

Developing the Arts Ag forbairt na nEalaíon

Arts Council Strategic Statement
Ráiteas Straitéiseach na Comhairle Ealaíon







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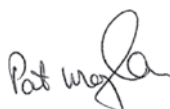
Developing the Arts

It has been a privilege to have led the Arts Council into and beyond its 60th birthday. I am proud that we continue to achieve so much in addressing our remit to promote, develop, support and otherwise foster the arts. That achievement has been due to the expertise and energy of Council members and the commitment and knowledge of the Council staff. There can be no doubt, even in the face of unprecedented stress on the public finances, that great art in all disciplines is being made and enjoyed by audiences at home and abroad because so many artists and arts organisations are unfailingly innovative and determined.

I am more convinced than ever that the arts confer enormous public benefit. That benefit is manifold: it ranges from truth and beauty, through social cohesion and community identity, via innovation and the creative industries, to cultural tourism and foreign direct investment. Viewed from any of these perspectives, the arts are Ireland's signature, our hallmark, our calling card.

These truths are jeopardised by some cold facts, the foremost of which is that Arts Council funding has declined by one third in the past five years. Such swift and severe decline in public investment has had devastating consequences for many artists and arts organisations, for the communities they work in, and for the economies they support. In short Irish society has been significantly impoverished.

Ten years after the 2003 Arts Act and five years after the high-water mark of public investment in the arts via the Arts Council, I am now firmly of the view that it is crucial that the Arts Council engages in a fundamental examination of how it addresses its remit. A fault-line has developed between the model of arts provision that was created a decade ago and the resources that are currently available. Social, cultural and technological realities also present challenges and opportunities to current arts practice and provision. Therefore, I believe it is both responsible and necessary that the Arts Council should now undertake a review of how it plans, partners, promotes and provides for the arts in Ireland. This review will inform future Arts Council policy and strategy for the next five years and beyond and so ensure the sustainability and viability of a vibrant arts sector in Ireland.



Pat Moylan, Chairman
November 2013

Developing the Arts

We publish this strategic statement at a time of significant change in the arts. That change is linked to wider social, cultural, economic and technological developments. It is a time of opportunity and challenge.

The opportunity springs from several sources. Ireland has many artists and an arts sector distinguished by ambition and achievement underpinned by a developed infrastructure, both physical and organisational. There are high levels of public interest, attendance and engagement in the arts. Over many decades the Arts Council has developed a range of key partnerships and co-funding relationships that assist in embedding the arts in the lives of communities nationwide. To these positive factors can be added new developments in technology which present many opportunities for the practice of the arts and for public participation.

There are also many challenges. Some are exciting but others are testing. One very obvious challenge facing the Arts Council arises from the substantial and rapid decline in public funding following the deterioration of the wider economy. The most recent budget allocation for the Arts Council (€55.895m for 2014) represents a 34% decrease in our financial resources in a six-year period.

We appreciate that many reading this strategic statement will focus on our funding intentions. As our decisions of recent years demonstrate, we cannot guarantee the continuation of funding, even if long-standing. Nor can we maintain funding at existing levels, or perhaps at all, to many artists and organisations doing excellent work. This is because, in addition to supporting excellence, we must also attend to viability and sustainability; to balance between and within arts areas; to spatial considerations; to 'value for money' (measured appropriately); and to the need to invest in new work, new practices and new actions. It is essential to weigh all these factors to ensure that well-balanced provision is the outcome of our funding allocations and our other decisions.

The decade since the 2003 Arts Act consisted of two periods of starkly contrasting fortunes for the arts. First there were five years of remarkable expansion and development with unprecedented levels of investment. The following five years (2008-2013) saw the model so recently developed become increasingly stressed by the severe and sudden contraction in public investment. Given the nature and the extent of the challenges ahead, the Arts Council will undertake a major review in 2014 to address how we plan, partner, promote, and provide for the arts. Rooted in realism, harnessing the views of the arts sector and of partners and stakeholders, and informed by comparative experience at home and abroad, we are confident this review will yield long-term benefits for the arts.

Developing the Arts

OUR REMIT

The 1951 Arts Act established the Arts Council and charged it with stimulating public interest; with promoting knowledge, appreciation and practice; and with assisting in improving standards in the arts. The 1973 Act developed that role and facilitated the achievements of the following decades, particularly increased public access and engagement. The 2003 Arts Act reiterated the three key purposes of the Arts Council and re-calibrated the relationship between it and Government. It underlined the autonomy of the Council as the expert body for funding the arts, steering their development, and offering advice on arts and cultural matters.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to promote and develop the arts in Ireland.

We do this by:

- Supporting artists to make work of excellence
 - Enabling people to experience the arts
 - Working with partners and stakeholders
 - Advising and advocating
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Developing the Arts

OUR PRINCIPLES

Key principles guide our work and inform our decision-making. In addressing our responsibilities to the contemporary arts and to the support of living artists:

- We recognise the primacy of intellectual and artistic freedom
 - We underline our commitment to supporting excellence – achieved and latent
 - We are dedicated to developing public access and engagement so that returns on public investment in the arts benefit as many as possible
 - We attend carefully to diversity: social, cultural and linguistic, acknowledging especially the living tradition of our dual language inheritance. We also value diversity within and across art forms and in the many contexts and approaches that constitute public engagement
 - We understand the importance of partnership and we work with others in the arts; in central and local government; in public agencies; in education; and in business
 - We realise that all those we work with, or on behalf of, place their trust in us and our processes. All our systems and practices demonstrate integrity, transparency, and accountability.
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Developing the Arts

OUR WORK

Four pillars underpin our work:

1. **Advice**

We advise on the arts, as we are charged to do by the Arts Act. Our advice is informed by over 60 years of experience as the statutory body whose expertise is vested in its membership, executive and processes. This expertise is enriched and enhanced through constant dialogue with the arts sector and with our partners. We further our expertise by conducting key research and development actions. We work to ensure knowledge about arts policy, planning, provision and practice is well-founded and widely-shared.

2. **Advocacy**

We advocate for the arts and for support for the arts from public funds. We do this in various ways, in a range of contexts and always from a conviction about the intrinsic value of the arts, their singular contribution to our identity, and their crucial importance to social and economic well-being.

3. **Investment**

We support and develop the arts by investing in artists and arts organisations. We allocate grants and awards and we provide a wide range of schemes and other opportunities. We also intervene where there are critical deficits in provision or where the potential clearly exists for strategic actions to benefit the arts. We monitor the outputs and outcomes of our investments, always seeking to enhance their value.

4. **Partnership**

We work with partners to broaden the reach and deepen the impact of the arts. We forge relationships with other cultural organisations, with third-level institutions, with the business sector, with central and local government and with the wider public sector.

Developing the Arts

The Arts Council has identified four key goals to address four distinct but related areas of responsibility. Our strategic framework looks outwards to the arts sector; it addresses itself to the public; it looks across to our partners; and it faces inwards to address our own work.

Goal 1:

Support and develop the work of artists and arts organisations

Goal 2:

Enable more people to experience the arts in more places

Goal 3:

Develop our relationships with stakeholders and partners

Goal 4:

Enhance the expertise and effectiveness of the Arts Council

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1:

Support and develop the work of artists and arts organisations

Objective 1

Support the work of individual artists

- We will make funding available and work with others to secure financial and other resources to support the work of artists
 - We will work to ensure as many artists as resources permit can realise their artistic ambitions while securing sustainable living and working conditions
 - We will advocate and incentivise good practice in the commissioning and contracting of artists. We will look to organisations that receive Arts Council funding to attend to the economic conditions of artists they engage.
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Objective 2

Support the work of companies, ensembles and organisations

- We will make funding available, as lead agency and primary funder, and we will work with others to secure financial and other resources to support the work of arts organisations
 - We will invest, as lead agency and primary funder or as a partner, in creating an environment that sustains the work of a viable range of companies, ensembles and organisations (workspaces; venues; resource organisations; producers) that contribute to the development and presentation of quality artistic practice.
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Objective 3

Support the development of practice across the arts

- We will support innovation and experimentation within and between art forms and practices, in production, presentation, and public engagement
 - We will support actions designed to develop artistic practice including digital arts production, dissemination and reception
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OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 2:

Enable more people to experience the arts in more places

Objective 4

Increase public access and engagement

- We will work to ensure high quality arts experiences are available to a wide range of people throughout the country. This will be key to our investment decisions whether as lead agency or as partner and co-funder
 - We will seek to increase and broaden engagement with the arts among people whose current participation is limited by various barriers
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Objective 5

Support and promote audience development

- We will work with the organisations we fund and with our partners to increase the number and broaden the demographic scope of audiences for the arts
 - We will support actions that extend the range and nature of arts experiences available throughout the country
 - We will increase knowledge and information about arts audiences and enhance the arts sector's capacity in marketing and audience development
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Objective 6

Create opportunities for children and young people

- We will support a range of high-quality programmes to address the needs and capacities of children and young people in and out of school. We will do this through our own initiatives and by our support of artists and arts organisations
 - We will advocate to and work with relevant government departments and other partners to make the arts central to the experience of children and young people in their school and out-of-school lives
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OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 3:

Develop our relationships with stakeholders and partners

Objective 7

Develop our relationship with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as a key stakeholder and with wider Government

- We will work closely with the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht and with all government departments, as appropriate, to advocate for public funding of the arts; to provide expert advice on arts and cultural matters; and to promote and develop the arts across all relevant areas of government policy, planning and provision
 - We will seek to secure resources for capital investment in the arts and to see capital funds available to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht released to reduce the burden of fixed costs for building-based arts organisations in particular. We will seek to ensure the capital investment in arts infrastructure over recent decades is secured by maintenance and renewal programmes
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Objective 8

Develop our strategic alliance with local government

- We will work with local government structures and particularly in partnership with individual local authorities to support sustainable arts provision across the country. Our investment in the arts locally will be informed by both geographical and art form considerations deriving from our remit as the national development agency for the arts
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Objective 9

Develop arts partnerships and other key relationships

- We will work closely with key arts and cultural bodies at home and internationally to share knowledge and resources and to devise joint approaches on issues of common interest
 - We will work with agencies and organisations outside of the arts but with congruent interests to advance policy and practice in areas of mutual concern
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OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 4:

Enhance the expertise and effectiveness of the Arts Council

Objective 10

Plan and manage strategically

- We will undertake during 2014 a major review designed to inform our strategic planning for the medium to long-term development of the arts
 - We will continue to adopt processes for corporate planning, financial management and performance measurement consistent with best practice for a public agency
 - We will ensure that all our actions and decisions are consistent with our stated policies and strategies.
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Objective 11

Manage public investment efficiently and effectively

- We will continue to invest public money carefully and to underpin public confidence in our allocation and monitoring of all supports made available to artists and organisations
 - We will guard the autonomy of our decision-making as set out in the Arts Act
 - We will monitor the viability and sustainability of organisations and programmes we support
 - We will review and, as we deem appropriate, adjust established budget models, funding relationships and levels of investment, to optimise strategic outcomes
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Objective 12

Advise expertly and advocate authoritatively

- We will develop our information, knowledge and communications' resources to better address our remit to stimulate public interest, promote knowledge, improve standards and provide expert advice
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