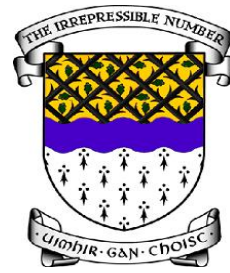


CARLOW  
COUNTY COUNCIL  
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHEATHARLOCHA



## Carlow Local Authorities

### Strategic Arts Plan 2007 - 2010

#### **Our Mission**

***“To create and develop a participatory and inclusive arts service which is committed to providing artistic excellence throughout County Carlow”***

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## Foreword

Carlow Local Authorities arts service is taking a strategic approach to inform the development of the arts in the county. This Strategic Arts Plan 2007-2010 is focussed on providing a participatory and inclusive arts service throughout County Carlow. Identified in the plan are five key areas for development of the arts in the county. We welcome and support this plan which celebrates the vibrant art scene throughout the county and look forward to the potential and creativity that the plan brings.

**Cllr. Michael Abbey**  
Cathaoirleach  
Carlow County Council

**Cllr. Jim Townend**  
Cathaoirleach  
Carlow Town Council

**Cllr. Margaret Cushen**  
Cathaoirleach  
Muinebheag Town Council

I am pleased to present this first Strategic Arts Plan published by the Carlow Local Authorities to inform the development of the arts service in the county for the period 2007 to 2010. Our mission is ‘to create and develop a participatory and inclusive arts service which is committed to providing artistic excellence throughout County Carlow.’

I wish to convey my thanks to the members of the Economic Development, Planning & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee, under the chair of Cllr. William Paton and the elected members of the Carlow Local Authorities for their input into the plan. I would also like to thank Sinead Dowling, Arts Officer, personnel in the Arts Office of the Community & Enterprise Department and all who participated in the consultation process and preparation of the plan.

Over a number of years the arts in County Carlow have played a significant role in assisting Carlow Local Authorities to achieve its mission statement. This plan maps a pathway which acknowledges and embraces the spread of diversity and creativity throughout the county and reflects the significance that the arts play in the quality of our lives.

**Joe Crockett**  
County Manager

## Introduction

This is the first strategic arts plan published by the Carlow Local Authorities, which will inform the development of the arts service in the county for the period 2007 to 2010. This strategic approach to the arts service is consistent with the development of core policies across the Carlow Local Authorities services and departments. Furthermore, it is formed in accordance with the objectives of the Carlow Local Authorities' Corporate Plan for the arts and the goals and objectives of the Carlow County Development Board Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the county "Cumhacht Comhoibriú". The plan is also informed by national arts policy - The Arts Council of Ireland (*Partnership for the Arts 2006-2010*).

In November 2006 the Carlow Local Authorities initiated a consultation process through the Economic Development, Planning & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee<sup>1</sup>. This process was managed through the arts office and facilitated by an independent arts consultant Annette Clancy. The Carlow Local Authorities recognise the value of widespread consultation and over a three-month period made a public call inviting submissions. A series of meetings were convened with key stakeholders including public representatives, members of the management team and core staff of the Carlow Local Authorities, artist representatives, arts organisations and partners from the community, educational and business sectors. A number of recurring themes have been identified throughout the consultation process, which have informed the five key strands of this document.

The purpose of this strategy is to outline these five key strands for development which are identified as the areas for the Carlow Local Authorities arts service to focus on over the next three years. Within each of the five key strands the arts service will encourage, support and create new ways for individuals and communities in the county to engage with the arts within the resources available to us. This will be achieved through innovative programming across all art form areas that are inclusive, accessible and relevant to the local community.

Carlow Local Authorities acknowledge the extraordinary work carried out by all the organisations (voluntary and professional), individuals and groups throughout all of the electoral areas of the county. We also recognise the creativity that these communities bring to the cultural fabric of a county and look forward to continuing to develop the arts over the next three years in County Carlow.

Sinead Dowling  
County Arts Officer

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the SPC (Economic Development, Planning & Cultural Policy Committee) (Nov 2006) - Cllr. William Paton (Chair), Cllr. Des Hurley, Cllr. Joe MacDonal, Cllr. Arthur McDonald, Cllr. Enda Nolan, Cllr. Paddy Kiely (Muinebheag Town Council), Pat Cahill, Michael Browne & Phil Sharkey

## Context

### County Carlow

County Carlow forms part of the South East region and is 943 square kilometres in area. The principal towns in the county are: Carlow, Tullow, Muinebheag, Hacketstown and Borris. County Carlow comprises five electoral areas, Carlow No. 1, Carlow No. 2, Tullow, Muinebheag and Borris. The population of the county has increased over the last five years by 9.7% to 50,349. Carlow Town is the largest town in the county and the town and environs have a population of over 20,000. The remainder of the population live in developing towns and villages such as Tullow, Muinebheag, Borris, Hacketstown, Rathvilly, Tinryland, Old Leighlin, Leighlinbridge, Myshall, Ardattin and other surrounding villages and countryside throughout the county.

Carlow town is strategically located with significant business potential as a major urban centre in close proximity to Dublin. The town has good infrastructure, two highly ambitious and progressive third level educational facilities, IT Carlow and Carlow College (known locally as St. Patrick's) and a National Crops Bio-technology Research Centre.

Tullow and Muinebheag are important urban settlements and are the location of local civic offices. Both towns play a key role in the strategic development of the county, being growth centres for business and urban development. Muinebheag is a promoter of tourism within the county with the River Barrow while Tullow is a tourist destination for golfing holidays. Hacketstown and Borris are located on the northern and southern edges of the county respectively and both are surrounded by scenic landscape.

County Carlow is both a traditional and a contemporary place. Its cultural and artistic life is informed by its citizens, including the new Irish who are bringing different cultural and artistic experiences and expectations. The challenge for Carlow Local Authorities is to manage the rapid development and changes at an economic and infrastructural level while responding to and creating outlets for the cultural and artistic opportunities that these changes invite.

## History of the Carlow Local Authorities Support for the Arts

Since 1999, the Arts Service has been a permanent function of the Carlow Local Authorities and over the last eight years has presided over a wide-ranging, proudly ambitious and innovative arts programme of events and activities. Carlow Local Authorities have shown a real commitment to the development of the arts in the County and have achieved a great deal. National recognition has been achieved through the role the Carlow Local Authorities have played in local arts development and in the forging of significant partnerships and connections for the arts at a local, national and international level.

Key elements of the service to date include:

- ongoing development of countywide provision for the arts, while working with communities in areas such as Tullow, Muinebheag, Hacketstown, Borris and villages throughout the county
- supporting community group initiatives throughout the county through the Arts Acts Grants Scheme
- ongoing development and support for local amateur and professional artists through advice, funding, commissioning and programming opportunities.
- the development of a physical space for the arts: a national centre for contemporary arts and performing arts centre
- a unique advance programme to this arts centre – *Visualise Carlow* – presenting three contemporary public art temporary projects annually, which invite local, national and international curators to Carlow
- County Carlow Youth Theatre, which has significantly developed as a leading Youth Theatre that is inclusive and promotes drama practice to all young people throughout the county
- Carlow County Council Choral and Music Programme, which operated in schools throughout the County from 2000-2003 and led to the consolidation of Carlow Young Artists Choir
- a new professional development service for all artists living in County Carlow and the South East region called ‘Artlinks’, developed in partnership with Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford and Kilkenny county arts offices
- an Artist-in-Residence programme developed over the last four years in County Carlow, enabling the public to access high levels of artistic skills and experience from professional writers, playwrights, performance-artists and visual artists

In addition, the Carlow Local Authorities Arts Office works in partnership and supports arts organisations such as:

- Éigse Carlow Arts Festival – which has a proud history of almost 30 years in Carlow and has grown into an independent arts organisation with its own Festival Director and staff. It is now recognised nationally as a leading and significant multi-disciplinary arts festival
- Carlow African Film Festival – the first African film festival in Ireland, celebrating the beauty and diversity of different cultures through film. This was initiated by the Carlow Local Authorities in partnership with key community members and KCLR 96fm Radio Station

- Carlow Young Artists Choir – which has developed over the last eight years into an independent, uniquely professional youth ensemble
- Carlow Performing Arts Group – which has been established for a number of years and has been assisting in audience development and lobbying for the new county performing arts centre.

Additionally, other services and departments within the Carlow Local Authorities have developed vibrant arts programmes. Internally a Public Art Working Group with senior staff members from Roads, Housing, Water Services, Planning and the Town Council has been established to develop the Per Cent for Art scheme in line with national guidelines. In addition, the county libraries offer a wide-ranging and valuable resource for County Carlow with a well balanced service for children, young people, and adults. The service encourages and celebrates both traditional and contemporary literature and readings.

**In developing the arts in the county, the Carlow Local Authorities recognise the extraordinary work carried out by other organisations (voluntary and professional) and individuals and groups at community level who bring astonishing creativity and passion to the cultural fabric of the county.** The third-level educational colleges also play an important role. Carlow College continues to develop its humanities programme which includes creative, innovative and accessible possibilities for students. Historically Carlow College has also proudly acted as a catalyst and advocate for the arts in Carlow. Furthermore, IT Carlow (Institute of Technology Carlow) brings substantial potential to the county and acts as a vital resource and facility with its extensive building, technical equipment, staff, students, and pioneering courses offered.

This Arts Plan will offer a framework in which to develop the Carlow Local Authorities working relationship with many of these community groups and educational institutes over the next three years. During this period, the Carlow Local Authorities will embark on an extraordinary and most important phase for developing the arts in the county. The National Centre for Contemporary Art will act as a major visual arts centre and play a significant role in terms of national infrastructure for the visual arts and the George Bernard Shaw Theatre will provide a major space for the performing arts in County Carlow at a local and community level. The centre will also provide an important and vital meeting place for artists, arts groups, local communities and enthusiasts. This is an ambitious and highly exciting development for the arts in Carlow and over the lifetime of this plan the Carlow Local Authorities will continue to show commitment to this development by putting in place appropriate professional governance and a management structure in line with best governance practice which will proudly lead and manage this development.

Carlow Local Authorities will adopt a policy approach to the arts service, focusing on the five key strands identified in this plan, endeavour to build on a high-quality arts service and continue to develop and create opportunities for meaningful and sustainable partnerships that see the arts becoming more participatory and accessible throughout the county of Carlow.

The existing partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland will be developed further and Carlow Local Authorities look forward to and welcome, over the next three years, the Arts Council's ongoing support.

## **Role of the Local Authority Arts Service**

The Role of the Carlow Local Authorities Arts Service is to:

- take a strategic policy and planned approach to the development of the arts that privileges sustainability, inclusiveness, quality and accessibility across the county
- prioritise, focus and concentrate on the key strands of this strategic development plan over three years
- develop key and new partnerships that have complementary agendas and opportunities
- motivate and inspire a balance between quality arts provision and public participation
- support amateur and professional artists in the county.

## **Guiding Values**

The Carlow Local Authorities:

- believe art can make a difference and play a significant role in the quality of a person's life
- believe in establishing innovative ways for the arts to be accessible, inclusive and participatory
- value sustainable partnerships with key stakeholders, locally and nationally
- believe in the production and presentation of all art forms that are innovative, challenging and of the highest quality
- believe that art is at its most inspiring when it acts as a valuable contributor to human development
- value our artists as key members of our community
- value our local community.

## **A Policy Approach to the Arts**

Carlow Local Authorities are obliged under the Arts Act 2003 to implement and deliver plans for arts development in the area, confirming the Carlow Local Authorities arts service and its functions as an integrated service of the local authorities and an integral part of local government planning. A policy approach to the arts service is consistent with the development of other services and departments of the council, having regard to the wider context as outlined in the introduction to this plan.

The County Arts Service is well established and resourced within the Carlow Local Authorities. This first strategic plan for the arts will require a different approach – one that is policy-driven with objectives, actions and the ability to quantify and qualify its successes. This approach will also require the consolidation of existing relationships and create new ones with partner organisations. The aim now is to focus on the key strands identified in this plan and the Carlow Local Authorities look forward to implementing the plan and delivering on its potential.

## **Proposed Strands, Objectives and Actions**

Five key developmental strands have been identified, on which the Carlow Local Authorities will concentrate over the three years of this plan:

### **Proposed Strands**

1. Consolidation of existing arts service
2. Provision of physical spaces for the arts in County Carlow
3. Support for Artists (residencies, commissions & professional development)
4. Information
5. The Public and The Arts

## **STRAND ONE: Consolidation of existing arts service**

### **Objective**

*To consolidate existing arts service in order to ensure a sustainable future for the arts service of the Carlow Local Authorities*

### **Actions**

1. Continue to develop new ways for the community throughout County Carlow to participate with the arts
2. Continue to develop and promote *Visualise* Carlow, introducing a countywide development/outreach agenda
3. Create a planned and sustainable future for *County Carlow Youth Theatre*
4. Create a longer-term strategic partnership with *Éigse - Carlow Arts Festival* through programming opportunities and the development of participation opportunities
5. Create a longer-term strategic partnership with the *Carlow African Film Festival* through programming opportunities and the development of participation opportunities
6. Create a longer-term strategic partnership with the *Carlow Young Artists Choir* through programming opportunities and the development of participation opportunities
7. Expand and develop the *Artist in Residence* programme
8. Foster links between the arts programme and the wider services of the Local Authorities (Water Services, Roads, Housing, Planning, Environment, Community & Enterprise and Libraries)
9. Design and implement a series of innovative commissions under the Per Cent for Art scheme in line with National Guidelines

## **STRAND TWO: Provision of physical spaces for the arts in County Carlow**

### **Objective**

- 1. To design and build a physical space for the arts: a national centre for contemporary visual and performing arts in County Carlow*

### **Actions**

- Lead and manage the building progress of the centre
- Support the building and management of the centre through appropriate funding mechanisms
- Put in place an appropriate governance and management structure in line with best governance practice
- Appoint professional staff for the arts centre
- Continue to lead and manage 'Visualise Carlow'

### **Objective**

- 2. To support local groups to develop existing facilities (community spaces for the arts and other activities), in each of the main urban centres in the Tullow, Bagenalstown and Borris Electoral Areas, i.e. Captain Murphy Memorial Hall, Tullow; McGrath Hall, Bagenalstown and Borris Hall, subject to provision of resources in the annual revenue budget of the local authority*
- 3. To assist other community groups in towns and villages throughout the county to identify local and national arts funding for community spaces.*

## **STRAND THREE: Support for Artists**

### Objective

*To encourage and foster opportunities for artists of all disciplines to live, create and professionally develop in County Carlow*

### Actions

1. Launch, develop and progress Artlinks<sup>2</sup> - a professional development service for artists of all disciplines, providing accessible opportunities for all artists resident in the partner counties to gain skills, knowledge and understanding and necessary supports to develop their work practices and careers.
2. Support the creation of new work, through awards, bursaries and commissions
3. Provide annual funding opportunities for all amateur and professional artists and community groups resident in or from County Carlow
4. Commission innovative projects through the Per Cent for Art scheme in order to inform a policy-driven approach to public art commissioning and community engagement process for public art throughout County Carlow
5. Support artist-led initiatives throughout the county of Carlow
6. Work in partnership with key organisations in the county to create new opportunities for artists to work in County Carlow
7. Provide consistent on going evaluation of the above.

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<sup>2</sup> **ArtLinks** is a partnership initiative in conjunction with the Local Authority Arts Offices in Kilkenny, Waterford, Wicklow & Wexford County Councils and the Arts Council of Ireland. Further information [www.artlinks.ie](http://www.artlinks.ie)

## **STRAND FOUR: Information**

### **Objective**

*To provide information on events and opportunities for artists, the public and partner organisations*

### **Actions**

1. Provide broader up-to-date information relating to the arts service at [www.carlow.ie/arts](http://www.carlow.ie/arts)
2. Forge and develop partnerships with Carlow Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, IT Carlow, Carlow College, Carlow Institute of Further Education, Carlow Library Services and other agencies to share and promote information relating to the arts
3. Develop the arts office existing database of artists residing throughout the county
4. Produce a countywide quarterly bulletin to share information relating to the local authorities arts services to increase audiences, access and participation with the arts
5. Provide in partnership with counties Waterford, Kilkenny, Wicklow, and Wexford a website as a forum for artists in the southeast to share information, to network, to access current news and opportunities and events calendar at [www.artlinks.ie](http://www.artlinks.ie)
6. Continue to offer advice and information to artists, arts organisations, key stakeholders, the public and community groups and agencies throughout the county

## **STRAND FIVE: The Public and the Arts**

### **Objective**

*To create new and accessible opportunities for the public to engage with the arts*

### **Actions**

1. Support the work of Carlow College, the Institute of Technology, Carlow and all schools and colleges throughout the county in their programmes to educate, raise awareness and create new opportunities for the public to engage with the arts as students, audiences, creators and participants
2. Develop partnerships with local agencies and initiatives for the local community to engage with the arts in County Carlow
3. Work with partner organisations to create new opportunities for the public to engage with the arts as audiences, creators and participants
4. Create new ways for the public to access existing programming strands and ensure continued access points for all new work commissioned and created
5. Develop and expand the existing Public Art Working Group and establish an Artistic Advisory Public Art Sub-Committee for pilot projects that engage the public, administered under the Per Cent for Art scheme
6. Maintain ongoing evaluation of the pilot projects in order to produce a strategy for the administration of Per Cent for Art scheme/public art in County Carlow
7. Initiate a series of new commissions and projects county-wide
8. Meet with and support community groups, on an annual basis, across the county to encourage active participation in the arts.

# **IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

## **Implementation**

The implementation of this strategic plan for the arts will require the following core resources

1. The continued support and funding of the Carlow Local Authorities
2. The continued support of The Arts Council of Ireland
3. The continued support of partner organisations
4. Ongoing staff training, development and support

## **Funding**

The Carlow Local Authorities acknowledge that, in order to deliver the Arts Plan, adequate funding must be in place. The local authorities recognise the role that the arts have to play in building and sustaining communities. In their acknowledgement of the importance of cultural development, the Carlow Local Authorities budget for the Arts Office has committed increased resources over the past number of years to this service. Substantial financial support has also been received from the Arts Council. It is hoped that circumstance will allow the budget to maintain its current level, in line with inflation, in order to ensure the successful implementation of the Arts Plan.

## **Monitoring**

It will be essential that this three-year plan be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis, with internal mechanisms in line with the Community & Enterprise & the Arts Departmental Team Development Plan. A more detailed annual arts plan will be devised internally for the Arts Office staff to deliver on the actions outlined in this plan. It will also be essential for regular internal staff meetings between Arts Office staff and Senior Managers of Carlow Local Authorities to ensure the delivery of this plan. The Carlow Local Authorities will also continue to inform work in partnership with The Arts Council of Ireland, providing regular updates on the development of the arts in County Carlow.

## **Evaluation**

This Carlow Local Authorities Arts Plan 2007-2010 will be evaluated in the following ways:

1. Annual Review Meetings with Director of Services, Community & Enterprise & the Arts
2. Annual progress report to the members of the Carlow Local Authorities
3. Commissioning of evaluation processes to be undertaken by internal and external facilitation, to include key partner organisations.

## Acknowledgements

The Carlow Local Authorities value the significant contribution of those who have assisted in the development of this three-year plan and would like to thank and acknowledge the following:

Members of the Economic Development, Planning & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee  
Elected Members of the Carlow Local Authorities  
County Manager and Management Team of the Carlow Local Authorities  
Staff of the Carlow Local Authorities Arts Office – Mags McMonagle, Aileen Nolan and Aisling Kellett  
Staff of the Carlow Local Authorities (Community & Enterprise), (Finance), (Roads), (Planning), (Housing), (Water Services) & (Town Council)  
Annette Clancy - Arts Consultant  
The Arts Council of Ireland  
Carlow College  
Institute of Technology Carlow  
County Carlow Libraries  
County Carlow Youth Theatre  
Éigse - Carlow Arts Festival  
Carlow Young Artists Choir  
Carlow Performing Arts Group  
Carlow African Film Festival  
Carlow Youth Orchestra  
Carlow Choral Society  
Tullow Variety Group  
Carlow Little Theatre  
Blackstairs Drama Group  
Rathanna Drama Group  
Killoughternane Community Group  
Fairgreen Shopping Centre  
Bernard Jennings Opticians  
County Carlow VEC  
Carlow Photographic Society  
Carlow Youth Services  
CANDO (Community Partnership)  
St.Catherine's Community Services  
Carlow Youth Training Initiative  
Carlow Tourism  
Fáilte Ireland South-East  
Patchwork Theatre Group  
Playwright - Bryan Delaney  
KCLR 96fm  
Paddy McGovern  
Bagenalstown Vocational School  
Hacketstown National School  
Leighlinbridge National School  
Leighlinbridge Parish Centre  
Artist Representatives: Gwen Wilkinson, Deirdre Brennan, Robert Frazier, Eileen MacDonagh, Cathy Fitzgerald, Brian Hand, Orla Ryan, Ellen Walsh, Bernadette Scott, Anne Deere, Mary Cassidy, Bridget Flannery, Bridget O'Hara, Rosalind Murray, Dave Donohue, Lily O'Rourke, John O'Rourke, Isabelle Cartwright, Brendan Harding, Bev Carbery, Nuala Grogan, Jacinta Crowley-Long, Paul Galbally, Adam Bohanna  
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Wexford, Wicklow, Kilkenny, Waterford County Council Arts Officers

This Strategic Plan was developed by Sinead Dowling, Arts Officer, with the support of Annette Clancy, Arts Consultant; the members of the Economic Development, Planning & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee under the chair of Cllr. William Paton, the elected members of the Carlow Local Authorities; Mags McMonagle, Youth Theatre Director; Aileen Nolan / Aisling Kellett, Arts Project Co-ordinator; Bernie O'Brien, Director of Services and staff of the Community and Enterprise & Arts Department and the Management Team of the Carlow Local Authorities

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