



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023-2027



Cavan

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Our Shared Rituals — Inspiring Memories and Imaginations at the Sullivan Centre, Cavan. **Credit:** Sonja Smith.

A Celebration of Cruinniú na nÓg 2018 — Cavan Town.

Credit: Cavan Library Service.

Performance of Lullaby Leaf in Town Hall Cavan.

Credit: Dr. Thomas Johnson, Ceol Connected.



**Comhairle Contae
an Chabháin**
Cavan
County Council

Forewords

Cathaoirleach's Foreword

The Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 sets out a road map for the advancement of cultural activity and creativity for County Cavan during that period. The document seeks to build on the previous five-year strategy and focuses on the five priority areas set out at national level, which seek to develop our creativity across the widest spectrum of our community.

Cavan people are, by their nature, innovative; travel the county and you can see examples of that in the way that so many indigenous industries have developed in the most challenging of locations. Cavan County Council has worked with communities and individuals to harness that spirit. An example of that relationship between the most traditional of industries and our spirit of innovation are the seven awards won at Blas na hÉireann promoted under the Created in Cavan banner to showcase food products from our county on a national and international stage.

Climate change is the challenge of our generation. As a partner with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in Cuilcagh Lakeland UNSECO Geopark we are already meeting that challenge, protecting our unique ecology and archaeology which supports a sustainable tourism product. A prime example of this is Cavan Burren Park, a unique, internationally recognised site at the heart of the Geopark.

To showcase our proud history of culture and creativity we will host Cavan Calling 2023, an opportunity to welcome home the diverse strands of our diaspora, from those influenced by St. Kilian in Würzburg, Germany to Cavan/Monaghan Township, Canada and everywhere in between. Coinciding with the celebrations to mark the centenary of Kingspan Breffni, organised by Cavan County Board of the GAA, it will be a chance to experience and celebrate the best of our county.

The new sculpture of John Joe O'Reilly, the most iconic of our county's illustrious footballers provides a focal point in our County Town.

Cavan has changed dramatically in recent years; a once very rural county is now influenced by many moving to our county from elsewhere in Ireland and indeed abroad, most recently those who have found themselves here because of the war in Ukraine. Cavan people have always found ways to welcome new people and integrate them and parts of their culture into our own.

Taking account of public engagement, this strategy provides for greater collaboration between artists, cultural creators, and communities around our county. The new pillars provided in this strategy – Health and Wellbeing and Climate Action – will provide a welcome challenge to the hard working and dedicated members of the Culture and Creativity Team in our County, who have already shown their ability to bring people together and meet and exceed the targets in the previous strategy.

Taking the lead, the Culture and Creativity Team will help to integrate cultural objectives across every element of the Council's work, and I look forward to results of this collaborative work in the coming years.

Cllr John Paul Feeley

Cathaoirleach of Cavan County Council for 2022-2023

Chief Executive's Foreword

Cavan County Council welcomes the extension of the Creative Ireland Programme for a further five years. It confirms the Government's commitment to embrace and encourage culture and creative thinking within each county. Our council has always encouraged and supported creativity for individuals and communities and the Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 helped to embed and imbue creative thinking in the national psyche.

As with the development of the previous strategy, the opinions and views of the public were sought, and the responses suggest that the need to connect artists and creatives to communities should be placed at the centre of the strategic vision. Cavan County Council is conscious that in the post-Covid period, when individuals and communities are slowly returning and engaging with cultural events, council policies should reflect current conditions and circumstances. In furtherance of the key objectives set out in Cavan County Council's Corporate Plan 2019-2024, as adopted by the elected members, our council will continue to embrace the Creative Ireland ideals over the next five years and beyond with this new strategy.

As well as nurturing Culture and Creativity at home, it is important that the greater Cavan Diaspora is remembered because these communities abroad represent and maintain a culture different from that of their adopted countries and often retain strong ties with their country and culture of origin. We can see this with the strong Cavan connections in England, France, Germany, Canada and the United States, and many other countries. The *Cavan Calling* homecoming festival, taking place in July 2023 will give Cavan people living at home and overseas, people of Cavan ancestry, and friends of Cavan an opportunity to return and enjoy a festival of concerts, sporting events, cultural performances, tours, ancestry events, networking events and more in their native county.

One of the most notable successes of the Creative Cavan programme 2018-2022 has been the development of the Cavan Arts Festival which started in 2018 and has evolved each year, the festival reflects the ideals of the Creative Ireland programme by giving local, national, and international creatives an opportunity to collaborate, participate, express creativity individually and collectively in an inclusive context.

The 2018 – 2022 national programme highlighted the importance of investing in Creative and Cultural Infrastructure and after extensive renovations, the TownHall Cavan reopened in April 2022 as a dedicated arts space for Cavan town and county, serving creatives, artists and audiences and complementing the existing provisions for culture across the county. The building will be complemented by the Virginia Civic, Cultural, and Library Services Centre which will open in 2023 and be a landmark cultural facility for the people of Virginia and its hinterland.

Cavan County Council views culture and creativity as an essential part of who we are both as individuals and communities and is committed to developing Cavan as a county where those from all nationalities and ethnic backgrounds have a feeling of belonging and pride and will have opportunities to contribute to all aspects of life.

Tommy Ryan

Chief Executive Cavan County Council

1 Creative Ireland 2023–2027

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government initiative committed to enhancing access to, engagement with, and enjoyment of Ireland’s culture and creativity. Within the broad range of available definitions, creativity is considered as a set of innate abilities and learned skills; the capacity of individuals and organisations to transcend accepted ideas and norms and by drawing on imagination to create new ideas that bring additional value to human activity.

The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023–2027 is to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, in our personal lives and in our institutions, we can realise our full creative potential thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing.

The Creative Ireland Programme will deliver through collaboration and partnership promoting understanding and appreciation of the value of creativity in all its forms — whether through the arts, culture, heritage, or technology.

The Creative Ireland Programme will prioritise its work around five aspects for the period 2023–2027:

1. Creative Youth
2. Creative Communities
3. Creative Industries
4. Creative Health and Wellbeing
5. Creative Climate Action and Sustainability

Through the Creative Ireland Programme, *Creative Communities* supports the partnership between the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and Ireland’s local authorities. This partnership enables citizens and communities to explore their culture and creativity at local level and, where appropriate, leverage that creativity to strengthen wellbeing, advance social cohesion and support economic development.

Creative Communities is also innovative in deploying creativity to achieve greater integration across targeted policy priorities. This has delivered new creative engagement initiatives in relation to for example children and young people, older persons, climate action, and local economies. Individuals’ and communities’ perception about the role and value of culture and creativity as central to our wellbeing in its broadest sense is being enhanced.

The opportunity embraced within the Cavan Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027 is to support people’s participation, inclusion and expression within communities, and further strengthen local creative economies.



Virginia Civic, Cultural, and Library Services Centre. **Image Credit:** CAKM Architects

A shot from the film “Redemption of a Rogue”, written and directed by Philip Doherty. **Image Credit:** Pale Rebel Productions, in association with The Gonzo Theatre

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Culture and Creativity in Cavan

In his essay, *Perspectives on the Making of the Cavan Landscape* Patrick Duffy points out that to most Irish people, Cavan conveys images of a borderland lying to the north of the Midlands and forming part of south Ulster, a hilly region of drumlins, abundant surface water, small farms and farmhouses girdling the hillsides with a tangle of by-roads connecting distinctively named towns and villages.

One of Cavan's best known early literary figures is Cathal Búí Mac Giolla Ghunna from the Blacklion area whose reputation rests with the poem *An Bunnán Buidhe* where he likens the yellow bittern's lonely predicament to his own. East Cavan is culturally rich with the Sheridan family from Quilca near Mullagh noted eighteenth century literary figures. Richard Brinsley Sheridan is probably the best known of the family for his work as a playwright, satirist and poet. Henry Brooke, and his daughter Charlotte, from nearby Rantavan House, followed this tradition and Charlotte made her reputation as an Irish scholar with the publication of *Reliques of Irish Poetry*.

Agnes O'Farrelly from Mullagh was a leading academic and professor of Irish in University College Dublin. She was the first female Irish language novelist and became a leading member of the Gaelic League, presiding at the inaugural meeting of *Cumann na mBan*. T.P. McKenna, a Mullagh born actor who had a distinguished career on stage and screen and Brían F. O'Byrne, also from Mullagh but based in the United States, has been nominated on five occasions for a Tony award.

Cavan's acclaimed writers include Tom MacIntyre, best known for his play *The Great Hunger*, an adaptation of Patrick Kavanagh's poem of the same name. MacIntyre was fascinated by the lakes and drumlins of Cavan and his county's language, myth, folklore, and landscape are an integral part of his writing. This sense of place can

affect the world of the artist. Dermot Healy, though born in Finea, County Westmeath, came to Cavan town in his youth and this sense of displacement informed his writing in *A Bend for Home*, *A Goats Song* and *Sudden Times*. Michael Harding, who proudly claims to have been mentored by both MacIntyre and Healy, was born and lived the early part of his life in Cavan Town. He is a noted playwright, actor, novelist, and newspaper columnist, who speaks with great fondness for his native town and of time spent leisurely at nearby Killykeen and fishing at Lough Oughter. Place is also central to the writing of Shane Connaughton who was born in Kingscourt and moved to Redhills at the age of ten when his father was relocated there as a member of An Garda Síochána, and the sense of loss and longing for Kingscourt stayed with him all his life. He describes Cavan as being "a wee Fergie tractor chugging up and down the drumlins, cheerful and indestructible whatever the weather".

Noel Monahan focused on the themes of isolation and creativity for *Culture Night 2020*, stating that "creativity by its very nature requires you to find your place of isolation and remain there for quite a while sifting through the art form, its mysteries and magical nature". He maintained that Creative Ireland "allows us time to reflect on what it means to be human, time to reflect on our lives, to connect with our feelings, to allow us time to adjust". This viewpoint is echoed by many local creatives, Heather Brett argues that the programme "has provided opportunities as an asset to going forward and realising our potential as artists and enhancing the cultural worth of the people".

Cavan County Council embraced the ideals of the Creative Ireland programme 2018-2022 supporting the innovative and wide-ranging programme of events, and from a community perspective the Cavan Arts Festival was a major success in demonstrating the transformative power of festivals. Kim McCafferty, director of the

festival says that "arts don't have to have a mission or a purpose, they are just there to be enjoyed". She cites the positive influence that culture and creativity have had on the Cavan town landscape. The inaugural 2018 festival gave opportunity to local groups to showcase their work to new audiences. The success of the initial festival continues to be built upon and international acts such as Villagers, Iarla Ó Lionáird and Steve Cooney performed in 2022. Cavan film makers such as Finn Keenan, Pádraig Conaty, Sarah McKenna Dunne and Alan Bradley have created original work of a very high standard, while Philip Doherty's critically acclaimed *Redemption of a Rogue* featuring Cavan actors Aaron Monaghan and Kevin McGahern, has achieved both national and international success.

Active community groups including Bailieborough, Blacklion, Bruskey, Canningstown, Tullyvin, Cootehill, Mullagh, and Virginia are committed to promoting music and drama within their communities. Individual musicians, songwriters, poets, playwrights, and artists that connect with Cavan project a positive image of the creative health of the county. *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*, which was held in Cavan in 2010, 2011 and 2012, created a lasting platform for the promotion of the traditional music genre, and exponents such as Martin Donohoe and Antóin MacGabhann are respected countrywide as active ambassadors. A local artist not to be forgotten is Pauline Halton, who died in 2021. She painted life around her native place of Crover and Mountnugent, and her life was a celebration of living through art.

Cavan County Council is conscious of the critical importance of maintaining and developing the cultural infrastructure within the county and the redeveloped TownHall in Cavan provides a hub for the creative activities of theatre, music, concerts, drama, dance, cinema, opera, and children's events in the county town. The new flagship Civic Centre planned for the town of Virginia, which will comprise a new library and a refurbished Ramor

Theatre, will cater to the cultural needs of the growing community in Virginia and will have an energising effect on the thriving east Cavan town, which according to 2022 census figures, is one of the fastest growing towns in Ulster. Virginia is the gateway to the county, and it is important therefore to have a cultural venue which projects a positive image to visitors on first entering the county.

Irish language and culture have an important focus in the local authority led Creative Ireland Programme of events. There is a particular emphasis placed on *Seachtain na Gaeilge* each March, and the Irish language is *fite fuaite tríd* (interwoven) throughout library programming (*Culture Night*, *Bealtaine* and *Children's events*). Creative Cavan is also intent on fostering and promoting the national pastime of storytelling as a tradition in English and as Gaeilge. The library provides a wide and varied programme of events throughout the year *mar shampla Club na nÓg*, *Club Leabhar* and *Ciorcal Comhrá* (which takes place in a number of branch libraries). Cavan County Library Service works closely with *Glór Bhréifne*, *Ógras* and *Conradh na Gaeilge*. *Beatha teanga í a labhairt* – The life of a language is to speak it.

Diaspora is important to Cavan people, the Culture and Creativity Team and Cavan County Council. In 2020/2021 a study was commissioned by Creative Cavan to examine and make recommendations on the extensive Cavan Diaspora Archive which commenced with the foundation of Cavan Genealogy in 1987. The study concluded that the archive material is unique in nature. Issues of storage and conservation, and timescale to digitise, were considered and addressed and this study presents a template for other genealogy centres. In July 2023, Cavan's global family will gather for the Cavan Calling Homecoming festival, a celebration of the county, its people, culture, sport, landscape, and heritage. The festival will present an opportunity for Cavan people, friends of the county, and those with Cavan

ancestry to come together for an exciting, and inclusive celebration of our shared history and culture, where old friendships will be rekindled, and new bonds forged.

Healthy Ireland is a government-led initiative which local authorities have fully embraced. Creative Health and Wellbeing, as the fourth pillar of the 2023-2027 strategy, offers a further opportunity to focus on the health and wellbeing of the nation. Cavan Monaghan Arts and Health Forum was established to facilitate artists, community and youth leaders to network, share, collaborate, and participate in experimental learning and capacity building arts-based programmes for all, and to support creativity, wellbeing, and innovation. The Create to Connect programme is a valuable example where young people worked with artists to explore emotions using creative arts therapies. Inspired by Celtic mythology and the pre-Christian goddess Brigid, practitioners Kim Doherty and Heather Brett initiated the Portals of Wellbeing project to explore contentment and health through the portal or door of wellbeing in springtime.

Climate action and sustainability is a focus for all local authorities and Cavan County Council's Climate Adaption Strategy 2019-2024 is the start of the process of adaptation planning within the Local Authority. This plan represents the first step in increasing knowledge and understanding of our changing climate and enabling effective responses to the threats posed by climate change. Actions for climate change are embedded in all council

strategies and at a local level many schools in the county have attained the Green Flag which acknowledges the efforts young people are making to embrace new environmental thinking.

The history of culture and creativity in Cavan is long and varied and has laid the foundations of today's vibrant creative landscape, where Creatives in Cavan have enjoyed international success on an unprecedented scale and participation in the arts at all levels is high. The Culture and Creativity Cavan Team, as led by the County Librarian with overarching responsibility for Cavan County Council's cultural sector, and administered by Cavan County Library Service, welcomes the renewal of the Creative Ireland Programme until 2027 and is confident that the initiative to date has helped to stimulate discussion on the process of creativity, both individually and collectively. Its continuation will provide a platform to ensure that the creativity of this small border county will continue to resonate around the globe.



Artists Shane Carroll and Rosie Cole re-imagine the landscape of West Cavan.
Image Credit: Shane Carroll

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The Creative Ireland Vision for Cavan

The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027 is to maintain creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, in our personal lives and in our institutions, we can realise our creative potential thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing.

The vision will be pursued through the following five pillars:

1. Creative Youth
2. Creative Communities
3. Creative Industries
4. Creative Health and Wellbeing
5. Creative Climate Action and Sustainability

In developing the Cavan Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027, Cavan's Culture and Creativity Team appreciate the importance of linking the objectives of the current range of cultural strategies and other relevant strategies within council policies and aligning them with this strategy. It is important that the Culture and Creativity Cavan Team build on the strong partnerships that exist within the grouping and with Council colleagues and work as a cohesive organisation to promote culture and foster creativity in the wider community. It is crucial to develop collaborative programmes between Cavan County Council, other county based cultural organisations, and education partners to maximise shared resourcing, marketing, and communication. The development of a dedicated cultural portal for Cavan County Council is a resource to be seriously considered as it would create a platform for all council events and initiatives to be highlighted at an early stage and negate the possibility of duplication and allow maximum return of financial outputs.

Creative Ireland 2018-2022 has been a very successful initiative in promoting Culture and Creativity for the individual, for communities and for the nation, and this model, with the introduction of new pillars such as Health and Wellbeing and Climate Action and Sustainability, should be equally effective. Health and Wellbeing is already embedded in Council Strategies, and in a farming county with 365 lakes, environmental awareness through Climate Action and Sustainability is of paramount importance.

Alongside the local population, the Cavan Diaspora must be considered, and the Cavan Calling Homecoming Festival 2023 is an ideal opportunity to showcase Cavan's Culture and Creativity to a global audience. As a border county, Cavan appreciates the many possibilities offered for North-South partnerships through the implementation of arts, culture, and heritage-based creative initiatives, having previously utilised funding to initiate and support shared initiatives with our counterparts in Northern Ireland. It is anticipated that the Creative Cavan Programme will continue to play its part in any Shared Island agenda through a process of collaboration, developing new and existing relationships which have been fostered under previous PEACE programmes to enhance the cultural offering to the people of Cavan and to our neighbours across the border.

Much work has been completed in connecting creatives with individuals and communities across the county and the exploration and fulfilment of many creative initiatives has taken place. The public now expect and deserve this and in a post-Covid context, the Culture and Creativity Cavan Team is very aware of the suffering endured by individuals and communities during the pandemic. Innovation and Creativity must be encouraged and nurtured, and the Culture and Creativity Cavan Team will ensure that by 2027 this vision will be achieved in a fully inclusive manner.

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How the Creative Ireland Programme Works Principles and Values of Creative Communities

Creative Communities will continue to support local authorities as a wellbeing strategy through:

- **Policy** — Working in partnership across government supporting local authorities to deliver relevant local, regional, and national policies and priorities;
- **Practice** — Flexible, cross-cutting Culture and Creativity Teams providing an agile and adaptable approach central to the delivery of *Creative Communities* as it addresses locally-relevant priorities;
- **Participation** — Providing more opportunities for people to engage with and enjoy culture and creativity at local level in ways that underpin equality of access; and
- **Partnership** — Between central and local government, and Cavan County Council and our local culture and creative sectors.

This approach is based on addressing a shared, strategic agenda while delivering on the challenges and opportunities unique to each local authority area.

The *Creative Communities* partnership will be delivered in line with the following principles and values:

- i. Broaden access to, and participation in, cultural and creative activities locally.
- ii. Use culture and creativity as a catalyst for collaboration and innovation in achieving greater wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development.
- iii. Strengthen the capacity of local authorities to integrate culture and creativity across place-making, regeneration, renewal, and the development of more vibrant, creative, and sustainable places.
- iv. Investing in culture and creativity to support environmental, social, and economic returns that help deliver local authority agendas — from local and regional, to national and international.
- v. Build on the agility and integrated approach of Culture and Creativity Teams to sustain further delivery of targeted collaborative programmes.

5

The Strategic Priorities for Cavan

The principal focus of this strategy is to increase the commitment of Cavan’s population to cultural engagement thus nurturing creativity, inspiration, and inventiveness. The priorities of the strategy underpin the objectives of Cavan County Council’s *Corporate Plan 2019-2024*, particularly Objective 4 to “Strengthen our communities, to remove disadvantage and make them more resilient”. The priorities will support the delivery of the objectives as set out in the *County Development Plan, Local Economic and Community Plan, Arts, Library, Heritage, Healthy Ireland, Age Friendly, Climate Action* and all other council plans and strategies.

People and Places

People and places are at the heart of *Creative Communities* in Cavan, and we are alert to the ever-increasing demand among individuals and communities whom we work to support and energise under the Creative Ireland mantle.

Cavan is a rural border county and working with diverse communities in towns, villages and rural areas requires a bespoke approach that values the diversity of people and their needs and expectations to live fulfilled and meaningful lives. Taking account of the changing demographics, we work to address need and support the requirements of a transforming population. We foster existing relationships while constantly looking for ways to refresh our work with people and place to support prosperous and resilient communities. The distinct history, heritage, and cultural richness of places in the county informs our programmes to provide meaningful opportunities to experience and create cultural memory. Creatives and communities collaborating to excavate the stories of places, memories and shared experiences allows for deep engagement that unlocks the individual and collective voice. We all need to be heard.

Equal access and opportunity will support Cavan people to achieve their full potential and live healthy balanced lives. The Creative Cavan programme has supported the diversity of everyone to learn, to participate and to contribute to the cultural life of the County. Through strategic partnerships we work sensitively with community stakeholders, local, national, and international organisations to provide access for a greater number and diversity of people to participate in and shape the present and future of County Cavan. A person-centred approach to inclusion is an ambition and a priority of the Creative Cavan Team. To achieve this, requires inter-departmental and inter-agency work. It requires the Culture and Creativity Cavan Team to fully understand and embrace the principle of inclusion. Supporting diversity through inclusive work brings many voices to the conversation and will through dialogue, meaningful engagement, and working methodologies deliver individual and collective wellbeing. The changing demographics in County Cavan requires intercultural practices from a range of national, ethnic, and cultural groups. Situated on an international border we have worked through peace and inclusion projects for many years and will continue to prioritise programmes that support this way of working for the people and places in County Cavan.

Innovation and Nurturing Collaborative Practice

The Culture and Creativity Cavan Team work innovatively to support creativity in the county. As humans, we constantly innovate finding new ways of doing or being to improve our lives. We prioritise innovation in our work with communities of place and interest. This supports us to manage threats, opportunities and respond to local, national, and global situations that impact our county. The makeup of the Creative Cavan Team changes to anticipate need, demand, shifts in organisational



Come Sing With Us Youth Choir at Town Hall Cavan. **Image Credit:** Music Generation Cavan-Monaghan

culture and to add value to our service provision. The membership includes the Library, Arts, Heritage, Cavan Arts Venues, Cavan County Museum, Communication, Irish Language, Social Inclusion, Environment, Local Enterprise Office, Tourism, Peace, and Healthy Cavan.

Innovation in County Cavan includes melding the traditional skill sets of makers and craft workers with digital and emerging technologies to explore the interconnection of idea creation, realisation, and value. Digitisation and ongoing transformation were supported by Connected Cavan, the Digital Strategy that set out the vision and focus for the digital plan. It enabled digital adoption and innovation for a digitally enabled society. This digital adaptability alongside traditional methods

supported the members of the Cavan Culture and Creativity Team to deliver agile programme change during the Covid-19 pandemic and the various periods of lockdown that required nimble responses to previously unimaginable challenges in health and wellbeing in our communities. Age friendly book delivery, online and in person library services, cultural, arts and health delivery in public realm and natural settings were among the ways Creative Cavan adapted. Our innovative approach to support basic needs, provide communication and creatively problem solve throughout the recent pandemic is evidence of the innovative approach of the Team. We are at the fore of cultural shifts, and we manage this with, and for Cavan communities, through open listening, learning by doing, evaluating,

and re-imagining made possible by nurturing collaborative practices. Making the most of everyone's expertise, sharing practice and ways of working is essential for Creative Cavan to serve the development needs of the cultural sector and community prosperity.

Identifying and nurturing strategic partnerships has been a journey of discovery and a leap of faith. Working with our artists, innovators, and communities, including the Cavan Diaspora, in open, co-operative, and respectful ways helps us to support and understand the ambition and challenges that individually and collectively we face to reach our creative and cultural potential. Documenting the ways in which we work and sharing best practice and knowledge supports strategic partnership. We value co-design and co-delivery of our ambitions for Creative Cavan as we share co-ordination and accountability for our projects and programmes. Meaningful work nurturing collaborative practice with communities, artists, innovators, and partners in education and research has enabled us to realise benefits and see previously invisible potential in action that was unimaginable at the inception of Creative Ireland in Cavan. This approach supports us to realise the inclusive needs of all citizens including children with diverse and complex needs, older people with lived experience to share, and to appreciate the diversity of voices who have dreams and expectations of living their best life in County Cavan.

Capacity Building and Infrastructural Renewal

National priorities such as inward investment and local economic development are necessary for the financial wellness of communities. To attract investment to sustain communities in Cavan, capacity building at both the local authority and community level is critical. The previous Creative Cavan programme prioritised Capacity Building for communities, the Culture and Creativity Team, sectoral and niche cultural development. Investing in people has bolstered the confidence and skills of staff and cultural operators, innovators, artists, and community leaders in County Cavan. Capacity

building in skills and confidence has a direct effect on our ability to articulate need and opportunity, attract funding and resources for infrastructural development. Cavan County Council, working with towns, villages, and communities, is instrumental in shaping and realising the many plans for the renewal of our urban and rural places while balancing the need to value and appreciate the built and natural heritage of Cavan.

Infrastructural renewal across our three Municipal Districts is essential and will be enhanced with ongoing capacity building work. Places for Cavan people to make and experience art and cultural expression are essential to the social, cultural, and economic wellness. The capacity of communities to communicate need and the ability of the local authority to anticipate and respond with resources and imaginative problem solving has given rise to the following: the arts venues at TownHall Cavan and the soon to be realised Virginia Civic, Cultural, and Library Services Centre which will incorporate the Ramor Theatre, the enhanced resources at Libraries across County Cavan offering smart technologies and adaptive software for people with sensory needs, and enhanced facilities for children, young people, older people and those with special and unique abilities.

Much more can be achieved by renewing and targeting our capacity building approach. In preparing for this new strategy, we have listened to the needs and expectations of our communities, artists, and collaborators. Our sectoral local authority plans all recognise and prioritise the strengthening of community through investing in the skill set, confidence, and capacity of key local stakeholders. Creative Cavan has been at the heart of this work. Strengthening our support to festivals, curators, cultural programmers, community, and youth leaders, those working in education and health has provided continuing professional development, peer support networks, training, mentoring and seed funding opportunities. This support at the local community level provides our communities, artists and innovators with skill and confidence to seek opportunity at national and European level enabling learning from different contexts with similar challenges and opportunities.

Engagement with children and young people

Access of young people to culture is a vital ingredient for their full participation in society. Involvement from an early age will allow our youth to be active citizens and to demonstrate their creative energy and copper-fasten their sense of belonging to their community and county. The Local Authority will commit to enabling children and young people to explore and understand their cultural beliefs and those of others and learn about integration, diversity, and historical perspective.

The cultural opinions and needs of young people will be sought and encouraged to enable the provision of targeted and innovative initiatives that are inclusive and respectful of the unique abilities and needs of our children.

The National Symposium on the role of creativity and arts in health and wellbeing in June 2022, discussed how interventions based on arts, culture and creativity in community and healthcare settings have been shown to improve people's health, and to contribute to the prevention of mental and physical ill health. The global pandemic has exacerbated anxiety and social isolation in our children. Creative Cavan will develop a programme of events and resources that will play a positive role in uplifting child happiness and supporting family wellbeing.

The Cavan Culture and Creativity Team will continue to collaborate with strategic partners who are committed to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.

- The Library Service will provide welcoming and engaging spaces that nurture learning, imagination, and discovery among children and young people, including the annual Cruinniú na nÓg programme.
- The Arts Office will provide access and engagement with innovative and engaging programmes for children and young people to foster early participation and appreciation of the arts.

- Cavan County Museum will spark curiosity in the history of Cavan and develop civic awareness and a sense of place.
- The Heritage Office will support and promote programmes for young people that foster a lasting appreciation of the natural, built, and cultural heritage of County Cavan.
- The Cavan TownHall and Ramor Theatres will facilitate the development of youth arts including youth drama and development programmes.
- The Irish Language Officer will collaborate with the Cavan Culture and Creativity Team to grow Irish language arts and cultural programming in conjunction with local and national agencies.

In collaboration with the wider cultural team and strategic partners, we will continue to grow a multi-faceted event programme that is responsive to the many challenges that are facing our society, including climate action and sustainability.

Climate Action and Sustainability

Climate change is something that affects us all, irrespective of where we live. European countries are among the most democratic and wealthy in the world and must take a principal leading role in mind-set change for planet preservation. A recent Environmental Research Agency study shows that almost fifty percent of those questioned were unwilling to change behaviour. Professor Pete Lunn from the Economic and Social Research Institute states that people are resistant to change behaviour despite knowing that climate change is caused by human action and that they won't change behaviour until they are certain that others are doing it also.

Local Authorities and the Creative Ireland programme can play a vital role in progressing a change in attitude and mindsets, transforming that connection from knowledge into behaviour change or climate action. Cavan Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 is the start of the process of adaptation planning in Cavan and all council strategies reflect its aspirations.

The 2019 report, *Engaging the Public on Climate Change through the Cultural and Creative Sectors* commissioned by the Creative Ireland Programme and DECC, outlines the belief that creativity, arts and culture have a vital role to play in bringing the urgency of this challenge to the forefront; in imagining, communicating and building a sustainable future; and in encouraging and facilitating action and change at all levels of society.

Research by Galafassi and colleagues noted “an increasing trend for scientists and artists to co-create work to help communicate climate change research ... Art allows for a way for people to connect more directly with these emotional and personal aspects of climate change but can also connect to the scientific facts. It can bridge that communication barrier” (Forbes.com, 2019).

To ensure real impact Creative Cavan recognises the need to develop a more integrated approach. A strong focus will be placed on encouraging greater collaboration by bringing together stakeholders from across the wider arts and creative industries, climate change and environmental bodies, education, science, and civil society sectors, and to offer creative, innovative, and interdisciplinary solutions. The Cavan Culture and Creativity Team will continue to build its programming to include actions and events that engage and inform communities of the vital necessity to change behaviour regarding climate action and sustainability. The annual Cavan Monaghan Science Festival will continue to reflect the urgency and importance of climate action.

Creative Industries

Creative industry refers to a range of economic activities that are concerned with the generation and commercialisation of creativity, ideas, knowledge, and information. Creativity is an asset and creative talent should be encouraged, developed, and nurtured to contribute to the growth of our economy.

Cavan County Council have a strong track record in promoting and showcasing quality food from Cavan producers. The successful development of an innovative Food Strategy has

fostered close working relationships between all local food stakeholders and promoted and secured this valuable aspect of the local Cavan economy. The importance of this preparatory work was clearly apparent by the success achieved by Cavan producers at the recent Blas na hÉireann awards.

With increasing focus shifting to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Design and Maths (STEAM) Creative Cavan will continue to engage in these areas to ensure interest and evolution in future technology and scientific progress. Significant headway has been made in recent years with the delivery of the local authority’s innovative science programme to schools, libraries, and community spaces around the county.

The Cavan Digital Hub is a progressive innovation involving the Local Authority, the Local Enterprise Office, and external partners to encourage the digital potential in the county and support developing and existing technology-based businesses and entrepreneurs. The economic advantages of developing Digital Hubs in rural areas is clearly evidenced in the establishment of a privately owned Digital Hub in Cootehill, funded under the Connected Hubs project through Our Rural Future, an ambitious policy for Rural Ireland. The owner aims to create “an environment where people can think outside the box, where people from different companies, working in the same area, can solve problems in different ways” (Anglo Celt, 2022).

The Creative Cavan programme has supported the production of quality films which have shown at various festivals. *Fable of a Ditherer* by Alan Bradley has been recognised at prestigious international film festivals. Likewise, Sarah McKenna Dunne’s film *No One Cares*, a film exploring transgender in a rural setting, premiered at the International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival. Cavan County Council is proud of our association with director Philip Doherty who achieved international acclaim with his film *Redemption of a Rogue*.

Creative Cavan is committed to develop Cavan’s potential in film production and has recently co-funded a feasibility study for a film studio facility in the border region, by the award-winning production company Maccana Teoranta.



Storytelling in Johnston Central Library for *Cruinniú na nÓg*.
Image Credit: Lorraine Teevan

There is potential for linkage and an embedded connection between the Local Enterprise Office and the Cavan Culture and Creativity Team in the progression of ideas and initiatives with industry. The government’s Pathways to Work programme 2021-2025 regarding education, retraining and job placement provides opportunities for engagement with creative teams and potential for participants to progress into creative industries. There is an opportunity for Cavan County Council to develop links and provide opportunities with industry for creative expression.

A new age of digitisation in a post-Covid environment has created new digital spaces which facilitate new and novel ways of sharing ideas, and which provide high demand and high visibility when it comes to creative content.

Creative Cavan recognises that digitisation of the Local Authority’s unique library, museum and heritage collections has a wider role to play in preserving our cultural heritage and facilitating access locally and to the Cavan Diaspora.

6 Implementation by the Cavan Culture and Creativity Team

Cavan County Council has a Culture and Creativity Team in place to guide and oversee implementation of this Strategy.

The Culture and Creativity Teams are the cornerstone of *Creative Communities* across all 31 local authorities in Ireland. These teams bring together a significant range and level of expertise and, in many cases, include professionals from architecture, archives, the arts, climate action, community, enterprise and environmental development, heritage, information and communication technologies, Irish language, libraries, spatial planning, tourism and more. This depth of technical expertise affords each local authority a level of insight, resources, and delivery experience which few other public or private sector organisations can match.

The role of this team is to:

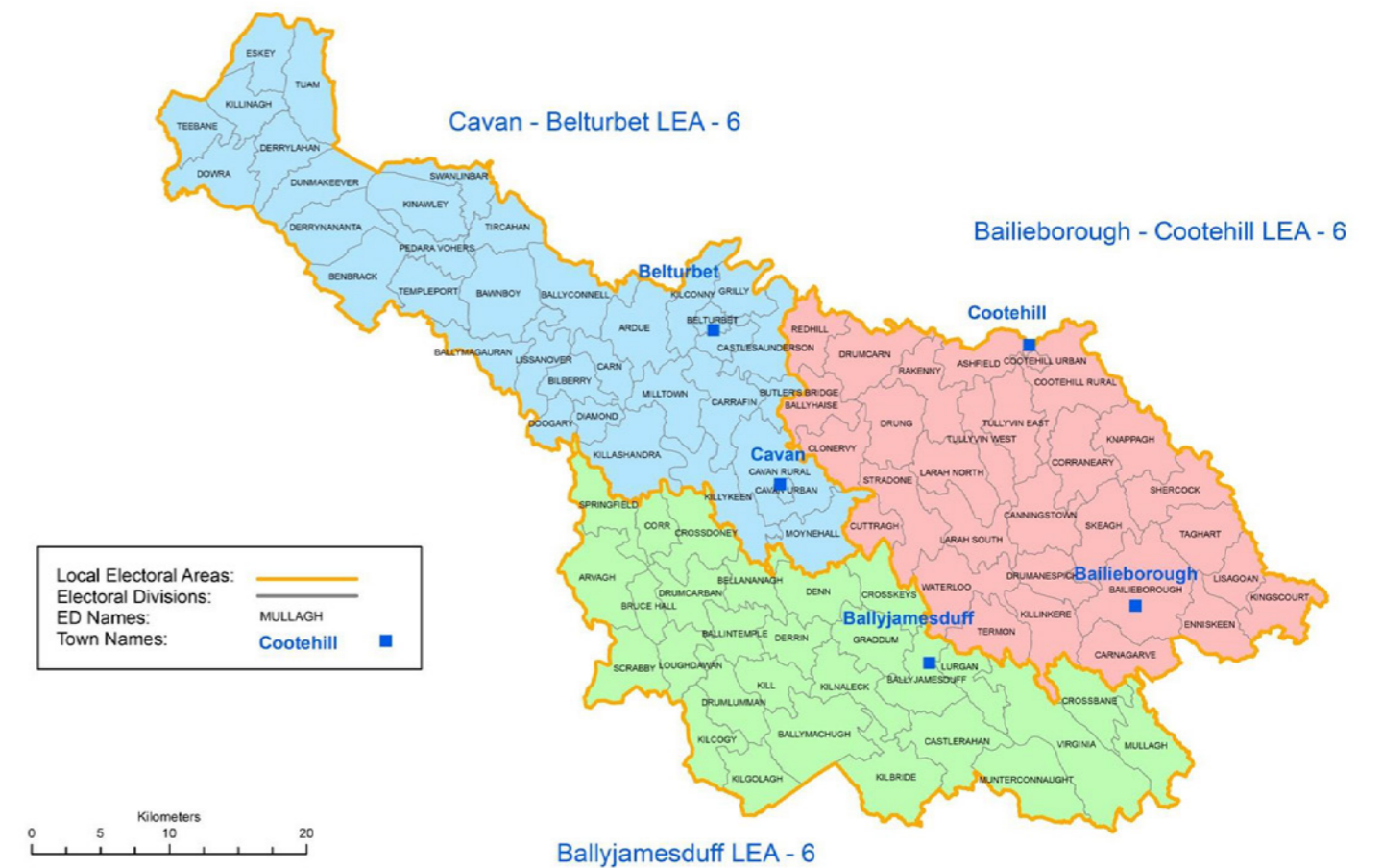
- Provide a collective forum for the ambition of culture and creativity within the local authority,
- Focus on diversity and inclusivity and enable harder to reach communities to participate in cultural and creative activities,
- Build on existing in-house expertise and strategies across areas of wellbeing, social cohesion and economic development to leverage culture and creativity to deliver on targeted local authority agendas,
- Enable a shift in how the cultural and creative sector is valued within and across local authorities and ensure that culture and creativity is embedded across local authority plans, policies and project teams,

- Drive cross-collaborative actions that support change and positive outcomes locally, and potentially between local authorities at regional level, and
- Be innovative and take risks – try new projects and new ways of working.


The delivery of the Strategy is led by the Director of Services for Housing, Libraries & Cultural Services, Human Resources & Corporate Services and the members of the Culture and Creativity Team for Cavan County Council including County Librarian and Creative Ireland Coordinator, Senior Executive Librarian, Arts Officer, Heritage Officer, Arts Venues Manager, Museum Curator, Communications Officer, Irish Language Officer, Social Inclusion Officer, Environment Officer, Local Enterprise Officer, Tourism Officer, Peace Programme Manager and Healthy Cavan.


These structures and processes are a critical success factor that will enable *Creative Communities* to deliver on strategic priorities for Cavan County Council


Map of Cavan Municipal Districts



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