Council's longest serving members, Councillor Margaret Gormley.



The Gormley family connection with Sligo County Council goes back to 1942, when her late father Willie was first elected to the Council. Margaret was co-opted onto the Council in 1980 and successfully contested every subsequent local election. Margaret was elected Cathaoirleach in 2004.

The Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council Councillor Martin Baker:

"It was with a heavy heart that I heard the news of Margaret's passing. Margaret was one of the most committed and hard working people I knew; she represented the people of South Sligo with great distinction. She had vast experience which shone through in the Council Chamber, and when she spoke, we

listened. She was a great champion for the under-dog or people struggling in any way. One of her many interests was in Gaelic Football, and she was one of the first in the county to promote ladies football, and she supported it with great passion and enthusiasm. We won't see the like of her again."

Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive of the Council:

"It was my 'privilege' to have known her. 'She represented her constituents with tenacity and had a determination and drive to see rural Sligo prosper the same as the regional capital. She had a sincerity that was refreshing and a respect for people. While she has been ill for some time, her sudden passing has left a cloud over County Buildings and a welcome presence around the offices has been replaced by a void that will take some time to fill. On my own behalf and on behalf of staff, all of whom held her in high esteem, I extend my sympathies and condolences to her family. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a ainm dílis.'"

The late Leo Conlon

In June 2019, the Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council Councillor Tom MacSharry paid tribute to former Councillor Leo Conlon who passed away.



'It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Leo Conlon. Leo was an outstanding public representative. He was first elected to Sligo County Council in 1979 and was elected Cathaoirleach in 1988 and 1998, and also served as Leas-Cathaoirleach on two occasions.

He worked extremely hard to serve his constituents, and was responsible for delivering and supporting numerous initiatives in his community. He was widely respected across all political interests, he had a passion and enthusiasm for his role as a Councillor and this was

reflected in his work over the years.

Even when he retired as a public representative, his commitment to public service remained and he was a valued member of the Council's Audit Committee for a number of years. Leo served as a role model for many young Councillors embarking on a career in public life.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Detta and family at this difficult time.'

The late Joe Shannon

The November 2019 meeting of Sligo County Council was adjourned as a mark of respect to former Councillor the late Joe Shannon, who had served two terms on the Council, representing the people of Cloonloo and Gurteen in particular with great dedication and enthusiasm. In their tributes at the adjourned meeting, Councillors remembered Joe as a quiet unassuming gentleman who had a passion for politics. They recalled him as a decent, respectful and honourable public representative and exemplary community worker.



HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources Department looks after all staffing related matters in Sligo County Council, e.g. recruitment, training, maintenance of personnel records, industrial relations, payroll, superannuation, time and attendance etc. It is also responsible for implementing statutory and non-statutory staff welfare policies and procedures and maintains stable industrial relations within the Organisation. The Human Resources Department works to create an equitable, consultative and supportive working environment within Sligo County Council.

Staff Recruitment

2019 saw a significant number of posts being filled for Capital Projects in the Housing Section, Cranmore Regeneration, TII Project office, Roads Department, Community and Economic Development, Planning and a number of temporary administrative posts. The Government's Rebuilding Ireland Programme, which is an action driven plan tackling the country's housing shortage, places significant responsibilities on local authorities to increase the delivery of homes. Delivery of this Programme resulted in the recruitment of additional Contract staff at various grades in 2019. Vacancies for open posts were advertised in the local and/or national press and also on the Sligo County Council and Local Government Jobs websites. In total, 36 recruitment competitions have been held to date and 42 posts were filled.

Retirements

During 2019, a total of 5 staff retired from the service of Sligo County Council.

Training and Development

Sligo County Council is committed to ensuring the professional and personal development of all employees. Training and development is aimed at helping employees to become more effective in their jobs and developing their potential, while also meeting the goals and objectives of the Council. A comprehensive training programme was delivered in 2019 which incorporated Health and Safety training, and various other in house training and workshops. A sample of the training programmes provided in 2019 is as follows:

- Abrasive Wheels,
- Confined Spaces,
- Data Protection Training,
- Location of Underground Services,
- Manual Handling,
- Occupational First Aid,
- Safe pass, and
- Staff Induction.

Industrial Relations

It is the policy of the Human Resources Department to foster a good industrial relations climate and, in this regard, regular meetings take place between the HR Department and Union representatives/officials. The Council is committed to resolving IR issues as soon as possible once an issue arises in an open and co-operative manner.

Staff Welfare

The Human Resources Department is responsible for formulating and implementing a range of policies and support mechanisms to help staff manage their work-life balance. The HR Department manages the Sick Leave Scheme and provides employee assistance when required, with the services of a full-time Staff Welfare Officer available to all staff. The Council has entered into an agreement with Health Assured to deliver Employee Assistance to all staff as required.

Details of all family friendly policies are available on the Council's intranet and many staff avail of these policies, which include Shorter Working Year Scheme, Parental Leave Scheme, Work Sharing Scheme, Career Breaks, Force Majeure Scheme, Bereavement Leave and Maternity and Paternity Leave.

Payroll

The Human Resources Department is now responsible for the administration of Payroll in conjunction with MyPay. 3 No. Paygroups are paid on a fortnightly basis, Wages and Wages Pensions, Salary and Salary Pension and Monthly Fire Fighters.

CIVIL DEFENCE

Civil Defence under the leadership of the Civil Defence officer has 70+ active volunteer members who attend the 6 training centres throughout the county. All volunteers train on an ongoing basis in skills specific to being in a position to provide assistance to the local 3 PRA's in an emergency situation.

Sligo Civil Defence volunteers assisted with providing first aid cover for over 100 events throughout the year. Insurance is having a major effect on events and a number of annual events had to cancel because of this. This year a new SOG for the boat launch and assistance was introduced by MarMan Associates who were asked by Civil Defence to draw the plan up following on from the report into the incident in Kilkee in 2017. In order to comply with the SOG our boating duties were put on hold for a short period of time but have since restarted and the arrival of a Lencraft boat to replace our ageing Avon is an asset to us.

Sligo Civil Defence is one of the chosen counties to receive a new Ford Ranger vehicle from a grant received by Civil Defence from the dormant accounts. It comes at a good time to replace our Toyota Hilux which we have had to take out of service due to rust on the chassis.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Sligo County Council will continue to implement the provisions of the local authorities Safety Management Systems. This will be carried out by ongoing review of the current systems and implementation of the rigorous annual H&S Inspection programme. Communication and consultation with employees will be carried out and H&S training of employees will be facilitated as required. Employees will be supported to implement safe systems of work. Liaison with the HSA, Irish Water and other stakeholders will continue as appropriate.



PLANNING, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Director – Ms. Dorothy Clarke



INTRODUCTION

The designation of Sligo as a centre for economic growth under the National Planning Framework has been the catalyst for a series of significant projects in both the urban and rural areas.

Schemes progressed under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) have enhanced the public realm, recreational infrastructure and community facilities throughout the county. The Sligo Cultural Plaza will be a flagship attraction for Sligo, and is just one of the many exciting projects that will transform the urban landscape.

The many attractions Sligo has to offer, was the backdrop to the launch of Sligo's new brand and website. Under the three pillars of Live/invest/visit, this initiative presents an opportunity to promote a positive image and enable key stakeholders to showcase Sligo under one collective brand.

Diaspora engagement is a critical component of local economic, social and community development, and an important action identified in the Sligo Local Economic Community Plan is to develop ways of linking with our Diaspora to foster linkages and networks

2019 was a busy and productive year for our Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), an excellent interagency and collaborative forum which was established in 2014 to deliver a coherent and integrated approach to community engagement

The national roll out of a new e-planning system is underway, and when it is completed in 2020 it will increase efficiency and provide enhanced customer service. A central feature will be a web portal to host electronic planning applications and correspondence.

Our Library staff also delivered a series of excellent initiatives in 2019 throughout the branch network, and the 'Right to Read' project received a national award for their efforts in supporting literacy development.

Dorothy Clarke
Director of Services

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The number of planning applications received (524) is consistent with the number received in 2018. However the past year has seen a significant increase in applications of larger scale, in particular including a number of large scale residential applications in the Sligo urban area. Pre-planning consultation interest has remained strong and it would be expected that 2020 will see a continuing increase in the number and scale of planning applications received.

As part of government housing policy, and in compliance with requirements of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, the process of establishing a vacant sites register commenced in 2017. Ongoing survey and monitoring work will continue throughout 2019 with a view to commencing the collection of vacant sites levies in 2020.

E-Planning

The national roll out of the e-planning system across all planning authorities is expected to be delivered in 2020. The main objectives of the e-Planning system are to increase efficiency and to provide enhanced customer service. Similar to the Building Control Management System, a web portal will be created through which all electronic planning applications and all correspondence would pass. The implementation is expected to generate significant operational efficiencies over time but will involve costs to the local authority in 2020 associated with enhancements to existing hardware and software capabilities.

Development Planning Unit (DPU)

The Development Planning Unit is responsible for drafting planning and development policy for Sligo County and City, in consultation with the public, members, officials, prescribed bodies and other stakeholders. The Development Planning team also carries out research, advises on development proposals, facilitates plan implementation and participates in a range of initiatives, at both local and regional level.

Achievements in 2019

Based on the Public Realm Plan for Sligo Town (completed in 2018), Sligo County Council submitted several applications to the Department for funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund announced in July 2018.

The Council was successful in securing circa €2,000,000 (Category A funding) for O'Connell Street Enhancement and the provision of a Cultural Plaza at the existing Stephen Street Car Park.

As recommended in the Public Realm Plan, the Planning Section prepared a separate brief regarding the regeneration of Wine Street Car Park. Urban design consultants BDP were selected after a competitive tendering process to design a new Centre Block Masterplan, which will form the basis for further applications to the URDF.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Throughout 2019, the DPU has worked in collaboration with the North and Western Regional Assembly on the preparation of the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). Having designated Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre, the Draft RSES was subject to a second round of consultation (on proposed amendments) and the adopted Strategy is expected to become operational in early 2020.

Cultural Plaza

The proposed Sligo Cultural Plaza will transform an existing city centre carpark into a permanent flagship attraction for visitors to Sligo, as well as for the local community. A traffic-free location on the banks of the Garavogue, and within easy reach of public transport, public car and coach parking, and Sligo Tourist Office, the plaza will serve primarily as a welcoming place for visitors, orienting them and providing information about Sligo and its many amenities and attractions.

As such it will be a 'must visit' destination, the starting point for telling Sligo's story and for exploring the city's historic sites such as the Abbey and Green Fort, as well as the adjacent County Museum and the Model arts centre. It will orient visitors to the stories and attractions of Sligo's environs and the surrounding region, e.g. Drumcliffe, Knocknarea, Strandhill, Hazelwood, etc., as well as other sites located along this section of the Wild Atlantic Way.

The Cultural Plaza facility will cater for a range of additional functions such as concerts and public performances, festivals and exhibits, social and recreational activities, outdoor markets, etc., scheduled as part of a year-round calendar of events. In this way, the plaza will become the focal point for the Sligo community, as well as visitors, drawing more people into the city centre and encouraging further regeneration and enterprise creation.



Stephen Street Cultural Plaza

As a venue for public events and functions, the Cultural Plaza will be available for commercial hire, e.g. product launches, promotional events, Fun Fairs, etc., subject to by-laws, as well as for not-for-profit and community use. Increased activity in this area will support existing and encourage new enterprise and tourism-focused development, and new employment opportunities.

Directly opposite, on the south bank of the Garavogue will be the Garavogue River Walk, that will pass through Doorly Park, Cleveragh Regional Park and finally reach to Cairns Hill, one of Sligo's more important megalithic monument sites. Along the route you will be able to experience woodland trails, playgrounds, outdoor gym, water sport facilities and the new Failte Ireland funded pontoon which will facilitate Lough Gill boat tours.

Recreational amenity:

The Garavogue River Walk, which will start from the Cultural Plaza, will be an on/off-road pedestrian and cycling route between the city centre and Cairns Hill Forest, the plaza will have the same function for the 3km (7km looped route) Garavogue River Walk connecting the city centre with the Cairns Hill forest amenity area overlooking Sligo, via Cleveragh Regional Park and the Failte Ireland-funded Doorly Park Pontoon from which boat tours of Lough Gill will be available.

Telling Sligo's story:

An enhanced visitor experience along the Surf Coast section of the Wild Atlantic Way. This will be achieved through the provision of centralised, high quality tourism infrastructure to include interpretive and informational displays that tell Sligo's story, a linked network of historic walking trails, improved access to the river, Doorly Park, Cairns Hill and other local attractions. In doing so, the promoters hope to entice more visitors to stay longer in the Sligo area to sample the many attractions and amenities on offer, which will deliver additional economic benefits to the region such as new, sustainable employment opportunities.

Vibrant city centre:

Rejuvenation of an important but underutilized, city-centre site, which will enhance the overall urban environment and act as a catalyst in stimulating new development and activity at this location that would not otherwise occur. This is in keeping with the vision for Sligo as the capital of the Northwest, a vibrant and attractive city located on the route of the Wild Atlantic Way, a place where people want to visit, live, work, socialise and shop, and invest.

Access to heritage:

The project will significantly improve access to and enjoyment of the area's natural environment, as well as heritage attractions such as the megalithic tombs atop Cairns Hill and at Abbeyquarter, Sligo Gaol, Hazelwood House, the Green Fort, the Model, Sligo County Museum, Sligo Abbey, etc. In doing so, and by providing marked trails incorporating these sites, the project will address the objective of encouraging healthier and more active lifestyles while at the same time increasing awareness and appreciation of the region's richness of natural, built, and cultural heritage assets.

Fáilte Ireland €2.5million investment in Sligo Cultural Plaza

In October 2019, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Seán Canney TD, announced Fáilte Ireland investment of over €2.5million for the Sligo Cultural Plaza.

The Fáilte Ireland investment of €2,523,256 for the development of Sligo Cultural Plaza and the Garavogue River Trail comes under its Grants Scheme for Large Tourism Projects 2016-2020.

Fáilte Ireland's Grant Scheme for Large Tourism Projects is funded under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy with the aim of driving sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector and higher revenue and job creation around Ireland.



Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive of Sligo County Council; Orla Carroll, Director of Product Development at Fáilte Ireland; Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry; Seán Canney TD, Minister of State for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Minister of State for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development

ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL

The Enforcement Section's role in this area involves investigating all complaints from the public with regard to unauthorised development, random inspections of developments in progress, and dealing with prior to commencement conditions or conditions which have not been complied with. The Section conducts site visits and issues Warning Letters, serves Enforcement Notices and institutes legal proceeding, as appropriate.

Hereunder are some relevant details of activity for the period January-December 2019:

- 81 new complaints lodged
- 49 Warning Letters
- 8 Enforcement Notices
- 22 complaints resolved through negotiation. (These include complaints received prior to January, 2018)
- 28 complaints dismissed

Collection of Development Contributions

The Enforcement Section is responsible for the collection of development contributions. Staff resources continue to be allocated to ensure that contributions are paid in a timely manner and to follow up defaulters. The amount of outstanding arrears stands at €1,032,877.13 as at 31/12/2019. Most of the outstanding money is in respect of unsold new build property, mainly dwelling houses and will be paid in due course on the sale of the properties.

Taking Estates in Charge

The Council commenced the process of taking in charge 12 No estates in 2019 and expects to commence the process of taking in charge 10 No. estates in 2020. The taking in charge fees received by the Council go towards the costs incurred by the Council during the taking in charge process and are also used where there is a shortfall in monies to complete outstanding works in the estate to bring it to a satisfactory standard to take in charge.

Vacant Homes / Derelict Sites

The Government has committed in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to develop an overall national vacant housing re-use strategy. In February 2018, the planning section prepared a Vacant Homes Action Plan whose aim is to significantly reduce the number of long term empty dwellings and reduce the effect of empty dwellings on the community and facilitate their return to productive use. A key action to be achieved in 2019 was the identification of the real level of vacancy in the Sligo and its Environs area. Of the 4,877 residential properties inspected in 2019, only 192 were determined to be vacant. This represents 3.9%. The enforcement section will continue to carry out inspections and identify owners of identified vacant properties in 2020 with a view to bringing these properties back into use.

HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION SERVICES

The protection of the natural and built heritage is an important function of Sligo County Council, a countywide asset that is valuable in its own right but also to the tourism and visitor experience in the County.

During 2019, the Heritage Office continued to work with Sligo Heritage Forum to oversee the implementation of the County Sligo Heritage Plan (2016-2020). The Heritage Plan seeks to protect, conserve, manage and promote the value of Sligo's heritage in recognition of its significant contribution to the quality of life of communities and the socio-economic development of the county. The Heritage Office has one full time officer and the heritage programme is supported by Sligo County Council in partnership with The Heritage Council. The Heritage Council provided an allocation of €38,000 towards the delivery of the Heritage Plan in 2019. As the current Heritage Plan will conclude at the end of 2020, preparatory work will be undertaken to develop the next Sligo Heritage Plan for the period 2021-2025. During 2019, the work programme focused on increasing heritage awareness and engagement with communities, the conservation of medieval churches, the continued roll out of the Sligo Community Archaeology Programme and progressing conservation plans for Sligo Gaol, the Green Fort, Sligo and the Drumcliffe Monastic Site.

Biodiversity



A County Sligo swift survey was undertaken by Birdwatch Ireland with the support of Sligo County Council Birdwatch Sligo and the National Parks and Wildlife Service

The implementation of the County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan has been reactivated through funding provided through the National Biodiversity Action Plan. Funding of €16,000 was provided by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2019. This supported the delivery of the County Sligo Swift Survey and the preparation of a management plan for designated lands in council ownership at Strandhill.

Architectural Conservation

In 2019, an allocation of €60,000 was allocated under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and €30,000 was allocated under the Historic Structures Fund (HSF).

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) funding will support the owners and custodians of historic and protected structures as they carry out small-scale, labour-intensive projects to repair and conserve our historic built environment. These projects provide vital support for local jobs in conservation, traditional skills and construction.

The Historic Structures Fund 2019 (HSF) (formerly the Structures at Risk Fund) is for conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership. The primary focus of the Historic Structures Fund is the conservation and enhancement of historic structures and buildings for the benefit of communities and the public.

The grant scheme is funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and is administered by the Heritage Office, Sligo County Council with the support of the Planning Section and Architecture Service of Sligo County Council. The 2019 grant allocations are set out below.



Conservation works underway to 79-81 John Street, Sligo – funded under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2019



Ballysumaghan Church of Ireland received funding in 2019 under the Historic Structures Fund

Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2019 (BHIS)

Projects	Funding allocated
Yeats Memorial Building, Hyde Bridge, Sligo	€2,000.00
Church of the Sacred Heart, Lavagh, Co. Sligo	€5,000.00
Cooper Memorial Hall, Riverstown, Co. Sligo	€2,000.00
Hazelwood House, Hazelwood Avenue, Sligo, F91 N2AO	€7,500.00
Church of St. Fechin and St. Lassara (RC), Ballinacarrow, Co. Sligo	€3,000.00
St. Aiden's Church RC, Monasteraden, Co. Sligo	€3,000.00
St. Annes Church, Cranmore Road, Sligo	€6,500.00
Kiltycahill Cottage, Kiltycahill, Co. Sligo	€3,000.00
The Blue Door, Toberpatrick, Dromard, Co. Sligo	€4,000.00
Mount Shannon House, Bundoran Road, Sligo, Co. Sligo	€3,000.00
No's 79, 80 & 81 John Street, Sligo	€10,000.00
Doobeg House, Doobeg, Bunninadden, Co. Sligo	€5,000.00
Former RIC Barracks, Aclare, Co. Sligo	€3,000.00
Millview House, Sligo Folk Park, Riverstown, Co. Sligo	€3,000.00
Total	€60,000.00

Historic Structures Fund 2019 (HSF)

Projects	Funding allocated
Yeats Memorial Building, Hyde Bridge, Sligo	€2,000.00
Total	€60,000.00

Priorities for 2020

- Heritage Awareness Programme to include Heritage Week
- Conservation work to medieval churches in Local Authority care – Tawnagh and Easkey Abbey
- Community Archaeology Programme – Phase 3
- Implementation of the Green Fort Conservation Plan
- Ongoing work (including geophysical survey) towards the preparation of a conservation plan for Drumcliffe monastic site in 2020. This will coincide with the commemoration of the 1500th anniversary of the birth of Colmcille which will take place in 2020/21.
- Implementation of the Sligo Gaol Conservation Plan through conservation works
- Delivery of biodiversity actions within the Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan
- Delivery of the Building Conservation Grants Programme
- Ongoing delivery of the Sligo Creative Ireland programme as part of the Cultural Team
- Co-ordination and provision of support to the County Sligo Placenames Committee

A sum in the amount of €263,327 is provided in respect of the Heritage and Conservation Services as delivered by the County Sligo Heritage Office.



Heritage week included a guided walk of Slish Wood by Michael Bell of Nature Learn. The event was an initiative of the Carraroe and District Region Association

Heritage Guide for Sligo

The new Archaeology Ireland Heritage Guide No. 87 'Sligo – a historic urban centre on the Atlantic Coast' was launched on the 4th December, 2019 by the Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, Councillor Tom MacSharry.

The new heritage guide traces the evolution of Sligo over nine centuries and is beautifully illustrated with drawings, maps and photographs.

In welcoming the guide, the Cathaoirleach paid a special tribute to historian and author Dr. Fiona Gallagher saying,

'Fiona has written so passionately and expertly on Sligo over many years. Her important work 'The Streets of Sligo' published in 2008, was followed by 'The Irish Historic Town Atlas for Sligo' in 2012, which she co-wrote with Marie-Louise Legg. Both are important, scholarly works for anyone who wants to understand, why and how Sligo developed through the centuries, and how the historical timeline underpins and influences its future growth. The new Sligo Heritage Guide has been a labour of love for Fiona. As a proud Sligionian, she has adeptly condensed nine centuries of the town's history into no less than 2000 words. Fiona's knowledge of the subject, her expertise and great affinity for Sligo and its people has resulted in an accessible guide which will be greatly valued for generations to come.'

Councillor MacSharry congratulated everyone involved in the initiative, particularly Una MacConville and Nick Maxwell of Wordwell, Sharon Greene editor of Archaeology Ireland, as well as Tom Condit and Gabriel Cooney both series editors of the heritage guides with Archaeology Ireland.

Martin Enright, MC for the evening and vice Chair of Sligo Heritage Forum, highlighted that the new guide was the fourth for Sligo under the Archaeology Ireland Heritage Guide series. Previous guides have included, Inishmurray, Neolithic Cuil Irra and the Streedagh Wrecks. The addition of a guide for the historic town of Sligo was reflective of the exceptional wealth and quality of Sligo's heritage.

Siobhán Ryan, Heritage Officer with Sligo County Council said that

'What really comes across when you read the guide is how important Sligo has been as a key economic and trading centre on the NW coast of Ireland for over nine centuries. We also see that the prosperity waxed and waned over time, but the ability of the historic town to adapt and quickly refocus shows great resilience and community spirit. That strength of identity, sense of place and community is deeply engrained in the streets and people of Sligo, it is heritage in the very best sense and one that needs to be nurtured and cared for in the long term.'

Over 2,500 subscribers to the Archaeology Ireland magazine will receive a copy of the new Sligo heritage guide in their Christmas edition. With subscribers located in Ireland and further afield, the story of the historic town of Sligo will be spread far and wide. The new Heritage Guide is an initiative of Sligo Heritage Forum in partnership with Sligo County Council and Archaeology Ireland. The guide is an action of the County Sligo Heritage Plan 2016-2020 and is funded by Sligo County Council and the Creative Ireland Programme. Copies of the heritage guide are available from Liber bookshop, O'Connell Street, Sligo and online from www.wordwellbooks.com.



Sharon Greene Editor Archaeology Ireland, Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council Councillor Tom MacSharry, Dr. Fiona Gallagher author of the Heritage Guide and, Martin Enright Vice Chair of Sligo Heritage Forum

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2019 managed by Department of Rural and Community Development and administered by the Local Authorities, was created to support the revitalisation of towns and villages in order to improve the living and working environment of their communities and increase their potential to support increased economic activity into the future.

Sligo County Council has been successfully approved under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2019 from Department of Rural and Community Development in respect of the following locations:

Location	Project	Amount
Ballinafad	Upgrade of the Field Study Centre and the provision of trailhead facilities and links to a walking trail.	€100,000
Bunnanadden	Establish a new Village Park and public realm works.	€100,000
Culfadda	Upgrade of the Culfadda Community Hall.	€64,000
Enniscrone	Resurface car park at Carrowhubbock, landscaping, footpaths, development of amenity area, upgrade of reception at Waterpark.	€100,000
Mullaghmore	Enhancement of the Peace Garden, refurbishment of public toilet facility and improvement of local pedestrian links.	€100,000
Riverstown	Upgrade of Sligo Folk Park heritage museum.	€100,000

Match funding in the sum of €70,500 has been allocated towards this scheme from a combination of Sligo County Council and the successful local communities.

Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme is part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and will provide funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure or the necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in Ireland. Successful applications in 2018/2019 period were secured under:

Measure 1	Maintenance/promotion for 10 no. locations for €180,000
Measure 2	Greenway/Blueway-€102,400
Measure 3	Coolaney Mountain Bike Centre €500,000

ORIS applications made in 2019/2020 period include the following:

Measure 1	9 No Applications to the value of €225,056
Measure 2	4 No Applications to the value of € 659,500
Measure 3	1 No Application to the value of €459,500

Match funding by Sligo County Council. Further funding opportunities may arise in 2019/2020 under this funding stream which will be considered in collaboration with community groups and interested parties.

No funding announcement to date for 2019/2020 period.

The Beara Breifne Way Route

Secured through the ORIS fund, The Beara-Breifne Way walking route situated in south Sligo passing adjacent to Lough Gara/ Monasteraden is a walking and cycling trail with work ongoing. When concluded it will encompass a long distance recreational trail linking Co. Cork to Co Cavan.

EU Projects

Sligo County Council C&E/LEO Economic Development Unit is involved in a number of EU project proposals at present.

1. Interreg V

Atlantic Area programme to develop a transnational cycle route – EuroVelo Route 1. The name of the project is AtlanticOnBike (AoB).

2. SARURE – INTERREG Europe

Rural businesses face significant challenges in the marketplace leading to their unfeasibility and to dramatic consequences in terms of social and territorial cohesion.

SARURE partnership intends to exchange on the models essayed during the past decade but also on the possibilities that the new markets, the new mix of services, the new financing options and the new technologies open for retail SMEs today. 99% of the SMEs in the retail sector in partner rural areas are indeed micro SMEs especially vulnerable to crisis and with many barriers to innovation.

The aim of the project is to improve the partner regions policies in force supporting retail SMEs towards survival, innovation and overall competitiveness. Given the fact that today European regions from the diverse latitudes face the issue, Interreg Europe is deemed an excellent arena to exchange on successful experiences and policies.

3. TrailGazersBid.

EU project under Atlantic Area Programme. Project Partner: Trail Gazers is setting out to examine how walks and recreational trails can be used as catalysts for the economic and social development of small rural economies and communities in an environmentally sustainable way.

4. Tide:

EU Project under Atlantic Area; Associate Partner role; Project seeks to protect, develop and promote public cultural and heritage assets and services

Inland Fisheries Ireland

A successful application in 2019 was made for Duff River Walk. Significant recreational access was achieved along 1.2km stretch of River Duff in Co. Sligo. Match funding requirement €5000.

Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF)

Sligo Cultural Plaza: This is aligned to the Failte Ireland Capital project. A successful application for funding was made under URDF was secured for €750,000. Work to commence in 2020.

Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF)

There were two successful applications for funding secured in 2019 under the RRDF fund.

Category	Project	Works	Amount
Category 1	Yeats Trail	Development works of which are underway.	€500,000
Category 2	Enniscrone Pavilion and Cliff Baths	Feasibility works are underway.	€131,000

Match funding requirement for both projects

- €170,000
- €43,000

Matching Funds

Funding has been provided under Matching Contributions for 2020 to allow the Council to benefit from opportunities that might arise to drawdown and match fund a number of grant schemes and programmes during the year. These include initiatives under tourism and recreational development, economic development, social inclusion, rural / community development etc.

The Future of Retail in Rural Sligo

Sligo County Council is partnered with an Interreg Europe project called SARURE (Saving Rural Retail). It is an inter-regional cooperation project which is tasked with improving policies aimed at SME competitiveness. The project is led by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of Teruel (Spain) and we are joined by partners from Burgenlandkreis (Germany), Western Macedonia (Greece), Aragon (Spain), South Karelia (Finland), South Warmia (Poland) and Soderhamn (Sweden). The project is funded by the European Development Fund has a total of value of €1.38M and will run from June 2019 until November 2022.



Sligo County Council's Ray O'Grady outlined details of the project; "The traditional model of high street retailing is under significant pressure in the modern age. The rise of both on-line and out of centre discount retailing has created a much changed competitive environment. The pressure on the high street retail sector is being felt most acutely in rural areas of not just County Sligo but in similar such areas all over Europe. In this context Sligo County Council has partnered with Local Authorities and Universities from across the continent to seek innovative solutions to the growing problem of the loss of vital retail services in our valuable rural communities".

SARURE Project - Background

Local Shops supply the population with staple goods and act as a social hub, they contribute to the quality of local life, encourage the population to remain in rural areas and are a prerequisite for the development of other diversified activities and services. Also, SMEs and micro SMEs' weight in terms of employment is very significant in demographically fragile rural areas. However, given that retail shops are a basic service that is required in sparsely populated areas, their existence is not inevitable. Small villages and towns need shops to survive but small rural shops need also a minimum number of customers to survive.

When depopulation started to affect some European regions severely, different schemes to support rural retail appeared around the year 2000. It was the case of Rural Multiservice Shops in Aragon (Spain) but also for different attempts and formulas in many other European countries. Even if these initiatives have undoubtedly contributed to cope with the situation in the past decade, the decline of retail in rural regions of Europe continues today. Rural businesses face significant challenges in the marketplace leading to their unfeasibility and to dramatic consequences in terms of social and territorial cohesion.

Reducing commercial vacancy

One of the main objectives of the County Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 is to develop Sligo as the economic driver of the Northwest and to promote as an attractive location for investment, tourism, entrepreneurship and employment. An action identified in the Plan is to develop Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) in key rural towns, starting with Tubbercurry as a pilot.

Tubbercurry has a population of around 2,000 people and is identified as a 'key support town' in the Sligo County Development Plan. The commercial vacancy rate in the Tubbercurry area exceeds that in the county as a whole, having doubled since 2013, indicative of the pressures on the retail and services sector in South County Sligo. Within this context Tubbercurry and its hinterland was deemed to be an appropriate case study in relation to the exploration of the problems facing the retail sector in rural County Sligo.

Project Aims

The SARURE partnership intends to exchange information on innovative trading and service models developed during the past decade in different countries and will seek to explore possibilities around innovative marketing, mix of services, financing options and technology. 99% of the SMEs in the retail sector in partner rural areas are micro SMEs which are especially vulnerable to crisis and with many barriers to innovation. In this context, the ultimate aim of the project is to improve the partner regions policies to support retail SMEs towards survival, innovation and overall competitiveness. Given the fact that a vast array of European regions face the same issue, Interreg Europe is deemed an excellent arena to exchange on successful experiences and policies.



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund

Ireland West Airport Knock

Sligo County Council is one of seven local authorities involved in the Irish West Airport Knock (IWAK) Partnership.

2018 was a flagship year for the Airport, with 777,000 visitors and the opening of a new Visitor Discovery centre.

In November 2018 the airport celebrated the official opening of the new state-of-the-art Visitor Discovery Centre, in collaboration with the airport's seven local authority partners. Sligo County Council took the lead role in the co-ordination of the project alongside

Donegal, Galway City and County, Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon County Councils, the Western Development Commission, Minister Ring and the Department of Rural and Community Development. The new Visitor Discovery Centre features information on attractions, activities, events and visitor experiences from across the region and presents opportunities for local suppliers to showcase local crafts and food tastings. It also facilitates musical performances from local musicians throughout the year. Dedicated staff members trained by Fáilte Ireland are on hand on a weekly basis to inform overseas visitors of the many attractions, events and things to do across the region.



The completion of the project is a very positive example of what can be achieved when resources are combined, in a regional approach to tourism promotion.

This new centre will be the first of its kind at any airport in the country and will showcase the very best of what the West and North West has to offer.

It demonstrates a commitment by both the airport and local authority partners to providing overseas visitors with a first class offering as they arrive into the West of Ireland.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Community and Economic Development section supports inter-agency strategic collaborative work with other organisations on a local and regional level in promoting and encouraging community and economic development within the County. It supports community organisations, encourages volunteerism and active citizenship, promotes social inclusion and provides a range of supports and grant aid to a community based and non-profit organisations throughout the county. Increasingly the economic agenda is growing as the section engages on a collaborative basis with stakeholders across the Economic Forum, Tourism, Atlantic Economic Corridor and Diaspora to mention but a few.

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

The Sligo LCDC was established in 2014 under the Local Government Reform 2014 Act for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The committee is made up of representatives from the local government and local development sectors, public bodies and representatives of social, economic, environmental and community interests.



Councillor Chris MacManus chair of the LCDC makes presentation to outgoing chair of the LCDC, Councillor Sinéad Maguire

In July 2019, Councillor Chris MacManus was appointed Chairperson of the Sligo Local Development Committee (LCDC)/Local Action Group (LAG) following the establishment of the new Council after the 2019 Local Elections. Councillor MacManus replaced the outgoing chairperson Councillor Sinéad Maguire. The post of vice-chair was assumed by Mr. Hugh MacConville, Trade Union Pillar rep to the LCDC, following the resignation of the outgoing vice-chair Mr. Seán Tempany.

In 2020 the focus of the LCDC will be to continue its overview of community activity in Sligo and review and monitor the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021. The committee's interagency structure and its monitoring role places it in a key position to overview other programmes such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, the Public Participation Network, Healthy Ireland, funding opportunities, EU programmes such as PEACE IV. Its function as the Local Action Group for the delivery of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in Sligo will ensure it has a key role in the delivery of the LEADER programme.

It has a keen interest in maximising opportunities for Sligo out of European funding, promoting investment in Sligo and establishing structures to ensure better collaboration at a county level. The LCDC meets at a minimum 6 times per year and its busy agenda has also provided for a series of presentations from agencies with responsibility for delivering on key actions within the LECP which has proved very beneficial with agencies reaffirming inter-sectoral commitment to collaborative action and sharing of ideas on how to best improve the delivery of services and the quality of life in the County. Presentations have been delivered by the HSE, MSLETB, the DSP Sligo County Child Care Committee, the Economic Forum and TUSLA among others.

On Wednesday 27th November 2019, Members and staff of Sligo LCDC on behalf of Sligo Local Community Development Committee attended the launch of Yeats Society's new website (<https://www.yeatssociety.com/>) and film poem held by the Yeats Society CLG.

In March 2019, Sligo LAG approved funding under the Rural Development programme for The Yeats Society CLG to the amount of €8,923.50.

At the Launch Chairperson of Sligo LCDC Councillor Chris MacManus gave a speech remarking: 'The Launch of the new website would provide exciting and new opportunities to connect with the Yeatsian community all across the world. Councillor Mac Manus went on to say 'As Chairperson of the Local Community Development Committee the agency that approved funding for this website and film poem this strong flavour of promotion of our community and county on a global stage, meant that when the application came before us in March, we had no hesitancy in approving the funding such was the strength of the proposal that came before us'.

Mr Chris Gonley SLPCo CEO and LCDC Member also gave a speech at the launch stating: 'We're ready to embrace fully the story of Yeats, we're ready to embrace the story of Sligo and of the western region and to make sure that we're putting that on the proper platform'



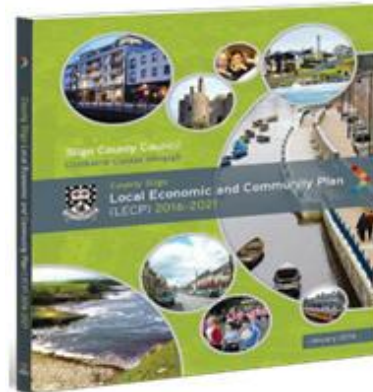
Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive Sligo County Council; Margaret McConnell, LCDC Sligo County Council; Chris Gonley, Sligo LEADER; Susan O'Keefe, Director Yeats Society; Councillor Chris MacManus, Chair LCDC; Dorothy Clarke, Director Services/Chief Officer LCDC Sligo County Council

Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2021

The LECP provides a roadmap for collective action in relation to local economic and community development in County Sligo.

The six priority areas outlined in the Plan include:

- Employment and Sustainable Economic Activity
- Education and Training
- Health and Wellbeing
- Social Inclusion, Equality and Poverty
- Environment and Climate Change
- Collaborative Framework



The LECP is now being monitored on a regular basis by the LECP Monitoring Committee with updates on progress being obtained from relevant stakeholders who have responsibility for implementing specific actions. A review of the LECP will be undertaken once the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies (RSES) are in place. The LCDC team continue to engage with lead agencies to monitor the progression of actions contained within the plan. Implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of the LECPs' objectives and actions are critical in determining the success of the LECP.

While the role of the LCDC is strongest on the Community side, through the LECP it has been instrumental in particular in ensuring the set up of an Economic Forum, and development of Tourism and Diaspora Strategies.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is a national programme which aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. The LCDC manages SICAP at a local level with support from Pobal and funding from the Department of Rural & Community Development it also receives funding from the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020.

The Programme commenced in 2014 with SICAP 2014-2017 concluding on the 31st December 2017. SICAP 2018 – 2022 commenced on the 1st January 2018 with County Sligo LEADER Partnership successful in their bid to continue to deliver the programme in Sligo. Following a national consultation process, some changes were introduced to the new programme which will now run for five years. SICAP 2018 – 2022 is more flexible than its predecessor and has an increased focus on interventions and quality of work rather than reporting on quantitative targets as was the case in the previous SICAP.

The programme itself involves the provision of supports to marginalized individuals and groups and disadvantaged communities. Sligo County Council staff is responsible for the administration of the contract and the preparation of monitoring and oversight reports on behalf of the LCDC. It is anticipated that the budget for 2020 will remain at the 2019 level of €585,514.



Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020

The Sligo LCDC is the Local Action Group (LAG) with the responsibility for the delivery of the Rural Development Programme (RDP/LEADER) working in partnership with Sligo County Council as Financial Partner and Sligo LEADER Partnership Company as Implementing Partner.

Themes and Budgets

County Sligo Local Development Strategy (2014-2020) (LDS) outlines three main themes that were identified as overarching needs for the county and out of that fall nine sub-themes as follows:

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation	Social Inclusion	Rural Environment
Sub Themes	Sub Themes	Sub Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rural Tourism ➤ Enterprise Development ➤ Rural Towns ➤ Broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Basic Services targeted at hard to reach communities ➤ Rural Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Protection and sustainable use of water resources ➤ Local Biodiversity ➤ Renewable energy
€2.32m	€2.83m	€572,070

The Projects budget is €5.7m broken down as outlined in the table above. In addition there is a sum of €1.9m provided in the LDS to cover the Administration, Support and Checking needed to deliver the strategy successfully. The overall budget for the RDP Programme 2014-2020 is €7.6m.

The Sligo LAG met 5 times up to mid Sept 2019 and is due to meet on a further 2 occasions before the end of 2019. Up to September 2019, the Sligo LAG has approved 34 projects to the value of € 1,060,974.12. These projects cover a wide range of themes from the Local Development Strategy (LDS) including Rural Tourism, Enterprise Development, Basic Services for hard to reach communities, Rural Youth, Rural Towns.

Communities Enhancement Programme

The Department of Rural and Community Development again made an allocation available under the Community Enhancement Programme in 2019. This followed on from the success of the initial programme in 2018. The allocation for 2019 was €134,084. A total of 65 Community Groups and local sporting organisations were successful in their applications for funding in the 2019 scheme.

To highlight the success of the 2018 programme, a number of acknowledgment events for successful applicants were held in the spring of 2019. These took place at City Hall and Teach Laighne respectively.



Members of Sligo LCDC and Sligo County Council with Community Representatives at the CEP Scheme acknowledgment event in Teach Laighne

Support for the Community & Voluntary Sector

The Community & Voluntary Grant Scheme covers a broad range of community activity in the county including support for community led local development. This Scheme supports community groups such as Tidy Towns Committees, Burial Ground Committees, Festival Committees and Organizers of International / National and Local Events in promoting their area and the county in general. The grant scheme creates a great opportunity for communities to benefit from an income source to allow them implement programmes, carry out projects and activities at a local level that otherwise would not be possible. The combination of this fund along with a strong volunteering ethos provides for a “bottom- up” approach to local development and participation. A budget of €120,000 was set aside for this initiative in 2019 and 221 committees/groups will benefit from the Scheme this year. Each year sees an increase in interest in the Scheme; this is measured by the amount of applications received. It is anticipated that this budget will be maintained as a minimum for 2020.

PPN (Public Participation Network)

2019 has been a busy year for Sligo PPN. The year commenced with the “Get Funding Ready” event which saw around 120 people come together to learn about funding options for the year. This was followed up with a series of community events including Hands for Life Training, Digital Skills promotions, a disability hustings and a Webinar Series focussing on community governance.



From a policy and planning perspective, the PPN has made submissions to the National Volunteering Strategy, Sligo Disability & Access strategy, Sligo SPC scheme, Sligo Climate Adaptation Plan and the national PPN User Guide review. It undertook a survey on Brexit which will be used to inform a regional event exploring the real impacts on community health and wellbeing. The survey on community insurance made national headlines and is being used at national level by both lobby groups and the Department of Rural and Community Development as part of a formal submission to the Minister making recommendations to immediately request the ‘cost of insurance’ working group examine this issue on behalf of all groups under the aegis of the Department.

The environment has been a key focus for the PPN this year. It undertook a climate survey with member groups, facilitated consultations into the Sligo Climate Adaptation Plan, organised Sustainable Development Goals workshops, worked with Sligo County Council and Sligo Chamber of Commerce on the introduction of an Environment category into the annual business awards and are currently on the working group for GLAN Sligo. This is an initiative aimed at supporting communities and businesses to improve their environmental practises. The PPN also hosted a climate change event featuring Professor John Sweeney which had over 200 people attending.



Pictured are attendees at the PPN Sustainable Development Goal Workshops

On an ongoing basis, the PPN continues to work with groups such as IT Sligo, Comhairle na nÓg and Sligo Intercultural project to try and broaden the reach and appeal of the PPN and to engage typically 'harder to reach' groups into the public participation process. PPNs nationally are being charged with the creation of Healthy and Wellbeing Visions for their representatives. In delivering this Sligo PPN will ensure that the community voice around what health, wellbeing and quality of life means to them is captured and used to inform future planning and programme development.

Age Friendly Programme

Sligo is part of the national Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme, an initiative aimed at making Ireland the best country in the world in which to grow old.

The Sligo Age Friendly Strategy for County Sligo was developed in 2016 and recognises that older people are a valuable resource with huge levels of expertise, experience and resources to assist in the growth and development of the county. While Sligo County Council has taken the leadership role in the development of the strategy, Age Friendly is very much a multi agency approach, with older people at the core.



The Mayor of Sligo Municipal District, Cllr Rosaleen O'Grady with members of MCR Active Retirement Association

Age Friendly Initiatives undertaken in 2019 include the "Go for Life Games" is a collaboration involving Sligo County Council and Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership. Its overall aim is to get older people more active, more often in recreational sport. This saw members of Active Retirement Associations from across town and county complete in a range of adaptations of games such as bowls, pitching, skittles and Frisbee. Following a tournament of participating groups, the MCR Active Retirement Association represented County Sligo at a National event in June, 2019.

Healthy Ireland

'Healthy Ireland', a Framework for improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025' is the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of Ireland over the coming generation. In 2017 the Government approved the creation of a Healthy Ireland Fund with an initial allocation of €5 million to support the implementation of its objectives in a practical way such as through alignment with specific objectives contained in Local Economic & Community Plans LECP's.



In May 2018, POBAL invited applications to 'Round 2' of the scheme with up to €75,000 available to LCDCs. Projects supported by Sligo LCDC include the Rickshaw Initiative in St John's Community Hospital. Staff and Community Volunteers were trained on rickshaw use and management, thus allowing residents to enjoy the health and recreational benefits of short bike rides around the environs of the grounds and the cycle lanes to the adjacent IT Sligo.



Pictured above at the official launch of the Rickshaw initiative, St John's Community Hospital, Councillor Gino O'Boyle, Mayor of the Borough District of Sligo and Councillor Chris MacManus, Chairperson of Sligo LCDC with project participants and volunteers.

PEACE IV

Sligo County Council is currently implementing The Sligo PEACE IV Programme through the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), which established the PEACE IV Sub Committee to oversee the implementation of the Programme and is chaired by Councillor Chris MacManus, Chair of the LCDC. Organisations represented on the PEACE IV Sub Committee include Sligo County Council, Sligo Leader Partnership, Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education & Training Board, An Garda Síochána, Tus Nua, the Public Participation Network (PPN), Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and representative from the minority faiths.

The PEACE IV Programme is managed by the Special European Union Projects Board (SEUPB) and the Sligo Programme with a budget of €860k is administered by Sligo County Council. The Programme includes a series of initiatives being delivered under the following three themes:

- Children & Young People
- Shared Spaces & Services
- Building Positive Relations.

All projects under the Children & Young People theme were completed during 2019. The Capacity and Inclusion through Music Project is an example of projects delivered under this theme. This project was



delivered by Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) and provided young people with an opportunity to learn about musical composition before performing their own unique musical pieces at performances in both Sligo and Enniskillen.

The Building Positive Relations theme includes the Heritage Programme which involved a series of lectures, workshops and cross border exchanges. It explored how history has shaped the present and how a better understanding of this heritage can contribute towards a shared future.

The Sligo Economic Forum

Sligo
ECONOMIC
Forum 2019

Sligo | Positioning for the Future

NPF Designated Regional Growth Centre

Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

The work of the Sligo Economic Forum (SEF) continues to centre around supporting, co-coordinating and promoting Sligo as a place to do business, to live, invest and visit. In 2018 it initiated the development of a new overarching Brand identity for Sligo and further progressed with developing a Marketing and Communications strategy supporting the brand. The SEF engaged with various stakeholders in developing Sligo specific messaging, centered upon the themes Live, Invest and Visit.

Sligo **LIVE
INVEST
VISIT**

Sligo Economic Forum is developing a 5 year Action plan for Growth and Investment which looks at the collaborative approach to delivering across the following headings:



In September of 2019, the SEF hosted a delegation from the JASPERS European programme. Sligo will be nominated as a pilot town under this programme where supports will be provided to the Forum in developing a strategic plan for the county. The JASPERS programme will also offer an advisory support in availing of large scale EU funding.

The Forum continues to support the outputs of the Atlantic Economic Corridor which will adopt a project based structure into the future. The AEC has successfully mapped 277 enterprise spaces along the western seaboard and work is progressing in forming a cohesive strategy for the Enterprise hubs available in each participating county.

Sligo entered in the Bank of Ireland Enterprising Towns Awards competition again in 2019 following a successful outcome to the 2018 entry whereby Sligo took runner up place in the region. This takes the form of a collaborative effort under the aegis of the Council and the Economic Forum and involves an engagement with the private sector and a multiplicity of agencies that all partner and assist in presenting Sligo as an all-round desirable and enterprising place in which to live.

The forum also made a submission to the Ten-T review process this year, emphasising the need to upgrade the core Ten-T network to include more peripheral infrastructures.

Sligo.ie launch



In October 2019 the Sligo Economic Forum, in partnership with Sligo County Council, launched the new Sligo brand and Sligo.ie website. This single call to action for Sligo will act as the umbrella brand for all things positive about Sligo and will provide a main central destination for users to find out about the best of what is happening in the county. Under the three pillars of live/invest/visit, the new brand and site presents an opportunity for Sligo to promote a positive image which will entice visitors and investors to the area to enjoy the landscape, culture, educational and innovative opportunities, with excellent choice and quality of life.



Speaking at the launch (L-R): Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry, John Concannon (Vice President NUIG), Ciarán Hayes (CE Sligo County Council), Aaron Forde (Chair Sligo Economic Forum),

Speaking at the launch event, Cathaoirleach Councillor Tom MacSharry commented on the future potential of the project. “Sligo is in a good place. We are on the cusp of something very positive, and if we continue to harness the abundant energy and local goodwill, there is no limit to what we can achieve. The branding project has achieved so much in a short period of time. But the energy and spirit that underpinned its delivery will be equally prevalent in its promotion, and we look forward to continuing this journey in showcasing Sligo as a special place to live, invest and visit.”

The brand was designed by ‘On the Dot’ Consultants from Donegal following an extensive consultation process which involved public, private and community interaction. Agencies were encouraged to explore what success looks like for Sligo, and to imagine what the Sligo Promise can aspire to.

The website - www.sligo.ie - was designed by Sligo-based design agency, JDK Design. It has a vibrant magazine style, and brings together stories about life in Sligo, inspiring business articles covering innovative business start-ups to multinational organisations and showcases Sligo as a spectacular visitor destination.



Pictured at the launch (L-R): Ciarán Hayes (CE Sligo County Council), Jeff Kay and Louise Kay (JDK Design), Aaron Forde (Chair Sligo Economic Forum), Dorothy Clarke (Sligo County Council) and Jimmy O'Brien (Sligo County Council).

The brand is supported by a Communications Strategy developed by DHR Consultants from Dublin, which will ensure its effective implementation and management.

Chief Executive of Sligo County Council, Ciarán Hayes, reflected on the collaborative nature of the project, and the importance in working together with all facets of the Sligo community to develop and promote the brand, "I want to commend all of those who have contributed to the development of this new website and brand. Collaboration has been paramount to its success to date, and will determine its success in the future. As we 'arise and go' we take with us that collaborative spirit, working together to deliver our message, that Sligo is a world class place in which to Live, Invest and Visit."

Along with the official launch, three promotional videos were released to promote Sligo under its new brand identity. The first of these videos detail the life of the Lyons Family, a young married couple with two children living in the sea-side town of Strandhill. Originally from Tipperary, career opportunities brought them to the North West where they could avail of what they describe as 'the perfect work life balance'. Set against the backdrop of Benbulbin, Knocknarea and the rugged coastline of the Wild Atlantic Way, the video is aimed at young families and professionals who want to strike a better work-life-balance to relocate to Sligo and enjoy greater affordability of housing and services, quality employment opportunities, and a beautiful, healthy environment in which to raise a family. Needless to say, this is not the only target audience in question; plans are in place to develop similar content in the future to attract third level students, creatives and innovators, and those looking to explore new career opportunities, to consider Sligo as the ideal place in which to live.



Some of the local food producers who were delighting guests at the launch with their artisan offerings.

The Invest video details the ‘romantic’ story of Bernie Butler, an entrepreneur originally from Dublin who visited Sligo with her husband some 35 years ago and, after instantly falling in love with the county, vowed she would relocate. As CEO of Good 4 U, Bernie runs a thriving business on the west coast surrounded by her family who are also involved in the business. With a rapidly expanding infrastructure and excellent connectivity, according to Bernie, Sligo provides the perfect location for companies looking for an idyllic location to establish operations. The video showcases just what Sligo has to offer for potential investors or start up businesses in creative talent and accessible workspace. It also details the overall collaborative spirit of the Sligo business community to support all enterprises.

These personal stories are followed by a captivating video which encourages tourists to visit Sligo. We are treated to a wealth of breath taking scenery as drone footage travels from the Devil’s Chimney above Glencar, to the iconic golf links in Enniscrone. The new Sligo brand has certainly provided to the outsider a little glimpse of just what this county has to offer, and there is clearly more to come.

Speaking after the Launch, Chairperson of the Sligo Economic Forum, Aaron Forde, CEO Aurivo, reflected on the work to date in developing the Sligo brand. “When the Forum was established in 2016, we had identified a need to promote the image of the county under one collective brand which would deliver a positive and coherent message for Sligo. Sligo County Council, leading out with public and private entities, came together to make this happen and our final product is an impressive brand, a state of the art website and high quality content to back it all up. However, that was the easy part, we now look forward to getting the message out there and promoting Sligo as a world class place in which to Live, Invest and Visit”.

County Sligo Diaspora Strategy 2019-2024

Sligo like many other counties has a large Diaspora world-wide who keep a keen interest in what is happening at 'home'. This resource has been largely untapped yet offers wonderful potential in expanding our opportunities. These relationships will be critical in achieving the social, economic and community development potential of the county.



Launch of Sligo County Diaspora Strategy 2019 - 2024 in City Hall on 1st May, 2019

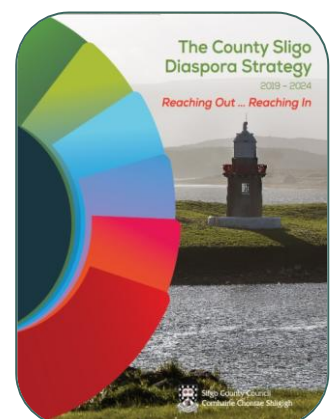
In 2018, Sligo along with Leitrim, Roscommon and Longford County Councils collaborated to progress this opportunity and advanced a joint approach to developing County Diaspora Strategies.

Work continued throughout 2018/19 to complete the strategy and stakeholder engagement took place across multiple sectors. The Strategy was launched on May 1st, 2019 and was widely welcomed. At the launch of the Strategy, the Cathaoirleach Councillor Martin Baker along with the guest speakers Martin Enright (Chair of Sligo County Board of Comhaltas) and Brendan Leonard (Sligo County Board GAA) spoke of the strong connections between our Diaspora and both the GAA and Comhaltas communities across the world. The Strategy outlines key actions paramount to ensuring that Sligo's Diaspora are engaged with and that the bonds to their home are strengthened into the future.

Tourism Development

Sligo County Council's ongoing collaboration with Sligo Tourism Ltd. and the broad range of stakeholders engaged in the promotion and development of County Sligo as a premier tourism visitor destination continued in 2019. This targeted and collaborative approach will harness public and private resources to support Sligo's aim to develop as a key tourism destination situated on the Wild Atlantic Way.

The continuing investment in tourism infrastructure and the growth in visitor numbers act as an economic driver to the region, while also reinforcing important social and cultural benefits locally.



Sligo Tourism has progressed plans in developing their Digital Media engagement with significant increase in website traffic and online social media presence. Work is continuing in the development of content creation and their latest promotional video was well received.

Sligo County Council is working with partner Counties Donegal and Mayo, to develop an International Marketing Strategy for the North West. The Strategy will focus on the North West region in attracting both domestic and overseas visitors. An Expression of Interest has been submitted by each partner under the Leader Co-Operation fund and plans are progressing in completing the overall application.

The County Sligo Tourism Strategy was developed collaboratively by Sligo County Council and Sligo Tourism Ltd and aims to be an inclusive and strategic roadmap that will guide the development and direction of the industry in the county. It was approved by Sligo County Council in February, 2018 and was officially launched in March, 2018 and is currently being implemented.

The Strategy sets out 4 Strategic Priorities to be delivered over the lifetime of the Programme namely:

- I. Product and Experience Development
- II. Marketing and Communications
- III. Industry and Capability Development
- IV. Leadership and Collaboration

To deliver on these Strategic Priorities a number of key objectives, initiatives and actions are set out. These include a concentrated focus on developing the Yeats Theme as the main theme /attractor for tourism in County Sligo both from a product and marketing point of view. This theme is selected on the basis that it can give County Sligo a Market Differentiation leading to advantage, that cannot be copied. The Plan also focuses on developing a second tier of thematic experiences and attractors selected based on their relative strength and ability to capture visitors and offer compelling experiences. In this respect, they are:

- a) Outdoor Adventure
- b) Archaeology and history
- c) Culture and Creativity.

During 2019 Sligo Tourism launched an extremely successful digital marketing strategy using social media platforms to promote County Sligo as a must see destination.

Part of this strategy included an Autumn campaign aimed at the 'Great escapers' with a focus on outdoor activities, health and well-being, and all there is to do and see in Sligo. A short video was commissioned showcasing outdoor activities in the County; this has over 60,000 views on social media and featured in irishindependent.ie and joe.ie. Sligo featured in a number of high profile Trade Magazines both on the domestic and International platforms, creating increased awareness of Sligo as prime visitor destination.

2020 will see Sligo Tourism continue to implement this digital marketing strategy, launching a Spring campaign with the focus on family friendly activities. The Sligo Tourism strategy highlights the importance of working collaboratively.

One of the main reasons why the digital marketing strategy has been successful is that Sligo Tourism has and continues to work with agencies and networks including Sligo Country Council, Sligo LEADER. Local Enterprise Office, IT Sligo, Fáilte Ireland, Sligo Food Trail, Adventure Sligo, Sligo Walks and Sligo Tourist Development Association.

Festivals & Events

There are many festivals held on an annual basis in County Sligo from local festivals engrained in the community with a varying level of attraction for visitors to the larger festivals and events held which attract a substantial audience. All however provide a variety of colour to the community and bring people together.

Festivals are seen in national tourism policy as having the potential to attract visitors to an area and are a generator of income for that area, along with being a driver to instil civic pride in its inhabitants.

In 2019, Festivals across the county were supported via a number of grant schemes including the Community and Voluntary Grants and the County Sligo Regional Festivals and Participative Events Scheme 2019, the Contribution to the Arts scheme and the LEADER programme. The County Sligo Tourism Strategy 2018-2023 looks at developing 6-7 larger events that demonstrate a uniqueness and ability to attract bed nights (overseas preferable) and grow business at off peak times.

The Council in partnership with Sligo Leader Partnership is developing a Festival and Events Strategy for County Sligo and the final document is expected by the end of 2019. The development of the Strategy involved extensive consultation with Festivals organisers throughout the county and all stakeholders involved in supporting and developing the festivals offering. The strategy endeavors to provide a framework and set of recommendations to help deliver on the key findings of the Tourism strategy by supporting and prioritising the strengths that Sligo has in its Festivals offer in order to secure and attract further visitors to the county.

Wild Atlantic Way

The Wild Atlantic Way's acknowledged success and improved visitor numbers, continues to attract visitors to the area as a result. Sligo has seven Discovery Points along the route; Enniscrone, Easkey, Aughris, Strandhill, Rosses Point, Streedagh and Mullaghmore. Mullaghmore has 'Signature Discovery Point'

status, allied to its spectacular seascape backdrop, 'Big Wave' surfing phenomenon, Classiebawn Castle and Benbulbin mountain backdrop. Improvements will continue at these locations to ensure the visitor experience is consistent with other WAW locations. A Visitor Destination Management Plan will be pursued in consultation with Fáilte Ireland in 2020. Sligo County Council linking with Fáilte Ireland supports groups who are actively engaged in delivering festivals and experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way.



A successful application was submitted to Fáilte Ireland's Large Tourism Projects Capital Scheme for Stage 2 (Delivery Stage) to investigate the development of a Cultural Plaza/Civic Space in Stephen Street Car Park in 2020. An application under Destination Town Capital Investment Programme 2019 for Enniscrone as Tourism Destination Town was also submitted.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure products continue to grow in popularity and Sligo County Council supports many exciting opportunities throughout the year; Maritime Centre redevelopment at Strandhill, Off-road National Mountain Biking Centre on the Ox Mountains near Coolaney in conjunction with Coillte and the pursuit of two cycleway Greenways:

- i. Recreational walking/ cycle trail along the Western Greenway from Collooney to Bellaghy, along the closed Western Railway Corridor in Co. Sligo. An application to the National Greenway Fund will be resubmitted in 2020.
- ii. Recreational walking/ cycle trail along the SLNCR (Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway) from Sligo to Enniskillen in Co. Fermanagh. Leitrim Co Co have agreed to be the lead partner in making an application to the National Greenway Fund to advance progress on a possible greenway on the SLNCR.

Pride of Place

Local communities throughout the county are encouraged to showcase their achievements and have participated in the IPB Pride of Place competition held in association with Co-operation Ireland since its inception in 2004. Entries are accepted in either population categories or single issue categories and Sligo County Council supports entrants in their preparation for and during judging day. The competition fosters community participation and highlights the importance of communities working together to create civic pride in their area. In 2019 Gurteen (Population Category 300 – 1000) and Sligo Food Trail (Community Tourism Category) represented the county in the competition. In 2020 community groups will again be supported to enter and represent the county in this All Island competition.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) is the first-stop-shop for those entrepreneurs starting a small business or expanding an existing one. It provides an integrated support service focusing on the needs of small businesses from the Council's offices in City Hall (from which many of its training supports are delivered directly to clients). Supports provided include training, mentoring, financial assistance, advice, counselling and promotion of an enterprise culture (including through programmes run in schools). It also signposts clients to the Council's other business-related services and to business-related services operated by other agencies.



The LEO assists broader economic development through for example the advancement of tourism, workspace, city centre developmental activities and membership of relevant local development bodies such as Sligo Business Improvement District (of which Councillor MacManus and the Head of Enterprise are both directors), the Sligo Local Community Development Committee/Local Action Group and the Economic Forum. The LEO is represented on Boards and Committees of developmental bodies such as Sligo County Enterprise Fund Limited in Strandhill, the Tubbercurry Development Company Limited, Enniscrone Leisure Company Ltd. and Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Limited.

A particular challenge for the LEO in the current climate is Brexit. The LEO has put in place a range of informational events, advice clinics and workshops on areas such as customs clearance to help our clients prepare, particularly if a "hard Brexit" will be the outcome. It stands ready to give absolute priority to the implementation of any further Government initiatives for businesses that will inevitably come on stream in the event of a hard Brexit.

At a cross-border and international level, its activities include sourcing/partnering for external funding (e.g. Co-Innovate Programme, a cross-border programme with InterTradelreland as lead partner geared towards promoting business efficiency and cross-border trade). Furthermore, together with colleagues in Mayo, Roscommon and Clare local authorities, the LEO is actively involved in an initiative aimed at fostering trade and business between Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and this region. The LEO also promotes the Enterprise Europe Network initiative, under which businesses are facilitated in making international connections.

The Office is also involved in driving a number of Government initiatives locally. For example, it remains heavily involved with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment in the delivery of its ICT vouchers programme and in the delivery of the Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Programme on behalf of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It works closely with Micro Finance Ireland on promotion of its loan offering to small businesses. The Office has been very successful in attracting external funding which, together with contributions from the Council and local contributions, has and continues to enable a broad range of projects in the areas of rural recreation, town and village enhancement and improvements to vantage points along the Wild Atlantic Way.

A significant element of the LEO's micro-enterprise funding is provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, co-funded by the European Union and channelled through Enterprise Ireland, which also provides key back-up expertise and assistance. In addition, an element of the Office's funding is made available through the Council. It generates income from training fees and from a refundable

element of some grants advanced. It also sources funding from external funders such as competitive national and EU programmes and assists where possible other relevant organisations with their applications for such funding.

Sligo Local Enterprise Office: Programmes and initiatives

Trading Online Vouchers

The Trading Online Voucher is a financial incentive to small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online. Under the scheme, a qualifying business may apply for matched funding to a maximum value of €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure (exclusive of VAT), whichever is the lesser. Following approval of their application, a successful applicant can engage suppliers and, upon completion of the work, submit a request for payment to the LEO in line with the terms and conditions of their voucher. To qualify businesses must be operating for at least 6 months and developing or expanding their e-commerce (selling online) activities.

Trading online vouchers are a key element of the LEO's current response. Others include a broad range of training and advisory programmes aimed at assisting businesses maximise sales and marketing through relevant social media channels.

Technical Assistance for Micro Enterprise (TAME) The TAME grant part-funds the costs that can be incurred investigating and researching export markets, e.g. exhibiting at Trade Fairs, preparing marketing material and developing websites specifically targeting overseas markets. Qualifying businesses may apply for matched funding to a maximum value of €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure (exclusive of VAT), whichever is the lesser.

Brexit Supports for Small Business

The Local Enterprise Office has a suite of supports to help businesses address the challenges of Brexit. They include workshops on how to comply with customs procedures and requirements, Brexit Clinics offering focused advice relating to the particular needs and issues facing a particular business, and access to expertise from the Local Enterprise Office mentor panel. Businesses can avail of TAME and Trading Online Vouchers to help them expand their market opportunities. Specialised programmes to assist them increase their productivity and efficiency levels such as a LEAN Programme tailored specifically to the needs of the micro-enterprise sector are also available.

At a broader level, the full suite of LEO programmes are available, including grant assistance for eligible businesses (principally manufacturing, exporting or potential exporting businesses). For those not eligible for grant aid, the LEO provides structured assistance to them in submitting applications to Microfinance Ireland for loan funding. The LEO also points suitable businesses towards other potential sources of funding, notably the Western Development Commission.

National Success for Mercy College Entrepreneurs in Croke Park

Ireland's largest celebration of secondary school entrepreneurs took place in Croke Park at Student Enterprise National Final on May 3rd, 2019, co-ordinated by the Local Enterprise Offices.

Annie Buick and Enya Hughes, second-year students from Mercy College in Sligo won an award at the Student Enterprise Programme National Finals in Croke Park, organised by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) for secondary schools.

The students secured 3rd place overall in the Intermediate Category and were presented with their awards on stage by the Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen T.D., Oisín Geoghegan of the Local Enterprise Offices and Michael Nevin, Chair of the Enterprise Education Committee for the LEOs.



Oisín Geoghegan, Chairperson, Network of Local Enterprise Offices; Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen T.D.; Enya Hughes; Annie Buick; and Michael Nevin, Chairperson, Local Enterprise Offices

Their enterprise, aptly named 'Imagination Book Company', was formed under the guidance of their teachers, Anne Gorby, Sarah Dufficy and Mary Rose Maguire. The girls, both diagnosed with severe dyslexia at an early age, came together to write a children's storybook, following the journey of a young boy's account of growing up with dyslexia. Using their personal experiences as the foundation for their story, Enya and Annie have created a fun, relatable book aimed at primary school children, to raise awareness and bring clarity to a learning difficulty experienced by an estimated 1 in 10 people.

Having won the Regional Student Enterprise Award in March, the entrepreneurs attended the National Finals where they clinched the bronze trophy. A fantastic achievement and a testimony to their resilience and perseverance, defying the assumption that having dyslexia inhibits the ability to achieve one's potential.

The Programme, funded by the Government of Ireland through Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the LEOs, had a total of 222 teenage entrepreneurs, aged between 13 and 18, from 78 different enterprises, competing at the National Final, with every local authority area represented.

This year's Student Enterprise Programme attracted over 26,000 student participants from 480 secondary schools around the country. Starting every September, the enterprise education initiative helps students gain the skills and practical knowledge of running a real-life business.

Congratulating this year's winners and their schools, Minister Breen said;

"These student entrepreneurs are the future of Irish business and job creation across the country. The skills attained by these young students during the Student Enterprise Programme will be invaluable to these young entrepreneurs and provide them with a fantastic foundation for a future in business. Many congratulations to all the students here today. By making it to Croke Park you have shown you can create and run a business. And congratulations also to their teachers who play such a significant role in sparking and encouraging their entrepreneurial imagination. If these students decide that being an entrepreneur is the path they want to take in their future, I can assure them their Local Enterprise Office will be there to support them every step of the way."

John Reilly, Head of Enterprise with Local Enterprise Office Sligo said:

"Congratulations to the students of Mercy College on winning this prestigious national award in Croke Park this week, which recognises all their hard work. We have seen over 200,000 students learn how to successfully run a business in the 17 years of the Student Enterprise Programme, thanks to a long-term partnership between local schools and Local Enterprise Offices. Judging by this year's finalists and winners, the future is bright for entrepreneurs here in Sligo."

Further details about the next Student Enterprise Programme, which begins in September through the Local Enterprise Offices, are available through www.studententerprise.ie

Best Tourism Award for South and West Sligo Tourism at Croke Park

Community tourism network South and West Sligo Tourism carried off the gold award in the Best Tourism Initiative category of the National Community and Council Awards 2019 on Saturday 9th February 2019.



Ciarán Hayes, CE, Sligo County Council; Marie Brouder; Eva Costello, Fálte Ireland; Louise Kilbane; Sean McDonagh, South & West Sligo Tourism; Mags Murray, Chair LAMA

The award was presented by Eva Costello, representing sponsors Fálte Ireland, at a gala black-tie event in the Croke Park conference centre.

Known as the LAMA Awards, the National Community and Council Awards recognise and celebrate outstanding work and achievements from local Community and County Councils, partnerships and projects that enhance our everyday lives. The Tourism award is specifically aimed at rewarding an initiative which directly increases visitor numbers to an area and improves the way we care for our visitors, as well as the effect it is having on businesses, both new and existing.

“I cannot express how overwhelmed and delighted we are to receive this award”, said Paul Taylor, Chair of South and West Sligo Tourism (SWST). “The whole purpose was for the businesses and community to work together to attract more visitors and benefit the whole region. This is a wonderful endorsement of the vision which has now become a reality. I want to say a heartfelt “thank you” to the committee, our members, the festivals and all our supporters who have worked tirelessly to make the network a success. We look forward to implementing our plans for 2019.”

Driven by a voluntary committee of Councillor Paul Taylor (Chair), Fintan Kennedy (Vice Chair), Sean McDonagh/ Louise Kilbane (joint Secretaries), Tony Hession (Treasurer), Ray O’Grady (Sligo County Council) and committee members Geraldine Brennan, David Tuffy and the South Sligo Tourist Office. The project engages Marie Brouder of Brouder Marketing and is supported by Sligo County Council.

South and West Sligo Tourism is a 40 strong member-based network, which has put practical measures in place to boost tourism in the largely rural area. Initiatives have included annual booklets including maps and calendars of events, a heritage and historical trails video with accompanying booklet and map, a series of #MySligo marketing campaign videos, networking events, sustained social media activity, media visits and implementation of an ongoing marketing plan. Outstanding successes have included being finalists in the Pride of Place Awards and our members featuring in an impressive seven-page feature in Cara Magazine, the Aer Lingus in-flight publication.

The educational and networking aspects of the project have improved and honed the existing offerings for tourists, these have included familiarisation visits to members. Members have learned how to present and promote their businesses in a more effective way. They have access to an ever-growing photographic library and are learning techniques and strategies to utilise these effectively. The network is delighted to collaborate with Sligo Walks and Sligo Tourism.

Strategic and consistent use of social media has capitalised on the potential of the internet – introducing South and West Sligo to a huge national and international audience which would otherwise have been unreachable. The effect has been to attract the interest of bloggers and journalists as well as Sligo diaspora and potential visitors around the globe.

South and West Sligo Tourism is an initiative which resulted from the Tubbercurry Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) programme. It is still in its infancy, but it has a strong kernel and is projected to expand in both membership and effect over the coming years. New members are always welcome and are invited to visit www.southsligotourism.ie or email info@southandwestsligo.ie for details.

SLIGO ARTS SERVICE

2020 will see the introduction and implementation of a new five year Arts Plan. The Plan will initiate new projects and programme elements and build on the excellent achievements over the past twenty three years.

The new Plan will re-state the value it places on the arts and artists. Support for the artist will once again be a key priority. Financial supports for artists will be re-instated.

Children and Young People

County Sligo Youth Theatre deliver weekly workshops to one hundred young people in three age groups. Three productions will be staged during the year. Shows in 2019 included These Bridges and The Case of the Goofy Groom as part of Culture Night 2019. A range of activities include a summer camp and a Young Critics panel and theatre outings.



The Primary Colours visual arts programme for Primary schools will look at expanding the range of schools and artforms under Primary Colours, taking account of the new opportunities for schools to participate in the Creative Ireland programmes.

Sligo Arts Service will continue to support the delivery of Music Education through Music Generation Sligo, in partnership with Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB and Sligo Music Education Partnership, specifically the Discovering Music Programme for school children.

Arts and Health and Older People

There will be a focus on artist residencies and commissions in Health/Care Settings including exhibition opportunities, and on the Bealtaine Festival, in partnership with HSE West.

Through the Healthy Ireland Fund 2019-2021, Glór Shligigh Intergenerational Choir will be developed by Sligo County Council Arts Office, in partnership with HSE Health Promotion and Improvement Department and Music Generation Sligo, using our extensive knowledge and expertise in delivering intergenerational arts + health programmes since the pilot Maugherow Project in 1998. This will be the first intergenerational choir project for the office.



Sligo Arts Service will once again partner with the Hawk's Well Theatre on a commission to celebrate Bealtaine commencing 2020 and finishing in 2022.

Community Arts and Artists

The Arts Service provides continual professional development to artists to work in the community. Under the new Arts Plan 2020 – 2025, there will be a call out for new artists to join the artist panels working through Arts + Health, Arts + Education and other contexts.

There will be enhanced funding opportunities for artists in the areas of exhibitions, projects, awards, commissions and bursaries. These are essential to enabling artists to create work and to make a living in Sligo.

Music

The 21st Sligo International Chamber Music Festival will focus on the 250th birthday of Beethoven with a colourful programme of music to celebrate this great composer.

The festival plans to introduce a number of coffee concerts and a talks series to expand the weekend programme and further develop audience interest, following an encouraging upturn in audience numbers in 2019. The festival will once again partner with Music Generation Sligo who will present the Tuned In Masterclass and Performance Programme, working with tutors from the Vogler Quartet and West Ocean String Quartet.



Film

SLR Film is a partnership initiative of Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon Arts Services to develop the film sector in the region and to attract inward productions. Following an independent review of the three-year pilot to be completed early 2020, we will implement the recommendations, in tandem with Sligo County Arts Plan 2020 - 2025. Until such time we will continue with the bursary schemes and networking events featuring presentations from different aspects of the industry as well as providing CPD opportunities to local filmmakers and writers for film.

Culture Night

Culture Nights is delivered by Sligo Arts Service in partnership with key arts venues and stakeholders and is funded by Sligo County Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.



Creative Ireland

Sligo's five-year Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 - 2022 aligns with the Government's initiative in placing creativity at the centre of public policy for the first time and in encouraging and supporting greater access to and participation in creativity to improve the wellbeing of all citizens. A key element in this strategic plan is to enable creativity in every community. The annual Creative Sligo Open Call is an opportunity for the cultural sector, community groups, artists and creatives to apply for funding in order to work collaboratively in realising the vision of Creative Ireland. In total 24 events/projects were completed under the Creative Sligo Open Call 2019 ranging from arts workshops in communities to new music/multidisciplinary commissions to exhibitions, creative explorations, literary events, artist network events, publications, filming and surfing! The Culture Team is currently planning for a National Cultural Conference to be held in Sligo in 2021.

Funding

The Arts Office will continue to manage Sligo County Council's Arts Grant Scheme which in 2019 awarded thirty eight grants.

Contributions to the Arts Scheme 2019

Organisations & Venues	Amount Awarded	Festivals & Events	Amount Awarded
Yeats Society	€9,000	Cairde Sligo Arts Festival	€9,500
The Model	€95,000	Con Brio Sligo Music Series	€2,300
Blue Raincoat Theatre Company	€31,000	Cos Cos Sean Nós Festival	€3,300
Hawk's Well Theatre	€48,000	Sligo Summer Festival	€11,000
Coleman Centre (Theatre Programming)	€3,500	Tubbercurry Old Fair Day Festival	€8,800
Sligo Jazz Project	€7,000	Ballintogher Traditional Festival	€1,650
Branching Out Art Ltd	€2,500	South Sligo Summer School	€4,400
Sligo Concert Band	€3,500	Coleman Traditional Festival	€1,650
Shared Light Theatre Company	€500	Fiddler of Dooney/Sligo Town CCE	€3,300
		County Fleadh/Riverstown CCE	€5,500
		Frank Finn Sligo Traditional Singing Weekend	€2,200
		James Morrison Festival/Riverstown CCE	€1,650
		Informal Music Afternoons/Sligo Baroque Orchestra	€2,850
		Sligo Feis Ceoil	€7,700
		Feis Shligigh	€7,700
		Tread Softly	€3,300
		Sligo Live	€11,000
		Spilt Milk Festival	€1,050
		Dark Leaves Theatre Co	€500
		Sea Shanty Festival	€1,650
		Sligo Gospel Choir	€1,000
Total Arts Venues & Organisations	€200,000	Total Arts Festivals & Events	€92,000
TOTAL ALLOCATED FOR 2019: €292,000			

International Chamber Music Festival

In 2019, Sligo County Council Arts Service celebrated the 20th anniversary of Sligo International Chamber Music Festival. Founded in 1999 as part of the ground-breaking Vogler Quartet in Sligo Residency Programme, the first festival was staged in St Columba's Church Drumcliffe as the 'Vogler Spring Festival' in the year 2000.



The Arts Service works closely with the quartet to curate and deliver ambitious, high quality music programmes, earning Sligo International Chamber Music Festival the reputation as one of Ireland's leading annual chamber music events. The festival now takes place in Drumcliffe and in The Model, Sligo town.

To mark the 20th anniversary year, two very special new events took place funded by Sligo County Council's Creative Ireland Programme 2018-2022.

SLIGO LIBRARY SERVICE AND MUSEUM



During 2019 Sligo Library Services continued to work with our communities, providing a free library service for all, in neutral inclusive spaces. As society and communities change so too do the needs of our communities in terms of service provision. Sligo County Council in partnership with the Department for Rural and Community Development in 2019 supported the Library service in providing Digital Learning Centres in all four branch libraries in the County. This investment assisted Library staff to deliver high end technology training and resources to library users of all ages throughout 2019.

Sligo County Council's library service core values of supporting reading, literacy and information provision continued to be supported in 2019 with additional expenditure on book stock. The removal of library fines in 2019 was an historic moment in Irish Public libraries. For the first time potential barriers to children utilising the library service for fear of monetary penalties was removed. This will over the coming years help to stimulate the appreciation of reading and literacy amongst both parents and children.

The Word, a partnership between Sligo County Council's Central Library service and IT Sligo's BA in Writing and Literature, continued in 2019 where it left off in 2018 in delivering a highly successful literary programme throughout the year. *The Word* has now become one of the main literary events to be held in the North West and the calibre of writers, musicians and artists taking part in the readings, Q&A and open mic sessions continues to be exceptionally high.



Countywide Events:

Ballymote Community Library

Ballymote Community Library hosted over 440 events during 2019, suitable for all demographics.

- Storytime Sessions – including Baby Book Club, Art and Craft Sessions, Puppet Shows, Wildlife Shows, Board Games and Yoga are among the highlights for children
- Coding, 3D printing and Computer Classes including Smart Phones continue for both children and adults
- The Knitting Club, Documentary and Book Club continue – as well as a newly formed Irish Language Group for adults
- Exhibitions of local and national interest continue
- Seachtain na Gaeilge, CBF, Summer Stars, Right to Read programme, Cruinniú na nÓg, Yeats Day, Roald Dahl Day, Science Week, Dr Seuss Day and Poetry Ireland Day Events were hosted at Ballymote Community Library.

Tubbercurry Community Library

Tubbercurry Community Library hosted over 120 events with 1,444 people attending the following:

- Easter and Summer Camps for Children
- Weekly Story Time for Children
- Weekly Creative Writers Group for Adults
- Adult Book Clubs
- Digital Skills Computer Classes for Adults
- Weekly Dyslexia Support Group for Primary School Children
- Art and Crafts Activities
- Spring Into Storytime Sessions for Children
- Board Games Sessions for Children
- Coding Workshops for Children
- Weekly Class Visits from local schools
- Arts and Crafts Workshop in conjunction with Tubbercurry Family Recourse Centre
- Weekly Storytelling Session facilitated by Library Staff in Family Resource Centre
- Culture Night Readings from the Creative Writing Group
- Cruinniú na nÓg – Tote Bag Design Workshop
- Children's Film Club
- Dungeons and Dragons workshops with Wayne O'Connor (Sligo Children's Author/Illustrator)
- South Sligo Summer School 2019 – In the month of July the Library hosted junior sessions for the South Sligo Summer School. 225 adults and children attended these sessions.
- Bealtaine Event - In partnership with the Tubbercurry Day Care centre which supports the elderly, the library showcased various arts and crafts created through their art classes in a window display with local musicians to launch the event.
- The Open Library continues to attract new members and was used extensively throughout the year by Leaving Certificate students and Third Level students including students from the North Connaught College of Further Education, Tubbercurry. Jobseekers continue to avail of the public access pcs and the Work Matters hub during Open Library time to prepare CV's etc.

Enniscrone Branch Library:

Enniscrone Branch Library has hosted the following events:

- Two chair yoga sessions, as part of the Healthy Ireland initiative, which attracted new customers to the library.
- Two four week *digitise the nation (tablet skills)* courses which again attracted new audiences to the library.
- Increased membership and issues were as a result of heavily promoting Library services in the local area and with local schools, as well as investment in new stock.
- Cruinniú na nÓg events were very successful and included a treasure hunt around Enniscrone town, a talent show, Storytime and face painting.
- Summer Stars ended with an enjoyable certificate and medal presentation in the Library followed by celebrations in the nearby ice cream parlour Maple Mousse.
- Monthly Adult Book Club.
- Class visits from local
- Junior stock recommendations collaboration with Kilglass National School.
- Storybook Trail along the hollow at Enniscrone Beach in partnership with *Tread Softly* Festival.
- Storytime sessions in July as part of the Enniscrone *Black Pig Festival*.
- Halloween Spooky Storytime and Games sessions.
- All *Right to Read* initiatives were delivered in 2019 (Spring into Storytime, Summer Stars Children's Book Festival and Family time at Your Library) which has resulted in new members joining and attending events.

Sligo Central Library

5,099 Library Patrons attended events throughout 2019:

- Boardgame workshops
- Dyslexia Workshops
- Comic Book Making Workshops
- Digitise the Nation Digital Skills classes
- Age Action Ireland Computer/Tablet/Smartphone literacy
- Seasonal events; Oiche Nollaig na mBán, Engineer's Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, World Book Day, Spring into Storytime, Poetry Ireland Day, Easter, Bealtaine Festival, Yeats Day, Summer Stars, Cáirde Sligo Arts Festival, Tread Softly Festival, October Book Festival, Science Festival, Halloween, Family Time at Your Library and Christmas
- 3D Printing Workshops
- *The Word*
- Goal Development Workshop
- Healthy Ireland at Your Library events
- Creative Writing Workshops
- Storytime sessions
- Staff Book Club
- Time to Read Literacy Programme visits
- Art & Craft Workshops
- Puppet Shows
- Music Workshops
- Book Launches
- Library Staff storytelling in Sligo Family Resource Centre
- Lego Technics Workshops
- Digital Town children's events
- Class Visits; Pre-School, Primary & Post Primary Schools and MSLETB
- Toddle Time Storytelling



Mobile Library

The Mobile Library visited 17 locations throughout County Sligo on a 3 week schedule as well as 15 Pre-Schools. In March 2019 a replacement vehicle was sourced and fitted out.

During Summer 2019 Library services were promoted at Cúl Camps by visits from the Mobile Library. Storytelling also took place on the Mobile Library at Cranmore Co-Op and Resource House.



Mobile Library driver Declan Howley checking out books while at one of the many locations visited by the Mobile Library.

Cruinniú na nÓg 2019

Cruinniú na nÓg is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme. Its purpose is to enable the creative potential of children and young people.

Sligo's Cruinniú na nÓg event, hosted by Sligo Libraries, took place on Saturday 15th June throughout the branch network. Parents, families and young people took part in a wide range of fun, free activities; from Creative Art Workshops to 3D Printing, Warrior Yoga Classes, Treasure Hunt, Tote Bag Designing, Storytelling, Creative Writing, Badge Making, Sun Catcher Workshops, Blacksmith Demonstrations, Dream Jar Making, Dance Workshops, Flea Circus and Live Music!



Pupils from St. Patrick's National School Calry at the 2019 launch of Cruinniú na nÓg with their teacher Ms. McNasser, writer Gerry Boland, Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady, Mayor of Sligo Municipal District, Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive Sligo County Council and Donal Tinney, County Librarian

Right to Read programme

Sligo Libraries delivered 2019 targets set out in the Action Plan for each of the 4 elements of the programme:



Spring into Storytime

Storytime sessions ran in all branches throughout the month of April.

Summer Stars

Successful reading programme ran in all branches. Increased participation from last year saw 2,040 children join throughout the county and borrow 26,366 juvenile items during July and August.

2,850 children attended 89 events; Storytelling, Puppet Shows, Art and Crafts Events, Yoga Workshops, Movie Clubs, Coding Workshops, 3D Printer Workshops, Pottery making, Illustration and Creative Writing Workshops, Lego Technic Workshops, Treasure hunt, Interactive Board Games, Bee Keeping, Introduction to Music Workshop, and Junior 'The Word.'

Children's Book Festival

Events ran in all branches during the month of October.

Family Time at Your Library

Events ran in all branches during the month of December.

A total of 3,053 children attended events held in Sligo Libraries throughout 2019.

218 class visits to Libraries also took place during the year.

Library staff visited schools throughout the County and gave 36 presentations in schools during 2019.



Children who participated in the Summer Stars reading challenge receive their certificate from Mayor Councillor Gino O'Boyle

Work Matters:

Work Matters is a programme delivered in all Sligo County Libraries. Work Matters targets those starting a business or seeking employment. This programme delivers dedicated computers, scanners and printers that can be booked for a morning or afternoon. There are also a carefully selected book stock and a host of online courses and aids to assist those wanting to become an entrepreneur or looking for work. Work Matters is supported by partners Intreo, Citizens Advice Centre, MSLETB and LEO Sligo and events are hosted both by Sligo Libraries and in collaboration with our partners to highlight the range of supports available.



Europe Direct Information Centre (EDIC):

Europe Direct Information Centre (EDIC) located at Sligo Central Library is a starting point for finding information about the European Union and its activities. The centre hosts events and activities to highlight the role of the EU in our daily lives and to develop an understanding of how the EU functions and the growing impact of its effect legislatively, commercially and socially. The EDIC offers ways of engaging with the EU through Citizens Dialogues and lectures EDIC plays an important role in disseminating information about grants, legislation and consumer information through social media platforms Facebook and Twitter and by regular newspaper articles.



Healthy Ireland at Your Library:

During 2019 Sligo Libraries delivered Phase II and commenced Phase III of the Healthy Ireland at You Libraries programme, a Government led initiative aiming to create an Irish society where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health, and where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society.

Funding was provided by the Healthy Ireland fund for health and wellbeing resources, staff training to support the service, and library events and promotion. Events ran on the themes of #BeWell #ThinkWell #EatWell included Mindfulness workshops for children, Nutritionist talks for teenagers, adult Chair Yoga classes, and Talks on getting active and adventurous outdoors. Resources provided included Healthy Ireland book collections in each Library as well as eBook, eAudiobook and digital Magazine collections.



Museum:

Centenary of Proportional Representation Election Sligo Borough:

As part of Sligo County Council's Decade of Centenaries programme of commemorative events, Sligo Museum displayed artefacts associated with the election held in January 1919, along with an exhibition which documented the processes involved in using proportional representation. The Sligo Borough election in 1919 was the first public election to use the PR system in Britain or Ireland.

Connaught Rangers Mutiny:

On November 9th 2019 a series of lectures in Tubbercurry Library took place with a view to introducing the history of the mutiny by a number of Connaught Rangers soldiers. Some of the mutineers were from County Sligo and at the time they were stationed with the British Army in India in 1920.

The centenary of the mutiny will occur in June 2020 and it is planned in June 2020 to unveil a plaque to their memory in Tubbercurry. As the history of these men has to a certain degree been less well documented, this introductory series of lectures held in Tubbercurry Community Library provided an informative historical backdrop to the mutiny itself.

Martin Savage 1897 - 1919:

In December 1919 Martin Savage of Streamstown County Sligo was killed in action at a very young age at Ashtown County Dublin during the War of Independence. Sligo County Council's programme of events to commemorate this historic moment in Irish history included a Commemorative Day of music and poetry on the anniversary of Martin Savage's death. It is also planned to publish a children's book which will illustrate and narrate the life and death of Martin Savage.

Right to Read Champion Awards

Mr Seán Canney TD, the Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development, presented Right to Read Champion Awards to local authorities in recognition of their ongoing efforts to support literacy development through the library service.

The Awards, which were hosted by the LGMA at Local Government House in Dublin, were presented to all 30 library authorities in recognition of the support and promotion of literacy skills development through initiatives such as the 'Summer Stars Reading Programme' and 'Spring in to Storytime'.



Ms Patricia Keane & Mr Donal Tinney, Sligo Library receiving the Right to Read Award from Mr Sean Canney

The delivery of the Right to Read programme at local level is led by the public library services in each local authority and the implementation is overseen by a Right to Read co-ordinator in each library service. These awards are being presented to and is coordinated at national level by the Right to Read Steering Group, chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development in collaboration with Libraries Development in the LGMA.



INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT & FIRE SERVICES

Director of Services: Mr Tom Kilfeather



INTRODUCTION

The Directorate includes Road Transportation and Safety, Water Services (under a Service Level Agreement with Irish Water), Environmental Services, Piers, Harbours, Coastal Protection, Climate Adaptation /Energy Efficiency and Fire Services.

In 2019 along with delivering annual work programmes across all Sections there were huge developments in terms of progression of major Infrastructural Projects that will have a transformative impact on Sligo and the Northwest.

These included

- Substantial completion of the Tubbercurry/Grange/Strandhill and Ballinafad Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades.
- Commencement of construction of Lough Talt Water Plant
- Commencement of construction of N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Road Scheme
- Commencement of construction of N4/N15 Urban Improvement Scheme
- Commencement of construction of Western Distributor Road Phase II
- Commencement of construction of O'Connell Street Enhancement Project.
- Commencement of Route selection process for the N17 Collooney to Knock Road Scheme.
- Continuation of design and advance works on Eastern Garavogue and Approach Roads Scheme.

The above Schemes, at construction in 2019, represent an investment of €215M in the development of Sligo.

Sligo County Council has significant obligations in relation to both Climate Action and Energy efficiency. Regarding the former, a Climate Adaptation Strategy (which includes 48 actions) was adopted by the Council in 2019 and this includes actions that affect all sections, at all levels.

I wish to acknowledge the exceptional commitment of all Staff over recent years in continuing to deliver excellent service despite severe reductions in resources.

Tom Kilfeather
Director of Services

ROAD TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

A total of €58,506,175 was initially allocated to the roads programme for the improvement and maintenance of the public road network in County Sligo in 2019. Work has continued on the planning, design & construction of key strategic national and non national road projects serving County Sligo and Sligo City – the gateway city of the north-west. Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) in addition to Sligo County Council were the key funding agencies for this programme.

The tables below show the details of the National and Regional Roads in Sligo.

National Primary Roads

Route	Description	Length km
N4	Sligo City to Roscommon Co. Boundary	34.35
N15	Sligo City to Bunduff Br	27.04
N16	Sligo City to Leitrim Co. Boundary	10.39
N17	Collooney to Bellaghy	34.06
Total		105.84

National Secondary Road

Route	Description	Length km
N59	Ballysadare to Mayo Co. Boundary	47.38
Total		47.38

National Primary Roads

Route	Description	Length km
R277	Killaspugbrone to Sligo Airport	1.7
R278	Sligo to Carrickoneilleen	7.63
R279	Cliffoney to Mullaghmore	4.4
R284	Carrowroe to Roscommon Co. Boundary	26.6
R286	Sligo City to Leitrim Co. Boundary	11.2
R287	Sligo City to Leitrim Co. Boundary via Carrowroe	15.89
R290	Ballysadare to Ballintogher	14.63
R291	Sligo City to Rosses Point	7.83
R292	Sligo City to Strandhill to Ballydrehid	18.23
R293	Ballinaboll to Gurteen to Roscommon Co. Boundary	25.8
R294	Cloonloo to Tubbercurry to Lough Talt	42.5
R295	Ballymote to Keash to Roscommon Co. Boundary	14.6
R296	Ballymote to Bunnannaddan to R29	10.2
R297	Dromore West to Enniscrone to Co. Boundary	29.8

R298	N59 to Lacknatlieva to R297	4.9
R361	Beside Roscommon County boundary	1.6
R298	Sligo City – Pearse Road / Markievicz Road	1.37
Total		238.88

Local Roads

County Sligo has a 2,400 km network of local roads, divided approximately as follows:

800 km Class 1 Local Roads	Main Local Roads
800 km Class 2 Local Roads	Secondary Local Roads
800 km Class 3 Local Roads	Cul-de-sacs

National Roads:

T.I.I National Road Maintenance Grants 2019

Works include surface renewal at particular locations, barrier repairs, bridge maintenance, signing and lining, drainage works, public lighting etc. The T.I.I. requires the logging of maintenance issues on the T.I.I. Geo app on handheld tablets and the programming of maintenance works online. This system also allows applications to be made for additional funds for particular maintenance issues.

National Primary Road Maintenance

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) allocated €568,223 to National Primary Maintenance works in 2019.

The breakdown was:

- €222,985 for Ordinary Maintenance
- €180,000 for Winter Maintenance
- €165,238 for Route Lighting
- €53,400 for Local Authority Support Maintenance.

National Secondary Road Maintenance

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) allocated €125,239 for N59 maintenance works in 2019.

The breakdown was:-

- €58,139 for Ordinary Maintenance
- €50,000 for Winter Maintenance
- €17,100 for Route Lighting

Pavement Renewal Schemes

A total of €7,180,692 was allocated by Transport Infrastructure Ireland to the restoration of road pavement on Sligo's national road network in 2019.

Projects completed included:

- N59 Ballysadare
- N17 Tobertelly
- N15-N4 Shannon Eighter
- N59 Rathglass
- N17 Cashel to Curry



Footpath, drainage and road pavement works N59
Ballysadare



N17 Tobertelly pavement strengthening



Footpath, drainage, road reconstruction and
strengthening works at N15 Shannon Eighter



Pavement Strengthening at N59 Rathglass

The N15 Cliffoey North has commenced and will be completed in early 2020. Works included strengthening and resurfacing the existing pavement to deliver a 20 year design life for the volume of traffic using the road.

National Roads Capital Maintenance Repairs

A total of €487,441 was allocated under this heading by the TII. This grant is to repair localised surface defects on the national road network which cost under €200,000. The following schemes will be completed in 2019:

- N4 Knockadoo
- N17 Ballynacarrow
- N17 Tawnavoutry
- N59 Corballa
- N59 Dromore West

National Roads Safety Improvement Scheme

The N59 Dromore West Traffic Calming which included footpath improvement and a pedestrian crossing received €160,000 in 2019 and was completed in October 2019. Funding was also received for improvements at Lecarrow Cross just west of Dromore West and work will be completed in November 2019. Two further schemes have been identified for 2020 namely N15 Creevykeel crossroads and N15 Grange climbing lane relining.

National Road Safety Inspections

The T.I.I carried out a survey on all national routes in the County identifying locations that could have localised safety improvements carried out. An extensive list of schemes has been developed and 12 of these locations will be addressed by the end of 2019. A total of €286,000 was allocated to this scheme in 2019.



Sight line improvements on N17 at Tobertelly

Non National Roads

Restoration Improvement Grant

An allocation of €5,804,000 was provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2019 for the restoration improvement of Regional and Local Roads. Some 67 km of roads at 76 locations throughout the County were programmed to be improved under this grant.

The types of work carried out included:

- Laying bitumen macadam surfacing to shape and strengthen the roads followed by surface dressing.
- Laying crushed stone to shape and strengthen the road and double surface dressing the stone to seal the road surface and provide skid resistance.
- Recycling – this was done where there were adequate stone already in the road structure but the road had disintegrated (typically used in bog road locations).
- Replacement of road markings.



Road Strengthening Works Ballymote area funded under Restoration Improvement Grant

Restoration Maintenance Grants

This grant is intended for surface dressing regional and local roads which are still in a reasonable condition and is intended as preventative maintenance to ensure roads surfaces do not deteriorate to the extent that substantial repairs are required later. A grant totalling €1,484,000 was provided in 2019 for surface dressing to Regional and Local roads. These grants enabled surface dressing of 77 km of roads.

Discretionary Grant

A discretionary grant of €2,185,000 was allocated in 2019 for the improvement and maintenance works of Regional and Local Roads throughout the county. Works carried out with this grant included regional/local road maintenance, road repairs, winter maintenance and bridge maintenance, road marking etc.

Drainage Grant

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport provided a specific grant in 2019 of €552,000 for drainage improvement measures. This funding was used to undertake much needed drainage improvement works at 38 no. locations throughout the County.

Community Involvement Schemes

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport allocated funding for Community Involvement Schemes in 2019. This grant is intended to fund works on mostly Class 3 local roads that have received little funding over the years. It relies on part funding coming from the local community. During 2019 Sligo County Council received an allocation of €853,000 under this heading for works at 42 no. locations.



Verge Strengthening works at Gleann on R284 funded by Specific Improvement Grant

Safety Improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads

A grant of €210,000 was obtained in 2019 for Low Cost Safety Improvement

Works at a number of locations as follows:

- Collooney Primary School
- Old Cartron Pedestrian Crossing
- Strandhill Roundabout
- Carricknagat Bridge
- Keenaghan
- Ursuline College
- Finod

Local Improvement Schemes

This grant is provided by the Department of Rural Affairs for local improvements on non public roads. A local contribution must be paid. This grant scheme is aimed at improving access to local amenities and agricultural lands. Sligo County Council received a grant of €256,154 for 2019 and improvement works were carried out at 7 no. locations throughout the county.

Bridge Rehabilitation 2019

The Department of Transport, Trade and Sport again provided support for bridge works and this years' grant was increased to €392,000, for 10 bridges in 2019 and preparatory design works for a further 4 bridges in 2020.

The grant was efficiently spent to provide a high standard of repairs to several masonry bridges. In addition, a severely damaged bridge at Coolrawer, east of Curry, was demolished and replaced with a new bridge in early October.

Substantial bridge repairs were carried out at:

- Srarevagh Bridge – north of Lissadell
- Tawnatruffaun Bridge – near Dromore-West
- Mollagh Bridge – near Cloonacool
- Carrownyclovan Bridge – near Drummacool

- Drumlashna Bridge – near Gurteen
- Rockbrook Bridge – near Riverstown

A number of other bridges were also repaired around the county, using discretionary funds, including Ballymeeny Bridge (on the R297 between Easkey and Dromore-West), and Foyogues Bridge (on the R284 near Geevagh).



Srarevagh Bridge north of Lissadell completed in July 2019



Carrownclyowan Bridge, Drummacool – before repair works and Carrownclyowan Bridge – after repair works

CLÁR Grants

Funding has been allocated by the Department of Rural Affairs and Community Development for works to be carried out at 6 locations under Clár 2019 Local Authority Measures 1 and 2 and 1 location under Measure 3 (c) Sensory Gardens. The grant amount is €281,003. The locations are as follows:

- Stokane Community Park
- Enniscrone Community Public Playground
- Knockminna N.S., Ballymote
- Killavil N.S., Gurteen
- Nace O'Dowd Park, Achonry
- Dromore West (Sensory Garden)

Other Works

In addition to the above, works that the Roads Department oversee include the following:

- Public lighting management and maintenance
- Car park management and maintenance
- Traffic management including traffic signal management and maintenance
- Road Openings
- Beach maintenance including lifebuoy provision and inspections
- Cemetery Maintenance
- Weed Control and treatment of invasive species e.g. japanese knotweed, giant hogweed etc.
- Assist tidy towns/clean coast and other voluntary/community groups
- Planning control/inspections and pre-planning meetings
- Dangerous structures
- Town and village cleaning and upkeep/waste management.

Specific Improvement Grants:

- €300,000 was allocated to carry out verge widening and strengthening at Gleann on the R284. Construction will be complete in November 2019.
- Compulsory Purchase documentation has been prepared for the Burton Street / Mail Coach Road link and will be advertised in 2020.
- Investigations have taken place into the recycling of the pavement on the R293 at Coagh and an application for funding will be made.

Markievicz Footbridge Project

This scheme forms an integral part of the integrated transportation for the city centre. Significant work has been progressed throughout the year. Rowan and O'Donovan Consultant Engineers (ROD) have been appointed to progress planning status of the proposed development. The submission to An Board Pleanála requires the preparation of the following documents

- Planning Report
- EIA screening report
- Natura Impact Statement

These reports have been finalised and are currently ready for submission. Additionally, ROD is at the final stages of preparing a compulsory purchase order (CPO) for the lands required to build the structure. It is anticipated that both the planning submission and CPO shall be made in Q4 of 2019.



Markievicz Footbridge Project

O'Connell Street Enhancement Project

The O'Connell Street Enhancement Project involves the refurbishment of Sligo's busiest commercial zone and pedestrian thoroughfare. The main design ethos is to create an improved pedestrian zone by enhancing the quality and attractiveness of the urban environment, while concurrently creating a permeable interconnected metropolitan space that will facilitate commercial and residential opportunities for the undeveloped and underutilised sites on, and in proximity to O'Connell Street. Construction commenced in April of 2019. The contractor Shareridge has completed approximately 45% of the works. It is anticipated that the northern section (from Tobergal lane to Harmony Hill) shall be fully completed by the end of October 2019. Works shall recommence in January 2020 and it is envisaged that all works shall be completed by Q2 of 2020.



O'Connell Street – works done to date



O'Connell Street – artistic impression of completed Scheme

Non National Strategic Improvement Schemes:

Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads

The proposed Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads is to provide a local link road on the eastern side of Sligo City. It is required to overcome the inadequacies of the existing road network in facilitating local travel between the eastern parts of Sligo City without need for travel through the city centre. The development will join communities north and south of the Garavogue River, will improve circulation and will reduce traffic congestion in the city centre.

The Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Road scheme is of strategic importance to the development of Sligo and linking communities within Sligo City.



Artist's impression of the proposed Eastern Garavogue Bridge – south Bridge

At present there are 3 road bridges crossing the River Garavogue, two of which are within the City Centre, and the third, Hughes Bridge is on the N4/N15 Sligo Inner Relief Road downstream and at the western edge of the centre. There is no direct road link available between the areas of the City to the north and south of the river on the eastern side of the City Centre. The Eastern Garavogue Bridge and approach road has been developed as traffic calmed urban distributor road consisting of a single carriageway with cycle ways and footpaths. It will be developed as a high quality urban road rather than a bypass of the city.

Project Benefits

- Relieve traffic congestion in city centre
- Improve conductivity between SE and NE quadrants of the city
- Improve access to Sligo University Hospital, Sligo IT, Grammar School etc.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle facilities between City centre and Cleveragh Regional Park
- Improve pedestrian and cycle facilities North-South across river
- Reduce emergency response time
- In parallel the associated Cranmore Regeneration Project has continued with the development of the Eastern area of Sligo City. The development of the Eastern Bridge Project should also be viewed in the context of being critical to the overall redevelopment of this area. The delivery of the Bridge project will give confidence to those living and investing in the East City and indeed act as a catalyst for redevelopment including attracting public service development.

Current Status of Scheme

- Planning approval has been granted by An Bord Pleanála for this scheme. The acquired lands have been fenced off and are available for construction commencement.
- Archaeological investigations and ground investigations are substantially complete.
- The Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Project is listed for construction in the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027.
- Sligo County Council has received a funding allocation of €6m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF). It is expected that the scheme will be jointly funded between the URDF fund and the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport. A funding profile and construction programme is currently being agreed for the Project and discussions regarding programme and funding are ongoing with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This includes developing a design and construction strategy with a view to being in a position to commence construction in early 2021.



Artists impression of Eastern Garavogue Bridge – View from southern bank of EGB looking west into City

Western Distributor Road Phase II

The Sligo Western Distributor Road Phase 2 scheme comprises the construction of 1.9km of single urban distributor road between the existing N4 junction (Caltragh) and the existing Ballydoogan Road, with a typical mainline road cross section comprised of a 9.75m carriageway, a 2m footway, 2m cycleway and 1.5m grass verge on both sides. The scheme includes two new at-grade junctions, two no. roundabouts located along the realigned Oakfield Road, a signalised crossroad junction, a single carriageway link road to a proposed IDA Business Park, construction of several minor roads and tie-ins, a single span integral prestressed beam bridge over the Dublin to Sligo railway line and all associated drainage, attenuation ponds, earthworks, public lighting, accommodation works, boundary treatments, traffic signals, landscaping, signs, road markings, provision of new utilities and diversion/protection of existing utilities.

The main construction contract was awarded to SIAC Construction Ltd. Construction of the scheme commenced on the 7th January, 2019 and the date for substantial completion is June 2020.



Oakfield Road Roundabout

This new road will assist the development of the South West quadrant of Sligo City and facilitate the development by IDA Ireland of a new IDA Business Park at Oakfield which will serve Sligo and the North-West Region. The Western Distributor Road will provide a direct high quality link from the proposed IDA Business Park to the N4 dual carriageway. It will also provide a new high quality access road from the N4 to the existing IDA Business Park at Finisklin.



September 2019 – Railway Bridge Works at Maugheraboy



Construction of rail bridge over Dublin to Sligo Line

National Road Major Road Schemes – Sligo National Roads Project Office

The Sligo National Roads Project Office (Sligo PO) is responsible for the delivery of all Major and Minor National Road improvement and realignment Schemes in County Sligo. This Office is one of 11 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) National Road Offices in the country.

The following are the Schemes currently being developed by the Sligo PO and the Work Programme planned for 2020:

N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Road Development Scheme

The N4 National Primary Route is the main Inter-Urban link between Dublin and the North West Region. The N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Road Project was included in the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Capital Plan 2016-2021, as a key priority in the roads programme which will support economic growth. The Plan identified this section of the N4 as one of the “critical gaps” in our existing infrastructure, which needs to be upgraded. A core priority under Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework is the essential requirement to enhance and upgrade accessibility between urban centres of population and their regions, in parallel with the initiation of compact growth of urban centres. This has a crucial role to play in maximising the growth potential of the regional urban centres, one of which is Sligo, and the economy as a whole. The delivery of the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Scheme is listed in the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, as one of the key Schemes to be delivered under Strategic Outcome No. 2 ‘Enhanced Regional Accessibility’ of the National Planning Framework.

The Scheme will provide just under 14km of Type 2 Dual Carriageway, and just under 1km of Single Carriageway on the National Road Network, linking the existing N4 dual carriageway at Collooney to the Curlews By-Pass, just south of Castlebaldwin village. The scheme includes one Compact Grade Separated Junction on the mainline at Drumfin, one at-grade roundabout Junction on the mainline at Castlebaldwin, three at-grade roundabout Junction on sideroads, four road overbridges, six road underbridges and two river bridges. This will complete the upgrade of the N4 to modern standards in County Sligo and will significantly improve the safety of this stretch of road that has seen 30 fatalities over the past 40 years or so.

The Scheme has progressed steadily through Planning, Design, the Statutory Process and the procurement process, which resulted in the Construction Contract being awarded in early 2019 to Roadbridge. Cabinet Approval was required to award the Construction Contract, in line with the requirements of the Public Spending Code, published by DPER in 2013. The Contract was signed between Sligo County Council and Roadbridge on 19th February, 2019 and the ‘Sod Turning’ was performed by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD and Minister for Tourism, Transport and Sport, Shane Ross TD, on 22nd February, 2019. The construction period is 29 months, so the new road is expected to be open to traffic in Q3, 2021.



Eastern Parallel Road and Western Parallel Road, looking south

The construction period is 29 months, so the new road is expected to be open to traffic in Q3, 2021.

Prior to the main construction contract, a number of advance works were completed including Fencing, Archaeology, Ground Investigation (G.I), Service Diversions (ESB and Telecoms), Topographical Survey and Building Demolition, to eliminate risks to the Construction Contract.



Looking south toward the tie-in south east of Castlebaldwin

The Project involved the Compulsory Purchase of 181.5 hectares of land, which included fourteen dwellings. Over 92% of the Land Acquisition cases are agreed to date and the remaining cases will be progressed in 2020. Scheme construction will continue throughout 2020.

An allocation of €23.891 million was received from TII for this Project for 2019 and an allocation of €40 million for 2020.

Momentous day for Sligo

The N4 project will see one of the poorest sections of National Roads finally upgraded to dual carriageway standard, while the Western Distributor Road will open up access to the IDA's new Industrial Park at Oakfield. Minister Ross was also given a briefing on the Eastern Garavogue Bridge project, which will facilitate improved movement around Sligo and open up land for development to the east.



Vision for Sligo

Chief Executive Ciarán Hayes credited the Council for their vision of Sligo's future and paid special tribute to the staff for their professionalism, persistence and determination in driving forward ambitious and transformative projects that will underpin the future development of Sligo. 'Sligo is on the cusp of a new era of growth', he said, adding that 'the infrastructural developments added to the recent job announcements bode well not only for the future prospects of the region, but for Sligo as the capital of the region'.

He also pointed to a unity of purpose among the agencies in Sligo. He explains it as an alignment where 'IT Sligo produces the graduates with the necessary skill sets for the type of new jobs that the IDA is attracting in facilities that can be provided on the back of the Council infrastructure'.

While he readily admits to simplifying what can be a complex network of collaborative arrangements, he feels it is a good basis on which to bring Sligo forward.



Bright future

The Cathaoirleach also welcomed the major jobs announcement by GW Plastics as 'a great boost for this region and one that confirms Sligo's status as an internationally recognised centre of excellence in mould and tool-making. Sligo is the key centre of economic growth in the northwest, and the positive, dynamic engagement between state and key local agencies provides the blueprint for a bright future.'

N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin

The N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Road Project will provide just under 14km of Dual Carriageway, and 1km of Single Carriageway, linking the existing N4 dual carriageway at Collooney to the Curlews By-Pass, just south of Castlebaldwin village. The €150m scheme was included in the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Capital Plan 2016-2021, as a key priority in the roads programme which will support economic growth and was identified it as one of the "critical gaps" in our existing infrastructure.

Western Distributor Road

The Western Distributor Road is of crucial importance to the future development of Sligo City and Environs. It will facilitate the development by IDA Ireland of a new Business Park at Oakfield which will serve Sligo and the North-West Region. The €18.5m road will provide a direct high quality link from this proposed IDA Business Park to the N4 dual carriageway. It will also provide a new high quality access road from the N4 to the existing IDA Business Park at Finisklin.

Eastern Garavogue Bridge

Minister Shane Ross was also briefed on the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and approach roads scheme, which is of strategic importance to the development of roads infrastructure in Sligo and linking communities within Sligo City. There is presently no direct road link available between the areas of the city to the north and south of the river on the eastern side of the city centre. The scheme will be developed as a high quality urban road, and will compliment and prolong the life of the Sligo Inner Relief Road.



Significant investment

In welcoming the significant capital investment in our road infrastructure, the Cathaoirleach said that 'The delivery of the N4 Sligo to Castlebaldwin, Western Distributor Road, and the Eastern Bridge, will enable this county and region grow and develop in the years ahead.

Projects of this scale and significance would not have been possible without sustained effort by many agencies and individuals' he said, adding that 'in recent years Sligo County Council has worked in dynamic partnership with other key stake-holders to plan and deliver many strategic projects that will transform and enhance our town and county. The elected members and staff have worked very closely to bring the various projects to this stage, and I want to commend local voluntary groups such as the N4 Action Group who have been very committed advocates'.

Exemplary work

'I also want to commend Sligo County Council's Roads Design Team for their professionalism and exemplary work across a range of capital projects, they have developed invaluable experience and expertise, and this is very much in evidence in the quality of their work on these major schemes. We are on the cusp of something very positive in Sligo. There is potential for every area of our county to develop, and the funding announced late last year under the various schemes will energise our communities and equip them to capitalise on the opportunities that lie ahead'.

Ambition

The Cathaoirleach concluded his remarks by thanking the Taoiseach and Minister Ross for travelling to Sligo for the sod-turning events 'Their presence here today is further indication of Sligo's resolve and ambition to progress these projects as quickly as possible and we will continue to work closely with the Government departments as the contracts progress'

Economic driver of the Northwest

The Chief Executive of Sligo County Council, Ciarán Hayes, sees collaboration as the key factor in delivering these projects. 'Sligo County Council, along with the IDA, IT Sligo, Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, is taking a leadership role as Sligo asserts itself as the capital and economic driver of the northwest. But recent announcements and uplift in the local economy are not due to one agency alone, they come from a genuine engagement between statutory agencies, business sector and local communities in the interest of Sligo. Because of that collaboration, 2019 will witness the gradual unveiling of a new, vibrant Sligo, where many long-awaited tourism and infrastructure projects will come to fruition.



N17 Knock to Collooney

A particular focus in the National Planning Framework (NPF) is on improving accessibility and connectivity northwards on the emerging Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) network. This is defined under the NPF Strategic Outcome No 2, to 'Enhance Regional Accessibility' and cites access to the North West as being essential.



The N17 Knock to Collooney corridor forms an integral part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor, therefore the improvement of the N17 is a key objective in the NPF. The route also forms part of the Ten-T Comprehensive Network.

The project involves upgrading of approximately 55km (34km in Co. Sligo and 21km in Co. Mayo) of a very substandard section of the existing N17 to current alignment and safety standards, including bypassing the towns and villages of Charlestown, Curry, Tobercurry and Ballinacarrow.

The development of the Project is being led by the Sligo Project Office, on behalf of Sligo and Mayo County Councils. The Sligo PO is Project Managing this Scheme and is also the Lead Road Designers and PSDP for the Scheme. Specialist sub-consultants will be procured as required.

In 2019, the project was successfully brought through Phase 1 - Concept and Feasibility, of the TII (Transport Infrastructure Ireland) Project Management Guidelines, and approval was received from TII to advance the Options Selection, Design and Environmental Evaluation and the Statutory Process Phases. The Options Selection commenced in 2019 and included an extensive Public Consultation in Q4 2019 on an established Physical Constraints Study Area. A wide range of improvement options are being considered in the Options Selection Phase, which will include various different routing scenarios for the N17, including any historical preferred routes. This work will be ongoing in 2020, and it is expected that a Preferred Option (or route corridor) should emerge in Quarter 3 of 2021.

A Physical Constraints Study Area has been established and public consultation on the Study Area took

place in Tubbercurry and Charlestown in October 2019. Over the course of the Options Selection period, a number of specialised sub-consultants will be procured to feed into the process. To date, Traffic Data Collection and Traffic and Transport Assessment (incl. Economics) consultants have been appointed to the Scheme.



N17 through Charlestown, Co. Mayo



N17 through Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo

N16 Lugatober

Following the selection of a Preferred Route for the full N16 in County Sligo in 2017, the development of the Minor Scheme on the N16 at Lugatober commenced. The Sligo PO is Project Managing this Scheme and is also the Lead Road Designers and PSDP for the Scheme.

Following completion of all the Statutory Documents, and approval from TII, the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement were published, and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) was made by Sligo County Council, in February 2019. The total amount of acquisition necessary for the Scheme is 24 hectares. Following extensive consultation between the Design Team and the landowners, all objections to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) were withdrawn. The scheduled Oral Hearing was cancelled and the responsibility to confirm the Compulsory Purchase Order was transferred from ABP to Sligo County Council. An Bord Pleanála confirmed the Scheme in August 2019.

The procurement of Consultants to complete the detailed design and prepare the Contract Documents for Scheme construction took place in Q4 2019. 2020 will see the completion of the detailed design and contract document preparation. Landowner liaison will continue to play a large part in this body of work. The advancement of Land Acquisition Agreements will be a key Scheme objective in 2020 also.

N4-N15 Sligo Urban Improvement Scheme

Following on from the N4 Hughes Bridge Widening Scheme, the N4/N15 Sligo Urban Improvement Scheme is the next section being developed by the Sligo PO. The Sligo PO is Project Managing this Scheme and engaged Jacobs Engineering to carry out the detail design and prepare the Statutory Process documents required. The Scheme was approved by An Bord Pleanála in February 2018. Approximately 4 hectares of land (including temporary plots) is being acquired in total.

The Scheme includes upgrading the National Primary Road from the northern end of Hughes Bridge to north of the Rosses Point junction, along with the upgrade of the Rosses Point, Duck Street and Markievicz Road Junctions. Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided as part of the Scheme. The Copper River Bridge will be upgraded as part of the works also. A new Traffic Management System has been designed and will be upgraded to an Urban Traffic Control System.



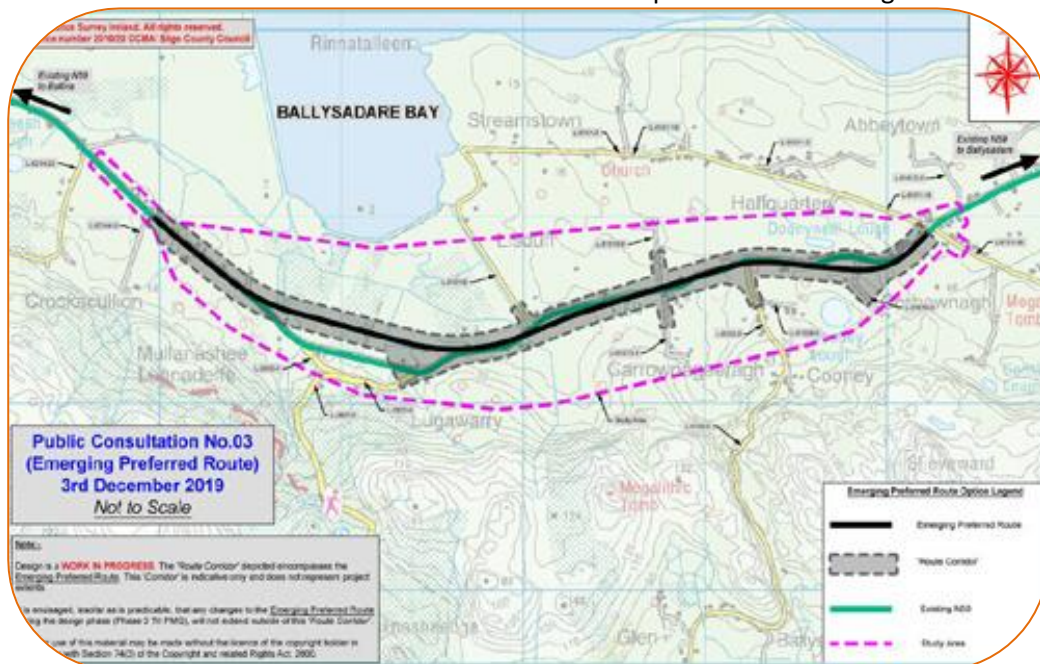
N4-N15 Sligo Urban Improvement Scheme

Five pre-qualified Contractors were invited to Tender for the Construction Contract in early 2019. Following the procurement process, and approval from TII, the Construction contract was awarded in August 2019 to Fox Contracts. The contract duration is 12 months, so construction will continue to Q3 2020. Land acquisition for the Scheme will be ongoing in 2020.

N59 Corhownagh to Lugnadeffa Road Improvement Scheme

Following completion of the Feasibility and Constraints phases, this project is currently being progressed through Phase 2 (Options Selection) of the TII Project Management Guidelines. The Scheme involves the Realignment of the N59 between Corhownagh and Lugnadeffa. The Sligo PO are Project Managing this Scheme and are also the Lead Road Designers and PSDP for the Scheme.

The Route Selection process involves public consultation and Landowner Liaison, along with specialist environmental, engineering and economic input. The second Public Consultation for the Scheme took place in July 2019. Following detailed appraisal of the four refined route options on display during this public consultation, a Preferred Route Corridor emerged. Detailed Design and Environmental Studies will be undertaken on this route in 2020. This will involve extensive public liaison throughout.



N59 Corhownagh to Crockacullion - Emerging Preferred Route

WATER QUALITY, AIR & NOISE POLLUTION

Catchment Management

The principal piece of legislation relating to the protection of surface water, groundwater, tidal, and coastal water quality in Ireland is the EU Water Framework Directive. Nationally, work is ongoing on the second cycle of implementing the Directive in Ireland. The River Basin District Management Plan for Ireland (2018-2021) was published by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in April 2018. Under the provisions of the Plan, all public bodies are required to coordinate their policies, functions and operations so as to maintain existing good status water bodies and improve existing unsatisfactory water bodies. Local authorities play a key role in implementing the programme of measures detailed in the Plan within their functional areas.

The current focus on implementing the RBD plan may potentially place increased demands on Environment Section resources during 2020. Nationally, the emphasis is on integrated catchment management and relates primarily to the following specific areas of work, which will continue to be prioritised during 2020:

- Licensing and enforcement of trade and domestic effluent discharges to waters under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, as amended.
- Assessing planning proposals for domestic, commercial, agricultural and forestry developments in terms of environmental impact, with particular reference to protection of water quality.
- Implementation of the National Inspection Plan for domestic wastewater treatment systems as published by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Implementation of the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice For Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017, S.I. No. 605 of 2017, as amended.
- Complaint and query response relating to general environmental, water quality and planning related issues.

Drinking Water

The quality of drinking water in Ireland is governed by the EU (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 and 2017. All public water supplies and regulated Group Water Schemes will be monitored in 2020, in accordance with statutory requirements and those set by Irish Water where relevant. Legislation defines what parameters are tested, and the monitoring frequency.

Sligo County Council will continue to act as the supervisory authority in relation to the provision of drinking water by Group Water Schemes and Small Private Supplies and manage the monitoring of GWSs and Small Private Supplies to ensure they meet the requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations. However, due to resource constraints the level of work being carried out on unregulated supplies is limited.

Bathing Water

Sligo County Council will continue to fulfil our statutory obligations in relation to the Bathing Water Regulations as outlined below:

- Identification of Bathing Waters
- Preparation of the annual monitoring programme
- Management, assessment and reporting of Bathing Water results
- Bathing Water incident management
- Complete bathing water returns to EPA

In 2019, Sligo County Council formally identified five beaches under the 2008 Bathing Water Regulations; these were:

- Rosses Point,
- Enniscrone,
- Mullaghmore,
- Streedagh and
- Mullaghmore.

Monitoring of the 5 bathing water beaches will continue in 2020 as well as monitoring at Strandhill beach. Results of this monitoring will be displayed locally at each of the bathing water beaches and on the council's website throughout the bathing season. Applications will be made to An Taisce for the Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards.

Water Safety

Sligo County Council aims to provide Lifeguard cover for the 2020 Bathing Season at Rosses Point, Enniscrone, Streedagh and Dunmorán along with Beach Warden cover for Strandhill.

Rivers and Lakes

All rivers and lakes listed in the National Monitoring Programme will be monitored in 2020.

Air & Noise Pollution

Noise Control

The Section will provide advice and information on residential and commercial noise under the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992.

Air Pollution

Environment will continue to enforce Air Pollution Licence and provide advice and information on odours and air pollution complaints. Sligo County Council is also working with the EPA on the installation of an Air Quality Monitor on the Inner Relief road in Sligo Town. It is envisaged that this will eventually allow for the provision of real time Air Quality data to the people of Sligo.

Ban on Smokey Fuels

In 2012, the Department introduced new regulations extending the restricted area with regard to the marketing, sale and distribution of Smokey Fuels (Bituminous Coal). They also made the use of this fuel type, within the restricted area, an offence. Sligo County Council is responsible for the enforcement of these Regulations. The enforcement of these regulations continues to be challenging and requires a change in habits for inhabitants of Sligo Town and Environs regarding the type of fuel they use to heat their homes. However, it should ensure that the increase in air quality, observed since the original Regulations were introduced in 2003, are maintained and improved upon.

Casual Trading

The Casual Trading Act 1955 covers open air trading of goods at designated bays throughout the County of Sligo. The Environment Section enforces the Casual Trading Bye-Laws 2018 in order to regulate casual trading on public property. Regular inspections will continue to be carried out by the Council's appointed Trading Officers to ensure that the trading bays are being operated in accordance with legislation.

Climate Change & Energy Efficiency

Sligo County Council has significant obligations in relation to both Climate Action and Energy efficiency. Regarding the former, a Climate Adaptation Strategy (which includes 48 actions) has been drawn up and adopted and this includes actions that affect all sections, at all levels. The main expenditure in this area will be in the area of improving energy efficiency. We have a target to reduce our energy usage by 33% on 2009 levels by 2020 and this will require investment in upgrading equipment, vehicles and buildings.

The Environment Section are currently working with the OPW on an initiative to improve energy performance in Riverside, and it is envisaged that the lessons learned during the course of this project will be rolled out to other Local Authority buildings in due course. The targets remain the same, and for the year 2019, we were at a 13.8% reduction, leaving a significant Gap to Target of 19.2% (on 2009 levels). Therefore we are in danger of not obtaining the required energy efficiency improvements. It should also be noted that improvements in energy efficiency will also lead to cost savings, and the 'ring fencing' of these savings for further investment in equipment upgrades and further energy savings should be considered.

Many Energy Efficiency related projects may also qualify for significant additional funding of 30-50% through initiatives being run through the Sligo Sustainable Energy Community (SEC). Funding is also available through SEAI provided a percentage of match funding is also available.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

2019 was another busy year for the Environment section of Sligo County Council. As well as maintaining the regular services related to water and air pollution issues, and dealing with our waste management responsibilities, environmental awareness and water monitoring programs, the section was involved in a number of discrete, yet important initiatives, such as the drafting of the Climate Adaptation Strategy, and the Anti Dumping Initiative, which was part of a National effort to tackle the issue of illegal dumping. There was also a new approach taken to the scourge of dog fouling on our streets and walkways, with footpath stencilling being used to highlight the problem in certain areas and patrols being carried out by the Litter Wardens in badly affected areas.

Climate Action

The adoption of the Climate Adaptation Strategy by the Council in September 2019 marked the first formal commitment from the Local Authority in dealing with the growing concerns being raised by our changing climate.

It outlines how Sligo County Council will change how it operates to ensure that the Organisation, and therefore the citizens of Sligo, can adapt to a changing world. The strategy contains over 40 actions, which cover all sections within the Local Authority, which are intended to put in place procedures, systems and infrastructure which will assist us in the climate related challenges we face in the near future. We were assisted by the Climate Action Regional Office in putting the Strategy together, and along with Donegal, Mayo and Galway Local Authorities, we form the Atlantic Seaboard North Climate Action Region.

The document includes lots of information on observed and projected climate change, case studies on events that have already occurred here in Sligo, as well as listing other impacts and actions which will help us to adapt. As part of the process a public consultation was carried out, and as well as recording the views and concerns of people who attended the meetings that were arranged, a number of observations from individuals and organisations were received. The Strategy will be reviewed and reported on annually, and the actions will be implemented according to the timescales outlined.

In order to deal with some very demanding energy related goals and targets that we have to achieve; we have enlisted the assistance of the OPW, who have started the groundwork on the Optimising Power @ Work scheme in the main offices at Riverside. This program will allow us to understand how we use energy in our offices and will lead to significant savings. We intend to implement the lessons learned in our largest office building, in the other Council offices around the County. We will also continue to work closely with the Sligo Sustainable Energy Community and the SEAI to identify areas where improvements in energy performance can be gained, and to plan for a far more energy efficient future.

Anti Dumping Initiative

It's Not In our Nature – Is it in Yours? Let's tackle illegal dumping!

To continue our efforts in tackling illegal dumping, an integrated campaign 'It's not in our nature, is it in Yours?' using social media, local radio and press was delivered in the Connacht Ulster Waste Region over the summer of 2019. This campaign supported the ongoing efforts of Local Authorities in cleaning up illegally dumped waste material.



To date, numerous clean ups have taken place across Sligo and the wider Region, and speaking on behalf of the Connacht Ulster Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authority (CU WERLA), Sean Scott, Regional Co-ordinator said, 'Our overall aim is to eliminate unsightly illegal dumps and further protect our environment both in rural and urban settings as well as engaging with the public to ensure that areas remain clean once clean-ups have taken place'. 'Significant costs are associated with cleaning up illegally dumped waste and there is an onus on all citizens to dispose of waste in the correct manner. Going forward, it is hoped that the use of technology including drones as well as overt and covert surveillance equipment will become more effective and act as a deterrent'.



Siobhan Gillen of Sligo County Council, said, 'over the past number of months as part of this campaign, we have targeted dumping black-spots to remove illegally dumped material and hopefully eliminate the culture of dumping. To date we have removed almost 70 tonnes of material from locations in Willow Park and Avondale in Sligo Town, and in Ballynashee, near Geevagh. Sligo County Council also ran a bulky waste collection day where over 13 tonnes of waste was accepted'.

Availing of an unlicensed waste service to dispose of waste is a criminal offence. Customers should request to see service provider documentation to ensure compliance and permit number details should be visible on all collection vehicles. Members of the public and householders need to be aware that each individual or business is responsible for their waste and must dispose of it properly.

'We're very grateful to all the very responsible householders and community minded people who do the right thing – who dispose of their waste correctly using authorised waste collectors, the extensive network of bring banks and the public and private Civic Amenity Centres located throughout the region. However, there is still a cohort of people who are irresponsible in disposing of their waste which ultimately results in small and large scale illegal dumps. We continue to appeal to those individuals to cease this activity' said Pete Murtagh from Sligo County Council.

The Connacht Ulster Waste Region campaign 'It's Not in Our Nature – Is it in Yours?' is creating awareness of the issues of illegal dumping, and is supported by the CU WERLA and funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

A dedicated website called mywaste.ie is available to assist householders with the management of waste, for example providing details on what can and cannot be recycled, recycling, bring bank locations, civic amenity site locations etc.

Finisklin Historic Landfill

Work continues at the closed landfill in Finisklin, which was one of the first sites in the County to receive a Certificate of Authorisation from the EPA. Significant effort has gone in to characterising the risks associated with the site, which for many years operated as the main waste disposal site in the County. But there is now a plan in place, and support from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, to ensure that the site is remediated to as high a standard as possible to eliminate risks to the environment and to allow for its future development.

Ballisodare Green Waste Facility

This facility continues to operate and to provide a very useful service to householders and businesses across the County. Since it opened over ten years ago, the site has taken in a huge volume of green waste, much of which was previously going to landfill, and has converted this to high value peat free compost. With the ongoing cooperation of the local Community Council, the site will be operated by a local business for the next two years who won this tender during 2019.

ReUse

This is an area which is receiving increased attention in recent times, due to the fact that so much material is being sent for disposal when it doesn't really have to be. It is Sligo County Council's intention to examine this area in 2020 and to encourage and support those who can provide the facilities required to allow people to reuse or upcycle goods and materials that would otherwise be sent to landfill. In conjunction with Community Reuse Network of Ireland, we ran a very successful event at the Airport in Strandhill called the Style Sessions, which gave an opportunity to the Charity shops in Sligo to show their wonderful wares. The event brought together people who are passionate about helping others and protecting our natural resources. And it showed that by supporting local charity shops and other reuse initiatives that one isn't just helping those less fortunate, but is also helping to develop and support a sector that will play an important role in an increasingly climate aware society.

Sligo Chamber Awards

2019 saw the introduction of the Green Initiative Award category in the Sligo Chamber of Commerce Excellence awards. This was as a result of discussions between the Local Authority and the Chamber about how we can support businesses in the county in becoming more sustainable, and along with the generous support of United Airlines Eco-Skies, this category was won by Voya Seaweed baths in Strandhill, who have shown that it is possible to run a very successful business while always considering their environmental impact. The runners up were Power Right and Abbvie Sligo, both of whom are also committed to ensuring that their businesses maintain the highest standards possible when it comes to sustainability. It should also be mentioned that the winners of the LEO Excellence award on the night were the local environmental consultancy, Woodrow Environmental, who are well known to businesses and community groups throughout the county for their excellent work on various different projects and developments.

Recovery and Recycling Facilities Operations

The following facilities will continue to be made available to the public:

- Bring Banks (x42 sites)
- Textile Banks
- Recycling Centre Tubbercurry
- Ballisodare Composting Facility

Litter Management

In 2020, activity will continue on the enforcement of the Litter Pollution Act, 1997, as amended.

Environmental Awareness

Sligo County Council supports a number of environmental awareness initiatives including Green Aware Sligo, National Spring Clean, Green Schools Programme and administration of Environmental Grants: Anti Litter & Anti Graffiti Awareness Grant Scheme and the Community Environment Action Fund Local Agenda 21 Grant Scheme.

The Environment Section also works closely with An Taisce, the Local Authority Prevention Network (LAPN), Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), the Regional Awareness Office, the PPN, Tidy Towns and many other organisations in promoting various schemes and initiatives throughout the year.

In 2019, the Environment Section delivered a new campaign under the brand 'Green Aware Sligo'. This was a 6 week social media campaign on Climate Change – Behavioural Change Initiative.

The campaign was launched during the first week of September following the formal adoption of the Climate Adaptation Strategy.

Topics covered over the 6 week period were as follows:

- Climate Change – What's it all about.
- Home Improvements and Energy Efficiency
- Smarter Travel
- Business and Plastic Pollution
- Community Climate Activism and Biodiversity
- Students

GREEN AWARE SLIGO
 OUR COUNTY OUR RESPONSIBILITY
 let's tackle climate change one step at a time

The campaign was delivered via radio interviews, videos on the topic of the week, publications, tips and press releases from Monday 2nd September, 2019 until Friday 11th October, 2019. Further information can be viewed at www.sligococo.ie/greenaware.



Launching our campaign to get rid of single use plastics at Sligo County Council as part of #greenawaresligo. All employees at Sligo County Council will get their own keep cup, with the aim of eliminating the use of single use plastics in all Council buildings by the end of the year.

Waste Regulations, Monitoring and Enforcement

Waste Management continues to be to the fore of EI and Governmental priorities. It receives recognition through increased amounts of legislation and funding. Waste enforcement activities continue to be fully recoupable from Governmental funding. This funding originates from initiatives such as the plastic bag levy and landfill levy. The legislation introduced by Government has encompassed producer responsibility which also generates additional monies.

There are ever increasing demands placed on organisations and families but the need for proper waste management continues to be of importance for economic, legislative and environmental reasons.

There is continuing need to avoid the production of waste at source and try and divert as much as possible from landfill. This diversion of waste is achieved through the provision of facilities and services followed by education and enforcement. The Bring Bank Network, Civic Amenity Sites, Composting Site, Kerbside Recycling, Home Composting and the introduction of a separate organic collection all assist towards diverting waste from landfill.

Another element of waste management is trying to ensure that people manage their waste in a manner that avoids the creation of environmental pollution. Ongoing waste enforcement activities will endeavour to reduce this to a minimum.

Waste Management and Enforcement priorities will continue to involve bringing unauthorised sites into environmental compliance, increasing the recycling and recovery rates and to try and ensure that works undertaken by Sligo Local Authorities are carried out in compliance with Environmental Legislation.

Waste Management Planning

For the purposes of Waste Management Planning the country is divided into 3 waste regions. Sligo is in the Connacht Ulster Region. A 6 year plan was agreed in 2015 which sets out a road map for achieving commitments, and is the framework for the prevention and management of waste. The plan is a statutory document and Sligo County Council has obligations to fund initiatives in the plan as well as the regional office based in Mayo County Council. Sligo is represented on the Regional Waste Steering Group.

Waste Management Enforcement

The new Regional Waste Enforcement Office is in operation since January 2016 with the intention of ensuring the effective implementation of Waste Enforcement policy in the Connaught Ulster Region. A key objective is the delivery of an integrated approach to waste enforcement which will drive consistent enforcement of legislation.

Parks and Open Spaces - Maintenance & Landscaping

Sligo County Council recognise the importance of the adequate provision of conveniently located open space throughout the city. People are attracted to live, work, visit and invest in areas which have good quality developed green recreational infrastructure.

Sligo County Council continues to progress and invest in the development of parkland and recreational infrastructure for Sligo. The provision of funding for Parks infrastructure and maintenance is a challenging issue but the elected members and the executive team remain committed to developing and maintaining high quality green infrastructure. The Parks Service, in consultation and cooperation with the community, will continue to improve the quality and beauty of the local environment.

The Parks Department are responsible for the management and maintenance of an expanding range of facilities including Doorly Park, Cleveragh Regional Park, Forthill Park, Mitchell Curley Park, the Fairgreen, Sea View Park, Sea View Drive Promenade, Salmon Point and The Fairgreen. This will continue in 2020. Along with, and incorporated into some of the Parks are 11 playing pitches, 6 playgrounds, 6 MUGAs, outdoor gym equipment, walking/jogging/cycling pathways and trails, amenity areas, a range of landscaped inner urban areas, 33 acres of partially landscaped and developed open space, and 290 acres of undeveloped open space incorporating woodland and pathways and undeveloped agricultural pastureland. The maintenance work conducted by the Parks department in open space areas include such activities as grass cutting, litter collection, maintenance and improvement of landscaped areas, maintenance of fencing, tree management and planting and maintenance of monuments and parks furniture all of which will continue in 2020.

The Parks Department will again assist in 2020 in judging of the best kept estates in Sligo competition, which has been supported and facilitated by Sligo Tidy Towns over the past few years. This initiative further enhances the quality of the green areas and open spaces throughout Sligo and its Environs.



The following is a list of all the Parks and the facilities in each Park, for which the Parks Department manage and maintain:

Park/Amenity Area	Facilities
Cleveragh Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1no. Rugby Pitch • 1no. GAA pitch • 1no. Tennis Court • 1no. Lawn Bowls Area • Walking/Jogging/Cycling Trails(Floodlights)
Doorly Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 No. Soccer Pitch • MUGA • Playground • Walking/Jogging/Cycling Trails (Floodlights) • Seating
Mitchell Curley Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 No. Soccer Pitch • 1no. GAA pitch • MUGA • Boules Court • Outdoor Gym & Trail • Playground • Walking/Jogging Trails • Seating
O'Boyle Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 No. Soccer Pitches • 1 No. GAA Pitch • Pitch Dressing Rooms • MUGA • 2 No. Basketball Courts (Floodlights) • Walking/Jogging Trail
Sea View Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 NO. Soccer Pitch • MUGA • Playground
Sean Fallon Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 No. Soccer Pitch
Acorn Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground
Hillside Adventure Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground
M.C.R. Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground
Ballytivnan Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUGA
Sea View Drive Promenade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenity Area
Salmon Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenity Area
Fairgreen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUGA

Sports Pitches

The Parks Department will continue to oversee and regulate the management, maintenance, booking and hire of the 11 public playing pitches in Sligo Town. High quality soccer, GAA and rugby pitches are available for hire to clubs, organisations and schools throughout Sligo. Various sports clubs and groups were accommodated with the hire of pitches to the greatest possible extent and the ongoing regime of quality pitch maintenance programmes including regular grass cutting, verti-draining, weed control, fertilising and turfing ensures the quality of the pitches year round.

Town Centre Enhancement

The Parks Departments continue to prioritise the enhancement of the Town Centre during the Spring and Summer months. In 2020 there was again a huge effort put in by the Parks Department to ensure Sligo Town was looking its best for the busy tourist season. Existing landscaped areas were enhanced and planter boxes were designed and hung from both sides of the pedestrian bridge at Rockwood Parade which gave a new vibrancy to this strategic pedestrian link across the Garvogue River. These initiatives, along with the hanging baskets initiative organised by Blooming Sligo and Sligo Tidy Towns ensure the town centre is awash with colour throughout the spring and summer months.

The hard work and various improvement initiatives undertaken by Sligo County Council parks Department in conjunction with Sligo Tidy Towns has yet again been rewarded by an increase in points received by Sligo in the tidy towns competition in 2019 and significantly the award of a Silver medal. The Parks Department will continue to work closely with Sligo Tidy Towns on appropriate projects throughout 2020.

We will also continue to work in partnership with Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership to facilitate and optimise the use of these facilities and ensure all demographics have the opportunity to participate in the ongoing activities. The facilities encourage an active healthy lifestyle and supports council's focus on ensuring that more people are more active more often.

Operation and Maintenance of Piers and Harbour

Sligo Harbour

Sligo is the only working harbour between Galway and Derry. The main cargoes at the harbour are slack, timber (logs and pulp) and fish meal. Activity has increased significantly during 2019 with 22 No. Ships docking at Sligo Harbour which is double the figure from 2018. Indications are that shipping movements are likely to increase further in 2020.



Loading of logs at Deep Water Quay during – 2019

Floating Pontoon

The pontoon on Ballast Quay at Sligo Harbour is available for use by owners and authorised crew of leisure craft. It is owned, managed and operated by Sligo County Council. The pontoon is 60m long and is available to all local and visiting leisure craft for day trips, short term stays or long term berthings.

Leisure craft can berth safely and securely within easy reach of the city enhancing the tourism potential of Sligo. Visiting boats were up on 2018.



Currently there are boats on long term berth from England, Northern Ireland and Australia. On average 10 boats are berthed at the pontoon all year round, approximately 10 boats will be on hard standing over the winter months.

VETERINARY SERVICE

Food Safety

Sligo County Council continues to implement all relevant food safety legislation under the Service Contract between Sligo County Council and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. This includes the supervision of two abattoirs and two small meat manufacturing plants. Funding comes from FSAI but was cut by 10% in 2019 and this was not communicated until June 2019. Funding for 2020 is expected to be at the same level as 2019. Following discussions between CCMA and FSAI, the Service Contract with FSAI was extended in 2019 to March 2020. Negotiations on a new contract will take place centrally between CCMA and FSAI.

Animal Welfare

The Council continues to implement the Control of Horses Act and has seen a major reduction in abandoned horses.

It is still hoped to develop a Traveller horse project in Sligo in conjunction with Hungry Horse Outside – an equine rescue charity. This however has taken longer than hoped.

It is hoped to commence a new Dog Warden service in January 2020. Re-homing from the shelter is continuing with a number of charities but the uncertainty surrounding Brexit may affect this as many of the dogs go to the UK. Inspections of Dog Breeding establishments also takes place with 2 establishments registered. The new National Dog Licence system was introduced by An Post and LGMA in 2018 and An Post now also send out first reminders. The system also has an online portal for dog licences which has been popular since its introduction in Summer 2018.

FIRE SERVICES

Operation of Fire Service

Sligo County Council is statutorily designated as the Fire Authority for the County of Sligo under Section 9 of the Fire Services Acts 1981-2003 and provides a range of Fire Safety, Enforcement and Emergency Management Services and is also responsible for managing the delivery of operational emergency fire and rescue services across 4 Fire Brigade Units located in Sligo, Ballymote, Tubbercurry, and Enniscrone.

Operations

Providing a professional operational service to the community, Sligo Fire Service is a highly trained workforce supported with the latest equipment and appliances (vehicles). The fire service is funded by Local and National Government to ensure service delivery is to the highest of standards. Sligo Fire Service provides a multifunctional response to emergency incidents including property/commercial fires, road traffic collisions (RTCs), medical emergencies, hazardous materials and providing humanitarian needs. In 2019, Sligo Fire Service attended a total of 448 emergency incidents compared with 470 in 2018 and 448 in 2017. This decreasing trend in emergency incidents is an indication of greater awareness of fire safety amongst the public and is an indication of the positive benefits of a robust community fire safety programme.

Training

Sligo Fire Service, in recognition of the potentially hazardous roles performed by its personnel, is required to implement a continuous programme of training, including mandatory refresher training in both core and specialist skills for all fire-fighting personnel. With the recent QQI FETAC accreditation of fire service training, Sligo Fire Service as the only training centre in the North West, intends (subject to funding from the DHPLG) to upgrade training and student facilities in the training centre.

Sligo Fire Service operational personnel are trained to the highest of standards. Every retained (on-call) firefighter is provided a minimum of 100 hours training annually, primarily in the core skills of breathing apparatus wearing, compartment fire behaviour, road traffic collisions, pump operation, dealing with hazardous materials and Safety, Health and Welfare. Outside of these core skills operational personnel are also trained in chainsaw operation, working at heights, winch operating and Emergency Fire Appliance Driving. In 2019, Sligo Fire Service developed a Swift Water and Flood Rescue capability which has been rolled out in Sligo Town servicing the entire county. The training was primarily conducted in Galway on the River Corrib and familiarisation training was carried out on the Garavogue River with potential rescue techniques and scenarios practiced in anticipation of a rescue call to the river.



Fire Fighter Conducting Swift Water Rescue Training on the Garavogue River

Training Centre

Sligo Fire Station is the Fire Service Regional Training Centre for the North West, providing national, regional and centralised training. The centre has a breathing apparatus (BA) training building, providing realistic live fire environment to train firefighters to the highest and safest of standards in search and rescue techniques in complex burning buildings. In 2019, Sligo Fire Service spent approximately €25,000 of its own funds upgrading the building to make it more complex and make the scenarios more realistic. Tubbercurry Fire Station provides Compartment Fire Behaviour Training (CFBT) in the form of specially designed containers for our own operational personnel and Brigades from across Ireland. We have invested in training Sligo Fire personnel to instruct in these core specialist skills of BA and CFBT and other disciplines. The training centre facilities are also utilised by the private sector providing vital training to their Emergency Response Teams. AbbVie, a multinational local employer, is the latest to up skill their personnel drawing on our expertise and resources and have used our services on 4 occasions this year so far. This year also, the training centre has been used by private sector emergency response trainers to provide training to industry from all over the country.

In April 2019 Sligo Fire Service Training Centre hosted the Rescue Organisation Ireland (ROI) National RTC Extrication and Trauma Challenge. The event was run over 2 days and was open to the public with large crowds attending. There were a large number of national and international participants showcasing their expertise in Road Traffic Collision extrication and medical provision and an opportunity for all teams to learn new techniques from



Extrication and Trauma Assessment during ROI National Challenge

other competitors.

Sligo Fire Service is a recognised PHECC (Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council) Training Centre. We have qualified trainers providing courses from First Aid Responder, Cardiac First Responder and Emergency First Responder. A service we have provided to Leitrim, Roscommon, Longford and Donegal Fire Authorities and is a resource available to the private sector.

Community Fire Safety and Prevention

Fire Safety and Prevention is an important function of Sligo Fire Service. The focus nationally in 2019 has been on the publication of the Fire Safety Task Force Review. Recent large scale fires, nationally and internationally, have resulted in an emphasis on fire safety in medium and high rise buildings which resulted in a national audit of these particular building types.

Sligo Fire Service has committed resources to risk profiling all premises within our functional area and producing/ updating pre-fire plans for these premises. Inspection of licensed premises and granting of Fire Safety Certificates for premises to ensure strict compliance with Fire Safety and Building Control legislation is an important function undertaken by Sligo Fire Service. Any buildings which are non-compliant – identified from inspections, operational incidents or concerns raised by members of the public – are followed up on by issuing advice to the owners and applying the powers legislated under the Fire Services Act 1981 and 2003. In 2019, Sligo Fire Service continued to engage with stakeholders, licensed premises and apartment management companies to promote the importance of fire safety in the built environment.

This year also saw greater interaction with TUSLA and other providers in the area of fire safety in crèches and preschools to ensure the fire safety elements of the building regulations are complied with and advise on appropriate fire safety management of the premises in light of the very young age of the occupants of the facilities.



Extrication demonstration at the Rotary Club "Just One Life"

Sligo Fire Service engages with and promotes National Fire Safety Week, Carbon Monoxide Awareness, Schools Fire Safety programmes and fire safety talks and free smoke detectors to vulnerable groups. The service is proactive in communicating the importance of community fire safety. Sligo Fire Service worked with Sligo Rotary Club on their "Just One Life" road safety campaign. The fire service participated in a multi agency presentation to over 450 transition year students from schools across Sligo in which the experience of fire service personnel

attending such incidents was outlined and the process of extracting road traffic collision casualties from a crashed vehicle demonstrated. This year Sligo Fire Service was involved with Summerhill College as a pilot school for the #BeFireSafeAware programme being rolled out for transition year students in a number of schools across the country.

On the 10th November, 2019, fire service personnel participated in the Sligo Science Fair held in Sligo IT conducting fire safety demonstrations and issuing fire safety advice. Initial reports indicate that the fair engaged with 1,448 primary school, 812 secondary school children and approximately 6,100 general public and families.

Working for the community

Sligo Fire Service continues to provide a professional, modern service and target improvements in all its functional areas – working for the benefit of the community.

Fire Service Personnel Honoured

The Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council Councillor Tom MacSharry presented a series of awards to Sligo Fire Service personnel at a ceremony at Sligo Fire Service in November 2019.



Among those attending were Mayor Councillor Gino O'Boyle, Chief Executive Ciarán Hayes, Chief Fire Officer Gerry O'Malley, Councillors Declan Bree and Chris MacManus, and Directors of Service Bartley Gavin and Tom Kilfeather

The ceremony involved the presentation of 1916 Commemorative Medals, twenty year service medals, and ten-year service certificates to those who reached the milestone of a decade of service in 2017/2018.

Special Blend

In his address the Cathaoirleach said ‘

I see this ceremony as an opportunity to formally convey our appreciation for the valuable role you perform in our community. Being a member of a front-line emergency response team requires a special blend of qualities, not least commitment, dedication and professionalism. To provide this level of service over an extended period of time, as you have done over many years, is an achievement to be noted and applauded.

Professionalism

I think today's presentation ceremony also allows us to increase public awareness of our Fire Service, to highlight the challenges they face in the course of their duty. I think it is fair to say that the general public have a very special regard for our Fire personnel, they appreciate the importance of the work you do and the talents, experience and professionalism you bring to the role. While responding to emergency situations lies at the core of your work, the role of the Fire Service is much broader – in broad terms you are responsible for a range of Fire safety, Enforcement and Emergency Management Services. These services are delivered across our four units in Sligo, Ballymote, Tubbercurry and Enniscrone.

Exemplary Record

It is a special source of pride for Sligo County Council that our Fire Service have an exemplary record when compared with national standards, and this has been highlighted in relation to measured response times. In the last published statistics, Sligo was the only fire service to break the 4 minute mark for mobilisation to fires, and there are only 2 other fire authorities that mobilised in less than 5 minutes. I think this is a remarkable achievement and reflects great credit on each and everyone of our Fire Service personnel.

Engagement

Extensive engagement with the local community has also been the hallmark of Sligo Fire Service, both by hosting visits by schools and other groups at the Fire Station, and also through delivering talks and fire safety programmes in schools and work-places. The nature of your work demands a continuing level of training in both core and specialist skills, with the recent expansion of your remit into the realm of 'Swift Water Rescue' I wish to commend Gerry O'Malley and his team for their hugely important work in this area.

Partnership

There is a great sense of loyalty and camaraderie between the various front-line response agencies, Fire Service, Gardaí, ambulance personnel. You have shown in the many exercises conducted in recent years that this partnership provides a re-assuring foundation in the event of a real emergency. People with this level of experience are an invaluable resource to this Authority and the people of County Sligo.'



FINANCE

Head of Finance: Ms Marie Whelan



INTRODUCTION

This Directorate includes Finance, Procurement and Information Technology.

2019 was a very strong year once again for Sligo County Council with a Revenue surplus of €1.017m as a result of continued strong financial performance, disciplined budgetary control, implementation of efficiencies, reduction in cost base and the adoption of prudent Budgets.

The effect of the strong performance for the 5th consecutive year in which the Council has produced a Revenue surplus amount to a cumulative of €8.1m for the period 2015-2019. The effect of the strong performance has meant a reduction of the Council accumulated Revenue deficit from a high of €26.6m in 2014 to €18.48m by 31st December, 2019.

The overall good performance has facilitated a number of other financial benefits such as the improvement to cash-flow and the overall reduced reliance on overdraft facility, with associated savings in the cost of funds.

Analysis of Collection Yields

Commercial Rates

The percentage revenue collection for commercial rates at the end of 2019 was 82% an increase of 1% on the previous years.

Housing Loans

The percentage collection from Housing Loans at the end of 2019 was 64% an increase of 2% on the collection at the end of 2018.

Housing Rents

The percentage collection on Rents has improved by 78% to 80% arising from a greater focus on Rent accounts and continuous follow up.

The overall Capital Balance has moved significantly in 2019 with an increase of 50m on 2018 arising from major Capital Projects.

Motor Tax

The percentage of Motor Tax transactions which were dealt with online i.e. (transactions processed and tax disc issue in 2019 was 64.65% compared with 62% in 2018.

CCR

At the end of 2019 Central Credit Register (CCR) was implemented in Sligo County Council, with guidance from the LGMA, Central Bank and Unit 4. The purpose of the CCR is that each month lenders (SCC) submit a file with information on loans of €500 or more to the Register. This information is used to generate individual credit reports on borrowers which they and, in certain circumstance lenders can access.

Lenders can use the credit report to get a picture of a borrower's current lending and credit history. This can help them to decide if they should approve an application for a loan or not.

Marie Whelan
Head of Finance

FINANCE

Income and Expenditure Account

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT STATEMENT) FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2019

The Income and Expenditure Account Statement brings together all the revenue related income and expenditure. It shows the surplus/(deficit) for the year.

Note 16 allocates transfers by service division in the same format as Table A of the adopted Local Authority budget.

Expenditure By Division	Note	Gross Expenditure 2019 €	Income 2019 €	Net Expenditure 2019 €	Net Expenditure 2018 €
Housing and Building		11,802,348	10,884,741	917,608	1,200,020
Roads, Transportation & Safety		20,631,645	15,481,589	5,150,056	5,248,355
Water Services		4,599,550	4,588,584	10,966	11,122
Development Management		5,446,453	1,860,049	3,586,404	3,284,001
Environmental Services		6,964,351	1,204,089	5,760,262	5,511,776
Recreation & Amenity		4,040,294	239,495	3,800,799	3,769,749
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare		592,689	511,294	81,395	83,481
Miscellaneous Services		7,702,413	4,395,349	3,307,065	2,690,221
Total Expenditure/Income	15	61,779,744	39,165,188		
Net Cost of Division to be funded from Rates and Local Property Tax				22,614,555	21,798,726
Rates				13,546,966	13,570,115
Local Property Tax				10,802,627	10,902,628
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Transfer				1,735,038	2,674,017
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	14			(717,949)	(743,318)
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year	16			1,017,089	1,930,699
General Reserve at 1st January				(19,500,224)	(21,430,923)
General Reserve at 31st December				(18,483,135)	(19,500,223)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (BALANCE SHEET) AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
Fixed Assets	1		
Operational		448,680,264	439,141,689
Infrastructural		1,187,559,070	1,187,594,684
Community		9,063,942	9,063,942
Non-Operational		19,673,719	19,673,719
		1,664,976,995	1,655,474,035
Work-in-Progress and Preliminary Expenses	2	195,125,531	134,507,982
Long Term Debtors	3	26,446,564	28,842,957
Current Assets			
Stock	4	258,470	253,205
Trade Debtors & Prepayments	5	8,207,549	8,074,772
Bank Investments		1,472,376	1,561,313
Cash at Bank		15,531,743	7,646,869
Cash in Transit		1,625	1,625
		25,471,762	17,537,785
Current Liabilities			
Bank Overdraft		-	-
Creditors & Accruals	6	32,630,320	24,943,679
Finance Leases		-	-
		32,630,320	24,943,679
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)		(7,158,558)	(7,405,894)
Creditors (Amounts greater than one year)			
Loans Payable	7	87,253,368	90,343,738
Finance Leases		-	-
Refundable Deposits	8	772,670	916,425
Other		-	-
		88,026,038	91,260,163
Net Assets / (Liabilities)		1,791,364,495	1,720,158,917
Represented By			
Capitalisation	9	1,664,976,991	1,655,474,030
Income WIP	2	193,142,673	132,898,788
Specific Revenue Reserve		32,264	32,264
General Revenue Reserve		(18,483,135)	(19,500,223)
Other Balances	10	(48,304,298)	(48,745,942)
Total Reserves		1,791,364,494	1,720,158,916

MOTOR TAX

The Motor Taxation Offices for County Sligo are located in County Hall, Riverside, Sligo Telephone: 071 9111830 and in Teach Laighne, Humbert Street, Tubbercurry, Co Sligo Telephone: 071 9111719, where applications for Motor Tax are processed for owners of vehicles which are ordinarily kept in County Sligo.

In the year 2019, €4,861,276 was paid by the registered owners of vehicles to the Motor Tax Offices in Sligo and Tubbercurry for Motor Tax transactions. This was a 7% decrease from the €5,226,689 recorded for the year 2018.

Declaring a Vehicle Temporarily off the Road

New procedures were introduced in 2013 for declaring a vehicle is temporarily off the road so that customers do not have to pay motor tax for that period. Since 1st October 2013 it is necessary to declare in advance that a vehicle will be off the road and not in use for a period of between 3 and 12 months using Declaration of Non-Use of a Motor Vehicle Form RF150. The declaration of non-use must be made in the same month that the current motor tax disc expires. If arrears in motor tax are due these must be paid in full plus a minimum of 3 months motor tax, before a declaration of non-use can be made.

Motor Tax Online

www.motortax.ie is an online service provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and motor tax customers are encouraged to tax their cars on line to avoid queuing delays at their local offices.

Statistics from the Dept of Transport, Tourism and Sport statistics show On-Line Motor Tax transactions for Co. Sligo as follows:

- 31% in 2011
- 35% in 2012
- 39% in 2013
- 48% in 2014
- 53% in 2015
- 56% in 2016
- 58% in 2017
- 62% in 2018
- 64% in 2019

Driving Licences

The Road Safety Authority assumed full responsibility for the driving licence service in 2013. The National Driver Licence Service office in Sligo is located at Ground Floor, Millennium House, Stephen Street, Sligo, opposite the Ulster Bank – Telephone: 076 1087880 and is open from 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday and from 9am to 2pm on Saturdays. See also www.ndls.ie.

PROCUREMENT

The primary procurement objective for Sligo County Council is to get optimum value for money while complying with all EU Directives, National Legislation, Public Procurement Policy, Circulars and Guidelines. The key procurement principles incorporate fairness, openness, transparency, mutual recognition, non-discrimination and proportionality.

Sligo County Council actively uses national procurement arrangements where they are suitable to our needs. These arrangements have been put in place by the Office of Government Procurement and the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre.

The Procurement Section under the guidance of the Procurement Officer is in place to provide a dedicated in-house resource for the organisation in respect of Public Procurement requirements. Formal responsibility for Procurement Governance is assigned to the Head of Finance.

Procurement within the organisation is decentralised, with buyers in all areas of the council, with most of the high value procurement being conducted using the two electronic procurement portals: www.etenders.gov.ie and www.SupplyGov.ie. Suppliers interested in tendering for contracts should ensure to register with both of these portals.

During 2019 Sligo County Council advertised tendering opportunities for a range of supplies, services and works contracts, relating to projects such as the National Surf Centre of Excellence at Strandhill, the Community Centre at Cranmore, the Housing First initiative, public realm enhancements, various housing and roads projects, and for the preliminary design phase of N17 Knock to Collooney [Atlantic Economic Corridor] Road Upgrade.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

2019 was a very active year for the Information and Communications Technology Department involving a number of Digital and Technology projects and providing and improving support for the various Council activities.

Digital Development

In 2019, Sligo continued on a vision to become a Smart City and Community by embedding Smart Technology elements in all policy areas. A Smart City Roadmap was created with the overarching aim of enhancing the quality of living for Sligo's citizens through the use of smart technology such as traffic management systems, car park management, smart street lighting and air quality measurement. Innovation is enabled by combining the data from these and other inputs to deliver insights and inform decision making and service delivery.

Key to enabling this information retrieval and dissemination is a reliable Communications Network, and Sligo has several infrastructure projects at planning and implementation stage during 2019, including the refurbishment of Cranmore estate, the upgrade of the Traffic Control System, construction of the Western Distributor Road, O'Connell Street Enhancement, and the N4 / Hughes Bridge extension. Each of these projects has a Smart Technology communications infrastructure element included at build stage, so that a platform to build applications on real time data and connect technology can be done cost effectively.

A gap analysis between existing and planned infrastructure has been done to inform where future interventions should be made and how, under a collaborative model, these assets could be financed and operated.

Extensive work has been carried out on Mobile and Broadband infrastructure throughout the county. Working in cooperation with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Sligo County Council has continued in its facilitation role in relation to the National Broadband Plan, and worked to identify and address mobile and broadband infrastructure gaps in the county.

Development and Support

2019 brought a number of improvements to the technology used in Sligo County Council. The Customer Relationship management system was improved with extra functionality to serve both the users of the system and the general public in managing customer contacts.

A new Revenue Collection System was rolled out to aid in more efficient income collection.

The I.C.T. Department provided all the technical services needed to run the Local Election Count including audio, providing technological support to the Returning Officer, publication of online results and management of the eCount software.



The count centre during the Local Election in 2019

The I.C.T. Department continues to maintain the Sligo County Council website sligococo.ie as well as sligo.ie, sligoarts.ie, sligolibrary.ie and sligosportscomplex.ie and also manages the various Council social media platforms.

A major redevelopment of sligo.ie took place in 2019 designed to promote Sligo as a place to live, invest and visit.



Crowd at the launch of sligo.ie

The year also saw an increase in followers across all the Council's social media platforms.



APPENDICES



Cast a cold Eye
On Life, on Death.
Horseman, pass by.

W B. YEATS

June 13th 1865
January 28th 1939

Appendix 1: Conferences Attended By Councillors 2019

Conference/Seminar Title	Venue	Date(s)
AILG Training - Module 1 of 2019	Athlone, Co. Roscommon	17 th January
	Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	19 th January
AILG Annual Seminar	Longford	21 st - 22 nd February
*LAMA Spring Seminar	Carrick-on-Shannon	7 th - 8 th March
*AILG Training - Module 2 of 2019	Arklow, Co. Wicklow	23 rd March
	Sligo	28 th March
*AILG Induction Training	Mullingar	11 th July
	Tipperary	13 th July
Desmond Greaves Summer School	Dublin	6 th - 8 th September
*AILG Autumn Training Seminar	Monaghan	11 th - 12 th September
*AILG Module 4 Training	Dundalk	12 th October
National Disability Authority Annual Conference	Dublin	17 th October
*LAMA Autumn Training	Ennistymon, Co. Clare	17 th - 19 th October
"Ireland and Plastic Waste"	Clonakilty, Co. Cork	25 th - 27 th October
Housing Agency Conference	Dublin	6 th November
*AILG Training (Module 5)	Athlone	21 st November
Climate and Biodiversity Workshop	Dublin	4 th December

- * **LAMA: Local Authority Members' Association**
AILG: Association of Irish Local Government
LCDC: Local Community Development Committee

Appendix 2: Staff Retirements in 2019

- Marion Davis
- John Cahill
- Owen Clarke
- Pat Doyle
- Gary Salter