Leitrim County Council

Arts

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Introduction

Leitrim is unique in many ways. As a county it is regarded for its unspoilt landscape, cultural vibrancy and remarkable relative to its size and for its levels of activity and capacity across a wide range of artforms and cultural arenas.

To some extent its culture is forged from its geography of a rugged landscape of thin soil, and it is partly as a consequence of this that Leitrim has the smallest population of any county in Ireland, though dispersed over a large area that stretches from the midlands of the country to the northwest coast. Until the year 2000 when it started to increase once more, the population of Leitrim continued to decline from 155,000 people in 1841 to 32,000 in 2016. As a local authority this presents Leitrim County Council with many challenges in terms of service delivery. However, in equal measure our small size has also been an advantage, where consensus is more easily reached, with an agility to grasp new opportunities that improve the livelihoods of our citizens.

By the early 1980s, relative property prices coupled with a unique landscape and environment, gave rise to the migration of artists and other cultural pioneers from other parts of Ireland, the UK and continental Europe, who saw in Leitrim a location where they could afford to sustain their livelihoods. In the 1990s, artists in Manorhamilton sought to develop better facilities in which they could make work, founding Leitrim Sculpture Centre, which today provides the widest array of material processes of any facility in Ireland.

By the turn of the millennium Leitrim County Council had developed its supports for communities who wanted to engage in the arts and increased its provision for the professional development of artists that would in time lead to the development of programmes like Creative Frame. Leitrim County Enterprise Board had developed Leitrim Design House and a wide range of product development and business training supports including multiannual cross-border programmes such as LiveCraft and Harnessing Creativity.

Through the government’s capital development scheme, Leitrim County
Council redeveloped the old courthouse in Carrick on Shannon to become the Dock, which remains a flagship of Leitrim and cornerstone of the region’s arts infrastructure.

Leitrim County Council Arts Office was established in 1999 to provide information, advice and assistance to a wide range of clients and develop policies in relation to various aspects of the arts.

It develops and co-ordinates a number of programmes independently and in association with a wide variety of local, national and international partners. Working within the local government structure, in particular, the Arts Office is uniquely positioned to develop partnerships and relationships with a wide range of cultural, social, educational and economic organisations and development agencies, broadening the width of arts initiatives across a wider developmental front. As a result, participation rates in the arts by the wider community are high, with Leitrim having one of the highest rates of participation in youth theatre and increasing levels of participation by schools and community groups in arts activities.

Leitrim County Council recognises the value and importance of the arts. We have seen how investment in the creative sector has paid dividend in terms of the social capital it builds and how it improves the lives of our citizens and grows pride. While this is invaluable to people of all ages who can engage in the arts, explore their creativity and our culture, it’s also a vital asset that brings real direct and indirect economic benefits.

The Western Development Commission’s 2009 report ‘Creative West’ noted that the percentage of people employed in the creative sector in Leitrim was 4.4% - the highest in the WDC region. This year a report by Indecon Consultants looking at the impact of local authority investment in the arts found that showed the % of the labour force employed in the creative sector in Leitrim remains substantially higher than the national average. The numbers of people working in the sector, level of activity, infrastructure and the opportunities for practitioners have continued to rise and have reached a critical mass where the creative sector is viewed as a key component of social, cultural and economic development.

While the scope of most individuals within the creative sector to employ further people or become major direct economic drivers is limited, the majority of all enterprises in Leitrim are small one and two person businesses. As such supporting those who work in the creative sector to develop sustainable careers is considered as valid and important as it is to support as any other sector, industry or endeavour.

In places like Leitrim where cultural activities form a strong point of identification, the arts and the wider culture and creative sector can make a significant contribution to regional identity. Programmes like Leitrim Equation and the Iron Mountain Literature Festival use the landscape, history and cultural heritage of Leitrim to explore contemporary themes of place, home and identity, while the work of venues such as The Dock and the Glens Centre all provide platforms for different communities of place or interest to explore their creativity to the fullest extent possible. Leitrim County Council views creativity as an essential skill and a mindset that every person should be encouraged to develop in order to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving future. Communities and individuals of all ages can develop confidence, a sense of self, and a shared understanding through creative expression and every effort should be made to provide them with that opportunity. Together these initiatives endorse the idea that while the arts plays a central function in the cultural wellbeing of the county, they also have vast implications socially and economically, the three strands of which are inherently intertwined.
Demographics

County Leitrim has seen a reversal in population trends in recent years with a 23.87% increase in population over the period 2002 – 2011.

The County Town of Carrick-on-Shannon experienced the greatest increase (753) representing a 40% change in population since 2002. Key demographic facts for County Leitrim:

- The recent population growth – 12% between 2002-2006 and 10% between 2006-2011 compared with national average increases of 8% during these periods is projected to continue for the next decade.

- Leitrim has a very high proportion of its population living in rural areas - almost 90%. All of the County’s main towns have experienced the County’s recent population growth.

- The greatest proportionate change in population in Leitrim towns from 2006-2011 was experienced in Leitrim Village (88%) and Dromod (106%), whilst the largest actual increase in population over the same period occurred in Carrick-on-Shannon (719 persons) and Kinlough (328 persons).

- While Leitrim’s Age Dependency Rate (the proportion of the population that is under 15 or over 64) at 36% is slightly higher than the 2011 national average of 33%, Leitrim’s 0-15 year-old population accounts for 23% of its total population compared to a national average of 21%.

- 60% of students in County Leitrim progress to Third Level Education, the joint highest % nationally.

- While the County loses a significant number of its young adult/adult population through migration, including the need to migrate for third level education, the County has benefitted from significant immigration with some 18.5% of the 2011 population born outside of the County.
The Framework for Planning

Leitrim County Council's planning for the arts is guided and informed by a number of local and national development plans and research as well as consultation with the sector and the wider community.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has responsibility for the provisions and requirements of the Arts. The Arts Act, 2003 requires each local authority to prepare a plan for the development of the arts. This requirement was added in the course of updating the 1973 Act.

6. (1) A local authority shall, for the purposes of section 31 of the Local Government Act, 1994, prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within its functional area and shall, in so doing, take account of policies of the Government in relation to the arts. [Arts Act 2003]

The Arts Act, 2003 defines the arts as follows:

Any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, circus, film and architecture, and includes any medium which is used for those purposes. [Arts Act 2003]

The Arts Act also empowers local authorities to directly assist the development of the arts locally.

6. (2) A local authority may provide such financial or other assistance as it considers appropriate to such persons or in respect of such activities, projects or undertakings, for the purposes of-
(a) stimulating public interest in the arts,
(b) promoting knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts, or
(c) improving standards in the arts, within its functional area. [Arts Act 2003]
In addition to the Arts Act, in 2014 the government approved the drafting of a National Cultural Policy - Culture 2025 designed to set out the high-level aims and policies of the Government in this area in the period up until 2025. Culture 2025 is the first Government Framework Policy to embrace the whole cultural sector and bring together all those involved in the arts, film, broadcasting, visual arts, cultural heritage, the Irish language and Gaeltacht with Government departments and State agencies. Through this Framework Policy, the Government seeks to nurture creativity, boost citizen participation, help more people to follow a sustainable career in the cultural sector, promote Ireland’s cultural wealth and ensure a cultural contribution to wider social and economic goals. All relevant public bodies will be required to respond to the challenges and opportunities of greater cultural engagement and collaboration.

**Leitrim County Council Corporate Plan 2014-2019**

The overall mission of Leitrim County Council’s Corporate Plan 2014-2019 is “to make Leitrim a sustainable, creative, inclusive County where individuals, family and business can flourish”. The plan is segmented into two pillars of Economic Development and High Quality Sustainable Living Environment. Within economic development it seeks to “develop a vibrant creative sector driven by practitioners, activities and opportunities of the highest calibre”, while in furtherance of developing a high quality sustainable living environment it sets out to “work to further develop and grow the creative sector of the County, bring greater awareness to the arts activities and services in Leitrim, and ensure that each citizen has the opportunity to engage with and participate in the arts.”

**Arts Council Framework Agreement**

A significant portion of government funding for the arts is channelled through the Arts Council, which, although funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is independent in its funding allocations and the Minister has no role to play in its funding or executive decisions. The Arts Act 2003 underpins the Council’s independence in this context.

In 2017 Leitrim County Council entered into the first of three multiannual framework agreements with The Arts Council guided on the part of Leitrim County Council by its relevant strategies and ongoing arts development work, and on the part of the Arts Council by its 2016-2025 strategic plan “Making Great Art Work”. Making Great Art Work identifies the centrality of the artist and the priority of public engagement with the arts. In the manner of basic principles of supply and demand – indentifying the needs of the sector and providing for and developing the capacity to meet that need – these priorities also form the basis of our Framework Agreement which has identified Professional Development and Sustainability on one hand and Public Engagement and Children & Young People on the other.
Leitrim County Council Culture & Creativity Strategy 2018 - 2022

Most recently, under the auspices of the Creative Ireland programme, Leitrim County Council adopted its first Culture and Creativity Strategy. The Creative Ireland programme is a significant and meaningful demonstration of collaboration between local and national government in the area of culture and creativity. Mirroring the approach taken of Creative Ireland being an all-of-government programme at a national level, within Leitrim County Council, the development of a Culture & Creativity Strategy and programme has given rise to enhanced collaboration across different departments within the organisation where culture and creativity are seen as vital contributors to social, cultural and economic development into the future.

The Vision contained in the Leitrim Strategy is “to nurture and foster creative expression in all its diversity; embrace and welcome new ideas; and create the conditions to help turn those ideas into reality and embed creativity into all aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of Leitrim” and the primary function of the strategy is to ensure that all policies developed by the local authority give consideration to how creativity can be encouraged and supported.

While the process of developing the strategy has been collaborative in nature in the broadest sense, the measures included in the programme, and the Creative Ireland Open Call in particular, are designed to encourage a wider collaboration between the local authority, practitioners in the sector, and communities of place or interest across the entire county.

The five strategic priority areas of Leitrim’s Culture and Creativity strategy are:

**Creative Potential** - to contribute to every child’s development by providing access to and engagement with creative activities and opportunities to explore different forms of creative expression.

**Creative Community** - to provide opportunities for communities throughout Leitrim to explore their own creativity through promoting greater access and inclusion to the wide range of creative activities and cultural infrastructure and resources across the county.

**Creative Place** - to recognise the value of our outstanding rich and diverse natural landscape, heritage, cultural infrastructure and the scale of our creative sector as vital resources and sources of inspiration for creative practitioners and the wider community.

**Creative Connections** - to support the creative sector in growing its national and global footprint through national and international linkages enhancing Leitrim’s reputation as a centre of creativity.

**Creative Enterprise** - to strengthen and develop Leitrim’s capacity as a creative hub and cultural cluster and enhance potential for economic development and sustainability in the Creative and Culture Sector.
In addition to these principal plans and strategies, the arts plan is also informed by Leitrim’s Local Economic and Community Plan 2015 – 2021, and public collaboration meetings in Manorhamilton, Carrick on Shannon and Ballinamore. Meetings with key stakeholders, research that accrued from the collaboration with Leitrim’s creative sector that formed part of the planning process for the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Programme and findings from the recent Indecon Local Authority Arts Service Research Project, which was a partnership project of Leitrim, Fingal, Kildare and Limerick local authority arts services commissioned under the Arts Council Framework for Collaboration programme.

Public Consultation
Consultation for this plan has been ongoing since the publication of the previous strategy. More formally, under the auspices of the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Programme, a number of public consultation sessions were held in 2016 and 2017 to research and examine the circumstances and potential of the Creative Sector and in 2018 public consultation meetings took place in Manorhamilton, Carrick on Shannon and Ballinamore to inform both this strategy and Leitrim County Council’s Culture and Creativity Strategy.

...The mission statement of Leitrim County Council’s Arts Plan 2019 – 2022 echoes that of Leitrim County Council’s Culture and Creativity strategy while the operational plan adopts the content and structure of the Leitrim County Council’s Framework Agreement with the Arts Council....
The Arts Plan

The mission statement of Leitrim County Council’s Arts Plan 2019 - 2022 echoes that of Leitrim County Council’s Culture and Creativity strategy while the operational plan adopts the content and structure of the Leitrim County Council’s Framework Agreement with the Arts Council.

MISSION STATEMENT

“to nurture and foster the arts in all its diversity; to embrace and welcome new ideas; to create the conditions to help turn those ideas into reality; and to embed the arts and creativity into all aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of Leitrim.”

This mission statement is reflected through the following actions as they pertain to the three strategic priorities of Public Engagement, Children & Young People and Professional Development and Sustainability.

Spatial Planning

Leitrim is divided into three Municipal Districts – Manorhamilton MD, which includes all areas north of Lough Allen; Ballinamore MD, which includes the southeast of the county to Lough Allen in the north, and from Drumshanbo to Lisboy on the Longford Border; and the Carrick on Shannon MD in the southwest from the River Shannon to the Ballinamore MD. Each of the three municipal districts have particular characteristics that align with the three strategic priorities of our Framework Agreement with the Arts Council, which are the three priorities brought forward into this plan.

While Leitrim has one of the largest proportions of artists of anywhere in the country, the majority of these are based in the Manorhamilton MD. It is also home to Leitrim Sculpture Centre which is the largest art making facility in the country, the Glens Centre which focuses much of its programme on the professional development of performing artists and emerging companies and groups in music and theatre and the majority of Leitrim’s filmmakers and film companies. Similarly the Dock represents the single most significant point of contact for the public to engage with the arts in the county. It is also home to Leitrim Design House, has the greatest population concentration and the largest throughput of visitors and transport connections and the greatest reach.
nationally and internationally. Finally Ballinamore is remarkable for its levels of involvement in the arts by Children and Young People. While we ensure that schemes such are the Artist in Schools Scheme are evenly distributed across the county, in Youth Theatre, while there is provision across the three MDs, participation from young people in the Ballinamore MD accounts for 50% of the total number involved. Furthermore the proposed new Junction Centre in Ballinamore contains a facility for young people in particular to engage with the arts alongside other youth resources, the only such facility in the county. Finally while Music Generation is offered to all schools in the county, it is hoped that two of the four core projects across the county including a Youth Trad Orchestra - will be established in the Ballinamore MD over the course of this plan.

While the three strategies of Public Engagement, Children & Young People and Professional Development and Sustainability will be implemented across the county, because these emphases have developed over time for different reasons in these areas, we are responding to this and will ensure they are supported to reach their full potential. In turn it is anticipated that the learning coming forward from these programmes can be applied across the county.

Engagement with the arts provides valuable opportunities for people to explore their own creativity, to celebrate, communicate, listen, learn, question, and to express ourselves as individuals, groups and as a society.
Public Engagement

One of the principle rationales for Leitrim County Council’s involvement in arts development is to enhance the quality of life of Leitrim’s citizens and to help achieve the council’s wider objectives of social, cultural and economic development. Therefore programmes and initiatives that enhance public engagement with the arts are central to achieving this. The public in this sense means any individual living in or visiting the county and any group of people that share an affiliation, membership or community of place.

Engagement with the arts provides valuable opportunities for people to explore their own creativity, to celebrate, communicate, listen, learn, question, and to express ourselves as individuals, groups and as a society. In our Culture and Creativity Strategy the Council recognised how investment in the creative sector pays dividend in terms of the social capital it builds and how it improves the lives of our citizens and grows pride. It recognised creativity as an essential skill and a mindset that every young person should be encouraged to develop in order to meet the challenges of their rapidly evolving future and noted that communities and individuals of all ages can develop a sense of self, confidence and a shared understanding through creative expression and that every effort should be made to provide them with that opportunity. The nature and means by which people engage with the arts are many and various, as are the reasons why people don’t.

While culture, geography, transport and affordability as well as opportunity are all militating factors that prevent engagement in the arts; knowledge and awareness are crucial factors to overcoming exclusion in the first instance. Nonetheless, engagement is as much about depth as it is about breadth and it is essential that opportunities to engage in the arts, particularly for those coming to the arts for the first time, are high quality, well planned and push the boundaries of what we do and how we engage with the arts.

Over the course of this plan Leitrim County Council will develop and diversify the means by which people can engage with the arts and explore their own creativity. In order to do this we will further develop the work we undertake as part of platforms already established, particularly the Creative Ireland programme, as well as providing direct support to partner organisations and events that share common goals.
## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

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<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Current Provision</th>
<th>Developments 2019 - 2022</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative Ireland</strong></td>
<td>The Creative Ireland Programme is a five year all-of-Government initiative to place creativity at the centre of public policy. The vision for the programme is that every person living in Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise his or her creative potential. As part of the programme each local authority has developed a policy for Culture and Creativity. In Leitrim that policy is &quot;to nurture and foster creative expression in all its diversity; embrace and welcome new ideas; and create the conditions to help turn those ideas into reality and embed creativity into all aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of Leitrim.” The principal initiative within the Creative Ireland programme in Leitrim is a countywide open call to community groups, organisations, venues, artists, writers, performers, archaeologists, archivists and everyone involved in the culture and creative sectors to develop high quality projects and programmes that enable groups and individuals to realise their creative potential and develop and encourage greater access, knowledge and appreciation of the arts, culture and creativity. Groups with little or no previous involvement in creative projects are particularly and actively encouraged to become involved, and once an application or enquiry is made, Leitrim County Council will work with the applicant until such time as the group has developed a project that is of high quality and which responds to the group’s capacity, needs and interests.</td>
<td>We will develop a series of specific policies and procedures to better facilitate underrepresented groups and cohorts to engage with the programme and adopt these across all council arts programmes. Working though Creative Frame, we will develop a toolkit for artists to develop and manage projects that involve working with groups within the community. We will develop and implement a methodology for assessing the impact of engagement in creative projects within the community. We will work towards developing a means to mainstream or continue the Creative Ireland programme beyond 2022. We will review the current Culture &amp; Creativity Strategy with a view to providing a roadmap for its successor.</td>
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<td><strong>Spark</strong></td>
<td>Spark is a partnership of Leitrim’s Arts Office and Local enterprise Office that is aimed at artists interested in working in new environments and companies interested in collaborating with artists and promoting creativity within their organisations. The programme provides artists with the opportunity to explore different methods of working, new influences, and the opportunity to produce art in a unique context. As well as making new work, the artist may point to new and different creative and innovative paths for the company, and serve as a catalyst for new thinking. Participants have included The Bush Hotel; Leitrim Organic Centre; Cafe Lounge; Leitrim Association for People with Disabilities; the Leitrim Observer; The Hive, Mohill Enterprise Centre; Prior PLM Medical, Leitrim County Council and Merenda. Spark explores important ideas about creativity, how it can impact in different contexts, and the correlations between how creativity is manifest in arts practice and in broader social, cultural and economic contexts. In addition to these objectives and impacts, for someone who was exposed to the arts as a young person, the arts may well never become part of what they do or enjoy, perhaps for their entire life and in that context Spark is significant in how it reaches people who may otherwise never encounter art or artists.</td>
<td>We will mainstream the Small Sparks programme, initiated under the Creative Ireland programme, as a means to introduce and involve a greater number of businesses in Spark. We will institute a role of mentor to artists participating in Spark</td>
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## Public Engagement Programmes Contd.

### Culture Night

In Ireland Culture Night first took place in Dublin in 2006 as an initiative to open up cultural institutions and increase public awareness and participation in cultural activities in the city to people of all ages. Culture Night is now an annual all-island public event that celebrates culture, creativity and the arts with some 400,000 people visiting museums, galleries, historic houses, artists’ studios and cultural centres across the island. On Culture Night, arts and cultural organisations and venues of all shapes and sizes extend their opening hours to allow for increased access to the public. Special and unique events and workshops are specifically programmed at participating locations and everything is available free of charge.

**Culture Night is important because it:**
- encourages more people to visit cultural venues and experience culture in their locality
- reminds us all about the fantastic cultural facilities and resources that we have locally and nationally
- raises the profile of cultural organisations, activities and facilities
- encourages people to try new things and to get into the habit of going more often to cultural venues and activities in their locality
- makes it easier for people to play a role in their local cultural scene
- helps create a sense of community and belonging

Revise guidelines to assist applicants to identify new audiences they hope to reach through Culture Night or for applicants to encourage people to engage with places and landscapes in new ways through the arts.

### Festivals

Leitrim County Council provides financial support to arts festivals and events that have a clear artistic purpose and provide the opportunity for audiences in Leitrim to encounter and engage with high quality arts activities that otherwise would not be possible. Festivals are also valuable in how they provide opportunities for Leitrim artists to perform and exhibit, thus enhancing their professional development.

To continue to support Leitrim festivals in partnership with the Arts Council.

To provide assistance and advice to potential and existing festival organisers on a year-round basis, particularly with a view to encourage long-term planning.

To develop a programme of training for festivals through Creative Frame.

### Iron Mountain

Arising from the John McGahern seminar which ran from 2007 for eight years, the Iron Mountain Literature Festival was established in 2016, reframed in a wider context which looks to ideas central to and arising from an exploration of place, home and identity and has been described by American writer Annie Proulx as “one of the most interesting and varied literary festivals... a genuinely remarkable literary experience.”

Over the course of the plan we will continue to provide a platform for unique voices to explore themes of place, home and identity, and to support new writing though the John McGahern Award for Literature.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES CONTD.

Leitrim Dance Project
Leitrim County Council is a core partner of Leitrim Dance Project which is a 5-day professional development programme for percussive dancers followed by a weekend festival for a general audience and dancers of all ages and skill levels. With regard to public engagement the weekend event promotes engagement with percussive dance for the entire community and seeks in particular to develop a keener understanding of the relationship between dancer and musician where the experience of the dance goes hand in hand with the experience of the music.

To continue to support the public engagement element of Leitrim Dance Project as an essential part of the overall programme.

Drumshanbo Artists Studios
The development of a visitor centre at Acres Lake in Drumshanbo in 2015 provided the opportunity to redevelop the 1st floor of Drumshanbo Library, which has hosted a heritage exhibition, for new purposes. The 1st floor of the building now consists of two artist’s studios and a separate workshop space and kitchen. The studios have 24 hour private independent access to the rear of the building. In lieu of rent, artists are instead asked to commit the equivalent of one hour per week conducting workshops or collaborative programmes with school, community or library groups developed by the artist in partnership with Leitrim County Council Arts Office and Leitrim Library Service.

To align the public engagement programme of Drumshanbo studio artists with the Creative Ireland open call programme, so that resident artists may benefit from project development and management supports provided through that programme.
Children & Young People

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Ireland committed in 1992 states that...

...“parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity”.

While developing and enhancing public engagement with the arts is a central focus of this plan, providing opportunities for children and young people to engage with the arts is particularly prioritised for a number of reasons.

Participating in the arts helps children to understand the world around them; it overcomes barriers, improves communication and academic skills, and sparks the imagination. While the basis for many of the benefits attributed to engagement with the arts by children are difficult to distinguish from other criteria such as access to education and economic status, much research, including that carried out by Cultural Learning Alliance (UK), has shown that learning through arts and culture improves attainment in all subjects; that participation in structured arts activities increases cognitive abilities, and that while those who could benefit the most from engaging with the arts are the least likely to have access, students from low-income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree.

Leitrim is the most rural county in Ireland with one of the highest dependency rates at all ages with, for example, the highest percentage of young people providing unpaid help at home. This is reflected in school attendance where Leitrim has one of the lowest rates of absenteeism at primary level but one of the highest at second level. As a grouping, young people are more dependent on parents or others to access the arts. The socio-economic circumstances of Leitrim’s young population tells us that for programmes to be successful and have sustained engagement, public subsidy and support is essential and that arts activities must be provided locally.
## CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMMES

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<th>Programme</th>
<th>Existing Provision</th>
<th>Developments 2019 - 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leitrim Youth Theatre</strong></td>
<td>Leitrim Youth Theatre is a professional youth theatre programme dedicated to providing opportunities for young people who wish to become involved in acting and theatre which has been developed and is provided in partnership with The Glens Centre in Manorhamilton, The Dock in Carrick on Shannon and Carrigallen Youth Theatre. Participation in youth theatre in Leitrim is particularly strong with over 150 children enrolled in 11 groups across the three branches for children from 10 years of age to 18, including a group based in Carrigallen, Bright Sparks, for children with an interest in theatre who struggle to cope in a school environment.</td>
<td>To develop a summer production programme with an invited director to which senior members from all three centres can audition to take part in. To work with the Arts council to institute process to develop detailed qualitative analysis on the impacts of participation in youth theatre for young people. To encourage greater collaboration between Youth theatre centres though leader exchanges, and professional development training. To seek to expand provision in each of the three centres where waiting list are consistent.</td>
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<td><strong>Artist in Schools</strong></td>
<td>Leitrim County Council's Artist in Schools scheme provides the opportunity for an artist to work with a primary school for 50 hours over the course of a number of months. The scheme is built on the idea of partnership. The artist and teacher work together to develop a lasting, memorable and enriching project for the children involved. This is a unique opportunity for both artists and schools to actively engage in an innovative project and both the teacher's and the artist's expertise is essential in order for the children to get the maximum benefit from the programme. From the applications received, a shortlist of artists will be invited to interview in mid April. Schools are invited separately to register their interest in the scheme. Once selected, the schools and artists involved will be asked to attend a special facilitated planning session to ensure that the best possible experience is created out of the scheme. This session will give teachers and artists an opportunity to get their planning off to a good start and to establish what they hope to get out of the scheme.</td>
<td>To evaluate the Artist in Schools Scheme in the context of other similar programmes that are ongoing, and in partnership with other providers, arrive at the optimum use of resources in this regard.</td>
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<td><strong>Music Generation</strong></td>
<td>Music Generation Leitrim is part of Music Generation - Ireland’s national music education programme and is co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Skills and managed locally by Leitrim Music Education Partnership, led by MSLETB with support from Leitrim County Council. The role of Music Generation Leitrim is to develop an affordable and accessible music education programme for children and young people age 0 – 18 in partnership with schools, community groups and centres in the formation of choirs, ensembles, access programmes, and other projects.</td>
<td>To continue to invest in Leitrim's Music Education Partnership with a view to developing a year-round music production project at The Glens Centre, A Youth Trad Orchestra in Drumshanbo, A children's Choir in Carrick on Shannon, A Ukulele Orchestra in Ballinamore and expanding its Access Programme to a greater number of community and school groups throughout the county.</td>
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### CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMMES CONT'D.

| Cruinniú na nÓg | Cruinniú na nÓg is a national one-day programme of events that celebrates and encourages children and young people's participation in culture and creativity through performance, coding, theatre, art and music workshops, readings, screenings, special events and much more. Events are free, local and activity-based. The model is similar to Culture Night except that events are held during the day, making them much more accessible to children and young people. |
| Wild Words | The Wild Words Festival for Young Writers is a special event for teenagers who have started to write their own short stories and poetry. As part of the programme, as well as having their work professional edited and published, the young authors are provided with the opportunity to meet other young people who share the same interests, to enjoy books, to meet authors, and to encourage their interest and abilities in creative writing. To continue to work with Wild Words to further develop the programme for young writers; to expand the publishing programme to support young writers to publish their own work and to provide more and better opportunities for young writers to engage with each other. |
Professional Development & Sustainability

A core objective of this strategy as well as the Council’s Culture and Creativity Strategy and the Framework Agreement between Leitrim County Council and the Arts Council is to support the professional development and sustainability of artists in Leitrim, building and consolidating on what has been achieved to date.

Over a number of years, Leitrim County Council has placed a strong emphasis on the professional development and sustainability of artists. In the first instance, the number of artists living and working in the county is significant and continues to rise. Membership of Creative Frame has doubled for each of the last three years, with over 500 individual artists having engaged in the project to date. Because artists represent such a significant proportion of Leitrim’s workforce, it is essential that we seek to ensure that their practice and livelihoods are sustainable.

Fundamentally though, we support the development of artists so that our communities and our visitors can benefit from a wealth of high quality events and activities that will contribute to our society and economy.

We also support artists so that our children, and people of all ages, can live in a society that values creative expression and aesthetics and encourages reflection, invention and innovation.
### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Existing Provision</th>
<th>Developments 2019 - 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative Frame</strong></td>
<td>Creative Frame is a professional development network for the creative sector in Leitrim and the wider region. The network is aimed at professional and emerging practitioners from all arts disciplines as well as those involved in craft and design. Creative Frame coordinates a year-round programme of training events, seminars and a mentoring programme while its website offers forums for discussion and exchange and other professional development resources.</td>
<td>We will develop qualitative data on the challenges and opportunities of living and working as an artist in Leitrim to better design a dynamic range of continued professional development programmes and training. We will develop a digital resource of professional development tools available online to our members. We will support our members to network and operate internationally.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Artist Bursary Programme</strong></td>
<td>In addition to Creative Frame, the Individual Artists Bursary programme is designed to support the development of Leitrim based professional artists from any arts discipline through any means that will demonstratively contribute to an artist’s development such as the development of new work for exhibition, publication or presentation; purchase of equipment or consumables; research or short-term courses; participation in conventional part-time or full-time education where other sources of public funding are unavailable; website development, documentation etc. Or any purpose that contributes to the removal of existing barriers to an artist’s development.</td>
<td>In order to support the development of artists’ careers in an international context we will develop a specific strand of bursaries to support artists to exhibit and perform abroad.</td>
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES CONTD.

**Mentorship Programme**

Such is the value of mentorship to Leitrim's artists that the Arts Office manages a specific mentorship programme separate to other bursaries. The Artist’s Mentorship programme is designed to support the development of Leitrim based emerging and established professional artists from any arts discipline who have identified particular gaps in their knowledge and expertise. The programme achieves this by providing funding to a leading professional to help the applicant make the next steps in their development. Initially training is provided to prospective mentors and mentees and the arts office works on a one-to-one basis with those selected to participate to ensure the best outcomes of everyone involved.

**SLR Film Programme**

In 2017 Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon County Councils came together with filmmakers from the three counties with a view to enabling the film sector in the region to grow and develop. Each of the three local authorities involved in this project recognise the value of film as an artform and the contribution that film can make to the region – socially, culturally and economically. In adopting a regional approach, we recognise that we can achieve a lot more by harnessing the capacity, resources and experience of agencies and practitioners of all three counties. As well as hosting different training and networking events, the three partners developed two support programmes - a film completion award for artists needing to complete projects already underway and a collaboration award for a filmmaker and writer from any film, visual or literary background to work together in the development of a new film project.

Following an initial three year pilot phase of the SLR programme, we will undertake an evaluation of the programme to date in early 2020 and devise the optimum means for supporting filmmaking and filmmakers for the following three year period.

We will explore opportunities for the provision of filmmaking facilities and equipment for filmmakers in the region.

**Leitrim Sculpture Centre**

Leitrim Sculpture Centre is a national resource deeply rooted in the local environment offering the widest array of material processes for making art of any facility in Ireland. It supports creativity, innovation and excellence in the production and practice of contemporary visual arts and advances the material skills and knowledge of traditional and contemporary art making and the professional formation of artists through practical workshops, professional development and deployment of new technologies.

We will continue to partner with Leitrim Sculpture Centre in the provision of residencies for national and international artists that engage with different communities in north Leitrim. We will support joint residencies and other synergies between the Sculpture Centre and Glens Centre, and others, which contribute to the professional development of emerging and established professional artists and groups.

**The Glens Centre**

As well as being an important cultural resource to communities in north Leitrim, given the concentration of emerging and established performing artists and companies in music and theatre in north Leitrim, Leitrim County Council and the Glens Centre have invested in an artist centred approach supporting practitioners in all stages of their development from youth theatre membership for example through to the development of emerging companies onto supporting professional companies to make new work.

Over the course of the plan we will continue to support the Glens Centre to support the development of performing artists at all stages in their career.

We will support the development of a core project in the area of music production and music technology for young people as part of Music Generation.
## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES CONTD.

| **Solas Gallery** | Support to Solas Gallery is considered under professional development as the gallery is a membership based group of over 60 amateur and semi-professional visual artists. While the gallery hosts a programme of member and invited exhibitions each year that combine to provide an important venue in Ballinamore, it is the voluntary artist membership that is Solas’ defining characteristic. | Over the course of the plan we will continue to support Solas and in particular to support its membership in their professional development. |
| **Leitrim Dance Project** | Leitrim County Council is a core partner of Leitrim Dance Project which is a 5-day professional development programme for percussive dancers followed by a weekend festival for a general audience and dancers of all ages and skill levels. The professional development element promotes pathways for emerging professional percussive dancers, locally, nationally and internationally combining practice workshops and talks by leading dance professionals and relevant agencies. | Over the course of the plan we will continue to contribute to the development of Leitrim Dance Project and in particular to enhance its capacity as a platform for the professional development of percussive dancers. |
The Dock

In 2005 Leitrim County Council developed The Dock to be the linchpin of the county’s cultural infrastructure and home to the Dock’s visual, performing, community and educational arts programmes and home to Leitrim Design House. Our investment in the centre ensures it can be sustained as a cornerstone for the arts and recent renovations have ensured that the existing facilities meet current health and safety standards and fire regulations. Its varied and strategically planned programme throughout the year continues to encourage audiences and participants for the arts locally and regionally, and The Dock continues to be a beacon for visitors and a crucially positive endorsement of the rich cultural offering of Carrick on Shannon, Leitrim and the Northwest.

<table>
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<td><strong>The Dock</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leitrim County Council provides funding on an annual basis to Leitrim Arts Development CLG, a company established by Leitrim County Council specifically for the purposes of managing The Dock including the management of internal and external spaces, and programming of the Galleries, Studios, Performance Space, Workshop Spaces, Cafe/Bar, and ancillary internal and external areas.</td>
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<td>Within this the Dock presents a year round programme spanning visual art, theatre, music, dance, comedy and performance art augmented by an arts education and outreach programme that provides people of all ages and backgrounds with the opportunities to engage in a meaningful way with all aspects of its artistic programme.</td>
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<td>The Dock also provides support for artists to develop their practice and show new work through residency programmes and where possible curates, commissions and develops new work and supports projects at a local, national and international level.</td>
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<td>The Dock is part of the fabric of the wider arts and enterprise community of Carrick on Shannon and the North West region supporting local arts initiatives and local enterprise including many festival events taking place in the area. The Dock also provides space for local arts groups and practitioners to meet, create and develop ideas and partnerships.</td>
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<td>Over the course of this plan Leitrim County Council will continue to support The Dock to manage the facility and undertake these objectives.</td>
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<td>In addition to this, given that The Dock represents the single largest and most important point of contact for people to engage with the arts in Leitrim and has built up significant expertise in this area, we will work with The Dock and others to explore new opportunities and means to enhance public engagement with the arts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This may include, but is not limited to, commissioning new work, developing new approaches to education and outreach, developing new methodologies to engage specific communities in high quality arts events and activities and new approaches to research and evaluation in this regard.</td>
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Glens Arts Centre/Leitrim Sculpture Centre/Solas Gallery/Cornmill Theatre

As The Dock was developed and is owned by Leitrim County Council it is included separately in planning to other cultural infrastructure. While the Council provides support to other venues in the county that help achieve the objectives of this plan and help fulfil its mission statement, the Council’s support to those venues is included under one or more of the three strategic priorities. The Glens Centre and Leitrim Sculpture Centre remain vital elements of the cultural infrastructure to North Leitrim. Leitrim County Council works closely with both venues in the support they provide to the development of the significant numbers of artists, musicians and theatre makers in the region - providing the opportunity for them to make and present new work. Leitrim County Council also continues its support of the Cornmill Theatre in Carrigallen and Solas Gallery in Ballinamore recognising their importance, not only because of the service to communities in the South Leitrim region, but because of the extent and quality of considerable voluntary contribution in providing valuable cultural facilities.

Percent for Art

In line with a 1997 Government decision, the budgets for public bodies delivering capital projects should include a percentage for public art under the Per Cent for Art Scheme. It is the intention of Leitrim County Council to fulfil this and contribute to the creative and cultural well being of Leitrim through the utilisation of ‘Percent for Art’ as a means of funding arts projects.

To guide that, Leitrim County Council has developed a policy as part of this plan which will provide a strategic approach to public art programming arising from Leitrim County Council’s Per Cent for Art programme.

Projects arising from this policy will be designed to engage communities in creative partnerships with artists, to enhance and enrich the county’s cultural environment and communities; to integrate the work and thinking of artists into the planning, design and construction of facilities and public spaces; and to make available ambitious and innovative art projects to the people of Leitrim.

The Arts Office

The specific and distinct role of local authorities in promoting the arts was formalised with the 1973 Arts Act, which sought to increase public access to and engagement with the arts through the provision for a local government role in the arts. The Local Government Act 2001 established County and City Development Boards which were obliged to draw up a strategy for the economic, social and cultural development, bringing culture and the arts into local planning for the first time. Subsequently the 2003 Arts Act indicated that a Local Authority shall propose and implement plans for the development of the arts within its functional area.
In 2018 the arts offices of Leitrim, Limerick, Fingal and Kildare engaged Indeco Consultants to undertake an assessment of the contexts and work of the Arts Office in order to understand its evolving role within the Local Authority.

The report identified the evolving role of the Local Authority arts offices as a driver of local, national, and international projects, allowing the Arts Offices to play a role in integrated social, cultural, and economic development. However, it acknowledged that arts development in local authorities is inevitably constrained by the modest level of investment in the arts as a country and that this impacts on the scale of outcomes which are feasible. The report recognised the Arts Council as an important financial resource and partner to the local authorities, and the emerging role and impact of the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht and the Creative Ireland programme in particular. Key to this has been the direct link between central and local government in the area of arts, culture and creativity, which Creative Ireland has engendered, providing valuable learning to how culture and creativity can be supported and developed by local authorities working with central government.

Working within the local authority structure provides unique opportunities to develop diverse projects and programmes, often in partnership with agencies or groups within the community, which makes the work intensely relevant and rooted into the fabric of a wider perspective of integrated social, cultural and economic development.

Since the Arts Office of Leitrim County Council was established in 1999, its role has continued to shift from a programming focussed, direct delivery approach to a more strategic, and expanded partnership approach to development. This continuing evolution coupled with the expanding demands levied on the service will require new approaches to how we do our work and this repositioning will take time to consolidate over the course of this plan.
Monitoring and Evaluation

This Arts Plan provides a three year framework for strategic actions to be implemented by Leitrim County Council in partnership with the Arts Council and other agencies and organisations. An annual operational plan will set out key tasks, targets and projected outputs for each of the three strategic priorities. The actions listed under each priority will provide the baseline for evaluation and review of work programmes. The Arts Office collects quantitative and where possible qualitative data, on all programmes and regularly considers and evaluates all of its work. This informs relevant changes in the work, alongside essential knowledge of the changing arts and wider social, cultural and economic context locally, nationally and internationally. Implementation will happen at a number of levels, with Leitrim Arts Office having direct responsibility for the Arts Programme and related actions, while others will involve working in partnership with other Council sections, artists, arts organisations and groups and public agencies.

In preparing the arts strategy, Leitrim County Council has taken due regard of the various internal and external influencing factors, the available resources, as well as the strengths, challenges and potential opportunities for the county going forward.

The plan seeks to consolidate much of the key developments secured by the arts sector in Leitrim. While the delivery of the actions is ultimately reliant on the availability of resources secured through existing and new streams of funding, the strategy is a strategic response to issues and needs that have been identified and provides a road map towards further development of the arts in Leitrim.

The corporate environment under which Leitrim County Council operates requires the continual monitoring and evaluation of progress in the delivery of plans and strategies. Accountability and transparency are essential features within local authority service provision and are guaranteed through operational planning, target and goal setting and regular reporting to members and management. The format of the strategy outlines Strategic Priorities and Planned Actions over a three year period. Annual work plans aligned with available resources will be developed at the start of each year. Progress in the delivery of this strategy will be reported on through monthly reports to management, the national Performance Indicator Framework. The Arts office will also report annually to the Council Members, the Housing, Community and Culture SPC and each Municipal District Meeting. The Local Authority’s Annual Report also includes an account of the achievements and progress in the delivery of this Arts Strategy.
Conclusion

The three functions set out in the Arts Act 2003 to “stimulate public interest in the arts, promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts, and improve standards in the arts” are the same functions that were written into the first Arts Act of 1951. Similarly Leitrim County Council’s previous arts plans all shared common goals to encourage greater engagement and participation in the arts and to support artists to be able to make work and provide for those opportunities.

This plan maintains these goals with an emphasis on innovating, growing and improving as well as building new. By maintaining and developing partnerships built on mutually shared goals, the plan seeks to put those programmes and projects that have proved successful on a secure and permanent footing while leaving the space to undertake new approaches where the opportunity arises.

Ultimately the plan endeavours to ensure that to work as an artist in County Leitrim is a viable option for all emerging and established professional artists who wish to do so, and that for everyone and every community the arts remain available, vibrant and vital.