

Laois County Council
Arts Plan 2018-2022

Extracts from Laois County Council Corporate Plan

Mission

“The Council will lead the sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development of our County and deliver quality public services to the communities we serve

Our Values

- **Local Democracy & Accountability** *The Council will exercise its democratic mandate in an impartial, transparent and accountable manner, subject to legal, ethical and statutory requirements.*
- **Quality Customer Service** *The Council is committed to providing a high quality service to our customers, in an inclusive, equitable and responsive manner.*
- **Sustainability** *The Council is committed to ensuring it works in ways which accord with the principle of sustainability, facilitate economic progress and social cohesion, and enhance and safe-guard the natural and built environment.*
- **Social Inclusion** *The Council is committed to promoting social inclusion in all its activities.*
- **Partnership** *The Council values partnership with private sector, state agencies, community groups, the wider community and our workforce.*
- **Management of Resources & Value for Money** *The Council is committed to the efficient and effective use of the available financial and human resources.*

Corporate Objectives include

- *To promote and support a socially inclusive community*
- *To foster and promote sustainable environmental initiatives and practices in the County/Region*
- *To promote, facilitate and support equal opportunities for all to participate in the Arts Programme*
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Strategy Statements include

- *Implement a Strategic Arts Plan with regular evaluation of same*
- *Create an environment which supports the artist and artistic ambition and the creative development of individual artists*
- *Increase socially inclusive participation in all artistic programmes*

What do we mean by Arts?

The Arts Act 2003 defines “Arts” as follows:

*“Arts” means any creative or interpretative expression
(whether traditional or contemporary)
in whatever form, and includes, in particular,
visual Arts, theatre, literature, music,
dance, opera, film, circus and architecture,
and includes any medium when used for those purposes*



Exhibits from Laois Arthouse, Stradbally Residents Exhibition "The Stradbally Six" – Photo Michael Scully



Scene from Laois Youth Theatre performance of "Black Eyes" at the Dunamaise Arts Centre in May 2018



Circus Skills performance at Áras an Chontae on Culture Night 2018

Context for this Arts Plan

This is the fifth Arts Plan to be implemented by Laois County Council. A solid foundation has been built for the Arts in County Laois in 29 years, with the establishment of an Arts Office in 1989. This Arts Plan will build on previous Arts plans, consolidating and nurturing programmes and strategies already in place

Compliance with national policies

Under national legislation – the Arts Act 2003- stipulates that a Local Authority shall 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.

The publication of *Culture 2025 Éire Ildánach (2016)* by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht created Ireland's first National Cultural Policy Framework. This policy has informed the new Laois Arts Plan.

The Government also launched the *Creative Ireland* programme in 2016. This programme is to encourage cross departmental and cross sectoral cultural projects throughout the country.

The Arts Council has published its *Strategy Making Great Art Work.- Arts Council Strategy 2016-2025*, setting out its plans to lead the development of the **Arts** in the decade 2016–2025, prioritising the artist and public engagement, and outlining a range of actions which the agency will take to deliver on its vision.

This Arts Plan has been prepared in the context of the above national policies and strategies.

Within the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, it is the policy of the Council to:

- **CUL6** Continue to recognise the importance of the Arts in areas of personal development, community development, employment and tourism and to endeavour to create further opportunities in each of these areas;
- **CUL7** Ensure that all Arts and cultural facilities in the ownership and management of the Council are accessible to the wider community and to promote the role of these centres as focal points for the community;
- **CUL8** Continue the physical enhancement programme of Arts spaces in libraries countywide, including visual art galleries, performance and workshop facilities, subject to availability of resources;
- **CUL9** Promote the provision of public art, including temporary art and sculpture, through such mechanisms as the government supported Percent for Art Scheme and the development management process;
- **CUL10** Encourage and support the creation and display of works of art in public areas, including appropriate locations within the streetscape, provided no unacceptable environmental, amenity; traffic or other problems are created..
- **TM 6** Support the development of the Arts, crafts and food sectors and liaise with the Crafts Council of Ireland, Laois Partnership, Laois LEO, Fáilte Ireland, and other interested bodies to facilitate growth within this sector.

The Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 addresses inter alia the policies of the Council in relation to the Arts and development.

The purpose of the County Development Plan is to enhance the quality of life for the current and future population of Laois and manage the county in the interests of the common good. This will be achieved by providing for good quality housing, economic opportunities, physical and social infrastructure while protecting our natural and cultural heritage and the environmental quality of the county.

The County Development Plan contains the following aims:

Aim 2 Develop the full potential of each part of County Laois to contribute to the optimal performance of the county as a whole economically, socially, culturally and environmentally

Aim 8 Facilitate the provision of and improvements to social and recreational infrastructure and ensure universal access to all to such facilities throughout the county for all its residents.

The Arts Plan builds upon commitments made in the County Development Plan.

Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

Laois LECP 2016-2021 sets out the economic and community development of the county over a 6 year period. Of the ten goals set in the LECP, Goal 7 " *Cultivate a Strong County Identity and an Excellent Quality of Life*" is a key goal to which this Strategy aligns itself.

Inward migration from other parts of Ireland and from abroad effected Laois' strong population growth of 20%. Social cohesion between long-standing Laois people and new residents is important to building sustainable communities. Heritage, arts, music, sports and recreational events and projects can be used to explore and cultivate a strong Laois identity and social cohesion.

In general, Laois offers a good quality of life, though deficits in social infrastructure and social services exist in places and need attention. Raising quality of life by supporting a vibrant cultural sector, improving the quality of the public realm and built environment as well as providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles is also important.

Goal 1 Market Laois to Foster Inward Investment

G1 A3: Promote (i) Laois' track record in hosting largescale outdoor events and conferences

Goal 2 Diversify and Strengthen a Sustainable Laois Economy

G2 A1 Create a *Laois Calendar of Events* including heritage, Arts, sports, business and tourism events through social media, on websites, through local libraries and the Tourism Office

Goal 5 Promote Equality and Inclusiveness across all sectors

G5 A: To ensure the voice of the most excluded is heard across sectors

G5 A3: Use of music as a means of promoting inclusion

G5 A4: Encourage and enable the use of the Arts to promote social inclusion in Laois.

Goal 7 Cultivate a Strong County Identity and an Excellent Quality of Life

G7 A: Improve quality of life and build a strong identity for people of Laois

G7 A3: Work in collaboration with key organisations to support local communities to promote culture and pride in the county.

G7 B: Use Heritage, Arts and Library events and initiatives to explore Laois' identities

Goal 10 Enhance and Sustain our Town and Village Centres

G10 A14: Examine the potential of creating a Portlaoise Cultural Quarter brand to encompass Maryborough Fort, the new Portlaoise Library, the Dunamais Arts Centre and Laois School of Music

Laois Local Economic and Community Plan for Laois 2016-2021

The purpose of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, was to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The Action Programme for Effective Local Government – *Putting People First* includes an overarching objective “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”.

The views of organisations and communities formed a significant part of the process of developing the LECP.

This Arts Plan is consistent with the aims and actions of the Laois LECP.



Making Great Art Work - Arts Council Strategy (2016–2025)

“The work of artists inspires and reflects the rhythm of the everyday as well as momentous events in public life.

The Arts shape and challenge us, give us pleasure, help us to know who we are and where we are going: their distinctive, creative power is an essential feature of our consciousness and conversation.

At home and abroad the Arts are the hallmark of our creativity as a people.”

The Arts Council’s strategy document contains the following Goals:

- Artists are supported to make excellent work which is enjoyed and valued
- More people will enjoy high-quality Arts experiences
- Public monies are invested effectively
- Well-planned Arts provision benefits people across Ireland
- The Arts Council and the Arts sector have the knowledge, skills and inventiveness to realise this strategy
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The Arts Council implementation Plan (2017–2019) under the strategy, contains the following aims and objectives:

- To work with others, including Local Government and the Department of Education and Skills, to support the provision of excellent Arts experiences for young people
- To develop opportunities for artists, Arts organisations and the communities in which they work by strengthening our partnership with Local Government via formal agreements.
- To ensure that its relationship with Local Government will be strategic and targeted.
- To ensure that its relationship with individual Local Authorities will have been strengthened through partnership agreements and programmes.

The Arts Council has supported the Arts in Laois over the past 30 years.

This long and fruitful partnership with the Arts Council is one that is based on dialogue and which respects the local remit and distinctive concerns of the local authority, while respecting the national remit and Arts development concerns of the Arts Council.

Further to the objectives in *Making Great Art Work*, the Arts Council at a national level has entered a Framework Agreement for collaboration with the local government sector through the County and City Management Association.

The Arts Council has subsequently entered into a Framework Collaboration Agreement with Laois County Council covering the period 2018-2025.

This Arts Plan takes account of the undertakings in that Framework Agreement.

(see Appendix 1)

Consultation

Laois County Council commenced a public consultation process to inform and develop its Social and Cultural Strategies for the county. A public meeting was arranged by the PPN and took place on Wednesday 17th January 2018. Presentations were made and the following plans were discussed.

- **The Creative Ireland Laois Plan 2018-2022**
- **The Arts Strategy 2018-2022**
- **The Recreation Play and Sport Strategy 2018-2022**
- **The Library Development Strategy 2018-2022**

Submissions were invited to an online survey. 50 on-line responses to the Arts Strategy survey and 29 online responses to the Creative Ireland survey were received, 2 written responses to the Arts Plan and 80 people attended the public consultation meeting.

Desk research was also undertaken and involved reviewing a number of national and county plans, policy documents and reports by the Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht and the Arts Council.

The motto of Laois County Council is “i bpáirt leis an bpobal” - in partnership with the community.

It is important to acknowledge the contribution of the public, by way of consultation feedback, to the development of this strategy.

Further details of the consultation processes are contained in Appendix 2.

Music Generation Laois Schools Out for Summer Concert at the Heritage Hotel, Killenard



Performance by Youth Dance Ensemble for Cruinniu na nÓg



Our Vision

“Laois County Council aims to maximise participation in and access to a wide range of quality artistic experiences across a range of art disciplines. Laois County Council is committed to developing sustainable and progressive Arts programmes that are supportive of artistic ambition.

Laois will be known as a destination for quality art and cultural experiences”.

Key Strategic Themes

- *Celebrating inclusive and creative communities in all their traditions and diversities*
- *Nurturing our young people and children in enjoying and experiencing themselves through art, whether as a young artist, learner, participant, audience member.*
- *Creating a supportive environment for artists and recognising the value of their contribution.*
- *Underpinning the artistic life of the County by supporting a suitable range of artistic infrastructure and systems – including physical infrastructure, capacity building, and collaboration.*
- *Working with partner bodies to maximise impact and effectiveness while critically evaluating and celebrating the impacts of Arts investment in the County.*

Collaboration(DRAFT)



Brian Keenan and Dermot Bolger in conversation at the Leaves Festival of Literature



Opening of "Welcome to May" exhibition by Stradbally Active Age Group at Laois Arthouse, Stradbally



Laois School of Music tutor Vincent Hunt demonstrates the violin at "Try an Instrument" event at DMC



Art for All – Creative Communities

- During the lifetime of this Plan we will work to identify the best approach to increase public engagement in the Arts in Laois, with a particular focus on communities for whom access to the Arts is difficult
- We will work to demonstrably increase the levels of public engagement in the Arts throughout the county.
- We will continue to provide opportunities for communities to engage in Arts projects and programmes, and guide them in how to develop their own projects and collaborate successfully with artists
- We will work to provide and encourage broader access to and engagement with the Arts for all people and to benefit as many people as possible.
- We will have a particular focus, during the implementation of this Plan, on communities for whom access to the Arts is difficult and we will work across the spectrums of social and cultural diversity to increase participation on the Arts.
- Given the context of commuting patterns from the county, we recognise the importance of engaging this large cohort of people, whose cultural needs should be thought about differently, and we will seek to find artistic opportunities to engage this group in meaningful ways.
- We will ensure that the work of communities in the Arts spectrum is highlighted through means of publicity via written, oral and social media.
- We will work in partnership with Laois Older People’s Forum in the provision of an Age Friendly Arts Programme, including the further development of the annual Bealtaine Programme.

Children and Youth

- We will support the provision and development of a quality youth Arts programme that supports opportunities and experiences for learning, creativity and developing skills in a range of art forms
- We will support the implementation of the National Creative Ireland Youth Plan, by working collaboratively with other art, education and youth service providers to increase access to Arts programmes for children and young people through early year services, in schools and a variety of youth and community settings.
- We will work to enhance the capacity and professional development of youth Arts providers to deliver these programmes.
- We will encourage and support Youth Theatre programmes across the County and seek to pilot further opportunities for long-term developmental programmes.
- We will develop youth friendly Arts programming for younger people working in partnership with Comhairle na nÓg.
- We will continue to support Laois School of Music and continue our collaboration with the Music Generation programme in Laois.
- We will seek to progress the development of music education and explore the introduction of third level music education in the county.
- We will continue to work with the County Library Service, the Dunamaise Arts Centre and others to ensure availability of artistic programming for young people.
- We will seek to appropriately measure the impact of our investment through tracking the education, career pathways and professional development of students from the Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois, to measure the social impact of our investment into music education for young people.
- We will nurture musicians and composers from Laois and beyond, in supporting music professionals to work in a local context alongside students of Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois.

Artists

- We will work to create opportunities in an environment that recognises the importance of artists, artistic ambition and the creative development of individual artists, artist collectives and groups.
- During the timeframe of this Plan we will devise plans for public art within the county.
- Working with partner bodies, we will create opportunities for residencies and commissions for artists.
- Working with partner bodies, we will encourage professional artistic practice within Laois, including Laois Arthouse.
- We will work to improve opportunities and supports for artists and those working in the Arts.
- We will work to support and encourage the diverse range of creative communities and grassroots Arts activity including festivals, clubs, amateur Arts and hobbyists.
- We will continue communication and information services in relation to our Arts programmes, funding streams and documentation of artistic projects and programmes.
- We will provide opportunities for communities to engage in Arts projects and programmes, and guided in how to develop their own projects and collaborate successfully with artists.

Supporting Capacity and Infrastructure

- Laois County Council will continue to operate an Arts Office to oversee the development of the Arts in County Laois.
- During the lifetime of this Plan, the Arts Office will further develop its strategic capability and move into an enabling and supporting role, building partnerships rather than concentrating on the operational aspects of projects and programmes. We will position the Arts Office as an important conduit for Arts development through partnerships and more dynamic communication strategies.
- We will develop capacity locally for Festivals such as the Leaves Festival to be run independently of the Laois Arts Office.
- During the lifetime of this Plan, we will undertake a review of the operating models for Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois. The review will have particular emphasis on ensuring the legacy and longevity of the investment to date.
- We will conduct a review of management structures for local authority art infrastructure in Laois. We will also examine the maintenance needs of existing Arts infrastructures.
- We will market Laois as a cultural and creative hub and market the potential of Laois for video and film locations.
- We will seek to measure the social impact of our Arts investment as a means of understanding, learning and empowering further development.

Collaboration

Laois County Council recognises the value and necessity of collaboration in delivering on the quality of life for people in the county.

- We will seek to work collaboratively with national, regional and local Arts bodies who can contribute to artistic life in Laois.
- We will maintain a close and effective working relationship with the Arts Council in accordance with our Framework Agreement.
- In conjunction with Creative Ireland and the Arts Council we will support the Scoileanna Ildánach - Creative Schools programme, along with other initiatives under the Creative Ireland programme.
- We will work closely with the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) and others on funding opportunities within and outside of the education sphere.
- We will encourage and support the work of Comhaltas Ceolteoirí Eireann, world traditional, contemporary and other music interests in the county.
- We will continue to promote and support the establishment of festivals and community events to develop Arts activities throughout the county.
- We will support and encourage local organisations, particularly those keen to expand and explore their Arts provision.
- We will engage in capacity-building within Arts and community organisations in Laois, to better enable others to take on the running of projects and programmes.
- We will work towards having a stronger Arts sector with a greater number of independent Arts organisations, producers and Arts managers capable of driving Arts development, initiating and managing projects and contributing to the vibrant growth of the county.
- We will continue to create links to local and national Arts agencies, organisations and resources, local authorities, and third level institutions, to enable us to act more effectively as a pivotal partner and networker between different constituencies of artists, organisations, public and information.

Acknowledgements

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Development of the plan has been guided by the significant contribution of the Arts Council.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Arts Council Framework Agreement

Appendix 2 – Feedback from Arts Plan Consultation

Appendix 3 – Creative Ireland Programme