



Aisling Buckley Long **Engineer and Regional Information Specialist**

The Long household is a busy one. Like many others around the country, the kitchen table has been doubling up as a craft and play area for the “smallies” as Aisling calls them. *“The house is ripped apart; no drawer has been left unturned,”* she says jokingly.

Sitting at home in Macroom with her laptop humming away, her kids are busily playing with dad Oliver in the background as Aisling talks about her journey through the lockdowns.

“We have dealt with it like everyone else really. Oliver and I share an office and we juggle the kids and work. My sister Keely and Oliver’s mum Kathleen have also helped us get through the extra busy days during this lockdown. We couldn’t have managed without them. It has been a challenge, but we see light at the end of the tunnel now with the vaccine rollout, so we must be optimistic.”

“I miss the little things, like having a coffee and catching up with family, friends and colleagues in person. It has been a tough year for everyone in our locality.”

A qualified Environmental Engineer, Aisling now works as a Regional Information Specialist with Irish Water.

“I love my job. I get to meet so many different and interesting people and work on a wide variety of projects too, albeit virtually for the moment. I’ve worked on many great projects in my career. My first job was on the Kinsale Road Landfill project and it was fascinating. It involved the remediation of the old landfill and turning it into a recreational park, while harnessing methane gas for power generation.”

“After college, I worked on motorway projects, both designing and building them. Working on large infrastructure projects and being a part of a big team is really rewarding. I feel the same way working in Irish Water; we are doing something positive for the country, safeguarding our water for our future and protecting our environment.”

Indeed, a lot of faith is being placed in the future. Covid-19 has disrupted all aspects of life with weddings all around the country being postponed, sometimes more than once.

“My sister Daire and her fiancé PJ were meant to get married last June, and they have had to postpone twice, so we are all looking forward to a third time lucky wedding this August, all going well.”

Naturally, Aisling’s girls Finley (4) and Jules (2) mean the world to herself and Oliver. One might wonder if their future careers are pre-ordained having parents who are an Engineer and a Quantity Surveyor respectively?

“Definitely if they are interested in studying STEM subjects and engineering, I’ll encourage them to follow and explore all of their interests. I’ve never regretted studying engineering, it’s a great qualification that leads to many different paths. The best thing is the variety of projects and work - no two days are ever the same. We are all intrigued by the Macroom bypass now, which is literally on our doorstep. We’ve been bringing our girls to watch the large beams being lifted onto new bridges. They love to see all the machinery and trucks as well, so it is definitely in the blood.”

A glance at Irish Water’s website will tell you there are hundreds of projects happening all over the country and the Cork/Kerry area is no different.

“I really enjoy working in a company that is literally keeping the country’s water and wastewater flowing. As an Engineer, I have been really impressed by how we are getting to grips with the size and scale of the challenges and delivering sustainable solutions for the future. The beauty of working in communications now is that I can bring my technical knowledge to the table and help people understand projects that affect them. I have communicated on a lot of great projects in Irish Water. The Lough Guitane Water treatment plant just outside Killarney is hugely impressive. It serves over 30,000 people. Water travels from there to Tralee, which is an amazing feat of engineering. The Cork Lower Harbour Main Drainage Project is another fascinating piece of engineering. We are eliminating the equivalent of 40,000 wheelie bins a day of raw sewage flowing into Cork Lower Harbour with that project and I was delighted to have been on site for some of the large-scale pieces of engineering work. It’s great to look back at all of the things I have done in my career to date and exciting to look forward to when things return to normality.”