



**Wexford County Council
Arts Plan 2023-27**

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Engaging Enabling Enriching

**Wexford County Council
Arts Plan 2023-27**



Cover Image: 'An Urgent Enquiry' public art programme 2019
Photo by: Brian Cregan

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“This is a dynamic plan with a real purpose - to make Wexford a better place to live and a more creative space for all.”

Introduction

Wexford County enjoys a rich artistic and cultural identity that continues to grow and thrive today. As Chairman of Wexford County Council, I'm delighted to present our Next Arts Plan, an ambitious and visionary strategy for local arts and its development in County Wexford over the next five years. Between 2023 and 2027, Wexford Arts office will enthusiastically ensure the centrality of the arts in the work of the council and help focus its contribution to enriching the lives of Wexford people and places.

We recognise the distinct contribution of the arts to well-being and quality of life for all our citizens, its intrinsic value and its role in the preservation and shaping of local cultural identity and distinctiveness. The value of arts in our lives has never been so apparent as it is today. In times of hardship and a global pandemic, the arts provided comfort and a vital connection to many. The arts connect us to our shared humanity, as well as helps us understand our past and present through a different lens. But it doesn't end there - the arts also make a real and vital contribution to placemaking in our towns and villages, enhancing our public spaces, as well as contributing to our local economy through cultural tourism and the creative industries.

Wexford County Council now looks forward to working in partnership with other key stakeholders in line with this ambitious strategy, in order to progress, nurture and support arts and cultural development in Wexford County into the future. This is a dynamic plan with a real purpose - to make Wexford a better place to live and a more creative space for all. I would like to congratulate everyone involved in the development of this plan and I look forward to supporting its implementation over the coming years.

Councillor John Fleming
Cathaoirleach

“Our focus will be on inclusion for all, connection and communication, supporting artists and arts infrastructure as well as the sustainability and climate action.”

Foreword

‘Reimagining Enniscorthy’ Public art project 2022
Photo by: Elaine Harrington

Wexford County Council has always taken a proactive and innovative approach to local arts development since the establishment of the first Arts Office within the county council almost thirty years ago. Today Wexford has an enviable reputation as a county that excels in the arts, with a strong artistic and cultural identity, which Wexford County Council is proud of and committed to supporting and developing into the future.

Arts and culture are vital to our quality of life and societal well-being, as well as being a key contributor to our local economy. This art plan aligns itself with the higher-level goals of Wexford county council, and our next Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028. This ambitious plan places arts and culture as central to the work of Wexford County Council and cuts across many departments including community, environment, urban and rural regeneration, tourism and economic development.

We look forward to advancing the arts in Wexford over the coming years with our key stakeholders including Music Generation Wexford, Wexford Waterford Education Training Board (WWETB) and the HSE, through the Arts Ability programme. I look forward to working with our new partners Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Craobh Loch Garman Comhaltas in hosting the 2024 Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Wexford town and to building a lasting legacy around this.

We continue to further enhance and deepen our work with our key partner The Arts Council through our Framework for Collaboration Agreement, The Arts Council’s Specialist Staffing Scheme as well as the recently announced Creative Places programme for Enniscorthy. We equally look forward to working with Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media over the coming years in advancing the Creative Ireland Programme through our Culture Team.

I wish to thank all those who have been involved in the extensive preparation and consultation process around this plan. We have listened to your feedback and our focus will be inclusion for all, connection and communication, supporting artists and arts infrastructure as well as sustainability and climate action. This plan can only be achieved through collective effort, and we look forward to working with our partners across all sectors over the coming years.

Tom Enright
Chief Executive





'Making and Momentum' Exhibition curated by Richard Malone,
Wexford County Council 2022
Photo by: Claudio Negro



'Seedlings' A Climate Opera, Music Generation Wexford, National Opera House 2023
Photo by: Zena O' Brien

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'Totem Yoke' Exhibition, Maria McKinney, Wexford County Council, 2021
Photo by: Frank Abruzzese

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'Seedlings' A Climate Opera, Music Generation Wexford, National Opera House
Photo by: Zena O' Brien

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ISACS 'Where Dance Meets Street', 2023
Photo by: by Ness Keeley



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ISACS, Nora Kelly Lester LIFT Residency, 2022
Photo by: Abigail Denniston

Chapter 1

Profile & Context



County Wexford is located in the southeast corner of Ireland, in a unique and varied landscape that enjoys a rare mix of mountains, valleys, rivers, slob lands, flora, fauna and breath-taking beaches along its 200km coastline. The county has four main towns – Wexford, Gorey, Enniscorthy and New Ross. County Wexford had an overall population in 2022 of 163,527, which represents a 9.2% increase in population in the last 5 years. The local authority for the county is Wexford County Council (Comhairle Contae Loch Garman) which has 34 elected members and is divided into the five municipal districts of Gorey, Enniscorthy, New Ross, Wexford Borough and Rosslare. The Council is responsible for a range of services including housing, community, roads, transportation, planning and development, libraries, arts and culture, the environment and emergency services. The County is well served by key infrastructure and the ever-expanding Rosslare Europort. Tourism plays a very strong part in the local economy, and Wexford enjoys being classified as the sunniest county in Ireland along with its designation as part of Ireland’s Ancient East.

163,527

population in 2022

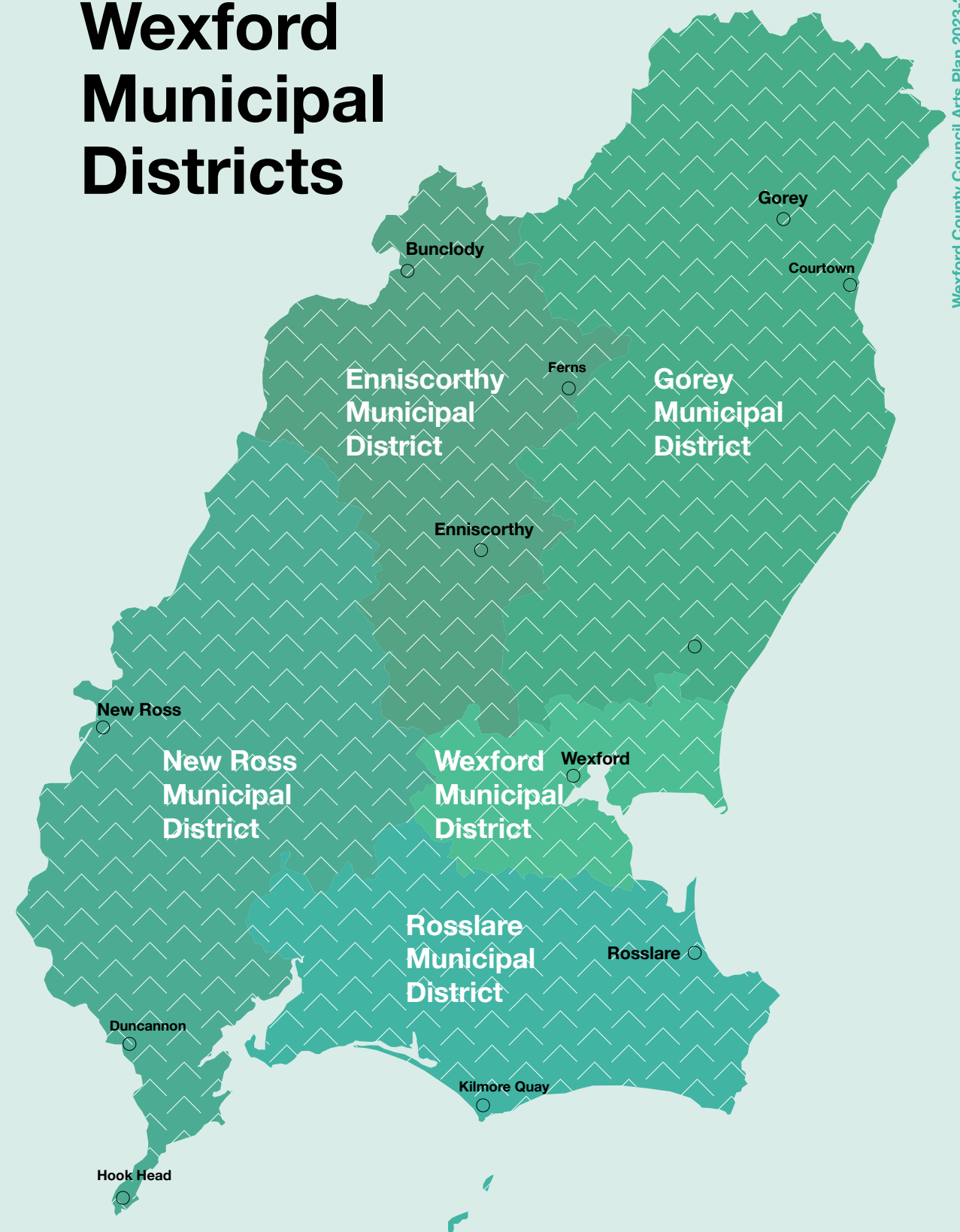
9.2%

increase in last five years

22

23

Wexford Municipal Districts



The Artistic Southeast

Wexford has a rich arts and cultural heritage with a vibrant and engaged artistic community which continues to grow. This has been achieved by countless individuals, artists, arts and community organisations who have achieved excellence and distinction on the local, national as well as world stage. Whether measured by the achievements of individual artists or the world-renowned Wexford Opera Festival, or its reputation as the home of one of Ireland's oldest and most pioneering Art Centres, Wexford has exceptional reason to be proud of its artistic identity. This new Arts Plan arises in the context of significant achievement in the arts in County Wexford over the years, which manifests itself today in a vibrant arts eco system. Like all eco systems, it must be carefully nurtured and supported for it to sustain itself and to flourish. This plan sets out our vision for arts and culture for the next five years. The plan has been developed by listening to and responding to the needs and ambitions of people from across our communities for arts and culture in County Wexford.

'Covid Care Concert' St. Aidan's Day Care Centre, 2021
Photo by: Michael Duggan



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The Arts Department, Wexford County Council

The establishment of the first Wexford County Council Arts Office in 1995 lent impetus to the strategic and planned development of the arts within the county. This role was consolidated through six previous arts plans delivered between 1995 and 2022.

The role of the Arts Office is to support and champion the arts in County Wexford thereby enriching the quality of life for Wexford people and visitors alike. In addition, the Arts Office advises and supports the council on all arts and cultural matters, to ensure continued support and the strategic development of the arts and arts and cultural infrastructure in the county. In implementing the last Arts Plan 'Advancing the Arts' 2018-22, the arts were strengthened by positioning it as central to the work of Wexford County Council, and aligning the arts plan with the higher-level social, community, and economic goals of the County Council. Much has been done over the last five years to advance the arts in County Wexford. Our artists were supported through artists bursaries, arts festivals, residencies, artists' work spaces, training, mentoring and artist employment opportunities. Wexford County Council has invested in the arts, with the completed extension to Wexford Arts Centre, and our successful bid for the 2024 Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. We continue to support and invest in our arts venues and artists workplaces and explore new models to best support artists changing needs.

“We forged new ground in public art commissioning, that engaged with people and place around themes of climate action and biodiversity.”

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We invested in our communities enabling greater participation in the arts across all ages and demographics through an expanded Creative Communities scheme supported by Creative Ireland, a new Small Arts Festival scheme, and we expanded our arts in health programme countywide in partnership with the HSE. The importance of arts and culture for society and general wellbeing was never so evident as during the Covid 19 Pandemic, and artists quickly developed new ways of working and engaging with communities as makers, collaborators, and audiences. Working closely with the Creative Ireland Programme and Culture Team, we fostered more collaboration with communities achieving positive outcomes around placemaking, well-being, climate action awareness and economic development.

Over the last five years Wexford County Council has developed the area of Film, with the establishment of Screen Wexford. We forged new ground in public art commissioning, that engaged with people and place around themes of climate action and biodiversity. We look forward to consolidating this cross departmental work as we enter the next five years.

A national policy for the arts

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 doing so, take account of policies of government in relation to the arts.

The arts as defined in the Arts Act 2003:

Any creative or interpretive expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and including, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus, and architecture and including any medium when used for these purposes.

We also recognise that artforms have evolved and the boundaries between art forms have blurred since this definition of the arts was developed. We acknowledge this and look forward to supporting arts and culture as it continues to develop and thrive over the coming years.



Informing our strategy

This strategy aligns with and seeks to advance the following national strategic arts and cultural policies.

Culture 2025

Culture 2025 is the government's framework policy for culture. It aims to 'enrich the lives of everyone through engagement in the cultural life of the nation and to provide opportunities for increased citizen participation'.

Making Great Art Work (2016-2025)

Making Great Art Work (2016-2025) the Arts Council's ten-year strategy, which sets out priorities focusing on the artist, public engagement, investment, spatial and demographic planning, and capacity development.

The Arts Council's **Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy** which 'strives to respect, support and ensure the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions'.

The Arts Council's **Paying the Artist Policy** promoting 'equitable and fair enumeration and contracting within the arts'.

The Arts Council's **Place, Space and People Policy**, a recent framework for socio-spatial equity in the arts presenting a vision 'for a country where everyone has the opportunity to create, engage with, participate in and enjoy the arts and culture, regardless of who they are or where they live and work'.

Creative Ireland

Creative Ireland, the all-of-Government creativity and well-being programme has been extended for another five years and will run until 2027. In this extended period of the programme, it will organise its work around five pillars: Creative Youth, Creative Communities, Creativity Health and Well-being, Creative Climate Action and Sustainability, Creative Industries. Wexford County Council recently launched its second Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 which is implemented by the Culture Team.

Wexford Framework Agreement with the Arts Council 2018-2025

In 2018, Wexford County Council entered a formal seven year agreement with the Arts Council (Framework Agreement 2018-2025) which was undertaken in the broader context of the expanding cultural policy environment, locally and nationally, for the arts and creative communities. This working partnership promotes and develops the arts in County Wexford in an integrated manner in the belief that by working more closely together Wexford County Council and the Arts Council can strengthen the arts and improve public access, engagement, and participation. We will ensure alignment of our priorities for the arts in County Wexford over the coming years, through a reviewed and updated Partnership Framework Agreement between Wexford County Council and the Arts Council.

Local, National and International policy frameworks

This new Arts Plan also aligns with several important local, national and international frameworks and plans, including Project Ireland 2040, Wexford County Development Plan (2022-2028), The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP 2023- 2028), The Corporate Plan (2019-2024), Wexford's Climate Change & Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024). This Arts Plan is also informed by other key areas of council work including, The Age Friendly Strategy (2022-2026), The Library Development Plan (2020-2025), The Healthy Ireland Framework and Wexford's Biodiversity Plan.

We also understand the European context of our work and continue to monitor and situate what we do in relation to longstanding development programmes such as Interreg -The European Regional Development Fund and Creative Europe. Many of the ambitions of this Arts Plan also align with the principles of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all UN member states in 2015.

These frameworks and policies offer a positive context for the development of the arts linked to the wider socio-economic and cultural development of the county.



'Seedlings' A Climate Opera, Music Generation Wexford, National Opera House
Photo by: Zena O' Brien

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Chapter 2

Background & Preparation



Internal Review

The early stages of preparing this strategy involved gathering and examining relevant socio-economic data and information for County Wexford. It also involved a detailed strategic review undertaken in 2021 of the last Arts Plan, including a qualitative and quantitative analysis of outcomes. This review identified significant achievements to date and also challenges and made a series of recommendations for the next arts plan.

Public consultations

A joint consultation process was held for the Arts Plan and the Culture and Creativity Strategy. This involved five focus groups held in the five municipal districts around key themes identified by the arts and culture teams. There was also separate focus group consultation with young people from Comhairle na N'OG. In total 172 people took part in these face-to-face meetings.

Local Live Performance Scheme 2021, 'Extreme Rhythm' in Library Park, New Ross
Photo by: Padraig Grant

More in-depth feedback from individuals, arts and community organisations was received through written submissions via an online survey circulated by the Arts office and Culture teams. A series of one to one meetings took place between key arts organisations, key strategic partners, senior management and stakeholders within Wexford County Council. This consultation process and feedback provides immense insight into the challenges experienced on a day-to-day basis by individual artists, arts organisations and local communities. It also identifies potential opportunities, and it plays an essential part in shaping our strategy so it can work for the benefit of all.

Data analysis and topics raised during the stakeholder engagement covered a vast and diverse range of issues. They have been instrumental in shaping the six goals which drive the overall strategy.

What did people tell us?

The focus groups and written submissions were very strongly linked in theme and ambition. They can be broadly clustered under four dominant themes:

- > **Connection and communication**
- > **Supporting arts Infrastructure**
- > **Inclusion and accessibility to the arts**
- > **Sustainability and the environment**



Connection and Communication

While there was an acknowledgement that Wexford has a huge wealth of artistic talent with Arts and cultural events happening regularly throughout the county, artists and communities weren't sharing this information or connecting enough. Collectively, our communities are seeking more connection and access to cultural experiences, whether they live in an urban or a rural environment. Artists need more ways to connect and network between themselves, as well as with local communities, and likewise local communities wanted to connect more with artists for arts and cultural experiences. Regular networking events, information clinics, newsletters, local radio slots or sharing of what's happening in the county was requested.

Supporting artists and arts Infrastructure

While the quality of arts infrastructure was acknowledged as generally quite good with key venues such as Wexford Arts Centre, The National Opera House, Presentation Arts Centre Enniscorthy, St Michael's in New Ross and Gorey School of Art, there is still a lack of suitable and affordable spaces for musicians and performing artists to rehearse, as well as affordable spaces for local groups and young people to perform and showcase work. Artists also called for more flexible and collaborative artists' work spaces throughout the county, and the development of more mobile/pop up performing or artists residencies models that could move through the county connecting to the rural. Creative and nimble use of existing community infrastructure particularly in rural areas was suggested. Community halls and GAA clubs, public parks, and other public realm spaces, for arts and culture events and workshops was also called for. Activating empty or derelict spaces, particular within towns for cultural use and pop-up artistic events was also suggested as part of regeneration programmes. Ongoing work for artists in youth, community and health context were acknowledged, and training, bursaries, upskilling for artists and artists residencies were welcomed.

'An Urgent Enquiry' public art programme.

Workshop with Mark Clare & Mairead Stafford, 2019

Photo by: Brian Cregan

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Social Inclusion and accessibility to the arts

More inclusion and accessibility to the arts was a dominant theme in the consultation process, which included more physical access to arts spaces, workshops and cultural events for people with particular access needs. The consultations also called for more equity of access to arts and cultural experiences for harder to reach groups, rural communities, teenagers, new communities, the traveller community and older people. The urban/rural divide was discussed with lack of transport in rural areas identified as a key hindrance to access to the arts. Literacy and the digital divide were also discussed as a barrier to access for all. There was a call for more accessible funding application procedures to the Arts Office and Creative Ireland programmes.

The environment, sustainability and climate action

There was a focus on enriching our environment and promoting sustainability through the arts as well as behaviours change around Climate Action. Wexford's rich biodiversity was discussed and the role of the arts in raising awareness around biodiversity and Climate Action as well as celebrating this. Creative programmes around Climate Action, celebrating our biodiversity, sustainability and greening initiatives were called for that would link to local groups and Tidy Town. In addition, Wexford's unique architectural and cultural heritage was discussed and the importance of passing on of traditional arts and cultural skills.



Chapter 3

Vision, Mission & Values



VISION

Our vision is for a vibrant, dynamic and engaged creative arts sector that is valued as integral to the development of County Wexford.

MISSION

We enable and champion the arts and creative activity in the county by using the following strategies:

Engaging the public in the arts both as participants and audiences.

Enabling collaboration and new partnerships that build capacity and infrastructure in the arts sector.

Enriching quality of life, quality of place and quality of employment through the arts for everyone.



Diagram : The Arts working collaboratively to achieve the Higher-Level Goals of Wexford County Council

The Centrality of the Artist in a Dynamic Creative Arts Sector

Wexford County Council regards the role of the artist as central to public life, whether expressed in images, music, language, movement, or the big screen. The reflective expression of artists on our everyday lives, be they large or small, is valued as enriching our entire community through sensory, emotional intellectual and creative engagement.

In the delivery of our vision and mission, we will work to ensure that the voice of the artist is to the fore and that artists of all disciplines are directly involved. We recognise that having a vibrant, dynamic arts sector will be key to our success. We want County Wexford to be a place where artists can live and work; to be a base from where they can build a career, supported by an enabling arts and cultural ecology.

Creative Hub Artist Studios, Wexford town

Photo by: Michael Duggan



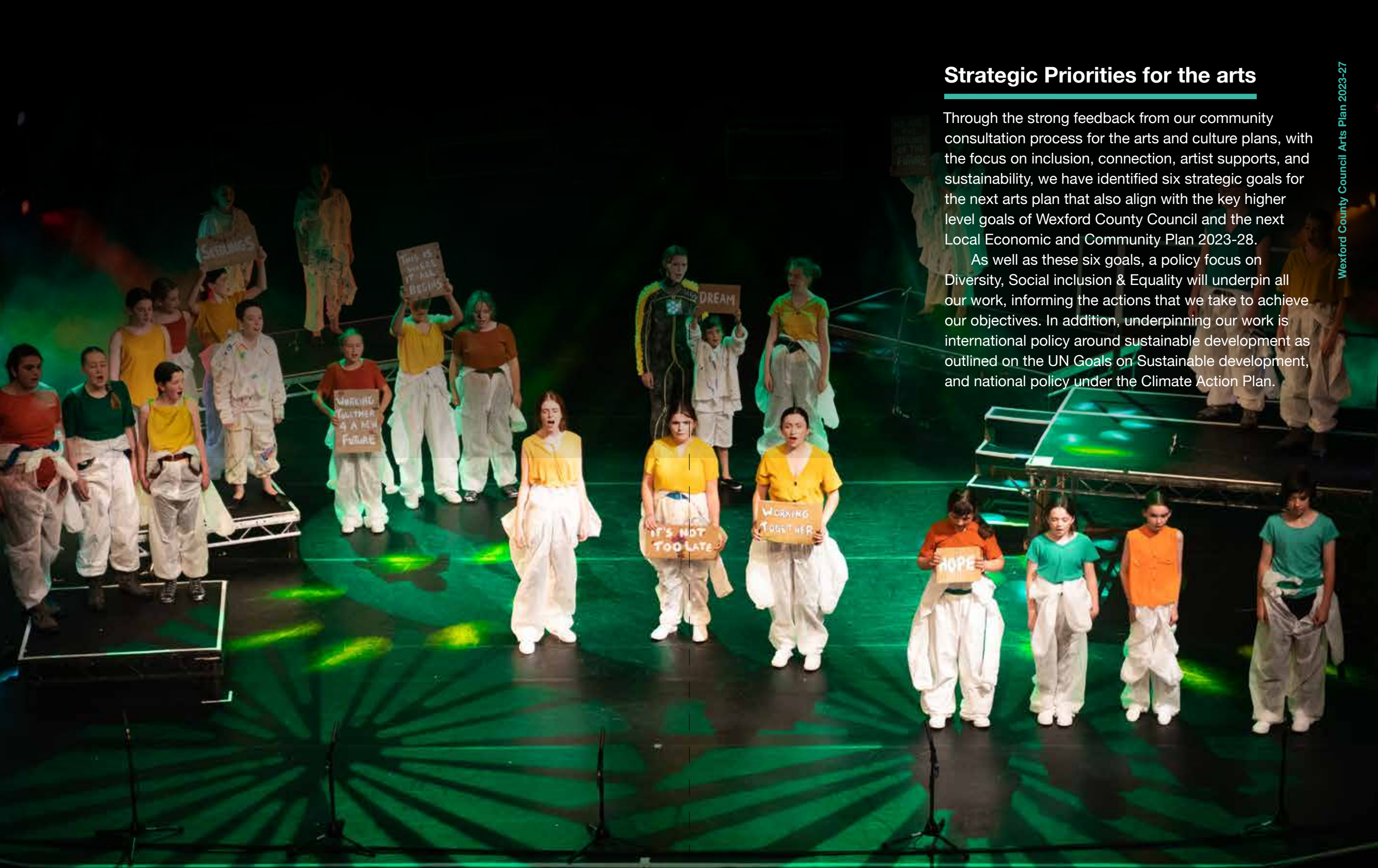
Integrating the Arts in Local Authority Development Frameworks

Building on the Arts Office tradition of integrating the arts within the wider socio-economic and cultural development frameworks, the Arts Plan Advancing the Arts 2018-22 raised the ambition for the arts through alignment with the vision and higher-level goals of Wexford's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021. In this way, the arts were positioned as a central means to support the implementation of the plan and raise awareness of the unique contribution made by the arts to quality of life, health and well-being and the local economy. The unique and essential role of the arts for wellbeing particularly came to the fore during the Covid pandemic. The Arts Office will continue to build on this outward cross departmental approach by being on the LECP advisory committee and further aligning with the higher-level goals of the next LECP 2023-2028.

'Covid Care Concerts' Oakfield Nursing Home, 2021

Photo by: Michael Duggan



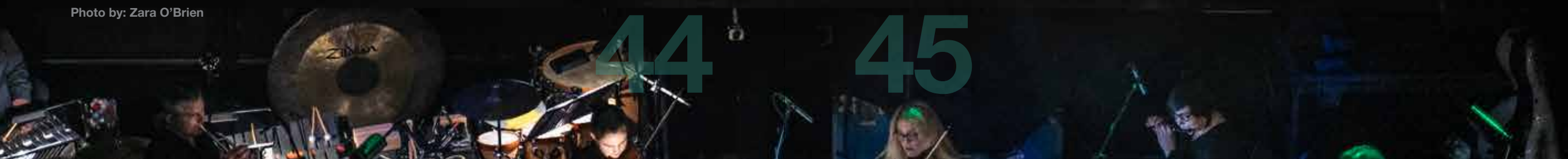


Strategic Priorities for the arts

Through the strong feedback from our community consultation process for the arts and culture plans, with the focus on inclusion, connection, artist supports, and sustainability, we have identified six strategic goals for the next arts plan that also align with the key higher level goals of Wexford County Council and the next Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-28.

As well as these six goals, a policy focus on Diversity, Social inclusion & Equality will underpin all our work, informing the actions that we take to achieve our objectives. In addition, underpinning our work is international policy around sustainable development as outlined on the UN Goals on Sustainable development, and national policy under the Climate Action Plan.

'Seedling' A Climate Opera, Music Generation Wexford, National Opera House, 2023
Photo by: Zara O'Brien



Chapter 4

Goals, Objectives & Planned Actions



Goal 1:

Promote Social Inclusion, Equality, Diversity, and Well-being in our communities.

Art for everyone

County Wexford is a diverse county with significant pockets of disadvantage existing around the county in both rural and urban contexts, as well as a high proportion of households in low paid and low skills groups. Within the county's growing population, there has been a significant increase in the number of older people. Additionally in recent years Wexford has also become more culturally diverse. Many Wexford communities experience exclusions or barriers to participating in the arts, sometimes these barriers are visible and sometimes they are invisible. The arts perform very special functions that promote individual and community creativity and well-being: Arts build confidence, Arts brings people together and Arts bridge differences – all key areas in promoting social inclusion.

'Covid Care Concerts' Middleton Nursing Home, 2021
Photo by: Michael Duggan



Objectives

- Encourage community involvement and participation in the arts through creative, accessible and inclusive arts in community programmes.
- Develop arts as an effective means of engaging harder to reach communities, that promote active citizenship, equality, and diversity.
- Raise awareness of the role of arts in promoting mental well-being and building healthy communities.

Proposed Actions

- Ensure a variety of opportunities exist for communities throughout County Wexford to engage meaningfully with arts and culture, across artforms, as participants or audience members.
- Sustain and develop initiatives that centre on the needs of identified groups and promote equality and diversity, including children and young people, older people, people with disabilities, new communities, the Traveller community, rural communities and other underrepresented communities.
- Have ongoing dialogue with communities experiencing marginalisation to ensure that they have what they need to participate in arts and cultural activity in the county.
- Continue to partner with and identify new stakeholders across arts and culture, Creative Ireland, education, health and community services, to remove barriers to arts and cultural participation and develop appropriate arts programming.
- Test new approaches to participatory arts programme that target harder to reach communities, working collaboratively with a range of partners including the Local Community Development Committee, (LCDC) Creative Ireland, the Arts Council and Creative Places Enniscorthy as well as the five Municipal Districts.
- Continue to build on and deepen Arts in Community and Arts in Health programmes in particular programmes supporting positive mental health and well-being.
- Enable regular sharing of information about arts and cultural activities countywide and opportunities for communities to engage in the arts and connect with artists.
- Provide additional supports when needed, to enable individuals and community groups have equitable access arts and culture, from funding application procedures to information clinics, to hosting cultural events.

Goal 2:

Foster a Culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning.

Arts in Education

Wexford has a large and growing population of young people. Early school leaving is higher than the state average and low educational attainment is impacting on the workforce, which is relatively low skilled compared to the state average. Fostering a culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning is fundamental to the long-term sustainability and development of the county and arts have a key role to play in achieving these goals. Arts learning experiences play a vital role in developing students' creativity, imagination, and innovation. These capacities are increasingly recognised as core skills and competencies needed by all students in the 21st century as part of a high-quality education. In addition, access to lifelong learning, and upskilling for people of all ages and circumstances, is key to the development of a skilled, creative and flexible workforce that can adapt to changing needs and technologies into the 21st Century.



'Living Arts' in schools workshop County Hall, 2022
Photo by: Wexford Arts Centre

Objectives

- Improve educational fulfilment through the development of high quality, accessible, inclusive arts in education programmes.
- Develop arts as an effective means of engaging with harder to reach young people for self-expression and to raise awareness of creative career options.
- Build capacity among artists at all stages of their careers, and those seeking to enter arts and creative industries.

Proposed Actions

- Continue to invest in and develop arts in education programmes (formal and informal) with our programme partners, Music Generation Wexford, WWETB, Creative Schools, Wexford Arts Centre, and identify new partnership opportunities as they arise.
- Build capacity amongst schools, teachers and youth programmes to deliver high quality arts in education programmes.
- Develop new partnerships with relevant stakeholders from the youth, community voluntary and creative sectors to target harder to reach young people.
- Consult with young people via Comhairle Na NÓg and other youth forums and respond to their needs in arts provision for the county.
- Continue to invest in youth film, youth drama, and other youth arts initiatives.
- Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders such as South East Technical University (SETU), WWETB and Screen Wexford to develop career progression routes for young people and artists in the arts, creative industries and film industry.
- Support arts graduates and artists at all ages and stages of their careers access lifelong learning opportunities, through relevant training and upskilling, to support their career advancement and work readiness.

Goal 3:

Promote County Wexford as a great tourist destination, making it an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Art in the public realm

Wexford is a county rich in cultural heritage including architecture, traditional crafts, historic buildings, archaeological relics, its unique Norman heritage as well as its more intangible assets such as traditions and stories. The county is one of the main tourist destinations in Ireland, enjoying exceptional coastlines, beaches, wildlife reserves, castles, gardens, as well as high quality arts and cultural events, world renowned arts festivals and arts venues. Arts and culture are intrinsic to the projected image of Wexford and fundamental to the county's tourism offer as well as contributing positively to placemaking in both rural and urban contexts.

Objectives

- Encourage investment in arts and cultural infrastructure in a manner that is strategic and sustainable and meets the current needs of artists and the public.
- Strengthen the council's capacity to integrate culture and creativity across place-making, regeneration, and the development of more vibrant, creative and sustainable places.
- Support the strategic development of arts festivals and other creative placemaking initiatives and help to build capacity within the sector.
- Develop and implement a Public Art Strategy that advances ambitious and innovative public art programmes, which animate the public realm and contribute positively to placemaking.

Proposed Actions

- Continue to work strategically and invest in our arts and cultural infrastructure across the county.
- Identify existing and potential spaces for creative activity countywide within existing community and local parish infrastructure, particularly in rural contexts, where more communities can have access to high quality arts and cultural provisions.
- Deliver supports for arts and cultural festivals countywide for all to enjoy in both urban and rural contexts with partner organisations.
- Help to build capacity of festivals through mentoring, training supports.
- Support the development of Culture Night in partnership with the Arts Council and the five municipal districts, which celebrates arts culture and creatively throughout the county for all to enjoy.
- Develop a Public Art Strategy and policy overseen by the Wexford Public Art Working Group that is ambitious and innovative, responds to the needs of County Wexford, and adheres to good public art practice guidelines nationally.
- Maximise the opportunity of the Per Cent for Art scheme across all eligible Wexford County Council capital developments over the coming years.
- Work with and advise the county council and Special Projects team on urban and rural regeneration programmes on creative place making initiatives, including Creative Places Enniscorthy, as well as involving artists designers and creatives.
- Continue to support the development of the expanded Wexford County Art Collection as a unique cultural asset for all to enjoy through exhibitions, public tours and education outreach programmes.
- Work with Screen Wexford, Economic Dept and Visit Wexford to promote Wexford as a top-class destination for film and TV productions and investment.

Goal 4:

Support artists to make great work that can be enjoyed by all.

A place for artists & creatives

County Wexford had a long established, vibrant and growing artistic community. Artists work in many disciplines, including visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus performance and architecture or a combination of the above. Artists continue to work in new, cross disciplinary and innovative ways, and we welcome evolving artistic practices, and art that imaginatively responds to place, context and communities. The Arts Office recognises the many challenges faced by artists in sustaining a career. We want Wexford to be a county where artists can live and work; to be a base where they can build a career supported by an enabling arts and cultural ecology. Furthermore, Wexford Arts Office is committed to facilitating high quality engagement between artists and the public, and supporting artists work in community contexts and in health, education, youth and other social settings.

Objectives

- Provide supports for artists at all stages of their careers that meaningfully respond to their needs.
- Ensure that artists have access to appropriate and flexible working environments and spaces.
- Increase work opportunities for artists.
- Create more opportunities for Wexford based artists to connect, network, and present their work regionally, nationally and internationally.

Proposed Actions

- Invest in artists bursaries, residencies, awards, professional development and training programmes, mentoring opportunities and networking events that support artists across all art forms.
- Support and develop key arts infrastructure throughout the county and in response to artist's needs.
- Support the production and presentation of work by artists of all disciplines by investing in arts venues and arts space's throughout the county.
- Create and extend professional development opportunities and pathways that facilitate artists and arts professionals to progress their practice and increase their capacity to build sustainable careers.
- Ensure that the needs of artists, artists workspaces and arts and cultural usage, are considered and factored into the design of our public realm, towns, and villages in county council regeneration programmes in both urban and rural environments.
- Continue to provide work opportunities for artists through our Arts in Community, Arts in Health, and Arts in Education programmes, youth arts programmes, and provide relevant training for working in community contexts.
- Create more opportunities for artists to connect, network with other artists and communities.
- Enable greater sharing of information of "what's on" in terms of arts and cultural activity in County Wexford.
- Create new commissions, residencies, and other opportunities for artists across all art forms through the Per Cent for Art and Public Art Commission Programme, that are in line with best practice public art guidelines nationally and internationally.
- Build upon and initiate new strategic residency exchange opportunities for Wexford based artists nationally and internationally, and identify relevant partners and funding opportunities.
- Provide exhibition opportunities for local, national, and international artists through the annual County Hall Streets exhibition programme.
- Continue to work with local, regional, and national partners to deliver professional development training for artists.

Goal 5:

Develop and Market Wexford as an Attractive Environment for starting and growing businesses.

Arts and the Creative industries

County Wexford's traditional economy is driven by agriculture, fishing, and manufacturing sectors with tourism a growing industry contributing significantly to the local economy. The growth in Film TV/Screen and AV industry, nationally and internationally is mirrored in Wexford with the establishment of Screen Wexford and the recent arrival of Tara Studios to North Wexford. Artists and the creative industries play a vital part in servicing this ever-growing industry where expanded distribution platforms like Netflix, Apple TV, etc, have driven need for new creative content and film crew. Wexford also has a very high percentage of small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) and micro enterprise which drive the local economy and highlight the entrepreneurial nature of the business sector. Artists and the creative industries are a vital part of this ever-growing micro business sector.



Screen Wexford 'New Voices' award film shoot, 2023
Photo by: Al Butler

Objectives

- Drive the development of the Film/ Screen industry in Wexford via Screen Wexford in partnership with Wexford County Council's Economic Department and other key stakeholders.
- Develop the creative industries and professional development of artists and creatives.
- Highlight the role of the arts as an incubator and testing ground for creativity and innovation.

Proposed Actions

- Continue to support the strategic development of Screen Wexford CLG in partnership with the Economic Department of Wexford County Council.
- Support the promotion of Wexford as a cultural and creative hub and a premier destination for the film and screen industry.
- Develop creative skills and competencies of artists and creatives that nurtures talent and incentivises their development in the creative and screen industries.
- Work in partnership with national and local providers, South East Technical University (SETU), Visual Artists Ireland, Words Ireland, Local Enterprise Office, Screen Wexford and other partners in the delivery of their training and upskilling for artists and creatives.
- Partner with key stakeholders in the professional development of artists and creatives eg LEO, Creative Ireland, Culture Team, Hatch Labs, Technology parks.
- Support local indigenous talent via annual awards in bursaries in the film/screen industry.

Goal 6:

Promote Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

Arts and the environment

Wexford has many unique natural resources, rich biodiversity, exceptional coastlines, beaches, wildlife reserves, and a wealth of archaeological, cultural, and built heritage. Climate change and the current climate crisis has created new challenges for us all, to protect what we have, as well as to adapt and take proactive actions. All local authorities have a Climate Change and Adaptation Strategy, Heritage & Biodiversity Plans and established Climate Actions Teams to oversee and implement this strategy. A cross departmental approach to this work is essential. The arts can play a key role in creating a space for local communities to engage in dialogue, reflect on as well as encourage behavioural change in relation to climate action. The arts and creatively also play key roles in showcasing and celebrating our unique natural resources and biodiversity.

Objectives

- Celebrate Wexford's unique natural resources and biodiversity through the arts and creative activity.
- Promote behaviour change and encourage positive climate action through the arts.

Proposed actions

- Continue to work cross departmentally within the Climate Action Team to identify, support and promote arts programmes and positive environment, biodiversity and climate action and evaluate and monitor outcomes.
- Incorporate environmental sustainability and climate action as a programme strand within Wexford's Public Art Policy and Strategy and Per Cent for Art programming.
- Work with the Culture Team, Creative Ireland, the Arts council and Creative Places Enniscorthy and identify other relevant partners to develop arts programmes around climate action with various communities of place and interest.
- Support artists and creatives in this area of work through brokering partnerships, linking to local communities in the five municipal districts, identifying funding opportunities, as well as relevant upskilling and professional development.
- Support arts venues, festivals, community groups and artists to develop greening initiatives that link to good practice guidelines nationally via Arts Council and internationally through Creative Europe.
- Identify and develop further partnerships locally, nationally, and internationally around arts and creative activity in relation to climate action.



'Reimagining Enniscorthy' workshop, 2022
Photo by: Elaine Harrington



'An Urgent Enquiry' Enquiry' public art programme.
Workshop with Mark Clare & Mairead Stafford, 2019
Photo by: Brian Cregan

Chapter 5

Implementa- tion & Review



Delivering the Plan

The realisation of this Arts Plan relies on a collective effort between Wexford County Council, the arts and culture sector and our local, national, and international partners, led and coordinated by Wexford Arts Office. This plan will be implemented at several levels with the Arts Office having direct responsibility for some actions, while others will involve partnering with a broad range of arts stakeholders and public agencies locally, regionally, and nationally.

Partnerships and investment

The continued support of the Arts Council through its investment in the arts in County Wexford, through arts venues, festivals, artists bursaries, as well as Wexford arts office and the Arts Council's Specialist Staffing support scheme is also a key factor for success. To that end we will ensure alignment of our priorities for arts in County Wexford through a reviewed and updated Partnership Framework Agreement between Wexford County Council and the Arts Council.

The Arts Office will work, with the support of partners, to secure any additional financial, staffing, or other resources, as and when necessary, to ensure the plan is delivered in full. We will continue to work closely with the Culture Team and Creative Ireland Programme, in the delivery of common objectives within the Arts Plan and the Culture and Creativity Strategy.

Further funding resources will arise through the Per Cent for Art Programme which will be proactively secured and pooled over the coming years. We will continue to build upon our long-standing partnership with our key partners and develop new ones. We will deepen our work cross departmentally within the Council and in so doing leverage further resources for arts and creativity within the statutory and community sector.

Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of this plan will ensure accountability and transparency. The Arts Office will create annual workplans that include actions to progress each of the identified objectives with regular reporting to Wexford County Council. Implementation will be monitored on an ongoing basis via the Council, and the Local Authority's Annual Report, which includes an account of the achievements and progress in its delivery. A mid-way review will take place in 2025. Through this Arts Plan, Wexford County Council will meet its obligations to stimulate, develop and promote the arts as directed under the Local Authority Arts Act 2003, as well as ensure its continued growth for the benefit of all.

“We will deepen our work cross departmentally within the Council and in so doing leverage further resources for arts and creativity”



'Right of Way' exhibition by Laura Fitzgerald,
Emergence Award Winner 2020 -2021 in Wexford Arts Centre, 2022
Photo by: Wexford Arts Centre

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Sincere thanks to all the artists, arts organisations, community groups, young people, and individuals and who took part in the consultation process for this Arts Plan. Thanks to Wexford County Council colleagues and the culture team who contributed their time and expertise to the plan and to the elected members of Wexford County Council for their input and continued support.

I would like to extend my thanks for their ongoing support to:

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Tom Enright – Chief Executive, Wexford County Council

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I would like to thank all our arts programme partners, in particular The Arts Council, The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Music Generation, WWETB, the HSE and Creative Ireland. I look forward to strengthening these partnerships and building new ones with other key stakeholders over the coming years.

Liz Burns, *Wexford County Arts Officer*



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