



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

DRÉACHTBHUISÉAD 2024

DRAFT BUDGET 2024

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

CHUIG GACH BALL DEN CHOMHAIRLE

DRAFT BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2024

Chuig An Cathaoirleach and gach Ball den Chomhairle

Introduction:

I enclose for your consideration the Draft Budget for 2024 together with a report from the Directors of Service in respect of activities in their functional areas which is submitted as an annual progress report of the Corporate Plan.

In accordance with the statutory requirements of Section 102 and 103 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended), issues relating to the preparation of the Draft Budget were considered by the Corporate Policy Group on 20th November and at our budget workshop held on 29th November 2023.

The Council considered and made its determination in relation to the local adjustment factor for the Local Property Tax at its meeting held on 23rd October 2023 at which it was decided not to vary the Local Property Tax rate. After the Department baseline funding review there was a welcomed additional allocation to the County's baseline funding however, I continue to negotiate with senior officials in the Department of Housing seeking additional funding for County Galway.

Circular letter Fin 06/2023 dated 23rd August 2023 confirmed the prescribed periods for the 2024 budget meeting and budget related matters. The prescribed period for the holding of the budget meeting is 1st November to 8th December 2023 and the draft Budgetary plan meetings for the five Municipal Districts took place between 16th October and 17th November 2023, as required.

The Council may by resolution amend the Draft Budget but is obliged to adopt the Draft Budget with or without amendment and determine, in accordance with the budget so adopted, the annual rate on valuation to be levied. The Council is required to complete the statutory process within a period of 14 days. This allows for the adjournment, if necessary, of the statutory meeting scheduled for 4th December 2023, but the process must be completed by 18th December 2023.

Local Property Tax:

Under the new model of Local Property Tax funding, all equalisation funding will be met by the Exchequer to ensure all local authorities receive, at a minimum, an amount equivalent to their baselines. As the projected Local Property Tax receipts for 2024 are less than the Council's baseline, Galway County Council will be in receipt of equalisation as set out below. In effect the Council's allocation from Local Property Tax in 2024 will be €20,309,071 which is a welcomed allocation to the baseline funding however we would like to highlight that we had anticipated a higher allocation from the recent baseline funding review process.

Galway County Council - LPT Allocation		
	2024	2023
	€	€
Baseline	20,309,071	14,517,890
LPT Retained Locally	15,299,282	14,362,329
Shortfall from equalisation fund	5,009,789	155,561
Total LPT Funding to be provided	20,309,071	14,517,890
Additional Funding for 2024 due to baseline review	5,791,181	

In general, equalisation grants are payments to local authorities that have smaller tax bases (and/or higher expenditure needs) due to less economic activity, usually arising from the socio-economic profile and circumstances of the local authority area. As Galway County Council is the second most rural local authority area in the Country with over 75 per cent of its population living in rural areas, in principle it should be in receipt of sizeable transfers for equalisation purposes.

The Local Property Tax is one of the few sources where the Council can raise significant additional income by varying the local rate. The recommended increase in my report on the Local Property Tax dated 25th September 2023 would have realised an additional €2.3m to support existing services and leverage additional grant funding opportunities. In not varying the local rate, the revenue from Local Property Tax remains static while the costs of the public services it is meant to support continue to increase. In such a scenario I must acknowledge an impact on public services as a consequence.

Supports from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

In prior years Galway County Council welcomed additional support from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, bringing the total overall support funding for Galway County Council in 2023 to over €12m, including pay, pensions and other supports. However, in the current year, Galway County Council have obtained a provisional allocation in respect of the additional costs that will arise in 2024 because of the National Pay Agreements of €8,897,619. For information purposes I set out below the breakdown of these supports from 2023 to 2024.

	2023 €	2024 €	Change €
Payroll	8,161,780	8,897,619	735,839
Energy and inflation	1,752,047	NIL	1,752,047
Special Grant Once-off	2,755,433	NIL	2,755,433

Main Budget Adjustments

You will see from the budget tables that the draft budget for 2024 is €173,000,119 compared to €158,884,698 for 2023. Members will be aware that the majority of the budget in any year is comprised of non-discretionary costs such as loan charges, payroll, pensions, insurances, statutory demands and expenditure of a contra nature supported either in whole or in part by grant income received on the basis of being assigned to a particular public service.

The current financial position of the Council has been discussed in detail by the Corporate Policy Group and full Council and the funding available to the Council remains a key issue. As I reported in September, there is a requirement for additional funding in almost every area of Council activity, including housing and estate maintenance, road maintenance, libraries, street cleaning, verge trimming, swimming facilities, tourism and economic development.

In Budget 2024 each programme area spend will increase and though the Council is faced with significant financial challenges again in 2024 I intend to commence the much-needed staff recruitment drive as part of our Strategic Workforce Planning exercise. Additional staff will result in a higher payroll cost and this is factored into the Draft Budget 2024. The Council must also provide for new pensions and gratuities in addition to the increases for existing pensions. Members will be aware that inflation is running at around 5% and this will have an impact on the cost of all goods, services and contracts. Energy costs have seen a significant increase, which will again impact the Budget 2024.

Due to additional income, the overall budget for 2024 is an expansion on that of the 2023 budget, providing the ability of Galway County Council to increase headcount and services for 2024. The Draft Budget 2024 provides for expenditure of €173m. The table below sets out how the proposed budgeted expenditure will be funded.

Sources of income	Draft budget 2024 €'000
Grants and Subsidies	79,203
Rates	36,936
Local Property Tax Allocation	20,309
Rents & Loans (inc. RAS)	11,307
Irish Water recoupment	6,990
Parking Charges and fines	742
Local Authority Contributions	8,626
Other Misc Income	8,887
Total	173,000

2024 Work Programme

Galway County Council, as the main statutory authority in Co. Galway, will in 2024 deliver a significant programme of works and public services to the benefit of our citizens and the economy of the County.

Since the formation of the Ukraine Community Response Forum in April 2022, the Housing Directorate continues to respond to calls from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) for assistance in finding and providing emergency accommodation and we continue to work with Government on the Ukraine response with the administration of www.offerahome.ie programme.

In addition, the Housing Directorate will during 2024 develop modular and other housing solutions in collaboration with other agencies such as the DCEDIY, the Red Cross, the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). As the County's Housing Authority this Council will continue to do everything we can to support the Country's humanitarian response to the refugee situation.

In addition, Galway County Council has a key role to play in implementing the various housing initiatives under the Government's Action Plan for housing and homelessness. The Housing Delivery Action Plan set out ambitious targets to deliver 1,717 social housing units delivered between 2022 and 2026. Our housing delivery work programme is progressing and with Part 5's, eligibility of areas of the County for Cost Rental and pro-active engagement with the Department (Affordable/Vacant Homes/Leasing and CALF/CAS) and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) will be on track. The budget available for housing maintenance and estate management is less than what is needed, but an increase of €646,615 in 2024 has been budgeted to help reduce the time taken to re-let properties and bring void units back in to service. Galway County Council plans to eradicate homelessness (new programme of supported housing), increase social housing delivery and support social inclusion and during 2023 delivered nearly 300 social housing units and in 2024 through our respective statutory functions we will continue to focus on the delivery of social, affordable and mixed-tenure housing. The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme will continue to be promoted throughout the County. In 2024 the Council will continue to deliver on our Traveller Accommodation Plan actions.

As the Council will not receive notification of its road grants until early 2024, the budget has been drafted based on the grant allocations for 2023. It is anticipated there will be an increase in 2024 as otherwise the impact of inflation will erode the output of works. Under the various grants in 2023 the Council carried out maintenance and improvement works on over 393km of the road network. In 2024, an additional €868,000 has been budgeted for local roads.

In addition, a provision has been included for street cleaning. Through Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority (NTA) the Council in 2024 will be supported to advance several capital projects of significance.

In January 2023 the High Court remitted the application for approval of the N6 Galway City Ring Road back to An Bord Pleanála for further consideration. Imminent further information requests are anticipated from An Bord Pleanála and Galway County Council as project lead authority will respond as thoroughly and as quickly as possible to any information request.

In 2023 Galway County Council secured €3m under the NTA Active Travel fund for Active Travel works around the County including local transport plans, community transport studies, urban design projects, footpath installations, cycling lanes, public lighting, cycle parking and pedestrian crossings.

The 28km Galway - Oughterard Greenway route will start at the Cathedral in Galway City and finish at the station road in Oughterard. In November 2023 Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation began and will take approximately twelve months to complete. In 2024 in Phase 4 an application will be made to An Bord Pleanála for planning approval before going to tender for construction.

In 2024 the Clifden – Oughterard Greenway route will see the construction of a 23km section between Clifden and Recess, currently 14km of the route is finished and open to the public and a further 6km is under construction. Landowner discussions are ongoing to acquire lands for the outstanding sections of this important Greenway route.

The Council is continuing to co-operate with the OPW on Flood Relief Scheme applications for Oranmore, Clarinbridge, Kinvara and South Galway, as well as Ballinasloe and Clifden and continues to seek funding for the design and delivery of these and other minor flood relief works which are of immense value to local communities as highlighted by the recent impacts of Storm Debi. Under the Bridge Rehabilitation Programme 12 bridges were allocated funding, totalling €630,000 in 2023 for which designs and works are ongoing and are expected to be completed by the end of November. For 2024, we have made a submission to the Department for 14 Bridges for approval totalling €815,000.

With 689Km of coastline, 4 inhabited islands and many piers, harbours and slipways of various sizes, the Maritime function of the Council is important however continues to remain significantly under resourced, and because of this an allocation of €250,000 was provided from the Council's own resources in 2023 for the ongoing marine maintenance programme. In 2023 a Harbour Master for Inis Óírr was recruited and improvement works to Piers, funded under the BALAMI scheme, were completed at Bealcarra, Killeenaran, Derryinver, Maumeen, Kilkieran, Kilronan, Roundstone, Kinvara, Garafin, Cashel, Pollagh and Cleggan. In 2024 we intend to provide additional funding for emergency works in the marine area and add to the Council's marine planning expertise.

Significant investment is required to replace our aging transport fleet. In 2023 a Machinery yard review was undertaken, and a phased replacement of vehicles has commenced with further vehicles to be purchased in 2024.

In 2024 works underway to install the new solar powered pay and display machines throughout the County will continue. This work will add to the replacement of the old pay and display parking meters already undertaken in 2023 with 57 replacement units installed in Gort and Athenry. A final phase in 2024 will result in the replacement of a further 48 units in Ballinasloe, Clifden and Cleggan.

To achieve compliance with National Energy Efficiency statutory targets set by Government Galway County Council is committed to the retrofit of all its inefficient public lights with energy efficient LED units. In 2024 with Mayo County Council as regional lead we hope this work will proceed, at pace.

Effective 20th September 2023, Galway Co. Co. and Uisce Éireann signed a master co-operation agreement transferring our water services functions to UE. The management and transfer of staff moving across to UE will during 2024 be managed in a planned and co-ordinated manner.

Throughout 2023, we have seen a strong emphasis on delivery of key strategic objectives of the County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 in areas, such as economic development, transport and goods and people movement, climate change, energy and renewable resources and tourism. Despite this success the Council’s planning function remains under resourced, and it remains challenging to keep pace with existing and new statutory requirements, i.e. new marine spatial planning jurisdiction, new national planning legislation and systems. All the while the Council must balance its pro-sustainable development approach to decision-making with the protection of our precious environment.

The residential land zoned maps were prepared and published on 1st November 2022, this process continues to consume resources in areas such as RLZT appeals and consequent matters being dealt with, i.e. the RZLT maps to be published on 1st December 2023. Additional resources are urgently needed in planning enforcement and forward planning areas as well as the promotion of economic development across the County.

The e-Planning system is now functioning for the majority of planning applications, submissions and Part VIII applications and public submissions.

In the promotion of Co. Galway for economic development we will continue to work closely with IDA, Enterprise Ireland and other stakeholders to attract inward investment to help stimulate economic development and job creation throughout Galway County. The Galway Strategic Economic Corridor identified in the County Development Plan has superb infrastructure availability and accessibility, and we will engage actively to attract enterprise clusters of scale and value to the land banks assembled by the IDA, and the County and City Councils in this area. Under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) we will continue to work with Irish Rail and other partners during 2024 to advance the passing loop at Garraun and the design of additional carparking and an urban framework plan for the Garraun area. In 2024 we anticipate significant new enhancements at the Oranmore station which will come into operation in early to mid-2025.

The former Galway Airport site has been included in the County Development Plan with the vision of making it an Innovation, Business and Technology Campus that will attract and secure long-term investment in Galway and the Connaught Region and underpin the economic development of the Galway Metropolitan Area. In partnership with the IDA the Council in 2024 will progress plans for the development of the site and commence preparation of a site masterplan as is an objective in the County Development Plan.

There is continued strong interest in the Food Sector in Galway, i.e. in the BIA Innovator Campus Development in Athenry, where in partnership with Teagasc the Council continues to work with the BIA Innovator Campus CLG to complete the project capital/construction phase and to ensure that it meets the needs of the Council, Community and wider stakeholders to support economic/enterprise activity. In Q1, 2024 the Athenry BIA Campus will be officially opened and in partnership with BIA the Council will participate in a number of EU funding applications.

Throughout 2024 the Council will continue to work with the Galway Arts and Film sector to promote creative sector initiatives across the County.

In 2024 the Council will prioritise urban and rural regeneration while tackling vacancy and dereliction in our main towns and villages. To date, Galway County Council has successfully secured €2m in funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under call 3 of the URDF (Urban Regeneration Development Fund) to address vacancy and dereliction in our towns. In 2024 we will need to budget for additional co-funding elements of both successful RRDF and URDF projects.

Also, we will continue to pursue funding for projects in 2024 under Rural Regeneration, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), Town and Village Renewal, Street Enhancement, Clár, Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) and other schemes as they arrive. The Department's Village and Town Centre First Policy aims to support the regeneration and development of towns and villages, and to enable people to live and work in a vibrant environment, the Galway County Town Regeneration Officer was appointed in June 2023. Gort was nominated as the pilot town centre first plan for county Galway. A formal Town Team with representatives from local community groups, residents and business owners was established to assist in the delivery of the Town Centre First (TCF) plan. The TCF Community activation approach to town centre improvement has the potential to be a huge success in Galway.

The County Development Plan recognises the potential of tourism as a key driver of sustainable socio-economic growth across the urban, rural, island and coastal settings of the County. Galway is one of the most successful counties in terms of economic benefit derived from tourism spend. The County's first Tourism Strategy giving a collaborative framework for the development of tourism initiatives over the coming years has been prepared. It will support the spread evenly of Tourism benefits across the County. The Strategy is aligned with the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Development Strategy and will identify key strategic projects to enhance the Co. Galway tourism product. Additional resources are provided in the budget for tourism promotion.

In response to our obligations under "Delivering Effective Climate Action, 2030" I have established a new Climate Action Unit for responding to Climate Change. The Climate Action Coordinator, Climate Action Officer and Community Climate Action Officer have been recruited. A new governance structure was put in place including a Climate Action Steering Group, Climate Action Team, and corporate Energy Team. The mission of Galway County Council, as set out in Delivering Effective Climate Action, 2030, is to deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across our County starting within our own organisation, through leadership, example, and mobilising action at a local level. I am delighted to announce that we have prepared the Draft Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, currently on public display. This draft plan sets out how Galway County Council will promote a range of mitigation, adaptation, and other climate action measures, to help deliver on the national climate obligations and the Government's overall national Climate Objective. As the lead authority in the County, Galway

County Council will provide the example and leadership to deliver on climate action for the County, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. We will administer €726,000 Climate Action Fund which is for new community action projects.

Projects in progress or planned include the public lighting energy retrofit, social housing retrofit, 70 active travel initiatives, development of an EV charging strategy and a range of biodiversity initiatives. These projects/actions will make a real difference.

Members will be acutely aware of the value of the library services throughout the County and the role it plays in enriching lives in our communities. Spending on library services in Galway is well below the level needed to serve the people and communities of Galway City and County. While it may take some time to address that deficit, the draft budget provides for additional funds towards library books.

Our Blue Flag beaches and swimming areas are of critical importance to the enjoyment of our natural environment by locals and visitors alike and for the tourism economy of the County. The Water Safety Programme 2023 involved the recruitment of a panel of 45 trained Beach guards to provide services at 10 locations in the County, including six blue flag beaches, and at six locations in the City as part of a shared service agreement with Galway City Council. Following the risk assessment ring buoys and safety measures need urgent upgrade and additional provisions have been included in the draft budget for lifeguards and safety measures.

Galway County Council's Blended Working application went live on Monday, 3rd July 2023, and 275 fully approved applications have been processed to date. The current blended working arrangement is for a trial period up to 31st December 2023, and if successful may be renewed on an annual basis effective from 1st January 2024.

Cyber security and the protection of our data and information continues to be a key priority for the ICT unit and for the entire organisation, and increased ICT security is needed for monitoring and protection of all our systems from potential threats.

Galway County's Digital Strategy is a statement of intent and support for the digital development of the county, in a period of increasing connectivity and higher use of digital service, digital technologies and infrastructure. To support Connectivity for the public, in 2023 Galway County Council increased its free public Wi-Fi Access points to 41 under the Wifi4eu scheme, this is in addition to the 21 Public Wi-fi access points from the BCP locations. As part of a new digital strategy for the organisation in 2024 we will develop a new modern inter-active website through which we can provide services to our citizens.

Staffing:

Galway County Council is operating with lower staffing levels and less financial resources than other comparable Local Authorities who operate with staff resources in the region of 1,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). The current staff complement in Galway County Council is 829 FTE. Having

a higher staffing compliment, will enable the Council's ability to access, leverage and utilise funding and initiatives that would benefit not only the citizens and stakeholders of County Galway but also provide opportunities to leverage efficiencies and new ways of working for Galway County Council itself. A Strategic Workforce Plan has been undertaken in 2023, to examine how existing and future staffing will be aligned with actions in the Corporate Plan 2024 - 2029. The implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Workforce Plan will be subject to Galway County Councils' budgetary provisions. Staff recruitment and re-deployment has been targeted at the priority areas of Housing, Environmental Enforcement, Climate Change, Economic Development & Planning and Municipal Districts and focus will also be on implementing additional posts approved for the Retained Fire Service in 2024.

Commercial Rates:

The two primary sources from which a local authority can derive income are by varying the rate of local property tax and the annual rate of valuation for commercial rates.

Given the scale of the financial challenge faced by the Council I will be requesting the new Council to approve a 15% increase in the local property tax rate for 2024 which will positively impact the 2025 Budget.

Members will be aware that the Valuation Office (VO) is undertaking a national revaluation programme and in the case of County Galway has issued final valuation certificates in September 2023 with the new valuations becoming effective on 1st January 2024. It is anticipated that the indicative ARV will remain as predicted at €0.21. In November 2023 the Minister issued a statutory instrument giving effect to the VO valuation for County Galway.

Expenditure Proposals

Expenditure by Programme Group	2023 Budget	2024 Draft Estimated Budget
	€	€
Housing and Building	19,454,462	26,104,453
Road Transportation and Safety	56,507,601	58,185,189
Water Services	15,879,218	17,267,038
Development Management	15,647,985	16,418,043
Environmental Services	22,442,670	25,205,877
Recreation and Amenity	10,583,291	10,983,220
Agriculture, Education Health and Welfare	2,816,370	2,882,581
Miscellaneous Services	15,553,101	15,953,718
Total	158,884,698	173,000,119

Conclusion and Recommendation

The financial supports from the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government have been essential to drafting a workable budget for 2024. Though the Council remains underfunded relative to comparable local authorities, our budget spend and service provision for 2024 is a significant uplift on 2023. This €173m spend on the governance and provision of public services is critical for the local economy of County Galway. Also, I will continue to negotiate with Department officials for additional funding uplifts.

In the preparation of the Draft Budget 2024 I wish to thank all the Members for their support throughout 2023 and in particular Cathaoirligh Cllr. Mogie Maher and Cllr. Liam Carroll for their assistance. I want to thank the Corporate Policy Group and Group leaders for their positive and proactive budget 2024 preparation engagement.

I wish to thank also our new Head of Finance Ms. Katie O'Connor, each Director of Service and all the staff of the Finance Directorate for their efforts in crafting and preparing the Draft Budget 2024. To all the staff of the Council, I am indebted for their welcome and support to me in this my first year leading Galway County Council.

For 2024 and beyond I am confident with the support of the Members and staff that we will together implement a quality and value-added programme of work for the citizens of Galway County.

Accordingly, I recommend the adoption of the Draft Budget 2024 as presented.

Mise, Le Meas,

Mr. Liam Conneally,

Chief Executive,

Galway County Council.

27th November 2023.

DIVISIONAL REPORTS INCLUDING ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2020 - 2024

The Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 as adopted by the Elected Members of Galway County Council, provides the framework to enable Galway County Council to guide the strategic direction and development of the County of Galway for the period 2020 - 2024.

The strategic goals and supporting strategies identified in the Plan support Galway County Council in carrying out its functions, prioritising its actions, and assessing its progress.

The Divisional Reports that follow detail the progress achieved during 2023 in relation to the strategic goals and supporting strategies. In addition, the Divisional Reports outline the main proposals to be advanced in 2024 to further progress the achievement of the strategic goals of the Council.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Community Participation & Social Inclusion

“To facilitate the broadest possible participation by citizens in local decision making and the sustainable development of their communities and their County.”

Economic & Enterprise Development

“To maximise the continued and sustainable economic and enterprise development of our County.”

Infrastructural Capacity

“To ensure that our physical and social infrastructure is sufficiently developed to support economic development, and to enhance our quality of life.”



**Organisational
Capacity**

“To maximise organisational capacity through the continuous review of operational efficiency, financial and risk management and the development of our Staff and Elected Members.”

**Protection of
Environment &
Heritage**

“To improve, protect and promote our environment, culture, heritage and language in the interests of present and future generations.”

**Quality
Customer
Service**

“To ensure that quality customer service is at the centre of everything we do.”

HOUSING AND UKRAINIAN RESPONSE

HOUSING SERVICES - DELIVERING HOMES ∞ BUILDING COMMUNITIES

The Housing Department of Galway County Council continues:

- To help individuals and families meet their housing needs in communities of persons of varied ages, family composition, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic status.
- To deliver early inter-agency supports and provide stable and supported housing options to homeless individuals and families to reduce the reliance on emergency accommodation.
- To accelerate the delivery of well managed and maintained social housing in sustainable communities for people to live while maximising the contribution to a climate friendly built environment.
- To ensure that existing housing stock is used to the maximum degree possible to improve the quality of housing stock and to contribute to the renewal of the built environment.

HOUSING FOR ALL – A NEW HOUSING PLAN FOR IRELAND

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

“Housing for All” is the government’s plan to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 per year over the next decade. The plan provides for an optimal mix of social, affordable, and private housing for sale and rent. The plan is based on four pathways, leading to a more sustainable housing system:

- support home ownership and increase affordability.
- eradicate homelessness, increase social housing delivery, and support social inclusion.
- increase new housing supply.
- address vacancy and make efficient use of existing stock.

Under “Housing for All” as launched by the Government on the 2nd of September 2021, Galway County Council has been set the following yearly targets totalling 1,717 new social housing units over the period 2022 to 2026.

The pathways through which **social housing construction** will be provided are:

- Local Authority direct build (LA Build), Buy and Renew scheme.
- Turnkey developments from private developers.
- Part V requirements for social and affordable housing.
- Approved Housing Body (AHB) delivery.

The social housing construction targets for social housing in Galway County for the 5 no. years are outlined below. The target is the minimum level of delivery expected. The Minister has

indicted that 60% of delivery should be provided by local authorities, with the remainder by AHBs, although local authorities will retain ultimate responsibility for meeting the targets.

Year	Social Housing Build Target	Expected Council Delivery (60%)	Expected AHB Delivery (40%)
2022	230	1,030	687
2023	351		
2024	358		
2025	385		
2026	393		
Total	1,717	1,717	

Currently, Galway County Council proposes to exceed the target under “Housing for All” assisting the Government to deliver 90,000 social housing units nationally as set out under the plan.

HOUSING DELIVERY ACTION PLAN

The Housing Delivery Action (HDAP) plan was approved on the 1st July 2022 and has been published on the Galway County Council website. The HDAP provides for Plan-led sustainable delivery of housing in the right locations. It charts the pathway forward for Galway County Council to deliver on its social and affordable housing targets from 2022-2026, identifying where and how those targets will be met. Strong delivery by AHBs of build units will be a key requirement for this plan. However, it is important to note that the proposed delivery is subject to the delivery of National targets and availability of funding to deliver social and affordable homes under “Housing for All” and all developments are subject to the normal approval and planning processes for each development.

LOCAL AUTHORITY DIRECT BUILD

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

In 2023, Galway County Council have a substantial uplift in our target delivery from 2022. The 2023 target is 351 units compared to 230 in 2022. During 2023, the Housing Unit continued to progress a range of direct-build housing projects through the 4 stage approvals process for design, planning, tendering and construction. Galway County Council will deliver circa 300 social housing units in 2023. This equates to a projected capital spend of €13,663,847 on the provision of these units.

The following projects were progressed through various stages to date in 2023:

Location	# Social Housing Units	DHLGH Stage
Single Rural Dwellings	6	Under Construction
Tobar Mhuire, Ahascragh	18	Under Construction
Baile an Theimpeal, Weir Road Phase 1	14	Under Construction
Total	38	

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

Proposals for 42 units are being prepared or are with the Department for approval and planned for delivery in 2024 with projected capital spend on the provision of these units of €15,916,849. The construction industry remains in a challenging position nationally with contractors experiencing price inflation and delays in obtaining materials, general labour shortages, and the recent increase in interest rates in accessing funding. The Housing Unit, together with the assistance of the Housing Delivery Coordination Office and the Department, has been working hard to manage these issues at a local level and strong delivery is expected for 2024.

Location	# Social Housing Units	DHLGH Stage
Baile an Theimpeal, Weir Road Phase 2	15	Under Construction
Ballymoe	8	Under Construction
Caislean Rathlin, Ardrahan	10	Under Construction
Corralough, Williamstown	1	Procurement ongoing
St. Joseph`s, Ballinasloe	8	Part 8 Approved
Total	42	

TURNKEYS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

Turnkey acquisition continues to be an important delivery stream under the new programme “Housing for All”. This model for delivery is of significant benefit where challenges exist regarding availability of suitable development land. The scheme is open to both the Council and the Approved Housing Body sector.

An advertisement calling for expressions of interest for turnkey developments (social and affordable housing) was published in April 2023 and again most recently in October 2023. There were 12 no. expressions of interest in May of which 5 no. have planning permission. We are awaiting the results of the October expressions of interest. For 2023 and for Galway County Council direct turnkey projects, the overall budgeted spend is €31,573,308 relating to 105 proposed social housing units.

During 2023, the Housing Unit are acquiring a total of 105 units from Turnkey Developments as detailed below.

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Cullairbaun, Athenry (Phase 4)	16	Completed
Limehill Dunloe (Phase 3)	15	Practically completed
Cuil Daibhi, Ballydavid South, Athenry	2	Completed
Dublin Rd. Tuam	8	Under Construction
Bun na Coille, Moycullen	1	Under Construction
Carraig Weir, Tuam (Phase 2)	7	Under Construction
Kilgarve, Ballinasloe (Phase 1)	34	Under Construction
Lakeview, Glenamaddy	22	Under Construction
Total	105	

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

It is expected that turnkey developments will again form a large part of our Social Housing Delivery in 2024. There are several proposals currently under consideration which hopefully will progress to delivery of units over the course of the remainder of the Housing for All program.

The funding of Turnkey construction projects is fully recouped from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

DEVELOPERS OBLIGATIONS UNDER PART V

In accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2001 and amendments, the Housing Department continues to acquire units as part of Developers obligations under this act. It should be noted that the Part V legislation was amended in August 2021 regarding land purchased on or after 1 August 2021. Any new planning permissions for housing development on that land will have a 20% Part V requirement. A 10% Part V requirement will apply where land

already has planning permission or was purchased between the 1st of September 2015 and 31st of July 2021 if planning permission is granted before 31st July 2026. In 2023, Galway County Council will be acquiring 33 units under the Part V obligations with a further 5 units being progressed for delivery through AHB's (38 in total) with a further 63 units planned for 2024.

The number of housing units acquired by the Council under this stream of delivery will increase in future years due to recent amendments to the legislation, providing for the acquisition of up to 20% of a development by the local authority, at least half of which units must be for social housing applicants.

Part V – 2023

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
An Saileachan (The Willows), Athenry	8	Under construction
Limehill, Dunlo(phase 2), Ballinasloe	8	Completed
Bun na Coille	7	Under construction
Lorrogate, Athenry	2	Under construction
Oranhill, Oranmore	4	Under construction
Kilgarve, Ballinasloe	4	Under construction
Total	33	
Part V (Approved Housing Bodies)		
Rivercrest (Tuath), Tuam	1	Under construction
Cricket Court (CHI)	1	Completed
Vicars Coral (Tir an Choir) (CHI)	3	Under construction
Total	38	

Part V – 2024

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Vicars Coral (Tir an Choir) Tuam	6	Under construction
Moneyduff (Phase 1), Oranmore	7	Under construction
Moneyduff (Phase 2), Oranmore	7	Under construction
Moneyduff (Phase 3), Oranmore	7	Under construction
Moycullen Rd., Bearna	12	Under construction
Lakeview, Baile an Chlair	11	Under construction
Kilgarve, Ballinasloe	4	Under construction
Oranhill, Oranmore	4	Under construction
Total	58	
Part V (Approved Housing Bodies)		
An Doireann, Ballyquirke, Moycullen (AHB) (Tuath)	5	Under construction
Total	63	

APPROVED HOUSING BODIES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Council is continuing to engage with the Voluntary sector to assist them with their tasked delivery of 40% of new build supply under “Housing for All”. It is hoped to maximise the number of units being made available through the funding schemes CAS (Capital Assistance Scheme) and CALF (Capital Advance and Leasing Facility).

For 2023 there are several projects with AHB’s to deliver 120 additional housing units through CALF, CAS & Part V to support the Council to meet the housing need in the County. It is expected that 114 units will be delivered in 2024. The AHB forum provides the structure for the partnership between the Council and the sector in the delivery of social housing units. The funding of the

Approved Housing Body sector differs in that both public funds and private finances are utilised to deliver these projects, depending on the method of delivery.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (CAS)

The Capital Assistance Scheme funding is provided by the Department through the Local Authority for the provision of housing. There were no CAS funded schemes completed in 2023.

OTHER CAS PROJECTS PROGRESSING:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
An Doireann, Ballyquirke (Tuath)	9	Q4 2024
Tuath, Mountbellew	5	Projected Completion Q3 2024
Peter Triest Housing Association, Springfield, Ballinasloe	4	Progressing
Carrig Dubh Housing, Shannon Road, Portumna	5	Progressing
Total	23	

CAPITAL ADVANCE AND LEASING FACILITY (CALF) AND MORTGAGE TO RENT (MTR)

The Capital Advance and Leasing Facility (CALF) and Mortgage to Rent Scheme provide social housing through off-balance sheet current expenditure.

One of the Housing for All Commitments (4.10) was to “Review the Structure and Operation of the CALF to assess whether any refinements to the facility are required to support delivery of social housing by the AHB sector across a wider range of Local Authority Areas”. The backdrop to this is that it was very difficult to achieve viability under the old P&A-CALF funding model due to relatively lower rents in mainly the West and North West areas of the Country including Galway County. In addition, increases in both interest rates and construction inflation also made it difficult to achieve viability for AHB projects. The main recommendations of the review were as follows:

- The initial P&A amount will be calculated to achieve a debt-service cover ratio (DSCR) target that will provide sufficient borrowing capacity for the AHBs with a minimum level of 25% CALF funding (previously a percentage of local market rent).
- An internal Departmental working group be established to explore the issue of gearing within the Approved Housing Body sector and recommend solutions.

- Options are explored in terms of the early repayment of the CALF loan, subject to agreement with the Housing Finance Agency.
- There is an explicit link between applications for financial support under P&A-CALF and the HDAP of a Local Authority.

It is anticipated that these measures will facilitate the AHB Sector in delivering additional voluntary housing in the main towns in Galway in 2024.

PROJECTS WITH CALF FUNDING FOR COMPLETION IN 2023:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Dunlo Cluid (Phase 1) (Culain Eisir Riada), Ballinasloe	24	Practical Completion
Dunlo Cluid (Culain Eisir Riada), Ballinasloe, (Phase 2)	14	Practical Completion
Gort na Fuinse, Headford (PHASE 2) (Cluid)	14	Completed
Cricket Court (CHI)	7	Completed
Vicar Coral, Tuam (Tir an Choir) (CHI) Phase 3	19	Practical completion
Rivercrest, Tuam (Tuath)	16	Under construction
Total	94	

The following units were delivered under the Mortgage to rent scheme in 2023 which enables homeowners in mortgage difficulty to switch from owning their home to renting their home as social housing tenants.

Scheme	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Mortgage to Rent Scheme (MTR) Home for Life (HFL)	2 Home for Life	1 Completed 1 Due to close 17 th November 2023
Mortgage to Rent – Approved Housing Body (AHB)	1 – Approved Housing Body	
Mortgage to Rent Scheme (MTR) Home for Life (HFL)	10	In progress
Mortgage to Rent – Approved Housing Body (AHB)		

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- It is proposed that the Council will continue to engage pro-actively with the Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) to facilitate the sourcing of further units for the provision of housing under this funding model.
- The Housing Unit will examine the potential for AHBs to deliver additional housing units on Council held lands.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY

Targets for affordable housing delivery have been set at a national level. The Scheme of Priority for Affordable dwelling purchase arrangements in County Galway was approved at the Meeting of the Plenary Council on Monday 24th April 2023. This was approved by the Minister on 2nd June 2023.

Galway County Council was advised by the Department on 30th March 2022 of its affordable housing targets. The total target is 226 houses for 2022-2026, with significant deliveries expected to take place under the Advance Purchase Scheme in particular.

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Affordable Housing Target Assigned by the Department	15	42	59	55	55	226

The primary pathways through which affordable housing will be provided are:

- Affordable Housing construction by Local Authority.
- Part V affordable housing units.
- Affordable Housing Advance Purchase by the Council (turnkey units from developers).
- Cost Rental.
- First Homes Scheme (facilitates acquisition by applicants of housing in private developments).
- Home Loans Scheme (formerly 'Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans')

The **First Homes** scheme may facilitate significant delivery for households, particularly if it encourages developers to increase delivery of private housing. However, the Council retains a key role in affordable housing delivery and is pursuing LA build projects and Advance Purchase (Turnkey) affordable schemes.

SHCEP funding is fully recouped from the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

The Local Authority Capital programme will remain a key focus in 2024 with priority given to:

- progressing local authority direct-build projects through design, planning, tendering and construction stages in accordance with the approved Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- Identifying further potential sites for development, in line with the housing needs for various areas, in order to enhance the potential for a direct build programme.
- engagement with builders with a view to advancing the delivery of units under Part V and increasing these numbers based on the new Part V requirements.

HOUSING ACQUISITIONS IN 2023:

There are three main mechanisms available for the acquisition of housing and these are Direct Acquisition, Developers Obligation under Part V and Turnkey processes.

Direct Acquisition for 2023:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Frenchpark, Oranmore	1	Purchase complete
The Orchard, Moylough (TIS)	1	Completion December 2023
Goldcave, Tuam	1	Purchase complete
Country Meadows, Tuam	1	Completion December 2023
Country Meadows, Tuam	1	Completion December 2023
Deerpark, Headford	1	Purchase complete
Castleview, Headford	1	Purchase complete
County Meadows, Tuam (TIS)	1	Completion December 2023
Country Meadows, Tuam (TIS)	1	Completion December 2023
Bruach na Habhann, Carraroe (TIS)	4	Completion December 2023
Cul na Cille, Ballygar (TIS)	1	Completion December 2023
Boland Court, Gort (TIS)	1	Completion December 2023

Rathbawn, Ballinasloe (TIS)	1	Completion December 2023
The Maltings, Loughrea (TIS)	1	Purchase Complete
Racecourse Lawns, Clifden	1	Completion December 2023
Cluain Ri, Athenry	1	Completion Quarter 1 2024
Total	19	End of year 2023

Galway County Council reviews the availability of houses continuously to meet the housing need within its functional area. Private units are assessed based on the housing need in the locality, compliance with the criteria, Engineering reports and legal assessment. A total of 5 units have been acquired by Galway County Council at a cost of €1,345,000 with a further 14 units at the final stages of acquisition with an estimated cost of €2,738,000. The numbers of second-hand units acquired on this basis will remain at a low number for the foreseeable future due acquisitions of this nature being focused on cases of specific need. Ten of these properties will be purchased under the Tenant in Situ Scheme

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR HOUSING LANDS

The active management of the housing land bank is part of a range of actions being taken under “Housing for All” designed to accelerate and increase housing output.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Continue to advance sites to development stage at the earliest date possible.
- Continue to expand the bank of lands available to the Council for public housing; affordable and social.
- Progress the approved Housing Delivery Action Plan for delivery of the build programme by Galway County Council and AHBs of both social and affordable housing for the period 2022-2026.

Land availability with RI zoning continues to be a constraining factor in meeting social housing need. The availability of critical infrastructure together with our listed areas of Housing demand determines the locations where Galway County Council can deliver Social and Affordable Housing. In 2023 Galway County Council agreed to purchase lands including lands in Portumna, Tuam and Oranmore. The land cost is fully recoupable from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, on development of the lands for housing. A property in St. Brigid’s

Road, Portumna is also being purchased with the purchase expected to be completed before year end. This purchase will support the regeneration proposal for the area.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

The Housing Unit will continue:

- to progress high quality sustainable social housing schemes, subject to planning approval, on various suitable portions of its remaining landbank, in areas with high social housing demand. These schemes will be advanced in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and will provide sustainable communities into the future.
- to advance the development of sites under the Affordable Housing Fund subject to approval by the Department and alignment with their guidelines. Further sites will be identified, and proposals advanced for affordable housing.
- to maximize the potential of the land bank to support housing need, including affordable housing, and cost rental options, subject to the introduction of appropriate schemes and funding streams by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- to seek new opportunities to acquire strategic lands suitable for the provision of high-quality social housing and/or affordable housing, in locations with strong social housing demand, to deliver on its housing targets under the “Housing for All” programme. This will be aligned with the approved Housing Delivery Action plan.

LONG TERM LEASING INITIATIVE

Long Term Leasing was introduced to facilitate the delivery of Social Housing under Pillar 2 of Rebuilding Ireland and has continued although on a reduced scale under “Housing for All”. The Local Authority or AHB is the landlord to tenant and the property owner does not have a direct relationship with the tenant. The rent paid to the landlord is discounted monthly by 15-20% of the Open Market Rent Valuation.

- The Lease term is between 10 and 25 years, during this timeframe the Local Authority tenant the property. The Landlord will have a guaranteed rent even when the property is vacant.
- The Landlord will have no day-to-day maintenance responsibilities under long term lease arrangements.
- No long-term leasing projects were completed in 2023. Instead, two of the four units proposed for long term leasing in Country Meadows are being purchased by Galway County Council and the eight units in Cricket Court in Tuam are being purchased by an AHB (CHI).

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

Leasing under the Government Programme “Housing for All”.

- At present there are no long-term leasing projects being progressed for 2024.

The Government advised their intention in 2022 to phase out the use of current leasing models by 2025 through phasing out new entrants to the current leasing arrangements for long term delivery and enhanced leasing, in favour of delivery models which ensure long-term ownership of social housing homes. The DHLGH will retain flexibility for Local Authorities to use short term rental availability agreements (RAS-Type) to accommodate people on the waiting list in the most appropriate way possible. There may be changes/additional requirements under long term leasing in 2024.

VACANT HOMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The role of the Vacant Homes Officer is to drive and co-ordinate actions at a local level, to attain the objective of the National Vacant Housing Reuse Strategy including data collection and analysis. The Primary focus in 2023 was the further development of the Croi Conaithe Scheme and the commencement of a survey of vacant Properties throughout County Galway. The Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund is a fund of €50 million to support people to live in towns and villages in Ireland by providing a grant to refurbish vacant properties.

The fund is focused on home ownership or making the property available to rent and it is aimed to tackle vacancy and dereliction in urban and rural areas around the country. A grant of €50,000 is available for a pre-2007 property that has been vacant for a minimum of 2 years and will be used as an Owner/Occupier primary residence or as rented accommodation. A top-up grant of €20,000 is also available for properties that are confirmed as derelict (i.e., structurally unsound, and dangerous).

This scheme also allows for new builds in Urban areas where the Local Authority can provide serviced sites. Galway County Council currently have no serviced sites available.

Since the 1st of July 2023, the scheme is now available to applicants who want to renovate a property on the islands of Inishbofin, Árainn (Inis Mór), Inis Oírr and Inis Meáin. These island-based properties can apply for an additional support of up to a maximum of 20% more than the standard maximum award of €50,000. (Up to €60,000 for the refurbishment of a vacant property, and up to €84,000 where the property is confirmed to be derelict).

As at end of October 2023, Galway County Council has received 268 applications since the start of the scheme with 74 approved, 2 approved in principle, 14 withdrawn, and a further 136 in progress. Of the 136 in progress, further information has been requested from 108 applicants

and 28 applications are awaiting inspection. 42 Applications have been refused for various reasons including the person did not wish to reside in or rent out the property.

Vacant Homes Survey Update:

Under the Governments Housing for All Pathway 4, Galway County Council are required to carry out a Vacant Homes Survey to confirm vacancy in private properties with a view to advising the Owners of the options of reusing existing buildings to reduce the overall vacancy rate.

- The Vacancy Data Project has commenced.
- The Department of Housing has developed a map-based app compiled from the Geo Directory vacancy data that is compiled from the 2016 Census that identified 1,727 vacant properties in Galway County.
- This number is likely to increase as more properties are added during the survey.
- Inspection staff are disseminating an information leaflet and displaying a poster on each vacant/derelict property to let the owners know that council staff have visited the site and to inform them of their options to bring the building back into use.
- All these properties are within a 1km settlement buffer as these areas are more likely to have a private or social housing need.

As of Wednesday 8th November, 635 properties have been surveyed, 342 of which have a status of Vacant or Derelict.

Of the 7 main large settlements, 6 have now been surveyed – Tuam, Oranmore, Loughrea, Ballinasloe, Clifden and Athenry. Gort should be complete by the end of November. Of the mid-size settlements, 2 have now been surveyed namely Bearna and Na Forbacha.

The following mid-size settlements have yet to be surveyed: Baile Chláir, Corrandulla, Lackagh, Turloughmore, Ballygar, Glenamaddy, Moylough, Mountbellew, Menlough, Williamstown, Ahascragh, Moycullen, Oughterard, An Cheathrú Rua, An Spidéal, Cill Rónáin, Roundstone, Rosscahill, Portumna, Kinvara, Craughwell, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan, Eyrecourt, Woodford, Killimor, Dunmore, Ballinderreen, Headford, Corofin, Cluain Bú, Monivea, Milltown, Abbeyknockmoy and Dunmore.

It is anticipated that the survey will be completed by the end of 2023.

Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) & URDF Funding

The CPO Activation Programme was launched in April 2023. As per the associated Departmental Circular, GCC has been set a target of surveying 300+ vacant or derelict properties that may be candidates for compulsory purchase. GCC has a target of commencing 27 CPOs in 2023 supported by the Housing Finance Agency Funding and the intention is that ultimately these projects will be self-financing.

The CPO Activation Programme as follows:

- **Step 1** – Identify that the property is vacant/derelict.
- **Step 2** – Identify the Owner of the Property.
- **Step 3** – Start the process of engaging with the property owner – For example, if the owner says that they intend to apply for the Croí Conaithe grant to bring the property back into use, then the property would exit the CPO Programme & GCC would record the outcome.
- **Step 4** – In the event that the owner cannot be identified or does not want to bring their property back into use. Then GCC can begin the CPO activation Program.
- **Step 5** – Then the property is assessed for Compulsory acquisition.

There are two pieces of legislation under which a CPO can be executed, the Derelict Sites Act 1990 and the Housing Act. If the site is not deemed to be derelict, then it can be compulsory acquired under the Housing Act, alternatively if it is deemed as derelict then the site can be purchased under the Derelict Sites Act 1990. Once acquired, the intention is to carry out some renovation works to allow the property to be put back on the open market and ideally sold to persons outside for social housing client base. If this is not successful, then the property can be used as social housing or community use. The funds generated by these sales are used to self-finance current and future CPO acquisitions. Under the URDF funding model there are several properties that have been identified and prioritised in Tuam (6), Ballinasloe (9), Oranmore (6) that have initial surveys carried out to confirm vacancy.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Investigate the potential to bring the vacant properties back into use for Social Housing.
- Investigate the vacant properties uploaded to www.vacanthomes.ie to determine if any are suitable to bring back into use.
- Implement actions identified in the Reuse Strategy at local level and bring forward measures to ensure, to the greatest degree possible that vacant and underused privately owned properties are brought back into use.
- Continue to advertise all relevant schemes in the local media and on social media.
- Secure accurate and up to date levels of vacancy in Galway County particularly in urban areas where housing demand is most acute.
- Continue to roll out the Croí Conaithe scheme to the maximum number of vacant homes possible.
- Using the information obtained from the survey, commence engaging with the owners to try to bring the properties back into use.
- Commence the CPO Activation Process

REPAIR AND LEASING SCHEME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Repair and Lease Scheme has been developed under Action 5.7 of Rebuilding Ireland to assist private property owners and AHB's in utilising existing vacant housing stock throughout the County for social housing. This scheme involves an interest free loan of €80,000 (including VAT) and the property must be leased to a Local Authority or AHB. These loans must be repaid over the term of the lease, and these can range in length from 5 to 25 years. These rates were increased in 2023.

- Continued engagement with property owners, estate agents and solicitors to attract expressions of interest to the scheme.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Repair and Lease Scheme will continue to be advertised on a regular basis in the local media and on social media.
- Property owners who make enquiries will be engaged with and given all necessary information on the Scheme as quickly as possible.
- Galway County Council will continue to engage with AHBs where appropriate in implementing this scheme.
- It should be noted that the expanded Croí Conaithe Scheme has had an impact on Repair and Leasing as the Croi Conaithe is a grant scheme provided the property is not sold for ten years but the Repair and Lease is a Loan which must be paid back.

HOUSING GRANTS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

A total of €3,140,373 was paid for Housing Adaptation Grants in 2023, up to end of October 2023:

- 265 Housing Aid for Older People Grants with a total value of €1,532,241
- 112 Mobility Aid Grants with a total value of €567,563 and
- 89 Housing Aid Grants with a total value of €1,040,569

This expenditure on Housing Adaptation Grants is an increase of 42% on expenditure to the end of October 2022.

Department funding was made available towards these grants in the sum of €2,512,298 to the end of October 2023. Co-funding of €375,000 was sanctioned from the Council's own resources in the 2023 Revenue budget with a total of €705,908 anticipated to be required to end of December 2023.

It is anticipated that the shortfall will be allocated from Internal Capital Receipts in 2023. It is anticipated the full allocation of the Department funding will be drawn down by year-end.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

The Council will continue to administer the Housing Aid for Older People, Mobility Aids Grants and Housing Aid Grants availing of grant funding from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to the extent that co-funding provided by the Council allows. It is expected that the number and value of the grant applications will increase again in 2024. The allocation of grants is dependent on the matching 20% contribution being made available in Galway County Councils budget for 2024 as the 80% contribution required from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has been forthcoming each year.

It should be noted that, as advised by the Department, Internal Capital Receipts may not be used to allocate towards the Local Authorities contribution to Housing Adaptation Grants from 2024 onwards. There is therefore a substantial increase in the proposed matching funds for Housing Aid Grants in the 2024 budget, i.e. €750,000 compared to €375,000 allocated in 2023.

HOUSE PURCHASE LOANS (PRIVATE AND TENANT PURCHASE LOANS)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

Galway County Council provide financial assistance to enable first time buyers to purchase a home either through the tenant purchase scheme or on the private market through the Local Authority Home Loan Scheme and existing loans through the Rebuilding Ireland Scheme.

The status of Home Loans at the end of October 2023 is as follows:

Local Authority Home Loans

- 16 Local Authority Home Loans were approved in principle in 2022, to the value of €2,874,102. Of these 11 have expired, 4.36 have been drawn down in 2023 to a value of €700,974 and 0.64 remain outstanding to a value of €85,200.
- 31 Local Authority Home Loans were approved in principle in 2023 to the value of €5,519,795. Of these 5 have expired, 12 have been drawn down to the value of €1,803,814 and 14 remain outstanding to a value of €2,649,481.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans

- 2 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans which were approved in principle in 2021 were drawn down in 2023 to a value of €175,357.
- 4 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans which were approved in principle in 2022 expired in 2023 to a value of €725,336.

- 0.5 of one self-build loan under Rebuilding Ireland approved in 2019 remains outstanding to a value of €91,243. All other Rebuilding Ireland loans are either drawn down or have expired. All future reporting will be on Local Authority Home Loans only when this self- build has been drawn down.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Galway County Council will continue to assess and process all housing loan applications in a timely manner in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Local Authority Home Loan scheme.

RENTAL STANDARDS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Housing Standards for Rented Houses Regulations - Statutory Instrument 137 of 2019 came into effect on 1st May 2019 that superseded Statutory Instrument 17 of 2017.

The Inspectorate is responsible for all Statutory Inspections of Rented Residential Dwellings within the functional area of Galway County Council.

- The Inspection Target for Galway County Council for 2023 was 1,425 First Inspections.
- As of end of October 2023, the number of First Residential Standards Inspections carried out was 1,305 with the remaining to be completed before year end.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- It is expected the inspection target for Galway County Council in 2024 will be circa 1,500 First Inspections but this will be confirmed in Q1 2024.
- Priority will be given to rental inspections where the occupier has made a complaint in relation to the condition of the premises & our target for First Inspections.

SOCIAL HOUSING NEED APPLICATIONS UNIT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- There are currently 3,074 qualified applicants on the record of qualified households. Galway County Council's interactive Housing Demand and Supply dashboards can be viewed at the following www.galway.ie/en/services/housing/supplydemand
- The Summary of Social Housing Assessment assessed 821 Applicant, 600 of these applicants were approved and 221 applicants were removed from the Housing Waiting List for not responding, ineligible or no longer wished to be on GCC's HWL.
- GCC requested 770 Garda Checks for 1,066 applicants and family members.

- BPIs were introduced in the unit using automation, reporting and internal online forms for improvements in service delivery. (GCC launched the Social Housing Supply Dashboard)



PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Council will continue its' progress in the provision of social housing supports for persons on the record of qualified households.
- The Council will continue to work in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies in nominating applicants for voluntary housing.
- The Council will operate Choice Based Letting (CBL) to facilitate participation by housing applicants.
- Online Social Housing Application form and online SSHA form to be developed and launched.
- Further development of CRM system to facilitate other housing services.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP) UNIT

INDICATIVES ACTIVITIES IN 2023

- A total of 2,483 HAP tenancies have been supported by Galway County Council since it started in Oct 2015.

HAP	
Total HAP Tenancies Set-up	2483
Total Active HAP Tenancies	1459
2023 HAP Tenancies Set-up	177
2023 RS Transfer Setups (2023 only)	26

- Lack of supply of available properties remains a significant issue for HAP applicants.
- The increase in rents across County Galway has also been a huge factor for applicants as the local authority can only pay a maximum rent rate depending on the household size.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- To continue transferring long term rent supplement recipients from the Department of Social Protection over to the HAP scheme, within the limits of available resources.
- Process all new housing applications for the HAP scheme.
- Continuation of inspection process for all properties under the HAP Scheme.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME (RAS) AND LEASING

Funding has been allocated for local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to lease or rent private residential properties for applicants on the housing list. RAS is primarily aimed at persons who are in receipt of rent supplement for a period more than 18 months. Since the 1st April 2011, any housing applicants that are in RAS type accommodation are deemed to have their housing needs met.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- There are 361 households accommodated currently through the RAS Scheme and short-term leasing Scheme (this figure is inclusive of RAS Voluntary).

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Council will continue to administer the RAS Scheme as well as working to progress supply options under “Housing for All.”

HOMELESS UNIT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

A further increase in the presentation of households seeking homeless services was noted in 2023, with a significant increase in the number of families and single people requiring Private Emergency Accommodation - 94 households, including families and single people, were provided with Private Emergency Accommodation from January to October 2023.

- The limited availability of Private Emergency Accommodation presented many challenges in responding to homelessness and placed significant demands on the limited resources of the Housing Unit.
- Both families and singles have had difficulty in sourcing homes in the private rented sector due to lack of availability with an increasing number of Notices to Quit being issued.
- Larger families have an additional difficulty in sourcing homes in the private sector. The Council has a very limited housing stock of 4/5 bedroom houses.
- The Homeless Action Team met regularly to establish the housing and wrap around supports needed for people experiencing homelessness, including single individuals allocated housing under the Housing First programme. Housing First enables single people with a history of chronic homelessness and complex needs to obtain a secure supported tenancy. Housing First supports are provided by Galway Simon and to date in 2023 three additional individuals were allocated supported Housing First tenancies. Supports have continued to be provided to the ten tenants who were housed under Housing First in 2021 and 2022. It is expected that a further two people will be housed under the programme by end of 2023.
- The annual Cold Weather Response is a facility provided for rough sleepers who may not be eligible for homeless services or may choose to sleep rough except during the harsher weather in Wintertime. The service is available from 01st November to end of March each year. Twelve individuals have been identified by Galway County Council as sleeping rough in Galway City and County who may have a need for such beds. The Cold Weather Response facility is based in Galway City and managed by COPE Galway on behalf of Galway City Council. Due to the limited availability of suitable accommodation Galway County Council is progressing and pursuing alternative temporary accommodation, using both Galway County Council own housing stock and through the private sector.
- Following the successful introduction of Community Based supported shared housing in two houses in 2022, the Council has allocated four additional properties in 2023 to Galway

Simon Community on a licence agreement to expand the programme. Galway Simon will be providing supported housing for up to 14 housing applicants with complex needs by the end of 2023.

- Galway County Council introduced a Youth Housing Programme in the County in 2023. The programme is managed by Galway Simon, with six young people aged between 18 and 25 living in three Council owned properties in two County towns which are licenced to Galway Simon.

Section 10 funding has been provided by the Department of Housing which enabled these programmes to be implemented. Funding has also been provided to Galway County Council to recruit an Outreach Worker, an additional staff member to the homeless team, recruitment for whom is underway.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- In cooperation with the Department of Housing, the Council is implementing a new programme of supported housing for families with complex needs currently residing in emergency accommodation. In the first instance Galway County Council is required to identify two suitable families and to allocate two properties suitable to their needs to the programme in 2024. One such property has been identified and is undergoing refurbishment to meet the needs of the family.
- The Council will continue to expand its staffing resources around homelessness to reflect the complexity of needs of the clients accessing various housing programmes. Any increase in the staffing resource will be dependent on the availability of Section 10 funding from the Department and the matching Local Authority financial resources.
- It is expected that the HAP Place Finder, the Tenancy Sustainment Officer, and the Homeless Outreach Worker will continue to positively impact firstly by assisting in preventing people becoming homeless by early intervention and by reducing the length of time people spend in Homeless services.
- Galway County Council will continue to progress cooperation with City Council and with all Homeless services, including the Cold Weather Response, for a coordinated inter-agency approach to homelessness.
- Continue to work in conjunction with all Local Authorities in the Western Region, Simon, Cope and the HSE to ensure the Housing First Model in County Galway continues, with a further four tenancies to be put in place in 2024.
- Expand the provision of Community Based supported housing to ten properties within the County, to include intensive supports to more complex individuals.
- Increase the number of properties available under the Youth Housing Programme to five, to provide tenancies for 10 vulnerable young people, thus avoiding them entering homelessness at an early age.

- Implement new Supported Housing for Families Programme as per the Department's Housing Programme
- Work in partnership with the Voluntary Sector and in particular Cope, Galway Simon, Peter Mc Verry Trust, AHB's and other agencies in providing own door accommodation for both families and single housing applicants who require a tailored housing solution to meet their housing needs – Progress a Housing led approach with all forms of social housing including transition accommodation for families in cooperation with Galway Simon, COPE Galway and Peter McVerry with supports tailored to needs. An additional 3 families are to be provided with supported housing in Tuam.
- Continue to work with Statutory and Voluntary bodies through the medium of Homeless Action Team to prevent Homelessness (e.g., Threshold, Tusla etc.) with a focus on tenancy protection and sustainment.
- Continue with case management with an emphasis on move on to appropriate accommodation.
- Continue to provide long term accommodation with all the necessary supports for both families and single homeless applicants.
- Progress two medium supported housing properties through the Capital Programme.
- Progress the provision of facility for Cold Weather Response in conjunction with medium term supported housing.
- Progress the provision of a Domestic Violence Refuge with the input and support of multiple stakeholders and government funding.

HOMELESS HAP PLACE FINDER SERVICE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service was introduced in Galway County Council in November 2018. The Service has been rolled out to Local Authorities to assist homeless households find accommodation where the high demand and low levels of supply make the rental market very challenging.

- 246 homeless households have been assisted by the HAP Homeless Place Finder between November 2018 to date, an increase of 51 since October 2022.
- 124 homeless households have been referred to the HAP Homeless Place Finder during 2023.
- Ongoing engagement with property owners, estate agents to source accommodation units.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

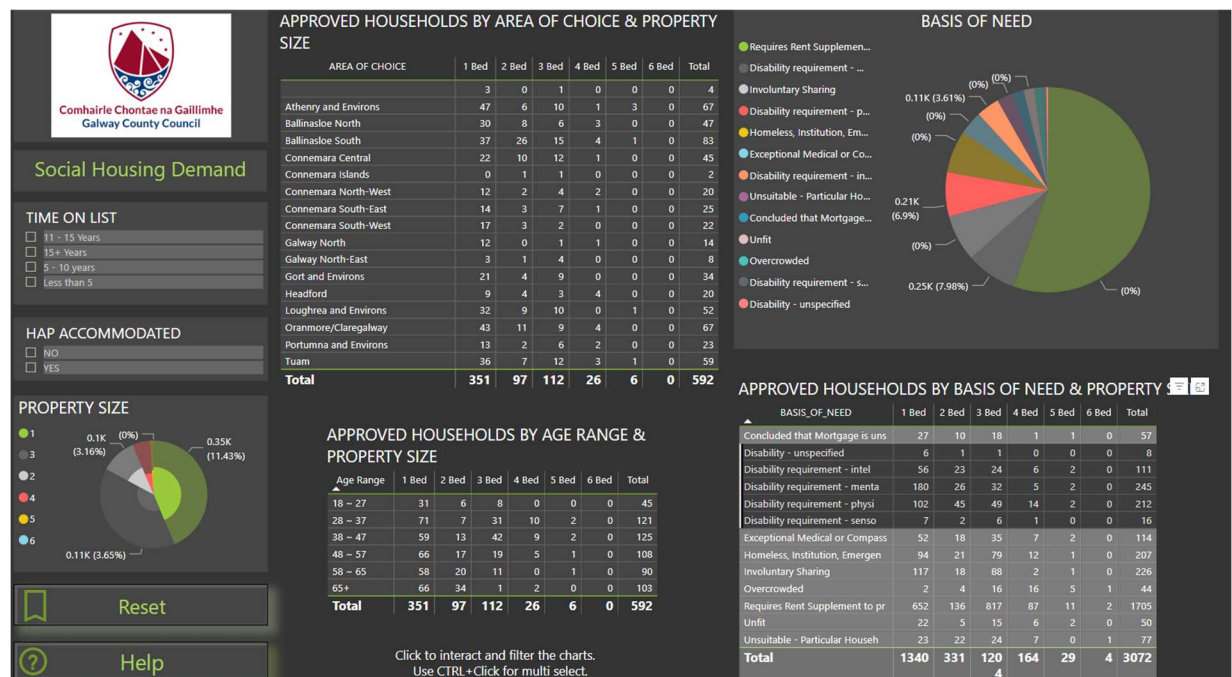
- Review of the priority homeless cases and the properties available to rent in County Galway.
- Continued engagement with property owners, estate agents to source all available accommodation units.

HOUSING STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The main aim of this Strategy is to promote and mainstream equality of access for people with a disability to the full range of housing options available, suited to individual and households need.

- Housing applications database indicates that there are 592 people with severe and enduring mental health conditions have a very clear requirement for security of tenure and easy access to services.



- The review of the Disability Strategy has been completed and is currently in place and operational. This includes an updated Action Plan.
- The Housing Disability Steering Group has been re-established in addition to a specific subgroup for Mental Health which includes representatives from Galway County Council and HSE Mental Health services. A subgroup for Intellectual Disability has also been established with the Brothers of Charity, Ability West and Galway County Council.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to work with Approved Housing Bodies and Disability service providers to provide suitable accommodation in individual tenancies or in shared accommodation. The CAS Call remains open and the Council welcomes all applications from Approved Housing Bodies.
- Consider a “Lifetime Adaptable Housing” approach and for a percentage of all new Council housing to be designed to be wheelchair accessible.
- Develop further communication links with stakeholders and clients directly in respect of their specific needs.
- Continue the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2026.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Council employs one Traveller Liaison Officer who provides support and assistance on behalf of the Council to 85 households who reside in Traveller Specific Accommodation including 14 halting site bays. The TLO is instrumental in identifying, planning, expanding, and ensuring the implementation of improvements to Traveller Specific Accommodation. The refurbishment and expansion of Traveller Specific Accommodation is guided by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, which meets on a quarterly basis and is comprised of the following stakeholders:

- Members of the Local Authority
- Employees of Traveller Representative Groups
- Traveller representatives from the Community and
- Staff from the Housing Unit of the Local Authority
- Major refurbishment works were completed on the 3 houses in Traveller Specific Group Housing Scheme at Clontuskert, Ballinasloe. An extension was constructed to facilitate multi-generational housing on one of the properties.
- Refurbishment, adaptation, and extension of a property at Portnick, Ballinasloe was completed to provide suitable housing for a family with four members who have additional needs.
- Works commenced on the major refurbishment and upgrades of 11 houses in a Traveller Specific Group Housing Scheme in Ballygar. Works will be completed on 4 properties by year end. Each family was relocated to a vacant property whilst works were ongoing in their own house.

- A rural Traveller Specific property at Cloonkeen, Attymon, is undergoing extensive refurbishment works and is being extended for a family.
- Two rural Traveller Specific properties at Ballygurrane are undergoing refurbishment works. One of the properties is being extended and adapted to meet the needs of a family member who is a wheelchair user.
- Fire Safety training was provided at halting sites in Tuam and Capira in July 2023 - 4 of the 10 households were represented at the training in Tuam Halting Site and 2 of the 4 households attended the training in Capira Halting Site. No volunteer from any household has come forward to date to act as Fire Safety Warden on either site. Training has been arranged again for 16th November 2023 at each of the halting sites.
- There is ongoing monitoring and replacement of fire safety equipment at halting sites in Tuam and Capira and at 2 bays in Cluain Órtha, Craughwell.
- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee met on 3 occasions to date in 2023 to discuss housing solutions for Travellers with a 4th meeting to take place in November 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The refurbishment of the remaining 7 properties at the Traveller Specific Group Scheme at Ballygar will be completed, with tenants all in situ by the year end.
- Fire safety training will continue to be delivered at all halting sites.
- Refurbishment, extension, and adaptation works will be completed at three properties at Ballygurrane (2 houses) and Cloonkeen, Attymon (1 house) in Athenry.
- It is intended to adapt and extend a property at Kingsland, Athenry to facilitate a family who require a ground floor property for medical reasons, dependent on the availability of funding from the Traveller Accommodation Unit. A request for funding has been submitted and is currently under consideration.
- Proposals are to be prepared and submitted to the Traveller Accommodation Unit for consideration for funding for upgrade and refurbishment works at two Traveller Specific Group Schemes, with works to commence in 2024 for Gortbride (7 houses) and Ballydavid (6 houses).
- Further applications are to be submitted for the refurbishment of 3 rural Traveller Specific houses in Mountbellew and Castleblakeney (2 houses).
- The reconstruction of a property which was demolished following fire damage, at the Traveller Specific Group Housing Scheme at Cloonlyon, Ballygar is to commence, subject to the availability of funding.
- The re-development of the Halting Site in Tuam will be progressed with a proposal to be completed and submitted to the Department for funding in 2024.
- Refurbishment works will be progressed at the Traveller Specific Group Scheme in Creggane.

- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will develop and adopt a 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programme for 2024 – 2028.
- The Annual Traveller Census will be completed.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

Social Work Cases 2023 (up to October, 2023)

Carried Over from 2022	Cases Closed from 2022 list	=	New Referrals during 2023	Active Total
186	36	150	158	<u>308</u>

Core Functions of Social Work Practice: Engagement, Assessment, Relationship building, Planning (informing service delivery), Implementation, Evaluation, Disengagement.

The Role of the Social Worker in Housing

In LA's the role of the Social Work has evolved over the years due to the emerging needs of clients. The role was initially established in Local Authorities in the 1960's and has since broadened from being a Traveller specific role to include potentially all applicants and existing tenants who are identified as vulnerable such as:

- Disability (Physical, Sensory, Intellectual) - HSDG & Subgroups
- Older persons
- Vulnerable Adults (Safeguarding)
- Child Welfare Liaison work
- Homelessness
- Mental Health
- LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex)
- Work with other marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups

In addition, the Social Work team respond to referrals regarding:

- Social Work Assessment
- Crisis Intervention
- Bereavement and Loss
- Advocacy
- Concerns regarding capacity of clients (Ref: Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015)
- SOLO (Sexual Offences Liaison Officer) cases

- Child Protection Officer work (organisational response)

The aim of the Social Work service is to work with housing clients who are experiencing difficulties in the social areas of their lives. Social Work services may be required either alone or as part of a multi-faceted intervention, multi-disciplinary teams, interagency working etc. Collaborative working with Housing colleagues, in particular Housing Liaison Officers, TLO's, Homeless, TEM's.

Assessment & Clinical Intervention:

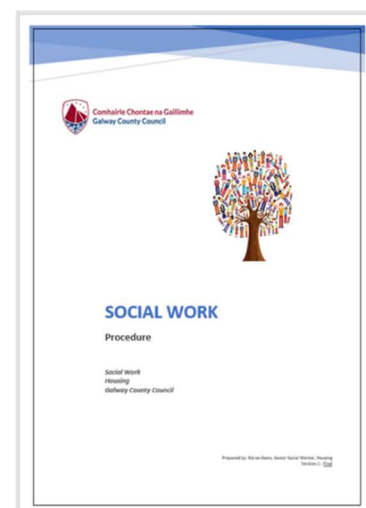
- Social Workers carry out evidenced based assessments utilising a strengths-based approach to determine needs and appropriate interventions - to assist in informing service delivery.
- Assessment may be completed as part of an initial Social Work referral or as part of a changing need for existing clients (open SW cases). An assessment can be a 'once off' piece or an 'ongoing process' in determining needs and planning interventions for longer term clients.
- Assessments take place when cases are referred or re-referred following case allocation to the Social Worker.

Intervention and assessment should identify:

- A clear purpose for input
- Information about the case i.e. background/social history/past traumas
- Clinical analysis of that information/assessment
- Recommendations

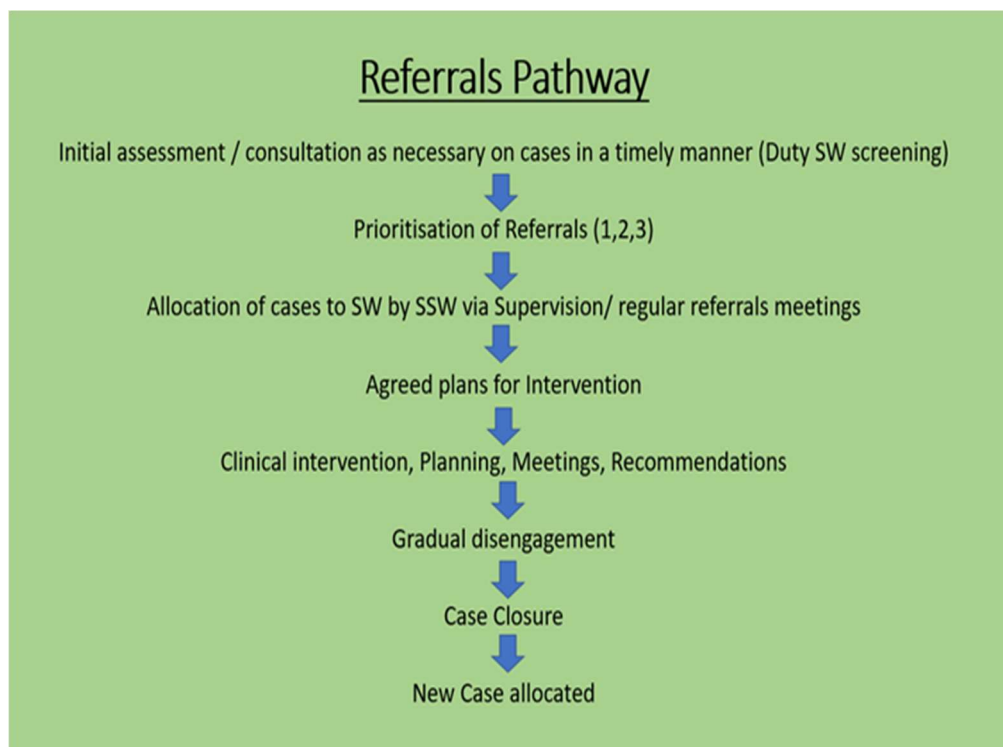
Social Work Process (Strategy)

- Social Work strategy in place within Galway County Council since 2021
- Referrals process in place
- Referrals are 'needs' based – as opposed to 'category' based.
- Clinical supervision of Social Worker's cases by the Senior Social Worker.
- CORU obligations being met.
- Accountability of Social Work service delivery.



Designated Child Protection Liaison Officer (Senior Social Worker, Housing)

- Social Workers have a key role in safeguarding children and adults.
- The Senior Social Worker holds the Child Protection Officer role for Galway County Council.
- This involves reviewing concerns from all Galway County Council staff regarding concerns of child abuse, providing advice and liaising with Tusla if appropriate. Review of Policies with Corporate services.
- Retrospective disclosures of abuse.
- Tusla have the statutory responsibility in responding and assessing concerns regarding child protection. *Ref. Child Protection Policy*



LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING STOCK MANAGEMENT - MAINTENANCE UNIT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- **Voids Refurbishment Programme:** Circular 20-2023 set out the 2023 Voids Refurbishment Programme and advised of the funding to be provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. An initial allocation of 49 houses with a budget of €539,000 was provided. The set funding limit of €11k for all refurbishment works per property remains unchanged for a number of years despite considerable increases in construction costs. As of end of October 2023 expenditure on the voids refurbishment programme in 2023 amounted to €1,226,063 with 79 units being made available in that timeframe. Funding is to be sought for the additional houses refurbished in 2023.

Since its introduction, this programme does not allow for a property to be funded more than once and this is proving to be an issue, particularly where there is more frequent turnover of houses such as OPDs. Every year a small number of properties become vacant that are in very poor condition and require extensive works. In 2023 two properties cost in excess of €80,000 each to refurbish and providing the excess funding above the €11,000 available from the Department of Housing is a challenge for Galway County Council.

- **Adaptation Works to Council Housing Stock:** Adaptations are made to existing houses under the Disabled Persons Grants (DPG) programme to address the needs of older tenants and tenants with a disability. There is considerable demand for these works and the Council continues to seek to secure the funding to meet this demand. This funding facilitates our tenants to continue to reside in their current homes by adapting them to meet their individual needs. In 2023 Galway County Council received a funding allocation of €959,999 equating to 90% of the cost of approved works. The remaining 10% must be funded by Galway County Council. As of the end of October, the total expenditure amounts to €530,005 for works carried out on 41 adaptations and 5 extensions with additional works ongoing.
- **General Housing Maintenance:** Housing maintenance is delivered on a priority basis with the necessity to focus on essential maintenance, including plumbing and electrical with the available funding. To date in 2023, 3,142 repair requests were logged for Housing Maintenance, of these 1,146 were deemed to be valid requests. In the same period 990 repair requests have been closed out.
- **Planned Maintenance Programme:** Galway County Council has an extensive planned maintenance programme underway. Initially the focus is to bring all social houses up to the minimum rental standards. The first priority is to carry out a periodic electrical inspection on all houses over 10 years old. The necessary repairs identified are then

carried out and a certificate issued for each house completed. In addition to the electrical works, a new fire and carbon monoxide alarm system, to meet current building regulations, is being installed in each house. In 2022 a total of 614 houses were upgraded under planned maintenance plus the 110 refurbished vacant units. In 2023 it is estimated that 650 houses will have electrical certification and upgraded fire and carbon monoxide alarms. The current average cost of these works is €1.3m for 2023. The Department of Housing, Local Government provided €92,732 of funding to Galway County Council for planned maintenance works in 2023.

- In addition to the electrical and fire alarm upgrades 136 houses in 2022 had the heat pump heating systems serviced under a planned maintenance contract. This figure is expected to increase considerably in the coming years due to all new and retrofitted properties having heat pump heating systems. It is anticipated that in 2023 that 180 houses will have heat pump servicing carried out. This equates to a spend of approximately €36,000 in 2023.
- **Energy Retrofit Programme:** The Energy Efficiency/Retrofit programmes of works as set out by the Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage is detailed in Circular 22-2023. It approves in principle the upgrade of 89 dwelling units to a BER Energy Rating of B2 in accordance with the grant thresholds and funding criteria. Galway County Council believe that this target is not ambitious enough and that additional items such as Solar PV panels and mechanical ventilation should also be funded under the programme. To date Galway County Council have funded these items, but this is no longer sustainable as the number of units retrofitted is increasing on a yearly basis.

All units proposed for upgrade in 2022 were completed and works are currently being finalised on houses approved under the 2023 programme in Ballygar, Gort, Headford, Loughrea & Tuam.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The ability of the housing unit to continue to return void housing units for occupation will be dependent on continuation of funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Voids Programme. However, as the funding provided is capped at €11,000 per house for houses not previously funded, it is becoming increasingly challenging for Galway County Council to provide the revenue funding necessary to support the return of void housing units.
- The Deep Energy Retrofit of a further 90 houses in County Galway will be progressed in 2024 subject to an anticipated budget in the region of €3.4million from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The works include replacement windows and doors, external insulation, the installation of heat pumps. It will PV panels as

deemed necessary and subject to Galway County Council being able to fund same in the continued absence of central funding.

- We will continue to prioritise and complete adaptation works on Council properties, based on medical need, subject to the approved funding made available from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It is anticipated that extensions will be progressed on 2 houses and adaptations carried out on 50 houses, subject to approved funding being made available and the ability of Galway County Council to provide the match funding.
- Deliver a response maintenance programme on a priority basis within the constraints of available funding.
- Under the Planned Maintenance Programme, it is proposed to complete the first cycle of electrical inspections and the installation of fire detection systems/smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, fire blankets and electrical repairs as required. There will be approximately 750 houses remaining by the end of 2023 and an anticipated budget of €1.5million will be required. It is also intended to continue the heat pump service contract where it is anticipated that 280 houses will be serviced at a cost of €56,000.

TENANCY AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Housing Unit continued to work with vulnerable families in assisting them in sustaining their tenancies.
- The Tenancy Enforcement Officer continued to work intensively in a number of areas across the County, this is done in conjunction with the Gardai, other Departments of the Council and other relevant stakeholders from outside agencies.
- The Council's Tenancy and Estate Management Strategy involves active community engagement and participation at local level on an ongoing basis with an emphasis on the early identification of Anti-Social Behaviour and breaches of Tenancy Agreements. The Council continued to engage with the Gardaí and the unit meets regularly to discuss problem areas and how both organisations can work together to address anti-social behaviour.
- CCTV is under review at various locations across the County.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- As part of the interdepartmental and inter-agency strategic approach, the Housing Unit will identify and target housing estates which will be the focus of extensive estate management activity over 2024.
- Estate management staff will continue to assist tenants with the sustainment of their tenancies as per the Tenancy Sustainment Strategy.

- Enforcement action will be carried out if required in accordance with the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.
- Tenants in estates, particularly in newly developed estates will be encouraged and assisted in setting up Resident Associations to take responsibility for their public spaces.

TENANT PURCHASE SCHEME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The introduction of the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme in 2016 afforded eligible Local Authority Tenants the opportunity to purchase their Local Authority homes. The *Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2021* give effect to amendments which include changes to (a) minimum income criteria for applicants and (b) the period applicants must have been receiving social housing support to be eligible under the scheme. The amendments came into effect from 1st February 2022.

The amendments are:

- Minimum income requirements:** The minimum income required for an applicant to be eligible to apply under the scheme has been revised downward from €15,000p.a. to €12,500 p.a. This change will ensure persons whose pension is their primary source of income can now apply under the scheme. The change only applies to pensions – other social welfare payments may only be regarded as secondary income.
 - Time in receipt of social housing supports:** Tenants are required to be in receipt of social housing support for a period of ten years to be considered eligible to apply for the Tenant Purchase Scheme. In the case of joint tenancies, both tenants must be in receipt of social housing support for at least ten years before being eligible to apply.
- To date in 2023 the Housing Unit has completed the sale of 14 houses under the tenant purchase scheme. The sale value of these properties is €982,006. There are a further 10 properties at an advanced stage of purchase.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Galway County Council will continue to process all tenant purchase applications in a timely manner in accordance with the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme 2016.

HOUSING RENTS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The weekly rent accrual payable for the 2952 Galway County Council owned and leased properties currently stands at €187,816 as at the end of October 2023. Galway County Council remains cognisant of the changes in people's financial circumstances with the current cost of living crisis.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

A rolling programme of rent reviews will commence for all current tenants in 2024 subject to available staff resources.

CONTROL OF HORSES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Council continued to implement its protocol in conjunction with the Gardaí on the Control of Horses.
- The Control of Horses Act is currently under review nationally with a view to simplifying and further improving the legislation.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Galway County Council will continue to work with the Gardaí in tackling the issue of stray and abandoned horses on public roads and Council owned land.
- Once the new legislation has been enacted, a redraft of the Bye laws will be undertaken to reflect the changes in the legislation.

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Housing SPC has met on 5 occasions in 2023. Areas covered relating to Housing Delivery Action Plan, Draft Scheme of Priority for Affordable Purchase arrangements, The Tenant in Situ Scheme, Amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme, Updates on the new CALF model of providing social housing.

- housing by AHB's, Vacant Homes Grants, Housing Adaptation Grants, CPO Activation Programme, Housing Maintenance Update, Homeless update, and updates from the Galway Social Housing Taskforce.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

In 2024, it is anticipated that the Housing Strategic Policy Committee will examine a range of policy areas relating to Housing including, Tenancy Agreements, Vacant Homes Strategy, Affordable Homes, Update on the digital strategy for Housing and Town profiles for the large towns in the County.

UKRAINE RESPONSE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Housing section continues to work on the Ukraine response with the administration of www.offerahome.ie programme. Under the 'Offer a Home' programme, local authorities are appealing for offers of houses, apartments, or holiday homes for use as temporary accommodation for those arriving from Ukraine. Ideally, properties would be available for at least six months. Property owners can offer homes at www.offerahome.ie or by contacting the local authority in which the property is located – dedicated contact details for each local authority are available at offerahome.ie.
- In addition, the Housing Section continues to liaise with the Department of Housing and DCEDIY in providing leads for long term multi-occupancy accommodation, and with the Red Cross and IPAS in providing pledged accommodation with the assistance of our partnering body IOM.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

The Housing Section will continue to respond to this dynamic geopolitical crisis.

- Identifying long term leads for the DCEDIY.
- Administrating the Offer a Home Programme.
- Working with the Red Cross and IOM regarding pledged accommodation.
- Engaging with the Community Response Forum.
- Work with the Department in relation to identifying vacant houses and assisting in matching these to Ukrainian tenants.

COMMUNITY, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE SERVICES

The Community and Rural Development section continued to guide and facilitate the sustainable development of the County supporting economic, community, social, cultural, and environmental initiatives at both macro and micro levels. While operating within limited resources, significant activity took place and there was a continued focus on working in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders to achieve the maximum impact. The focus of the work on the economic side continues to be on the key sectors such as food, tourism, creative sector, supporting indigenous firms and facilitating FDI as well as focusing on regenerating our towns and villages including the retail and hospitality sectors. Through the LCDC, PPN, Arts Office, Creative Ireland and Galway Sports Partnership as well as initiatives/programmes such as SICAP, CSS, CEP, Age Friendly, the Ukrainian Community Response Forum, Tidy Towns and many more, the unit assist individuals and communities to improve their quality of life.

FOOD SECTOR

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- Continued to play an active role in the construction phase of the BIA Innovator Campus CLG (BIA) with the provision of staff on the Board and various sub-committees.
- The construction phase of the project is substantially complete, with buildings 2 & 3 comprising the 9 growth units and 3 HPSU units finished and handed over. First tenancy taken up in November 2023.
- Building 1 which comprises the BIA Obair and BIA Eolas is nearing completion, and work in relation to the campus will being officially opened in early 2024 is progressing.
- Projects and presentations were run at a local, regional and national level. The project is recognised nationally as a critical piece of infrastructure that provides a unique ecosystem to support the food and associated sectors.
- Participated in a number of successful EU funding applications in association with the BIA Innovator Campus.
- Worked closely with the Regional Enterprise Plan Coordinator to ensure that food and related sectors were progressed under the new West Region Enterprise Plan (WREP) and that the BIA Innovator Campus plays a central role in maximising opportunities and growth of the sectors for the wider west region. This included securing Enterprise Ireland funding through BIA which will enable further scoping of opportunities for the Ag-Tech sector in Galway and the West, an action which was called out in the WREP.

- Lead partner for the implementation of the successful application under the Shared Island Initiative, partnering with Leitrim County Council and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council as well as the BIA Innovator Campus, the Food Hub Drumshanbo and the South Regional College in the North. The project was completed by November 2023.
- Some examples of the full suite of Commercial, Technical and Business Mentorship Supports include:
 - Technical Services across New Product Development, Scaling Up Your Offer, Equipment, Ingredients, Quality Systems and meeting correct production standards.
 - Growing team of experts, offering expertise across Commercial, Finance, Funding Business Strategy, Retail and Hospitality sectors, Food Science, Meat Technology, Charcuterie, Coating Systems, Dairy, Events and Customer Service.
 - Sample events & programming during 2023 included the following:
 - 18.04.23 Enterprise Ireland Showcase
 - 23.04.23 Food Reformulation Conference | FSAI | Cork
 - 11.05.23 - Safefood Workshop | Introduction to HACCP
 - 31.05.23 - Food Innovation Summit | Enterprise Ireland | Cork
 - 02.06.23 - Redesdale Food Fund | John Stapleton and Michael Cantwell (Hosted)
 - 22.06.23, 29.06.23, 06.07.23 –Bootstrapping | How to flourish as a Start-Up
 - 06.09.23 – Shared Island Immersion Day
 - 07.09.23 – Shared Island Co Creation Event
 - 14.09.23 - Irish Drinks Open Forum Summit – Irish Spirits Renaissance | Let's Reset
 - 19.10.23 – Shared Island Climate Action Conference

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Work with the BIA Innovator Campus to ensure that it meets the needs of the Council, community and wider stakeholders to support economic/enterprise activity.
- Finalise onboarding of tenants for own door units and work with a range of partners to build on the programme of works already being delivered as outlined above.
- Progress the work on the potential of Ag-Tech under the Shared Island initiative looking at a phase 2 option.
- Progress the Food & Agri-tourism Strategy with a focus on the key priorities and objectives identified.
- Work with the other local authorities to drive regional growth of the sector and to realise the objectives of the WREP.
- Be in a position to progress a second phase of the Shared Island initiative if such a call advertised.

CREATIVE & CULTURAL SECTORS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- Continued to support the Audio Visual and Film Sector through a number of initiatives including partnering with Ardán (previously the Galway Film Centre) and other relevant partners on the UNESCO City of Film 2020 programme.
- Following a review of the original WRAP fund and the economic benefits which are accruing from investment, the Council continued its support for WRAP II which is a larger fund developed with investment from the WDC and other partners which will continue to support the development of the sector.
- The SPC for Economic & Enterprise Development as well as the Plenary Council received presentations on the opportunities for the audio visual and film sectors encompassing UNESCO, WRAP, location services and future opportunities including the potential to develop a studio of scale.
- Progressed the process for the potential development of a film studio at the former Galway Airport site in Carnmore. A preliminary section 183 has been passed by both Galway County Council and Galway City Council to enable a planning application to be submitted by the project applicant.
- While Covid-19 had a significant impact on the Capital of Culture and the impact in the year of designation, there were some opportunities to benefit from the programme. The Mirrored Pavilion was set up in Derrigimlagh Bog as part of a collaboration between the Council and Galway Arts Festival and this drew many visitors to the area.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to work with the Galway Film Centre and wider stakeholders to realise opportunities under the WRAP II fund.
- Support the UNESCO, Creative City (which includes the County) designation and to explore opportunities for economic and enterprise growth through the network for the Creative Sector and opportunities for working with other Creative City designations such as Gastronomy.
- Progress the process for the establishment of the AV/Film Studio at Carnmore in line with process and subject to planning and other regulatory/legislative requirements.
- Continue to work with the wide range of stakeholders to support the sector.

TOURISM

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023

Tourism Strategy:

The County Galway Tourism Strategy is in the final project development stage and is due to be adopted by the Council at the November Plenary meeting. The adoption of this Strategy means that, for the first time, there will be a collaborative framework in place for the development of tourism over the coming eight years across the County. This framework will support the delivery of the vision.

County Galway is Ireland's leading cultural and natural heritage tourism destination - a vibrant and integrated destination that respects its unique culture and environment, proudly sharing it with visitors in engaging ways.

It celebrates diversity, protects its heritage and is led by sustainable principles.

The Strategic Framework that provides the structure for the delivery of the Strategy is built around four strategic areas, each with key actions and recommendations. It is also supported by the identification of six Development Zones that ensure more targeted interventions where they are required to address more local challenges and opportunities.

The priority for Galway County Council Tourism will remain the ongoing delivery of existing and new collaborative projects that offer major opportunities for tourism growth across the County, and several principles will help guide activities and interventions, ensuring future growth is sustainable. These principles include:

1. Continue to prioritise delivery of major collaborative opportunities with strategic partners, including existing and future Visitor/Destination Experience Development Plans, Tourism Masterplans, and the Greenways.
2. Support the extension of tourists' length of stay and expenditure, and encouraging exploration of less visited areas.
3. Prioritise the goal of fully sustainable tourism and aligning with national and local Climate Action Plans.
4. Support Gaeltacht culture, language and communities.
5. Prioritise the harnessing of existing natural and built assets, outdoor tourism and ongoing investments, especially in blue and green infrastructure.
6. Establish tourism as a core economic activity across the County and promoting the growth of tourism - including in less visited areas - through the development of existing and new tourism experiences and destinations.

7. Developing a zone approach that will enable the targeting of relevant interventions at a more local level.
8. Introduce and supporting innovation.
9. Enhance industry, community and stakeholder collaboration.
10. Improve universal access in tourism experiences.

- A Tourism Strategy Briefing was held in the Raheen Woods, Athenry in July 2023 with excellent attendance and engagement by the elected members, it resulted in a very informative briefing. A panel of speakers at the briefing consisted of members from Fáilte Ireland, Galway City Tourism Officer, Cathaoirleach, Chief Executive and Director of Services of Galway County Council. They presented and demonstrated the overarching framework within which tourism is being developed in the County.
- The Tourism Strategy and the environmental documents including the NIS and SEA were sent to the statutory bodies with feedback received in November. Now that the environmental documents have been considered, the final strategy will come before Council for consideration and adoption at the plenary meeting in November.

CSS Festivals and Events:

- Galway County Council continue to support festivals and events with 67 communities granted supported through the scheme now complete. Galway County Council supports value at €69,250 with Fáilte Ireland supplying an additional €18,000.

Total funding allocated for 2023 Regional, Economic and Festival & events stands at €87,250.

The objective is to ensure that CSS supported festivals gain additional marketing support in the shoulder season (outside summer months).

Regional Festivals Funded by Fáilte Ireland	Amount Granted
2023	€18,000
Festivals	8 Granted
Economic Grants including Festival funding	Amount Granted
2023	Total Funding €69,250
Festivals & Events	48 Granted
Economic Initiative	11 Granted

Blueway projects:

- **The Lough Derg Blueway** is accredited with the Chief Executives of Galway, Clare and Tipperary launching it in 2023. This project was supported by Fáilte Ireland and Sport Ireland and led by Waterways Ireland who worked through the accreditation process with Tourism staff from the three counties around Lough Derg.
- **The Great Western Blueway** Galway City and County Tourism staff are managing the research and consultation phase of the ‘Corrib’ Blueway project and supporting community and local consultation with key individuals and groups.

Just Transition Fund:

- To facilitate a just transition toward a low-carbon economy in the midlands the EU has awarded Fáilte Ireland €68million for a Regenerative Tourism Scheme to invest in the sustainable development of tourism in the midlands with the aim of creating job and sustaining communities.
Fáilte Ireland hosted drop-in clinics for the month of May around the midlands and in Ballinasloe. Just Transition is relevant to the Ballinasloe MD and surrounding community-based tourism amenities.
Galway County Council continues to build the tourism team with the appointment of a Just Transition Activator for 2024.

Three Greenway projects in Connemara

Galway - Oughterard Greenway

- The route will be approximately 28km in length. The route will start at the Cathedral in Galway City and finish at the station road in Oughterard. This project has recently completed the third Non-statutory Public Consultation in May/ June 2023 – Emerging Preferred Route Corridor. Landowner engagement has begun to finalise a route for the greenway within the emerging preferred corridor.
The project is currently about to begin Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation in November 2023. This phase will take approximately 12 months to complete, and an application will then be made to An Bord Pleanála for planning approval in Phase 4.

Clifden – Oughterard Greenway

- Funding has been secured to construct a 23km section between Clifden and Recess. Currently 14kms is finished and open to the public and a further 6km is under construction. Landowner discussions are ongoing to acquire lands for the outstanding sections of the route.

Derrigimlagh – Kylemore Abbey Greenway

- Funding has been secured to complete a strategic assessment report and Feasibility report for the potential of a Greenway between Derrigimlagh and Kylemore Abbey. The strategic assessment report is currently with TII for approval. The feasibility report will begin once the strategic assessment report has been approved.

Connemara DEDP

- A conference took place between two Wild Atlantic Way Destination Experience Development Plan areas. Dingle and Connemara & Islands were chosen given their life cycle stages, and their geographic and thematic similarities.
- Connemara and Island DEDP launched in March 2018 is one of the first DEDP's in Ireland and thus has many learnings and experiences to share with other DEDP's. Dingle DEDP which launched in January 2021 is approximately halfway through its five-year period.
- This conference was an opportunity to collaborate, encourage networking and build opportunities for business cross-selling and business learnings.

Tourism promotion:

- Curated content and invested in advertising a County based marketing spread for the Connacht Tribune Supplement 2023 edition '**Where West**' is a full colour, high quality magazine circulated throughout the west- from Connemara to the Islands; south to north Galway; north Mayo to south Clare.
- 4 pages in '**Go West**' magazine was also published in the 2023 edition. Galway County Council annually invest in the magazine of Knock Airport- alongside local authority partners in Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway City. For 2023 coverage includes highlighting festivals and events that are supported by GCC and promoting the best aspects of the visitor experience around the County including North/East Galway and high quality photography to promote Tourism in the County.
- '**This is Galway**' magazine, we published in the June/July and August/September and October/November editions, focusing on the Kinvara, Gort and Moycullen areas and highlighting all that is to offer. The feedback received overall from these areas has been fantastic. The businesses that engaged have been extremely receptive and are delighted that 'This is Galway' featured businesses and places of interest outside the City, hotels in particular use the magazine as a vehicle to promote areas across the County.
- **Photography:** A large bank of tourism photography for County Galway has been developed and uploaded to a publicly available Flickr platform for use by the tourism industry. These images can be used to promote the rich visitor experience throughout the County including many less know areas and local treasures.

- **Milwaukee and Tourism Brand:** The Tourism Destination brand project is now developed and was presented to the elected members at the Tourism briefing held in Athenry in July. Milwaukee Irish Festival is the largest celebration of Irish culture and heritage in the United States and takes place in Lake Michigan in Wisconsin. Members of Galway County Council and Galway City Council represented the Councils and promoted the Irish and US strong links at the four day event.
- Staff working in the tourism function in Galway County Council worked in collaboration with the Tourism Officer in Galway City Council and Tourism Ireland in designing a new Galway stand, banners, pop ups, backdrop and PR material for the event showcasing the new Galway Brand.
- Maps of County Galway including visitors' attractions, visitor information and Connemara maps were organised and printed in Milwaukee with Pens, Tote Bags and T Shirts for distribution. Further literature and information on County Galway's tourism attractions were also distributed at the event.

EuroVelo 1 Official National Launch of Cycle Route

- Staff working in the tourism function has worked with Sport Ireland in supporting the population of the EuroVelo 1 Ireland website, cycle route. The route is broken up into sections. In County Galway there are four sections, one of which includes the City. The work that was required for the website was a description of each section, three points of interest for each section and suitable images were added. Following internal consultation information was uploaded onto the system.
- The official launch for the website was on 18th May 2023 at Our Lady's Island Community Centre County Wexford.

Wild Atlantic Way, Galway Tourism Industrial Networking Event.

- Fáilte Ireland hosted an in-person Industry Networking Event for tourism partners in Galway City, Connemara and Islands on Thursday 4th May 2023.
- The event supported tourism partners to maximise the cross-selling and referral opportunity in 2023 and followed the structured format of speed-networking appointments. Accommodation providers, visitor attractions, and experience/activity providers attended. Galway County Council Tourism staff attended and participated at this event and will continue to work with the key partners in tourism.

TOURISM NETWORKS AND CROSS LOCAL AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Ongoing support and technical support for Connemara.ie; this Council owned website is the landing page for Splash4U site (collaboration with Broadband Officer).
- Participated in ongoing support of The Lough Derg Visitor Experience Plan.
- Cross-agency partnership in Portumna in relation to tourism and development projects

- Continued to implement actions in all VEDPs and regional tourism plans.
- Ongoing engagement with Roscommon RRO and Roscommon Tourism Officer in relation to promotion of the Suck Valley Way.
- Local authority partnership with Mayo and Galway City on Corrib/ Mask Blueway.
- Partnership with Failte Ireland and Galway City on promoting and launching the new destination brand Galway.
- Representation for Galway County Council on the Banagher Tourism Masterplan which is linked to the Shannon Tourism Masterplan.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Clifden Destination Town:

- Continue to work on the redevelopment for the Clifden Destination Town and Town Centre Enhancement with impact on tourism development.

Regeneration Projects:

- Continue to work on the development of Portumna Vision 2030 and other projects to ensure the tourism development potential is enhanced.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- **Tourism Strategy:** Implement and progress the objectives and actions set out for year one of the Strategy and establish a tourism working group.
- **Just Transition Fund:** Appointment of a Just Transition Activator to the Tourism Team in Galway County Council.
- **Milwaukee Festival:** Showcase all what County Galway has to offer and have members of the tourism working group and Galway County Council attend the festival.
- **Connemara Greenway campaign:** Implement a marketing and promotion campaign for Connemara Greenway based on the ORIS funding awarded to Tourism in Galway County Council for this project.
- **Clifden Destination Town:** Finalise several elements under the Clifden Destination Town project.
- **Destination Brand:** Promote and launch a website for the new Galway destination brand, in conjunction with Galway City Council and Failte Ireland.
- **Corrib Blueway Feasibility** progress and support this project in conjunction with Mayo County and Galway City.
- **Marketing:** Continue to development marketing, advertising, social media and promotion of tourism in Co Galway.

- **Lough Derg VEDP** Progress and implement Lough Derg VEDP actions and network.
- **Conamara Coast and Islands VEDP:** Continue to work with the Connemara and Islands actions and network.
- **Burren VEDP** Build on engagement with the VEDP and seek opportunities for southwest Galway.
- **CSS Festivals and Events** Assess and manage the Community Support Scheme: Tourism projects and festivals and events.
- Support Failte Ireland and agency partnerships as required.
- Continue to support Greenway and Blueway projects.
- Support the **Beara Breifne Way** development project.

ATLANTIC ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

“More to Life” - Campaign, 2024 to encourage more people to make the move to Galway

County

Series 3 of Moving West 2024, will showcase Galway County and City. The series shines a light on all Galway City and County have to offer in terms of lifestyle, outdoor amenities, food, culture and quality of life. The Galway Programme which is funded by Galway County and City Council’s will feature a wide representation from indigenous and FDI employers in both Galway City and County which will also feature Minister Heather Humphrey’s.

Series 3 also includes Counties Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon and Donegal and is an initiative of the Atlantic Economic Corridor.





THE FILMING PROCESS

- Worked with the WDC and Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) network on regional projects, including the development of hubs along the AEC.
- Participated in AEC Strategy and AEC Hub Strategy processes.
- An image bank was prepared for Galway County including images related to enterprise.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

The 2024 will feature Galway County and City and will showcase:

- New remote working patterns which have made a move to Galway County possible.
- Showcase the growing number of career and lifestyle opportunities available in the County and showcase WesternJobs.ie which promotes, job opportunities in the region.
- Work within any revised arrangements for the AEC following the review by the Department.
- Support the development of Creative Clusters in the region.
- Work with the WDC and other AEC counties to promote the West as an attractive place to live and work.
- Work with projects to support the regeneration of town centres including the development of hubs and addressing vacancy/dereliction in towns and villages.
- Continue to work with the Broadband Officer to identify and realise opportunities for communities.
- Work with the WDC, AEC network and other local authorities in the delivery of regional initiatives including under the West Region Enterprise Plan as appropriate.
- Support the development of the Food Sector and linking of hubs with a particular emphasis on the BIA Innovator Campus as an engine for growth and innovation in the region.

DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTS FOR WORKING HUBS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The Community & Rural Development section acted as an information and advisory point of contact, to facilitate Community based hubs in the County to avail of the national www.connectedhubs.ie funding scheme.
- Invested with Corporate Services in essential upgrades to the Ballinasloe Business Centre, Office Suites in the renovated Ballinasloe Library Complex, Society Street, including remote access controls allowing flexibility for clients. Meetings rooms and suites on floor two available for hire and leasing.
- Progressed the development of working hubs as part of the existing approved RRDF projects in Loughrea, Portumna, Tuam and Athenry (BIA Innovator) as well as including as part of the proposal for the Category 2 application for Gort.
- Organised and hosted an information and networking event in January 2023 themed 'working well for 2023 and beyond'. Guest inputs ranged from the Department of Community & Rural Development, Grow Remote, Galway County Council and Western Development Commission's www.connectedhubs.ie team as well as a key input from an Operational Hub in County Galway.

PROPOSALS 2024:

- Progress existing proposals for working hubs as part of RRDF projects.
- Identify new opportunities for hubs in the County and to work with the relevant stakeholders to deliver on same.
- Secure clients to maximise use of the Ballinasloe Business Centre Office Suites at Ballinasloe Library Complex.
- Provide ongoing advisory services on www.connectedhubs.ie and target supports under for set up of additional remote work centres in County and work with Údarás na Gaeltachta who are leading on G-tec Hub Network in Gaeltacht.

GENERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES AND STRATEGY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- Fed into the development of the review of the National and Regional documents and policies
- Continued to implement Our Rural Future Policy.
- Fed into the regional tourism policy documents, the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, the Lough Derg VEDP and the West Region Enterprise Plan.

- Developed and progressed strategic proposals for RRDF projects to drive regeneration in Athenry, Clifden, Gort, Loughrea, Portumna and Tuam.
- Worked with EI to support job creation, indigenous firms and to progress the potential for investment in FDI for the food sector.
- Worked with the IDA to promote County Galway as a location for Foreign Direct Investment.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Lead the development of the 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan in line with the national guidelines working with the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC.
- Continue to take a strategic approach to regeneration of our towns.
- Feed into the development of the Masterplan for the former Galway Airport site at Carnmore.
- Continue to work with EI and IDA to support economic development and job creation.
- Submit proposals and work with designation locations under the Just Transition Funding programme as the programme develops in 2024.

RURAL FUNDING SCHEMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

TOWN AND VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME

Introduced in 2016, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) supports small to medium capital projects which enhance the environment of town or village centres. Grant funding for projects ranges from €20,000 to €500,000. It is funded by the Department of Community and Rural Development.

The 2023 Scheme places particular focus on tackling issues such as vacancy and dereliction and supporting projects that will bring additional footfall into our town centres such as new plazas, parks, playgrounds and green spaces. Since 2020 the TVRS has pivoted from general infrastructure to individual sites, re-use properties and design led public realm and hubs. This year the scheme will also include a focus on Town or Village Centre Markets in alignment with the Programme for Government. This will be achieved through the provision of infrastructure to support the facilitation of these outdoor markets.

In recognition of the classification by the EU Commission of the North-Western region as a Transition Region and with a view to proactively address regional disparities, grant aid of 95% of the total project cost will exceptionally apply to counties in the N-W region including County

Galway. The remaining 5% match funding must take the form of a cash contribution and can be contributed by the Local Authority and/or the community and/or Philanthropic contributions.

In line with the Government's Our Rural Future and Town Centre First policies, strong focus has been given to town centre revitalisation and regeneration under the TVRS 2023. To complement and enhance this a separate funding strand of Town Centre First related supports is currently being developed. This will replace previous support available for the development of Town Plans of several types and Project Development support offered under the 2021 and 2022 TVRS. It is proposed to launch this package of support in the coming months, and it is envisaged that it will lead to strong project cohesion across the funding streams available under the Rural Development Investment Programme.

Galway County Council engaged in an EOI (Expression of Interest) process in September 2023 and shortlisted 6 projects to be submitted to Department of Community and Rural Development in November 2023. The following projects have received ongoing administrative and technical support in 2023. Many projects have experienced increased costs and therefore, amendments to project activities and options for further funding have been explored.



TVRS Programme 2019	Grant Approved	Status
Oranmore	€200,000	Complete
Ballyglunin	€100,000	Ongoing – Final Implementation Phase
TVRS Programme 2020	Grant Approved	Status
Claregalway Báile Chlair – Community Centre Extension & Hub	€200,000.00 / Project Deferred and Main Grant Decommited – New Grant Offer 2023 - 30k	Project Development - Complete
Portumna – Accessibility and link to Portumna Forest Park	€100,000	Complete
Creggs – Village Enhancements & Heritage Centre	€90,000	Ongoing
Leitir Móir - Upgrade Halla & Community Páirc and Outdoor Performance Space	€100,000	Ongoing
TVRS Programme 2021	Grant Approved	Status
Leenane – Community Park in association with Leenane Development Association	€250,000	Complete
Barnaderg – Accessibility and Pedestrian Improvements	€100,000	Complete
Project Development Measure – GCC Property - Woodford Courthouse in association with Woodford Parish Dev. Comm.	€50,000	Ongoing

Village Audits / Checklist Project	€48,000	Ongoing
TVRS Programme 2022	Grant Approved	Status
Ballinasloe - Refurbishment of Town Centre Hub	€250,000	Ongoing
Collectivised Branding & Marketing Campaign	€50,000	Ongoing
Development Of Multi Use Facility Athenry at Burkes Lane-North Gate St.	€50,000	Ongoing
Portumna Upgrade & Enhance Shopfronts & Streetscape	€100,000	Ongoing
Cashla Feasibility Study for Development of Low Carbon Sustainable Centre	€50,000	Ongoing
An Spidéal Upgrade & Enhance Shopfronts & Streetscape	€100,000	Ongoing

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- To provide administrative support for all projects ongoing in the TVRS programme including those approved extensions under the 2019 - 2022 programmes and ongoing projects approved under the 2023 programme.
- To identify potential projects across the County through ongoing engagement community organisations, committees and with colleagues in other Municipal District offices and Departments as well as via the formal Expression of Interest Process in Quarter 2 2024.
- Support the roll-out of key Strategies including targets in the CDP, Tourism Strategy and Rural Regeneration Programme, identifying potential projects to meet these targets and capacity to develop these into capital applications including vacant or derelict Properties acquired by the Council for community re-use.

- Continue to identify funding opportunities under Our Rural Future Strategy to help deliver rural development objectives bearing in mind the County Development Plan and in its settlement strategy and for dispersed rural areas.
- Continue to work with the Public Participation Network to promote Schemes and engage with the Community and Voluntary Sector about funding opportunities.
- Continue to review options for digital transitions and innovations in our service provision (including on-line application systems). Work with GIS/ IT and other service co-ordinators to ensure make continual improvements in our report and administrative systems to reduce inefficiencies and maximise availability of information on rural schemes.

CLÁR PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- Staff continued to support the projects which were approved in 2021. Of the 7 projects approved 4 have been completed with works on the remaining 3 due to conclude before the end of Q1 2023.
- In 2022, CLÁR funding totalling €612,864 was awarded to 15 projects across the County. An outline of approved projects is displayed in the table below.

CLÁR Programme 2023	Grant Approved	Status
Comhairle Ceantar na nOileán Teo - Development of a community cinema and drop in youth hub facility at the Hall Pobail Tir an Fhia to include library, coffee dock & game area.	€41,827	Ongoing
Mountbellew Moylough GAA Club - Construction of 1.1km walking/running track around site perimeter. Enhancements also to parking and lighting on site.	€50,000	Ongoing
Cleggan - Claddaghduff Community Council - Enhancement to surface and surrounds of ballcourt at Cleggan Community Centre	€36,492	Complete



Kilchreest National School BOM - Development of a car parking facility to allow access to community walking track and pitch area.	€50,000	Ongoing
Clonberne Community Centre Co Ltd - Enhancement to access roadway allowing for increased & accessible use of existing community facilities. Associated landscaping works & development of a pollinator area.	€50,000	Complete
Gort GAA Club - Development of an 850m accessible perimeter walkway around the 20acre site for community use.	€45,000	Complete
Ahascragh Fohenagh GAA Club - Level existing car park, improvements to site accessibility, drainage, surfacing and lined finish.	€49,500	Complete
Ballinasloe Rugby Club - Develop a walking track around the perimeter of their site encompassing two pitches.	€32,400	Complete
Clontuskert Community Development Group - Resurfacing and lining of parking area, upgrade to lighting, install CCTV, painting of building facade, heating system upgrade, seating & garden area also being developed	€30,267	Complete
Ionad Oideachas Pobail Glinnsce & Caiseal - Development of safe accessible parking facilities at the education centre.	€27,000	Ongoing
Galway County Council - Enhancements to the community playground in Portumna	€36,473	Complete
Skehana Community Development - Upgrade to car parking area at existing Skehana Community Facility	€50,000	Complete
Killyan Community Field - Upgrades to include works on walkway and lighting around perimeter of pitches. Plans also include	€45,000	Ongoing

improvements to site drainage and installation of seating area.		
Collins Park Playground Committee - To enhance facilities at the community playground	€18,904	Complete
Donaghpatrick National School - Development of a community walkway and small playground on the school grounds which will be accessible to the wider community.	€50,000	Ongoing

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- To oversee the conclusion of remaining 2022 projects before the end of Q1 2024.
- Staff will work closely with community groups and projects leaders to facilitate delivery of the approved projects under the 2023 CLÁR Scheme.
- To identify potential projects across the County through enhanced engagement with local development committees and with colleagues in other Municipal District offices and Departments.

TOWN & VILLAGE - NATIONAL STREETSCAPE SCHEME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- Tuam, Portumna and An Spidéal were nominated for the Street Enhancement Scheme in 2022-2023 Galway County Council were permitted to apply for funding with a maximum amount of €100,000 being allocated to successful applicants in each town.
- The overall objective of the Tuam Streetscape Scheme was to focus on improving the attractiveness of the Market Square and Town Core by improving the overall visual appearance of the Streetscape. This project invited premises in High Street, Shop Street, Bishop Street, Vicar Street and Dublin Road to engage in application for Streetscape co-funding in a co-ordinated manner, targeting adjacent properties to progress decluttering of facades, repair of shopfronts and painting. Subject to available budget the objective was to provide co-funding to 35-40 property Owners and Tenants to engage in upgrading of their street facing facades and the Scheme was aligned to the Tuam Masterplan brought forward by the Regeneration Team and Tuam Town Team.
- The Scheme took place in the period October 2022 to October 2023 and the level of successful completion and draw-down was at 78% of offers made with 32 of the 41 offers

made successfully completing and drawing down the funding by mid-October 2023. The level of successful draw-down in the 2021 Streetscape Enhancement Scheme was on average at 70% of offers made. The Scheme was promoted in series of Public Workshops, and via the Elected Members, Tuam Tidy Towns, Business Groups and Tuam Lions Club. Auctioneers were contacted to pass on information on the Scheme to owners with properties for sale. There remains a number Vacant Properties in key locations in the Town Centre for sale, but it is hoped the level of engagement and focus on Town Centre improvements will assist in future engagement locally opportunities for larger scale capital investment to renew and upgrade the public realm and streetscape.

Town – Streetscape Enhancement	No. of offers made	Amount Offered	No. of Offers claimed	Grant Amount Paid at rate of 80% or 70% depending on offer	% of Grant Amount Offered Claimed
Tuam	41	€106,285	32	€ 77,280	80%

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Pending DRCD approval, staff will continue to liaise with successful applicants under the Street Enhancement Scheme for Portumna and An Spidéal. Following feedback to DRCD, a more realistic timeframe for completion of works has been agreed for An Spidéal.
- Continue to identify funding opportunities under Our Rural Future Strategy to help deliver rural development objectives bearing in mind the County Development Plan and in its settlement strategy and for dispersed rural areas.

OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME (ORIS)

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) contributes to the strategic objective of strengthened rural economies and communities as set out in the Project Ireland 2040 strategy. The objective of the Scheme is to provide funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the necessary repair, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure in countryside areas across Ireland.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- Work continued to ensure the delivery of a number of projects approved in previous years. These included Kilcornan Linked Trail, Portumna Way Loop, The Walks Project Loughrea, East Galway Eco Park, Gort River Walk, Glenamaddy Walking Trails.

MEASURE 1 FUNDING RECEIVED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS -2022

Measure	Project Name	Outline	Amount Approved
Carrabane Forest Muddy Walks	Upgrade of trail at Carrabane Forest	Carrabane, County Galway	€29,250
Connemara Greenway Maintenance	General maintenance of the completed 15kms of the Connemara Greenway along section between the town of Clifden and the village of Recess. Works to include grass cutting to verges and pruning of overhanging trees.	Connemara, County Galway	€28,350
Connemara Greenway Marketing	Marketing materials and promotion of the Connemara Greenway section from Clifden to Recess	Connemara, County Galway	€27,000
Glenamaddy Walking Trails	The proposed project is for the second of two environmental walking trail loops around the Frass Clooncon Bog Inner at Glenamaddy.	Glenamaddy, County Galway	€21,072

Gort Riverwalk	This project includes an upgrade of an old village road to a class 2 trail and the completion and registration of a 3.5km looped trail from Gort Town Centre.	Gort, County Galway	€27,424
Monivea Woods Walking Trail	Enhancement to Monivea Woods walking, running and cycling trails to include the upgrading of signage and pathways, and the development of marketing infrastructure for the trail.	Monivea, County Galway	€27,000

M2 & M3 FUNDING RECEIVED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS 2022

Measure	Project Name	Outline	Amount Approved
Project Development	East Galway Eco Park - Ballinasloe	The development of a trailed eco park on a former landfill site offering experiences in Amenity & Recreation; Biodiversity and Heritage; Health & Wellbeing; Educational and Sustainable Practices.	€50,000
Project Development	Portumna Outdoor Recreation Park	The development of an overall masterplan for the future development	€49,950



		of Portumna Forest Park and Bathing Areas incorporating new activity and recreation zones, visitor hub, performance areas and enhanced public realm. (refer also to supporting document provided	
M2	Creggs Mountain Walk	The Mountain Walk project in Creggs involves the creation of a trail in a tranquil area in East Galway	€200,000
M2	The Walks Loughrea	Completion of further Phase of the Walks Project. it will allow the repair of The Walks wall to be Completed, improve trout breeding grounds and enhance biodiversity	€200,000
M2	Killarainy Woods Trail	Upgrade and enhance existing trails for the benefit of the entire community/public and tourism. Create a new multi access trail suitable for those with reduced mobility.	€103,950

M3	Western Way Trail Upgrade	Upgrade and improvement of existing 4 Sections of the Western way Walking trail to include improved wayfinding, marketing and trail surface and carpark upgrade.	€425,250
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PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to support the delivery of already approved schemes.
- Work with the various stakeholders to ensure a strategic approach is taken in relation to ORIS.
- Submit applications under ORIS 2024.

ORIS 2023 provided for several measures as follows:

- Measure 1: Small Scale Repair/Development/Promotion and Marketing Grant Amounts: Up to seven projects per LA to the value of €30,000.
- Measure 2: Medium Scale Repair/Upgrade and New Trail/Amenity Development Grant Amounts: Up to three projects per LA to the value of €200,000.
- Measure 3: Strategic Large-Scale Repair/Upgrade and New Strategic Trail/Amenity Development Grant amounts: Up to one project per LA to the value of €500,000.
- Project Development Measure: Development Costs for Strategic Large-Scale Projects – Two projects up to the value of €50,000.
- Projects listed below were granted funding for 2022 and continue to be progressed into 2024.

The following projects were submitted to the Department of Rural & Community Development under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2023. It is anticipated that a decision will issue by year end or Quarter 1 2024, with Projects commencing thereafter.

Measure	Project Name	Outline	Amount Applied For
M2	Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails Group	Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails aims to develop both Castlegrove Woods and Barracks as Nature Trails, Historic Trails and Heritage Display centre. Accessibility is at the heart of the development.	€47,821
M2	Glinsk Heritage Park	Glinsk Heritage Park Repair and Upgrade of 2km of Existing Trails to improve accessibility.	€200,000
M2	Ionad Pobail an Mháma - Car Park	The construction of a car park which will facilitate cars and buses for those walking the western way and provide proper and secure parking for a range of community and commercial recreation events.	€172,582
M3	Rinville Park Walkway	Rinville Park is an outstanding amenity with existing unlit walkways. This project adds 2.5km of lit walkways incorporating key new features, namely a sensory garden and interpretative signage for the ringfort.	€351,000

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The LCDC has held 4 meetings to date this year in addition to meetings of sub-committees dealing with SICAP, Health and Wellbeing, and Funding Evaluations, which are tasked with detailed assessment of programmes and making recommendations to the LCDC.
- Work has progressed on a Socio-Economic Statement which will form the basis of the LECP subject to a public consultation process.
- A Healthy Ireland Plan to underpin the allocation of funding under Round 4 of the Healthy Ireland Fund was prepared by the Health & Wellbeing Sub-Committee and presented to the full LCDC. The primary issue being fed back through consultations was the lack of non-sporting / non-competitive social and leisure activities at community level, in addition to physical difficulties in accessing existing amenities, particularly, for People with Disabilities. Consequently, the priority outcome area selected by the LCDC for Round 4 funding was “Wellbeing Factors”, with projects to focus on increasing the percentage of people engaging in one or more social or leisure activities at least once a week, with particular emphasis on older people, people with disabilities, and other groups who had low engagement levels.
- The LCDC received an allocation of €300,432 through the Community Support Fund, under the Community Enhancement Programme. Similar to previous years, the Fund was split between operating / running costs and small capital grants and was heavily over-subscribed with 274 applications for funding received. 49% of the fund was allocated towards running costs to aid the sustainability of community facilities during this time of rising energy costs, and 51% was allocated towards capital grants, with a particular emphasis on small-scale grants under €1,000 to assist small grassroots groups with small items of equipment, in accordance with the ethos of the Fund. In accordance with the decision of the LCDC, the medium-size grants were targeted at improving facilities and amenities which addressed disadvantaged or would have a widespread social benefit for the community. A total of 193 applications were successful in receiving funding under the Community Support Fund and all grants were drawn down in 2023.
- The LCDC agreed an Annual Plan for the delivery of SICAP in 2023 which has been reviewed at the mid-year point. The Annual Plan includes a range of supports and initiatives to build

the capacity of community groups and social enterprises to serve target groups and communities, and individual training and supports to enable individuals to access lifelong learning, education and training, and employment or self-employment opportunities. The Case Study topic to showcase the work of SICAP in 2023, has been selected, and will be programmes which target Mental Health.

- The procurement process for SICAP 2024-2028 programme commenced and in accordance with a decision of the LCDC, is based on the County being split into 3 Lots for the purposes of delivery of the SICAP Programme, i.e., Galway East, Galway West, and Galway Islands.
- The Empowering Communities Programme (ECP) is a new €2m pilot programme targeting 14 small areas with highest socio-economic deprivation (as measured by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index). The purpose of the programme is to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion using a community development approach, by developing relationships with community stakeholders / groups and collaborating with statutory agencies and other structures to implement tailored responses to identified challenges. In particular, the ECP will work closely with other government-funded initiatives such as Community Safety Partnerships/Joint Policing Committee, Local Drug Task Forces, Youth Justice, Healthy Ireland, etc.

The small area selected for County Galway is Ballinasloe Urban Small Area ID 067017010 (comprising St. Grellan's Terrace & St. Theresa's Park) which has a deprivation rating of -30.93 making it one of the highest deprivation areas in the country. Each small area selected for the pilot project has been allocated a baseline budget to recruit a Community Engagement Worker and cover other administrative overheads and costs, as well as direct programme costs associated with community engagement activities, connecting people with services, and other activities falling under the local needs planning. The budget allocation is based on the level of population in each small area and Ballinasloe Urban falls into Band 3 with an allocation of €140,000. Galway Rural Development CLG is the Programme Implementer and has developed a Work Plan and Budget to identify critical issues and solutions in the target area.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- A key area of work will be development of population profiling based on Census 2022 data and the finalisation of the new 6-year Local Economic & Community Plan 2022-2028. The objectives and actions identified as part of this process will form the basis for prioritisation of all LCDC funding programmes to target disadvantage and social exclusion.

UKRAINE COMMUNITY RESPONSE FORUM

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The Ukraine Community Response Forum comprises representatives from all of the agencies tasked with providing supports such as Department of Social Protection, HSE, GRETB, An Garda Síochána, Túsla and the Children and Young Persons Services Committee, Galway Childcare Committee, Local Link, Red Cross, Volunteer Centre, Local Development Companies and officials from relevant local authority departments. There is regular communication with the Forum to share information on new and existing accommodation centres, and other updates from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY), including a recent information session on the delivery of rapid build housing at Poolboy, Ballinasloe.
- Galway County Council was notified that it had been allocated €1.3m under the Community Recognition Fund for communities which had a high number of Ukrainian refugees among their current population. An Expression of Interest Form was circulated to all relevant areas of the County, and staff from the Community & Rural Development section worked with the communities to develop projects of a capital nature which would address infrastructural deficits and be of benefit to the wider community in the future. A total of 33 projects in 19 locations were submitted to the Department and approved for funding, subject to delivery over the course of 2023 and 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The dedicated Integration Team to support the longer-term integration of International Protection Applicants, Refugee Resettlement Refugees, and Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection into local communities will be in place in 2024, and it is envisaged that the role of the Community Forum will expand its remit in line with the wider brief of this Integration Team.

SOCIAL INCLUSION FORA AND INITIATIVES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The Age Friendly Alliance has met 3 times to date this year to agree and progress a Workplan for the Joint Age Friendly Programme in Galway City & County. In addition, initiatives were developed to celebrate Bealtaine, Positive Ageing Week, and updates were provided to the Age Friendly Alliance on the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Project and updates on developments from the National Age Friendly Programme. The Healthy Islands Roadshow

which was delivered through Healthy Ireland and SICAP was shortlisted for a National Age Friendly Recognition Award. The Directory of Services for Older People, which was last published in 2015, was reviewed by a Working Group established by the HSE & Galway City & County Councils and is being launched at a public information event for older people in November 2023.

- The Older Persons Council for the County has met 5 times during 2023 and have been heavily involved in proofing the information for insertion in the Directory of Services for Older People.
- The Community Section also offer support to other interagency structures which promote social inclusion, including the Traveller Interagency Group, LGBTIQ+ Interagency Group, and Comhairle na nÓg.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Community Section will continue to support all interagency fora to support social inclusion, integration and diversity through programmes and funding initiatives.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK (PPN)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The Galway County PPN continues to develop understanding of the vital role of PPNs in democratic processes and provide training for representatives elected to a range of committees and consultative structures.
- During the year the PPN continued to build its membership and by end October, the PPN Membership stands at 1,258 member groups spread across the 3 Pillars of Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion, and Environmental.
- The Galway County PPN supported a range of training to build capaCity of member groups including training on the Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Gardening & biodiversity swatches, and other training to build capaCity around governance of groups.
- The Galway County PPN organised 2 Plenary Meetings of its full membership, providing an information session of the types of insurance available to community & voluntary members.
- The PPN continued to support the Galway County Energy Master Plan including providing training for the development of Energy Audits which was co-financed by the Community Section to maximise the funding available to community groups.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The PPN will also continue to act as an information forum for Member Groups, facilitating information sessions on funding schemes and acting as a consultative forum for policy for Galway County Council.
- To support capacity building of local groups, training needs analysis will take place regularly to identify needs.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCHEMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The Community Section coordinates the advertisement and processing of the Community Support Schemes for the relevant departments of the Council and in 2023, the overall allocation under the Schemes was €273,750, which was allocated with an additional €18,000 of funding for festivals/events from Failte Ireland as follows:

	Economic	Community	Cultural	Total
No. of Applications received	77	110	106	293
No. of Applications funded	66	55	103	224
Total Allocation	€87,250	€103,800	€100,700	€291,750

- In line with previous years, the allocations under the Community Support Schemes are presented to the Plenary Meeting for approval under the relevant Support Scheme, and all applications are also categorised by Municipal District. The relevant data for 2023 applications broken down by Municipal District is as follows:

Municipal District	No. Apps received	No. unsuccessful	Total Allocation per M.D.
Countywide	16	2	€39,200
Athenry-Oranmore	26	3	€25,349
Ballinasloe	66	15	€54,562
Conamara	101	15	€97,146

Loughrea	50	13	€46,650
Tuam	34	5	€28,843

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Community Support Schemes will continue to be targeted to support volunteer activity throughout the County and promote economic, cultural, and social development.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- The Cathaoirleach Awards are an annual initiative to acknowledge the commitment of individuals and groups who participate in unpaid community and voluntary activities, and the significant impact which this has on quality of life in their communities. The Cathaoirleach Awards for 2023 were held in conjunction with the Cathaoirleach’s Ball which took place in the Meadowcourt Hotel, Loughrea, on Saturday 27th May, and the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael Maher and MC for the evening, Bernadette Prendergast, welcomed all in attendance to the event and presented the winners with a specially commissioned award designed and hand-crafted by Sean Mahony, and a cash prize of €500. The winners of the Award Categories, which are jointly sponsored by the PPN and County Council were:
 - Arts and Culture Award – Glenamaddy Theatre Festival
 - Best Contribution to Heritage Award – Milltown Heritage Group
 - Environment & Climate Action Award – East Corrib Alliance
 - Social Inclusion Award – CURVE
 - Sports Award – Tuam Women’s Shed
 - Heritage Publication Award – Emma Laffey – “An Bhean Ghlúine”
 - Gradam na Gaeilge - Ceoltoirí Oga Cois Fharraige
 - Pride of Place Awards – Gort River Walk Group, Creggs Rural Development
 - Tidy Towns Recognition Award – Abbey Community Development Association
 - Special Award – Aileen Cust Memorial Society
- Galway County Council selected Gort River Walk Group and Creggs Rural Development to represent County Galway in the All-Island Pride of Place Awards 2023 and staff from various Departments, Elected Members, and other political representation and professionals

supported the groups during Judging Day. The All-Island Pride of Place Awards Ceremony took place on Friday 10th November in Armagh.

Nominated by Galway County Council, Creggs Rural Development Group was named overall winner of Climate Action & Biodiversity category in recognition of its commitment to promote, educate, raise awareness, and enhance biodiversity within the north Galway village. The community joins Lawrencetown (2022), Inis Méain (2018), Clonbur Community Council (2016) and Clifden (2012) as an overall winner of the prestigious annual competition. County Galway's other participant in this year's competition Gort River Walk Group was nominated in the Community Wellbeing category in recognition of their continued development of a 3km looped walk that encompasses biodiversity, rest areas, and a new footbridge in the south Galway town.

- Tidy Towns Groups across County Galway continue to improve their marks in the Supervalu National Tidy Towns Competition results year-on-year, while carrying out invaluable work in their respective communities.

First place in the County, and their Gold Medal, was retained by Milltown, while Abbey retained second place in the County and their Silver Medal status, and An Spidéal retained third place in the County and their Bronze Medal which they first achieved last year. Tullycross achieved an Endeavour Award for the biggest improvement in marks since last years competition.

In addition to the Medal Awards, there are several Special Award Categories in the Tidy Towns Competition to recognize excellence in particular areas of the competition, and County Galway continued its proud record of high achievement in this area with the following honoured with special prizes at the Awards Ceremony:

- Williamstown Tidy Towns was the overall winner of the National Heritage Award.
- Monivea Tidy Towns was the overall winner of the Gum Litter Taskforce Award.
- Northampton National School was a regional winner of the Supervalu Schools Award.
- Woodford Parish Development were highly commended for their work towards the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Work will continue to streamline the timing of local awards to tie in with national awards and to integrate the local awards with other relevant ceremonies where feasible. Targeted supports and training will continue to be provided to Tidy Towns Groups to enable them to

continue to improve their marks in the National Competition, and to address particular issues in their respective towns & villages.

PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING ARTS ACTIVITY & CULTURE

INDICATIVE ACTIONS FOR 2023:

- Arts Grants (Community Support Scheme – Culture): Arts Office administered, adjudicated and supported arts grants for voluntary groups and organisation to pursue the development of the Arts in the County. 48 Grants were awarded - €60,000 budget allocated.
- Advice and Advocacy: Provided ongoing professional arts information and advice to community groups, artists and organisations in the County. Provided continued professional development opportunities are planned in collaboration with Visual Arts Ireland, Tulca Visual Arts Festival, Irish Street Arts Circus Spectacle (ISACS) and Create (National Agency for Collaborate Arts Practice).
- Public Art: Public Art Management Group set up to oversee schemes. Schemes in Progress: OPW Tuam Mural project and Two x OPW Flood Relief Schemes, Craughwell and Claregalway.
- Artist Support Scheme: supported 11 artists based in the County working in the following artforms dance, music, literature, visual arts and traditional arts - €26,000 budget.
- Artists Residencies: 4 residencies for artists based in Galway County have been fully funded through the Arts Office this year. Theatre maker Emma O'Grady at Áras Éanna (Inis Oírr), dance artists Linda Schirmer and Jessie Keenan with Galway Dance Project and street art and spectacle artist Noeline Kavanagh at Interface (Inagh Valley).
- Dance Artist Residency – Magdalena Hylak was awarded a Dance Artist Residency Scheme working with 3 communities in Galway County in late 2023/ early 2024.
- Artist in Residence on the Edge -Successfully spearheaded an application to IRIS (Arts Council's International Residency Initiative Scheme) in collaboration with Áras Éanna. 2 Galway artists (Noelle Gallagher and Daniel Mocci) will travel to two of our partners in The Netherlands, Serbia, Denmark and Finland in 2023/2024.
- In partnership with Ardán and Galway City of Film Arts Programme offered a Misleór Bursary and two Short Documentary Bursaries to film makers based in Galway County. Filmmaker Kathleen Ward who is based in Tuam was awarded the Misleór Short Documentary Grant. Filmmaker Jenny Roche who is based in Moycullen was awarded the Galway County Short Documentary Bursary.
- Artists CPD Supports – working with VAI and in partnership with Galway City Council we have rolled out a series of networking and training sessions for Visual Artists.
- Artists in Schools Scheme: 5 schools were awarded Artists in Schools for 2023, the successful schools were: Scoil Náisiúnta Na Bhforbacha, St. Brendan's National School Portumna, St.

Patrick's National School Ballinasloe, Claregalway Educate Together National School and Scoil Naisiunta Inis Meain.

- Library Mobile Van Project with Chris Judge. This project took place in two schools in Galway with workshops culminating in the design and delivery of a new wrap for the school's library van.
- Children's Book Festival takes place in October across Galway County funded by the Arts Office programme and delivered by the Galway Public Libraries.
- Galway County Arts Office/Galway Community Circus Tuam Circus Partnership – support a Youth Circus programme, 1 day a week reaching 50 young people in Spring 2023, 2 days a week in Autumn 2023 reaching 70 young people with 20% of all participants on a full or part time bursary to promote access/Inclusion and Diversity. The Community Circus are also committed to running a Professional Training Programme in the County in order to develop new circus educators locally.
- Worked with Macnas and a TY school in Athenry to take part in the Macnas event for Culture Night.
- Galway County Council make a significant contribution to the Music Generation programme in the County. This offers children a wide range of music tuition and music education across a wide range of musical genres and music technology.
- Youth Arts Programmes: continue to offer other programme supports for children and young people in partnership with our professional partners: Baboró International Arts Festival for Children, Galway Community Circus, Macnas, Branar T  atre do Ph  ist  , Tulca, Galway Music Residency, Galway Junior Film Fleadh and Galway Film Centre who present and tour in the County.
- Connemara Sea Week – supported young people to work with artists to respond to serious issues involved in climate change.
- Supported Something in the Water Festival Headford. The inaugural Something in the Water festival took place in venues across Headford from 6-8 October 2023. The programme featured an inspired mix of architecture, craft, dance, literature, music, storytelling and visual art events and workshops.
- Supported North East Galway Fit-up Theatre Festival in North East County Galway to tour 3 one-act plays to 6 theatres, community centres and town halls in Skehana, Newbridge, Dunmore, Fohenagh, Tuam and Abbeyknockmoy.
- Creative Places Tuam: Directly supported the Taking Root Funding programme available to artists and community groups to work on an arts project; aim to make a positive impact in their area.
- West's Awake Community Weekend Tuam invited local community groups, creatives and artists of all forms to be part of a showcase of Tuam's creativity and talent. Coordinated by Creative Places Tuam with support from Galway County Council Arts Office, Galway Rural

Development, the Saw Doctors and the local community, the town of Tuam will host a local stage with family friendly events in the town on the weekend of the Saw Doctors concert.

- Collaborated directly with Blue Teapot to develop training for artists to work with children with disabilities in schools across the County for 2023. Collaborated with Skylark Centre to fund an artist's programme and residency for an artist with a disability.
- Support the Studio Mór, Open Call for Artist Residencies (3 Residencies). Studio Mór is a Brothers of Charity art studio based in Oranmore and operates alongside the Brothers of Charity Galway centre Limelight Creative Arts. The artists will also work with a group of artists with additional needs, this will be supported by artists working in Limelight Studios.
- Culture Night 2023; funded 40 events in 18 locations across the County. The events and workshops spanned craft, literature, music, poetry, street art and spectacle, theatre, trad arts and visual art.
- Culture Night Late 2023: Secured additional funding from the Arts Council to work with Macnas and Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre presented **Take a Walk with Crom**, a Culture Night Late event.
- Cultural Diversity Programme Commission- working with Cúirt to deliver a programme for minority groups in Cúirt Festival 2024.
- Arts in Older Years: Supported 3 projects with older years groups and artists in Loughrea, Portumna and Athenry in poetry, scriptwriting and visual arts.
- Supported Aras Éanna (Arts Centre on Inis Oírr) in 2023.
- Galway County Council's Creative Ireland Programme. Led, managed and administered the Creative Ireland Programme 2023 and directly curated and programmed Cruinniú na nÓg 2023 (national creative day for children) in Galway County.
- Recruited and contracted a Creative Ireland Engagement Officer, a five-year post, part funded through the Creative Ireland Core Funding.
- Creative Ireland bursaries 2023 - 13 bursaries were awarded to wide range of creative project to the value of €58,150.
- Creative Ireland Culture Team Projects 2023: 9 projects were awarded funding for projects led by the Galway County Culture Team including Galway Gates Project, Comicon 2023, Around the House and Mind the Dresser and Bia Innovator Food Trail.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2024:

- Arts Grants: Arts Office to administer, adjudicate and support arts grants for voluntary groups and organisation to pursue the development of the Arts in the County through the Community Support Scheme (Culture) 2024. The Arts Grants is the lifeline support for many community and voluntary organisations providing arts programmes in the County and supports a very large range of programmes.

- Arts Advice and Advocacy: Provide ongoing professional arts information and advice service to community groups, artists, professional arts organisations and festivals in the County.
- Continue to Develop a programme of Public Artwork and commissions in 2024 through the Public Art Management group in response to a substantial pipeline of projects.
- We will continue to partner with Ardán (Galway Film Centre) on supporting Galway County Artists to receive mentoring and bursary support to develop short documentaries.
- Artists Bursaries: Offer bursaries to Artists to develop work and ensure excellence and rigour on peer assessment panels for all awards.
- Continued Professional Development – we will continue to design and deliver a series of CPD opportunities based on our artist needs analysis conducted in 2023.
- Meitheal Programme, continue to support Branar’s programme after the successful pilot phase to support Galway County based artists to create work for young audiences across the performing arts.
- Artists Residencies which will be supported in 2024 include: Áras Éanna, Tyrone Guthrie Cultural Centre Irlandais Paris, Galway Dance Project and Interface Inagh Valley.
- Book It Festival 2024: continue to programme throughout October 2024 bringing writers and reading events to schools and libraries across the County.
- Artists in Schools- opportunity to offer six schools’ artists in school’s residencies in 2024, and additionally work with Ealaíon na Gaeltachta to create a strand in the scheme for Irish language artists and Irish language Gaeltacht schools to address a gap we’ve identified in the County.
- We will create a performing arts commission for young artists aged 13-19 in the County which will include support from professional artists and a producer. This work will be presented to an audience at an arts festival in the County. The commission will be inspired by Broei a radical Arcadia 2023 project from Fryslan, The Netherlands.
- Creative Youth Programme - working with Galway Community Circus, Macnas and Live Music performance leaders to support performance opportunities for young Artists Galway County
- Sea Week Youth Gathering – we will continue to partner with Sea Week to develop a youth led arts programme with a climate action theme.
- Continue to support Galway Community Circus Tuam 2024 as they develop a longer-term programme into the future. 20% of all participants on a full or part time bursary to promote access/Inclusion and Diversity.
- Erasmus+ Culture Up 2024: Galway County Council Arts Office will embark on a new Erasmus + application to support culture in rural areas with European partners under a number of themes which will support capaCity building for our communities, artists and organisations. This project will focus primarily on supporting our diverse and rural communities.

- In 2024 we will review our Arts and Disability. Programmes in collaboration with our partners in the regions which will inform our priorities for 2024/2025 in terms of investing in artistic programmes to support our agreed priorities in investing in these contexts.
- Arts in Older Years: Capture the creativity and contribution of older people in County Galway through artists' commissions across a wide range of artforms and engage with local and national organisations such as Age & Opportunity, Age Action and Galway Older People's Council.
- Festivals: We take the lead on delivering and supporting festivals and events to programme & commission quality arts experiences to enhance and animate their community and festivals including North East Galway Fit up Festival and Something in the Water Festival 2024. Assist with Arts Council funding applications.
- Work directly with Creative Places Tuam Steering Committee to fund and support community led arts projects in Tuam in 2024 and make application to Arts Council under the Creative Places Scheme 2024.
- Cúirt- continue to work with Cúirt Festival on the Shining Light Creative Writing and Spoken Word Performance Project on the intercultural programme developed with them and members living in direct provision.
- Continue to Support Aras Éanna and its expanded professional programme on Inis Oírr.
- Work in partnership with Music Generation Galway County to support Music Education Programme in collaboration with GRETB in 2024.
- Culture Night 2024 - continue to support many events for Culture Night 2024. We will be ensuring additional financial supports are available to deliver on this diverse and very successful programme in partnership with our local communities.
- Council's Creative Ireland Programme 2024: Lead, manage and administer the Creative Ireland Programme, Creative Ireland Bursaries 2024 and directly curated and programmed Cruinniú na nÓg 2024 in Galway County.
- Shared Island Project 2024: Support Birds of a Feather project in Partnership with Clare County Council and women's group in Ballinasloe, Inishbofin, Clare and Belfast.

LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

Sourced and secured funding from Sport Ireland, Dormant Accounts, HSE, Local Authorities, National Transport Agency, Healthy Galway amongst others to deliver programmes in sport and physical activity for all target groups within Galway.

Community Sports Development Officer (CSDO) activities included: Bike Week 2023, park run Inis Meáin, Yoga, Adult and Teen Stand Up Paddle Boarding for beginners in Loughrea (3-week blocks), Marathon Kids program, HER Outdoors week across Galway, Buggy Buddies programs in

the City and County, Men and Women on the Move programmes in disadvantaged areas (Tuam/Ballinasloe) and Sanctuary swimmers' program.

- Sports Inclusion Development Officer (SIDO) activities included: Ower Equine Time, Inclusive Triathlon, positive ageing week, inclusive boccia programme and tournament, horses connect program, Activator Sessions and Tutor Training, Good to Go Training for Older adult and Disability Groups, Equipment Loans for groups
- July 8th was National Play Day and to celebrate Galway Sports Partnership partnered with Galway County Council, Healthy Galway County and Galway Rural Development to host pop up activities on the green in St Grellans. This event was designed to encourage sustainable free play and involved revamping the playground in the estate with playground stencils. Funding of €3,000 was received towards the event from the Dept. of Equality.
- Through HSE and Healthy Galway County funding Galway Sports Partnership were able to provide Boccia Tournaments, Activator Walking Training, Positive Ageing week taster sessions, Good2Go older adults training and Equestrian programs for individuals with disabilities.
- European Week of Sport took place between the 23rd to 30th September. GSP asked all clubs and community groups to register their activities during this week and ran an Inclusive Triathlon event for adults with intellectual disabilities during this week.
- Galway Sports Partnership facilitated the Sports Energy Support Scheme which was targeted towards Clubs and Community owned facilities which do not currently qualify for TBESS or other Government support schemes through DRCD, local authorities and others.
- Galway Sports Partnership ran a number of supports for clubs and organisations such as 58 Safeguarding Courses, 12 First Aid Courses, Disability Awareness Workshops along with a series of Webinars covering volunteer recruitment and retention, managing diversity and social media.
- Arranged and facilitated meetings of GSP Steering group and relevant workgroups throughout 2023.
- GSP secured €124,000 in Dormant Accounts funding for 2023. Specifically, this funding will support Community Sports Hub Funding and the Active Cities Project.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024

- Apply for and secure CORE funding from Sport Ireland to fund general operations of Galway Sports Partnership for 2024 and Dormant Account Funding Opportunities. Apply for other funding opportunities throughout the year such as Age and Opportunity, Healthy Ireland and HSE funding.
- Introduce a variety of programmes that target our specific target groups such as women and girls, people with a disability, disadvantage groups, older adults.

- Provide Training Programmes such as Balance bike programme, Learn to Cycle programme, Sports Hall Athletics Programme, Good 2 Go, Active Disability Ireland Courses, Coaching Children workshops and Physical Literacy workshops.
- Provide Sport Ireland Safeguarding Workshops.
- Provide Sports First Aid Courses
- Deliver programmes with a variety of populations with low levels of participation or lack of participation opportunities.
- Deliver sport and physical activity opportunities during Bike Week.
- Promote coach education courses for all sports especially minority sports on social media
- Support schools in achieving an Active Schools Flag
- Maintain compliance with Governance Code for Sport
- Continue to represent, support, advocate on alliances such as Older Adult groups, Disability Groups, National Policy groups, working groups, Galway Traveller movement.
- Promote Get Ireland Active Database.

LIBRARY SERVICES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Galway Public Libraries provide lending services, pc access, printing, scanning, request service, study spaces, newspapers and magazines. We provide activity and event spaces for community groups, schools, local NGO's, arts and creative groups and Galway County Council departments.
- We also provide a selection of online resources that are available free to registered library members, these include:
 - Borrowbox- eBooks & eAudio books.
 - Universal Class-This resource provides a wide range of over 500 courses, including Yoga, Digital Photography, Computer Basics, Excel, and much more.
 - eMagazines-Libby is our app for eMagazines. There are more than 3,000 magazines from which to choose and you can access them for free with your library card.
 - Press Reader-Press Reader provides global news coverage. With Press Reader you can: Access top newspapers and magazines from more than 120 countries. Download and save titles to read offline whenever, wherever. Translate foreign language content in up to 18 languages.
 - Medici TV -The world's leading classical music channel, Medici TV offers access to the best of classical music to viewers worldwide. Over 150 live events broadcast each year and the largest on demand library of classical music available for viewing on all devices.

- Comics plus which offers unlimited, simultaneous access to thousands of digital comics, graphic novels and manga from over 100+ publishers.
- LOTI for kids provides access to thousands of books online and through the app in over 30 languages including Ukrainian.
- Nessy – An online learning support platform for children who learn differently.
- Regular events during the year include- Book clubs, Craft groups, Poetry groups, Women’s groups and Irish Language Conversation Circles /Ciorcal Comhrá.
- Seachtain na Gaeilge, Heritage week, Positive Ageing week, Space week, Bealtaine Festival, Decade of Centenaries, Cruinniú na nÓg, Ballinasloe ComicCon, and Creative Ireland events were all celebrated and promoted in Libraries.
- The library service had a full programme of children’s events across all branch libraries:
 - School visits
 - Childcare group visits
 - Spring Into Storytime
 - Summer Reading Challenge
 - Children’s Book Festival
 - Family Time at your Library
 - Rhyme times
 - Cruinniú na nÓg

Our Summer Reading Challenge “Summer Stars”

Summer Stars is the public library national summer reading programme for children that runs from the 12th June until the end of August. All children throughout the Country are invited to join the adventure and to enjoy the fun and pleasure of reading and writing over the summer. Summer Stars is non-competitive and every child who reads even one book/e-book is regarded as having completed the programme – and it’s all completely free!

We also had some creative workshops happening throughout the summer in our branch libraries: from Storytimes to Jenga, Free play Lego, Mosaic workshops, Dog’s Trust workshops, Stamping Art and much more. **Westside Library** hosted writing, sand art and quilling workshops as well as enchanted storytelling sessions and much more. Library members from the Ukrainian community were delighted to celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day through artwork created at the library. **Dogs Trust Workshops** were hosted in Killimor, Loughrea, Tuam, Oranmore, Ballinasloe, Portumna, Galway City Library and Ballybane this summer. Children and their parents enjoyed afternoons of fun, drama and roleplay. Moth and Butterfly music and Storytelling sessions happened in our smaller branches.

Children’s Book Festival “Bookit!” this is a children’s Book Festival which takes place each October throughout Galway Public Libraries and various primary schools with the support of

Galway County and City Arts Offices. The festival is a celebration of books and reading and is a chance to meet new and favourite authors. Events included:

Stories on the Move with Jay Ryan

Jay Ryan - who needs no introduction as one of Ireland's finest dramatic storytellers for the young – engaged in a series of interactive story sessions on board Galway's mobile Library and told stories about what it's like living with Fairies!

Mobile Library Service calling at Clonfert, Kiltormer N.S. and Laurencetown N.S.

Journey through the Antarctic with Michael Smith

Michael Smith author of Tom Crean: Ice Man, The Adventures of an Irish Antarctic Hero and a biography of Ernest Shackleton entitled Shackleton: The Boss – The Remarkable Adventures of a Heroic Antarctic Explorer, has a life-long interest in Polar exploration, brought all with him as he took us on a journey through the Antarctic, introducing us to some great explorers.

Participating schools: Mountbellew NS, Newtown NS & Athenry Boys NS.

Irish History Live: Medieval reenactment with Mike Moylan



Irish history live was inspired by a young boy who saw me at a medieval re-enactment wearing armour and asked to wear it himself. I was happy to oblige, and I wondered if this hands-on approach would help children learn in schools too. In 1999 we presented our first show and it was a great success. Soon other schools wanted the Vikings show. Thanks to word of mouth our service began to grow. Other periods were added from the stone age to modern times. The idea is to dress the

children in period costumes, try out tools, household items, weapons and armour. This makes the children the stars of the show. They learn experientially and it's fun to learn! Those who have any difficulties learning find this way easier and simpler to remember.

Ballinasloe Library: Participating schools Gael Scoil, Scoil Croí Naofa & Creagh NS

Kamishibai, Mbira music & storytelling workshops with Fiona Dowling

Based in County Mayo, Fiona Dowling is a French Irish storyteller and visual artist. In her storytelling sessions, alongside telling folktales from all around the world, Fiona often uses Kamishibai (Japanese paper theatre), drawing and paper-folding stories, riddles, interactive

songs with call and response, as well as stories accompanied by mbira music (thumb piano from Zimbabwe). Children heard stories about tiny creatures and insects with wings and without: Simon the Snail, Philzer the Fly, Tim the Tinies Man on Earth and all their friends are here to entertain you. (Stories told with puppets, paper folding and Kamishibai).

Tuam Library: Tuam Educate Together, Belmont, Sylane, Kilconly, Trinity Primary School, Tuam Gaelscoil - Loughrea Library: Loughrea Community Pre-school, St. Ita's NS, Bullaun NS Dunmore Library: Dunmore NS, Moylough, Glenamaddy NS.

School visits: Woodford NS - Leitrim N.S. – Kilnadeema N.S.

Historical fiction with Brian Gallagher

Brian Gallagher writes children's historical fiction. His books include; Winds of Change, One Good Turn, Friend or Foe, Stormclouds, Secrets and Shadows, Taking Sides, Across the Divide, Arrivals and Pawns. Brian talked about what it's like to be a professional writer, covering the nuts and bolts of how a book is written - from the first idea, through plotting, creating characters, designing the cover, right through to the published book. The session included a reading with Q&A afterwards.

Participating Libraries: Ballinasloe, Loughrea, Athenry, Killimor, Portumna, Galway City, Westside.

Participating schools: Newtown School & Scoil Croí Naofa Loughrea Gaelscoil, Scoil Croi Naofa, Killimor NS, Portumna NS, Scoil Iognaid, St Enda's Secondary School.

Serena Molloy – Author

Hailing from Wexford but living in Galway, Serena Molloy released her first novel *Wider than the Sea* – described as an outstanding and special book earlier this year. The novel is a dyslexia-friendly story of friendship, hope and self-discovery.

Ballybane Library: Scoil Chaitriona, Renmore, Radharc na Mara NS.

Headford Library: Headford Girls NS.

Oranmore Library: Scoil Mhuire, Oranmore.

Patricia Forde

Ar an Ochtú lá déag do mhí Dheireadh Fómhair, beidh leabhar nua le Patricia Forde dhá sheoladh i Leabharlann an Spidéil. An Mac Tíre Deireanach leabhar atá bunaithe ar eachtraí a tharla le linn aimsir an meánaois, nuair a bhí Oliver Cromwell i nGaillimh.

Scoil Einne, rang 6

Teddy Bear's Picnic & Book Craft with Hayley Aldous



Hayley Aldous is a Galway-based Second level art teacher and illustrator. She facilitates arts and crafts workshops.

Teddy Bear's Picnic Portumna Library, Participating school: Portumna NS.

Book Craft workshops Participating schools: Portumna NS.

Creativity & Reading with E.R. Murray

Elizabeth writes novels for children and young adults as well as short fiction and personal essays. Her books include *The Book of Learning – Nine Lives Trilogy 1*, *The Book of Shadows – Nine Lives Trilogy 2*, *The Book of Revenge – Nine Lives Trilogy 3* and *Caramel Hearts*. Join Elizabeth for an interactive, high energy and confidence building session to encourage creativity.

Oranmore Library: Participating schools: Oranmore Boys & Oranmore Girls NS.

Gort Library: Participating school: Gort NS.

Fearghas MacLochlainn agus An Slipéar Gloine

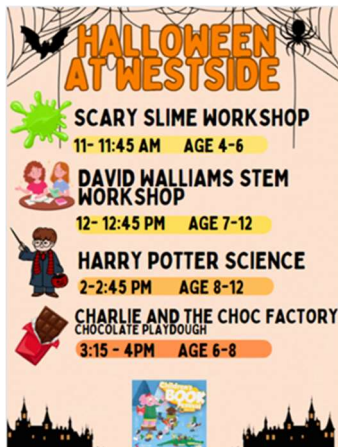


Léigh Fearghas Mac Lochlainn sleachta spraiúla as a leabhar draíochtúil, *An Slipéar Gloine?* i Leabharlann na Ceathrún Rua ag 11am –Agus arís an tráthnóna céanna ag Leabharlann an Spidéil ón 2 go 3pm.

Fearghas Mac Lochlainn will be reading humorous extracts from his enchanting book *An Slipéar Gloine?* in Carraroe Library and later the same afternoon in Spiddal Library from 2 to 3pm.

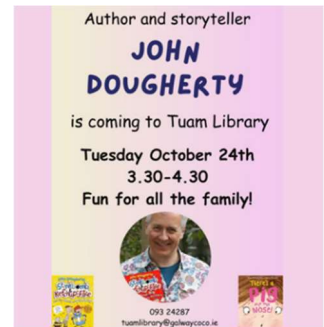
Anyone for Science?

Science workshops with a scary twist.....



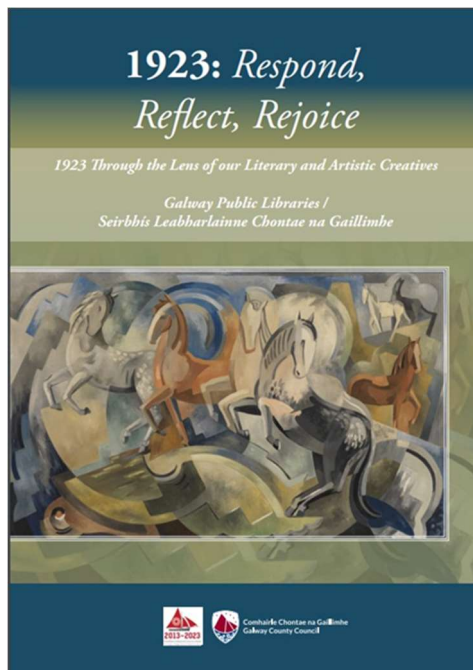
Galway City Library: Participating schools Mercy & St. Nicholas Parochial NS. Westside library hosted sensory experiences and STEM workshops themed around Halloween.

“There’s a Pig up my Nose” with author John Dougherty



- **Cruinniu na nÓg: Leabharlann na Ceathrún Rua** hosted Robotic and Coding workshops that showcased the various elements of robot design. **Loughrea Library** had several events including bookmark making, LEGO workshops and robot building using recycled materials. They also had chalk drawings in the car park encouraging children to decorate the public space with colour. **Oranmore Library** inspired future authors and illustrators with a fun and interactive workshop on comic making. Tuam library hosted a series of printmaking workshops facilitated by artist Jennifer Cunningham.

- **Decade of Commemoration:**



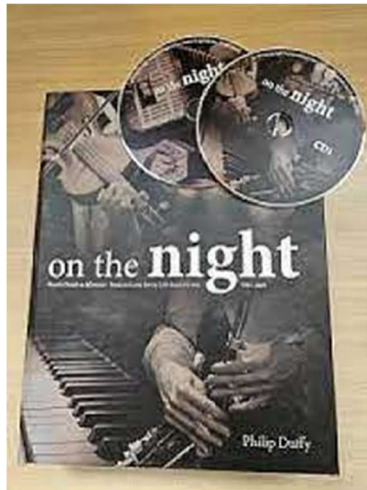
- 1923: Respond, Reflect, Rejoice: *Through the Lens of our Literary and Artistic Creatives* presents an exhibition and a series of talks, commissions and residencies which aim to honour the artists

who created works during this time of turbulent history. This project will reflect on Elizabeth Bowen, Sean O'Casey, W.B. Yeats, Mainie Jellet and Liam O'Flaherty.

- **"Reflections" - In Commemoration to the Women of 1923** Galway City Council, Galway Public Libraries and Galway City Museum are proud to present "Reflections," a programme commemorating the remarkable women of 1923 as part of the Decade of Centenaries 2012 - 2023 initiative, supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports, and Media. This multifaceted project, in development since August 2023, is a heartfelt tribute to the women who shaped Irish history during a pivotal era. It has offered a platform for in-depth discussions, artist residencies, and creative exploration of their lives and contributions.
- **Galway's Great Read 2023:** Galway's Great Read is an annual programme of events, organised by Galway Public Libraries during November. Its purpose is to promote our literary heritage, history and our unique culture, and foster an appreciation for its diversity and richness. Each year Galway's Great Read commemorates a literary figure, historical event or literary genre through readings, poetry, exhibitions, talks and reminiscences of life in Galway and Ireland during a specific period. The title of this year's programme is *Around the House and Mind the Dresser*. Our musicians and facilitators include singer /songwriter Ultan Conlon; musicians from East Galway Fahy Family and Patsy Broderick; musicians from North Galway Aine Sheridan, Claer Keville and others; Storytellers Aindrias De Staic and Máirín Mhic Lochlainn



- *The aim of **Around the House and Mind the Dresser** is to highlight the rich musical and song writing traditions of North and East Galway; to explore the various storytelling voices of South Galway & Connemara and our Islands; to re-ignite in our older audiences' memories of times past and to inspire our younger generations to value and participate in this exploration of our Culture.*



- *This year our programme encompasses two of the strategic objectives outlined by Galway County Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 – 2027, which are to broaden access and participation of our communities to the traditions associated with music, storytelling and song and secondly, to celebrate and promote Galway as a Creative County.*
- **Healthy Ireland at your Library** talks continues throughout the year on various topics: Wellbeing workshops, Alzheimer’s disease, Dementia, Palliative Care, Autism talks, Childhood disability, Motor Neuron Disease, Speech & Language Therapy, Parkinson’s Disease, Diabetes.

In 2023 the programme introduced physical exercise to several library locations where sessions of chair Yoga were delivered in Loughrea, Ballinasloe, Galway City, Gort, Westside and Tuam.

Healthy Ireland At Your Library also partnered with the newly appointed Social Prescriber for Galway City and hosted wellbeing sessions, crafting workshops and information chats about mental health, nutrition and coping strategies for living with depression.

Sensory Services: Westside Library has increased the number of sessions in the sensory room and facilitated LEGO based Play therapy sessions as part of the continued sensory services. The second phase roll out of sensory toys and materials was delivered in Autumn 2023. All Galway Public Libraries now have extensive collections of sensory toys and supporting materials in branches.

- **Art Exhibitions-** Several art exhibitions took place during 2023 in various branch libraries.
- **Music events:** Soundbites- free lunchtime concerts at Tuam Library.

Welcome Notes- Music Therapy Sessions at Westside Library and this was extended to Ballybane library as well as pop up sessions in Headford community hall for people living with Dementia.

Music Alive- Age Friendly music sessions for Older People at Ballinasloe & Oughterard Libraries.

New strategic partnership with Music Generation Galway City in the launch of the Early Years Programme of Music and Rhyme sessions in the City libraries running weekly in Ballybane, Westside and Galway City Libraries with parent and toddler groups.

- **Outreach:** We were delighted to take part in a number of outreach activities during 2023. **Make the Link** is an initiative of Galway Rural Development and GRETB with the aim of showcasing education and training courses available in local areas. This was a great opportunity to highlight library supports for job seekers, the Ukrainian community, young people, and families by staff members who attended the fairs in Tuam, Ballinasloe, Clifden and Gort.



- Galway Public Library staff also attended outreach events in Croí Galway City, Tuam and the Glenamaddy Ploughing championships.
- In 2023 staff attended meetings with community groups such as Women's sheds, Direct Provision Centres, Active Retirement groups, Men's sheds, Climate Action groups and more.
- Ukrainian information sessions, Stay & Play sessions for children throughout the branch library network.
- Irish Deaf Society- Irish Sign Language story for deaf children was held online.

Ballybane MakerSpace: On Wednesday 5th April the now former Mayor of Galway City Cllr. Clodagh Higgins formally launched the new Makerspace and creative studio in Ballybane Library. This is the first Makerspace in Galway Public Libraries that is funded by Creative Ireland Galway City and is jointly supported by the GRETB under the Creative Youth Partnership.

Galway City MakerSpace: Autumn 2023 launched the makerspace in the City library with a strategic partnership with Foróige Youth Services. This new partnership allows for the introduction of a youth STEM club, which is a new initiative for Galway Public Libraries.

- **Westside Arts Festival** at Westside Library, some of the activities that took place included- Stories, song & rhyme, Origami, Bingo bonanza, Crafts, Print Making, Technic Robotics, VR experiences, Drama workshop, Fairy Door workshop, LEGO workshops.

- **Ballinasloe Library Crime Book Club** The first meeting of the brand-new Crime Book Club "The Bookworms" took place in Ballinasloe Library in March. These lovers of crime fiction will meet once a month to discuss a chosen crime, detective or mystery book.
- **Culture night** Culture Night/Oiche Chultúir which took place on 22 Sept 2023, is an annual, all-island public event which celebrates culture, creativity and the arts. It is a night to promote our rich and varied culture and showcase that it is treasured and nurtured in people's lives. Galway Public Libraries hosted events such as crafting, music, poetry sessions, podcasting.....

Westside - Wood Turning with Mairtín Mac Donnacha.

Galway City – Podcasting & Storytelling.

Ballybane – Rita Ann Higgins and poetry night.

Oranmore – Music session circle.

Ballinasloe – The Tallest Smallest theatre.

Tuam Library – Jennifer Cunningham exhibition Bringing the Magic

Loughrea – ‘Oiche Chultúir’ with Lilis Ó Laoire & Róisín Seoighe.

Gort Library – A night of traditional crafting.

- **My Little Library Bags** - All children starting school in 2023 were invited to collect a bag of books just for them at their local library. In excess of 3,000 bags were distributed to children throughout the County. Each My Little Library Book Bag contained:
 - Three books on starting school, making friends and being comfortable to be yourself.
 - A story card on going to the library.
 - A postcard the child could write or draw on and send to their new teacher or bring to give to the teacher on their first day at school.
 - Their very own library card and special ‘My Little Library’ cardholder.
 - Book bags are available in both Irish and English.
- **Books Before Bedtime** – To celebrate Family Time at Your Library children under 5 were invited to visit the library and pick up a free book in Irish or English. Parents are encouraged to read their children a book before bedtime during the winter.
- **EMBL (European Molecular Biology Lab) TREC (Traversing European Coastlines)** In September the EMBL boat and testing teams arrived in Galway as part of their journey traversing European coastlines, studying ecosystems and their response to the environment. Galway Public Libraries were honored to officially welcome their community engagement officer Dr. Michele Fontana to Galway City and County.

Cathaoirleach Liam Carroll, Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr. De Evelyn Parsons along with County Librarian Jo Vahey kickstarted 5 days of library activities in Ballinasloe Library on Sept. 9.

- **Galway Libraries mobile service** On April 1st, 1960, Galway Public Libraries launched its first mobile library service. The service is busier than ever with 59 stops in towns and villages including visiting 4 playschools and 3 nursing homes. 63 years to the day we are thrilled that the service is now fully computerised and library members are being issued with Galway Public Library cards which they can use in any library across Ireland.
- **Age Friendly Libraries:** As part of the initiative to enhance our public services for older people in our County we have achieved Age Friendly status in all of our library branches in 2023. Every library has a staff member who is an Age Friendly Champion, all libraries have reading aids, accessible seating and bookshelves have been raised/lowered to improve access for all. Libraries have hosted events for the Healthy Age Friendly Home initiative and the Local Heroes exhibitions during Positive Ageing Week.
- **Postal service** for visually impaired in conjunction with An Post continued throughout 2023

Climate Action Activities

To support SDG week Galway Public Libraries have organised and hosted a number of events to support Climate Action. Ballinasloe Library hosted a Sustainable Energy Saving Event with lots of information for homeowners about grant applications, solar panels, heat recovery systems and much more.



Sustainable Energy Saving Event
Europe Direct Centre / Ballinasloe Library

Join us Saturday, 23 September
11am-1pm

Win a FREE heat loss survey worth up to €900
Snughome.ie will tell you how you can save energy and money with a thermal imaging energy audit

Want to end oil and gas bills forever?
Talk to Unitherm engineers about heating your home or business with an air-to-water heat pump system

Thinking about installing solar panels?
Learn about solar panels for your home or business from solar energy experts JFW Renewables

Want help filling out SEAI grant forms?
Get assistance from Dr Orla Nic Suibhne on home energy grants for retrofitting & gain impactful energy saving tips

Logos at the bottom: Europe Direct Ballinasloe, Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, seai, Snughome.ie, JFW, unitherm, A&A

- **Home Energy Saving Kits** – Due to demand 5 extra kits were acquired for libraries to loan to library members. There were also online tutorials provided and a kids energy saving experiment workshop. Feedback is sent to CODEMA to further improve the kits and the service.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Work will continue, based on available funding, to maintain and improve, where possible, the Library Services in Galway as per the new National Public Library 2023- 2027....*The Library is the Place: Information, Recreation, Inspiration*.
- The Healthy Ireland, and Right to Read campaigns will continue to be rolled out across the library branch network, availing of national funding streams, with the aim of ensuring a range of service in both urban and rural branches.
- Efforts to enhance the use of technology will continue, including self-service technologies, while further promotion of the online resource package will be delivered.
- The computerisation of branch libraries in the Galway Service will continue, subject to staffing levels and financial resources.
- Clifden Library will be opened as a My Open Library in 2024.
- To continue to maintain the library vehicle fleet and explore upgrade options.
- Efforts will continue to increase the book fund available for the purchase of Library Stock.
- Galway Libraries will continue to develop our events programme, engaging with individuals and communities through our branches, availing of national funding opportunities where possible, including Creative Ireland, while operating within the constraints of local funding.
- To continue to identify the needs of new and established communities and aspire to respond accordingly.
- To ensure that all local communities are aware of their local library service and what each library has to offer.
- To ensure where possible that all branch libraries organise/host a range of activities including exhibitions, readings, book-clubs, lectures, and music for their community.
- Shared Island Project: Work with Clare Libraries on the *Birds of a Feather* project in partnership with women’s groups in Ballinasloe, Belfast, Inishbofin, Clare.
- The Europe Direct Centre at Ballinasloe Library will continue to provide information on the EU and access to publications and brochures from EU institutions.

WATER SAFETY PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Appointed a permanent Water Safety Development Officer.
- The Water Safety Programme 2023 involved the recruitment of a panel of 45 trained Beach guards to provide services at 10 locations in the County [including six Blue Flag Beaches] and at 6 locations in the City as part of a Shared Service Agreement with Galway City Council.
- The Service commenced on the 28th May and continued until the 11th September 2023.
- Installation of new huts and manage new Blue Flag Beach locations.
- Upgrading of equipment was undertaken as well as a hut preparation and repairs-maintenance schedule, which was agreed and delivered.
- Following approval by Council, funding of €6,000 was advanced to the Irish Water Safety Council.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Implement Water Safety Programme, subject to funding being available, on a seasonal basis including induction training.
- Promotion of the Beachguard Programme using websites, social and local media.
- Continue, subject to funding and the approval of Council, provision of a financial contribution to Irish Water Safety.
- Continue to Implement and manage Water Safety Ireland Guidance Notes.
- Implement findings from Risk Assessments.
- Funding to accommodate lifeguards on the Islands during the bathing season.
- Continue development of the Water Safety Officer (Courses).
- Host Water Safety Development Officers Annual conference in Galway for 2024.
- Ringbouy replacements as part of the risk assessment findings.
- Review & Update the Beach Bye Laws.

RECREATION AND AMENITY – PARKS, PITCHES, RUNNING TRACKS, OPEN SPACES AND PLAYGROUNDS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Rinvilla Park, Maree, Oranmore, managed by Galway County Council is owned jointly by Galway County Council and Galway City Council. It is a designated location on the 'Wild Atlantic Way'. It is used extensively by residents, visitors and local organisations such as Scouting Groups. The maintenance programme continues to be delivered in partnership

with local groups and is co-funded by Galway City Council. A Concession for the provision of refreshments at Rinville Park from March to October was continued.

- Palace Grounds, Tuam - Maintenance Programme for Palace Grounds Park, Tuam was implemented in association with a Council sponsored Community Employment Scheme. The Palace Grounds retained their Green Flag and Green Heritage Award from An Taisce in 2023. An Age Friendly Walkability Audit was carried out and several projects were completed on foot of this, additional benches to act as resting points for older people in areas where none existed. Works commenced for footpaths in the park to be widened, to allow safe access for pedestrians and wheelchair users and the installation of Activator Signage for the park through secured funding through the Healthy Ireland Fund.
- Ballinasloe – Maintenance Programme was continued in Ballinasloe town for parks and open spaces in 2023.
- Installation of an inclusive roundabout and repairs to existing playground equipment was carried out on the local authority owned playground at Gort Road Loughrea on success of our application where funding was granted from the Department of Children & Youth Affairs (DCYA).
- A Licence Agreement is in place with Tuam Celtic Football Club, to operate Galway County Council's All-Weather Pitches in Tuam.
- Dunlo Recreational Park, Ballinasloe Running Track was fully operational for the year.
- In accordance with commitments previously given under the Play Policy, assistance was provided to playgrounds through direct funding and provision of insurance. To-date, a total of 79 playgrounds have been developed in the County, under this policy. The Smoke Free Playgrounds Policy launched in 2013 was ongoing in 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- To continue the maintenance and upgrade of Council owned and operated playgrounds subject to funding being available and to apply for available funding under CLÁR and the Department of Children & Youth Affairs (DCYA).
- Provide additional playground Inspection Training to another committee member for our 64 community run playgrounds.
- The Parks maintenance programmes, including grass cutting, will be developed and implemented in line with available resources for Rinville Park, Oranmore, the Palace Grounds, Tuam, Dunlo Park, Ballinasloe, Cowpark in Clarenbridge and other amenity and open spaces, with priority afforded, within available resources, to public parks and amenity areas.
- Installation of an online booking and keypad system for Dunlo Park to extend opening and closing times of the facility.
- Continue maintenance required in Rinville Park under the Woodlands Plan.
- Develop Aughrim as a significant tourist destination.

- Endeavour to continue to provide administrative and advisory support to community groups wishing to advance proposals for recreation and to access available funding insofar as staff resources allow.

LEISURE CENTRES – TUAM AND BALLINASLOE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The management and operation of Leisure Centres at Tuam and Ballinasloe was continued by Coral Leisure Ltd. following an extension of the Licence Agreement for 2023. A Liaison Committee continues to be chaired by Senior Staff in Corporate Services with Coral Leisure to review the ongoing implementation of the Licence Agreement.
- The management of the leisure centres and associated costs were kept under review in line with increasing energy costs and increased usage after the pandemic and the liaison committee played a key role in monitoring same including the additional financial support required of the Council.
- Corporate Services continue to have oversight of essential maintenance and health and safety related improvement works at both centres.
- A Leisure Centre Steering Group has formed this year in partnership with the Atlantic Seaboard Northern Energy Bureau and a number of Western Regional Local Authorities as part of a strategy to reduce the dependency on carbon for these Leisure Centres.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The management of the leisure centres and associated costs will continue to be kept under close and ongoing review during 2024 and the liaison committee will continue to play a key role in monitoring and oversight.
- Work on the Sports Capital Grant approved in 2020 for both the Tuam and Ballinasloe Leisure Centre for upgrade of dressing room facilities are progressing. It is intended to appoint a Contractor to this project in Q4 2023 with a view to completing the works in Q1-2024.
- An application for funding through the EXEED programme for energy improvement works is progressing with Stage 1 approval obtained for both centres and Stage 2 approval being advanced. It is intended that each Centre will benefit from a €1m investment.

COUNCIL FACILITIES FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY BENEFIT/HERITAGE /INTERPRETATIVE FACILITIES OPERATIONS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Funding was provided for the operation of Athenry Heritage Centre located in St. Mary's Church in Athenry Town Centre, which is the in ownership of Galway County Council and subleased to the Development Association who oversee the management of the Centre. The Centre employs a Centre Manager and staff through various schemes.
- The 1691 Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre is owned and operated by Galway County Council. The Centre opens seasonally. In 2023, it opened from May until 4th September 2023. During the season the centre held the Annual Walk About and Talk About of the Battle of Aughrim during Heritage Week.
- Part VII planning and a Fire Cert was approved for the Oranmore Library building for access improvement works. It is intended to progress to Contract Document stage and the Tender Process in the 2024.
- Continued efforts to maintain and improve the wonderful amenity at Rinville Park in collaboration with the local Community Employment scheme.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Subject to funding, financial support will continue to be provided to support the operation of the Athenry Heritage Centre and Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre to build their number of visitors and promote these areas as part of overall Council investments in tourism and support of the local economy.
- Subject to funding access improvement works to the Oranmore Library building will be progressed in line with the Part VIII Planning and Fire Cert approvals.
- Subject to funding approval it is intended to appoint consultants to undertake an overall management report for the Rinville Park including an update to the Forest Management Plan.

DISABILITY ACTION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2023:

- As part of the Council's Recreation & Amenity Programme, a number of items of outdoor gym and fitness equipment for use by wheelchair users, was maintained in Dunlo Park Ballinasloe, Palace Grounds, Tuam and Castle Avenue, Portumna.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Support implementation of the Customer Service Action Plan to continually improve access to services for persons with a disability.
- Support improved Access for Persons with a Disability to Recreation and Amenity Facilities, subject to finance being available.

OPERATION OF MARKETS & CASUAL TRADING AND REQUESTS FOR FILMING IN COUNTY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Casual Trading Licenses were issued for trading in a number of towns and villages throughout the County including: Athenry (6), Ballinasloe (10), Clifden (8), Gort (8), Loughrea (2), Mountbellew (10), Dunmore (2), Headford (1), Portumna (2), Tuam (9), Glenamaddy (1); in line with Casual Trading Byelaws.
- Other Casual Trading Licences issued were for Ballygar Festival, (23), Dunmore (27), Clifden Show (8), Clifden Arts Festival (3), Maam Fair (11)
- 12 Requests from film makers etc. to use public property for filming were also processed.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to issue Casual Trading Licenses.
- Continue to promote trading where bays are vacant by contacting those on the waiting lists and continued to monitor data on Casual Trading through Community Wardens Work Plans returns.
- Continue to facilitate queries and issue permissions as required to Media and Production Companies wishing to film in the County.

PROMOTION OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Irish language classes (beginner and intermediate levels) continued to be made available for staff of the local authority and classes were also available for Councillors who expressed an interest in same. These classes were made available online.
- Community Support Grants – The Irish language was specifically included as a category in the Community Support Scheme in 2023. Small scale grants totalling €5,000 were approved for

projects by Community and Voluntary Organisations to support the promotion and increased use of the Irish language.

- Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe continued its support of the promotion of Irish in communities throughout the County through sponsorship of a Glór na nGael Award, which was presented to Comhar Chuigéal, Conamara, County na Gaillimhe, in March 2023.
- Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe continued to work in partnership with other organisations, informing them of our Language Scheme and ensure that the measures of the Scheme were implemented where such was within the Council's control. Support and advice were provided, along with proofing services.
- Information and consultation continue to be provided to staff of Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe regarding language duties, obligations and legislation, including ensuring bilingualism on www.galway.ie / www.gaillimh.ie, in line with our language scheme.
- The Council continued to co-operate with An Coimisinéir Teanga, in dealing with issues raised by members of the public, regarding Irish language services and legislation.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to provide information to all staff of Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe regarding language duties, obligations and legislation, including information to ensure bilingualism on www.galway.ie / www.gaillimh.ie, in line with our language scheme.
- Continue to provide appropriate language awareness and language support material to staff of Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, to enhance the provision of services through Irish.
- Continue to provide and build on the number of Irish classes/courses provided throughout the year for staff and Members of Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, focusing in particular on conversational Irish and possible immersion courses in the Gaeltacht, based on available funding.
- Continue to provide the awarding of Scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta Phádraig Mhic Phiarais / Pádraig Pearse Scholarships in partnership with Irish Colleges in the County.
- Continue with Scoil Samhraidh an Phiarsaigh/Padraig Pearse summer school.
- Continue to promote the Irish language category for community support grants and Gradaim an Chathaoirligh, on a priority basis.
- Lead participation of Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe in activities and events during Seachtain na Gaeilge in March 2024.
- Continue to liaise with community groups for the promotion of the Irish language.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT – COUNCIL PROPERTIES / HEALTH & SAFETY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Corporate Services continued to provide caretaking and facilities management services for the Council's network of offices, libraries, and civic functions.
- The Unit continued to deliver on its requirements under the Safety Management Programme in areas such as PAT testing, periodic testing of electrical installations, VDU assessments, maintenance to our lightning protection systems, fire safety systems including emergency preparedness for our buildings, Static Risk Assessments.
- Energy efficiency monitoring and management continues to be a priority focus in the facilities unit. A new Energy Bureau called Atlantic Energy has recently been established with joint funding from LAs in the region and SEAI. Galway County Council has been assigned an Energy Bureau Office to support the organisation in reducing our overall internal energy consumption.
- Ongoing review of refurbishment requirement to Council office buildings to facilitate the provision of additional office and meeting room accommodation.
- The Unit continues to undertake procurement processes for a range of facilities management related contracts to ensure value for money and quality of service are maintained.
- Plans to install a new back-up electrical generator are underway in partnership with the Fire Service Department who are taking the lead role on this project, in conjunction with the IT Section.
- Ongoing Legionella Risk Assessments and monitoring programme in place in relation to office and library accommodation.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Maintenance contracts will continue to be the subject of ongoing review with the aim of maintaining costs reductions achieved in recent years and we will seek to achieve further cost reductions.
- In order to operate within available budgets, it may be necessary to limit the maintenance of office and library facilities to focus on priority health and safety requirements and critical operating systems.
- The provision of adequate accommodation at Áras an Chontae is proving to be an ever-increasing challenge. Occupancy demands in several areas in HQ are exceeding the available capacity giving rise to the change of use into office space in some locations of the building including the old laboratory space, meeting rooms, training rooms, etc. A review of the organisation's business and customer requirements for the medium to long term must be undertaken to allow for adequate office space capacity to be available to deliver these services.

- The Unit will aim to further reduce energy consumption across its offices and libraries. In conjunction with the newly appointed Energy Bureau Officer.
- Subject to funding to develop a hot food service in the canteen and to improve the offering in Centrepoint too.

MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS AND ARCHIVES

The Archives Section works to ensure the care, preservation, management of and access to the Council's archives. Archives are an important asset to Galway County Council assisting it meet its objective to be transparent and accountable. They are also important resources and tools for research, education and cultural tourism. They are valuable cultural heritage assets which require specific care. The Section also provides policy advice to the Council on the care and management of its records.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Continued to provide core archival services, in terms of access and preservation. Such as maintaining and updating information on Galway County Council's archival holdings through its descriptive lists and its on-line catalogue, and through various archival portals; monitored the environmental conditions of the archives and endeavoured to ensure their continued protection, preservation and management, despite storage facilities not meeting internationally acceptable preservation standards.
- Continued the programme of processing archive material and collections^[1]. This activity is the lynchpin between access and use; charged with providing an effective and efficient connection to our holdings, first and foremost our descriptive lists and on-line catalogue provide this connection as do our website, together with entries on various archive portals.
- Provided reader services, such as answering research queries and providing advice and guidance to researchers.
- Continued the programme of providing security backup and reference surrogates to collections^[2]. The availability of a significant quantity and variety of Archives collection on the [Digital Archives](#) is an invaluable asset and benefit to the researching public enabling 24/7 access to global audience to many of our collections.
- Commenced a project to review for retention or disposal, arrangement and listing of a large collection of maps and drawings held off-site.
- Continued the process of upgrading the Archives database system (i.e. transfer from Adlib to Axiell Collections).
- Commissioned the conservation of several oversized OS barony maps (1841).

- Provided advice on records management best practice and assistance to Galway County Council units as required, working with various units to update in-house Retention Schedules, and compile and action Disposal Certificates.
- The Arlink records management database will continue to be used to assist with the management of records within the organisation sent to off-site storage.
- Continued the management of non-current (hardcopy) record transfers to storage and record retrievals and returns: 1,081 requests were processed from January to-date (09/11/2023). There are now more than 141,370 entries on the ArLink database.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Concentrate on processing archive collections, whilst continuing to provide access and advice to researchers.
- Continue the programme of providing security backup and reference surrogates to collections.
- Continue to promote awareness of Galway County Council Archives' collections.
- Complete the grade of the Archives database system (i.e. transfer from Adlib to Axiell Collections).
- Continue the project of reviewing for retention or disposal, arrangement and listing of a large collection of maps and drawings held off-site.
- Galway County Council will continue to avail of commercial storage for its non-current records and manage the retrieval and return of records held in off-site storage.
- Continue to liaise with and support the various Units within Galway County Council to develop, maintain and implement file classification and record retention schedules and to provide advice on records management best practice. Each Unit will be encouraged to review and update their schedules on a regular basis and to list and actively manage their non-current record holdings held off-site.
- Liaise with Corporate Services and Library Services in the quest for alternative and improved accommodation for the Archive repository and for a Record Store.
- Liaise with Corporate Services, the Library Service, and others in the quest to develop a digital preservation policy, digital archive and ensure digital born records are appropriately management.

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- A Rolling Register of Electors is in place following commencement of the Electoral Reform Act 2022 on the 13th October 2022.
- Local Government Elector Registration System (LGERS) Modernisation Project - (National Electoral Registration Database) - All local authorities are scheduled to migrate their data to

a central shared national electoral registration database by the end of 2025. In advance of this we are working on improving our data quality:

Accuracy - Additional data is now required from all electors including PPS Numbers, Dates of Birth and Eircodes, Comprehensiveness - RIPs and preregistration of 16 to 17 year olds.

A public awareness campaign, through TV, Radio, social media and local print media, leaflet drops and schools inviting the public to update their details on the Register has been ongoing in 2023 working in tandem with the Department and a national campaign.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Rolling Register and systems updates ongoing.
- Work will continue on the Electoral Modernisation Project with local campaigns for people in Galway to update their details on the Electoral Register through www.checktheregister.ie
- The Council will organise the Local Elections to be held in June 2024. Working group to be established Q4 2023 to plan for the Local Elections 2024.
- Preparation for proposed Referendum in Q1 2024.
- Work on implementing Electoral Boundary revision changes will commence following the recommendations of An Coimisiún Toghcháin, Constituency Review Report 2023 Dáil and European Parliament Constituencies.

CORPORATE PLANNING & SUPPORT / LOCAL REPRESENTATION / CIVIC LEADERSHIP

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Administrative services are provided for the Chief Executive, Cathaoirleach of the Council, Elected Members, Corporate Policy Group and Council Meetings.

SERVICES DELIVERED FOR PLENARY COUNCIL MEETINGS AND MEMBERS

- Preparation of Agendas for Ordinary, Special and Annual Meetings of the Plenary Council, co-ordination of agenda items with all Sections, facilitating the meetings and recording the minutes.
- Publication of the agendas, minutes and agenda documentation to the Extranet.
- Facilitating meetings of the Corporate Policy Group.
- Facilitation of Expressions of Interest for attendance at training events and conferences.
- Compilation of Reports to Council in accordance with the Local Government Act for Authorisation of Attendance by Members at Training Events & Conferences.

- Arranging in-house training in line with the agreed Galway County Council Training and Development Plan for the Members.
- Processing Members Travel & Subsistence Claims for attendance at Training & Conferences.
- Facilitate the submission of Summaries of Conferences attended by the Members, preparation of Report for Agenda and publishing Summaries on the Website.
- Maintaining Database of Attendances of the Members at all Meetings of the Council, including Plenary, SPC, Municipal District, JPC, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Local Community Development Committee, Road Safety Together Committee.
- Facilitate the compilation of the Public Register of all Attendances and Payments of the Councillors.
- Maintenance of Ethics Register for Councillors.
- Facilitating the Members in the return of Donations Declarations.
- Facilitation of Civic Receptions is supported by the Corporate Team in response to proposals of the Plenary Council.
- Progressed the use of technology to facilitate meetings.
- Preparation of the Corporate Plan, a statement of strategy for the local authority within 6 months from the date of the 2024 Annual Meeting, in accordance with section 134(1) of the Local Government Act 2001.
- Preparation of an SPC Scheme, following the Local Elections to be held in June 2024 in accordance with section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001 and section 48(1A) of the 2001 Act, as amended by section 41(a) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

FACILITATING THE JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

Galway County Council operates a Joint Policing Committee (JPC) in conjunction with local Garda Síochána management. The operation of this Committee is an assigned statutory function, in accordance with Section 35(4) and 36(1) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and in accordance with Revised JPC Guidelines issued in 2014.

The function of a Joint Policing Committee is set out in section 36(2) of the Garda Síochána Act, which states: *“The joint policing committee’s function is to serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the Local Authority’s administrative area”*.

Meetings of the JPC were held on 30th January, 3rd April, 19th June, 4th September and the 6th November 2023.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY CORPORATE SERVICES FOR THE ORGANISATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Maintenance of Ethics Register for Relevant Staff.
- Support provided by Corporate Services for Receiving, Registering and Opening of Tenders for the organisation through the eTenders system.
- Register of Chief Executive's Orders maintained, Orders Numbered by Corporate Services for each Section.
- Corporate Services continued to serve as liaison for the Office of the Ombudsman in relation to queries raised by the Office in relation to service delivery by Galway County Council. All correspondence is co-ordinated via Corporate Services, with a tracking system in place.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Corporate Services will continue to support the Cathaoirleach, elected members and the organisation of Plenary Council Meetings.
- The Council will maintain Staff and Members Ethics Register and facilitate the Members in the return of Donations Statements.
- The Unit will publish details of all Payments to Elected Members, including in respect of Outside Bodies to which the Members are nominated.
- The Unit will actively support the role of the Corporate Policy Group.
- The Unit will continue to facilitate the Joint Policing Committee and other meetings as necessary
- The Council will continue to comply with its statutory requirements regarding Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Access to Information on the Environment legislation and will continue to facilitate the organisation in relation to Ombudsman queries.
- Corporate Services will continue to facilitate the reception, opening and recording of Tenders received by the Council.
- A Corporate Governance Risk Compliance Software Solution will be procured. The system will be custom built to streamline existing manual processes in respect of risk activities across the organisation and provide direct access to risk information, data and instant reporting on a real time basis.

DATA PROTECTION

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on 25th May 2018, with the purpose of maintaining a uniform approach to Data Protection across all EU member states. The GDPR sets out extensive obligations on data controllers and data processors and provides strengthened protections for data subjects. The GDPR is binding in its entirety and requires the use of privacy principles within all aspects of business operations: such as Privacy by Default, Privacy by Design, Accountability and Transparency. Although the GDPR is directly applicable as a law in all Member States of the EU, it allows for certain issues to be given further effect in national law. In Ireland, the national law, which, amongst other things, gives further effect to the GDPR, is the Data Protection Act 2018.

All staff have been afforded the opportunity to attend training sessions and briefings on the obligations this legislation places on Galway County Council.

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) is assigned to Corporate Services and is the contact point for all Subject Access Requests received by Galway County Council. The DPO is also the Council's contact point with the Office of the Data Protection Commission.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Implementation of the Data Protection Compliance Plan continued to be prioritised during 2023. This Compliance Plan focuses on the 7 Data Management Principles, Data Controller Obligations, and Data Subject Rights. To progress the Plan, the focus on increased Staff Awareness and Training and the implementation of Policies and Procedures that create a more transparent, secure and trusted environment for all personal data in our control, continued in 2023.
- The Data Management Platform (PrivacyEngine) is implemented across the organisation as an effective tool to manage and ensure compliance with the GDPR. Improvements to the Platform were implemented during 2023 with new functionality added, including Programme of Work Templates. Each Unit of the Council has a designated Data Champion responsible for co-ordinating the Data Protection requirements of the Unit.
- Each business unit continued to develop Privacy Notices in respect of all processing activities and implement the required Data Processing Agreements governing the processing of personal data where a Processor is engaged to process personal data on the instruction of the Council.
- PrivacyEngine a built-in online training module that allowed the creation and management of training courses for employees to ensure increased awareness\ understanding while reducing risks.

- On-line Data Protection/GDPR training courses were delivered to approx. 800 employees in 2023 on the following:
 - Data Subject Access Requests
 - Data Protection by Design and Default
 - Galway County Council Data Protection Policy & Procedures for Remote Working
 - Data Breach notification
 - Online GDPR training is delivered to all new employees of Galway County Council as part of their induction to the Council.
 - The DPO provided in-person Data Protection Awareness Training for all outdoor staff at three venues across the County in quarter 1 of 2023.
 - In-person Data Protection Awareness Training was provided by the DPO for all office-based staff in quarter 1 of 2023.
- The DPO provided a Data Protection/GDPR Training Workshop to the Beach Lifeguards in advance of the summer season.
- 10 no. Data Subject Rights requests were received up to the end of October 2023; 9 were granted, 1 was refused as the personal data requested did not exist.
- 2 no. Requests were received from An Garda Síochána, in accordance with Section 41. (b) of the Data Protection Act 2018. 1 was granted and 1 was refused as the data requested did not exist.
- 2 no. Internal Requests were received in accordance with Section 60 (3) (a) (iv) of the Data Protection Act 2018. 1 was granted and 1 was refused as the data requested did not exist.
- The Staff Data Protection Newsletter which is designed to promote awareness of Data Protection issues across the organisation, continued to be published in 2023, with an issue released at the end of each quarter.
- The Data Protection Staff Intranet Resources is updated on an ongoing basis and continues to provide useful links and reference points for ensuring Data Protection related compliance for all business units.
- Galway County Council received the Final Decision of the Data Protection Commissioners (DPC) in relation to the DPC's Inquiry commenced in 2018 into the use by Galway County Council of CCTV and other surveillance technologies.
- The DPC, in its Final Decision, exercised a number of Corrective Powers on Galway County Council, including the following:
 - A temporary ban on the processing of personal data through CCTV cameras and ANPR cameras at several locations until a valid legal basis can be identified.
 - A temporary ban on the processing of personal data through body-worn cameras until a valid legal basis can be identified.
 - An order to Galway County Council to bring its processing of personal data into compliance taking certain actions specified in the decision.

The Council is working to ensure compliance with the Corrective Powers exercised by the DPC.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Compliance Project Plan will continue to be a priority for 2024, focusing on Data Management Principles, Data Controller Obligations, Data Subject Rights, supported by increased Awareness and Training, Policies and Procedures that creates a more transparent, secure and trusted environment for all personal data in our control.
- The DPO will continue to act as the contact point for the public in relation to Data Subject Access Requests and any other information sought and also for the Office of the Data Protection Commission.
- The PrivacyEngine Data Management Platform will continue to facilitate the management of all aspects of data protection within the organisation to demonstrate compliance and deliver real business value, turning data protection and privacy into a key priority.
- Online GDPR training will continue to be delivered to Galway County Council employees via PrivacyEngine to ensure increased awareness and understanding while reducing risks.
- The Record of Processing Activities will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis by each Unit.
- Work will continue to develop Privacy Notices and ensure all Data Processing Agreements are in place in each business unit.
- The DPO will continue to provide support and advice to business units in the conducting of Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) in respect of any new processing likely to result in a high risk to personal data.
- The DPO will continue to provide guidance on Data Protection & GDPR to business units within Galway County Council while supporting and facilitating the work of the Data Protection contacts in each business unit.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The Freedom of Information Officer/Access to Information on the Environment Officer is assigned to Corporate Services and is the contact point for Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Decision Makers & Appeals Officers in the organisation and also the Local Government Management Agency and the Office of the Information Commissioner/Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Information. All FOI & AIE Requests received are processed and tracked through Corporate Services and a Disclosure Log of FOI requests maintained.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

110 requests were received up to the end of October 2023. Decisions were issued as follows:

- 26 granted, 31 part-granted, 24 refused, 3 transferred, 4 withdrawn, 16 withdrawn and dealt with outside of FOI, 6 pending decision.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

33 requests were received to end October 2023. Decisions were issued as follows:

- 13 granted, 9 part-granted, 2 refused, 1 withdrawn, 2 withdrawn and dealt with outside of AIE, 6 pending decision.

PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY

Section 42(2) (a) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires an organisation to set out in its strategic plan “an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues.”

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

In advance of the forthcoming corporate planning cycle Galway County Council progressed an initiative to implement the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty). A cross-organisational working group was established to create the conditions necessary for effectively and efficiently implementing the Duty. The core task for the working group is to create the conditions for implementation of the Duty. This involved working with an external consultant to develop key foundations of:

- An equality and human rights values statement to provide a frame and benchmarks for implementing the Duty;
- Assessment of equality and human rights issues relevant to the functions of Galway County Council, the first step required under the Duty; and
- Implementation Plan for the Duty in Galway County Council.

The initiative will ensure inclusive policies and practices continue while informing the implementation of the Duty in this new corporate planning cycle.

In July 2023, The Management Team adopted for Galway County Council a Public Sector Duty Implementation Plan.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

Galway County Council's adopted Public Sector Duty Implementation Plan identifies enabling factors for implementation of the Public Sector Duty and sets out priority actions required to be implemented and this work will be progressed in 2024.

The Corporate Working Group will gather updates from Units and report on implementation to the Management Team on an ongoing basis and to our citizens via the Annual Report.

Updates will also be included for the Elected Members via the monthly Management Report.

CUSTOMER SERVICE, COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Corporate Services continued to coordinate customer services activities in the Council, with Customer Services Team the first point of contact for the public. The Customer Services Desk continues to be operated to provide efficient referral/query handling for customers as they enter Áras an Chontae. The phone service continues to be operated from here, with back up from the Customer Services Communications Centre on the second floor of Áras an Chontae as well.

- Further increased use of Social Media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) is continuing to grow and develop.
- Social Media has been integrated with Advertising and other Promotional Campaigns of the Council and specific attention given to the use of Social Media during severe weather events. There has been an increase in the posting of events on behalf of staff with a focus on Road Works, Water Disruptions and any other day to day events happening throughout the County.
- Communications Section developed the programme for 'Your Council Day' national Twitter campaign as coordinated by the LGMA.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The email addresses, customerservices@galwaycoCountyie and gaeilge@cocogaillimh.ie remain a central point of access to information for Staff and Customers alike. Staff are asked to submit information on projects, campaigns, events, works etc. so that the Customer Services Team are aware what events are taking place across the Council and are better informed to handle queries. The general public can also email these addresses with general queries, which are acknowledged and directed to the relevant sections as required for their attention and direct reply.
- Provided information on Council services and operations and advised how the public could engage with staff and services.

- Customer Services is the central point of contact on behalf of Galway County Council for the new Government portal for Public Consultations.
- Door and car park access system continue to be maintained by Customer Services on behalf of the Building and Facilities Unit.
- Introduced a new telephone system Luware Nimbus for easier access to all staff.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to co-ordinate implementation of the Customer Service Action Plan in line with agreed targets and goals in the Quality Customer Services Strategy.
- Develop branding and standard report templates for use by all staff in Galway County Council
- Continue the Customer Services Officers Group meetings, information sharing and joint actions across all sections.
- Continue to focus on the development of the County Council's use of Social Media as a source of information and an efficient communication channel for our customers.
-

INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve the organisations operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance process.

The Internal Audit Unit is responsible for providing assurance to the Chief Executive of the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control and risk management systems. The Internal Audit work programme is driven by the annual Internal Audit plan which is drawn up in conjunction with the Executive Team and the Audit Committee.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Completion of six Audit reports in line with the Internal Audit Plan 2023, with five IA reviews still underway.
- Quarterly checking of the cash office receipts, and lodgements and cancelled receipts was carried out.
- Periodic checking is carried out in the Motor Tax Office headquarters in Áras an Chontae and biannual checks at MTO in An Cheathrú Rua and Ballinasloe.
- Annual review of burial ground receipts and lodgements.
- Periodic checking of prompt payment interest penalties.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Drafting of the 2024 Internal Audit plan for approval by the Audit Committee & Chief Executive
- Reviews of recommendations made on the 2023 Audit Reports.
- Facilitate the work of the Audit Committee /administration of meetings and participation at regional and national Internal Auditors network meetings.
- Completion of audits as per the 2024 Audit Plan.
- Compliance with the Quality Assurance requirements of the Public Spending Code.
- Continued work on policy compliance and value for money testing.
- Quarterly monitoring of purchases made using Low Value Purchase Cards and Fuel cards.
- Periodic checking in the Motor Tax and Cash Office/Prompt Payment Interest Penalties & other miscellaneous income streams where resources allow.

LEGAL ADVISORY SERVICES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Department continued to provide legal and advisory services for all programme areas and Directorates. These services included the acquisition and sale of properties, an area of practice which has continued to return to usual levels since the Covid pandemic, the conduct of litigation to include District Court enforcement prosecutions, Circuit and High Court, including Judicial Review. The completion of land acquisitions, CPOs on inter-urban routes and road widening schemes, were also substantial areas of work for the Law Agent Unit.
- The Case Management System, which facilitates the use of templates to create workflows for the efficient and cost-effective delivery of legal services, has undergone the most complete update in recent years and this update was completed in November 2023.
- Work has continued on the council Register of Lands, in co-operation with our partners in other units such as IT, Finance and Housing. Significant progress has been achieved in terms of the Property Interest Register, and indeed on the Archiving of old files, through the use of Remote Working, helping to ensure high staff productivity in this area in circumstances of Blended Working. Funding for the new IS management system has been approved and the Law Agent Office has engaged with various service providers with the view to finalising this system acquisition. Staffing for a new Property Interest Register Unit has also been approved and initial staff identified. This is in line with Local Government Auditor requirements.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Focus on and continue in our efforts to provide efficient legal advisory services for all programme areas throughout the organisation.

- We continue in our significant efforts to meet our requirements in terms of the new Data Protection Regulations, to include Data Mapping and Risk Control. We have appointed a specific GDPR and FoI representative for the unit from our solicitor staff in this regard. Staff within the unit will, in conjunction with HR, receive updated training throughout the year.
- Workflows for the Case Management System will continue to be created, further enhancing work delivery and capacity. We will also look to maximise the benefits of this important system as the practice of Remote Working of council staff continues to evolve. Staff will continue in their efforts to maximise the use of this system in 2024 having received specific upgrade training in late 2023.
- We will ensure that our team members will, through the appropriate training, continue to keep up to date with developments in Local Government Law and Office Management.
- The ongoing work on the Register of Lands will remain a priority area of work with the ultimate aim of bringing the council's record of property ownership fully up to date. The implementation of the new IS Management system and the completion of the setting up of the new Property Interest Register Unit is a key goal for the Law Agent Office in Q1 of 2024.
- Recruitment to back-fill and complete the Law Agent team of employees will be crucial in the early part of 2024 to safeguard and ensure the efficient provision of legal and advisory services to the council.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS FIRE & MAJOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Notification has not yet been received of grants for 2024 from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the Department of Transport, (DOT). The figures included in the budget for 2024 are therefore in line with the 2023 grant allocation. Road Grant allocations are distributed amongst the Municipal District based on the KM of road within the district and in line with the 3-year Road Works Programme (the final year of which is 2024).

Road Lengths per MD					
Municipal District	Motorway	National Primary	National Secondary	Regional	Local
Athenry/Oranmore	31.82	2.17	29.86	86.15	555.40
Ballinasloe	16.85	0.00	30.13	218.37	1,350.98
Conamara	0.00	0.00	109.60	229.40	1,142.68
Loughrea	51.26	0.00	60.34	271.68	1,626.50
Tuam	14.15	20.95	61.41	94.06	937.44
Total	114.08	23.12	291.34	899.66	5,613.00

NATIONAL ROADS - INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023

Funding was provided in 2023 to facilitate the continued advancement and delivery of the National Road network across the county. The following projects are managed by the National Roads Project Office and the costs associated with this programme are recouped, in full, from Transport Infrastructure Ireland:

National Road No.	Route Section
N6	Galway City Ring Road
N59	Clifden to Maam Cross
N59	Maigh Cuilinn Bypass
N59	Maam Cross to Oughterard
N63	Liss to Abbey Realignment
N17	Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment
N84	Galway to Curraghmore
Greenways	Galway to Athlone Cycleway Connemara Greenway

Active Travel	AT- N63 Abbeyknockmoy Village
	AT-N67 Ballindereen to Oranmore
	AT-N67 Kinvara Village
	AT-N67 South of Ballindereen

- N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) - In December 2021 An Bord Pleanála approved (with conditions and modifications) the N6 GCRR. Three Judicial Reviews were taken challenging the decisions of An Bord Pleanála approving the N6 GCRR, and in January 2023 the High Court made final orders in those 3 sets of proceedings quashing the decisions of An Bord Pleanála. The High Court remitted the applications for approval of the N6 GCRR back to An Bord Pleanála for further consideration.
- Maam Cross to Oughterard has been granted planning permission and is being advanced in two phases. Phase 1 - Maam Cross to Bunnakill is complete. Phase 2 - Bunnakill to Claremount was the subject of discussions with National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). Land acquisition on the scheme is ongoing.
- Galway to Athlone cycleway – A Preferred Route was displayed at Public Information events in four locations in March 2023 and work progressed on Phase 3 design. In Q3, RPS, Consulting Engineers advised Westmeath County Council (the Lead Authority), they sought a mutual termination under the contract with immediate effect. Westmeath County Council *on behalf of the participating local authorities and TII*, is exploring various approaches for progressing the scheme through the design and environmental evaluation processes. Public engagement and landowner liaison is ongoing.
- N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass – The tender process for this scheme was concluded in late 2021 with the appointment of Wills Bros Ltd as the main contractor. The main elements of this scheme include 4.6km of type 1 single carriageway, realignment of the Knockferry & Homefarm Roads over 1.3km, 1.7km of farm/accommodation roads, 2 no. at-grade roundabouts and 8 structures consisting of 5 bridges, 2 underpasses and 1 culvert. Works progressed well throughout 2023 and the main focus of the construction activities during the year were completing all earthworks, bridge and underpass structures, drainage, utility works, pavement surfacing, and accommodation works. It is anticipated that Substantial Completion of this scheme will be achieved towards the end of the year with the scheme being opened thereafter to traffic, bypassing the village of Maigh Cuilinn and removing traffic congestion through one of Galway’s most congested villages.

- N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme – Approval of the Scheme was granted by An Bord Pleanála in May 2023. Consultants for Phases 5,6 & 7 are to be appointed by December 2023 with construction tender documents being prepared in 2024.
- N84 Galway to Curraghmore – Consultants were appointed in May 2023 to carry out Phases 0,1,2 of TII’s PMGs. It is anticipated that Phase 0 will be completed by the end of 2023.
- N17 Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment – An application for approval of a CPO and Natura Impact Statement were submitted to An Bord Pleanála with both being approved in March and October 2022 respectively. The CPO has been confirmed. Land acquisition is underway. Ground investigation and Archaeology investigations are underway.
- Galway to Clifden (Connemara Greenway) – construction is ongoing on sections between Clifden and Recess.
- Galway to Oughterard (Connemara Greenway) – consultants have been appointed to progress this scheme through phases 0-4 of the TII Project Management Guidelines. Currently at Phase 2. Awaiting Gate Approval from TII to begin Phase 3 deliverables.
- The annual resurfacing and maintenance programme for the National routes in the county was undertaken in accordance with the budget for maintenance works notified by Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- A full programme of Pavement Overlay works was undertaken on the National Primary and National Secondary Road Network in the context of the 2023 grant allocations from Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- Active Travel (AT) Schemes – The NRPO are currently progressing 4 active travel schemes: N67 South of Ballinderreen AT, N63 Abbeyknockmoy Village AT, N67 Kinvara Village AT and N67 Ballinderreen Village AT.

NATIONAL ROADS - PROPOSALS FOR 2024

- N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass – Subject to achieving Substantial Completion for the scheme construction works, the works will be monitored throughout the defects liability period with the Contractor being required to complete all outstanding snag & defect items. A final account will be prepared & agreed. Remaining land settlements will also continue to be addressed.

- N6 Galway City Ring Road – The scheme has been remitted back to An Bord Pleanála. A Further Information Request is anticipated from An Bord Pleanála and Galway County Council will respond as thoroughly and quickly as possible to any such request.
- Galway to Athlone Cycleway - Public engagement and liaison with landowners to continue. Phase 3, design, and environmental evaluation on the preferred route to continue once Consultants are commissioned.
- N67 Ballindereen to Kinvara Realignment – Outstanding land settlements will continue to be addressed in 2024.
- N59 Bunnakill to Claremont - Progression of method statements for construction phase will continue. Advance contracts for ground investigation works and topographic surveys and archaeology investigations will continue to be progressed and completed.
- N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment – It is anticipated that construction tender documents will be advanced in 2024.
- N63 Abbeyknockmoy to Annagh Hill – Outstanding land settlements will continue to be progressed through 2024.
- N84 Galway to Curraghmore – This Project will be progressed by the consultants through Phases 1 & 2 of TII’s PMGs in 2024.
- N17 Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment Scheme – continue to progress land acquisition and detailed design and complete the preparation of construction tender documents.
- Galway to Clifden Greenway - Complete remaining 6km from Clifden to Recess and open to the public. Land acquisition is on-going.
- The annual resurfacing and maintenance programme incorporating ordinary maintenance, winter maintenance, bridge maintenance and traffic route lighting maintenance will be undertaken within the limits of available funding from Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- In addition, the programme of Pavement Overlay works will continue on the National Primary and National Secondary Road Network in the context of the 2024 grant allocations from Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

- Active Travel (AT) Schemes – continue to progress the N67 South of Ballinderreen AT, N63 Abbeyknockmoy Village AT, N67 Kinvara Village AT and N67 Ballinderreen to Oranmore AT schemes through the planning consent process.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL ROADS MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT WORKS

The 2023 total grant allocation for Regional and Local Roads in was **€39,329,263** and this grant allocation was classified under the following headings:

Grant Category	2023 Allocation
Restoration Improvement Grant	€20,455,000
Restoration Maintenance Grant	€2,986,500
Supplementary Restoration Maintenance	€2,346,500
Discretionary Maintenance Grant	€5,659,500
Specific Improvement Grants – Bridge Rehabilitation Programme	€630,000
Low-Cost Safety Improvement Grants	€418,400
Specific Improvement Grants	€1,000,000
Strategic Regional and Local Roads	€1,100,000
Speed Limits – Housing/Signage	€79,830
Training	€128,000
Drainage Works	€1,397,500
Community Involvement Scheme	€1,131,840
Former National Roads	€775,000
*PSCI: Survey Support	€ 52,000
Climate Adaptation & Resilience	€1,131,840
OVERALL TOTAL	€39,329,263

**Pavement Survey Condition Index*

RESTORATION IMPROVEMENT (RI) - INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023

Funding of **€20,455,000** was allocated by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport for road reconstruction works on Non-National roads in 2023. This funding was allocated as follows and facilitated improvement works at 241 locations throughout the County:

<i>Restoration Improvement 2023</i>		
Municipal District	No. of locations	Allocation
Athenry/Oranmore	17	€2,014,984
Ballinasloe	46	€4,929,024
Conamara	86	€4,309,437
Loughrea	45	€5,961,815
Tuam	47	€3,239,741
Total	241	€20,455,000

2023 was the second year of the 2022-2024 Multi-Annual (RI) roads programme. This programme was collated in conjunction with the elected members and approved by the Municipal District Councils during October 2021. This programme formed the basis of planned works under Restoration Improvement works for the three-year period 2022 to 2024.

RESTORATION IMPROVEMENT (RI) - PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

A programme of restoration improvement works will be finalised when notification of the 2024 funding is received and will be detailed in the Annual Roads Programme 2024.

Restoration Maintenance (RM) - Activities in 2023:

Funding of **€5,333,000** was allocated for Restoration Maintenance (surface dressing) by the Department of Transport. It was allocated as follows and facilitated surface dressing works at 152 locations around the County:

Restoration Maintenance 2023		
Municipal District	No. of Locations	Allocation
Athenry/Oranmore	12	€525,344
Ballinasloe	44	€1,285,088
Conamara	38	€1,123,551
Loughrea	32	€1,554,356
Tuam	26	€844,661
Total	152	€ 5,333,000

RESTORATION MAINTENANCE (RM) - PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

A programme of restoration maintenance works will be finalised when notification of the 2024 funding is received and will be detailed in the Annual Roads Programme 2024.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCHEMES

As part of the 2023 Regional & Local Road allocation, the Department of Transport approved funding in the amount of **€1,131,840** which allowed the progression of 20 projects from the priority list that was submitted in 2021. Work is still in progress for these schemes, with the intention of completion by funding allocation deadline of 30th November 2023.

The Department sought applications for Community Involvement Schemes 2024/2025 under Circular RW13/2023. A submission has been made to the Department for funding for 2024 and 2025 in the total amount of **€5,519,224**. Galway County Council is awaiting a department review of submitted applications. A programme of works for 2024 will be finalised when notification of the 2024 funding is received.

FORMER NATIONAL ROADS

A total of **€775,000** was received in 2023 for two separate sections of the R446 former national road between Galway and Dublin. These works were completed. A submission has been made to the Department for funding in 2024 under this grant category in the amount of **€1,625,000** on the following roads; R446 (former N6 - two sections), R458 (former N18 - two sections) and R354 (former N63 – one section).

TERTIARY ROAD REPAIRS (DG)

Investment in Local Tertiary roads repairs continued in 2023 with a specific allocation from the Discretionary Grant (DG) to be set aside for such roads. A total of **€900,000** was allocated specifically to this category which enabled restoration improvement works on 41 Local Tertiary

Proposed Bridge Rehabilitation Programme 2024

**Subject to Departmental approval*

Priority	Road Number	Bridge Name and Location	2024 Proposed Expenditure €
1	R336	Teernakil Bridge	€20,000
2	R446	Suck (East) Bridge	€20,000
3	L-53221	Crumlin East Bridge 4	€20,000
4	L-3111	Licklea Bridge	€20,000
5	L-6143	Mahanagh Bridge 1	€200,000
6	L-3117	Cormacuagh (Clogh) Bridge	€200,000
7	L-6447	Kilshanvy Bridge 2	€40,000
8	L-46031	Pollboy Bridge	€30,000
9	L-2307	Newvillage Bridge	€30,000
10	L-6331	Kingstown Bridge	€15,000
11	L-2314	Timacat Bridge	€25,000
12	L-7152	Ballynanulty Bridge	€20,000
13	L-2208	Belmont Bridge 1	€25,000
14	L-85381	Roxborough Bridge 2	€150,000
Total			€ 815,000

roads in County Galway.

It is intended to continue allocating a specific portion of the Discretionary Grant towards improvement works on tertiary roads. A programme of restoration maintenance works will be finalised when notification of the 2024 funding is received.

BRIDGES REHABILITATION AND REPAIRS

12No. bridges (7no. design & 5no. works) were allocated funding, totalling **€630,000**, under the Bridge Rehabilitation Programme in 2023 for which designs and works are ongoing and will be completed by the end of November deadline. A re-allocation of funding was agreed with the Department in August 2023 once it became clear that a decision on planning by ABP for one of the bridges (Formweel, Shannapheasteen) was not going to be received in time. The re-allocated funding was used for rehabilitation of a further 2no bridges and de-vegetation of 21no bridges. Bridge repair works were completed on a further 14no bridges, which were allocated funding of **€395,000** from the Discretionary Grant.

In accordance with circular RW17/2023, each local authority was invited to submit applications for bridge rehabilitation and repair works, of which the total should not exceed 130% of 2023 allocation. Based on this and available resources to carry out the works in 2024, a submission for 14no bridges (4no design & 10no works) was submitted to the Department for approval, totalling **€815,000**. Details of the proposed bridge rehabilitation projects for 2024 is set out in the table below.

It is intended to continue to make provision from the Discretionary Grant allocation for bridge repairs to the amount of **€395,000** for 2024. This is dependent on the level of funding allocated by the Department. Full details of approved works will be detailed in the Roads Programme 2024.

Grant funding application requires an amount of work to have been completed to establish the feasibility of and constraints applicable to a particular project. The availability of a budget to undertake this work will ensure a sustainable pipeline of priority works is in place.

SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG)

A specific improvement grant allocation, totalling **€1,000,000** was received for projects in 2023:

- R374 Causeways & Bridges
- R332 Kilbannon
- R339 Belville

Galway County Council will seek funding for the continuation of these schemes into 2024. An application has also been submitted to the Department for a new Specific Improvement Grant at Cuan na Loinge in Conamara.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL AND LOCAL ROAD GRANTS

An allocation of **€ 1,100,000** was made available for the Athenry Northern Ring Road in 2023. The CPO for Athenry Northern Ring Road – Western Section was confirmed earlier in 2023. Notices to Treat have issued to the affected landowners. During the year the Department sanctioned the upgrade of one of the engineering positions on this scheme and a permanent engineer has been appointed to facilitate delivery of this project.

Preparation has begun on the tender documents for the construction works on this section. Detailed design continues on the eastern section towards the Monivea Road and Irish Rail has been appointed to complete the detailed design of the railway overbridge. The Department has confirmed its ongoing commitment to this project and an allocation is expected in 2024.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

In March 2023, the Department of Rural & Community Development approved an initial allocation of **€954,736** along with an allocation of **€250,000** which was ringfenced for the islands. In early August 2023, an additional **€563,523** plus another **€226,000** ringfenced for the island communities was allocated to Galway County. 41 projects were completed under the Local Improvement Scheme from an overall allocation of **€1,994,259** for 2023 from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

Due to the popularity of the scheme, it is anticipated that the LIS funding will continue in 2024. The amount of funding available will be dependent on funding allocation from Department of Rural & Community Development. An estimate for Budget 2024 included under SubServ B0406 is based on the initial allocation received in 2023.

NON-NATIONAL ROADS - OWN RESOURCES

The shortfall in the budgetary allocation for the maintenance of local roads over time has resulted in a significant reduction in the level of maintenance works the Council has been able to carry out. Inflationary pressures coupled with rising energy costs are impacting on pricing and costs. Some essential elements of maintenance including drainage, verge trimming, and the renewal of signs and markings have been particularly impacted by these rising inflationary costs. Local road maintenance is funded from both the Council's own resources and the Discretionary Grant.

The sum provided from the Council's own resources in 2023 was **€8,526,786** which included provision of **€2,200,000** for public lighting.

The distribution of the Local Roads Budget 2024 will be presented to Council for approval in the context of the Roads Programme 2024. The level of discretion that will be available to the Council in the allocation of funding in 2024 for Regional and Local Roads will be restricted by the requirements of the Memorandum on Grants for Regional and Local Roads as issued by the Department of Transport.

CLIMATE CHANGE

During 2023, a national allocation was made available to local authorities under the Department's regional and local road maintenance and renewal grant programmes for Climate Adaptation and Resilience scheme. The eligible projects could include but are not limited to the following –

- (i) preventative measures such as drainage works to mitigate flooding
- (ii) works at bridges to take account of increased hydraulic loads due to flash floods
- (iii) protection measures for roads which would be vulnerable to severe weather events such as embankment stability measures to protect the road and prevent slippage
- (iv) altering the level of the road to mitigate flooding, road edge protection measures
- (v) replacement/repair of seawalls or retaining walls.

Provision for **€1,169,193** was made in the Budget 2023 for 27 projects.

A submission for funding for 2024 is being prepared for works in this category.

PUBLIC LIGHTING

A sum of **€2,200,000** was provided, from Council's own funds, in the 2023 budget to fund the cost of the public lighting programme in County Galway, including the maintenance, energy and upgrade costs, while funding of **€113,665** was provided by the TII to cover the cost of the operation & maintenance of public light on the National Road Network.

To achieve compliance with National Energy Efficiency statutory targets set by Central Government Galway County Council is committed to the retrofit of all its inefficient public lights with energy efficient LED units & in this regard has committed to the delivery of this project as part of the National Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project. This project is being progressed on a regionalised basis with Galway County Council forming part of 10 Local Authorities participants within the Northwest Region with Mayo County Council acting as the lead authority for the region. All necessary agreements to participate in the project are in place. The Contract for the Northwest Region went out to tender in the second half of 2022. Contract award was anticipated by the end of Q1 2023. However legal challenges have delayed the issue

of a Letter of Acceptance to the identified preferred tenderer. Pending resolution of that situation, it is hoped that the contract will be awarded in Q1 2024 with activity on the ground to commence shortly thereafter.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Traffic Management Plans

Under the Active Travel schemes, a series of community transport studies are being progressed for several locations and it is expected that Traffic Management Plans will follow thereafter.

TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

A sum of **€10,000** exclusive of service support costs has been provided in the budget to progress 'Bike Week' in the County of Galway.

ROAD SAFETY ENGINEERING IMPROVEMENT

LOW-COST REMEDIAL MEASURES

The Council, as with headings B01 – B04, has not yet received notification of the level of grant that will be available for Low-Cost Safety Improvement works in 2024. An allocation of **€418,400** was received in 2023 from the Department of Transport and the projects included for completion in 2023 are outlined in the table below.

Road Number	Description of Location of Safety Improvement Works	Description of Proposed Scheme	Cost €
R348/R446	Derrydonnell Beg	To carry out a full re-design and layout, including Safety Audit at this junction	€40,000
R466	Moyveela (Oranmore to Craughwell)	Signage and trim Vegetation	€20,000
R446	Oranbeg (Oranmore to Craughwell)	To Carry out a full re-design and layout, including Safety Audit at this junction	€40,000
L4304/L43042	Loughturk	Set back boundary fences to open sight lines	€30,000
R363/L3210	Corracoolia	Set back boundary fences to open sight lines	€30,000

R374	Casla to Bealadangan, Carraroe West	Road studs, chevrons, signage, lining	€45,000
R341	Derrigimlagh	Set back wall on bend to improve road	€40,000
L1322/L5383/L5382	Boleybeg East	Build out of mouth of junction to decrease see through area of road, to prevent cars merging, locate signs. Install Other Information Signs, Regulatory Signs, Larger Warning Signs and Road Markings	€30,000
R380/R460	Series of sharp bends and narrow road due to bridge parapets (6No.)and approach to Gort Town (4No.) Total 10No.	Installation of Vehicle Activate Signs at the approaches to isolated hazards and bends	€44,900
L4322	Killimor to Kiltormer Rd at Derrew Cross	Realign the vertical alignment of the side road to provide a 5m dwell. Currently vehicles exiting side roads have no view of road	€25,500
L2212	Dalgin Improvement of Sight Lines	Set back fence and verge	€20,000
			€418,500

A submission has been made to the Department for 2024 in the amount of **€682,500** across all MDs and a programme of works will be compiled when notification of the 2024 funding is received.

OTHER ENGINEERING IMPROVEMENTS

A provision of **€79,830** was made available in 2023 for replacement of speed limit signage, a provision of **€33,290** was made for the provision of speed limit signage in housing estates, and a provision of **€12,540** was made available for cycle signage.

A submission will be made over the coming weeks for a funding for 2024. And a programme will be compiled when notification of the 2024 funding is received.

The Unit will continue to implement Road Works Speed Limits; in consultation with the Gardaí and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, as deemed necessary to facilitate the delivery of the Council's various work programmes.

ROAD SAFETY PROMOTION AND EDUCATION

There are a number of costs incurred under this heading including the Junior School Wardens Scheme, publicity campaigns including Road Safety Week, European Mobility Week, Drive for Life Course, Cycle Training for National Schools which promote awareness of road safety issues for the benefit of the public with a focus on vulnerable road users.

Galway County Council's Road Safety Together Committee consists of representatives from the County Council, Galway City Council, the Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and An Taisce. The Committee meet four times during the year and jointly examine options available to improve road safety for vulnerable road users (VRUs) including pedestrians, cyclists, members of the community with mobility issues, and motorists.

CAR PARKING

A budget provision under B09 inclusive of service support costs, is for the operation and maintenance of both on-street (6 locations) and off-street (6 locations) parking facilities provided throughout the County along with parking enforcement costs.

Works are underway on the new solar powered Pay and Display machines throughout the County. It is envisaged that delivery and installation of all units will be completed by the end of 2023.

SUPPORT TO ROADS CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The administration costs (i.e., indirect costs) in relation to supporting the Roads Capital Programme are met from the revenue budget. This budget contains the staff costs associated with providing support to the programme, as well as a proportion of the service support costs.

AGENCY AND RECOUPABLE SERVICES

The Council can charge an agreed overhead rate for all jobs undertaken by its staff. The income derived from the overhead charge meets the costs of holiday pay, sick pay, and insurance costs. All applications for licenses to open the public road are lodged through the national MRL system, managed by the Road Management Office. The Council's Roads department processes the licenses for County Galway and from the MRL system and attaches conditions and fees to the license. Income from Road Opening Licenses and works undertaken for other bodies are accounted for within this budget heading.

UNFINISHED HOUSING ESTATES

The Taking in Charge section actively engages with residents, developers and bondholders for the completion of residential estates to required standard for taking in charge and/or for bond release.

To date, 1 estate has been completed to the required standard for bond release, a further 8 estates have been Taken In Charge with a further 8 estates to be considered for Taking in Charge by the Elected Members by the end of the year.

The Council is currently engaged on over 60 developments at various stages of the Taking in Charge process. The work on these estates may be carried out directly by Developer(s) for Bond Release/Taking in Charge or by the Taking in Charge Section following receipt of the bond monies.

The financial resources available to the Taking in Charge Section is by way of Bonds, specifically assigned to developments and/or funding received through Site Resolution with Irish Water. Works on older historical estates across the County are funded through a Council budget allocation for Unfinished Historical estates enabling the Taking in Charge section to carry out remedial works to bring these estates to the required standard for taking in charge.

The Taking in Charge Section engages with Bond Holders for the release of monies to complete works on estates and with Developers and/or other interested parties to ensure estates are completed to the required standard for the benefit of all, especially the residents.

The progress of works on estates is governed by the funding available, engagement with third parties and the complexity of the work involved which may include wayleave agreements.

PROPOSALS 2024:

The Taking in Charge section will continue to assess and process taking in charge applications. Having regard to the resources available, every effort will be made to ensure developments are completed in compliance with grant of planning and to a required standard for taking in charge.

Where non-compliance issues are identified, the relevant departments will be notified to initiate appropriate proceedings.

AGENCY AND RECOUPABLE SERVICES

COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

During 2023, 5 Community Employment Schemes continued to operate. Villages and towns benefitted from such works as village maintenance; landscaping; grass cutting and stone wall building. The CE Schemes are as follows: Clifden/ Roundstone; Maigh Cuilinn/Oughterard; Gort and Environs; Laurencetown/ Abbey and Tuam and Environs.

The 5 Community Employment Schemes will continue to operate and provide such works as village maintenance; landscaping; grass cutting and stone wall building in 2024.

LAND DRAINAGE COSTS

MAINTENANCE OF LAND DRAINAGE AREAS

ARTERIAL DRAINAGE

The Council discharged its statutory responsibility for the maintenance of certain drainage works in the County through the Infrastructure & Operations Unit and the Council's Municipal District Offices. The Council has charge of twelve drainage districts and there are two drainage districts in County Galway which extend into Roscommon and Clare County Councils. The budget provided for this work in 2023 was **€175,000**.

FLOOD MITIGATION WORKS AND STUDIES

Galway County Council continued working in partnership with the OPW during 2023 to identify and progress works aimed at reducing the risk of future flooding. Works at 4 locations are in progress under the minor works scheme for 2023, with these projects to be substantially complete by year end. A programme of works for 2024 has been developed based on already approved schemes. Further applications will be made for consideration and approval by the OPW based on identified need.

Galway County Council will continue to liaise with the OPW about future minor works schemes that are under consideration with the aim of securing funding for these schemes.

A provision of **€450,000** has been made under this heading for carrying out works of this nature. These works are 90% recoupable from the OPW.

Grant funding application requires an amount of work to have been completed to establish the feasibility of and constraints applicable to a particular project. The availability of a budget to undertake this work will ensure a sustainable pipeline of priority works is in place.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF PIERS AND HARBOURS

OPERATIONS OF PIERS AND HARBOURS

An allocation of **€250,000** was provided from the Council's own resources in 2023 for the ongoing marine maintenance programme in relation to approximately 100 landing places in County Galway which have been identified as in the charge of/responsibility of Galway County Council. This involves varied works including safety repairs to access steps, rails, and repairs to slipways. It also includes the removal of algae growth, as the budget allows, on piers in County

Galway. The allocation included an amount of **€50,000** to cover the recruitment of a Harbour Master for Inis Oírr.

In addition, there was a need to commission various reports for piers and harbours under this allocation to inform works required under the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. DAFM provide funding of 95% of construction costs under the BALAMI funding scheme. Improvement works to piers, funded under this scheme, were completed in 2023 at Bealcarra, Killeenaran, Derryinver, Maumeen, Kilkieran, Kilronan, Roundstone, Kinvara, Garafin, Cashel, Pollagh and Cleggan.

As per the maintenance and repair programme, repairs were carried out on navigation lights and removal of silt and other obstructions at slipways at a small number of locations, as financial resources allowed.

An increase in budget to **€300,000** for Operation and Maintenance of Piers and harbours is required in 2024. This is required to improve a seriously restricted system of maintenance, giving a total increase of **€50,000** on 2023 budget allocation. It is proposed to use the additional funding to cover the costs associated with various initial consultants' reports including security assessment, safe system of work for island piers that are served by passenger ferries and commissioning of relevant environmental and engineering reports to progress projects to the planning phase to avail of DAFM funding into the future.

A first phase system of maintenance has been developed which will require additional maintenance funding to implement in 2024. This increase of **€50,000** is a continuation of steps in the aim to provide a less restrictive budget.

There are circa 60 visitor moorings located in various areas such as Cill Ronán, Killary Harbour, Clifden Bay, Srutháin, Roundstone, Cill Chiarán and Maumeen, which require chains and shackle replacement every 2 years. Maintenance was carried out this year on approximately 20 moorings. Provision of **€20,000** for 2024 has also been made under this heading to continue the maintenance on yacht moorings.

A budget of **€200,000** was provided in 2023 for the Maintenance of Kilronan Harbour. This was required for ongoing maintenance of the harbour and for the payment of legal fees regarding the Warehouse Building on the pier.

This budget of **€200,000** will be required again in 2024 for the maintenance of Kilronan Harbour to cover the recurring items such as wages, minor works etc with the balance to cover remaining legal fees and works to the warehouse on the pier. There will also be a requirement to implement any findings of the safety system of operation plan for the pier.

There has been an ongoing issue with the way external funding is provided for Pier & Harbour works which has constrained the ability to avail of optimal funding levels. Projects must be shovel ready and only construction costs are covered (to a level of 95% under the BALAMI model). To date this has meant that we are limited to putting forward projects that are relatively simple in nature, do not require statutory approvals and do not incur costs for

environmental or other assessments. Given many of the piers and harbours are protected structures, are in areas of environmental sensitivity and that any works below the high-water mark will require foreshore licence it is clear that in many instances significant work is required to get a project to shovel ready status and this will also involve cost. Currently any such costs incurred are charged to the already stretched Pier & Harbour Maintenance Code. Separate funding provision from Galway County Council own resources is required if we are to be in a position to optimally utilise available funding for pier and harbour refurbishment works.

Water Services

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Council continues to implement Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Programme as per the Master Co-Operation Agreement. Projects are prioritised by Uisce Éireann to provide critical infrastructure which will help to achieve compliance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and the Water Framework Directive. Investment priorities are set out in Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Plan which is prepared at least every five years and submitted to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities for approval of funding. In 2023, the following works have progressed:

- A contract was signed with Coffey Construction Ltd. for the Athenry Wastewater Network project. Construction commenced in January 2023, and it is expected that at least 90% of pipelines will be completed by the end of 2023.
- An Bord Pleanála confirmed the Compulsory Purchase Order for the Roundstone Wastewater Treatment Plant proposed sites and wayleaves in March 2022. This decision is currently the subject of a judicial review, the results of which are awaited.
- A decision on the CPO for the acquisition of the site for the Carraroe Wastewater Treatment Plant is awaited pending the outcome of judicial review.
- Construction of the wastewater treatment plants at Spiddal and Ahascragh by Coffey Water Ltd has been completed and both plants will commence full operation before end of 2023.
- Preliminary planning and design for a new wastewater treatment plant at Eyrecourt is being progressed.
- Planning application to be submitted before year end for the proposed Ballygar Wastewater Treatment Plant.

- Planning application to be submitted before year end for the proposed Mountbellew Wastewater Treatment Plant.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- It is expected that the Athenry Wastewater Network will be fully completed in Q3, 2024. The completed network, pumping stations and mechanical and electrical work, will provide much needed capacity in the wastewater collection pipe network within Athenry town.
- Planning and design for new wastewater treatment plant at Roundstone will proceed to planning once the CPO process is completed.
- Detailed design for a new wastewater treatment plant at Eyrecourt to be completed.
- Ballygar and Mountbellew Wastewater Treatment Plants are expected to go to tender under one contract in Q1 2024.

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER AND WASTEWATER SCHEMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and Uisce Éireann came to an end on 5th May 2023 when it was replaced by a Master Co-operation Agreement (MCA). The MCA was provided for under the Government Policy Paper – “Uisce Éireann – Towards a national, publicly-owned, regulated, water services utility” dated February 2021 and the Workplace Relations Commission document “Framework for the Future Delivery of Water Services” dated June 2022. From the effective date, the 20th September 2023, as provided for under the MCA, Uisce Éireann has full accountability for water services functions, except for Rural Water, and all Local Authority Water Services Staff are now under the direct Management and Control of Uisce Éireann. The signing of the MCA is the first significant step in the complete separation of the Council and Uisce Éireann with a timeline now laid down for the final migration of staff to be completed on or before December 2026. This has commenced with a number of staff already having been recruited by Uisce Éireann through open competitions. The direct transfer across for those staff who wish to transfer has already commenced. The management of the process of staff moving across to Uisce Éireann will need to be done in a planned and co-ordinated manner under the MCA to ensure both organisations can continue to fulfil their respective obligations.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

The Council will continue to operate the MCA. It is expected that further transformation initiatives will be rolled out resulting from the publication of the framework mentioned above and more staff will leave the local authority during 2024.

WATER CONSERVATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Planned and reactive leakage reduction operations continued throughout the County in 2023 in conjunction with the Water Network Program (WNP). The works were carried out by both direct labour crews and contractor's crews working across different activities of the WNP. Major inroads were made in the reduction of leakage especially given the significant increased leakage levels because of the severe frost experienced in December 2022.
- These included the following: Find & Fix, Lead Replacement, Metering & Pressure Management, Mains Rehabilitation, Mains Decommissioning and First Fix. An additional 8.7km of mains rehabilitation will have been completed in 2023, increasing the total length of mains rehabilitation in areas of high leakage or where water quality issues required works to be undertaken to date, to approximately 46km. The works included fitting all pipeline fittings and connections and installation of meter boundary boxes at every connection. In addition, 4 Pressure Reducing Valves (PRV's) have been commissioned (some with day night controllers) throughout the County in 2023 and are now operational yielding considerable water savings. Customer side leakage continues to be targeted under the First Fix Program.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Leakage reduction will progress throughout the County with resources targeted at public and private side leakage in the network.
- New areas for rehabilitation have been identified and added to the works package in the Leakage Reduction Programme. These additional sections of network are currently awaiting design and they will be added to the construction programme for 2024.

RURAL WATER PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- There was no Multi Annual Rural Water Programme in place during the year with emphasis on closing out projects funded during the previous programme (2019-2021) which was significantly hampered due to the Covid pandemic. Technical staff resources in Rural Water began to be replenished in 2023 but the level of opportunity and demand for qualified technical staff continues to make the recruitment and retention of staff challenging. The Council will be engaging with the sector to compile the next Multi Annual Rural Water Programme when it is received from the Department. In the next programme the investment in the sector will be driven by looking at whole life costs when considering options for investment in treatment with sustainable and compliant water quality remaining the central objective. There is an emphasis in policy nationally to minimise sources and maximise the use of existing capacity in both public and private schemes to address any shortcomings in water quality. The Council continued to assist schemes in their day-to-day operations by implementing the approved Subsidy scheme and substantial funds were paid out.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The main objective for 2024 is to compile an ambitious and focused Multi Annual Rural Water Programme and recruit the necessary staff to make sure it is implemented and delivered.

MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (MEM)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Major Emergency Development Committee (MEDC) which was established by the Council as part of the National Framework for MEM is ongoing and is chaired by Mr Derek Pender (Director of Services) as part of the Council's Infrastructure and Operations Directorate.
- The Major Emergency Plan and Severe Weather and Flood Response Sub-Plans were reviewed. A Severe Weather Event Management System (SWEMS) continued to operate during occasions of severe weather. GCC also commenced work on an inter-County trial with two other Local Authorities.
- The MEM West Regional Steering Group (RSG) under chair of An Garda Síochána continues to meet in its role of co-ordinating Major Emergency Management between the eight Principal Response agencies (PRA's) i.e. 3 Local Garda Divisions, 4 Local Authorities and HSE West, in the Galway, Mayo and Roscommon areas.

- The MEM West Regional Working Group (RWG) involving members of the Principal Emergency Services (PES's) in the West Region, i.e. Local Authority Fire Services, Local Garda Divisions and HSE National Ambulance Service, continues to operate, under the auspices of MEM West Regional Steering Group and is currently chaired by An Garda Síochána.
- Galway County Council Headquarters continues as the location of the Local Co-Ordination Centre (LCC) for the three Principal Response Agencies (PRA's) – Galway County Council, HSE West and Galway Garda Division for Major Emergencies in the Galway County area. The information management (IM) facilities at LCC in County Hall were upgraded in 2018 and continues in use with the installation of video conferencing facilities now complete. An electronic information management system was also introduced in both the Local Coordination Centre and on the Mobile On-Site Coordination unit based in Gort Fire Station.
- In 2019, funding from the NDFEM was approved for the purchase and installation of a stand-by (back-up) generator for County Hall to provide a redundant power source for the LCC, IS Section and other critical areas. The generator was purchased and will be installed by the end of 2023 to provide back-up power for the GCC critical infrastructure and the Galway County MEM Local Co-ordination Centre.
- It should be noted that the City Council may use City Hall as the LCC for severe weather events.
- The County/City MEM Integration Group was established between the PRA's in Galway City and County under the Chair of a Director of Services from Galway City Council to deal with issues in the City/County area and large crowd events and continues to operate. The development of site-specific plans in the City and County continues.
- Regional training is ongoing for relevant personnel in the eight PRA'S in the West region.
- GFRS/GCC personnel attended several MEM seminars and severe weather debriefs. MEDC members also attended the MEM National Conference on the 5th October, 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Both local and regional personnel will receive further training and testing in their various new roles as allocated in their PRA Major Emergency Plans.
- The Major Emergency Development Committee (MEDC), established by the Council as part of the New National Framework for MEM, will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis and will continue to be chaired by Mr. Derek Pender (Director of Services). The emphasis will be on the implementation of a new system for managing and mapping requests for assistance during severe weather events and the improvement of Staff communications, including the full integration of TETRA.

- Validation and updating of the existing County Council Major Emergency Plan is envisaged to continue in 2024.
- Council personnel and GFRS personnel will continue to support Regional Steering and Regional Working Groups, local MEDC and the Galway County/City Integration Group.
- Work on the Major Emergency Regional Co-ordination Plan will continue including the Regional Media Plan and the Regional Evacuation Plan.
- Work will continue in 2024 in relation to testing of the new stand-by generator at County Hall.
- The review (as per the COMAH Regulations) of the Tynagh Power Station site External Emergency Plan will be completed in 2024.
- GCC in conjunction with the City Council will commence work on the external emergency plan for the proposed Green Hydrogen Hub at Galway Port.
- GCC Local Coordination Group and On-Site Coordination Group table-top/practical exercises will be conducted in 2024.
- GCC will continue work in 2024 on an inter-County trial with two other Local Authorities in relation to the SWEMS project.

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- GFRS continue to lead nationally on the development of the National Unified Risk Operating Platform (NUROP). The platform allows the sharing of risk information in real-time to improve decision making in all GFRS sections. This includes a system to identify and map domestic risk in the community. GFRS personnel lead a national working group for the development of the system to determine risk in all properties (commercial and domestic) to enable fire authorities focus fire safety activities. Elements of the system are on trial in several other fire authorities.
- Self-contained smoke alarms with long life batteries were procured by GFRS for, and continue to be issued to, households in Galway City and County for installation by community groups as in previous years. This project was conducted with the assistance of the Community and Enterprise Units in both Galway City and Galway County Councils as part of the ongoing National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) Programme. GFRS have also implemented a home fire safety visit programme with a particular emphasis on rural areas and social housing.
- Fire safety awareness media campaigns were conducted in 2023 for National Fire Safety Week, wildfire safety, Halloween safety and a further campaign is planned for Christmas time. A number of Officers conducted radio interviews.
- In 2022 the Vulnerable Persons Programme continued including a Home Fire Safety Check Booklet which was originally launched by Sean Canney, Minister of State Community

Development, Natural Resources & Digital Development on the 7th of October 2019 at Tuam Fire Station. The Home Fire Safety initiative has been expanded now with an on-line home fire safety checklist available to all members of the public. The link is available on the front page of the Galway County Council website and a link is also included under the email signature block of all fire service personnel. To date almost 1000 on-line home fire safety checks have been completed.

- In 2022 the new fire safety advertisement campaign of the fire safety messages ‘Stop Fire’ and ‘Check Your Detector’ continued with a programme to show the message on all first responding fire appliances.
- In 2023 work continued on a new GFRS website to promote fire safety awareness.
- An Islands Community Fire Safety initiative, which commenced in 2021, aims to ensure that all homes on the Islands have at least 2 smoke alarms installed. This initiative continued in 2023 on all larger islands. In addition, the inter-agency island incident response plan was also updated and practiced.
- Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, many fire service face to face activities were curtailed. The Schools Fire Safety Program was postponed; however, it is available for all primary schools in County Station Areas. GFRS have also commenced preparations for the NDFEM ‘Be Fire Safe’ programme for secondary schools.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- GFRS will continue to lead nationally on the development of the National Unified Risk Operating Platform (NUROP). The platform allows the sharing of risk information in real-time to improve decision making in all GFRS sections. This includes a system to identify and map non-domestic and domestic risk in the community. GFRS will continue to lead an inter-County trial in five other Fire Authorities in 2024.
- Self-contained smoke alarms will continue to be issued in 2024 in both the City and County from allocations received in 2023 and further alarms will be purchased in mid-2023. This will be used to complete the Islands Community Fire Safety Initiative and to continue the targeted Home Fire Safety Visit Programme. The scheme now also provides smoke alarms for the hard of hearing and will be distributed in 2024.
- A program will be run locally again in 2024 as part of National Fire Safety Week as in previous years including opening of all Fire Stations to the public. This year we hope to include several fire safety seminars and demonstrations in towns.
- Fire safety awareness media campaigns will be conducted again in 2024 for National Fire Safety Week, Wildfire safety, Halloween safety and Christmas safety. It is hoped that the number of Officers conducting radio and TV interviews will increase in 2024.
- In 2024 the Vulnerable Persons Programme will be continued in all stations including the City and the Home Fire Safety Check Booklet will continue to be promoted extensively. The programme will be linked with the pre-incident planning and home fire safety visit

programmes. GFRS will continue to develop links with other agencies to further improve these programmes.

- In 2024 the fire safety advertisement campaign of the fire safety messages ‘Stop Fire’ and ‘Check Your Detector’ will continue. It is hoped, subject to the availability of finance, that the messages will be installed on the fire station appliance bay doors in all stations.
- GFRS hope to launch their new website to promote fire safety awareness in 2024.
- The Schools Fire Safety Programme involving local fire officers visiting 4th class in primary schools in Galway will continue in 2024 subject to the availability of financial resources. All visits will be mapped on the NUROP system. GFRS also intend to commence the roll out of the ‘Be Fire Safe’ programme in secondary schools.

FIRE OPERATIONS – KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE (KCS)

A FRAMEWORK FOR FIRE SAFETY IN IRELAND

The Fire Service is subject to the same financial constraints and consequent scrutiny of expenditure as all other Local Authority services. Additional investment in Fire Services beyond that already programmed will be challenging, given the impairment of public and local government finances. The challenge, as reflected in the document “Keeping Communities Safe” is to manage the available resources to achieve an optimal outcome for the public in terms of their individual safety, and to minimize loss and disruption to society.

The challenge as outlined above is one that is facing all fire authorities, and it is accepted now by both unions and management that the current Retained Fire Service model is not fit for purpose. This manifested itself in the difficulty within all fire authorities to both recruit and retain personnel in the retained fire service. As a result of industrial action on behalf of Retained Fire Service SIPTU members nationally, a Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) recommendation was accepted by both sides. This agreement will see an increase in the numbers of retained personnel from a full-strength establishment of 120 to 164 personnel, as well as giving members the option to respond to emergency incidents on a week on / week off basis. The implementation of the WRC agreement will see an initial once off cost of approximately €3.5m due to wages increases, extra wage bills, initial training costs and other ancillary costs per fire fighter.

Achieving the successful implementation of the main provisions in KCS will require ongoing commitment from the Fire Service, the City and County Management Teams along with the City and County Elected Representatives. Following from the report of the NDFEM External Validation Group (EVG) visits to all Fire Services in 2014 entitled “Fire Services in Ireland – Local Delivery – National Consistency”, a second round of External Validation Group visits were scheduled for the end of 2019 and throughout 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic stalled the roll-out of that External Validation Group visit, however an NDFEM Capacity Review online meeting

and assessment was conducted in September 2020 in lieu of the EVG visit. A new draft Service Delivery Plan 2019 – 2024, a new Draft Section 26 Plan have been prepared by Fire Service Management and submitted to the Directorate of Planning, Environment and Emergency Services. It is envisaged that these plans will be presented to the Council Executive Management Team in Q1 of 2024 and to the SPC Planning, Environment and Emergency Services and the Plenary Council in Q2 2024. Work is also ongoing in relation to new Statutory and Community Fire Safety Plans.

During the NDFEM on-line capacity review meeting, a Galway Fire and Rescue Service Operational Intelligence project based on the ArcGIS platform caught the attention of the review group. This project is proving to be very valuable from an analysis perspective and is now being utilised to plan and target future fire service activities. Two Fire Service Senior Officers and a member of GCC IT section are working with members of the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) to develop and roll out this project nationally.

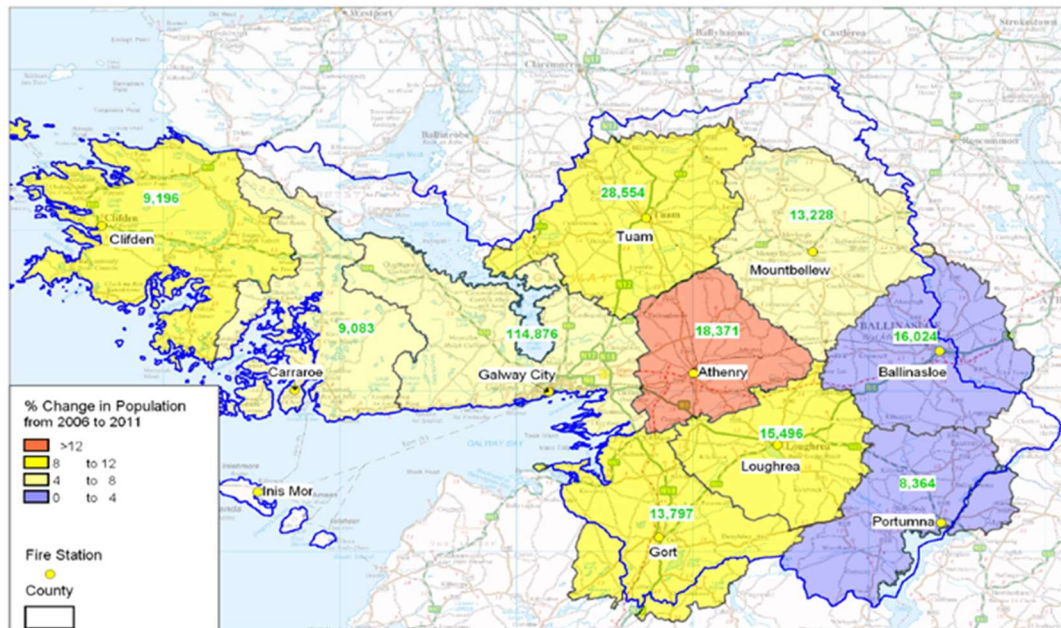
FIRE OPERATIONS – KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE (KCS)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023 (BASED ON 2022 DATA):

- There are 11 Fire Stations in the City and County (see Figure 1) located at Athenry, Ballinasloe, Clifden, Galway City, Gort, Loughrea, Mountbellew, Portumna, Tuam, Inis Mór and An Cheathru Rua. All stations are resourced with retained personnel except Galway City, which is a mix of full-time personnel on shift and retained personnel on call.
- The Council employs approximately 156 fire-fighting personnel at full complement directly in Galway Fire & Rescue Service including full time and retained fire-fighters in the City and County. This figure includes an agreement negotiated in 2021 to increase the number of retained firefighters in the City by two additional fire-fighters.
- There are also 11 supervisory and fire prevention senior fire officers, including the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and 5 civilian support personnel, a Brigade Mechanic and a Civil Defence Officer (CDO) working in the Headquarters at Galway City Fire station.

During 2022, the Galway Fire and Rescue Service responded to a total of 1,830 emergency call outs, 1131 by the County Fire Brigades and 699 by Galway City Fire Brigade in its City and County fire grounds. This represented an increase of 418 mobilisations compared to 2021. Figure 2 below shows the level of callouts from 2012. From a peak in 2013, callouts had reduced and flatlined from 2014 to 2017. There was a significant increase in callouts in 2018 with 2021 having the lowest number of call outs for the last 12 years with 2022 having the highest number since 2011. All indications are that the callouts for 2023 will fall between 2021 and 2022 levels. Callouts per station are shown in Figure 3 below.

FIGURE 1 CURRENT FIRE STATION AREAS



- The average cost per head of population for providing the Fire Service in Galway City and County in 2022 was €52.66. Average response times for all incidents for first attendance vehicles in the City full-time and County retained stations were 2.03 minutes and 5.10 minutes respectively.
- The percentage attendance times at scene for fires and other incidents for City and County Fire Brigades are shown in Table 1 below. There was no fire fatality in 2022 and one thus far in 2023.
- The Council endeavoured to ensure that all its Fire and Emergency Services personnel received training as in previous years at local level. Senior and Junior Fire Officer training with the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management (NDFEM) also progressed. Training was carried out as per the Training Plan / Annual Training Programme for 2023 in so much as was reasonably practicable taking into the restrictions and risk associated with the pandemic. Training standards continued to convert to the QQI framework in 2021.

FIGURE 2: CALL-OUT HISTORY 2013 – 2022

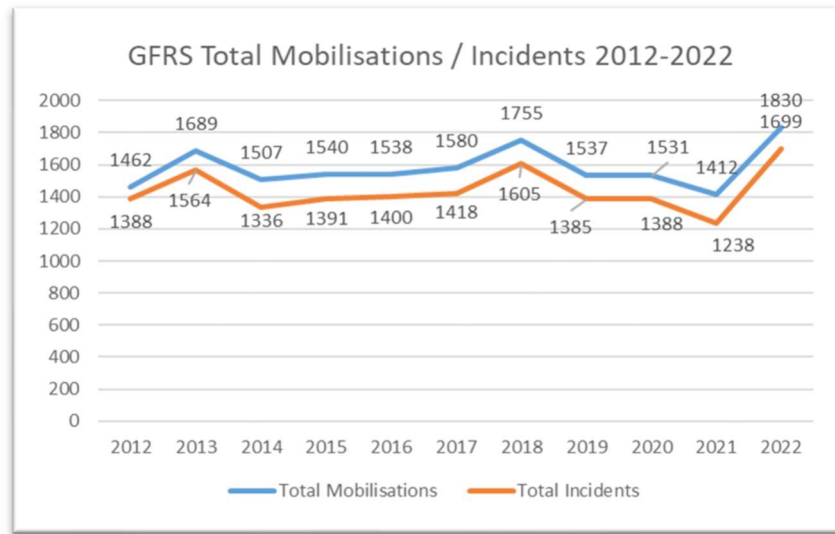


FIGURE 3: BREAKDOWN OF CALL-OUTS BY STATION IN 2022

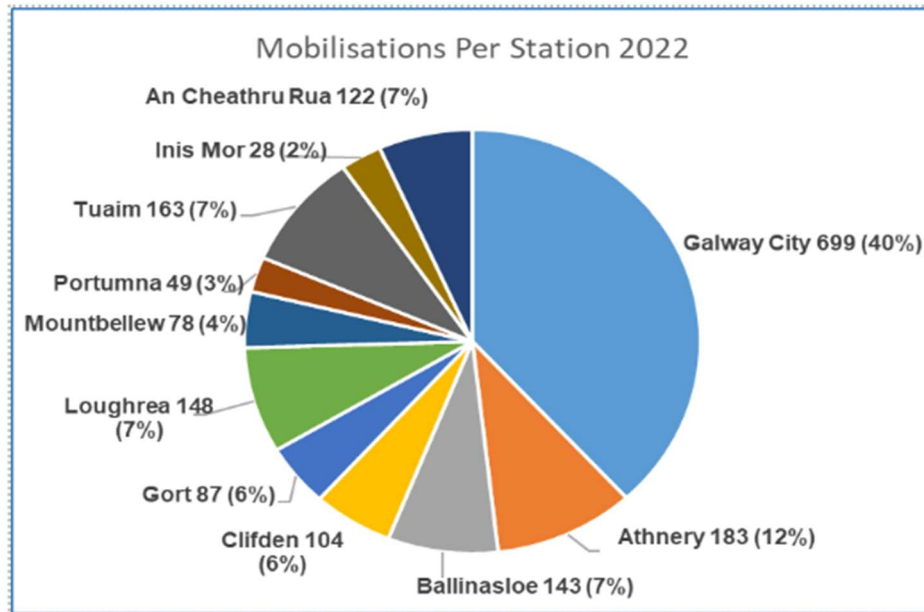


TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE ATTENDANCE TIMES GALWAY CITY AND COUNTY 2022

% Attendance Time	Fires %	Other Incidents %
Less than 10 minutes	45.29	47.99
10 to 20 minutes	25.95	35.38
Greater than 20 minutes	28.76	16.68

- The Fire Service intend to continue to prepare pre-incident plans for significant City and County risks, which is a statutory duty under the Fire Services Act 1981 & 2003. This work is closely allied to the new Vulnerable Persons and Community Fire Safety Programme which commenced in 2019.
- The Fire Service's Health & Safety Steering Group continued to meet in 2023 with monthly meetings to manage and drive the Health & Safety Management Plan throughout the Fire Service and Civil Defence. The objective was to maintain its ISO 45001 accreditation achieved in October 2018 which followed the OHSAS 18001 accreditation previously achieved in December 2017. The Operational Safety Group meetings also continued monthly in 2023. The Fire Services were audited or compliance with ISO 45001 by the NSAI on 29th and 30th May 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

OPERATIONAL

- The Council will endeavour to ensure that all its Fire and Emergency Services personnel continue to receive training as in previous years, at local level. Fire Officer / Instructor training with the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management will continue. Training will be carried out in accordance with the Annual Training Plan for 2024 subject to budgetary provisions. National SOGs will continue to form the backbone of the training plan throughout the City and County for all fire personnel in 2024. The next set of SOGs will be rolled out in 2024 and National Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) continue to underpin generic and activity-based risk assessments as part of our Safety Management System.
- In 2024 we will continue the migration of training standards to the QQI framework in conjunction with the NDFEM.
- There was a steady rate of retirements/resignations from retained and full-time Fire Service in Galway in 2021 and 2022 and retirements/resignations eased in 2023. The national WRC agreement referred to above should further slowdown retirements and it is envisaged the more attractive on-call arrangements will aid recruitment, with the caveat that the agreement calls for a greater level of recruitment in 2024 and into 2025. Retained recruit induction will continue through LASNTG to the new QQI standard in 2024.
- The emphasis on pre-incident plans will continue in 2024 in conjunction with the Vulnerable Persons Programme which will be implemented in all stations. The emphasis will continue to extend to high and medium rise buildings and those with legacy issues.
- In 2024, with the improvement in our infrastructure we hope to be able to continue to improve our mobilisation and attendance times.

- Safety will continue as a priority through 2024 with our monthly Safety Steering and Operational Safety Group meetings. GFRS will again be audited for continued ISO 45001 accreditation on a six-monthly basis.

WEST REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE (WRCC)

The Fire Authorities of Connacht and Donegal are involved with this Central call-out and communications project through the Western Regional Communications Centre (WRCC) in Castlebar, which is run by Mayo County Council as Contracting Authority. All Local Authority partners contribute to the cost of this service and costs will increase slightly in 2023 while the existing systems are run in tandem with the old system. All three Regional Communications Centres are currently being reviewed by the NDFEM as part of the new CTRI project.

In 2019 GFRS, along with all other Local Authority Fire Services migrated to a new National Digital Radio Service platform known as TETRA. The installation of new mobilisation and radio equipment was completed in Fire Stations and all appliances in mid-2019 as part of the ongoing CTRI project.

The change over to the TETRA has had significant financial implications for all Local Authority Fire Services from 2020 as there will be an annual fee for each TETRA device in use, payable to TETRA Ireland who have won the national digital communications project for all Emergency Services in Ireland. The revenue cost for new TETRA devices for the first year of operation in 2019 was borne by NDFEM. The cost reverted to each Local Authority Fire Service in 2020 and this represents a significant increased cost in the region of €90,000 per annum.

It is understood that as WRCC migrates from a Regional to a National model, a new National funding model will be established. This might have benign implications for Local Authority budgets from 2024 onwards, however there is no indication as to when the new national funding model will be introduced.

REGIONAL CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM) PROJECT

Galway County Council is the Contracting Authority for the CISM system for the six Fire Authorities of Connacht and Donegal. Provision is being made in 2024 budgets to continue this project, with Galway County Council again acting as the Contracting Authority. A contract for the period 2021-2024 in the West region was awarded to Inspire Wellbeing from Northern Ireland.

FIRE SAFETY / FIRE PREVENTION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023 (BASED ON 2022 DATA):

- In 2022, the Fire Service Fire Prevention Section carried out 237 inspections of premises as part of its fire prevention function up from 194 in 2021, under the Fire Services Act (FSA) 1981 & 2003, Licensing Acts, Planning Acts and the Dangerous Substances Act. Inspections were also carried out in relation to the issue of Fire Safety Certificates (FSC's) under the Building Control Act 1990 (as amended).
- The Fire Prevention Section dealt with 278 Fire Safety Certificate (FSC) Applications of all types in 2022 under Building Control Regulations. Fire Safety Certificate activity from 2012 to 2022 is shown in Figure 4 below. The slight increase in FSC applications received in 2022 reflects the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in society.
- Thus far to the end of October 2023, the Fire Prevention Section have received and dealt with 219 Fire Safety Certificate (FSC) Applications of all types, roughly on the same trend as 2022 and confirming the continuing effect of the pandemic and other international events.
- The Fire Prevention Section processed 95 Disability Access Certificate (DAC) applications in 2022. Disability Access Certificate activity from 2012 to 2022 is shown in Figure 5 below. Thus far and to the end of October 2020, the Fire Prevention Section have received and dealt with 74 Disability Access Certificate (DAC) Applications under Building Control Regulations.

FIGURE 4 FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATE (FSC) ACTIVITY 2012- 2022

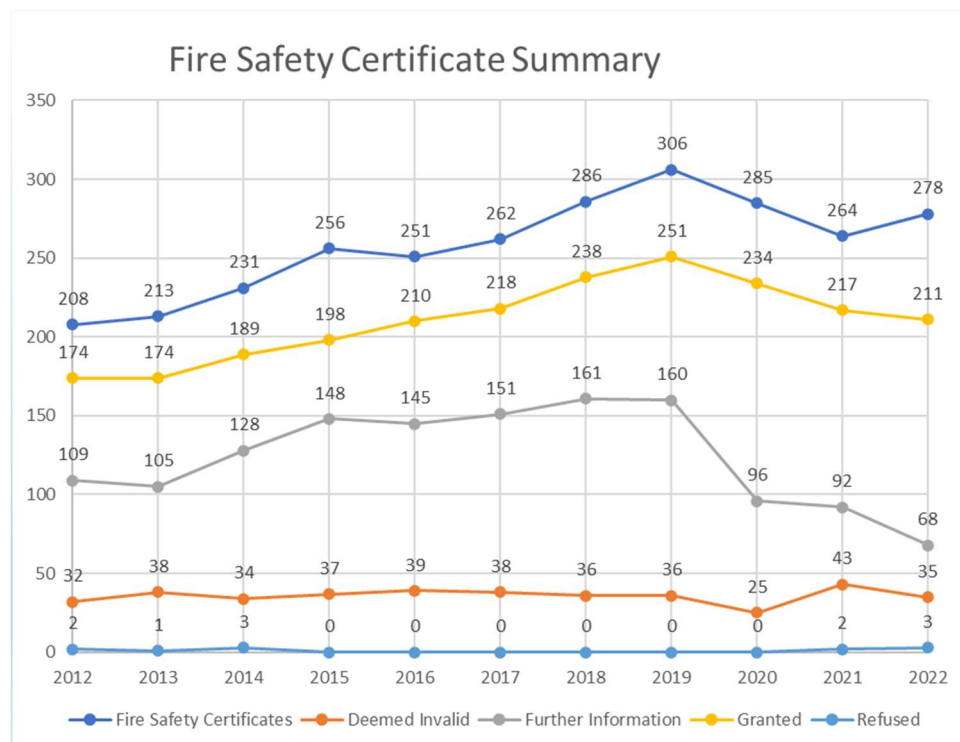
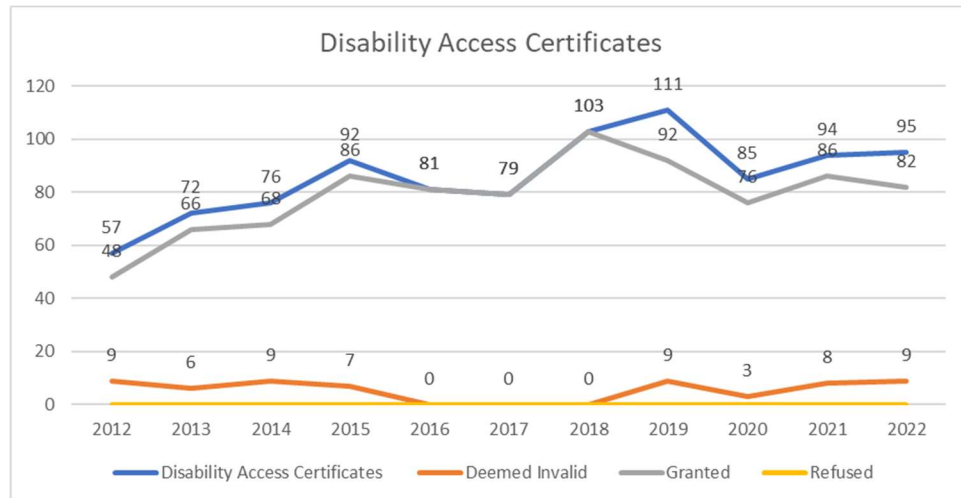


FIGURE 5 DISABILITY ACCESS CERTIFICATE ACTIVITY 2012-2022



PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Fire Prevention Section will continue to process all FSC type applications on behalf of the County and City Councils and DAC applications on behalf of the County Council.
- The Fire Prevention Section will continue to process licence applications and planning referrals as received.
- The Fire Prevention Section will continue their programme of inspections of retail petroleum stores in the City and County. They will also continue to process DSA licences of retail petroleum stores in the City and County as received. It should be noted that proposed new regulations in this area will significantly increase the workload of this Section and additional resources will be required going forward.
- The Fire Prevention Section will continue their programme of fire safety inspections with particular emphasis on nursing homes, care facilities, hostels and hotels in the City and County. Emphasis will also be placed on medium/high rise buildings and those with legacy issues.
- The Fire Prevention Section will continue to carry out inspections in the City and County on foot of complaints on a prioritized basis. Enforcement action will be taken as necessary and required.

GALWAY CIVIL DEFENCE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Galway Civil Defence operate from 5 training centres, Galway City, Oranmore, Loughrea, Ballinasloe and Clonberne. In 2023 all units reopened fully for training and continued throughout the year.
- Members have continued assisting the Irish Blood Transfusion Service at their clinics held in the Galway City and County throughout the year.
- Galway Civil Defence have assisted in numerous Missing Person Searches within the City/County at the request of AGS and assisted Clare Civil Defence on occasions with their request during the year. Drone and our new boat Sonar systems were primarily used in searches and have proved a valuable asset to our search teams.
- Training has commenced on our Control Unit for our volunteers. This unit has proved a valuable asset for Control of Operations at events and searches.
- All Civil Defence CFR, FAR and EFR Instructors have recertifying as per the Civil Defence College Training Programme.
- Civil Defence EMT's have completed their PHECC 2021 CPG Up-skilling in March 2023 as required by PHECC.
- Civil Defence Swift and Flood Responder Instructors have recertified in 2023 in line with the Civil Defence College Programme.
- The Civil Defence Branch launched their VEMS (Volunteer, Equipment Management System) with replaced the Civil Defence Register in July 2023. The Civil Defence Officer attended numerous training days on the operation of the new system.
- Implement Minimum Training Standards for all volunteers new and existing members.
- A programme of training in Cardiac First Response, First Aid Responder, Emergency First Response, Manual Handling and People Moving is currently ongoing for volunteers through 2023.
- Galway Civil Defence also received €35,000 from the Dormant Fund Grant for 2023 from the Department of Defence to purchase a Ford Ranger 4x4 vehicle. This allocation has enhanced to response capability of all our units to requests.
- Participated in Galway County Council and Galway City Council Community Forum and carried out tasks for vulnerable persons identified in the forum groups.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Focus on training for 2024 will centre in developing the Search Management capability and Flood Water Responder training with members partaking in ongoing recertification training and initial training in 2023/2024 under the Civil Defence programme.
- Severe Weather driver training and recertification to be held in the first quarter of 2024.

- To partake in Re-certification training of all disciplines in line with the Civil Defence College programme for 2024.
- All clinical levels of responders will continue to develop their skills throughout the training year
- Continuous liaison with the PRAs to develop and promote Civil Defence as a support organisation.
- Additional CISM Peer to Peer Support training to be availed from the Civil Defence Branch training programme in 2024.
- Continuation for all members to meet the Minimum Training Standards as per Civil Defence Policy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE (LEO)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Provided an excellent and effective First Stop Shop for businesses in Galway County & City
- Delivered Enterprise supports including Short Training Courses, Mentoring and Business Advisory clinics.
- Provided Financial supports to eligible businesses in the form of Feasibility, Priming and Business Expansion Grants to assist with starting up and expanding their business.
- Delivered Financial supports in the form of Trading Online Vouchers which enabled businesses to develop an e-commerce website and increase online sales.
- Delivered Financial support in the form of the Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters to assist businesses in exploring markets overseas, increasing export sales and internationalisation of their business.
- Delivered Green for Business programmes to assist businesses take their first step towards becoming more sustainable.
- Delivered Lean for Business programmes to assist businesses adopt Lean principles to improve their productivity and competitiveness.
- Delivered Digital for Business programmes to help businesses prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across their business.
- Supported business owners in the application for Microfinance Ireland loans.
- Increased awareness of LEO services available to businesses locally and nationally and assisted with the development of relationships between businesses and these service providers.
- Developed stakeholder relationships through attending external enterprise events, contributing to enterprise policy, and working collaboratively on enterprise support initiatives in Galway.
- Provided a suite of capability building supports and services that add value and bring benefits to business.
- Supported employment creation in the County through investment in eligible businesses.
- Supported economic development aimed at job creation in the County and region.
- Fostered a culture of entrepreneurship through engagement with sectoral networks, schools and third level institutions.
- Engaged with partners at local and national level, such as CREW, Ardan, DCCOI, WDC, Udaras, BIM, Network Galway to design and deliver enterprise creation and support initiatives.

- Participated in National events such as Local Enterprise Week, National Enterprise Awards, Student Enterprise Programme, National Women’s Enterprise Day, Showcase & National Ploughing Championships.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Information provision – First Stop Shop and outreach events.
- Business Advice, Mentoring & Networking.
- Management development and Sectoral development programmes.
- Business Training Workshops and Business Advisory Clinics.
- Financial Support – via Trading Online Vouchers, Feasibility, Priming, Business Expansion, TAME and Grad Start Grants.
- Research and Development funding delivery to high potential sectors (Agile Innovation and IP Start Grants).
- Delivery of Green for Business, Lean for Business and Digital for Business programmes.
- Delivery of Export programmes for targeted clients to scale and grow.
- Client participation in National events – Local Enterprise Week, National Enterprise Awards, Student Enterprise Programme, National Women’s Enterprise Day, Showcase & National Ploughing Championships.
- Support Bia Innovator hub by working collaboratively with them to support and develop programmes for Food & Drink startup and SMEs.
- Delivery of supports for businesses impacted by Ukrainian war and its impact on energy costs (such as Kerosene users).
- Continue to build and develop stakeholder relationships through collaborative events and initiatives.

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023

- 1,704 Planning Applications have been received to date (23th October 2023).
- The National e-Planning system is now functioning for Planning Applications, submissions and Part VIII applications and submissions, to date this year 1,269 e-applications have been received, 478 e-submissions have been received via the portal (23rd Oct) Part VIII applications are available on the portal for both viewing and making submissions there are 9 applications on the portal.
- 3 LRD planning applications meetings were held.
- 18 meetings for major developments have taken place from a total of 35 requests.
- 111 Exempted Development applications processed at 23rd October 2023.
- Finalized and Adopted the Tuam Local Area Plan 2023-2029, Q 3 of 2023.

- Prepared the Draft Athenry Local Area Plan 2023-2029 published Q2 of 2023.
- Prepared the Draft Loughrea Local Area Plan 2023-2029 published Q4 of 2023.
- Ongoing work with the Residential Zoned Land Tax Maps-Final Maps to be published on 1st December 2023.
- Provided planning inputs into various Steering Groups relevant to the County.
- Continuance with the joint partnership with the Roads Directorate in relation to Transport Studies.
- Undertook a cross-border initiative in education and spatial planning in Athenry and Mountbellew in Q1 of 2023. This initiative was between University of Galway, Queens University Belfast and the Geography staff and students at Presentation College, Athenry and Holy Rosary College, Mountbellew in Co Galway, and New-Bridge Integrated College, Banbridge, Co Down. The staff of the Forward Planning Section of Galway County Council provided support and participated in this cross-border initiative.
- Ongoing work in relation to the URDF Team in the delivery of the Call2 Funding Application.
- Liaise and Manage with the Transport Consultant and Environmental Consultants for Athenry and Loughrea.
- Participated and involved in the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy with NTA, TII and Galway City Council.
- Develop IT systems for managing pre planning system.

PROPOSALS 2024

- Continue monitoring planning application data as per RSES requirements.
- Prepare and publish Draft Development Contribution Scheme.
- Prepare and publish Local Area Plans for Gort.
- Liaise and manage with the Environmental Consultants on the Loughrea and Gort Local Area Plans.
- Prepare Supplemental Maps (1st May 2023 – 1st June 2023) & Final Maps (1st December 2023) for publication and subsequent public submissions that will be received on the RZLT: liaise with Department, Irish Water, TII An Bord Pleanála and Revenue Commissioners on this project and deal with queries arising from this.
- Review policy objectives in relation to strategies that have been committed in the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.
- Progress the URDF project.
- Liaise with Roads Directorate/Transport Consultants appointed on a number of Transport Strategies (transport Modelling/Local Transport Plans/Walking/Cycling Strategy).
- Provide Planning inputs into various Steering Groups relevant to the County.
- Participate in the Town Team Initiative/RRDF Teams.
- Preparation of Public Realm strategies for identified Local Area Plan towns, where resources allow.

- Participate in the Planning Spatial Data Capture Pilot initiative with the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government.
- Engagement in statutory licensing events legislation with Officials where appropriate.
- Project manage the Consultants on the design of the local centre, carpark and open space provisions outlined in the Draft County Development Plan & URDF project for Garraun.
- Project Manage the Consultants on the Topology Study for Garraun, Oranmore.
- Prepare Tenders for the Masterplan of the Former Galway Airport Lands and subsequently project manage the said Consultants.
- Implement the parameters of the new Planning and Development Bill- possible variations.
- Implement the pre planning meeting system.

REGENERATION

URDF CALL 3- TUAM, BALLINASLOE AND ORANMORE

The Regeneration Team successfully secured €2,000,000 in funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under call 3 of the URDF (Urban Regeneration Development Fund) to address vacancy and dereliction within the towns. The fund will be available to cover the acquisition costs of a property or site and any civil or design works which may be required to de-risk or improve the site/building to make it more attractive for reuse, development by others or onward sale. The intention is that the fund would be replenished from the proceeds received from the end use/user, thereby allowing the local authority to put in place a rolling programme to tackle long term vacancy and dereliction without recourse to borrowing and the associated financial risk.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Establishment of internal working group including, Environment, Housing and Regeneration team members.
- Commencement of building surveys to identify occupancy/ownership of buildings.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Appointment of property services advisor to assist in implementation of project.
- Progress with acquisition of identified vacant properties for resale to the open market.

TOWN CENTRE FIRST (TCF)

The Galway County Town Regeneration Officer was appointed in June 2023. Gort was nominated as the pilot town centre first plan for County Galway. A formal Town Team with representatives from local community groups, residents and business owners was established to assist in the delivery of the Town Centre First (TCF) plan. The programme will continue to be rolled out to the next identified TCF towns.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Establishment of Gort Town team.
- Public engagement and consultation for the TCF plan.
- Publication of pilot TCF plan for Gort.
- TVRS application for Streetscape enhancement in Gort

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Prepare tender for next two TCF plans.
- Establishment of formal Town teams in TCF settlements.
- Progress the preparation and completion of the Athenry TCF plan.
- Assist Town teams in preparation of funding applications against the projects in the Gort TCF plan.

ATHENRY RRDF

The Regeneration team has been progressing with the Cat 2 RRDF funding award to deliver a new public realm scheme for Market Square and Cross Street.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Prepared Part 8 planning application for Market Square and Cross Street
- Progressed the acquisition and funding application for Burke's Lane building.
- Provided full technical support for the planning application including external consultants and detailed design stage of Burkes Lane property.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Apply for CAT 1 RRDF funding for public Realm scheme on Market Sq. and Cross Street.
- Progress with project through procurement and delivery (subject to funding award)

CLIFDEN RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 2 RRDF for Clifden is €792,029 with a match funding requirement of €198,007. The project comprises of enhancing and revitalising the Clifden Public Realm, redesigning the Clifden Harbour Park and public realm interventions along Beach Road Quay.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Public engagement with both local residents, business owners and councillors.
- Finalisation of detailed design and preparation of Part 10 planning application for submission to An Bord Pleanála.
- Provide technical support to Community section in Building acquisition application for remote Hub.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Submission of Part 10 planning application and preparation of CAT 1 RRDF funding application for public realm scheme.

CLIFDEN DESTINATION TOWNS

The Regeneration team has taken over the project to deliver the Destination Towns funding award from Failte Ireland of €500,000 with match funding of 25% giving a total spend of €666,000.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Development of schemes including “greenway readiness” at Ardbear Bridge.
- Redesign of pavilion at Coach Park.
- Upgrade of signage in the town including gateway sign delivery.
- Pedestrian access at rear of Gaol to greenway.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Completion and drawdown of full funding for Destination Towns project.

GORT

Galway County Council Regeneration team has been successful Funding of €798,584 (with a match funding requirement of €199,646).

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Detailed public engagement on the development of the Public Realm project for the town.
- Finalisation of detailed design and preparation of Part 10 planning application for submission to An Bord Pleanála.
- Acquisition of lands for public car park to support public realm project.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Submission of Part 10 Planning Application.
- Acquisition of lands for public car park to support public realm project.
- Application for CAT1 RRDF application for delivery of Public Realm Scheme.

LOUGHREA RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 1 RRDF for Loughrea is €1,628,879 with a match funding of €542,960. The project will assist revitalise Loughrea and the Loughrea Town Hall and the Barrack Street Public Realm by bringing back into use this historic and important building.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Detailed design progressed and contractors for construction tendered.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Contractors to be appointed and commencement of construction on-site with 18-month build program.

PORTUMNA RRDF

The funding approved under RRDF for Portumna is €1,192,855 with a match funding requirement of €397,618. The project includes the renovation of the Old Courthouse, public realm interventions, the design of a sculpture/public art park & trail, wayfinding and interpretation as well as the regeneration of town centre historic sites. RPS consultants have been appointment for the provision of Design Team Consultancy Services.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Detailed public engagement on the development of the Public Realm project for the town.
- Finalisation of detailed design and preparation of Part 8 planning application for submission.
- Finalisation of acquisition of development site on Abbey Street.
- Procurement of consultants to design swimming area.
- Provided technical support for TVRS streetscape enhancement application and scheme roll-out.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Submission of Part 8 Planning Application and Application for CAT 1 RRDF Funding.
- Acquisition of lands for public car park to support public realm project.
- Delivery of Art/Sculpture trail.
- Publication of Urban Design Guidance Document supporting town centre development.

PORTUMNA COURTHOUSE RRDF

The funding approved under RRDF CAT 1 for Portumna Courthouse is €2,552,309 with a match funding requirement of €283,590. This project will redevelop the historic courthouse building and courtyard in Portumna to deliver a state-of-the-art venue for the arts and culture, a remote working space for entrepreneurs and a new meeting and social space for the community.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Detailed design progressed and contractors tendered and appointed

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Commencement of construction on-site with 14 month build program.

TUAM

The Tuam Regeneration masterplan was completed 2021 with funding approved under RRDF.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Provided technical support for TVRS streetscape enhancement application and scheme.
- Submit Part 8 planning application for Tuam Shambles outdoor covered market.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Submit RRDF CAT 1 application for Tuam Town Hall and Shambles covered outdoor market.
- Prepare URDF application activating proposals in Tuam Regeneration Masterplan under Call 4, focusing on Market Square, Shop Street, Vicar Street to the Station Quarter.

BUILDING CONTROL

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- 683 commencement notices have been validated to 19th October 2023, which represents a 2% increase on this time last year.
- 137 completion certificates have been validated to 19th October 2023, which represents a 49% increase on this time last year.
- 73 inspections have been carried out by the Building Control Officer to ensure compliance with the Building Regulations to 19th October 2023.
- 749 new buildings commenced to 19th October 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Building Control Officer will continue to implement the statutory building regulations and to carry out at least the minimum level of inspections of new developments required.

ENFORCEMENT MEASURES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- 96 warning notices/letters served to 23rd October 2023.
- 58 enforcement notices served to 23rd October 2023.
- 23 files have been referred for legal action to 23rd October 2023.
- 189 unauthorised development complaints received to 23rd October 2023.
- 158 approx. enforcement files have been resolved/closed as of the 23rd October 2023.

PROPOSALS 2024:

- It is proposed to continue to provide resources to the Enforcement Team to ensure the implementation of the Planning Regulations in 2023 and proactively follow up complaints and referrals in respect of unauthorised developments.
- To prioritise unfinished housing estates for enforcement action as necessary.

HERITAGE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Athenry Walled Towns Day: This family fun day was held on Sunday 13th August. It showcased the wealth of the built, natural and cultural heritage in medieval Athenry.
- Athenry Town Walls Conservation Works: Funding was received from Heritage Council and works have commenced and hope to finish in this year.
- Loughrea Medieval Festival: This 3 day heritage event was held from 25th to 27th August 2023 in partnership with Loughrea Medieval Festival Committee with the support of the Heritage Council.
- Heritage Grant Scheme as part of Community Grants: Assessed grants, assigned conditions to the same and in the process of paying out grants.
- Creative Ireland part of the Creative Ireland team are working on the “Galway Forged Gates project: Phase 2”. Launched phase 1 in April 2023 which consisted of an exhibition, booklet, films and videos.
- Decade of Commemoration involve an array of projects including Aleen Cust, Irish Workhouse Centre booklet and video, Recording Wayside Memorials, Bi-lingual Childrens Garda Workbook, Closing event for Galway County Decade of Commemorations. Held launch of *Ever and Always The Marvellous Story of Aleen Cust ‘Britain And Ireland’s First Female Vet’* (a Bi-lingual Primary School workbook in April 2023).
- ICAN – Community Heritage website - The Heritage Office continued to work in partnership with the Museum of County Life Castlebar and various communities throughout the County to further develop this website.

- Féile na gCloch 14th-17th September 2023 Working in partnership with Comhar Caomháin Teo, International Cultural Policy Unit of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Drystone Walling Association of Ireland. The festival was extremely successful saw a large number of participants from all over the world including 14 EU Countries, Canada, USA, Australia, Austria and Japan.
- *Digital Mapping of Graveyards in the County* – Launched a new digital mapping system with GIS Department to incorporate the use of drones and Survey 123. Working with Community Groups to upload their graveyard data to the system.
- Community Events, Conferences and Workshops
- Assistance, advice, and support was also given to numerous Tidy Town, Community Heritage and schools groups in 2023 and included advice and guidance on heritage publications, development of heritage trails, oral heritage recordings, Heritage Week Events, heritage training and relevant local heritage conferences and seminars etc.
- Participation on Committees/teams such as the *Placenames Committee, National intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, Loughrea Heritage and Development Company*.
- Community Monument Fund – Funding has been accepted in relation to conservation management plans and works for a number of recorded monuments in the County.
- Holy Wells Audit Phase 4 - Working in North Connemara on this phase of the project.
- Produce a Golden Mile Calendar for County Galway.
- Commence the development of a new *Heritage and Biodiversity Plan for the County of Galway 2023- 2030*.
- Community Archaeologist Programme - The Community Archaeologist has worked with numerous groups in the County with regards to the provision of advice and guidance with regards to their archaeological heritage and has produced several online resources. Also see <https://field-monuments.galwaycommunityheritage.org/>
- Audit of Oral Heritage Recordings Phase 1: East Galway is being undertaken. The audit of oral recordings of stories, family histories and memories is being undertaken in East Galway in 2023 – to preserve them for future generations before reels and cassettes are lost forever.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue with the digital mapping of graveyards project. Work in partnership with several local community groups, LEADER Companies and GIS Department of Galway County Council to provide free access to the wealth of heritage and local history information contained within the graveyards of County Galway in the form of a graveyard map, memorial inscriptions, exact location of burial plot and photographs of the memorials as resources allow.
- Finalise and print the bi-lingual workbook on the geology of the County for second level students in partnership with the Geological Survey of Ireland and the Heritage Council.

- Develop more Story Maps.
- The community archaeologist will work with various groups, schools and individuals in the County to increase awareness, knowledge and appreciation of the archaeological heritage of the County. He will also provide guidance and assistance on undertaking archaeological heritage-based projects to best heritage practice. Also apply for Community Monument Funding.
- Continue with the 'Sound Map' of the County of Galway Project.
- Reading the Landscape Course - To continue to work with community groups to learn field skills and use same to upload content onto the new community heritage website.
- Athenry Walled Towns Day – Funding will be sought from the Walled Towns Funds of the Heritage Council and if successful a walled town Day will be held in August 2024.
- Athenry & Loughrea Walled Towns Educational Project – Funding to be sought to continue this worthwhile project.
- Athenry Town Walls Capital Works – Funding will be sought to undertake another programme of works for the Walls and an ensuing body of work will also take place if successful.
- Loughrea Medieval Festival – Seek to develop an event in partnership with Loughrea Medieval Festival Committee.
- Decade of Commemoration - Further development and updating of the bi-lingual website for the Decade of Commemoration with additional information and podcasts. Continue with the development of the Galway County Decade of Commemoration publication series. (If funding is still available).
- Apply for Community Monument Funding
- ICAN – Community Heritage website. The Heritage Office will continue to work in partnership with the Museum of County Life Castlebar and various communities throughout the County to further develop this website.
- Community Events, Conferences and Workshops – Assistance, advice, and support will also be given to numerous Town and Community events in 2024 including Féile na gCloch, Heritage Week Events, heritage training and relevant local heritage conferences and seminars etc.
- The Beo Schools Project with INSIGHT, NUIG and Galway Education Centre will be ongoing.
- Continue with the Holy Well audit of County Galway (South Conemara).
- Continue with the Oral Heritage Audit (Conemara).
- Participation on Committees/teams such as the Placenames Committee, Loughrea Heritage and Development Company, Creative Ireland, and other such initiatives
- Roll out of the Heritage Grant Scheme as part of Community Grants.
- Produce a Golden Mile Calendar.
- Continue with Townland Research and Parish/Local Area Heritage Audits.

- Hold meetings and progress heritage initiatives with Galway County Heritage & Biodiversity Forum.
- Continue with the development of a new *Heritage and Biodiversity Plan for the County of Galway 2023- 2030*.
- Continue to develop the town heritage booklets.
- Undertake the Féile na gCloch festival in Inis Oírr.
- Develop and deliver heritage training.
- Support and undertake events for Heritage Week.

BIODIVERSITY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Biodiversity Week May 2023: Ran and supported events around the County including a Wildflower Workshop in Brigit's Garden, Dawn Chorus in Headford, Sustainable Gardening workshop in Loughrea, BioBlitz in Mountbellew and Orchard Management workshop in Headford Community Orchard.
- Local Biodiversity Action Fund Projects: Connemara Blue Dot (Publication, video & 10 primary school workshops), Galway Bay I-WeBS (workshops and equipment), Rhododendron Management (FORUM Connemara), Working with Nature (Swatch Publication, coastal planting workshop, rodenticide video, and library garden design), Wetlands Restoration Feasibility Study (NE Galway), Management of Invasive Alien Species (Connemara), Invasive Alien Species Mapping (South Connemara), Quagga Mussel Study, Connemara Bog Natural Heritage Awareness Programme (Poster, filming, podcast), Barn Owl Booklet (publication), Alpine Newt (monitoring of population) and Invasive Algae *Nitellopsis obtusa*.
- Provision of Invasive Species training to Community Wardens.
- Heritage Stewardship Fund: Tree Management Principles for County Galway (Acquisition of the National Tree Map for County Galway, workshops and information leaflets)
- Development and collaboration on Sustainable Plant Management Plan to document and manage the use of pesticides. This was adopted by the Climate Change and Biodiversity SPC in September 2023.
- Providing advice and guidance on various aspects of biodiversity including tree-planting, invasive species management, pollinator planting and grassland management to staff and community groups.
- Media and social media engagement to raise awareness of biodiversity around the County.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue with the roll-out of biodiversity projects with the funding support of Heritage Council and the National Parks & Wildlife Service.
- Work to deliver on actions as detailed in the Galway County Council's Climate Action Plan.
- Provide support to community groups, Tidy Towns groups, educational institutions and local development companies.
- Deliver on our commitments for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- Develop a new Heritage and Biodiversity Plan for the County of Galway 2024- 2030.
- Hold meetings and progress biodiversity initiatives with Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Forum.
- Undertake Biodiversity Week events and Heritage Week and work on the Invasive Species Strategy.

CONSERVATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Identified, evaluated and provided advice on structures, groups of structures areas and other features of architectural heritage significance. Provided advice to owners and occupiers of historic structures on good practice and on the availability of assistance, including financial assistance, for such conservation.
- Assessed structures on Record of Protected Structures (RPS) with a view to issuing Declarations as to works that require planning permission and provide pre-planning advice.
- Offered advice to owners /occupiers of traditionally built structures, in particular energy efficiency measures.
- Reported and advised on planning applications where architectural heritage issues arise both in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and with Protected Structures (individual buildings or groups of buildings) where development was proposed.
- Monitored the state of repair of structures on the record of Protected Structures, and as necessary, made recommendations on the need for the planning authority to take enforcement action.
- Maintained Architectural Inventory database.
- Consulted with the relevant department, state agencies, voluntary and international organisations on matters of architectural conservation including Association of Architectural Conservation Officers, ICOMOS, and Irish Georgian Society.
- Liaised with local communities regarding Tidy Towns and community initiatives.
- Creative Ireland funded pilot survey on energy efficiency in traditional buildings in Gort.
- Historic Assets group – the internal inter disciplinary- inter departmental working group continued its work to maintain Protected Structures in the care of the local authority.

Consulted with Regeneration Team on repurposing and refurbishment of several local authority owned properties.

- Promote and administer *The Walks, Loughrea*; conservation project to boundary walls and bridges in historic public realm.
- Liaised with GRETB, CIF and Departmental Built Heritage Advisory service re traditional building skills training courses.
- Participation in *Architecture at the Edge* festival of architecture with *Repair* theme- Events attracted participation at Kylemore, Loughrea, Mountbellew, Esker, Ballygar as well as hybrid events online and in Galway.
- Administered the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and Historic Structures Fund (HSF) made available through Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Community Monuments Fund scheme from National Monuments Service in the same department.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continue to carry out the statutory duties of Architectural Conservation Officer as set out in Circular 5/99 or as amended.
- Review Record of Protected Structures by proposing additions to the RPS and research and propose Architectural Conservation Areas and liaise with owners and occupiers.
- Maintain Architectural Inventory System.
- Promote opportunities to raise awareness of the architectural heritage and its appropriate conservation and reuse through Creative Ireland, Irish Architectural Foundation, Arts Council and other funding opportunities as available.
- Promote the initiatives and funding made available by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Continue to promote traditional skills use and training initiatives in association with the Building Limes Forum Ireland, Construction Industry Federation and GRETB.
- Continue to contribute to the Historic Assets working group and work with local communities to incorporate the historic built environment into the community life of towns and villages.
- Prepare costed project outlines and plans to be able to avail of capital funding in historic towns and ACAs and for Historic Assets in care of the local authority as it becomes available in association with Regeneration Team.
- Avail of and promote any funding initiatives available, including Built Heritage Investment Scheme Fund, Historic Structures Fund, Rural Towns and Village funding, Historic Towns Initiative, Community Monuments Fund & Creative Ireland.
- Provide advice to the local authority on architectural conservation matters; Liaise with Roads re conservation of masonry stone arch bridges; Liaise with corporate services re historic assets in LA ownership; Liaise with Environment re graveyards; Liaise with local area engineers re public realm and issues arising. Liaise with Housing re energy efficiency in traditionally built houses.

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, HUMAN RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITISATION

WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Completed tender documentation for Gort Civic Amenity Site Project and issued invitation on new eTenders platform. Tender closing date 25th October, 2023.
- Framework Plan, Options Report, and Preliminary Cost Estimate Report completed for East Galway Eco Park Project. A public consultation and open information day were held to invite contributions from the community into the park design process.
- Brady Shipman Martin (Landscape Architect) awarded contract to complete a Preliminary Report in respect to development of an Amenity Park at Pollboy landfill. A public information event is proposed to be hosted in November, 2023.
- Upgrade to SCADA system at Pollboy Landfill 90% completed.
- Certification of Authorisation (CoA) applications progressed in respect to last remaining high risk historic landfill sites – Glenamaddy, Kilronan.
- Bottlebank service contract extended on same commercial terms until 1st March, 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Prepare planning submission for East Galway Eco Park. Submit applications for external capital funding.
- Review Preliminary Report for Pollboy Amenity Park Development and progress project as appropriate.
- Progress development of Gort Civic Amenity Site in so far as budget permits.
- Undertake obligations per CoA for historic landfills which expected to issue during the year – Tullyvoheen, Gort and Tuam. Finalise and submit CoA applications for Kilronan and Glenamaddy.
- Support Athchursail Arann in the management of the islands waste management service.
- Address the implications of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS to be launched in February 2024), on Galway County Council's bottlebank collection services.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT MEASURES

The work programme set out in the Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) Plan 2023 was completed.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Details of enforcement notices and warning letters which were issued and prosecutions which were initiated under environmental legislation in 2023 will be set out in the 2023 RMCEI returns which are due for issue by end of February 2024.
- The 2023 RMCEI returns will detail planned inspections carried out on regulated facilities and unplanned inspections carried out in relation to complaints received and incidents of environmental pollution. Inspections were carried out in relation to complaints, permitted waste facilities, permitted collectors, quarries, garages, various waste producer categories, discharge licences, sewage sludge facilities, farms, private wastewater treatment systems, air pollution licences, deco paints facilities and solvent registered sites and bathing waters.
- Joint enforcement inspections were carried out with the Gardai, NWTFS office, CU WERLA, Galway City Council.
- Bulky Goods Collections were organised in conjunction with Galway City Council.
- The Environment Enforcement Team carried out Awareness Campaigns in relation to the proper use of bring bank facilities and the facilities available at Civic Amenity Sites. An electronic signage and billboard campaign was rolled out across the County highlighting issues associated with illegal collectors.
- Monitoring was carried out in relation to drinking water, bathing water, rivers, lakes, and landfills in accordance with legislative requirements both directly and via contracts with external laboratories. Follow-up actions were taken in response to non-compliances.
- Inspections were carried out in relation to 149 discharge licences, 6 domestic wastewater treatment systems and 25 farms. Enforcement actions were carried out where necessary.
- Public notices were issued, and investigative monitoring was carried out as required in response to drinking water and bathing water non-compliances. Six Blue Flags and six Green Coast plaques were awarded to bathing areas in County Galway.
- Activities which have the potential to cause air pollution such as dry cleaning, vehicle refinishing, and quarries were regulated.
- The Environment Section reviewed all significant planning applications for developments other than applications for single houses. These included industrial, housing estate, energy, waste management and quarry developments. Comprehensive reviews are carried out to ensure that the proposals comply with a myriad of relevant environmental legislation and guidance documents.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Council will set out all planned pro-active inspections of authorised facilities under various environmental legislation in the 2024 RMCEI Plan which is due for issue by 16th February, 2024. The scale of enforcement activity in 2024 will reflect the resources available for inspections and will be on a prioritised basis taking into consideration of Departmental, EPA, LAWPRO and WERLA guidance.
- The Council will continue to carry out investigations and monitoring under environmental legislation, in accordance with government policy and EPA directions, and take enforcement measures as required for non-compliance with environmental legislation.
- There will be continued review of the most successful ways to deal with illegal dumping. The Waste Presentation Bye Laws will be enforced, and fixed penalty notices will be issued as required.
- The Council will work with the public and other agencies, including the WFD Office, on the improvement of water quality in identified priority catchments, through public awareness and a concentrated programme of inspections of potentially polluting sources including large scale private wastewater treatment systems, farms, and domestic wastewater treatment systems.

DERELICT SITES AND DANGEROUS STRUCTURES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Council continued to exercise its powers under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 and the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964, to work with the owners of neglected, ruinous and unsightly buildings and land to take remedial action. Enforcement action continued to take place where required.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Sites in the County will continue to be reviewed in accordance with the Derelict Sites policy and the Dangerous Structures policy.

BURIAL GROUNDS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- There are currently 233 burial grounds listed on the Council's burial ground register. The Council, with the participation of the many local burial ground committees, carries out maintenance and improvement work as resources permit.

- The burial ground capital works programme continued throughout 2023. Works were completed on extensions to burial grounds in Creagh and Duniry which provided an additional 407 and 62 double plots respectively. Two developments for the internment of urns were finished in Moycullen and An Spidéal which provided 24 niches and 10 lawn urn plots respectively and a lawn plot area will be set aside in Creagh for 59 burials. A works contract was awarded and commenced for the extension to Ballyconneely burial ground which will add approximately 150 double plots.
- A Part 8 planning application was submitted for an extension to Kilbannon burial ground and site investigations were successfully carried out on lands for extensions to Kilconieron and Renvyle burial grounds.
- An annual grant is provided to committees who maintain the burial grounds in their area. Grants are awarded to Committees in the sum of €1,400, €900, €600, €450, €300, and €200 with grants made to over 190 committees in 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Completion of projects at construction stage, procure contractors for permitted projects and advance projects at planning stage to application submission.
- Issue advertisement campaign to invite Landowners to come forward in areas where burial ground capacity is low.
- Procure Landscape Consultants for extension to Renvyle burial grounds.
- Work with communities where capacity deficits exist to find solutions and identify suitable sites.
- Draft new Burial Ground Bye Laws for consideration by the Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer is involved in promoting environmental awareness through ongoing engagement with the domestic and commercial sectors.
- Review of the 2019-2022 Litter Management Plan and adoption of the 2023 -2025 Litter Management Plan following consultation process.
- Social media, radio, cinema, direct email contact, and networks including the PPN, Tidy Towns, Schools, Councillors, and staff have helped deliver information on litter, waste management, waste prevention, food waste, home composting, promotion of waste management services and other environmental issues.
- Ongoing involvement and support of Tidy Towns groups and other Community groups.
- Rolled out of Food Waste Recycling campaign.
- Environmental Awareness Information stand held at 4 public events and 3 group meetings, with 3 planned for November 2023.

- Supported WEEE Ireland to deliver 22 Waste Electrical Goods Collections at local community level.
- Ongoing involvement in the Green Schools programme, 41 schools renewed their flag in 2023.
- Information on other events, such as WEEE Battery Collection competition, An Taisce Clean Air Programme and An Taisce Water Ambassador programme delivered to schools.
- Anti-Litter poster competition was roll out to schools. Presentation to the winners in Áras an Chontae. The Secondary School winners to be presented with prizes in November 2023.
- Picker Pals Programme was rolled out to 66 classes in National Schools.
- Eco Unesco Young Environmentalist programme was supported.
- Support of National Spring Clean with over 180 events and over 600 trees were distributed during National Tree Week.
- 13 Christmas tree recycling sites were provided in communities.
- Anti-Litter campaigns continue to be rolled out in communities. Leave No Trace principles integrated into anti-Litter campaigns. Anti-Litter Awareness Audio devices were installed at litter black spots. The Gum litter Task Force campaign was supported. Anti-litter adverts were run on local radio and social media.
- Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) reports were followed up on.
- An Anti Dog Fouling Advertisement was run in cinemas in conjunction with Galway City Council with guaranteed 192,000 admissions to see it.
- Continued to liaise and work with Connacht Ulster Regional Waste Management Office.
- Promotion of environmental awareness with Waste Enforcement, Community and Enterprise Unit, Housing, Facilities, PPN Co- Ordinator and Heritage Officer.
- Supported Climate Adaptation Strategy rollout.
- Supported An Taisce Blue Flag, Green Coast, and Clean Coast programme. Promote Art Competition for schools in relation to Blue Flags.
- We launched the Beach Anti-Litter campaign, and we held inaugural Beach Awareness Day during Heritage Week which had good attendance.
- Supported national social media campaigns from WEEE Ireland, Leave No Trace and Regional Waste Management Planning Offices.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Awareness campaign will continue to further enhance partnerships with community, schools and voluntary groups and continued the dissemination of information to all sectors.
- Continue to deliver on the Litter Management Plan 2023-2025. Presentation to be given on progress to Councillors during 2024.
- Continue to support rollout of Climate Adaptation Strategy.
- Continue to liaise and support with Regional Waste Planning Office.

- Ongoing implementation of the Litter Management, Waste Management and Waste Prevention Programme.
- Continue to support campaigns such National Spring Clean, National Tree Week, Gum Litter Taskforce campaign, Blue Flag, Green Coasts, Green Schools, Picker Pals and others.
- Target Anti-Litter Awareness campaign through communities, schools, social media and similar.
- Continue promotion of Anti Dog Fouling programme and Beach Awareness campaign.
- Roll out Roadside Litter Awareness programme and Cigarette Butt campaign.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The mission of Local Authorities, as set out in Delivering Effective Climate Action, 2030 is to deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across our counties and within our own organisations, through leadership, example, and mobilising action at a local level. To detail the steps, we will take to achieve this, we are required to prepare and adopt a Climate Action Plan. Stakeholder engagement was carried out in advance of the development of the Draft Climate Action Plan and supporting documents were developed including a Greenhouse Gas Emission Baseline and Risk Assessment.
- A Climate Action Unit has been established and the Climate Action Coordinator, Climate Action Officer and Community Climate Action Officer have been recruited. A new governance structure was put in place including a Climate Action Steering Group, Climate Action Team, and Energy Team. There are 28 members of the various teams.
- Work is also ongoing across the organisation in relation to climate change including the retrofit of social housing, reduction in the internal energy use in buildings and lighting, development of an EV strategy, just transition, climate proofing our plans, raising awareness, developing stakeholder networks including support of existing projects, training of staff, biodiversity protection, environmental education, and many other related areas. As part of our role, the Environment Section supports, reports on, and highlights this work to varying degrees.
- SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities Program: GCC have supported 5 communities to develop Energy Masterplans including Dunmore, Milltown, Headford, Athenry and Ballinasloe. We have committed to support 5 additional communities, and these are at various stages of development. This will equate to a total commitment of approx. €120,000 which will be recouped via SEAI.

- Galway County Council fulfilled their statutory obligations in respect of energy consumption monitoring and reporting. GCC met the target of a 33% improvement in energy efficiency by 2020 and is now working on new targets: a 50% improvement in energy efficiency and a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- The Regional Energy Bureau serves the 5 LAs in the Northwest Atlantic Region. It is 50% funded by the Local Authorities and 50% funded by SEAI. Under this programme a Regional Energy Bureau Officer has been appointed to GCC and we have support from ATU. We have also assigned an internal member of staff as Energy Officer. These resources are focused on progressing the SEAI Pathfinder Programs, obtaining ISO50001 certification in 2024, reducing occupational energy use and meeting our 2030 energy targets.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Community Climate Action Officer will administer the €726,000 Climate Action Fund allocated to Galway County. This fund is for new community climate action projects and initiatives to be developed over an 18-month period. The overall objective of the programme is to support and empower communities, in partnership with the Council, to shape and built low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets.
- Prepare a submissions report in relation to the Draft Climate Action Plan and present it to the Plenary for adoption by the 24th February, 2024. Continue to cultivate and actively participate in partnerships with enterprise, community, voluntary, third level institutions and the research community to deliver on initiatives that reduce climate impact. Continue to engage in existing projects including CONNECTED, LEAP and Galway Partner Forest Programme.
- Manage the Climate Action Steering Group and Climate Action Team and report progress to the Management Team. Continue to support and report on work ongoing across the organisation in relation to climate change. Run internal engagement and education campaigns. Implement the actions in the Climate Action Plan.
- Manage the Energy Team and work on our targets of a 50% improvement in energy efficiency and a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Continue to work towards ISO50001 certification for our Energy Management System.
- Continue to engage with the CCMA Local Authority Climate Action Training.
- Continue to support Sustainable Energy Communities throughout the County to develop and implement their Energy Master Plans.

ANIMAL CONTROL AND WELFARE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Under the Control of Dogs Act, 2 fulltime Dog Wardens provide a dog control service in the County utilising 1 leased dog pound facilities which are under veterinary supervision and operate as laid out in the Councils Dog Control Policy.
- In 2023, Galway County ran a tender for the Provision of a Dog Shelter and Associated Services and in July entered into an agreement with a Contractor for the provision of these services.
- 61 Enforcement actions have been brought under the Control of Dogs Act to date.
- We continue to promote responsible dog ownership within the community and through the Council's social media platforms. Over 40 Dog Waste Bag dispenser units are now installed in many of our towns, villages, and amenity areas.
- The Council continued to implement the Dog Breeding Establishment Act 2010 which requires the registration, and compliance with standards, of all premises coming under the definition of a 'dog breeding establishment'.
- The Council continued to be active in providing shelter facilities for impounding of horses, sheep, cattle, and goats.
- In 2023, Galway County Council worked in partnership with MADRA regarding Millie's Fund, a campaign launched in March of this year offering free spays for eligible female dogs in Galway County. Over 120 vouchers have been issued to eligible applicants to date.
- Where possible, Dog Wardens were involved in liaising with members of the public and Gardaí in assisting with dog thefts and missing dogs.
- Animal welfare cases involving dogs, cattle, sheep, and horses were reviewed and referred where appropriate to the relevant Gardaí, Department of Agriculture, and Welfare groups.
- The Dog Warden service continue to investigate sheep kills in line with policy and liaise with An Garda Síochána where required.
- The Dog Warden service continues to operate the agreed Protocol with the An Garda Síochána when required to assist with search and arrest operations in a variety of situations.
- The Council veterinary service continues to liaise with Housing in the implementation of the Control of Horses Act.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Ongoing improvements to the efficiency of the Dog Control service regarding the effective resourcing of the service including staffing and facilities available.
- Review of training requirements and of standard operation procedures for Dog Wardens in line with existing legislation and in keeping with best practice.

- Continue to look at increasing compliance with dog licensing as dictated by resources available. Targeted licence checks will be carried out across the County in conjunction with the Community Warden service.
- Licensing and Microchipping Awareness campaigns will be conducted to combat dog theft in the County.
- In conjunction with Dogs Trust Ireland, Responsible Dog Ownership workshops will continue to be promoted in County Libraries and Primary Schools.
- The Council will continue to support Anti Dog Fouling Campaigns and the introduction of new measures to target dog fouling.
- The Council will continue to review reported cases of animal welfare breaches, and refer to Department of Agriculture, Gardaí and welfare groups as required, within the capabilities of the allocated resources.
- Dog Breeding Establishments on the register will be inspected and all reports of unregistered breeding establishments will be followed up. It is a legal requirement that all establishments apply for registration.
- The Council will continue to provide and improve our shelter services ensuring animal well-being for all animals that come into our care.

FOOD SAFETY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The Council has a service contract with the FSAI under which it regulates EC approved abattoirs and meat processing plants located in the County and City of Galway, through the veterinary service.
- This service contract requires that all animals are inspected before and after slaughter, animal residue sampling and welfare checks are carried out, with detailed audits performed, thus ensuring the integrity and traceability of the farm to fork food chain in the eleven local EC approved abattoirs in the County. These premises slaughter cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry and process wild game.
- The service contract also requires the supervision and regulation of fourteen EC approved meat processing plants in the City and County. This involves sampling of meat products for microbiological contamination, food additives, allergens, residues, disease surveillance, labelling compliance, traceability, and food fraud. There is also a regular schedule of unannounced inspections and pre-planned audits in the premises, which themselves provide employment to more than 200 employees.

- Two new registered businesses were added and attained the required EC standard for registration in GCC veterinary service facilitated the approval of additional activities for multiple meat businesses as these small businesses continue to pivot to survive amidst the pandemic.
- The Council provided ongoing training and an advisory service to existing Food Business Operators in the implementation of changing EC food legislation and the challenges posed by Brexit as well as meeting, carrying out site visits and advising start-up food businesses across the City and County.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- The Council will continue to fulfil official food safety controls in the County and City of Galway pending agreement between the CCMA and the FSAI on the terms of a service level agreement.
- Regular Training for Food Business Operators and Veterinary Inspectors will continue during 2024, targeting new EC regulations introduced. There will also be an enhanced training and advisory role to businesses to meet the challenges posed by Brexit with the need for enhanced certification amongst businesses in operation with food product coming from or to the United Kingdom.
- The Council will continue to liaise with the FSAI to ensure that there is sufficient budget allocation to ensure we are able to fulfil our statutory obligations in the context of public health requirements and due diligence.
- Regular Training for Food Business Operators and veterinary inspectors will continue during 2024, targeting new EC regulations introduced. There will also be an enhanced training and advisory role to businesses to meet the challenges posed by Brexit with the need for enhanced certification amongst businesses in operation with food product coming from or two the United Kingdom.
- Continued sampling programs as in 2024 directed by both the Department of Agriculture and the Marine and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.
- Continued involvement and liaising with the Steering Committee and Statutory Agencies DAFM, Teagasc, SFPA and HSE in the ongoing development of the multicentre Teagasc / GCC Food Innovation and Incubation centre proposed for Athenry. The Food Hub comprises of 3 blocks, consisting of a learning centre and timeshare kitchen production unit, a block of 8 starter units and a block of 3 larger growth units.

- Continued mentoring of existing businesses to approve new activities and open new business opportunities.
- Continued sampling programs as in 2020 directed by both the Department of Agriculture and the Marine and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.
- Support National Local Authority Systems Implementation.

HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY

The Human Resources Department continues to support and develop an Organisational culture of positive employee engagement and personal and professional development through the implementation of relevant HR policies and legislation, leading to improved employee wellbeing, work-life balance, job satisfaction and productivity.

The HR Department prioritises the recruitment of Staff through Workforce Planning and strives to ensure the most effective use the skills and abilities of each employee to deliver the strategic goals of Galway County Council's Corporate Plan.

A Strategic Workforce Plan has been undertaken in 2023, to examine future staffing requirements in line with the Corporate Plan for the next five years. The implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Workforce Plan will be subject to Galway County Councils' budgetary provisions.

RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

Galway County Council's Staff Headcount at the end of Quarter 3, 2023 is as follows:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Headcount</i>
<i>Core Staff</i>	873
<i>Retained Fire Fighters</i>	104
<i>Non-Department of Housing, Planning & LG</i>	79

Recruitment Activity, up to Quarter 3, 2023:

The Human Resources Department ran 62 recruitment competitions up to the end of Quarter 3, 2023 which resulted in the following appointments:

New Appointments/Joiners	Acting Appointments	Permanent Promotional Appointments
111 + 53 Beach Lifeguards	51	50

Staff recruitment and re-deployment has been targeted at the priority areas of Housing, Environmental Enforcement, Climate Change, Planning and Municipal Districts and focus will also be on implementing additional posts approved for the Retained Fire Service in 2024.

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The Training and Development Section provides a wide range of training programmes to enable staff and management carry out their duties in a confident and competent manner, in a safe working environment.
- Investment in staff training benefits the organisation through the upskilling of employees and continuing personal and professional development.
- Employee Health & Safety training formed a considerable part of the Training Plan in 2023. This included the following courses: Safe Pass, Manual Handling, Re-certification of Occupational First Aid, Chainsaw Training, Road Opening Reinstatement Training, Abrasive Wheels, Fire Evacuation Training.
- Approximately 2506 training days were facilitated through the HR department Training team from January to October 2023.

STAFF WELFARE

Galway County Council offers several Family Friendly Schemes to employees. Staff have availed of the various schemes as follows up to the end of Quarter 3, 2023:

- **Paternity Leave Scheme:** 9 staff members availed of the paternity leave scheme in 2023.
- **Carer's Leave Scheme:** 3 staff members availed of Carer's Leave in 2023.
- **Career Break:** 13 staff members availed of career breaks in 2023.
- **Parent's Leave Scheme:** 18 staff members availed of parent leave scheme in 2023.
- **Work Sharing Scheme:** 51 staff members availed of work sharing arrangements in 2023.
- **Parental Leave Scheme:** 59 staff members availed of parental leave scheme in 2023.
- **Shorter Working Year Scheme:** 52 staff members availed of unpaid leave under the Shorter Working Year Scheme in 2023.

OTHER SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR STAFF

- **Employee Assistance Service:** The Human Resources department reviewed Galway County Council's Employee Assistance Scheme (EAS) and in September last year, procured the services of a new EAS through Spectrum.Life which provides confidential counselling and advisory services to all Galway County Council employees, their spouse, partner and dependants over the age of 18, residing in the family home.

- **Cycle to Work Scheme:** The Cycle to Work Scheme was revised as part of the Government's Jobs Stimulus Plan with an increased allowable expenditure from August 2020.
- **21** applications for participation in the Cycle to Work Scheme were processed from 1st January, 2023 to 30th September, 2023 for Council employees.
- **Travel Pass Scheme:** **5** staff members availed of the tax saver travel pass scheme between the period of 1st January to 30th September, 2023. **7** staff members availed of the Monthly tax saver travel pass scheme from 1st January to 30th September, 2023.
- ☐ **VDU Assessments:** **41** VDU tests have been carried out between 1st January to 30th September, 2023.

RETIREMENTS

- Following the introduction of the Public Services Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018, the compulsory retirement age for most staff recruited before 1st April 2004, has increased from 65 to 70 years.
- Staff recruited after 1st January 2013 and who are members of the Single Pension Scheme also have a compulsory retirement age of 70.
- Galway County Council service records indicate that 2 full-time staff members will reach retirement age in 2024.
- 21 staff members have retired to date, in 2023.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Continue to recruit and deploy staff in an efficient and professional manner, and in accordance with Government policy and service priorities.
- Continue to deliver mandatory Health and Safety training and support staff education and development programmes.
- Develop, implement and communicate appropriate human resource policies in line with existing and new legislation, and in keeping with best practice.
- Support and advise Line Managers on the implementation of workplace policies.
- Promote dignity at work, diversity and equality for all employees of the Council.
- Continue to promote a climate of good industrial relations and strengthen the partnership approach to joint problem-solving in the interest of employee and customer relations.
- Strengthen the uptake of PMDS across the Organisation through the delivery of training and in line with the requirements of the Blended Working Policy.
- Implement efficiencies for the HR department through continuous Business Process Improvements.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- New telephony main reception system introduction with more extensive menu options for services access.
- Managed 24 x 7 PC, Laptop and Server malware protection service introduction.
- Further consolidation and integration of security services for early warning and tracking of threats.
- Council telephone service and staff numbers all moved to secure reliable cloud service.
- Network infrastructure works commenced for Uisce Éireann (Irish Water) staffing support.
- Security Systems upgrades to enhance services and provision of more timely updates and protection.
- Continuing upgrade of laptops for remote working and replacement of obsolete
- Video Conferencing systems in meeting rooms in County Hall and regional offices facilitating hybrid access roll out.
- Supporting BIA Innovator Hub for networks access.
- Backup Systems enhancements for additional measures and facilities.
- County Hall Council Chamber video distribution display replacement and expansion.
- Multifunction Printer Tender contract in progress.
- Oranmore Library public internet connection to Metropolitan Area Network.
- Additional staff complement to Geographic Information Systems Team.
- Fully funded position dedicated to National Fire Service NUROP (National Unified Risk Operating Program) with Galway County are the technical lead agency.
- Preplanning Reports Portal Launch for applicants and design professionals.
- Automation Processes for Development Planning Staff for site inspections.
- Transition of Web ePayments to new platform service.
- Community Lead Heritage Graveyards survey program and winner of Public Sector Digital Transformation Awards in the Community Engagement Category.
- Database and applications support and maintenance.
- Conversion of all scanned documents to single accessible standard for public and internal use.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continuing progress and improvement of Cyber Security standards and policies within the Council.
- Continuing progress on Council Chamber project to implement the fully integrated remote client services offering, combined with the acquisition of the planned Q4 2023 integrated

Web Casting component from Taiden to provide the best operational experience for members.

- Adoption of LGMA Ireland's Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy 2030 to deliver Councils Digital and ICT strategy.
- Progression of digitally enabling of processes and services to enhance delivery and ability of blended working.
- Support all National ICT Project Initiatives.
- Work on full compliance of State National Cyber Security Standards and prepare for EU NIS2 regulatory framework as a Public Administration Body.
- Enhance greater mobile and field data collection.
- Procurement Program to replace Council's entire internal switched network.
- Complete Irish Government Cloud network connection to Athenry , Gort , Clifden and An Cheathrú Rua offices and adjoining services units.
- Support Technology to deliver full www.galway.ie replacement.
- Establishment of a centrally funded Information Systems Security Team.

FINANCE AND MOTOR TAX

FINANCE

VALUE FOR MONEY, SHARED SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

Galway County Council utilises the procurement platform www.supplygov.ie offered by the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre (LGOPC) in relation to the procurement of goods, works and services from suppliers (incl. contractors and service providers). The website www.supplygov.ie has been developed by the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre (LGOPC) to streamline the procurement process. The platform operates two modules for procuring goods, works and services through Supplementary Requests for Tenders (sRFTs) and Requests for Quotations (RFQs). During 2023 Galway County Council generated 193 sRFT's and 30 RFQ's on www.supplygov.ie.

The Government's electronic tendering platform administered by the Office of Government Procurement is www.etenders.gov.ie. This platform is a central facility for all public sector contracting authorities to advertise procurement opportunities and award notices. A new provider began operating the platform from May. This year-to-date Galway County Council processed 23 requests for tenders on this platform.

Purchase Cards: The Council uses the Lighthouse Portal (Ascendas) to process transactions to Agresso and currently has 193 active cards with spend of €1,051,625 and has processed 8,548 transactions year to date.

Fuel Cards: The Council currently has 224 active fuel cards with a 2023 spend of €706,464 year to date.

The Spend Tracker System rollout has been completed on time and in conjunction with the LGMA. GCC have been working with cities4forests to develop a sustainable wood procurement policy specific to requirements for the council. It is anticipated that this will be completed by end of 2023.

A central procurement contract register was developed to record, manage and communicate to staff all central OGP contracts GCC are using.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Further develop the use of the platforms www.supplygov.ie and www.etenders.gov.ie across the organisation with a view to increasing the use of frameworks and DPS's established by LGOPC and the OGP across the organisation.
- Monitoring www.etenders.gov.ie and www.supplygov.ie to ensure competition processes are completed in line with EU Directives and guidelines.
- Analysing the 2023 spend profile with a view to identifying possible cost saving initiatives in line with LGOPC and the OGP frameworks and contracts.
- Communicate new contracts and central arrangements to relevant staff to ensure the organisation is compliant with relevant circulars and ensuring maximum value for money.
- Encourage greater SME participation by updating council website with relevant information regarding access to frameworks and DPS's.
- Continue to utilise existing facilities on etenders website to develop a contract register.
- Ensure staff are informed of GCC internal procurement regulations through by carrying out training with business units.
- Assist staff with finalising contract award information on the new eTenders platform. Continue to assist staff with training and information on the new eTenders platform. Encourage the use of GPP criteria in RFT's and contracts.

DISCHARGE OF PAYMENTS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Implementation of electronic payment methods/upgrades to ensure compliance with e-Invoicing led by LGMA.
- Deliver best practice both in accounts payable and payroll functions with continuous improvement on processes, techniques and practices so activities are efficient, accurate and effective, thereby contributing to the quality of financial reporting. Providing transparency about the decisions made for the work undertaken.
- Implementation of Directives issued by the Revenue Commissioners and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for various financial statutory and non-statutory returns.
- Implementation of electronic initiatives such as e-TAX Clearance
- Real-time reporting for Payroll and eProfessional Services Withholding Tax, Relevant Contract Tax, Non-Resident Landlord Withholding Tax and others.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- In accordance with Finance Act, 2022: Section 897C, Enhanced Reporting Requirements will be introduced in 2024, which will require detail submission to Revenue of certain payments made to Employees and Directors.
- Scope and implementation of Supplier Relationship Management technology to simplify processes, draw on our full capacity to deliver high-quality standards and be mutually beneficial.
- Modernising payments infrastructure by reducing\phasing out cheque payments.inancial Management Systems

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Additional efficiencies achieved re: Budget drafting system (Budgeting/Forecasting/Reporting) and full engagement with the software provider for increased functionality.
- Additional efficiencies achieved re: claims system for travel and subsistence and reduction of late claims/utility accounts and control over arrears.
- Policy and procedure notes developed for Accounts Payable including supplier statements /fraud prevention.
- Effective staff planning initiatives rolled out including a transparent rota, staff cover for vital operations and annual leave planning.
- Core BI Reporting replaced by Makodata software utilised for Payroll reporting.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Continued review of procedure/best practice for the full Accounts payable function and documentation of same.
- Investigation of enhances/alternative automated methods to achieve aspects of the BUDGET cycle. Continued review of CCAS Budgetary Modules and full implementation of functionality including Budgeting for Pensions.
- Review Taxation expertise within Finance unit and skill-up for identified knowledge and expertise gaps.

REVENUE COLLECTION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The National Revaluation Programme for the County of Galway took place in 2023 and provided for a complete revaluation of all commercial and industrial property in regard to commercial rates in the County. The Valuation Office with assistance from GCC Revenue Collectors held clinics in Clifden, Tuam, Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Aras an Chontae. The

purpose of the revaluation is to bring increased transparency and equity to the rating system and provide a much closer and uniform relationship between the current annual rental values of commercial property and their commercial rates liability. This is part of the National Revaluation Programme and the deadline for the production of the new Valuation List was September, 2023.

The new valuations will become effective on the 1st January, 2024.

- The Finance Section implemented a new online payment system for rents, rates and housing loans in July, 2023. The MyCoCo system provides a more efficient service to customers and once registered allows the customer to make online payments and view their statements online.
- Continued utilisation of the ASCENDAS system for the management of income streams such as rates, rents and development levies.
- Continued utilisation of the MARPS process regarding housing loans.
- Implementation of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme for suitable tenants in conjunction with the Housing Section.
- Utilisation of the Tenancy Warning system as required for tenants in rent arrears under the terms of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014.
- Continued implementation of electronic payment methods e.g. Billpay, Household Budget, EFT, online payment facility etc to facilitate customers.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Monitor and update the Revenue collection function as regards best practice
- Continue to review debt collection procedures.
- Issue new Rate Demands following the National Revaluation Programme undertaken in the County in 2023.
- Continued implementation of any extension of the Waiver Scheme for commercial rates in accordance with Government Directives.
- The unit will continue to offer the Bill Pay option to Rents, Loans, RAS and Rates customers to assist household budgetary requirements.
- Provide appropriate training to staff on debt collection procedures.

MOTOR TAX AND DRIVER LICENSING SYSTEMS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- The number of motor tax transactions carried out by Galway County Council motor tax offices to the end of September 2023 was 45,889. Over €7.8M was taken in by Galway

Motor Tax Offices for this period. Approximately 83.5% of total motor tax transactions for the Galway area were carried out online to the end of September 2023.

- The motor tax offices issue tax discs for private and commercial vehicles, tractors, hackneys, taxis and large public service vehicles. Trade plates, trailer license's, replacement documents are also issued and Garda queries and other Local authority queries i.e. S103s and CT53s are processed.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Work will continue on retrieving and digitizing motor tax records in long-term storage with a view to creating an accessible index of all vintage vehicle registration records.
- The Motor Tax Offices in An Cheathru Rua, Ballinasloe, and Galway, will continue to implement all motor tax policies and procedures, and provide support and advice to members of the public, including customers of the motor tax online service.

RISK CONTROL

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

- Communicating with members of the public regarding claims submitted to Galway County Council.
- Liaising with IPB in relation to all aspects of insurance claims dealt with by Galway County Council including Employer's Liability, Public Liability, Housing, Motor and Material Damage.
- Corresponding with our legal team and other council departments in collating documents for use in the investigation of all claims.
- Providing information to council departments regarding insurance matters including all aspects of cover.

PROPOSALS FOR 2024:

- Provide insurance details to IPB in relation to all departments regarding renewal information and policy cover.
- Ensure insurance policy payments premia are made to IPB
- To provide for the planned coordination of statutory inspections in relation to lifting and pressure equipment between IPB's supplier IES and Galway County Council.
- Continued collaboration with all stakeholders in relation to any future claims received by the Risk Control office.

3 YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024 – 2026

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

ATHENRY RRDF

The funding approved under Cat 1 & Cat 2 RRDF for Athenry is €3,554,000, with a match funding requirement of €888,500, The Key deliverable has been the BIA Innovator Campus which is currently being tenanted with LEO and other BIA client. 2024 will see the official opening.

The Cross Street and Market Square enhancement design package which is being incorporated into the wider public realm was submitted for Part VIII

It is anticipated that a significant application will be made under a future Category 2 to bring the public realm enhancements in line with the proposals for other towns such as Clifden, Gort and Portumna, while also including other key elements which will have an economic and community impact with a whole of town approach.

CLIFDEN RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 2 RRDF for Clifden is €792,029 with a match funding requirement of €198,007. The project comprises of enhancing and revitalising the Clifden Public Realm, redesigning the Clifden Harbour Park and public realm interventions along Beach Road Quay.

The Design team are now finalising the planning application with expected submission to An Bord Pleanála.

GORT

The Town Regeneration Officer (TRO) has been working closely with the Gort Town Team finalising the content of the pilot Town Centre First (TCF) plan for Gort. The plan is now completed with an expectation to have a formal launch of the final plan in December. The plan has outlined 12 key themes, each theme having approximately 2 projects identified as short-, medium- or long-term proposals. The TRO has assisted in preparing the first funding application since the completion of the TCF plan, which is a TVRS application for streetscape enhancement for Gort.

The public realm project is in its final stages of detailed design in preparation for the submission of a planning application, environmental screenings of the project are currently being undertaken.

KINVARA

The funding approved under CAT 2 RRDF for Kinvara is €122,790.20 with a match funding requirement of €40,930.06. The project has been developed to preliminary design stage and has recently been transferred to Infrastructure and Operations as part of a larger scheme being undertaken by the NRPO on behalf of TII. This scheme will develop detailed designs and bring to planning stage a boardwalk and walkway and provide safe pedestrian access from the village to this national heritage site and onto the tendered upgrade works on the N67.

LOUGHREA RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 1 RRDF for Loughrea is €1,628,879 with a match funding of €542,960. The project will assist revitalise Loughrea and in particular the Loughrea Town Hall and the Barrack Street Public Realm by bringing back into use this historic and important building.

Construction Tender Documents are finalised for the Town Hall. These are due to be published on the etender platform with appointment of contractors expected Q1 2024 and with a view to construction commencing on site in Q2 2024.

PORTUMNA RRDF

The funding approved under RRDF for Portumna is €1,192,855 with a match funding requirement of €397,618. The project includes the renovation of the Old Courthouse, public realm interventions, the design of a sculpture/public art park & trail, wayfinding and interpretation as well as the regeneration of town centre historic sites.

The project is now at detailed design stage with the proposals due to be lodged for Part VIII planning in Q1 of 2024.

PORTUMNA COURTHOUSE RRDF

The funding approved under RRDF CAT 1 for Portumna Courthouse is €2,552,309 with a match funding requirement of €283,589.90. This project will redevelop the historic courthouse building and courtyard in Portumna to deliver a state-of-the-art venue for the arts and culture, a remote working space for entrepreneurs and a new meeting and social space for the community.

Tenders for the construction phase of the project have now been evaluated and it is anticipated the contractors for construction will be appointed in Q1 of 2024.

TUAM

The funding approved under RRDF for Tuam was €175,000 with a match funding requirement of €43,750. The funding included the preparation of a Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan, which has now been environmentally assessed and was endorsed by Tuam M.D. on April 12th, 2021.

The Regeneration team is preparing for the funding call for a Category 1 application under the RRDF. A call for applications was announced on 10th November, with a closing date for Cat1 applications of the 8th February 2024. The team are working towards resubmitting an application for the Tuam Town Hall which already has part VIII planning in place.

GARRAUN (ORANMORE TRAIN STATION) URDF

There are three main elements to the funding allocation which is centred around the existing train station at Oranmore in County Galway's metropolitan area.

Funding has been awarded for:

- Railway Infrastructure Upgrades to include a 1KM passing railway loop at the existing Oranmore Train Station; including additional platform and associated infrastructure (12m).
- Design of the local centre (see attached) and lands south of the train station to include a detailed design of the local centre, associated car park (existing), (architectural/structural engineering detail) and landscaping plan (for public use); (€300,000).
- A study on the Design Development of Typologies to implement the Urban Framework Plan (€75,000). Also, a flood risk assessment will be carried out for the site.

The project commenced in 2021 in close collaboration with Iarnród Éireann. Subject to planning being granted it is anticipated that the new enhancements at the station will come into operation in early to mid-2025.

It is intended that the lands surrounding the station will eventually deliver up to 1,100 residential units, as well as employment, commercial, educational and community spaces. Critical to the success of this plan is the provision of good quality public transport and the upgrade of Oranmore Station will significantly enhance services.

FORMER GALWAY AIRPORT SITE

Galway County Council and Galway City Council acquired the former Galway Airport site for the purposes of economic development. The site has been included in the County Development Plan with the vision of making it an Innovation, Business and Technology Campus that will attract and secure long-term investment in Galway and the Western Region and underpin the development of the Galway Metropolitan Area.

In partnership with the IDA the Council is now progressing plans for the development of the site and work are due to commence on the delivery of the overall masterplan as included as an objective of the County Development Plan. An investment in analysis of infrastructure, services and financial analysis will be progressed in the short term and this will inform the future development of the site which is a strategic asset with potential to create and sustain jobs and the economy. The initial capital investment in the development of the masterplan and roadmap for the site will inform the capital expenditure requirements.

HOUSING

Housing for All – a new Housing Plan for Ireland was launched in September 2021. Housing for All is the government’s plan to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 per year over the next decade. The plan provides for an optimal mix of social, affordable and private housing for sale and rent. The plan is based on four pathways, leading to a more sustainable housing system:

- Support home ownership and increase affordability.
- Eradicate homelessness, increase social housing delivery and support social inclusion.
- Increase new housing supply.
- Address vacancy and make efficient use of existing stock.

The delivery of the largest ever social and affordable housing programme under Housing for All remains the priority of Galway County Council with a primary focus on new builds to provide social homes. The provision of social and affordable housing of a high standard in the right locations will provide long-term sustainable housing for current and future generations.

The Housing Delivery Action (HDAP) plan was approved on the 1st July 2022 which provides details of the when and how Galway County Council plans to deliver sustainable housing in the right locations during the timeframe of the Housing for All programme.

The Council is committed to utilising all available capital funding streams to maximise the delivery of social and affordable housing including construction, turnkey developments, Part V and Buy and Renew Schemes. The Council continues to actively support Approved Housing Bodies in availing of the Capital Assistance Scheme to deliver social housing.

Description	2024	2025	2026
	(Estimated)		
Main Construction, Turnkeys and Approved Housing Bodies (Including Traveller Accommodation Programme)	€110m	€120m	€140m
Acquisition Programme (including Part V’s)	€4.5m	€4.5m	€4.5m
Capital Assistance Scheme	€0m	€2m	€2m

The Council is actively pursuing the purchase of additional land to add to its existing land bank to ensure the availability of land for the construction of housing units into the future.

All project proposals are subject to Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage funding and specific stage and statutory approvals by project and are dependent on the availability of co-funding where required.

The Council will continue to actively engage with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in relation to additional proposals for construction projects to be delivered under Housing for All. The focus for 2024 is achieving the delivery of 358 social houses through the activities of the Council and Approved Housing Bodies.

A large construction/build programme will be delivered in 2024 and the expenditure profile reflects this. The focus will continue to shift away from leasing arrangements and towards construction (new build delivery) and acquisitions. Part V acquisitions will continue with 20% on developments of which a minimum of 10% will be allocated to social housing. The remaining 10% may be allocated to social or affordable housing.

The Housing Unit is progressing several other capital schemes through design and planning which have the capacity to deliver units from 2024 through to 2026.

The Council's proposed developments to 2026 in line with Housing for All includes delivery on existing and new landbanks recently acquired in Portumna, Tuam, Loughrea and Oranmore. The land cost is fully recoupable on development from the Department of Housing. New turnkeys may be acquired from time to time depending on suitability.

SCHEMES PROPOSED (2024)

Location	Type	Social Housing Units
Caherwalter	Turnkey	44
Kilgarve (Phase 2)	Turnkey	30
Vicars choral (Plot 2)	Turnkey	22
Vicar Choral	Turnkey	6
Oranhill (Considine Site)	Turnkey	0
Circular Road	Turnkey	2
Carraig Weir (Phase 2)	Turnkey	7
St. Josephs	Build	8
Ballymoe	Build	8
Caislean Rathlin	Build	10

Pairc na Cille Baile an Theimpeal, Weir Road (Phase 2)	Build	15
Corralough	Build	1
Total		153

It is anticipated that additional turnkey projects will be sourced in 2024 following the recent advertisements for expressions of Interest. The extent of the direct build programme will be influenced by the availability of land for Council own-build projects. The Housing Unit will seek to maintain and increase the level of delivery of construction for 2024 and future years.

The targets for build delivery under Housing for All Plan over the period 2024 to 2026 are as follows:

2024: 358 units **2025:** 385 units **2026:** 393 units **Total: 1,136 units**

The role of the Approved Housing Bodies in delivering new build units will be a critical aspect of Galway County Council's success in meeting its targets. Under the Housing for All Plan Approved Housing Bodies are expected to deliver 40% of units per annum up to 2026

The Council will continue to carry out improvement works on all forms of Traveller Accommodation. It is intended to redevelop Tuam Halting Site. Funding proposals will continue to be submitted to the Traveller Accommodation Unit in 2024 and future years as plans are progressed for the major refurbishment of current Traveller Specific Group Schemes and the development of new Schemes in accordance with the adopted Traveller Accommodation Programme.

HOUSE PURCHASE LOANS:

House Purchase Loans will continue to be issued to eligible purchasers and has been expanded to include an increased income ceiling of €70,000 for single people or combined income of joint applicants of €85,000. Funding is sourced by way of Council borrowing, the debt servicing of which is met by repayments from loanees.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING STOCK:

Description	2024	2025	2026
Energy Efficiency, Voids Retrofitting and Planned Maintenance Programme	€4.56m	€4m	€4.5m
Major Refurbishment Programme –	€.5m	€.5m	€.5m

A significant capital investment programme is required for existing local authority housing stock to achieve compliance with minimum standards, co-fund energy efficiency works, the turnover of void housing units and to deliver a planned maintenance programme.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME:

Funding has been provided via a loan facility of €10M for a Planned Maintenance Programme for existing housing stock to achieve compliance with statutory requirements, including minimum standards.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFIT PROGRAMME:

Provision has been made for works under the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) to be carried out on Galway County Council housing stock. In 2023 we will have completed retrofitted 89 properties under the Energy Efficiency Programme. This is in addition to the 121 properties which were retrofitted in 2022.

Galway County Council proposes to retrofit 90 properties of its housing stock in 2024. The properties identified for retrofitting will continue to be a mix of house types, in line with the Programme Guidelines. The remaining housing stock will benefit from the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme in future years as grant funding and match funding allows.

MAJOR REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME:

It is intended to complete major refurbishment works on 4 Council owned properties in the Tuam, Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Conamara Municipal Districts.

INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATIONS, FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Capital projects relating, to Roads, Piers and Harbours, Flood Mitigation schemes, Plant Acquisition and Smarter Travel (Greenway) are detailed below.

The completion of the following projects is subject to the appropriate departmental sanctions, the availability of the necessary funding and compliance with all appropriate legislative and regulatory provisions.

NATIONAL ROADS

In addition to works on Major Inter Urban routes, a full programme of Pavement and Minor Improvements Works, Safety Measures and Bridge Improvement Works shall continue to be undertaken on the National Primary and National Secondary Road Network. This Programme is dependent on annual allocations from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and as such the programme of works shall be presented to the Council on an annual basis in the context of the Annual Roads Programme.

Project:	Status:
N6 Galway City Ring Road	Subject to legal challenges the scheme could be remitted back to An Bord Pleanála. Subject to a remittal, a second ABP decision, further legal challenges and available funding, the project can progress to the next stages - land and property acquisition, detailed design and enabling works. The procurement of a contractor for the main construction phase to follow in subsequent years.
N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass	Construction works are well advanced, and it is anticipated that they will be substantially complete by Q3 2023 with the scheme being opened thereafter to traffic, bypassing the village of Maigh Cuilinn and removing traffic congestion through one of Galway's most congested villages. The main elements of the proposed scheme include 4.6km of type 1 single carriageway, realignment of the Knockferry roads over 850m, 1.7km of farm/accommodation roads, 2 no. at-grade roundabouts and 8 structures consisting of 5 bridges, 2 underpasses and 1 culvert.

<p>N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme</p>	<p>It is anticipated that An Bord Pleanála will make a decision in the Q1 2023 and then the Scheme will advance through Phases 5 and 6 of TII Project Management Guidelines.</p>
<p>N59 Bunnakill to Claremount</p>	<p>Progression of method statements for other aspects of the Bunnakill to Claremount section with National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS) & Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) such as advance contracts for ground investigation works and topographic surveys and archaeology investigations in 2023. It is hoped to progress to the detailed design for Bunnakill to Claremount in 2023 based on the outcome of the initial surveys and investigations. Discussions will continue with NPWS & IFI in relation to construction stage method statements for the remaining section Bunnakill to Claremount pending development of the detailed design.</p>
<p>N17 Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment</p>	<p>Progress land acquisition and detailed design and then the Scheme will advance through Phases 5 and 6 of TII Project Management Guidelines.</p>
<p>Galway to Clifden Greenway</p>	<p>Complete remaining 6km from Clifden to Recess. Land acquisition on-going. Publish the Emerging Preferred Corridor in Q1 2023 for the Galway to Oughterard section and continue Liaison with landowners to proceed on potential routes for the cycleway within the emerging preferred route corridor. Design and environmental evaluation to be carried out</p>
<p>NCN Galway to Athlone cycleway</p>	<p>NCN Galway to Athlone cycleway - Liaison with landowners to proceed on potential routes for the cycleway within the emerging preferred route corridor. Design and environmental evaluation to be carried out.</p>

NON NATIONAL ROADS

Advance/commence the following Non-National Road Schemes

- Ballinasloe Inner Relief Road
- Athenry Northern Ring Road
- R336
- R374 Causeways & Bridges
- R332 Kilbannon
- R339 Belville

The advancement of the above projects is dependent on the availability of funding and where required the availability of the necessary internal resources to advance the projects.

PLANT ACQUISITION / RENEWAL AND WINTER MAINTENANCE PROGRAMMES –

Project:	Status:
Review of Fleet and Machinery Yard Operations	Significant investment is required to replace aging fleet. A Galway County Council Machinery yard review has been undertaken and a phased replacement of vehicles has commenced in line with the recommendations arising from that exercise.
Replacement of Pay and Display Units	57 replacement units will be installed in Gort and Athenry. A final phase in 2024 will result in the replacement of a further 48 units in Ballinasloe, Clifden and Cleggan. The phasing of the installation is designed to cater for funding availability.

FLOOD RELIEF/MITIGATION SCHEMES

The Council will continue to work with the Office of Public Works (OPW) through the Joint Working Group and Steering Group and other stakeholders to advance appropriate flood relief/ mitigation schemes in compliance with all appropriate legislative and regulatory provisions and within the limits of available resources.

Project:	Status:
<p>South Galway (Gort Lowlands) Flood Relief Scheme</p>	<p>Site investigation works and all base line surveys for the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) have been completed.</p> <p>Development of the EIAR and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) progressing. Public exhibition (Arterial Drainage Act process) is projected for Q1 to Q3 2024.</p>
<p>Ballinasloe Flood Relief Scheme</p>	<p>Site investigation works and all base line surveys for the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) have been completed.</p> <p>Development of the EIAR and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) progressing. Public exhibition (Arterial Drainage Act process) is projected for Q1 to Q3 2024.</p>
<p>Clifden Flood Relief Scheme</p>	<p>This project is being funded by the OPW – CFRAM funding from Tranche 1.</p> <p>Site investigation works and all base line surveys for the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) have been completed. EIAR and NIS well progressed with design being finalised.</p> <p>This scheme does not utilise the Arterial Drainage Act and will route through the conventional planning process. Planning submission projected in Q1 2024.</p>

The Council is continuing to co-operate with the OPW on Flood Relief Scheme applications for Oranmore, Clarinbridge, Kinvara and South Galway, as well as Ballinasloe and Clifden and continues to seek funding for the design and delivery of these and other minor flood relief works which are of immense value to local communities as highlighted by the recent impacts of Storm Debi.

STRATEGIC PIERS AND HARBOURS PROGRAMME

Funding for works on strategic piers on the islands is being provided through the Department of Rural & Community Development.

Project:	Status:
<p>Inis Oírr Pier Improvements – construct breakwater and pier extension, carry out dredging and provide additional berthage</p>	<p>The Land Acquisition/CPO process has been completed and all lands necessary to be made available for the project have been acquired.</p> <p>An updated Business Case has been approved by the DRCD and the process to procure a contractor to undertake the works has commenced. Contract award is anticipated in the first half of 2024 with completion ahead of the 2026 summer season.</p>
<p>Inis Meáin Improvements</p>	<p>A Business Case has been prepared and submitted to the DRCD as a funding application to undertake a feasibility assessment examining the potential options to upgrade landing facilities on Inis Meáin to ensure adequate and appropriate provision is made for passenger and cargo services to the island over a significant future time horizon.</p> <p>The recommendation from the Feasibility Report being commissioned, will underpin a funding application to move ahead and bring whatever proposals come out of the process through design, planning and construction stages.</p>

FISHERIES HARBOUR AND COASTAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME

Project:	Status:
<p>Various Piers and Harbours</p>	<p>There is an ongoing programme to identify and prioritise works required to upgrade facilities at landing places under the control of Galway County Council. Subject to approval from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, these projects are progressing through planning, design and construction phases.</p>

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Project:	Status:
<p>Active Travel Project – National Transport Authority</p>	<p>In 2023 Galway County Council secured €3m under the NTA Active Travel fund for Active Travel works around the County including local transport plans, community transport studies, urban design projects, footpath installations, cycling lanes, public lighting, cycle parking and pedestrian crossings. Works are now fully complete on all the NTA-approved Construction projects for 2023.</p> <p>However, Active Travel Design Consultants will continue to be appointed for Active Travel Design Scheme projects for the remainder of 2023 and into 2024. In respect of any design projects not fully completed by year end, applications for project-continuance into 2024 will be made to the NTA. The focus for 2023 has shifted to plan-led design projects and this will continue in 2024.</p> <p>The NTA agreed in 2023 to fund an additional Executive Engineer post for the Galway Active Travel design scheme and this position is expected to be filled in early 2024.</p> <p>The Active Travel Programme is a rolling programme and applications for new projects will also continue to take place on an ongoing basis. All projects ultimately require the approval of the NTA to proceed and must comply with the NTA’s Project Appraisal Guidelines.</p>

NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN & DIGITAL STRATEGY

Project:	Status:
<p>National Broadband Plan</p>	<p>The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is set to deliver high-speed fibre broadband to 40,084 premises of in County Galway and the projected investment in County Galway over the life of the project is €153 Million.</p> <p>In 2020 NBI commenced network construction for their fibre roll out, with an expected program of 5-7 years for construction.</p> <p>By November 2023 NBI have passed 16,172 (32%) premises with fibre broadband of which 5,203 properties have been connected.</p>

	<p>Network build has commenced on a further 5,502 premises. NBI are projecting that by the end of 2023 approximately 81% of NBI's survey work in Galway will be complete.</p> <p>NBI current build schedule anticipates that by the end of 2024 the network in County Galway will be 54.6% complete and NBI's currently published build plan indicates they will have completed their network roll out in County Galway by December 2026.</p> <p>Source: https://nbi.ie/where-are-we-working/ Nov. '23</p> <p>Galway County has 22 Broadband Connection Points (BCP) which are been provided with wireless high-speed connectivity as part of the NPB to support communities until fibre broadband is rolled out in their area. 21 of the BCP sites have been provided with high-speed wireless broadband services to date, the final site has been facilitated with an interim wireless broadband connection until the BCP scheme's wireless solution is delivered at this location.</p> <p>A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. This has acted as a catalyst for commercial investment by the telecommunications sector.</p> <p>Galway County Council will facilitate the roll out of telecommunications by both state and private investment in the County.</p> <p>Fibre broadband networks have been built in the towns of Tuam, Athenry, Gort, Clifden, Oranmore, Bearna and Loughrea.</p> <p>Network build is currently ongoing in the town of Ballinasloe.</p> <p>Additional networks builds have been announced in 2023 for the towns of Athenry and Gort and are projected to be completed in 2024, these additional networks will provide greater choice to the residents and business of these towns.</p> <p>The new Mobile Phone and Broadband taskforce was reconvened in December 2021.</p> <p>One of the issues to be prioritised by this taskforce is Improving outdoor mobile phone coverage.</p> <p>Galway County Council employs a full time Broadband Officer.</p>
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<p>Digital Strategy</p>	<p>Galway County’s Digital Strategy was published in Q1 2021, with the aim of identifying the County’s strengths and weakness resulting from increased connectivity from both state and private investment in telecommunications within the County. It will encourage our communities to build on our strengths and to combat our perceived weaknesses.</p> <p>Galway County’s Digital Strategy is a statement of intent and support for the digital development of the County, in a period of increasing connectivity and higher use of digital service, digital technologies and infrastructure. Galway Counties digital strategy will support the population of County Galway to benefit from these changes.</p> <p>To support Connectivity for the public, in 2023 Galway Co increased its free public Wi-Fi Access points to 41 under the Wifi4eu scheme, this is in addition to the 21 Public Wi-fi access points from the BCP locations.</p> <p>Galway County Council will continue to support the BCPs as they develop their service offering to the public, ranging from public wi-fi, spaces to get on-line & remote working spaces.</p> <p>In 2023 Galway County Council further supported 4 thematic programs from Dept. of Rural and Community Development, in the areas of E-health, Digital Skills, Remote working and Art.</p> <p>In 2023 a Broadband Support Officer (BSO) was appointed to work with community groups who host BCPs, the BSO has promoted skills providers and their digital skills courses to the BCP network, and this work will be built upon in 2024.</p> <p>Digital skills promotion is one of the main themes of the current Digital Strategy.</p> <p>During 2024 the Council will develop an upgraded website to improve the citizen engagement with our public services. A new Council digital strategy will be prepared.</p>
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GALWAY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (GFRS)

GFRS is the Principal Emergency Service (PES) for Galway City and County Councils. The following sets out the indicative Capital programme for GFRS for 2022-2024.

Please note all projects are subject to Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) funding and specific approval by project.

FIRE APPLIANCES

- The DHLGH allocated a new class B Appliance to Galway County Council as part of a National Procurement Plan 2021-2025. This class B appliance was procured centrally as part of a National procurement process by OGP. The selected supplier was Emergency One in Scotland. Personnel from GFRS attended the Emergency One plant in Scotland in 2021 and outlined the detailed specification of the order. There is a worldwide delay in the supply of chassis and the new appliance was delivered in Q3 2023.
- In Q3 2023 it was announced that GFRS will receive 2 new fire appliances under the current procurement framework. The order is currently being placed. The selected supplier is Emergency One, Scotland.
- Efforts are ongoing to procure a number of pre-owned Class B appliances. This will help to lower the average age of appliances which is currently high. Currently there are very few suitable pre-owned Appliances on the market. Efforts are also ongoing to procure a pre-owned water tanker for Tuam Fire Station.

FIRE STATIONS

New fire station projects are outlined in DHLGH National Capital Programme 2021-2025.

TUAM FIRE STATION

- The new Fire Station in Tuam went operational in late September 2018 and was officially opened on the 15 April 2019 by Sean Canney T.D., Minister of State Community Development, Natural Resources & Digital Development.
The four-bay retained Fire Station and Training Centre was constructed by Carey Construction Ltd.

ATHENRY FIRE STATION

- A site for a new Fire Station in Athenry has been identified in the Athenry town area. A design team was appointed in 2020 and a detailed design completed in 2021. Galway County Council went to tender for Project Supervisor Construction Stage in mid-2022.

- The project is currently under construction and will hopefully be completed in 2024.

LOUGHREA FIRE STATION

- A number of suitable sites were identified, and an appropriate site was secured. Galway County Council made a case to Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for approval to proceed to the design stage and the appointment of a Design Team. The process for delivering a new fire station in Loughrea is well underway with the design consultants appointed and the Part 8 Planning application submitted. The Part 8 planning application was appealed to APB by a member of the public. That objection was assessed and ABP ruled that there was no grounds for an objection. The Part 8 Planning Application has been resubmitted.

BALLINASLOE FIRE STATION

- A revised capital appraisal was sent to the DHPLG in November 2019 in relation to the refurbishment of Ballinasloe Fire Station in its existing location. Once approval in principle is received, we will proceed to the design phase and the appointment of a Design Team.

GALWAY CITY FIRE STATION AND HEADQUARTERS

- Work is ongoing by Galway City Council in relation to the identification and procurement of an appropriate site. There has been an indication from the DHLGH that funds will be made available once a site has been procured.
- Given the scale of this project and estimated cost of between €7-9 million (depending on the future service delivery model selected (as per GFRS report prepared in 2017) it is vital that a capital appraisal be submitted to the DHLGH for inclusion in the new National Capital Programme as soon as possible. Both Councils are aware of the urgency in relation to this project.

BRIGADE MECHANICS WORKSHOP

- GFRS maintains a fleet of approximately sixty (60) vehicles. Currently there is no dedicated Brigade Mechanic's Workshop which is a requirement under the Council's Safety Management System. In 2022, a capital appraisal was sent to DHLGH to construct a new dedicated workshop on the same site as the New Fire Station in Athenry. Approval in principle was received and GFRS is proceeding through the process to progress the project.

OTHER- SMALL PROJECTS CAPITAL

- Procurement of smoke alarms for 2023, as part of National Community Smoke Alarm Scheme as per previous years. A submission has been made to DHPLG to procure 650 smoke alarms (including those for the hard of hearing) in 2024 and continued distribution via Galway County and City Community Smoke Alarms Schemes in 2024 to vulnerable households with a particular focus on the off-shore islands.
- Ongoing equipment replacement will continue in 2024. Breathing Apparatus equipment that reached the end of its serviceable life was replaced at a cost of €100k approx. in 2020. A successful case was submitted to DHPLG to recoup this cost.
- There is a very limited National capital budget for Fire Service appliances/equipment. Galway County Council have submitted a number of requests to the Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage for capital funding/grant aid for items of equipment in 2023 and have received approval to procure a number of small and larger items. As well as the recoupment of the cost of the new fire appliance in 2023, GFRS has also recouped approximately €400k from the NDFEM through grant aid funding.

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

GORT CIVIC AMENITY SITE

Tender evaluation will be completed in November 2023. It is estimated the total cost to complete the project (construction works, connection costs and consultant fees) will be in the order of €585K.

KILCONNELL LANDFILL – PROPOSED ECO PARK

We have appointed a design consultant at a cost of €108,370 including VAT. €50,000 of this funding has been approved under the ORIS Scheme and we have also requested support from the Department (DECC). Galway County Council contribution will be in the region of €59,000.

POLLBOY

Landscape consultant has been appointed to produce a Preliminary Report for an Amenity Park development. The costs for this service are €38k which will come due in Q1 2024. Should GCC progress the project further it is expected that the preparation of a planning submission will be in the same region of costs.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Capital expenditure projections on Burial Grounds in 2024 are as follows:

<u>In Construction:</u>	Ballyconnelly	€145,000
<u>At Part 8:</u>	Kilbannon	€40,000
<u>Site Identified:</u>	Kilconieron	€40,000
	Urn Plot Developments	<u>€25,000</u>
		€250,000

Locations where no sites have yet been identified and have limited burial Capacity include Leitir Móir, Inverin, Claregalway and Annaghdown. Costs in these cases will include planning application, site acquisition and contract work. At best the planning applications will be progressed for these locations in 2024, for which a budget of €50K will be required.

A budget of €25K is also requested for production of planning drawings for an extension to Renvyle burial ground. HSE have approved GCC lands as suitable for development.

RECREATION AND AMENITY

The Council will continue to support investment in recreation and amenity facilities in the County leveraging grant funding where available to support the upgrade of existing playgrounds, the development of new facilities including walking routes and amenities and the preparation of a Recreation and Amenity Development Strategy for County Galway

CORPORATE SERVICES, FACILITIES MANAGEMENT & ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENTS

The Facilities Section in collaboration with our Climate Action team have submitted applications through the Local Authority Energy Pathfinder program in view of obtaining funding to undertake essential energy improvement works on four of our buildings. These include Áras an Chontae, Ballinasloe MD Office, Tuam MD and Library and the Westside Library. Ongoing assessments are taking place on the buildings including air permeability tests and asbestos surveys as part of the design process. It is intended that works will be carried out on these four buildings to decarbonise on the day-to-day energy usage. This programme, if successful will require a capital investment. However, the weatherproof fabric of the roof at

County Hall is a cause of concern and ongoing efforts are being made to repair the fabric. Capital investment will be required to replace this roof fabric shortly.

Health and Safety works to the existing boundary wall at Bóthar na mBan remains a concern and will require attention and investment.

The Facilities section submitted applications for funding through the Just Transition Fund Program to develop EV Charging facilities at both the Ballinasloe leisure Centre site and Aughrim Interpretative Centre site. The initial entry level criteria for both these sites were verified by the facilities section and the applications have been registered. If the applications for funding are successful, then further design will be necessary in view of developing public EV Charging facilities in Ballinasloe MD.

Capital investment is also required throughout the County Council portfolio of buildings, including regional offices and our library network both to sustain these assets and to ensure a more energy efficient property folio in line with our current Climate Action Plan.

During the period of this 3-year Capital Programme 2024-2026, it is intended to progress several other projects subject to Departmental funding, however some works required for Health & Safety and/or essential conservation purposes may need to be carried out with funding from the capital account.

COUNCIL OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

A review of all Council office accommodation has commenced. A business case for the future office accommodation needs of the Council will be prepared in 2024 which will identify future accommodation needs and options and the costs involved.

LIBRARIES

As Galway County Council provides the shared library service for Galway City and County, the Council has commenced a full review of the library accommodation needs across the County and City and an application for funding has been submitted to the department. The outcome of this application will inform the library accommodation spend for the next 3 years.