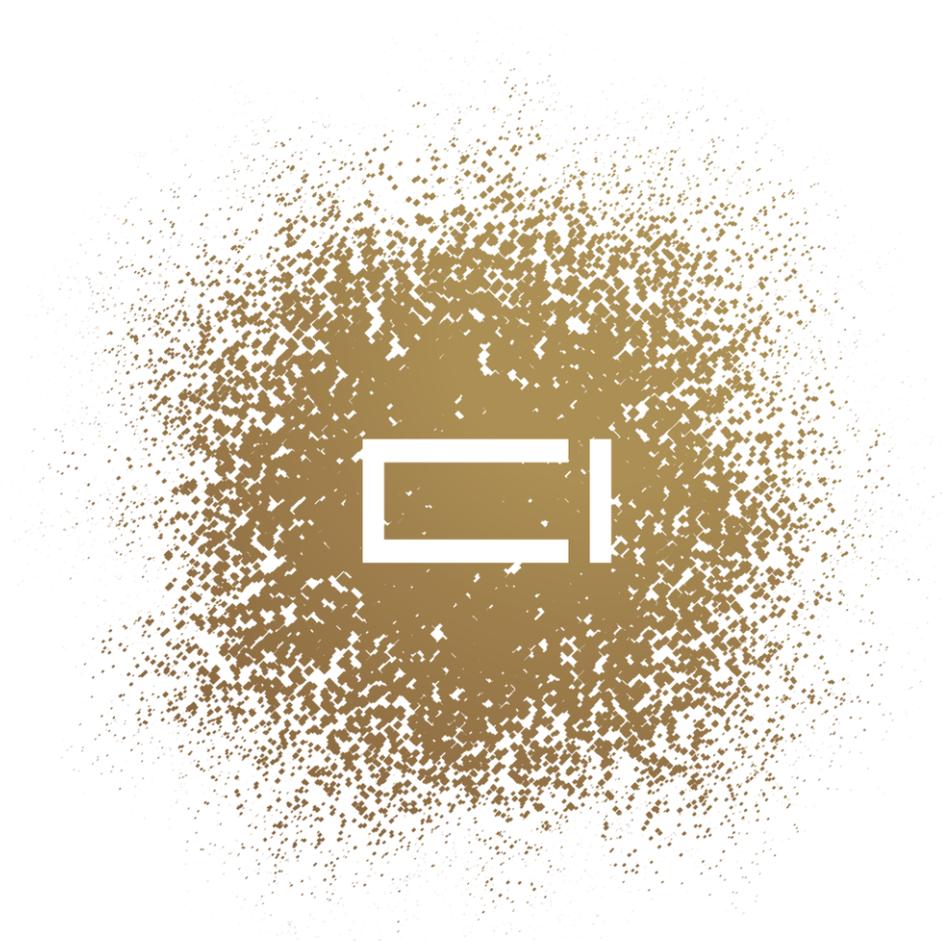


Creative Ireland Programme

County Laois – Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022

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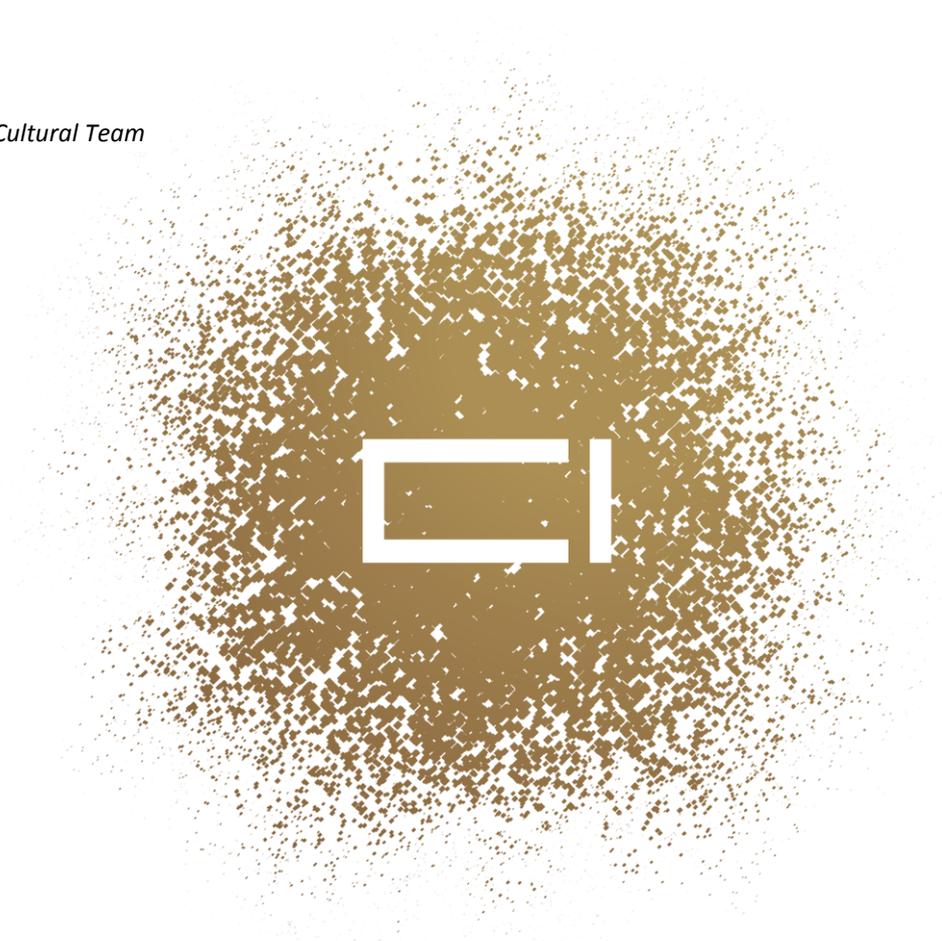


Creative Laois

Culture and Creativity Strategy for the Creative Ireland Programme in County Laois

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1 Foreword

Creative Ireland Laois provides an opportunity for everyone in the county to become involved in creativity and culture. Laois welcomes the opportunity to be part of this national programme. Being part of a countrywide programme gives us a collective voice. Through this strategy of participation and engagement across the communities, Laois looks forward to delivering the programmes as outlined in this five-year Culture and Creativity Strategy Plan.

A Sense of Place is the theme chosen for our *Creative Ireland Laois* Plan for 2018-2022. The development of community is of vital importance for this multi-annual programme. The vision for Creative Ireland in Laois is a county where culture and creativity are recognised as integral to life.

The heritage and landscape of Laois is rich and varied, and Laois County Council has worked with state agencies, community groups and private owners in recent years to develop and promote the heritage sites and assets of the county for the benefit of both local communities and visitors. State-owned sites such as the Rock of Dunamase, Emo Court, Heywood Gardens, Killeshin Romanesque Church and the Timahoe Round Tower are managed in a way that enhances their heritage value and complements the tremendous community and voluntary efforts made at Donaghmore Workhouse, Aghaboe Abbey, Abbeyleix Heritage House, Mountmellick Museum and the Attanagh Fly-fishing museum. The Laois Heritage Trail and Laois Monastic Trail highlight over twenty places of interest for visitors to explore the story of the county. Audio guides to these sites are available in a range of languages, in the Laois Heritage Trails smart phone app, created in 2016 with support from Fáilte Ireland. The sod was recently turned on the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail which straddles Laois and Offaly and will attract many more visitors to the area once it is completed. In early 2018, Laois County Council was successful in obtaining funding from the Heritage Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under the new Historic Towns Initiative. The project funded will see the transformation of Fort Protector and Fitzmaurice Place at the historic core of the town, over several phases. Laois is an integral part of the Ireland's Ancient East region and we are working closely with Fáilte Ireland to develop and promote the heritage sites of the county for visitors from across Ireland and overseas.

County Laois has developed cultural initiatives which have impacted strongly locally in the last twenty years. We work in partnership with the Arts Council and have benefited greatly from the collaboration. Laois County Council has built our arts and library infrastructure to a high standard. These include the Dunamase Arts Centre which opened in (1999) and the Laois Arthouse (2011). The Dunamase Arts Centre is a multi-disciplinary arts centre and the primary performance space in the county; it also has workshops spaces, digital cinema facilities and an exhibition space. The Laois Arthouse offers artists' studios and living accommodation, a small gallery, a kiln, a garden space and opportunities for artists. Laois County Council are devising a framework document with the Arts Council at present as well as devising a new arts plan which will complement the Creative Ireland Laois programme and vice versa.

Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois are led by Laois County Council and supported locally by Laois Offaly ETB and Laois Partnership. In 2017, over 4,500 young people accessed weekly music programmes, and many more participated in short term programmes and performances.

Newly refurbished libraries in Abbeyleix, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Durrow, Portarlinton and Stradbally provide a welcoming accessible cultural space. A new county library is being developed for Portlaoise in the next year. The New County Library will be situated in the town centre on Main Street and also the cultural and historical core of the county. The new library will cater to the needs of an increased and changing population providing increased public areas for cultural events, genealogy, local studies for all citizens and also visitors to the town and environs.

2017 was the inaugural year of the Creative Ireland plan. The Laois plan drew on many collaborations including Cruinniú na Cásca day at the Dunamaise Arts Centre, the music commission by Ian Wilson which explored the theme of pollination, the Music Generation Laois Commission for Harp Orchestra by Michael Rooney, a Spoken Word residency led by Stephen James Smith, a film project *Walking Back to My Heart*, a range of programming in the Science Technology Engineering Arts and Maths areas carried out in the branch libraries and the community grant scheme which yielded some highly significant projects.

Through our Culture Team in Laois County Council, representing expertise in the arts, library, heritage and community, Laois County Council looks forward to leading and engaging with the Creative Ireland Programme 2018-2022.

Pádraig Fleming

Cathaoirleach Laois County Council

John Mulholland

Chief Executive Laois County Council

2 CULTURE AND CREATIVITY IN COUNTY LAOIS

Culture and Creativity is at the heart of our community. This strategy provides a unique opportunity for County Laois to work strategically across the cultural areas for the enrichment of the county.

The following short pieces reflect the themes of the creative Ireland programme in Laois from the point of view of a heritage specialist an artist, and two young people from the county.

Celebrating Laois, a county of natural beauty, colourful history and famous people

Laois is a county of quiet natural beauty. It has a wide diversity of scenery ranging from the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the rich farmland that covers much of the county. There are extensive forests in the county and within a mile of several of the main roads there are bogs and tracts of peat that are beautiful and peaceful. Various scenic routes and beauty spots include the Windy Gap near Stradbally and the nature walks in the Slieve Blooms, Durrow and Abbeyleix.

Its built heritage includes the majestic ruins a the Rock of Dunamaise, the first plantation fort in the English speaking world at Portlaoise, numerous monastic remains and magnificent houses including Emo Court, Ballyfin, Abbeyleix House and Stradbally Hall.

Equally impressive are the living people of Laois today – rich in diversity, courtesy, friendliness and natural story-telling. It is indeed the rich tapestry of stories about the people who lived in Laois in by-gone times that attracts the interest and attention of visitors to Laois. Famous men and women dot the history and story of the county which in many ways is a microcosm of the story of Ireland. From tales of Finn and the Fianna, to the warriors who were granted Laois by the King of Leinster two thousand years ago, the story of Laois includes world famous monks, Irish warlike Septs, Anglo-Norman warriors and the first plantation of Ireland.

The list of famous people include; Rory O'Moore, Bartholomew Mosse, William Dargan, Colonel Fitzmaurice, and Lucy Franks to name but a few.

In short the beautiful natural heritage of Laois and the deeply impressive built heritage are matched by a superb treasury of cultural heritage. We should celebrate and enjoy the Laois story.

Michael Parsons

Art has no boundaries for a Laois artist

On a visit to Beijing in 2007, I was fortunate to meet an artist named Qu Jun. During our conversation he spontaneously picked up a brush, loaded it with lampblack ink and with bewildering skill calligraphed a sheet of rice paper. It was a rare privilege to see such a master at work. Later, when I prepared to leave his studio, he presented this work of art to me explaining that the four large characters he had drawn proclaimed ‘art has no boundaries’. This beautiful piece hangs on the wall at the foot of my bed and its message has become a personal mantra for me.

When I moved to Emo in 1998, the very first fact I learned about Laois was that it is the only county in Ireland that is completely surrounded by counties which don’t touch the sea. One could be forgiven for imagining that this might present a picture of insularity and boundary-enforced remoteness, however my experience as a Laois artist has, in fact, been one of boundless connectedness. During my time here I have been presented with many invitations to participate and engage with the rich artistic and cultural life of the area. I have gratefully embraced opportunities to: exhibit my paintings and prints; have my work on permanent display in County Hall; select an ‘Open Submission’ exhibition at the Dunamais Arts Centre; speak at the ‘Politics and the Symposium’ in the early days of the ‘Peace Process’ (when – hard to imagine now – a politician from one persuasion refused to enter the venue until another speaker from a different persuasion had left); curate a fascinating collection of artifacts inextricably demonstrating the influence of the county’s greatest hero, James Fintan Lalor, on the events of Easter 1916; and stand on an actual soap-box and speak to an audience about my concerns as a contemporary artist. My highlight was a commission to produce an exhibition of work which provided the visual centre-point for the James Fintan Lalor School 2014 and which two years later travelled to Australia where I proudly represented our county on the world stage in the Culture Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme.

My years as a Laois artist have been colourful and rewarding. Most of these activities were initiated by our wonderful Arts and Heritage Officers – they were all generously and enthusiastically supported by them and involved collaboration across the community.

Currently I am working on two new exciting projects. In a mid-career re-focusing of my practice I have been observing the landscape through a lens. I am editing photographs I have taken at home and abroad over the last decade which explore the epic stillness in landscapes and certain cityscapes which seem frozen in time, immune to the dramatic and violent changes in the world around them. These images present a visual liberation from the endless torrent of chaos that invades our lives and I will be applying to show them publicly soon. The other project involves the curation of a spell-binding exhibition of original items which celebrate the era-defining achievement of Colonel James Fitzmaurice, whose formative years in Portlaoise lit the flame which eventually motivated him to co-pilot the first ever east-to-west trans-Atlantic flight.

Inspired by world-renowned visionaries who had strong feelings for Laois as ‘*A Sense of Place*’, like Lalor who refused to be fettered and Fitzpatrick who refused to be grounded; coupled with the implementation of the County Culture and Creative Strategy 2018 - 2022, ‘art has no boundaries’ for a Laois artist.

Brendon Deacy

Write path

Growing up in Laois I was always involved in the arts, predominantly through the Dunamaise Arts Centre. I have seen more theatre productions, films and exhibitions there than I can count (believe me, I've tried!), have been known to tread the boards myself, and for the past number of years have worked there in front of house. Over the years I've occupied just about every possible spot in the venue; as performer, staff member, audience member, coffee-drinker, bookshelf browser, workshop enjoyer, and overall theatre lover. Alongside this, I was a member of Laois Youth Theatre for five years, through which I got to take part in weekly workshops and yearly productions, as well as getting the opportunity to get involved with a number of programmes with Youth Theatre Ireland, the national network of Youth Theatres, who I am still involved with today. My experience of Youth Theatre certainly played a large part in bringing me to where I am today; as I write this, I am just a few short weeks away from finishing a degree in Drama and English at Trinity College Dublin, and have been working as a theatre critic and practitioner for the past few years. I'm excited to see what the Creative Ireland Plan brings to Laois' already vibrant arts community. I have spoken and written on several occasions about the importance of participation in and access to the arts for everyone, and I hope that the Creative Ireland plan will bring even greater levels of that to the arts community in Laois. Had I not had ready access to the Dunamaise Arts Centre and Laois Youth Theatre, I may not have made the leap to decide to study theatre in university and would probably be poring over notes for a physics exam right now (which would be no bad thing, but is certainly not my current vocation!). The Creative Ireland values of collaboration, community, communication, participation, inclusivity and empowerment have always been very important to me in both my experience and practice in the arts, and I look forward to seeing how they evolve here in Laois.

Saoirse Anton

My Music Experience

When I was thinking about what to study in college, I was advised to do what I am passionate about - for me this was a simple decision. I'm passionate about music, and my experience in Laois since I moved here in 2010 from Wexford has nurtured and developed this passion.

Traditional Irish music in Laois is strong - the work that the seven Comhaltas branches have done in promoting traditional music has been built upon in recent years with Music Generation Laois, to the point that Laois is now attracting attention nationally for the quality of young musicians being developed. I myself have been involved with Spink Comhaltas and Music Generation Laois. There is a real community element to Spink, with a strong emphasis on the social aspect of music as well as its traditional roots, while Music Generation has introduced me to a range of professional musicians and innovative thinking in looking at how to present music.

Classical Music is also strong in Laois, and for this we have the Laois School of Music to thank. It provides tuition for a wide range of instruments. I studied piano with Tatyana Vykhodseva there, who is an inspiring teacher. For a short time, I was also involved in the Laois School of Music Orchestra and the importance of this orchestra in the county can't be overstated - it is orchestras such as these that give young musicians an opportunity to explore orchestral repertoire and prepares them for national orchestras such as the National Youth Orchestra and the RTE National Symphony Orchestra.

Music is more than learning an instrument - it is performing in public and enjoying it - regardless of how good your standard is. I know adults who have studied all the piano grades, but only ever performed for an examiner, and then stopped when they completed the last grade. I have been very fortunate that my experience and influences across all the music groups in Laois has opened up the opportunity for me to learn multiple instruments, travel across Ireland, the UK and Germany playing music, write and arrange music, play solo and as part of groups and full orchestras, get introduced to a range of interesting and different people and perspectives, and to get some insight into the culture and history that is associated with music. More importantly, I have made a lot of friends.

I believe that music is incredibly important to society - for people's mental health, as a pastime for our young people and to preserve our traditional culture. It also develops life skills such as self-confidence, teamwork, innovation, and entire new opportunities to explore performance and creativity. Not everyone will go on to study music, but everyone has music in them. I am grateful for my experience in Laois to date, and how it has helped to develop the music in me.

David Vesey, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois

The Engine by Pat Boran

*With a four-sided aluminium key
and one hand clamped around the wheels
to hold them still, I hold my breath
and wind the engine of the small grey train.*

*I am five or six years old and I wind
for the soft creaking of the spring,
for the pull of these four small wheels
like the heart-throb of some living thing.*

*Later when I carve my name in wood
or later again stub out cigarettes
it will be with this same motion, but for now
I wind to be here, beside myself,*

*and with the last possible, last permissible turn
to release the perfect single ping
then watch as the engine heads out with the news,
a thing beyond me, a thing singing.*

(from 'A Man Is Only As Good': A Pocket Selected Poems, Orange Crate Books, 2017)

Pat Boran was born in Portlaoise in 1963. He has published more than a dozen books of poetry and prose, including *A Man Is Only As Good: A Pocket Selected Poems* (2017). He is a member of Aosdána.

3 THE CREATIVE IRELAND VISION FOR COUNTY LAOIS

The vision of Creative Ireland is that every person living in Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise his or her creative potential. The vision is pursued through the Five-Pillars of the Creative Ireland Programme:

Pillar 1: Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child

Pillar 2: Enabling Creativity in Every Community

Pillar 3: Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure

Pillar 4: The Creative Industries: Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production

Pillar 5: Unifying our Global Reputation

Laois County Council will deliver under **Pillar 2** of the Programme: **Enabling Creativity in Every Community**.

The role of Local Authorities in the delivery of the programme at local level is acknowledged and supported by Government.

The national co-ordinating office for the programme is located within the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in Dublin.

The Vision for Creative Ireland in Laois

A county where culture and creativity are recognised as integral to life

4 THE CREATIVE IRELAND VALUES IN COUNTY LAOIS

The Creative Ireland values of *Collaboration, Communication, Community, Participation, Inclusivity and Empowerment* are reflected in the strategic priorities of the County Laois Culture and Creativity Strategy.

Through this programme an environment conducive to collaboration, innovation and creativity for community of Laois will be fostered.

5 THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR COUNTY LAOIS

A Sense of Place, has been chosen as an over-arching theme, developing community, creativity and well-being. This will inform the themes and strategic priorities for the next five years.

Purpose

To foster an environment conducive to collaboration, innovation and creativity, so that the people of Laois can realise their full creative potential.

Goal

That Laois is the leader in the cultural life of Ireland.

Vision

A county where culture and creativity are recognised as integral to life.

Objectives / Values

- To strive for excellence in all areas of cultural and creativity
- To build the confidence of Laois to take its place as a leader in the cultural arena
- To use creativity to improve quality of life in Laois
- To embed a culture of collaboration within the local authority and the wider community

Public Consultation

The Creative Ireland Laois values have been informed through Public Consultation. Consultation took place in April 2017 in the form of a public focus meeting in the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise, on April attended by 80 members of the public.

On January 17th 2018 a public consultation meeting was arranged by the PPN in the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise. Opinions received at the meeting were merged with the opinions expressed in an online survey, as well as written expressions of interest received. 80 people attended the event.

Strategic Priority Themes

Theme ONE - Enabling the Creative Potential of every Child & Young Person

Objective - To give every child and young person in County Laois the opportunity to fully develop their creative potential

Key Goals

- Full participation in Music Generation Laois, Laois School of Music, Laois Youth Theatre and Laois Dance Ensemble.
- Full participation for all schools in existing programmes such as Creative Schools initiative, Artists in Schools and Heritage in Schools.
- Further development of education and outreach at the Dunamaise Arts Centre, Laois Arthouse and libraries of the county.

Theme TWO - Enabling Creativity in every Community

Objective - Empower communities to foster creativity, well-being and sense of place

Key Goals

- Develop and support programmes to build confidence and increase quality of life through creative engagement with sense of place.
- Support internationally recognised projects which will nurture pride in sense of place in the county, through showcasing at international level. Examples include “Freemarket” at the Venice Biennale 2018 and celebration in Germany of the first transatlantic flight from Europe to North America.
- Support and build on existing community projects (e.g. Abbeyleix Bog, Durrow Scarecrow Festival, Laois Walks Festival, Slieve Blooms Storytelling Festival, Mountmellick YarnBombing, High Nelly Trails, Fort Protector conservation, local independent film projects).
- Develop residencies focusing on ‘Community’ and ‘Sense of Place’ in particular areas around the county.

Theme THREE - Investing in our Creative and Infrastructure

Objective - Prioritise the development of built cultural infrastructure whilst mapping, conserving and enhancing existing development

Key Goals

- Develop a map of all cultural infrastructure of Laois, and put in place programmes to conserve, develop and enhance this infrastructure.
- Work towards enhancing the infrastructure for youth and young people's performing arts in Laois (Laois School of Music, Music Generation and Laois Youth Theatre).
- Advocate for sustainable funding for owners of built and cultural heritage.

Theme FOUR - Laois as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production

Objective - Promote Laois as a venue for film and other media production

Key Goals

- Establish "Film Laois", a portal to promote film in Laois and Laois as a film location and destination. County Laois has a stunning and varied landscape and is open for business for film companies nationally and internationally.
- Develop website to showcase Laois as a location for films; facilitate filmmakers looking for locations and other expertise.
- Work with existing Laois-based filmmakers to develop co-operative projects to promote the county.

Theme FIVE - Building the Confidence of Laois to take its Place as a Leader in Cultural Life

Objective - Drive the reputation of Laois as a cultural leader, both within Ireland and overseas

Key Goals

- Drive the celebration of international artists with Laois connections e.g., Francis Bacon, Cecil Day-Lewis.
- Support the development of international residencies with contemporary artists.
- Support the promotion of Laois creativity abroad.
- Embrace the objectives of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and related international initiatives.
- Celebrate and commemorate important Laois people and events e.g., Col James Fitzmaurice, James Dargan, Bartholomew Mosse, Helen M. Roe, James Fintan Lalor.

Theme SIX - Celebrating and Cherishing the Heritage of County Laois

Objective - Promote awareness and appreciation of the county's rich history, heritage, culture, natural and built environment including our language and traditional music and dance

Key Goals

- Promote and develop the built, natural and cultural heritage of the county.
- Develop projects that investigate and celebrate our heritage through working collaboratively with artists of all disciplines.
- Create a Digital Archive Programme of heritage pieces and records through our Library Service.
- Support the promotion of a love for and use of the Irish language across all generations.
- Use participation in initiatives such as Culture Night, Heritage Week to develop pride in the culture and heritage of the county all year round.
- Support love and appreciation of the traditional music, dance and crafts of Ireland.

My Forget-Me-Nots by Ann Egan

*You see those forget-me-nots
growing by the cleaning stone,
just outside my doorway.*

*Well, those flowers stay
when all else is gone,
their stems circled in buds,*

*yellow eyes enfolded in blue,
they may never open,
still they grow there.*

*The top ones bloom,
leaves sharpen to spears
to tackle another day.*

*Sturdy as an army,
bristling with discipline,
they won't crumble,*

*they're bonded in stone.
Even the china delicacy
of those blue flowers,*

*so powerfully fragile,
won't be splintered.
Guardians of my watch,*

*as reliable as a treaty
written in soul's ink,
they're my memory ledger,*

*they stem my past's defeats,
transcribers of my hearthstone,
platoon of forget-me-nots.*

(from Telling Time published by Bradshaw Books 2012)

Ann Egan was born in Coolagh, Kilcavan, County Laois in 1948. After a career in teaching, she devoted herself to writing full time. Widely published, she has written four books, edited twenty books, and has won Listowel Writers' Week Poetry prize many times.

6. Appendices

Appendix I - The Creative Ireland Team in Laois

Profiles of members of the County Culture Team:

Donal Brennan, Director of Service

Donal is Director of Services in Laois County Council. His responsibilities include an oversight role for Corporate Services, Culture, Arts, Sports and Library Services in County Laois.

Georgina Ireland, Acting Senior Executive Officer, Community, Arts & Sport

Georgina has worked in the Community and Culture area since 2009. She was an integral part of the development of a number of structures and policies in Laois, including Laois Public Participation Network, Laois Local Community Development Committee and the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021.

Muireann Ní Chonaill, Arts Officer & County Coordinator

Muireann is Arts Officer in Laois County Council since 1991. She is a graduate of Arts Administration from UCD and the MA programme in Visual Arts Practices from IADT. She is the County Coordinator for Creative Laois.

Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer

Catherine has been Heritage Officer for Laois since 2003. She works with the Laois Heritage Forum, a consultative group made up of a range of agencies and community representatives with an interest in the built, natural and cultural heritage of the county, to deliver the actions of the Laois Heritage Plan. The Forum is currently working to deliver the third Heritage Plan for Laois, with the support of the Heritage Council.

Bernie Foran, Acting County Librarian

Bernie Foran is Acting County Librarian in Laois County Council since 2011 with responsibility for the management and development of library services and Archives. Bernie has overseen the capital development of branch libraries in the county, implementing the actions of "Opportunities for All", the public library strategy of Ireland 2013-2017 in County Laois.

Rosa Flannery, Coordinator, Music Generation Laois

Rosa Flannery was appointed Co-ordinator of Music Generation Laois in 2012. A native of Co. Donegal, Rosa is a graduate of the MA in Arts Policy and Practice in NUI Galway. Previous roles include working with the Donegal Music Education Partnership, Nomad Theatre Company, Tulca Festival of Visual Arts, Droichead Arts Centre and Galway Arts Festival.

Bridie Keenan, Assistant Arts Officer

Bridie Keenan has worked in the Laois Arts Office since 1999. Appointed Assistant Arts Officer in 2001, her role is to assist in the delivery and development of a comprehensive and varied arts programme in the county.

Patricia O'Rourke, Clerical Officer and Creative Laois Committee Secretary

Patricia previously worked as Qualified Financial Advisor with Irish Nationwide Building Society, Permanent TSB, Portlaoise Credit Union and Bank of Ireland. She joined Laois County Council in 2016 as part of the Arts Office team.

Michelle de Forge, Director of Dunamaise Arts Centre

Appointed in 2012, Michelle is responsible for a year round, diverse programme of performing and visual arts which attracts over 25,000 people of all ages per annum. Collaborating with local, national and international artists, curators, theatre companies and musicians, Dunamaise presents life-enhancing audience experiences in all art forms.

Buíochas le:

The strategy is informed by Laois County Council's Creative Ireland Laois Team, public consultation, sector and community focus groups and individuals. Thanks to all who gave of their time including the Laois Public Partnership Network who arranged the 2018 public meeting.

Thanks to the National Creative Ireland Office for guidance, support and direction.

Thanks to Brendon Deacy, Michael Parsons, Saoirse Anton and David Vesey for their contributions. Thanks also to Pat Boran and Ann Egan for their poetry.

Strategy compiled by Muireann Ní Chonaill, Arts Officer/Creative Ireland Coordinator and Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer.

Thanks to the Senior Management at Laois County Council, and the Strategic Policy Committee overseeing Community, Social, Cultural Heritage.

Appendix II

Creative Ireland Laois: Implementation in 2018

The key projects underway for Creative Ireland in Laois for 2018 are:

Community Bursaries

A number of bursaries will be created to facilitate communities in exploring their own local sense of place through the arts and heritage.

Bliain na Gaeilge

A series of Irish language and bilingual events targeting young people and adults will be arranged as part of Bliain na Gaeilge and will include:

Gaeilge Tamagotchi

A performance installation by Manchán Magan. Members of the public are invited to adopt an endangered Irish word and become a guardian of Gaeilge. Participants wind through a labyrinth of 30m of raw Irish linen to receive an endangered Irish word from the artist, which they agree to nurture, nourish and take guardianship of. This will take place in a public space in Portlaoise.

Ceardlann scríofa

Creative writing workshops in Irish will be hosted during a residency in the County.

Laois Traditional Singing Project

An Irish language traditional singing residency, to work with singers from the Music Generation Laois Singing programme and community groups, building on the success of our previous 'Irish Songs We Learned at School' project with John Spillane.

Old St Peter's Graveyard Youth Arts Project

A project will be developed in partnership with a local secondary school to design and install a mural at Old Saint Peter's Graveyard in Portlaoise, as part of a community archaeological project at the site.

Art project for the Dunamaise Arts Centre & Laois Arthouse

A residency programme for the development of deeper local engagement with artists through projects in the Dunamaise and Laois Arthouse.

Music Generation Laois

New commission

To create a multi-instrumental new work with young musicians from the Music Generation Laois Schools programmes.

Music-rich schools

Music Generation Laois will continue to develop music-rich schools in a number of designated primary schools in Laois, with the aspiration that by 2020, every child in those schools will have had the opportunity to participate in a Music Generation Laois programme

Cruinniú na nÓg

A family arts event will be held on Saturday 23rd June in Portlaoise in conjunction with the Old Fort Festival, to celebrate Cruinniú na nÓg.

European Year of Cultural Heritage

For the European Year of Cultural Heritage, there are two trans-national projects:

Col Fitzmaurice & First Flight

Portlaoise man Col James Fitzmaurice was navigator on the first plane flight across the Atlantic from Europe to North America, in 1928. The event and the anniversary will be celebrated in Laois throughout 2018, with a series of events and workshops, and an exhibition at the Dunamase Arts Centre in October.

“Free Market” at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2018

A team of Irish architects will explore and develop the culture of Irish market towns at this major international exhibition. One of the towns selected is Mountmellick. The exhibition will tour to the featured towns including Mountmellick following the Venice Biennale.

Library Projects

Archives

The Laois County archives hold collections of both public and private records pertaining to Laois. These now need an online platform to ensure wide access to the records for researchers and historians. The Archive project will research and put in place the appropriate software for the scanning, storage, display and retrieval of the digitised archives of County Laois.

Writer in the community

The Library Service will engage a reader/writer who would enable children and teenagers to develop storytelling and creative writing skills.

Adult history talks

These talks will take place in Portlaoise Library to celebrate the European Year of Cultural Heritage running throughout May 2018 and during Heritage Week 2018.

Decade of Commemorations

A community history project to research and develop projects to commemorate historical events through the remainder of the Decade of Commemorations.
