



**Sligo
County Council
Arts Service**

Sustain Renew Collaborate

**Sligo Arts Plan
2020 - 2025**

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Sustain Renew Collaborate

County Sligo is a vibrant, artistic county that supports a dynamic, diverse and engaging range of artist livelihoods and arts experiences. The arts make a positive contribution to the lives of individuals and communities. The value of arts and culture to society is best understood when we try to imagine a society without the humanizing influence of the arts. The arts represent much of what is pleasurable in everyday life, as well as much that is educationally critical and socially essential. Without personal expression through the arts, the world would be static and sterile – no creative arguments about the past, no diverse and stimulating present and no dreams of the future.

County Sligo Arts Service for the past 20 years has been to the forefront of cultural development in the county across a range of services and facilities. The challenging economic and social environment within which the local authority has operated has curtailed ambitious plans and limited development over the past number of years but it has not quelled artistic vision and ambition on the part of the arts community in Sligo.

County Sligo Arts Plan 2020 –2025 presents Sligo County Council with an opportunity to restate the value it places on art and artists. The Plan aims to renew Sligo County Council's role as a leading development agency and strategic partner in arts development. Through a range of responsive and new programmes, the local authority will invigorate the artistic and creative life of Sligo with additional resources including new funding streams, connection and co-ordination and deepened relationships among artists and communities.

An agreement between the Arts Council and the County and City Management Association, entitled A Framework for Collaboration, in its 'Statement of Common Purpose', says of the arts:

The arts have had demonstrable impact across the three key pillars of local development; culture; community and economy... We share a conviction about the intrinsic value of the arts and culture in people's lives and we acknowledge the distinctive and important contribution that artists and the arts make to society.









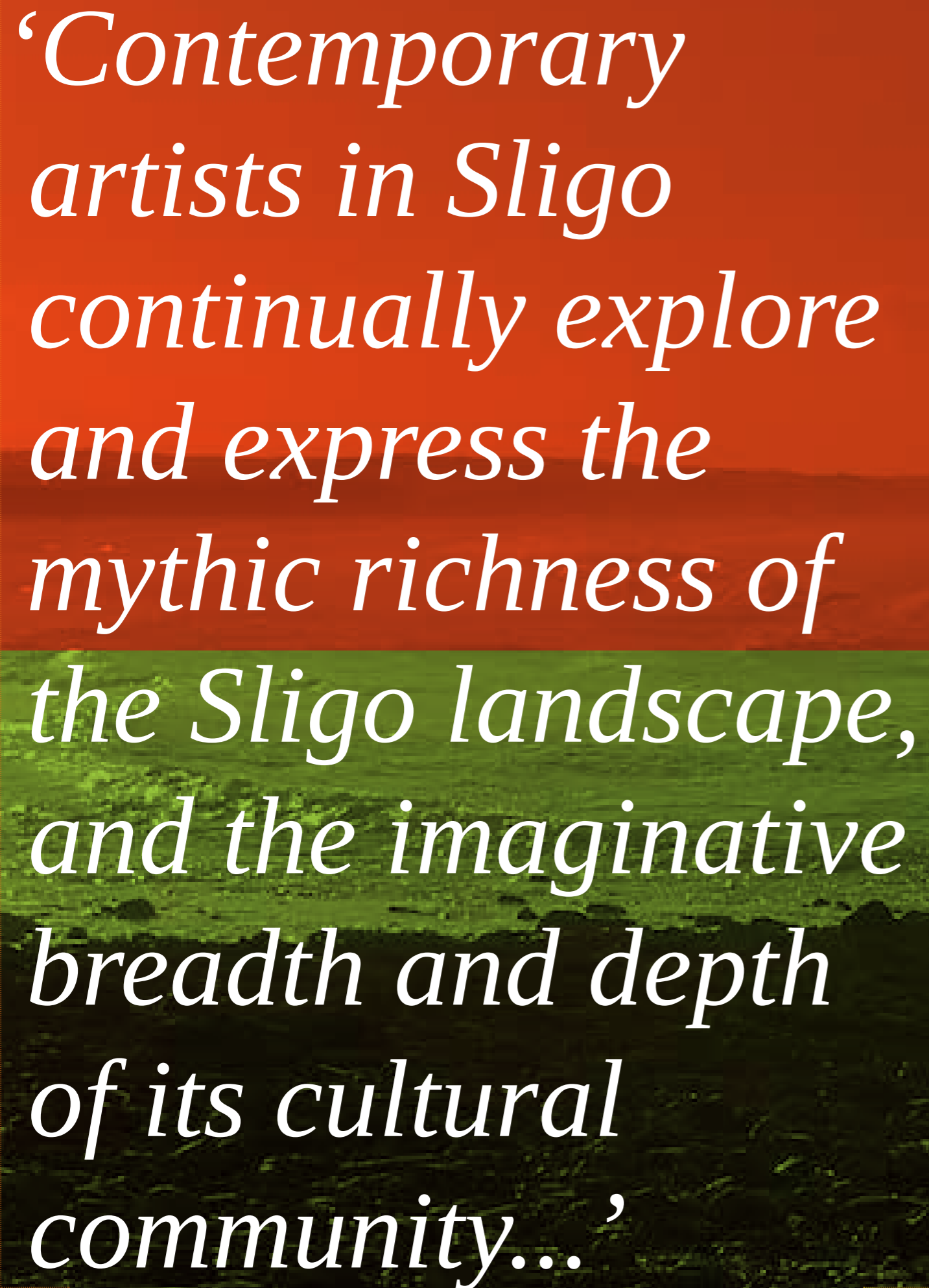


*Kiera O'Toole Day 3 'Drawing Wonder' III,
chalk, algae and sea water on concrete structure,
Dunmorán Strand, Sligo.*



Introduction

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‘Contemporary artists in Sligo continually explore and express the mythic richness of the Sligo landscape, and the imaginative breadth and depth of its cultural community...’

Brian Leyden, writer and broadcaster, frequently draws on the landscape of County Sligo to feed his imagination and ours. Borrowing from Sligo’s own poet, WB Yeats, he recently evoked the richness of the cultural life of the county, which resembles ‘Heavens embroidered cloths’. He goes on to say: ‘Contemporary artists in Sligo continually explore and express the mythic richness of the Sligo landscape, and the imaginative breadth and depth of its cultural community. Each makes his or her own mark, mines Yeats’s extraordinary life’s work for contemporary resonance and, between beaches and hills, stage and create new work in the magnificent theatre without walls, the Sligo landscape’.

It is no surprise that Sligo is home to many thriving and connected communities of artists, creative people and organizations, working in a diverse range of forms and genres. They are visible and recognized for the quality of their thinking, work and contribution to society. The social and economic benefits they bring to the county are understood and valued. People of all ages and from different types of communities from all parts of the county can have deep and meaningful engagement with arts and creativity.

Now and in the future, this Plan will underpin the work of artists and creative people through both financial and empathetic support, so that they have time and space to develop their practice and produce thoughtful, inspiring, high-quality work. Closer collaboration with national agencies including heritage, language, artists, arts organizations, cultural venues and creative enterprises will lead to the best use of resources across urban and rural communities. Arts, creativity and culture will continue to be recognized and celebrated by communities and policy makers alike. Locally distinctive work will be valued and encouraged.



Vision, Mission & Objectives of County Sligo Arts Service

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Vision

To create an environment where the intrinsic value of the arts is widely recognized across all sectors of society and to support an ecosystem where the arts thrive to the benefit of artists, communities and visitors to the county. We aim to make Sligo a place where everyone actively values and celebrates arts and creativity as central to all of our lives; which continually extends its imagination and ways of doing things; and where the arts and culture are confident, connected and thriving.



Mission

County Sligo Arts Service works in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver a high-quality arts service for the people of Sligo and to promote greater public involvement in the arts in a wide range of social and community settings. The Arts Service also works with the arts community to promote culture and creativity as an expression of contemporary Sligo at national and international level.

Sligo Arts Service will work to consolidate artistic activity and to strengthen and promote its position in the broader national and international context. This will be progressed by integrating the arts into Sligo County Council's cultural, social, economic and tourism development policies and by working in partnership with the broader social and economic framework and key stakeholders in Sligo and the region, to ensure the arts are central to civic life in Sligo.

The Plan is dynamic and will be reviewed midway through the five-year timescale to allow for its reorientation where necessary. Evaluation of newly-introduced or reinstated funding schemes and programmes will allow for the Plan to be reflective and responsive.



Role of Sligo Arts Service

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Sligo Arts Service sits in the Directorate of Planning, Community and Economic Development, Arts and Culture. The Head of Arts is the County Librarian who reports to the Director of Services.



The role of Sligo Arts Service is to encourage, foster and support cultural activity in Sligo through a policy-based approach. Sligo local authority has played a crucial role in supporting the vibrant arts and cultural sector ‘making available high-quality experiences across the arts to the benefit of Sligo’s citizens, visitors and artists’ (Sligo Arts Service, *Space for Art 2007–2012*). In 2007, Sligo Arts Service aimed ‘to ensure that Sligo’s long-standing reputation as a “cultural county” is secured and built upon’ (ibid.). Between 2007 and 2013, Sligo County Council embarked on an ambitious journey that saw the arts play a role in regeneration and renewal, creatively responding and breaking new ground with artists, arts organizations and communities throughout the city and county.

Sligo Arts Service for the duration of the 2007–2013 Arts Plan and subsequently, despite much-depleted resources and challenging economic times, ensured that the arts contributed to and supported the social and economic fabric of the county, contributing to the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens.

Sligo Arts Service works in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver a high-quality arts service for the people of Sligo and to promote greater public involvement in the arts in a wide range of social and community settings.

Sligo Arts Service also works with the arts community to promote culture and creativity as an expression of contemporary Sligo at national and international level.

The core values underpinning the work of Sligo Arts Service include:

- » to promote the value of the arts as an essential component in building balanced, inclusive communities with a sense of their own identity
- » to promote inclusiveness and wider access for all citizens who wish to be involved in the arts
- » to develop and deliver an arts service in a fair, open and transparent manner
- » to develop sustainable policies in consultation with the various departments of Sligo County Council, relevant organizations and community groups in the context of local, national and international arts policies and trends.

Since 2014, the staffing levels of Sligo Arts Service have been much depleted with the loss of the Arts Officer position and two staff members taking a secondment and a career break, thereby reducing the staffing to one person until the secondment ceased at the end of 2018.

In view of this changed environment, Sligo Arts Service has been functioning but not reaching its full potential. Arts officers are a crucial resource at local level, working strategically, representing the arts in the county at local and national level and leading out on partnerships and imaginative approaches to ensuring that both artists and communities are best served.

Sligo Arts Service has continued to deliver but has been restricted in finding innovative solutions that would secure and consolidate achievements in local arts provision due to dramatically-reduced financial and human resources. At present, Sligo Arts Service promotes projects and practices that place quality arts experiences in a range of contexts according to the framework established in the previous arts plan, *Space for Art 2007–2012*. Sligo County Council supports a broad range of arts groups, organizations and activities through direct investment and grant aid. The new *Sligo Arts Plan 2020–2025* will aim to find new approaches to investing in and developing the arts in the years ahead. This will be underpinned by a new structure within Sligo Arts Service that will have the capacity to adopt and deliver on these new approaches. This may include procurement of specific services to deliver the objectives of this Plan with temporary contracts of up to five years’ duration.



Future Direction

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Sligo Arts Plan 2020–2025 is the fifth framework document for arts development by Sligo County Council. Rather than replace the previous plan, it will augment, complement, reinforce and build on the successes and profile of arts development in Sligo. It will do this through policy development, innovative programming, best practice and critical thinking and evaluation. The actions set out in the Plan will be regularly reviewed, tracked for progress and monitored by Sligo County Council Strategic Policy Committee for Culture.

“This new Plan will pay attention to the holistic case for arts and culture – the argument that arts and culture have an impact on our lives in complex, subtle and interrelated ways...”

The Plan makes provision for a mid-term review so as to ensure that the recommendations that we adopt now will be dynamic, responsive and open to change as we move through the next phase of development.

Sligo Arts Service will continue to collect quantitative data and implement the Arts Council's guidelines on quality measurements, for example, to capture the social impacts of its programmes.

Reflecting the substantial economic changes that have occurred in the past ten years, both locally and nationally, this Plan will bring fresh perspectives and new approaches based on the insights of a great many practitioners.

Much has been achieved already to the benefit of the arts and cultural community and, importantly, to the people of Sligo. Indeed, Sligo has achieved considerable success in increasing cultural provision and engagement throughout all parts of Sligo. Sligo County Council has always been ambitious in the quality and delivery of its services. This is a critical juncture

for Sligo's diverse cultural footprint, with a widespread desire to see more links created between and among performing companies, museums, galleries and libraries, heritage and the range of cultural activities delivered locally.

Sligo County Council will always seek to work collaboratively and in partnership wherever possible, particularly with the individuals and organizations supported by its various programmes.

The challenge now will be to increase the resources available for artists and culture broadly, through partnerships with a host of national and international bodies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. This new Plan will pay attention to the holistic case for arts and culture – the argument that arts and culture have an impact on our lives in complex, subtle and interrelated ways, and that each benefit relates to a cluster of other benefits. The aim of *Sligo Arts Plan 2020 –2025* is to restore Sligo Arts Service to its role of strategic leadership and to build on over 20 years of support to the arts by Sligo local authority.



Legislative Framework

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National Context

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht provides the resource, policy and legislative framework to support the stimulation and development of the arts in Ireland. The goal of the Department’s Arts Division is to promote and develop Ireland’s artistic and creative strengths at home and abroad and to maximize their societal, economic and reputational value for the country. The department works to enhance access to the arts by promoting and encouraging artistic expression, cultural awareness and participation.

The Department funds and works closely with the Arts Council and Screen Ireland to secure the implementation of appropriate and effective strategies for the arts in partnership with the artistic community and film industry. The Department’s Culture Ireland Unit promotes Irish arts and artists abroad. Government funding for the arts is generally channeled through The Arts Council, which, although funded by the Department, is completely independent in its funding allocations and the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has no role to play in its funding or executive decisions. The Arts Act 2003 underpins the Council’s independence in this context. The Department has recently published *Culture 2025 – A National Cultural Policy Framework*, which clearly articulates the important role of culture in Ireland and which will set out a road map for what the cultural sector wants to achieve leading up to 2025.

The Arts Council is the national agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland. The Council recognizes that the arts have a central and distinctive contribution to make to our evolving society. Established in 1951 to stimulate public interest in and promote the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts, the Arts Council advises the Minister and other public bodies on the arts. It provides financial assistance, mainly but not exclusively, to artists and arts organizations; it supports others who develop and promote the arts; it publishes research and information as an advocate for the arts and artists and it undertakes a range of projects to promote and develop the arts, often in partnership with others.

The Arts Council’s own ten-year strategy, *Making Great Art Work 2016–2025*, identifies the following priorities:

- » **The Artist:** Artists are supported to make excellent work that is enjoyed and valued
- » **Public Engagement:** More people will enjoy high-quality arts experiences
- » **Investment Strategy:** Public monies are invested effectively to realize priorities
- » **Spatial and Demographic Planning:** Well-planned arts provision to benefit people across the country
- » **Developing Capacity:** Building knowledge, skills and inventiveness to realize this strategy.

Sligo Arts Service makes an annual funding application to The Arts Council to support the County Arts Development Programme. In 2016, the Arts Council and the City and County Managers Association (CCMA) published *A Framework for Collaboration* agreement. The purpose of the agreement is to highlight the value and clarify the current position of the 30-year strategic partnership between the Arts Council and local authorities nationwide and to set out a vision and broad goals for what is to be achieved by the partners over the next ten years.

Under A Framework for Collaboration, Sligo County Council and the Arts Council will enter into an eight-year Framework Agreement setting out our shared strategic priorities, which will align closely with the priorities of the Arts Plan. Our shared strategic action headings are:

- 1. Supporting Artists**
- 2. Young People and the Arts**
- 3. Music Development**
- 4. Arts Participation.**

In 2019, the Arts Council presented its second three-year plan, for the years 2020 to 2022, under its strategy, *Making Great Art Work 2016–2025*. The continuing strategic partnership with local authorities will be central to its work, having renewed and developed the relationship over the past three years.

The Arts Council also prioritises opportunities for the arts in creative and community place-making as part of *Project Ireland 2040*, the Irish government’s national framework for strategic planning. In order to harness such opportunities in Sligo, the reinstatement of the post of Arts Officer is essential to ensure that the arts are present and central to all aspects of policy formulation and decision making.

Arts Council/Sligo County Council shared strategic actions

1. Supporting Artists

2. Young People & the Arts

3. Music Development

4. Arts Participation

The Creative Ireland Programme

Creative Ireland is a government programme to connect people, creativity and wellbeing, inspired by the multitude of cultural events that were held to mark the hundredth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. It is a five-year, all-of-government initiative, extending from 2017 to 2022, which aims to improve access to cultural and creative activity in every county across the country.

‘*Creative Ireland* places culture and creativity at the centre of public policy and at the centre of our lives, for the betterment of our people and for the strengthening of our society . . .’. *Creative Ireland* is built around five pillars:

- 1: **Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child**
- 2. **Enabling Creativity in Every Community**
- 3. **Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure**
- 4. **Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production**
- 5. **Unifying our Global Reputation.**

Local authorities are responsible for delivering Pillar 2, Establishing Creativity in Every Community. At its heart is collaboration – within local government, between central and local government, between culture and industry, between artists and policy makers – to facilitate an ecosystem of creativity. Each local authority delivers Pillar 2 through a Culture and Creativity Plan for its county.

The work of Sligo Arts Service informs the Sligo Culture and Creativity Plan. It is a mechanism for co-operative development of the cultural services of the local authority led by the Creative Ireland co-ordinator, the County Librarian and chaired by the Director of Service. Changes in government policy and wider shifts in the arts and cultural landscape at national level may have an impact on the environment within which the arts operate at county level over the course of this plan.

‘*Creative Ireland places culture and creativity at the centre of public policy and at the centre of our lives, for the betterment of our people and for the strengthening of our society . . .*’

The Local Framework

Section 6 of the Arts Act 2003 requires local authorities to prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within their functional areas. In so doing, local authorities may provide financial or other assistance in respect of activities, projects or undertakings for the purposes of stimulating public interest in the arts, promoting knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts or improving standards in the arts within their functional area.

The arts as defined in the Arts Act 2003 incorporate ‘any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form and including in particular visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture and includes any medium when used for those purposes.’

In preparing *Sligo Arts Plan 2020–2025*, Sligo Arts Service is informed by a range of Sligo County Council plans and policies including the council’s *Corporate Plan 2020-2024*, the purpose of which is to describe the main priorities for Sligo County Council in a five-year timeframe.

Sligo Arts Plan 2020–2025 will seek to support the achievement of the aims of the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan has three broad aims:

- » **develop a strong economy**
- » **enhance quality of life**
- » **safeguard the quality of the environment, through supporting our communities and working toward a shared purpose to deliver prosperity across the county.**

Sligo Arts Plan is aligned to Sligo County Council’s policy statement on climate change and sustainability, set out in *Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023*, which is: ‘To plan for the impacts of climate change, increasing resilience through appropriate adaptation and embracing opportunities for sustainable development’.

Sligo Arts Plan will adhere also to policy positions set out in Sligo County Development Plan and *Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–2021 (LECP)*, which aim to promote a more integrated and targeted approach to addressing the strategic social, community and economic issues facing the county in a way that meets the priority needs of the community. What constitutes the ‘needs of the community’ is heavily influenced by the views sought from the communities themselves through the LECP process of consultation and collaboration but within the context of government policies and priorities.

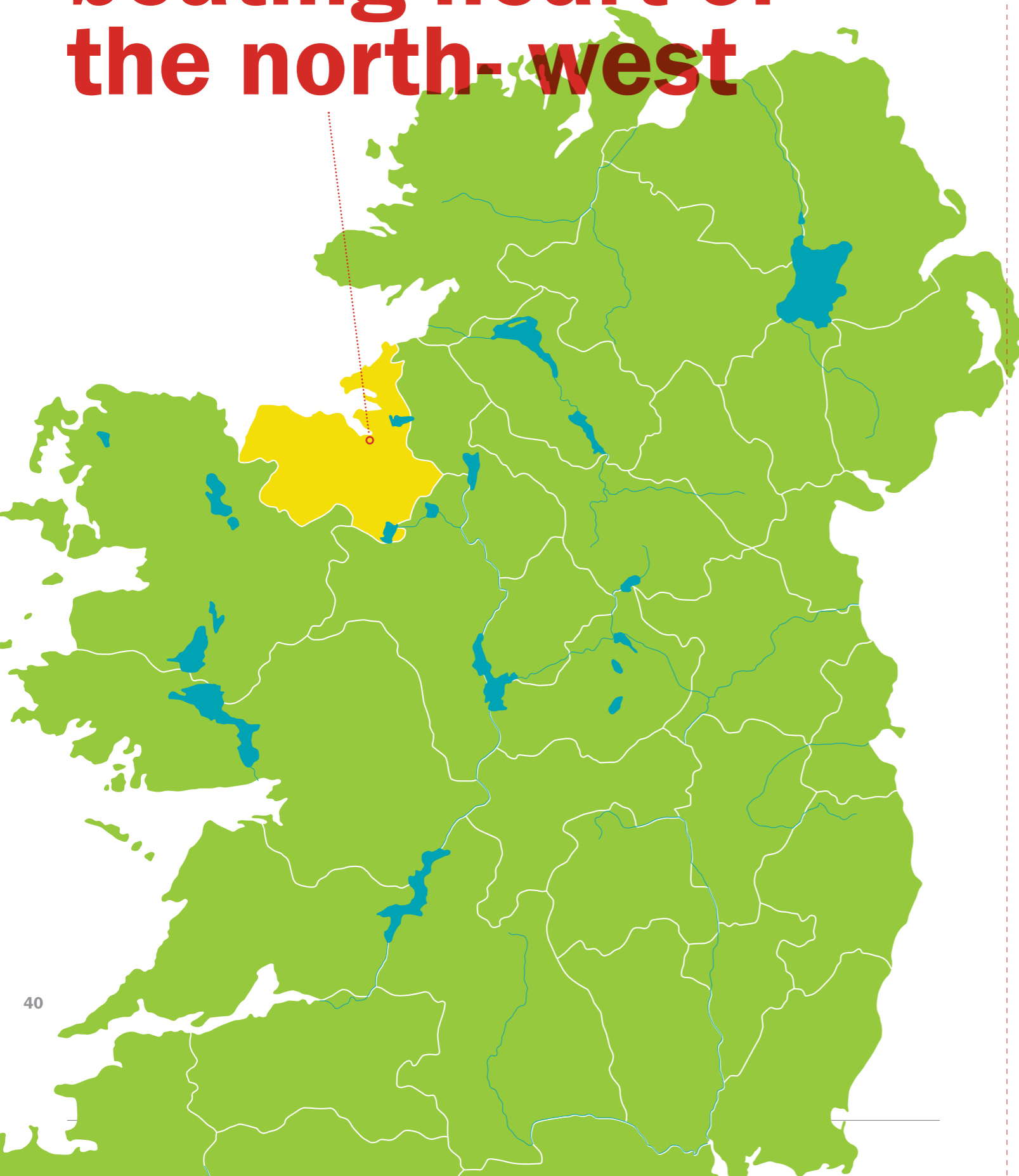
Creative industries are highlighted in the *Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–2021* as ‘a key micro enterprise growth sector and Sligo has the second highest number of creative businesses in the western region’ (LECP, p.65). There are opportunities for the creative sector to contribute to and benefit from the Sligo County Council initiative, Smart City. The LECP also recognizes tourism as a priority, with large potential for economic and employment growth and, within this, cultural tourism such as festivals and for international tourism segments the cultural and literary heritage associated with the site of the Spanish Armada shipwrecks in north Sligo and the poet WB Yeats and his brother, the painter Jack Yeats.



Profile County Sligo

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Sligo, the beating heart of the north-west



About County Sligo

County Sligo, located in the northwest of Ireland, encompasses a total land surface of approximately 1,837.11 sq. km, bordered by Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo, and flanked to the west by almost 200 km of Atlantic coastline. The county has a varied natural landscape with limestone mountains, such as Benbulbin and Benwiskin, other interesting upland terrain including the Ox and Bricklieve Mountains, numerous picturesque lakes (Loughs Gill, Arrow, Glencar, Easky, Gara and Talt), enclosed farmland and a diverse coastline comprising low-lying cliffs, indented shoreline and sandy beaches.

Sligo's unique archaeological and historical remains comprise more than 5,000 recorded archaeological sites dating back over 6,000 years, including the Neolithic sites of Carrowmore, Carrowkeel and Creevykeel. The beautiful landscape and rich cultural heritage has inspired many musicians, artists and poets, including Lilly and Lolly Yeats, WB Yeats and Jack B Yeats, Michael Coleman and even a saint, St. Colmcille. This has given Sligo strong international recognition on which to base a thriving tourism industry. (*Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023, Consolidated Draft*).

Sligo has one local authority, Sligo County Council, with three municipal districts, namely Ballymote-Tubbercurry, the Borough District of Sligo and Sligo-Drumcliffe. Sligo city is the administrative capital and largest town in the county.



Demographic

The population of County Sligo is 65,535 according to the 2016 census (Central Statistics Office), a slight increase on 2011, making it the third most populated county in Connaught.

Over 29,000 people live in urban areas, making up 39.8% of the population, which reflects the national trend (37.3% in rural areas). Sligo city's population of 19,199 makes it the county's largest urban area by some distance, although Tubbercurry experienced a 13.7% population growth between 2011 and 2016. There was a decline in the rural population in Sligo of 1,621, which was offset by an urban increase of 1,763, which largely can be attributed to the re-classification of Collooney from rural to urban designation.

In Sligo the number of people in the older age categories is significantly higher than the national average. The average age in Sligo rose from 37.9 years in 2011 to 39.2 in 2016. It is predicted that, by 2025, 26% of the population of County Sligo will be over 65 (LECP, 2016–2021, p.36). The age group 5–18 years had very small increases while the 0–4 age group saw a fall. Sligo is in the top five Irish towns with an ageing population.

The percentage of non-Irish born people in County Sligo stood at 9.3 per cent, while just over one resident in five (21%) in Sligo city was born outside Ireland, with 25% of those from Poland and Lithuania (www.citypopulation.de). According to the government's Social Inclusion Analysis, Sligo has the highest proportion of asylum-seekers and refugees in Ireland – the average in each county is 0.1% and in Sligo it is 0.3% (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2019, Pobal/ Department of Rural and Community Development).

65,535
County Sligo population

19,199
Sligo city's population

39.8% urban

39.2yrs
Average age in Sligo

1 in 5
Born outside Ireland

Economic

The largest centre of population in the Northwest, Sligo city has grown to be a regionally important urban centre, serving as the administrative, commercial, service, health and educational focus for a large hinterland. Sligo city is a designated regional centre in the government's Project Ireland 2040 and is one of two Gateway cities designated by the National Spatial Strategy in the Border region of Ireland. Project Ireland 2040 states that, due to Sligo's pharmaceutical industry, engineering capabilities and higher education institutions, such as Institute of Technology Sligo and St. Angela's College, a constituent college of the NUI Galway, the county has a significant 'capacity to enhance its regional role' (Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023 Consolidated Draft + Adopted Amendments, August 2017).

Institute of Technology Sligo offers a diverse range of courses in business, engineering, humanities and science while St. Angela's College provides courses in nursing, health studies, home economics and education.

With the benefit of improvements in telecommunications, utilities, infrastructure and the availability of well-serviced sites, Sligo Gateway has been able to establish itself as a high-quality location for business, with several international companies choosing to locate in Sligo (County Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–2021). In 2016 there were 19 multinational companies located in IDA business parks in County Sligo (Finisklin and Ballytivnan in Sligo city, Collooney, Tubbercurry and Ballymote). Sligo is also home to a vibrant cluster of Irish companies.

The public sector remains the most important employer in County Sligo, with a high concentration in Sligo city. Tubbercurry is the county's second largest employment centre. Outside the urban areas, agriculture remains an important part of the local economy, while tourism and other small-scale, rural-based economic activities continue to support a substantial population living in villages and in the countryside (Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023).

Institute of Technology Sligo has been delivering courses in the arts since 1972. Under the previous arts plan, Space for Art 2007–2012, the John O'Leary Fine Art Graduate Award was established in partnership with Sligo Arts Service, Institute of Technology Sligo and Sligo Art Gallery. Developments at IT Sligo over the past five years have seen it grow at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Institute of Technology Sligo's Yeats Academy of Arts, Design and Architecture (YAADA) offers six distinctive programmes across the disciplines of fine art, design, architecture, literature, music and theatre.

The recently commissioned *Festivals Strategy for County Sligo* (draft) makes specific reference to the resources and expertise within Institute of Technology Sligo that could be drawn upon for marketing and PR, digital resourcing, tourism advice, financial management support, general business and day-to-day operational supports to festivals, including arts festivals, which feature strongly in the draft plan. Institute of Technology Sligo is a holistic resource for festivals, which represent such a significant focal point for the arts in Sligo.

Cultural Profile and Arts Programme Achievements

Sligo is noted for its long-standing vibrant voluntary arts scene in which music and drama groups are numerous. Since the establishment of Sligo Arts Service, the county has seen many positive changes in its cultural profile and the delivery of arts services. Sligo Arts Service created the first public art role and the first public art plan, which challenged traditional sculptural approaches to art projects under the Per Cent for Art Scheme. Other firsts include structured intergenerational work and the emergence of a Music Generation programme, which provided the opportunity to consolidate and expand existing work in music education in partnership with Sligo VEC, now Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB), and other partners. Following a successful application co-ordinated by Sligo Arts Service in 2011, Music Generation Sligo was one of the first three counties established under this programme. It is now managed locally by the lead partner MSLETB.

Sligo Arts Service over time has developed an extensive youth and education programme including youth theatre and new approaches to arts practice in the classroom. These new approaches have brought the teacher to the centre in the design and delivery of classroom projects ensuring integration and engagement among education stakeholders with the Primary Colours programme to enrich the primary level arts curriculum, delivered by artists and supported by Sligo Arts Service.

As well as maintaining long-standing successful programmes in Arts in Health, Music, Children and Young People, Sligo Arts Service has introduced new areas for development such as film. SLR Film project was established in 2015 by Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon Arts Services, along with film-makers, with a view to enabling the film sector to grow and develop. SLR Film (www.slrfilm.ie) has a membership

of 188 film-makers in the three counties consisting of emerging and established individual film-makers and 16 production, post-production and interrelated companies.

SLR Film project developed a joint film strategy that aims to encourage the development of the film sector in the region, to better facilitate film-makers, large and small, from here and elsewhere to make films in the region and to undertake actions that support the viability of film-making as a profession in the region.

Links have been developed with Screen Ireland/Screen Training Ireland and the Western Region Audiovisual Producers Fund (WRAP). This relatively new area of activity for Sligo Arts Service is already showing impressive results, generating more screenplays and film-making. SLR Film project is a partner in the Creative Heartlands initiative supported by the Government's regional economic development fund.

In addition to financial assistance, Sligo Arts Service offered bursaries and allied support to professional artists and groups until the recession of 2009–2010 when these supports came to an end. In an effort to continue to support artists in other ways, Sligo Arts Service has built a Continuous Professional Development and training programme, which is offered to artists free or at subsidized rates. The CPD and training programme covers a wide range of skills and competencies such as working with special educational needs, financial management and tax advice and practical upskilling. The programme most recently introduced mentoring for artists. Sligo Arts Service works with Sligo County Council's Local Enterprise Office to ensure that artists also can benefit from their services. A visual artists network is supported by Sligo County Council through the Creative Ireland Programme. The network is a valuable resource to Sligo County Council and to venues, both of which may draw on the artistic and creative services of its membership when shaping the creative content of an event.

Publicly Funded Arts Venues

Sligo County Council is also known for its support of venues such as The Model, home of the Niland Collection of twentieth century Irish art, The Hawk's Well Theatre, Blue Raincoat Theatre Company (The Factory), The Coleman Traditional Irish Music Centre and the Hyde Bridge Gallery.

The Model is a multi-purpose arts venue, whose primary focus is visual arts and whose Niland collection of paintings by Irish artists is world renowned. The Model has been a vital part of the expanding and diverse cultural life of the Northwest.

The Hawk's Well Theatre continues to undergo significant redevelopment with the assistance of capital funding from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Sligo County Council and its fundraising campaign. The Factory Performance Space is home to the Blue Raincoat Theatre Company and is used primarily as their theatre performance and development space. It also hosts performances and events produced by others in the culture sector.

The Michael Coleman Heritage Centre Ltd (Coleman Irish Music Centre), situated in Gurteen, County Sligo, is dedicated to the memory of the legendary fiddle player Michael Coleman (1891–1945). The Centre draws together the many strands of south Sligo's rich traditional music heritage, fostering its preservation through teaching programmes and performances.

The Hyde Bridge Gallery is an independent, not-for-profit gallery situated in the Yeats Memorial Building, home of the Yeats Society Sligo. The Gallery exhibits work from local artists as well as artists from around Ireland. The Yeats Society produces many poetry and cultural events, hosted in its period Arts and Crafts-style building.

Each of these venues has established itself over time as central to the quality of life of the people and communities who access them. Ongoing investment by Sligo local authority in these venues continues to sustain and allow for their ongoing development. Much of the focus in *Space for Art 2007–2012* was on developing partnerships with these venues and channeling arts activities and opportunities for engagement through their programmes with local authority financial support. The approach was one of mutually beneficial partnership, with each organization bringing its own expertise and creativity into the mix, supported and facilitated by Sligo County Council. The arts and cultural infrastructure of County Sligo is augmented by commercially-run spaces with a strong cultural vision.



Festivals

Sligo Arts Service continues to programme performances and events in Sligo on an annual basis. Sligo International Chamber Music Festival is an annual chamber music festival that features resident virtuosi the Vogler String Quartet. The festival is based mainly at St. Columba’s church, Drumcliffe, and The Model. In consultation with Sligo Arts Service and the Vogler Quartet, potential spaces and venues will be considered throughout the county to broaden the reach of the festival and to increase its accessibility to audiences. The Vogler Quartet would like to commission work, bring in more prestigious international artists, expand its offering and create opportunities for other ensembles to move into the festival sphere in a more meaningful way. All of these developments require additional resources and a broadening of the current support base for the festival. At present, it is produced by Sligo Arts Service and an event management company and is an efficient operation that works well. There is a sense that it has the potential to be much stronger and more prominent, as there is nothing similar in the Northwest and nothing that can boast an association with the Vogler String Quartet. There is a long-term aspiration to work with the Vogler Quartet towards creating a new ensemble in residence.

Other important festivals unique to Sligo that benefit from varying levels of Sligo County Council support include Sligo Jazz Festival and Summer School, Sligo Baroque Festival, The Yeats International Summer School, Tread Softly festival that celebrates the landscape that inspired the Yeats family, Cairde Sligo Arts Festival, South Sligo Summer School and Sligo Live, including a number of new festivals emerging in 2019 and 2020. Each is a unique offering targeting local, national and international audiences; all have developed strong national and local press profiles and each has grown over the past five years despite financial and fundraising constraints.

Festivals Strategy

In 2019, Sligo County Council commissioned a festivals strategy with the express intention of identifying and developing festivals that will realize the ambition set out in Sligo County Council’s Tourism Strategy. Describing itself as a ‘tactical approach towards the growth and development of festivals,’ it aims ultimately to deliver up to seven festivals with visitor capability of 20,000 each to be supported and developed. The strategy aligns with Fáilte Ireland’s critical success factors for festivals:

1. each must have a clear USP with a unique, differentiated and focused proposition that is firmly embedded in people and place, and is hard to replicate in any other location
2. each must also be able to clearly identify the target interest group or a ‘fan base’ who will travel in order to fulfil a passion and interest offered by the festival proposition
3. each festival must connect with and reach these fans through sales and marketing channels
4. each festival must provide opportunities for its ‘fan base’ to share quality, immersive and participative experiences with like-minded people.

A number of arts festivals are singled out for prioritization within the new strategy.

The Festivals Strategy recommends the appointment of a festivals co-ordinator whose work would be funded and resourced to develop the festivals in the county, maximizing their potential for development and earning power.

It also recommends that funding from Sligo County Council (including the Fáilte Ireland regional festivals funding) and Sligo LEADER programme should be prioritized for the above. All festivals should have access to a range of supports such as the services of the festivals and events co-ordinator, training programmes and marketing and sales supports. Specific mention is made of strategic partnerships with Institute of Technology Sligo and Fáilte Ireland to deliver training and mentoring, while Sligo Tourism could also play a key role in terms of promoting Sligo, and its festivals and events, as a destination for year-round quality festivals and experiences.

Sligo Arts Service brings professional assessment skills and experience to contribute to the objectives of the Festivals Strategy. The role of Sligo Arts Service in the development of independently-run festivals offering arts content is to ensure quality standards are met and to support their ongoing programme development and their ability to innovate. This developmental role is complementary to the actions delivered through the Festivals Strategy where synergies and mutual benefits are made possible.



Strategic Priorities

8

A number of strategic priorities have emerged through review of the legislative framework, the public consultation, and one-to-one discussion with members of the arts and wider community. The following strategic priorities are the recommended actions associated with this plan.

Arts Officer Post

1

The reinstatement of the post of Arts Officer in Sligo is essential to ensure that the arts are present and central to all aspects of policy formulation and decision making within the local authority and with external agencies.

Arts Practitioners

2

Provide for the wellbeing and sustainability of artists to develop their careers through supportive arts services with accompanying resources and funding.

Monitor rates of pay to artists and comply with the rates recommended by artists' membership bodies and the Arts Council's policy on artist remuneration.

Public Participation

3

Sustain, renew and initiate creative programmes at community level that are inclusive and accessible.

Encourage people from all backgrounds to engage meaningfully with the arts on an ongoing basis.

Arts Infrastructure, Ecosystem & Economy

4

Sustain direct support to the established cultural venues and maximize opportunities for collaboration to strengthen their cultural capacity.

Strengthen the arts economy through inter-agency collaboration to support creatives and their businesses.

Identify and develop new partnership opportunities for added value and integration of the arts across sectors such as Tourism, Creative Industries and Enterprise development.

Art in the public realm

5

Develop and enhance the cultural identity of Sligo regionally, nationally and internationally, through a new round of commissioning, funded by the Per Cent for Art scheme.

Actions 2020–2025

Arts Officer Post

1

The fully staffed and resourced arts office will take a dynamic approach to this arts plan, ensuring ongoing review and research, continuous assessment of the needs of professional artists, groups and organizations to ensure that this plan will remain relevant and meaningful.

Arts Practitioners

2

Sustain and renew work opportunities for artists in Sligo through Arts Office arts participation and public art programmes.

Explore new work and support opportunities for arts practitioners across broader cultural and creative partnerships regionally, nationally and internationally.

Work with Sligo County Council services and external agencies to identify spaces in Sligo city and county that would meet the needs for creating, exhibiting and performing artistic work to the public.

Provide professional development supports and mentoring through partnerships with:

- » national organizations such as Visual Arts Ireland, CREATE (national development agency for collaborative arts), Irish Theatre Institute, Irish Music Rights Organization (IMRO) and others
- » and Sligo's established venue infrastructure of The Model, The Hawks Well, The Factory, Yeats Memorial Building and others.

Provide longer-term artist residencies in a variety of local settings including healthcare, education and recreation.

Public Participation

3

1. Review and renew the Primary Colours primary school arts programme in the context of Creative Schools and Teacher-Artist partnership initiatives.
2. Sustain the Council's partnership with Music Generation Sligo and explore ways for further collaboration.
3. Develop the Sligo Youth Theatre offering, to meet the high demand for participation. Explore potential partnerships with schools, MSLETB or Creative Ireland to expand opportunities for engagement.
4. Work with the HSE, Healthy Ireland and other programmes to design and develop arts interventions that improve social inclusion, mental health and wellbeing through engagement with older people and people with disabilities.
5. Research and develop ways of enabling people from culturally diverse and marginalized backgrounds to engage meaningfully with the arts on a long-term basis.

Arts Infrastructure, Ecosystem and Economy

4

1. Through programme partnerships identify opportunities for collaboration with the network of professional venues and festivals in County Sligo.
2. Provide for and facilitate arts programming in smaller population centres throughout the county so that the arts can continue to grow at a local level.
3. Broaden the reach of the Sligo International Chamber Music Festival by considering new performance spaces and venues throughout the county.
4. Looking to the future of the Festival and a new generation of audiences, plan with the Vogler Quartet for creating a new ensemble in residence.
5. Sustain the practice of commissioning composers to create new work for the Festival.
6. Review and renew the Bealtaine Festival.

7. Contribute to the Actions of Sligo County Council's Festivals Strategy to maximize the impact of Sligo's impressive arts and, in particular, music festivals.
8. Explore international partnerships and funding opportunities, for example EU programmes designed to encourage collaboration, mobility, cultural exchange and partnership to expand arts and cultural activity in Sligo.
9. Explore partnership opportunities for creative sector/creative industries through Sligo Local Enterprise Office, Institute of Technology Sligo Innovation Centre and other hubs, the Western Development Commission and North West Regional Assembly.
10. Evaluate the impact of the SLR (Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon) Film Project and allocate resources based on the evaluation findings.
11. Resource Sligo Arts Service adequately to support inward productions (film industry) as an important growth area bringing significant benefits to the local economy.
12. Redesign the brand of Sligo Arts Service.
13. Upgrade Sligo Arts Service website, www.sligoarts.ie, to integrate social media platforms.

Art in the Public Realm

5

1. Facilitate new opportunities for engagement between artists and the public.
2. Continue to commission a variety of projects across all of the art forms and to offer artists opportunities to create art in different public contexts.
3. Re-establish the Public Art Steering Group to
 - » Develop a commissions plan
 - » Oversee the delivery of the commissions plan
 - » Identify opportunities for public engagement with communities.



Conclusion

9



The new Sligo Arts Plan has encapsulated its work over the next five years in three words: it will sustain, renew and collaborate to achieve its aims.

Firstly, Sligo Arts Service will renew itself and further enhance its ability to make the arts accessible and inclusive to all through the re-establishment of the post of Arts Officer, aiming also to staff and resource the post adequately, thereby ensuring that s/he is poised to deliver on the ambitions of the new Sligo Arts Plan.

The work of Sligo Arts Service has always been firmly rooted in principles of quality, access, inclusion and long-term value. Sligo Arts Plan sets out a course of action that will ensure that Sligo Arts Service is well supported by elected members and the executive of Sligo County Council, the Arts Council and other key strategic partners, local and national. Investment in the arts over the 20 years of Sligo Arts Service has been significant and the next five years will see Sligo Arts Service work with stakeholders to focus investment where it is most needed. Priorities for investment will include enhanced bursaries and financial supports to artists, professional development programmes for artists and supporting creative networks to ensure they are sustainable.

Sligo Arts Service will consider and evaluate all of its work with an overall mid-term review planned for Sligo Arts Plan. This will inform relevant changes in the work, as does essential knowledge of the changing arts context nationally and internationally.

Whilst programming exceptional arts initiatives and showcasing new directions in the arts nationally and internationally is still a key role for Sligo Arts Service, there exists a high standard of professional arts knowledge and delivery throughout County Sligo, demonstrated through the excellent programmes of the venues and festivals. The role of Sligo Arts Service in the context of the new Sligo Arts Plan will be a supporting one, adding value to these programmes, supporting new approaches, facilitating collaborations and taking a strategic approach to the development of the arts. The professional expertise and experience of the staff of Sligo Arts Service is a considerable cultural resource for the county. The continued development of Sligo Arts Service is predicated on these expert staff resources.

Appendix 1

Consultation: Needs and Opportunities

A series of public consultations and interviews with key stakeholders and stakeholder groups was carried out between May and July 2019 and these have informed this plan. The consultation process engaged with artists and cultural practitioners, directors of arts organizations, interested members of the public and county council staff.

In addition, a questionnaire was circulated, to which individuals and organizations responded.

The questionnaire looked at respondents' profiles, their current level of engagement with the arts, barriers to participation and needs and priorities for the future. Out of these consultations, internal and external, guiding principles were identified followed by priorities underpinning policy areas leading to recommended actions as follows:



Appendix 2

Glossary

Advocate
Publicly supporting or recommending a particular course of action or policy.

Amateur arts
Engaging or engaged in the arts without payment; non-professional.

Arts Council
The Arts Council of Ireland is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. The Arts Council works in partnership with artists, arts organizations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life.

Arts festivals
Arts festivals may feature a mixed programme that include music, literature, comedy, children’s entertainment, science or street theatre, and are typically presented in venues or public spaces over a period of time ranging from as short as a day or a weekend to a month.

Arts in education
Engagement of artists in the design, development and delivery of education programmes in formal education settings such as primary and secondary schools.

Arts Officer
Professional arts manager employed by local authorities to advise, advocate, broker, design and deliver arts policy through working with stakeholders, national and local.

Arts Plan
A sequence of steps to be taken for a strategy to succeed. It may also be called an action programme.
An arts plan has three elements:

1. **Specific actions**
2. **Timing: when it will be done**
3. **Resource allocation: what specific funds are available for specific activities.**

Arts Strategy
A method or plan chosen to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of a goal or solution to a problem. Drawing on all of the resources available to achieve high-level, overarching aims.

Arts venues
Spaces in which art is presented including galleries, arts centres, theatres, concert halls.

Broker
Arranging or negotiating an agreement between stakeholders.

Commissioning
The act of procuring the creation of a piece of art, composition, writing – an original work, often on behalf of government or business, for example classical music ensembles often commission pieces from composers, where the ensemble secures the composer’s payment from private or public organizations or donors.

Creative Ireland
Creative Ireland is a five-year, all of government culture, creativity and wellbeing programme committed to the vision that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realize their full creative potential. Within the programme, every local authority develops a Culture Plan for its county to deliver the second strand of ‘enabling creativity in every community’.

Creative/community Place-making
Creative or community place-making is an evolving field of practice that intentionally leverages the power of the arts, culture and creativity to serve a community’s interests while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation in a way that builds the quality of place.

Culture 2025
This is the National Culture Policy Framework of the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Curator
A curator selects and interprets artworks (from among the entire range of arts practice). In addition to selecting works, the curator is often responsible for documenting, cataloguing and sourcing other content to support art exhibitions and performances.

Grant
Support offered in a competitive environment to specific projects and plans with conditions attached.

Ireland 2016
The 1916 state programme to mark the hundredth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising through a large series of public cultural events that explored issues of community, identity, culture, heritage and citizenship.

Making Great Art Work 2016–2025
The ten-year strategy of the Arts Council.

Participatory arts
Participatory art is a term that describes a form of art that directly engages the audience in the creative process so that they become participants in the event.

Per Cent for Art Scheme
A government initiative dating from 1978 whereby one per cent of the cost of publicly-funded capital, infrastructural and building development is reserved for the commissioning of artworks.

Primary Colours Programme
Primary Colours is a children’s arts programme to enrich the primary school arts curriculum delivered in Sligo by practising artists.

Professional Artists
Full-time, working exclusively as a creative, usually with a formal qualification, more accurately referred to in terms of career stage – emerging, mid-career or established artists.

Project Ireland 2040
The Irish government’s long-term, overarching planning strategy that aims to make Ireland a better country for all of its people.

Public art
Public art are works of art in any media created for and in the context of the civic realm, be it the built or natural environment.

Sligo County Council Corporate Plan 2020–2024
Sligo County Council’s plan setting out its priorities during the five-year timeframe of the plan.

Sligo Local Community and Economic Plan 2016–2021
Sligo County Council’s six-year plan for the promotion of economic development and local and community development within the local authority area, through strategic planning and targeting of resources. The plan is drawn up by Sligo Local Economic Development Committee (LCDC). Each local authority is required to draw up its local plan.

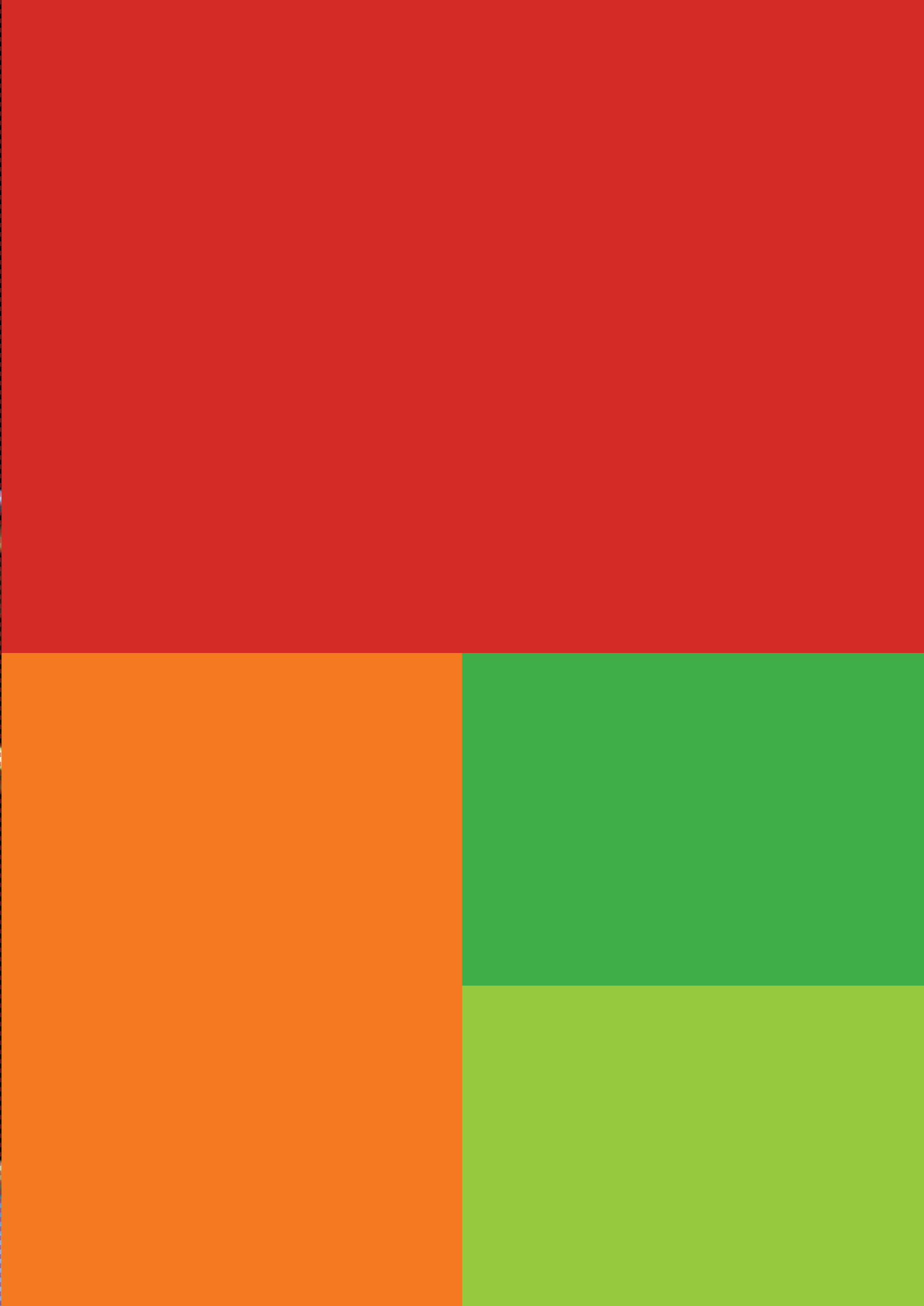
SLR Film
Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon Film Project www.slrfilm.ie.

Smart City
A Smart City is an urban area that uses different types of electronic Internet of Things (IoT) sensors to collect data and then use insights gained from that data to manage assets, resources and services efficiently.

Socially engaged practice
Socially engaged practice describes art that is collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work.

Visual arts
The visual arts are art forms that create works that are primarily visual in nature, such as ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, photography, video, film-making, animation and architecture.
These definitions should not be taken too strictly as many artistic disciplines (performing arts, conceptual art, textile arts) involve aspects of the visual arts as well as arts of other types. Also included within the visual arts are the applied arts such as industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design and decorative art.

YAADA
Yeats Academy of Arts, Design and Architecture, Institute of Technology Sligo





Sligo
County Council
Arts Service