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Draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028
Planning Department
Carlow County Council
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Carlow

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Consultation Portal Link

<https://consult.carlow.ie/en/user/login?destination=node/add/submission%3Fc%3D376>

**RE: Draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028.
Observations by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to the publication by Carlow County Council of the draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028, the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon, respectfully request that Carlow County Council takes into consideration this submission in finalising the Carlow Development Plan 2022-2028.

The following submission has taken into account, the provisions of the draft Carlow Development Plan 2022-2028, emerging trends and spatial considerations regarding 'arts and culture', and, the role of the Development Plan in the facilitation and preservation of *the arts and culture* in County Carlow through the provision of mandatory planning objectives.

The Role and Function of the Arts Council | An Comhairle Ealaíon

The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon is the Irish government agency for developing the arts and it operates as an autonomous body under the aegis of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts,

Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The Arts Council has a role and function in the Development Plan process as a prescribed body.

The Arts Council works in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life.

The role and purpose of the Arts Council, as defined by the **Arts Act 2003** is to:

- stimulate public interest in the arts,
- promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts,
- assist in improving standards in the arts,
- furnish advice or information to a public body in relation to any matter connected with its functions, whenever the Council considers it appropriate or is requested to so do by the public body concerned, and
- cooperate with a public body in relation to any matter connected with its functions, whenever the Council considers it appropriate.

Under these provisions, the Arts Council has a material and distinctive contribution to make in the formulation of spatial policy for our evolving society.

Arts Council Policy and Strategy

The Arts Council is guided by its own strategy '**Making Great Art Work, 2016 - 2025**', which sets forth a vision for Ireland in which the Arts are valued as; central to civic life; as a hallmark of local and national identity; and as a sign and signature of our creativity as a nation.

The **Making Great Art Work Strategy** seeks to ensure that funding is spent strategically and reflects the long term interests of the public, and signifies the Arts Council's role as an expert agency for the arts.

Despite the impact that the Covid-19 has had on the Arts sector, the effects of the pandemic have demonstrated that the arts, music, film, literature, theatre, culture and entertainment are essential to the wellbeing of the country.

The Arts Council is currently preparing its own '**Spatial Policy**', which will forefront the importance of place and spaces where people live, work and come together for cultural participation, as an essential component of personal and collective satisfaction and fulfilment living in Ireland today. The Spatial Policy will highlight the Arts Council's key role as a Prescribed Body in the Irish planning system and set out a clear vision for how it endeavours to see the arts and culture more strongly integrated into spatial development frameworks, and land-use planning policy.

In advancing this approach, The Arts Council has made a submission to National Government during its current review of the National Development Plan (in February 2021). In that submission, the Arts Council have confirmed that the Arts have become more integrated into citizens' lives; there are strong examples of this in the national Creative Schools programme, wellbeing initiatives, arts and health, creative Ireland initiatives and the vital role the arts play in the night-time economy. In concert

with these, The Arts Council submitted to National Government that the arts should now become more integrated into the principles of spatial planning for people and places through appropriate and effective provision and use of public open spaces.

Emerging Trends and Spatial Considerations for the Carlow Development Plan

Planning for arts and culture means more than the development of tangible infrastructure and services such as theatres, libraries and museums or the preservation of cultural and built heritage. Arts and culture can play a contributing role to the social and economic development of places by creating vibrant places to live and creating social cohesion through festivals and events, community cultural activity, tourism interest and local identity and association with a particular place.

The provision of arts and culture in formal and informal spaces, for example, in the built and natural environment such as parks and open spaces, can make a significant contribution towards social, cultural and physical wellbeing to the community. Within a broader perspective, the definition of cultural diversity has been defined by UNESCO as;

“A set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”

(UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity)

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the Arts sector in Ireland, with live entertainment and many cultural events still postponed over a year after the pandemic began. The pandemic has also influenced how public spaces are viewed and used by society. During the pandemic and in its aftermath, such spaces, designed, configured and equipped to a high standard, are critical to public enjoyment and reengagement with cultural events and live entertainment.

Contribution of Arts and Culture toward Proper Planning

The provision of Arts and culture can contribute toward community and societal development in a number of ways including for example;

- ***Place-making and psychological well-being:*** Arts and cultural assets including venues and the public realm (formal and informal public accessible spaces and buildings), can contribute toward place making by creating places where people want to go, interact, and to live near offering distinctive sense of place and personal satisfaction.
- ***Creation of Stronger Communities:*** Arts and culture infrastructure can contribute toward social capital by facilitating the space and locations in which communities can mix, integrate and bond, and can enable informal social engagement.

- ***Physical and Economic Value:*** *High-quality and engaging spaces and arts and culture activities can assist in area renewal/regeneration and attract visitor to boost economic activity and prosperity.*

The ‘**Life Worth Living**’ (The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce¹) November 2020, sets out a number of recommendations on how best the arts and culture sector can adapt and recover from the unprecedented damage arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, and, the importance of outdoor public spaces to access arts and cultural events in the aftermath of the pandemic. ‘**Recommendation 9**’ of the taskforce report promotes the development of a capital improvement programme to ‘Re-imagining our Public Spaces’ that includes:

1. *a targeted and accelerated public realm capital improvement programme to fund local authorities to adapt, equip or otherwise improve public spaces for cultural and events activities, taking account of public health guidelines and of the needs of the local arts community, to include a competitive fund that would encourage the development of spaces of regional strategic importance by local authorities; and*
2. *a targeted fund to incentivise the Private Sector to activate appropriate private spaces for public attendance at artistic, cultural and entertainment events.*

Under these recommendations, Local Authorities are encouraged to prioritise place making projects and encourage/incentivise private sector with large spaces/buildings in creative activation or facilitation of spaces of local or regional scale for public enjoyment.

Planning Obligations for Arts & Culture

The provision of cultural and arts infrastructure, like any social capital, requires planning and foresight commensurate with identification of need and tangible outputs. The provisions of Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) set the basis for spatial planning for the arts by requiring each Development plan to include objectives for:

- ***the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;***
- *the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.*
- *the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;*
- *the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;*

(Bold Emphasis Added)

At a regional level, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region acknowledges that the region has a distinctive and rich arts and culture sector which is of intrinsic value to the people and communities. In addition, the RSES sets out that a vibrant arts and culture sector can contribute to the vitality of the region, making it an attractive place for visitors, workers and investors. The Strategy seeks to promote the development and preservation of arts and culture in the region through a number of policy objectives, for example;

RPO 191: To develop a vibrant cultural and creative sector in the Region as a key enabler for enterprise growth, innovation, regeneration, place-making and community development, health and well-being and support measures under Culture 2025, Creative Ireland Strategy 2017- 22 and the Action Plan for Rural Development

RPO 192 Local Authority Development Plans, Local Enterprise Community Plans and Local Area Plans should include cultural policies and objectives supporting the sustainable development of enabling infrastructure including:

- *Workspaces for cultural uses;*
- *Delivery and optimisation of high-speed broadband to support the digital media and remote working;*
- *Support investment in training and education initiatives for cultural employment opportunities;*
- *Provision and upgrade of cultural facilities;*
- *Support the adaptation and bringing back into use of heritage buildings;*
- *Where large scale housing is planned, to ensure adequate provision is made for a range of community facilities including cultural facilities.*

RPO 194: To advocate for investment in infrastructure and initiatives that develop the role of arts, heritage, culture within our Region and communities and assist delivery of actions under arts, heritage and cultural strategies in our Local authorities, including funding streams outlined in Project Ireland 2040 Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027 and Heritage 2030.

Observations on the Draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Arts Council welcomes the recognition given to ‘arts and culture’ in the Draft Plan as a “*vibrant element of social life*” which can contribute to creating a sense of place and to the regeneration of the urban environment, specifically referenced under *Section 8.15 Arts and Cultural Facilities* and *Section 11.8 Culture, Arts and Entertainment*. The Arts Council also welcomes the recognition given in the Draft Plan to the *County Carlow Local Arts Development Plan 2016-2021* which as a legislative requirement sets out the strategic objectives for the development of the arts sector in the County.

That said, The Arts Council considers that there is greater opportunity for the development plan to reflect and incorporate the increasing important role of ‘arts in culture’ as community infrastructure which can contribute to placemaking in the spatial planning framework of policies and objectives for the County.

In this regard, the Arts Council seek to make the following observations for consideration in finalising the Development Plan;

1. Value and Function of ‘Arts and Culture’ in Planning

The concept of ‘arts and culture’ is defined in the Draft Development Plan as ‘facilities’ and described expressly in both Chapters 8 and 11 as facilities that are;

“wide ranging in the County and include museums, galleries, theatres, cinema, libraries, buildings and spaces of important artistic and cultural significance, halls for meetings, community and arts centres and music venues. These facilities contribute towards the intellectual, artistic and social quality of life for people in the County”.

However, as discussed already in this submission, the Arts Council submit that the concept of ‘arts and culture’ for which the development plan must provide for, goes significantly beyond the concept of museum, galleries, theatres, cinema, library ‘facilities’ *per-se*, as described above. In the context of emerging spatial trends and experiences of the recent pandemic, the provision of space and quality in urban environment as essential community infrastructure, has never been more important. Providing spaces for arts and culture as part of urban development, expansion and regeneration, can contribute to placemaking, it can facilitate engagement of people and communities, and, it can enhance the aesthetics of public realm and quality of environment.

With this in mind, the Arts Council suggest that the Development Plan gives greater acknowledgement to, and recognition of the importance of arts and culture as essential community provision and infrastructure, in addition, to the provision of certain facilities such as museums, galleries and libraries.

The recent successful application by Carlow County Council to the Arts Council for Creative Places Bagenalstown as well as its successful Take A Part Carlow programme, gives evidence to the value the local authority already has in placed based arts development, which in a long term view, invests in people and places beyond the traditional provision of facilities.

2. Clarity in Development Plan Policy

The Arts Council welcomes specific policy provisions set out under Section 8.15 intended to provide facilities for arts and culture. However, it is difficult to understand; what level of facilities are required and where; how it is intended to implement those policies and by whom; and what is the measure for monitoring the success of those policy objectives by the Council as part of any review mechanism. For example, with specific reference to ‘Arts and Cultural Facilities’ policies CA.P1 – CA.P5, it is difficult without further details in the draft plan, to see how the Council can and will;

- **“Encourage** the provision of new or improved cultural, arts and entertainment facilities, particularly in the parts of the County where there is a deficiency in such provision.” (Policy CA.P1)
- **“Promote and support** the role and continued expression of local culture, arts and entertainment in the County, and to **facilitate and encourage** the use of public spaces in towns and villages for art events and performances” (Policy CA.P2)
- **“Encourage and support** the creation and display of works of art in public areas, including appropriate locations within the streetscape, provided no unacceptable environmental, amenity, traffic or other adverse issues arise” (Policy CA.P3)

Furthermore, it is unclear from the draft provisions, where the responsibility lies for the provision of such infrastructure, whether it is the responsibility of the local authority, by private developer in certain development instances, or by way of other entity. Furthermore, the Arts Council is mindful that in some other local authority areas, development plans have sought to consider fiscal measures for the provision of such community infrastructure through the formulation of Section 48 development contribution levies as a practicable means of implementation and assigned responsibility.

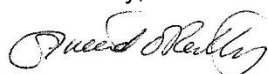
3. Future Planning for Arts and Culture - Formulation of a Spatial Framework

The Arts Council would recommend that specific policy objectives for the provision of community facilities, including provision of certain arts and culture infrastructure, such as artists' workspaces or community facilities is informed by an evidence based needs assessment. The Arts Council is mindful that this 'evidence-based approach' is recommended in the draft Development Plan Guidelines prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (August 2021) which states, *the development plan process should, at the initial stages provide, and ultimately be based on an evidence-based approach to the determination of requirements for new social, community and cultural facilities*".

In order to assist this approach, the Arts Council would suggest that a county register of arts and cultural assets could be established, and could include infrastructure such as arts centres, museums, artists' workspaces, heritage buildings, townscapes, or public spaces and locations which either individually or collectively, contribute to access to, and/or provision of arts and culture infrastructure. The collation of such data could be used to generate a baseline information and spatial dataset of arts and cultural assets and their spatial distribution/concentration across the county based on the type of activity, level of provision, and key attributes. This information can inform locational decisions and future needs and can inform other service providers interested in co-location of service and activities.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission in due course.

Yours faithfully,



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