

Creating with Communities

Arts
Development
Plan

24
/30

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
County Council





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Welcome

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Arts Development Plan integrates the rich cultural heritage and vibrant arts sector with a focus on community engagement. Recognising the pivotal role of the arts in the social and economic life of this County, the Council is looking forward to seeing this ambitious Plan come to fruition.

The Council's work in arts and culture emphasises the health and wellbeing benefits of arts engagement, echoing the World Health Organisation's definition of health as complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Supporting initiatives such as Well Dance for Seniors, Dementia inclusive choirs, and arts projects in care settings, help to improve physical and mental health, connection with others, and individual fulfillment.

Learning emerges as a cornerstone of the plan, with institutions like UCD and IADT nurturing the next generation of artists and audiences. From early childhood education to third level, local arts and culture is valued and celebrated, instilling a lifelong appreciation for creativity.

Economically, the Plan recognises the significant contribution of the creative sector to the County's economy, from cultural tourism to a thriving film industry. Supporting

local artists and creatives, the Plan aims to cultivate an innovative ecosystem that enriches both the cultural landscape and the local economy.

It is hoped that this Plan underscores the intrinsic value of the arts in enriching daily life and fostering a sense of place and pride in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. Through words, music, movement, and images, the County celebrates its cultural vibrancy while acknowledging the dedication and contributions of those who bring these experiences to life.

We would like to thank the members of the public, the creative community, our partners across the County, the staff of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office, and all who contributed in ways large and small to this Arts Development Plan. It sets out an ambitious vision for the arts in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown which we will realise together over the coming years.



Laura Sarah Dowdall,
Dance Artist in Residence,
Dún Laoghaire Baths Artist Studios.
Photo: Mark Stedman

Introduction

Situated between the suburbs of Dublin City, the picturesque South Dublin coastline, and the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County boasts a diverse and thriving arts scene. With a population of over 233,000 and spanning an area of 125 square kilometres, our County is home to a dynamic community of artists, performers, writers, and arts organisations. From award-winning venues to vibrant local youth arts initiatives, our County is teeming with creative energy and cultural vitality.

As we started to develop this Plan, it was important to us to hear from a wide range of people to understand more deeply what measures will help the arts continue to thrive in the County. This input has been critical to forming a Plan that aspires to empower people of all ages and situations to play a part in growing the cultural fabric of their communities.

Within the Plan, steps are put in place that will enable the arts to continue to be a catalyst for positive social change in the community. Projects that promote dialogue, empathy, and understanding across all our communities contribute to an environment of inclusion and enhance well-being in the County.

As we set out on this journey to cultivate a vibrant and inclusive arts ecosystem in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County, we are guided by a steadfast commitment to creativity,

innovation, and community engagement. By working in partnership with the collective talent and creativity of our artists and local community, we aim to ensure that the arts continue to thrive as an integral part of our County's identity, making Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown a great place to live, work and visit.



Frank Curran
Chief Executive



Cllr Jim O'Leary
An Cathaoirleach



Local Arts Development *in* Context

Rachel Doolin, Visual Artist,
dlr LexIcon, Dún Laoghaire.
Photo: Mark Stedman

The Council's commitment to arts development is evident in its track record of strategic investments over the past three decades. Through various departments such as the Arts Office, Library Service, Community Section, Parks and Heritage Office, Local Enterprise Office, Economic Development, and the Creative Ireland Culture Team, the Council has funded and delivered a range of artist supports, vital arts infrastructure, festivals, exhibitions, residencies, school projects, and public art initiatives. These efforts have contributed to the growth and vibrancy of our local arts scene.

As set out in the Arts Act 2003, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council is committed to developing and implementing an Arts Plan to the benefit of all. Recognising the vital role of local authorities in shaping the cultural landscape, we are guided by national frameworks such as Culture 2025 and Making Great Art Work. Through strategic partnerships with the Arts Council, Creative Ireland and other key stakeholders, we work to strengthen the link between national cultural policies and the lived experiences of our communities.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is home to a vibrant community of artists and creatives working at professional, amateur and community levels.

The County is host to three major theatres and venues: the award winning dlr LexIcon which includes the County's Municipal Gallery, the Pavilion Theatre, which is the County's Municipal Theatre, and the dlr Mill Theatre. Dún Laoghaire Baths Artist Studios, Marlay Craft Courtyard in Rathfarnham, and the Grainstore Artist Studios in Cabinteely Park provide important spaces for artists to work.

Cultúrlann na hÉireann, Monkstown and Dance Theatre of Ireland's Centre for Dance provide both performance and teaching spaces. Our literary heritage is celebrated in Dalkey Castle and Heritage Centre and the James Joyce Museum in Sandycove.

IADT is home to the National Film School and UCD's campus includes an extensive sculpture trail and the new Trapdoor Theatre.

Amateur music and drama hold a very special place in the cultural life of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown with groups including Dalkey Players, Balally Players and Glencullen Dundrum Musical and Dramatic Society. Choral and organ music is found throughout the County with St. Michael's Church in Dún Laoghaire playing host to an annual summer organ music festival. Music in Monkstown is curated to bring chamber music to a local audience while our world-famous literary heritage is an inspiration to writers, artists and audiences through festivals, exhibitions and events.

About *the* Arts Office

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office is responsible for nurturing and developing the arts in the County. Our deep understanding of local needs, cultures, and resources allows us to implement national arts policies in a way that will be most effective for the needs of our communities.

We work to understand the barriers local artists are facing and to put programmes and funding in place to remove these barriers. We champion grassroots initiatives, community projects, and cultural events that embody our local identity. Through partnership, we feed into a dynamic cultural ecosystem, working with the arts in schools, community centres, healthcare settings, libraries, and youth services. Most of all, we work to provide equitable access to the arts for all.

Operating with a team of just six, we experience growing demands for our

services, which underscores the necessity for informed, evidence-based decision-making regarding the initiatives we can support or fund. Public consultation, alongside the Council's plans and strategies, including our Corporate and County Development Plans, and national policy considerations, coupled with a continuous assessment of the challenges and opportunities within the local arts sector and community, all shape our focus. This approach remains crucial, particularly in a rapidly expanding and changing County.



Small Wonders,
dlr LexIcon, Dún Laoghaire.
Photo: Mark Granier

30 years

of Arts Development

in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

Founded in 1994 with the establishment of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, the Arts Office has strategically supported and expanded local arts through comprehensive Arts Development Plans. The illustration below captures 30 milestones in the County's arts development over the past 30 years.

Since 1994 / For the past 30 years, we have run an Artists in Primary Schools programme, currently partnering with six schools a year.

Since 1994 / We have cared for and developed a County Art Collection and an outdoor sculpture collection, featuring works of historical and contemporary importance.

Since 1995 / Our dlr Writer in Residence scheme provides time and space for writers to create new work while engaging with our local community. This annual residency is now based in dlr Lexlcon.

Since 1995 / Through the Percent for Art scheme we commission public art - both permanent and project based - in collaboration with artists and local communities.

Since 2000 / Dublin Youth Dance Company founded the Irish Youth Dance Festival in Dún Laoghaire, working to showcase young talent and elevate youth dance nationally.

1995-2011 / We ran dlr Poetry Now for 16 years, showcasing Irish and international poets and platforming new work through awards.

Since 1999-2001 / We collaborated with the Arts Council to support the opening of the Dance Theatre of Ireland's Centre for Dance at Bloomfields, which we continue to support annually.

1999-2012 / The Concourse Visual Arts Programme, which featured commissions and exhibitions in County Hall, laid the groundwork for the Municipal Gallery at dlr Lexlcon.

2001-10 / For 10 years, the dlr Festival of World Cultures celebrated international cultural diversity, drawing up to 250,000 visitors annually.

Since 2001 / Since opening in 2001, the Pavilion Theatre - the County's Municipal Theatre in Dún Laoghaire has presented the very best performing arts and film.

Since 2004 / We started our arts ebulletin in 2004, initially monthly but now a fortnightly update that keeps our community informed of upcoming events and opportunities.

2005-10 / The Country House Concert Series brought live classical, traditional and jazz performances to the elegant settings of Marlay and Cabinteely Houses.

Since 2006 / Opening in 2006, the dlr Mill Theatre has been a key cultural venue and we are proud to be its largest funder.

Since 2007 / Our dlr Arts and Health Programme, funded by the HSE, fosters dementia inclusive arts practices and offers arts programming in residential and day services for older people and the broader community.

2008-10 / Place & Identity was our first large-scale public art programme, consisting of six residencies and two temporary projects.

2009-19 / We ran the Grainstore Youth Arts Centre in Cabinteely Park, providing opportunities for young people to create and curate work for their peers.

2009-21 / Mountains to Sea dlr Book Festival, established in 2009, was co-produced by the Arts Office from 2012-21 and attracted hundreds of authors from Ireland and abroad.

In 2010 / We launched our annual arts grants scheme, funding artists, groups and organisations to create and present work locally and invest in their career development.

Since 2012 / Artnetdlr, an idea started by the Arts team and now artist-led, is a vital resource organisation for local artists with 760 members.

Since 2014 / We programme and operate the Municipal Gallery and co-manage the 120-seat theatre at dlr Lexlcon Central Library and Cultural Centre.

Since 2015 / Our Musician in Residence programme annually supports musicians or groups to create new work and engage local audiences.

Since 2015 / The Emerging Artists Bursaries were established to support artists at this crucial early stage in their careers.

Since 2016 / We jointly established the Exploring and Thinking Early Childhood Arts Partnership with the other Dublin Council Arts Offices to create Early Years Art opportunities, offering 25 bursaries to date.

Since 2017 / dlr First Frames has commissioned 13 short films, in English and Irish, supporting emerging filmmakers and partnering with the National Film School/IADT.

Since 2017 / The dlr Creative Ireland Programme supports additional bursaries, residencies, and programmes in community and healthcare settings.

Since 2020 / MART has run artists' studios at the Grainstore, Cabinteely, providing vital workspace for 11 artists.

Since 2020 / Our Youth Creative Engagement Programme encourages creativity among young people aged 10-24 years, outside of formal education.

2021-22 / Availing of the Government's Local Live Performance scheme in response to Covid's impact on the performing arts sector, we supported 622 performers and creatives in safely presenting work across the County.

Since 2023 / We have run Dún Laoghaire Baths Artist Studios, offering 4 workspaces and supporting residencies and public art commissions.

2024 / The Municipal Gallery presented its 50th exhibition in November 2024, having welcomed over 335,000 visitors since its opening.



Mountains to Sea.
Illustrator: Conor Nolan

Methodology

How we agreed on priorities for the **2024-2030** Arts Development Plan

This Plan was a team effort, led by the Culture, Community and Wellbeing Strategic Policy Committee and drafted by the Arts Office. Developing the 2024 - 2030 Arts Development Plan gave us the opportunity to reflect on our work, considering our strengths and opportunities against the valuable backdrop of the feedback gathered in the consultation process.

Our extensive public engagement, alongside the Council's plans and strategies, including our Corporate and County Development Plans, and national policy considerations, shaped our focus. This approach remains crucial, particularly in a rapidly expanding and changing County.

It was important to us to protect and prioritise existing strengths such as local and national partnerships, a deeply collaborative approach to programming, an improved and still improving arts infrastructure, and an exceptional community of artists and creatives.

As we look ahead to the next six years, we want to invest more time in communications and advocacy, supporting artists at all stages

of their careers, meeting the challenges of the Council's Climate Action Plan, while staying true to the priorities coming from Public Sector Duty legislation.

The consultation process highlighted several areas that are particularly important to our partners and communities. We heard loud and clear the need to invest in our arts ecosystem with more space for arts, increased Arts Office resources, and more opportunities for artists and creatives to develop their practice. Collaboration and partnership are deeply important to us and feedback reflected the need for even more community involvement in project development, hearing more from children and young people, and making sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to take part in the arts. Finally, spreading the arts more widely across the County, making them more visible, and holding more outdoor arts experiences came through strongly.

This feedback has closely informed our mission, vision, values and purpose along with the resulting focus and desired outcomes for 2024 - 2030.

Who We Spoke With

Between April 2023 and January 2024, we sought out ideas and feedback from people across the County.

Stakeholder Engagement

We worked with the Culture, Community and Wellbeing Strategic Policy Committee to consider the effectiveness of our last plan, identify areas for enhancement and streamlining, and explore our shared ambition for local arts development. Drawing on this foundation we actively engaged with stakeholders and the target groups below to build a picture of what we would like the arts to look like in 2030 and the actions needed to achieve that vision, together.

Artists and Arts Organisations

We invited creatives, artists, and arts organisations from the professional arts community in the County to a number of workshops where we listened to their challenges, needs, and expectations. To make sure we heard from as many people as possible we also gathered insights from an online survey.

General Public

An online survey for the public returned 294 responses, including 212 observations, with ideas for future projects and ways to enhance our work.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this plan with their ideas and feedback.

Children and Young People

We took a few different types of approaches to gathering the ideas of children and young people. These included focus groups, with particular emphasis on those whose voices are often unheard, from Crosscare Youth Services, Southside Travellers Action Group, Youth Diversion programme and local primary schools. An online survey was designed with input from Comhairle na nÓg for caregivers and young people under 18, and we heard from children, young people, and their caregivers as part of Cruinniú na nÓg 2023.



Purpose (Why we exist)

Making Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown a great place to create and enjoy art.

Vision (Our ideal future)

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is home to valued artists and creatives and a community that is deeply engaged in the arts.

Mission (What we do to further our vision)

We connect the needs of the community with the talents of artists and creatives to deliver an arts programme that enriches all our lives.

Values (What we stand for)

Integrity
Respect
Diversity
Creativity
Sustainability

Dance Club 50+, Exit 15,
Samuel Beckett Civic Campus, Ballyogan.
Photo: Rachel Burke



Art on Our Doorsteps

Through delivery of this plan, we will facilitate exciting and tailored arts experiences to a range of communities across the County. Arts experiences will be accessible within a ten-minute neighbourhood.

Why This Goal?

The county of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is home to over 230,000 people spread across 125 square kilometres. We want to make it easier for people to have great arts experiences and for them to feel that the arts are always only ten minutes away. Having more arts experiences in more places does not just make it more likely that people will have a chance to encounter art, it makes sure that the experiences are representative of all our communities.

Actions

Work more closely with Early Childhood, Schools, and Youth Services to create more art experiences with children and young people

Make sure that all parts of the County are benefitting from Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office funding

Discover new and innovative places in which to present artists' work

Grow the County Art Collection with pieces that represent our communities and display the Collection in more spaces across the County

Champion local arts so that target audiences and communities are better informed about the wide range of arts experiences available to them

Outcomes

Children and young people can participate in the cultural life of the County in their everyday environments

Encounters with the arts are available equitably across the County

More people have access to the County Collection in person and online

More people engage with Arts Office supported programmes

Connecting Communities

We will support an artistically ambitious arts programme that impacts, animates, and connects with local communities.

Why This Goal?

Art that is truly reflective of communities drives connection, helps people feel less isolated and creates a sense of belonging. Taking part in the arts together creates lifelong friendships and helps us flourish with improved mental and physical health. Children and young people have a right to meaningful experiences with the arts where they live. Artists living in the County can help us see our surroundings in new and unexpected ways, deepening the feeling of belonging.

Actions

Children & young people see their needs and views reflected in the programme of arts initiatives

Develop and expand programmes that provide opportunities for specific target groups such as older people, people with disabilities, those who are new to the County and country, and members from the Traveller Community

Help artists and facilitators learn new skills and bring fresh approaches to community projects

Include more under-represented places and communities in arts programme, public art commissions, and the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Art Collection

Support artists and communities to consider the impact of the climate emergency on our County, and to build climate awareness and resilience

Create arts opportunities that enable equitable access to the arts, regardless of age or ability through collaboration with local services and communities

Develop arts and cultural opportunities with social cohesion at the heart, supporting the Council's ongoing work to improve the quality of life in the County

Outcomes

Children and young people increase and deepen their engagement in the arts

Individual groups derive meaningful value from their opportunities to engage with the arts

The reach of arts office programming and satisfaction with that programming increases

Artists and communities are encouraged and assisted to explore and consider the natural beauty of the County and how climate change is impacting us

People are engaged in arts projects that help reduce social exclusion and barriers in accessing the cultural life of the County.

Our communities feel ownership over the cultural life of the County and that it's part of their everyday lives

Empowering Artists

We will encourage and empower artists in the County to have fulfilling careers and to develop their practice in key focus areas.

Why This Goal?

Every community needs artists. Our lives are enriched by their presence and their work gives Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown meaning. Artists give us a sense of place, pride in our communities, and they help us tell our stories. Developing a career as an artist is challenging and our artists need support informed by their needs and targeted to their career stages.

Actions

Continue to provide funding and support through robust and accessible application processes for the creation of new work, annual grants, bursaries, studio spaces, and residencies

Communicate artist support opportunities clearly and simply. Continue to work to make the submission process easier to navigate by applicants with disabilities, requiring literacy support or whose first language is not English or Irish

Support artists to further develop their careers in the County. Provide opportunities and commissions targeted to critical career stages. Increase peer networking and pathways to facilitate under-represented artists

Support local and national artist resource organisations to deliver professional development and networking opportunities

Provide specialised capacity building for artists who wish to develop their practices in the areas of community, health, education, climate justice, climate action, and social justice

Work with small and emerging arts organisations and companies to find ways in which they can sustain their practice in the County

Support artists and organisations to meet the challenges of climate change, in line with the Council's Climate Action Plan

Outcomes

Growing number of applications, new artworks and diversity of applicants

Access to career development has improved and opportunities are more readily available to artists at critical career stages

Local and national artist resource organisations have access to the information and support they need to best represent our communities

A greater number of socially engaged and collaborative practices working in these focus areas

Increase in the number of arts organisations based locally

A more knowledgeable, empowered arts sector with sustainable practices

Making Space for Art

A resourceful, collaborative, and creative approach to activating spaces will result in more opportunities to make work and engage audiences.

Why This Goal?

As Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown changes and evolves, cultural spaces and infrastructure similarly need to expand and grow. Artists need space to create, and audiences need space to encounter art. With ever-increasing demand on existing space in the County, the creation and development of artists' spaces needs to be managed sustainably with innovative and collaborative approaches.

Actions

Explore opportunities for more space for art in the County, working with partners to make the best use of existing buildings

Design cross-council initiatives which help support the use of local buildings as temporary artist led creative spaces

Plan for a multi-use Community, Culture and Civic Centre in Dundrum as recommended by the Dundrum Local Area Plan, County Development Plan and Community and Culture Audit

Outcomes

An increased number of spaces spread across the County

An increased number of artist led creative spaces across the County

Improved and equitable access to rehearsal, creation, and performance spaces across the County

Focus Area /

Building Together for the Future

The Council will strengthen its networks and partnerships to expand the reach of its programme and invest strategically in a thriving ecosystem of arts and culture across the County.

Why This Goal?

The arts in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown grow and prosper through a rich network of arts venues and organisations, educational centres, healthcare providers, and countless community organisations. Collaborating with and supporting this network helps Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office connect with groups across the County, delivering impactful arts programme. On a national level, the Arts Office's relationship with funding agencies and policy makers helps ensure the County's needs are seen and supported.

Actions

Develop and expand partnerships with educational organisations to support the artists of the future

Support arts venues and their audiences through funding and collaboration

Deepen partnerships, supports, and capacity building for wellbeing and arts initiatives with a particular focus on age-friendly programmes

Collaborate with national funding and development agencies to implement policies, programmes, and funding schemes with local expertise

Champion local arts so that target audiences and communities are better informed about the wide range of arts experiences available to them

Advocate for the importance of supporting the arts across local and national networks and agencies

Outcomes

Existing programmes experience continued success while new initiatives are explored across the County

Relationships continue to prosper through funding, support, and ambitious programmes

Partnerships are developed both to provide a greater number of programmes and to anticipate the needs of a growing population

Successful implementation of policies, programmes, and funding schemes while influencing new opportunities through sharing local knowledge and expertise

More people engage with Arts Office supported programmes

Deeper awareness of the work of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office and its impact on the County



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Spark, Carmona School, Glenageary.
Photo: Stephen O Connor

Implementation *and* Review

Listening and Responding

We value the continuing input of our communities. As the Plan progresses we will regularly ask for feedback and consider ways in which we can better meet the needs of our communities.

Partnership

Our success depends on working together across Council, with the arts and culture sector, and our partners in Health, Education and Community. We could not do it without the support of our funders, and we are committed to making sure our priorities are aligned through clear communications and agreements.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We want to make sure that what we are doing is working. We will monitor progress and evaluate how effective our efforts are. If something is not working, we will adjust our approach to make sure we are getting the best results possible.

Workplans

This is a high-level Plan which will be underpinned by detailed annual workplans with specific actions aligned to our focus areas. We will meet regularly to review our progress, and report back to the Council, its Culture, Community and Wellbeing Strategic Policy Committee, and the wider community of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.



Creativity in Older Age, Shankill.
Photo: Mark Stedman

Appendix

Key local and national policy documents which inform this development plan:

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Children and Young Persons Plan 2020-2023

DLR County Development Plan 2022-2028

DLR LECP Draft Statement 2023-2028

DLR Corporate Plan 2020-2024

DLR Age Friendly Strategy 2022-2026

DLR Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

DLR Heritage Plan 2021-2025

DLR Library Development Plan 2022-2026

Culture 2025, Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

DLR Community and Cultural Audit:
Community Needs Assessment, 2023

Arts Council Equality, Human Rights
& Diversity Policy, and Strategy

DLR Tourism Strategy 2018-2022

DLR Culture & Creativity 2023-2037

Project Ireland 2040: Investing in our
Culture, Language & Heritage 2018-2027

Healthy DLR Plan 2019-2022

Arts Council Strategy:
Making Great Art Work 2016-2025

National Development Plan 2021-2030



Vera by John Brady, Dún Laoghaire.
Photo: Daniel Geesen

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