

## **June 2016 - Arts Progress Report**

The county arts service is part of the Finance, Information Technology and Culture Directorate. Currently the Arts Officer position is shared by Sinead Dowling and Aileen Nolan assisted by Mairead Wilson who provides clerical support.

The distinct role of the arts service comprises four key areas of work:

- 1. To advise on national arts strategic development and the implementation of the local arts development plan.**
- 2. Management of county arts programme, including public arts, County Carlow youth theatre, new commissioning projects and artist's residencies.**
- 3. Support to local arts organisations including venues, festivals and music education.**
- 4. Support to communities and artists, includes grants, bursaries, professional development supports and advice to build capacity in our communities, training and networking opportunities.**

### **1. Strategic development**

At local and national level The County Arts Service earlier this year launched Carlow County Council Local Arts Development Plan 2016-2021 following adoption by Council in late 2015. This plan is decisive and clear and provides the roadmap for local arts development under three key strategic objectives to lead, nurture and sustain the arts across the county. Central to this strategic plan, and a key factor in facilitating the unprecedented growth in local arts development over the last five years has been through working in partnership with key local and national stakeholders, including The Arts Council of Ireland.

The Arts Service continues to work closely with the Community Department and Local Enterprise Office in strategically aligning the local arts development plan with the new local community and economic plan. The emphasis for the arts is for increased access to the arts at local level. A further information evening for local communities will be organised with the Community Department and through the PPN.

Carlow County Council Local Arts Development Plan 2016-2021 sets out also to articulate the distinct role the arts service plays, in order to show the breadth of work, often unseen, often long-term and developmental that is undertaken by the Arts Service. A public information evening was held on 25th May in the Town Hall attended by a cross section of communities of interest countywide. The evening provided an opportunity to share information with the public about the implementation of the local arts development plan.

In early 2016 The Arts Council of Ireland published its own ten year strategy for the arts, Making Great Art Work, and has engaged in a consultative process with county arts officers to develop a three year plan, setting out its short term priorities. This plan will be available at the end of 2016 at national level. Key to the partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland is the development of a national framework document specifically focussing on the key partnership with local authorities. This report will be available to present to the Culture, Health & Agriculture, Strategic Policy Committee at its next meeting.

## **2. Management of County Arts Programme**

Please see May update - Chief Executive Report - for the diverse Arts programme activity currently being managed by the arts service. This year the county arts service is also managing the following 1916 projects, the memorial stone in Bagenalstown to Fr. Bibby and Nurse Keogh, The stained glass commission in the County Museum, Carlow stories of 1916 short films and Project Revolution by County Carlow Youth Theatre. Also through the Public Art Working Group, support is provided to Music Generation Carlow. Research had shown that the biggest barrier for children accessing music was the affordability of an instrument. The countywide musical instrument bank has been a huge success in Carlow, seeing the rotation of instruments being borrowed through our library services for any child aged 0-18.

## **3. Support to local arts organisations including venues, festivals and music education.**

The arts service continues to support and work closely with key arts organisations in Carlow and under the new Local Arts Development Plan 2016-2021 will work closely with them to define new working relationships

that identify points of strategic alignment between organisations for the greater good of arts development in County Carlow.

The board of Carlow Arts Festival over recent months have appointed a new festival director, Jo Mangan, who is extremely well respected in the arts and has already developed a festival for 2016 which will be suited to all families and local communities. The Festival of Writing and Ideas will continue in Borris House 10 – 12 June this festival is in association with Carlow Arts Festival and independently managed. This year Carlow Arts Festival returns to Carlow College and its grounds for ‘the Big Weekender’ 16 -19 June. Full festival details can be found [www.carlowartsfestival.ie](http://www.carlowartsfestival.ie) <[http://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=6600&d=w6bO17pse7Zop\\_-OptFiSW1bt5290h3hw5W0QjsL9g&s=382&u=http%3a%2f%2fwww%2ecarlowartsfestival%2eie%2f](http://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=6600&d=w6bO17pse7Zop_-OptFiSW1bt5290h3hw5W0QjsL9g&s=382&u=http%3a%2f%2fwww%2ecarlowartsfestival%2eie%2f)>

VISUAL, Carlow - The Arts Service continue to work and support VISUAL. The Arts Service commissioned, initiated and managed a film installation of the closure of the Sugar Factory in Carlow some 10 years and in July this work will return to the main gallery of VISUAL, along with the Nine Stones Artists from the Borris area and with local photographer Enda Bowe.

Music Generation -The Arts Service continues to support and work closely with Music Generation Carlow. Now in its third successful year the philanthropic support from U2 and the Ireland Funds has now moved to the Department of Education and skills. It was the agreement from the outset that for longer term sustainability after an initial three year period the Department would in partnership with local agencies financially support for the longer term. See Chief Executive report for recent programme activity update.

## **1.Support to communities and artists**

The Arts Service Continues to support and advise local communities and artists. Recently artist Michael Fortune produced a series of works depicting Carlow Dressers from people across the county. The Arts service will continue to work with Michael over the next year in order to broaden the arts to communities across Carlow. Michael has a keen interest in local history, storytelling and folklore. The arts service over recent months has met with communities in Rathvilly, Rathanna and Bagenalstown to share information of local initiatives and potential opportunities. The Arts Service continues to work closely with Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford and Wicklow local arts services on our partnership initiative Artlinks, which provides supports and professional development for artists in the southeast. A meeting with local artists will take place in

September to discuss our local arts development plan 2016-2021 and support opportunities for local artists.

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