

AILG

Association of Irish Local Government
Aontas Rialtas Áitiúil na hÉireann

2023- 2024

ACTIVITY REPORT



Celebrating 125 Years of
Local Government in Ireland
1899-2024



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



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

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Message from the President

It gives me great pleasure to present the AILG
Annual Activity Report for 2023-24.

While I have been in office since July, I want to begin by acknowledging the significant contributions of my predecessor, Cllr. Gail Dunne, and the Executive Committee of 2023-24. Their leadership, dedication, and commitment steered the organisation through an important period of growth and achievement. A key priority during their term was delivering a range of supports to our members both before and after the local elections which took place in June of this year. Their efforts have laid a strong foundation for AILG and our members as we commence this new five-year council term.

The report outlines notable successes under Cllr. Dunne's tenure, including the launch of our long awaited AILG commissioned research report *The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government*, securing the alignment of Councillors gratuity to the new salary, strengthening member engagement, and intensive Oireachtas lobbying campaigns to advocate and raise awareness about the challenges faced by our members and the

local government system as a whole. This included multiple consultations with the Seanad Public Consultation Committee on the Future of Local Democracy and actively promoting the findings of the Council of Europe Monitoring Report and launching a campaign calling for the immediate implementation of its recommendations.

2024 marked the 125th anniversary of the first council elections in Ireland, a milestone that highlights the vital role of local government in shaping Irish democracy. County Councils were established almost two decades before Dáil Éireann and long before the Seanad, serving as Ireland's training ground for democratic practice. This heritage, beginning in April 1899, is a legacy worth celebrating as we reflect on the contributions of Councillors over the past century and a quarter.

125 years later, Councillors today need enhanced autonomy, additional resources, and more direct control over local decision-making. The AILG has consistently highlighted over the past number of years that, while the 2014 reforms were a step in the right direction, further progress is needed to truly empower local Councillors. This message is reflected in both our Local Election and General Election Manifestos, published this year, which bring forward

a number of strong proposals and measures to strengthen local government. Over recent weeks, the Executive Committee and I have been actively presenting our policy paper to political parties and advisors, advocating for our key recommendations to be included in the upcoming Programme for Government. I assure you that the Association will continue these lobbying efforts in the coming weeks and into 2025.

In the months ahead, my focus will be to continue AILG's advocacy and policy efforts in securing improved supports for our members. I also want to work towards developing a strategic training plan for the next five-year term, the first step of which was our Training Needs Analysis Survey which we launched in September. In order for AILG to continue to improve our service delivery to our members, it is vital that we ensure our training programme aligns with members' evolving needs. Equally as important, we need to ensure that the voice of the Councillor remains to the fore and AILG will be that

voice for local government in Ireland that is absent at the moment. We have the opportunity now in advance of the upcoming new programme for government and Seanad elections early next year to shape our future of local government.

I look forward to continuing this work alongside my fellow officers and the Executive Committee for the remainder of my tenure as President. I'd like to sincerely thank them for their support to date and we look forward to renewing our efforts to advance the Association and achieve meaningful progress for our members into the new year.

In closing, I also extend my sincere gratitude to my predecessors and of course to the AILG staff for their hard work and dedication, which have contributed to the significant progress this Association has made in recent years.

Is mise le meas,

Kieran

Councillor Kieran O' Hanlon

AILG President 2024-25

Director's Report

It gives us great pleasure to report on the AILG's activities for the year 2023 - 2024.



Tom Moylan
Director



Liam Kenny
Director

This year was a particularly productive one for the AILG and there is much to be proud of. In January we launched the AILG commissioned Maynooth University report, *The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government*, which presents data from the most extensive survey ever conducted among elected members in Ireland. Research remains central to shaping our training programme, with numerous recommendations from the report and our September Councillor Training Survey guiding us in delivering targeted CPD, up-skilling, and capacity-building initiatives for our members.

This year also marked a new five year term and following the June local elections, we delivered a comprehensive Member Induction Training Programme attended by over 800 Councillors.

This programme combined six weeks of webinars with an in-person session, covering essential topics such as local authority functions, governance, finance, and post-election procedures. We were also delighted to renew our partnership with the University College Cork (UCC) in supporting and sponsoring the QQI Level 7 course on Climate Crisis and Local Government. This 12-week programme has seen a growing number of Councillors graduate, and we're excited to welcome a new cohort in early 2025.

The President and AILG Executive have done outstanding work this year, building on the efforts of their predecessors to advocate for our members and address the challenges facing the local government system. Through numerous meetings with political parties, policy advisors, and Department officials, we have crafted and presented a precise policy document outlining AILG's bold vision for the future of local government in Ireland. Our goal is to place Councillors at the heart of local democracy, ensuring they have the authority, resources, and respect needed to perform their roles effectively. As the voice for local government, AILG remains dedicated to filling the gap in representation and advocacy.

We wish our members every success in this five-year term and thank you for your public service. AILG is here to support you in every way possible throughout your tenure.

Liam Kenny & Tommy Moylan

Directors AILG

Our Role and Functions

The Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) is a national representative body that proudly represents and supports local democracy.

With 949 members, AILG focuses on developing, supporting and promoting the important work of City and County Councillors across the island of Ireland and helping them to respond to changes and challenges in local government.

The AILG is one of the longest established representative bodies in Ireland, and we liaise closely with other stakeholders in the local government environment to ensure that the contribution of Ireland's democratically elected Councillors is appreciated in government departments and throughout the full range of public agencies.

Mission Statement

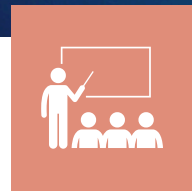
The AILG is a national representative body that proudly represents and supports local democracy. We the elected Councillors provide a strong voice for local communities through effective local government.



Advocate

Our Responsibilities

- Protect & promote democratic local government
- Lobby for improved supports for Councillors
- Achieve greater influence for local government and our member local authorities
- Provide training, resources and support to Councillors to meet their legislated responsibilities
- Facilitate continuous improvement for local government
- Build the profile and enhance the status and reputation of City & County Councillors in Ireland



Support



Promote

Programme of Work

As a membership organisation, we have a duty to deliver to our members on business objectives which have been set and agreed by our Executive Board and Plenary Council.

Our programme of work is central to the day-to-day activities of AILG and their achievement is key to the realisation of our overall vision and mission. In our Activity Report 2022-23 we report within the following pages on these key programme areas:

1. **Advocacy & Policy**
2. **Training & Education**
3. **Communications**
4. **European Engagement**

Structure, Governance and Management

The 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 AGM and are responsible for implementing and delivering the strategy and policies of AILG, in conjunction with the Executive Committee and Management Team.

Officers 2023 - 2024

- Cllr. Gail Dunne, President
- Cllr. Jason Murphy, Vice-President
- Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Past President

Executive Committee Members 2023-2024

- Cllr. Dermot Lacey
- Cllr. Carmel Kelly
- Cllr. Blackie Gavin
- Cllr. Paraic Brady
- Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald
- Cllr. Colette Connolly
- Cllr. Alan Cheevers
- Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon
- Cllr. Joe Fox
- Cllr. Anthony Connick

Officers 2024 - 2025

- Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon, President
- Cllr. Jimmy McClearn, Vice-President
- Cllr. Gail Dunne, Past President

Executive Committee Members 2024-2025

- Cllr. Thomas Healy
- Cllr. Anne Colgan
- Cllr. Blackie Gavin
- Cllr. Mick Cahill
- Cllr. Mary Hoade
- Cllr. Joe Fox
- Cllr. Pio Smith
- Cllr. Charlie Farrelly
- Cllr. Anna Grainger
- Cllr. Winston Bennett

Structure, Governance and Management

The **Finance Committee** is responsible for all matters relating to financial planning and budgeting, resource and expenditure management, financial monitoring and reporting to the Executive Committee.

Finance Committee Members 2019 - 2024

- AILG Officer Board
- Cllr. John Paul Feeley
- Cllr. Cyril Burke

Finance Committee Members 2024 - 2029

- AILG Officer Board
- Cllr. Tom O' Callaghan
- Cllr. Declan McDonnell

The **Audit Committee** has an independent oversight role in advising AILG 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. John Pender (Chair)
- Cllr. Christy Hyland
- Cllr. Kevin Murphy
- Cllr. Jason Murphy

Audit Committee Members 2024 - 2029

- AILG President
- Cllr. James Byrne
- Cllr. Dermot Lacey
- Cllr. Tom Farrell

Additionally, an independent chair for the Audit Committee will be introduced in 2025.

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.

Our Year of 2023 - 2024 in Review

Successfully lobbied and **secured the alignment of Councillors gratuity** to the new salary

Appeared before the Seanad Consultation Committee to discuss the Future of Local Democracy

Officially **launched our commissioned Research Report, *The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government*** in partnership with Maynooth University

 **216**
MEDIA MENTIONS
AND INTERVIEWS

Launched an updated **Councillor survey Report on threats, harassment and intimidation**

5 Published **five new policy and education resources**, including an Elected Members Guidance Handbook and AILG's General Election Manifesto outlining our Vision for Local Government

Delivered a comprehensive Member Induction Training Programme following the 2024 Local Elections that **engaged over 800 participants**

Strongly **Advocated for Councillor Supports and Local Government Reform** during Oireachtas Lobbying Campaign

Hosted a landmark cross-border event in partnership with NILGA and **Supported Launch of New Ethical Political Discourse Pledge**

Conducted a Training Needs Analysis Survey with our membership

Renewed our partnership with the University College Cork (UCC) in supporting and sponsoring Councillors to undertake a QQI Level 7 course on Climate Crisis and Local Government.

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme



Through our Advocacy and Policy Programme, the AILG proudly protects and supports democratic local government on behalf of the 949 City and County Councillors across the State.

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 programme. A key objective of our Advocacy programme is to lobby for improved supports for Councillors & to achieve greater influence for local government and our member local authorities.

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 Department 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.

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

Councillor Supports

Increase to Councillors' Annual Remuneration

As of 1 October 2024, the annual remuneration for Elected Members increased to €30,274, marking a significant milestone as Councillors' salaries exceeded €30,000 per annum for the first time.

Since the alignment with the local authority Grade 4 pay scale in July 2021, members have benefitted from cumulative public sector pay adjustments totaling nearly €5,000. This reflects the ongoing impact of the Building Momentum public service pay agreement and subsequent adjustments.

In addition to salary increases, the updated remuneration figures are now used for calculating gratuity entitlements, providing enhanced financial security for elected members transitioning out of public office.

AILG Advocacy Success: Councillors' Gratuity Scheme

Over recent years, AILG has worked tirelessly to resolve the long-standing issue of the Councillors' gratuity scheme. This persistent advocacy effort culminated in late 2024 with the official alignment of the gratuity scheme to Councillors' updated salary structure, marking a significant achievement for the Association and its members.

In November 2023, a key meeting leading to this result took place when President Cllr. Gail Dunne led an AILG delegation to meet Minister of State Kieran O'Donnell at the Customs House. The AILG delegation pressed

the urgency of resolving the gratuity scheme. President Dunne emphasised its impact on Councillors, particularly those considering whether to run in the upcoming elections. Minister O'Donnell responded positively, reaffirming his commitment to resolving the issue in coordination with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

In December 2024, Minister O'Donnell announced the successful resolution of the gratuity scheme. Under the revised scheme, gratuity payments are now aligned with Councillors' updated salaries, calculated at three-twentieths of the annual salary per year of service, up to a maximum of 20 years. Based on the current salary of €30,274 (effective October 2024), this revision increases the gratuity for 20 years of service from €77,812 to €90,822, a rise of €13,010. The revised scheme came into effect following the local elections in June 2024, benefitting both retiring Councillors and those elected. Eligibility criteria remains unchanged, requiring a minimum age of 50 years and at least two years of service as a Councillor.

AILG Highlights Urgency for Local Government Reform in Ireland

After a Monitoring Mission to Ireland by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE) in April 2023, the resulting Council of Europe Monitoring Report was unanimously approved by CLRAE during its Plenary meeting in Strasbourg in October 2023. The report highlighted significant shortcomings in Ireland's local government system, finding the country compliant with only 8 of the 20 principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The AILG was one of the key stakeholders who engaged with the Monitoring Committee during their visit to conduct an independent investigation,

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

and presented the Monitoring mission with a detailed formal submission which provided an overview of the Irish local government system in Ireland as well as outlining both positive and negative characteristics of our local government system.

The final report described Ireland as a solid democracy but noted that its highly centralised system remains far behind European norms. Recommendations included implementing an action programme to devolve more powers and responsibilities to local and regional authorities, coupled with adequate financial resources to support these functions. Following the report's adoption, Immediate past President Cllr. Gail Dunne and AILG actively promoted its findings and launched a campaign calling for the immediate implementation of the recommendations. Cllr. Dunne used the report to support the Association's advocacy efforts in calling for a fundamental review of Ireland's local government system and during engagements with national stakeholders to bring Irish local governance in line with European standards.

AILG appear before Seanad Consultation Committee on the Future of Local Democracy

In November 2023, an AILG delegation led by then-President Cllr. Gail Dunne appeared before the Seanad Consultation Committee on the Future of Local Democracy, chaired by Leas-Chathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Mark Daly.

During his opening statement, Cllr. Dunne highlighted the growing imbalance between the executive powers of Chief Executives and the reserved powers of elected councillors.

The AILG delegation referenced the recently published CLRAE Monitoring Report, which underscored the highly centralised and weak nature of Ireland's local government system. Cllr. Dunne urged the Committee to explore devolving more powers to local authorities through legislative reforms to strengthen and enhance local democracy.

The AILG delegation highlighted other key issues, including the impact of national legislation on local governance, and challenges in representation, candidate recruitment, and councillor wellbeing. AILG actively participated throughout the consultation process, and in July 2024, AILG Executive members (2023-2024) Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick and Cllr. Paraic Brady addressed the Committee, reiterating these concerns while also highlighting findings from the AILG commissioned Independent Maynooth University report on councillors' evolving roles.

AILG welcomed the Committee's final report, launched in October 2024, which included 25 recommendations, including the establishment of a Local Democracy Task Force to enhance governance, support councillors, and reform local government powers. The Association was pleased that many of AILG's recommendations were incorporated, and Senator Mark Daly has since urged party leaders to include the Task Force in the next Programme for Government.



Left: AILG Delegation led by Cllr. Gail Dunne (Immediate AILG Past President) pictured in Seanad Éireann before their appearance before the Seanad Consultation Committee on the Future of Local Democracy on 16 November 2023.

Bottom: AILG Delegation pictured outside Leinster House before their appearance before the Seanad Consultation Committee.

L-R: Tommy Moylan, AILG Director, Cllr. Jason Murphy, Immediate Past Vice President, Cllr. Paraic Brady, AILG Executive member 2023-24, Cllr. Gail Dunne, Immediate Past President, Cllr. Carmel Kelly & Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, AILG Executive member 2023-24.



AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

AILG Launches New Research Report on the Evolving Role of the 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government

The Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) commissioned Maynooth University and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (a research centre involving MU) to undertake a study on the 'The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government' as part of a wider MU-AILG Strategic Partnership in existence since 2021.

Building on the Moorhead Report, this detailed body of research centered on the role of the local Councillor in the 21st Century, with a strong emphasis on the evolving non-statutory nature of our member's role including international comparisons. A key purpose of the research was to look at the many other facets of the councillor role such as civic leadership, community representational role etc as well as the challenges facing the councillor in an everchanging landscape & the evolution of the role over the past decade.

This research report was informed by an extensive review of international literature, and it is noteworthy that Ireland did not feature much in cross-country studies about the role of the councillor in local government. Thus, this research addresses a significant gap, as it has generated a considerable volume of primary data about councillors' experiences in Ireland. Furthermore, the research has ensured that the councillors' voice was to the fore, and the methods of primary data collection were as follows: an online questionnaire (which was circulated to all 949 councillors); one-to-one interviews with stratified samples of councillors; and thematic focus groups

(roundtable discussions) with councillors. Five hundred councillors completed the questionnaire, and fifty-three participated in interviews or focus groups; thereby ensuring this report has a very strong evidence base. These engagements with councillors were complemented by interviews with other senior stakeholders who interface with local government.

The final report was officially launched on 31st January 2024 at the Mansion House in Dublin, in the presence of key local government stakeholders and media. The event was MC'd by Mary Kennedy, RTE presenter, with the report officially launched by Minister for Housing and Local Government, Darragh O'Brien TD, and the then Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Kieran O'Donnell TD. The comprehensive new research has significantly enriched the ongoing dialogue around meaningful reforms in Ireland's local government system, providing AILG with a clear evidence base for its lobbying efforts. It also highlights AILG's vision for the future of local government: restoring elected councillors to their rightful place at the heart of democracy.

Equally important, this research will support the Association in enhancing its service delivery to elected members, particularly in areas such as CPD training, education, up-skilling, and capacity building. It will also shape future promotional campaigns over the next five-year Council term, helping to highlight the contribution and value of the local government sector in society. Furthermore, it will play a key role in public awareness campaigns, emphasising the critical role of elected members in our democratic system.

Launch of AILG-MU research report on “The 21st Century in Irish Local Government” - In pictures



Launch of AILG-MU research report on “The 21st Century in Irish Local Government” - In pictures



AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

AILG Advocates for Councillors' Role in New Planning Legislation

Throughout 2024, AILG renewed its lobbying efforts to secure amendments to the Planning and Development Bill 2023, aiming to protect the role of councillors in shaping planning policy. Cllr. Gail Dunne, then-AILG President, issued a detailed briefing to Senators, urging amendments to key provisions in the Bill. The Association also commissioned an expert planning report to assess the implications of the legislation, building on previous work conducted with input from Cllr. Nick Killian, AILG's representative on the Planning Advisory Forum.

Among AILG's primary concerns was the proposed extension of Development Plan durations from six to ten years, potentially deferring councillors' ability to shape their localities beyond a council term. AILG argued that if the ten-year timeframe were adopted, councillors should retain strong powers to initiate plan variations. The Association also raised concerns about the mandatory nature of Ministerial guidelines, advocating for consultation with councillors before such directives are issued.

Despite engaging with the Department, Minister Darragh O'Brien, TD, and the Oireachtas throughout the legislative process, many of AILG's proposed amendments were not included in the final version of the Bill, which passed in October 2024 after extensive debate and over 1,200 amendments. The Association is extremely disappointed that many of our proposed amendments, in order to protect the position of the councillor in the planning process, were not included in the final bill. It is a further erosion of powers and functions of councillors and local government

and this comes as a great disappointment to AILG. However, the Association remains committed to engaging with the Minister as regulations and circulars under the new legislation are developed and will continue our advocacy to ensure councillors retain a central role in Ireland's planning system.

AILG Advocacy on the Policing & Community Safety Partnerships Bill

AILG engaged extensively with the legislative process surrounding the Policing & Community Safety Partnerships Bill to safeguard the role and status of our members. The Bill provided for the replacement of Joint Policing Committees (JPCs) with Community Safety Partnerships, featuring reduced councillor representation and the appointment of an independent chairperson, rather than an elected councillor as was the case with the JPCs.

Then President, Cllr. Gail Dunne, contacted Oireachtas members across the country, highlighting AILG's particular concern regarding the membership and chairperson of the partnerships and asked them to take into consideration a number of amendments during the committee stage of the bill. AILG argued that the responsibility for establishing community safety partnerships should rest with local authorities, not the Department of Justice, and that AILG, as the representative body for councillors, should be consulted during the preparation of regulations for the partnerships' structure and operations. AILG also advocated for a minimum of 25% councillor representation in the partnerships, with 10–15 councillors included, and stressed the importance of retaining the position of chairperson as a councillor. Despite persistent lobbying, AILG's efforts to secure changes to the Bill were ultimately unsuccessful, and the legislation was passed without incorporating AILG's key recommendations.

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

AILG Launch Updated AILG-CMG Councillor Survey on Threats, Harassment, and Intimidation in Public Office

In March 2024 the AILG launched the results of our national councillor survey which revealed that almost 63% of respondents had experienced threats, harassment, and intimidation between 2021 and 2023. The Association was eager to get an updated evaluation from Councillors in relation to the important issue as it had been almost two years since our last member survey in 2021, both of which were carried out in partnership with Crime Management Group (CMG).

The AILG received widespread coverage of our survey results in national and regional media outlets. Then President Cllr. Gail Dunne spoke on *RTE Drivetime* and Today FM's *The Last Word* radio programmes and highlighted the urgent need to tackle the normalising of abuse and harassment of councillors and emphasised the importance of respect in political debate.

Then President Cllr. Dunne and the 2023-24 Executive Committee delivered a thorough action plan throughout the year to raise the profile of the issue and provide support & guidance for Councillors, particularly in the lead up to the 2024 Local Elections. As part of a number of recommendations in response to the survey findings, AILG collaborated with CMG to launch a new service called 365assist a comprehensive security service that offers 24/7 on-call advice and response to general personal security queries, or in cases where councillors feel that danger is imminent.

AILG Launches Local Elections Manifesto Outlining Vision for Strengthening Local Democracy

In May 2024, AILG launched its Manifesto for the Local Elections, which underscored the need for substantial dialogue and immediate action on the future of local democracy and governance in Ireland.

The Manifesto highlighted the importance of decentralisation as a critical step toward strengthening local government and addressing the challenges facing the future of local democracy. It noted that Ireland has one of the most centralised systems of local government in Europe, particularly regarding powers, functions, service delivery, and funding. The Manifesto also addressed key priorities, including supporting training and education for councillors, advancing climate action, promoting gender and diversity in local government, and improving local authority funding.

The Manifesto outlined strategic priorities to tackle the severe housing and homelessness crisis, emphasising the need to reinforce local authorities as the primary providers of social housing. Among its key proposals, AILG advocated for expanding the legislative powers of councillors and local authorities to enable greater local governance and enhanced service delivery, particularly in social housing and economic development. It also called for better support mechanisms for councillors to strengthen their roles as community leaders and policymakers. Additionally, the Manifesto urged the resourcing and expansion of the Regional Women's Caucus Network across all local authorities to promote gender and diversity in local government.



Above: Cllr. Gail Dunne, 2023-24 AILG President pictured presenting AILG's Local Election Manifesto to Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing at DHLGH in May 2024.



Middle: 2023-24 AILG President Cllr. Gail Dunne and AILG Director Tommy Moylan pictured at University College of Dublin (UCD) to mark the final meeting of the 6th UCD Governing Authority which was hosted by UCD President Professor Orla Feely in Oct 2023.



Bottom Left: Membership of the 2023-24 AILG Executive Committee pictured in AILG headquarters in Maynooth Co. Kildare at their first Executive meeting in October 2024.

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

AILG Deputation with Minister for Planning & Local Government to Advocate for Councillor Supports and Local Government Reform

In October 2024, newly elected AILG President Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon led an AILG delegation in a meeting with Minister of State Alan Dillon at the Customs House to discuss key local government issues on behalf of Councillors.

During the meeting, President O'Hanlon emphasised the importance of addressing critical matters affecting Councillors, including local government reform, pay and non-pay supports, and overall system improvements. The AILG presented its policy document on the "Future of Local Government," which outlined recommendations to expand the powers of elected councils, enhance local revenue-raising capabilities, and strengthen local authority structures, particularly at the Municipal District and Area Committee levels.

The delegation also stressed the need for continued supports to encourage participation in local government, advocating for measures such as index-linking Councillor allowances (unchanged since their introduction), increments to remuneration payments, and family-friendly initiatives to promote greater gender and diversity representation.

Cllr. O' Hanlon expressed his commitment to engaging with all political parties, the Minister, and the department on the AILG's policy paper in the lead-up to a new government term.

AILG Launches General Election Manifesto calling for Stronger Local Government

In the lead-up to the General Election, the AILG undertook a series of engagements with political parties to advocate for critical local government reforms and greater support for Councillors. Central to this effort was the launch of AILG's General Election Manifesto: *Building Stronger Local Government* in November 2024. This comprehensive policy document outlined the Association's vision for the future of local government and called for essential reforms to rebalance power between Elected Councils and Chief Executives, enhance local revenue-raising capabilities, and strengthen local authority structures, particularly at the Municipal District and Area Committee levels.

In October 2024, AILG representatives, including Vice President Cllr. Jimmy McClearn and Executive members Cllr. Anna Grainger and Cllr. Joe Fox, met with Fine Gael officials at the party's headquarters. The delegation presented AILG's Manifesto and reform proposals, focusing on the need for rebalancing power between elected councils and Chief Executives. Similarly, a delegation led by President Cllr. Kieran O'Hanlon met with Fianna Fáil General Secretary Seán Dorgan to present the Manifesto and discuss AILG's vision for local government reform.

These meetings were part of AILG's broader effort to engage with policy advisors and representatives from all political parties in advance of the General Elections which took place in November. AILG remains committed to pushing for meaningful local government reforms and will be busy advocating for a number of its proposals to be included in the next Programme for Government over the coming weeks and months.



Top Left: L-R: Tommy Moylan, AILG Director, Cllr. Mick Cahill, AILG Executive Member, Alan Dillon TD, Minister of State at DHLGH, Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon, AILG President, Cllr. Anna Grainger, AILG Executive Member, Cllr. Jimmy McClearn, AILG Vice-President.



Above: L-R: Senator Sharon Keogan, Cllr. Charlie Farrelly, AILG Executive member, Deputy Michael Healy-Rae, Senator Victor Boylan, Tommy Moylan, AILG Director.

Middle Left: L-R: Cllr. Mick Cahill, AILG Executive Member, Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon, AILG President, Darragh O' Brien TD, Minister for Housing at DHLGH, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, AILG Executive Member, Tommy Moylan, AILG Director

Middle Right: L-R: Cllr. Thomas Healy, AILG Executive Member, Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon, AILG President, Deputy Martin Kenny TD, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, AILG Executive Member, Tommy Moylan, AILG Director

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

Greater Participation, Retention & Diversity in Local Government

The AILG is committed to developing initiatives that support Gender & Diversity in Local Government, and a key goal of the Association is to help and support existing Councillors to ensure that we retain members from diverse and minority groups and in particular women once they are elected.

As part of its efforts to promote gender balance and diversity in local government, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) has provided funding over the past number of years to increase female and diverse candidates for the 2024 Local Elections and beyond.

In June 2021, with DHLGH funding approval, AILG partnered with See Her Elected (SHE) to establish the WoMeN's Regional Caucus pilot in the Western, Midlands, and Northern regions. This initiative aims to retain and support women in politics and includes 13 local authorities: Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway County, Galway City, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Longford, Westmeath, Laois, and Offaly. These areas were selected due to their historically low numbers of female elected representatives. The AILG and SHE currently provide joint secretariat to the WoMeN's Regional Caucus from their own resources. Since 2021, the Caucus membership have actioned an ambitious programme of work with the support of the Secretariat and completed a number of key projects in over the pilot project term. The WoMeN's Regional Caucus held its AGM plenary meeting in October 2024, chaired by Cllr. Carmel Brady where the

caucus addressed future priorities, and a significant outcome of the meeting was the unanimous decision to continue the WoMeN's Regional Caucus for the 2024-2029 period. The process for electing new leadership positions was outlined, with a new Working Group to be appointed and a new Chair, Vice-Chair to be elected in early 2025.

The WoMeN's Regional Caucus will be publishing a final report on successes & learnings taken from the pilot project in early 2025 which will help to create a blueprint on how to roll out a Regional Caucus Network across across the full 31 local authorities.

WoMeN's Regional Caucus Unveil Artwork as part of International Women's Day Celebrations

On 5th March 2024, the WoMeN's Regional Caucus marked International Women's Day with the unveiling of a new artwork highlighting the need for increased female representation in local government. The artwork, created in collaboration with the members of the WoMeN's Regional Caucus and acclaimed artist Sinead Guckian, was revealed at the Customs House in Dublin. The event was attended by members of the Caucus, Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Kieran O'Donnell, TD, President of the AILG, Cllr. Gail Dunne, and AILG staff.

The decision to commission the artwork stemmed from the shared goal of creating a lasting symbol to reflect the values and aims of the WoMeN's Regional Caucus. It was also a response to the previous year's International Women's Day events, where councils hosted activities to reverse the gender of their council chambers, visually addressing the gender inequalities in local politics. The artwork aims to spark conversations, and inspire more women to engage in local politics.

AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

Outreach Project with Transition Year Students

In 2024 the WoMeN's Regional Caucus completed its Transition Year (TY) outreach project aimed to inspire young women to engage in their communities and explore leadership potential. A professional video was produced featuring a number of caucus members and accompanying teacher and student workbooks were developed for TY coordinators. The video highlighted the role of Councillors, celebrated the achievements of female Councillors in the region, and showcased the impact of Ireland's first regional caucus. The project aims to raise awareness among students about the underrepresentation of women in local government, connect the role of Councillors to students' lives, and encouraged informed voting.



Above: WoMeN's Regional Caucus members pictured following their AGM Plenary meeting in Sligo Park Hotel in October 2024.

Bottom Right (L-R): Participants of a Councillor focus group session hosted by AILG in collaboration with the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) in Maynooth in August 2024.

AILG Collaborates with DFI on Local Government Implementation of UN CRPD

In August 2024, AILG hosted a Councillor focus group session in collaboration with the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) at our offices in Maynooth. The DFI has established an Implementation Advisory Group to oversee the integration of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) within the local government sector. As part of this initiative, DFI has engaged researchers from the University of Galway to study the role of local authorities in implementing the UN CRPD.

The focus group session was led by researchers Charles O'Mahoney and Mary Lynch from the University of Galway. Participants included Councillors Miriam Murphy (Wicklow County Council), Vicki Casserly (South Dublin County Council), and Winston Bennett (Cavan County Council). With 20% of Ireland's population living with a disability, this issue is vital for communities across the country. AILG has been pleased to actively collaborate with the DFI on this important work and looks forward to continued engagement following the final recommendations report.



Launch of WoMeN's Regional Caucus Artwork "Le Feicáil" at Customs House - In pictures



AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

Stakeholder Collaboration & Engagement

AILG President attends UCD to mark final meeting of the 6th UCD Governing Authority

In October 2023, then-AILG President Cllr. Gail Dunne travelled to the University College of Dublin (UCD) to mark the final meeting of the 6th UCD Governing Authority and the contribution made by the Association of Irish Local Government nominees to successive Governing Authorities since 1913.

The special event hosted by UCD President Professor Orla Feely marked the end of the Association between the AILG and its predecessor the General Council of County Councils whereby – for more than a century – local authority members were nominated to the Governing Authority of UCD.

AILG President hosts meeting with Deputy Ambassador in the British Embassy

In February 2024 then-AILG President Cllr. Gail Dunne met with the Deputy Ambassador in the British Embassy, Elin Burns, who had requested a meeting with the Association to learn about the important work carried out by AILG and its members.

In an extremely productive meeting, Cllr Dunne and former Past President Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick discussed a number of items including the role and remit of AILG, Cross Border Collaborations with NILGA (Northern Ireland Local Government Association) and the National Association of Councillor Northern Ireland & UK and Local Government Challenges including greater participation in local government and the importance of local leadership/civility in public life.

AILG Engage with Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)

In March 2024, the AILG engaged with Ms. Kelly Grigsby, Chief Executive of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) in Australia.

The MAV is the Victorian local government sector's partner and ally, and the collective voice of their 79 local councils and whose work closely aligns with the work of the AILG. The meeting was a great learning opportunity and sharing of information, covering a number of agenda items including the Directly Elected Mayor of Limerick, Local Government Challenges including Importance of Local Leadership/Civility In Public Life/Greater Participation in Local Government/Local Democracy/Abuse & Harassment.

AILG Engage with President of the New Zealand Government Association

In July 2024, the AILG engaged with the New Zealand Local Government Association President, Cllr. Sam Broughton.

The Association arranged a briefing on Irish local government for Cllr Broughton which included a visit to the Mansion House for a meeting with the newly-elected Dublin Lord Mayor, James Geoghegan, who discussed city council issues and his plans for the year. Dermot Lacey of AILG's National Executive also in attendance, provided a firsthand account of an Irish councillor's daily experience. Accompanying Cllr Broughton to the briefing was the New Zealand Ambassador to Ireland, the Rt. Hon. Sir Trevor Mallard, a former speaker of the NZ Parliament and MP for many years.

Cllr Broughton shared insights on New Zealand's local government, noting similarities to Ireland but highlighting differences in funding sources and election cycles.



Left: L-R: Tommy Moylan, AILG Director, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, AILG Past President, Elin Burns, Deputy Ambassador in the British Embassy, Cllr. Gail Dunne, 2023-24 AILG President, Fraser McDoughall, second secretary, British Embassy.



Middle: Cllr. Gail Dunne, AILG President 2023-24 pictured with Tánaiste Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence at a networking event in October 2023.

Bottom Left: Cllr. Gail Dunne, AILG President 2023-24 pictured with Joan Flynn, political consultant for Glencree Peace and Reconciliation Centre during their respectful politics campaign.

Bottom Right: L-R: Liam Kenny, AILG Director, Cllr. Dermot Lacey, AILG Executive Member 2023-24, Cllr. Sam Broughton, New Zealand Local Government Association President, Rt. Hon. Sir Trevor Mallard, New Zealand Ambassador to Ireland



AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

Stakeholder Collaboration & Engagement

AILG Participate and Support Launch of New Ethical Political Discourse Pledge

In April 2024, the AILG supported the launch of a new Ethical Political Discourse Pledge via a panel discussion and webinar.

The Ethical Political Discourse Pledge stems from 18 months of engagement by Glencree, through its Public Discourse Project, and the Hume Foundation with current and former political representatives across the island of Ireland and organisations including AILG, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and the UK-based Jo Cox Foundation.

The Pledge, aims to encourage political parties, candidates, party members and the wider public to commit to respectful politics and to positively shape political discourse. Elected members from across the country joined the online discussion on Let's Talk Respectful Politics for Democracy and Reconciliation along with local government stakeholders. AILG participated as panellists and provided an overview of our recent survey results on abuse, threats and intimidation faced by our members nationwide.

AILG Cross Border Collaboration with Northern Ireland Colleagues

Building upon the strong working relationship and groundwork made together the previous year, in November 2024 the Association and NILGA (Northern Ireland Local Government Association) hosted a landmark cross-border event titled "Respectful Leadership – Raising the Bar" at the Carrickdale Hotel, Dundalk. The

event titled "Respectful Leadership – Raising the Bar" at the Carrickdale Hotel, Dundalk. The event, which was supported by the Irish Government's Shared Island Civic Society Fund, brought together over 90 participants from across Ireland, the UK, and Europe, including councillors, senior local government representatives, and international experts.

MC'd by Tim Attwood, Foundation Secretary for the John & Pat Hume Foundation, the conference aimed to address the challenges of maintaining civility in political discourse, combatting abuse, and fostering a culture of respectful leadership in local government. Distinguished speakers included Ms. Nóirín O'Sullivan, Chair of the Oireachtas Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life; Ms. Hannah Philips of the Jo Cox Foundation; Dr. Kelly Fincham, University of Galway; and Ms. Carla Dejonghe, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

Discussions focused on the impact of abuse and harassment on democratic participation, particularly among women and minority groups, and explored strategies to promote respectful engagement. Workshops throughout the day also provided actionable insights into building civility within council chambers, supporting councillors, and addressing online abuse.

Key outcomes included calls for joint training initiatives, the development of a "civility in public life" schools programme, and the creation of guidelines on councillor security and wellbeing. Participants also highlighted the need for cross-border collaboration to foster inclusivity and diversity in local government. The event underscored the shared commitment of AILG and NILGA to promoting safe and respectful participation in political life, reaffirming the importance of local government as a cornerstone of democracy.





AILG Advocacy & Policy Programme

AILG President attends event marking 10th Anniversary of NOAC at the Customs House

In September 2024 AILG President Cllr. O' Hanlon attended a special event in the Customs House to mark the 10th Anniversary of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).

Established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, NOAC provides impartial oversight of local authorities and regional assemblies. Through detailed reporting on performance, corporate plans, customer service, and internal audits, NOAC has promoted good practices and fostered greater engagement with stakeholders like government departments, audit committees, and state bodies.

AILG President Attends National Bravery Awards

In November 2024 AILG President Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon attended the National Bravery Awards in Farmleigh House in the Phoenix Park, Co. Dublin.

The annual honours are awarded by Comhairle na Míre Gaile – the Deeds of Bravery Council – which was founded 76 years ago in 1947 to enable State recognition of exceptional Acts of Bravery.

The council is chaired by the Ceann Comhairle and includes the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Cork, the Garda Commissioner, the president of the Association of Irish Local Government, and the chairman of the Irish Red Cross. The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, presented the awards which celebrate “the noblest impulse in a human being, the impulse to risk our lives in order to save someone else’s.”



Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon, AILG President 2024-25, pictured with the Bravery Council and the 2024 recipients of Bravery Awards in Farmleigh House on 8th November 2024.



Above photo (L-R): Michael McCarthy, Chair of NOAC, Alan Dillion TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Elaine Lynch, AILG Communications Officer, Cllr Kieran O'Hanlon, President, Tommy Moylan, AILG Director, Graham Doyle, Secretary General at DHLGH



Above: Cllr. O' Hanlon, AILG President 2024-25 pictured with the NOAC board outside the Customs House to mark the 10th Anniversary of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).



Left: AILG President Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick pictured with the Council of the Bravery Awards and MC for the event, RTE Presenter Mary Kennedy.



Left: Cllr. Kieran O' Hanlon pictured presenting Bravery Award to recipient Mary Noonan alongside the Chair of the Bravery Awards Council, An Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Feargháil at the National Bravery Awards in Farmleigh House, Dublin in November 2024.

AILG European Engagement



The AILG has a valued and strong role as parent body for the Irish delegation of Councillors to the Council of Europe's local government forum - the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE).

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.

AILG European Engagement

Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Irish Delegation to CLRAE attend and contribute at the 46th Session of the Congress in Strasbourg

In March 2024 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe held its 46th Session in Strasbourg, France.

The Irish delegation made a strong impression among the 300 delegates from 45 states where the ongoing war in Ukraine dominated discussions. Cllr. John Crowe was elected Vice-Chairman of the Monitoring Committee, joining Delegation Head, Cllr. Jimmy Moloney, in a leadership role. Cllr. Gobnait Moynihan co-rapporteur a report on local government in Croatia, which was well received.

During the 3 day session, the Congress Secretariat announced plans to involve AILG in a follow-up intervention regarding the previous year's Monitoring Team report, which criticised the dominance of central government in Ireland's local governance system.

The session marked the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe, of which Ireland was a founding member in 1949, and the 30th anniversary of the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities. The Irish delegation worked closely with Irish Youth Delegate Jack O'Connor and engaged with Ireland's new Ambassador to Strasbourg, Ms. Caitriona Doyle, fostering a positive relationship for future collaboration.



Above: Cllr. Gobnait Moynihan, a member of the Irish Councillor delegation to CLRAE, presenting a report on local democracy in Latvia at the 47th Session of the Congress in Strasbourg, France on 16 October 2024.

AILG European Engagement

Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

AILG President Attends European Conference on Strengthening Local Democracy

In September 2024 AILG President Cllr. O'Hanlon attended the "Conference of National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities" in Strasbourg on 12-13 September 2024.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the Congress and the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe, the event gathered representatives from 110 national associations. Discussions focused on the role of local and regional authorities in strengthening democracy, addressing climate challenges, and supporting Ukraine's reconstruction. The conference also emphasised cooperation, multi-level governance, and youth participation, culminating in a joint declaration reaffirming commitment to shared democratic values.

Irish CLRAE Delegation Make an Impact at the Council of Europe

The Irish delegation to the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities (CLRAE) played a prominent role at its 47th session in Strasbourg, representing the State with distinction. Led by Cllr. Jimmy Moloney, the delegation included Cllrs. Gobnait Moynihan, John Crowe, and Ann Colgan, alongside delegation secretary Liam Kenny.

Cllr. Moloney was appointed rapporteur for a policy document on alternative housing solutions, while Cllr. Moynihan presented a report on local democracy in Latvia. The delegation participated in discussions on local

discussions on local government systems in Finland, Iceland, and Malta, examining approaches to compare with Irish practices. Cllrs. Crowe and Moynihan contributed to the Monitoring Committee, addressing an upcoming CLRAE mission to Ireland.

A major focus of the Congress was Russia's aggression in Ukraine, with delegates from 45 countries expressing solidarity with Ukrainian communities. Irish youth delegate Jack O'Connor of Limerick was recognised for his contributions during the Congress, which also marked ten years of youth engagement.

The delegation also engaged with Irish officials, including Michael O'Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights, and Ambassador Caitriona Doyle, who hosted a reception attended by Irish Army personnel stationed with the Eurocorps in Strasbourg. Delegation head, Cllr. Moloney, commended the Irish Army's peacekeeping efforts, particularly their role in south Lebanon, referencing the high regard in which they are held by the Irish public.

The Congress provided an invaluable platform for the Irish delegation to contribute to European dialogue on local democracy while fostering relationships with international and Irish representatives.



Left: AILG President Cllr Kieran O'Hanlon with Vadym Boichenko, Mayor of Mariupol, the south Ukraine city eviscerated in the early months of the attack by Russia.



Middle: AILG President Cllr Kieran O'Hanlon and AILG Director Liam Kenny with Irish Ambassador Caitriona Doyle and Marcos O'Cearnaigh from the embassy.



Bottom Left

Minister of State Kieran O' Donnell TD pictured in October 2023 with the Irish CLRAE delegation at the Plenary Congress Session.



An AILG and Irish CLRAE Delegation pictured with members of the Council of Europe Monitoring Team and senior Department officials at the Customs House in November 2024 to discuss the need to take time-tabled actions to bring Ireland into line with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self Government.



Bottom Left

Delegation head, Cllr. Jimmy Moloney pictured chairing a formal meeting of the Council of Europe's Social Inclusion Committee in Strasbourg, France in July 2024.



Bottom Right

Cllr. Gobnait Moynihan, a member of the Irish Councillor delegation to CLRAE, presenting a report on local democracy in Latvia at the 47th Session of the Congress in Strasbourg, France on 16 October 2024.

AILG European Engagement

Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

AILG and Irish Delegation joins with Council of Europe Monitoring Team to press Department on local government issues

The AILG led by President, Cllr Kieran O'Hanlon, paid host to a Monitoring Team from the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in November 2024, who were in Ireland to follow-up on their hard-hitting report issued last year on the ways in which Irish local democracy could be brought into line with European norms of local independence.

The day began with an early morning meeting at which Cllr O'Hanlon was joined by an AILG delegation including Cllr Joe Fox of the AILG Executive and the Irish CLRAE delegation members led by their Head of Delegation, Cllr Jimmy Moloney accompanied by Cllr Anne Colgan and Cllr John Crowe.

A rapport was quickly developed with the visitors who comprised Cllr Gunn Merit Helgesen of Norway, Vladimir Plebic MEP of Slovenia, academic adviser Dr Anders Lidstrom of Sweden, and Strasbourg-based Head of Monitoring, Ms Stephanie Poirer. Having agreed a joint approach the group then travelled to the Customs House for a meeting to impress on senior officials in the Local Government Division on the need to take time-tabled actions to bring Ireland into line with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self Government.

At the Customs House the combined CLRAE-AILG group was received by Ms Fiona Quinn, Asst, Secretary General and Mr Diarmuid O'Leary, Principal Officer, accompanied by their colleagues across a range of local government functions in the Dept. including reform, structures and finance.

Key issues highlighted by AILG included central government's dominance over local authorities, executive dominance over elected members, and insufficient consultation with the Association and elected members on legislation and policies. In addition to this, the Irish CLRAE delegation emphasised the need to align Ireland's local governance with European standards and urged officials and the Department to signing the Additional Protocol to enhance civic participation. The Department agreed to consult the Attorney-General on this matter which was quite significant, given that the Department had not been agreeable to this previously.

The officials pointed out that they were not in a position to make commitments given the political hiatus resulting from the General Election campaign but they did express a willingness to take on board the comments of the CLRAE Monitoring Team and report them to the incoming Minister with responsibility for local government – whoever that will be – with a view to considering a roadmap for progress towards bringing Ireland in line with the European Charter.

AILG Training & Education Programme



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. 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.

AILG Training & Education Programme

AILG hosts successful Annual Training Conference

In February 2024, the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) held its annual training conference in Arklow, Co. Wicklow, drawing hundreds of elected representatives from across Ireland. The event, themed “The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government,” was inspired by the independent research report commissioned by AILG from Maynooth University and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD).

Throughout the two-day event, key discussions tackled pressing topics in local government, with tailored training sessions delivered by AILG to support Ireland’s 949 councillors. Representatives from the Land Development Agency (LDA) showcased initiatives such as the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme and the agency’s public land register for sustainable housing development, sparking meaningful dialogue on housing strategies and collaboration with local governments.

A dedicated session on the AILG & Maynooth/ICLRD report explored its findings and implications, with insights from lead researchers and expert panelists. Discussions centred on bridging knowledge gaps, raising public awareness of councillors’ roles, and leveraging the report as a foundation for progressive change.

The conference concluded with practical workshops preparing councillors for the upcoming local elections, covering campaign strategies and compliance. Closing remarks by Minister Stephen Donnelly TD and Cllr. Dunne underscored the significance of the research and its potential to shape the future of local government in Ireland.

AILG Launches Guidance Handbook and Delivers Comprehensive Induction Training Programme

Following the June 2024 Local Elections, the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) launched an extensive Induction Training Programme tailored to meet the needs of Ireland’s 949 newly elected councillors. Delivered through a blend of in-person sessions and online webinars, the programme was designed to equip councillors with the essential knowledge and skills required to fulfill their roles effectively. The in-person module, delivered in July, covered practical topics such as Post Local Elections Statutory Returns, the Code of Conduct, an Introduction to AILG, and Elected Member Supports. Attendees also received induction packs, including AILG’s newly published Guidance Handbook for Councillors, a comprehensive resource designed for elected members on topics ranging from legislative frameworks and council meeting procedures to ethical governance and personal security.

Complementing the in-person training, AILG hosted six online webinars between June and August, addressing key aspects of councillors’ roles, including the functions of local authorities, governance and oversight responsibilities, and local authority planning frameworks such as Corporate Plans and Climate Action Plans. These webinars provided councillors with accessible and flexible learning opportunities. Minister of State for Planning and Local Government, Alan Dillon TD, was among those in attendance. Minister Dillon addressed and congratulated new and returning Councillors on their election, emphasising their crucial role as democratically elected representatives and that he looked forward to engaging with Members and AILG over the coming five year term.

AILG Training & Education Programme

AILG announces renewed partnership with UCC on Climate Crisis & Local Government Course for Councillors

In Autumn 2024, AILG President Cllr. O' Hanlon announced the Association's renewed partnership with the University College Cork (UCC) in supporting and sponsoring the Climate Learning Program. The course aims to inform, challenge and empower Councillors, providing them with a unique opportunity to gain an accredited qualification while deepening their understanding of urgent climate issues.

The Climate Crisis and Local Government course, specifically designed for City and County Councillors in Ireland remains the only university credit-bearing CPD programme of its kind in the country, offering a recognised qualification in this critical sector.

The next intake of Councillors undertaking the AILG sponsored course will commence the 12-week QQI Level 7 certificate programme in February 2025.

AILG Councillor Training Survey

In September AILG launched a Councillor Training Survey with members which will serve as a key tool in shaping AILG's strategic training plan for 2025-2030. The Training needs analysis was carried out in partnership with an external training consultant, to ensure that our training plan reflected the full diversity of our membership—including different demographics, gender, and urban-rural representation. We received 339 responses in total which has provided a strong evidential base to develop a new and improved training programme for our members over the next five year term which will commence in 2025-26.

AILG Seminar Highlights: 125 Years of Local Governance and Future Strategies

In September 2024, Monaghan Town hosted the Association of Irish Local Government's Autumn Training Seminar, drawing hundreds of city and county councillors from across Ireland. The seminar, held at the Hillgrove Hotel on September 11th and 12th, highlighted key themes in local government and celebrated 125 years of local governance in Ireland.

The seminar featured a range of engaging sessions tailored to address councillors' evolving roles and challenges. Declan Keogh, Chair of the National Network of Road Safety Officers, provided insights into strengthening road safety initiatives across local authorities. Liam Bradley, Curator of Monaghan County Museum, delivered a keynote address on the Monaghan Peace Campus and its cross-community and cross-border engagement efforts. A session led by Coimisiún na Meán representatives explored local authorities' roles within the media landscape, while Uisce Éireann representatives outlined their collaborative approach to delivering sustainable water services at the local level.

A special session centred on preparing councillors for leadership challenges post-2024 local elections was extremely well received, with panellists and first time councillors sharing their diverse perspectives from across Ireland.

Minister James Lawless TD, Minister of State at the Department of Transport, delivered the keynote speech during the conference dinner, reflecting on the critical role of local government in Ireland's development over the past 125 years.

AILG Elected Member Training Programme 2024 - In pictures



AILG Training & Education Programme

AILG "In Person" Elected Member Training Programme Analysis 2024



Module	Date	Subject	Speakers
Module 1	Jan 2024	<i>Elected Members Briefing: Annual Declarations, Donations, Code of Conduct, and LRA Update</i>	Cllr. John Paul Feeley, Solicitor and Elected Member of Cavan County Council, Tommy Moylan, AILG Director.
Annual Conference	Feb 2024	<i>AILG Annual Conference 2024</i>	Presentations from national and international experts from local government.
Module 2	March 2024	<i>Local Election 2024 Preparation – A Briefing from the Electoral Commission</i>	Sarah Keaveney, Assistant Principal Electoral Operations Unit, Electoral Commission. Tommy Moylan, AILG Director.
Module 3	July 2024	<i>AILG Elected Member General Induction Training</i>	Presentations from Tommy Moylan and Liam Kenny, AILG Directors, Elaine Lynch, Communications Officer, AILG.
Module 4	Sept 2024	<i>An Overview of the Planning System</i>	Presentations from the Office of the Planning Regulator, the National Transport Authority and experts from local government.
Autumn Seminar	Sept 2024	<i>AILG Annual Autumn Seminar</i>	Presentations from national and international experts from local government.
Module 5	Oct 2024	<i>Local Authority Finance and the Budget Process</i>	Tommy Moylan, AILG Director, Local Authority Head of Finance
Module 6	Nov 2024	<i>A Councillor's Guide to the Home Upgrade Grants</i>	Shane Murphy, Managing Director - Ashgrove Renewables

AILG Training & Education Programme

AILG "Online" Elected Member Training Programme Analysis 2024

<i>Module</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Speakers</i>
Webinar 1	Jan 2024	<i>Introduction to Advertising on Facebook and Instagram</i>	Clare O'Donoghue Velikitch, Director of ODV Digital.
Webinar 2	Feb 2024	<i>Planning Budgets, Tracking Results, and Getting Authorised to run Political Ads on Meta</i>	Clare O'Donoghue Velikitch, Director of ODV Digital.
Webinar 3	March 2024	<i>Canva - How to use Canva to Create Marketing Images</i>	Elaine Lynch, Communications Officer, AILG.
Webinar 4	April 2024	<i>Security While Canvassing</i>	Presentations from national experts from Crime Ap Management Group
Webinar 5	April 2024	<i>Defensive Social Media - How you can put safety first in your Election Campaign</i>	Dr Kelly Fincham, University of Galway
Webinar 6	Sept 2024	<i>An Overview of the Community Engagement Teams</i>	Presentations from Eibhlin Byrne, National Lead on Civic Engagement, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).
Webinar 7	Oct 2024	<i>Overview of the New Planning Legislation</i>	Presentations from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).
Webinar 8	Nov 2024	<i>Local Authority Energy Efficiency Targets</i>	Presentations from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).
Webinar 9	Nov 2024	<i>Community Empowered Climate Action - The GAA Green Club Programme</i>	Presentations from national experts from the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) and the GAA Green Club Programme Team

AILG Training & Education Programme

AILG "In Person" Elected Member Training Programme Analysis 2024



AILG "In Service" Member Training Analysis 2023 - 2024

2963

2, 963 attendees over 29 Training events (including over 1500 online participants) in 2024

809

Total number of participants who attended our AILG Induction Training Programme following the 2024 Local Elections.

600

The number of combined attendees at our Annual Training Conference & Autumn Seminar in 2024

720

The number of councillors who have attended at least one of our online training sessions now stands at 720 Elected Members or above 76% of our membership

15

Total number of online training webinars delivered to our Members between Jan 2024 - December 2024

AILG Annual Conference (14th & 15th February 2024) - In pictures



AILG Annual Conference (14th & 15th February 2024) - In pictures



AILG Autumn Seminar (11th & 12th September 2024) - In pictures



AILG Autumn Seminar (11th & 12th September 2024) - In pictures



AILG Communications



An key objective of our public awareness and communications plan is to proactively position the AILG (Association of Irish Local Government) as the leading voice for local government matters.

AILG recognises the significance of establishing a strong presence and reputation among key stakeholders, including government departments media outlets, and other relevant parties. Through effective communication strategies and initiatives, AILG advocates for the interests and concerns of Councillors, and for the advancement of a true system of local government.

AILG Communications

Media engagement

2023-2024 AILG President Cllr. Dunne and the Association came out strong in promoting the CLRAE Monitoring Committee report upon the formal adoption of its report in October 2023 and a number of feature articles were published across media outlets highlighting AILG's position on the need for local government reform in Ireland.

In 2024, the Association received widespread coverage following the launch of both our commissioned Research Report *The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government* and our survey report on the levels of abuse and harassment experienced by Councillors across the country. A number of feature articles were published across national media outlets including *The Irish Times*, *Irish Examiner*, and the *Irish Independent*, with Cllr. Dunne, AILG President (2023-2024) also interviewed on *RTE Drivetime* radio and *The Last Word* on the topic of Councillor abuse and harassment.




THE IRISH TIMES

Opinion

Local politicians are overworked, underpaid and unrepresentative

Worldview: Improving local democracy should be a priority in talks on the formation of the next government

By Eoghan



Limerick County Council: Irish councillors represent 3,198 citizens per councillor, compared to 900 in Belgium, 620 in Spain and 412 in Finland. Photograph: Don Mooney

Paul Silences
Sat Nov 30 2024 - 09:00

The question of where Irish government happens matters in its delivery to an electorate demanding greater public services and infrastructure to service an expanding society, economy and population. Yet Ireland is one of the most centralised states in Europe and its local government one of the weakest.

This is paradoxical because comparisons with similar states show many of the electorates big issues, such as housing, taxation, health, social welfare, childcare and transport, could be more effectively - and democratically - delivered at local level.

A 2016 measure of local autonomy ranked Ireland last of 39 countries in Europe, indicating a severe governance and democratic deficit. We spend a commensurately time amount at local level

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'Local government in Ireland is among the weakest in Europe'

Association of Irish Local Government calls for action as, in terms of local democracy, Ireland is third from the bottom of the class among 46 European states



Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) president Gail Dunne says Ireland's highly-centralised system "violates the principle of subsidiarity which is held in great esteem in Europe". Picture: Fianna Fáil.ie

LATEST

Researchers find 'first proof of menopause in wild chimpanzees' 18 minutes ago

Chinese fighter jet 'was within 10ft of US B-52 bomber' over South China Sea 31 minutes ago

Elon Musk's first year at Twitter 'hugely damaging' 32 minutes ago

South Korean and US forces stage military exercises 1 hour ago

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THE IRISH TIMES

Councillors report online death threats and violent language, new survey finds

Association of Irish Government (AILG) said over a quarter of threats reported to An Garda Síochána

By Eoghan



The AILG is to engage with the online regulator Comair na Meán to highlight the particular problem of online abuse towards councillors.

Mark Millard
Tue Mar 12 2024 - 21:00

Almost two thirds of elected councillors experienced threats, intimidation or harassment over a two-and-a-half year period between 2021 and 2023, according to a new survey.

The Association of Irish Local Government (AILG), their representative body, said while over a quarter of threats were reported to An Garda Síochána, just 3.5 per cent resulted in prosecutions.

Its findings underscore an urgent need to address the "normalising" of abuse in order to protect

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THE IRISH TIMES

The Irish Times view on threats to politicians: an unacceptable attack on democracy

The perpetrators are not acting in a vacuum. A broader coarsening of public discourse has taken place

By Eoghan



Councillors reported threats of violence, damage to property, death threats, arson, and threats of sexual violence. Photo: Getty Images

Mark Millard
Mon Mar 18 2024 - 22:20

Two disturbing new reports will add to mounting concern over the unacceptable threats and abuse which elected politicians now endure.

A survey from the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) has found that two thirds of elected councillors had experienced threats, intimidation or harassment over a two-and-a-half year period. Councillors reported threats of violence, damage to property, death threats, arson, and threats of sexual violence. More than half of recipients felt worried or extremely concerned

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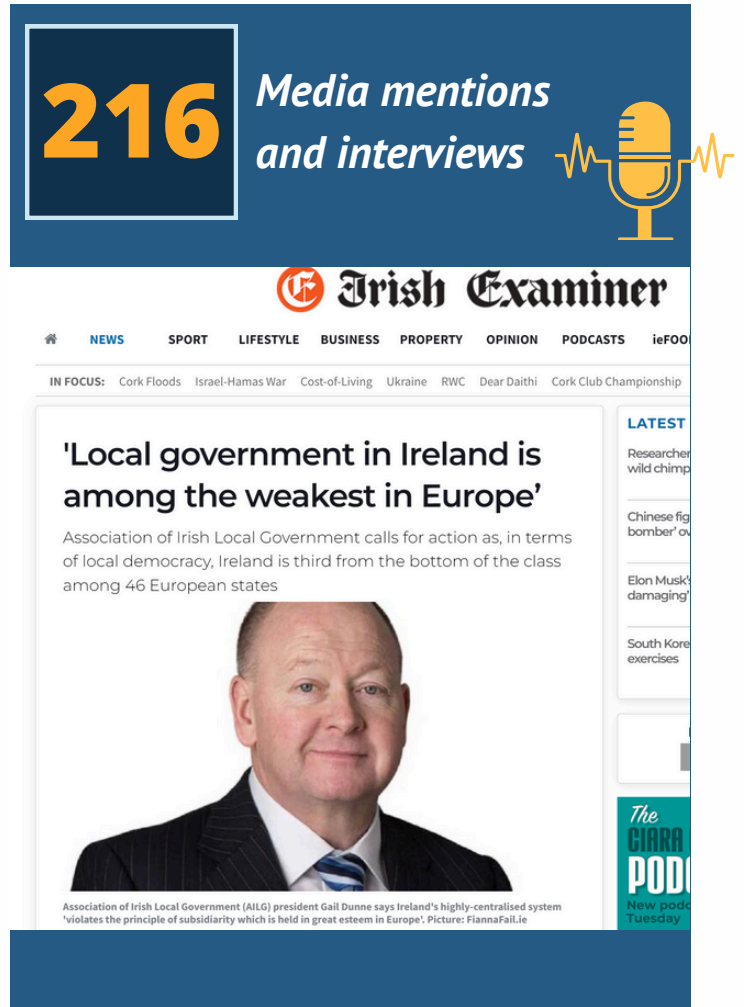
AILG Communications

Media Presence and Communications Summary

The 2024 media activity demonstrated a strong presence across Online, Broadcast, and Print platforms, with the total number of media mentions and interviews in 2024 is 216.

- Online media achieved the highest reach of 46.1 million with a volume of 97 placements.
- Broadcast media delivered a reach of 4.77 million from 32 placements.
- Print media generated a reach of 1.66 million with a volume of 87 placements.

This activity highlights the significant role of online platforms in extending reach, while print and broadcast provided balanced contributions to overall media visibility.



Website visitors

9,470



Email marketing Performance

+3.3%



Twitter followers

2,176



Facebook followers

1,537



Linkedin followers

706



Instagram followers

660

• date of these statistics is 17 Dec 2024

In Memoriam



Cllr. Noreen McGarvey

A former Cathaoirleach of the Glenties Municipal District and present Leas Cathaoirleach, Noreen succeeded in getting elected in the 2019 Local Government Elections, and despite health issues gave a one hundred percent commitment to her duty as a local councillor for the Glenties Municipal Area.

Prior to her election in 2019, Noreen worked with former TD, Minister and MEP, Pat the Cope Gallagher for nearly 20 years, and was an integral part of community and political life in South Donegal. She worked tirelessly to address the needs and concerns of her constituents, striving to make a positive difference in their lives. Her untimely departure will undoubtedly be felt not just by her family and friends but by her local community where she was a highly respected advocate and representative.



Cllr. Gerard Murphy

Cllr. Murphy who was a native of Newmarket was one of the longest serving public representatives in Cork County Council and a lifelong community activist. Cllr Murphy was first elected to Cork County Council in 1992 and he served as Cathaoirleach of Cork County Council from 1995 to 1996.

Elected to Dáil Éireann for Cork North West from 2002-2007, where he served as Vice-Chairman of the Justice and Equality Committee, Cllr Murphy returned to local politics representing Kanturk Mallow Municipal District and the Southern Regional Assembly.

He was true champion of his native county and was a highly respected public representative both in his own locality and farther afield.

In Memoriam



Cllr. PJ Kelly

PJ Kelly (FF), a former Mayor of Clare and county councillor for fifty years, sadly passed away on 14 September. A giant of a political figure in the county, PJ's contributions have been remembered by all who knew him with fondness over the past week.

Recently retired after fifty consecutive years as a member of Clare County Council, PJ. Kelly is one of only three people in the country to achieve such a feat. He was central to numerous developments in the Lissycasey parish as well as throughout West Clare. He was first elected to Clare County Council in 1974, where he was returned by a comfortable majority from then until he retired this year. AILG's thoughts are with his family, friends and Councillor colleagues.



Cllr. John Naughten

The untimely passing of Cllr. John Naughten marks a significant loss for the community of Roscommon. A native of Drum, John was a dedicated public servant and a member of Roscommon County Council for over 20 years, winning five elections throughout his career.

His family are deeply embedded in the political and community life of the county, with John becoming the third member of his family to serve on the Council, following in the footsteps of his brother Denis and their late father Liam, a former TD and Senator. John previously served as Chair of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and was deeply involved in farming, community life, and the GAA. A passionate farmer and tireless advocate for the people of Roscommon, his legacy of service and commitment will be long remembered.

AILG extends our condolences to the loved ones and Council colleagues of Cllr. McGarvey, Cllr. Murphy, Cllr. Kelly and Cllr. Naughten.

Leaba l measc na naomh go raibh acu.



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