

Activity Report 2020 - 2021



2020 - 2021



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council



Laois County Council
Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois



Leitrim
County Council
Comhairle Chontae Liatroma



CARLOW
COUNTY COUNCIL



WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council



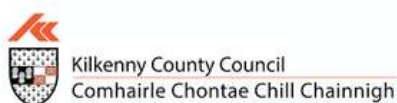
AN LONGFORT
Comhairle Chontae An Longfort
Longford County Council
CONNECTED
People - Place - Community



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council



Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council



Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh



Comhairle Contae
an Chabháin
Cavan
County Council



Comhairle Contae
Loch Garman
Wexford
County Council



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin
Wicklow County Council



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



Comhairle Contae
Ros Comáin
Roscommon
County Council



Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Council



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary County Council



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe
Galway City Council



Comhairle Contae Chiarraí
Kerry County Council



Comhairle Contae County Council



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City
& County Council



Comhairle Contae
Átha Cliath Theas
South Dublin County Council



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City
& County Council



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Contents

Message from the President	4
Message from the Directors	5
Who We Are	6
Governance, Responsibilities & Structures	7
AILG Committees	7
Our Year of 2020-2021 at a glance	10
Vision, Mission & Key Initiatives	11
1. Key Advocacy Campaigns	12
<i>Gender & Diversity: Promoting the role of women in local government</i>	16
2. AILG Policy & Legislation	20
<i>Research and policy: Partnership with Maynooth University</i>	26
<i>Engagement with stakeholders in the Local Government context</i>	32
3. Training & Education	34
4. Communications	46
5. Congress of Local & Regional Authorities in Europe (C.L.R.A.E)	50

Message from the President

Cllr. Nicholas Crossan,
AILG President 2021 - 22



The year 2020 - 2021 was one of enormous challenge for AILG similar to almost every organisation as we grappled with the Covid pandemic and had to rapidly adapt to new ways of working in order to ensure continued service delivery to our members. At the same time the AILG was also undergoing a process of some change itself to align its activities with the requirements of the modern era including ensuring its governance structures were of the highest standard. Against this dynamic environment the association continued to have substantial engagement with a wide range of stakeholders impacting on the local government environment including government departments, state agencies and regulators, counterpart local government associations, and, of course, members throughout the country.

"The Elected Members, through our association, are fundamental stakeholders in our local government system and it is vital that their voice is heard on issues at all times."

The AILG, though still relatively new, has in a short space of time, become an effective voice for the 949 elected members in our local government system. The last number of years has seen the association grow into a truly representative and support body for its members, delivering on areas including member training, policy development and better terms and conditions. To this end may I pay tribute to all of our Past Presidents and Executive Committees, whose experience and steady hands, has helped to guide the Association over the last 7 years. As councillors, we have a long history and involvement in local government and we all have great respect for the contribution of the elected members in our democratic local government system. The elected members, through our association, are fundamental stakeholders in our local government system and it is vital that their voice is heard on issues at all times.

In conclusion, I am indebted to the staff, Past Presidents and Executive Committees for their unwavering dedication to serving and supporting our members and the association. 2020 - 2021 has tested our resilience, adaptability and leadership and I am proud to say that everyone stood up to the challenge when it counted.

Handwritten signature of Nicholas Crossan in black ink.

Councillor Nicholas Crossan
AILG President 2021-22

Message from the Directors



Tom Moylan

Director



Liam Kenny

Director

It gives us great pleasure to report on the AILG's (Association of Irish Local Government) activities for the year 2020 - 2021.

During the course of the last seven years it has been the association's priority that councillors' voices would be listened to and accepted by national politicians, the department or indeed our council executives and that the days of being side-lined would be over. It has been our objective that a re-balancing has to take place and that as councillors, our members are re-asserting their authority.

With the help of the association's Officers, Executive Committee and Delegates, we have instigated an intensive lobbying campaign over the course of the last seven years to ensure that the voice of the local councillor is put back into the heart of local government. We are continuously involved in an intensive schedule of meetings, briefings and events as we seek to have the voice of the association heard in fora where policy is being made which is of relevance to local government. As we celebrate the 122nd Anniversary of Local Government in Ireland, the AILG and its predecessor associations have worked tirelessly to develop, support, and give a voice to Ireland's Local Authority Elected Members, helping them to respond to massive changes and challenges that have taken place in local government. We will continue to progress towards fulfilling our vision of a thriving local government system in Ireland with the Elected Members at its centre, serving and delivering for the public.

Liam Kenny & Tommy Moylan

Directors AILG

1. Who We Are

The Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) was formally established in July 2014. The association has two parent associations - the Association of County & City Councils and the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland. Following the local government reforms of 2014 both organisations merged voluntarily to form the Association of Irish Local Government.

The AILG is a **networking, policy development and training resource** for the elected members of Ireland's thirty-one County and City Councils. Through regular interaction with other stakeholders in the local government environment AILG aims to ensure that the contribution of Ireland's democratically elected councillors is appreciated in government departments and throughout the full range of public agencies.

The growth of AILG over the past seven years has been propelled collectively by the elected members and all the past presidents and past members of the Executive Committee.



Governance, Responsibilities and Structures

"AILG is committed to observing and operating out of the highest standards of governance for the organisation, in line with best practice and legislative requirements."

The AILG is governed under both the 2001 and 2014 Local Government Acts, following a merger of the two previous national representative bodies after the 2014 local government reforms.

The Association is structured on each of the 31 local authorities nominating three delegates to AILG (93 delegates in total) for the full 5 year-term of any local election period. We have 3 full-time staff members.

AILG Committees

Officers and Executive Committee

The Officer Board comprises of our President, Vice President and Past President. The President & Vice President are elected each year by Plenary Delegates at the association's annual AGM and are responsible for implementing and delivering the strategy and policies of AILG, in conjunction with the Executive Committee and Management Team.

Officers 2019 - 2020

- Cllr. Mick Cahill, President
- Cllr. Anne Colgan, Vice-President

Executive Committee Members 2019-2020

- Cllr. Jimmy Moloney
- Cllr. Damien O' Reilly
- Cllr. Deirdre O' Donovan
- Cllr. Sean Gilliland
- Cllr. Patrick O' Neill
- Cllr. Thomas Mulligan
- Cllr. Ger Baron
- Cllr. Michael Begley
- Cllr. Eddie Moran
- Cllr. Mary Hoade

Officers 2020 - 2021

- Cllr. Mary Hoade, President
- Cllr. John Joe Fennelly, Vice-President
- Cllr. Mick Cahill, Past President

Executive Committee Members 2020-2021

- Cllr. John Pender
- Cllr. Terry O' Flaherty
- Cllr. Michael Clarke
- Cllr. Martin McLoughlin
- Cllr. Garret Kelleher
- Cllr. Thomas Healy
- Cllr. Kieran Dennison
- Cllr. Bernard Moynihan
- Cllr. Baby Pererppadan
- Cllr. Damien O' Reilly

Governance, Responsibilities and Structures

Officers and Executive Committee

Officers 2021 - 2022

- Cllr. Nicholas Crossan, President
- Cllr. Nick Killian, Vice-President
- Cllr. Mary Hoade, Past President

Executive Committee Members 2021-2022

- Cllr. Joe Leddin
- Cllr. Kate Feeney
- Cllr. Arthur McDonald
- Cllr. John King
- Cllr. Noel Cribbin
- Cllr. Gráinne Maguire
- Cllr. Patrick McGowan
- Cllr. Fintan Brett
- Cllr. Breandán Fitzgerald
- Cllr. Charlie Farrelly

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is responsible for all matters relating to the financial affairs of the association encompassing the areas of financial planning and budgeting, resource and expenditure management, financial monitoring and reporting to the Executive Committee

Finance Committee Members 2019 - 2024

- AILG Officer Board (i.e President, Vice President, Past President)
- Cllr. John Paul Feeley
- Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan

Audit Committee

The primary purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide oversight of the financial reporting process, the audit process, the associations system of internal controls, internal procedures, risk assessment and management and compliance with laws and regulations. The Audit Committee has an independent role in advising the association on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and Audit matters, as part of the governance arrangements that operate within AILG.

Audit Committee Members 2019 - 2024

- AILG President
- Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick (Chair)
- Cllr. Christy Hyland
- Cllr. Aisling Moran
- Cllr. Jason Murphy

Compliance and Accounting

The Association maintains the highest standards in Compliance, Accounts, Internal Controls & Corporate Governance.

The AILG engages a professional external firm of accountants who complete the Association's Financial Accounts which are subsequently audited by the Local Government Auditor.

Governance, Responsibilities and Structures

AILG Organisational Development

In 2019, AILG undertook a detailed review of the Association in order to plan strategically for the long term future, work and role of the organisation. The key outcomes of that review were the reframing of the AILG mission statement, preparation of the Training and Professional Development Strategy, Policy and Advocacy Strategy, and the Communications Strategy.

A dedicated Project Team was then put in place to oversee the delivery of these strategies and this work continued during the past year. The Project Team comprises of the AILG Officer Board, chaired by Cllr. Anne Colgan and its standing members Cllr. Mick Cahill and Cllr. Thomas Mulligan. In addition to progressing the key strategies relating to Training and Development, Policy, and Communications, the Project Team focused during the year on review of key business processes, organisational governance, and identifying opportunities for new supports for members.

A Governance Handbook was drawn up and approved by the Executive, where the AILG governance principles, structures, roles and

responsibilities are brought together in a single document, setting out the AILG commitment to the highest standards of governance in line with best practice. New supports proposed by the Project Team included the development of a series of information leaflets for members and a survey of member supports provided by Local Authorities. Business processes reviews included the structure of Plenary meetings and Executive Committee meetings.

Our Year of 2020 - 2021 at a glance



3,096 Elected Members attended over 32 Training events (including over 2,200 online attendees) between February 2020 - November 2021)



Entered into a **two-year research partnership with Maynooth University** with, as an initial project, a study on the role of the Councillor in the 21st century.



Increased communications resources, developed a Communications Strategy including a **new website** and an active presence across social media platforms.



Numerous delegations & consistent dialogue with Ministers, Opposition Party Leaders, Party Spoke-persons, TDs & Senators to ensure the delivery of pay and conditions recommendations of the Moorhead report, introduced in July 2021.



We launched **five Information training leaflets for Elected Members**



Appeared before various Oireachtas committees as part of our policy work in relation to the Land Development Agency Bill and the Higher Education Authority Bill.



Pioneered regional caucus for female councillors across the midlands and west in partnership with See Her Elected.



As part of its efforts to remove the barriers that currently exist for women in politics, AILG **published proposals to provide maternity leave for councillors.**



Launched a Counselling & Welfare Service for Elected Members in partnership with the County & City Management Association (CCMA)

Our Vision

The AILG aims to ensure that the contribution of Ireland's democratically elected councillors is appreciated in Government Departments and throughout the full range of public agencies.

Our Mission

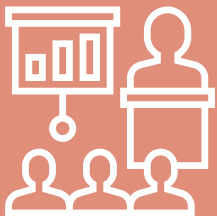
The AILG is a national representative body that represents and supports the role of our elected councillors. We are a strong voice for local communities through effective local government.

AILG Key Initiatives



Advocate

- Lobby for improved supports for local authority elected members
- Achieve greater influence for local government and our member local authorities



Assist

- Provide training, resources and support to councillors to meet their legislated responsibilities
- Provide general help, advice and guidance to elected members on aspects of local government law, powers and responsibilities of elected members



Advance

- To put the councillors voice to the forefront of local government
- Facilitate continuous improvement for local government
- Build the profile and enhance the status and reputation of the elected member

1.1 Campaign for Improved Terms & Conditions for Elected Members

The major focus of AILG was to ensure that Government delivered on the recommendations of the Moorhead report which proposed improvements in the terms and conditions of elected members.

Building on the work of successive Presidents and Executive Committees since 2014, the President and Officers maintained a consistent dialogue with all Ministers in the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to ensure the delivery of pay and conditions recommendations of the report. This required tenacity as the circumstances of the pandemic, and related concerns for the economy, did not provide a promising context for a significant advance.

In the following months Cllr Hoade, and members of the Executive, exercised constructive communication through formal and informal channels with the Ministers and Dept. officials and provided significant background data to ensure that those considering the report would do so in the most favourable light for councillors.

Members of the Oireachtas were contacted to ensure that the association's case had the broadest possible base of support as and that the value and input of councillors to the democratic system was recognised at all levels of public representation. This work came to fruition in May 2021 with an announcement by Government that an increase in pay had been approved by Cabinet following proposals presented by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O' Brien TD, Minister of State, Peter Burke TD and Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael

McGrath TD based on recommendations from the Moorhead Report.

The Cabinet decision also approved an implementation date of 1st July 2021 for this increase in line with the commitment given in the Programme for Government to implement the Moorhead Report on the Role and Remuneration of Local Authority Elected members within twelve months of the Programme for Government.

"This is the first time since the representational payment was introduced in 2000 that there has been a significant increase which goes some way towards acknowledging the workload of, and demands on, local elected representatives."

This outcome represents a signal achievement for AILG in countering the narrative of the Moorhead report that the role of the councillor was part-time in nature and deserving of a lesser sum in consequence. Furthermore, and as sought by AILG, the salary is now linked by regulation with that of a recognised grade in the local government service meaning that the councillor's salary will be increased as a standard matter when staff salary is also increased. This gives councillors confidence in the trajectory of the salary into the future and also provides a basis from which other improvements common to the public service may be sought.

1.2 Moorhead – Expenses Recommendations and AILG response

While there was an emphasis on the pay element of Moorhead the association had also concerned itself with its recommendations in relation to allowances and expenses. Indeed, on the publication of the Report in May 2020 the AILG had identified that a new formula it put forward would have the effect of reducing councillor's expenses to the extent

that, in some cases, the reduction in expenses would outweigh the improvement in the salary recommended. The AILG Director, Mr Tom Moylan, carried out a member-by-member analysis of the impact of Moorhead on expenses – an exercise which provided the basis for the association's President and Executive Committee to feed in alternative proposals to the Dept. which would ensure that no councillor would have a nett negative outcome.

As a result the Government announcement of 18 May 2021 extensively modified the recommendations of Moorhead under the expenses heading to the extent that the Annual Expenses Allowance was maintained at its existing level.

The new scheme included a vouched Local Representation Allowance which would allow councillors claim on a vouched basis a wide range of costs necessary for the performance of their service to the community. The association scrutinised this provision and identified realistic additions to the range of costs allowed to give councillors the maximum flexibility in terms of recouping expenditure by way of office, communications and support services, a specific example being the production of printed material.

The AILG argued that with modern printing providers the process was integral from design to print and it made no sense to impose such a distinction. The revised guidelines issues allowed such a cost to be recouped. There was also a considerable expansion in the range of services such as IT and website design and hosting and the provision of administrative and secretarial services.

The AILG highlighted a continuing concern relating to the potential liability for rateable valuation in the case of a councillor with a premises or the part

of a premises used as an office. The AILG took the opportunity to remind the Dept. of a commitment to provide in legislation for councillor's office expenses to be exempt from rates. As well as proposing that the categories be expanded the association expressed concern that the vouching requirements should not be onerous for councillors and that the processes be as streamlined as possible to facilitate both councillors and council administration staff charged with administering the system. The foregoing proposals and concerns were the subject of a formal paper submitted to the Dept. by AILG.

1.3 Moorhead – Non-financial proposals and AILG participation

Following recommendations in the Moorhead Report that further work be undertaken to promote awareness of the role of local government in general, and of the councillor in particular, a Working Group of key stakeholders was set up by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in Autumn 2020 to progress these recommendations. AILG had three representatives on the Working Group – President at the time Councillor Mary Hoade, Councillor Kieran Dennison and Councillor Anne Colgan.

In May 2021, an Action Plan to deliver the non-pay recommendations set out in the Moorhead Report was completed by the Working Group. The key elements of the Action Plan include the role of the councillor, Local Government Efficiencies, Governance, Professional Training, Future Councillors/gender and diversity balance. The Working Group will remain in place until 2024, and will progress the implementation of the Action Plan by means of a number of sub-groups on the key themes. The Working Group will also contribute to the proposed review of Putting People First.



AILG delegation led by Cllr. Mick Cahill President with Minister John Paul Phelan and members of the Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government after Minister Phelan's appearance before the committee on Wednesday 27th November 2019.

Cllr. Mick Cahill, AILG President 2019/2020 Meeting with Minister Peter Burke TD, Minister for Local Government and Planning on Wednesday 29th July 2020.



L-R: Minister Peter Burke, TD, AILG President Cllr. Mary Hoade and Vice President Cllr. John Joe Fennelly following their deputation with the Department of Local Government and Planning at Custom House, 25th November 2020.

1

Key Advocacy Campaigns

1.4 Members Gratuity

While the announcement of a salary improvement by Government in May was welcomed, it was identified by AILG that the salary uplift did not transfer across to an enhanced gratuity calculation.

At its meeting with Minister Burke on 21 September 2021 the Association made it clear that it was the members' expectation that the gratuity would be linked to the salary scale and that the mechanism to correct the anomaly would be put in place. The Moorhead report had suggested the continuation of the gratuity scheme for existing members (without commenting on its calculation) and proposed the establishment of an interdepartmental committee to consider retirement provision for councillors post 2024. The AILG will be continuing its engagement with the Minister on the gratuity question as a priority.

1.5 Post Moorhead actions – AILG briefing for Elected Members

Following the publication of the Moorhead Report the association received many enquiries from members throughout the country regarding the detailed implications of the new terms and conditions. As well as responding to individual queries AILG participated in briefing sessions for councillor members in Kilkenny, Clare and Cork County Council.

When In-Person training resumed in September in line with safe public health measures, AILG included a presentation on Moorhead so that councillors would get a first-hand briefing on the detail of the new remuneration scheme especially in relation to the vouched-expenses categorisations.



Cllr. Mary Hoade (President 2020-21) addresses attendees at AILG's Module 1 Training event in Glendalough, Co. Wicklow in September 2021.

Gender & Diversity: Promoting the role of women in local government

As the first female President of the AILG, Cllr Mary Hoade set as a priority the promotion and retention of women in local government office. Under her leadership intensive work was carried out to progress a series of initiatives intended to give practical support to elected members.

1.6 AILG National Women's Network Forum

AILG hosted its second National Women's Network Forum which coincided with International Women's Day on 8 March 2021.

The theme for the online event was **#wechoosetochallenge** which saw a wide-ranging and spirited panel discussion from women councillors about how to improve women's representation in local government but also to celebrate their achievements as women.

Guest speakers at the event included Minister of State for local government and planning, Peter Burke TD, Maria Walsh MEP and Chair of the Women's Oireachtas Committee Senator Fiona O'Loughlin.

1.7 AILG Pioneer Caucus for female Councillors across the Midlands and West.

As a national representative body for councillors across Ireland, retention of the currently elected women councillors is a key objective for AILG. In November 2020 the AILG responded to a call from the Dept. seeking expressions of interest for funded projects to address the under-representation of women at local government level. AILG and the Longford based See Her Elected

(SHE) came together to collaborate on the idea for a regional caucus for women councillors because it brought their complementary aims together - improving the working environment for councillors and providing a structural support for women in politics. Following a successful joint application, AILG & SHE were allocated funding of €5,000 by Minister Burke, T.D., in June 2021 to establish a Midlands, Northern & Western (MNW) Regional Women's Caucus in counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway County, Galway City, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly.

The funding will be used to engage the services of an independent facilitator over the duration of a 12-month period who will also help to formulate an evaluation and recommendations report at the end of the pilot project which we hope will create a blueprint on how to roll out other regional caucuses across Ireland.

AILG and SHE have had frequent and detailed meetings in recent months with an independent facilitator in preparation of the rollout of the pilot project, with the inaugural meeting of the MNW Regional Women's Caucus taking place online on 29 September 2021.

1.8 AILG Maternity Leave Proposals

As it was a priority of the President to champion female participation and retention in local government it was decided that AILG would research the issue and compile a paper with solutions to this issue.

Two themes emerged as needing to be addressed. The first was that local government law specifies that a member is deemed to have lost her seat if absent for a period of more than six months unless the council in question passes a motion approving the absence. This was highlighted as being an outdated provision in the context of maternity provision given that, in employments generally, a woman's period of leave will last longer than six months. However as councillors are considered to be office holders rather than employees there is no provision for maternity leave with the attendant financial supports.

The association was aided in researching the paper by a focus group of women councillors who offered practical insights as to the issues involved in combining family life with elected office.

On 1st September 2021 the AILG published its researched proposals by way of a media launch having previously submitted its findings to Mr Peter Burke, Minister for Local Government and Planning. Speaking at the launch the President, Cllr Mary Hoade remarked that as a national representative body for elected councillors, the Association's priority was to help and support our current elected women councillors, encourage more women to consider putting themselves forward to election at local level and to promote

better gender equality & diversity in our local government system. The proposed solutions and recommendations from the AILG included:

- An Amendment to the Local Government Act 2001, to provide for Maternity Leave as an excused absence from a local authority and where Elected Members can take Maternity Leave without the necessity of a resolution from the elected council and therefore eliminated any risk of a councillor having deemed to have resigned their seat.
- Appropriate financial provision to accompany maternity leave provisions for Elected Members.
- Appropriate measures to help manage the workload of a councillor during their maternity leave
- Continued facility of remote attendance at Council meetings including the facility of remote voting at statutory meetings.

The AILG proposal was inclusive in its scope advocating for paternity, paternal and adoptive leave in the same terms.

1.9 President appointed to Steering Group to support family friendly policies in Local Government

In September 2021 Cllr. Mary Hoade (AILG President 2020-21) was appointed to a new advisory group set up by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) as part of a project to develop a toolkit to support more family friendly and inclusive policies for elected members in local government. The Steering group will meet online to provide expertise and advice to NWCi on the research methodology and inform the development of the toolkit so that it is relevant and useful for elected members.

AILG celebrated International Women's Day by hosting the second National Local Government Women's Network Forum which was held on 8th March 2021.



Female councillors from 13 Councils across the Midlands, Northern and Western region met online for the inaugural women's regional caucus meeting on 29th September, 2021.



L-R: Cllr. Anne Colgan, Tara Farrell, CEO, Longford Women's Link, Catherine Lane, NWCI, Cllr. Mick Cahill, AILG President 2019/2020 at the 2020 Annual Conference held in Longford in March 2020.



Women councillors in attendance at the inaugural Women's Local Government Network meeting as part of the 2020 Annual Conference held in Longford in March 2020.

2

AILG Policy & Legislation

"The objective of AILG policy development is to see the Association of Irish Local Government become an influential participant in the formulation of policy relating to local government in Ireland. "

The AILG monitors the output of the Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and other government departments and State agencies to identify proposals in terms of policy and draft legislation which would enhance or circumscribe the powers of councillors. The association's policy agenda is informed by the Programme for Government agreed in summer 2020 and the Government's announcement of legislative priorities at the beginning of each Dáil session.

In addition, the association listens to the input and feedback from councillors received through its committee structures and from its engagement with councillors on a wider basis through its online and in-person training. The AILG subjects new draft legislation published by Government to scrutiny so as to assess any implications for the powers of elected members and local government.



L-R: Cllr. Mick Cahill, President 2019/2020, Cllr. Pat FitzPatrick, Audit Committee Chair, Michael McCarthy, Chairman of NOAC.



L-R: Tom Moylan, Director AILG, Cllr. Thomas Mulligan, Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Peter Burke, TD., Cllr. Anne Colgan, Vice President, Cllr. Mick Cahill, President 2019/2020, Liam Kenny, Director AILG.

2.1 Land Development Agency Bill

On 5 February 2021 the Land Development Agency Bill was published with the objective of putting the Land Development Agency on a statutory footing and giving it extensive powers in relation to the development of housing on public land owned by state agencies and local authorities. The Bill included significant legal provisions relating to the fixing of the price of houses built on such lands as well as providing the legal basis for a cost rental scheme.

On an immediate scrutiny of the Bill it became apparent to AILG that it included a section which would suppress the reserved function of councillors in relation to approving the sale of Council owned land where it was required by the Land Development Agency. It was also apparent that considerable work needed to be done on the complex provisions relating to the determining of price at which houses built on such public land would be sold to homebuyers. The provisions seemed to give considerable control to the Minister to set prices and other conditions in relation to such schemes.

After considerable analysis by the Management Team and the Executive Committee the following actions were undertaken and agreed;

- to seek professional input and engage Dr Lorcan Sirr, Senior Lecturer at the Technological University of Ireland and housing policy analyst and Ms Orla Hegarty, Asst. Professor at the School of Language, Architecture and Policy at University College, Dublin, to prepare an analysis of the Bill to add to that already carried out by the AILG.

- invite Dr Sirr to make online presentations to the Management Team, the Executive Committee and the Plenary Body outlining issues with the Bill which would have consequences for local authorities in their capacity as housing authorities.
- refine the Sirr report into a document outlining a number of amendments which the AILG sought to the Bill including that the provision be deleted which set about curbing the councillors' power to sanction the transfer of Council land to another party.

Following extensive consultation with all forums in the Association, the input of external experts, and the analysis of the AILG's own staff, the outcome of this work was a document outlining a series of amendments sought in the Bill to protect the role of local authorities and elected members.

This document was sent to the Minister for Housing, Heritage and Local Government and to the Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Heritage and Local Government with a request in relation to the latter, that the Association would have the opportunity to present its concerns to the Committee at the Pre-Legislative stage of the Bill.

On 11 May the President, Cllr Hoade, Vice President Cllr John Joe Fennelly, and Project Team Chair Cllr Anne Colgan, made a presentation to a public session of the Oireachtas Committee. The presentation cogently highlighted the association's concerns with the Bill.

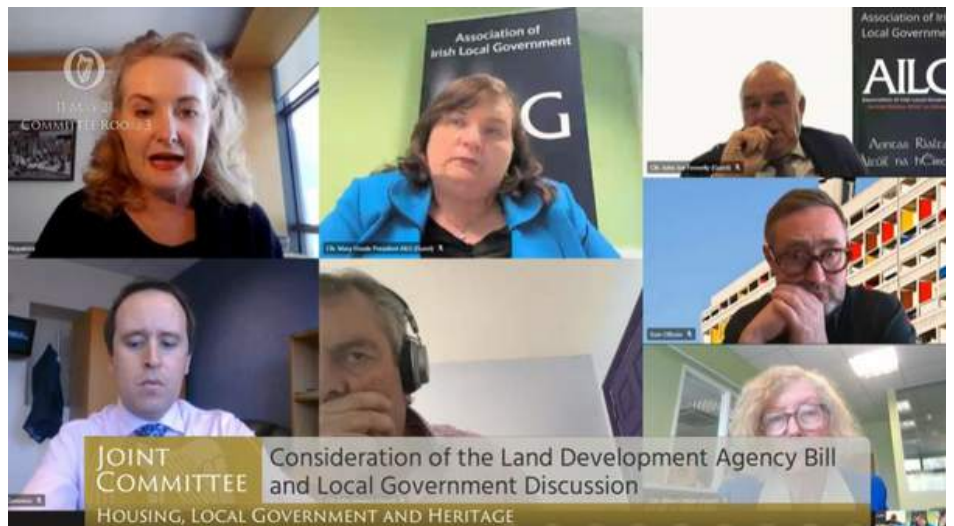
Friday 16th July 2021

AILG delegation meeting remotely with Minister Peter Burke to discuss the implementation of the Moorhead Cabinet decision.



Tuesday 11th May 2021

AILG delegation led by AILG President Cllr. Mary Hoade, pictured at a remote meeting of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Housing, Heritage and Local Government to discuss the Land Development Agency Bill 2021.



Tuesday 6th July 2021

AILG President Cllr. Mary Hoade appeared before the Oireachtas Education Committee on behalf of the association to defend Councillor positions on University Governing Bodies.



Regrettably, of the 13 substantial amendments proposed by AILG, only one was taken onboard. An outcome of the AILG's rigorous analysis was that when the Minister brought the Bill to Committee stage, he had amended the Section 56 provision to retain the right of sanction by councillors over the sale of council land to the Land Development Agency save in the case of land with an extant zoning for housing.

2.2 University Governing Bodies

There are 25 councillor seats on the Governing Bodies of universities in Ireland including 8 nominated directly on a five-yearly basis by the AILG under legislation dating back to 1908. For some time, the Dept. of Education had intimated that it intended to bring forward legislation to reduce the size of the Governing Bodies which were typically 40 in number including the 7 or 8 councillor seats on each.

The association's case was principally that having councillors on the Governing Bodies ensured that the public interest was represented in the State's higher educational and training colleges.

Having become aware that the Minister for Higher Education and Research, Mr Simon Harris, T.D., intended to bring forward legislation to reform the Governing Bodies the association decided to have a professional case prepared to make a case for retaining the elected member seats.

The AILG office prepared a paper which in turn formed a basis for the Management Committee to direct the preparation of a study by an academic in the third level sector. The association commissioned Dr Brid Quinn to write a report

strengthening the case for retaining elected members on the Boards of Universities. An interim version of Dr Quinn's report was submitted to a short-notice consultation announced by Minister Harris with a closing date in early April 2021. The full document was submitted to the Minister later that month.

At the same time the association sought an audience with the Oireachtas Committee on Higher Education so as to be able to present its case when the Minister's Bill was undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny. After making contact with the relevant Oireachtas representatives an invitation was forthcoming and on 6 July 2021 President Hoade joined senior figures from the third-level sector in a public hearing of the Oireachtas Education committee. The President's presentation was met with a positive response from committee members who expressed appreciation of qualities brought by councillors to the governing bodies. The association's input, and that of the other contributors, was to be considered by the committee in the context of its report following its pre-legislative scrutiny with the report being expected in the autumn.

2.3 Traveller Accommodation Submission for Joint Oireachtas Committee

In February the association began research on a submission for the above committee on issues, from the local authority perspective, in regard to traveller accommodation.

As well as considerable desk research the AILG consulted widely with members and the subsequent report reflect the complexity of this function while at the same time responding to criticisms as regards local authority progress on traveller accommodation.

The report was discussed by the various forums of the association and a final version agreed in March for submission to the Committee.

Among key recommendations made by the AILG were:

- Examples of good practice across all Local Authorities countrywide in relation to the delivery of Traveller accommodation should be examined to improve local structures.
- From AILG engagement with councillors it is clear that not all Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee's (LTACC) are working to their full potential and the AILG recommends that appropriate training and best practice help would be made available to those LTACC's who are currently not operating to their full potential.
- The AILG supported a review of the Social Housing Assessment process for Traveller families to help them engage, understand and appreciate the importance of the social housing

assessment procedure.

- The AILG supported the case for regular training for local authority staff on social housing assessments for Traveller accommodation in order for members of the Travelling community to fully engage with and recognise the importance of the assessment procedure.

The association returned to the issue of Traveller Accommodation in August when it received correspondence from the Irish Commissioner for Equality and Human Rights informing it of a council-by-council human rights audit of traveller accommodation provision. The AILG notified all of its councillors of the Commissioner's engagement with councils.

2.4 Town Centre First Initiative

The President was appointed to a new advisory group established by Minister of State Peter Burke, T.D., that will work on delivering the programme for Government commitments on introducing a Town Centres First (TCF) policy and rolling out the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check programme nationally. Chaired by Minister Peter Burke, the newly formed committee had its first meeting via conference call in late December 2020.

The association's priority within the wider town centre renewal project was to point out that local councillors are community champions and as public representatives many are already heavily involved in regeneration projects. They are a vital component of vibrant towns & villages, bringing a strong voice for local communities through effective local government.

Town centre renewal makes sense under many headings not least that of maximising the investment made by local councils over generations in providing services such as water, drainage, paving and public lighting in urban locations. Town centre living meets climate change objectives as urban dwellers within walking distance of shops and schools are less likely to need emissions-heavy motor vehicles than if they were living at a remove from the town. Vibrant town centres with a strong residential component also make for attractive places and positive environments in which to nurture enterprise and community development.

2.5 Directly Elected Mayor – for Limerick in the first instance

Following a plebiscite in 2019 where the Limerick electorate balloted in favour of a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM), the Programme for Government committed to the establishment of such a role. An Implementation Advisory Group was commissioned to consult intensively with all stakeholders and, in particular, elected members, community, academic and business representatives in Limerick.

The Group published its extensive report in late January and the AILG prepared an analysis of the recommendations of the group. It was noted with satisfaction that a submission made by the AILG in 2020 on the governance aspects of the role had been reflected in a firm recommendation that the DEM would not also be chair of the Council in regard to the management of meetings.

The formula proposed by the Implementation Advisory Group will see the establishment of three new titles in the local government environment:

the Directly Elected Mayor; the “*Priomh Comhairleoir*” who will chair the meetings of the Council; and the Director General who will be the head of the executive of the council but with many powers ceded to the Director General. Crucially, the elected council will retain its existing reserved functions with additional powers to call the Mayor to account. The precise framework for the Directly Elected Mayor of Limerick will become apparent in legislation due to be published in the current Dáil session and which will be subject to scrutiny by the association.

2.6 Operation of Municipal Districts

The AILG compiled a detailed review of an Institute of Public Administration study on the operation of Municipal Districts. The association review extended beyond the content of the IPA paper and considered how the Municipal District system had bedded-in since its establishment in 2014. It was highlighted that there was considerable variation in the way Municipal Districts did their business including as regards frequency, location and format of District meetings. This reflected the flexibility of the MD model allowing districts to adapt the template to suit their local circumstances. Issues were also considered in relation to entities such as Town Teams and the extent to which these might encroach on, or complement, the activities of the democratically elected councillors.

The AILG paper will be a resource when the Dept. begins a review of the Municipal District concept. The relationship between Municipal Districts and the County-level local authorities proper was also considered including the distribution of reserved functions between the different levels. There was also a comparison outlined between communities

on either side of a county boundary where one was embraced by a Municipal District and the other by an Area Committee. This real-world comparative exercise could be developed to establish to what extent the Municipal District delivers benefits as compared to the traditional area committee form of sub-county representation.

Research and policy: Partnership with Maynooth University

The AILG entered a two-year Strategic Partnership with Maynooth University (MU) and its International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) as part of our strategic goal to advance AILG's Professional Policy, Research and Advocacy Programme.

This is a broad partnership to which there are a number of strands. As it evolves, it has been agreed that over this initial two-year timeframe, MU will support AILG via:

- The development of short briefing papers on predefined themes
- Comprehensive action research programmes
- Data gathering and analysis via survey supports; and
- Convening of a joint policy discussion group twice a year.

As part of the strategic partnership, an independent research study on "The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government" will be undertaken by Maynooth University, with support and collaboration from AILG.

The role of the councillor has evolved and changed rapidly in the past few years, with elected members now viewed as stewards of place, advocates for change, place-makers, entrepreneurs and place-based leaders. The AILG believe it is vital to see research that seeks to investigate, understand and promote the ability of councillors to provide civic leadership, devise public policy, oversee and enable service delivery and engender democratic participation and engagement.



2.7 AILG develops submission on Night Time Economy

A commitment of the June 2020 Programme for Government was the establishment of a Task Force to rejuvenate the night-time economy in towns and cities. The need for such rejuvenation had been highlighted in previous years by concerns over the depopulation of town centres and by the closure of night-time entertainment and cultural venues in the face of property redevelopment. There was also criticism by promoters and restaurateurs of the complexity of planning and licensing codes in relation to establishing new night enterprises.

Local authorities through their well-established community engagement and their democratic and operational structures are well placed to be at the forefront of developing the night time offering and thereby help to revitalise our urban centres into the future.

The AILG's paper on the night time economy identified both the benefits and the costs to local authorities of fostering the night time economy. The AILG submission addressed some of the proposals indicated in the programme for Government which for example proposed the establishment of "Night time Mayors" and dedicated committees. The association's paper stated that the promotion of the night time economy could be well accommodated within existing local authority mayoral and committee structures and that any measures to foster night-time activity should be firmly situated within existing municipal democratic and operational resources.

The paper was submitted to Minister Catherine

"An ongoing project of AILG is to respond to specific objectives in the Programme for Government which involve a significant local government component. "

Martin, T.D., Minister for Media, Arts, Sports and Tourism in April 2021. The paper in addition had relevance to the Town Centre First Initiative project as a vibrant night-time economy will be both a driver and an outcome of a revitalised town centre.

2.8 Planning & Development LRD Bill 2021 – Returning large housing decisions to Councils

The General Scheme of the Planning & Development Large Scale Residential Development Bill 2021 was published in July, with the objective to provide for the winding down of the Strategic Housing Development (SHD) process created under the Act of 2016 and the establishment of a local authority-based channel for large housing developments incorporating some of the features of the former. The main provisions of the new Bill include;

- Developer must complete pre-application consultation
- Time Limits: local authority must give an opinion within 4 weeks;
- An Bord Pleanála must give a decision within 16 weeks (if the project is appealed).

On 21 September 2021 an AILG delegation led by President Cllr. Hoade met remotely with Minister Peter Burke and urged him to amend the legislation with two objectives:

1. Insert a mechanism for councillors to be consulted in open council about a large scale residential development;
2. Include a provision prohibiting applicants from including characteristics in their developments which manifestly contravene parameters of the Development Plan.

Minister Burke committed at the meeting to take both AILG proposals up with Minister Darragh O'Brien. The association in addition contacted the Joint Oireachtas Committee with its requirements and asked that committee members reiterate the AILG case during the pre- legislative scrutiny phase of the Bill. Regrettably, neither of AILG's two proposed amendments were accepted.

2.9 Rights-of-way registration deadline

The AILG as part of its role in monitoring the legislative landscape for issues that concerned councillors became aware that a deadline in relation to the registration of rights-of-way and easements had been set for November 2021. This was a consequence of earlier legislation which had introduced a requirement for such easements to be registered with the Property Registration Authority.

The AILG office researched the issue from a local government viewpoint and pointed out that rights-of-way were of critical importance for Councils under two headings: 1) the multitude of rights of way used by councils to access pipelines, drains, depots, valves, pumping stations, quarries etc; and 2) with the 21st century emphasis on outdoor exercise and recreation, rights-of-way which gave access to beaches, forests and recreational areas, or forming candidate Greenways, needed to be

preserved for public use. In the past local authorities have encountered costly litigation in their attempts to assert rights-of-way, thence it is important that none such easements be lost through a failure to register their existence. The AILG gave members a short briefing on the rights-of-way issue at a number of meetings and at its training seminars.

Engagement with stakeholders in the Local Government context

AILG Meeting with Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform

In December 2020 an AILG delegation headed by Cllr Hoade engaged productively with Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan, T.D. His brief is of interest to the Association as it incorporates Heritage and its numerous funding streams which can be availed by local communities, and Electoral Reform.

Minister Noonan advised that he would be publishing his Electoral Reform Bill (including provision for a long deferred Electoral Commission) within a matter of weeks and he would arrange for an early meeting with the team of senior franchise officials drafting the Bill.

This commitment was delivered upon by the Minister and the AILG became the first group outside of the Oireachtas to be briefed on the new Bill when it was published. In January 2021 the association met with the full team of officials who are drafting the first reform of the State's electoral machinery to take place in many years. The AILG was conscious that the mechanics of registration and of election are of first-rank importance to councillors whose existence is based on a thorough understanding of the rules

surrounding registration and election. There was detailed engagement with the Dept. officials drafting every extensive Bill and the AILG noted with satisfaction that the role of voter registration authority remained with the County and City Councils.

Engagement with Northern Ireland colleagues

The first quarter of 2021 saw AILG engage with both the National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region (NAC) the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).

The AILG re-connected with our sister association in the North (NAC) during an online meeting, held on the 8th February. The purpose of the meeting was to brief NAC members on AILG's campaign for improved remuneration and T&C's for their members and also to help foster deeper ties between both associations.

During the online meeting between AILG and NILGA held on the 9th March, Cllr Mary Hoade, President, AILG and Cllr Matt Garrett, President, NILGA exchanged greetings and spoke of the importance of having a channel of communications between the two primary local government associations on the island. AILG representatives gave a presentation on the association's current activities and plans for future development and a number of key issues. Follow up by staff on both sides yielded benefits in terms of suggestions for public relations and accredited training resources.

AILG President attends Northern Ireland Region Annual General Conference

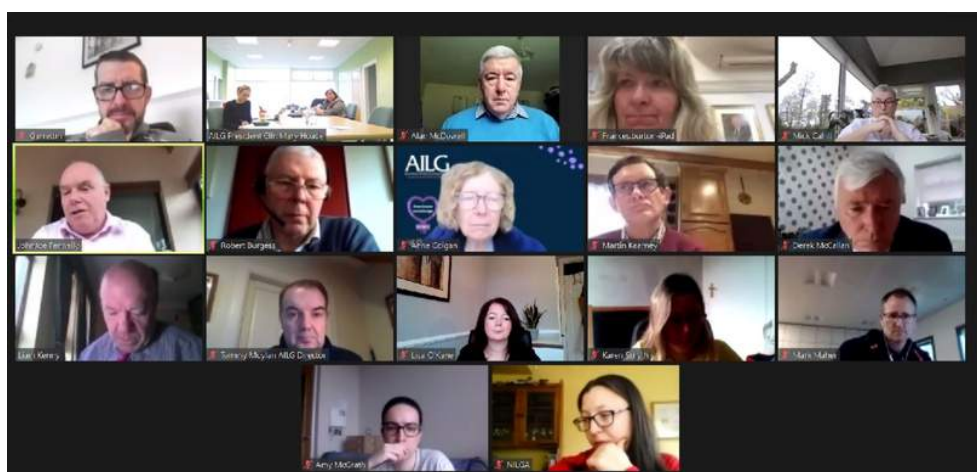
AILG President Cllr. Crossan was among those in attendance at the Northern Ireland Region Annual General Meeting which took place on Friday 15 October 2021 at the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown Co. Tyrone.

During his attendance at the conference, the President highlighted the importance of cross border relations and noted it was great to engage and build upon the good working relationship that has been established with our sister association chaired by Alderman Tommy Sandford. Cllr. Crossan also re-connected with members of the Local Authority Members Association (LAMA), the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Mark Daly who were also in attendance.

AILG President attends 2021 NILGA Local Government Conference "Councils Make It Happen"

AILG President Cllr. Crossan attended the 2021 Local Government Conference in Bangor, Co. Down on the 24th of November 2021 which saw Councils in Northern Ireland press for increased powers to help the country recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jointly delivered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and SOLACE NI, the 2021 "Councils Make It Happen" event dealt with the economic, environmental, investment, social and health issues facing all in Northern Ireland and developed practical and political solutions should partnership between local government and the NI Executive improve.



Online meeting held between AILG and NILGA held on the 9th March, 2021.



Cllr. Nicholas Crossan, AILG President 2021/2022 pictured with Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Mark Daly at the Northern Ireland Region Annual General Conference.





Cllr Nicholas Crossan, AILG President, pictured with local government colleagues at the National Association of Councillors (NI) Annual Conference.

Engagement with stakeholders in the Local Government context

March events reaching out to diaspora and reflecting on the struggle for independence

In March 2020, Cllr. Hoade addressed the American Irish Legislators St Patrick's Day Webinar as President of AILG – the first time a representative from AILG has been invited to speak at the event. It was an excellent opportunity to support co-operation and connection between our two countries and celebrate the long and enduring relationship between our two republics.

Also speaking was Chair of the Senate Senator Mark Daly, Seanad Leader Senator Regina Doherty, NY Senator Timothy Kennedy & Congressman Richard Neal.

The President also addressed attendees at the online launch of the **Garden of Remembrance & Reflection initiative** in March 2020 which will ensure an enduring physical legacy of our struggle for independence. These gardens will also ensure public engagement on a local level for the Commemoration of those who strived to achieve the aim of the 1916 Proclamation.

The President is ex officio a member of the **Bravery Awards Council** chaired by the Ceann Comhairle. The Council meets bi-annually to decide and award recognition for acts of civilian bravery based on reports verified by An Garda Síochána or the Irish Coast Guard.

External Committees

The AILG is represented on a small number of external bodies, principally:

- University College Dublin Governing Body
- National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Congress of Local & Regional Authorities – Council of Europe

City and County Management Association

The AILG meets with the CCMA – the body representing the City and County Chief Executives on an annual basis. In January 2020 the Association met with the CCMA Chair Mr Tim Lucey, Cork Co Co CE who was accompanied by Ms Collette Byrne, Kilkenny Co. Co CE and Mr Eamonn O'Sullivan, Monaghan Co Co CE. Issues discussed included: Covid 19 continuing emergency – Community Call, Council Meetings Protocol; Town Centre First Initiative; Moorhead Report and Mother & Baby Homes Report.

Subsequently, a meeting between the AILG and CCMA took place in May with the following Chief Executives in attendance: Mr Tim Lucey, Chair CCMA – Cork Co Co CE; Mr Brendan McGrath, Galway Co Co CE; Mr Michael Walshe, Waterford Co Co CE; Mr Tom Enright, Wexford Co Co CE; and Ms Paula Butler, LGMA, Asst. CE. The items discussed included: Local Government Finance; Moorhead Report; Directly Elected Mayor; Technology issues for Councillors; GDPR; Land Development Agency Bill; and Dignity at Work Guidelines.



*Cllr. Nicholas Crossan,
AILG President
2021/2022 in attendance
at the Bravery Awards
Ceremony which took
place in Farmleigh House
on Friday 12th November
2021.*

L-R: Cathaoirleach of
Seanad Éireann, Senator
Mark Daly, Mary Kennedy,
TV and Radio
broadcaster, Cllr.
Nicholas Crossan, AILG
President 2021/2022 in
attendance at the Bravery
Awards Ceremony.



3

AILG Training & Education

"One of the key functions of the AILG is to ensure that Elected Members receive appropriate and relevant training and development as they govern Irish local authorities currently and into the future."

The AILG's *"Elected Members Training Programme"* delivers appropriate training across a wide range of local authority functions and related activities. Members who have attended the training modules will know that the training days are for the purpose of giving elected members the required knowledge of all local authority functions, from the best people

available, to enable them to be effective Local Public Representatives. Our training programme is delivered on a regional basis in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government with speakers being made available from across various government departments, agencies and local authorities. However, we also try to include speakers from our own body of elected members who have the appropriate experience and expertise.



Members in attendance at the AILG Elected Members September 2021 (In-Person) Module 1 Training Event held in the Rose Hotel, Co. Kerry



L-R: Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald, Cllr. Michael Anglim, Cllr. Evie Sammon, Cllr. Declan Burgess, Cllr. Marie Murphy, Cllr. Dan McSweeney pictured at the AILG Annual Conference held on the 3rd and 4th March in Longford, 2020.

AILG "In Service" Member Training Analysis 2020



Liam Kenny, Director AILG, delivers presentation to members at the Module 3 Training Day Event in the Carrickdale Hotel, Co. Louth, 2020.

Module	Date	Subject	Speaker
Module 1	Feb 2020	<i>The Development Plan Making Process</i>	Jim Keogan, former Deputy CE (Dublin City Council) David L'Estrange, CAAS (the Conservation and Amenity Advisory Services)
Module 2	July 2020	<i>Planning and the Local Authority Elected Member</i>	Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator (Office of the Planning Regulator) Anne Marie O' Connor, Deputy Planning Regulator
Module 3	August 2020	<i>Moorhead Report - A Briefing for Elected Members</i>	Tom Moylan & Liam Kenny, Directors AILG
Module 4	Sept 2020	<i>Initial Stages of Preparing Development Plans & Core Strategies</i>	Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator (Office of the Planning Regulator) Anne Marie O' Connor, Deputy Planning Regulator
Module 5	Oct 2020	<i>Consideration and Finalisation of the Draft Development Plan</i>	Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator (Office of the Planning Regulator) Anne Marie O' Connor, Deputy Planning Regulator
Module 6	Nov 2020	<i>Implementation of the Development Plan and Development Management Process</i>	Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator (Office of the Planning Regulator) Anne Marie O' Connor, Deputy Planning Regulator
Induction	Dec 2020	<i>Elected Members Induction Training</i>	Lorraine Gallagher, DOS, Wicklow Co. Co Cllr. John Paul Feeley, Member of Cavan Co. Co Tom Moylan & Liam Kenny, AILG Directors

*AILG Annual
Conference 2020*

L-R: Cllr. Mick Cahill, President 2019/2020, Guest Speaker Duncan Stewart, Cllr. Anne Colgan, Cllr. Seamus Butler.



*AILG Annual
Conference 2020*

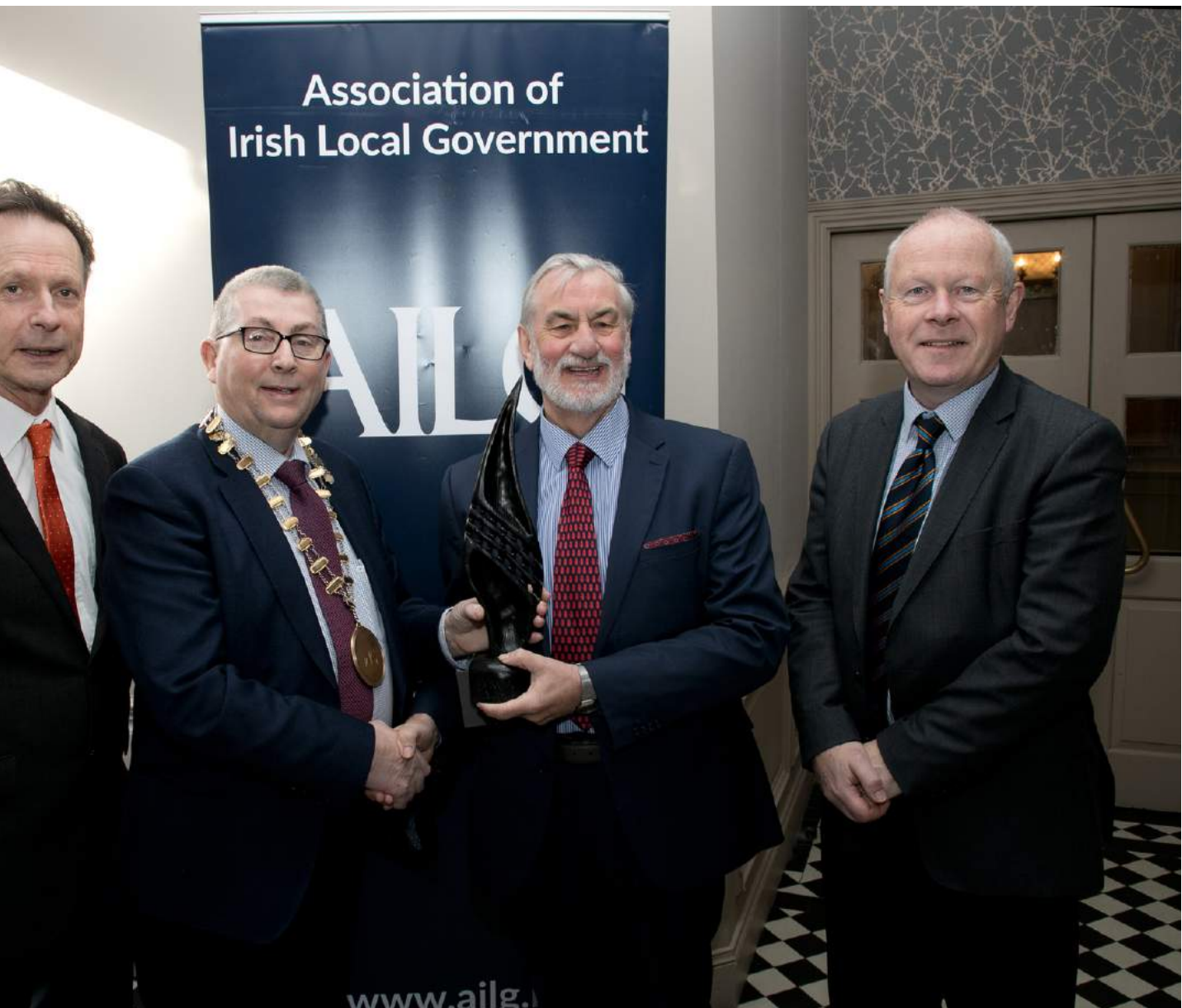
*Elected Members
pictured with
Chairman of NOAC
Michael McCarthy
at AILG Annual
Conference in
Longford, 2020.*



*AILG Annual
Conference 2020*

L-R: Cllr. Noel Heavey, Cllr. Fintan Brett and Cllr. Ivan Keatley





L to R: Donall Mac An Bheatha, Senior Planner at Longford Co.Co, Cllr. Mick Cahill, President 2019/2020, Kieran Mulvey, Just Transition Commissioner, Paddy Mahon, Longford County Manager.

AILG "Online" Member Training Analysis 2021

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Speaker</i>
Planning	Jan 2021	<i>The Decision on the Planning Application and Appeal</i>	Catherine McConnell, Planning Director of Services, Mayo County Council Terry Prendergast, Member of An Bord Pleanála
Planning	Feb 2021	<i>Local Authority Planning Enforcement Functions</i>	John Downey and James Cosgrove, Dublin City Co. Ahmed El Baradie and Tom Morgan, The Office of the Ombudsman
Communications	March 2021	<i>Communications Infrastructure and Local Authorities</i>	Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator (OPR) Fergal Mulligan, Programme Director for Ireland's National Broadband Plan
Housing	April 2021	<i>Housing Supply Targets and Core Strategies</i>	Stewart Logan, Senior Planning Advisor in the DHLGH Malachy Bradley, Senior Planner with EMRA
Housing	May 2021	<i>Local Authority Housing and the Housing Agency</i>	Sarah Kennedy, Senior Staff Officer and Camille Loftus, Head of Policy and Practice, the Housing Agency
Housing	May 2021	<i>Rural Housing and Development Policy</i>	Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator (Office of the Planning Regulator) Anne Marie O' Connor, Deputy Planning Regulator
Housing	June 2021	<i>Housing Commitments in the Programme for Government and Affordable Housing Delivery</i>	John O'Connor, CEO of the Housing Agency Gwen Perry, Head of the Affordable Housing Unit Alex Dowdall, Senior Staff Officer, Housing Agency
Housing	July 2021	<i>Delivery of High Quality Housing Appropriate to its Setting</i>	Jason Taylor, Planning Advisor, DHLGH Fionnuala May, County Architect, Fingal Co. Co
Climate	July 2021	<i>Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030 Elected Members Training</i>	Paddy Mahon (Chair of the CCMA Climate Action, Transport and Networks Committee) David Mellett, Climate Action Regional Officer (CARO)
Climate	Sept 2021	<i>On and Offshore Renewables</i>	Alex Hamilton, Senior Engineer, 3 Counties Energy Agency Michael Mahon, Chief Infrastructure Officer, Eirgrid
Climate	Oct 2021	<i>How to Implement National Renewable Energy Targets in Development Plans</i>	Andrew Murray, Senior Planner, Offaly Co. Co Tadhg Madden, Senior Exec Engineer, Laois Co. Co Alexandra Revez & Connor McGookin, MaREI
Transport	Nov 2021	<i>Sustainable Travel & Transport Planning & Local Authority Development Plans'</i>	Michael Aherne, Head of the Transport Development Division NTA and Robert Burns, Director of Infrastructure and Climate Change, DLRCC

AILG "In Service" Member Training Analysis 2021

Module	Date	Subject	Speakers
Module 1	Sept 2021	<i>Government Decision on the Reform on Remuneration and Allowances Payable to Local Authority Elected Members/Update on Planning and Development Bill 2021 and other Planning Related Matters</i>	Tom Moylan & Liam Kenny, Directors AILG
Module 2	Nov 2021	<i>Elected Members Mental Health & Well-Being and Briefing on the National Office for Suicide Prevention</i>	John Meehan, HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Strategy & Planning and Head of the National Office for Suicide Prevention Cllr. Shane P. O'Reilly, Cavan Co. Co. Cllr. Pío Smith, Louth Co. Co. Cllr. Rosaleen O'Grady, Sligo Co. Co. Cllr. Peter Roche, Galway Co. Co



AILG "In Service" Member Training Analysis 2020 - 2021

3,096

3,096 Elected Members attended over 32 Training events (including over 2,200 online attendees) between February 2020 - November 2021)

615

The number of councillors who have attended at least one of our online training sessions now stands at 615 elected members or above 65% of our membership

17

The number of online training webinars delivered to our members between July 2020 - November 2021

AILG Plenary Meeting, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal

AILG Delegates engage in round table discussions during Plenary Meeting in the Jacksons Hotel, Co. Donegal on 21st October, 2021.



AILG Elected Members July 2020 (In-Person) Module 3 Training Event

Tommy Moylan, Director AILG, delivers briefing for Elected Members on the Moorhead Report in the Horse & Jockey Hotel, Co. Tipperary on 6th August, 2020.





Rear L to R: John Meehan, HSE Assistant National Director, Cllr. Peter Roche, Cllr. Pío Smith, Cllr. Shane P. O' Reilly.

Front L to R: Cllr. Rosaleen O' Grady, Cllr. Nicholas Crossan, AILG President 2021/2022



Photo top left

*AILG Elected Members September 2021
(In-Person) Module 1 Training Event*

Liam Kenny, Director AILG, delivers presentation on Planning and Development Bill 2021 and other Planning Related Matters at the 2021 Module 1 Training Day in the Tower Hotel, Co. Waterford.

AILG Elected Members November 2021 (In-Person) Module 2 Training Event

John Meehan, HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Strategy & Planning and Head of the National Office for Suicide Prevention, delivers Briefing on the National Office for Suicide Prevention.



*AILG Elected Members November 2021
(In-Person) Module 2 Training Event*

Cllr. Nicholas Crossan, AILG President 2021/2022, delivers opening address at the 2021 Module 2 Training Day on Elected Members Mental Health & Well-Being/Briefing on the National Office for Suicide Prevention.

3.1 Local Authority Elected Members Training Programme for 2021

Responding to the results of a feedback survey launched in at the end of 2020, in February 2021 the **AILG published an ambitious programme of training** developed in conjunction with high-level partners such as the Office of the Planning Regulator and the Housing Agency to deliver to Councillors in an online format – in the first instance - training relevant to key current themes.

The programme endeavored to provide members with a more in-depth level of training in relation to topical matters relevant to their development plan

preparation functions and four topical themes will were explored in a new City and County Development Plan Policy Series:

- Communications, including the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan and key local authority enablers;
- Housing, including a four part webinar on settlement policy, rural planning, social and affordable housing delivery and quality delivery;
- De-carbonisation, including the implications of the implementation of national climate policy and the roll-out of new energy sources;
- Active Travel, including innovative development plan practice and wider local authority led enablers to promote public transport, walking and cycling

Since the beginning of the Covid pandemic **AILG has delivered seventeen training webinars** to our members and these online sessions have proved hugely popular and have allowed us to reach a larger number of the 949 elected members across the country – the number of councillors who have attended at least one of our online training sessions now stands at 615 elected members or above 65% of our membership. All the presentations and video recordings are easily accessible and available for our members to download on our new website which is regularly updated with new content.

3.2 AILG Launches Information Leaflets

In July 2021 **the Association launched a series of information leaflets** – currently available online – with the intention of giving councillors a quick briefing on issues that feature frequently on their business agendas – including; Material Contravention of the Development Plan; S183 Notices; and statutory powers relating to Rights of Way; Reserved Functions and Part VIII “Own Development” cases.

An objective of the leaflets is to empower councillors to question and to contribute to processes which have enduring consequences for communities or individuals. The leaflets will have a particular value for newly elected or co-opted councillors for whom the terminology and procedures of local government can be daunting at first sight.

AILG AGM, 30th September 2021

Incoming President Cllr. Nicholas Crossan presents bouquet of Flowers to outgoing President Cllr. Mary Hoade at the Association's Annual General Meeting held in Gormanstown Co. Meath.



AILG AGM, 30th September 2021

Incoming President Cllr. Nicholas Crossan and Vice President Cllr. Nick Killian pictured with Senator Gerard Craughwell following their election at the Association's Annual General Meeting.





L to R: Elaine Lynch, AILG Communications Officer, Cllr. Nick Killian, AILG Vice-President (2021-22), Cllr. Nicholas Crossan, AILG President (2021-22), Mr. Liam Kenny, Director AILG.



AILG AGM, 30th September 2021

L-R: Cllr. John Joe Fennelly, Vice President (2020-21) pictured with Cllr. Mary Hoade, President (2020-21) at AILG's Annual General Meeting.

4

AILG Communications

"As part of our Communications Plan, we proactively position AILG as the go-to leading voice for local government matters with Government, media and other stakeholders."

The AILG places huge importance on regular communication and networking with our members. The association organises a full programme of meetings & events at which councillors from all parts of the country are facilitated in exchanging knowledge on current issues.



News flow and actual media product are key persuasive factors when it comes to emphasising the value and importance of local government and the valuable work of our elected members. The Association of Irish Local Government was featured in print, broadcast and online media throughout 2020 and 2021, projecting the AILG as an authoritative voice across social media and long-established media.



President Cllr. Mary Hoade being interviewed on RTE's The Week in Politics in relation to the AILG-CMG Survey Report Launch, 13th June 2021.

AILG Communications Strategy

Responding to findings of a strategic review undertaken by the association in 2020, **the AILG added an additional staff resource and developed a communications strategy** which outlined a number of key objectives;

- Evaluate how effective our communication activity is in achieving policy aims and delivering organisational impact.
- Improve internal and external communications
- Portray AILG as a proactive & professional organisation
- Reflect current trends in new media
- Cater for varying age profile of users/Elected Members
- Raise the profile of the Association externally to the general public, central government, other public agencies and to the media
- Advocate on behalf of the Local Government sector in general

Below are a list of communication activities undertaken to deliver on these goals;

4.1 Corporate Branding

The association underwent a logo redesign and introduced Corporate Branding across all internal/external communications including a professional cover template for all major Policy launches/Papers and submissions.

4.2 Communication with our members

Sharing our information continues to be supported by our **social media strategy**, with increased engagement on LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. All these activities focus on increasing the profile of the association and guiding our

audience to our new contemporary website, which will better service our membership and the local government profession.

4.3 Newly developed website

We were pleased in December 2020 to release our new website (www.ailg.ie), delivering on the key requirements identified during our strategic review. The goal was to create a more valuable, user-centric and responsive resource for elected members across all platforms and devices. Specifically, we wanted to focus on making it easier for our members to learn & to keep up to date on upcoming training & events.



Twitter followers
1,745



Facebook followers
1,300



LinkedIn followers
483



Website visitors
8,300

- date of these statistics is 30 Nov 2021

4 AILG Communications

AILG Communications Strategy

Throughout 2020-21 we invested resources in our regular communications to keep our members updated on the latest news and events organised by AILG. A **new Bi-monthly Activity report** for Plenary delegates and the full 949 membership was also introduced along with a **quarterly newsletter** which can be accessed on our website.

In-house design was also introduced to further communicate & strengthen branding; examples of this can be seen via our new series of Information Leaflets and our **Training Programme Brochure** which were both launched in 2021 along with **increased video/media content** across our social media channels and the delivery and promotion of our webinar and training events.

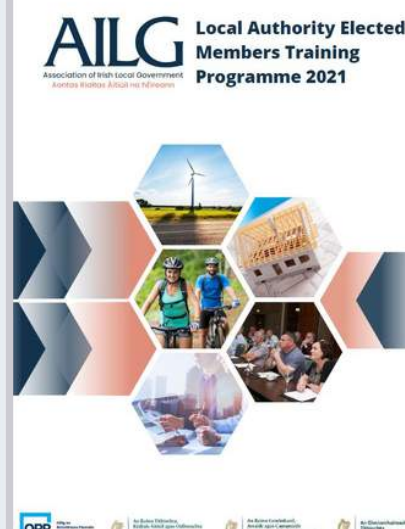
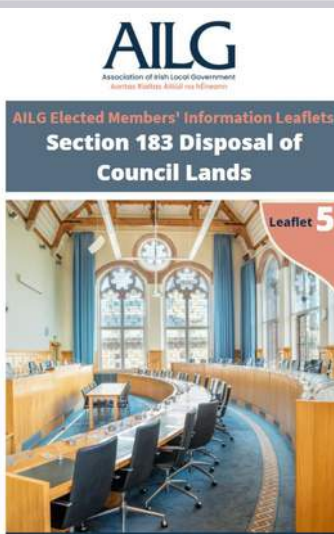
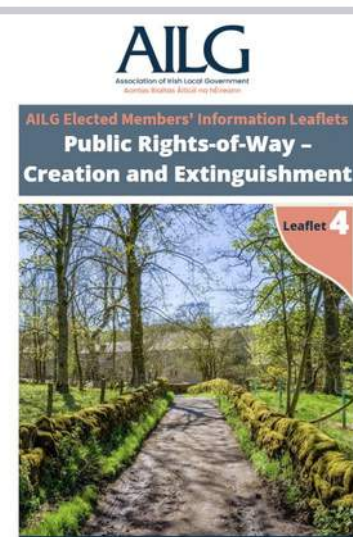
4.4 Media Engagement

After developing a **Communications database** of national, regional and local radio & newspapers, the following are some examples of media engagement and specific communications projects/campaigns set against the background of the ongoing work in projecting the AILG as an authoritative voice across social media and long-established media.

4.5 AILG-CMG Survey Report Launch

In May 2021 AILG partnered with Crime Management Group (CMG) to launch the results of our national councillor survey which revealed that almost 72% of respondents have experienced threats, harassment, and intimidation in the past 3 years either in-person or via social media.

The successful campaign led to an increased awareness nationally and regionally about this growing issue and of the ongoing risks to the



mental and physical wellbeing of councillors in Ireland. The association highlighted serious concerns that this growing issue will not only act as a deterrent and hold people back from running for future election but will also affect retention rates. The AILG received a high volume of media coverage in relation to the survey launch, which led to AILG spokesperson and President at the time, Cllr. Mary Hoade, featuring on *RTE's The Week in Politics* and being interviewed across various radio stations across the country.

Contact was also made from Facebook's Public Policy Manager to offer an online Facebook and Instagram safety training session for members of AILG which will be rolled out in early 2022.

4.6 RTE Investigates Programme

The AILG was initially contacted by the RTÉ Prime Time Investigates Unit during the summer of 2020 seeking accounting details on individual payments to councillors as part of an investigation RTÉ was undertaking concerning councillors' expenses related to conferences, training seminars and meetings of external bodies. Where in a position to do so, AILG provided detailed responses to the queries received and at all times remained open in communication with the RTÉ Investigates Unit. At the same time, the AILG kept its Executive and broader membership apprised of the queries received from RTÉ and the respective responses issued.

Following on from this correspondence, in May 2021, AILG received an interview request from the RTÉ Prime Time Investigates Unit asking for the association to participate on the show. Based on the information provided by RTÉ the AILG Executive decided that the most appropriate person to represent the association and discuss these general areas on the programme would be

AILG Director, Mr Tommy Moylan, in the context of his remit as accounting officer of the association responsible for the local government audit. The interview was pre-recorded with Mr Moylan on Wednesday, 16th June. During the interview Mr Moylan provided detail on the following areas specifically in relation to the AILG: its role & remit, structure and income, education and training, value for money and AILG payment & reporting obligations. In advance of the programme being aired, a number of actions were taken by AILG including;

- Preparation of a detailed statement which was placed on the association's website and referenced across AILG's social media following the airing of the programme. The statement was a factual account of AILG's interaction with RTE in advance of the programme.
- Advice and speaking points to any Plenary members who were asked to comment on the programme on behalf of the AILG.
- Contact was made personally by the President to all of the 31 Cathaoirigh/Mayors to inform them of the programme and to advise them to speak to their own CE in relation to drafting a statement if any member of their local authority was featured in the show. AILG also drafted some sample statements for them to use.
- Help and support was provided to individual members who sought advice and assistance from the association in advance of featuring in the show.

The AILG will be providing revision training to delegates in relation to quarterly returns and issue an email reminder to all delegates every quarter to remind members of their reporting obligations.

AILG Congress of Local & Regional Authorities in Europe (C.L.R.A.E)

"Four Irish Councillors made an impact at a major European forum in late October 2021 when they represented the State at the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities in Strasbourg."

The Congress is the forum of the Council of Europe which brings together elected members from 47 European countries to discuss issues of concern in the local government sector throughout the continent. There is an emphasis on issues to do with the participation of minority groups including migrants in all facets of local democracy and the Irish delegates also take part in meetings of the three major committees of the Congress: Monitoring, Governance and Current Affairs.

Ireland to head Council of Europe Presidency

On the margins of the Congress the Irish Delegation met with the Irish Ambassador to the Council of Europe, Mr Breffni O'Reilly, and the Deputy Ambassador, Mr Shane Griffin, who briefed the Irish members on Ireland's forthcoming Presidency of the Congress from May to October of 2022. This opportunity comes about only once in every twenty years and will give Ireland a platform to raise its profile in the wider European environment. The Ambassador's briefing prompted the Irish Delegation to consider ways in which Irish local government could deepen its engagement with the Council of Europe within the framework of existing meetings and activities.



L to R: Deputy Ambassador, Mr Shane Griffin, CLRAE Secretary Mr. Liam Kenny, Cllr. Anne Colgan, CLRAE Delegation Head, Cllr. Jimmy Moloney, Irish Ambassador to the Council of Europe, Mr Breffni O'Reilly, Cllr. John Crowe, Cllr. Gobnait Moynihan.

In regard to the Congress proper the Irish delegation took an active interest in business on the three-day Congress agenda which echoed concerns expressed by councillors in Ireland including a debate on how councillors' public lives are impacted by hate speech on social media and what counter-measures could be taken to mitigate the impact of such unwanted interventions.

Separately, the Delegation Head, Cllr Jimmy Moloney, joined with a councillor from Azerbaijan to oversee preparation of a report on the challenges facing young people in rural regions of the EU.



In between the bi-annual sessions of the Congress, the Irish delegates will be occupied with participation in committee meetings - mostly online - and with scrutinising the high volume of studies and reports generated by the Congress secretariat. And the prospect of the Irish Presidency in May next adds an exciting opportunity for Ireland to highlight its long tradition of local democracy to its European counterparts.

The Irish Delegation for the period of 2020-2024 comprises of: Cllr Jimmy Moloney (Head of Delegation), Cllr. Anne Colgan, Cllr. Gobnait Moynihan and Cllr. John Crowe. The Secretary to the Delegation is Liam Kenny, Director AILG.



CLRAE Delegation Head, Cllr. Jimmy Moloney, presenting a CLRAE report to Plenary Delegates at AILG's Annual General Meeting held on 30th September 2021.



Association of Irish Local Government
Office Unit 10, Manor Mills,
Maynooth, Co. Kildare
W23YT63

01 6106100
www.ailg.ie

Please follow us on social media.

Twitter: @Ailgire

LinkedIn: Association of Irish Local Government

Facebook: AILGIREL

Instagram: @ailgire