



GROWING THE
ARTS
IN WICKLOW
20—25

***Growing the Arts in Wicklow* sets out the overall strategy and supporting actions that Wicklow County Council will undertake to both nurture & sustain the arts in Wicklow from 2020–2025. It consolidates a quarter century of arts development and provision led by Wicklow Arts Office and allows flexibility to respond to the ever changing economic, social, cultural and environmental challenges that Wicklow will face during this period.**



GROWING THE ARTS IN WICKLOW 20—25

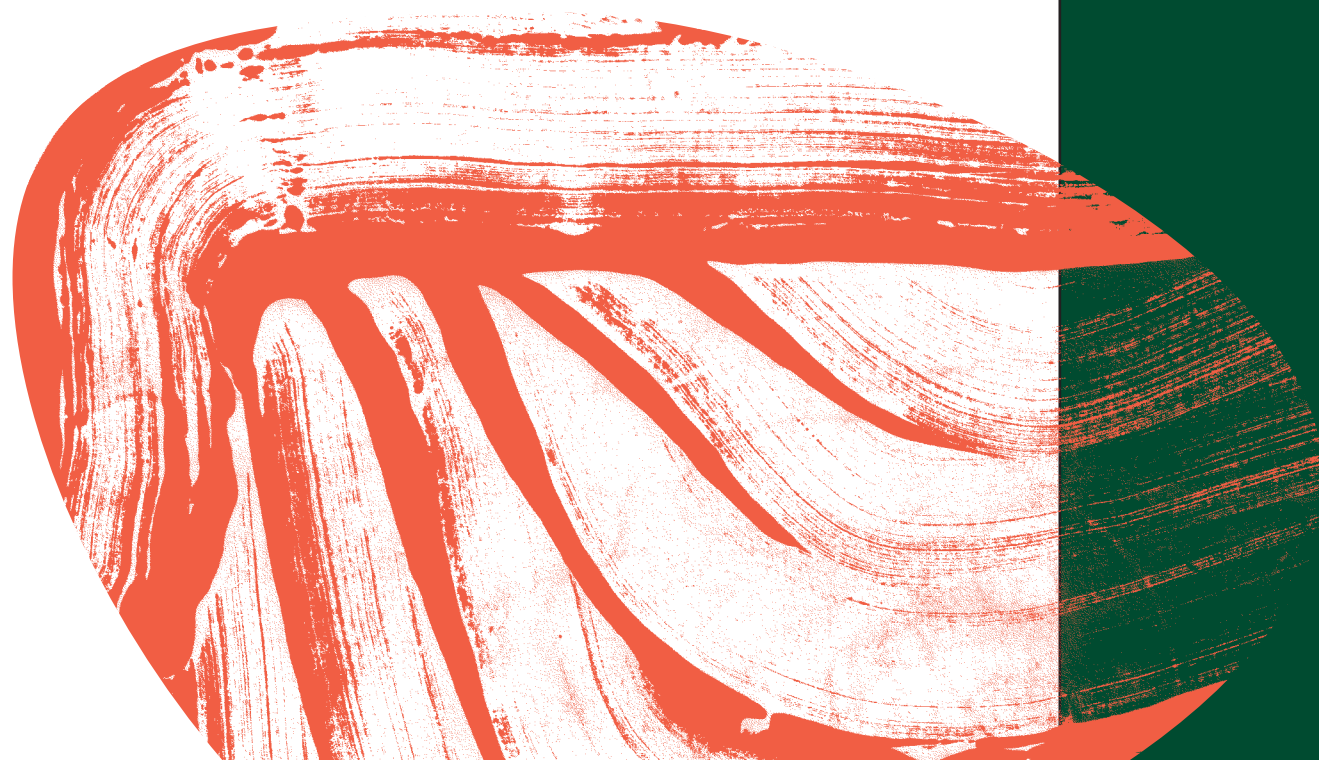
I am delighted to introduce Wicklow County Council's new Arts Plan 2020-2025, which lays out how we will grow the arts in Wicklow over the coming years.

The Arts Plan was ratified by the Council in April 2020, in the early days of the public health crisis still profoundly affecting how we live and work. Publication of the Arts Plan was paused as we in Wicklow County Council focused our attention and efforts in ensuring an effective response to Covid-19.

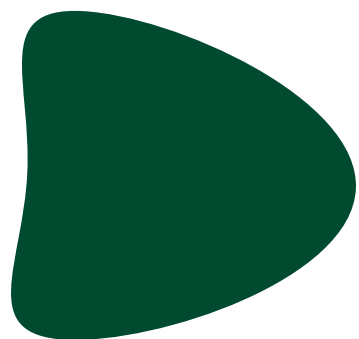
As we start to emerge from the crisis of Covid-19, and begin the process of recovery, it now seems timely and appropriate to present this positive way forward for the arts in Wicklow. The twin pillars of this plan: enabling opportunities for artists and the public and cultivating an ecology that supports growth, have an urgency and optimism that needs to be known.

This plan has a vision for Wicklow, as a county where the arts flourish in the lives of the individuals and the communities who live, work and visit here. It is vision we all share and look forward to achieving.

**Cathaoirleach
Wicklow County Council**



This Arts Plan comes at a key juncture for Wicklow County Council as we conclude the preparation of a new County Development Plan for the period 2021 to 2027, which will set out the overall strategy for the planning and the sustainable development of the county.



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The arts have long been an essential component of our vision for County Wicklow. As a Council we instituted the position of Arts Officer in 1997, one of the first authorities to champion arts development at local government level. We value all that the Arts Office has achieved in that time, sustaining and nurturing an environment where the arts are real in the lives of our citizens: where artists are supported to make work and the public have opportunities to access a wide range of quality experiences.

Beyond that specific remit, we also recognise and appreciate the contribution of the Arts Office to other key aspects of our work: to job creation, the development of the creative industries and the cultivation of social, economic and tourism opportunities within the county. Integrated planning and investment are key drivers of success.

As we plan for the changes and opportunities that lie ahead for the county, in terms of population growth, industry and infrastructure development, and most particularly as we seek to renew and strengthen the public's experience of place and engagement in the public realm, we look forward to the Arts Office's continued active role and positive influence within the Council and with other key stakeholders.

Growing the Arts in Wicklow will support us in our collective endeavour for the county and for our citizens.

Chief Executive
XXXXX

Growing the Arts in Wicklow sets out the overall strategy and supporting actions that Wicklow County Council will undertake to both nurture and sustain the arts in Wicklow from 2020 – 2025. It consolidates a quarter century of arts development and provision led by Wicklow Arts Office and allows flexibility to respond to the ever changing economic, social, cultural and environmental challenges that Wicklow will face during this period.

The plan strengthens the framework of support for the arts in County Wicklow, facilitating excellent artistic practice and public engagement. It will guide the work programme, decision-making and resource allocation of Wicklow Arts Office. It is grounded in the principles of partnership and collaboration: local and national, within and beyond the cultural field.

The plan is bounded by two goals:

- › Create **transformative opportunities for artists and the public** in County Wicklow
- › Advance an **ecology** to sustain and develop **the arts for the benefit of all** in County Wicklow

Our first goal is about **enabling opportunity**. We have a wealth of talent within our county. This goal commits us to supporting and nurturing both established and emerging artists and organisations. It also seeks to extend access to quality arts experiences within and across our communities in all their diversity: of place, of culture, of interest. Most particularly, it makes provision to ensure the place of the arts in the lives of children and young people, including continued investment in the Music Generation programme.

Our second goal is about **cultivating growth**. Over the course of this plan we look forward to increasing our impact by creating an environment in which the arts may thrive. We will do so by building and strengthening strategic partnerships at local and national level, within and beyond the arts, by working closely with our colleagues in other departments and service areas within Wicklow County Council and by developing our own capacity.

The first year of this plan may have been beset by challenge. For many in the arts community that we supported during this period, it was a time to survive rather than thrive. As we emerge from the crisis of 2020, this plan comes into its own, setting a way forward with clarity and conviction to grow the arts in Wicklow.

Jenny Sherwin
Arts Officer

As a discrete, specialist public service within a Local Authority structure, the Arts Office operates within the context of several important policy frameworks at local and national level. Very immediately, the focus and work of the Arts Office aligns with and advances the priorities of the **Wicklow County Council Development Plan, Wicklow County Council Corporate Plan** and discrete plans for area-based development or programme implementation.

These plans for County Wicklow support national priorities as identified in Project Ireland 2040 with its overarching objective ‘to provide a comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure for all our people to flourish, so that together we can create a better society’.

Within the sphere of the arts and culture specifically, this plan responds to a number of key policies.

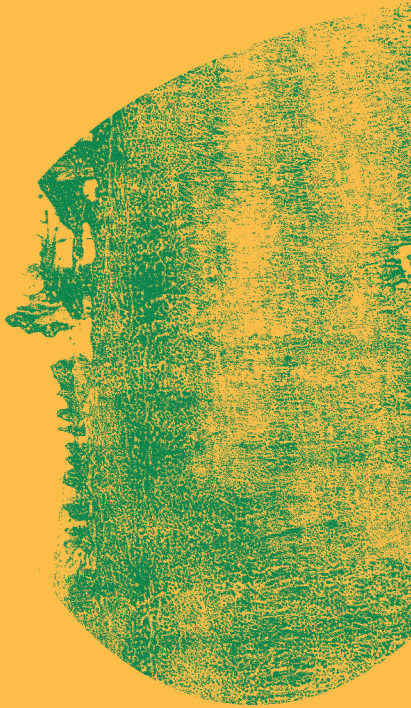
Culture 2025 is the framework policy of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. It recognises that everyone has the right to enjoy, create and participate in the culture of their country and seeks to “enrich the lives of everyone through engagement in culture, placing emphasis on increased citizen participation, especially for those currently excluded”.

The all-of-government programme, **Creative Ireland**, aims to connect people, creativity and well-being. A framework agreement exists between Creative Ireland and each local authority to develop and implement Culture and Creativity Strategies that foster vibrant creative communities. The Arts Officer is the Creative Ireland Co-ordinator for Wicklow.

A similar agreement exists between each local authority and the Arts Council. The **Framework for Collaboration** agreement between the **Arts Council** and the City and County Managers Association sets out the guiding principles and shared goals of this strategic partnership. The current agreement extends to 2025, in alignment with the Arts Council’s ten-year strategic plan **Making Great Art Work** which maintains a focus on the artist and on public engagement, alongside investment, spatial and demographic planning and capacity development.

The Arts Office also attends to and seeks to advance the Arts Council’s **Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy** (2019) and **Paying the Artist Policy** (2020).

The Arts Office looks forward to realising this plan within the context of these key policies, whilst remaining attentive and responsive to others that may emerge as relevant to our work over the course of this plan.



Our VISION

Wicklow is a county where the arts flourish in the lives of the individuals and communities who live, work and visit here

Our MISSION

Our mission is to lead the development of the arts in County Wicklow.

We do so by:

- › taking strategic actions
- › providing sustainable supports and
- › by working with partners to foster a creative county distinguished by excellent artistic practice and dynamic public engagement.

Our VALUES

Quality in the delivery of our programmes and services and in the work of those whom we support

Inclusiveness in the kinds of arts practice we support and in the range of communities we serve

Sustainability in the design and delivery of developmental actions with long-term benefits

Collaboration in our work with internal and external as well as local and national partners to realise mutual objectives

Integrity in the consistency of our decision-making with our stated strategy

Accountability in the clarity of our communication, promotion, evaluation and reporting

There are **two** areas of work where we will focus on over the course of the next five years.

Goal 1
Create transformative opportunities for artists and the public in County Wicklow

Goal 2
Advance an ecology to sustain and develop the arts for the benefit of all in County Wicklow

Goal 1

Create transformative opportunities for artists and the public in County Wicklow

It is nearly twenty five years since the establishment of the Arts Office in Wicklow County Council. In that time, we have seen the artistic and cultural community in the county grow and both individuals and communities in Wicklow flourish through their engagement with the arts. We are proud to have nurtured the talent and ambitions of existing and emerging local artists, to have taken the lead and responded to initiatives that support the development of the arts in the county and to have opened up access to quality arts experiences for people of all ages and with different life experiences within our communities. Over the next five years we will build on all that we have learned and achieved to date and expand the opportunities we offer to artists and to all citizens of Wicklow. By doing so, we will ensure that the arts are a viable career and a relevant and resonant part of peoples’ lives.

Objective 1

Assist artists & arts organisations to make work of quality

- Key actions
- i

Support professional artists at all stages of their careers through bursaries, awards and development opportunities
- ii

Maintain Project Awards and deepen their strategic impact through a multi-annual support stream that addresses identified priority areas
- iii

Commission artists of various disciplines and practices through the Per Cent for Art Scheme
- IV

Develop a small number of strategically-focussed artist residencies in collaboration with local partners and national providers
- V

Incentivise arts organisations to support professional practitioners in the development and realisation of excellent work
- Vi

Dedicate additional resources to advance priority areas such as artist development; choral music; public art; and areas of specialist practice
- Vii

Improve the provision of workspaces for artists
- Viii

Acknowledge and encourage amateur and voluntary arts groups and festivals and support their work through Arts Act Grants

Extend the range of communities with access to quality arts experiences

- Key actions
- i

Extend existing actions designed to ensure access and opportunity for a diversity of communities of place and interest, especially those who experience barriers to enjoying the arts
- ii

Increase the range of opportunities for quality arts experiences in West Wicklow, using the frameworks of (i) the Wicklow County Council / Arts Council agreement; and (ii) the Creative Wicklow programme supported by Creative Ireland
- iii

Use the annual Culture Night and Cruinniú na nÓg programmes as catalysts and platforms for arts development work in communities with no professional arts infrastructure
- IV

Optimise public engagement and community development benefits arising from public art commissions
- V

Initiate a small number of ‘action research’ projects so as to increase our expertise and inform our practice in the area of cultural diversity

Objective 2

Make specific provision for County Wicklow’s growing population of children and young people

- Key actions
- i

Engage personnel with expertise in programming for young people so as to extend and deepen existing provision in strategic ways
- ii

Target resources to address the three core commitments of the Young People’s strategy within Creative Wicklow and more broadly
- iii

Invest in the ongoing delivery and development of Music Generation Wicklow in partnership with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board
- IV

Develop a new programme strand in film directed at young people
- V

Provide funding and other supports for key youth arts organisations and activities
- VI

Ensure the voices of young people inform the design and development of programmes for them

Objective 3

What we look forward to by 2025

There will be increased investment in artists and arts organisations, enabling more and a wider diversity of artists and organisations to be supported be at their best and to progress their professional ambitions. We will have assured the relevance and impact of the supports we offer and the initiatives we create through close engagement and consultation with artists, organisations and the public, including children and young people as equal citizens of out county.

There will be greater spatial balance in the distribution of our investment, with a significant increase in arts activity in West Wicklow. The settings of our work will have expanded and diversified, specifically in marginalised contexts where clients cannot routinely access arts experiences. More people across all of our communities will have access to quality arts experiences. In particular, more children and young people throughout the county will be enjoying opportunities to discover and love the arts.

Goal 2

Advance an ecology to sustain & develop the arts for the benefit of all in County Wicklow

Objective 4

Why this goal?

There are excellent arts venues, committed professional and amateur organisations and exceptional artists within the County. It is an ecosystem that we want to sustain and grow. To do so we need to drive greater connectivity within and beyond the arts sector and to work purposefully in partnership with others. By doing so, we will maximise our impact for artists and the arts in County Wicklow. The relationships we will maintain and develop over the course of this plan will be internal within Wicklow County Council, local with key stakeholders within the county and national, driven by policy and opportunity. We will amplify the consonance between the discrete ambitions of the Arts Office and the priorities of those with whom we engage. We will promote where we can add value and work to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. To enable us to be at our best in this work for the arts and artist in Wicklow, we commit to develop and assure our own capacity.

Strengthen strategic partnerships, local and national, within and beyond the arts

Key actions

- i Renew Wicklow County Council’s strategic partnership with the Arts Council through a new framework agreement with key measurable actions
- ii Work with Creative Ireland to deliver the Creative Wicklow programme attending in particular to legacy planning for long-term benefits for the county
- iii Consolidate the partnership with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board in the development and delivery of Music Generation Wicklow
- IV Strengthen the (co) producing partnership with Mermaid as Wicklow County Arts Centre, focussing on long-term developmental actions
- V Position Wicklow Arts Office strategically to generate or respond to opportunities for partnerships that advance the implementation of this plan
- VI Encourage private and corporate donations directed at supporting the arts in the county

Grow the connections between the work of the Arts Office and other departments and services of Wicklow County Council

Key actions

- i Inform Wicklow County Council corporate planning so it reflects the distinctive contribution and particular needs of the arts
- ii Improve the benefits to the arts from development levies and planning gains
- iii Ensure local authority area plans provide for the arts within wider social, recreational and community infrastructure
- IV Develop a new Public Art Plan optimising opportunities of the Per Cent for Art Scheme and maximising benefits to artists and communities
- V Increase collaboration with the County Library Service to deliver programmes of mutual benefit, especially in areas without a dedicated arts infrastructure
- VI Grow the Arts Office’s partnership with Libraries, Heritage, and Archives in delivering the Creative Wicklow programme with a focus on place and environment
- VII Create links and promote collaborations between the arts and developments designed to enhance Wicklow’s natural environment and outdoor amenities
- VIII Collaborate with Local Enterprise Office to progress strategic actions in film

Build capacity and development function of Wicklow County Council Arts Office

Key actions

- i Conduct a survey to map the arts ecology in the county to inform Arts Office planning and development activities
- ii Strengthen operational resources within the Arts Office to release capacity for developmental actions arising from this plan
- iii Engage providers in producing, curation and event-management to ensure design and delivery of quality programming, allowing increased Arts Office focus on strategic actions
- IV Secure additional expertise in the Arts Office with arts management or creative experience and knowledge
- V Commit increased resources to the evaluation of key actions and programmes so as to ensure quality and value for money and to inform future planning
- VI Develop a new communications strategy (including enhanced website) to increase the profile of Wicklow County Council as planner, producer and provider in the arts

What we look forward to by 2025

Partnerships and collaborations within the Council and with external bodies within and beyond the arts will be deepening and extending the reach and impact of the Arts Office. Correspondingly, the Arts Office will be positively influencing and supporting the delivery of other programmes of work, especially within Wicklow County Council or for the good of the county. The culture, conditions and infrastructure that support a vibrant artistic community will be in place with enhanced cultural and creatives spaces and established opportunities for in-person and online connection and networking. The Arts Office will have staff with the skills and experience to deliver and promote the services and programmes that give effect to the plan.

Objective 5

Objective 6

