

CONSULTATION DRAFT

Ambitions for the Arts: a Five Year
Strategic Plan for the Arts in Northern
Ireland 2013-2018

Preface

This strategy builds on 2012 – a year when the spirit of creativity and confidence is celebrated through international interest in the reputation of our artists, encouraged by the success of *Our Time Our Place*. It has been a milestone year where we have witnessed the fruition of flagship projects, providing outstanding theatres and purpose-designed arts spaces and when we have experienced unparalleled growth and commercial success in the creative industries.

We stand at the threshold of 2013 when Derry ~Londonderry takes centre stage as the first UK City of Culture; in the midst of a Decade of Anniversaries which have shaped the sense of British and Irish identity in Northern Ireland; and when artists will play a unique role in helping us to better understand the complexities of their legacy, our culture and our identity.

The Arts Council has long recognised the important role that artists have played in our recent troubled history, making us question our preconceptions and assumptions and opening us up to possibilities. It enables us to see things differently, reaching beyond polarised cultures and politics.

We are living in extraordinary times; our society is changing, as are the issues it faces in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, demography and class. The demographic composition of our society is changing with advances in technology raising standard of living and quality of life, people are living longer.

We are also entering a new age of innovation with people choosing how they consume, share, access and create artistic content, offering previously unimagined possibilities to connect with audiences. Within this broader context, the Arts Council is focusing on a new policy approach to creative cultural content generated for digital platforms redefining how we engage with the public in a digital age.

These are also times of austerity – the uncertainties facing the economy will have long-running consequences, with recovery unpredictable. For the arts sector, these conditions continue to impact upon consumer behaviour, audience spend, corporate sponsorship, as well as limiting access to private finance. Arts organisations continue to adjust their business models, seeking opportunities in new markets but as always reminding us they provide a very necessary spark of creativity in our lives.

We will champion the resilience, creativity and courage of artists and arts organisations, who while they struggle to manage on over-stretched budgets, often demonstrate a capacity for innovation and resourcefulness. As we face seemingly intractable economic challenges, there is a new reality: one in which we may have to manage with less but be no less ambitious in our thinking.

We do not know how long this crisis will last and how deep it will become. But when it is over, those who will have invested in creativity and innovation will find themselves ahead of the pack.

Ján Figel, EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism.

In Northern Ireland a number of unique factors also apply, not least the legacy of the conflict, the low wage economy, our peripheral location in Europe as well as issues surrounding deprivation and rurality. Moreover, the administrative landscape will have altered with the current Local Government Reform. Whatever the outcome of the new administrative arrangements, the challenges for the sector remain the same: creating opportunities for all to participate in our creative life: developing new forms of connection both here and abroad, raising awareness in local communities, bringing artistic excellence within the reach of everyone and engaging with new audiences.

In turn, this calls for new forms of engagement, moving beyond conventional practice, having the courage to take risks, explore new territory; to embrace the changes brought about by communication technology and the radically new.

Something worth remembering – looking back over the last five years

As the outgoing five year strategy “Creative Connections” draws to a close, we reflect over a period in which, despite the world facing one of the greatest recessions of all time, the Arts scaled new heights through a series of major developments and international events. Most importantly during this period the Arts became more relevant and accessible to more people as public funding brought great art within the reach of everyone.

- Everyone has access to a dedicated arts facility as a result of Arts Council investment with 99% of households situated within a 20 mile radius of an arts venue. Arts facilities and cultural events have enhanced the cultural tourism offering in Northern Ireland and act as powerful symbols of regeneration across our towns and cities.
- The Arts Council has a long and successful track record of working at the heart of our communities; our investment supports a wide range of community programmes with over half of our funding going directly to the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland.
- 82% of adults reported attending an arts event in 2012, representing an 8 percentage point increase from 2009
- More people are getting involved in the arts, especially the young 88% of whom attended arts events during the year
- 30% of adults reported participating in an arts event in 2012, representing a 4 percentage point increase from 2009

Our headline achievements

1. Arts infrastructure has enjoyed unprecedented investment over the past five years.

The MAC, the Lyric Theatre, Grand Opera House and the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast and Culturlann Ui Chanain, the Playhouse and Waterside Theatres in Derry have been key projects enriching the cultural fabric of our two major cities. Many have achieved distinction for their iconic buildings which have become a focal point for the performing and visual arts, winning prestigious awards for their design and construction.

- The Lyric Theatre, Northern Ireland’s only full-time producing theatre re-opened following an £18.1m rebuild in 2011 with a bang, winning 15 trophies including the Irish Times Theatre Awards for its debut production of *The Crucible* and ‘Outstanding Contribution to Tourism’. It was also shortlisted for the prestigious architectural Stirling Prize and is considered a prime example of “how buildings should be built”

“You have taken the Lyric from a dream to a concrete idea, to a physical manifestation. You have made this building an actuality. May it be a living, breathing monument to and for the spirit of the people of Northern Ireland.”
Liam Neeson, Actor and Patron of Lyric Theatre

- After almost a decade in the making, the Metropolitan Arts Centre (the MAC) opened its doors in 2012 in the city’s Cultural Quarter. Although in its infancy, the MAC has scooped an impressive tally of prizes, including ‘Best Creative Business’ and ‘Best Belfast Brand’.

“The MAC really is an amazing gift for the people of Northern Ireland - more than a building; it’s about the art and the magic that happens inside” Meryl Streep, Oscar Winning Actress

2. The Arts reach deep into communities, touching people’s lives.

- There is a thriving community arts sector in Northern Ireland, widely recognised as at the cutting edge of practice internationally. We have been proud to support the sector for more than 40 years. Given its flexibility in meeting community need and its ability to deliver important social outcomes by bringing people together; by building networks of trust that develop social capital, it helps tackle economic, racial and ethnic divides; as well as engaging with the most disenfranchised members of our community. It also helps address issues of anti-social behaviour and improve the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals.

Between 2007 and 2012, £19.5m. was distributed in grant aid by the Arts Council to organisations delivering community arts based work representing 22% of the total funding awarded to all Arts Council clients over this period.

- Over 155 community regeneration projects tackling sectarianism and racism have been successfully delivered through the Re-imagining Communities Programme to encourage greater social integration, address the issues surrounding paramilitary murals and slogans in a post conflict society.

3. The Arts create jobs.

- Since its inception in 2008, the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) has supported a portfolio of organisations in the development of products for local and international marketplaces. By 2011 254 awards, worth over £4.5m had been made. CIIF represents a significant contribution towards the Programme for Government target of 200 projects within the creative industries sector.

“The creative industries can help to rebuild and rebalance our economy. The Executive realises the importance of promoting innovation and creativity and aims to support 200 projects over 2011-15” Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure Carál Ní Chuilín

- Through its main grant programmes, Arts Council investment supports jobs in the vibrant cultural sector. We believe that stimulating growth and development of the creative sector will optimize our economic potential, now and for future generations, and play a significant role in the long-term aim of reinvigorating the Northern Ireland economy. This is a view that is shared by many in the private sector who recognise how

partnership with the arts is delivering creative business solutions to help businesses address many of the challenges they are facing around retaining and motivating staff, engaging with communities and increasing their competitiveness. It is becoming increasingly acknowledged that creativity, which is at the heart of the artistic endeavour, is linked to economic outcomes, particularly as a seedbed of innovation, job and wealth creation.

4. The Arts do us proud abroad.

- Northern Ireland showcased over 40 arts and culture events, illustrating the calibre and vitality of the region as a place to visit, invest study, work and live at the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival in Washington DC. Leading performers, Snow Patrol played to thousands of Americans at the Bender Arena whilst Belfast born pianist Barry Douglas performed with his orchestra Camerata Ireland at the Library of Congress.
- Artists from Northern Ireland exhibited their work at the Venice Biennale, the largest and most prestigious showcase of contemporary visual arts in 2005, 2007 and 2009. Visitor numbers to the Northern Ireland pavilion grew significantly, from 18,500 in 2005 to 51,500 in 2009, alongside the reputation of the Northern Ireland's visual arts talent.
- Brassneck, a small independent theatre company based in West Belfast renowned for its razor sharp black Belfast humour, collected the award for Best New Play with 'A Night with George' at the Irish Festival of Theatre, 2011 in New York.
- The new regional opera company for Northern Ireland, NI Opera has been hailed a triumphant success. Following the award winning performance of Tosca and a critically-acclaimed run of eight shows in Belfast Zoo as part of the London 2012 Festival, Benjamin Britten's much-loved children's opera, Noye's Fludde travelled to Beijing for an exclusive performance as part of the Beijing Music Festival.

"Youngest and feistiest of Britain's Regional companies"
The Independent on Sunday

5. Nearer home the Arts helped us celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

- *Land of Giants* was one of only four outdoor spectacles to be funded as part of the Cultural Olympiad. An event billed as the "biggest outdoor arts celebration ever staged in Northern Ireland" it presented a unique tale inspired by iconic giants found in the history, society and landscape of Northern Ireland, to an audience of 18,000 on Belfast's newest events space, Titanic Slipways.

"Beautiful, provocative, emotional, artistic, soulful, & then some."
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure Carál Ní Chuilín

- Choreographer, Caroline Bowditch, highlighted the real potential of people with disabilities to dance in a professional company. The dance project, *Luminous Souls*, was showcased as part of the Legacy Trust UK's Connections programme.
- Ulster Orchestra's 'The Pied Piper' was the first Cultural Olympiad project to receive the London 2012 Inspire Mark, an award to outstanding cultural events helping to deliver the lasting legacy of the Olympic Games.

6. The Arts are changing the image of Northern Ireland.

- Exemplified in the richness and cultural strength of the events of *Our Time, Our Place NI 2012* and in 2011 when Belfast hosted the MTV *European Music Awards* to a world audience, demonstrating a 'city of music ... steeped in rich musical heritage'.
- Derry~Londonderry made history, pipping Birmingham, Norwich and Sheffield to the post to win the bid to become the first UK City of Culture. The Arts Council has invested £1m in the Derry~Londonderry City of Culture 2013 events programme to support local arts organisations presenting world-class standard work to international audiences. Leading travel guide, the Lonely Planet named Derry~Londonderry the "4th best city to visit in 2013" based on its "2013 calendar of cultural events" and "impressive redevelopment".

"It's an incredible opportunity which will bring new jobs and help transform the city." Martin McGuinness, deputy First Minister

Looking forward – a new five year plan

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to provide clear, strategic direction. A framework for future development – working from a significant evidence base that helps us better understand the needs of artists, the sector and those who attend and participate in the arts. Our approach in developing it is to build upon what has already been achieved but also to identify what needs to be done. In doing so we will work with Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to ensure that its forthcoming Arts Strategy fits with our own ambitions. This will complement the existing DCAL corporate strategy under its five strategic pillars, agreed by the NI Executive; we will bring long-standing benefits for communities across Northern Ireland, unlocking the full potential of culture and the arts. These pillars are:

ECONOMY: enhancing the contribution of the culture, arts and leisure sectors in growing and rebalancing the economy;

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY: enabling the population to enhance their quality of life through participation/engagement in culture, arts and leisure activities;

HEALTH: Enable as many people as possible to achieve mental and physical wellbeing through regular participation in sport and leisure activities;

EDUCATION: Maximise the benefits of learning visits and experiences through our culture, arts and leisure infrastructure and

ENVIRONMENT: Through interventions in the culture, arts and leisure sectors, we will protect and enhance the quality of the environment.

The Arts Council is striving to deepen the value of arts to individuals and wider society, target resources to meet social and community challenges, deliver improved access and reach new audiences and enhance community engagement.

In doing so, we will work with other members of the DCAL family to maximise the benefits of our rich, collective cultural resources, especially libraries, museums, archives and film. The opportunities presented by City of Culture, 2013 provide a platform for the arts to contribute to the Legacy Framework, thus ensuring that the benefits of City of Culture do not end with the completion of the year-long programme of events. Working with DCAL and the Implementation Group we will strive to maximise the legacy outcomes of City of Culture, now and post 2013.

Our mission is to place the Arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life

More than any other activity, the Arts have the power to broaden and enrich our lives, to look at the world differently, to transform the familiar, to deepen at every contact.

Never has there been a more fitting time for the arts to demonstrate how they speak to us in myriad ways. Their role in education and learning; their value to the economy; their importance to the health and vitality of communities; how they are changing the image of Northern Ireland at home and abroad; helping us to celebrate our diversity and their role in drawing us together.

In our role as the lead agency for the development of the contemporary arts we have created strategies shaping and defining our approach to key areas of work such as: creating international platforms; promoting excellence and making sure the arts are accessible across society. We manage funding programmes that are flexible and responsive; harness the transformative power of the arts and deliver benefits at local and community level: enhancing social cohesion; strengthening peace and building partnerships.

This five year plan affirms our vision to place the Arts at the heart of society, to champion their cause and express their value in a way that connects with practitioners, audiences, policymakers, investors and wider society.

Our ambitions

Our aim is to be a confident organisation committed to the development of the contemporary arts, accessible to all; one that delivers effectively and gives the best possible service.

In this section, we set out our ambitions over the next five years:

To place high-quality arts projects within the grasp of socially excluded groups

Everyone has the right to access arts and culture of their own choosing. That remains both a continuing challenge and ambition for the Arts Council. We want to ensure access for all, especially those who feel marginalised, isolated and voiceless as many socially excluded groups do. To this end, we will develop the experience gleaned from such initiatives as *Test Drive the Arts* which reached into our most disadvantaged communities by offering free tickets to those who otherwise could not have afforded the cost of attending an event. We will devise a new programme, in conjunction with our health and social care partners, which will offer every new born an Arts Voucher that can be re-deemed for arts experiences, thus giving them the best possible start in life.

Community arts are often the conduit through which individuals and groups engage. Working with diverse communities of interest - young and old people, disabled people and those most vulnerable who feel excluded, we will support organisations working in the frontline of our communities.

Our long-term, expert partner involved in supporting community based arts projects is the Community Arts Partnership and we will continue to learn from best practice in this area.

To support individual artists

Supporting professional artists and helping them make a difference in society lies at the core of our endeavours. In providing support to artists, we aim to encourage engagement with

people in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. We want to make Northern Ireland a place where artists can thrive and achieve the respect their talents deserve.

In pursuing this significant goal we will implement the recommendations arising from the Living & Working Conditions of Artists in Ireland, support artists' career development through the Artist Career Enhancement Scheme (ACES), encourage the commissioning of new work, develop dedicated programmes that place artists at the heart of local, regional and international showcases.

To core fund arts organisations

We will sustain our commitment to core-fund arts organisations that demonstrate the impact their work is having in engaging new and more diverse audiences, especially those from our most disadvantaged communities. A resilient arts infrastructure provides the strategic platform to deliver strengthened public and community engagement. The building blocks of that infrastructure comprise: arts organisations of quality, strength and connectedness; resourceful artists of vision, engaging with audiences, learners and citizens.

We will protect the health and well-being of key arts organisations improving their long-term creative and financial future. This will involve supporting them through direct funding but also helping them develop a mix of different sources of income and bringing new approaches to their work through partnerships with others and by promoting an entrepreneurial spirit in the sector.

To help arts organisations deliver benefits to our community

As a funder we will seek to increase the impact of public investment in the arts. We recognise the need to have effective funding programmes in place but we also require those who we fund to be innovative and resourceful - to share, to collaborate, to take advantage of economies of scale, to encourage larger organisations to work with smaller ones, to maximise the investment and showcase what they do.

As a sector we need to better articulate what has been achieved through public investment in the arts, through effective evaluation and case study, capturing value and expressing that through advocacy.

We will work with arts organisations, developing delivery agreements based upon Business Plans that show how their programmes are reaching all sections of society and delivering improved access. In practice this means dedicated interventions to enhance community engagement, out-reach programmes and collaborative projects that work beyond conventional arts spaces and activities that reach new audiences in fields such as Disability, Intercultural diversity, older people, marginalised children and youth.

We will require all funded organisations to place a strong focus on community engagement through new delivery agreements. We recognise that the major arts organisations are central plank to the delivery of this strategy. We will continue to invest in them as 'centres of excellence' and will require them to proactively engage with communities beyond their traditional catchment.

We have invested in key projects of significant scale. Facilities such as the Lyric and the MAC now generate major opportunities for artists and practitioners. While we will protect

the investment already made, we expect them to utilise the new asset-base for the wider benefit of the citizen, building new audiences for the arts, strengthening the cultural offer and increasing diversity.

To build partnerships

The ambition of placing the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life can only be achieved through working with a broad range of partners across all sectors, public, private and voluntary.

Based on a broad platform, we will open up horizons through new partnerships, in key areas such as cultural tourism, education and learning, health and wellbeing, inclusion and community building and the economy. It is through such partnerships in these arenas that we will create a stronger, healthier creative sector and foster opportunities for artists, arts organisations and the communities which they serve. Such an approach in the context of the City of Culture 2013 will deepen the impact and legacy of the year round cultural programme.

Apart from current partnership arrangements which help deliver the Re-Imaging Communities Programme, the Creative Industries Innovation Fund, the Arts and Older People Programme, the Inter-cultural Arts Programme, we have strong practical working relationships with the British Council to forge international connections through culture and with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to strengthen cultural tourism product. In the course of this plan, we will develop new partnerships in education and others in health and well-being to anchor our work in the hardest to reach communities. We will bring to fruition programmes in after school arts with our partners in education and the community and with the Public Health Agency and local groups to improve mental health in the community.

The Arts Councils of these islands have a long history of co-operation. We reaffirm our commitment to work with the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon: to share a common strategic commitment to support artists and arts organisations jointly on the island and through a joint working group and annual plenary meetings to nurture and support key projects of common interest. Such a collaborative approach ensures value for money and greater impact. We will also actively foster strong east/west relations with the other Arts Councils of the UK, delivering benefits in key areas such as Cross Border Touring, the exchange of ideas, values and practices. The forthcoming Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 presents an opportunity to showcase the Arts and strengthen our relationship with Creative Scotland.

To support skills development

Working with a range of providers, we will support learning and development for arts organisations; develop leadership programmes to give senior executives the knowledge and skills to respond to an ever-changing environment. Through the interventions of the Arts Council - and our strategic delivery partner Arts & Business Northern Ireland (A&B NI) - we will support arts organisations to deliver their core business activities through tough times.

Recognising the role of non-executive board members of arts organisations, we will support A&B NI to deliver an expanded programme of tailored support using their skills and business networks to enhance training and specialist advice for the arts sector. Business leaders bring distinctive qualities for the benefit of the cultural sector: specialist knowledge,

business acumen, energy and a passion for the arts. Working through A&B NI we will support them in their role on cultural boards and helping to prepare cultural leaders of the future.

With the Creative and Cultural Skills Council we will make a long-term contribution to recruitment in the sector, delivering Creative Apprenticeships and encouraging take up of paid internships. We believe in fair access to careers in the creative and cultural industries, especially for our most talented people living in disadvantaged communities. Providing accessible routes into the sector is important if we are to avoid losing a generation of creative talent.

To encourage voluntary activities in the arts

Many organisations working in the cultural sector have effective volunteering programmes. We are committed to volunteering in the arts and have teamed-up with Voluntary Arts Ireland and Volunteer Now to achieve a louder voice for volunteering and to promote good practice in recruiting, retaining and supporting volunteers. We will support Voluntary Arts Ireland as the principal umbrella body for volunteering in the arts and encourage organisations we fund to adopt and apply the Volunteering Toolkit. We will raise the profile of volunteering by sponsoring an awards scheme recognising those who choose to put their time, energy, skill and creativity into helping arts and cultural organisations which have established outstanding volunteering programmes.

The Themes

To achieve our ambitions for the arts we have set out a clear statement of priorities under three strategic themes that reflect the changed context and the need for strong public engagement. Those three themes are to:

- Champion the Arts
- Promote Access
- Create a resilient sector

Theme One: Champion the Arts

We encounter the arts in every aspect of our lives. The arts are fundamental to humanity and have the power to transform lives, connect people and are essential to a thriving community. They contribute to creating a sense of place and have the power to fuel social and economic growth. The arts can help us develop skills, build interpersonal ties, change attitudes to learning and foster educational development. The arts have significance and meaning of themselves but they also generate value directly and indirectly.

The Arts Council is a strong, independent and authoritative champion of the arts in Northern Ireland - a source of specialist expertise in and about the arts. We will work hard to realize a vision for the arts that is informed by our belief that they lie at the heart of our social,

economic and creative life. By working collaboratively, the arts sector can make a compelling case for why the Arts matter.

Empirical studies highlight how the arts impact on local and national economies through attracting investment, generating taxes, creating jobs, promoting tourism, fostering innovation and nurturing community development.

Research studies and evaluated projects demonstrate the benefits of using arts in healthcare settings. We realise the importance of introducing arts interventions that deliver benefits in the health sector. We will work with partners to pilot initiatives specifically aimed at reducing the high levels of suicide and self-harming in Northern Ireland in line with the on-going implementation of the “Protect Life - A Shared Vision” suicide prevention strategy.

Overall the evidence is there, but we know we have to make a more persuasive and compelling case as to why public funding for the arts is essential, especially in straightened times, and what impact it has on the life our community and all individuals.

We are heartened, however, that despite economic stringency and cuts in public expenditure, in a survey of the general population, 75% of people here support the principle that there should be public funding for arts and culture projects.

Together with our partners we will advocate the value of arts to Northern Ireland society, through think pieces, articles, newsletters and briefings with political parties.

- We will capture the evidence of the value of our investment in the arts, using quantitative research, programme evaluation, case study and personal testimony.
- We will gather strategic insights that can be used and acted upon by us and by others and with our partners.
- We will ‘harvest’ views and opinions of a wide variety of people across the arts sector and the general public on the value of the Arts and why they are deserving of public funding.

Apart from our promise to advocate the value of the arts, we will also champion the role that the arts and creativity play as a fundamental attribute of a competitive economy and highlight how creativity is integral to achieving success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). A STEM-literate workforce is essential to economic prosperity, but without creative designers and ‘imagineers’ to challenge conventional thinking, we may fail to find those unexpected new directions that add value through the pursuit of creativity. Attracting and retaining extraordinary people who thrive in a creative culture is one of the challenges we face as a region. Working with our strategic delivery partners, we will contrite to the STEM thought leadership debate but expand horizons to championing the idea that STEM expands into STEAM when art is part of the equation.

Arts Mark

We will introduce an ArtsMark award scheme in recognition of the outstanding achievements of schools and community arts projects in delivering first class arts opportunities to children and young people.

Target: Introduce an ArtsMark scheme in partnership with Education & Training Inspectorate by 2017/18

A dedicated gallery for Northern Ireland

We will advocate the necessity of creating a new, dedicated gallery to house the best twentieth century holdings in Northern Ireland and mount international touring exhibitions. Such a proposal for a 21st Century art gallery seeks to change the way in which the visual arts are perceived and experienced. As a beacon, this initiative would celebrate our unique indigenous collections of Irish and Northern Irish art, provide a rich resource for all our citizens and become a driver for tourism revenues helping revitalize the region's economy. A capital project of this scale offers significant opportunities to help regenerate our most disadvantaged communities and provides employment in a local area through the adoption of a social clause approach to procurement. Glasgow spearheaded its economic regeneration with a series of cultural developments, commencing with its now famous and popular Burrell Collection. The Lowry, Manchester is an example of an architectural flagship building with a unique and dynamic identity, rising from the regenerated docklands of Salford Quays. Tate Modern at Bankside, London shows the transformation of a landmark listed building. Wakefield's Hepworth opened in 2011, establishing Yorkshire's credentials as a global centre for sculpture. There are many more such examples.

Target: Undertake an economic appraisal for a Dedicated Gallery for Northern Ireland

The Troubles Archive

We continue to live in a divided society fractured by multiple fault-lines. Our artists have been observing and responding to our divisions for many decades. This is a rich source of material which should be publicly available.

The Arts Council has been compiling a compendium of artistic activity that took place during thirty plus years of violence in the belief that it allows us to give recognition to the contribution the arts make to our understanding of the legacy of the past. The archive is an important cultural resource containing many key artistic works and one which helps us to understand more clearly the connection between the arts and the events which shaped them.

We will make this power digital resource accessible to audiences everywhere through a dedicated online gallery.

Honouring our Artists

A society that does not sufficiently value its artists is a poorer society. We believe it is timely to introduce an 'honours system' of awards to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of our artists and practitioners and have with, our partners in the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA) undertaken an international survey to ascertain the most appropriate model. During the course of this plan we hope to persuade others of the merits of this cause.

Target: Introduce an 'honours system' for our most distinguished artists by 2015

Theme Two: Promote Access

During the life of this plan we will encourage more people and communities to become engaged and more deeply involved in the arts. Tackling barriers to engagement in the arts and encouraging development and diversification of audiences are key ways in which the Arts Council will demonstrate its commitment to DCAL's expressed vision to target poverty and social exclusion. To deliver this ambition we will help funded organisations understand, retain, grow and diversify their audiences. We will commit to high impact projects that lay the basis for 'step change' in the sector, such as a dedicated, centralised ticketing agency for the arts that links ticket sales with strategic marketing infrastructure. In practice, this means we work through our strategic delivery partner, Audiences NI and the Grand Opera House to set up a joint venture under the working title of BTickets, thus creating a shared ticketing service and audience development project to bring state-of-the-art ticketing services on a cost effective basis within the reach of arts organisations in Northern Ireland. It will build upon the current market intelligence compiled by Audiences NI thus enabling effective audience engagement by empowering more arts organisations through the provision of cost-effective, shared services. This will help arts organisations understand who their audiences are and, most crucially, who they are not and why, as well as how best to reach them.

Target: Work with Audiences NI to develop a framework to map arts attendance and identify audience 'cold spots'

We will encourage more touring companies to undertake audience development work. We will fund projects that have the potential to build strong connections between communities. We will support artists enrich and deepen engagement through programmes such as the Reimaging Communities.

Target: Fund the delivery of at least 10 new public artworks each year through the Re-Imaging Communities Programme

Arts & Older People

We will continue the roll-out of the Arts and Older People strategy developed as a means of promoting social inclusion for older people, recognising the barriers which prevent them from participating in a wide range of activities. We will improve access and participation, using the arts as a creative vehicle to explore and highlight social justice issues through a series of artist-led interventions.

The programme will continue throughout the life of this plan as we are active in seeking new funding partners.

Target: Increase the number of funded projects aimed at older people

Intercultural Arts

The Intercultural Arts Strategy recognises the changing face of society and its increasing cultural diversity. The strategy sets out how we will foster the expression of cultural pluralism, build dialogue and promote understanding through interchanges within and between communities and their cultures, as well as supporting minority ethnic artists

develop their practices. We will showcase practical approaches to promoting diversity and inclusion in a changing society, through our dedicated funding stream.

Target: Increase the number of funded projects targeted at ethnic minority groups

Disability

We will maintain our evidence-based approach to policy development, building on our recent thematic strategies which examine the inequalities faced by some sections of society. One of the areas highlighted for priority action is disability. People with a disability are much less likely to attend arts events than those without; participation levels are also lower. Given that one in five people in Northern Ireland has some form of disability, we will seek to pioneer key interventions to enable more people with a disability to engage in the arts. This will build upon work already undertaken, such as the Disability Charter Mark, which recognises the concerted efforts arts organisations have undertaken to ensure that the arts are more accessible to everyone. We will require our funded organisations to demonstrate the practical measures they pursue to engage with disabled people as members of the audience or as participants in their work.

Target: Encourage more disabled people to become engaged in the arts

Arts & Education

The arts are every child's entitlement. We want every young person to have the opportunity to experience the arts; to fuel their curiosity; to heighten their sense of creative discovery. We will build on the legacy of Creative Youth Partnerships with new initiatives designed to support children engage with the arts early in their lives by offering access to quality arts experience, investing in arts practice, strengthening provision in and outside schools and by offering every new-born an Arts Voucher that can be redeemed for arts experiences thus giving them the best possible start in life.

Target: Introduce an Arts Voucher Scheme for every new-born child to redeem for arts experiences by 2014/15

The Arts Council recognises the effects of poverty and social exclusion on how people are able to participate in the Arts and the vital role that early exposure, particularly through the education system, plays in addressing this. Working with our partners in Education, we will maximise the opportunities for early engagement. We also want people to experience high quality arts.

Partnerships between the arts and education make a positive difference to the learning experience. How young people engage with the arts is changing. Over the next five years we will work closely with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in building our engagement with the Department of Education, the new Education and Skills Authority and the Education and Training Inspectorate to develop quality arts-based programmes for both mainstream and special education.

We will work with Creative and Cultural Skills to develop a creative apprenticeship pilot aimed at young people wishing to fulfil their creative ambitions.

Target: Establish a Creative Apprenticeship Pilot in Northern Ireland by 2014/15

Our universities and regional colleges have been a powerful force underpinning the growth of the creative economy – a contribution that will become increasingly important to economic recovery. The extent of their engagement is far reaching: helping to develop new models for interacting with creative businesses; acting as hubs for innovation at the heart of regional creative clusters; developing talent and skills for the creative economy; supporting activities that enhance the employability and enterprise skills of both and providing tailored continuing professional development. Given the strategic importance of the higher-education sector we will foster partnerships to support their engagement with the creative and performing arts and the creative economy.

Voluntary Arts

Throughout Northern Ireland there is a very significant level of engagement in voluntary arts: from amateur music groups, choirs and a youth orchestra, to video production; from drama groups to salsa dancing and ballroom; from floral art to craft-making. It is a hive of creative activity through which people participate in local arts and crafts groups in their own communities. The voluntary arts are important to the vitality of local communities. They encourage a culture of life-long learning and provide significant personal benefits. We will support Voluntary Arts Ireland to foster a sustainable voluntary arts infrastructure in Northern Ireland, to make a real difference by supporting groups and by helping the voluntary sector contribute to strong cohesive communities.

Target: Encourage 22% of funded arts organisations to adopt the Arts & Volunteering Toolkit by 2018

Local Government

Local Government is changing in Northern Ireland. The changes will see a reduction from 26 councils to 11. This process will be completed by April 2015 and has been devised to ensure that the new councils are citizen focused and more responsive to the needs, aspirations and concerns of local communities. It is also proposed that councils will have a new statutory duty of Community Planning and a new Power of well-being and work in partnership with others as they guide the future development of their areas.

Local authorities are one of our long standing partners - they continue to be important players in supporting arts development and provision. However, the emerging picture for local authority funding for the arts is also a challenge, with the squeeze on local government finance having its impact. We will continue to make the case for the arts to local authorities across Northern Ireland and we will prioritise working with the two largest councils – Belfast and Derry. We will establish bi-lateral agreements (memorandum of understanding) to consolidate the collaborative relationship with each and as a means of achieving our mission. This is particularly imperative in the case of the latter as we work together to maximise the legacy of the City of Culture, 2013.

We see the potential for greater engagement, especially in the context of the new 11 council configuration and we will look at new ways in which the relationship might be developed and re-articulated, for example, through a formal Advisory Group representing the new councils.

Target: Establish MoU with Belfast and Derry

Target: Support the 11 new Council Areas to develop dedicated Arts Strategies

Theme Three: Create a Resilient Sector

We invest in the arts by supporting artists and arts organisations and we also support a range of activities that help to bring art within reach of everyone.

- We will strengthen capacity within the sector delivering business development support and roll out support measures with Creative and Cultural Skills, Arts and Business NI and Audiences NI.
- We will strengthen the skills base within the sector through training, coaching and workshops; offer a range of practical supports and help cultural organisations lever sponsorship and funding from Europe.
- We will strengthen governance; improve mechanisms for income-generation and encourage funded organisations to be entrepreneurial and exploit opportunities.

Realising the vision to create a stable and resilient arts sector will require a new focus on collaborative enterprise by both the Arts Council and its partners.

Up-skilling for the sector to address knowledge gaps and helping arts organisations connect with prospective donors is a priority. We will help them engage with thought leaders, utilising networks to strengthen the arts and offer peer-to-peer mentoring. The arts sector in Northern Ireland is constituted of a large number of small and micro businesses. Most organisations have small numbers of employees delivering their objectives. The Skills Audit carried out by Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS), provides evidence of the need to focus on organisational capacity building across a range of business areas such as: strategic thinking and planning, leadership, good governance. We appreciate the value of well-planned creative apprenticeships working with learners, nurturing a new generation of talented individuals and benefitting employers in the sector.

Recognising the need to build capacity in key areas such as audience engagement, we will work with Audiences NI to rapidly expand a sector approach that utilises digital platforms and web-based technologies as a driver for business. We will support arts organisations develop their marketing skills by establishing with Audiences NI a range of learning development offers to strengthen their strategic marketing function.

Target: Deliver 10 programmes to address ‘cold spots’ in audience attendance in Northern Ireland by 2018

Target: Grow the drawdown in EU funds by 20% by 2018

The Creative Industries

Increasingly artists and arts organisations are endeavouring to turn their ‘products and services’ into a business offering which will help them to earn a living or re-invest as part of a social enterprise effort in their organisation. Regardless of the particular ‘business model’ deployed by individual artists and arts organisations, the creative industries are increasingly seen as part of a modern, knowledge-based economy, generating wealth and jobs through the development, production or exploitation of intellectual property.

Working with our partners: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Invest NI, Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure and NI Screen, we have shown how the Creative

Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) has contributed to the growth of Northern Ireland's cultural capital by supporting creativity and creative talent in business activities. The Fund has driven risk-taking and innovation and helped position the sector for a future economic upturn. An independent evaluation highlighted that CIIF has played a role in building capacity for export and external sales, 'internationalising' the outlook of participant companies - providing training and skills development. It has fostered a wide range of innovation activity and facilitated Intellectual Property Rights protection.

- Gross Value Added for the Creative Industries was £737 million in 2008. This was equivalent to 4.2% of Northern Ireland's total GVA.
- The estimated number of business units in the Creative Industries sector was 2,200 in 2010. This represented 3.2% of all business units in Northern Ireland.
- The number of people in creative employment in 2009 was estimated at 31,000. This represented 4.1% of total employment in Northern Ireland.

Target: Fund 50 projects each year through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) to 2015

Artform Strategies

The arts are, of course, not simply instrumental spheres of 'business activity'. They have their own intrinsic worth.

Following the publication of the last strategy 'Creative Connections', the Arts Council embarked upon a process of commissioning art form reviews to complement the 5-year plan. In recent years this has resulted in a series of strategic action plans for our work both with individual art forms and in cross-art form areas. The reviews drill down to the strategic issues facing the art form areas, identify what needs to change and how we will strengthen and develop each art form area through a series of interventions. We will continue to rollout the implementation of these actions plans during the life of this strategy.

Drama

The Arts Council encourages artistic excellence and innovative approaches in the creation of drama; we support drama that reaches audiences throughout the region. We aim to make theatre and drama as accessible to audiences through amateur and community drama, professional theatre, youth drama and touring.

The drama strategy established a clear vision for the development of drama within Northern Ireland, with priorities and key actions for implementation. Over the next five years we will consolidate our commitment to the Lyric Theatre as a fully-resourced producing theatre in its new flagship facility. We will support major independent theatre companies which have flourished and diversified their practice as a result of the strategy, building the profile of our playwrights and enabling, where possible, the international showcasing of the very best of our theatre. We will seek to sustain the engagement these companies enjoy at grass-roots level with the wider community and across Northern Ireland.

Target: Build upon exiting outreach initiatives to drive demand among excluded audiences

Dance

We will encourage a diverse range of dance projects: from direct assistance for individual dancers with new work, to assistance for professional dance companies to produce and tour throughout Northern Ireland. We will seek collaborative partnerships to strengthen and develop the dance infrastructure and create opportunities for skills development. We will aim to make dance accessible to diverse audiences and participants in varied contexts.

The art form action plan frames our proposals for Dance in Northern Ireland, laying emphasis upon developing the infrastructure for professional production and performance, ensuring that people have the opportunity to experience and enjoy dance. With the stabilisation of the four main dance companies and the exciting opportunity to build a legacy for dance in Derry-Londonderry and across the region, the challenge ahead is to encourage artistic excellence and innovative approaches with the creation of new work.

Target: Anchor Dance initiatives within the Legacy Framework for City of Culture

Literature

The Arts Council supports the development of writers, readers and publishers across a range of genres – poetry, novels/novellas, short stories, performance-based work, scriptwriting, non-fiction (including essays and criticism), storytelling, children’s books and graphic novels.

We also support reading platforms where writers can showcase their work to informed audiences. The Council encourages new readerships and new audiences for writing from Northern Ireland by assisting literary festivals, readings and roadshows. We also fund and administer schemes which enable local schools and community groups to experience writers first-hand in workshops and short-term residencies. The Council also works with organisations in the Republic of Ireland to ensure opportunities for writers island-wide.

Writers from Northern Ireland have laid down an enviable legacy of excellence. A focus on how best to encourage lifelong familiarity with literary creativity and to identify and develop new writers is a vital way of ensuring that same quality is reflected in future generations. We will continue to support young and emerging writers of talent. We will seek to create pathways to publication on the full range of contemporary platforms for writers of originality and help build opportunities for them to articulate their work to a variety of audiences at home and abroad. A review of Literature will be commissioned during the first year of the life of this strategy to clarify these and identify other strategic issues and drivers for the sector and create the conditions in which Literature can flourish.

Target: Undertake review of literature

Visual Arts

The Arts Council’s primary focus is contemporary visual arts, supporting work by living artists of quality - innovative, challenging and experimental. That support is chiefly delivered through acquisitions and awards. The Council helps sustain the infrastructure of galleries and organisations which commission and present visual arts.

Following a collaborative research project undertaken by Audiences NI in 2011, we identified the need to focus on building and diversifying audiences for the visual arts. There is an imperative for visual arts organisations to provide an educational and outreach function as part of their core activities. That work will be taken forward by Audiences NI helping galleries build up a picture of their audience, identify gaps that exist in the market, shape the right interventions and reach out beyond their current audiences.

We are committed to improving facilities for artists in Northern Ireland, particularly studio and resource provision.

Our interest in the applied art field is targeted at contemporary works of design-led crafts that show a high degree of creativity, innovation, skilled workmanship and originality. The Arts Council encourages excellence in the design, production and exhibition of crafts and applied arts. The Arts Council is committed to the development of Craft NI as the lead agency for the development of the sector in Northern Ireland.

Public art is experiencing something of a renaissance, with major works like Rise and Mute Meadow setting a new standard of scale and ambition. Over the life of this strategy the Arts Council will develop a partnership approach to the commissioning of work on a city-wide basis, under the theme of One City. Large scale public art projects will connect local communities and assist in the regeneration of neighbourhoods.

Targets:

- *Secure funding for One City Proposal*
- *Secure additional studio and gallery provision for Derry as part of City of Culture*

Music

Music making continues to flourish and provide a powerful expression of identity and imagination. The Music Review carried in 2011 has informed a comprehensive strategy and action plan that provides a clear statement of what developmental priorities, aims and objectives we have set for the next five years. We will work with the traditional music sector to facilitate cross-border contact leading to joint projects and sharing of resources with the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, the rest of the UK and other relevant territories, as well as undertaking an audit and needs analysis of the sector. We will be an advocate for the entitlement of music in education and lifelong learning; we will support an ambitious, dynamic and cohesive approach to under-represented genres (jazz, world music and new music) and the development of year-round programming across Northern Ireland for the benefit of local artists and audiences alike. We will support the Ulster Orchestra through its on-going change-management process, engage with other key funders and assisting it in seeking to broaden its income-base as well as engaging with other stakeholders to advocate the benefits of a collaborative approach to Northern Ireland-wide orchestral provision; we will develop a mechanism for a joint approach to festivals, with other agencies, such as local councils and Northern Ireland Tourist Board for the funding and promotion of festivals incorporating music; we improve the mechanisms for accessing resources available to composers/music creators/producers and we will work with partners to support them in testing and improving standards. We will commit, along with Invest NI and other stakeholders, to a long-term joint strategic programme for the music industry, and ensure

our contribution is aligned with its core purpose of supporting the creation and performance of music and the promotion of music to audiences.

Target: Complete audit of traditional music sector

Opera

The new opera company – NI Opera - is part of the change sweeping through the sector. Its formation followed the publication of the new opera strategy with a mission to provide the highest-quality opera, underpinned by a philosophy of excellence and artistic risk-taking. We will foster the development of small-to-mid scale opera through continued investment in the new company to engage new audiences with its resourceful and innovative programming. We will continue to import large-scale productions through the Cross-Border Touring Scheme and encourage collaboration with opera providers from the Republic of Ireland.

Target: Continue partnership with NI Opera to diversify the audience for opera, making it more accessible to local audiences; diversify the range of places where opera can be heard through site-specific work; develop opera break packages and encourage co-operation with opera companies in the Republic of Ireland.

Community Arts

The arts have an important part to play in creating cohesive and vibrant communities. Community Arts is a process of harnessing the transformative power of original artistic expression and producing a range of positive outcomes where the beneficiaries become the main players. It is participant led and artist facilitated. Increasing

Interest has been shown in participatory arts programmes which prove flexible and responsive, engaging with complex social, environmental and economic problems which can work more effectively than orthodox approaches. Community arts projects contribute to a number of benefits at local and community level: creating 'safe' spaces to discuss social issues; enhancing cohesion; building partnerships, developing self-confidence. Recognising the inter-relatedness of social equity, community and cultural development processes and the value of community arts practice, the Arts Council is carrying out a review of community arts with an associated action plan which be rolled out over the lifetime of this strategy.

Target: Implement recommendations from review and strategy

Youth Arts

The new Youth Arts Strategy provides a strategic direction for the development of the youth arts through a series key objectives: developing apprenticeship opportunities and mentoring schemes; piloting a youth sector initiative aimed at young people at risk of self-harming and suicide; harnessing arts-based resources that support interagency intervention; creating an Artsmark programme to promote high quality arts education in schools and further education colleges; establishing a dedicated funding pot to provide small grants to young artists in support of their creative ventures.

The Arts Council will work with DCAL officials in promoting self-evaluative processes with rigor using a set of agreed Quality Indicators. By using an existing suite of indicators, the Arts Council will develop and embed an effective evaluation framework for use by arts

organisations delivering participatory based activity across all the artform areas within an education context.

Target: Develop partnership with ESA by 2015

Target: Roll out the Quality Indicators Framework with regularly funded arts organisations delivering arts services in schools in partnership with DCAL and ETI by 2015

Target: Introduce pilot mental health initiative with PHA by 2014/15

An Organisation Ready for the Future

Achieving our mission to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life requires a business model that is aligned to our strategy. This task is given added impetus by the fact that we are undergoing a period of rapid change - striving to do more with less and meeting the new and expanding expectations of artists, arts organisations, stakeholders and our funders in Government. However, we have chosen to view this as a moment of opportunity – a chance to look critically and objectively at what we do.

With the help of the Department of Finance & Personnel's Information, Strategy and Innovation Division, we recently completed an organisational review with the purpose of renewing our structures and processes making sure that the services we provide are relevant and useful in a fast-changing world and attuned to how the arts today are created, presented and enjoyed.

We also looked closely at how we utilise digital media and marketing to engage more effectively with key audiences. Social media is changing the concept of communication: not just changing the direction of flow but directly engaging with us through instant access from office, home or on the move. Social media allows real-time communication and give people the power to publish and share comments and visual content at the touch of a button. Harnessing the power of social media and building better networks for knowledge exchange, creation and capture - is one of number of changes that are transforming the way we work.

- We will roll out a Digital Engagement Strategy using leading social media channels to build vibrant online networks, deliver engaging content to the public and reinforce customer relationships.
- We will maintain our commitment to improve our performance ensuring that we have the focus, innovation and adaptability to face a changing future.
- We will invest in our people and their learning development, listen to our customers, learn from the client satisfaction survey, develop strong links with our clients, make sure our grant programmes and processes work effectively and create a culture partnership with our stakeholders.
- We are strengthening our systems, implementing a new ICT strategy and investing in the tools we use to gather information through the RFO Survey.
- We recognise that the relationship with our clients should be clearly structured and easily understood. To help this process we have drawn up a Service Charter which sets out what our clients can expect from us and what we can expect of them.

- We will regularly consult with the arts sector and make sure that our programmes and processes are effective.
- We recognise the importance of continuous improvement and aligning purpose, people, and values: we are focused on effectiveness and continually seek to deliver our service efficiently reporting to the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure on a regular basis on our savings delivery plan.

In summary, our ambitions for improving our business processes and developing the organisations we ensure that we will:

- Become a more client focused organisation
- Develop our structures and processes to achieve our business objectives
- Develop our people in line with our business strategy
- Deliver our values with integrity
- Sustain strong governance and accountability within the Arts Council

Ambitions for the Arts (2013-2018)

Theme One:
Campion the Arts

Theme Two: Promote
Access

Theme Three: Create a
Resilient Sector

Champion the Arts

- Improve communication channels and increase our engagement with key stakeholders and the general public using digital media platforms by 2014/15
- Introduce an ArtsMark award scheme in partnership with ETI using the Quality Indicators Framework (QIF) by 2017/18
- Introduce an 'honours system' for our most distinguished artists by 2015
- Work with partners to advocate and promote the value of the arts
- Undertake an economic appraisal for a Dedicated Gallery for Northern Ireland by 2014/15
- Evaluate effectiveness of the Young People & Mental Health Arts Programme by 2014 /15

Promote Access

- Develop a framework to map arts attendance and identify audience 'cold spots' by 2014
- Fund the delivery of at least 10 new public artworks each year through the Re-Imaging Communities Programme
- Increase the proportion of arts activities delivered in the top 20% of most deprived Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland
- Increase the proportion of arts related activities delivered in rural areas across Northern Ireland
- Increase the number of funded projects targeted at older people
- Increase the number of funded projects targeted at ethnic minorities
- Encourage more disabled people to become engaged in the arts
- Increase the number of funded projects targeted at children and young people
- Increase the percentage of young people reporting that attending an arts event had a "positive impact on my well-being"
- Offer every new-born child an Arts Voucher that can be redeemed for arts experiences by 2014/15
- Establish a Creative Apprenticeship Pilot in Northern Ireland by 2014/15
- Encourage 22% of funded arts organisations to adopt the Arts & Volunteering Toolkit by 2018
- Form bi-lateral MOUs with Belfast and Derry City Councils
- Strengthen the long term impact of the City of Culture 2013 through the Derry City Legacy Implementation Group
- Support the 11 new Council Areas to develop dedicated Arts Strategies
- Work closely with Local Government to measure the benefits of the activities and services arts venues provide through the adoption of a dashboard indicator suite

Create a Resilient Sector

- Fund 50 projects each year through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) to 2015
- Grow the drawdown in EU funds by 20% to build the capacity of the arts sector in Northern Ireland
- Grow sponsorship income for arts events achieving leverage of £4.50 for every £1 of public funding
- Increase the number of successful arts funding applications to Trusts & Foundations and encourage strategic fundraising initiatives
- Co-pilot initiatives with the Public Health Agency aimed at reducing the level of suicide and self-harming in Northern Ireland by 2014/15
- Build upon existing outreach activities in the Drama sector to drive demand from excluded audiences
- Anchor Dance initiatives within the Legacy Framework for City of Culture
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the Literature sector in Northern Ireland and develop a dedicated strategy
- Secure funding and deliver the One City Public Art Project by 2018
- Secure additional studio and gallery provision for Derry for City of Culture 2013
- Carry out audit of traditional music sector in Northern Ireland and devise an appropriate action plan
- Continue to support and work in partnership with NI Opera to diversify audience base and develop new opportunities to grow its reputation
- Implement recommendations from Community Arts review and strategy
- Deliver a shared programme of cultural events and interventions with An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Strengthen processes for critical appraisal of artists' work through the commissioning of arts assessors
- Roll out the Quality Indicators Framework with regularly funded arts organisations delivering arts services in schools in partnership with DCAL and ETI by 2015