

Introduction

Creativity is evident in every aspect of Kilkenny life, from the ancient stonework and architecture of heritage sites to the contemporary and traditional craft and design to be found in galleries and design studios the length and breadth of the county. The variety of festivals and events throughout the year also bear testimony to the strength of this creative tradition.

County Kilkenny has a rich artistic heritage and an important architectural legacy of ancient monuments, high crosses, standing stones, burial sites, monastic settlements and old country houses and estates.

Kilkenny City has been the site of a settlement for at least 1,500 years. The City is dominated by two outstanding historic buildings, Kilkenny Castle to the Southeast and St Canice's Cathedral to the North West, both built on promontories looking east over the River Nore.

The medieval city grew as two densely developed abutting towns, the Irish town next to the Cathedral and the principal settlement next to the Castle. The Borough was given its status as a City Authority separate from the County in the 17th Century. Over the past 25 years Kilkenny City & Environs has seen significant development and is now rightly renowned as a vibrant, progressive city with magnificent heritage and a thriving cultural base.

This development has seen an increase in population, with new suburbs and industrial areas spreading into the environs of the City in County Kilkenny. Expansion of the City and Environs is likely to continue in the coming years

The arts play an integral role in the life of Kilkenny. From local community groups to micro-enterprises, from solo practitioners to national organisations, Kilkenny has a long history of cultivating and showcasing the arts in its many guises. A high percentage of the population is currently engaged in arts, crafts and design. Creative practitioners have resided in Kilkenny for many years and have provided a rich legacy for the county.

This strategy aims to provide an appropriate policy framework to support, stimulate and further develop the arts so that provision and access, participation in the arts and employment and economic return is maximised.

Effective and meaningful strategies for the arts can only be implemented through partnership with the artistic community. The practitioner is central to the effective implementation of any arts strategy and will play a critical role in any future developments within the sector. There is a broad range of arts activities in Kilkenny that run the gamut from theatre, cinema, animation, fine art, writing and craft to classical, rock, popular and traditional music, dance, festivals, art workshops and educational initiatives.

This strategy allows us to take stock of where the sector actually is and how the local authority in Kilkenny can best contribute to the future development of the arts. This task is a challenging and urgent one. Kilkenny has a historical reputation for arts and culture and there is a perception that it may be further advanced in its arts strategy than many other counties. In addition, its tourism branding communicates the message that Kilkenny is 'the creative heart of Ireland'. Kilkenny has an enviable artistic culture. However, the county cannot sustain this sector

simply by trading on reputation. New and emerging practitioners must be supported and encouraged to flourish. Existing practitioners must survive and operate in an increasingly competitive marketplace where quality and distinctiveness are critical to success. Practitioners and stakeholders alike must continually innovate to maintain and raise standards within the sector to ensure collective and individual success.

A coherent, dynamic and realistic vision is central to the current and future creative wellbeing of the arts in Kilkenny. Issues such as infrastructure, professional development and training are critical to the future viability of the arts in Kilkenny. The role, funding and ongoing support of the Arts Office itself is also a core issue.

The overall aim of this strategy is to consolidate and strengthen the arts sector in Kilkenny in practical and quantifiable ways. The strategy also seeks to communicate and further develop the core values that underpin the arts in Kilkenny.

This strategy aims to represent the interests of practitioners and identify and articulate key development needs in the sector. The core objective of this strategy and the primary function of the Arts Office is to:

***Strengthen and cultivate the arts sector in Kilkenny
support and empower emerging and existing practitioners
encourage creativity, innovation and excellence and,
Increase community appreciation and participation in the arts***

Arts Audit

Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office surveyed practitioners during 2003 in order to identify:

- the number of practitioners operating throughout the city and county *
- the range and scale of their enterprises
- their training and professional development needs
- the core issues that this arts strategy would need to address.

A postal questionnaire was sent to over 500 full-time artists, makers, musicians and writers based within the county. There were a total of 15 questions in the survey that required a tick box or yes/no response. The information collated from this survey includes data on the age group, gender, ethnicity, education and income bracket of practitioners as well as information on financial, aspirational and training needs. The audit has also provided the Arts Office with an accurate and current database of practitioners residing and working throughout the city and county.

* See Appendix 1

As a result of work undertaken prior to the appointment of the current Arts Officer, also the Arts audit and the consultation with partners, the general public and various interest groups, a core set of issues has emerged. The issues that need to be addressed in the terms of this strategy are:

- Infrastructure
- Professional/practitioner development
- Inclusiveness, Community & Education
- Excellence and Innovation
- Partnering Linkages & County Council Funded Projects
- Key Actions
- Arts Office: Structure & Role
- Sustaining and Developing the Arts Office
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Conclusion

Infrastructure

Kilkenny is served by a variety of general venue, performance and exhibition spaces. The city and county accommodates companies, groups, events and individuals that contribute to a collective arts culture.

Kilkenny boasts both council-managed exhibition spaces for the visual arts, namely the Watergate 'Gallery Upstairs', County Hall and 72 John Street. The Watergate Gallery and County Hall currently hosts six to twelve exhibitions per year focusing on both individual and group and community shows. Number 72 John Street is an extremely significant newly acquired Arts Office space. This also serves as a flexible exhibition, residency, workshop and activity space. Other independent venues include the internationally-recognised Butler Gallery, Rothe House, the National Craft Gallery (Crafts Council of Ireland), city and county libraries, the city based Kilkenny Art Gallery and the Berkeley Gallery in Thomastown.

Music and theatre venues include St Canice's Cathedral, St Mary's Cathedral, Nolan Park, the Watergate Theatre, Ballykeefe amphitheatre, Duiske Abbey in Graiguenamanagh and Castalia Hall in Callan. The Barnstorm Theatre Company is recognised locally and nationally for its work in the area of children's theatre. The Parade Tower in Kilkenny Castle is suitable for a range of events from music, theatre and film to meetings and conferences. Public houses are a traditional venue for music, theatre and comedy and include Cleere's, Ryans, Anna Conda, the Pump House, Kytellers Inn and Langtons.

In addition, the grounds of Kilkenny Castle, cafes, streets, empty retail premises and libraries, banks, schools and community centres currently

serve as non-intimidating public spaces for exhibitions, community events and workshops.

The Kilkenny Arts Office has successfully delivered a key infrastructural initiative 'Endangered Studios', as a direct result of clear needs identified in the arts audit. The audit confirmed that most artists/practitioners use domestic areas for work such as garage space, spare bedrooms or gardens. Domestic space can seriously limit the scope and size of work that can be undertaken and can be psychologically restrictive.

Studio or incubator space for emerging artists/practitioners was created in the 'Endangered Studios' in association with Chesterbridge Developments, a national property development company and Douglas Newman Good, Auctioneers. A disused commercial property with extensive warehouse and outside space was harnessed. Original initiatives on the site included three short-term projects for HND Students from the Ormonde College of Art, Kilkenny, and site specific installations and a residency for second year sculpture students from the National College of Art and Design in Dublin. This property served as invaluable studio/workshop space for 9 local artists. However, residencies were terminated as the site is due for commercial redevelopment.

The new Arts Office, 72 John Street, will be used as ongoing exhibition, short-term residency, workshop and meeting space. New initiatives in the county will also serve as invaluable resources. The Friary in Callan will offer creative, crèche and IT facilities to the local community. Thomastown has recently secured CEB funding at feasibility stage for the creation of an Arts Centre. Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent (KCAT) has been successfully established for 5 years and offers inclusive arts and adult education

programmes. It has recently secured ACCESS funding for the upgrade and redevelopment of its existing premises in Callan. Gallery space will be included in this re-development. Callan Friary is currently being re-developed through a local authority and community partnership; the resulting development will house public exhibition space. A recently completed commercial development in Castlecomer currently offers flexible incubator/studio spaces.

Kilkenny County Council is completing plans for the development of a 'writers in residence' establishment in the village of Glenmore. This disused coach house is in need of complete renovation. Glenmore's local rural development agency (who previously controlled the building) is anxious to see the premises creatively re-developed.

The space is modest in size, secluded, private and peaceful but not isolated as it is situated within ten – fifteen minutes drive of both Waterford City and New Ross.

The Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan currently offers space to visual artists, writers and musicians to develop, create and complete work. However, it is believed that the Glenmore Centre will be the only entirely independent space exclusively for writers (i.e. not connected to a 'centre' or other 'dwelling places'). The centre will be self-financing by revenue secured through its residencies. It is hoped that its geographical proximity to neighbouring counties will also allow for an increased volume of inter-county initiatives.

Any Arts Office or local authority infrastructural initiatives will adhere to national guidelines on disability and environmental matters. Through partnering linkages and initiatives with local businesses and other

organisations, the arts infrastructure in Kilkenny can be strengthened by encouraging individuals, organisations and commercial businesses that have an association with design, craft and creative excellence to locate to the city. A practical example of this type of synergy is the fact that former students and practitioners from third level institutions are choosing to base themselves in Kilkenny city and county.

There is a current identified need for a smaller, flexible venue in the county to fulfill a multiplicity of roles ranging from space for community groups, dance, band rehearsal, theatre rehearsal, storage facilities, etc.

A new local area plan for the city of Kilkenny is currently being developed. The issue of the provision of an integrated artistic space is being addressed within the terms of reference of this plan.

Another city-based development at proposal stage has provision for an Art Gallery along with exhibition, performance and cultural community space.

It is hoped that this Arts Strategy will help to shape the overall mission and objectives of any future infrastructural provision and resources in Kilkenny.

**Improve public awareness of the enjoyment and benefits to be derived
from the arts**

(Arts Council Action Plan 2004)

Inclusiveness, Community & Education

Inclusiveness is usually addressed by identifying and resolving needs and access issues for disadvantaged groups in our society. However when discussing inclusiveness in the context of the arts, the term becomes an all-encompassing one. Inclusiveness in the arts is about empowering and encouraging all individuals and groups to participate: from volunteers to practitioners and students, from audiences to interest groups. It is our belief that fully inclusive, community-based art should concern itself with the process rather than merely focusing on the product and its outcomes.

One of the best practical examples of this concept in action was the successful 'Postcards from The Edge' project (2004), which resulted in 4,000 entries from a largely local but also national and international audience. The Arts Office issued press releases and exhibition details calling for 1,500 standard and signed postcards that could be decorated or embellished in any way. These postcards were subsequently exhibited in the Link Corridor in County Hall. Entries ranged from professional to amateur from simple written messages to knits, oils, etc. Judges selected 50 postcards which were subsequently auctioned purely on visual merit (for a minimum of €2 each) with proceeds contributing to a Children's Art Day for Kilkenny city and county. A winning postcard was selected and 500 copies printed by John Hinde Ltd as part of their sponsorship of the competition.

Another example of a key initiative in the area of inclusiveness and access was the public consultation undertaken in early 2004. Extensive consultation took place both with practitioners (i.e. The Arts Audit) and with the community at large so that their inputs would help to shape and guide this current strategy.

Kilkenny is marketed as the *Creative Heart of Ireland*, particularly within the tourism sector. Therefore visitors arrive with an expectation that they will find a wealth of cultural events and arts activities in the city and county. Allied to this is the key infrastructural requirement that galleries, shops, cafes etc. will be available as they are often as important to the visitor as the 'art' itself. It is critical that these expectations are met as much of the economy of the county is dependent on the arts.

Members of the public were asked to consider whether the arts scene in Kilkenny supported and lived up to this expectation. In addition, they were asked to assess the appropriateness of access and facilities. Leisure centres, post offices, libraries, churches, shops, workplaces, dental and doctor's surgeries, community centres and colleges were used to distribute FREEPOST cards for comments/opinions which were subsequently returned and collated in the Arts Office.

Although the response to initiatives such as 'Postcards From the Edge' and the *Creative Heart of Ireland* consultation is hugely positive, the Arts Audit and ongoing consultation suggests a general apathy and lack of support for the arts, among some sections of the community. The arts sector is often perceived as being elitist and impenetrable to many.

The Arts Office, in partnership with other groups, is working to allay such perceptions.

Practical activities include:

- use of the County Council website to inform, encourage and support. It is hoped to further exploit the potential of the website and to make best use of the valuable domain names the County Council owns. The Arts Office currently updates its section on the

website twice weekly with information on literature, visual art, musical opportunities, competitions, exhibitions, bursaries, public art awards, general information etc. The practitioners registered on the Arts Audit database (See Appendix 1) is also mailed on a regular basis.

- a regular arts column in the local regional newspaper, The Kilkenny People, featuring articles that are grounded in the normal daily life/community of the artists.
- radio interviews with visiting and local practitioners, students, arts office staff, musicians, community groups etc.
- Subject to staff numbers, it is hoped to produce a web-based quarterly newsletter that will outline training opportunities, workshop spaces, funding information, forthcoming events and exhibitions, national news etc.

Community

Practitioners of all persuasions have a unique quality of life and traditionally work in a way that firmly roots them in their local community. This reality can be used to great advantage. Workshops and studios will entice people into a community they might not otherwise visit with a resulting spin-off for the local community. Artist themselves can also do much to educate and encourage community access to the arts and initiatives such as in-house workshops/talks and outreach programmes will be actively encouraged.

The Arts Office and other groups are currently using several county-wide venues to good effect. Some of the most unique, historical and distinctive

musical and theatrical venues in Kilkenny are within rural community areas.

2004 saw the Duiske Abbey 800 celebrations which included a series of concerts. Duiske concerts have run for 13 years and the Abbey has also acted as a dramatic backdrop for one of the Passion Series, the 'Blue Crucifixion', by Hughie O'Donoghue. Another commissioned work by Hughie O'Donoghue was also created for the Friary in Callan at the same time. Events such as these further combine and highlight the importance of the arts and our heritage and how they complement each other. Castalia Hall houses the County Council owned Steinway and hosts various classical music concerts.

The Kilkenny Arts Festival uses various county venues to great effect. In 2004, Woodstock House and Gardens in Inistioge was the venue for a classical concert and fireworks display. Once again the arts serve to highlight distinctive local historical venues and our heritage providing the perfect venues for such arts events. During the festival, local libraries are also used to host children's events such as storytelling, puppetry, weaving workshops etc. Kilkenny Castle Grounds are also used for large installations during the festival. Ballykeefe Quarry recently hosted 'Kila' a traditional Irish Music concert which was a Kilkenny Festival initiative.

'Sculpture at Kells' is a highly respected, internationally recognised initiative that has placed the village of Kells firmly on the arts map. Input from the local community has ensured the ongoing success of this annual event.

By alternating and shifting focus from city to county venues it is hoped to stimulate, engage and encourage both practitioners and observers through the entire county.

Community-based initiatives also include workshops in libraries, poetry readings and exhibition space for local community groups, schools, and individuals. Many of these initiatives rely on harnessing resources and venues that already exist. However with additional expertise, staff and funding resources and an increased community focus, the Arts Office believes that existing premises can be used more extensively on a year round basis. Further initiatives will involve greater use of libraries, bank premises, retails premises etc. with 'host an artist' events and other exhibitions aimed at de-mystifying the arts and broadening the audience base in Kilkenny.

Extend and enhance the arts experience of young people in the formal and non-formal education sectors

(Arts Council Action Plan 2004)

Education

The Arts Office recognises the importance of encouraging and supporting the arts from pre-school level through all stages of the education cycle. There is a national, centralized delivery of art inspection and other supports through the Department of Education and in-service courses for teachers. The 'School Completion Programme' and the delivery of 'special library skills to promote reading' (under the auspices of the VEC) are two important, locally-delivered initiatives. The Arts Officer will

continue to engage with and work with existing educational personnel in an advisory capacity.

Linkages with third level institutions both national and local are well developed and further linkages are being actively pursued (See Partnering Linkages section). In addition, the Arts Office delivers annual courses on portfolio/presentation to ease the transition from second to third level education.

As is the case in other city and county areas, Kilkenny is served by staff and appointees who are charged with responsibility to further the arts through education. Linkages and partnering initiatives are being actively pursued in order to avoid duplication of effort and to utilize a skills base that already functions successfully on the ground.

Provide incentives to artists of significant quality to develop artistically
(Arts Council Action Plan 2004)

Awards and Bursaries

The Arts Office has designed a number of awards or bursaries that will be delivered in collaboration with the local authority and local businesses.

Groups (Community)

'Go see' award for groups for visiting projects similar to ones they are currently /or are intending to run. Grants will be made available to 'Leaders' in order to visit and learn best practice from similar, successful national projects.

Individuals

Training subvention will be awarded to individuals to enable them to work an 'apprenticeship' to learn skills such as stage management, design, project management etc. with local established organisations. The participating organisations will make one or two key people available during this apprenticeship to facilitate learning.

Visual Arts Individuals

Research and proposal formulation

Part 1- Funds will be made available to visit 3 venues with a view to putting together a proposal to exhibit either nationally or internationally. Practical assistance and funds will also be offered for formulation of a professional proposal.

Part 2 – If the proposal is successful, assistance with the costs associated with staging the project will also be made available.

All Media, Individuals

Travel and fees.

Support to attend a conference, seminar or master-class relevant to their practice be it visual arts, literature, drama, music etc.

Tyrone Guthrie Bursary

A bursary for a two-week residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre is administered by the Arts Office of Kilkenny County Council.

Improve professional, managerial and organisational development capabilities

(Arts Council Action Plan 2004)

Professional/practitioner development

Most practitioners seek to earn a living from their work. Combining the creative impulse, a mastery of design and technique and the financial imperative is an ongoing challenge for those who are actively engaged in the arts sector. As artists, practitioners already possess invaluable skills such as independence, resilience, market focus, adaptability etc.

However, practitioners now operate in a fiercely competitive national and international environment. All practitioners have strongly identified the need for ongoing supports in terms of professional training, personal development and industry knowledge. Targeted and accessible training and supports are critically important to sustain the industry. National education policy currently places a clear emphasis on lifelong learning to enable people at all stages in their career to address their skills needs.

In order to address these issues, specific actions are being delivered including:

- Theory based professional development courses for practitioners. Modules will cover specific areas such as self employment status, tax exemption, proposal writing, applying for funding, evaluation, getting into print etc.

- Practical workshops covering the visual arts, literature, music and other media
- Mentoring, talks, discussion sessions in conjunction with the residency programme
- MOOT debates, seminars, discussions. MOOT is a collaborative initiative between Kilkenny County Council and the Butler Gallery and provides a forum for powerful, focused, inspirational and educational debates on a wealth of arts and cultural topics
- Ongoing advocacy, advice and support from the Arts Office for all practitioners.

Excellence and Innovation

Kilkenny Integrated Cultural Facility

Kilkenny local authorities and Butler Gallery are exploring the feasibility of establishing an Integrated Cultural Facility for Kilkenny, combining Butler Gallery contemporary art gallery and a proposed museum.

Relevant agencies such as Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council; the Board of the Butler Gallery; The Heritage Council; The Arts Council, the National Museum and The Crafts Council have been involved in preliminary discussions. It is anticipated that the proposed facility will strengthen the cultural identity of art, heritage and design and will support the heritage and visual arts sectors in Kilkenny.

**Increase the role of partners and other sponsors in sustaining the arts
locally**

(Arts Council Action Plan 2004)

Partnering Linkages & County Council Funded Projects

The Arts Office endorses and endeavors to work with the following groups:

3rd Level Institutions (county and inter-county)

B.N.S LEADER Group (city based promoting rural initiatives)

Ballykeefe Amphitheatre (county based)

Barnstorm Theatre (city based)

Cat Laughs (city)

Celtic Festival (city and county)

Community Childcare Facilities (city and county)

Duiske Concerts (county based)

Eigse Sliabh Rua (county)

Grennan Mill Thomastown (county)

Individuals (city and county)

Internal local authority linkages – environment, libraries, parks and gardens, community and enterprise etc. (city and county)

KCAN (city)

KCAT (county)

Kilkenny Arts Festival (city and county)

Kilkenny Music Club (city and county)

Kilkenny Tourism (city and county)

N.C.A.D. (national)

New Butler Gallery and Museum Development/Integrated Cultural Facility
(city based)

Ormonde College of Art and Design (city based)
Per Cent for Art Scheme – (city and county)
Primary schools (city and county)
Rhythmn and Roots (city based)
Rothe House (city based)
School of Music (city based)
Sculpture at Kells (county based)
Secondary schools (city and county)
The Butler Gallery (city based)
Watergate Theatre (city based)
Young Irish Film Makers (city based)

The Arts Office of Kilkenny County Council works to advance arts and cultural development throughout the county. The initiation and maintenance of partnerships between organisations with similar or complementary aims is at the core of this strategy.

The key objectives of these linkages is to further the professional development of practitioners, to support participation in the arts by the community, to maximize available resources and to identify and resolve gaps in provision. The Arts Office also forges inter-departmental linkages within the local authority for sharing of funds and resources. The support, skills and expertise of other agencies and groups can be harnessed in order to meet key strategic objectives. The role of the Arts Office also involves empowering and promoting innovation within these groups.

The links between agencies, providers and individuals and community groups currently work well and activity takes place across a variety of areas. As a result of this synergy, key actions are being delivered which include:

- a series of debates and discussions about the arts, entitled 'MOOT', is currently being delivered by the Arts Office and the Butler Gallery. The debates feature internationally renowned panelists and encourage full and open audience participation. These debates are being recorded and will also be promoted and marketed with a view to future publication.
- the Arts Office and Kilkenny Arts Festival liaised in order to specifically promote emerging local artists during the festival. This has resulted in a highly successful initiative called VERGE. This gives artists a tremendously valuable platform for their work and the overall support and endorsement of the Festival. Collective marketing/promotion is secured through the festival programme and general publicity and PR.
- The Ormonde College of Art was offered a number of residencies in the Endangered Studios during 2004. In addition placements in the Arts Office are offered to students who are also advised of courses, lectures and events it may be useful for them to attend. This informal linkage is due to be formalised in 2005 and the parameters of the initiative will be extended.
- National College of Art and Design (NCAD) students visit Kilkenny on an annual basis and engage with Ormonde College students as well as participating in specific initiatives.

- The Watergate Theatre and Rothe House receive local authority funding and support.
- Local initiatives such as Sculpture at Kells, the Barnstorm Theatre, Duiske Concerts etc. are also funded by the local authority while the Arts Officer has a presence on their Boards.

Key Actions

The Arts Office will continue to support, sustain and strengthen the dynamic of the arts in Kilkenny. It will work to cultivate new energy and foster initiatives across the sector for practitioners, audiences and interest groups alike.

Infrastructure

The local authority will continue to plan for, support and endorse others groups or agencies in their plans for arts infrastructure, city and county wide.

Actions:

- continue to source studio / rehearsal / performance space
- endorse and support other developments (e.g. KCAT, Callan Friary, MacDonagh Station, Chesterbridge Development)
- develop and manage the writers in residence space
- develop and sustain number 72 John Street as a resource for exhibitions and events.

Professional & Practitioner Development

Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office will facilitate the professional development of arts practitioners to maximise their full potential and enable them to explore new possibilities. Many of these initiatives will be undertaken in partnership with other arts or education service providers.

Actions:

- increase bursaries, to enable practitioners to broaden their knowledge, experience and expertise and hence further their careers
- provide advice and support on practical matters such as funding, project development etc.
- MOOT discussions and debates on contemporary arts.
- development courses and initiatives
- support for practitioners to source alternative spaces for events and projects.

Inclusiveness, Community & Education

Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office will develop and deliver an inclusive Community Arts programme working to dispel notions of elitism in the sector.

Through partnership with other groups, the Arts Office will deliver a programme of activities where the arts are enjoyable, gratifying and a tool for lifelong learning.

Actions:

- a specific annual bursary will be administered to increase the knowledge and expertise of community group leaders
- the Arts Office will advise and source appropriate expertise for groups and individuals
- the Arts Act Grant will be administered annually
- the Arts Office will continue to advocate and endorse the work of groups and individuals whose activities complement the work of the Arts Office
- the Arts Office will co-ordinate a Children's Arts Day for Kilkenny

- the Arts Office will continue to support and assist arts activities within county and city libraries
- the Arts Office will continue to work with third level institutions
- the Arts Office will administer a training subvention for placement in a local professional arts organisation
- the Arts Office will support an individual (or number of individuals) to secure exhibitions in a national or international venue
- the Arts Office will support individuals in attending conferences / master classes appropriate to their practice.

Excellence and Innovation

The local authority will work with relevant agencies to deliver projects and developments aimed to strengthen the arts and cultural identity of Kilkenny.

Actions:

These include number 72 John Street, the writers in residence space in the south of the county and the proposed Integrated Cultural Facility.

Partnership Linkages and County Council Funded Projects

Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office will maintain current partnerships and endeavour to initiate new ones with organisations with similar or complementary aims and objectives.

Actions:

- to collaborate with such organisations as the Butler Gallery and third level institutions in order to further the professional development of practitioners
- to continue to collaborate with Kilkenny Arts Festival in supporting and promoting the work of local practitioners
- to work in partnership with local groups and community resource agencies to encourage access and participation for all
- to empower groups, group leaders and individuals in facilitating events and activities
- to continue to help sustain and support the work of Barnstorm Theatre Company, Duiske Concerts, the Watergate Theatre, Rothe House, Sculpture at Kells and the Kilkenny Music Club
- to continue to administer the Arts Act Grants on an annual basis
- to collaborate with other departments within Kilkenny County Council

Arts Office: Structure & Role

Sustaining and Developing the Arts Office

Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office will develop, co-ordinate, motivate, inspire and empower artistic activity throughout the city and county. It will promote the arts as a worthwhile activity for all, providing advice and support for groups and individuals.

This activity will serve as an investment for the community, the local economy, and the tourism and heritage sector and will help to ensure the future cultural health of the county.

It will further strengthen Kilkenny's position as a centre of excellence for the arts and ensure a successful and prosperous arts environment within the region.

Actions:

- endeavour to increase the level of funding invested in the arts by the local authority
- work to encourage further investment from outside organisations, businesses and funding agencies
- work to improve the dissemination of information by developing a web-based newsletter
- ensure the best deployment of current resources and personnel
- employ, where necessary, the knowledge and expertise of project managers and technical staff to facilitate events and activities

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of all activities will allow the Arts Office to establish the success, failure and value of initiatives. This is a fundamental function of the Arts Office. It is an essential tool to safeguard quality and excellence and to raise standards across all activities.

Actions:

- where feasible we will evaluate creatively thus enabling potentially excluded groups to contribute their views
- we will collect feedback from participants, partners and audiences on both a formal and informal basis
- reports will be collated and circulated to the Director of Community and Enterprise and the SPC 5 Committee
- this data will then feed into future strategies and enable us to highlight and acknowledge examples of good practice
- we will look to other organisations including the Arts Council, other local authorities and national and international advisory bodies for developments in this sector.

Resources

The complete implementation of this Strategy is reliant upon a number of factors:

These include:

- sustaining and developing the current arts office premises
- ensuring appropriate levels of funding
- ensuring appropriate levels of support, both within the local authority and from external bodies and agencies

- the creation and maintenance of appropriate staff structures within the arts office
- the ability to employ project managers and technicians, with the appropriate expertise, to deploy specific projects
- ongoing staff training, where necessary.

Arts Office: Structure & Role

In order to provide clarity to practitioners and partner groups and to ensure the smooth running of the Arts Office, it is important that we define the precise purpose, function and role of the Arts Officer.

The function of the Arts Officer is:

- to develop and co-ordinate artistic activity across the county
- to motivate, inspire and empower practitioners in the sector
- to encourage and inspire enthusiasm for the arts and to promote it as a valuable, positive and worthwhile activity for all
- to ensure city and county synergy within the arts by encouraging local arts and city to county events
- to provide advice, assistance and support for individuals and groups
- work to keep the arts on a county-wide agenda
- through partnerships and linkages work to bring the arts to a wider community
- working with educational providers to make the arts a realistic career choice
- broadening participation through increased audience and practitioner involvement
- initiating personal and professional development training
- administration of an annual bursaries and Arts Act Grants
- Per Cent for Art Scheme- administered with the County Council Architect's Office and in conjunction with the Roads and Housing Departments
- best deployment of available financial and personnel resources

- facilitate partnering synergy and skills exchange between groups, individuals and agencies involved in the arts
- advocacy.

Administration of the Arts Act Grant

Various groups and projects secure funding through the Arts Act Grant, which is administered through the Arts Office of Kilkenny County Council. Organisations involved in activities which promote, develop the knowledge, appreciation or practice of the arts are invited to apply for this grant. The Arts are taken to include: Visual Arts, Music, Drama, Film (including video), Artistic Craftsmanship, Literature, Dance and Photography.

The Arts Act Grant provides for support under the headings of:

- Groups and Organisations promoting the Arts
- Equipment Purchasing Grant

and,

- Individual Artists living in Kilkenny - all art forms (for specific projects, Research and Development and Professional Development).

Sustaining and Developing the Arts Office

Kilkenny is a City and County teeming with creativity, imagination, ingenuity and skill. We host an array of highly talented and resourceful Arts events, organisations and practitioners. Funding and support for the Arts Office has traditionally been reliant upon Kilkenny County Council and the

Arts Council of Ireland. However, the level of support from the Arts Council depends on the level of support secured through the County Council. Arts Council funding will not be sustained unless local Authority funding is maintained and increased as required.

It is a very challenging and exciting time for the Arts Office in Kilkenny and for the arts sector in general. It is fair to say that practitioner, community and visitor aspirations and expectations have never been higher. We have tremendous opportunities because of the new Arts Office space, recent community initiatives and the media exposure the Arts Office has secured for both individual practitioners and group initiatives. Many projects have received valuable national endorsement from agencies such as The Arts Council.

We must maintain and develop this current dynamic and further advance and deliver cultural developments.

The FÁS Arts and Travellers C.E. Scheme funded and placed support staff in the Arts Office for 13 years up until its demise in 2003. This has resulted in a loss of both income and personnel. Consequently the current output of the Arts Office exceeds present capacity and resources. The facilitation and administration of current projects is hugely reliant on good will and voluntary efforts. This has led to uncertainty and insecurity within the office. Careful thought and action needs to be developed regarding how current output can be sustained and enhanced.

Actions are urgently needed to underpin and support the work of the Arts Office. In order for the arts in Kilkenny to thrive additional provision, support and backing from bodies, organisations and

businesses including Kilkenny Local Authorities is vital. Effective collaborations both within departments of the County Council and between outside agencies are essential to progression, enrichment and expansion. A clearly defined and agreed Arts Budget must be in place on an annual basis. The Arts Officer recently retained one personnel member but more staff is needed if the potential of the office is to be fully realised. The Arts Officer currently estimates that four additional members of staff are needed to support the level of artistic activity taking place throughout the city and county:

- administrative/clerical officer for office management, database maintenance, publicity, information dissemination etc.
- project coordinator for audience development and access programmes
- specialist staff members to administer specific projects.

Securing and maintaining adequate resources within Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office will enable us to:

- Continue and further develop the number and significance of our current exhibition programme
- Improve upon and increase the scope and number of bursaries available to both groups and individuals
- Enhance the level of advice and support provided in order that groups and individuals become self sustaining
- Sustain and expand the current range of workshops and courses
- partnerships and linkages will be strengthened and increased
- more groups and individuals will benefit from support and advice
- the new Arts Office, Number 72, will reach its full potential
- the creative and innovative approach necessary to thrive and succeed will be attainable

- our capacity to monitor, research and assess wants and needs will be enhanced. This will have a positive impact on programming and best use of funding and resources

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

The principal method of monitoring the progress of this strategy will be through regular meetings between the Arts Office, the Director of the Community and Enterprise Department of the local authority and the Strategic Policy Committee 5, (Arts, Sports, Tourism, Culture and Heritage funding).

The funding application to the Arts Council and the preparation of the estimates requires detailed analysis of all annual work undertaken as well as the anticipated programme of activity for the year ahead.

Internally, the Arts Office monitors and examines activities on an ongoing basis. It maintains specific files on the publicity and marketing of all events. This data is available to members of the public and helps to increase understanding of the role and function of the Arts Office.

Kilkenny County Council's Annual Report includes a section relating to the Arts Office that also highlights the work of the office.

Evaluation

Evaluation allows us to establish the success, failure, meaning and value of work undertaken. It is a critical tool as it helps us to ensure the delivery of effective events and activities and allows us to accurately prioritise all policy and initiatives.

Successful evaluation is dependent on prioritising key aspects of 'projects' prior to the event. In this way, feedback is based on predetermined criteria, i.e. the aims, objectives and measures of success of the undertaking. Shaping evaluation in this way ensures constructive and valuable data collection.

Meaningful evaluation will allow us to improve activities on an ongoing basis. It will also help us to recognise, acknowledge and act upon the successes or failure of all activities, thus ensuring:

- continual improvement
- raising of standards
- evolution of activities / projects over time
- that all involved can change and develop their practice
- that arts projects facilitate life long learning
- and,
- on a practical level, that funding has been utilised effectively and efficiently.

It will also enable us to communicate that participation in the arts is beneficial to all.

Equal Opportunities

Evaluation must be designed in a way that allows for views to be contributed by all. The process must not exclude anyone on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, social background or disability. Within the arts there are many opportunities to evaluate creatively and enable potentially excluded groups to contribute their views.

Methods of evaluation

Arts based projects can be difficult to evaluate. The methods of evaluation chosen for such activities must be flexible and adaptable so they can be modified for a variety of different events. Our methods of monitoring and evaluation will be based on the collection of feedback from participants, partners and audiences on both a formal and informal basis.

The ways in which we will collect evidence will include:

1. observation
2. comments boxes and books
3. questionnaires
4. small focus group discussions
5. written diaries and drawings
6. 'Graffiti' walls
7. photography
8. video
9. displays of work or performances
10. collating visitor numbers
11. reports from individuals and organisations.

The results of our own evaluation and reports received by us from individuals and organisations will inevitably feed into future strategies and enable us to highlight and acknowledge examples of good practice.

We will also look to other organisations including the Arts Council, other local authorities and national and international advisory bodies to keep abreast of key developments within our sector.

Conclusion

It is our belief that participation in creative endeavors strengthens local communities, celebrates distinctiveness and enhances local pride.

Kilkenny is often viewed as a mecca for artists, makers and those interested in the arts. The city and county attracts individual practitioners, observers and organisations. Our tourism product promotes our city and county as 'The Creative Heart of Ireland' and the reality should not disappoint.

The presence of the National Craft Council, the Heritage Council and the pending Arts Council of Irelands move to Kilkenny provides a welcome measure of proof that the creative heart of Kilkenny is beating. However, there is a danger of viewing our artistic health in too positive a light. Without the necessary practitioner, infrastructural, community and educational supports we cannot ensure the future development of this sector. Without recognition of the importance of the arts and adequate staff and financial supports, the viability of the sector will be in question.

Kilkenny has a distinctive cultural and artistic identity that must be retained, strengthened and developed in new and innovative ways to harness the creative strength and cultural diversity of the city and county.

It is hoped that this strategy will encourage debate, increase co-operation and raise the profile and standards of the industry; to bring a new dynamic and impetus to arts and culture in Kilkenny.

Appendix 1

Arts Audit - Current Database by Practitioner Groups

Amateur artists	25
Full time artists	137
Classical events contacts	58
Community groups	19
Craft workers	56
Drama groups	27
Film, video, photography	32
Music Groups	25
Musicians	19
Local groups and orgs.	10
Painting groups	5
Theatre venues	7
Workshop facilitators	28
Writers groups	7
Writers	131
Youth organisations	29

Appendix 2

Existing Venues/Infrastructure

Theatre

Barnstorm

Cineplex

Cleere's

Friary Hall

Library: (city and county)

Schools: (city and county)

The Parade Tower

Watergate.

Music

Anna Conda

Ballykeefe Amphitheatre

Castalia Hall, Ballytobin

Cleere's

Duiske Abbey

Kytelers Inn

Langtons

Nolan Park

O'Loughlins

Pump House

Ryans

Schools: (city and county)

St Canice's Cathedral

St. Mary's Cathedral

The Parade Tower

Watergate
Woodstock House & Gardens
Morrisseys
and many more

Dance

Community Halls
Schools: city and county
Watergate Theatre.

Visual Art

72 John Street
Berkeley Gallery
Butler Gallery
Cafes
Kilkenny Art Gallery
Kilkenny Castle grounds
Kilkenny County Council: County Hall
Library: (city and county)
Retail premises
Schools: (city and county)
The Friary, Callan
The Green Door
National Craft Gallery (Crafts Council of Ireland)

KAS DRAFT 4

27 November 2004

introduction

Arts Audit

Infrastructure

Inclusiveness, Community & Education

Community

Education

Professional/practitioner development

Excellence and Innovation

Partnering Linkages & County Council Funded Project

Infrastructure

Actions:

Professional & Practitioner Development

Actions:

Inclusiveness, Community & Education

Actions:

Excellence and Innovation

Actions:

Partnership Linkages and County Council Funded Projects

Actions:

Arts Office: Structure & Role

Sustaining and Developing the Arts Office

Actions:

Monitoring and Evaluation

Actions:

Resources

Arts Office: Structure & Role

**Administration of the Arts Act Grant
Sustaining and Developing the Arts Office**

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

Evaluation

Equal Opportunities

Methods of evaluation

Conclusion

Appendix 1

Arts Audit - Current Database by Practitioner Groups

Appendix 2

Existing Venues/Infrastructure