Creative Ireland Programme

Galway County Council

Culture and Creativity Strategy

2018 - 2022

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**Foreword by An Cathaoirleach**

I warmly welcome the publication of Galway County Council’s Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 – 2022, a key initiative that will assist in the cultural advancement of our County. The ethos is deeply significant, signaling the collective desire of Government to work together under the Creative Ireland Programme to benefit the nation and enable it to realise its full creative potential.

County Galway has long been associated with the arts and culture in a traditional sense, artists from all over the world have come here to paint and create under the soft ethereal light of the west of Ireland. We see culture and creativity as an essential component for communities to thrive and understand that creativity is the foundation of innovation, the most coveted skill across all areas of life in the 21st Century.

Our sense of place has informed all our priorities, we appreciate our unique landscape and vibrant cultural heritage and are aware of the challenges posed by changes in demographic patterns brought about by social and economic pressures. We aim to work with these challenges, to harness the potential of our people and to ensure that culture, creativity and language remain a vibrant and unique part of our identity. Culture 2025/Eire Ilddánach draws on the intrinsic value of culture but it also outlines the importance of the Irish language, our cultural heritage, folklore, games, music and the uniqueness of our Gaeltacht areas.

Creativity is valued as a distinct asset in Galway, with a host of artists, makers, chefs and coders contributing to our reputation as a great place to live and work. From our international designations, as European Region of Gastronomy 2018, European Capital of Culture 2020 and our burgeoning creative industries; Galway County Council is committed to supporting the wealth of talent already here and to discovering and encouraging the creators of tomorrow.

Participation in all forms of creative and cultural activity contributes to the health and wellbeing of our citizens. Through the implementation of our community based arts, culture, language, wellbeing and heritage programmes we aspire to ensuring every citizen regardless of age, gender or ethnicity is aware of, take part in and experience the value and importance of creativity in their lives. Through this Creative Ireland/Galway County Council Cultural and Creativity Strategy we aim to enrich the lives of the people of County Galway. This is a wonderful opportunity to embrace our rich cultural past and forge a bright creative future.

**Cllr. Eileen Mannion**

**Cathaoirleach of Galway County Council**

**Foreword by Chief Executive**

As Chief Executive, I am delighted to welcome Galway County Council’s Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 – 2022 which directly follows our Culture and Creativity Plan 2017 developed under the national Creative Ireland Programme.

The Creative Ireland Programme is the Government’s Legacy Programme from Ireland 2016. It is a five-year all-of-government, culture-based initiative that emphasises the importance of human creativity for individual, community and national wellbeing​. Our strategy provides us with a framework that will assist in the cultural advancement of our County. Creative Ireland facilitates an enhanced level of coordination, focus and leadership to existing policies and initiatives across national and local government, State agencies, the arts and cultural sector, Gaeltacht and Irish language organisations and can provide a link to private business and the creative industries sector. It will support and enhance the wide range of cultural programmes already in place through our arts office, libraries, conservation, heritage, economic development and Irish language provisions in the Council. The collaborative approach of our Culture Team demonstrates how we can significantly leverage existing projects to magnify the scale and reach of our Creative Ireland initiative in terms of budget, numbers of participants and positive impact on the quality of life of people living in County Galway.

We have worked collaboratively with the community to draft a strategy that reflects Creative Ireland’s ethos and values in County Galway. We have drawn reference from a wide range of key national and regional policy documents. Our local references include: Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2022, Galway County Draft Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2017-2022, Galway County Development Plan 2015-2022, Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2015-2022, The WRAP Fund 2015-2017 and our Irish Language Scheme. Our key statistics are drawn from a range of sources (CSO, GeoDirectory and [www.galwaydashboard.ie](http://www.galwaydashboard.ie)). The values in this strategy align with our LECP plan, its wide-reaching objectives and actions designed to promote and support the economic and local/community development in County Galway in partnership with other economic development and community stakeholders with an overarching vision of Putting People First - “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”.

We are now entering a very exciting period which we expect will greatly enhance and develop culture in County Galway. Galway 2020; the European Capital of Culture designation offers the creative sector in our County much needed strategic investment and renewal, ensuring capacity building and opportunity, particularly in rural areas currently experiencing decline. Our commitment to assist with the delivery of this programme includes financial investment, supporting our communities to avail of the many opportunities taking place in the rural landscape and supporting the initiative through our other work programmes.

Our recent successful Music Generation bid; to deliver a County-wide music education programme, will significantly enhance the landscape of music education provision for our children. The MEP (Music Education Partnership) will deliver this initial three-year Music Generation programme, with a €1.2m budget that includes investment from Music Generation, GRETB and Galway County Council. By 2021, over 3,500 children and young people (aged 0 to 18) will be participating in Music Generation Programmes.

In addition, Galway City & County has been designated European Region of Gastronomy 2018, galvanising our reputation throughout Europe as a well-regarded culinary destination. As organising body and lead partner, we have just launched our ambitious programme for 2018. This award will focus attention on the vital role of food culture in the West while creating opportunities for our communities to explore our strong cultural identity and rich heritage, firmly rooted in our unique landscape and proud rural traditions. The European Region of Gastronomy designation is a key element for the enhancement of our cultural, tourism and creative sectors and this will be further facilitated by our Creative Ireland strategy.

Our Creative Ireland programme in conjunction with the work of our heritage office will be instrumental in promoting the European Year of Cultural Heritage, 2018. This year sets out to encourage the sharing and appreciation of Europe’s Cultural Heritage and is geared towards involving all citizens in events that help to promote a sense of belonging to a common European space. Our Heritage Officer will act as Ambassador for this initiative in County Galway. In 2018, we also celebrate Bliain na Gaeilge, the national celebration of the revival of the Irish Language over the last 125 years. This celebration inspires us to reflect on the creativity and vibrancy of the language, to value our Gaeltacht’s and to focus on encouraging strong participation from the community through a variety of creative, artistic and community events around the world. We will be supporting this national celebration in our Creative Ireland programme for 2018.

Finally, the key to the successful delivery of this strategy is the strength of our community partnerships. The priorities outlined in this strategy demonstrates the large volume of work carried out by this Council to enhance the life of our communities. It reflects the long-term objective of the Creative Ireland Programme, that individual and collective wellbeing is enhanced through increased participation in creative activity at all stages of life. Funding for the delivery of our 2018 plan comes directly from government departments via Creative Ireland. In 2017, we received €64,000 towards our Creative Ireland 2017 programme and all Implementation Plans based on this Strategy will be subject to available funding. Notwithstanding budgetary constraints we are committed to continued collaboration through this programme with our local communities. I wish to commend the commitment and collective approach of our internal Culture Team in responding to the unique opportunities offered to our communities through this Creative Ireland initiative.

**Mr. Kevin Kelly**

**Chief Executive**

**Culture and Creativity in County Galway**

With borders stretching out into the Atlantic Ocean in the west and pastureland touching the River Shannon in the east, County Galway is a diverse area, culturally, socially, geologically and economically. Our strategic priorities reflect and celebrate County Galway’s uniqueness; our islands, history, culture, heritage, language, landscape and people, creating space and opportunity for our citizens to grasp the creative and cultural baton that is being passed to them through the Creative Ireland initiative.

Culturally diverse, County Galway is also home to Ireland’s largest Gaeltacht population. As an inclusive County with a clear sense of identity we strive to work together towards achieving the full economic, social, community, linguistic and cultural potential of Galway and its people through citizen engagement.

In 2017, we launched our first Galway County Creative Ireland Programme following on from a successful 1916 centenary programme. The success of this 2016 programme came from an unprecedented level of interdepartmental and interagency collaboration led by Galway County Council and it illustrated the extraordinary power of cultural creativity to bring communities together. The devolution of responsibility for the Creative Ireland programme to local authorities supports the crucial role we play through our Culture Team to make an impact within our community, working collaboratively to increase participation in the arts, to boost our creative industries and preserve our heritage with a focus on language, landscape and the environment,

Our 2017 Creative Ireland programme reflected the aspirations and creative ideas of our communities. New programmes launched under the County’s Creative Ireland plan enhanced the already extensive initiatives and work plans currently being delivered by each member of the Culture Team within the community. This 2017 programme was built around themes of identity, culture and citizenship in alignment with our mandate to deliver on Pillar 2 of the Creative Ireland programme – Enabling Creativity in Every Community. Our Creative Ireland programme will bring an enhanced level of coordination, focus and leadership to existing policies and initiatives across our local authority affording greater synergy between our existing arts, heritage and cultural sectors to enhance life in our communities.

Culture and Creativity plays a vital role across a wide range of services within Galway County Council. The Arts Office has a long track record in supporting, collaborating and developing creative programmes with schools, community groups and artists across the County. Each year its dynamic programme focuses on many important projects; working in partnership with key arts organisations, building capacity for art-form development, supporting artists and providing quality opportunities for all our citizens to engage in and enjoy the arts. Our ongoing extensive programme features an Artist in Schools Scheme, Children’s Book Festival, Burning Bright (an older year’s project), animation workshops, festivals, dance and theatre residencies, youth programmes and artistic residencies in communities and healthcare settings. We also provide much needed support to artists working and living in the County including artist bursaries, mentoring and production supports.

Our Libraries have always been central to community life in County Galway as dynamic civic and cultural spaces where creativity and ideas are born and nurtured. For many of our early learners the Library is the first place they encounter opportunities to expand their imagination through creative play and literature. We strive to provide adequate space in our libraries for storytelling and other children’s initiatives to grow and expand. The Library has long been a meeting place and valued resource for members of our local communities. Over the next 5 years we will focus on the furthering of integration and cohesion through our existing work plans, supported by a number of key initiatives through this Creative Ireland programme. In 2017 our County libraries featured many successful pilot projects including the Ballinasloe String Festival, an inaugural two-day music festival with a common thread – strings. Over the course of two days Ballinasloe Library played host to a variety of vocal and instrumental talent, both local and international. This new and successful festival offers audiences a blend of musical genres performed by world renowned and up-and-coming musicians, which is open and free to the public making it accessible to all.

Our European Region of Gastronomy designation for 2018 presents us with a platform to not only showcase our wonderful food culture but also provides us with an opportunity to educate; gastronomy in its simplest sense is the relationship between food and culture. Over the next 5 years we hope to build on the remarkable work of our chefs, restauranteurs, fishermen and farmers through a series of initiatives and events aimed at celebrating Galway’s culinary diversity in a way that is accessible to all. Our aim is to use gastronomy as a tool to help address social inclusion, marginalisation and discrimination while simultaneously fostering mutual respect. Our programme features a series of major events and community gatherings to include: *Food Culture Carnival – Intercultural Street Feasts* which celebrate our culinary diversity in an accessible manner to *Our Food Histories – an Inter-generational project* aimed at recording the food traditions of our islands and communities along the Wild Atlantic Way, as well as documenting the traditions of the ‘new Irish’.

Following Galway City and County’s designation as UNESCO City of Film, a permanent global designation, Galway has been put firmly on the world stage as a centre of excellence in the creative media industries. Its overall vision is to bring into focus the rich heritage, tradition and legacy of film in the region, to extend ongoing creative activities occurring through film and enrich the social, economic and cultural benefit for the city and County. Led by the Galway Film Centre, in collaboration with Galway City and County Councils, UNESCO City of Film’s focus is to enhance film and media literacy, grow our already healthy film and television industry, to expand audiences and encourage investment. In recent years Galway has come to rival Dublin as a hub for the creative industries sector, building on its traditional reputation as a hub for creativity. Film has been successfully used to showcase our rich cultural heritage, this has been led by our Heritage Officer, working in collaboration with communities, documenting and exploring local assets and resources.

As the County with the largest Gaeltacht population in the country, the Irish language (Gaeilge) is fundamental to the identity of many of our communities not only in the Gaeltacht but across the County. We recognise the Irish language as our unique and precious inheritance and we continue to support and promote it by celebrating the different traditional aspects linked to it including traditional Irish music and dance (including sean-nós). Through our Irish Language Officer, we support a range of initiatives to promote the use of the Irish Language. 2018 has been named Bliain na Gaeilge, a national year-long programme of creative, artistic and community activities and events planned to celebrate and encourage increased participation in the language. We are in full support of Bliain na Gaeilge 2018 but our support for the Irish language will not end here. Over the next five years, it is our intention to promote and support projects that capture both the language and culture of the Gaeltacht.

Heritage, like all other aspects of cultural life in County Galway attracts significant community interest and engagement. Galway County Council continues to place heritage and biodiversity at the heart of public life. Through increasing awareness, participation, enjoyment, knowledge and understanding of our shared heritage we aim to foster proper conservation management to safeguard it for future generations. The Heritage Office supports many community groups with a wide reaching programme of activities, assisting them in the delivery of built, natural or cultural heritage projects alongside extensive public programmes and supports.

*“The rich heritage and biodiversity of County Galway will be cherished, valued, conserved and enhanced in a manner that is respectful of our past, mindful of our present needs and sustainable for future generations.”*

Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2017-2022

The Galway Gastronomy Heritage Project led by the Heritage Office and Social Inclusion unit of Galway County Council in partnership with local heritage groups, networks, schools, individuals and the National Museum of Ireland Country Life, embarked on documenting Galway’s rich gastronomic heritage on [www.heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org](http://www.heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org). This large-scale project was further supported by our Creative Ireland programme and is well underway with up to 1.000 items including recipes, photographs and information uploaded to the website by local community groups. We will continue to support and further develop this project with the intention of ensuring a lasting gastronomical heritage legacy for our communities.

Galway County Council through its Historical Assets Initiative, actively promotes the care and conservation of structures of special interest in its protection, offering guidance and best practice in conservation and traditional skills to preserve buildings of interest in the community. We engage in projects with groups who care for and rejuvenate local buildings with a view to preserving their use. Alongside architectural conservation we also strive through our Conservation Officer to create awareness and appreciation of the designed built environment. Supporting the *Architecture at the Edge Festival* in our 2017 Creative Ireland Programme reflected our overall aim to demonstrate how design enhances quality of life, while addressing important issues of society through responsible architecture. In 2017, we also piloted an ENtopia project in Gort; ENtopia, a mentoring programme based on a European model, inviting communities to improve their sustainability and attractiveness of their towns for their enjoyment and to share and improve the economic and social potential of each ‘Place’ for employment and tourism.

The collective memory of the people of Galway is of vital importance to preserving cultural identities, in bridging the past and the present and to shaping the future. The documentary heritage residing in Galway County Council Archives constitutes a major part of that memory and reflects the diversity of the people, history and culture of the County. The Archives strives on a continual basis to preserve, manage and make accessible that memory. As access to our documentary heritage is seen more and more as a right of citizenship our Archives will continue to collect, preserve, document and manage this irreplaceable material. In our efforts to democratise access, we will endeavour to continue to make collections accessible and expand our already significant digital archive, to facilitate global access to its diverse collections, which document our County’s social, economic and political history and memory.

The wellbeing of the people of County Galway is central to every project we undertake, from increased access to culture and the arts, to ensuring that our communities have access to and engage in sport and physical activity. The value of sport to local communities extends beyond sport for sport’s sake. It can play a role in bringing communities together, have a positive social and cultural impact, enhancing local pride and sense of place. Through the Galway Sports Partnership, we organise and deliver specific physical activity programmes suitable for all ages and abilities. Healthy Ireland, the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland, is currently being led by our library service and social inclusion unit. Healthy Ireland’s aim is for everyone to enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility, complementing our Creative Ireland programme.

In its first year, our Creative Ireland programme delivered and supported over ten distinct programmes to include: Architecture at the Edge, Literature on The Move – Galway’s Great Read, Ballinasloe Strings Festival, Galway’s Gastronomical Heritage, Lego for Adults, Songs for Our Children - A song research, composition and performance project, ENtopia Gort, Silent Books Project and the large scale Cruinniú na Cascá event which took place in Athenry over the Easter weekend. Encouraged by the positive public response, we will continue to work to support individuals, groups and organisations in County Galway – creating unique cultural experiences in the most unlikely of magical places. Our aim is to create something for everyone, everywhere.

**The Creative Ireland Vision for County Galway**

The vision of Creative Ireland is that every person living in Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise his or her creative potential. The vision is pursued through the Five Pillars of the Creative Ireland Programme.

Pillar 1: Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child

Pillar 2: Enabling Creativity in Every Community

Pillar 3: Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure

Pillar 4: The Creative Industries: Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production

Pillar 5: Unifying our Global Reputation

Participation and access are central to the vision. Connecting artists and other creators to communities is also regarded as essential to realising the vision.

In response to the Creative Ireland vision, the focus of Galway County Council in the coming years is to preserve and support our unique culture, environment, heritage and language. We are committed to developing the wellbeing of the County, its communities and people. It is our wish to maximise social inclusion and support active citizenship. This plan serves as a strategic framework for the future actions of the Council during this period and identifies 8 strategic priorities with clear objectives to achieve the Council’s values and vision, while always cognisant of our mission statement as set out in our Corporate Plan;

**“To provide civic leadership and effective democratic representation, while leading on sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development and delivering coordinated effective and good value services, aimed at realising the full potential of the County of Galway”.**

Through our strategic priorities and objectives, we will realise our ambitious programme year on year, keeping the values of Creative Ireland together with the culture and wellbeing of the people of County Galway at the heart of our endeavours. While implementing this plan, we are committed to keeping channels of communication open to both stakeholders and the public.

**The Creative Ireland Values in County Galway**

***Collaboration*** is a concept that Galway County Council is very familiar with. Our creative collaborators include our neighbouring local authorities, The Arts Council, Ealaín Na Gaeltachta, Galway 2020, Creative Ireland, The Heritage Council, community groups, artists, education providers, our elected members, local interest groups, the business community and local development agencies. We continually deliver on a wide range of cultural, creative and wellbeing programmes; engaging with our communities to improve their quality of life takes place on an extensive level across the local authority through our Library, Arts, Heritage, Archives, Irish Language, Social Inclusion, Conservation service alongside the Sports Partnership, Corporate Services and the Community, Enterprise and Economic Development Unit.

***Communication:*** We recognise the importance of communication as a two-way, central and vital element in the successful delivery of our Creative Ireland Strategy and programmes. The creation of a cultural team within the local authority has greatly assisted communication across all our community initiatives. Through our direct link with the Public Participation Network (PPN) we communicate with over 700 active groups who represent the broader community sector in the County. Our Corporate Services Department drives all formal communication and social media platforms; however, we also communicate directly with all our interest groups, artists; communicating informally through our wide networks and connections across the whole of the Culture Team.

***Community*** is at the heart of and central to our Creative Ireland Strategy. We support local communities on an ongoing basis by fostering new initiatives and supporting them through the many programmes and work plans within the Culture Team. Creativity is most prevalent in vibrant communities, by resourcing community development, the Council is strengthening communities to harness their creativity.

***Participation***: Galway County Council supports a participative ‘bottom up approach’ as a key feature of our local and community development - meaningful community participation through the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan, shaping local initiatives and a vision for those communities.

**Inclusivity**: We have a clear focus on social inclusion and this is reflected in the strategies outlined in this plan. Galway County Council are committed to making sure that everyone in our society has an equal chance at a good quality of life. We aspire to treat people equally, to remove barriers to creative opportunities within the County, ensure the broadest participation in creative activity and target resources where they are most needed.

**Empowerment:**  The Creative Ireland programme is about reaching out to our communities, we want it to be open to all to discover, enjoy and appreciate. Participation increases societal cohesion and adds to overall mental and physical wellbeing. This strategy is informed by and feeds into everything else we do at a local level.

**Strategic Priorities for County Galway**

This five-year strategy has been created to bring coherence to the individual culture-based strategies (Heritage, Libraries, Arts and Galway County Local Economic and Community Development Plans) and to align with the work of different members of the Culture Team over the coming years. We commenced consultation in April 2017 with a public presentation by the Creative Ireland National Team, outlining the vision and objectives of this new government initiative. This was followed by a facilitated feedback session with over 35 interested parties from the community offering informal feedback and ideas for the delivery of the plan at local level.

In June 2017, we launched our first Annual Plan featuring several pilot programmes which linked in with national Creative Ireland priorities, Pillar 2: Enabling Creativity in Every Community. Local Authorities were seen by Creative Ireland to have primary capacity for local programme delivery and were asked to lead on Pillar 2. Our 2017 Programme was directly overseen by the internal Culture Team. In late 2017 the Galway County Council Culture Team began drafting this five-year strategic plan, adhering to the national template provided by Creative Ireland to all Local Authorities. Key priorities were identified, informed by several existing local Council strategies, and a further public consultation took place on Monday 5th March 2018 to present the draft strategy and request feedback. This feedback has been incorporated into our strategy.

**PLACES AND SPACES:**

 **To revitalise and regenerate our towns, villages, townlands and islands, and to improve the connectivity of communities to the built environment and public spaces.**

Creative investment in re-imagining the use of our surroundings is required to breathe new life into towns/villages and our countryside. We recognise that the County has infrastructural deficits in the areas of cultural infrastructure. The ability to access appropriate space to work, practice and cultivate artistic endeavours was a key thematic outcome of our consultation process, therefore further support is required to foster both communities and creatives to display their talents.

**Objectives**:

* Review our existing infrastructure, our landscape and our amenities in conjunction with reaching out and engaging our communities in a meaningful way to encourage the creative use of our public spaces.
* Develop and enrich programmes within our libraries, conservation, arts, heritage, social inclusion and enterprise services; enhancing activities that create awareness and appreciation of our built environment and rich heritage.

**CREATIVE INDUSTRIES:**

 **To support the development of our economic, social, and cultural sector by placing creativity at the heart of our entrepreneurial support.**

We acknowledge that creativity is an asset and creative talent should be supported so it can be developed and empowered to contribute to the growth of our economy. With focus shifting internationally to STEM, we are now turning to innovation as the way to ensure a prosperous future. Innovation remains coupled with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – the STEM subjects, however Art and Design are poised to transform our economy just as science and technology did in the last century. We will look to add Art and Design to the equation and transform STEM to STEAM.

*“What has become abundantly clear is the need to harness the imagination and curiosity of young people if we’re to create a workforce that can exist harmoniously with the ever more automated industries of the future”.*

***Lord Puttnam, CBE (Former Irish Digital Champion)***

A rapidly growing interest in the Culinary Arts feeds directly into our vibrant gastronomical culture and reflects the rich gastronomical heritage that the people of the County possess. From our farmers, food producers, chefs and food ambassadors there is much to celebrate and support within this sector.

**Objectives:**

* Foster a dynamic and vibrant entrepreneurial environment by developing opportunities for collaboration from craft to code across all our creative industries and encourage partnerships between the private and public sector.
* Forge a strong and sustainable culinary industry in County Galway through the platform of our Region of Gastronomy designation and promote interest in the Culinary Arts.

**COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE WELLBEING:**

**To focus on projects that promote active citizenship and community engagement to foster flourishing communities.**

Our strategy clearly focuses on accessing everyone living in County Galway, including those marginalised within their communities. Galway County is home to a population of over 179,000 which has grown steadily over the past decade and over 77% of people live in rural areas which are becoming increasingly multicultural. We have a higher rate of older and younger persons in comparison to other counties in the west region. In considering our strategic priorities, we have drawn on national policy as outlined in Putting People First which defines the overarching purpose of local government as the need to expand and strengthen our role “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”. This is also reflected in our local policy as set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) where our over-riding vision for County Galway is stated as “an inclusive County with a clear sense of identity where we work together towards achieving the economic, social, linguistic and cultural potential of County Galway and of its people through citizen engagement at a local level”.

**Objectives:**

* Build on the existing networks and collaborations within our communities to increase their capacity through training and mentoring.
* Place a strong emphasis on the creation of collective experiences, festivals, and events that help to promote a sense of cultural identity and celebrate creativity.
* Incorporate all elements of the arts, crafts and creative industries alongside initiatives that promote physical and mental wellbeing through the medium of sports, physical activity and food.

**CREATIVES IN OUR COMMUNITY:**

**To make artistic endeavor a viable career option for emerging and established artists living and working in the County.**

County Galway has a strong and dynamic artistic community who have achieved much despite limited investment. This Strategy recognizes the significant value professional artists bring to our communities. It is also important to acknowledge the wide range of art-form practices in the County which range from the traditional such as music, theatre, dance, literature, architecture, visual arts, film, heritage and crafts to new emerging creative industries and digital arts through the medium of English and Irish.

**Objectives:**

* Provide tangible programmes and initiatives offering support and mentorship for all artists within our community.
* Develop opportunities for artists and community practitioners to network and collaborate, supporting the creative development of their community
* Focus on supporting and developing specific art-forms as part of our Annual Programmes.

**AN GHAEILGE – ANAM AGUS DÚCHAS:**

**To recognize the economic, social and cultural importance of Irish in the Gaeltacht and throughout the County.**

As the County with the largest Gaeltacht population in the country, we recognise the economic, social and cultural importance of Irish within the Gaeltacht and throughout the County as a whole. With 49% of the population of the County (excluding Galway City) indicating that they can speak Irish, County Galway has the highest percentage of Irish speakers of all administrative counties for the population of Ireland aged 3 and over, (Source: CSO Census 2016). County Galway is host to TG4 – Irish language television station and to RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta – National Irish language radio station, among many other Irish language organisations. Galway County Council has an active role in relation to the development, protection and promotion of the Irish language alongside other local and national organisations such as Foras na Gaeilge and Údaras na Gaeltachta to name just two.

**Objectives:**

* Aspire to maintain the current ratio of Irish speakers to non-Irish speakers in the County and encourage the high ratio of Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht through the continued support and promotion of our native language.
* Provide grants to the community for initiatives aimed at promoting the use of the Irish language and provide awards to those who deserve recognition for their promotion or development of the language.
* Organise public events on an annual basis to celebrate our native language and the role it plays in all aspects of our cultural identity, e.g. Scoil Samhraidh an Phiarsaigh (Patrick Pearse Summer School), as well as events such as traditional music, dance (sean-nós) and lectures during ‘Seachtain na Gaeilge’ (Irish week) in March.

**A LIFETIME OF CREATIVITY:**

**To support the delivery of programmes that enhance the cultural life of our citizens throughout their lifetime.**

Putting creativity at the heart of our lives is at the core of the Creative Ireland vision. Our overall aim is to promote participation in social, economic, cultural and public life for all members of the community. We will also plan to support national initiatives led by Creative Ireland under Pillar 1: Enabling the Creative Potential of every Child. Our first experience and encounter with the world of creativity often begins at an early age in the home or within a school or educational framework. Galway County Council acknowledges the importance of providing and supporting creative activities for children, and our Music Generation programme, Children’s Book Month and Festival and our Artists and Writers in Schools Schemes are only a sample of the work already being carried out in this area. Whilst our young population are a key strategic priority we also must acknowledge the large ageing population also residing in the County. The twentieth century has brought great changes to longevity with the average life expectancy increasing to 81.5 years, and it is expected to extend by a further 10 years by 2050, (Source CSO). The very old (age 80+) are now the fastest growing population group. People are experiencing older age differently from their grandparents’ generation, enjoying longer lives, better health and more active lifestyles. In acknowledgement of our ageing population we have taken the lead alongside Galway City Council to develop an Age Friendly strategy, and will advocate for and promote all activities that help to sustain creativity from the early years and on into older years.

**Objectives:**

* Create programmes designed specifically to encourage children to engage with their creativity.
* Support and promote creative initiatives which will enable people to live healthier, active lives for longer, and improve their quality of life.
* Promote the concept and practice of inter-generational activities throughout our community and to foster respect across the generations.

**EQUALITY OF ACCESS:**

**To support equal access to all our cultural and creative services, programmes and initiatives.**

Accessibility means more than free events; it’s about bringing creativity to the heart of communities so that it becomes an integral part of their lives. Access to and engagement in creative activity is an important objective of this strategy. We acknowledge the work of volunteers and communities, especially in venues and festivals across the County. They are vital to the development and growth of a creative society and underpin our ability to deliver on this strategy. This community-engaged activity underpins so many cultural offerings across the County. With respect to and in recognition of our growing cultural diversity we must ensure that every citizen regardless of age, ability, gender or ethnicity can contribute to and engage in the cultural life of the County.

**Objectives:**

* Programme activities throughout our civic spaces that will encourage more people to engage in cultural activity and events.
* Support opportunities for the training and development of volunteers and community groups contributing to the creative wellbeing of our County.

**OUR GLOBAL REPUTATION:**

**To build on our strong and ever-increasing positive international reputation in County Galway.**

Due to our dramatic and breath-taking land and seascapes Galway has enjoyed more than its share of tourists throughout its history. In recent years however, it has been our artistic, cultural and gastronomic reputation that has been drawing crowds. This Strategy acknowledges that the further growth and development of our international reputation is a key strategic priority particularly considering our European and worldwide designations. Through the partnership of Galway County & City Councils and the wider cultural community, Galway has been selected as European Capital of Culture for 2020: Galway 2020. The strong programme of events included in the Galway 2020 bid book, Making Waves, will envelop every corner and community in the County and will deliver a lasting legacy for the people of Galway, Ireland, Europe and beyond.

The resilience of our farmers, fishermen, chefs and restauranteurs has been rewarded this year with the award of European Region of Gastronomy 2018. This designation is well deserved and Galway County Council are proud to support this ambitious programme which will further enhance our reputation as a European and international culinary destination.

Galway City and County were awarded the permanent designation of UNESCO City of Film in recent years and have since built on this wonderful accolade to nurture and grow the film and television industry in the West of Ireland. With over 600 people permanently employed in this visual medium, Galway County Council will continue to support the Galway Film Centre as it develops and sustains good working relationships amongst the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

**Objectives:**

* Strengthen our reputation and profile as a County rich in cultural and creative assets through the promotion and marketing of existing designations.
* Build on the local strengths in film, animation and the gaming sector by maximizing their impact and contribution to our economic and cultural wellbeing.

Implementation

Our public consultation meetings in 2017 and 2018 provided us much insight into potential project ideas which would offer opportunities for everyone in the County to engage in culture and creativity.

The development of an implementation plan for 2018 will involve each member of Galway County Council’s Culture Team who will each be invited to put forward projects which meet the strategic priorities of this Strategy. Several projects submitted through this internal call will be delivered as part of Galway County’s 2018 Culture and Creativity Plan with reference to the budget available. The Culture Team, through their own links with communities will assist in the planning, delivery and implementation of Creative Ireland programmes and initiatives throughout the County. Our aim is to undertake a cross-departmental assessment of creative projects rooted in citizen engagement.

Our Culture Team reflects our integrated approach to this process from inception to implementation and its members represent a wide range of our services including: Libraries and Archives, Arts, Heritage, Irish Language, Conservation, Social Inclusion, Sports, Economic Development and Corporate Services supported by a Coordinator.

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| ***Members of Galway County Council Culture Team*** |
|  Alan Farrell | A/Director of Services for Economic, Rural & Community Development and Corporate Services |
| Sharon O’Grady | Arts Officer & Creative Ireland Coordinator |
| Catherine Gallagher | County & City Librarian |
| Patria McWalter | Archivist |
| Marie Mannion | Heritage Officer |
| Mairin Doddy | Architectural Conservation Officer |
| Jo Vahey | Library Service |
| Una Ní Eidhin  | Irish Officer |
| Ann Mallaghan | Social Inclusion Officer |
| Michael Curley | Sports Development Officer |
| Marian Donohue | Corporate Section |
| Brian Barrett  | Economic, Rural & Community Development  |

As part of our implementation plan for 2018, we will be advertising a Galway County Council Creative Ireland Bursary Award Scheme. The key objective of these bursaries will be to provide support to individuals and community groups for developmental activities and projects that will encourage creativity, collaboration and cultural participation in County Galway.

A key element of implementation for 2018 will be to ensure that all communications and information updates are provided in a clear, timely and effective way. The Galway County Public Participation Network (PPN) is the County Council’s main structure for community contact. The Culture Team will work with the PPN to ensure that community engagement in the development and delivery of the programme is strengthened. Each member of the Culture Team also has access to a wide network of contacts and we will endeavour to engage with all our networks across a wide range of channels including local and national media, social media, newsletters and our website [*www.galway.ie*](http://www.galway.ie) to ensure we interact and communicate with everyone in our community.