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**ARTS & CULTURE STRATEGY 2022-2026**

**Implementation Report No. 2**

**June 2024 – 2025**

**Introduction**

In June 2022, Cork City Council officially adopted and launched its five-year Arts and Culture Strategy. This ambitious plan places arts and culture at the heart of a dynamic, equitable, and forward-thinking city. It articulates a clear mission: to “enable and champion the artistic and cultural ambitions of Cork city and its people through investment, advocacy, connection and animation.”

Now in its third year of implementation, Cork City Council Arts Office has made significant progress in advancing the strategy’s goals.

This report provides an overview of the progress achieved between June 2024 – 2025, highlighting developments across the strategy’s five core priorities and reflecting the growing impact of arts and culture in the life of the city.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1 - **ART FOR EVERYONE**

GOAL **Encourage and enable more people across all our communities to access and enjoy art**

**Outcome 1.1:** A rich mix of arts and cultural events and experiences are driving strong public engagement.

Action:

* In 2025 we have dispersed and committed a total of €992,550 in core funding to 90 arts and cultural organisations across the professional and voluntary bodies that make up the arts sector in Cork City.
* This brings the total dispersed in core funding over the last three years to €2,887,700 - just under 2.9 million euros.
* A further €475,800 has been distributed in Project Awards, Bursaries and ‘Artist and the Community’ scheme funding since 2023 including €169,000 committed in 2025.

**These organisations and projects offer high-quality, diverse programmes that engage the public and elevate Cork’s cultural reputation.**

**Outcome 1.2.:** A broader diversity of people in a greater variety of contexts are experiencing art in their lives.

Actions:

* Continued to deliver on the five year plan for embedding creativity in communities across the city: Creative Ireland Cork City - Culture and Creativity Plan:
  + 16 community-led creative projects under the Creative Communities Grant Scheme. A total allocation of €114,509 has been allocated across 41 projects since 2023.
  + 33 projects and programmes championed by members of the cross-directorate culture and creativity team have been delivered since 2023. These include One City One Book by Cork City Libraries; the Young Print Collective, Creative Parks etc.)
* With support from Creative Ireland, worked with Music in Community to provide a programme of live music performances rolled out in three community nursing units in Cork City.
* Delivered *Exploring Loss & Grief: Healing Through Art* in partnership with Irish Hospice Foundation. Children and older people in Knocknaheeny and Mayfield benefitted from a creative programme delivered by six artists, focusing on the past, present and future of their neighbourhoods and communities.
* Developed ‘Creative Places Knocknaheeny’ via an engaged R&D programme with funding from the Arts Council. The project is supported by a partnership of local groups to respond to community-led demand for more arts and creativity.

**Outcome 1.3:** Constituent groups in our city are engaged in arts and cultural experiences that are by, of and for them.

Actions:

* Delivered by 2 x iterations of Cruinniú na nÓg Cork City, the national day of children’s creativity in June 2024 and 2025.
* For Cruinniú na nÓg 2025 supported Comhairle na nÓg to design an inclusive youth event in collaboration with Scoil Bernadette and Breaking Barriers Theatre Group through a series of engaged workshops. The ‘Fun Inclusive Youth Space’ at the Marina Market was open to all young people on 7th June 2025.
* In 2025 we funded four projects through a new ‘Artist and the Community Scheme’ where professional artists work with communities of interest. The scheme is a development from the previous Arts in Context award, with increased maximum funding threshold and the inclusion of supplementary funding to support project access costs.
* Continued to support and steer BEAG Early Years programme, bringing quality early years arts programmes to childcare settings with partners Cork County Arts Office, HSE and delivery partners, Graffiti Theatre.
* Supported the 2025 iterations of arts in schools programmes: Tools of the Trade (primary schools’ collaborative art project by artists Leah Murphy and Susan Walsh); The Unfinished Book of Poetry (transition year poetry project).
* Published, launched and disseminated the [socialpracticetoolkit.com](https://www.socialpracticetoolkit.com/), a practical resource for socially engaged arts practice, resulting from a long-term collaboration between Cork City Council Arts Office and Leitrim County Council Arts Office.

**Outcome 1.4:** the people who make, produce and govern arts and culture in Cork reflect the city demographic

Action:

* Artist, Tom O'Sullivan, was awarded the Cork City Council Visibility Bursary Pilot Award.

**Outcome 1.5 :** a spatial strategy is guiding our focus and investment across Cork City’s urban suburban and rural neighbourhoods

Action:

* Initiated the Creative Communities Roadshow – creative tasters, information sharing and networking for artists, community workers and members of the public. So far over 150 people have attended roadshow events in: Ballincollig, Blarney, Douglas, Mahon, Togher and The Glen.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2 - **SPACE FOR ART**

GOAL **Optimise and extend places and spaces for art in the city**

**Outcome 2.2.:** Cork City Council’s arts and cultural infrastructure is safeguarded as a sustainable, effective resource into the future.

Actions:

1. Cork City Council owned buildings in Arts and Cultural use with ongoing programme of works, maintenance and conservation:

* In 2024/25 conservation works were conducted on the roof at St. Lukes
* Direct management of St. Lukes Crypt as multifunctional, no cost hire by professional arts organisations.
* Jack Lynch House managed by Dance Cork Firkin Crane as a residence for visiting artists and arts workers. 638 bed nights occupied in 2024.
* Financing and matched-funding provided by Cork City Council to support urgent repair of the roof at Dance Cork Firkin Crane.

**Outcome 2.4:** Plans for a flagship arts creation facility in Cork City have been approved for development.

Action:

* Work ongoing in 2025 based on the recommendations from Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment and Capital Definition Reports completed in 2024.

**Outcome 2.5** Arts and culture facilities are being considered at early design stage in redevelopment and regeneration projects.

Actions:

* Arts actions are included in the Integrated Urban Strategy for Shandon (2025). Strategy identifies the potential to develop the Weighmaster’s House for a new community and creative hub.
* Consideration and guidance for arts and culture infrastructure needs included in the Cork City Docklands Framework Masterplan and resulting draft variation to the City Development Plan (May 2025).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3 **- ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM**

GOAL  **Animate our city centre and our neighbourhoods with art that reflects and celebrates who we are**

**Outcome 3.1:** Perceptions of public art have been transformed through the quality, inventiveness and range of Cork City’s commissioned projects.

Actions:

* New moving image artwork by artist, Elinor O’Donovan. *Winter Sun* projected at Triskel Christchurch in Winter 2024/25 as part of the Island City Sculpture Trail.
* Launched new website for the Island City Urban Sculpture Trail. The website contains access to self-guided tours for the public as well as a host of accessibility features that increase access to the trail.
* The Arts Office partnered with Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) to create a bespoke suite of access accommodations for the trail, including siting Navi-Lens QR codes at the sculptures, producing audio descriptions of the artworks and Social Narrative documents.
* Engaged Sample-Studios to create a series of monthly guided walking tours of Island City.
* Completed the final output of the Per Cent For Art project *I Can Colour Between The Lines But I Choose Not To*, a collaboration between Knocknaheeny residents and artists, with guests Mark Storor and Stephen King, produced by Cork Midsummer Festival. A tile-mural was installed in September 2024.
* Programme of refurbishment of existing public sculpture underway. Reedpod by EilÍs O’Connell, Lapps Quay refurbished in October 2024; John Behan’s Swan Fountain at Bishop Lucey Park under refurbishment; Storm damage to Pegasus by Renn & Thacker, condition assessment underway.

**Outcome 3.2:** All eligible Cork City Council capital development projects include public art commissions

Actions:

* Douglas Togher Flood Relief Scheme Per Cent for Art commissioning process underway.
* Major Per Cent For Art commission underway in respect of the Dunkettle Interchange. Open competition for commission budgeted at €375,000 and funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. Partnership with Cork County Council and TII.
* Marina Promenade Pavilion mural commission underway.
* New Cork City Council Public Arts Policy under development.
* Site-wide Guidance for Public Art in respect of the Docklands provided within the 2025 variation to the City Development Plan (2022 – 2028) to ensure per cent for art commissioning.

**Outcome 3.3:** Cork’s arts and culture sector is producing arts activities of impact and imagination in public spaces that engender a sense of pride and belonging as well as contribute to the city’s distinct appeal

Actions:

* Continued to support and steer the KinShip Creative Climate Action Public Art Project at Tramore Valley Park in 2025.
* Fleadh Cheoil na Mumhan 2025 hosted in Cork City and supported by Cork City Council.
* Cork City Council Climate Action Unit collaborated with Cork Midsummer Festival to bring ‘Les Girafes’, a street spectacle by Compagnie OFF (France) to Patrick Street as part of the Open Streets programme.
* In total 16 arts festivals supported in 2025, many with significant public realm engagement. E.g. Dragon of Shandon Festival; Sounds from a Safe Harbour; Cork Midsummer Festival.

**Outcome 3.4:** The public experience of Cork City’s signature events is enhanced, and investment is leveraged for the benefit of the city and its arts and cultural communities.

Actions:

* Introduced Cork City’s first Christmas parade in November 2024. LUXE spectacle company performed its Winter Procession to an audience of 40,000 in Cork city centre.
* Presented Corkmas – A Cork Christmas celebration from 22nd November to 30th December, with record footfall in the city centre reported.
* Coordinated Culture Night Cork City Friday 20th September. 100 venues took part with more than 150 events. Over 30,000 people in attendance.
* Produced the St. Patrick’s Day Festival from 14th – 17th March. 40,000 spectators attended the St. Patrick’s Day parade. 3,100 participants took part from 61 arts, cultural and community groups.

**Outcome 3.5:** More communities are leading inclusive arts activities in their area

Actions:

* 16 community-led projects funded under the Creative Communities Grant Scheme 2025
* Creative Communities Roadshow initiative established to stimulate development of embedded community arts.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4 - **A CITY FOR ARTISTS**

GOAL  **Advance the culture and conditions that make Cork a city for artists**

**Outcome 4.1:** Artists are supported to develop and make work of quality, scale, ambition and criticality.

Action:

* 26 grants allocated in artist’s bursaries and project scheme awards in 2025. A total of 88 awards granted since 2023 to directly support artists to develop their practice and make new work.

2025 recipients are:

Individual Artist Bursary Award 2025

Joanne Heffernan (Theatre/ Youth Arts)

Chloe O’ Reilly (Theatre/ Arts Participation)

Julie Kelleher (Theatre)

Evgeniya Martirosyan (Visual Arts)

Cormac Mohally (Circus)

Sadhbh Moriarty (Literature)

Elinor O'Donovan (Visual Art)

Kate O'Kelly (Visual Art)

Solamh Kelly (Music)

Aoife Desmond (Multidisciplinary)

Natasha Bourke (Multidisciplinary)

Ollie McMorrow (Music)

Colette Lewis (Visual Arts)

Abreain Blake (Music)

Aoife Barrett (Arts Participation)

Sarah Buckley (Music)

Lisa O'Sullivan (Multidisiplinary)

Rebecca Griffin (Dance)

Project Scheme 2025

Luke Murphy R&D for the Prometheus Series

Irene Kelleher Production of new play, ‘Stitch’

Peter Power R&D for RUIN Nation (RN)

Jody O'Neill Produce Neurofestivity Festival

Moss Russell R&D for new walkabout show

Niamh Dalton Produce album under ‘Ana Palindrome’

Ciara O Mahony R&D for Drag Panto with Candy Warhol

Jane Hayes First Impressions – Visual Arts for Early Years

**Outcome 4.2:** Artists and arts professionals have the knowledge, skills and professional relationships that increase their capacity to build sustainable careers.

Actions:

* Continued to partner with Dance Cork Firkin Crane and The Everyman to support respective Cork City Dance Artist in Residence and Cork City Theatre Artist in Residence programmes.
* Provided a bursary for a professional artist working with older individuals in care contexts to participate in Age & Opportunity’s Artists Care Exchange (ACE) training opportunity.
* Provided 2 x artist bursaries to attend the Performing Arts Forum Gathering in May 2025.
* Piloted the I.D.E.A. Exchange in 2025 as a professional peer learning development programme for arts organisations in Cork. The programme offers a supportive space to find out what questions to ask ourselves about inclusion, diversity, equity and access.
* Supported 7 artists to be trained in working with people experiencing grief and loss with Irish Hospice Foundation, through Creative Ireland funded Health and Wellbeing programme.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5 - **CAPACITY AND INFLUENCE**

GOAL  **The City Council and the arts sector have the knowledge, skills and capacity to achieve our shared ambitions for arts and culture in Cork**

**Outcome 5.1:** The impacts of the City’s investment in arts and culture are evident, valued and recorded

Action:

* 2 x Strategy Implementation Reports produced and disseminated to date.

**Outcome 5.4:** More people know, experience and appreciate the full breadth of arts and cultural activity in the city

Actions:

* Supported Cork-based Architecture firm, Cotter & Naessens’ project ‘Assembly’, which represented Ireland in the Venice Architectural Biennale 2025.
* Established Assisted Listening Devices Loan Scheme. ListenTALK assisted listening devices available to arts organisations in the city, to enhance accessibility. Devices loaned to date by Cork Opera House, The Everyman and Dance Cork Firkin Crane.
* 4 x editions of the quarterly Arts Office e-newsletter disseminated since July 2024

**Outcome 5.6:** Investment has enhanced our capacity to influence arts practice in the areas of youth, community, health and climate action in particular

Actions:

* Supported the CATCHMENTS project by the School of Looking (Anne Cleary and Denis Connolly) at the Lee Fields. The project is using a blend of citizen science and participatory art, tofoster environmental awareness and creative expression among diverse communities.
* In May 2025, Music Generation Cork City launched a new strategic plan 2024 – 2028. Cork City Council is a proud Steering Partner of MGCC, with lead partner Cork ETB.

**Outcome 5.7:** A common purpose and collective effort are mobilising progress for arts and culture in the city

Action:

* Cork City Council (Arts Office and the Night-Time Economy Advisor) joined with the Arts Council and Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media to host the Night-Time Culture Forum at City Hall in October 2024.

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