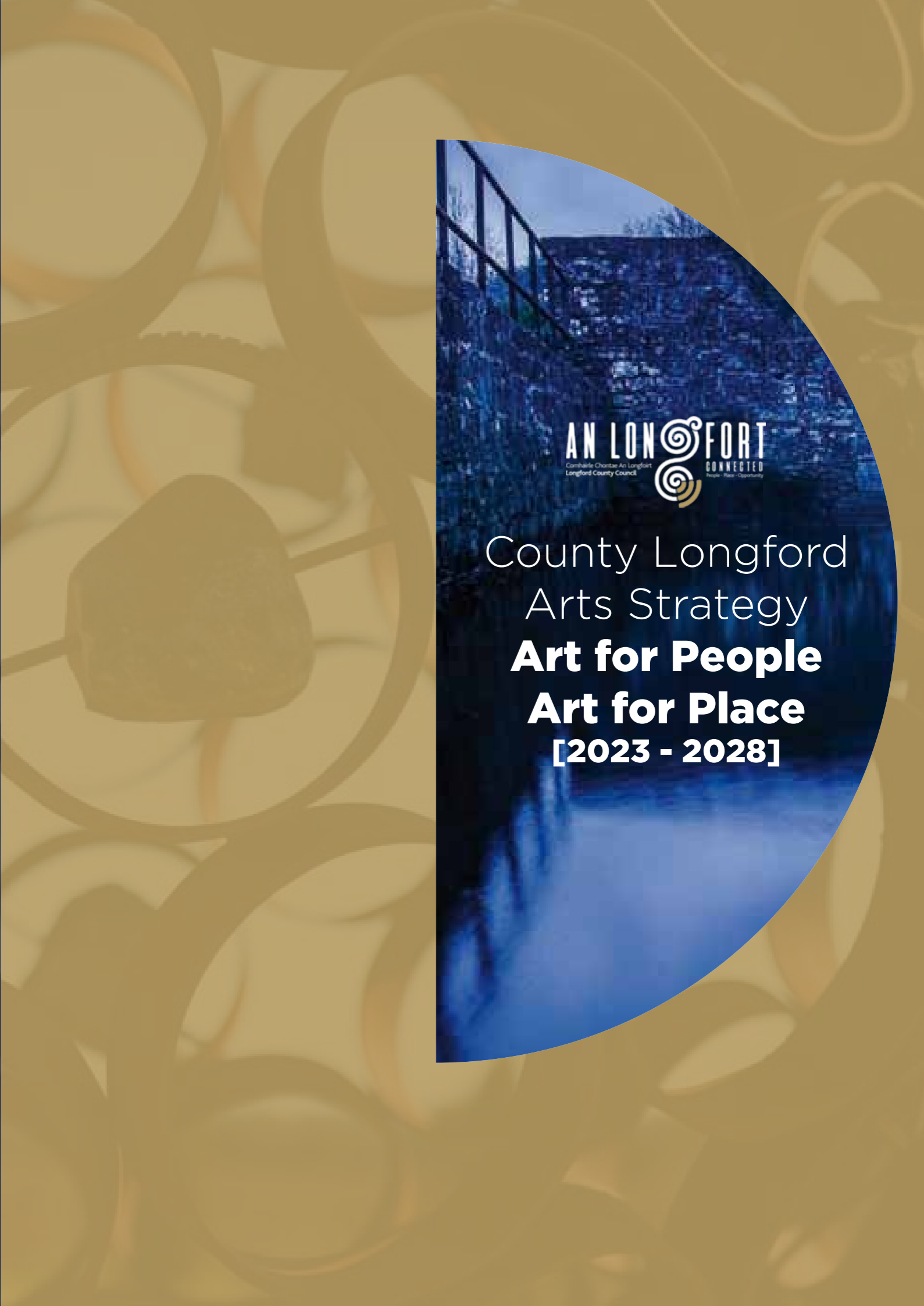




County Longford  
Arts Strategy  
**Art for People**  
**Art for Place**  
**[2023 - 2028]**





County Longford  
Arts Strategy  
**Art for People**  
**Art for Place**  
**[2023 - 2028]**

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& Paddy Mahon Chief Executive

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# Introduction



Cllr. Colm Murray  
Cathaoirleach



Paddy Mahon  
Chief Executive

Cruthu Arts Festival 2019.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.

Longford's Arts Strategy: **Art for People. Art for Place [2023 - 2028]** represents an ambitious plan for the arts to grow and develop over the coming six years, yet realistic in how it is to achieve depth and sustainability for arts activity across the county. 'Art for People. Art for Place' is not simply a tagline but states succinctly how it is the relationship between Longford citizens and their sense of 'Place' that is the well from which springs creative expression and consequently - great art. It is the intent of this Arts Strategy to further consolidate the relationships and opportunities that can help build a strong and sustainable community of creative possibilities for Longford citizens.

As a local authority, it is increasingly recognised that the Arts inform public service planning. Longford County Council recognises the value of creative and artistic activity, at all levels of engagement, as significantly contributing to the social health and well-being of our citizens. In addition, the Arts also play a role in attracting inward economic investment, the knowledge and cultural economy, entrepreneurship, and tourism. Longford County Council, through its Arts Service, maintains a strategic overview of arts development within the county. We encourage and foster a partnership approach, collaborating with a range of local and national agencies and other sectors (education, youth, health promotion and local business) to advance our shared objectives.

In presenting this new Arts Plan Strategy for the next six years, its origins and context must be acknowledged. For the past 27 years and with the implementation of four previous arts plans, Longford Arts Service has been providing leadership and support for artists and creative communities in County Longford. We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Fergus Kennedy - who held the position as Longford's first Arts Officer since 1996 and is sadly no longer with us.

*Ar dheis de go raibh a anam.*

On behalf of Longford County Council, we happily endorse this six-year Arts strategy. We are confident that it will help make Longford a place where communities can engage actively and frequently in making and experiencing art.

Cllr. Colm Murray  
Cathaoirleach

Paddy Mahon  
Chief Executive





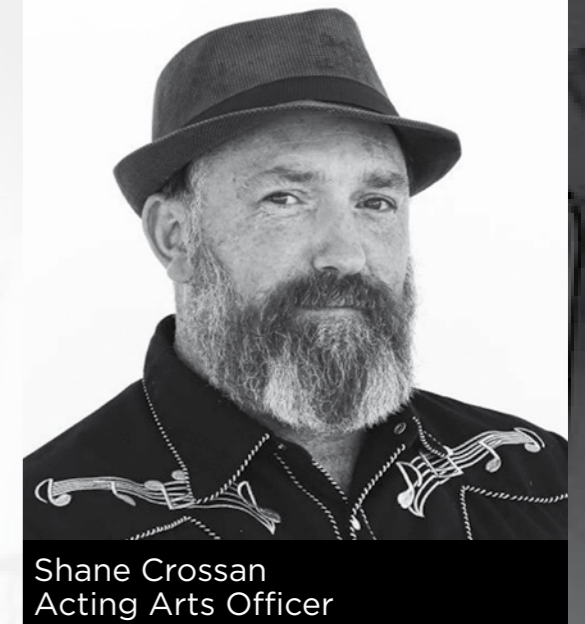
# Overview

The motivational speaker Rosemarie Rossett once said “Adversity precedes growth.” This is fitting when reflecting on the health of the Longford Arts ‘scene’ today. Not long ago in 2020, the pandemic disrupted many of the shared aspects of human connection, entertainment and creative expression, that we all took for granted. However, our arts community rose to the challenge and provided one of the largest programmes of art engagement the county has ever experienced. For over two years and with the support of Covid-related funding, the Longford arts community produced over 170 separate offline and 230 online arts, music and cultural events. These events took place in towns and villages, carparks and fields and included highlights such as the Faoin Speir programme, nursing home concerts and the youth music festival - Hype. If ever there was an occasion that demonstrated the value and contribution of art to citizens lives - this, was it.

As Longford’s population continues to grow so too does the capacity of Longford’s arts community. The number of new art practices, festivals and events have increased significantly with the advent of new multi-cultural, multi-lingual communities making Longford their home. This is particularly evident in the many new community art events that take place around the county.

With the publication of Longford County Council’s fifth consecutive Arts strategy, **Art for People. Art for Place [2023 - 2028]** we are better situated to support arts development in the county. Longford County Council will invest wisely in cross-disciplinary programmes and projects (incorporating aspects of Arts, Heritage, Library and Enterprise) to cherish and celebrate our shared culture. To this end, the extension of the Creative Ireland Programme to 2027 brings further opportunities for the Arts in Longford.

Shane Crossan  
Acting Arts Officer



Shane Crossan  
Acting Arts Officer



Artist Phil Atkinson in his studio in Granard.  
Photos by Anna Wiercioch.





Culture Night. Longford Town. 2023  
Photo by Anna Wiercioch.



The Flower Festival Moyne. 2022.  
Photo by Anna Wiercioch.



St. John's Night, Granard. 2023.  
Photo by Anna Wiercioch.



Carnival of Adolescent Antics. 2019.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.





Longford Lights 2023.  
Photo by Amayo Photography.



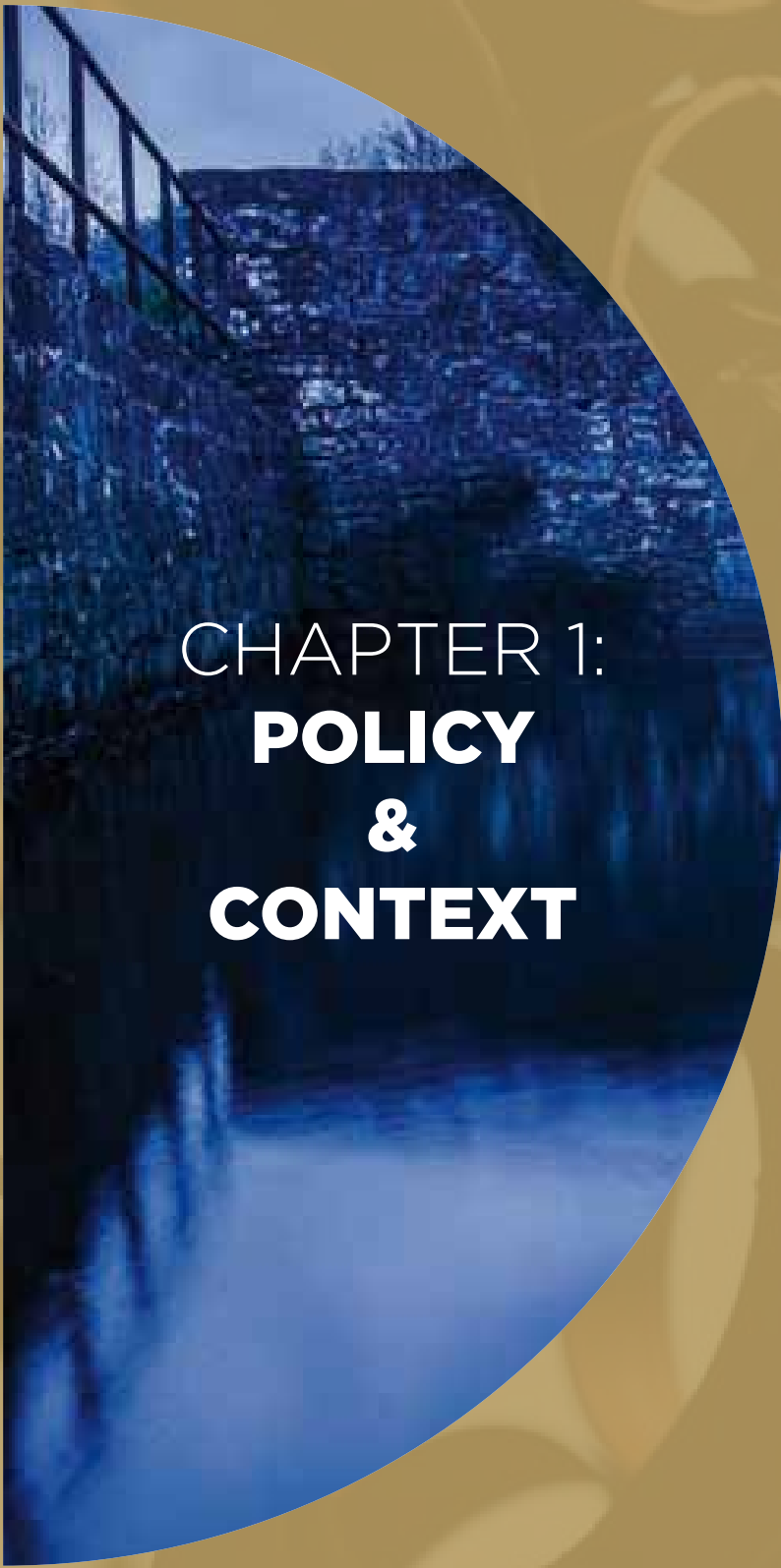
Artist Anna Wiercioch in her studio, Gowna. 2022.  
Photo by Anna Wiercioch.





Longford Lights 2023.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.





CHAPTER 1:  
**POLICY**  
&  
**CONTEXT**

# Longford Municipal Districts



## County Longford - Arts Profile

Longford is situated in the north midlands and shares borders with counties Cavan, Westmeath, Leitrim, and Roscommon. Longford is divided into three municipal districts. Granard to the north, Ballymahon to the south and Longford in the central district. The County is well serviced by roads and railway and situated almost equidistant between Dublin and Galway. Longford is predominantly a rural county with a population of 46,634 in 2022\*. Nearly 68% of the county's total area is farmland. A large proportion of the workforce is traditionally engaged in agri-related businesses, however, the last decade has seen a shift in demographics and alternative employment as people migrate to Longford from large urban centres and other countries. From 2016 to 2022 the county's inward migration was the highest in the country at 14%. County Longford also has one of the most ethnically diverse populations per capita, with 16% of its residents having non-Irish national citizenship or dual citizenship status [2022 CSO data].

- Culturally, Longford has a strong literary tradition with festivals that celebrate the writers Oliver Goldsmith, Maria Edgeworth, Padraic Colum and the Granard Book Town Festival.
- Longford has a strong music tradition. The Granard Harp festival dates from 1781 and has left a strong legacy of traditional music among the county's Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann network. Longford also retains a rich cultural legacy from the showband era and the Irish Country music scene.
- Visual art in the county has developed significantly in recent years through the founding of the Cruthú Arts Festival, Mide Arts Group, Engage Longford and Longford Lights.
- Shawbrook in south Longford, for many years a successful ballet school, now operates an international residency programme for professional dance artists.
- Evolution stage school, the Peelo School of Dance and Backstage Youth Theatre provide performance training opportunities for children and young people.
- Music Generation Longford began developing music infrastructure for the delivery of music programmes to children and young people in 2020. It now operates an instrument loan bank via the library branch network and a variety of programmes across several music hubs.



Backstage Theatre & Centre for the Arts provides a key piece of arts infrastructure for the County. As well as being a receiving venue for performance-based art, Backstage supports the creation of new art projects and actively develops audiences with a community outreach programme. It has a 200-seat theatre, a studio and a gallery space.

Longford's County Library infrastructure facilitates cultural activity and development with its six branches located in Ballymahon, Drumlish, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Lanesboro and Longford town. The Library Service administers the Creative Ireland programme and funding for Longford County Council. This is a broad cultural programme that seeks to connect people, creativity, and well-being across society.

### County Longford Arts Service

While the activities of the Arts Service are continually evolving as new and unanticipated opportunities to work with artists, arts organisations and community groups arise, the more structured role of the Arts Service involves:

- **Information Provision, Training, Mentoring and Advice**  
The Arts Service advises Longford County Council on all matters relating to the Arts. The Arts Service acts as a contact point for information on such issues as professional development, project planning, and funding opportunities for artists, arts organisations, and community groups.
- **Arts Festivals and Project development**  
Arts development is most successfully achieved by supporting projects developed and delivered by artists or arts groups. However, on occasions the Arts Service identifies gaps in provision for the arts sector, it initiates and develops projects where appropriate.
- **Financial Support**  
A range of grant schemes are administered by the Arts Service to individuals and groups. These include the Art Act Grant, Arts Bursaries, Project Funds and Residencies.
- **Networking and supports**  
Through a series of networking events, cross-collaboration with our neighbouring counties and shared island projects, there will be more opportunities for Longford-based creatives to thrive and network with others based in the Midland region. This will enable the transfer of information in relation to skills and funding opportunities.





## Wider Policy Context

The establishment of an Arts Service (1996) within the framework of Longford County Council lent impetus to the strategic and planned development of the Arts within the county, consolidated through previous County Arts Plans delivered between 1996 - 2019. The legacy of the Covid pandemic on the Arts has also informed and influenced the preparation of this arts strategy. Such recent arts planning in the local context sits within the wider national arts policy and planning framework represented most recently by the Arts Council's 'Making Great Art Work' (2015-2025).

### A NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE ARTS

Under National legislation, 'The Arts Act' 2003 stipulates that a Local Authority shall prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within its functional area and shall, in so doing, take account of policies of the Government about the Arts. 'Arts' means any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, "visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture." [Arts Act 2003].

### INFORMING OUR STRATEGY

The publication of Culture 2025: National Cultural Policy Framework (2019) and Eire Ildanach (2016) by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht created Ireland's first National Cultural Policy Framework. Creative Ireland, now beginning its second five-year programme is a cross-governmental initiative, based on the proposition that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity with significant implications for individual and societal well-being and achievement.

These broad national frameworks, in conjunction with Longford County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-29, County Longford Development Plan 2021-27, Longford County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024 and Creative Ireland 2023-27. It was essential to cross-reference and combine the work on *Longford Heritage Plan* (2019-2024); the *Longford Library Development Plan* (2021-2025), the *Longford Healthy County Plan* (2018-2022), *County Longford Tourism Strategy: Developing a connected sustainable Tourism destination* (2023-2027) *Longford Age Friendly Strategy* (2015-2020), *Longford Digital Strategy - Centred and Connected* (2021-2023), *Longford Sports Partnership Strategy* (2018-2022), and the Longford County Council Climate Action plan (currently in development) to offer a positive context for the development of the Arts linked to the wider socio-economic and cultural development of the county.

The Arts Council of Ireland are also currently developing a Climate Action Policy for the Arts sector planned to be published in 2024.





## FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION

A significant portion of government funding for the Arts is channelled through the Arts Council, which, although funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is independent in its funding allocations and the Minister has no role to play in its funding or executive decisions. The Arts Act 2003 underpins the Council's independence in this context.

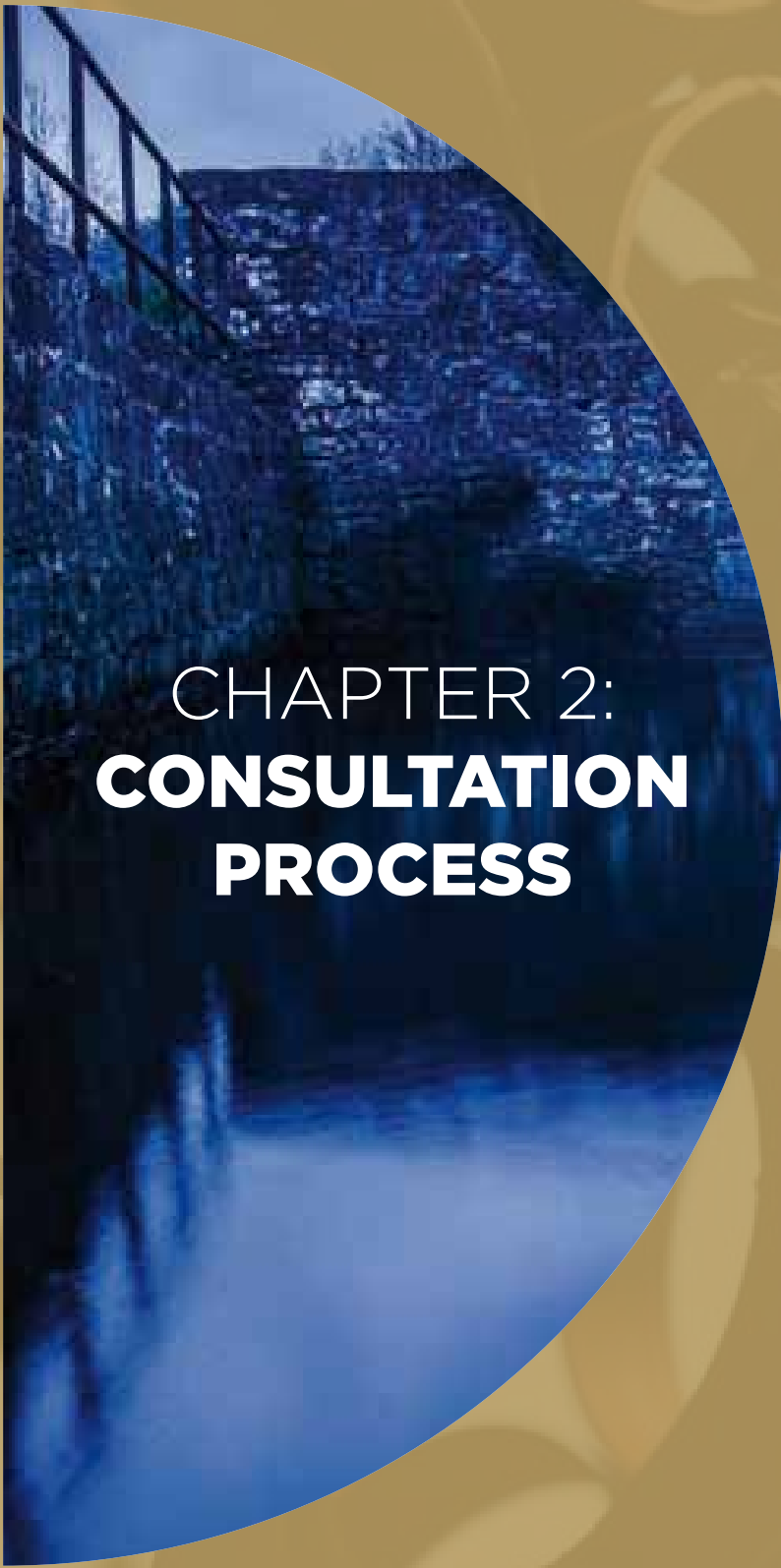
In 2020, Longford County Council entered into a Framework Agreement with The Arts Council guided on the part of Longford County Council by its relevant strategies and ongoing Arts development work, and on the part of the Arts Council by its 2016-2025 strategic plan "Making Great Art Work" which identifies the centrality of the artist and the priority of public engagement with the Arts. In the manner of basic principles of supply and demand - identifying the needs of the sector and providing for and developing the capacity to meet that need - these priorities also form the basis of our Framework Agreement which has identified the following priorities:

- Audience Development
- Development of Digital Arts
- Professional Development for Artists
- Place-Based Arts Development

Kila and dancers, Shawbrook Forest Festival 2023.  
Photo by Frank McGrath.







CHAPTER 2:  
**CONSULTATION  
PROCESS**



A comprehensive range of individuals and groups involved in the Arts in County Longford were consulted in the research involved in the preparation of this strategy-through the circulation of online questionnaires and public consultations with artists and community arts activists.

Close attention was also paid to the views and roles of services within the local authority that share certain common interests with the Arts Service as well as development agencies operating in County Longford.

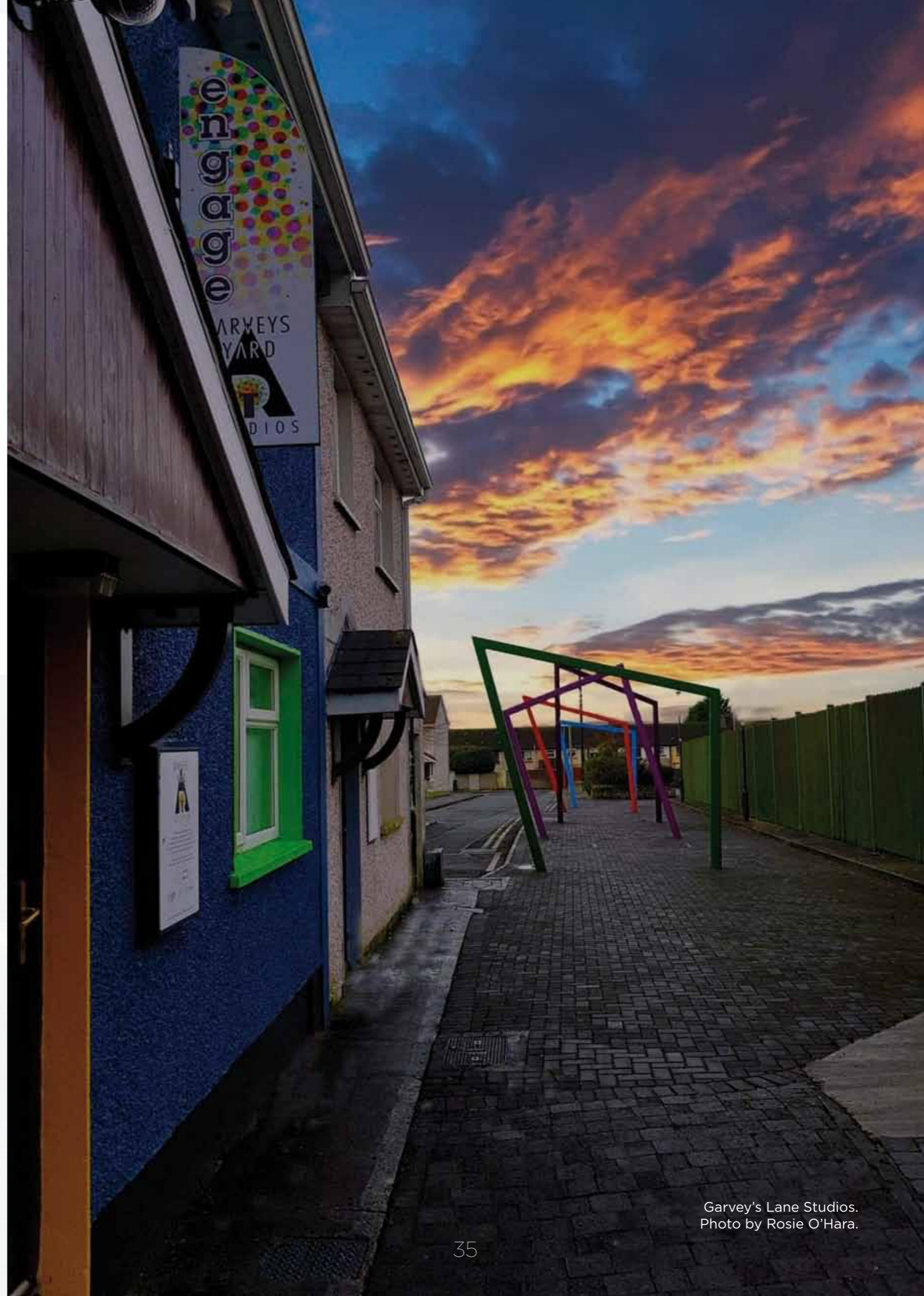
The objectives of the consultation process were threefold:

- To assess the level of current activity in the various Art-forms in Longford.
- To identify the gaps in service provision and the specific developmental needs of artists and Arts groups in the county.
- To devise strategic responses to the articulated needs of Longford artists and Art groups.

There were two online questionnaires. Both questionnaires sought feedback on how citizens viewed current Arts provision by Longford County Council and what they considered should be the main priorities for investment and development during the period of the plan. One questionnaire sought the views of people working in the Arts as either artists or producers. 24 responded of which 14 were professional artists. The other questionnaire sought the views of audience members and citizens involved in arts and cultural organisations. 26 people responded with an even distribution of respondents across the three municipal districts.



Aontacht Sculpture. Garvey's Lane.  
Photo by Rosie O'Hara.



Garvey's Lane Studios.  
Photo by Rosie O'Hara.





Festival of Cultures, Ballymahon 2022.  
Photo by Mick Conlon.



Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival, 2019.  
Photo by Arts office.

Kila and Vanessa Guevara, Shawbrook Forest Festival 2023.  
Photo by Frank McGrath.



Four separate public consultations took place. One was dedicated to artists and producers with an audience of 36. Three public consultation meetings took place in Longford, Ballymahon and Granard with 27 in attendance.

The feedback provided immense insight into the challenges experienced on a day-to-day basis by individual artists, arts organisations, and local communities. The feedback played an essential part in shaping our strategy so it could work to the benefit of all.

Data analysis and topics raised through stakeholder engagement cover a vast and diverse range of issues. These have been instrumental in shaping the five goals which drive the overall strategy.

Broadly the main areas of concern for artists and arts organisers were:

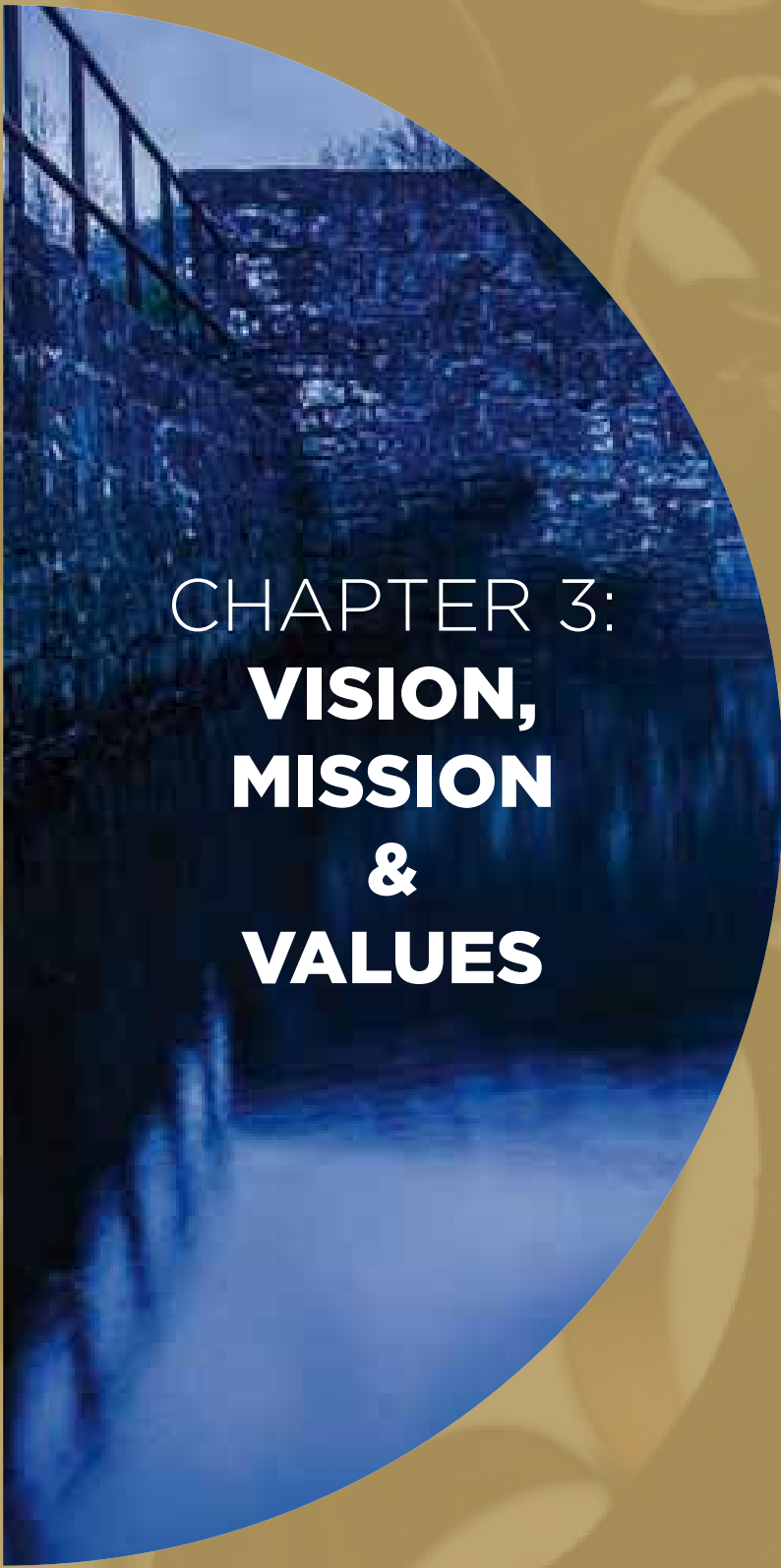
1. The development of adequate physical infrastructure for the Arts.
2. Provision of information and advice particularly in the areas of professional development and grant writing/funding.
3. An increase in the level of direct support to the Arts.
4. Develop networking opportunities for artists and creatives.
5. The need to continually increase audiences and broaden public participation in the arts.





Strasbourg Orchestra. St. Mel's Cathedral. 2023.  
Photos by Frank McGrath Photography.



A circular inset image showing a path leading to a waterfall in a forest. The path is made of wooden planks and leads towards a waterfall cascading over rocks. The scene is surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. The image is set against a dark blue background within the circular frame.

CHAPTER 3:  
**VISION,  
MISSION  
&  
VALUES**



## VISION

Our vision is to make Longford a place where citizens can engage actively and frequently in making and experiencing art.

To create conditions where the value of the Arts is acknowledged across all sectors of society and positively contributes to the lives of artists, communities, and visitors to the county. Art in all its mediums is for everyone. Therefore, connecting with the local audience is of vital importance.

## MISSION

Our mission will be to integrate the Arts into Longford County Council's cultural, social, economic, regenerative and tourism development policies and work in partnership with the broader social and economic framework and key stakeholders in Longford.

- County Longford Arts Service works with the Arts community to promote culture and creativity as an expression of a contemporary and progressive Longford.
- Longford Arts Service works in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver a high-quality arts service and increase public engagement in the arts across a wide spectrum of social and community settings.

## VALUES

The core values identified by County Longford Arts Service to successfully deliver this strategic plan are Partnership, Participation, Transparency and Environmental Sustainability.

1. **Partnership:** County Longford Arts Service will work in partnership with all relevant local and National stakeholders and organisations to pursue the successful realisation of the strategic plan.
2. **Participation:** A strategic plan is a living document and can only be implemented by the participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly artists and invested community groups and individuals.
3. **Transparency:** Ensuring that the Arts Service conducts its business openly and transparently. The Longford artists and citizens are informed about opportunities, activities, and events in a timely fashion.
4. **Environmental Sustainability:** Longford Arts Service is committed to monitoring and managing its environmental impact as part of its leadership in reducing the environmental impact of the cultural and creative sectors in County Longford.





Short Stories, long Tails - Faoin Speir. Longford Town. 2022.  
Photo by Shelley Corcoran.

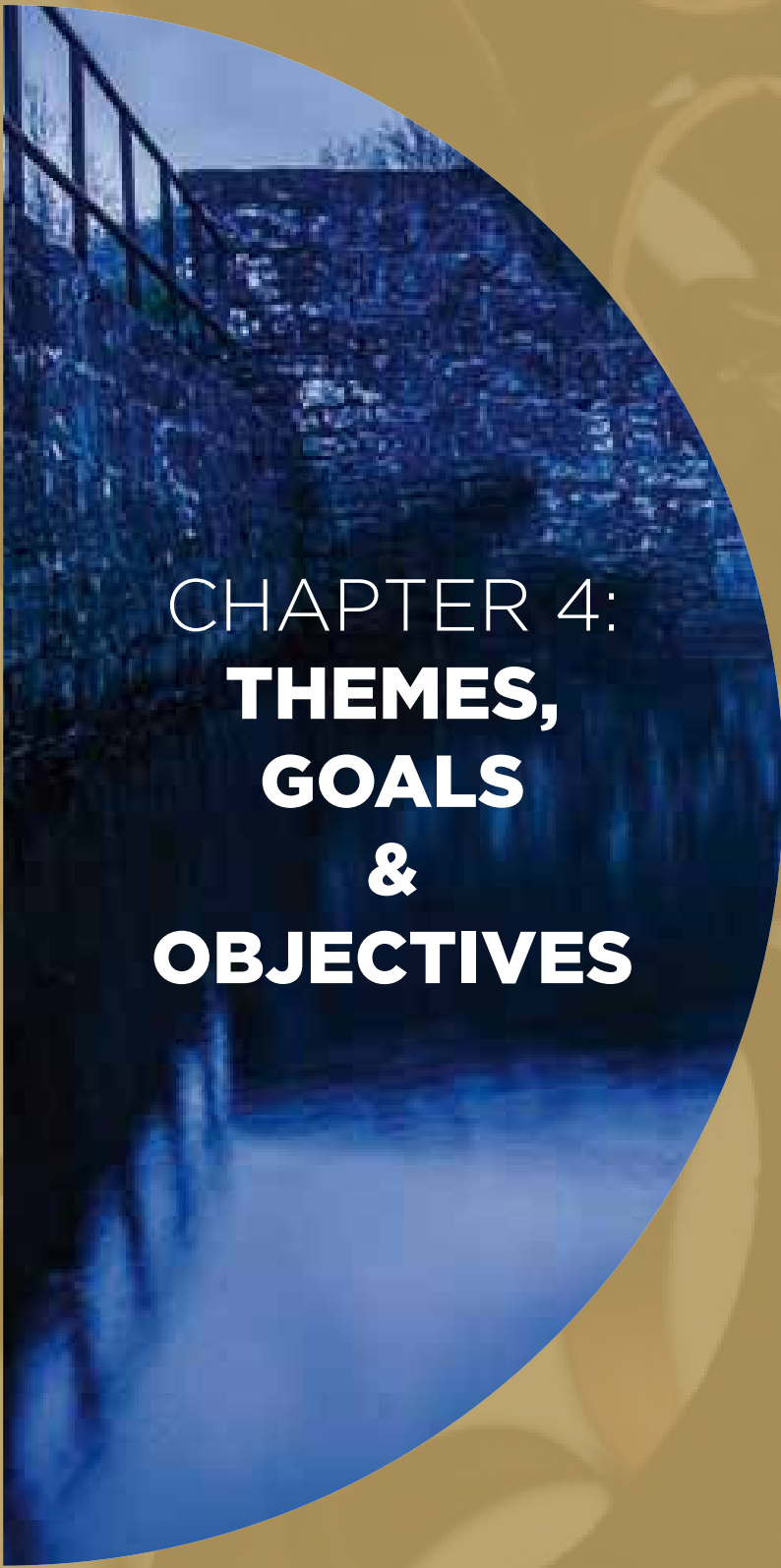


Artists Tom Duffy, Phil Atkinson, Mary Fleming, Kevin Flood and project manager Shane Crossan at Launch of Iora Nua - Squirrels Reimagined project. Photo by Luke Danniells.



Iora Nua - Squirrels Reimagined 2022.  
Photo by Lissette Carcamo.



A circular inset image showing a path leading to a waterfall in a forest. The path is made of light-colored stones and is bordered by a wooden fence on the left. The waterfall is in the background, surrounded by lush greenery and trees. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

CHAPTER 4:  
**THEMES,  
GOALS  
&  
OBJECTIVES**



*Theme 1:* Arts contribution to the development and promotion of County Longford

*Theme 2:* Climate action and environmental sustainability in the Arts

*Theme 3:* Connecting Artists and Citizens

*Theme 4:* Collaboration and Engagement

*Theme 5:* Infrastructure

*Theme 6:* Supporting the Living artist – Developing career pathways within the arts.



## **Theme 1:**

Arts contribution to the development and promotion of County Longford

**County Longford is ideally placed as a location of inward investment and migration, as housing availability and remote working opportunities draw people out of large urban areas. The substantial population increase recorded in Census 2022 underlines this. Longford's County Development Plan (2021-2027) reflects these changes and seeks to improve the infrastructure and services to meet this challenge - as summed up in the Council's development plan tagline - *Connecting People, Place and Opportunity*. The Arts and creative industries are playing an increasingly important role in place making strategies of developing Longford's assets.**

The population growth is creating a more culturally diverse society with a significant increase in new communities, mostly in the larger towns. Coupled with the increase in the younger age cohort, this is creating a new demographic dynamic that plays itself out in new cultural and creative expression.

The Arts offer multiple benefits for the development and promotion of County Longford as a vital resource for citizens which contributes directly to building sustainable communities and to local economic development, improving opportunities for cultural and experiential tourism, or supporting the indigenous creative industry.

**GOAL 1.1 Seek to foster imaginative, creative and artistic responses to the uniqueness of Longford culture, its landscape and its people, as primary sources of inspiration.**

**OBJECTIVE 1.1.1** Advocate on behalf of artists and the Arts communities to be more actively involved in the civic and cultural development of communities. Strive to secure the highest levels of creativity and innovation in the delivery of capital assets and services and seek to engage communities in commissions that re-animate or redefine their physical, social, or cultural spaces.



**OBJECTIVE 1.1.2** Work with communities to develop innovative and inclusive place-making programmes, that encourages a sustainable grassroots approach to creativity and local arts development. Develop an asset-driven approach focusing on what a place has, that can be built upon and developed rather than what it lacks. This approach will be inclusive, diverse, and rooted in socially engaged arts practices and community development principles. It will build on existing cultural strengths and be led by community participation and ideas and supported by artists.

**OBJECTIVE 1.1.3** Engage with key civic-social organisations and community development resources to develop opportunities to increase arts and creative participation across the county - to include programming of talks, exhibitions, community artwork, recitals, digital art and cultural programmes as opportunities arise.

**GOAL 1.2 Support arts festivals, groups, and organisations to consolidate, and develop new work and to engage directly with artists in the development of their annual programmes.**

Arts festivals, programmes, projects and events of different sizes and scales abound throughout the county, taking place in urban and rural contexts that respond to local needs, as well as attracting visitors locally, nationally, and internationally.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2** Longford County Council, in partnership with the Arts Council and other bodies, are committed to supporting a broad range of professional and voluntary arts organisations, groups and venues in presenting and promoting professional work so that the public and visitors can enjoy a wide range of

arts experiences both as audiences and as engaged participants. Longford Arts Service values the work and expertise of arts organisations and will continue to develop funding and other relationships with them, including support for audience development and context-based work.

**GOAL 1.3 Seek to integrate arts development programmes with other sections and units within the Longford Local Authority.**

Longford Arts Service is a part of a much larger local authority and many of its strategic objectives and arts policies resonate deeply with other council services. Longford Arts Service seeks to successfully progress an arts strategy, by developing effective communication and by generating productive partnerships with other council departments and services that pursue similar strategies.

**OBJECTIVE 1.3.1** Longford Arts Service will work in partnership with Longford Tourism, Longford County Libraries, Heritage and Archives, the Longford County Council ICT, Healthy Longford, and Longford Age Friendly Alliance across common areas of strategy and programming. Longford County Libraries provides cultural infrastructure within the county which can help support the delivery of Arts programming.

**OBJECTIVE 1.3.2** Longford Libraries administers the Creative Ireland Programme and funding which involves substantial overlap with the Longford Arts Service strategic plan. Longford Arts Service will work with the Creative Ireland Culture Team to pursue mutual goals, optimise resources and avoid unnecessary duplication.

**GOAL 1.4 Secure the distinctive contribution of the Arts in the design and planning of the public realm.**

Public art has a particular significance in the integration of art in the public realm. The term 'Public Art' is used to describe work created and produced by artists within the natural or built environment.

**OBJECTIVE 1.4** Working with a broad range of Council Departments and other stakeholders, Longford Arts Service will avail of opportunities to animate the public realm and enrich street life through public Art commissions, carnivals/circuses, street exhibitions, arts events, and public performances. These public art initiatives will play a central role in uplifting and empowering local people, reinforcing a sense of place, celebrating local identity, and developing active citizenship.





## **Theme 2:**

### Climate Action and environmental sustainability in the Arts

**The response to global warming must extend to all carbon-emitting aspects of our lifestyle and non-sustainable consumption patterns. Despite the challenges ahead for our community, Longford Arts Services believes that climate and environmental action offer opportunities to the arts.**

The arts community has a unique and crucial role to play in meeting this crisis – through its own actions and through its ability to engage with people, broaden the conversation through unique and profound expression, mobilise change and offer unique opportunities for a green, just and inclusive transition.

Support is needed for creative, programming and public engagement initiatives within the sector and local authority, which needs to go hand-in-hand with support for greening arts venues, festivals, production and practice. Sector collaboration will be crucial to build on and scaling up existing skills, knowledge, solutions and leadership within the sector

**GOAL 2.1: Longford Arts Services will work with all statutory bodies to implement current climate action and carbon mitigation legislation relevant to the arts in County Longford.**

**OBJECTIVE 2.1.1** Support the implementation and adoption of the Longford County Council Climate Change Adaption Strategy and promote the County as a key driver of the transition to a low carbon economy in the midlands.

**OBJECTIVE 2.1.2** Ensure that climate action awareness and adaptation responses are embedded within Longford Arts Service governance, operations and policies. Work with relevant local stakeholders including local authority services including but not exclusive to Libraries, Heritage, Environment, Planning, Procurement, Housing and Community Development services.

**OBJECTIVE 2.1.3** Provide advice and consultation opportunities for artists, arts organisations and festivals seeking to reduce



carbon emissions. Promote and disseminate within the Longford arts community, leading national/international policies, practices and guidelines that inform carbon reduction and climate action within arts and cultural contexts. Promote where possible the use of public transport, slow travel and resource sharing.

**Goal 2.2 Provide leadership and incentivise actions that promote climate action approaches to art-making and creative practices.**

**OBJECTIVE 2.2.1:** Work with local arts partners to pursue grant opportunities to fund local responses to climate action and carbon mitigation measures.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2.2:** Support the development of creative approaches to climate action awareness education programmes.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2.3:** Work with refuse & recycling partners to provide recycled and upcycled materials for use within the arts, culture and education sectors.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2.4:** All local festivals and events will be supported to be environmentally sustainable using clear greening guidelines. This will include training, information sessions and upskilling new and established artists toward green procurement, using recycling material, and providing a creative and visual presentation of climate action which spark conversations and knowledge exchange.

**Goal 2.3: Develop policies to address the emerging opportunities associated with the cultural aspect of the regeneration of the midland industrial bogs. The National Just Transition Fund (JTF) is a key pillar of the Government's plan for the Midlands region.**

A fund was made available in 2020 to support communities transitioning to a low-carbon economy and generating sustainable employment in green enterprises across the region. Cultural and tourism projects will be a significant strand of this plan.

**OBJECTIVE 2.3.1:** Develop strategies and collaborative opportunities with neighbouring counties who share Longford's unique social, cultural and industrial heritage associated with midland bogs, using this as a springboard for creative engagement.

**OBJECTIVE 2.3.2:** Develop artistic responses and opportunities based on the current regeneration of our bogs as places of tourism, cultural activity and unique natural biospheres.

**OBJECTIVE 2.3.3:** Support opportunities for increased bog-related cultural activities as a result of warmer summers, within limits of existing infrastructure and sensitive habitats.



Bog pictures. Photos by Luke Danniells.





Artist Gordon Farrell in studio. 2021.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.

## **THEME 3:** Connecting Artists and Citizens

**All art needs an audience. Art must be seen, heard, and experienced by citizens of all ages and backgrounds if it is to grow and flourish.** Connecting ‘artists with artists’ and ‘artists with audiences’ is a key theme of this strategic plan and one that was identified as a need in the consultation feedback. In the absence of dedicated spaces to share ideas and develop collaborations, artists frequently work in isolation from other artists - unaware of their proximity. Ironically, many Longford-based artists are more likely to meet and engage with one another outside of the County. Similarly, audiences and communities can be unaware of artists working and living in their communities. Making ‘visible’ Longford’s art community, artists’ work and its positive impact on the County needs to be prioritised.

**GOAL 3.1 Promote the importance of the Arts as a vital component in County Longford’s development and for the wellbeing of its citizens.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1** Artists and creatives must be supported to engage with each other and the broader community. Longford Arts Service seek to promote the importance of the Arts as a vital component in County Longford’s development and for the well-being of its citizens by supporting the publication and dissemination of news, data, research, and media assets that demonstrate the positive impact of artists and arts activity on Longford’s local economy, tourism and citizen well-being.

**GOAL 3.2 Develop resources to communicate effectively with artists, creatives, communities of interest and citizens.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.2.1** Longford Arts Service seek to develop resources to communicate effectively with artists, creatives, communities of interest and citizens. This will involve the development of a database and suitable online platforms to inform stakeholders of relevant information, event notification and funding opportunities.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2.2** Longford Arts Service will seek to collaborate with other relevant stakeholders on a county-wide basis to market arts / cultural activities/tourism and develop audiences for the same.

**GOAL 3.3 Create support networks for artists and creatives to develop sector capacity.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.3.1** As Longford is a rural county, the arts community is dispersed and opportunities to meet are infrequent. Longford Arts Service seek to create a regular support network for artists and creatives to develop sector capacity and create conditions for collaborations and information sharing.

**OBJECTIVE 3.3.2** Longford Art Service will organise sessions for sharing information and training on grant writing and marketing skills to be made available to artists and creative producers.

**GOAL 3.4 Promote Longford artists and creatives on local, national, and international platforms and fora.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.4** Longford Arts Service will seek to develop local, national, and international opportunities for Longford artists to develop their profiles and promote their work. This will include supporting artists to exhibit outside the county, travel bursaries and the development of partner links within European art support networks.

# Theme 4:

## Collaboration and Engagement

**Building on the success of previous community-based programmes and schemes, Longford Arts Service will continue to develop community trust, pride, and well-being through socially inclusive arts programming.**

In implementing this arts strategy, the Arts Service will work with a range of partners to promote and develop programmes that engage people with fewer opportunities and bring them together to participate in creative activities that enhance their self-esteem and well-being.

**GOAL 4.1 Foster and invest in ambitious and sustainable programmes that target specific sectors of society, those hardest to reach, through opportunities to excel and express themselves via sustained access to the Arts.**

**OBJECTIVE 4.1.1** Longford Arts Services will support civic-social organisations that engage citizens who experience barriers to art-making opportunities because of lack of access, affordability or discrimination. Emphasis will be placed on engagement with young people with fewer opportunities, people with additional needs, migrants and members of the Roma and Travelling Community.

**OBJECTIVE 4.1.2** Link with regional/national support organisations to ensure leading arts practices and resources are available to organisations in Longford including older people, people living with mental/physical health issues and people living with addiction.

**GOAL 4.2 Fund and develop cooperation partnerships that enable longer-term investment in arts in specific programme contexts and practices.**

**OBJECTIVE 4.2.1** Longford Arts Service will develop partnership programmes with relevant community and network organisations to connect to specific communities/communities of interest and respond to their needs. This will include artmaking in specific contexts including education, youth work, health settings and amateur arts groups.

**OBJECTIVE 4.2.2:** Longford Arts Service will work with festival organisers to develop a festival support network for the county. This network will allow festival organisers to collaborate, share best practices, and identify and share resources.

**GOAL 4.3 Develop practices and inclusive policies to activate and increase civic engagement in cultural activities.**

**OBJECTIVE 4.3.1** Longford Arts Service will research and develop arts plans for the county in partnership with specific communities of interest and relevant stakeholders including young people, migrant groups, and older people. These strategies will facilitate greater access to arts programmes in Music, Drama, Film, Visual, Digital, and Performance arts like circus skills.



Cruthu Arts Festival 2019.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.





Tarry Flynn presented by Livin Dred & Nomad Theatre 2022.



Longford Lights. 2023.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.

## Theme 5: Infrastructure

**Enhance and develop our arts infrastructure and promote resource efficiency to create optimal conditions for long-term sustainable growth. This infrastructure development will focus on sustainable approaches to materials, conservation, recycling and skills development with clear communication on climate action with artist-led public consultation and collaboration.**

The development of adequate physical infrastructure for the Arts was the most frequently expressed need by artists and activists during the consultation process for this plan. Longford is the only county in Ireland without a dedicated exhibition/art-making space.

When Backstage Theatre opened its doors in 1995, it was the first arts facility constructed in the county. Its impact has been far-reaching over the last 28 years, developing audiences, nurturing artists, developing ambitious projects, and providing a space where Longford communities can experience art that celebrates their own personal and lived experiences.

However, there is a need for additional programmes and capital infrastructure to meet artist/audience demand and support a broader spectrum of creative practices and communities of interest.

**GOAL 5.1 Encourage investment in arts and cultural infrastructure in a manner that is strategic and sustainable and meets the current needs of artists and the public.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.1** Longford Arts Services will seek to build its influence around key regeneration projects planned for Longford Town and other locations, working with key local authority directorates and departments to integrate arts and culture in design phases for all developments including regeneration and town centre first project, this will include the choice of materials, concept, and planning stages and to ensure optimal use of the Percent for Arts Scheme.

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.2** Longford Arts Services will address the development of a temporary arts space in Longford town to provide exhibition space, rehearsal spaces, storage and art-making opportunities. Currently, in the area towns like Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Granard, there is a collective move to provide free community space for the arts in the shape of the



library community meeting rooms, community halls, reduced or free use of school halls. This is not the case in Longford. There are no community meeting rooms in the County Library which can be used for a professional exhibition space or rehearsal space without disturbing the library users. There is a shortage of community space in the county town. To build capacity of both artist and audience, and civic leadership of the arts in the county town, there needs to be a base or foundation to facilitate this development led by the Longford County Council Arts Service. This space will act as a hub to develop programme capacity, networking opportunities and action research within the arts community until a permanent space is secured. This project will commence with smaller pop-up craft shops and exhibition spaces to build audiences and inform future investment.

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.3** Longford Arts Services will work closely with statutory and local institutions in the rollout of music, drama and art programmes for children and young people. This will include a plan for arts development opportunities for teenagers and the development of a dedicated youth arts festival.

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.4** Support for local creative enterprise unlocks opportunities for artists and creatives to develop income and impacts positively on the local consumer/tourism economy and brand Longford. Longford Arts Service will work with LEO and other relevant stakeholders to support the development of a local creative economy which will include a design and craft network in County Longford.

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.5** In 2022, the Longford Film Commission was established to support the development of filmmaking in the county. With the advent of a large film studio being developed nearby, this commission is timely. The Longford Film Commission will be supported to develop a range of resources to make County Longford an attractive location for film production including a register of location types in the county.

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.6** Currently in County Longford, there is no independent arts organisation operating with a county-wide development remit. Such organisations have the capacity to collaborate freely, respond to/and access a wide spectrum of funding and support in developing opportunities for artists and communities. Longford Arts Services will encourage and support relevant stakeholders and individuals to develop a community-based arts development organisation that serves this need.

**OBJECTIVE 5.1.7** Longford Arts Services will seek to develop an appropriate facility for the adequate storage and maintenance of the County Art Collection and specialised art equipment.

Backstage Youth Theatre. Providers Building, Longford Town 2023.  
Photo in background by Arts Office.

## **GOAL 5.2 Ensure the voluntary festival, projects and events and youth arts sector is skilled and resourced to renew and sustain its vital role in the Arts and cultural life of the county.**

Many artists and creatives struggle with the core governance, organisational and business skills (project management, marketing, finance and grant application writing) needed to develop ambitious projects and build sustainable art practices. In addition, young arts graduates often leave college without the skills needed to access valuable work opportunities across a range of creative contexts and struggle with the identification of a career pathway that could potentially support them financially in the development of their creative practice.

**OBJECTIVE 5.2.1** County Longford Arts Services will collaborate with and support all County Longford based festival organisations to enhance coordination, scheduling, procurement, audience development and promotion of events.

**OBJECTIVE 5.2.2** All festivals will be supported and encouraged to move toward using green procurement, recycled materials, energy-efficient building status (BER rating of B2 or above) and highlighting a greener agenda within their programmes.

**OBJECTIVE 5.2.2** Longford Arts Service will work with local TUS gateway hubs and the Local Enterprise Office to build capacity among arts graduates and project promoters to access employment opportunities and enhance their work readiness thus improving professional support and business training for artists and those working in the creative sector. Providing local training will reduce the need for transport costs.





# Theme 6:

Supporting the Living artist –  
Developing career pathways  
within the arts

**Professional artists and creatives that are properly supported to make great work contribute substantially to the quality of life for communities by visual enhancement of the built environment, creative enterprise, cultural tourism, citizen well-being and place-making.**

**GOAL 6.1 To develop a healthy Arts community. Artists who choose a dedicated professional path must be supported throughout their careers, particularly at the emerging stage.**

**OBJECTIVE 6.1** Longford Arts Service seek to provide support for artists to meet their needs at different stages in their career beginning at the undergraduate level through to the emerging artist level. This will be done by developing an undergraduate bursary programme to support third-level students in their development as young artists and encouraging them to maintain links with County Longford.

**OBJECTIVE 6.2** A follow-on support for emerging artists will be a training programme to include awareness of career progression routes, development of proposals, grant writing and applications. Longford Arts Service will seek resources to provide dedicated exhibition/publication/performance opportunities for emerging artists who base their artmaking in County Longford.

**OBJECTIVE 6.3** Longford Arts Service will facilitate more established artists to work with emerging artists through a mentoring programme to support the transfer of specific skills and tacit knowledge. This will help emerging artists and help consolidate productive relationships within the Arts community.

**OBJECTIVE 6.4** A key element of this art strategy is to support the development of infrastructure that facilitates artists and creatives to produce art in County Longford. This equates to having suitable affordable workspaces and access to a living wage as exemplified by the pilot scheme Basic Income for Artists (BIA). Longford Arts Service will advocate on behalf of artists to



secure artists' access to appropriate working environments and spaces. Working environments such as studios, workshops, and accommodations in County Longford to support their work.

Longford Arts Service will campaign on behalf of artists for the appropriate remuneration of artists and the mainstreaming of the BIA scheme.



Writer Seán Columb Granard Book Town 2023.  
Photo by Ronan O'Toole.

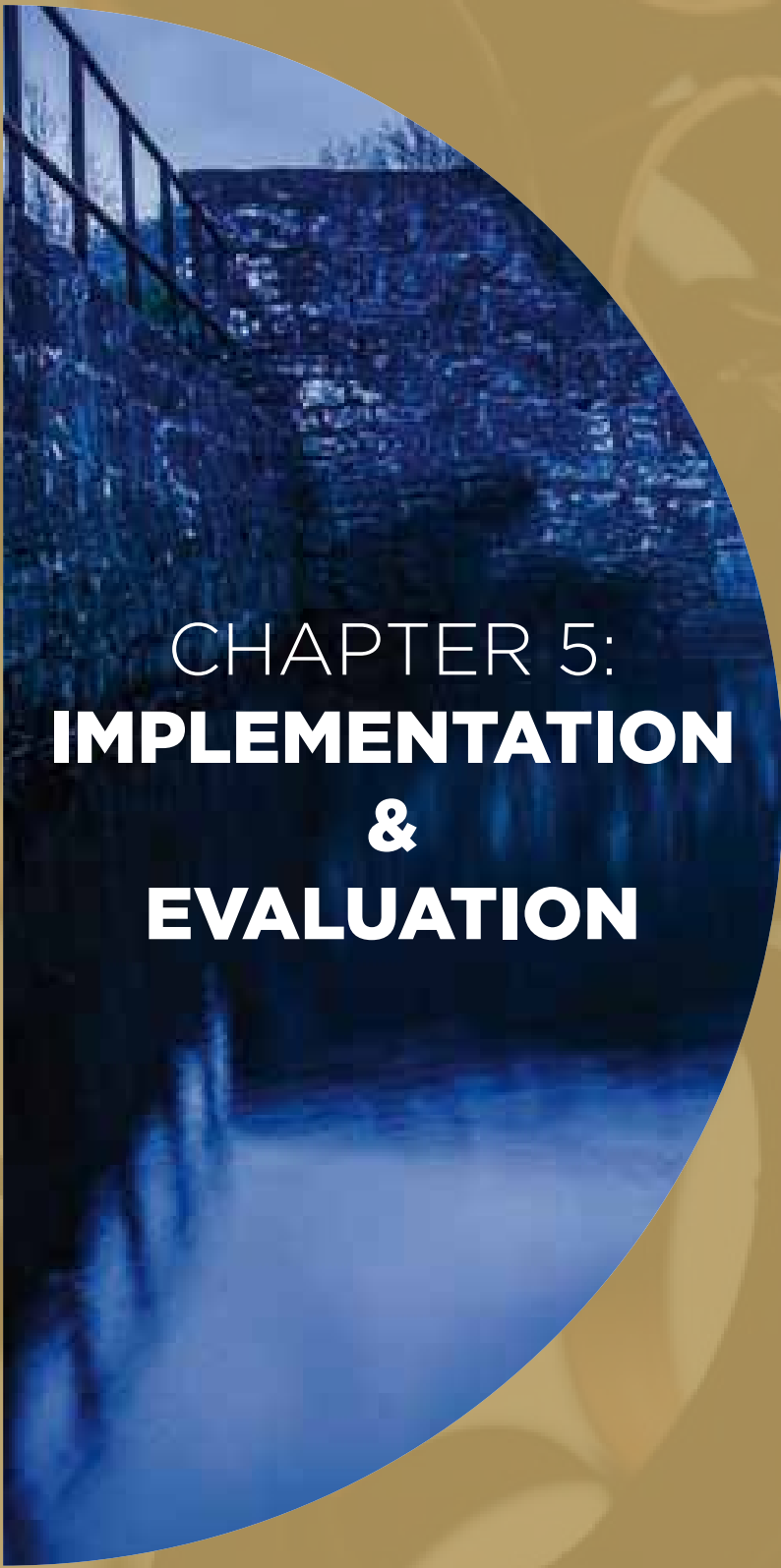


Granard Book Town 2023.  
Photo by Ronan O'Toole.



Mary Reynolds, Mancan Magan. Granard Book Town, 2023.  
Photo by Ronan O'Toole.





CHAPTER 5:  
**IMPLEMENTATION**  
&  
**EVALUATION**





### **Implementation & Evaluation**

The Longford County Arts Development Strategy 2023-2028 sets out the strategic development objectives for the Art Service. Within those strategic parameters, the Art Service will produce several detailed art-form-specific development plans annually over the period of the strategy.

A comprehensive assessment of the Arts Strategy will be carried out mid-way through its period. The aim will be to evaluate how

the Arts Development Strategy's objectives are being met against baseline data gathered in 2023. This will involve measuring how Arts spending and the activities that result, fulfil the objectives of this Strategy and the County Council's policies as set out in various Development Plans. The mid-term evaluation process will enable the amendment of plans in response to changing economic and cultural circumstances.





Piano for the people. Bruno & Mihaela Hanzek. Longford Shopping Centre. 2023.  
Photo by Arts Office.



Kathrina Rupit, Cruthu Arts Festival 2016.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.



Youth Provides Concert. Culture Night 2022.  
Photo by Arts Office.



Mide Samba Band. 2017.  
Photo by Frank McGrath Photography.





Artist Gary Robinson in his Studio. 2018.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.



Artist Gary Robinson. Circle of Courage,  
Clonfin, Decade of Centenaries.2022.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.







Decadent Theatre present The Chief.  
Backstage Sept 22.



African-Irish Carnival. Longford Town 2022.  
Photo by Luke Danniells.



Ronan O'Snodaigh. Shawbrook Forest Festival 2023.  
INSET: Kila at Shawbrook Forest Festival 2023. Photos by Frank McGrath.



Lúminaria by Fionnuala Gyax directed by Maisie Lee - photo by Doug  
Fox Roberts - Martha Breen - Honi Cooke. Backstage Theatre 2022.









County Longford Arts Strategy:  
**Art for People. Art for Place**  
[2023 - 2028]

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Longford County Council, Great Water Street Longford.  
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