

# Mayo County Library **DEVELOPMENT PLAN** **2024-2028**



# Foreword

Mayo's libraries are at the heart of our communities. They are within easy reach of all citizens providing equitable access to information, knowledge and learning and contributing to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the county. They are welcoming community spaces for our citizens to explore collections, attend cultural events or learn about their past. They offer a vast range of services, both in-person and online, to library users, young and old. Supporting our libraries has always been a key priority of Mayo County Council. I am therefore delighted to welcome this Library Development Plan, which sets out the strategic actions and objectives for our public libraries, for the next five years.

There has been a significant level of achievement since the publication of the previous Library Development Plan – most notably the removal of library fines and charges and the introduction of a new Library Management System that links all public libraries in Ireland. Access to digital resources, including eBooks and online resources has greatly expanded. The planned opening of the My Open Library service in two Mayo Library branches will greatly extend access to libraries in those areas.

Over the past ten years, our library service played a key role in Mayo's Decade of Commemorations programme and is currently leading our Creative Ireland programme in the county.

COVID-19 highlighted the value of libraries within our communities and the high level of esteem in which they are held. Our libraries responded to the crisis in a flexible and innovative manner and increased their online offer resulting in an exponential increase in borrowings of eBooks and eAudiobooks.

Modern libraries must reflect the different ways in which people use them and we need to continually review our approach to ensure existing and emerging needs are met. This plan is an ambitious forward-looking strategy which sets the direction of travel for the library service in Mayo and seeks to improve access, use and visibility of our libraries as an essential community service.

Mayo County Council will support this strategy with continued investment in libraries and staff, developing high quality library buildings that reflect the quality of services available, improving access and opening hours and enhancing digital services.



I would like to thank everybody who helped us to develop this plan over the past year especially the respondents to our consultation process, the Corporate, Education, Culture, Heritage and Library Services Strategic Policy Committee, the library staff, elected members, and all other stakeholders who contributed.

**Michael Loftus,**  
Cathaoirleach, Mayo County Council.

## Introduction

Mayo County Council's Library Development Plan recognizes the valuable contribution that our library service makes to improving the quality of life in our county. Our libraries provide a network of frontline services across the county which provide cultural, learning, entertainment, educational and social spaces for our communities. They promote community cohesion and wellbeing and enhance cultural identity and self-worth. The library service also protects and promotes our unique culture and heritage and is vital to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the county.

Libraries are the best used and most popular of our cultural services. It has been said that public libraries are the only service of the local authority which touch the lives of the citizen from the cradle to the grave as library membership and usage often follows a lifecycle model. They deliver a diverse range of resources and services. These include encouraging reading at all levels, improving digital skills and literacy, enabling formal and informal learning, supporting the provision of information and guidance on many topics including health and wellbeing, job seeking and personal development and ensuring that people have a place in the community to meet and come together. Our outgoing Library Development Plan supported our library staff to deliver improved services and expand the role and profile of the library in the community. This included the removal of library fines, increased opening hours, and supported the training of staff to deliver new digital services. Even during a pandemic, when our buildings were closed to the public, the library service remained open and connected to communities through various initiatives including delivery services, increased provision of eBooks, online events and regular online story times.

This plan seeks to maintain our general progress and is ambitious for the development of our core services including reading and literacy and access to information. But it also aims higher, with measures firmly rooted in the now to help and support climate action. It proposes new actions on lifelong learning, cultural heritage and digital inclusion that will make Mayo's libraries a leader in global librarianship.

Investment in our public libraries is an investment in people and their community. To ensure success, the council will commit to supporting our library service, ensuring that it has the resources and staff needed to deliver the exciting programmes and actions set out in this plan. Our challenge lies in developing a service that continues to be attractive to readers while at the same time developing new services to appeal to the wider needs of today's society.

The themes of this strategic plan align with a number of council policy objectives, particularly in relation to our wider rural and community development priorities, our objective to make Mayo an attractive place for people to live, work and visit and our commitment to support individuals and groups from disadvantaged, marginalised and socially excluded communities to meet their full potential. The plan shares the vision, mission and values of Mayo County Council's Corporate Team Plan, The Creative Mayo Strategy 2023 -2027 and Mayo Local Economic Community Plan 2023 -2027.

The implementation of this plan over the next five years will be overseen by the Corporate, Education, Culture, Heritage and Library Services Strategic Policy Committee. As Chief Executive, I am looking forward to working with library staff, the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Local Government Management Agency and all other partners and stakeholders to deliver on the promise of this plan for an even better library service for the people of Mayo.

**Kevin Kelly**  
CE, Mayo County Council

## Mayo Library Service Today

Mayo's public library service is provided through a network of 14 branches, a school library service, and multiple digital channels. Through this network our libraries provide accessible, friendly, and truly civic spaces. They help people to embark on voyages of reading and escapism, attend cultural events and activities, and engage with new technologies and learn new skills. Every day, libraries across Mayo arrange events, provide access to local studies collections, or work with a variety of partners to create cultural programming. More than 20% of the population are now registered with their library in Mayo and the service is consistently regarded as one of the best things a local authority has to offer its residents.

The first library in Mayo opened in 1926, and since then public libraries have become one of the most popular services provided by local authorities. There are currently 14 local libraries operating across County Mayo offering a free service to the people of the region. Our major branches are in Castlebar and Ballina and these account for almost half of all our business. Our other full-time libraries are in Claremorris and Westport with remaining branches being part time, opening an average of 24 hours per week. All our branches are open at least two evenings per week and on Saturdays. These libraries are an invaluable cultural pillar for the county, providing access to an extensive collection of half a million books, CDs, DVDs, musical instruments, technology items such as c-pens, blood pressure monitors and more (and access to over 15 million items nationally).

Our library website [mayo.ie/library](http://mayo.ie/library) provides access to library resources around the clock. It provides access to our online collections which include tens of thousands of eBooks and eAudiobooks, and thousands of digital magazines, newspapers and e-learning courses. It also provides access to our extensive local studies collection with hundreds of articles on Mayo people, history, and places.

In 2023, Mayo Library service had over 25,000 active members with 500,000 books being borrowed during the year. More than 300 events are held every year as part of the library's cultural programme, and the library attracts around 365,000 visitors per annum. The budget for the operation of the library service was €2,859,873, which included the cost of staff and a book fund of €120,000. There were 43 staff employed by Mayo Library service in 2023.

There is now an even geographical spread of branch libraries, an experienced and highly motivated staff and high usage of the branch network by the public. Our library service today is built on values of social and cultural inclusion, and real democracy at a local level, supporting healthy and vibrant local communities. In essence our libraries are evolving to become places for "connection" as well as "collections". They are places that can provide:

- A positive future for our children and young people
- A fulfilling life for our older people
- Strong, safe and sustainable communities
- Promotion of local identity and community pride

There still remains the need to make some of our older buildings more accessible and some of them are in need of refurbishment. A book fund which reflects the converging demands on library service provision to an inclusive society today is urgently required. Our previous development plans have made our library service stronger and more ambitious and contributed to the formation of the objectives which are identified in this plan and which will be achieved over the next five years.





# Mayo Libraries AT A GLANCE SINCE 2018

More than  
**2 million**  
visits

**14**  
local  
libraries

Access to  
**7,000**  
eNewspapers &  
eMagazines

Over  
**600**  
online eLearning  
courses at a  
variety of levels  
and comprising  
a wide range of  
subjects

**100,000**  
items in the collection

More than  
**2 million**  
items loaned



A collection of over  
**110,000**  
eBooks and eAudiobooks

Almost  
**2000**  
cultural events held



Over  
**110**  
language courses  
for speakers of  
30+ languages

Over  
**3,000**  
musical  
instruments lent

**86**  
PCs available  
to public

**60+**  
languages



Over  
**20,000**  
images in the Liam Lyons  
Collection

Over  
**3,000**  
Little Library bags  
distributed.

**8,000**  
books read under  
Summer Stars  
scheme

**04**  
libraries with  
dedicated sensory  
hubs/rooms

Over  
**€15 million**  
spent on library service



## Our Achievements

Substantial progress has been made on many of the commitments in our Library Development Plan 2017 -2022.

Mayo Library service expanded access to digital resources, including eBooks and online resources, to include a greater number and variety of options in all libraries. The demand for eBooks and eAudiobooks increased exponentially as a result of COVID-19, leading to a 210% increase nationally in eAudiobook loans, a 160% increase in eBook loans and an increase of 155% in user registrations for eLending services between 2019 and 2021.

One of the most noteworthy achievements, and possibly the one with the most beneficial impact on members, was the removal of library fines and charges. This eliminated a significant barrier to library use, thereby facilitating equity of access for all to public library services and resources.

A further significant milestone was the introduction of a new Library Management System which featured a more responsive and functional platform, streamlining the user access experience and providing the same functionality across all library authorities.



Throughout the lifetime of our last development plan Mayo libraries have been delivering national and local programmes to support personal and community development, arranging thousands of events and activities each year for hundreds of thousands of people through the Right to Read Programme, Healthy Ireland at Your Library, Creative Ireland, Work Matters, Age Friendly Ireland and more. These programmes have been planned and delivered with central and local input to expand the range and variety of activities under each initiative in order to keep increasing participation and reach within the community.

The Right to Read Programme was launched in 2017 to support reading and literacy across the whole of Ireland. The programme includes initiatives for children and families throughout the year – Spring into Storytime, Summer Stars, Children’s Book Festival and Family Time at Your Library – and a range of services to support schools.

The Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme is part of the national Healthy Ireland strategy to improve health and wellbeing. The programme is available across all library branches in Mayo. It includes a book collection (books, eBooks, and eAudiobooks), and a programme of free events across the year.

Sensory services in our public libraries have expanded significantly since 2019. Mayo Libraries now provide sensory facilities and resources, in a number of its branches, including sensory pods in Castlebar, Swinford and Belmullet, a sensory room in Ballina and sensory toys and books in all branches. These services have reached out and engaged many more neurodiverse people and have made the library space more accessible and inclusive, offering a safe and enjoyable space for all.

Mayo Libraries offer an extensive range of cultural events including exhibitions, festivals, talks and workshops across the network of branches with more than 300 events being held in 2023.

The libraries manage the local delivery of the national Creative Ireland Programme supporting a wide range of cultural, heritage and creative events annually.

The library service organised a successful programme of commemorative events to mark the Decade of Centenaries over the past ten years.

COVID-19 highlighted the central position of libraries in our communities and demonstrated the ability of libraries and their staff to flexibly deliver their services in a more innovative manner. Staff underwent skills training to better help them to meet the needs of users when library buildings were closed over an extensive period of time. This has brought benefits of new staff skillsets, new users, and new opportunities for growth in the changed environment.

The My Open Library service, coming onstream in Mayo shortly, will provide library access to members from 8am to 10pm, 365 days of the year.

Overall, Mayo libraries have made good progress but with challenges still to overcome. What has become clear, though, is that Mayo's public libraries are being recognised in the community for their achievements during the past five years in widening access to collections and providing a vast range of cultural and heritage services.



## Strengths & Weaknesses



### STRENGTHS

- Talented, committed, knowledgeable, customer-focused staff
- A valued community asset
- A trusted service with a positive public perception
- A network of 14 branches throughout the county
- Free membership and free access to a wide range of services.
- Comprehensive opening hours
- Access to a network of national resources of more than 15 million books.
- Access to the latest technology with a focus on showcasing innovative resources
- An established programme of events across all branches and age-groups with strong community engagement.
- Continuously expanding our reach with e-services – online books, newspapers, journals and courses.
- Local History collection



### WEAKNESSES

- Older buildings
- Space constraints in older buildings make it difficult to provide the range of services demanded of a modern library
- Building costs – maintenance and refurbishment
- Staffing numbers hinder our ability to deliver a consistent service across our branch network
- Opening hours need to be extended and tailored to local needs
- Book fund
- Marketing - need for greater awareness of our services
- Limited broadband coverage in some areas.
- Energy efficiency in older buildings



The only thing you absolutely have to know is the location of the library.  
Albert Einstein



### THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Our libraries face some common pressures, opportunities, and threats globally and regionally. The 2021 update to the IFLA Trend Report identifies a number of these that are relevant to Mayo Library service:

- Immediate access vs. digital detox: people want personalisation and 24/7 information access now. But equally, a preference for off-line living is emerging as an antidote to digital overload
- Charges for information: new barriers and paywalls and licensing arrangements have implications for the free exchange of ideas as well as library budgets
- Disinformation: the greater value of information literacy in the “fake” news era
- Data domination: a growing role for Artificial Intelligence in society – algorithms are already becoming overwhelmingly important and can impact negatively
- Race to extremes: populism, lack of respect for alternative views – what libraries can and do hold will be challenged and criticized
- Mobile populations and a globalized user base: a challenge to the relevance of the local library service
- Lifelong learners: people change jobs, reskill, retrain, and are more mobile than ever. Libraries should support this through resources, but should they be educators too?
- Global collections: local access to worldwide resources has implications for technology, licensing, and “localness” of services.
- In October 2022, public libraries were included in the government’s National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024. This makes Ireland one of a handful of leading countries globally that is utilising the benefits of public libraries to achieve the SDGs, and recognises public libraries as sustainable institutions which play a big part in helping to provide knowledge, understanding, and resources in our communities.



## Consultation

To ensure comprehensive input from all stakeholders, extensive consultation took place with the general public, staff, library users and non-users, community groups and relevant local agencies and bodies. A survey was made widely available to individuals and organisations in the county through various media. The main objective of the consultation was to better understand attitudes towards the library service and to seek feedback on how services could be improved in terms of access, use and visibility of our libraries. The plan also utilized the findings of the national five-week programme of consultation which was undertaken in 2022 in advance of the new National Public Library Strategy. This consultation received almost 3,000 responses while the Mayo consultation resulted in over 300 responses.



**Libraries allow children to ask questions about the world & find the answers. And the wonderful thing is that once a child learns to use a library, the doors to learning are always open.**  
 Laura Bush

Both consultation responses showed strong satisfaction with the library service, while also identifying areas for improvement. Some of the positive feedback included:

- 90% of public survey respondents had used a library service in the past year
- 87% of public survey respondents were satisfied with the library service overall
- The three areas of service provision with the highest satisfaction levels were books, the standard of customer service, and the overall appearance and physical condition of libraries
- A strong appreciation of library services generally, the range of resources available and the commitment and enthusiasm of staff
- Being able to order material from any library in the country for collection at a user’s local library was highly popular
- Libraries were recognised as a central community hub for reading, learning and enjoyment – and as a key part of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy programmes
- Libraries were seen as sanctuaries that play a crucial role in delivering services to children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds, and other isolated and hard to reach groups particularly in rural areas.



## Our Vision

To enrich the quality of life in County Mayo by promoting access to knowledge, information, culture, heritage and the latest technologies in a professional, welcome, inclusive and supportive way.



## Our Values

- Reading and literacy
- Welcoming, open and inclusive
- Excellence
- Supportive and enabling
- At the heart of communities
- Collaborative and participative



## Our Three Strategic Objectives

This plan is built on the achievements of its predecessors and the significant strengths of public libraries in Mayo. Its ambition is to increase membership and use of the library system. It will do so by focusing on three strategic objectives:

- People
- Places
- Connections

These themes are underpinned by four goals:

- Reading and literacy
- Connecting with our communities
- Collaborating with our partners
- Improving library spaces and technological infrastructure.

Delivering innovative and resilient programmes and services that can support users as the country enters a new phase following the COVID-19 pandemic will also be a key element of this plan.

# Strategic Objectives and Enablers

## 1. People

### 1.1 READING AND LITERACY IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

There has been a quiet remodelling of the library service in the last ten years – a move from being passive providers of books on shelves to being a lively, social reading service. Book clubs, summer reading schemes, author programmes, book reviews on the library website, reader development training of library staff, book festivals and the use of social networking tools have led to the primacy of the book being reasserted, whether for enlightenment, information, or just plain entertainment. The library’s book collection is its prime asset and the key contributor to sustaining communities by meeting their needs to access a wide variety of materials. Reading will continue to be the key focus of all library activity.

#### OUR AMBITION

Mayo libraries will be at the heart of reading and literacy development within the community. We will provide opportunities for everyone to develop as literate and informed individuals and raise the profile of reading for pleasure and wellbeing in English, Irish and other languages. There will be an excellent book stock available at libraries, online and through our national distribution service.

#### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. The Right to Read programme and Right to Read local networks will be expanded to increase the participation of children and young people, families, and adults in reading activities.
2. Every library user will have access to a book club that is suitable for them in terms of age and reading level by the end of 2025.
3. Mayo libraries will support the annual ‘Ireland Reads’ national day of reading with events and activities.
4. We will enhance our reader development programme through book clubs for different audiences, more reviews and recommendations, displays and innovative schemes to encourage new readers.
5. We will endeavour to increase our budget for books year on year, with an aim to work towards the national book fund target of €4 per head of population in the lifetime of the plan.
6. We will improve teenage readership by working with Transition Year programmes, No Name Clubs, Foróige, Comhairle na nÓg and other youth organisations.



7. We will continue to lead the Time to Read initiative targeting disadvantaged schools in the county.
8. We will develop and expand our service to primary schools with initiatives such as increased class visits and a class novel service.
9. We will work in partnership with parents, carers, preschools and schools to strengthen family literacy.
10. The availability of services and materials in the Irish language will be increased in every library branch.

**OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS**

1. We will work with the County Childcare Dept, Mayo Children’s and Young People’s Committee (CYPSC) and care sector to develop the Little Library Bag Programme, and provide reading development supports for early childhood, thus helping to achieve uniform levels of literacy.
2. We will work with Mayo Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) to build on the current provision of library services to primary and post-primary schools and explore the potential for an expanded programme of library supports which will be delivered in alignment with the Department of Education’s forthcoming new national strategy on literacy and numeracy.
3. We will work with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; SOLAS; the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA); MSLETB and other stakeholders to implement the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy through library activities.
4. We will work with our Irish Officer, Foras na Gaeilge, Conradh na Gaeilge, Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), and other partners to deliver high quality Irish language services through libraries.



**1.2 LIBRARIES FOR ALL**

**OUR AMBITION**

Mayo libraries will improve life opportunities for all and address social and health inequality by providing access (free of charge) to information, ideas, collections, and study and community spaces. Everyone will have the opportunity to become a library member. We will support disadvantaged and marginalised users, welcome new arrivals and assist with their integration into the community. Those who need assistive technologies, literacy resources and sensory equipment will be able to find them at the library.

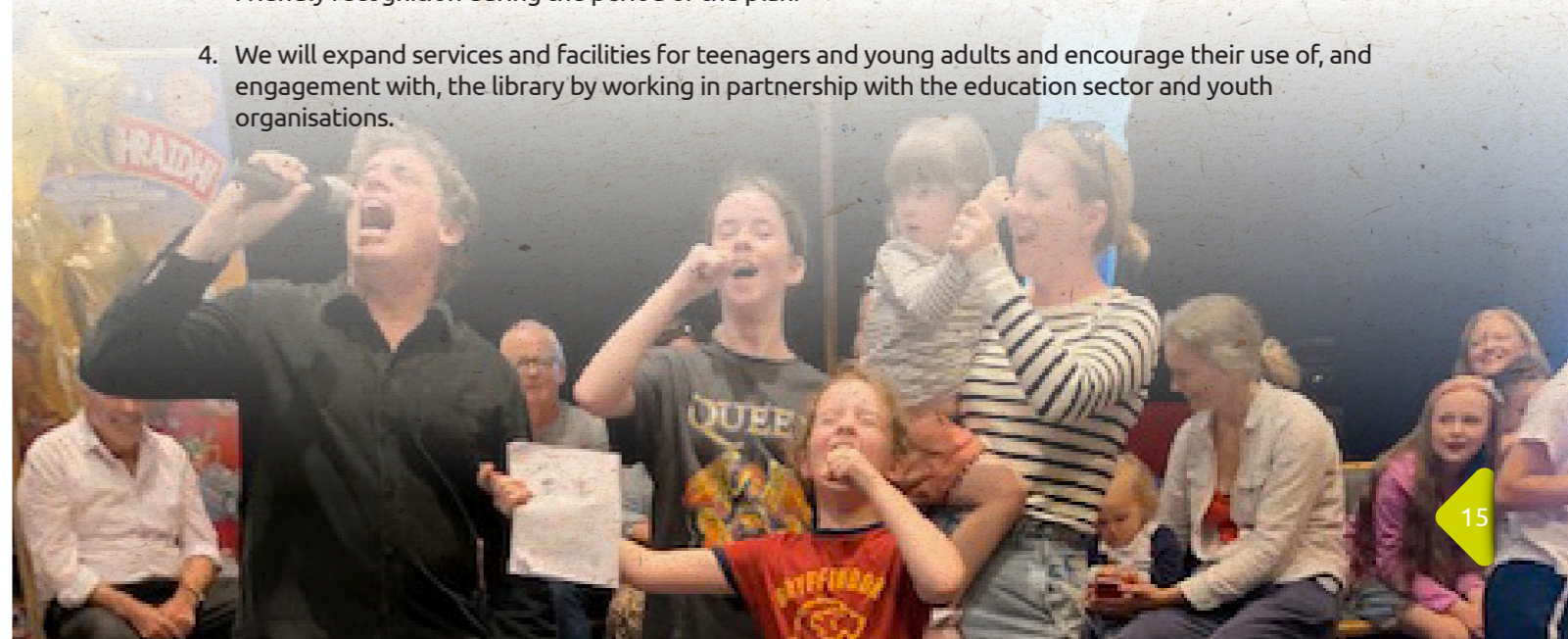
Our library service will welcome everyone through its doors and continue to be a free service for everyone.

**OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS**

1. The number of active library users will return to 2019 levels by the end of 2024 and will increase overall in every remaining year of the strategy.
2. Library opening hours and the impact of the My Open Library service will be reviewed in the first year of the plan to identify an optimum approach for access to library services.
3. We will investigate the provision of outreach library services to isolated rural and island communities and to individuals who cannot visit their public library such as the homebound, or those in nursing homes.
4. We will extend our sensory facilities including sensory rooms, sensory pods, magic tables and sensory toys and games.

**OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS**

1. We will work with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the health sector to further develop the Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme and will participate in the package of library services in support of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme that will be introduced in early 2024.
2. We will partner with the DRCD and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to fully develop the First 5 Little Library initiative supporting all children under 6 to become library members.
3. We will continue to work with Age Friendly Ireland to ensure that every library in Mayo retains Age Friendly recognition during the period of the plan.
4. We will expand services and facilities for teenagers and young adults and encourage their use of, and engagement with, the library by working in partnership with the education sector and youth organisations.





### 1.3 SKILLS FOR LIFE

#### OUR AMBITION

Mayo libraries will support individuals at all stages in their lives to develop and maintain the skills they require to navigate the changing world successfully. We will be a trusted information source, providing a wide range of book stock, as well as online and print learning resources to support all of our events, workshops and training programmes. We will support lifelong learning in all its forms and be a crucial partner in enhancing digital inclusion.

#### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will participate in the national 'Skills for Life' umbrella programme of resources and activities that will be developed and available through all library authorities by the end of 2024. This will include:
  - Basic digital skills
  - Financial literacy
  - Media literacy
  - Business and employment skills
  - Health awareness
  - Sustainable lifestyles and environmental awareness
2. We will extend and promote our TTRS (Touch Type Read Spell) initiative across our branch network while investigating other reliable software and apps to support literacy
3. We will expand our programme of STEAM events for young people.

#### OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

1. We will work with the MSLETB, the Department of Education, Age Friendly Ireland and all other relevant agencies to support Skills for Life and continue the provision of specific programming, technology and facilities for disadvantaged and marginalised library users.
2. We will link with youth services to facilitate events of interest to a teenage audience.



## Strategic Objectives and Enablers

### 2. Spaces

#### 2.1 THE LIBRARY AS THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY

##### OUR AMBITION

Mayo libraries will continue to be central to our towns and villages. As the only civic spaces in many communities, we will offer trusted and welcoming facilities that encourage community participation and are accessible and relevant to everyone. We will expand our role as the frontline information service for local authorities, continue to signpost users to other reliable agencies and sources of information, and design any new services and spaces in partnership with the community. We will strive to make our libraries a major consideration in urban and rural regeneration planning, community development and efforts to support the night-time economy, through evening opening hours and the My Open Library service. Our strategic actions

1. We will ensure that visitor numbers return to 2019 levels by the end of 2024, and rise in every remaining year of the strategy.
2. We will ensure that meeting, study, and social space is freely accessible for individuals, local organisations and groups in all new libraries.

##### OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

1. We will work with relevant government departments and agencies to explore potential additional funding sources for projects focused on community regeneration which will include opportunities for the development of library facilities.
2. We will ensure the development of areas for children and families in libraries
3. We will work with the Local Community Development Committee to ensure that the role of the library is incorporated into the Local Economic and Community Plan.



## 2.2 OUR BUILDINGS

### OUR AMBITION

We will work to enable communities to make maximum use of our library services and facilities, including spaces for community engagement, research, education, and recreation. Our libraries will provide up-to-date ICT infrastructure and increase broadband speeds to support the development and roll-out of new and innovative services.



### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will work to establish a new library in Westport during the period of this plan.
2. Having made an application under the Libraries Capital Programme 2023-2027 we will aim to establish a new library in Ballyhaunis during the period of this plan
3. We will maintain our existing library buildings to the highest standard making them safe, comfortable and fully accessible.
4. We will provide My Open Library Services in Swinford and Ballina Libraries in 2024.
5. We will explore the potential for extending the buildings or providing new premises for our smaller libraries. For example, we will work to develop a new library space in Killala as part of a broader regeneration project in the town, as per the Killala Town Centre First Plan.
6. We will expand our automated self-service to more branches if national funding is made available
7. All new and refurbished library buildings will be developed to comply with the new Public Library Standards and Benchmarks that will be published before the end of 2023.
8. We will provide maker spaces and media suites in all new branches.
9. We will provide sensory rooms and quiet spaces in all new branches.
10. We will provide community meeting rooms in all new branches.
11. All new branches will have enhanced children's areas with soft furnishings and room for story time and play to meet the highest standards.
12. We will continue to ensure that all our branches are accessible to all members of society especially those with varying needs and abilities.

## 2.3 SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

### OUR AMBITION

Our libraries will make a significant contribution to local and national climate and environmental objectives by providing information, knowledge and programmes for the community. We will provide our users with energy awareness and green lifestyle resources and promote awareness of libraries' contribution to Ireland's circular economy.

### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. All new library buildings will support the Mayo's Climate Action Plans, energy efficiency and sustainability targets.
2. All our libraries will provide information to the public supporting Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Climate Action Plans.
3. All our libraries will offer users access to resources to support home energy saving awareness and assessment, expanding on our current provision of Home Energy Savings Kits for lending in our four biggest branches.

### OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

1. We will engage with Mayo County Council's Climate Action Team, Climate Action Regional Offices and energy agencies to ensure library involvement in the implementation of Local Authority Climate Action Plans.



## Strategic Objectives and Enablers

### 3. Connections

#### 3.1 OUR DIGITAL OFFER

##### OUR AMBITION

Our libraries will support users to navigate the digital world and will provide access to the appropriate technology to do this. We will provide a wide range of trusted information sources, both in print form and digitally, and ensure that skilled library staff are available to advise users on how to identify and access reliable information.

##### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will provide all library users with access to eBooks and other digital resources to facilitate lifelong learning, on a cost-effective basis.
2. During the lifetime of the strategy we will explore the feasibility of library-owned infrastructure for the provision of eBooks and other digital resources, in collaboration with relevant local and national agencies.
3. We will participate in the new national media literacy programme for staff and users that will be developed and rolled out in 2024.
4. We will implement a programme of information and communications technology (ICT) upgrades to underpin the development of and roll out of new and innovative services.
5. We will promote STEAM activities as enablers of literacy, numeracy and personal development.
6. We will expand the programme of introductory computer courses such as those provided for the elderly.
7. We will develop Apps for access to the catalogue, digital resources and other library services during the plan period.
8. We will become a part of the new network of Gigabit Libraries that will be developed nationally by 2025 to offer superfast internet services to users.

##### OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

1. Throughout the strategy we will work with Mayo County Council's IT Department to explore the expansion and improvement of community access to digital library resources.

#### 3.2 CULTURE AND HERITAGE

##### OUR AMBITION

Mayo has a rich and ancient heritage that we must continue to preserve and foster. Our libraries will continue to be centres of cultural activity, inspiring and encouraging creativity and hosting free cultural experiences. We will produce and support local cultural events, festivals, exhibitions, and residency programmes, working with the creative community at local and national levels. We will work with our local communities and partners to collect, explore, preserve and celebrate cultural memories.

##### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

###### CULTURE:

1. We will continue our ambition to make local libraries the key cultural resources and spaces in our towns through the provision of spaces for exhibitions, lectures, and community, arts and heritage events.
2. We will expand our programme of events, activities, and exhibitions as part of national festivals celebrating Ireland's culture such as Cruinniú na nÓg, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Bealtaine, Heritage Week and Culture Night.
3. We will continue our commitment to the Irish language and culture through:
  - Developing our Gaelic language collections
  - Fostering our partnership with Oifigeach na Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge and Glór Mhaigh Eo
  - Develop and expand the Seachtain na Gaeilge Festival
  - Include events in the Irish Language in all library programmes

We will aim to expand our Music Generation instrument lending scheme to all parts of the county. We will continue to work with the County Arts Office in specific programmes to promote Mayo writers and artists.

##### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

###### HERITAGE:

1. We will participate on the development of a new national online infrastructure for access to cultural, heritage, local history, and other materials, and work to implement the national recommendations during the plan period. This will result in more access to online resources such as photographs, newspapers and journals, Minute Books and folklore.
2. We will proactively source and acquire historical documents relating to Mayo whether from private or public collections.
3. We will create a county archive, appoint an archivist and develop a policy for the collection, storage and availability of archives.
4. We will complete the Mayo Newspaper digitisation project.
5. We will strengthen links with the Mayo diaspora through information provision, genealogy services and the creation of a diaspora heritage collection.
6. We will use the unique material in the Jackie Clarke Collection in Ballina to attract visitors and scholars to the county.



7. We will maintain and expand the current photographic digitisation programme.
8. We will implement a rolling programme of digitisation of primary source local history resources.
9. We will expand our special collections of books, prints, maps etc of Mayo interest.
10. We will initiate a policy to encourage donations of private collections.
11. We will continue to develop a genealogy service in conjunction with other family history agencies in the county.
12. We will strengthen our links with schools in the promotion of local history by providing resource packs, exhibitions, class visits and talks.
13. We will collaborate with and support local history, archaeology and genealogy societies in the county.

#### OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

1. We will continue to drive the local delivery of the Creative Ireland programme and to explore new opportunities for creative initiatives and collaborations.
2. We will encourage local communities to augment our local history collections ensuring that the maximum amount of locally produced material is preserved for future generations.
3. We will develop our tourism potential by connecting the diaspora to their roots in County Mayo.
4. We will continue to engage with both statutory and non-statutory organisations at local level, to explore opportunities for collaboration to promote the unique culture and heritage of Mayo.

### 3.2 MARKETING

Our libraries will be promoted through coordinated local marketing campaigns every year. We will use reliable data to inform our marketing, and work with local partners to ensure mutual promotion of our services. The role of libraries in any relevant national campaigns and initiatives will also be highlighted.

#### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will develop a local promotional marketing campaign focusing on increasing library membership and usage.
2. We will participate in the national public libraries open day, where libraries can showcase what they offer.
3. Library staff will receive training in marketing and communications.
4. We will develop an online newsletter to promote the library service.
5. We will expand our regular newspaper column to other media in the county.
6. We will monitor and evaluate customer satisfaction through inviting feedback, both online and in-person.

## 4 Our Team: The Library Staff

Our staff are the most important element of this plan. It is their skills, customer service and commitment that have created and bolstered the impressive range of services that we have today. We can only achieve our ambition of placing libraries firmly at the heart of every community by valuing and investing in our library staff.

#### OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will strive to ensure that we have sufficient qualified and trained staff to deliver all elements of the plan.
2. Staff skills gaps will be addressed through structured programmes, mentoring and training.
3. Over the period of the plan, comprehensive training will be delivered to help staff develop and expand their digital skills, and a cohort of digital library specialists will be recruited to support better digital services in each library authority.
4. We will ensure our staff can participate in the proposed national leadership programme for library staff which will be developed during 2024 and rolled out in 2025.
5. We will continue to utilise the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) to support the performance and development of our staff.

## Implementation and Monitoring

This Library Development Plan will be regularly reviewed and a timescale will be agreed for the implementation of each action. A Library Team Plan will be developed each year as part of the PMDS process to deliver on the actions identified. We will consult with our communities on a regular basis and ensure that our services respond to their needs.

We will present progress reports on the implementation of the plan to regular meetings of the Corporate, Education, Culture, Heritage and Library Services Strategic Policy Committee.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all groups, organisations and individuals who contributed to the consultation process and who so enthusiastically shared their views on how we could enhance our library service. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the elected members, management and staff of Mayo County Council. Without their support this plan would not have been possible. We are heartened by the level of interest and we hope that this plan will deliver on most of the proposals and suggestions that were generated in the consultation process.





# Mayo County Library **DEVELOPMENT PLAN** **2024-2028**



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo  
Mayo County Council

