



Arts Grants Review and the interim Arts Plan

As reported previously a review of Arts Grants and a new Interim Arts Plan is underway at the Arts Office. Both studies have set out the question of why DCC is involved in the Arts and how its role differs from the Arts Council. While DCC acknowledges the inestimable intrinsic value of the Arts and has an Arts Office of specialists that can speak to and understand this value, any Local Authority engages in the Arts (or any activity) in order to enhance the lives and of its citizens and, in the case of a Capital City renowned for the Arts, to maintain its reputation as a destination for high quality unique Arts programmes and events. DCC can easily see how communities, young people and tourists enjoy and are inspired by Artists, Arts organisations and Arts projects. The short term economic gains of Arts activity can be seen in commercial and large scale Arts events whether indoor or outdoor but the long term economic well-being of the City requires a thriving and well supported Arts ecology and an understanding of how the Arts connect to all other parts of an economy and a society.

What is meant by an Arts ecology? People engage in the Arts in three distinct but interdependent ways. 1. They go to see concerts, plays, read books, visit exhibitions etc. 2. They are Artists and create the experience for Arts audiences. 3. They are part of a choir or paint in their spare time, perform plays in their local group to take photos as part of a youth project and so on. In other words people are practitioners, participants, or audiences. All of these categories depend completely on each other. Without Artists there is no high quality participation e.g. no trained conductor no choir. Everyone knows that Diego Maradona was once a child in the local team just as Michael Fassbender was once a member of Killarney Youth Theatre. But playing soccer is not just about creating the next Maradona. It's about physical exercise, the emotions of winning and losing, the ability to be part of a team etc. just as youth theatre is not primarily about creating stars but about peer bonding, safe expressions of emotion, the joy and confidence of public performance et al.

Without youth theatres and choirs Art classes in school and writing workshops the budding artist does not get the inspiration or early support to consider the Arts as career and even more importantly people are not exposed to the kind of inspiration and real difficulty of trying to be good at an Art form. And finally no audiences no Arts. It is intrinsic to the Artist that they receive feedback and learning from the public and the public prove continually that they want to have great Arts experiences whether reading an unputdownable book in private or to a standing ovation at a performance.

The Arts Acts 1973 that created Arts Offices asks the Local Authorities to 'develop the Arts in their administrative areas' but the Arts Plan specifically sets out the priorities of each Local Authority. DCC in the interim Arts Plan and before a period of consultation in 2023 will set out the premise that DCC support Artists, Arts Participants and Arts Audiences in order to support the Arts as a means of continually increasing opportunities for citizens and communities to

participate in the Arts and to support new audiences particularly in diverse and hard to reach, underserved and underestimated communities.

DCC sees the Arts Council as the National Development Agency for the Arts as the primary supporter of Artists and Artists and Arts organisations and particularly as the Agency that understands the highly complex and nuanced area of how Art forms are changing and how they can be supported. DCC's role through the Arts Office is to understand this complexity and remain current in order to bring best practice to its real agenda of exploiting and supporting the virtuous three legged stool of practice participation and audience development. That is not to say that the Arts Council are not involved in participation or audiences of course they are but primarily in supporting practitioners. Very importantly the Arts in DCC is not confined to the Arts Office. The provision of Arts services is embedded in the Development Plan and Planning, it is central to Community Development, critical pieces of arts infrastructure are owned by the local authority, Libraries disseminate and provide support for the Arts at a community and citywide level providing real democratic access to the great ideas of our time and times past. The Dublin City Council Culture Company through its programme and its stewardship of 14 Henrietta Street and Richmond Barracks understands and programmes the Arts in a unique way that shows how the Arts relates to all other cultural activity. The City Events Unit provides large, medium and boutique opportunities for the public to experience the Arts in their local Parks, streets and community spaces. The Parks service has commissioned and is home to significant sculpture and installation. Dublin has a world class gallery in the Hugh Lane. Areas offices support local Arts initiatives. This list is by no means exhaustive but is the true picture of the Arts in DCC.

The interim Arts Plan in development for November 2022 is the context for the Arts Grants review by Arthur Lappin. It has been notable in the arts infrastructure research studies and the North Central Area Arts research both undertaken by Turley that quite obviously arts infrastructure, a clear deficit citywide, is notable by its absence outside of certain post codes and this is the corollary of a historical lack of Arts funding in areas outside of the city centre. The Local Authority cannot forget that it is the Local Authority. There are paradoxes in Dublin though that as a capital city it has a national responsibility and that arts organisations of national remit will in a capital city cluster in the city centre and that is as it should be. However considering the scale of the DCC area we are faced with an area such as North central that has the population of Cork city with almost no arts buildings and it would be hard to imagine Cork city without its theatres and galleries.

The considered interim provisional view emerging from the Arts Grants review is that new Arts funding in underserved areas in the city is both required and would be supported by the Executive and Elected Members. An increase in Arts Grants funding is long overdue and is likely to be supported by Elected Members if targeted locally. Arts Grants in 2023 will not change (except perhaps by piloting some test cases based on initial findings). However in 2024 based on a new Arts Plan and on extensive consultation the new Arts Grants Scheme will be rolled out in the hope of securing support to increase Arts Grants from the current €550K to IM (budget allowing).

Ray Yeates
City Arts Officer
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