



LAUREATE NA NÓG

2020 ONWARDS

At its 22 April Plenary Meeting, Council considered an independent review of Laureate na nÓg, which was undertaken in late 2019 and the first quarter of 2020 by Janice McAdam (commissioned by the Arts Council).

This paper expands on the recommendations presented at the April plenary and the approach was agreed by the Council at its 18 November Plenary meeting.

Laureate na nÓg: 2020 Onwards

1. History and Context of Laureate na nÓg

In 2008, as part of the mid-term review of Partnership for the Arts, the Arts Council led a consultation process to develop a comprehensive vision, strategy and action plan for children's literature. Central to the resulting policy and strategy was a proposal to establish a children's laureate, a role which would celebrate children's literature and its contribution to cultural life.

Laureate na nÓg was established in 2010. Siobhán Parkinson was awarded the honour of being Ireland's first Laureate na nÓg. Since that time there have been four other laureates - Niamh Sharkey, Eoin Colfer, PJ Lynch and Sarah Crossan, who concluded her term in late April. Each has contributed in their own ways to the aims of the programme, and the Laureate is recognised as the highest honour that can be awarded to a children's writer or illustrator in Ireland. The sixth Laureate na nÓg, Áine Ní Ghlinn, was announced in May. Her programme of work is currently underway.

2. Review

2020 marks a decade of Laureate na nÓg. The Arts Council has taken this opportunity to undertake a formal review, considering afresh the aims and ambitions of Laureate na nÓg and ensuring their alignment with those of Making Great Art Work. The review also sought to evaluate Laureate na nÓg's impact as a programme and makes recommendations for future years.

In late 2019, independent consultant Janice McAdam was engaged to undertake this review for the Arts Council.

3. Renewed Vision, Purpose and Aims

One of the primary recommendations of the review was to recalibrate the vision, purpose and aims of Laureate na nÓg, so that they are relevant to the Arts Council's 10 year strategy, and also to the current environment for children's literature.

Over recent months, the Arts Council, Children's Books Ireland, project partners and key stakeholders, including writers, illustrators, booksellers, librarians and publishers, have worked to redefine the Laureate's vision, purpose and programme.

The following approach has been developed in partnership and in consultation, and is was agreed by the Arts Council at its Policy and Strategy meeting in November 2020.

Vision

The Arts Council believes in:

- every child's right to discover and delight in literature

- work of quality and ambition for children and young people
- writers and illustrators having productive and rewarding careers
- the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today

Purpose

By honouring an artist of exceptional talent and commitment, Laureate na nÓg champions and celebrates literature for children and young people, inspiring generations of writers, illustrators and readers

Aims

The specific aims of Laureate na nÓg are:

- To honour an exceptional writer or illustrator of literature for children and young people in the Irish or English language
- To champion literature for children and young people nationally and internationally
- To engage and inspire children, young people and their communities through literature
- To encourage new generations of writers and illustrators

4. Further Recommendations

Taking into account the findings and recommendations of the review, the following further recommendations have been agreed as of November 2020:

- Institute parity across the stipends for the Laureate for Irish Fiction, Laureate na nÓg and Ireland Professor of Poetry.
- Extend the Laureateship to three years, in line with other honours.
- Structure the programme of Laureate na nÓg so that the artist has time dedicated to his or her creative practice, in line with other honours.
- Recast the programme of work for the Laureate that aligns with their leadership status and the agreed aims of the Laureate. This would include:
 - Annual lecture or podcast
 - Mentoring programme for emerging children's writers and illustrators
 - Peer engagement
 - Small number of high profile public events that underline that status of the Laureateship

- Separately, develop with children and young people, a **programme that prioritises engagement and outreach with children and young people**. The programme will be themed and relevant to the Laureate's ambitions, but very much guided by children and young people. This programme will involve a range of writers and illustrators, and not be limited to the Laureate himself or herself.
- Ensure that the programme is inclusive of the voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, in line with the EHRD policy and strategy.
- Continue to involve a **young person in the Selection Panel**, and identify other ways that young people can be actively involved in the Laureate programme.
- **Diversify the selection process** for the Laureate, in line with EHRD policy and strategy.
- Extend the **Steering Group** of appropriately skilled and expert individuals, in line with the revised aims. This would include representatives from youth, bookselling, libraries, third-level and media.
- Develop a cogent briefing document and clear **Terms of Reference** for an incoming Laureate na nÓg.
- Develop an **Induction Programme** that ensures their familiarity with key stakeholder and fluency with key communications protocols and messages.
- Streamline reporting on budgets and outputs.