



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

ADOPTED BUDGET 2025

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

CHUIG GACH BALL DEN CHOMHAIRLE

DRAFT BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Chuibh An Cathaoirleach and gach Ball den Chomhairle

Introduction:

I enclose for your consideration the Draft Budget Book for 2025 together with a report from the respective Directors of Service in respect of activities in their functional areas which is submitted as an annual progress report on the Corporate Plan 2019-2024.

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 at our budget workshops held on 11th and 18th November and by the Corporate Policy Group on 18th November 2024.

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 September 2024 at which it was decided increase the basic rate of local property tax by 15 per cent for the five years 2025 through to 2029 inclusive in respect of relevant residential properties situated in County Galway.

Circular letter Fin 11/2024 dated 15th July 2024 confirmed the prescribed periods for the 2025 budget meeting and budget related matters. The prescribed period for the holding of the budget meeting is 1st November to 6th December 2024 and the draft Budget plan meetings for the Municipal Districts were to take place between 14th October and 15th November 2024. GCC held their five Municipal District meetings on week commencing 11th October 2024 and the Annual Council Budget meeting for Galway County Council (GCC) is fixed for 29th November 2024, both in compliance with the Circular 11/2024.

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 (ARV) 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 29th November 2024, but the process must be completed by 13th December 2024.

Local Property Tax:

Under the new model of Local Property Tax (LPT) 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 2025 are less than the Council's baseline, Galway County Council will be in receipt of an equalisation amount as set out below.

The increase of 15% in the rate on the LPT retained locally, resulted in an increase in the total LPT of €2,370,963, in effect the Council's total Local Property Tax in 2025 will be €22,680,034 as set out in Table I below.

Table I		
Galway County Council - LPT Allocation		
	2025	2024
	€	€
Baseline	20,309,071	20,309,071
LPT Retained Locally	15,806,419	15,299,282
Shortfall from equalisation fund	4,502,652	5,009,789
LPT Funding including equalisation	20,309,071	20,309,071
15% increase in LPT retained locally	2,370,963	-
Total LPT Funding	22,680,034	20,309,071

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. In this regard, I have written to the Department seeking additional funds.

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 23rd September 2024 was implemented resulting in an increase in €2.3m to support existing services and leverage additional grant funding opportunities.

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. However, in the current year, Galway County Council have obtained a provisional allocation in respect of the additional costs that will arise in 2025 because of the National Pay Agreements of €12,688,403. For information purposes I set out below the breakdown of these supports from 2023 to 2025.

Table II			
Funding supports from the Department			
	2023 €	2024 €	2025 €
Payroll	8,161,780	8,897,619	12,688,403
Uplift on payroll	-	1,763,631	-
Energy and inflation	1,752,047	-	-
Special Grant Once-off	2,755,433	-	-
Total	12,669,260	10,661,250	12,688,403

Main Budget Adjustments

You will see from the budget tables that the draft budget for 2025 is €188,376,941 compared to €173,000,121 for 2024. 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 that the Council provides.

The current financial position of the Council has been discussed in detail by the Corporate Policy Group and at full Council and the funding available to the Council remains a key issue to fund additional services set out in our new Corporate Plan 2024 to 2029. As I reported in September, there is a requirement for additional funding in almost every area of Council activity, including increasing our staffing levels, housing and estate maintenance, road maintenance, libraries, street cleaning, verge trimming, swimming facilities, tourism and the promotion of economic development.

In Budget 2025 all programme area spends will increase and though the Council is faced with significant financial challenges again in 2025 I intend to continue the much-needed staff recruitment drive as part of our Strategic Workforce housing Planning exercise. Additional work done by additional staff will result in a higher payroll cost and this is factored into the Draft Budget 2025. 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 2.5% and this will also have an impact on the cost of all goods, services and contracts that we provide and engage.

Due to additional income, the overall budget for 2025 is an expansion on that of the 2024 budget, providing the ability of Galway County Council to increase headcount and services for 2025. The Draft Budget 2025 provides for expenditure of €194m. Table III below sets out how the proposed budgeted expenditure will be funded.

Table III Sources of Income		
Sources of income	Draft budget 2024 €'000	Draft budget 2025 €'000
Grants and Subsidies	79,203	90,308
Rates	36,936	41,734
Local Property Tax Allocation	20,309	22,680
Rents & Loans (inc. RAS)	11,307	11,824
Irish Water recoupment	6,990	6,334
Parking Charges and fines	742	970
Local Authority Contributions	8,626	8,662
Other Misc Income	8,887	11,039
Total	173,000	193,551

2025 Work Programme

Housing

Galway County Council, as the main Government Organisation in Co. Galway, will in 2025 deliver an ambitious 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. 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 targets to deliver 1,717 social housing units deliverable between 2022 and 2026. Our housing delivery work programme is progressing and with Part V'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) is on track. The budget available for housing maintenance and estate management is less than what is needed, but an increase of €814k in 2025s Budget 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) and in 2025, 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 2025 the Council will continue to deliver on our Traveller Accommodation Plan actions.

Road Transport & Safety

As the Council will not receive notification of its road grants until early 2025, the budget has been drafted based on the grant allocations for 2024. It is anticipated there will be an increase in 2025 as otherwise the impact of inflation will erode the output of works. Under the various grants in 2024 the Council carried out maintenance and improvement works on over 400km of the road network.

In addition, a provision has been included for more street cleaning. Through Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority (NTA) the Council in 2025 will be supported to advance several capital projects of significance.

The N6 - Galway City Ring Road received planning approval in December 2021 was the subject of judicial review proceedings and has since been remitted back to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) for further consideration. In December 2023 the board requested further information on the Galway City Ring Road application and preparation on this request is completed and the file will be submitted to ABP this month. The Galway City Ring Road remains an absolute priority for the sustainable development of the County, City and West of Ireland. In 2023 the Maigh Cuilinn bypass was officially opened by An Taoiseach, Mr. Leo Varadkar and is now open to traffic.

In 2024 Galway County Council continued its 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 application will be made to An Bord Pleanála for planning approval before going to tender for construction as soon as possible after permission is granted.

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. This is important infrastructure for County Galway which when completed will be a major active travel and tourism asset for our businesses, citizens and visitors.

Under the Bridge Rehabilitation Programme 20 bridges were allocated funding, totaling €305,000 in 2024 for which designs and works are ongoing and are expected to be completed by the end of 2024. For 2025, we have made a submission to the Department for 9 Bridges for approval totaling €760,000.

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 2024 for the ongoing marine maintenance programme. In 2025 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 2024 a detail Machinery yard review was undertaken, and a phased replacement of vehicles has commenced with an additional 4 vehicles to be purchased in 2025.

In 2025 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 the last two years, with over 100 replacement units installed in Gort, Athenry, Ballinasloe, Clifden and Cleggan. A final phase in 2025 will result in the replacement of further pay and display machines to install the new solar powered types.

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 2025 GCC will continue this work at pace so that our organisation leads by example in reducing the use of carbon fuel.

Effective 20th September 2023, Galway Co. Co. and Uisce Éireann signed a master co-operation agreement transferring our water services functions to UÉ. The management and transfer of staff moving across to UÉ will during 2025 and 2026 be managed in a planned and coordinated manner.

Economic Development and Planning

Throughout 2024, 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, the new planning and development Act 2024 and planning ICT systems. All the while the Council must balance its pro development approach to decision-making with the protection of our precious natural environment.

The e-Planning system is now functioning for over 90% 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. In this regard, joint masterplanning with stakeholders (including IDA, EI, Ionraid Eireann, UÉ, Eirgrid, National Broadband) will be necessary. Under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) we will continue to work with Irish Rail and other partners during 2025 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 have seen 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 of International scale 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 2025 will progress plans for the development of the site and commence preparation of a site masterplan in partnership with the City Council and the IDA.

There is continued strong interest in the Food Sector in Galway. In 2024 after significant support from this Council, the Athenry BIA Campus was officially opened and in partnership with BIA the Council will participate in a number of new EU funding applications. Throughout 2025 the Council will continue to work with the Galway Arts and Film sector to promote creative sector initiatives across the County.

In 2025 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 €3m 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 2025 we will need to budget for additional co-funding elements of both successful RRDF and URDF projects as I want to scale up this unit of work.

Also, we will continue to pursue funding for projects in 2025 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 all require significant Council staff assistance and/or co-funding. 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. 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 will be a huge success in Galway and I want to roll this initiative out to as many town's as possible in our County.

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 even spread of Tourism benefits across the County. The Strategy is aligned with the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Development Strategy and identifies key strategic projects to enhance the Co. Galway tourism product. Additional resources are provided in the budget for tourism promotion and I want these tourism initiatives in the plan to be delivered on the ground.

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. Now that we have prepared and adopted the Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 it's time to show leadership to our citizens and seek funding to implement its objectives across Co. Galway. This 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. Galway County Council will 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 €635,000 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. This Council is the lead Local Authority in library services for both the County and City. While it may take some time to address that deficit, the draft budget provides for additional funds towards library books and the preparation of new funding applications for new libraries across the County and City.

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 2024 involved the recruitment of a panel of 54 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. The identification of new parking areas to allow safe and orderly access to our beaches is a priority.

Corporate / Human Resources

There were 339 applications approved for Blended Working in 2024. Galway County Council's Blended working policy is reviewed on an annual basis and blended working applications are renewed on an annual basis.

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. I will require additional funding in this area to provide for the necessary resilience/back-up of our data and online services.

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, Galway County Council continues to increase its free public Wi-Fi Access points under the Wifi4eu scheme. ICT have also commenced work on a full Website replacement that will be designed around public service delivery and engagement using open source technology for sharing of built solutions with other local authorities. The Council will continue their work on Digital and ICT strategy in 2025 which will be directed in terms of themes and enablers by the published Ireland's Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy 2030. I also want to continue the excellent work on ePlanning, iPlan and iHouse to extend the functionality of each service for the benefit of our customers, staff and elected members.

Staffing:

Galway County Council is operating with lower staffing levels and less financial resources than other comparable Local Authorities who operate with higher number of staff resources serving smaller populations. The current staff complement in Galway County Council is 851 FTE. Increasing our staff complement in line with the Council's Strategic Workforce Plan, 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. In this regard, a Strategic Workforce Plan was 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 Council's budgetary provisions across all Directorates. Staff recruitment and re-deployment has been targeted at the priority areas of Housing, Environmental Enforcement, Climate Change, Economic Development & Planning Project Management and Delivery and Municipal Districts and focus will also be on implementing additional posts approved for the Retained Fire Service in 2025.

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.

Members will be aware that the Valuation Office through Tailte Eireann undertook a national revaluation programme and in the case of County Galway has issued final valuation certificates in where the new valuations came into effective on 1st January 2024.

Given the scale of the financial challenge faced by the Council, effective for 2025 I will be requesting the new Council to increase the ARV to bridge the shortfall of €10.8m on the revenue account, yielding a net additional income of €3m. As part of this decision I am proposing that members implement a rebate scheme for those rate payers with a commercial rate bill of under €10,000 to be funded through the increase in the annual rate of valuation. This rebate will reduce very significantly the proposed ARV increase on the majority of our rate payers to an average of €3.66 per week.

Table IV Expenditure by Programme Group		
Service Division	2024 Budget €'000	2025 Draft Estimated Budget €'000
Housing and Building	26,104	32,191
Road Transportation and Safety	58,185	62,275
Water Services	17,267	16,256
Development Management	16,418	20,993
Environmental Services	25,206	28,408
Recreation and Amenity	10,983	13,381
Agriculture, Education Health and Welfare	2,883	2,853
Miscellaneous Services	15,954	16,924
Total	173,000	193,551

Conclusion and Recommendation

The financial supports from the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government have been essential to drafting a workable budget for 2025. Though the Council remains underfunded relative to comparable Local Authorities, our budget spend and service provision for 2025 is a significant uplift on 2024. This €193m spend on the governance and provision of public services is critical for the local economy of County Galway. Also, I will continue to negotiate and correspond with Department officials for additional funding uplifts.

In the preparation of the Draft Budget 2025 I wish to thank all the Members for their support throughout 2024 and in particular Cathaoirligh Cllr. Liam Carroll and Cllr. Albert Dolan for their assistance. I want to thank the Corporate Policy Group and all elected members for their positive and proactive budget 2025 preparation engagement.

I wish to thank also our 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 2025. To all the staff of the Council, I am indebted for their continued commitment and hard work in supporting me to lead Galway County Council.

For 2025 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 2025 as presented.

Mise, Le Meas,

Mr. Liam Conneally,

Chief Executive,

Galway County Council.

22nd November 2024.

DIVISIONAL REPORTS INCLUDING ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2025 – 2029

The new Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2025-2029 is currently being drafted. With the Public Consultation Process finalised in October 2024, the final version is due before the full Plenary Council in November 2024 for their consideration and adaption. The Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2025-2029, as adopted by the Elected Members of Galway County Council, will provide the framework to enable Galway County Council to guide the strategic direction and development of the County of Galway for the period 2025-2029.

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 2024 in relation to the strategic goals and supporting strategies listed in the Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024. In addition, the Divisional Reports outline the main proposals to be advanced in 2025 to further progress the achievement of the new strategic goals of the Council.

STRATEGIC GOALS (GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2029)



HOUSING

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

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 2nd September 2021, Galway County Council has been set a target 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 five years are outlined below. The target is the minimum level of delivery expected.

The Minister has indicated 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	

HOUSING DELIVERY ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2026

The Housing Delivery Action (HDAP) plan was approved on 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 2024:

During 2024, the Housing Unit continued to progress a range of direct-build housing projects through the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage approvals process for design, planning, tendering and construction. Galway County Council will deliver circa 167 social housing units in 2024.

The following Direct build projects were progressed through various stages to date in 2024:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Costing	DHLGH Stage
Single Rural Dwellings	1	€395,127	Under Construction
Pairc na Cille, Tuam	31	€7,927,527	Completed
Ballymoe	8	€2,296,097	Under Construction
Total	40	€10,618,751	

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

Proposals for 25 units are being prepared or are with the Department for approval and planned for delivery in 2025 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, general labour shortages, and challenges 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.

Location	# Social Housing Units	DHLGH Stage
St. Josephs, Ballinasloe	8	Under Construction
Hillcrest, Loughrea	3	Procurement ongoing
Caislean Rathlin, Ardrahan	10	Procurement ongoing
Parkmore, Tuam	4	Procurement ongoing
Total	25	

TURNKEYS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

Turnkey acquisition continues to be an important delivery stream under the 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 February 2024 and a second campaign will issue in Quarter 4. In March 2024, 11 expressions of interest were received of which 9 have planning permission and 2 are pending planning permission.

For 2024 Galway County Council direct Turnkey projects overall budgeted spend is €21,709,575 relating to 63 proposed social housing units as detailed below.

Location	# Social Housing Units	Cost	Stage
Bun na Coille, Maigh Cuilinn	1	€399,020	Completed
Gort Fada, Ballinasloe	13	€4,435,300	Completed
An Coill Fada, Ballinasloe	16	€5,574,882	Completed
Carrig Weir, Tuam	7	€2,275,000	Completed
Vicars Coral, Tuam	22	€7,764,472	Under Construction
Caheroyan, Athenry	2	€793,336	Completed
Circular Road, Tuam	2	€467,566	Completed
Total	63	€21,709,576	

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

It is expected that Turnkey developments will form a large part of our Social Housing Delivery in 2025. There are several proposals currently under consideration which are hoped to progress the 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 1st 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 September 2015 and 31st July 2021 if planning permission is granted before 31st July 2026. In 2024, Galway County Council will be acquiring 22 units under the Part V obligations with a further 5 units being progressed for delivery through AHB's (27 in total) with a further 102 units (LA 88 & AHB 14) planned for 2025 and 2026.

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 – 2024

Location	# Social Housing Units	Cost	Stage
Gort Fada	4	€1,143,733	Completed
Bun na Coille, Moycullen	7	€2,223,806	Near completion
Vicars Coral, Tuam	5	€1,460,646	Under construction
Lorrogate, Athenry	2	€610,000	At conveyancing stage
Tobar Orain, Oranmore	4	€1,250,571	Completed
Total	22	€6,688,756	
An Doirin, Moycullen	5		Under construction
Total	5		

Part V – 2025 and 2026

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Bilberry, Loughrea	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
An Choil Fada, Ballinasloe	4	Under construction
Bog Road, Oranmore	1	Commencing construction Q1 2025
An Maolan, Bearna	5	Under construction

Caherwalter, Loughrea	8	Under construction
Station Road, Oranmore	2	Under construction
Harbour Road, Ballinasloe	1	Under construction
Bothar na Mias, Kinvara	5	Under construction
Cluain Na Cathrach, Athenry	4	Under construction
Turskey East, Bearna	4	Under construction
Gort Road, Kinvara	6	Under construction
Kilcummin Field, Oughterard	2	TBD
Westport Road, Westport	3	Under construction
Ard Bear, Clifden	3	TBD
Vicars Choral, Tuam	1	Under construction
Total	88	
Part V (Approved Housing Bodies)		
Clochans, Tuam	2	
Cosmona, Loughrea	1	
Lakeview, Baile Chláir	11	Under construction
Total	14	

The Planning and Development Bill 2023, was published by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Daragh O'Brien TD, on 21st November 2023 and by the Dáil on 9th October 2024, Part 7 of the new Bill will replace Part V of the Planning Act of 2000. It provides for housing strategies to be prepared by planning authorities to ensure that adequate land is zoned for housing and sufficient social, affordable and cost rental housing is provided in their areas.

APPROVED HOUSING BODIES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

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 2024 there are several projects with AHB's to deliver 44 additional housing units through CALF, CAS & Part V to support the Council to meet the housing need in the County. It is expected that 44 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 is 1 CAS funded scheme to be completed in 2024 (An Doirin, Moycullen).

CAS PROJECTS PROGRESSING/UNDERWAY:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
An Doireann, Ballyquirke (Tuath)	9	Q4 2024
Tuath, Mountbellew	5	Projected Completion Q2 2025
Peter Triest Housing Association, Springfield, Ballinasloe	4	Progressing
Carrig Dubh Housing, Shannon Road, Portumna	5	Progressing
TET – Rossaveal Cottages	6	Progressing
Sophia Housing – Tuam (CAS Turnkey)	9	
Total	38	

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 County Galway in 2025.

PROJECTS WITH CALF FUNDING for Completion IN 2024:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
The Old Mill, Milltown	7	Practical Completion
Barr an Chnoic, Loughrea	13	Practical Completion
Sliabh Carron, Gort	9	Completed
Total	29	

The following units were delivered under the Mortgage to rent scheme in 2024 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 Complete
Mortgage to Rent Scheme (MTR) Home for Life (HFL)	2	In progress
Mortgage to Rent Scheme (MTR) Irish Homes	1	In progress
Mortgage to Rent – Approved Housing Body (AHB)	5	1 Complete

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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

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.

Proposed Affordable Delivery	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
LA Build Affordable Purchase	0	0	40	40	30	110
Part V	n/a	n/a	10	10	10	30
LA Turnkey Affordable Purchase	15	42	9	5	15	86
Total	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 affordable homes to be developed in County Galway since 2013 are nearing completion in Baile Chláir and have been made available for sale. 61 affordable housing units are being delivered in the Garraí Na Gaoithe development, which is the first turnkey housing scheme to include affordable housing in County Galway under the Government's Housing for All policy.

17 units, including 2 two-bedroom, 9 three-bedroom and 6 four-bedroom houses, are being delivered in the soon-to-be-complete first phase of the development. Work on 16 additional homes in the second phase of the development will be delivered mid-2025 with a further 28 units to be developed in the third phase later next year. Located on the Lakeview Road, the housing scheme also features a crèche and is located close to local amenities in Baile Chláir.

Applications for Phase 1 were accepted via an online application portal between October 14th and November 11th, 2024. There were 138 applications for the 17 houses available in Phase 1.

The Affordable Housing Pipeline is as follows:

Status	Scheme Name	No. of Affordable Purchase	No. of Cost Rental	Delivery Due
Approved	Garrai Na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir (Phase 1)	17	0	Q1 2025
Approved	Garrai Na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir (Phase 2)	16	0	Q3 2025
Approved	Garrai Na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir (Phase 3)	28	0	Q4 2025
Project in development	Droim na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir	36	30	Q3/4 2026
Project in development	Raheen, Athenry	28	0	Q4 2026
Project in development	Pairc na hAbhainn, Athenry	16	0	Q4 2026
Totals		141	30	

In September 2024, Galway County Council invited the public to participate in an online survey as part of its efforts to establish the level of interest and preferred locations in County Galway for affordable homes. The information sought included the numbers of people/households interested in affordable housing, family size, the type of housing/accommodation required, house prices that people might be able to afford, and preferred locations. The results of the survey will inform ongoing work of developing affordable housing across the County, in accordance with Housing for All Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026.

On 24th October 2024, Senior Officials from Galway City Council and Galway County Council met with Property Developers and Key Stakeholders to explore opportunities for delivering new affordable housing projects across Galway. The briefing highlighted the significance of affordable housing and the growing need to a find solutions-based approach to the housing crisis.

The Developers in attendance were encouraged to submit Expressions of Interest for the provision of Affordable Housing on future housing schemes and were informed about the latest regulatory frameworks and funding mechanisms supporting affordable housing initiatives.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

The Local Authority Capital programme will remain a key focus in 2025 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, to enhance the potential for a direct build programme.
- Engage with builders in a view to advancing the delivery of units under Part V and increasing these numbers based on the new Part V requirements.

HOUSING ACQUISITIONS

Three main mechanisms available for the acquisition of Housing Direct Acquisition, Developers Obligation under Part V and Turnkey processes.

Direct Acquisition for 2024:

Location	# Social Housing Units	Stage
Droim na Cille, Loughrea (TIS)	1	Purchase complete
Riverdale, Oranmore (TIS)	1	Purchase complete
Sruthan na Teorann, An Cheathrú Rua (TIS)	1	Purchase Complete
Rosewood, Gort	1	Conveyancing in progress
Country Meadows, Tuam (TIS)	1	Purchase almost complete
The Grove, Oranmore (TIS)	1	Purchase almost complete
Cois na Habhann, Tuam (TIS)	1	Purchase almost complete
Lakeview, Glenamaddy (TIS)	1	Conveyancing in progress
Rivergrove, Oranmore (TIS)	1	Conveyancing in progress
Riverside Court, Tuam (TIS)	1	Conveyancing in progress
Deerpark Woods, Headford (TIS)	1	Conveyancing in progress
Country Meadows, Tuam	2	Purchase complete

Cois na hAbhann, Tuam (TIS)	1	Purchase complete
Banogues, Loughrea (TIS)	1	Purchase Complete
Cois Chlair, Claregalway (TIS)	1	Purchase Complete
Country Meadows (CAS acquisition by AHB)	1	Purchase almost complete
Cúl na Cille, Ballygar (TIS)	1	Purchase complete
Country Meadows, Tuam (TIS)	1	Purchase complete
Total	19 (18 LA, 1 AHB)	End of year 2024

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 10 units have been acquired by Galway County Council at a cost of €3,000,000 with a further 9 units at the final stages of acquisition with an estimated cost of €2,700,000. The numbers of second-hand units acquired on this basis will remain at a low number for the foreseeable future due to acquisitions of this nature being focused on cases of specific need. Of these 15 properties will be purchased under the Tenant in Situ Scheme. One of the purchases is by a CAS acquisition by an Approved Housing Body. Costs are fully recoupable from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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 2024:

- Continued to advance sites to development stage at the earliest date possible.
- Continued to expand the bank of lands available to the Council for public housing.
- Progressed 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 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 2024 Galway County Council availed of the Housing Agency Land Acquisition Fund to

purchase lands. For land costs met directly by Galway County Council, such costs are fully recoupable from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, on development of the lands for housing.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

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.
- Proposals will be submitted for acquisition of land through The Housing Agency Land Acquisition Fund as appropriate or alternatively for R2 lands will be funded by way of borrowing recoupable from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the delivery of housing on the lands.

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 period the Local Authority tenant the property. The owner (lessor) will have a guaranteed rent even when the property is vacant.

The owner (lessor) will have no day-to-day maintenance responsibilities under long term lease arrangements.

No long-term leasing projects were completed in 2024, however, Galway County Council has a target of 16 units to enter long-term leasing arrangements before the end of 2025.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

Leasing under the Government Programme Housing for All.

Galway County Council has a target of 16 units to enter long-term leasing arrangements before the end of 2025. The Government intends to phase out the use of current leasing models by the end of 2025. 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.

VACANT HOMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

VACANT ACTION PLAN:

The Elected Members of Galway County Council adopted the Vacant Homes Action plan on the 22nd April 2024. The 5-year plan by Galway County Council aims to tackle vacancy rates and increase new housing supply. The Vacant Homes Action Plan 2024-2029 features seven key objectives that include bringing vacant and underutilised privately-owned properties back into use and acquiring derelict and vacant brown field sites to convert into residential units to meet social housing demand in key county towns.

VACANT PROPERTY REFURBISHMENT GRANTS (CROÍ CÓNATHE (TOWNS) FUND):

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 2024 was the further development of the Croi Conaithe Scheme and the completion of a survey of vacant properties throughout County Galway.

The Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund is a fund 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 aims to tackle vacancy and dereliction in urban and rural areas around the country. A grant of €50,000 is available for a pre-2008 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 has no serviced sites available, however, this will be kept under review by Galway County Council.

Since 1st July 2023, the scheme is now available to applicants who want to renovate a property on the islands of Inishbofin, Árann (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 2024, Galway County Council has received 465 applications since the start of the scheme with 293 approved, 100 withdrawn, and a further 49 in progress. Of the 49 in progress, further information has been requested from 39 applicants and 10 applications are awaiting inspection. 23 Applications have been refused due to ineligibility.

VACANT HOMES SURVEY UPDATE:

Under the Government's Housing for All Pathway 4, Galway County Council was required to carry out a GeoDirectory Vacancy Data Survey to confirm vacancy in private properties, with a view to advise the Owners of the options of reusing existing buildings to reduce the overall vacancy rate. An App was developed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage which was pre-populated with the properties to be surveyed to assist Local Authorities in identifying properties which may be recoverable into use. The initial part of the GeoDirectory Vacancy Data Survey, whereby the properties identified on the App were visited, to determine whether the property was vacant, began in September 2023 and was completed in early February 2024. 43 settlements were identified by the Department (DHLGH) to be surveyed within the urban settings of Galway County and a perimeter of 1km from a central hub point. 7 large towns, 11 major settlements and 25 minor settlements were selected. In the GeoDirectory Vacancy Data Survey of 1,708 properties undertaken by Galway County Council, 817 properties were deemed vacant and/or derelict, of which 773 were deemed to be vacant and 44 properties were deemed to be vacant and derelict.

THE COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (CPO) ACTIVATION PROGRAMME

The CPO Activation Programme was launched in April 2023. Under the Programme, local authorities are required to adopt a proactive, planned and systematic approach to the identification and activation of vacant and derelict properties. This may include the use of legislative powers to compulsorily acquire properties to bring them back into use.

Targets to activate vacant properties will be set annually for Galway County Council by The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. A target of 175 vacant and derelict properties to enter the activation programme in 2024 has been set for Galway County. A target of 3 compulsory acquisitions has been set. This is where engagement with owners has not resulted in the property being brought back into use. Galway County Council will utilise their legislative powers to activate these properties.

There are two pieces of legislation under which a CPO can be executed, the Derelict Sites Act 1990 and the Housing Act, 1966. If the site is not deemed to be derelict, then it can be compulsory acquired under the Housing Act, 1966, 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 renovation works to allow the property to be put back on the open market for occupation or to be acquired for social housing.

The CPO Activation Programme outlined 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 applies for the Croí Conaithe grant and brings the property back into use privately, then the property would exit the CPO Programme and Galway County Council 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 Galway County Council can begin the CPO activation Programme. |
| Step 5 | The property is assessed for compulsory acquisition. |

Galway County Council has identified 40 derelict buildings in County Galway for inclusion in the first phase of a nationwide programme to address vacancy and underutilisation of residential properties to help contribute to the supply of housing. Located in Tuam (9), Loughrea (7), Ballinasloe (7), Connemara (9) and Oranmore/Athenry (8), the properties have been targeted as part of the CPO Activation Programme through which local authorities are required to adopt a proactive, planned and systematic approach to the identification and activation of vacant and derelict properties, as outlined above.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Investigate 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 County Galway 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 further owners to try to bring additional properties back into use.
- Advance proposals for the first 40 properties identified for the CPO Activation Programme including if required, Galway County Council to acquire the properties through legislative means including by way of CPO.

REPAIR AND LEASING SCHEME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

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. The properties must be vacant for at least one year. The property owner can receive a loan of up to €80,000 for each individual home completed, e.g. a maximum loan of €320,000 is available for a property converted into four homes. These loans must be repaid over the term of the lease, and these can range in length from 5 to 25 years.

It is noted that the expanded Croí Conaithe Scheme has had an impact on Repair and Leasing as the Croí 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. Continued engagement with property owners, estate agents and solicitors to attract expressions of interest to the scheme.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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.

HOUSING GRANTS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

A total of €3,038,929 was paid for Housing Adaptation Grants in 2024, up to end of October 2024:

- 283 Housing Aid for Older People Grants with a total value of €1,619,325
- 144 Mobility Aid Grants with a total value of €662,919 and
- 82 Housing Aid Grants with a total value of €756,685

This expenditure on Housing Adaptation Grants is similar to expenditure to the end of October 2023.

Department funding was made available towards these grants in the sum of €2,431,143 to the end of October 2023. Co-funding of €607,786 was sanctioned from the Council's own resources in the 2024 Revenue budget with a total of €750,000 anticipated to be required to end of December 2024.

It is anticipated the full allocation of the Department funding will be drawn down by year-end.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

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.

Following a review of Housing Adaptation Grants, an announcement of changes in the scheme was made in the 2024 budget. Grant limits are to be increased by 30% and income thresholds are to be increased by 25% and there will be adjustments to the means test. The Local Authority contribution towards grants issued will be reduced to 15%, with the balance of 85% contributed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The allocation of grants is dependent on the matching 15% contribution being made available in Galway County Councils budget for 2025 with the balance of 85% being made available by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

It is expected that the number and value of the grant applications will increase in 2025. There is therefore an increase in the proposed matching funds for Housing Aid Grants in the 2025 budget, i.e. €1,007,500 compared to €750,000 in 2025.

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.

HOUSE PURCHASE LOANS (PRIVATE AND TENANT PURCHASE LOANS)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

Galway County Council provides 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 2024 is as follows:

Local Authority Home Loans

- 27 Local Authority Home Loans were approved in principle in 2024, to the value of €4,479,168. Of these 5 have expired, 6 have been drawn down in 2024 to a value of €603,900 and 16 remain outstanding to a value of €2,771,788.
- 33 Local Authority Home Loans were approved in principle in 2023 to the value of €5,845,145. Of these 8 have expired, 6.76 have been paid in 2024 to the value of €1,085,453 and 1 self-build loan remains outstanding to a value of €40,000.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans

- 0.19 of one self-build loan under Rebuilding Ireland approved in 2019 remains outstanding to a value of €10,000. 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 2025:

- 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.
- It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of enquiries and applications for housing loans due to the significant interest in the Affordable Housing Programme and the Vacant Homes Scheme.

RENTAL STANDARDS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

The Housing Standards for Rented Houses Regulations - Statutory Instrument 137 of 2019 came into effect on 1st May 2019 which 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 2024 is 1,460 First Inspections.
- As of end of October 2024, the number of First Residential Standards Inspections carried out was 1,108 with the remaining to be completed before year end.
- As of end of October 2024, the Total number of Residential Standards Inspections carried out was 1,203.

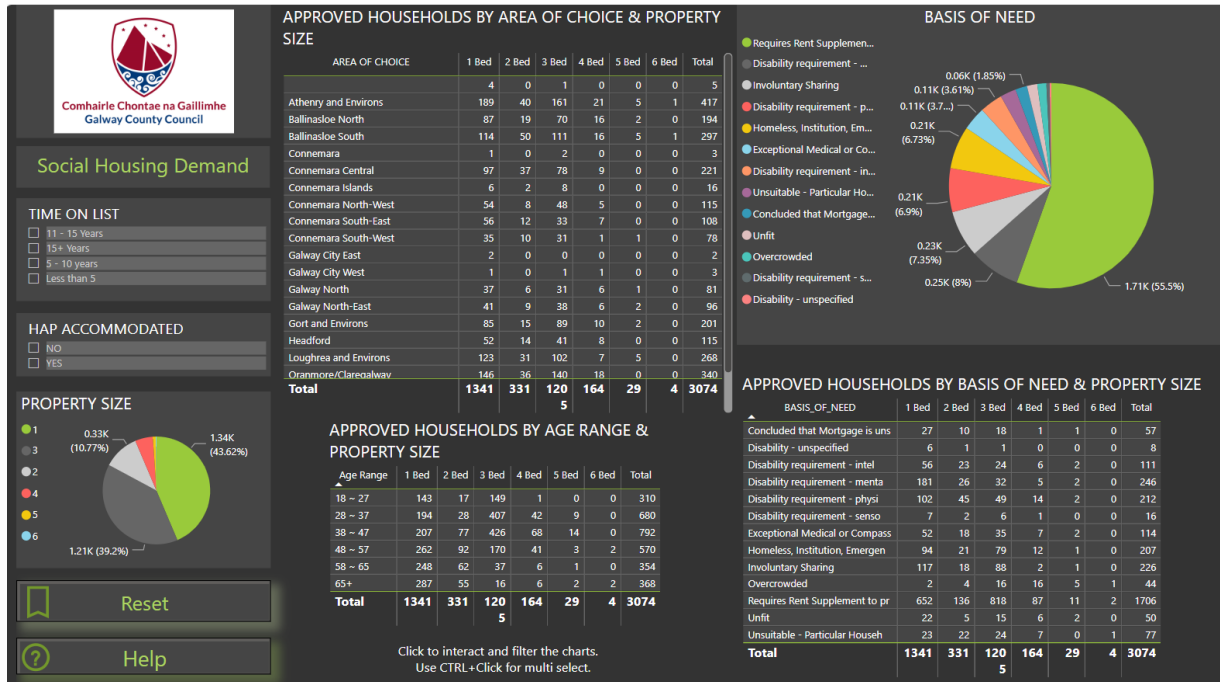
PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- It is expected the inspection target for Galway County Council in 2025 will be circa 1,500 first inspections, this will be confirmed in Q1 2025.
- Priority will be given to rental inspections where the occupier has made a complaint in relation to the condition of the premises and our target for first inspections.

SOCIAL HOUSING NEED APPLICATIONS UNIT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- There are currently 2,853 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 and new applications assessed 1,342 Applicants in 2024, 882 of these applicants were approved and 460 applicants were removed from the Housing Waiting List for not responding, ineligible or no longer wished to be on the Housing Waiting List.
- Galway County Council requested 863 Garda Checks for 1,405 applicants and family members.
- BPIs were introduced in the unit using automation, reporting and internal online forms for improvements in service delivery.



APPROVED HOUSEHOLDS BY AREA OF CHOICE & PROPERTY SIZE

AREA OF CHOICE	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	Total
Athenry and Environs	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
Ballinasloe North	189	40	161	21	5	1	417
Ballinasloe South	87	19	70	16	2	0	194
Ballinasloe South	114	50	111	16	5	1	297
Connemara	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
Connemara Central	97	37	78	9	0	0	221
Connemara Islands	6	2	8	0	0	0	16
Connemara North-West	54	8	48	5	0	0	115
Connemara South-East	56	12	33	7	0	0	108
Connemara South-West	35	10	31	1	1	0	78
Galway City East	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Galway City West	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Galway North	37	6	31	6	1	0	81
Galway North-East	41	9	38	6	2	0	96
Gort and Environs	85	15	89	10	2	0	201
Headford	52	14	41	8	0	0	115
Loughrea and Environs	123	31	102	7	5	0	268
Oranmore/Claredonway	146	36	140	18	0	0	340
Total	1341	331	120	164	29	4	3074

APPROVED HOUSEHOLDS BY BASIS OF NEED

- Requires Rent Supplement...
- Disability requirement - ...
- Involuntary Sharing
- Disability requirement - p...
- Homeless, Institution, Em...
- Exceptional Medical or Co...
- Disability requirement - in...
- Unsuitable - Particular Ho...
- Concluded that Mortgage...
- Unfit
- Overcrowded
- Disability requirement - s...
- Disability - unspecified

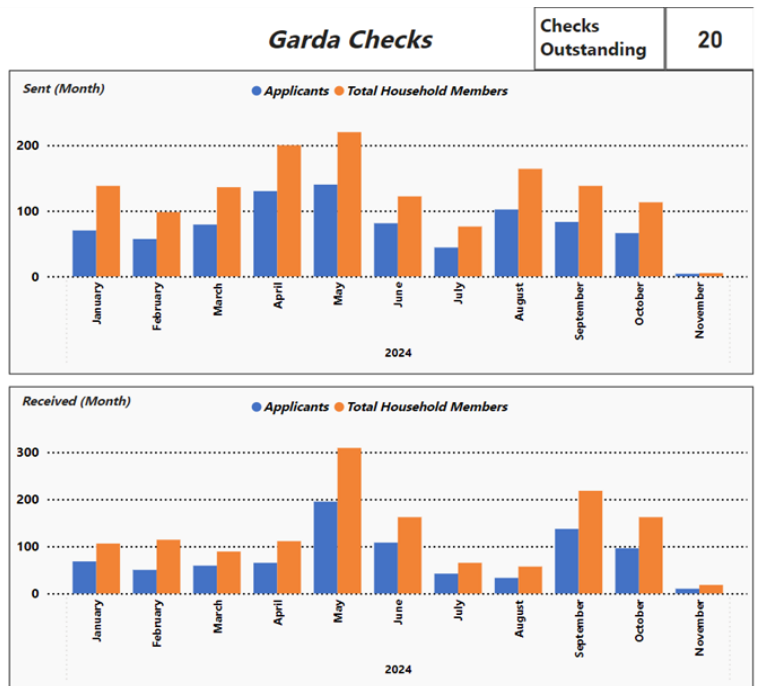
APPROVED HOUSEHOLDS BY BASIS OF NEED & PROPERTY SIZE

BASIS_OF_NEED	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	Total
Concluded that Mortgage is uns...	27	10	18	1	1	0	57
Disability - unspecified	6	1	1	0	0	0	8
Disability requirement - intel	56	23	24	6	2	0	111
Disability requirement - menta	181	26	32	5	2	0	246
Disability requirement - physi	102	45	49	14	2	0	212
Disability requirement - senso	7	2	6	1	0	0	16
Exceptional Medical or Compass	52	18	35	7	2	0	114
Homeless, Institution, Emergen	94	21	79	12	1	0	207
Involuntary Sharing	117	18	88	2	1	0	226
Overcrowded	2	4	16	16	5	1	44
Requires Rent Supplement to pr	652	136	818	87	11	2	1706
Unfit	22	5	15	6	2	0	50
Unsuitable - Particular Househ	23	22	24	7	0	1	77
Total	1341	331	120	164	29	4	3074

Click to interact and filter the charts.
Use CTRL+Click for multi select.

Month	Applicants	Total Household Members	Checks Sent 2024
January	70	114	
February	57	83	
March	79	116	
April	130	171	
May	140	188	
June	81	101	
July	44	61	
August	102	141	
September	83	113	
October	66	96	
November	4	5	
Total	856	1190	

Month	Applicants	Total Household Members	Monthly Avg Days	Checks Received 2024
January	68	106	19	
February	50	114	16	
March	59	89	17	
April	65	111	23	
May	195	309	18	
June	108	162	14	
July	42	65	23	
August	33	57	32	
September	137	218	21	
October	96	162	16	
November	10	18	15	
Total	863	1405	19	



PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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.
- Support the development of an Online Social Housing Application form and online Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA).
- Further development of CRM system to facilitate other housing services.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP) UNIT

INDICATIVES ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- A total of 2,672 HAP tenancies have been supported by Galway County Council since it started in Oct 2015.

Housing Assistance Payments	
Total HAP Tenancies set-up	2,672
Total Active HAP Tenancies	1,390
2024 HAP Tenancies set-up	196

- 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 2025:

- 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 2024:

- There are 342 households accommodated currently through the RAS Scheme and short-term leasing Scheme (this figure is inclusive of RAS Voluntary).

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024:

A have been allocated supported Housing First tenancies. It is expected that one additional person will be housed under the programme by end of 2024.

- 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. The service is available from beginning of November to end of March each year. Fourteen 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 2022, the Council allocated six properties to Galway Simon Community on a licence agreement. Galway Simon provide supported housing for up to 14 housing applicants with complex needs in these properties. It is intended to increase the number of houses allocated under this programme to 12, with supports being provided by Galway Simon for up to 24 housing applicants.
- Galway County Council introduced a Youth Housing Programme in the County in 2023. There are 5 Council owned properties allocated to Galway Simon to provide shared housing and

supports to up to 10 vulnerable young people aged between 18 and 25 under this programme. The programme is managed by Galway Simon, with supports provided by other organisations as the need arises.

- Galway County and City Councils have introduced a national pilot programme to provide supported housing to families with complex needs who were previously residing in emergency accommodation. Four families, including two in the County are receiving these supports which are provided by COPE Galway. This pilot programme will be reviewed on its completion in 2025.
- Section 10 funding has been provided by the Department of Housing which enabled these programmes to be implemented and for three staff to be employed in the Homeless Section.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- The Council will continue to expand its staffing resources around homelessness to reflect the complexity of needs of the clients accessing various housing programmes. Additional Section 10 funding which is allocated on an annual basis has been provided in 2024 for the additional staffing resource of a Tenancy Sustainment Officer and a Homeless Services co-ordinator who will be recruited in 2025.
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 Officers 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.
- Galway County Council will 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 an additional four tenancies to be put in place in 2025.
- Expand the number of Community Based supported houses to twelve properties within the County, to provide intensive supports to more complex individuals.
- Continue to support the occupants allocated housing under the Youth Housing Programme, to provide tenancies for 10 vulnerable young people, thus avoiding them entering homelessness at an early age.
- Continue to provide and support the Housing Led - 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, Approved Housing Bodies 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, where they will receive supports from Peter McVerry Trust.
- Continue to work with Statutory and Voluntary bodies through the medium of Homeless Action Team to prevent Homelessness (e.g., Threshold, Túsla 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.
- Support the provision of Domestic Violence facility with the input and support of multiple stakeholders and government funding.

HOMELESS HAP PLACE FINDER SERVICE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 challenging.
- 65 homeless households referred to the HAP Homeless Place Finder during 2024.
- Ongoing engagement with property owners, estate agents to source accommodation units.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

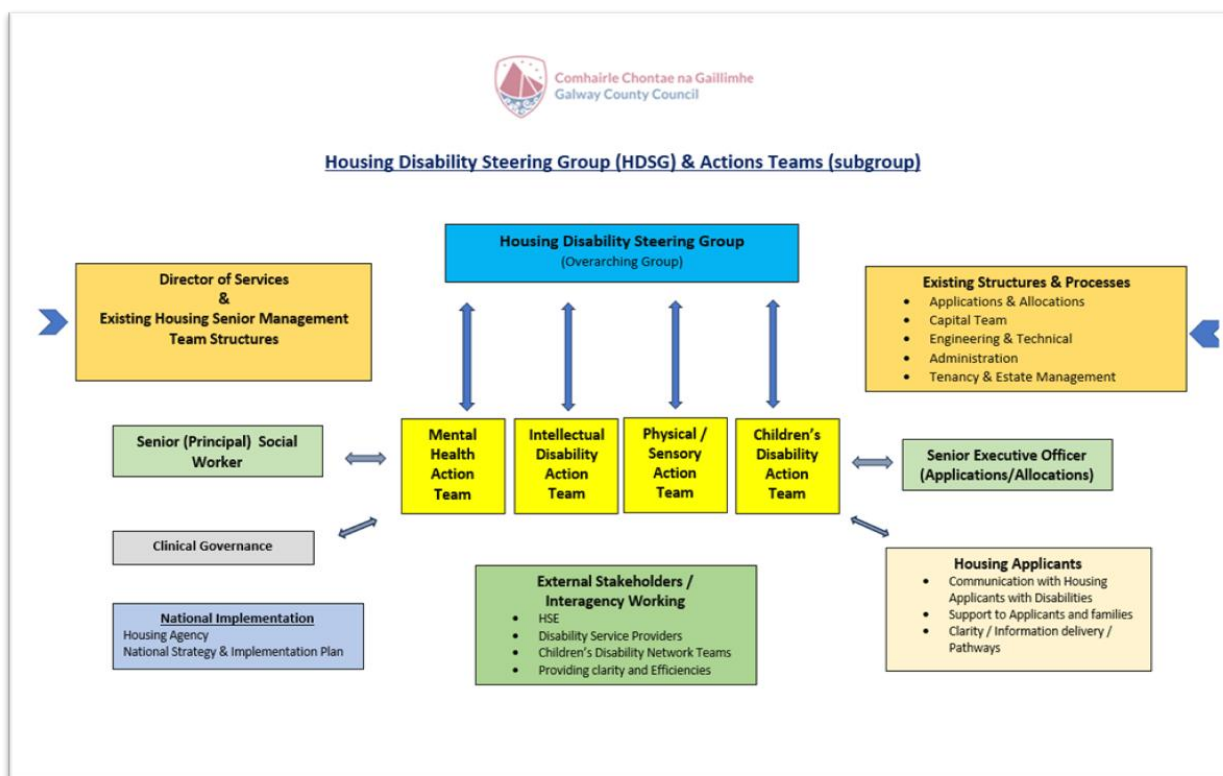
- Review of the priority homeless cases and the properties available to rent in County Galway.
- Continued engagement with property owners, estate agents to source all available accommodation units.

HOUSING STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

Galway County Council's *Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2026* underpins a substantial proportion of disability allocations within housing. 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.

The Housing Disability Steering Group has been re-established in addition to a specific Action Teams for specific needs and stakeholders which includes representatives from Galway County Council and HSE Mental Health services.



PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Continue to work within Housing in Galway County Council, Approved Housing Bodies and Disability service providers to provide suitable accommodation in individual tenancies or in shared accommodation, depending on needs and clinical recommendations. The CAS call remains open, and the Council welcomes all applications from Approved Housing Bodies.
- Develop further communication links with stakeholders and clients directly in respect of their specific needs.
- Continue implementation of *Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2026*.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

The Council employs one Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO) 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 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 and extension works were completed on the 2 houses at Ballygurrane, Athenry. An extension was constructed to meet the needs of a resident in one of the properties.
- The refurbishment and extension of a property at Cloonkeen, Athenry was completed to provide suitable housing for a family of seven.
- Works have been substantially complete on the major refurbishment and upgrades of 12 houses in a Traveller Specific Group Housing Scheme in Ballygar. Each family was relocated to a vacant property whilst works were ongoing in their own house.
- Fire Safety training was provided at halting sites in Tuam and Capira in 2024 - 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 2024 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.
- A successful application was made for Dormant Account Funding which facilitated the external painting of 3 Traveller Specific houses in the centre of Killimor.
- A further allocation of Dormant Accounts funding was allocated to deliver a Fire Safety video, with a focus on halting sites.
- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee met on 3 occasions to date in 2024 to discuss housing solutions for Travellers with a 4th meeting to take place in December 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- The completion of the refurbishment of the remaining properties at the Traveller Specific Group Scheme at Ballygar.
- The major refurbishment of a single Traveller Specific property in Ballygar.
- Fire safety training will continue to be delivered at all halting sites.
- The extension, adaptation, and refurbishment of a property at Kingsland, Athenry to facilitate a family who require a ground floor property.
- Extensive refurbishment and upgrade works at 2 single Traveller Specific properties at Castleblakeney, Ballinasloe.
- 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 for Gortbride (7 houses) and Ballydavid (6 houses).
- Further applications will be submitted for the refurbishment of Traveller Specific accommodation as the staff resources allow.

- The reconstruction of a property which was demolished following fire damage, at the Traveller Specific Group Housing Scheme at Cloonlyon, Ballygar is to commence, following recent grant of planning permission.
- The re-development of the Halting Site in Tuam will be progressed with engagement and support of CENA.
- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will implement the adopted 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programme for 2025 – 2029.
- The Annual Traveller Census will be completed.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

Social Work Cases 2024 (up to October, 2024)

Carried Over from 2023	Cases closed during 2024	New Referrals in 2024	Current Active Cases
221	132	182	271

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 Worker 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.

Sex Offender Accommodation Network

The CCMA are establishing a Sex Offender Accommodation Network to provide a forum for collaboration, information sharing, and feedback contribution to the CCMA Housing Committee. The Network will be chaired by the CCMA/LGMA SORAM representative (Director of Service) from a local authority. The Senior Social Worker has contributed to the development of this network and terms of reference via the Local Authority lead in the SORAM office.

The development of the network is welcome in supporting the role of SOLO (Sexual Offences Liaison Officer), which is part of the Senior Social Worker's role in Galway County Council.

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*



INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- **Voids Refurbishment Programme:**

Circular 13-2024 set out the 2024 Voids Refurbishment Programme and advised of the funding to be provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. An initial allocation of 41 houses with a budget of €451,000 was provided. An additional allocation of 5 houses with a budget of €55,000 was approved in October 2024. The set funding limit of €11k for all refurbishment works per property remains unchanged for several years despite considerable increases in construction costs. As of end of October 2024 expenditure on the voids refurbishment programme in 2024 amounted to €1,132,036 on 164 units within that timeframe. Since the introduction of this programme in 2014, funding is not provided more than once for a property to be turned over. This is 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 2024 four properties cost more than €40,000 each to refurbish with Galway County Council responsible for the provision of the funding above €11,000 available from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

- **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 2024 Galway County Council received a funding allocation of €676,898 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 €367,026 for works carried out on 32 adaptations. Additional adaptation works and the construction of 5 extensions are 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 2024, 3,757 repair requests were logged for Housing Maintenance, of these 1,004 were deemed to be valid requests. In the same period 814 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.

A periodic electrical inspection on all houses over 10 years old is nearing completion with properties in the Tuam and Conamara fully completed. The necessary repairs identified were 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. A total of 701 houses have received electrical certification and upgraded fire and carbon monoxide alarms under planned maintenance in 2024 at a cost of approximately €1.1m. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage provided €90,550 of funding to Galway County Council for planned maintenance works on 146 houses in 2024.

In 2024 250 heat pump heating systems were serviced under a planned maintenance contract at a cost of €50,000. This figure is expected to increase considerably due to all new and retrofitted properties having heat pump heating systems.

- **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 07-2024. It approves in principle the upgrade of 67 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 has funded these additional items. To date in 2024 energy efficiency upgrades have been completed on 56 properties in Loughrea, Ballygar, Athenry, Tuam and Conamara. It is anticipated that a total of 73 dwellings will be upgraded in 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 80 houses in County Galway will be progressed in 2025 subject to an anticipated budget in the region of €2.72 million from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The works include replacement windows and doors, external insulation and the installation of heat pumps. Solar PV panels and mechanical ventilation will be installed 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 an additional 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 a radon survey and remedial works on relevant properties, it is estimated that 400 houses will require a survey at a cost of €72,000. Remedial works are expected to be necessary on 100 houses at a cost of €200,000. It is also intended to continue the heat pump service contract where it is anticipated that 300 houses will be serviced at a cost of €60,000.
- Subject to additional funding for housing maintenance, it is proposed to increase the number of Housing Maintenance Teams from 3 to 4 in early 2025 and to 5 Teams by year end, subject to the sanction of additional posts by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

TENANCY AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- The Housing Unit continued to work with vulnerable families in assisting them in sustaining their tenancies.
- Following planned estate management visits in 2024, several referrals have been forwarded to our social work department and Tenancy sustainment officer on foot of observations and concerns over ability to sustain Tenancies. These referrals will open further exploration into these cases and will provide interventions where required around ensuring Tenancy support.
- The Tenancy Enforcement Officer and Housing Liaison Officers 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.
- Presently the Tenancy and Estate management section are exploring with three separate tenant groups interested in establishing residents' associations in the following areas:
Two in the Municipal District of Tuam
One in the Municipal District of Connemara
- The Councils Housing Liaison Officers and Tenancy Enforcement Officer continue to engage with An Garda Síochána and regularly discuss problem areas, on how both organisations can work together to address anti-social behaviour.
- 2 possession order applications were successful in the District Court in 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Enforcement action will be carried out if required in accordance with the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 and Control of Horses Byelaws.

- Tenants in estates, particularly in newly developed estates will be strongly encouraged and assisted in setting up Resident Associations to take responsibility for their public spaces.

Local Community Safety Partnership

- Ensure strong linkages with the Local Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) in order to work in a collaborative means to foster sustained community involvement in identifying issues in our estates and assisting in co-designing solutions with external agencies to address these issues.

Tenancy and Estate Management Visits

- Planned estate management visits conducted in Q4 2024 proved to be highly effective in terms of identifying the following:
 - Non-compliance with household waste management.
 - No. of domestic pets and non-dog licence holders
 - Restricted breeds
 - Continuation of successful visits undertaken in 2024 –
 - Estate/Tenancy management visits in each of the Municipal Districts as part of our interdepartmental and inter agency approach.
- It is envisaged that in 2025 Tenancy and Estate management staff will visit four estates per quarter, accompanied by Dog warden service, Maintenance staff, Traveller Liaison Officer, Housing Liaison Officers, Community Wardens and Tenancy Enforcement Officer

TENANT PURCHASE SCHEME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

The introduction of the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme in 2016 afforded eligible Local Authority Tenants the opportunity to purchase their Local Authority homes. The following updated guidance incorporates the recent changes on foot of the Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 and recent Reckonable Income Directions under section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014.

These changes came into effect on 29 January 2024. They include –

- **Minimum income requirements:** The minimum income required for an applicant to be eligible to apply under the scheme is now €11,000 per annum.
- **Time receiving social housing supports:** The period tenants will be required to be in receipt of social housing support to be considered eligible under the scheme remains at 10 years. However, in the case of joint tenancies only one tenant is now required to have been in receipt of social housing supports for 10 years.
- **Primary Sources of Income:** In addition to the State Pension (Contributory and Non-Contributory) being considered as a primary source of income, the Widow's, Widower's,

Surviving Civil Partner's (Contributory and Non-Contributory Pension), Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance are now also considered primary sources of income.

- **Secondary Sources of Income:** The following payments have been removed from the income disregard list and are now be considered as secondary sources of income: Working Family Payment, Age 80 (Pension) increase and Rural Social Scheme.
- **Income disregard list** includes additional named payments.
- To date in 2024 the Housing Unit has completed the sale of 15 houses under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. The sale value of these properties is €1,090,745.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024:

The weekly rent accrual payable for the 3,099 Galway County Council owned and leased properties currently stands at €202,550 as of 9th November 2024.

A rent review team, consisting of 5 staff members was established in October 2024. The team is commencing a rent review of all Council, HAP and RAS tenancies with the intention of continually reviewing rent payable for all tenancies on an annual basis.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

An annual rent review of all current tenancies to be implemented by the newly established dedicated rent team.

CONTROL OF HORSES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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.

- The Council has seized one stray horse and one stray donkey to date in 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024:

The Housing SPC has met on 3 occasions to date in 2024, with a further meeting scheduled in November 2024. Areas discussed at SPC meetings included Housing for All, Vacant Homes Action Plan 2024 to 2029, Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025 to 2029, Affordable Housing, Housing Delivery Action Plan, Homelessness, Refugee Programme, Vacancy Action Programme, Differential Rent Review, and the Housing Capital Programme.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

In 2025, it is anticipated that the Housing Strategic Policy Committee will examine a range of policy areas relating to Housing including Homeless Action Plan, Housing for All, Affordable Housing and Vacant Homes including CPO Activation.

RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, INTEGRATION AND ENVIRONMENT

The Rural and Community 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, Healthy Galway County 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 2024:

- Continued to play an active role on the Board and various sub-committees for the Bia Innovator Campus project.
- 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.
- Continue to participate in several 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 vital 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.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 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 able to progress a second phase of the Shared Island initiative if such a call is advertised.
- Act as lead partner for the implementation of the successful phase one project 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. In 2025 it is anticipated that phase two will be applied for.

CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SECTORS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- 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.
- 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 2025:

- 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 2024:

Tourism Strategy:

The County Galway Tourism Strategy was adopted by the Council at the November 2023 Plenary meeting. The adoption of this Strategy means that, for the first time, there is a collaborative framework in place for the development of tourism over the coming eight years across the County. This framework supports 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:

- 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.
- Support the extension of tourists' length of stay, expenditure and encourage exploration of less visited areas.
- Prioritise the goal of fully sustainable tourism and align with national and local Climate Action Plans.
- Support Gaeltacht culture, language, and communities.
- Prioritise the harnessing of existing natural and built assets, outdoor tourism, and ongoing investments, especially in blue and green infrastructure.

- Establish tourism as a core economic activity across the County and promote the growth of tourism - including in less visited areas - through the development of existing and new tourism experiences and destinations.
- Develop a zone approach that will enable targeting relevant interventions at local level.
- Introduce and support innovation.
- Enhance industry, community, and stakeholder collaboration.
- Improve universal access to tourism experiences.

CSS Festivals and Events:

Galway County Council continues to support festivals and events with 73 communities granted support 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 2024 regional, economic and festival and 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
2024	€18,000
Festivals	8 Granted
Economic Grants including Festival funding	Amount Granted
2024	Total Funding €69,250
Festivals & Events	54 Granted
Economic Initiative	11 Granted

Just Transition Fund:

In April 2024, Galway County Council appointed an EU Just Transition Activator to support local community groups and SMEs in accessing the Just Transition Fund. Over the past six months, the Activator has engaged with 15 community groups and approximately 20 SMEs, holding over 50 face-to-face meetings to promote the fund. These engagements resulted from combined marketing efforts, including four public information sessions and two radio segments disseminating information.

The EU Just Transition Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme 2023-2026 closed for expressions of interest on July 2, 2024, at 12 noon. A total of 25 EOIs were submitted, with 23 moving to the approval stage. The Activator is now assisting applicants through the application phase, providing checklists, scheduled monthly updates, and guidance throughout.

To date, two applications have been submitted with five more expected imminently. Work continues on other applications, with some pending planning approvals. So far, two applications have been approved for a combined total of €856,000.

The final application deadline is January 13th, 2025, with funding allocated on a ‘first come, first served’ basis. The Activator will continue supporting applicants to help as many as possible meet the deadline and will provide ongoing support and guidance for successful projects.

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 completed the third Non-statutory Public Consultation in May/June 2023 – Emerging Preferred Route Corridor. Landowner engagement is continuing to finalise a route for the greenway within the emerging preferred corridor.

The project is currently at Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation. 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 in 2025.

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. Phase 1 has now been completed. Awaiting approval from TII to progress to Phase 2 Options Selection.

CONNEMARA DESTINATION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 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 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 2024 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 2024 edition. Galway County Council annually invest in the magazine of Knock Airport- alongside local authority partners in Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway City. For 2024 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.
- **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.

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.
- The event supported tourism partners to maximise the cross-selling and referral opportunity in 2024 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 WIFI4U 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 Fáilte 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 2025:

- **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 Fáilte Ireland.
- **Marketing:** Continue to develop marketing, advertising, social media and promotion of tourism in Co Galway.
- **Lough Derg VEDP** Progress and implement Lough Derg VEDP actions and network.
- **Connemara Coast and Islands VEDP:** Continue to work with the Connemara and Islands actions and network.
- **CSS Festivals and Events** Assess and manage the Community Support Scheme: Tourism projects and festivals and events.
- Continue to support Fáilte 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 2024:

Galway in the spotlight – “Moving West Series”

The Galway Programme which aired on TG4 on Tuesday 29th October, 2024 was produced by Dundara Television & Media in collaboration with the WDC and Galway City and County Councils, ‘Moving West’ captured the community that draws people to the region year on year and featured a wide representation from indigenous and FDI employers in both Galway City and County.

Presenter Mary Kennedy explored Galway’s unique appeal and met a diverse group of movers who have made the county their home. The series highlighted all Galway City and County have to offer in terms of lifestyle, outdoor amenities, food, culture and quality of life.

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 2025:

- 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 2024:

- 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.
- In May 2024, Galway County Council attended the opening of the Ballinasloe PULSE Hub which was completed with funding support under the Town and Village Renewal Programme.

PROPOSALS 2025:

- 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.
- Identify funding paths for Community and Voluntary Enterprise and Multi-Purpose Hubs across the County and those supporting feasibility and marketing of same. Liase with Regeneration Team and Community and Voluntary and Enterprise Network Sector.

GENERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES AND STRATEGY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- Fed into the development of the National and Regional review 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.
- 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 2025:

- Lead the implementation 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 2025.

RURAL FUNDING SCHEMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

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. In line with the Government's Our Rural Future the Scheme is funded by the Department of Community and Rural Development further to an annual Expression of Interest Process and Shortlisting Process co-ordinated by Galway County Council (Rural and Community Unit).

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 2024 in line with the Town Centre First a new Suite of Supports was introduced in February 2024 that included a Project Development Measure (PDM). The Rural and Community Unit undertook an Expression of Interest Process and submitted a maximum of three projects from 15 EOI received. Three projects were approved for seed capita of up to €50k to advance resources bringing the following projects to planning stage. Launched in 2024, these projects will continue into 2025.

Ahascragh Community Centre - PDM24GY01

This Project Development Measure funded under Town Centre First Supports will advance renovation of the Community Centre managed by Ahascragh Area Community Group, located on the approach road in a visually prominent site in the streetscape. It will facilitate youth groups, active age groups, classes and events/functions - a significant gap locally. It will promote historical and heritage opportunities, bring renewal to the village centre, increase footfall, and encourage living in Ahascragh.

An Fháirce Clonbur Community Centre - PDM24GY02

This Project Development Measure funded under Town Centre First Supports will completely refurbish Clonbur Community Centre which is currently in disrepair (managed by Clonbur Cloghbrack Community Council), an important step in the revitalisation of this scenic Gaeltacht village. This will deliver essential safety upgrades and make the building more visually appealing, providing a much-needed space for sport, youth and active age groups, creches, and offices, serving as a hub of parish activity.

Eyrecourt Village Recreation Space - PDM24GY03

This Project Development Measure funded under Town Centre First Supports will advance planning for a playground, small skate park and outdoor recreation space adjacent to Eyrecourt Village Square, enhancing the general public realm of this historical village. Eyrecourt Development Co Ltd, on behalf of the community who fundraised to buy the land.

In 2024, Projects under the 2022 Scheme including **An Spidéal and Portumna Streetscape Enhancement Measures** investing grants of up to 80% with Local Business and Residents to improve their Shopfronts and repair and presentation of properties within the central zones of these locations. Over 100 properties have been supported with positive feedback on the strong visual enhancement achieved due to the effective administration of the schemes and positive buy-in from local businesses. Galway County Council engaged the service of a Colour Consultant and established Advisory Clinics to recommend painting schemes to those participating in the scheme to add value and improve the overall visual impact of the Scheme.

In 2024 applications under the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme were approved.

Maree Community Centre (€250k) Dunmore Community Centre (€250k) and Gort Town and Village Renewal Scheme (€250k). Over 60 applications have been received with roll out in the Spring/Summer of 2025. Over €300k has been sought by business and residents to invest in the enhancement of their properties.

TVRS Programme 2021	Grant Approved	Status
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	Completed in 2024
Collectivised Branding & Marketing Campaign	€50,000	Ongoing
Development Of Multi Use Facility Athenry at Burkes Lane-North Gate St.	€50,000	Completed to Part 8 Planning and Successful in securing funding under RRDF Programme
Portumna Upgrade & Enhance Shopfronts & Streetscape	€100,000	Completed in 2024
Cashla Feasibility Study for Development of Low Carbon Sustainable Centre	€50,000	Due for Completion in March 2025
An Spidéal Upgrade & Enhance Shopfronts & Streetscape	€100,000	Completed in 2024

TVRS Programme 2023	Grant Approved	Status
Maree Community Centre Enhancements	€250,000	Commenced in 2024 and to June 2025
Dunmore Community Centre Enhancements	€250,000	Commenced in 2024 and Ongoing to June 2025
Gort Streetscape Scheme	€250,000	Launched in June 2024 and Ongoing to June 2025
Project Development Measure Town Centre First Suite of Supports	Grant Approved	Status

Ascharagh Community Development Group	€50,000	Launched in September 2024 and ongoing in 2025
Eyrecout Community Field	€50,000	Launched in September 2024 and ongoing in 2025
An Fháirce Clonbur Community Centre	€50,000	Launched in September 2024 and ongoing in 2025

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- To provide administrative and advisory support for all projects ongoing in the Town and Village Renewal Programme including ongoing project from the 2021, 2023 Programme and 2024 Project Development Measure.
- 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 to be launched when new Scheme is announced by the Department of Community and Rural Development.
- Support the roll-out of key Strategies including targets in the County Development Plan and Tourism Strategy and emerging Recreation Strategy, 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 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 2024:

- Provision of Administrative and Advisory Support for the successful implementation of Project Approved in 2023 Programme. The Department approved the 2023 Programme February 2024, and 14 projects are ongoing with one project completed. The remainder of these projects will be completed in 2025.
- In May 2024 the Unit undertook the Expression of Interest process of CLÁR 2024 with 68 applications and 15 shortlisted. EOI were submitted on-line by groups. In October 2024 an allocation of with projects offers issued in November 2025. Projects will be implemented during 2025 and up to May 2026. The Staff also held a feedback session for

unsuccessful projects to provide guidance on future applications and scoring mechanism applied for shortlisting.

School Name / Community Facility Name / LDC	CLAR 2024 Programme Approved in October 2025 (Ongoing for 2025 and 2026.	Amount of CLÁR funding Approved
Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál - Ballygar National School	This funding will allow Ballygar National School to lay a new Multi Use Games Area surface, upgrading the currently 39-year-old tarmac play area. This addresses several critical needs within Ballygar's community: delivering high-quality all-weather training and playing areas for local sports teams who currently travel elsewhere, as well as serving as an inclusive hub for community events - supporting Tidy Towns, Ballygar Carnival, and Ballygar Heritage Group - all in the heart of the village.	€50,000
Kilchreest National School Board of Management	This project by Kilchreest National School Board of Management will deliver a 700m walking track providing an accessible, safe facility next to the National School, accessible to families, senior citizens and persons with disabilities. The hill to rear of the site will be removed in preparation for new astro turf pitch location, opening views of natural surrounds. Picnic benches and Age Friendly seating will be installed to perimeter of track with development to enhance existing flora and fauna.	€50,000
Roundstone Community Development Council Ltd (Playground Committee)	This project managed by Roundstone Playground Committee will enhance the playground in the village centre of this Coastal Connemara spot, which attracts a high volume of visitors. Current timber fencing blocks views and is in a state of disrepair, as is kerbing and wet pour. Upgrades to these will maintain the safety of visitors, including an appropriate steel fence, hedging to act as a wind barrier and contribute to biodiversity, and new play equipment reflecting Risk Assessment requirements.	€50,000
Williamstown Development Company CLG, Supported by Williamstown GAA Club & National School	This project will complete the two-acre field adjacent to Williamstown National School and the local GAA club purchased in 2019, improving access for walkers/runners, parents with buggies and wheelchair users by installing smooth tarmac and kerbs. Among installations are upgrades to playing pitch and playground for senior students, sensory garden to engage children with plants. Landscaping will enhance the green area with seating and picnic facilities, promoting beauty and biodiversity.	€50,000

Clonberne Community Centre Co Ltd & SNO Club (Special Needs +Others)	This community-led project will enhance the existing inclusive playground by adding equipment for teenagers, adults and retired people; addressing the needs of the ageing community. This will introduce additional sensory seating, planting, a boules area, an age and disability inclusive swing, a sensory path with tactile surfacing, and more. An 'adult' playground will enable inclusive participation, particularly for local adults with intellectual disabilities and nursing home residents.	€50,000
Moylough Parish Sports Field	The project driven by local volunteers will upgrade the playground at Moylough Parish Sports Field, replacing existing 21-year-old equipment and ground cover. The scope of the works involved include: Installation of New Multi Play Area, Swings, Swing Basket, Butterfly Game Station, Inclusive Springer, Zip Line Repairs, surfacing (coloured Wetpour), and improved security fencing along with Independent Safety Inspection and bedding area for wildflowers to enhance biodiversity.	€50,000
Leenane Development Association CLG	This will enhance the existing community park developed by Leenane Development Association CLG in 2023 by installing sensory play equipment known to improve cognition, emotional regulation, and social skills in children. The park has been a success for the area, attracting visitors across Connemara to walk and explore while enjoying spectacular views of the Killary Fjord. The improvements will appeal to children and make the walking trail more exciting for the local community and visitors.	€45,000
Dunmore Tidy Towns & Galway County Council	This project delivered by Dunmore Tidy Towns & Galway County Council will enhance the safety, accessibility and biodiversity features of Dunmore River Walk, a popular Community Park linking the town centre to key community facilities and used daily. Improvements to infrastructure include replace fencing which has become dangerously deficient in places, improve the width and condition of walkways for accessibility, provide bins, and plant native species to enhance visual appearance.	€50,000
Clontuskert Community Development Group	This project managed by Clontuskert Community Development Group will further upgrade the community hub built in the 1980s to a standard which will attract more community events. Insulation, electrics, plumbing, bathrooms, windows, entrance gates will all be replaced, with installation of baby change facilities in the disabled bathroom, larger vehicle gates, secure lock system and storage heaters. This will increase use by local groups: Heritage, Crochet, IFA, Hurling, and Camogie.	€45,000

Killimordaly Community Centre CLG	This project managed by Killimordaly Community Centre CLG will replace and insulate the Community Centre roof, which is leaking and contains asbestos, allowing the roof to retain heat and make the community space more inviting. This investment will facilitate an increase in public events, events targeted at our older and younger generations, including use by Foróige club and Community Alert Group. This upgraded community hub will increase participation and inclusion among a large catchment area.	€50,000
Killiererin Community Council	This project will deliver critical roof repairs for Barnaderg Community Centre. The upgrades to slates, lighting, vents, and guttering will ensure a safe space for the events enjoyed by the community, ranging from senior citizen gatherings, dance classes for 4/5-year-olds, and Foróige youth clubs. Once fit for purpose again, Killiererin Community Council plan to refurbish the centre's polytunnel, plant flowers, and make a 'bee hotel', to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity.	€49,456
Woodford Parish Development	This project managed by Woodford Parish Development will upgrade the community playground based on feedback from users of the playground including local primary and secondary schools. Wood fibre will be upgraded to tiger mulch for safety, sensory equipment and accessible picnic benches will be installed, and maintenance equipment including leaf blowers and hedge cutters will be purchased for playground volunteers. This will maximise its use as a vital community asset in the village centre.	€50,000
Esker Community Centre	This project managed by Esker Community Centre will replace windows and doors, upgrade toilets, and replace kitchen and all internal/external lighting with energy-efficient lights. Esker Community Centre, where no works have been carried out since 1990, is central to all community activity in this rural population of approx. 750 people, where local voluntary, sporting, recreational, farming and cultural groups meet on a regular basis.	€48,262
Kilconly Community Recreational Group	This project will add Tennis and Basketball Courts to the now well-known multi-use outdoor recreation facility managed by Kilconly Community Recreational Group, diversifying facilities beyond Soccer, GAA, and walkways, widening possibilities for all ages and abilities. These courts will allow for Tennis and Basketball clubs and annual camps to be set up, encouraging new members of the community as well as visitors from further away to join the activity at Fitz's Field.	€44,730

Gort Community Playground	This volunteer-driven project will install a net climbing frame in the Playground opposite Gort Community School, appropriate for ages 5+ and can cater for up to 38 children, filling a gap in age-appropriate equipment. The project will also replace no longer functioning equipment with new accessible alternatives which will allow independent, exciting free play for a larger number of participants. Investment will give the children of Gort access to more enjoyable facilities.	€42,307
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PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- The CLÁR Small-Scale Infrastructure Scheme for Community Amenities offers groups up to 18 months for completion and for 2025 there are 29 live projects across the County, with a value of €1.4million.
- Staff will work closely with community groups and projects leaders to facilitate delivery of the approved projects under the 2023 and 2024 CLÁR Programme which will run concurrently in 2025.
- The Unit will respond to any new calls for funding for a 2025 CLÁR Programme and continue to identify potential projects across the County through enhanced engagement with local development committees and with colleagues in other Municipal District offices and Departments.

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 2024:

- Work continued to ensure the delivery of several projects approved in previous years.

MEASURE 1 FUNDING RECEIVED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS -2024

Project Name	Outline	Amount Approved
Creggs Wildlife Garden accessibility upgrade	Enhancement of wheelchair accessible walkways within Creggs Wildlife Park.	€20,339
Gateway to the Corrib	Installation of signage for a new cycle route in the Claren area of Headford.	€18,000
Hymany Way Upgrade	Upgrade the Beara Breifne/Hymany Way Walking Trail.	€29,710
Lackagh Knockdoemore Walkway 2023 Enhancements	Walkway safety enhancements and Maintenance to existing Knockdoemore Park - Lackagh walkway.	€27,450
Traught Beach Accessibility Upgrade	Accessibility Upgrades to Traught Beach to provide improvements to walkway, access ramp and seating.	€29,700
An Trá Mhor Inverin Accessibility Upgrade	Accessibility Upgrades to An Trá Mhor to enable accessibility and inclusiveness for older people, younger people and persons with disabilities.	€29,700
Cill Murvey Beach Accessibility Upgrade	Accessibility Upgrades to Cill Murvey to enable accessibility and inclusiveness for older people, younger people and persons with disabilities.	€29,700

M2, M3 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FUNDING RECEIVED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS 2024

Measure	Project Name	Outline	Amount Approved
Project Development	Rinville Forest Park Masterplan	To Develop a Major Tourism Attraction, Building on the Unique Heritage of the park for Galway County and the Western Region.	€ 49,950
Project Development	Ballinasloe Outdoor Recreation Park	To carry out a feasibility study exploring the options for the development of a public park in Ballinasloe that reflects good practice in line with Proper Planning and Sustainable development.	€49,950
Project Development	Linn Taoide Arainn	Feasibility Study for Provision of tidal pool on Arainn along the seashore that will offer recreational opportunities for the island community as well as visitors to the island and provide a habitat for marine life.	€ 35,847
M2	Glinsk Heritage Park	Glinsk Heritage Park Repair and Upgrade of 2km of Existing Trails to improve accessibility.	€200,000
M2	Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails	Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails aims to develop both Castlegrove Woods and Barracks as Nature Trails, Historic Trails and Heritage Display centre.	€47,821
M2	Ionad Pobail an Mháma - Car Park	The construction of a car park which will facilitate the western way and provide proper and secure parking for a range of community and commercial recreation events.	€172,583

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024/25.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- The LCDC has held 7 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. A further two meetings of the LCDC are due to take place in November and December as well as additional meetings of the various sub-committees.
- An extensive public consultation process took place on the development of a second LECP (Local Economic and Community Plan) for County Galway culminating in the publication of a draft strategy which is currently being assessed by the Municipal Districts and Regional Assembly to ensure complementarity with local and regional planning policy. It is proposed to present the final Framework Plan and Implementation Plan to the full council before year end.
- The project Outcome area for Healthy Ireland Round 4 is to increase the proportion of people aged 50+ engaging in one or more social leisure activity at least once a week. As such one of the outputs incurred in 2024 was the launch of community health and wellbeing events in targeted communities in line with the HSE health information calendar to align with the roll out of physical activity projects. As a means of improving social connection opportunities for older people to reduce isolation and subsequently support physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing a small grants scheme was targeted at creating inclusive community gardens. The EPA publication 'Connecting with Nature' highlights evidence that direct experiences of nature can enhance our sense of wellbeing and benefit our physical and mental health, especially to reduce anxiety which was the purpose of this initiative. A new programme of arts workshops 'Mending Hearts' has been launched in 2024 in collaboration with support by Creative Ireland to roll out a series of workshops across Galway city and county to expand and create a sustainable model for arts engagement in healthcare settings. The Active Parks Initiative, in partnership with Galway Sports Partnership, will continue. Three areas were identified and designs approved for the installation of Activator Fit Stick Trails in Galway County. These areas were specifically designated due to the uptake of

activator pole use in the area through supported programmes with Galway Sports Partnership and Healthy Galway

- The LCDC received an allocation of €154,480.86 through the Local Enhancement Programme. This funding provides capital supports essential for the many small community groups and organisations, particularly those who serve disadvantaged areas in rural and urban areas. There was a particular focus on small capital works/improvements, and the purchase of equipment for community use. The funding can also be used to provide improved access for persons with a disability; enhancing community participation for disadvantaged and marginalised groups and improving energy efficiency of community facilities to reduce ongoing costs. Like previous years, the Fund was heavily over-subscribed. A total of 99 applications were successful in receiving funding under the Local Enhancement Programme and all grants were drawn down in 2024.
- A separate Women's Fund was also made available with an allocation of €30,896. This funding was in recognition of the fact that there is a growing number of Women's Sheds, groups and networks across the country. A total of 21 applications were successful in receiving this funding.
- Members and support staff of the LCDC attended a LCDC networking event organised by the Department of Rural and Community Development on 9th October in Athlone Springs Hotel. Updates were provided on review of the guidelines for the operation of LCDCs, LCDC National and Local Programme of Awareness Campaign, Overview of the establishment of the Community Safety Partnerships, Healthy Ireland, Creative Ireland and LECP monitoring
- The contracts for SICAP 2024-2028 commenced on 1st June 2024 with the new programme commencing across 3 Lots – Galway East, Galway Islands, Galway West. Galway Rural Development has responsibility for Galway East and Galway Islands and Forum Conemara has responsibility for Galway West. The LCDC agreed an Annual Plan for the delivery of SICAP in 2024 across the 3 Lots. 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 2024, has been selected which includes labour market training and the integration of the Ukrainian community into Clifden.
- The Empowering Communities Programme (ECP) continues 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. The small area selected for County Galway is Ballinasloe Urban Small Area ID 067017010 (comprising St. Theresa's Park, St. Annes and St. Grellan's Terrace) which has a deprivation rating of -30.93 making it one of the highest deprivation areas in the country. Galway Rural Development CLG is the Programme Implementer, and each year develops a Work Plan and Budget to identify critical issues and solutions in the target area. The ECP work closely with other government-funded

initiatives such as Community Gardai, Local Drug Task Forces, Youth Justice, Healthy Ireland, etc.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- A key area of work for 2025 will be the development of a Monitoring System to track progress on the first LECIP Implementation Plan including regular reporting to the LCDC.
- SICAP Annual Plans will also need to be developed to respond to local needs to address disadvantage and social exclusion across the 3 Lots in the County.
- Initiatives for 2025 will be to support mental health, including workshops, support groups, and awareness campaigns throughout Galway County including offshore islands. Programs to encourage physical activity, such as community walks, fitness classes, and sports events and projects to promote healthy eating habits, including cooking classes and nutrition workshops among active retirement groups. In addition to relaunching community events to raise awareness of health and wellbeing the 5 ways to wellbeing, alcohol harm reduction, how to create a tobacco-free Galway and the provision of targeted education and material resources and informational talks for women's and men's health.

LOCAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- The Department of Justice has developed a new community safety policy based on a key principle that policing is not the responsibility of the police alone and involves other agencies of Government such as health and social services. The Community Safety Policy proposes a whole-of-government approach to community safety. This new approach will be delivered through Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs), supported through a national governance structure. This structure will ensure that communities are empowered to have a strong say in what actions are prioritised by the services operating in their area and will also have a key oversight role in ensuring those actions are followed through. Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs) will bring all the relevant state services and the community together at local authority level. This will build on the work undertaken through Joint Policing Committees and supplement it by ensuring that all other relevant stakeholders necessary to constitute a more holistic forum for discussion, decisions and action on community priorities are present.
- Each Partnership will be supported by a dedicated Community Safety Coordinator, Grade VII – Administrative Officer and an administrator, Grade IV Assistant Staff Officer. Both permanent positions will be funded by the Department of Justice and recruited by and sit within each local authority. The Secretariat for each LCSP will be provided by the local community safety coordinator. Interviews have taken place for these positions and an assessment panel will be convening shortly to appoint a Chairperson to the partnership.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 20 of the 30 members will be specified in regulation (including 7 local councillors). The remaining 10 places will be appointed by the Chair in consultation with the rest of the partnership, who will consider local demographics and other factors that will help in deciding who else is needed in each specific locality. Membership of each LCSP will include residents, community representatives, including representatives of youth, new communities and the voluntary sector; business and education representatives; relevant public services in the area, including HSE, Túsla, AGS, and the local authority; and Local Councillors. The LCSP will have a maximum of 30 members.

INTEGRATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- The dedicated Integration Team to support the longer-term integration of International Protection Applicants, Programme Refugees, Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and Persons with Status into local communities began work in 2024. They currently support 1,423 Ukrainians in 38 Accommodation centres and the 64 Modular Homes in Ballinasloe, and 395 International Protection Applicants across 7 designated accommodation centres.
- The Offer a Home Scheme continues to operate with 173 OAH residents in 51 properties across the County. The Integration Team provides support to people wishing to pledge properties to the scheme and arranges inspections to confirm compliance with the OAH requirement.
- The Ukraine Community Response Forum was reconfigured as the Community Integration Forum in 2024. It comprises representatives from key agencies tasked with providing integration supports to migrants, such as the HSE, GRETB, An Garda Síochána, Túsla, Galway Childcare Committee, Local Link, Irish Red Cross, Volunteer Centre and Local Development Companies. 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), as well as identifying gaps in service provision and recommending solutions.
- 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 2025:

- A new National Migrant Integration Strategy will be launched in 2025. Galway County Council will begin the process of producing a Migrant Integration Strategy for County Galway in 2025.
- The Offer a Home Scheme is currently running until March 2025. As the Temporary Protection Directive has been extended to March 2026, it is envisaged that the Offer a Home Scheme will continue until this date also.
- Funding proposals have been submitted to the DCEDIY for a Ukrainian interpreter to assist the Integration Team with their work.

SOCIAL INCLUSION FORA AND INITIATIVES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- The Age Friendly Alliance has met 3 times to date this year to agree a Workplan for the Joint Age Friendly Programme in Galway City & County and to discuss initiatives relating to Older People, for example, the Healthy Homes Pilot Project, events and activities for Bealtaine, Positive Ageing Week, etc., and to update on developments from the National Age Friendly Programme. Bus Shelters at Casla and Inverin were shortlisted for a National Age Friendly Recognition Award under the Transport Award. The Older People's Councils has met regularly throughout the year and have also reviewed the Directory of Services for Older People with a view to issuing an updated version of the Directory by year end. Further initiatives for the Age Friendly Programme included attendance of agency partners and Council staff at a Virtual Mobile Dementia Tour and organisation of "Putting your House in Order" in partnership with the Irish Hospice Foundation.
- The Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee met quarterly throughout the year to discuss progress on broadening engagement in Comhairle na nÓg at local level and on progressing the 2024 topics which is Youth Mental Health and Transport. The AGM took place on 30th October in County Hall with a good attendance from several schools from around the county.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024:

- The Galway County PPN continues to support community representatives to sit on a variety of decision-making committees and during the year filled representative roles on the PPN Secretariat, Strategic Policy Committees, and Galway Rural Development. The PPN also has a representative from County Galway on the National Working Group which has recently published the PPN Implementation Roadmap for PPN's.
- During 2024 the Galway County PPN contributed to several consultative processes including the circulation of surveys on behalf of the local authority and national fora and made a submission to the Council's SPC Scheme. The PPN was also heavily involved in organised public consultation sessions across the County for the Local Economic and Community Plan.
- A series of training courses were held throughout the year aimed at building capacity of Member Groups including training on governance, legal duties of groups, using social media, etc.
- As part of the PPN's role to act as an Information Hub between communities and the local authority and other agencies, the PPN continues to issue its Weekly Digest, its Monthly Newsletter and has further developed its website including its popular Event Calendar to help users stay informed about local events and activities. An important element of this role is also facilitating different Departments of the Council and other Agencies to provide information on funding schemes through Webinars or the Plenary Meetings of the PPN.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- The PPN will also continue to act as an information hub for its Member Groups and the local authority, facilitating information sessions on funding schemes and acting as a consultative forum for new policy development. The PPN will also identify training needs for Member Groups and PPN Representatives to build their capacity to represent and enhance their local communities. Succession planning for the PPN Secretariat will also take place to ensure the longest-serving members step down and new representatives sought to represent the full membership on an ongoing basis.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCHEMES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

- The Community Section coordinates the advertisement and processing of the Community Support Schemes for the relevant departments of the Council and in 2024, the overall allocation under the Schemes was €276,830, which was allocated as follows (an additional €18,000 for Regional Festivals from Fáilte Ireland is included below:

	Economic	Community	Cultural	Total
No. of Applications received	85	85	141	311
No. of Applications funded	73	61	133	267
Total Allocation	€87,250	€104,250	€103,330	€294,830

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024:

- 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 2024, held in conjunction with the Cathaoirleach's Ball took place in the Clayton Hotel, Galway on Thursday 16th May, and it was a huge success. The winners of the Award Categories, which are jointly sponsored by the PPN and County Council were:
 - Arts and Culture Award - Interface
 - Best Contribution to Heritage Award – Ballinasloe & District Heritage Society
 - Environment & Climate Action Award – Connemara Green
 - Social Inclusion Award – Vision Arch Club
 - Sports Award – Kinvara Hockey Club
 - Heritage Publication Award – *Anglicizing Tudor Connacht: The Expansion of English Rule in the Lordships of Clanrickard and Hy-Many* by Dr Joseph Mannion
 - Gradam na Gaeilge - Pleanáil Teanga Chonamara Láir
 - Pride of Place Awards – Kinvara Tidy Towns & Williamstown Community Development (to recognise the groups selected to represent County Galway as the current year entrants to the IPB Pride of Place Awards)
 - Tidy Towns Recognition Award – Kinvara Tidy Towns (to recognise the special achievement of a Tidy Towns Group)
 - Posthumous Special Recognition Awards – Saoirse Ruane, Kiltullagh, and Martin Ruane, Oranmore
- Galway County Council selected Williamstown Tidy Towns and Kinvara Tidy Towns to represent County Galway in the All-Island Pride of Place Awards 2024 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 2nd November in Monaghan. The stellar work of both communities was recognised at All-Island level with both being named runners-up in their respective categories.

- 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. Milltown retained First Place in County Galway and their Gold Medal status while Abbey became the second area in County Galway to achieve Gold Medal status in the competition. The Tidy Towns Committee in Tuam were rewarded for their ongoing efforts by becoming the first town in County Galway to be awarded Bronze Medal Status in the National Competition. An Spidéal maintained their excellent progress over the last number of years and retained Third Place in the County while the Endeavour Award, for the Group who achieves the highest increase in marks since the previous year's competition, was awarded to Tullycross Village for the second year in a row, with their marks increasing by an amazing 69 marks in the process! There are several Special Award categories in the National Competition which recognise excellence in particular areas, and County Galway groups have continued their excellent results in these areas with 2024 awardees as follows:
 - *Cuan Beo Environmental Group Kinvara* were one of 4 National Winners of the Waters and Communities Award
 - *Oranmore Tidy Towns* were the Regional Winner of the Pollinator Award for Large Towns.
 - *Kinvara Tidy Towns* were one of 2 areas in the country who were Highly Commended under the EPA Circular Economy Award.
 - *Abbey Tidy Towns* were the national winner of the Circular Economy Award.
 - *Abbeyknockmoy Parish Society* were the national winner of the Gum Litter Task Force Award Village/Small Town Category and won the overall award in this category.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- In recognition of the hugely beneficial impact on community wellbeing, the Community Department will continue to offer targeted supports, training and funding to Tidy Towns Groups to enable them to continue to improve their marks in the National Competition, and to address issues in their respective towns and villages in partnership with other areas of the Council. In addition, the Community Department will continue to partner with the PPN to promote best practice through local and national Award Competitions.

PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING ARTS ACTIVITY & CULTURE

INDICATIVE ACTIONS FOR 2024:

- Arts Grants 2024: Arts Office administered, adjudicated and supported arts grants for voluntary groups and organisation to pursue the development of the Arts in the County. This was the first year the grant process went online via Submit.com. €60,000 budget awarded to 69 grants recipients. (€163,000 requested).
- 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. Delivered one largescale Public Art project with OPW in Craughwell (Dec 2024).
- Artist Support Scheme 2024: Offers support to artists to develop new work. Vital financial support of €29,750 was awarded to 12 artists.
- Continued Professional Development – we continued to design and deliver a series of CPD opportunities based on our artist needs analysis conducted in 2023.
- Support UNESCO City of Film/Ardán to develop mentoring and bursary support for Galway County artists to develop short documentaries.
- Artists Residencies supported in 2024 include: Áras Éanna, Cultural Centre Irlandais Paris, Galway Dance Project and Interface Inagh Valley.
- Successfully supported Galway Dance Residency for County Based Dancer Linda Shermer and bursary for Theatre Maker Mairéad Folan.
- Programmed Posthumous exhibition “Painting by Light” by Tuam born artist Laura Buckley.
- 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.
- Book It Festival 2024; support the schools and libraries to bring writers and reading events to schools and libraries across the county in October.
- Artists in Schools- Supported 6 artists in school’s residencies in 2024, plus worked with Ealaín 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.
- Supported Branar’s local tour of Ballad of a Bandit, written and performed by Miquel Barceló to schools in County Galway.
- Created a Performing arts commission Tiny Mutiny for young artists aged 13-19 in the county which will include support from professional artists and a producer. This Open Call is developed and produced by Tuam based Sparkcatchers.
- Sea Week Youth Gathering – we continued to partner with Sea Week to develop a youth led arts programme with a climate action theme.
- Supported 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.
- In 2024 we worked with Limelight Studio Oranmore to deliver an artist residency for an artist with a disability.

- Arts in Older Years: Supported three free arts projects for older people. Online Creative Writing Workshops with writer Ken Harmon led 8 workshops in Athenry, Loughrea Men's Shed and Loughrea Craft Group to create a new craft exhibition at Loughrea Library. Portumna Day Care Centre Writer's Group with writer Gerry Hanberry.
- Programme a Sing Along Social Project with three older years care settings and day care to engage with older residents and staff to create a fun, musical environments.
- Festivals: We take the lead on directly supporting Galway County based Arts Festivals to programme & commission quality arts experiences to enhance and animate their community and festivals. Includes North-East Galway Fit up Festival and Something in the Water Festival 2024.
- Worked directly with Creative Places Tuam Steering Committee to fund and support community led arts projects in Tuam in 2024. Supported a successful application to Arts Council under the Creative Places Scheme Strand 2 in 2024.
- Art Centre Support: Continue to Support Aras Éanna and its expanded professional programme on Inis Oírr.
- Music Generation: Support Music Generation Galway County to support Music Education Programme in collaboration with GRETB in 2024.
- Culture Night 2024 - On Friday, 20th September, Galway County came alive with creativity and culture, welcoming everyone to experience free and diverse cultural events taking place across the county for Culture Night. Our programme will feature over 40 events, including music, dance, theatre, art, poetry, puppetry, storytelling, film screenings, crafting and more.
- Culture Night Late: As part of this year's Culture Night Late, we presented Lumina, a series of artistic outdoor projections on The Cathedral Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as Tuam Cathedral. Featuring work from artist Jennifer Cunningham, Scott Robinson and ENTER. Black. The work was accompanied by the enchanting voices of Tuam choirs. It was a one-of-a-kind experience that celebrates creativity and innovation in Tuam and Galway County to a large audience.
- 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.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2025:

- CSS Cultural Development (Arts Grants) 2025: Arts Office to administer, adjudicate and support Arts Grants for voluntary groups and organisation to pursue the development of the Arts in the County. Proposed Budget €60,000.
- Artists Support Scheme 2025: By investing in artists, we continue to nurture their creativity and enable them to focus on their work and support their practice. This fund is vital to alleviate financial pressures, allowing artists to focus on their work. It also provides peer and public recognition of their work and opportunities for growth.

- Film Bursary Supports 2025: working with Ardán we will continue to support the Short Doc Bursary and Misleór Documentary. These programmes are unique to Galway and supports a film ecosystem that doesn't necessary fit in any commercial fund.
- Branar Meitheal: Support Branar's formal application and delivery of Creative Production Services for Professional Artists creating work for Children in Galway 2025.
- Dance Artist in Residence: Support 2 successful Galway County Dance Artists in Residence. Linda Schirmer (Clifden Arts Festival, Interface Inagh Valley, Clifden Playschools) and Magdalena Hylak (Galway County and City)
- Support Artists Project Awards: Galway County Artists Joanne Webb (Theatre), Jenni Nikinmaa (Theatre) and Twisted Lane (Spectacle) to deliver on their projects in 2025.
- Artist Residency Schemes 2025: We will support 1 x Galway County Artist to access residencies in the following places: Áras Éanna and Interface Inagh Valley.
- Galway Community Circus in Tuam Programme: Continue supporting the successful move to Tuam, ensuring sustainability and future growth for Circus for Children.
- Create new collaboration opportunities with Galway and national organisations to present work and deliver ambitious youth programmes in the county.
- Artists in Schools Scheme: Building on our success, we will expand the scheme to include more artists and schools (7 schools). This will include special need and DEIS schools. Continue with our collaboration with Ealaíon na Gaeltachta to further develop a dedicated strand for Irish language artists and Gaeltacht schools.
- Ballad of a Bandit Theatre Show: Promote and support a 4-week tour of Galway County Schools in 2025. (Branar & Miquel Barcelo)
- Book It Festival 2025; continue to programme throughout October 2025 bringing writers and reading events to schools and libraries across the county.
- Tiny Mutiny 2025: Building on our evaluation, we'll collaborate with Sparkcatchers for a second open call, enabling young people to create new work. Supported by Creative Producers JoJo Hynes & Midie Corcoran, this initiative provides a platform and performance opportunity for youth-created work.
- Culture Night 2025: Will continue to curate, support and deliver many events for Culture Night 2025 and if the funding opportunity remains in place for 2025 produce a Culture Night Late event in a new town in the County. We will commit to additional financial supports required to deliver on this diverse and extensive countywide event in partnership with our local communities.
- Galway Theatre Festival 2025: Support a Galway County Open Call and performance in the County for a local theatre makers.
- Creative Places Tuam: Our commitment to Strand 2 funding will extend through 2025, reflecting our dedication to fostering sustainable growth in the region. We recognise the importance of continuity and stability, which is why we are not only maintaining our financial support but also actively collaborating with the local steering group in Tuam.
- Supporting Early-Stage Arts Festivals: By supporting these festivals, we aim to deepen our relationships with local communities and ensure that these cultural events continue to

thrive, bringing joy and inspiration to all who participate. E.g. North Galway Theatre Festival, Something in the Water Festival, Headford. This community arts festival highlights the importance of the arts in fostering a sense of place and belonging. It draws on local artists and creative talent, offering workshops and performances that encourage community participation and creativity.

- Support our Artist Care Exchange Artist to develop a project idea working with older people in a care context. Our intention is to deliver consultation and arts projects to older people that remove as many barriers as possible to creativity.
- Arts Centre Support 2025: Continue to Support Aras Éanna and its expanded professional programme on Inis Oírr.
- Artist Studio Support Interface 2025: Direct Support for our only Artist Studio in County Galway that provides professional opportunities for artists from Galway County and attracts national and international artists to county Galway.
- Will continue to curate, support and deliver a large number of events for Culture Night 2025 and if the funding opportunity remains in place for 2025 produce a Culture Night Late event in a new town in the County, We will commit to additional financial supports required to deliver on this diverse and extensive countywide event in partnership with our local communities.
- Work in partnership with Music Generation Galway County to support Music Education Programme in collaboration with GRETB in 2025.
- Council's Creative Ireland Programme 2025: Lead, manage and administer the Creative Ireland Programme 2025, Creative Ireland Bursaries 2025 and directly curated and programmed Cruinniú na nÓg 2025 in Galway County.
- Arts Plan 2025-2030: Will lead out on the development of a new arts plan 2025-2030 that will build on our successes and address future challenges. We will be engaging with our community and stakeholders to ensure this new plan reflects our collective aspirations and continues to foster a vibrant arts landscape where our artists thrive.
- Public Art Programme 2025. Continue to Develop a programme of Public Artwork and commissions in 2025 through the Public Art Management group in response to a substantial pipeline of projects.
- Revise Public Art Policy 2020-2024 in line with new National Public Arts Policy.

LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES 2024:

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 2024, HER Outdoors week, Buggy Buddies, Men and Women on the Move programmes in disadvantaged areas and Sanctuary Paddlers' 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.

- Delivery of a National Play Day Event in Loughrea with over 150 people in attendance. This event was designed to encourage free play with a variety of opportunities for children to be active. Galway Sports Partnership facilitated Play Packs for disadvantaged children through Family Resource Centres with 100 packs distributed across Galway. 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 a variety of programmes for Older Adults such as Activator Walking during Positive Ageing week, Good2Go older adults training, taster events and sessions for Older Adult Groups to showcase activities that they can get involved in and Equestrian programs for individuals with disabilities.
- Galway Sports Partnership received an allocation of €23,276.43 from the Department of Transport to run events as part of Bike Week. Galway Sports Partnership facilitated 28 programmes throughout the week with 3213 people benefitting.
- Galway Sports Partnership ran a Club Development Grant Scheme allocating €30,000 to 28 clubs to help increase new members through training and education supports, inclusive supports and targeted programmes towards target groups.
- European Week of Sport took place between the 23rd to 30th September. Galway Sports Partnership ran several programmes throughout this week culminating in a family friendly Colour Run with 180 people in attendance.
- 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 Safeguarding Courses, First Aid Courses, Disability Awareness Workshops along with a series of Webinars covering volunteer recruitment and retention, managing diversity and social media and Women in Sport topics.
- Arranged and facilitated meetings of GSP Steering group and relevant workgroups throughout 2024.
- Galway Sports Partnership secured €30,000 through the Participation Nation Fund to develop an active youth space in Tuam Palace Grounds.
- Galway Sports Partnership secured €28,000 through Healthy Ireland Swimming Infrastructure scheme for improved access at Loughrea and Portumna Swim area and outdoor sheltered changing areas at Kinvara and Gurteen Bay.
- GSP secured €177,500 in Dormant Accounts funding for 2024/5. Specifically, this funding will support Community Sports Hub Funding – Ballinasloe and Active Islands, HER Moves Project and the Active Cities Project.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Apply for and secure CORE funding from Sport Ireland to fund general operations of Galway Sports Partnership for 2025 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 Course
- Deliver programmes with a variety of populations with low levels of participation or lack of participation opportunities.
- Provide Club Development Grants through Sport Ireland funding.
- Deliver sport and physical activity opportunities during Bike Week.
- Promote coach education courses for all sports especially minority sports on social media
- Deliver National Campaigns such as European Week of Sport and HER Outdoors Week.
- 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.

WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Completed tendering process for construction of Gort Civic Amenity Site Project. Received EPA license (Certificate of Registration) for proposed development.
- Certificate of Registration application was submitted for Tuam Civic Amenity Site.
- Waste Facility Permit was issued for Athchursail recycling facility on Inis Móir.
- Part 8 planning application was submitted for Eco Park Project. A request for further information was issued by Planning. The project received a Sport Capital grant for the cycle pump track feature within the park.
- Brady Shipman Martin (Landscape Architect) completed the Preliminary Design Report in respect to development of an Amenity Park at Pollboy landfill. A presentation of the report was made to the Ballinasloe MD Councillors in October.
- Certification of Authorisation (CoA) applications for five of the six category A sites have been submitted to the EPA. The application for the remaining site of Glenamaddy is being progressed and is expected to be completed by end of year.
- A new 1-year Bottlebank service contract was entered into in March.
- Extension provision within service contract for management of Civic Amenity Sites was invoked.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Progress East Galway Eco Park to construction tender stage post planning approval.
- Procure surveys and Stage (ii) design services for preparation of planning application for Pollboy Amenity Park Development.
- Progress development of Gort Civic Amenity Site in so far as budget permits.
- Undertake the license obligations for historic landfills CoA's as they issue.
- Renew service contracts for bottlebank and Civic Amenity Site Operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT MEASURES

The work programme set out in the Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) Plan 2024 was completed.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Details of enforcement notices and warning letters which were issued and prosecutions which were initiated under environmental legislation in 2024 will be set out in the 2024 RMCEI returns which are due for issue by end of February 2025.
- The 2024 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. All retailers of solid fuels in the county had informal inspections carried out.

- 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 and collections were carried out in Loughrea and Gort.
- The Environment Section arranged anti-dumping/litter radio adverts as part of this year's anti-dumping initiative.
- Monitoring was carried out in relation to drinking water, bathing water, rivers, lakes, discharge licences 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.
- As of November 2024, inspections were carried out in relation to 97 discharge licences (with 37 further to complete), 225 domestic wastewater treatment systems, 39 farms (with 23 further to complete) and 25 relating to water pollution complaints. 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. A register of all retailers of solid fuels in the county was created and each retailer was sent an awareness letter on their obligations. Several fuel samples were analysed for compliance.
- The Environment Section reviewed all significant planning applications for developments other than applications for single houses. As of 05/11/2024, this was 214 applications. 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 2025:

- The Council will set out all planned pro-active inspections of authorised facilities under various environmental legislation in the 2025 RMCEI Plan which is due for issue by 16th February 2025. The scale of enforcement activity in 2025 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 2024:

- 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 2025:

- 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 2024:

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 2024. Two new extensions were completed at Ballyconneely and Kilbannon burial grounds which have created an additional 150 & 40 double plots respectively.
- Part 8 planning applications have been submitted for Leitir Moir and Kilconierion burial ground extensions and design works have taken place for developments in Annaghdown and Rinvile.
- Minor capital works including road upgrades and drainage improvements have taken place in Spideal, Moycullen, Cregg, Renvyle, Kilmacduagh and Killoran 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 147 committees in 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Procure contractors for permitted projects and advance projects at design stage to planning applications.
Issue advertisement campaign to invite Landowners to come forward in areas where burial ground capacity is low.
- 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 2024:

- Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer is involved in promoting environmental awareness through ongoing engagement with the domestic and commercial sectors.
- 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 7 public events and 1 group meetings, with 1 planned for November 2024.
- Supported WEEE Ireland to deliver 20 Waste Electrical Goods Collections at local community level.
- Ongoing involvement in the Green Schools programme, 37 schools renewed their flag in 2024.
- Anti-Litter poster competition was roll out to schools. Presentation to the winners in Áras an Chontae. 968 entries.
- Picker Pals Programme continues to be supported in National Schools.
- Support of National Spring Clean with over 200 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-Litter Advertisement was run in cinemas over the summer period.
- Continue to liaise with and support the Regional Waste Management Office.

- Promotion of environmental awareness with Waste Enforcement, Community and Enterprise Unit, Housing, Facilities, and PPN Co-Ordinator.
- Supported Climate Action Plan rollout.
- Supported An Taisce Blue Flag, Green Coast, and Clean Coast programme.
- 2 Beach Awareness Days held in 2024.
- Supported national social media campaigns from WEEE Ireland, Leave No Trace and Regional Waste Management Planning Offices.
- Launch of Anti-Litter Ambassador Programme.
- Roadside Litter signage and radio campaign delivered.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2025.
- Continue to support rollout of Climate Action Plan.
- Continue to liaise and support with Regional Waste Planning Office.
- Continue to encourage and enlist support for the Litter Ambassador Programme
- 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, Roadside Litter Awareness programme and Cigarette Butt campaign.

ANIMAL CONTROL AND WELFARE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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.
- Significant upgrade works carried out to The Council's dog shelter facility with departmental funding received as part of the Dog Control Initiative 2023. Additional equipment for the dog warden service was also purchased with the funding allocated. Similar funding has been made available from the DRCD in October 2024.
- 58 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 50 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'.
- From October 1st, 2024, new regulations came into law, prohibiting the importing, breeding, selling and re-homing of XL Bully type dogs. From February 1st, 2025, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully type dog without a 'Certificate of Exemption' issued by the local authority in which the dog resides. XL Bully owners have between October 1st, 2024, and (before) February 1st, 2025, to apply for a Certificate of Exemption from Galway County Council.
- Galway County Council dog warden and veterinary personnel attended 3 training days in Dublin around type identification of XL Bully Type Dogs in September and October this year. Dog Warden, Veterinary and Administrative staff completed 3 modules from a nationally developed Dog Warden Training Programme at Roscrea RTC during 2024.
- The Council continued to be active in providing shelter facilities for impounding of horses, sheep, cattle, and goats.
- Galway County Council continue to work 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. 209 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.
- Galway County Council partnered with the MADRA on the roll out of their pilot 'Talking Dog' Primary School Workshops aimed at providing a series of educational dog focused workshops to 3rd and 4th class students.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Ongoing improvements to the efficiency of the Dog Control service regarding the effective resourcing of the service including staffing and facilities available.
- Continue upgrade works to our dog shelter facility to help futureproof the service in respect of the health and wellbeing of the dogs in our care as well as assisting in improving health and safety for the dog wardens, shelter keeper and veterinary personnel on site.

- Dog warden service will continue to implement the new XL Bully Regulations to ensure compliance with same.
- 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 roll out MADRA workshop activities to schools across the county.
- 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 2024:

- 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.

- In May 2024, a second veterinary inspector for the County was appointed, the position having been vacant since the retirement of the Chief Veterinary Inspector in September 2022.
- Following the retirement of the veterinary inspector for Mayo, Galway County Council entered into a Section 86 agreement with Mayo County Council in September 2024 to conduct antemortem and postmortem inspections in 5 premises located in Co. Mayo during September and October. The agreement ensured the continued viability of these food businesses during this period.
- Continued involvement and liaising with the Steering Committee and Statutory Agencies DAFM, Teagasc, SFPA and HSE in the progression of the multicentre Teagasc / GCC Food Innovation and Incubation centre proposed for Athenry. This included attending open days at the centre and facilitating Question and Answer sessions to Food Business Operators.
- 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 2025:

- The work contained in the FSAI service contract is due to move to DAFM in January 2025, as are the veterinary inspectors themselves nationwide. There is also a proposal that Dog Breeding inspection will also move to DAFM.

CORPORATE SERVICES

WATER SAFETY PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- The Water Safety Programme 2024 involved the recruitment of a panel of 55 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 in June (2 weekends) and continued until September 2024. Peak season of July and August saw the open designated bathing areas lifeguarded 11am – 7pm daily.
- Installation of a number of new huts with better infrastructure around huts including railings and access to beach wheelchairs in appropriate designated bathing areas.
- Further upgrading of equipment was undertaken as well as annual hut preparation and repairs - maintenance schedule agreed and delivered.
- Following approval by Council, funding of €6,150 was advanced to the Irish Water Safety Council.
- Higher quality uniforms provided for all beach lifeguards to ensure longer term use

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Continue to implement high calibre Water Safety Programme, subject to funding being available, on a seasonal basis including induction training for all beach lifeguards.
- Promotion of the beach lifeguard 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 in line with prior years
- Continue to Implement and manage Water Safety Ireland Guidance Notes.
- Ongoing implementation of recommendations from Risk Assessments.
- Funding to continue the accommodation of lifeguards on the Islands during the bathing season.
- Continue development of the Water Safety Officer (Courses).
- Replacements of ring buoys as part of the risk assessment findings.
- Develop a register of ring buoys located throughout the county to support public safety
- Review and update the Beach Bye Laws.
- Review potential to better utilise technology to streamline administration functions

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

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Continued to implement program of works required for the ongoing opening and maintenance of the following parks and amenities for safe enjoyment by the public.

Facility	Number	Description
Parks	2	- Rinville Park, Oranmore (managed by Galway County Council (Owned jointly with Galway City Council) - Palace Fields, Tuam
Open Spaces	6	- Dunlo Recreational Park & Running Track, Ballinasloe - Loughrea Lakeside - Loughrea Fairgreen - Clarinbridge Cow Park - Fair Green Ballinasloe - Portumna Open Spaces
Playgrounds	79	15 Directly Owned/Maintained by Galway County Council 64 Community run with insurance provided by Galway County Council
Pitches	1	All Weather Pitch, Tuam
Outdoor Gyms	5	- Rinville Park, Oranmore - Loughrea Lakeside - Dunlo Recreational Park Ballinasloe - Portumna - Community run - Outdoor Gym – Kilannin
Visitor / Heritage Centres	1	Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre

- Rinville Park, Maree, Oranmore continues as 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 is delivered in partnership with local groups and is co-funded with Galway City Council. A concession for the provision of refreshments at

Rinville Park from March to October was continued.

- The 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 2024. The sensory garden works have commenced, and the dog park has recently commenced with fencing and paths completed. Spring bulbs have been sown in recent weeks to be ready for pollination next spring 2025 around the park.
- The ongoing maintenance programme was continued in Ballinasloe town for parks and open spaces in 2024.
- Installation of a new multi play unit and slide together with the installation of sensory play panels and repairs to existing playground equipment was carried out on the local authority owned playground at Parkmore Playground, Tuam. This followed the success of our application where funding was granted from the Department of Children, Equality Disability, Integration & Youth (DCEDIY).
- As part of the Council's ongoing 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.
- A Licence Agreement remained 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 operational through the year with some new camps for children taking place during October mid-term.
- Insurance was provided to 64 Community run playgrounds and 1 community run outdoor gym. Galway County Council continue to provide independent routine inspection training for committee members involved with the Community playgrounds.
- 2024 saw the return of the summer lecture series in Aughrim with further support provided for the Annual Walk and Talk About event during Heritage Week in August.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- To continue the maintenance and upgrade of Council owned and operated playgrounds subject to funding being available and to apply for further available funding under the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).
- Provide additional playground Inspection Training to committee members for our 64 community run playgrounds as deemed necessary and provide Independent Annual Inspections for all 64 community run playgrounds.
- Support improved Access for Persons with a Disability to Recreation and Amenity Facilities, subject to finance being available.
- Implement the Parks maintenance programmes, including grass cutting, 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 a new online booking and keypad system for Dunlo Park to extend opening and closing times and therefore yield better public access and security.
- Continue maintenance required in Rinvile Park under the Woodlands Plan.
- Support Tourism Officer on strategic plan to develop Aughrim Centre as a major tourist destination.
- Continue to provide administrative/advisory support to community groups wishing to advance proposals for recreation and access available funding (as staff resources allow).

LEISURE CENTRES – TUAM AND BALLINASLOE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 2024. Procurement to appoint a management company is underway and will be completed by Q4-2024. 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 wages and energy costs. The liaison committee play 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 2025:

- The management of the leisure centres and associated costs will continue to be kept under close and ongoing review during 2025 and the liaison committee will continue to play a key role in monitoring and oversight.
- Works on the Sports Capital Grant approved in 2020 for both the Tuam and Ballinasloe Leisure Centre for upgrade of dressing room facilities are progressing. A Contractor has been appointed to the project. The works are intending to commence in Q1 – 2025.
- 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 to decarbonise each leisure facility by more than 200 tonnes of carbon p.a.
- The facilities team are working in collaboration with the leisure centre management company to install a PV array in the Ballinasloe and Tuam Leisure Centres that will have a capacity to provide 100KwA.

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

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 2024, it opened from May until 1st September 2024. During the season, the centre supported the Annual Walk About and Talk About of the Battle of Aughrim during Heritage Week and recommenced the Summer lecture series in July & August.
- Access improvement works to the Oranmore Library building are intended to progress to Contract Document stage and the Tender Process to commence in 2025.
- Continued efforts ongoing to maintain and improve the wonderful amenity at Rinvile Park in collaboration with the local Community Employment scheme.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Subject to funding, financial support will continue to be provided to support the day-to-day operation of the Athenry Heritage Centre and Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre to promote these centres.
- 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 Rinvile Park including an update to the Forest Management Plan.
- Subject to funding, measures will be taken to remove trees that have been affected by the Ash Die-Back disease.

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

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Casual Trading Licenses were issued for trading in a number of towns and villages throughout the County including: Athenry (5), Ballinasloe (10), Clifden (6), Gort (5), Loughrea (3),

Mountbellew (4), Headford (1), Portumna (6), Tuam (8), Glenamaddy (1); in line with Casual Trading Byelaws.

- Other Casual Trading Licences issued were for Ballygar Festival, (24), Dunmore (27), Clifden Show (11), Clifden Arts Festival (1), Maam Fair (9)
- 7 Requests from film makers etc. to use public property for filming were also processed.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Continue to issue Casual Trading Licenses.
- Continue to promote trading where bays are vacant by contacting those on the waiting lists and continue to monitor data on Casual Trading through Community Wardens Work Plan returns.
- Continue to facilitate queries and issue permissions as required to Media and Production Companies wishing to film in the County.
- Review of Casual trading Bye-Laws with a view to modernising same.

PROMOTION OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Irish language classes (beginner and intermediate levels) continued to be made available for staff of the local authority and classes were also available for 2024-2029 Elected Councillors who expressed an interest to commence same in January 2025. Classes to date were conducted online to facilitate access. For future classes Nov 2024 onwards, recording of same will take place to maximise learning opportunity presented.
- Awarding of Scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta Phádraig Mhic Phiarais / Pádraig Pearse Scholarships in partnership with Irish Colleges in the County - 14 scholarships awarded in 2024.
- Scoil an Phiarsaigh took place in September with a focus this year on the theme of enterprise in the Gaeltacht regions and through the medium of Irish.
- Information and consultation continues 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.
- New Documentation rolled out to staff under the heading of Language Scheme and Official Languages Act(s) Employee Guidance Notes to create better awareness of requirements amongst staff.
- 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.
- On 8th March 2024 the joint Oireachtas committee on the Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Irish-Speaking Community held a meeting in the Chamber of County Buildings during Seachtain na Gaeilge where various Irish stakeholders participated. Paidí Ó Lionaird from Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga and Gormfhlaith Ní Thuairisg from Radio na Gaeltachta facilitated the event. The proceedings were live streamed on Oireachtas TV and were also available online.

- On the same date young musicians from Comhaltas Cheoltóirí Charna played traditional music and dance in the County Hall Atrium during lunch time.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 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 2025.
- Continue to liaise with community groups for the promotion of the Irish language

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT – COUNCIL PROPERTIES / HEALTH & SAFETY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 2025:

- Corporate Services are currently progressing the Office Accommodation Appraisal report which should be finalised by Q2-2025.
- 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.
- The Unit will aim to further reduce energy consumption across its offices and libraries working in conjunction with the appointed Energy Bureau Officer.
- Subject to funding develop a hot food service in the canteen and to improve the offering in Centrepont too.

MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES AND RECORDS

The Archives Section works to ensure the care, preservation, management of and access to the Council's archives. Local Authorities across Ireland have statutory obligations to record their decisions, and to manage and make available those records to anyone who wishes to consult them, for any purpose. Therefore, Galway County Council's archives are an important asset, required to ensure it can meet its legal obligations and its objective to be transparent and accountable. The Archives 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 2024:

- 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 monitoring the environmental conditions of the archives and endeavoured to ensure their continued protection, preservation and management.
- Completed, with the assist of colleagues in IT, the transition to Axiell Collections, a web-based archives collections management system.

- Continued the programme of providing security backup and reference surrogates to collections¹, and hosted a Heritage Week event to highlight the project, which received grant aid from the Heritage Council. The availability of a significant quantity and variety of archive collections on the [Digital Archive](#) is an invaluable asset and benefit to the researching public enabling 24/7 access to global audience to many of our collections.
- Worked extensively on various projects to mark the centenary of Galway Public Libraries, including researched, curated and produced, along with library colleagues, an exhibition to mark the 100th anniversary, launched in Ballinasloe Library in July, and compiled and co-edited, *'A nuisance or a luxury'... Historical and Nostalgic Reflections 100 Years of Galway Public Libraries* (forthcoming publication), and researched and contributed an essay for the book.
- Continued the map survey project to review for retention or disposal, arrangement and listing of a large collection of maps and drawings held off-site (ongoing).
- Hosted, managed and supervised the work schedule of a University of Galway undergraduate intern (History), working primarily on sorting and box listing a large private photographic collection.²
- Commissioned the conservation of several Galway Poor Law Union minutes books³.
- Provided reader services, such as answering research queries and providing advice and guidance to researchers.
- Continued the programme of processing archive material and collections.⁴ 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 does our website, together with entries on various archive portals.
- Worked with Local Government Archivists and Records Managers in association with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to produce the publication, *125 Years of Local Government*.
- 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 Arclink records management database will continue to be used to assist with the management of records within the organisation sent to off-site storage.

¹ GPL4/12-96,

• ² Accession 2024/01, Walshe, Jimmy, photographic collection (negatives)

• ³ GPL6/36-37, /39-41 &/150

⁴ Collections / items processed and added to the online catalogue include additional Registers of Electors (2024/06), burial ground registers, and Corporate Services files.

- Continued the management of non-current (hardcopy) record transfers to storage and record retrievals and returns: 938 requests were processed from January to November. There are more than 143,530 entries on the ArcLink database.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- The Archives will continue to 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.
- Continue the map survey project, 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.
- The Unit will continue to liaise with and support the various Sections 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 is encouraged to review and update their schedules on a regular basis and to list and appropriately manage their non-current record holdings held off-site.
- Continue to liaise with Corporate Services and the Library service in the ongoing quest for alternative and improved accommodation for an appropriate 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 2024:

The Council organised and held the Local Elections in June 2024.

- Preparation for Referendum(s) held in March 2024.
- The Rolling Register of Electors and systems updates ongoing throughout the year.
- Work continued on the 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. We continued to work on improving our data quality:
- Accuracy - Additional data is now required from all electors including PPS Numbers, Dates of Birth and Eircode's, 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 2024 working in tandem with the Department and a national campaign.
- Preparation for General Election in Q4 2024.
- Implementation of Electoral Boundary revision changes following the recommendations of An Coimisiún Toghcháin, Constituency Review Report 2023 Dáil and European Parliament Constituencies, are prepared and ready to be commenced once the General Election 2024 is announced formally.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Rolling Register and systems updates ongoing.
- Work will continue on the Local Government Elector Registration System (LGERS) Modernisation Project - (National Electoral Registration Database) with continuing to improve our data accuracy with a data cleanse. Local campaigns will also continue for people in Galway to update their details on the Electoral Register through www.checktheregister.ie
- Preparation for potential Referendum(s) in 2025.
- Preparation for Presidential Election in Q4 2025.

CORPORATE PLANNING & SUPPORT / LOCAL REPRESENTATION / CIVIC LEADERSHIP

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 and Local Representation Allowance.

- 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, 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.
- Facilitation of meetings between visiting Ambassadors with the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive.
- 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.
- Prepared a new SPC Scheme 2024-2029, following the Local Elections which were 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. The SPC Scheme was adopted by the Members at the September 2024 Plenary meeting.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY CORPORATE SERVICES FOR THE ORGANISATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 2025:

- 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 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.

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 2024:

- Implementation of the Data Protection Compliance Plan continued to be prioritised during 2024. 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 2024.
- 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 2024 with new functionality added. 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 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 2024 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.
- In-person Data Protection/GDPR Training Workshops provided by the DPO for the Beach Lifeguards, in advance of the summer season.
- The DPO provided an in-person Data Protection/GDPR Training Workshop for the newly appointed Community Wardens
- On-line Training Workshops were provided by the DPO for newly appointed Unit Data Champions
- 15 no. Data Subject Rights requests were received up to the end of October 2024; 8 were granted, 4 were refused as the personal data requested did not exist, 1 was refused as the information was not the personal information of the requester and 2 are pending.
- 6 no. Requests were received from An Garda Síochána, in accordance with Section 41. (b) of the Data Protection Act 2018. 4 were granted and 2 were 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 2024, 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.
- The DPC, in February 2024, concluded its Inquiry into the use by Galway County Council of CCTV and other surveillance technologies. The DPC issued its Conclusion Letter to the DPO on 4th March 2024, indicating that it was satisfied that Galway County Council, as Data Controller, had complied with the corrective measures set out in the DPC Decision dated 22nd August 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- The Compliance Project Plan will continue to be a priority for 2025, 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 via a tracker system and a Disclosure Log of FOI requests maintained.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

122 requests were received up to the end of October 2024. Decisions were issued as follows:

- 25 granted, 47 part-granted, 17 refused, 15 withdrawn, 14 withdrawn and dealt with outside of FOI, 4 pending decision.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

27 requests were received to end October, 2024. Decisions were issued as follows:

- 12 granted, 6 part-granted, 6 refused, 1 withdrawn, 2 pending decisions.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE INCLUDING 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.”

An Implementation Plan in relation to Public Sector Duty was adopted by Galway County Council and this is being utilised on a continuous basis in relation to any new Plans, Policies or Actions.

Corporate Governance aspects in general include Business Continuity, Risk Management, Child Protection & Welfare, Corporate Plan as well as Public Sector Duty. There is a Working Group in place to deal with all aspects of Corporate Governance across the organisation.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Business Continuity – The Business Continuity Management System was adopted by the MTM in January 2024 and is due to be reviewed again in January 2025.
- Corporate Plan Review – the Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 was reviewed this year and a new Corporate Plan for 2025 – 2029 is being prepared. The Public Consultation Period has now finished, and the final draft will be brought to the November Plenary Meeting for consideration and adoption by members.
- Public Sector Duty – Our main Implementation Plan, along with the Evidence Book is published on our website and these documents are utilised by us in relation to any new plans, policies or actions. The Working Group last met in August, to undertake that Public Sector Duty Assessment for the new Corporate Plan.
- Risk Management – a new Risk Management System, ViClarity, has been operational since August 2024. Individual Unit Risk Registers are now being assessed and reviewed by relevant Risk Champions on a quarterly basis, to be followed by final review by Directors of Services.
- Child Protection and Welfare – policy and procedures for same are published on our website and reviewed all a regular basis.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2025:

- 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 continue to be progressed in 2025.
- 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.
- Business Continuity Management System to be reviewed in Q1 2025.
- Risk Management will continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis throughout 2025 via the ViClarity Risk Management Compliance System.
- Child Protection & Welfare Policy and Procedures to be reviewed by Q3 2025.
- Progress reports on new Corporate Plan Goals and Actions to be undertaken on a quarterly basis during 2025.

CUSTOMER SERVICE, COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Corporate Services continued to coordinate customer services activities in the Council, with the Customer Services Team the first point of contact for the public after they have gone through the switch. The ground floor Customer Services Reception 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 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 with team training taking place again on Social Media in November.
- Social Media has been integrated with Advertising and other Promotional Campaigns of the Council. 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.
- Our Communications team developed the programme for 'Your Council Day 2024'.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- The email addresses, customerservices@galwaycoco.ie 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 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.
- Ongoing monitoring of telephone system Luware Nimbus to review ongoing improvements to be made.
- Review and updating of our Customer Services Action Plan and ancillary documentation to ensure they are aligned with our Corporate Plan for 2024-2029.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Continue to co-ordinate implementation of the Customer Service Action Plan in line with agreed targets and goals in the Quality Customer Services Strategy.
- Development of a Communications Framework/Strategy which will address the need for improved information management within the Council and externally with the Council's stakeholders and the public, taking account of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and aligned with the strategic goals as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 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.
- Support implementation of the Customer Service Action Plan to continually improve access to services for persons with a disability and towards upholding our Public Sector Duty ambitions.
- 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.
- Review Customer Services Strategy.
- Develop plan for more impactful 'Your Council Day 2025'.

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 2024:

- Completion of four Audit reports in line with the Internal Audit Plan 2024, with two IA reviews still underway at year end.
- Annual review of Prompt Payment Interest penalties.
- Compliance review of Freedom of Information Code of Practice.
- 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.
- Active participation in the Local Government Internal Auditor's Network (LGIAN) and Northwest Region Internal Auditor's Network (NWIAN).
- Secretarial Duties to the Audit Committee, 4 meetings held during the year along with completion of statutory reports on AFS2023 and annual Audit Committee Activities.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Drafting of the 2025 Internal Audit plan for approval by the Audit Committee & Chief Executive
- Reviews of recommendations made on the 2024 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 2025 Audit Plan.
- Compliance with the Quality Assurance requirements of the Public Spending Code.
- Continued work on policy compliance and value for money testing.
- Periodic 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.

LIBRARY SERVICES

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Galway Public Libraries provide an extensive array of services to the community and fulfil the key actions set out in national policy on the provision of an inclusive library service.

Key elements include extensive lending services to adults and children, pc access, printing, scanning, national book request service, study spaces, newspapers and magazines. It provides activity and event spaces for community groups, schools, local NGO's, arts and creative groups and Galway County Council departments. It works in collaboration with various organisations to deliver workshops and programmes to upskill and better inform communities about issues that are relevant to them.

- It also provides a selection of online resources that are available free to registered library members. These online resources allow 24/7 access to a virtual library along with software and educational supports for those with additional needs. These include:
 - Borrowbox- this platform offers access to eBooks & eAudio books, magazines as well as daily newspapers from more than 120 countries. Current affairs and international news coverage can also be accessed in 18 different languages.
 - Comics plus which offers unlimited, simultaneous access to thousands of digital comics, graphic novels and manga from over 100+ publishers. This platform is suitable for both children, young adults and adult readers.
 - Universal Class-This resource provides a wide range of over 500 courses, including Yoga, Digital Photography, Computer Basics, Excel, and much more.
 - Transparent Language Online provides guided courses in over 100 languages as well as beginner English courses in 25 different languages, suitable for those whose first language isn't English.
 - LOTE for kids provides access to thousands of books online and through the app in over 30 languages including Ukrainian.
 - 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.
 - TTRS – an online platform that is highly accessible and incorporates a multi-sensory element into the teaching and learning of reading and spelling.
 - Nessy – An online learning support platform for children who learn differently and has tailored programmes for those who are neurodiverse.
- Regular events during the year include- Book clubs, Craft groups, Poetry groups, Women's groups, Active Retired groups, parent and toddler groups and Irish Language Conversation Circles /Ciorcal Comhrá these help build a sense of community and aim to address social isolation, encourage skills sharing and experiences.
- Seachtain na Gaeilge, Heritage week, Positive Ageing week, Irish Astronomy week, Bealtaine Festival, Ireland Reads Day, Cruinniú na nÓg, Engineers week, World Refugee week, Biodiversity week, Decade of Centenaries 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. These events promote reading and literacy development in a fun and inclusive manner.

- School visits
- Childcare group visits
- Spring Into Storytime
- Summer Reading Challenge
- Children's Book Festival
- Family Time at your Library
- Baby Rhyme time
- Cruinniú na nÓg

'Right to Read' Programme

'Right to Read' is a national programme to promote literacy and reading development for people of all ages and backgrounds. It currently includes four national programmes that are designed to promote children's reading and literacy:

- **Spring into Storytime**

This programme is delivered online and in all libraries across the county during the month of April. It incorporates extensive programming of events and activities for preschool children and primary school aged children.

Some of the events this year introduced sensory experiences, music workshops and storytelling sessions utilizing STEM materials such as Ozobots and easily programmed robots. These interactive sessions allowed for story creation and taught basic coding techniques to children. Children's authors such as Meabh McDonnell visited libraries sharing insights into writing stories and finding inspiration for the next adventure.



- **Summer Reading Challenge "Summer Stars"**

Summer Stars is the public library national summer reading programme for children that runs from 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. The Summer Reading Challenge is an opportunity for children to continue their reading experience throughout the school holidays with an aim to increase reader confidence, showcase additional reading resources and learn new skills through workshops and events. Summer Stars is non-competitive with a focus on inclusion and reader development.

In addition to this remit our libraries offer extensive opportunities for creative play, arts, performance, drama and storytelling sessions. Events ranged from paper quilling workshops to a visit by a barn owl and the discussions around nature and our impact on the ever-changing

environment. Other activities included Irish language crafts and a fashion upcycling workshop encouraging the reuse of materials and stop clothes going to landfill.

With over 3,500 children registering across the county the interest and involvement in the Summer Stars is a welcome addition to summer activities for families. The celebrations at the conclusion of the challenge were attended by the Cathaoirleach or deputy along with the Mayor of the city who supports the city libraries.

- **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 over-riding aim of this festival is to foster a love for reading and learning while strengthening community bonds.

Author talks and the creative writing:

Children in Dunmore Library enjoyed creative writing sessions along with author insight from Serena Molloy into the writing process. This was the inaugural launch of the festival.

Opportunities for book creation were well received in both Tuam and Ballinasloe libraries. These events were facilitated by Kids Own Publishing.



The Learning Garden explored the idea of creating a superhero while other activities introduced the art of calligraphy, crest and motto designing and a few Harry Potter wands to add to the magic.

With an emphasis on story and story development Niall De Burca, who is a storyteller with an international profile encouraged children in Tuam Library to incorporate theatrics and improvisation into the oral story telling process.

- **Family Time At Your Library:**

Family events and activities are programmed in libraries during the month of December to support the involvement of the whole family in children's reading. Many of these events are hosted on Saturdays and during our late evening hours. This programme utilizes a family focus approach with shared reading experiences/ bedtime story time sessions and opportunities for family members to participate in arts and crafts activities.

- **Little Library Bags**

As part of the Right to Read First 5 programme, Galway libraries distributed the Little Library programme. This programme provided all children who started school in September with a book bag, two books, information about joining the library and a wallet to hold their new library card. Parents/guardians are encouraged to enrol their children in the library and the aim of the initiative is to foster a lifelong love of reading and creates links with the nearest library in your community. In 2024 the library distributed 1,000 book bags throughout the community.



- **Literacy Skills Development**

Adult Literacy for Life (A.L.L) strategy is a 10 year, whole of Government and society strategy dedicated to addressing the unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs for people across Ireland. Galway Public Libraries in association with GRETB are at the forefront of delivering the ALL strategy by providing access to drop-in digital skills sessions for those who may need them. Four libraries are facilitating a tutor for morning sessions helping people address their digital literacy needs. The four Libraries involved are Oranmore, Tuam, Athenry and Loughrea.

Galway City Library ran workshops with older participants learning from volunteers about using computers, the apps on their phones and tablets. The one-to-one sessions offered older people the opportunity to get to grips with technology that they use daily.

Westside Library with their Digital Skills Ambassador hosted drop-in sessions for older people to learn how to access the libraries vast online library resources.

- **Age Friendly Libraries**

The Age Friendly Library Recognition Programme supports libraries to examine their facilities and services and to listen to older customers. Libraries are a core service within our neighbourhoods, providing access to information, cultural services, digital opportunities, and social support to all age groups. They are particularly invaluable to older people as a source of information, community hubs, learning centres, and cultural facilities.

For libraries, this means looking at their lending collections, library programmes and events, staff training and the physical environment – to understand comprehensively what an older person's experience of the library environment is and how it can be improved.

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. 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. Social events continue throughout our libraries including the introduction of Scrabble for Seniors in the City Library, Jigsaw workshops in Portumna, Oranmore, Ballinasloe and Tuam Libraries. Ballybane Library also developed and coordinated an information morning for those recently retired and showcased all the available activities and community groups that work in the area.

Bealtaine Festival celebrates creativity and arts as people age with opportunities across our library network of events. Niall De Búrca facilitated and led inter-generational storytelling sessions in Ballinasloe, Tuam, Loughrea and Portumna Libraries.



- **Postal Service**

Galway Libraries are one of the few public libraries offering a postal delivery service in conjunction with An Post for those who are visually impaired. This allows people to access the audio book collection and have items delivered to their homes free of charge.

- **Healthy Ireland at your Library**

Healthy Ireland, a government-led initiative, is the national strategy to improve health and wellbeing, place a focus on prevention, individual awareness and keeping people healthy for longer. Public libraries are currently delivering the nationwide Healthy Ireland At Your Library programme and this is a valuable resource within the community for health information. The resource includes a comprehensive collection of books on health and wellbeing, extensive online resources incorporating eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines. In addition to this remit there was an extensive calendar of events, workshops and talks with a focus on physical health, mental health and health literacy.

- Community outreach in Moylough Library with the Croí team on stroke and cardiac events. Prevention, managing life after a stroke and living with cardiac disease.
- Leabharlann Na Ceathrún Rua hosted Pilates classes for fall prevention strategies.
- Tuam and Gort Library hosted events on bone and pelvic health for both men and women.
- Podiatrist visits to libraries showcasing the importance of foot health.
- Ballinasloe Library hosted talks from Galway Autism Partnership on Autism and a parents guide to supporting children with Autism.
- Oranmore Library hosted a talk on supporting students at exam times.

Healthy Ireland At Your Library also partnered with the 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.

Mobile Library Outreach with Healthy Ireland At Your Library

The Mobile Library along with the school's library service and the branch support vehicle visited Conamara as part of an outreach community event. The roadshow also included support from the Alzheimer's Association of Ireland with their mobile unit, Mental Health Ireland as well as information from the Irish Cancer Society. The event was supported by Galway Rural Development and storyteller Julie Ann De Brún entertained the children with puppetry and stories as gaeilge. The event also launched the distribution of the 'Message in a Bottle' Initiative which the mobile library will promote across the rural network of library stops throughout the county.



Community Connects

This initiative brings diverse members of the community together for friendly discussions and guest speakers. It has become an important social event in Tuam Library for members and is well supported and attended. From flower arranging classes to history talks there is something for everyone. The group is run with support from the Social Prescriber with Galway Rural Development and its aim is to give people a chance to meet new people, reconnect with others and explore what is happening in the community in a safe and welcoming space.

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 installation of two new sensory hubs into Ballinasloe and Tuam Libraries extends the sensory remit in the county locations. The planned roll out of sensory toys and the additional training of staff completed the suite of services available through our libraries.

○ **Community Outreach and Engagement**

Galway Public Libraries extended their remit this year in outreach and community engagement activities with staff attending community open days, information sessions, meetings with community groups such as Women's sheds, Direct Provision Centres, Active Retirement groups, Men's sheds, Climate Action groups and more. Staff also attended the Monivea Agricultural Show and the Glenamaddy Show to highlight the services of the libraries plus the remit of the Europe Direct Centre which is based in Ballinasloe Library.

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.

Cultural Activities

Galway Public Libraries celebrated 100 years as per the inaugural meeting of the Irish Advisory Committee of the Carnegie Trust held on 2nd August 1924. Events included Poetry workshops in Oranmore, Portumna and Gort Libraries with Emily Cullen and Noelle Lynskey. Artist Maeve Clancy capturing illustrations.

- At War with Mercy performance in Ballinasloe Library which was a collaborative work between the late Canadian songwriter and poet Leonard Cohen and the writers John MacKenna and Angela Keogh.
- Tús: Beginnings exhibition which invited previous artists who had displayed their work in Galway Libraries to re-exhibit works as part of the centenary celebrations.



Opportunities to capture retired staff insight and experiences as well as the development of an exhibition showcasing the service and the various branch libraries all added to the acknowledgement of the impact libraries have in communities.

- **Decade of Centenaries**

Galway Public Libraries hosted a wonderful afternoon of music and film in Leabharlann an Spidéil on the 15th of March. The event started with a live performance of a piece of music commissioned by Galway Public Libraries last year, as part of the Decade of Centenaries project Respond, Rejoice, Reflect: 1923 Through the Lens of our Literary and Artistic Creatives. The piece “I gCuimhne Liam Uí Fhlaithearta” was composed by Risteárd Ó hAodha and combines piano, fiddle and spoken word. This was followed by a screening of the documentary “Westward Ho!.....Wandering West with Words”, from our Galway’s Great Read project.



- **Galway’s Great Read 2024:**

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.

- **Westside Arts Festival**

This was the 20th year of the Westside Arts Festival, and this year’s festival was titled ‘Exploring New Horizons’. This is a community festival that brings people together in a fun, positive and community -orientated way through the provision of the Arts. The festival is now considered to be of strategic importance in the delivery of the City Arts Strategy and the festival was founded by the library service in conjunction with community partners and supporting organisations. Over 20 events were hosted and the festival brought a footfall of over 4,000 people to the Westside Library.



- **Culture night**

Culture Night/Oiche Chultúir, 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 and drama workshops.

Strategic Partnerships

Galway Public Libraries are delighted to be part of a Creative Communities on a Shared Island project which runs until 2025. This cross-border initiative titled 'Birds of a Feather' brings together women from Belfast, County Clare and County Galway. Catholic, Protestant, Nationalist, Loyalist and Ethnic Minorities make up the programme participants. This programme which is funded through Clare Creative Ireland allows for artists to unite in a shared learning experience through Arts and Crafts, history workshops and cultural awareness campaigns.

Another important partnership and a pilot EU project which was funded and coordinated by Cúram, the SFI Research Center for medical Devices under the auspices of the University of Galway was the 'Intertwined Mosaic' created by Transition Year students from Galway Community College. The project collaborated with 12 EU partners and was part of the HORIZON funded remit showcasing STEAM learning ecologies. The aim was to foster policy change in science education and explore the Science field with students in an applied and focused manner.

Galway Libraries mobile service

On April 1st, 1960, Galway Public Libraries launched its first mobile library service. The service is busier than ever with 55 stops in towns and villages including visiting playschools and nursing homes. With the announcement of capital funding for the provision of new vehicles, extensive community engagement and community mapping is underway to ensure that when the new vehicles come into service the communities that need the access will be assured of it.

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.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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.
- Where funding is available, continue with the refurbishment and upgrade of our libraries in line with national guidelines, energy consumption and environmental impact.
- 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 2025.

- To continue to maintain the library vehicle fleet, explore upgrade options for the schools vehicle and plan for the introduction of the new mobile library vehicles
- 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, 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 increase our outreach and community engagement work by creating awareness of the services libraries have to offer.
- To ensure where possible that all branch libraries organise/host a range of activities 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.
- 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 for their community.
- The Europe Direct Centre at Ballinasloe Library will continue to provide information on the EU and access to publications and brochures from EU institutions.

LEGAL ADVISORY SERVICES

The Law Agent Department of Galway County Council is responsible for the provision of legal transactional and legal advisory services in Property-Based Services, Housing, Code Enforcement, Judicial Review and Litigation, Debt Recovery and overall General Legal Advisory Services for all Directorates within the council.

Over the years, the functions of the Law Agent Department have expanded significantly in keeping with the reform of In-House Legal Departments and an ever-increasing enlargement in the scope of the services provided by the council as a whole.

As such, the Law Agent Department now plays a crucial role in additional areas of practice, policy and procedure such as Ethics, Freedom of Information, AIE Requests, Data Protection and Subject Access Requests, Complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman, Corporate Governance and Public Procurement.

Recent years have shown an increasing complexity in EU legislation which has a direct impact on and represents further challenges to the organisation in terms of Housing, Planning and Environmental Law. With the advent of 'Protective Costs Orders' under EU Directives, there has been an ever-increasing number of legal and Judicial Review challenges in the Superior Courts to the exercise of day-to-day Executive and Reserved functions of the council.

The government's response to the current and ongoing housing crisis is reflected in various new housing schemes such as Tenant Purchase, Vacant Property Refurbishment Grants and the Repair & Lease Scheme, all of which represent additional areas of practice and an increased workload for the Law Agent Department.

Indicative Activities in 2024:

- The Law Agent Department has been involved in the provision of various legal and advisory services in the following areas:
- Corporate Services – Libraries, Leisure Centres & Swimming Pools, Property Management, Beaches & Water Safety, the Ethics Registrar, Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Public Procurement
- Environment – Code Enforcement in Waste & Litter Management, Control of Horses, Water & Air Pollution, Control of Dogs, Derelict Sites, Burial Grounds
- Roads & Infrastructure – Inter-urban, Road Widening Schemes, Greenways, CPO Schemes & Arbitrations, Taking in Charge of Estates, Enforcement of Planning Bonds, Marine & Piers and the Islands, Litigation
- Planning – Code Control to include Planning Enforcement (s154), Planning Injunctions (s160), Part V, County Development Plan, Local Area Plans, Planning Conditions
- Housing – Single Unit Acquisitions, Turnkey and Multi-Unit Acquisitions, Disposals, Vacant Properties, Leases & Licences, Tenant Purchase Scheme, Repair & Lease Scheme, Affordable Housing, Vacant Property Grant (Croi Conaithe) Scheme, Tenant-in-Situ Scheme, Anti-Social Behaviour, Tenancy Agreements, Tenancy Repossessions, Estate Management

- Finance – Debt Recovery to include Planning Financial Contributions, Commercial Rates, Arrears of Rent, Loan Arrears, Parking Fines, Fire Services Charges
- As such, and as indicated above, the Department continued to provide legal and advisory services for all programme areas and Directorates.
- These services included the acquisition and disposal of properties, an area of practice which has continued to grow, and in fact has surpassed the usual levels since the Covid pandemic, the conduct of litigation to include District Court enforcement prosecutions, legal proceedings at Circuit and Superior Courts, including Judicial Review. The completion of land acquisitions, CPOs on inter-urban routes and road widening schemes, have also represented 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, receives continuous updates and maintenance which greatly assists the Law Agent Department and the client to achieve our goals in the effective provision of legal and advisory services to our colleagues within the organisation.
- Work has continued on the population and completion of the council's 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. It is anticipated that the new Register Unit will be in place in 2025.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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. The Law Agent acts as 'Data Champion' for the areas of practice.
- 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 2024.
- 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 2025.
- Recruitment to back-fill and complete the Law Agent team of employees will be crucial in 2025 to safeguard and ensure the efficient provision of legal and advisory services to the council. This will be particularly so as the areas of practice and engagement for the Law Agent Department continue to grow and as staff members are delegated new roles and assigned to the Property Interest Register Unit as per the Departments Strategic Staffing Plan compiled by the Law Agent in 2024, in conjunction with the organisations overall Strategic Workforce Plan 2024.

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 was produced in 2024 that examines staffing requirements in line with the Corporate Plan for the next five years. The recruitment of key positions identified in the Strategic Workforce Plan has been commenced and is subject to Galway County Councils' budgetary provisions. Recommendations were also made in relation to Galway County Council's Organisational structures and a restructure of Directorates was completed in June 2024. The HR department continues to engage with Trade Unions and meets with the Water Services Union forum in relation to arrangements for the transition of staffing between Galway County Council and Uisce Éireann.

RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

Galway County Council's Staff Headcount at the end of Quarter 3, 2024 is as follows:

Category	Headcount
Core Staff	891
Retained Fire Fighters	123 with a further 2 participating on Recruits Course
Non-Department of Housing, Planning & LG	80

Recruitment Activity, up to Quarter 3, 2024:

The Human Resources Department formed 62 recruitment panels up to the end of Quarter 3, 2024 which resulted in the following appointments:

Activity	No
Temporary Contracts	67
Permanent Contracts	111
Acting Contracts	35
Promotions	37

Staff recruitment and deployment has been targeted at the priority areas of Housing, Environmental Enforcement, Climate Change, Planning and Municipal Districts and focus has also been on appointing 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 2024. 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 2,014 training days were facilitated through the HR department Training team from January to October 2024.

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, 2024:

- **Maternity, Paternity and Parent's Leave Schemes:** 29 staff members availed of maternity, paternity and parent's leave schemes in 2024.
- **Parental Leave Scheme:** 74 staff members availed of parental leave scheme in 2024.
- **Career Break:** 9 staff members availed of career breaks in 2024.
- **Work Sharing Scheme:** 58 staff members availed of work sharing arrangements in 2024.
- **Shorter Working Year:** 55 staff members availed of unpaid leave under the Shorter Working Year Scheme in 2024.
- **Medical Care Leave:** A number of staff members availed of unpaid leave under the new Medical Care Leave Scheme in 2024.
- **Carer's Leave Scheme:** 5 staff members availed of Carer's Leave in 2024.

OTHER SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR STAFF

- **Employee Assistance Service:** A confidential counselling and advisory service, the "Employee Assistance Service" or "EAS" is available to all Galway County Council employees. Spectrum.Life provides this service to all Galway County Council employees, their spouse, partner and family dependents aged 16 or over residing at 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. 22 applications for participation in the Cycle to Work Scheme were processed from 1st January, 2024 to 30th September, 2024 for Council employees.
- **Travel Pass Scheme:** 7 staff members availed of the tax saver travel pass scheme between the period of 1st January to 30th September, 2024.

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 5 full-time staff members will reach retirement age in 2025.
- 21 staff members have retired to date, in 2024.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2025:

- 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.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, CLIMATE CHANGE

The primary goal of the Transport Department is to establish, oversee, and maintain a safe and efficient roads and transport network. This is done in collaboration with the Department of Transport and other agencies to develop integrated, sustainable transport policies. The works carried out by the Council include pavement repairs, surface dressing, line painting, signage, drainage work, and the trimming of grass and verges along all routes.

The Transport budget is funded by grants from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), the National Transport Authority (NTA), and from the Council's own resources. Galway County Council expects to receive grant notifications in early 2025; however, for budget planning, it is assumed that grant levels will remain consistent with those in 2024. Continued funding from central government is essential for advancing projects.

Following budget adoption and confirmation of central grants, a detailed budget breakdown will be presented to the council in early 2025 as part of the Roads Programme 2025.

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.

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 2024

Funding was provided in 2024 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 Greenways
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 (NR-GCRR) – The N6-GCRR is a live application with An Bord Pleanála (ABP) following its remittal back to the board from the high court. ABP request through a Request for Further Information (RFI) inviting Galway County Council (GCC) to update the development consent application and the compulsory acquisition schemes. It also invited submissions on the current Climate Action Plan and the new Galway City Development Plan. Work has been ongoing to ensuring that the information and data in the application are valid and up to date. This work includes Transport and Traffic Assessments, Biodiversity Surveys and Assessments, Climate Assessments as well as Environmental Assessments. GCC will be in a position to provide the additional information to the Board before the end of 2024.
- 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 – Due to the complexity of the environmental challenges and the availability of technical & environmental resources to deliver the scheme as one,

it was agreed by TII and the Galway & Westmeath Local Authorities to re-tender the technical consultancy services as 2 schemes. The two schemes are as follows:

- Scheme 1: 83 km Portumna to Athlone Castle, including the link to Ballinasloe.
- Scheme 2: 114km Portumna to Galway (Ballyloughane).

This Framework was established in Q3 this year. Public engagement and landowner liaison continued throughout 2024.

- N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass – Substantial Completion for this scheme was achieved in December 2023 with the scheme being opened thereafter to traffic removing traffic congestion through one of Galway’s most congested villages. Some minor works to adjacent side roads, addressing snag and minor defect items were progressed throughout 2024. Galway County Council also arranged for restoration works to be completed at the Millenium Park in Drimcong involving carpark resurfacing, installation of paving, pathways, stonewalls and benches. Land settlements continued to be progressed throughout the year.
- N63 Abbeyknockmoy to Annagh Hill – The construction contract is complete with land settlements being continued to be addressed during 2024.
- N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme – Atkins were appointed as Consultants for Phases 5, 6 & 7 in March 2024 and detailed design is being progressed. Site Investigation field work will be completed in 2024 and Notice to Treat has been issued.
- N84 Galway to Curraghmore – Consultants were appointed in May 2023 to carry out Phases 0,1 of TII’s PMGs. It is anticipated that Phase 1 will be completed by the end of 2024.
- N17 Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment – The CPO for the scheme has been confirmed by An Bord Pleanála and the Notice to Treat and the Notice to Enter have been issued. Land acquisition is underway and detailed design is being progressed. Ground Investigation and Archaeology surveys commenced this year.
- Galway to Clifden (Conamara Greenway) – Construction and land acquisition is ongoing on sections between Clifden and Recess with 5km substantially completed in 2024. An application for a CPO was submitted to An Bord Pleanála for the section from Clifden to Recess.
- Galway to Oughterard (Conamara Greenway) – Consultants are progressing the scheme through Phase 3 – Design and Environmental Evaluation.
- Derrygimlagh-Kylemore Greenway – Phase 1 Concept and Feasibility completed in 2024.
- The annual resurfacing and maintenance programme for the National routes was undertaken in accordance with the budget for maintenance works notified by Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- A programme of Pavement Overlay works was designed and prepared for tender 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 – 2 Active Travel schemes were progressed through the Part 8 planning process: N67 South of Ballinderreen AT and N63 Abbeyknockmoy Village AT.

NATIONAL ROADS - PROPOSALS FOR 2025

- N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass – The defects period for the scheme will cease at the end of 2024 which will require outstanding retention monies held under the contract to be released to the Contractor. Remaining land settlements will also continue to be addressed.
- N6 Galway City Ring Road – A Response to a Request for Further Information will be with An Bord Pleanála. The Board will determine on further public consultation and possible oral hearing, after which the Board will make a decision on the application. It is anticipated that a decision on the application will be made by the board in 2025.
- Galway to Athlone Cycleway – Subject to TII approval GCC propose to go to tender in early 2025 to appoint a Technical Consultant to advance Phase 3 Design & Environmental Evaluation and Phase 4 Statutory Processes of TII's Project Phases Lifecycle. Public engagement and liaison with landowners will continue as required. GCC will also engage with the Development Applications Unit of the NPWS to see pre-applications observations and advice.
- N59 Bunnakill to Claremount - Progression of method statements for construction phase. Progress advance contracts for ground investigation works and topographic surveys and archaeology investigations. Land acquisition on the scheme is ongoing.
- N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme – Detailed design will continue to be progressed along with preparation of contract documents for advance contracts including archaeology, site clearance and fencing. It is anticipated that construction tender documents will also be advanced in 2025.
- N63 Abbeyknockmoy to Annagh Hill – Land settlements will continue to be progressed through 2025.
- N84 Galway to Curraghmore – Funding has been requested from TII to progress the project through Phases 2 to 4 of TII's PMGs in 2025.
- N17 Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment – Land acquisition and detailed design are to be progressed.
- N59 Oughterard Footbridge - Detailed design and environmental evaluations to be completed followed by an application for consent to An Bord Pleanála in 2025.

- Galway to Clifden (Conamara Greenway) - Complete construction and land acquisition from Clifden to Recess.
- Galway to Oughterard (Conamara Greenway) – Complete phase 3 - Design and Environmental Evaluation and commence Phase 4 – Statutory Processes.
- Derrygimlagh-Kylemore Greenway – Commence Phase 2 – Options selection if approval obtained.
- 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 2025 grant allocations from Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- Active Travel (AT) Schemes – Progress the N67 South of Ballinderreen AT and N63 Abbeyknockmoy Village AT through the land acquisition process.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL ROADS MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT WORKS

The 2024 total grant allocation for Regional and Local Roads in was **€39,926,300** and this grant allocation was classified under the following headings:

Grant Category	2024 Allocation
Restoration Improvement Grant	€20,798,500
Restoration Maintenance Grant	€2,844,000
Supplementary Restoration Maintenance	€2,488,500
Discretionary Maintenance Grant	€5,620,000
Specific Improvement Grants – Bridge Rehabilitation Programme	€635,000
Low-Cost Safety Improvement Grants	€428,000
Specific Improvement Grants	€590,000

Strategic Regional and Local Roads **€1,600,000**

Speed Limits – Housing/Signage **€7,960**

Training **€128,000**

Drainage Works **€1,258,000**

Community Involvement Scheme **€1,131,840**

Former National Roads **€775,000**

***PSCI: Survey Support** **€ 52,000**

Climate Adaptation & Resilience **€1,149,500**

Severe Weather **€420,000**

OVERALL TOTAL **€39,926,300**

**Pavement Survey Condition Index*

RESTORATION IMPROVEMENT (RI) - INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024

Funding of **€20,798,500** was allocated by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport for road reconstruction works on Non-National roads in 2024. This funding was allocated as follows and facilitated improvement works at 264 locations throughout the County:

<i>Restoration Improvement 2024</i>		
Municipal District	No. of locations	Allocation
Athenry/Oranmore	22	€2,048,821
Ballinasloe	43	€5,011,796
Conamara	82	€4,381,805
Loughrea	57	€6,061,931

Tuam	60	€3,294,196
Total	264	€20,798,500

2024 was the third 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.

Galway County Council was pleased to receive an additional allocation under the Restoration Improvement programme in May 2024 of €2,059,000. This money was distributed to the Municipal Districts for additional roadworks.

RESTORATION IMPROVEMENT (RI) - PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

A programme of restoration improvement works will be finalised when notification of the 2025 funding is received and will be detailed in the Annual Roads Programme 2025. Additionally, a new Three-Year Roads Programme covering 2025-2027 inclusive will be presented to Councillors in early 2025.

Restoration Maintenance (RM) - Activities in 2024:

Funding of **€5,332,500** was allocated for Restoration Maintenance (surface dressing) by the Department of Transport. It was allocated as follows and facilitated surface dressing works at 122 locations around the County:

<i>Restoration Maintenance 2024</i>		
Municipal District	No. of Locations	Allocation
Athenry/Oranmore	12	€525,295
Ballinasloe	31	€1,284,968
Conamara	32	€1,123,445
Loughrea	28	€1,554,211
Tuam	19	€844,582
Total	122	€ 5,332,500

RESTORATION MAINTENANCE (RM) - PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

A programme of restoration maintenance works will be finalised when notification of the 2025 funding is received and will be detailed in the Annual Roads Programme 2025.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCHEMES

As part of the 2024 Regional & Local Road allocation, the Department of Transport approved funding in the amount of **€1,131,840** which allowed the progression of 27 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 2024.

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 2025 will be finalised when notification of the 2025 funding is received.

FORMER NATIONAL ROADS

A total of **€775,000** was received in 2024 for the following roads R446 (former N6 - two sections), R458 (former N18). These works were completed. A submission has been made to the Department for funding in 2025 under this grant category on the following roads; R446 (former N6), R458 (former N18) and R380 (former N65), R942 (former N65) and the R381 (former N18).

TERTIARY ROAD REPAIRS (DG)

Investment in Local Tertiary roads repairs continued in 2024 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 34 Local Tertiary 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 2025 funding is received.

BRIDGES REHABILITATION AND REPAIRS

13 bridges (4 design & 9 works) were allocated funding, totalling **€635,000**, under the Bridge Rehabilitation Programme in 2024 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 October 2024 once it became clear that works at one of the bridges did not require the level of funding initially provided. The re-allocated funding was used for de-vegetation of 20 bridges. Bridge repair works were completed on a further 20 bridges, which were allocated funding of **€395,000** from the Discretionary Grant.

In accordance with circular RW16/2024, each local authority was invited to submit applications for bridge rehabilitation and repair works, of which the total should not exceed 130% of 2024

Bridge Rehabilitation Programme 2024			
Priority	Road Number	Bridge Name and Location	2024 Expenditure €
1	R336	Teernakil Bridge [Design]	€20,000
2	R446	Suck (East) Bridge [Design]	€20,000
3	L-53221	Crumlin East Bridge 4 [Design]	€20,000
4	L-3111	Licklea Bridge [Design]	€20,000
5	L-6143	Mahanagh Bridge 1	€200,000
6	L-3117	Cormacuagh (Clogh) Bridge	€100,000
7	L-6447	Kilshanvy Bridge 2	€40,000
8	L-46031	Pollboy Bridge	€40,000
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	Various	Bridge Devegetation	€60,000
Total			€ 635,000

allocation. Based on this and available resources to carry out the works in 2025, a submission for

9 bridges (4 design & 5 works) was submitted to the Department for approval, totalling **€760,000**. Details of the proposed bridge rehabilitation projects for 2025 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 2025. This is dependent on the level of funding allocated

Proposed Bridge Rehabilitation Programme 2025			
*Subject to Department Approval			
<i>Priority</i>	<i>Road Number</i>	<i>Bridge Name and Location</i>	<i>2025 Proposed Expenditure</i> €
1	L-7269	Trihill Bridge [Design]	€20,000
2	L-42025	Allendarra Bridge [Design]	€20,000
3	L-8211	Drum Bridge [Design]	€20,000
4	L-53241	Western Way Bridge [Design]	€20,000
5	L-12010	Formweel Bridge	€200,000
6	L-8766	Moat Bridge	€160,000
7	R336	Teernakil Bridge	€90,000
8	L-8229	Derrygarrieff Bridge	€200,000
9	L-6331	Kingstown Bridge	€30,000
<i>Total</i>			€ 760,000

by the Department. Full details of approved works will be detailed in the Roads Programme 2025.

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 **€590,000** was received for projects in 2024:

- R374 Causeways & Bridges
- R332 Kilbannon
- R339 Belville
- L52214 Cuan na Loinge

Galway County Council will seek funding for the continuation of these schemes into 2025.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL AND LOCAL ROAD GRANTS

An allocation of €1,100,000 was made available for the Athenry Northern Ring Road in 2024. Advance site works on the Raheen section were completed in 2024 which included tree removal and ESB diversion works and advance fencing. The tender documents are being finalised, and it is expected to commence tendering in late 2024. The construction of the Raheen section will begin in earnest in 2025. Design works continue on the Eastern section towards the Monivea Road.

The Department has confirmed its ongoing commitment to this project and an allocation is expected in 2025.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

In June 2024, the Department of Rural & Community Development approved an allocation of €1,564,965 along with an extra allocation of €250,000 which was ringfenced for the islands. 31 projects were completed under the Local Improvement Scheme from an overall allocation of €1,814,965 for 2024 from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

The Department of Rural & Community Development has informed Galway County Council of a funding allocation of €1,023,479 for 2025 with a further €250,000 ringfenced for the islands.

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 2024 was €9,167,387 which included provision of €1,900,000 for public lighting.

The distribution of the Local Roads Budget 2025 will be presented to Council for approval in the context of the Roads Programme 2025. The level of discretion that will be available to the Council in the allocation of funding in 2025 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 2024, 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 €1,149,500 was made in the Budget 2025 for 31 projects.

A submission for funding for 2025 is being prepared for works in this category.

PUBLIC LIGHTING

A sum of €1,900,000 was provided, from Council's own funds, in the 2024 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 lighting on the National Road Network.

Galway County Council is committed to the retrofit of all of its public lighting with energy efficient LED units in line with requirements to meet National Energy Efficiency statutory targets. In 2024 the budget provision allowed for a limited accelerated programme of

replacement through the maintenance contract, the proportion of lighting retrofitted with LED units is now greater than 75%.

It was anticipated that the completion of the retrofitting project would be done through a dedicated regional contract (Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Contract, PLEEP), however that has changed following the failure of the procurement process after a protracted legal challenge. It is now intended to complete the retrofitting of the public lighting at county level and utilising or contractor on maintenance. An additional capital fund will be required to supplement the revenue budget to ensure this is completed within a reasonable timeframe, and arrangements are in train to secure such funding. The budget provision of €1,900,000 will be required for 2025. Assuming there are no significant increases to energy prices, this will be sufficient to cater for maintenance and energy costs and will allow for some limited elective LED retrofitting.

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. In 2024, Local Transportation Plans were completed for Athenry and Loughrea in alignment with the Local Area Plan process. A template for community transport studies was agreed with the NTA and roll-out has begun.

ROAD SAFETY ENGINEERING IMPROVEMENT

LOW-COST REMEDIAL MEASURES

The Council, as with expenditure headings from B01 – B04, has not yet received notification of the level of grant that will be available for Low-Cost Safety Improvement works in 2025. An allocation of €428,000 was received in 2024 from the Department of Transport and the projects included for completion in 2024 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 complete works at Regional Road junction	€130,000
N83	Turloughmore @ Roonaunmore	Install Signage	€2,000

R446	Oranbeg (Fureys Cross)	To complete works at Regional Road Junction	€50,000
L-4305-68	Crossroads at Lenamore, Clonfert	Installation of Advanced Warning Signage and works to increase sightlines	€45,000
R939	R939 Milltown Road, Tuam	Junction improvement to include design, upgrade of signals, other works.	€60,000
R460	R460 Ballyhugh, Gort	Install Anti Skid, Lettering and Lining at Junction	€11,000
R351	Barrack Street, Lrea	Refresh Road Markings and Install Anti Skid Surface	€38,000
N59/L1320/L313	Moycullen Village	Refurbishment of traffic signal heads and push buttons	€35,000
R942	Main Street, Lrea	To complete works at Regional Road	€17,000
R333	Cahernaheeny, Tuam	Signage & Road markings	€40,000
			€428,000

A submission has been made to the Department for 2025 across all MDs and a programme of works will be compiled when notification of the 2025 funding is received.

OTHER ENGINEERING IMPROVEMENTS

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, 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 and provision of high visibility material to the public.

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 the heading of 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.

The installation of the new solar powered Pay and Display machines throughout the county (Tuam, Loughrea, Athenry, Gort, Ballinasloe, Clifden and Cleggan) was completed by the end of 2023. Warranty periods have now expired on all units and maintenance contracts, funded by receipts, are in place. Budgetary provision is made on this basis for 2025.

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, 2 estates have been completed to the required standard for bond release, 9 estates have been Taken in Charge with a further 3 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 on 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 Uisce Éireann.

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 2025:

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 2024, 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 2025.

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 and 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 2024 was €174,000.

FLOOD MITIGATION WORKS AND STUDIES

Galway County Council continued working in partnership with the OPW during 2024 to identify and progress works aimed at reducing the risk of future flooding. Works at 6 locations are in

progress under the minor works scheme for 2024, with these projects to be substantially complete by year end. A programme of works for 2025 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 €369,500 was provided from the Council's own resources in 2024 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 upgrade of piers, 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.

The allocation also served to provide the matched funding element of the Island Minor Capital Works grants for 2024. Works to a total of €175,150 relating to Piers and Harbours were 90% funded by these grants, the 10% matched funding requirement coming to €17,515. The works completed included a significant refurbishment of Trá Teach Pier at Inis Oírr, coastal protection works on Inis Meáin, and pier improvement works at An Caladh Mór, Inis Meáin and at Cill Ronáin.

The budget is also used to fund reports and studies for piers and harbours which are required to access other potential external funding streams operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.

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.

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. Significant maintenance works were carried out this year and the

€20,000 budget provision was fully utilised. Provision of €20,000 for 2025 has also been made under this heading to continue the maintenance on yacht moorings.

A budget of €200,000 was provided in 2024 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 2025 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.

The Budget allocation for Piers and Harbours has increased over the past two years. This increase will need to continue to ensure an adequate maintenance and improvement programme can be provided. The infrastructure plays a vital role in sustaining the viability of the communities they serve, and significant works are required to ensure Piers and Harbours are at an appropriate standard so they can continue to be used safely. Many of them are protected structures, are in areas of environmental sensitivity and any works below the high-water mark will require foreshore licence. Consequently, in many instances significant work is required to get a project to shovel ready status and this involves incurring high levels of costs before any construction can take place. This funding provision from Galway County Council own resources is required if we are to be able to optimally utilise available external funding for Pier and Harbour refurbishment works.

WATER SERVICES

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER AND WASTEWATER SCHEMES

For Budget 2025 income and expenditure in this area is static. Uisce Éireann (UÉ) is the authority responsible for municipal Water Services since the effective date of the Master Cooperation Agreement. Council staff are now under the management, control and direction of Uisce Éireann albeit these staff remain employees of the Council until the end 2026 or a sooner date if the individual decides to transition to Uisce Éireann. Galway County Council's priority for 2025 is to work with Uisce Éireann to ensure the continued delivery of Water Services under the Master Cooperation and Support Services Agreements. This service will also face challenges as this transition is implemented over the next 2 years.

Galway County Council, however, is responsible for the management of projects involving new or upgrading of Group Water and Sewerage Schemes and for the provision of grants for domestic bored wells under a devolved programme. In addition, the Council is also progressing the delivery of schemes under Measure A8 for Craughwell and Clarinbridge.

RURAL WATER PROGRAMME

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- In Q1 the Council successfully secured advanced approval for funding of €19.3M for the provision of wastewater networks and treatment for Craughwell & Clarinbridge villages under measure A8 of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026. The Local Authorities contribution will be €2.6M. These projects will take several years to deliver and provisions for costs will need to be considered in future budgets over the lifetime of the Projects.
- In Q2 the Council submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) the remaining application for the new Multi Annual Rural Water Programme, comprising 100 projects for consideration with a total cost of €12.3M. The Department has taken a phased approach to the approval of funding under the new MARWP for 2024-2026. To date, the Department has issued approval under five (5) of the eight (8) measures included. The approved programme comprises 29 projects with a call for clarification on 4 further Community Water Connection projects.
- The Kilrickle/Kilcooley GWS capital project has been completed at a value of €3.5M. The scheme is supplied by Cappataggle GWS who will own the network of 41.5km of mains once the 12-month maintenance period has elapsed. The scheme supplies 270 houses, 2 National Schools and numerous businesses and farms with clean and wholesome water. Kilcooley GWS members are now receiving compliant drinking water and this scheme has been removed from the Boil Water Notice list.
- Four public group water schemes have been taken in charge by Uisce Éireann in 2024.
- Staff resources in Rural Water were further replenished in 2024 but the level of opportunity and demand for qualified technical staff continues to make the recruitment and retention of staff challenging. 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 2025:

- The main objective for 2025 is to deliver the approved Multi Annual Rural Water Programme and recruit the necessary staff to make sure it is implemented and delivered. There will be a focus on substantially reducing the number of schemes on 'Do not consume' notices, Boil water notices and the Department's remedial action list (RAL).

MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (MEM)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

In 2024, Galway County Council (GCC) continued various initiatives to enhance Major Emergency Management (MEM) across the region:

Major Emergency Development Committee (MEDC): This committee, chaired by Mr. Uinsinn Finn, focused on MEM activities within the Council's Infrastructure and Operations Directorate.

Plan Reviews and Systems: The Major Emergency and Severe Weather/Flood Response plans were reviewed, and the Severe Weather Event Management System (SWEMS) was active during severe weather events. GCC also started an inter-county trial with two other local authorities.

Regional Coordination: The MEM West Regional Steering Group, led by the HSE, coordinated emergency management across eight principal response agencies (PRAs) in Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon. Additionally, the MEM West Regional Working Group, also HSE-chaired, continued operations among local emergency services in the West.

Local Coordination Centre (LCC): GCC headquarters serves as the LCC for Galway's PRAs (GCC, HSE West, and Galway Garda Division), with upgraded video conferencing and electronic information systems. A back-up generator was installed to ensure continuity during power outages.

City/County MEM Integration: A City/County MEM Integration Group, chaired by Galway City Council, coordinated emergency planning for large crowd events and specific sites in the city and county.

Training and Conferences: Ongoing training covered Information Management, Media Liaison, and Coordination. GCC personnel attended MEM seminars and a national MEM conference in October.

Emergency Exercises:

- GCC led a review and exercise for the COMAH External Emergency Plan at CBE West, including a tabletop and practical exercise with PRAs.
- A combined Connemara Airport and Island Response Plan exercise tested emergency coordination for onshore and offshore incidents.
- A CBRN exercise with An Garda Síochána and HSE assessed interagency capabilities for chemical and radiological incidents.

Future Plans: GCC is developing an emergency plan for Tynagh Power Station and preparing for a 2025 review of the Circle K COMAH Site at Galway City Harbour, with interagency meetings scheduled for December.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

In 2025, Galway County Council (GCC) and Galway City Council will continue MEM training for regional and local personnel, covering Information Management, Media Liaison, and On-Site Coordination, alongside tabletop and practical exercises. The Major Emergency Development Committee (MEDC), led by Mr. Uinsinn Finn, will meet bi-monthly to improve severe weather response systems, integrate TETRA radio, and coordinate with a sister committee in Galway City Council to strengthen city resilience.

Galway Fire and Rescue is finalizing a combined emergency plan for both councils, with updates to the County's appendices ongoing. Regional coordination efforts will focus on the Regional Coordination, Media, and Evacuation Plans. Testing of the new County Hall stand-by generator will also proceed.

Site-specific emergency planning includes completing the Tynagh Power Station review with a mid-year exercise, leading a large-scale exercise at the Circle K site, and planning for the proposed Green Hydrogen Hub at Galway Port. GCC will also continue its inter-county Severe Weather Event Management System trial.

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2025:

- 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. GFRS also works with CHIME to procure and facilitate the installation of smoke alarms for the hard of hearing. 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 2024 for National Fire Safety Week, wildfire safety, Halloween safety and a further campaign is planned for Christmas time. Several Officers conducted radio interviews.

- In 2024 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 over 1,000 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 2024 work continued 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 2024 on all larger islands. In addition, the inter-agency island incident response plan was also updated and practiced.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2025.
- Self-contained smoke alarms will continue to be issued in 2025 in both the City and County from allocations received in 2024 and further alarms will be purchased in mid-2025. 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.
- A program will be run locally again in 2025 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 2025 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 2025.
- In 2025 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 2025 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 2025.
- The Schools Fire Safety Programme involving local fire officers visiting 4th class in primary schools in Galway will continue in 2025 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 in 2023 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. This recruitment is ongoing and will continue into 2025. As highlighted in the Fire Services Retained Review Report, recruitment into the fire service is proving difficult, however the changes in the Retained Fire Service model are aiding recruitment. 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. This additional cost will be recouped initially from the NDFEM and DoHLGH, however in the long term will fall on Local Authorities to fund.

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 3rd External Validation Group visit to all Fire Authorities will take place in Q1 and Q2 of 2025. The format of the visit will change from the previous two and will involve the group meeting with the Chief Executive and a wider group of fire service personnel.

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.

A new Draft Section 26 Plan is being drafted by Fire Service Management for submission to and approval by the elected members and to the Directorate of Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services. It is envisaged that this plan will be presented to the Council Executive Management Team in Q1 of 2025 and to the SPC Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services and the Plenary Council in Q2 2025. Work is also ongoing in relation to new Statutory and Community Fire Safety Plans.

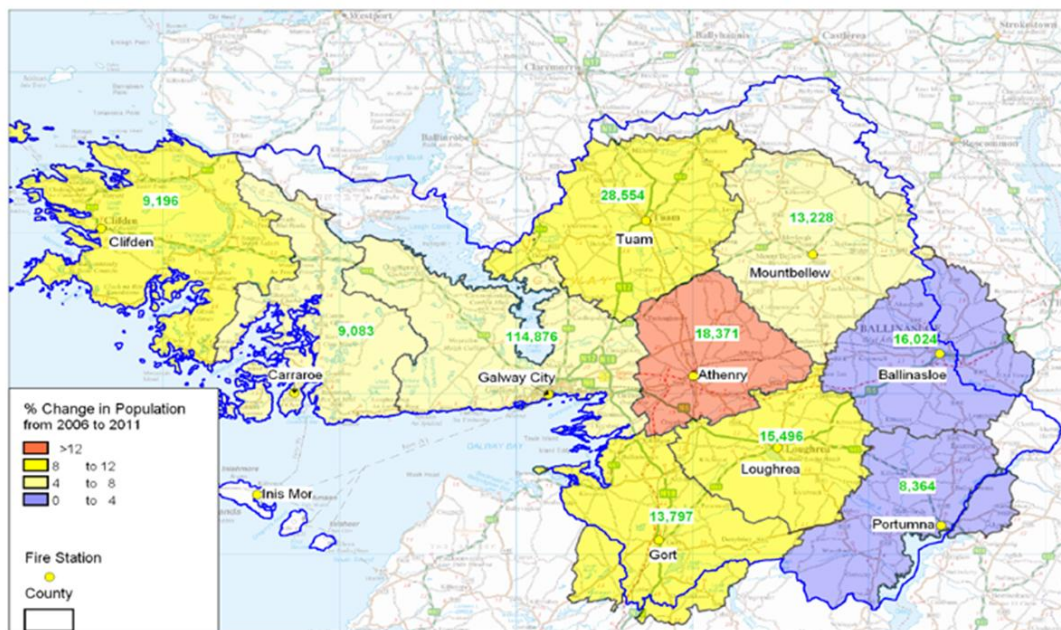
FIRE OPERATIONS – KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE (KCS)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024 (BASED ON 2023 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 170 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 and will increase further as a result of the recent national WRC agreement
- There are also 11 supervisory and fire prevention senior fire officers, including the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and 7 civilian support personnel, a Brigade Mechanic, a Civil Defence Officer (CDO) and assistant Civil Defence Officer A/CDO working in the Headquarters at Galway City Fire station.
- At the time of writing in late 2024 the statistics for 2024 are not available. The following numbers are based on the 2023 statistics. During 2023, the Galway Fire and Rescue Service responded to a total of 1,846 emergency call outs, 1113 by the County Fire

Brigades and 733 by Galway City Fire Brigade in its City and County fire grounds. This represented an increase of just 16 mobilisations compared to 2022. Figure 2 below shows the level of callouts from 2013. 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 2023 having marginally the highest number since 2011. All indications are that the callouts for 2024 will be roughly on par with 2022 and 2023 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 2023 was €58.45. Average response times for all incidents for first attendance vehicles in the City full-time and County retained stations were 2.03 minutes and 5.56 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 one fire fatality in 2023 and no fire fatality thus far in 2024.
- 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 2024 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 – 2023

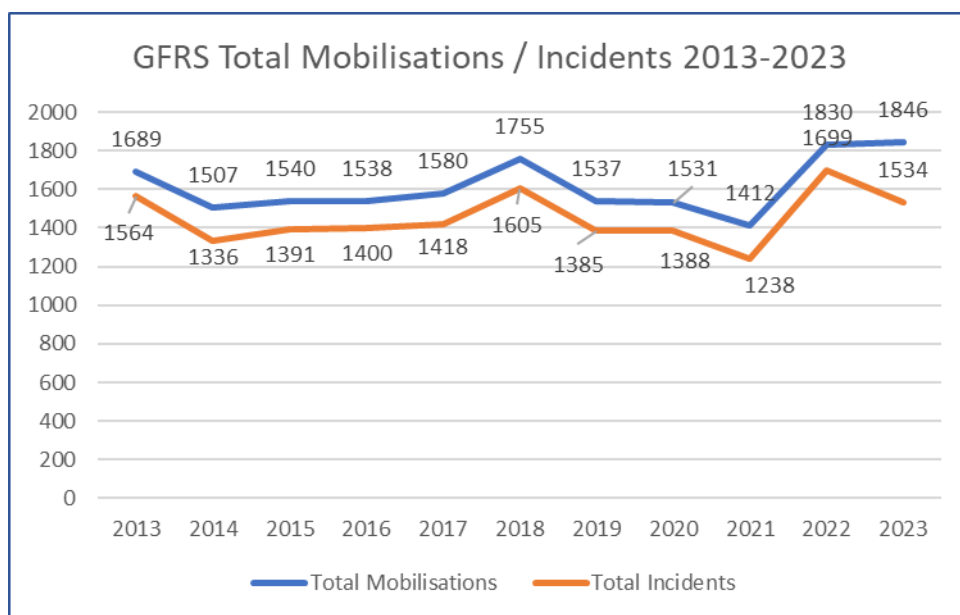


FIGURE 3: BREAKDOWN OF CALL-OUTS BY STATION IN 2023

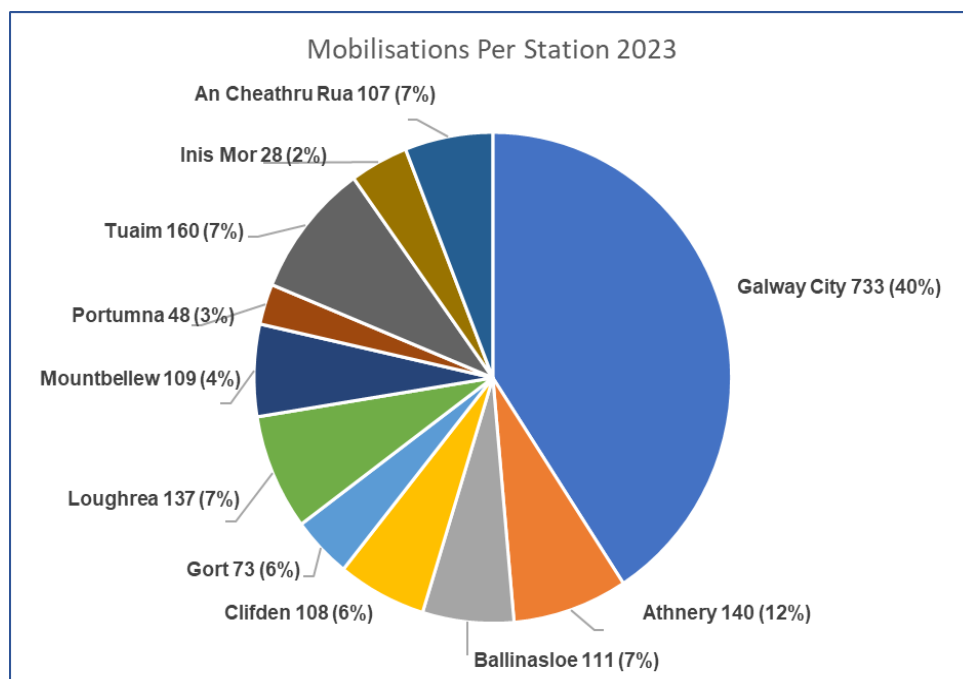


TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE ATTENDANCE TIMES GALWAY CITY AND COUNTY 2023

% Attendance Time	Fires %	Other Incidents %
Less than 10 minutes	35.97	45.55
10 to 20 minutes	40.26	38.97
Greater than 20 minutes	23.76	15.66

- 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 2024 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 2024. The Fire Services were audited for compliance with ISO 45001 by the NSAI on 29th and 30th May 2023.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

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 2025 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 2025. The next set of SOGs will be rolled out in 2025 and National Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) continue to underpin generic and activity-based risk assessments as part of our Safety Management System.
- In 2025 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 2023/2024.
- This has been greatly improved by the introduction of the minimum mandatory retirement age of 62 years of age – and increase from 55 for full time personnel and 58 for retained personnel. 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 2025. Retained recruit induction will continue through LASNTG to the new QQI standard in 2025.

- The emphasis on pre-incident plans will continue in 2025 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 2025, 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 2025 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 have increased considerably over the past 2 years. The reason for the rise in costs is that the current Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is obsolete. A procurement process has taken place and a contract has been awarded for the supply of a new CAD system which will also offer redundancy and a call transfer system between Regional Control Centres in instances of spare calls and a temporary overload in any of the control centres. All three Regional Communications Centres are currently being reviewed and restructured by the NDFEM as part of the new CTRI project and will all form hubs in the newly formed National Mobilisation and Communication System (NMACS).

It is understood that as WRCC migrates from a Regional to a National model, a new National funding model will be established. This may have benign implications for Local Authority budgets from 2025 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 2025 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 and the option under the conditions of the contract to extend the contract for another year has been availed of with the agreement of the partner fire authorities in the region.

FIRE SAFETY / FIRE PREVENTION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024 (BASED ON 2023 DATA):

- In 2023, the Fire Service Fire Prevention Section carried out 228 inspections of premises as part of its fire prevention function slightly down from 237 in 2022, 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 285 Fire Safety Certificate (FSC) Applications of all types in 2023 under Building Control Regulations. Fire Safety Certificate activity from 2013 to 2023 is shown in Figure 4 below. The trend of Fire Safety Certificate applications received between 2020 and 2023 is steady. Thus far to the end of October 2024, the Fire Prevention Section have received and dealt with 264 Fire Safety Certificate (FSC) Applications of all types, roughly on the same trend as 2023 .
- The Fire Prevention Section processed 103 Disability Access Certificate (DAC) applications in 2023. Disability Access Certificate activity from 2013 to 2023 is shown in Figure 5 below. Thus far and to the end of October 2024, the Fire Prevention Section have received and dealt with 88 DAC Applications which is also roughly on par with 2023.

FIGURE 4 FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATE (FSC) ACTIVITY 2013- 2023

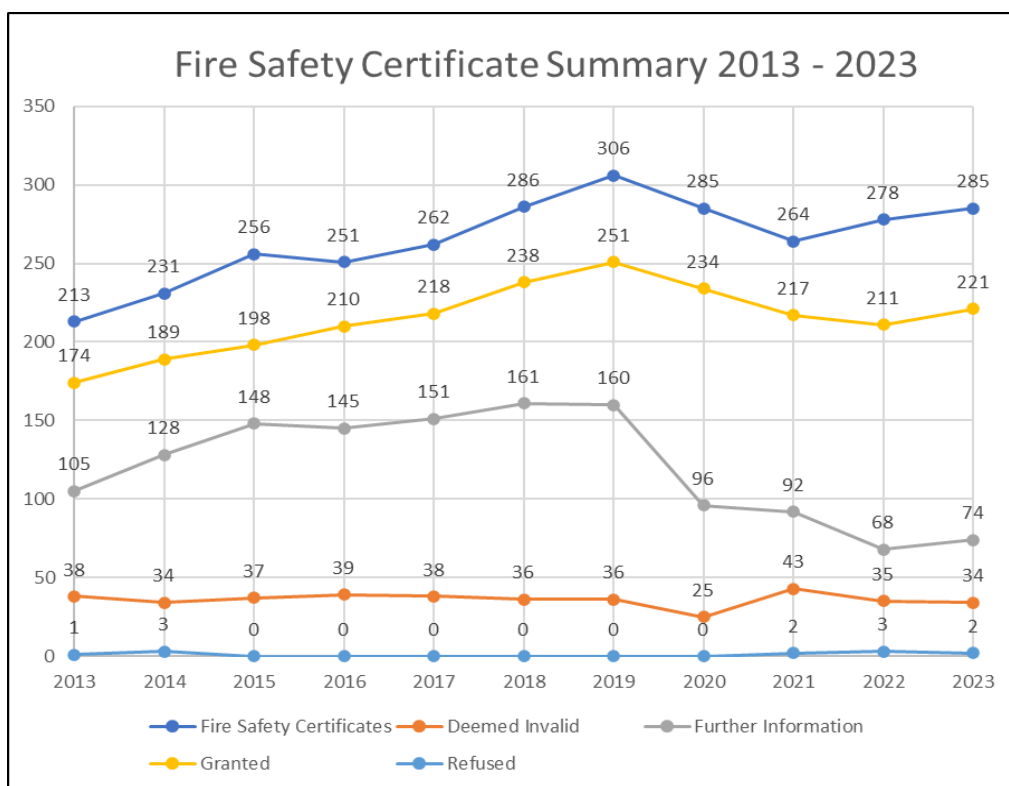
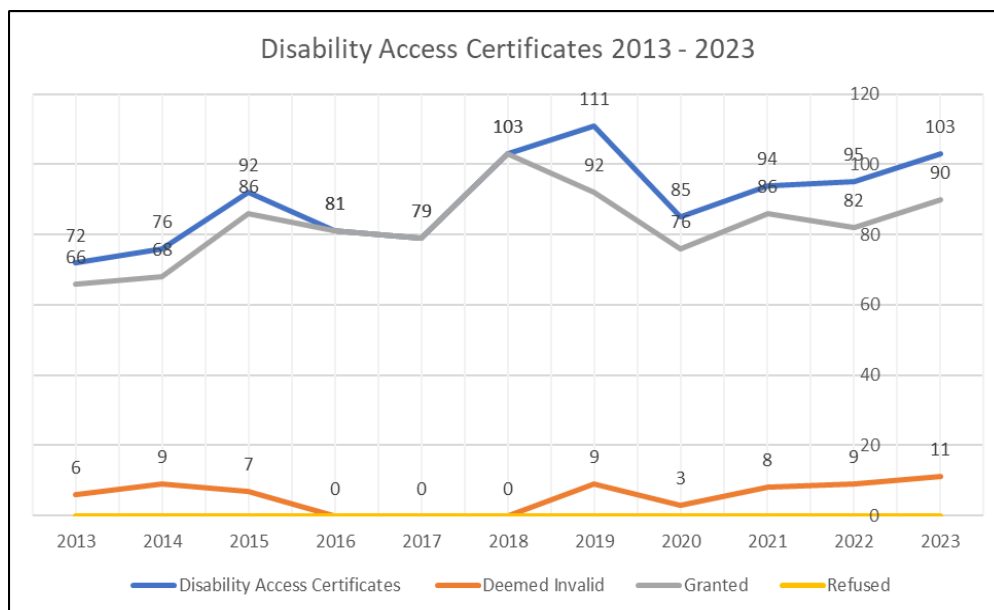


FIGURE 5 DISABILITY ACCESS CERTIFICATE ACTIVITY 2013-2023



PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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.
- In December 2023 the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage published and launched the remedial Apartment Defects Scheme providing government funding for the remediation of fire safety defects of apartments build between 1991 and 2013. Applications for the scheme must be made to the Housing Agency and once the application is complete, correct and assessed as falling within the remit of the scheme, forwarded to the Fire Authority for assessment. It is anticipated that this scheme will considerably increase the workload for fire authorities will larger urban areas. Following an analysis of eligible buildings within the Galway City and County Fire Authority areas, Galway Fire and Rescue Service made a case to the DHLGH for additional staff to facilitate the scheme and deal with the additional workload. GCC was granted sanction in 2024 for the recruitment of 2 additional senior fire officers and 1 additional clerical officer. Currently there are 3 pathfinder projects being processed nationally to ascertain difficulties with the scheme and streamline the application and assessment processes. Thereafter, applications received by the Housing Agency will be release and forwarded to the fire authorities for assessment.

GALWAY CIVIL DEFENCE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Galway Civil Defence operate from 5 training centres, Galway City, Oranmore, Loughrea, Ballinasloe and Clonberne. In 2024 all units have continued operations throughout the year.
- Galway Civil Defence have assisted in numerous Missing Person Searches within the City/County at the request of An Garda Síochána (AGS) and assisted Clare Civil Defence on occasions with their requests during the year. Drone and boat Sonar systems were primarily used in searches and have proved a valuable resource to our search teams. Assistance was provided to Mayo and Clare Civil Defence units to assist with missing person searches at the request from An Garda Síochána.
- Training has continued 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. Certification will last until 2026.
- Civil Defence EMT's have completed their PHECC 2021 Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) Up-skilling in March 2023 and the 2023 updates to the CPG's in 2024 as required by PHECC.
- Galway County Council appointed a permanent Assistant Civil Defence Officer (ACDO) in August 2024 to assist in the operations of Civil Defence in Galway City and County.
- 2 Civil Defence Swift and Flood Responder Instructors have recertified in 2024 in line with the Civil Defence College Programme.
- The VEMS (Volunteer, Equipment Management System) replaced the Civil Defence Register in July 2023. The Civil Defence Officer attended numerous training days on the operation of the new system. This system is kept updated as required by the CDO.
- Implementation of Minimum Training Standards for all volunteers, new and existing members, continues.
- A programme of training in Cardiac First Response, First Aid Responder, Emergency First Response, Manual Handling and People Moving is currently ongoing for volunteers throughout 2024.
- Induction Training for new members was conducted at each of the Unit Training centres in 2024. 20 new members completed this mandatory training in 2024.
- Galway Civil Defence 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 2025:

- Focus on training for 2025 will centre in developing the Search Management capability and Flood Water Responder training with members partaking in ongoing recertification training and initial training in 2025 under the Civil Defence programme.
- Severe Weather driver training and recertification to be held in the first quarter of 2025. A new training provider was selected by the Civil Defence Branch to undertake training from 2025 for volunteers.
- Galway Civil Defence have been selected as one of 7 Local Authorities to pilot a scheme on Sarman Enterprise Search Management Suite. Training will commence in early 2025 on this search product.
- To partake in Re-certification training of all disciplines in line with the Civil Defence College programme for 2025.
- 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 2025.
- Continuation for all members to meet the Minimum Training Standards as per Civil Defence Policy.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Following completion of an extensive public consultation process, the GCC Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 was adopted by the full plenary in February 2024.
- Supported and coordinated actions via a cross-organisation governance structure which includes a Climate Action Steering Group, Climate Action Team, and Energy Team.
- Actively engaged in numerous projects with external stakeholders including:

International	Galway Partner Forest Programme
EU	30 islands for 2030 Programme
EU	LEAP (Local Energy Agencies in the Peripheral Regions) Project
National	CONNECTED Northwest Region Decarbonisation Zone project
National	Sand Dunes Campaign
Local	Over 60's Climate Action Courses

- Administered the Community Climate Action Fund, under which GCC have been allocated €726,000 to support communities to undertake climate action. Thirty-two applications were approved for funding under the current round.
- Support was provided to communities and individuals to implement climate action via workshops, presentations and stands at events throughout the county. The Climate Unit worked with SEAI and GCC Sections including Housing, Planning, LEO, Community and Environment to deliver this support.
- Six communities were supported in the development of their Energy Masterplans as part of the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities Programme.
- Under the SEAI Regional Energy Bureau programme a Regional Energy Bureau Officer has been appointed to GCC. An internal member of staff has also been appointed as Energy Officer. These resources are focused on progressing the SEAI Pathfinder Building Retrofit Programme, obtaining ISO50001 certification, reducing occupational energy use and meeting our 2030 energy targets. The installation of an automated Energy Data Management System is expected to be completed by end of 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 30 islands for 2030, CONNECTED, LEAP and Galway Partner Forest Programme.
- Support the work of the Climate Action Steering Group and Climate Action Team to implement the actions in the Climate Action Plan. Run internal and external engagement and education campaigns.
- 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 including through the development of Pathfinder Projects. Work towards ISO50001 certification for our Energy Management System in Q2 2025.
- Continue to support Sustainable Energy Communities throughout the County to develop and implement their Energy Master Plans. Support communities throughout the county to implement the projects awarded funding under the Community Climate Action Fund and identify potential projects for the next round of funding.

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE (LEO)

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Provided an excellent and effective First Stop Shop for businesses in Galway County and 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 2025:

- 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 2024

- 1,794 Planning Applications have been received as at 31st October 2024.
- The National e-Planning system is now functioning for Planning Applications, submissions and Part VIII applications and submissions, to date this year 1,475 e-applications have been received, 945 e-submissions/consultation reports have been received via the portal (31st Oct) Part VIII applications are available on the portal for both viewing and making submissions there are 8 no part VIII and 4 no Section 179A- Local Authority Applications and 40 submissions/consultation reports to the 31st October 2024.
- 5 LRD planning applications meetings were held.
- 4 SID planning applications meetings were held
- 9 meetings for major developments have taken place from a total of 13 requests.

- 132 Exempted Development applications processed as at 31st October 2024.
- Finalised and Adopted the Tuam Local Area Plan 2023-2029, Q3 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.
- Developed IT systems for managing pre planning system.

PROPOSALS 2025

- 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.
- Work with LGMA on implementing iPlan 5 in quarter 1 of 2025.

REGENERATION

URDF CALL 3- TUAM, BALLINASLOE AND ORANMORE

The Regeneration Team successfully secured €3,000,000 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 2024:

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

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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. We now have progressed to the second town of Athenry. A formal Town Team with representatives from local community groups, residents and business owners has been 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 in the coming years.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Tender and appointment of consultants to help deliver the TCF plan for Athenry
- Public engagement and consultation for the Athenry TCF plan.
- Established collaborative working agreement with Údarás na Gaeltachta and deliver a Town Centre First Plan for An Cheathrú Rua.
- Identification of short term- priority projects to advance to funding application stage.
- Town Centre health checks completed for new established Town teams in Headford, Oranmore and An Cheathrú Rua

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Publication of TCF plan for Athenry
- Prepare tender for next TCF plan.
- Progress the preparation and completion of the Athenry and Headford TCF plans.
- Work with Údarás na Gaeltachta ,the Town team and wider Local community to deliver a Town Centre First Plan for An Cheathrú Rua.
- Assist newly formed Town teams in their town development proposals
- Assist Town teams in preparation of funding applications against the projects in the Gort and Athenry TCF plan.

ATHENRY RRDF

The Regeneration team has been successful in the Cat 1 RRDF funding award €6,075,518 to deliver a new public realm scheme for Market Square and Cross Street and the redevelopment of Somers house to provide a Community and Enterprise Hub with a match funding requirement of €675,058

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Prepared Cat 1 RRDF application for Market Square and Cross Street and Somers House
- Progressed the tender for the Market Square and Cross Street and appointed consultants.
- Provided full technical support for the planning application including external consultants and detailed design stage of Burkes Lane property.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Prepare tender for the appointment of consultants to deliver the construction Phase of the Somers House redevelopment.
- Commence construction on both Somers House and Market Square and Cross Street.

CLIFDEN RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 2 RRDF for Clifden is €792,030 with a match funding requirement of €264,010. 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 2024:

- Completion of all design elements of the project in readiness for planning application
- Completion of public engagement
- Submission of Part 10 planning application to An Bord Pleanála.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Development of dedicated off-street car-parking facility in the town centre
- Submission of Part 8 Planning application for additional car park.

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 2024:

- Completion and delivery of schemes including “greenway readiness” at Ardbear Bridge.
- Completion and delivery of pavilion at Coach Park.
- Completion and delivery of gateway signage

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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).

ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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 agreed sales prices of €180,000 and €220,000.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Assist in the delivery of successful planning decision of the Part 10 Planning Application.
- Application for CAT1 RRDF application for delivery of Public Realm Scheme.

LOUGHREA RRDF

The project funding was originally approved under CAT 1 RRDF for Loughrea as €1,628,879 with a match funding of €542,960. The revised project costs are RRDF CAT 1 funding of €4,241,897 with a match funding of €1,413,966. The project will revitalise Loughrea and the Loughrea Town Hall by bringing back into use this historic and important building.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Detailed design progressed and contractors for construction tendered.
- Successful application for uplift in project costs approved by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 appointed for the provision of Design Team Consultancy Services.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Detailed public engagement on the development of the Public Realm project.
- Finalisation of detailed design and preparation of Part 8 planning application.
- Finalisation of acquisition of development site on Abbey Street.
- Procurement of consultants to design swimming area.

- Appointment of consultants to deliver Town Trail Strategy

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 Town Trail Strategy and application for funding to deliver.
- Disposal of Abbey Street property to facilitate its redevelopment and address its derelict status.

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. The revised project costs are RRDF CAT 1 funding of €2,950,749 with a match funding of €327,861. 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 2024:

- Construction commenced on-site
- Tender issued for operator of on-site café
- Approval gained for appointment of 3 year Business Development and Operations Manager to run the venue once operational.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Completion of building programmed March 2025 with launch and formal opening event.
- Appointment of Café operators
- Appointment of Business Development and Operations Manager
- Building handover from Regeneration team

TUAM

The Tuam Regeneration masterplan was completed 2021 with funding approved under RRDF. This has now been used to secure both RRDF and European funding for the Town Under the THRIVE scheme. The Tuam Town Hall was granted €3,679,200 under CAT 1 with match funding of €409,484. The Tuam Station Quarter Masterplan was granted €199,310 100% funding for the delivery of the project.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Successful Cat 1 application for Tuam Town Hall
- Part 8 application prepared and approved for Tuam Shambles and unsuccessful CAT 1 funding application
- Published tender for appointment of consultants to deliver the construction phase

- Tendered for consultants for Station Quarter Masterplan

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Submit RRDF CAT 1 application for Shambles covered outdoor market.
- Contractors to be appointed and commencement of construction on Tuam Town Hall with 18-month build program.
- Prepare and submit Part 8 for Tuam Station House and apply for 100% THRIVE funding for redevelopment of the building
- Completion of Tuam Station Quarter Masterplan

BALLINASLOE

A successful 100% funding was secured for the delivery of the Town Centre First Plan for Ballinasloe with a budget of €131,501.

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Application for THRIVE funding
- Tender and appointment of consultants for the TCF plan
- EOI and appointment of new Town team

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Preparation and completion of TCF plan
- Community engagement and collaborative working with the Town team
- Identification of future investment projects for the town.

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.

BUILDING CONTROL

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024

- 801 commencement notices have been validated to 4th November 2024
- 107 completion certificates have been validated to 4th November 2024
- 210 new building inspections have been carried out by the Building Control Officer to check compliance with the Building Regulations to 4th November 2024.
- 1,322 new buildings commenced to 4th November 2024

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024:

- 243 warning notices/letters served to 31st October 2024.
- 124 enforcement notices served to 31st October 2024.
- 23 files have been referred for legal action to 31st October 2024.
- 319 unauthorised development complaints received to 31st October 2024.
- 216 approx. enforcement files have been resolved/closed as of the 31st October 2024.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- It is proposed to continue to provide resources to the Enforcement Team to ensure the implementation of the Planning Regulations in 2024 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 2024:

- Athenry Walled Towns Day: This family fun day was held on Sunday 18th 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.
- 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, Heritage Office working on the “Galway Forged Gates project: Phase 3”. This work involves working with communities in Oughterard, Aughrim, Moylough and Athenry.
- Decade of Commemoration involves including further work on promotion of Aleen Cust, Irish Bi-lingual Childrens Garda Workbook and Bi-lingual Garda Centenary Book.
- 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. The Heritage Office will also process grants for projects and equipment for eligible iCAN Groups.

- Féile na gCloch took place on Inis Oírr on 12th- 15th September 2024. The festival was extremely successful saw a large number of participants from all over the world including various parts of Ireland, the EU, Canada, USA, Australia, Austria and Japan.
- *Digital Mapping of Graveyards in the County* –Continued working on the digital mapping system with GIS Department to incorporate the use of drones and Survey 123. Working also with Community Groups to upload their graveyard data to the system.
- Community Events, Conferences and Workshops including ‘Harvesting our Heritage’ conference which took place in Mountbellew on 11th July and ‘Roundstone’s Hidden Heritage’ Conference which took place on 23 July to commemorate 200 years since the founding of Roundstone by Alexander Nimmo.
- Assistance, advice, and support was also given to numerous Tidy Town, Community Heritage and schools groups in 2024 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.
- StoryMaps worked with University of Galway students on the creation of new Storymaps for Ballyglunin, Mountbellew, Monivea and a number of civil parishes. Also facilitated Creggs, Oughterard and Mannion Clan host their StoryMaps .
- Townland Research: Working with University of Galway students on the documenting of 171 townlands, which are now uploaded onto Galway Community Heritage website.
- Provided training on Oral Heritage research and undertaking videoing on smart phones.
- Participation on Committees/teams such as the *Placenames Committee and National Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee*
- 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 5 - Working in South Connemara on this phase of the project.
- Produce a Golden Mile Calendar for County Galway.
- Development of a new *Heritage and Biodiversity Plan for the County of Galway 2023- 2030* in partnership with Biodiversity Office and Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Forum.
- 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 2: West Galway is being undertaken. The audit of oral recordings of stories, family histories and memories is being undertaken in to preserve them for future generations before reels and cassettes are lost forever.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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. She will also provide guidance and assistance on undertaking archaeological heritage-based projects to best heritage practice. Also apply for Community Monument Funding.
- Continue to develop further StoryMaps for the county and document further townlands in partnership with local community groups.
- Work with INSIGHT, University of Galway and Galway Education Centre and schools on the 'Lost Schools' 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.
- Medieval Loughrea– Seek funding for a signage strategy for Loughrea in partnership with the Area Office and Loughrea Medieval Festival as part of the Irish Walled Town Network funding.
- 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 and administer the ICAN community support grant scheme.
- 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.
- Continue with the Holy Well audit of County Galway.

- Continue with the Oral Heritage Audit.
- Participation on Committees/teams such as the Placenames Committee, 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 to develop the town heritage booklets.
- Undertake the Féile na gCloch festival in Inis Óírr.
- Develop and deliver heritage training.
- Support and undertake events for Heritage Week.

BIODIVERSITY

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Biodiversity Week May 2024: Ran and supported events around the County including a Wildflower Workshop in Brigit's Garden, Dawn Chorus in Roundstone, Sustainable Gardening workshop in Glenamaddy, BioBlitz in Portumna and Discover the Beach event at Trá an Doilín.
- Local Biodiversity Action Fund Projects: Hare's Corner Alpine Newt Eradication, Shannon Callows Survey and Biodiversity Citizen Science Programme, Invasive Alien Species Treatment, Invasive Alien Species Survey, Lough Corrib Islands Survey, Working with Nature Biodiversity Awareness Project, Mayfly survey, Connemara Biodiversity Awareness & Engagement, Large Carder Bee Clonbur Pollinator Project, Barn Owl monitoring & conservation in Galway, Alpine Newt eDNA
- Provision of Lesser Horseshoe Bat training to Galway County Council staff.
- 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 2025:

- Continue with the roll-out of biodiversity projects with the funding support of Heritage Council and the National Parks & Wildlife Service including including The Hare's Corner,

Alpine Newt Eradication, Invasive Alien Species Treatment, Invasive Alien Species Survey, Working with Nature, Mayfly Survey, Barn Owl Conservation, Swift Survey, Lesser Horseshoe Bat Conservation.

- 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.
- Launch the 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
- Provision of training to staff on lighting for wildlife.
- Creative Ireland Biodiversity Projects
- 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.
- Create more StoryMaps.

CONSERVATION

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Liaised with GRETB, CIF and Departmental Built Heritage Advisory service re traditional building skills training courses.
- 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 2025:

- 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 and update Architectural Inventory System.
- Promote opportunities to raise awareness of the architectural heritage and its appropriate conservation including climate resilience 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.

- Support and Participate in *Architecture at the Edge* festival of architecture. On site Events and hybrid events online to be explored in County Galway.
- Continue to promote traditional skills use and training initiatives in association with the Building Limes Forum Ireland, Construction Industry Federation and GRETB.
- Promote and administer *The Walks, Loughrea*; conservation project to boundary walls and bridges in historic public realm.
- 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.

FINANCE, MOTOR TAX, ICT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

VALUE FOR MONEY, SHARED SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

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). This year-to-date Galway County Council generated 176 sRFT's and 25 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. This year-to-date Galway County Council processed 49 requests for tenders on this platform.

GCC have been working with cities4forests to develop a sustainable wood procurement policy specific to requirements for the council. This policy is at an advanced draft stage.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 2024 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 2024:

- 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.
- In accordance with Finance Act, 2022: Section 897C, Enhanced Reporting Requirements was introduced in 2024, submitting details to Revenue before payments are made.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- 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 cheque payments.
- Additional efficiencies achieved re: Budget drafting system (Budgeting / Forecasting / Reporting) and full engagement with the software provider for increased functionality.
- Additional efficiencies achieved through software upgrade for travel and subsistence.
- 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 2024:

- 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 Rate Demands issued in 2024 set out the new revaluation amounts for businesses. The Rates and other Matters Act 2019 also provided

a change in the requirements to produce rate demands. The rates are now billed in one moiety instead of two.

- The Finance Section implemented the Increased Cost of Business Grant on behalf of the Department of Enterprise in 2024.
- The Finance Department are currently administering the Power Up Grant on behalf of the Department of Enterprise, and it is anticipated that qualifying businesses will receive a payment before year end.
- 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 2025:

- Monitor and update the Revenue collection function as regards best practice.
- Continue to review debt collection procedures.
- 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 2024:

- The number of motor tax transactions carried out by Galway County Council motor tax offices to the end of September 2024 was 45,162. Over €7.4m was taken in by Galway Motor Tax Offices for this period. Approximately 84.5% of total motor tax transactions for the Galway area were carried out online to the end of September, 2024.
- 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 2025:

- Work will continue 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 2024:

- Liaising with IPB in relation to all aspects of insurance claims being dealt with by Galway County Council.
- Corresponding with our legal team and other Council Departments in collating documents for use in the investigation of all claims.
- Providing assistance to Council Departments regarding insurance matters.
- Corresponding with members of the public regarding claims submitted to Galway County Council.
- Provide insurance details to IPB in relation to all departments regarding renewal information and policy cover ensuring insurance policy payments premia are made to IPB.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Liaising with IPB in relation to all aspects of insurance claims being dealt with by Galway County Council.
- Corresponding with our legal team and other Council Departments in collating documents for use in the investigation of all claims.
- Collaboration with all stakeholders in relation to any future claims received by the Risk Control office.
- Corresponding with the public regarding claims submitted to Galway County Council.
- Provide assistance to Council Departments regarding insurance matters.
- Provide insurance details to IPB in relation to all departments regarding renewal information and policy cover ensuring insurance policy payments premia are made to IPB.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

- Completed Procurement for new galway.ie Content Management System (CMS) website and commencing design and content production.
- Financial and Payroll Systems Business Intelligence (BI) dashboard development.
- Municipal Offices Athenry, Gort, Clifden and An Cheathra Rua connection to multi gigabit Government Cloud Network (GCN).

- Bia Innovator Campus network design, procurement, and implementation.
- Playground Inspection Application for safety and maintenance completed and implemented.
- Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Framework Engagement for Council network equipment replacement.
- Support for new staff additions with ICT services and equipment provision.
- Information Security Staffing and Systems Protections increase.

PROPOSALS FOR 2025:

- Customer Relations Management (CRM) System Corporate Services.
- Unified Single Digital Software Portal for Public Services Engagement.
- National Local Authority Accounts Management Program Support.
- Digital Storage and Compute Replacement with Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Framework.
- Cloud Systems hosted Business Continuity Development.
- Implementation of OGP awarded tender full network switching replacement for all office locations.
- Implementation of National Cyber Security Centre (NSCS) Standards.
- Launching and implementing a Learning Management System (LMS) for Information Systems Security and Policy Training.
- Support of activities to support and increase Cyber Insurance cover and effectiveness.
- Laptop and Desktop Replacement program.
- Procurement using OGP Managed Print Services for printing, scanning and photocopying devices replacement.
- Geographic Information Systems Cloud Residency Move.
- Inspection and Mobile Management Applications for Ring Buoy and Beach Lifeguards Activities.
- Implement and Support action items for Local Government ICT and Digital Strategy 2030.
- Implementation of additional staff to support and implement Local Government Digital and IS Strategy 2030.

3 YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025 – 2027

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

ATHENRY RRDF

The funding approved under Cat 1 RRDF for Athenry is €6,075,518 with a match funding requirement of €675,058.

The Cross Street and Market Square enhancement project and the redevelopment of Somer house is currently at Detail Design stage. A tender is about to be published, seeking consultants to develop this building to deliver a Community & Enterprise Hub.

CLIFDEN RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 2 RRDF for Clifden is €792,030 with a match funding requirement of €264,010. 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.

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.

These projects have reached practical completion and the final Project Architect/Engineer's Report been issued in accordance with Failte Ireland guidelines.

Total expenditure by the Regeneration Team on the project was €364,128 which equates to €273,096 (75%) Failte Ireland Funding and €91,032 match funding.

GORT

The pilot Town Centre First (TCF) plan for Gort was launched in December 2023. 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 as well as the Heritage Stewardship funding application from the Heritage Council for project development measures for the Gort Town hall building.

Galway County Council Regeneration team has been successful Funding of €798,584 with a match funding requirement of €199,646 for the Public Realm Enhancement Project. Privately owned lands are being acquired for use as a public car park in support of the public realm project with agreed sales prices of €180,000 and €220,000 respectively.

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 with a match funding requirement of €40,930. 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.

A Project Completion report has been issued in accordance with the Public Spending Code and the balance of funding returned to the DRCD.

Total expenditure on the project was €73,063 which equates to €54,797 (75%) RRFD Funding and €18,266.

LOUGHREA RRDF

The funding approved under CAT 1 RRDF for Loughrea is €4,241,897 with a match funding of €1,413,966. The project will assist revitalise Loughrea and in particular the Loughrea Town Hall by bringing back into use this historic and important building.

Construction Tendering process has been finalised for the Town Hall. The appointment of contractors expected Q4 2024 and with a view to construction commencing on site in Q2 2025.

PORTUMNA RRDF

The funding approved under RRDF CAT 2 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 town trail, wayfinding and interpretation as well as the regeneration of town centre historic sites.

The public realm project is now at detailed design stage with the proposals due to be lodged for Part VIII planning in Q4 of 2024.

PORTUMNA COURTHOUSE RRDF

The funding approved under RRDF CAT 1 for Portumna Courthouse is €2,950,749 with a match funding requirement of €327,861. 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.

Construction is currently progressing on site with proposed completion due in Q1 2025.

TUAM

The funding approved under RRDF for Tuam was €175,000 with a match funding requirement of €60,000. The funding included the preparation of a Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan and the delivery of a number of key projects identified within.

The project is now complete, and a Project Completion report has been issued in accordance with the Public Spending Code.

Total expenditure on the project was €222,643 which equates to €164,756 (74%) RRFD Funding and €57,887 (26%).

RRDF CAT 1 funding was granted for the redevelopment of Tuam Town Hall to the sum of €3,679,200 with a match funding requirement of €409,484. This project will involve internal renovations and reconfiguration of the main building to make way for the construction of new multi-functional spaces. The project is currently out to tender for consultants.

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 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 and Capital Assistance Leasing Funding 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	€18m	€9m

Capital Assistance Scheme	€3.4m	€2m	€2m
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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 2025 is achieving the delivery of 385 social houses through the activities of the Council and Approved Housing Bodies.

A construction/build programme will be delivered in 2025, and the expenditure profile reflects this. The focus will continue to shift away from leasing arrangements/acquisitions and towards construction (new build delivery). 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 2026.

The Council's proposed developments to 2026 in line with Housing for All includes delivery on existing and new landbanks acquired in Portumna, Tuam and Loughrea. 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 (2025)

Location	Type	Social Housing Units
An Gort Fada, Ballinasloe	Turnkey	1
Pairc na Cille, Athenry	Turnkey	12
Vicars Choral, Tuam	Turnkey	6
An Choill Fada, Ballinasloe	Turnkey	14
St. Josephs, Ballinasloe	Build	8
Caislean Rathlin, Ardrahan	Build	10
Hillcrest, Loughrea	Build	3
Parkmore, Tuam	Build	4

Total	58
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It is anticipated that additional turnkey projects will be sourced in 2025 following 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 2025 and future years.

The targets for build delivery under Housing for All Plan over the remaining period of the Plan (2025 & 2026) are as follows:

2025: 385 units **2026:** 393 units **Total: 778 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. To date, delivery by AHB's in Galway has been under the 40% target.

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 2025 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 2025 – 2029.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

The pipeline of Affordable Housing is currently as follows:

Status	Scheme Name	No. of Affordable Purchase	No. of Cost Rental	Delivery Due
Approved	Garrai Na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir (Phase 1)	17	0	Q1 2025
Approved	Garrai Na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir (Phase 2)	16	0	Q3 2025
Approved	Garrai Na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir (Phase 3)	28	0	Q4 2025
Project in development	Droim na Gaoithe, Baile Chláir	36	30	Q3/Q4 2026

Project in development	Raheen, Athenry	28	0	Q4 2026
Project in development	Pairc na hAbhainn, Athenry	16	0	Q4 2026
	Totals	141	30	

The Affordable Housing team will be evaluating Part V housing options on any new planning permissions for housing development. Land purchased on or after 1 August 2021 will have a 20% Part V requirement. This 20% will be composed of a minimum 10% social housing and may have up to 10% affordable housing.

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:

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.

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 2024 we will have completed retrofitted 73 properties under the Energy Efficiency Programme. This is in addition to the 207 properties which were retrofitted between 2021 and 2023.

Galway County Council proposes to retrofit 80 properties of its housing stock in 2025. 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.

Description	2025	2026	2027
Energy Efficiency, Voids Retrofitting and Planned Maintenance Programme	€4m	€4.5m	€4.5m

PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME:

It is proposed to advance a significant Planned Maintenance Programme subject to loan approval by Plenary and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage for existing housing stock to achieve compliance with statutory requirements, including minimum standards. A loan of €10 million is being sought to fund the Planned Maintenance Programme with the majority of the loan drawdown over the period 2025 – 2027.

VOIDS PROGRAMME:

A Voids Programme will continue to be delivered bringing vacant properties to the required minimum rental standards prior to reletting. Once off funding has been provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for a limited number of void properties on an annual basis with the balance of funding provided through the Housing Maintenance Budget via the revenue account and with the approval of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, via Internal Capital Receipts (ICR's).

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Capital projects relating, to Roads, Piers and Harbours, Flood Mitigation schemes, Plant Acquisition and Active Travel (Greenways) 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	he application has been remitted back to An Bord Pleanála. The Board will reconsider the proposed project and may hold an oral hearing in 2025 as part of consideration of the project. Subject to approval, 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. Scheme Budget: €600m

	Funding Source: TII 100%
N59 Maigh Cuilinn Bypass	Complete defects and close out remaining land agreements. Scheme Budget: €71m Funding Source: TII 100%
N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme	Proceed detailed design in 2025 and construction 2026 & 2027. Scheme Budget: €25m Funding Source: TII 100%
N59 Bunnakill to Claremount	Progression of method statements for other aspects of the Bunnakill to Claremont 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. Scheme Budget: €40m Funding Source: TII 100%
N17 Milltown to Gortnagunnad Realignment	Progress land acquisition and detailed design and then the Scheme will advance through Phases 5 and 6 of TII Project Management Guidelines. Scheme Budget: €25m Funding Source: TII 100%
N59 Clifden to Maam Cross	An application for funding to progress the scheme through Phases 0 to 4 of TII Project Management Guidelines has been made. Scheme Budget: €80m Funding Source: TII 100%
N84 Galway to Curraghmore	Phase 1 of the TII PMGs is to be completed and approval to be sought from TII to progress the project through Phases 2 to 4 in 2025 with options to be considered. Scheme Budget: €40 - €200m

	Funding Source: TII 100%
Galway County National Secondaries Relief Road Study	Phase 0 and 1 of the TII PMGs is to be completed and approval to be sought from TII to progress the project through Phase 2 (Options). Scheme Budget: €30m Funding Source: TII 100%
N83 Baile Chláir Traffic Calming	The design of the network drainage, cycleway and traffic calming measures have commenced in-house to be completed followed by tendering and construction stages in 2025. Scheme Budget: €5m, Funding Source: TII 100%
N59 Oughterard Footbridge	Detailed design and environmental evaluations to be completed followed by an application for consent to An Bord Pleanála in 2025. Scheme Budget: €5m Funding Source: TII 100%
Pavement Schemes	A 3 year pavement renewal programme is to be agreed with TII in 2025. Estimated Programme Budget - €3m/year Funding Source: TII 100%
Active Travel Schemes	Progress the Active Travel programmes through the land acquisition and detailed design stages. N67 South of Ballinderreen AT Scheme Budget: €1.5m N63 Abbeyknockmoy Village AT Scheme Budget: €1m Funding Source: TII 100%
Galway to Clifden Greenway	Complete construction from Clifden to Recess. Land acquisition on-going. Publish the Emerging Preferred Corridor 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. Scheme Budget: €45m Funding Source: TII 100%
NCN Galway to Athlone Cycleway	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. The scheme is be progressed in 2 sections, Galway to Portumna and Portumna to Athlone. Scheme Budget: Galway to Portumna - €150m Portumna to Athlone - €100m Funding Source: TII 100%

NON-NATIONAL ROADS (REGIONAL AND LOCAL ROADS)

Advance a programme of capital works on Regional and Local Roads. This will be dependent on the availability of funding and where required the availability of the necessary internal resources to advance the projects.

Project:	Status:
Athenry Northern Ring Road (Strategic Regional and Local Road Grant)	CPO approved for western section. Tender docs prepared. Approval to proceed to tender expected in Q4 2024. Construction phase to follow in Q2 2025. Detailed design continuing on the eastern section to Monivea road. Scheme Budget for Western Section: €3.95m. Funding Source: 100% funding from DoT
Specific Improvement Grant Belleville	Detailed design prepared. Discussions with landowners ongoing. Proceed to public consultation/statutory planning in Q4 2024 to Q5 2025. Scheme Budget: €1.5M Funding Source: 100% funding from DoT
Specific Improvement Grant Kilbannon	Detailed design prepared. Land acquisition continuing. Proceeding to tender construction works in Q4 2024. Expected construction start in Q3 2025. Scheme Budget: €4.95M

	Funding Source: 100% funding from DoT
Specific Improvement Grant Causeways	Repairs to 4 no. causeway structures. Toposurvey and other surveys completed. Tendering for consultant for road elements underway. Scheme Budget: €3.45M Funding Source: 100% funding from DoT
Specific Improvement Grant Cuan na Loinge	Design consultants to be appointed Q4 2024. Initial site visits completed. Project will involve raising road from flood levels (tidal). Environmental assessments to be completed. Expected construction start in Q4 2025 – subject to environmental assessment and statutory planning processes. Scheme Budget: €840,000 Funding Source: 100% funding from DoT
Oughterard Car Park and Bus Park	Enhancement of existing Council carpark at Oughterard to facilitate buses, additional pedestrian facilities. Scheme Budget: €250,000 Funding Source: 100% funding from GCC Own Resources (allocated)
Ballinasloe Townspark Relief Road	Additional funding and resources required to support delivery. Scheme Budget: €TBC Funding Source: Some GCC own resources but significant additional funding will be required.
R336 Bearnascrib via Ros a Mhíl	It is a policy objective of Galway County Council to support the preparation of a feasibility study in relation to the R336 within the lifetime of the County Development Plan. Scheme Budget: €TBC Funding Source: Funding required.
Islands Minor Capital Works Programme	The Department of Rural and Community Development has provided funding to Galway County Council annual over a number of recent years. The funds are generally in the order of €600,000 annually and cover road resurfacing, minor works on piers, footpaths and other infrastructural elements on our islands.

	Scheme Budget: €0.7M annually (represents 90% funding and must be matched by Galway County Council in the order of 10%). Funding Source: DRCD (90%) and GCC Own Resources (10%)
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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. TII funding has been secured for the acquisition of 2 no. permanently mounted salt spreaders with brine spreading capability. Delivery of these truck is anticipated in Q1 2025. The cost is 100% recoupable from TII. The acquisition of an additional 3 no. 26 tonne tipper trucks has also been progressed. They will replace vehicles which are at end of life or have been recently removed from service. External funding is not available for this purchase. These trucks will form part of the Winter Service Fleet, they will have pre wet spreading capability, and they will also service the Municipal Districts. Delivery of these trucks is also anticipated in Q1 2025. Further acquisitions are planned over succeeding years to modernise the fleet with significant savings

on operation and maintenance costs offsetting an element of the capital investment.

The projected spend over the years 2025 – 2027 is €2.5M. In the main part this will be financed from Galway County Council own resources with support from TII and DOT anticipated in the region of €1M.

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:
South Galway (Gort Lowlands) Flood Relief Scheme	Development of the EIAR and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been progressed during 2024, with assessments and reports due to be finalised before years end. The scheme is scheduled to seek statutory permissions to proceed in 2025.
Ballinasloe Flood Relief Scheme	Development of the EIAR and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been progressed during 2024, with assessments and reports due to be finalised before years end. The scheme is scheduled to seek statutory permissions to proceed in 2025.
Clifden Flood Relief Scheme	Development of the EIAR and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been progressed during 2024, with assessments and reports due to be finalised before years end. The scheme is scheduled to seek statutory permissions to proceed in 2025. This scheme does not utilise the Arterial Drainage Act and will route through the conventional planning process.

The Council is continuing to partner with the OPW on Flood Relief Scheme applications. The study into the effect of Storm Debie on Oranmore, Clarinbridge and Kinvara commenced in September, with the final report due in twelve months. The South Galway, Ballinasloe and Clifden schemes are progressing through the design phase and funding for the delivery of these and other minor flood relief works will be of immense value to the local communities. Provisions.

PUBLIC LIGHTING

The completion of the LED retrofitting programme will continue over the next three years. In parallel a comprehensive asset inventory survey is to be completed – this will be done as part of a regional contract. Unbundling of the Public Lighting network from the electricity distribution network is another significant piece of work under this heading which will be progressing within the relevant timeframe.

Projected expenditure over the period 2025 – 2027 is approximately €6M. €1M will be provided through Climate Action Funding with the balance to come from Galway County Council own resources.

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:
Inis Oírr Pier Improvements – construct breakwater and pier extension, carry out dredging and provide additional berthage	The Land Acquisition/CPO process is complete and all lands necessary to be made available for the project have been acquired. The process to procure a contractor to undertake the works was completed in 2024 and contract award is anticipated by year end pending DRCD approval of the recommended tender and updated Business Case. It is anticipated that works will commence in 2025 with completion by end of 2026. The cost estimate for the completion of this project is €30M. It is fully funded by the Approving Authority, the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Inis Meáin Improvements

In 2024, following submission of a business case, funding approval was obtained from DRCD 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.

A consultant has been appointed, and a Final Report will be furnished in Quarter 3 of 2025. The recommendation from that Feasibility Report will underpin a funding application to move ahead and bring whatever proposals come out of the process through design, planning and construction stages.

It is projected that spend on this project over the next three years will be approximately €1M. This will be fully funded by the Approving Authority the Department of Rural and Community Development.

FISHERIES HARBOUR AND COASTAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME

Project:	Status:
Various Piers and Harbours	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 progresses through planning, design and construction phases.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

In 2024 Galway County Council secured €2.5m under the NTA Active Travel fund for Active Travel works around the County including local transport plans, community transport studies, urban design projects and safe routes to school schemes. Additional funding is being given to the county for the provision of a number of bus shelters.

Active Travel Design Consultants will continue to be appointed for Active Travel Design Scheme projects for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025. In respect of any design projects not fully completed by year end, applications for project-continuance into 2025 will be made to the NTA. A large element of the work in 2025 will be on progressing the urban design projects in Tuam, Athenry, Loughrea, Ballinasloe and Oranmore, and concluding the drafting of Local Transport Plans and Community Transport Studies.

The Active Travel Programme is a rolling programme of projects. However, the NTA has advised that funding is relatively constrained nationally, and that the priority will be to proceed with existing projects through to construction. All projects ultimately require the approval of the NTA to proceed and must comply with the NTA's Project Appraisal Guidelines.

Project:	Status:
Bus Shelters	Separate source of funding to main NTA allocation. Delivered to Galway County Council separately from BSEP below due to advanced progression of bus shelters at a no. of locations. Scheme Budget: €0.2M. Funding Source: 100% funding from DoT
Bus Stop Enhancement Programme	NTA has indicated that this scheme will not commence in 2024 but rather in 2025. Indicative scheme funding of €500,000 expected to be provided annually in the next 3 years. Capital works to include shelters, seating, hardstanding at bus stop locations nationally. Funding to be conducted through local authorities. Funding source: 100% funding from NTA
Tuam Active Travel Scheme Dublin Road	Consultants will be appointed in late Nov 2024. Design to commence in December 2024. Scheme budget: €2.5M (estimated) Funding source: 100% funding from NTA
Ballinasloe Active Travel Scheme R446	Design underway. Early public consultation has taken place in 2024. Public consultation will take place again on the Emerging Preferred Option. Expect to proceed to statutory planning processes in Q1 2025 Scheme Budget: €3.5M Funding source: 100% funding from NTA
Oranmore Active Travel Scheme Coast Road	Design underway. Early public engagement completed. Public consultation will take place on the Emerging Preferred Option. Expect to proceed to statutory planning processes in Q2 2025. Scheme Budget: €1.0M Funding source: 100% funding from NTA
Athenry Active Travel Scheme Church Street to Station Rd	Consultants will be appointed in late Nov 2024. Design to commence in December 2024. Scheme budget: €2.9M (estimated) Funding source: 100% funding from NTA
Loughrea Active Travel Design Scheme	Options for a new urban design scheme to be considered in Q1 2025. Scheme budget: €2.5M (estimated) Funding source: 100% funding from NTA

Safe Routes to School	A programme of capital works across 3 no. rounds of schools. 11 no. schools announced in Round 3. There are 65 no. schools in total in County Galway on this scheme. Scheme budget: €0.1M per school. Funding source: 100% funding from NTA
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NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN

Project:	Status:
	The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to provide access to high-speed broadband to every home, school, and business in Ireland, even in remote areas. This is done through private investments and government support. Under the NBP, National Broadband Ireland (NBI) is contracted 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. By October 2024 NBI have passed 21,897 (58%) premises with fibre broadband, of which 7,764 properties have been connected. Network build has commenced on a further 8,347 premises. NBI's current build schedule anticipates that by the end of 2025 their network in County Galway will be 68% complete and NBI's currently published build plan indicates they will have completed their network roll out in County Galway by December 2026. Commercial Investment delivering FTTH services. Under the NBP it is projected Fibre broadband will be delivered to 100,668 premises in County Galway by commercial investment, companies such as Open Eir, Siro Virgin media and ENet are currently investing in the roll out of High speed broadband in the county. The following towns in County Galway now have high speed broadband networks; Tuam, Athenry, Gort, Clifden, Oranmore, Barna, Loughrea & Ballinasloe. Open Eir has invested €31.5 million in County Galway in upgrading the broadband networks in County.

	In September 2023 SIRO announced further investment in County Galway, with the building of two new fibre networks in the towns of Gort and Athenry. This investment adds to the other town of Oranmore, Barna, Ballinasloe and Loughrea which have already benefit form SIRO fibre broadband networks. SIRO's full investment in these six Galway towns is expected to exceed €11 million. On 26th September 2024: Vodafone announced that Galway County would be part of the next phase in its nationwide network upgrade programme, providing enhanced coverage and connectivity for its customers. From October, the existing 3G network will upgrade to a more sustainable, efficient and reliable 4G and 5G network service, with the 3G service no longer being available.
Broadband related initiatives	Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) are a key part of Ireland's "Our Rural Future" strategy and are aimed at improving digital connectivity in rural areas. Galway County has 22 Broadband Connection Points (BCP) including on 4 of the islands. The rollout of BCPs is a collaborative effort involving the Department of Rural and Community Development, National Broadband Ireland (NBI), Vodafone Ireland under the National Broadband Plan. The scheme is known as the Connected Communities Initiative. 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. Public Wi-Fi - Wi-Fi4EU The EU Commission and the Department of Rural and Community Development funded the installation of Wi-Fi access points in County Galway through the Wi-Fi4EU scheme. Galway County Council installed 40 Wi-Fi access points and is committed to funding the running costs of this service until 2025.

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 2024-2026.

Please note all projects are subject to Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) funding and specific approval by project.

FIRE APPLIANCES

- Galway Fire & Rescue Service have sought funding from the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management for a Heavy Rescue Tender with Crane, this application is currently under consideration by NDFEM.
- In Q4 2024 Galway Fire & Rescue Service were granted approval to procure a Mid-Sized Appliance Vehicle, the procurement process is underway.
- Galway Fire & Rescue Service has been designated as a regional hub for both new capabilities of high-capacity pumping and urban search & rescue. As part of these programmes, it is envisaged that starting from 2025 GFRS will receive funding for up to 7 new vehicles and associated equipment at a provisional estimated cost of €1.2m.

FIRE STATIONS

New fire station projects are outlined in DHLGH National Capital Programme 2021-2025.

ATHENRY FIRE STATION

- The new Fire Station in Athenry went operational in October 2024 and was officially opened by Minister of State, Anne Rabbitte on Friday 15th November 2024.
The three-bay retained Fire Station and Training Centre was constructed by Coolsivna Construction Ltd.

LOUGHREA FIRE STATION

- A suitable site has been identified and a revised application under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations for the proposed Loughrea Fire Station was submitted for publication on 11th October 2024. It is hoped that the Chief Executive's report will be submitted to the Loughrea Municipal District meeting in December 2024 for members' consideration. Briefings for MD members were held on the 8th and 15th July 2024 and further meetings are planned prior to the December Municipal District meeting. Subject to approval it is proposed to tender for a main contractor in early December 2024 with a contract start date in March 2025.

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. Given the level of capital support received from NDFEM in recent years it is deemed unlikely that such an approval will be forthcoming in the short term. GFRS are currently exploring the possibility of a commercial mortgage for this project. Preliminary analysis suggests that energy savings would make the cost of servicing the mortgage effectively cost neutral until capital approval is granted.

GALWAY CITY FIRE STATION AND HEADQUARTERS

- The preferred site has been identified with Galway City Council. An initial independent planning and flood risk assessment is underway, and it is hoped that this will be completed presently. The capital appraisal is 99% complete and will be submitted to the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management once Chief Executive approval is confirmed.

BRIGADE MECHANICS WORKSHOP ATHENRY

- GFRS maintains a fleet of approximately sixty (60) vehicles. A Request for Tender for the Design Team pertaining to the Brigade Mechanics Workshop was issued and was received on the 13th September 2024. The tender assessment board met on 2nd October 2024 to consider submissions and the Most Economically Advantageous Tender was identified. Hopefully, the Design Team Contract will be signed by the end of November 2024.

PORTUMNA FIRE STATION

- A Capital appraisal will be submitted to the NDFEM in early 2025 in relation to the refurbishment of Portumna Fire Station. It is estimated that the project cost will be in the region of €0.8 million.

OTHER- SMALL PROJECTS CAPITAL

- Funding was granted by the NDFEM for the procurement of battery-operated hydraulic cutting equipment and ancillary rescue support equipment.
- A new Incident Command Unit has been acquired through funding from the NDFEM, cost €140K.
- A transport vehicle for the GFRS Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) was acquired, cost €67.5K, again through funding from the NDFEM. This ROV will support the work of the new regional Urban Search and Rescue efforts, the acquisition of the new transport vehicle is an important aspect of the capability.
- ROV Remote Detection Equipment has also been funded by the NDFEM, this is the first time that such capability has been available to the fire service and significantly reduces the risk to firefighters, as detection can safely be done from outside the hazardous/risk area. This detection equipment includes:
 - Thermo Sciebtific Radeye G10 Radiation Detector.

- Rae – MultiRae PID & 5 Gas Detector.
- Res – Q – CQL Raman Chemical Analyzer. This Res –Q- CQL is the first capability in the Irish Fire Service for the analysis of liquids and powders in terms of toxicity and explosive content.

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

GORT CIVIC AMENITY SITE

The estimated cost to complete the project (construction works, connection costs & consultant fees) is in the order of €646K. The tendered construction cost component within this estimate expired in March 2024. The Gort CAS project development has planning and EPA license approval.

KILCONNELL LANDFILL – PROPOSED ECO PARK

A FI request has been issued regarding the Part 8 planning submission. The cost to complete the response will be in the order of €34K for ecological surveys, updated screenings and design revisions. Subject to planning approval, to progress the project to tendering Stage (iii) will require funding of approx. €35K. To date GCC have been able to acquire grant funding assistance from DECC for this project.

POLLBOY

The Preliminary Design Report for an Amenity Development has been completed. To progress the project to a planning submission will require funding of approximately €80K to cover stage (ii) design services, site investigations, screenings and ecological surveys.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Capital expenditure projections on Burial Grounds in 2025 are as follows:

At Part 8:

Kilconieron €72,000 (Construction)

Leitir Moir €80,000 (Construction)

Site Identified:

Rinville €25,000 (Design)

Annaghdown €10,000 (Archaeology) €350,000 (Site + Construction)

Priority – No Site:

Claregalway €10,000 (Surveys and Screenings)

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 AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENTS

Galway County Council is required to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. To support achievement of these targets it will be necessary to undertake capital investment in our portfolio of buildings during the period of the 3-year Capital Programme 2025-2027. As an initial step, four buildings have been proposed for Design Stage as part the Building Retrofit Pathfinder Programme, under which the SEAI provide 50% funding. A detailed estimate of costs will be available following the Design Stage.

Capital investment in our portfolio of buildings will also be required from the 3-year Capital Programme 2025-2027 for essential Health & Safety, maintenance and conservation purposes. Particular projects of note include ongoing repair and upcoming replacement of the roof fabric on County Buildings and essential Health and Safety works to the existing boundary wall at Bóthar na mBan.

COUNCIL OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

The Facilities Section have appointed Tom McNamara & Partners as the lead consultant to undertake an appraisal of all the Council office accommodation. A business case for the future office accommodation needs of the Council will be prepared in 2025 which will identify future accommodation needs and options, and the costs involved.

LIBRARIES

Expansion and upgrade of mobile library services encompassing two new mobiles which have received a grant funding award from DRCD.

Utilizing the human-led design approach to capture and collate the strategic review of library services and develop the library development plan.