

THE BRIGHTENING AIR
County Sligo Arts Plan

2002

2005



The Song of Wandering Aengus

William Butler Yeats

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire aflame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And some one called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

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Published and distributed by the Arts Office,
Sligo County Council, Market Yard, Sligo
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Design and Production: ATELIER David Smith, Dublin
Landscape Photography: Vincent Vidal, Paris
Print: Modus Media – Dublin Print Solutions

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The Arts Office wishes to thank Annette Clancy, Arts Consultant and all those who assisted or contributed in any way to this publication.



Sligo County Council



Sligo Borough Council



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Message from Cllr. Tony McLoughlin Cathaoirleach, Sligo County Council

The unanimous adoption of Sligo's first Arts Plan by Sligo County Council members represents a clear and unequivocal commitment to ensure all citizens of the county have access to the arts and the means to engage and explore their creativity. In my capacity as Cathaoirleach and on behalf of the members it gives me great pleasure to endorse the Brightening Air – County Sligo's Arts Plan 2002-2005.

The investment by the Council in a pre-planning phase through the design and implementation of 'Placing Art' 1998-2001 is now bearing fruit. The programme was exploratory, experimental and innovative. It was driven by three-core values: a belief in quality, a commitment to creating new opportunities and a recognition of the need for ongoing research to identify sustainable approaches.

The Plan builds on the experience of artists and members of the public of all ages who participated in the extensive research undertaken by the Arts Office to assess the

needs of the arts in the county. Needs were examined in a variety of settings covering youth arts, arts in the community, arts in education, classical music development and the commissioning of public art. The feedback received from artists, participants, evaluators and others ensures that this plan is relevant, considered and appropriate to the needs of the arts over the coming years.

Most importantly it is the genuine voice of those whom it is intended to facilitate and support. The goal of Sligo County Council is to contribute to an enhanced quality of life for all. I have every confidence that the implementation of this Arts Plan will greatly advance the achievement of this goal.



Councillor, Tony Mc Loughlin,
Cathaoirleach Sligo County Council.

Message from Cllr. Joe Leonard Cathaoirleach, SPC 4 Housing Policy, Social and Cultural Development

The Arts as an organised expression of ideas, feelings and experiences in images, in music, in language, in gesture and movement provide for the sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment of the entire community.

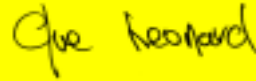
Participation in the creative arts is a positive experience, is life enhancing, is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking and in promoting capability and adaptability. Self-esteem is enhanced spontaneity and risk-taking are encouraged, and difference is celebrated. Arts activities are a focus for social and cultural development and are particularly effective in attaining social inclusion.

Access to the arts is a fundamental right of all citizens, essential to living a full and rewarding life.

The policy led, planned, strategic arts interventions in the highly successful and acclaimed 'Placing Art' Programme (1998-2001), provided the framework for the development of this plan.

It is the policy of the Council to support and facilitate increased opportunities to

enhance the environment, in which art is made, engaged with and received. The Plan is the process through which the Council seeks to achieve its objectives.



Councillor, Joe Leonard,
Chairperson SPC 4.

Tradition, Continuity & Development

MAPPING ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLIGO'S ARTS AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT
by John Kavanagh

The decision by Sligo County Council to adopt The Brightening Air – County Sligo Arts Plan 2002-2005 is a major watershed in local cultural development. To mark and celebrate its publication, I was invited by the Arts Office to provide an overview of major achievements in Sligo's arts and cultural environment. This piece was also commissioned to pay tribute to the many individuals, groups and organisations, past and present who, through their enthusiasm and commitment to the promotion and development of the arts, have made Sligo the vibrant cultural centre it is today.

As I considered how to approach the task three themes recurred—tradition, continuity and development. Through this overview I hope to provide you, the reader, with a sense of how we have arrived at this point and where we are going in the future.

Sligo has a rich and distinguished cultural legacy, is renowned for its own unique musical 'style' noted for the ornamentation of the playing, easily recognisable to the cognoscenti. Three figures of international stature in the field were born or lived in the south of the county - James Morrison, Michael Coleman and Paddy Killoran. Perhaps the most famous of these, Coleman, achieved greatest fame, not at home, but in the urban immigrant enclaves of the New World. Comhaltas branches are vibrant throughout the County and the increasingly popular traditional music summer schools preserve and develop a form that is healthier than ever.

Early opportunity to identify and shape young talent resides in the annual Feis Ceol and Feis Shligigh, which continue to exercise

teacher and pupil in the weeks before Easter. The demand for skills needed to ensure good competitive performance has over the years spawned a number of Speech, Drama and Dance Schools. These provide vital training that later fuels choral, musical and theatrical activities.

Sligo is well known for choirs and local productions of light opera, pantomime and musical whose choruses are regularly boosted by choir members.

Interest has proven sufficiently passionate to enable the founding of the Sligo International Choral Festival. Now in its 15th year, it is a major choral festival attracting participants locally, nationally and internationally.

For many, Sligo is most associated with the works of WB Yeats. For over forty years the Yeats Society has nurtured interest in the poetry and its importance to Sligo – the Yeats International Summer School was for many years the sole provider of contact with visiting literary figures. The Society's focus on academic responses to literature opened the door for locally based writers to establish writer's groups and develop outlets for contemporary work.

Jack B. Yeats' ever growing reputation sees him regarded as the finest visual artist to emerge from Ireland. A lover of Sligo, like his poet brother, he stated that there is no canvas of his which does not have a piece of Sligo in it and his response to the landscape has left us a unique body of paintings.

Theatre too has a long and successful history with amateur groups thriving and over the years conquering audiences locally and judges nationally as Sligo Drama Circle, Everyman, Coolera and Tubbercurry's Phoenix Players won national titles in all categories in national drama competitions.

However, tradition is not a static concept but one that is continuously evolving, being

Tradition, Continuity & Development cont.

BIOGRAPHY

John Kavanagh a native of Sligo is a poet and playwright. Winner of the Listowel Poetry Prize in 1988, he has two collections of poetry published by Salmon Press with a third forthcoming in 2003. He was a member of the Yeats Council for over ten years.

To date he has had four plays produced. In April 2002 Naxos released his two CD set audio book compilation of 'The Life and Poetry of W.B. Yeats'.

enriched and transformed by contemporary interpretations and influences. Thus unique cultural legacies continue to grow and flourish across art forms.

In traditional music one cannot ignore two more recent Sligo based major talents of the latter part of the 20th century – fiddler Joe O'Dowd and flautist Josie McDermott. Lest we be accused of looking only inward, Dervish, among the finest contemporary traditional groups, though locally based are globally in demand, taking Sligo music as far away as Japan and Brazil. Another interesting young talent is Tommy Fleming, steadily carving a reputation at home and abroad as an emotional interpreter of both traditional ballad and newer Irish songs.

In the classical genre the very talented local violinist Niamh Crowley recently established the Sligo Academy of Music to provide much needed instrumental tuition opportunities for the young and the not so young. In response to growing interest local music promoters Con Brio bring some of the most exciting solo and small ensemble performers to the locale.

Music culture in Sligo has taken on more exotic and indeed ambitious hue with the Sligo Early Music Ensemble and the founding of a festival based on early and Baroque Music.

On popular musical fronts the county has gained newer prominence with the Westlife phenomenon, with three of the group members hailing from the town.

Other well known and influential local figures are the brilliant jazz guitarist Michael Nielsen and musician and composer James Blennerhassett, both children of talented

amateur musician parents who are well known contributors to local music activities. The specific space along with the technological skills required for contemporary pop and rock are currently available at the St. Anne's Centre for Music Skills, a major initiative in an urban area long in need of creative outlets.

The ongoing strength of drama and theatre is evidenced in that Sligo boasts not one, but two excellent professionally run theatres, the Hawk's Well and the Factory Performance Space. The Hawk's Well owes its existence to the passion and energies of the town's amateur players and has developed into one of the foremost regional theatres in the country. The Factory Performance Space, home of the Blue Raincoat Theatre company and brainchild of company founders director Niall Henry and playwright Malcolm Hamilton, has gained recognition as a space which is home to Ireland's most consistently innovative theatre company.

On the literary front the vibrancy of the town and the beauty of its surroundings has drawn writers such as Pat McCabe, Dermot Healy, Leland Bardwell, Molly McCloskey, Ronan Bennett and Eoin Mac Namee who live in the region.

The Scriobh Literary Festival attracts an international programme each autumn and two infrequent, though important journals – the widely respected 'Force 10', local and regional in flavour – and the more pluralistic Flaming Arrows which prints local, national and international writers – have proved to be quality forums for Sligo writers to have their work published and distributed.

In the visual arts the legacy of Jack B Yeats has given rise to a distinct artistic group – the Sligo Landscape School whose three major figures including Jack B Yeats are the late Paddy Collins and the contemporary

master Sean McSweeney. This lineage and its influence on Irish painting, along with the enormous successes of the Fine Arts programmes of the locally based Institute of Technology enable the region to attract visual artists to live, learn and work in Sligo. There is an unusually high proportion of young visual artists who make up Sligo's creative community including such major figures as McSweeney and Barry Cook.

The works of Yeats, McSweeney and others form the core of an internationally significant collection housed at the magnificent Model Arts and Niland Gallery on Sligo's Mall, which along with Sligo Art Gallery provide space for artist and art lover to view and exhibit works. The Mall based gallery, one of the most lauded facilities of its type in Ireland, also serves as a fully functioning Arts Centre.

No overview can ignore the cultural watershed that was Sligo Arts Festival. Commencing in 1984 as Sligo Community Arts Group, it quickly jettisoned the community tag and turned, under founder John O'Dea, to broader horizons. The organisers taking substantial risks in the first three years or so in a depressed economy provided superb programming that drew a magnificent response from the community.

In its heyday Sligo Arts Festival exemplified what a vibrant arts environment can contribute to the quality of peoples lives. The Arts Festival also demonstrated the importance of making the arts available to people on a continuing, coherent and planned basis. The post festival world suggests the need to formulate arts policies to secure resources, develop support structures and invest in arts and cultural infrastructure in order to provide a solid foundation for ongoing arts development.

It is for this reason that the decision by Sligo County Council to establish the County

Arts Office in 1997 was pivotal. A central role of the office is to assist in developing public awareness and appreciation of the arts and to increase opportunities for the practice of the arts.

'Placing Art' 1998-2001 contributed much to Sligo's arts and cultural environment. Initiatives such as the Vogler Quartet in Sligo Residency programme and the establishment of County Sligo Youth Theatre are key develop-ments in music and drama. The former is one of the most significant high level cultural developments in the County in recent years and unique within the State and the latter will nurture development amongst a vital sector of the community's future cultural expression.

The Brightening Air – County Sligo's Arts Plan 2002-2005 is a major step by Sligo County Council to address identified arts and cultural development needs. Its successful implementation should ensure that the traditional base and future potential of art and artist will be protected and developed.

Emerging initiatives will emerge for existing and new forms through a structured approach to resourcing and information, programming and development, opportunity and cross sector linkages and infrastructural projects. This should ensure that the arts, their practitioners and audiences enjoy fuller integration into the life of the county and its citizens in turn, a more fully integrated life.

JK

Preface

by Hubert Kearns, County Manager

County Sligo has a beautiful and unspoiled landscape, which is steeped in mythology, music, archaeology and history. It is a mystical place full of presence and wonder. This powerful setting attracts artists, creating a dynamic and diverse environment where works of imagination infuse and enlighten the fabric of life in the County.

The development of the arts is therefore important to us; but it is also important for other reasons.

As a society, Ireland has developed rapidly in recent years and this economic improvement is now affording us a standard of living comparable with other European Countries. Our physical development or infrastructure still lags behind most western countries and this is the subject of much public debate and is a major issue for the Council.

The development of our human capacity is equally if not more important – this is the infrastructure of life. It is here that the arts have an invaluable role to play in exploring and stretching our senses, our imagination and our experiences of life. This is particularly so in the new information-based society that is increasingly global, materialistic and individualistic.

There is a need to promote the values of civil society, namely civic pride, participation and the collective celebration of identity and diversity. In this regard the arts perform three very special functions they build, they bond and they bridge. They build individuals, as involvement in the arts helps the individual to become more rounded, more informed and more critically aware. The arts bond people by encouraging community

engagement and social integration. They also bridge differences between those who don't share the same interests, views or concerns.

A compelling work was the public art event, 'Owning the Space' created by Imelda Peppard. The venue the Rockwood Youth Centre was full to capacity. Listening from outside, I heard muffled sounds, expectant shuffling and coughing, which gave way to silence as the audience was drawn in by the performance. The ensuing experience was captivating. When the doors finally opened to the enthusiastic applause of a full house the sense of pride in the achievement by all concerned was palpable. This artist created a powerful artistic encounter, which involved local people celebrating ownership, identity and place.

Such artistic encounters were characteristic of the many projects I experienced in the delivery of our arts development programme 'Placing Art' 1998-2001. The successful completion of 'Placing Art' and its evaluation outcomes provide us with a solid foundation on which to build for the future, together with a clear context for the ongoing development of arts policies and planning.

Public awareness and appreciation of the distinct contribution the arts can make to social, economic and cultural development in the County has increased and with it the demand for more expansive arts programming and services.

The Arts Plan 2002-2005 is the process by which Sligo County Council will deliver on the above. I look forward with enthusiasm and confidence to the delivery of the plan's objectives.



Hubert Kearns, County Manager.

Foreword

by Martin Drury

In a school in Easkey a boy called Brendan is listening to a string quartet whose name sounds like a German foot-baller. He feels the dark brown music of the 'cello vibrate in his breastbone.

Because his local authority knows that this enriches the quality of Brendan's life.

An elderly man in Maugherow works with a ten-year old girl in applying coloured paper to willow moistened overnight by an artist.

Because their local authority understands the power of the arts to provide occasions for young and old to work and play together and the social value of such interaction.

A freezing winter evening in Sligo is dispelled as 300 people are drawn into the web of a drama first played before the citizens of ancient Athens.

Because the local authority wants the people it serves to have access to high-quality cultural experiences.

Near Collooney a dog licks a man's hand, wondering why he has interrupted his morning walk to (surreptitiously) place his head on a carved pillow stone in Knoxspark.

Because his local authority endorses a partnership between several agencies to create exciting connections between art, history and landscape, so renewing a community's identity, its 'sense of place'.

All the way home in the car to Ballysadare, Ruth talks incessantly to her mother about the movement workshop she has just done with Sligo Youth Theatre.

Because their local authority supports the development of a resource where young people, under the guidance of experienced professionals, can be actively engaged in making

drama and theatre that is close to their lives.

Jan and Inge, a Dutch couple, are walking around the Model Arts and Niland Gallery, discovering that the poet they knew had a brother they did not. They decide to stay for the lunchtime reading.

Because local and national authorities are collaborating to support the development of a centre of excellence where tradition is an ever-evolving force, enriching the lives of locals and visitors alike.

We live in challenging times. Market forces that would commodify us as client, consumer and customer dominate our lives and, certainly in material terms, most of us have never had it so good. And yet our age is characterised by a kind of spiritual restlessness. It is as if the voraciousness of our appetite to have cannot mask the intensity of our hunger to be. One alternative to the triumph of market forces is that we look to ourselves, to our community leaders, and to our elected public representatives and public officials, to take a series of strategic actions that address our need to be not just a consumer but also a citizen, our desire not only to make a living but also to make a life.

Culture is the life we make. We can either make that life ourselves or surrender to those who would make it for us and export it to us. Making our lives, on some kind of agreed basis that balances private and public good, is central to the project of democracy. Here may be found the point of intersection between local government and the arts. Because, just as local government might be described as a central building block of democracy, so the arts can be described as a central building block of culture.

The relationship between local government and the arts in Ireland is still both nascent and nervous. Something similar could be said justifiably about the relationship between the arts and planning.

Foreword cont.

BIOGRAPHY

Martin Drury is a theatre director and arts consultant. His varied career in the arts began as Arts Education Officer of Co. Sligo VEC (1979-1981). Since then he has held a variety of key positions including Artistic Director of TEAM Educational Theatre (1981-1984); Education Officer of the Arts Council (1985-1990); Founder-Director of The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children (1992-2001). He has also spent periods as a freelance theatre director and is currently an Associate Director of the National Theatre Society (The Abbey and Peacock Theatres), as well as Honorary Fellow of Psychology at UCD.

In part, that is why this first Sligo Arts Plan is important both locally and nationally. The success of the local authorities arts development programme 'Placing Art' (1998-2001) lies not so much in the series of planned, sequenced and developmental actions it facilitated, though these are impressive. More remarkable is the yoking of the principles of better local government with those of high-quality contemporary arts planning. For it is this fusion that has resulted in strategically-driven actions rather than simply a list of random activities.

What is compelling about what has been achieved to date is the marking out of a shared and rich agenda deriving from the connections between the arts and so many aspects of community life such as education, health, housing and the environment. This shared agenda has been mirrored by a matrix of organisational relationships and partnerships that have secured the sustainability of the actions taken.

Remarkable too has been the sophisticated sense of tradition that has informed

much of the work undertaken. It is not difficult, especially in Sligo, to claim a cultural inheritance retrospectively, to embrace tradition and to assert identity from past glories, be they archaeological, musical or poetic. It is much harder to renew tradition and to create the contexts within which new identities are forged.

It takes a sophisticated political courage to translate ideals and principles like these into action, to argue for defining values above the clamour of pressing needs, to cling onto what's important in the midst of the avalanche of what's urgent, to favour coherent actions over multiple activities. It is clear that in the town and county of Sligo, policy-led planning has provided a framework that translates these values and ideals into practice.

Good arts planning makes a contribution to better local government, to the benefit of Brendan in Easkey, Ruth in Ballysadare and countless thousands of other Sligo citizens.

MD

Setting the Context

The activities of Sligo County Council touch every citizen of the County. Services impact on the quality of the environment in which we live, work, and on the housing, roads, water and other services we use. Sligo County Council plays a role in leading, supporting and developing the economic, social and cultural development of the county. The arts not only constitute a central element of our cultural identity but can also play a key role in assisting the Local Authorities to achieve their development objectives and promote the quality of life of its people.

The Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands is the government department charged with overall funding and planning for national arts and cultural policy development. The Department vests authority in the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon established by Government in 1951 as the agency with statutory responsibility for the arts in Ireland. Two important recent developments are the publication of the Arts Council's Arts Plan 2002-2006 and a new Arts Bill. This Bill repeals existing arts legislation from 1951 and 1973.

While the Arts Council is charged with the development of the arts on a national basis, Local Authorities are ideally positioned to co-ordinate and plan for the arts at a local level. The publication of this Arts Plan by Sligo County Council marks a significant step in local arts development as it is the first Arts Plan for the County.

Sligo County Council established the Arts Office in 1997 with assistance from the Arts Council of Ireland / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

A key focus of the work of the Arts Office since its inception was the design and implementation of the arts development programme 'Placing Art' 1998-2001.

The programme was a strategic response to address the needs of arts development in the county. It was designed and delivered by the Arts Office on behalf of the local authority members.

Placing Art had three primary goals:

- *To increase opportunities for access to and participation in the arts through action research, evaluation and arts policy development.*
- *To develop more long-term sustainable services through partnership and interagency co-operation.*
- *To promote Quality by supporting innovation and targeting resources.*

Setting the Context cont.

The strategy involved establishing three-year pilot projects in a variety of contexts as follows:

Development Context

Community Arts & Education

Pilot Project Action

The Maugherow Project 1998-2001

Development Context

Youth Arts

Pilot Project Action

County Sligo Youth Theatre 1998-2001

Development Context

Art Form

Pilot Project Action

Vogler Quartet Residency 1999-2002

Development Context

Public Space

Pilot Project Action

Art commissions under the DOELG Per Cent for Art Scheme 1999-2001

Partnerships developed with agencies and groups were central to the programmes success and to the realisation of its stated goals. The partnership network established

to support the programme expanded funding sources for it. Sligo County Council, Sligo Borough Council and the Arts Council of Ireland were the core funders. Other sources included : The North Western Health Board, IRMA Trust, Department of Education & Science in Career Development Unit, ESB, Special Support Programme for Peace & Reconciliation, Department of the Environment & Local Government, National Roads Authority and the Cohesion Fund of the European Union.

In addition to the direct pilot action research initiatives listed above the Arts Office advised the local authorities on the disbursement of grants and awards, arts building projects and provided arts information and advice to the public.

Evaluation & Learning Outcomes from the 'Placing Art' Programme

contemporary art, involving information about public collections, liaison with artists, some aspects of curation, responsibility for selection to the wider community – in short ownership”²

As a new programme of work, all 'Placing Art' projects were independently evaluated. The learning from this programme ensures that this first Arts Plan for County Sligo is relevant and appropriate to addressing the needs of the arts and provides value for money.

The following random selection of quotes taken from evaluation and other written material celebrates the impact of 'Placing Art' projects on those involved and the general arts environment in County Sligo.

- *“Placing Art identifies public art’s space at community and parish levels, where it reflects and transforms the best imaginings of local people and artists in ways and places that simply couldn’t have been imagined before. Most of all, it shows us that getting things right is a matter of choice. Quality public art never talks down to people: it speaks directly to them”¹*

- *“This project represents one of the most significant advances in the direct empowerment of a community group in relation to*

- *“...After so many meetings now we had something to show, something to be proud of and a great sense of achievement and a lot of pleasure for us...”³*

- *“From June 2001 the Youth Theatre’s first Board will be in place. It inherits a Youth Theatre that has a good public profile and strong internal commitment for it to continue. It has a membership, past and present, that feels very positive about the Youth Theatre’s existence. It has the support of key arts and theatre organisations in Sligo as well as the Local Authorities. It has access to excellent theatre spaces and an office in the Factory Space.”⁴*

- *“I love the atmosphere. You are encouraged to try new things experiment with characters and learn new techniques - all in a supportive atmosphere. I love meeting new, fun and interesting people with the same interests as me. I love the opportunity to be part of a great performance and to explore all areas of production. I love all the workshops and really feel at home in the Factory.”⁵*

¹ Medb Ruane, Foreword, Public Art Strategy Group Report.

² Catherine Marshall IMMA, facilitator of the People’s Purchase, Weighbridge.

³ Member of Weighbridge Purchase Group.

⁴ Evaluation report on County Sligo Youth Theatre 1998-2001.

⁵ County Sligo Youth Theatre member.

Evaluation & Learning Outcomes from the 'Placing Art' Programme

⁶ Michael Dervan, *Irish Times*
Leader Article, May 1999.

⁷ Evaluation report on County
Sligo Youth Theatre 1998-2001

⁹ Interim evaluation report on
the Vogler String Quartet in
Residence Programme.

¹⁰ Vogler Quartet in Sligo,
Teacher, ESB Music Education
Programme.

¹¹ Evaluation Report on the
Maugherow Project.

¹² Maugherow Project Participant.

¹³ Maugherow Project Participant.

¹⁴ Maugherow Project Participant.

- *"The appointment of the Vogler String Quartet from Berlin as quartet-in-residence in Sligo will surely stand as a milestone in Ireland's musical life."*⁶

- *"The (ESB Vogler Spring) Festival deserves to survive well beyond the initial period of the Voglers residence."*⁷

- *"...while the Vogler Quartet is making educational history in Sligo..."*⁸

- *"This project has facilitated a process of music education for students while at the same time capacity building teachers to deliver music training modules. These educational processes are transferable to other art form areas and are already being integrated into teaching methodologies in some of the schools."*⁹

- *"We see the children in the school talk about the quartet and talk about the instruments, they take it as second nature. They have learned a lot, basically through fun*

*and they're not aware of the fact that they are learning the information."*¹⁰

- *"The practical aspects were put in place – a bus to pick up people and take them home, a good working space in the modern school hall, materials and tools. The first artist was recruited. The programme evolved. Initially the older people found it difficult to understand that they were so important to the process of what happened. They shared the planning of themes, they negotiated the level of their involvement."*¹¹

- *"I found out that older people have very creative and imaginative minds."*¹²

- *"Being involved with the children seems to energise us"*¹³

- *"Life long learning enables us to catch up on any subject of our choice we may have missed earlier. It's like a new lease of life... It's great to be alive and fit to take part in it all. As the younger people say... it's cool."*¹⁴

















LISSADELL km
5

HOUSE

FEARANNUICHEARNAIGH
CARNEY
LIOS A'DAILL
LISSADELL 2½

MAUGHEROW



MOUNTAIN VIEW km

House Accom. 1

Dunfore
Farmhouse



9
km

FAVOURITE



















The Arts Plan Mission Statement

Sligo County Council will create:

Opportunities for the citizens of Sligo to make, share and participate in high quality artistic processes.

—

Possibilities for artists to imagine, innovate and create work of excellence.

—

Time, space and support for those who would create expressions of self, community and place.

The Arts Plan Key Policy Areas

A central tenet of Sligo County Council's arts policy is to facilitate and support opportunities to enhance the environment in which art is made, engaged with and received.

The implementation of this Arts Plan is the process by which maximum impact on the local arts environment will be achieved over the coming three years. As a first step the Arts Office has identified five key areas for development under the Plan.

The Artist

Sligo has a vibrant and growing community of artists. The Sligo local authorities value the enriching contribution artists make to the quality of our collective cultural experiences and will continue to encourage and support opportunities that assist in the development of their creative potential.

Social Inclusion

The arts have the capacity to contribute to personal and community development. They hold a unique role in achieving a level of personal and group expression through creative approaches that many other activities can't facilitate. Through engagement with education, health and community development agencies, the arts can reach more people and take on added relevance to every day life.

The local authorities will continue to impact on the creative life of the community by encouraging and facilitating opportunities for self-expression, experimentation and innovation.

The Arts Sector

County Sligo is fortunate to have a number of dedicated and specialist arts organisations and institutions who deliver arts programmes of excellence, many of whom have gained a reputation for their work outside the County. Collectively this represents a significant body of arts experience and expertise. The Sligo local authorities recognise this as an asset they wish to harness and partner in order to fulfill the broad remit of supporting and integrating the arts into the wider social, cultural and economic life of the County.

Physical Space Environment

The physical spaces we inhabit impact greatly on the quality of our lives. Whether that space be work, leisure, living or recreational – each are affected by architecture, design, ergonomics and atmosphere. An artist's involvement in the process of designing and creating our lived and natural environments can add a sense of inquiry, surprise, contemplation and additional quality.

The Sligo local authorities will support the involvement of artists in the development of public spaces.

Arts Infrastructure

Relative to its size and population Sligo has emerged as having a strong and developed arts infrastructure. In recent years the Sligo local authorities, in partnership with local groups and agencies, have assisted or contributed to the development of a number of spaces of distinction, which support the creation, exhibition and performance of the arts. These include the Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Ceoláras Coleman, the Factory Performance Space and the Hawk's Well Theatre. The Sligo local authorities will continue to plan for and invest in the development of dedicated arts facilities.

The Arts Plan Core Services

Changes in local government under the strategic reform programme 'Better Local Government: A Programme for Change' have increased the impetus of Local Authorities to ensure that arts and cultural provision is integrated into the range of services offered at a local level.

*Over the past twenty years policy-makers in Europe have gradually placed the arts in a cultural setting. According to UNESCO "In the widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group". Hence in this view the arts are not so much a separate sphere of activity as a series of interactions, which reach from its creative and reflective core into people's everyday lives.*¹⁵

County Sligo Arts Plan is informed by this holistic definition of the arts. The Arts Office is open to receiving proposals for projects in all art forms across service areas.

The Arts Plan will be delivered and managed by the Arts Office under the following three service areas.

- **Information and Resourcing**
- **Programming and Development**
- **Linkages and Infrastructure**

Although presented as three distinct areas of service there will be a high degree of crossover and inter-linkage between the service areas listed.

The Arts Plan is intended to provide an overview and a clear direction for work to be carried out by the Arts Office over the three-year time frame. It will be supported by annual Operational Plans which will provide the detail of projects and work being carried out in each service area.

The structure for each service area comprises an identified goal that outlines the aim of the service, supporting objectives that expand and develop the goal further and a number of direct actions designed to ensure the delivery of the service. These goals, objectives and actions will form the basis for ongoing evaluation of the plan.

¹⁵ *The Creative Imperative*, page 9 paragraph 2.5, Arts Council 2000.

The Arts Plan Information and Resourcing

Goal

Expand arts information and resource services for artists, the broader arts sector and the public.

Supporting Objectives

- Further develop capacity to deliver an enhanced information service.
- Encourage and support the development of local arts networks.
- Further develop capacity to respond to requests for specialist arts advice and expertise.
- Seek to increase existing levels of funding available to local arts organisations and events.
- Establish an innovation fund, which supports creative ventures and provides greater opportunities for individual artists.

Direct Actions

- *Develop a comprehensive website incorporating a directory of artists, arts organisations and arts facilities, a What's On Guide, funding information, archive facility and an interactive events diary.*
- *Continue to produce the advance arts and cultural listings Sligo Events Quarterly.*
- *Promote and publicise Local Authority Arts Services.*
- *Promote and encourage the exchange of information and skills within the Arts Sector locally.*
- *Continue to commission and publish critical comment, with a view to increasing debate in relation to arts policy development, planning and programming.*

- *Produce resource materials arising out of arts development work commissioned through the Local Authorities' Arts Programme and continue to disseminate learning and expertise gained through action research and development initiatives.*
- *Monitor requests for advice in order to develop a system that facilitates an efficient and effective response.*
- *Seek to increase the financial support allocated to organisations, individuals and groups in a transparent and accountable manner.*

It is proposed that funding will be allocated under the following categories:

Innovation Fund

Establish project funding for innovative, experimental and original arts proposals.

Establish procedures for fixed term funding to support creative ventures on the understanding that the venture would become funded by another source at the end of an agreed period.

Individual Artists

Expand direct support to individual artists through bursaries, awards, residencies and project commissions.

Revenue Funding

Establish a formal process to address applications from organisations/groups for financial support on an ongoing annual basis.

Community Arts Act Grant Scheme

Continue to administer Sligo County Council's annual grant allocation to encourage and support community-based arts activity.

The Arts Plan Programming and Development

Goal

Design and deliver an innovative arts programme, which extends the range of opportunities for Artists to create work and the public to engage with and participate in the arts.

Initiate research, which will assist the further integration of the arts into the social and cultural life of the county.

Supporting Objectives

- Continue to promote high standards of practice and quality in arts provision.
- Facilitate creative processes through direct project initiatives, and aim to increase capacity to support independent project proposals.
- Increase opportunities for artists to create and present their work.
- Encourage and promote a diversity of cultural experience and exchange.
- Improve the quality of people's experience in community, health and education contexts by facilitating integrated arts interventions.
- Facilitate and support the professional development of practising artists who wish to work in social contexts.
- Encourage networking and the exchange of skills among artists.

Direct Actions

- *Continue to research and present models of good practice in arts development, drawing on local, national and international initiatives.*
- *Endeavor to support local groups and organisations who wish to develop arts projects in keeping with development priorities stated in this Arts Plan.*

- *Design and deliver a programmed series of arts events to inform, educate and entertain.*
- *Increase opportunities for artists to present their work through this series via exhibition and performance.*
- *Increase work opportunities for artists through project commissions, residencies and workshops delivered through the arts programme.*
- *Facilitate inter- cultural projects, events and residency initiatives.*
- *Form a strategic working partnership with the North-Western Health Board to develop arts policies and projects within their CHOICES pilot programme, building on learning from the Maugherow project.*
- *Collaborate with other agencies to design and deliver relevant arts learning opportunities for health/community professionals and artists wishing to work in health/community environments.*
- *In collaboration with Sligo Leader Partnership design, plan and implement a programme, which will facilitate the professional development of practising artists who wish to work in social contexts.*
- *Form a strategic partnership with Sligo Education Centre to develop models, which facilitate the inclusion of professional arts practice in the classroom.*
- *Work with the Maugherow Project steering group to develop a sustainable plan for the project's future. Support the design and implementation of a model integrated arts plan for St Patrick's National School, Maugherow.*
- *Continue to facilitate the Vogler Quartet in Sligo residency programme. In phase two, emphasis will be placed on maximising inter-relationships between existing programme areas, together with facilitating a planned exit strategy to ensure sustainable supports for classical music development in the future.*

The Arts Plan

Linkages and Infrastructure

Goal

Advocate the role of the arts in a cross sector context, in contributing to an enhanced quality of life.

Supporting Objectives

- Promote the role of the arts within the local authority and further the integration of the arts in local authority services.
- Promote sustainable arts development through the consolidation of existing partnerships and the development of new partnerships.
- Continue to invest in strategic planning and seek to influence arts policy development across sectors.
- Expand the range of cultural facilities for the creation, presentation and support of the arts.
- Enhance the natural and lived environment through the promotion and facilitation of arts interventions.

Direct Actions

- *Seek to ensure quality liaison with the Elected Members, Management Team, Strategic Policy Committees and the County Development Board.*
- *Circulate information concerning plans, activities etc. across local authority departments and in turn respond to opportunities for inter-departmental co-operation and collaboration.*
- *Contribute to the development of new local authority cultural facilities including enhanced provision for public access to arts services.*

- *Convene a formal communication process among the arts sector in the County with a view to identifying local needs, informing future arts planning and policy development.*
- *Convene an arts education representative group to devise an action plan to facilitate planned development in the area of arts education, within and without the formal education sectors.*
- *Co-operate with County Sligo Leader Partnership Company to implement its plan for integrated community arts interventions in rural and urban locations.*
- *Develop a new working relationship with the recently established board of County Sligo Youth Theatre to build its capacity and facilitate its transition to independent status.*
- *Work with local performing arts groups to develop a plan which will address the need for affordable rehearsal spaces and specialist resource facilities.*
- *Form a working group to develop a strategic plan which will address the need for an increase in the number of artist's workspaces.*
- *Collaborate with the Public Art Officer in the preparation, presentation and delivery of the County Sligo Public Art Plan 2002-2006.*

The Arts Plan Delivering the Plan

This first plan for the arts holds a broader and more inclusive vision for arts development, operating at many levels. A central tenet of the Sligo Arts Plan is the creation and delivery of local authority arts services. The Arts Office with associated specialist and administrative support, will provide the services with the necessary resources to achieve its objectives. Core resources can be summarised as follows;

- *Consolidation of existing staff within the section.*
- *Ongoing staff training and development.*
- *A permanent base for the Arts Office offering broader public access.*
- *Ensure appropriate levels of funding from Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council.*

The County Arts Service will be provided and funded by Sligo County Council. Budgets for the County Arts programme will be made available by Sligo Borough Council and augmented by development partners and private sponsors.

County Sligo Arts Plan 2002-2005 will form the basis of a multi-annual funding agreement with the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon under the National Arts Plan.

Sligo Arts Plan outlines objectives, which Sligo County Council sees as invaluable elements of the cultural, social and economic development of County Sligo. It is informed by a holistic ethos in which the arts impact on our lives and on our society in many different ways. There is a role to play for many more organisations in the public and private sector. Through the publication of this plan Sligo County Council is endeavoring to lead and facilitate new investment and support for the arts. Success will require a positive input from many agencies with broad social, economic and cultural remits.

The Arts Plan

Monitoring Evaluation & Review

The introduction of a corporate environment that involves strategic planning is ensuring that review and evaluation are becoming more formalised. Accountability and transparency are essential elements within Local Authority service provision and will be augmented by operational planning, target setting and an increased emphasis on customer service.

The Local Authorities have put in place an evaluation framework for all service areas. Partners in developing the framework include; The Corporate Policy Group, The Elected Council, the Partnership Committee and Customer Representation. Progress reports in all areas will be presented to Council.

This Arts Plan is a new body of work and as such both the service and the projects within it will be evaluated from a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

Appendix 1 Consultation Process

Placing Art Arts Development Programme 1998-2001

Consultations with participants, facilitators, boards, steering groups and key personnel took place in the context of the pilot projects under this programme. These consultations formed the basis for evaluation and review and fed into the preparation of the draft County Sligo Arts Plan 2002-2005.

Sectoral Consultation

A copy of the draft plan and a presentation on the Arts Development Programme was delivered to members of County Development Board, SPC4, Sligo Leader Partnership Board, Sligo Leader Partnership Cultural Sub-Committee and the Community Forum.

Public Consultation

A copy of the draft plan was available for inspection by the public from Wednesday 13th February to Wednesday 20th March 2002 at the following locations:

Reception, Sligo County Council, Riverside / Community & Enterprise Office, Sligo Development Centre, Cleveragh Road / Reception, Sligo Borough Council, City Hall / Sligo County Council Website www.sligococo.ie / Libraries: Sligo Branch Library, Stephen Street / Sligo Reference Library, Bridge Street / Ballymote Branch Library / Enniscrone Branch Library / Tubbercurry Branch Library.

Readers were invited to view and respond to the draft Plan by returning written submissions which identify issues and needs relating to the development of the arts locally and mechanisms to address them.

Arts Sector Consultation

The following arts groups, organisations and individuals were invited to consultation sessions. A review of the draft plan and a presentation on the Arts Programme to date was delivered on 26th February, 5th March and 20th March in The Model Arts & Niland Gallery and on 21st March in Sligo Education Centre.

Hawk's Well Theatre / Sligo International Choral Festival / Blue Raincoat Theatre Company / Model Arts & Niland Gallery / Sligo Art Gallery / Yeats Society / Ceoláras Coleman / Con Brio / Sligo Academy of Music / Sligo Early Music Ensemble / County Sligo Youth Theatre / The Cat & Moon / Apple Loft Gallery / Kids Own Publishing Partnership / Storm Dance Company / Village Artists / St Anne's Youth & Community Centre / VEC Arts Education Organiser / Sligo Leader Community Arts Development Work / Sligo Leader Community Arts Sub Committee / Private Practise Arts Workers / Individual Artists / Sligo School Project / Sligo Education Centre / North Western Health Board / Dha Ean / Sonas / Sligo Institute of Technology, South Sligo Summer School / Coleman Traditional Festival / James Morrison Weekend / Ballintogher Traditional Festival / Feis Shligigh / Fred Finn Branch CCE / Western Drama Festival / Mougherow Drama & Entertainment Group / Live & Original Community Arts Club / The Warriors Festival / Women Together / Calry Show / Phoenix Players / Sligo Concert Band / Riddle Feet Productions / Sligo Feis Ceoil / Ballyrush Feis / Amaryllis Choir / Coolera Dramatic Society / Everyman Productions / Sligo Drama Circle / Corran Players / Grange Dramatic Society / Yeats Theatre Company / Aclare Development Company Ltd. / Orpheus Choir / Carnaleck Writers / Knocknarea Writers / The Shelley Scribes / Yeats Country Singers / Sligo Musical Society / CLASP / Sligo Film Club / Red Beak Productions / Benwisquin Centre / Stage on Fire / Grange Art Workshops / Daft Productions.

Appendix 2 Public Art Commissions

Artist	Ronnie Hughes
<i>Title</i>	Keepsakes
<i>Type of Work</i>	Installation
<i>Location</i>	Streedagh Beech
<i>Completion Date</i>	June 2000
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo County Council

Artist	Ron Van der Knoll
<i>Title</i>	Metamorphic Portrait of Michael Coleman
<i>Type of Work</i>	Installation
<i>Location</i>	Ceoláras Coleman, Gurteen
<i>Completion Date</i>	December 2000
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo County Council

Artists	Hilary Gilligan Pauline O'Connell Martina Coyle
<i>Title</i>	Regeneration
<i>Type of Work</i>	Sculptural and Environmental Interventions
<i>Location</i>	Knox Park, Co Sligo
<i>Completion Date</i>	October 2000
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo County Council

Artist	Laura Gannon
<i>Title</i>	Underswim
<i>Type of Work</i>	Film
<i>Location</i>	Old Jail, Sligo, North Sligo Partnership, Forthill
<i>Completion Date</i>	April 2000
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo County Corporation

Artist	Ronnie Hughes
<i>Title</i>	People's Purchase
<i>Type of Work</i>	Painting
<i>Location</i>	City Hall, Sligo
<i>Completion Date</i>	June 2000
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo County Corporation

Artist	Imelda Peppard
<i>Title</i>	Owning The Space
<i>Type of Work</i>	Performance
<i>Location</i>	Rockwood Center and the Model & Niland Gallery
<i>Completion Date</i>	September/December 2000
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo County Corporation

Per Cent for Art Commission

Artist	Donald Urquhart
<i>Title</i>	Planes, Lines, Larus, Signus
<i>Type of Work</i>	Installation
<i>Location</i>	Garavogue River
<i>Completion Date</i>	October 2000 – ongoing
<i>Commissioning Authority</i>	Sligo Borough Council and County Council

Public Commissions

<i>Boat, Act, Place</i> , Grace Weir, City Hall, June 2000
<i>Leading Light</i> , Mary Fitzgerald, City Hall, June 2000
<i>County Council</i> , Cathy Carmen, County Hall, April 2000

Appendix 3

Vogler Quartet in Sligo 1999-2002

Partners

Sligo County Council / Sligo Borough Council / Music Network / Arts Council of Ireland

Local Partners and Participants

Sligo Academy of Music / Con Brio / Model Arts & Niland Gallery / Sligo Early Music Ensemble / St Anne's Youth & Community Centre / Drumcliffe Church & Visitor Centre

Educational Institutions at Primary, Secondary and Third Level

St Brendan's NS, Cartron / Strandhill NS / Owenbeg NS / Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote / Rosses Point NS / Grange NS / St Patrick's NS, Calry / Ardkeerin NS / Coolbock NS / Ballintogher NS / Rathcormack NS / Convent of Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone / Ursuline Convent Secondary School / Sligo Grammar School / Mercy College / Benada Abbey, Tourlestrane / Institute of Technology / St Angela's College.

Sponsors

ESB / In Career Development Unit of Department of Education & Science / IRMA Trust

Specialist Support Team

Artscope (Caroline Wynne) / Marian Jordan / Aileen Donagher McGowan / Elaine Agnew

Evaluator

Annette Clancy

Appendix 4 County Sligo Youth Theatre 1998-2001

Partners

Sligo County Council / Sligo Borough Council / Arts Council of Ireland

Affiliated to

National Association of Youth Drama

Local Partners/Board/Leaders

Blue Raincoat Theatre Company / Hawk's Well Theatre

Interim Board 2000-2001

Jackie Lynch, Youth Sector / Jim Meehan, Management Consultant / Úna McCarthy, Model Arts & Niland Gallery / Pat Forde, Youth Sector / Deirdre Finnerty, Sligo County Council / Denis Clifford, Hawk's Well Theatre / Niall Henry, Blue Raincoat Theatre Company / Tracy Diamond, Youth Theatre Member / Rebecca Lange, Youth Theatre Member.

Board 2001-2003

Jackie Lynch, Youth Sector (Chairman) / Úna McCarthy, Model Arts & Niland Gallery / Niall Henry, Blue Raincoat Theatre Company / Tracy Diamond, Youth Theatre Member / Rebecca Lange, Youth Theatre Member / Jo Conway, Drama Sector / Peter Davey, Drama Sector / Eamon Jordan, Institute of Technology Sligo / Siobhan O Dea, Drama Sector.

Niall Henry, (Leader/Co-ordinator 1998-2001) / Bernadette Meehan (Leader/Administrator) Appointed August 2001.

Evaluator/Consultant

Liz Lennon / Jane Daly, ArtBeat Management Services.

Appendix 5

The Maugherow Project 1998-2001

Partners

Sligo County Council / Sligo Borough Council / Arts Council of Ireland / North Western Health Board / St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow.

Project Steering Group Members

Des Keaney, Community Worker, North Western Health Board / Joe Leonard, Principal, St. Patrick's National School / Mary McAuliffe, Arts Officer, Sligo County Council / Peggy Waters, Project Participant.

Artists and Facilitators 1998 - 2001

Ann O Connor, Project Leader & Arts Facilitator, appointed October 2000 / Sinead Aldridge, Visual Arts Facilitator / Fionnula Gallagher, Drama Facilitator / John McDwyer, Writer / Martina Coyle, Visual Arts Facilitator / Catherine Fanning, Visual Arts Facilitator / Maria Gibbons, Video Worker / Con Lynch, Ceramicist / Brigitta Varadi, Felt Artist / Sorcha Carroll, Drama Facilitator / Aida Bangoura, Visual Artist / Bridget O Connell, Visual Artist / Barry Lynch, Community Development Consultant / Liz Lennon, Community Development Consultant.

Project Evaluator

Alan Tweedie



