

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Context - Leitrim County Council's Arts Service has grown since the appointment of the first full-time Arts Officer in 1999 (having previously shared an arts officer with Longford County Council from 1997). The Arts Office currently comprises an Arts Officer, a Youth and Community Arts Co-ordinator (a post developed in partnership with The Arts Council) and a shared Administrator. The work comprises direct programme, targeted support for identified initiatives / organisations and a broad service to the public and community groups. The arts office also manages The Dock, a 1,400sqm (15,000sqft) arts centre in Carrick-on-Shannon. The Dock employs additional staff; a Communications Officer, a Technician and a Venue Assistant, and this team also provide some supports to the arts programme for County Leitrim.

The primary function of Leitrim County Council's arts office is the development of the arts in Leitrim, and this function is delivered through the following mechanisms:

- Financial Assistance

The Arts Office an annual application process for small grants which are offered to voluntary, amateur and community groups undertaking projects in the county. In addition, the Arts Office supports the artistic programme costs of a number of independent arts organisations throughout Leitrim.

- Information

The Arts Office, in conjunction with The Dock, produces a bi-monthly guide to the arts in Leitrim '*What's on in Leitrim*'. The office also endeavours to provide an on-demand information and advice resource to artists, arts organisations and the public via phone, mail and e-mail.

- Per Cent for Art Scheme

Leitrim County Council operates the Percent for Art Scheme which supports the development of public art projects in association with Nationally funded capital projects. Under the last arts plan, Leitrim County Council implemented 12 projects utilising the Department of Environment and Local Government's Per Cent for Art Scheme.

- Capital Development

The arts office was key in terms of advice regarding the development of the former courthouse in Carrick-on-Shannon as a multi-disciplinary arts centre.

- Advocacy

The Arts Office advocates for the arts, on a number of levels and to a number of audiences, including within the community, with groups who are already involved with the production of the arts, with new audiences unfamiliar with the arts, and on behalf of the County Council with other bodies.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

- Documentation and evaluation

These are all areas that Leitrim County Council and the arts office are committed to and will invest in over the life of the Plan. There are a number of documents of record, referring to arts activity, including annual reports and newsletters, while more recently evaluations of the status of the youth theatre projects and the reading and writing groups in the county have also been carried out.

- Arts Planning

This strategy not only describes a programme of work for Leitrim County Council, but also outlines how the local authority can contribute to arts development where projects and programmes are led by others. This strategy may become the basis of rolling action plans or partnerships which will outlive this strategy. These may be area specific or artform specific.

- In Addition:

Under the Local Government Centenary Community Initiative Awards Scheme, Leitrim County Council purchased a mobile cinema unit called Aisling Gheal Liatroma in 2001. The cinema is operated by an independent company *Scannanlann Ghluaiseachta Liatroma Teo* with direct support from Leitrim County Council.

Leitrim Arts Office also run programmes in the direct support of artists, youth theatre, literature and traditional music which are to be further developed under this strategy.

The Context for this strategy:

Leitrim County Council Corporate Plan states that the mission of Leitrim County Council is “to lead the continued development of Leitrim as a location of choice for people to live work and visit”. The arts strategy fits into this corporate plan relating particularly to the core values of Leitrim County Council* and contributing to a number of strategic objectives, particularly those relating to, *quality environment, community participation, population growth and economic development.*

Context - The 2002 – 2005 Arts Plan for Leitrim focussed on the following objectives:

1. Audience Development
2. Supporting public participation
3. Increasing opportunities for children and young people to engage with the arts
4. Building capacity in the arts sector
5. Supporting the professional artist in developing their practice

Each objective was supported by a number of projects. A review document relating to the 2002 – 2005 arts plan is available from the arts office on request.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Context – The Arts Council (based in Dublin) is the statutory agency for the promotion and development of, and participation in, the arts. Their framework document *Partnership for the Arts* is in harmony with many of the aims of Leitrim County Council's arts service. The Arts Council currently provides revenue funding to the Glens Centre, the Leitrim Sculpture Centre and The Dock, as well as supporting the arts programme and projects of Leitrim County Council. The Arts Council has also provided project-based funding to Carrick Water Music Festival, Leitrim Mobile Cinema and a number of Leitrim artists in recent years.

Context – Increased resources available for the development of the arts have facilitated the scale of ambition set out in this strategy. Leitrim County Council, in partnership with the Arts Council, have ensured a sustained approach to making resources available to arts development since the establishment of the arts office.

Context – The growth in the population of Leitrim has taken it from 25,750 in the last census to 28,840 in the current census. This population increase of 12% reflects a significant increase in persons from other countries who have moved to Leitrim, and Irish people who have moved to new homes in Leitrim, but may be commuting to work in neighbouring counties.

Context – The landscape of the arts in Leitrim. While undertaking a comprehensive mapping exercise is a measure within this strategy, Leitrim County Council's on-going awareness of the terrain has informed the development of the strategy. The development of The Dock by Leitrim County Council, as an arts centre in Carrick-on-Shannon, is the significant addition within the arts landscape arising from the *Leitrim Arts Plan 2002 – 2005* and this strategy endeavours to take account of the place of The Dock within the arts in Leitrim going forward.

Context – A high number of artists living in and around Leitrim was brought about in part by the relative value in property prices and the development of the Leitrim Sculpture Centre in Manorhamilton. Artists continue to move to Leitrim and are valued members of the communities they live in and valued in terms of the essential contribution they make to the development of the arts in the county.

Context – The particular potential of certain artforms and practices in Leitrim sets a context for the investment of public resources into those areas / artforms which offer the best potential for return. This strategy acknowledges this, while seeking to establish schemes / initiatives to facilitate the development of projects / practice where the arts service does not have the direct resources to intervene.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Context – The consultation process carried out in relation to this strategy comprised one public meeting in each of the four electoral areas in the county. More than 50 people attended these meetings, and a subsequent public meeting was held with the Community, Cultural and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee of Leitrim County Council to debate the discussion document arising out of the consultations. A full review of the points raised in these consultation meetings is available from the arts office on request. Written submissions were also received. The contributions arising out of the consultation process provided a wealth of concerns, insights and ideas which Leitrim County Council have endeavoured to integrate into this draft strategy.

The Arts Strategy 2006 - 2010

This arts strategy for 2006 – 2010 is set out under seven priorities.

- Priority 1** – To develop awareness of, and public participation in, the artistic life of Leitrim
- Priority 2** – To support professional artists in developing their practice
- Priority 3** – To create opportunities for children and young people to explore their artistic potential and expand their experiences of the arts
- Priority 4** – To support the continuing development of new and identified Leitrim arts organisations
- Priority 5** – To develop the Leitrim County Council arts service
- Priority 6** – That Leitrim County Council support the continuing development of The Dock
- Priority 7**– That Leitrim County Council work to ensure the sustainable development of Leitrim Mobile Cinema

Priorities 1 to 5 have a range of goals which break down into individual measures from which a scheme, project or programme of work will flow.

Priorities 6 and 7 set out individual measures only, as the goals for the organisations named are not directly for Leitrim County Council to set.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Priority 1 - To develop awareness of, and public participation in, the artistic life of Leitrim:

1.1 Goal: The development of audiences through:

- On-going support for, and collaboration with, The Glens Centre as the key venue for audiences for the performing and literary arts in and around North Leitrim.
- Working with other organisations (such as Carrick Water Music Festival, Mohill Storytelling Festival and The Cornmill Theatre) who also have audience development as part of their agendas
- Initiating traditional music projects which work in an area-based manner
- Offering quality music experiences and promoting new ways for people to engage with music
- Endeavour to provide support for the transmission possible between older professional musicians and young musicians / schools
- Visual Arts residencies throughout Leitrim in partnership with Leitrim Sculpture Centre, (including one for young audiences).
- Develop an action plan in partnership with other organisations to increase audiences from amongst target groups such as older people, people with special needs, or people in care, or other groups identified as being culturally excluded / disadvantaged

1.2 Goal: Develop arts participation and the artistic abilities of people in Leitrim:

- Initiate and support projects which develop Leitrim traditional musicians and the creation of new musical experiences and opportunities for Leitrim musicians
- Continue with the Arts Act Grant scheme, but seek to increase the budget and simplify the application forms
- Develop schemes which allow and encourage new participative projects to emerge, incl. intergenerational / minority / and other (target group-based) projects
- Explore ways of providing on-going support to arts activities amongst target groups such as older people, people with special needs, or people in care, or other groups identified as being culturally excluded / disadvantaged
- Develop a programme to support writers, writing groups and reading groups in Leitrim
- Establish a project / scheme to further develop the rich tradition of amateur drama in the county

1.3 Goal: Further develop awareness of the arts amongst the people of Leitrim and beyond:

- Continue to promote the arts through a variety of local media
- Work to ensure more targeted approaches to the promotion of Leitrim County Council schemes / opportunities
- Promote major initiatives both within and beyond Leitrim
- Introduce a new publication to both celebrate and report on news from the arts community in Leitrim.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

1.4 Goal: Develop and support projects, which explore what it is to be from Leitrim, from places within Leitrim, and part of a community in Leitrim:

- Support the integration of new communities now living in Leitrim in order to develop dynamic communities
- Support exchanges / residencies with countries of origin (relating to the new communities who have come from other countries)
- Develop and support projects, which endeavour to explore / stimulate a sense of contemporary Leitrim culture.
- Explore the possibility of *arts-twinning*s for Leitrim arts groups to connect the arts internationally

Priority 2 - To support professional artists in developing their practice

2.1 Goal: Provide opportunities for Leitrim artists to develop their practice:

- Bursaries / residencies to Leitrim visual artists in conjunction with Leitrim Sculpture Centre,
- Bursaries to artists in other artforms,
- An annual international bursary for a visual artist (in partnership with Roscommon County Council),
- Small bursary scheme for artists

2.2 Goal: Strengthen networks and linkages (both local and international) from which Leitrim artists can benefit

- Seek to establish a Leitrim Artists network / forum,
- Explore linkages between Leitrim County Council arts office, other providers and the PLC arts courses in the county,
- Improve access to information for Leitrim artists whether through the support for resources at Leitrim libraries / other centres in Leitrim
- Continue to run the TRADE project, which offers international linkages and engagement for artist in this area.

2.3 Goal: Develop a range of direct supports for Leitrim artists:

- Develop training / mentoring opportunities for Leitrim artists
- Develop projects which support the learning of Leitrim traditional musicians and the creation of new musical experiences and opportunities for Leitrim musicians
- Explore opportunities for the development of more studio / workshop / residential studio spaces.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Priority 3 – To create opportunities for children and young people to explore their artistic potential and expand their experiences of the arts

3.1 Goal: The development for quality arts experiences for young people outside of the formal education sector:

- Continue to support the development of quality youth theatre experiences
- Establishment a visual arts project to develop the young person as contemporary artist / curator
- Explore options and design a project / scheme to increase the involvement amongst the 18- 25 age range in the arts (whether by building on existing projects or establishing new projects)
- Establish new mechanisms to support quality arts experiences for young people, outside of those delivered directly by Leitrim County Council.

3.2 Goal: Exploration and identification of ways to support quality arts practice within schools:

- i. Through teacher supports,
- ii. Artist in school schemes,
- iii. Development of instrument banks
- iv. Supporting schools to visit local arts centres for workshops / arts events

Priority 4 - Support the continuing development of new and identified Leitrim arts organisations

4.1 Goal: Support the continuing development of identified organisations:

- The Glens Centre, Manorhamilton
- Joe Mooney Summer School
- Leitrim Sculpture Centre, Manorhamilton
- Mohill Storytelling Festival
- Samhain Festival, Manorhamilton
- Carrick Water Music Festival
- John McKenna Society
- Beeznee Theatre Company
- Cornmill Theatre, Carrigallen
- South Leitrim Area Arts
- Shaylyn Traditional Arts Education initiative

4.2 Goal: Remain open to supporting the emergence of new arts organisations and initiatives:

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Priority 5 – To develop the Leitrim County Council arts service:

- 5.1 Goal: Improve access and quality in relation to available information:
- Improve the artists' database and distribute it to schools with guidelines for artists-in-schools work.
 - Continue to update and improve other databases
 - Explore the development of a directory of useful supports for the arts in Leitrim
 - Have dates and guidelines for all schemes / programmes available from January of each year
- 5.2 Goal: Improve the quality of contact with the arts community*:
- Increase visibility on the ground
 - Report annually to the arts community* in relation to progress on the plan
 - Explore, from 2008, the potential to use these annual reviews and consultations to develop rolling strategic plans
- (*As defined here, the community of people in Leitrim interested in the arts)
- 5.3 Goal: Maintain an openness and a dynamism in order that the arts service can add value in ways not yet identified in this strategy:
- Carry out a mapping exercise to establish what is happening in the county and where, and to identify areas where there is currently relatively little arts activity and ways whereby the local authority can respond to this.
 - Maintain a flexible arts service which can take on new opportunities / challenges which arise over the duration of this strategy.
- 5.4 Goal: Develop the uses of the Percent for Art Scheme in order to ensure quality and diversity within public art provision for the county.
- Management of the percent for art scheme in order that it supports the priorities of this strategy
 - Ensure that all sections of Leitrim County Council maximise the potential of the scheme
 - Consider the recommendations of the previous review and consult with the arts community on the formulation of policy
 - Explore the occasional use of the percent for art scheme over time to develop a collection for the county from Leitrim artists / arts organisations through artist / curator led projects where the public become the purchasers
 - Report annually on progress in relation to this scheme.

Strategy for the arts in Leitrim 2006 – 2010

Priority 6 – That Leitrim County Council, having established The Dock, continue to take a lead role in its development:

- While The Dock continues as part of Leitrim County Council's broad arts service, that the centre be required to take account of local, regional and national contexts, and supported to set out it's own identity as an arts centre.
- That Leitrim County Council continues to ensure that The Dock would not be developed to the detriment of other arts centres / organisations in the county, but rather developed as a complementary element to the arts in Leitrim.

Priority 7 - That Leitrim County Council work to ensure the sustainable development of Leitrim Mobile Cinema:

- That Leitrim County Council make clear to the Arts Council that, at a time when they are trying to see more investment in cultural cinema, Leitrim is leading the way on this, through the Mobile Cinema.
- That Leitrim County Council continue with the review of Leitrim Mobile Cinema's operations and support the development of a strategy for Leitrim Mobile Cinema which looks at other ways for Mobile Cinema:
 - (a) to be viable
 - (b) to be better promoted and develop audiences
 - (c) to take account of the emergence of the new multi-plex cinema in Carrick-on-Shannon
 - (d) to explore it's potential as a film development organisation and a film resource organisation.
 - (e) To review progress annually in relation to this strategy and the commitment required from Leitrim County Council and other funding partners.