



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023–2027



Monaghan

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Foreword

We are delighted to welcome the Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 for County Monaghan. Following on from the success of the first Culture and Creativity Strategy for the county which has been implemented over the past five years, this new strategy will build on the engagement, understanding and adoption of creative and cultural programming and practices, delivering to an even broader population base in the county in the next five years.

When we started out on the delivery of the last strategy, we were entering new territory and adopting a new mechanism of bringing creativity and culture to the people of County Monaghan. The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented challenge to people from every walk of life across the country and in the context of delivering a Culture and Creativity strategy in the county. It forced the Creative Team in Monaghan County Council and the creative practitioners they worked with, to develop new ways of engaging with people in the community. It is fair to say that the experience of continuing to deliver the strategy through the pandemic has probably resulted in a more diverse, innovative, and successful programme of delivery resulting in a collection of projects, outputs and outcomes that could never have been envisaged at the outset.

Over the last five years of the first Culture and Creativity Strategy for County Monaghan, we set out to achieve a number of things – we wanted to engage more people in their own exploration of creativity and culture at all levels; we wanted to connect artists and creatives to community and industry; we wanted to encourage collaboration at all levels of the creative sector and across all facets of society; and we wanted to positively impact the wellbeing of our community both socially and economically. In reviewing the work

done, it is clear that we have achieved a great deal and in considering the next five years, it is even clearer how valuable the vehicle of culture and creativity can be to effect change, to harness the focussed energies of our population and to be a transformative influence in our lives.

On behalf of the people of the county, we would like to commend the Culture and Creativity Team and the creative practitioners they worked with, on their ingenuity, creativity, innovation, flexibility, and perseverance to explore and create authentic engagement experiences which have been developed and delivered over the life of the last strategy. There was a lot learnt out of necessity; technology was adopted and indeed relied upon in order to create reach in the community; creativity was called upon to re-imagine project ideas and to make them workable in a new delivery environment. Creative practitioners also thought BIG and then thought even BIGGER again, delivering a great return on the support and funding they received through the programme. And so, County Monaghan's cultural legacy has grown and has found new international audiences and collaborations.

The Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 will build on the firm foundations created during the first strategy and will develop more innovative programming in the areas of youth, communities, creative industries, the environment and health and wellbeing. Feedback from consultations conducted in the preparation of this strategy underline that we are still in the early stages of delivering on some of the priorities of the first strategy and these will be continued into this second five-year strategy, so it is very much a case of 'much done, but more to do'.

Having tested out engagement methodologies in the last five years, more focus will be included

on engaging creative practitioners, cultural places and spaces and communities on issues which are important to them, their quality of life and their future, specifically Health and Wellbeing and Climate Action and Sustainability. There is a role for the Creative Arts and Culture to play in relation to these important agendas by creating a space for self-expression, empowering people to take part in conversations, to take action and to make sustainable changes in their lives.

The Health and Wellbeing of the people in our county will be greatly enhanced if the people themselves find ways that they can become informed, understand, and take part in activities that aid their own wellbeing. Giving a spotlight to Health and Wellbeing as a running theme across this Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy will enable people, communities, and businesses to engage in a new way of thinking about how Health and Wellbeing can be individually tailored and nurtured to affect personal agency and positive outcomes.

Another most important running theme through the Strategy is Climate Action and Sustainability. Across the country, authorities, organisations, businesses, communities, and individuals are implementing actions which will reduce the impacts of future climate change and are identifying climate adaptation actions which will protect people, communities, and infrastructure. In County Monaghan the Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy is taking the lead from the county's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and over the next five years will use Creativity and Culture as mechanisms for empowering individuals, businesses, and communities to engage with biodiversity considerations, ways of becoming climate resilient and how they can reduce their carbon footprint.

It is clear to the Culture and Creativity Team that there is a hunger in the community for opportunities to engage in cultural and creative pursuits; there is much potential to support the further development of the creative industries sector in its own right; and that culture and creativity are effective mediums for educating society, engaging people in transformational conversations and effecting change around challenging topics like climate change and wellbeing.

We will continue to embrace the tradition of creativity and culture in County Monaghan bringing it to more people, in more ways and stretching the limits of what can be generated from the "stony grey soil of Monaghan". We invite you to join us on this voyage of discovery over the next five years.

Patricia Monahan

Chief Executive
Monaghan County Council

Councillor Sean Conlon

Cathaoirleach of
Monaghan County Council

1 Creative Ireland 2023–2027

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Blind Painting in Monaghan Library



A Memory of Water - Creativity in Older People Project

2

Culture and Creativity in County Monaghan

“We could splash paint on the school roof so a helicopter could film it!”

“Aye, or a mural with the name of everyone in the school!”

“Or a giant sculpture ... with a time capsule”.

“How about a maze on the football field, made out of hay bales?”

Creative Monaghan Landscape So Far...A Creative Associate Perspective by Declan Gorman, September 2022

These are from the recorded words of Fourth-Class children at a National School in rural County Monaghan in 2020. They were responding to an invitation to imagine without boundaries a future creative project for their compact campus, just off the old Castleblayney to Monaghan Road.

Sixth Class children about to graduate from that same school were asked to express their hopes and wishes for themselves, their families, and the wider world ten years hence. The words and images they created ranged from reassuringly familiar ones of grandparents' wellbeing, future ownership of super farm machinery and the continuing success of local GAA clubs, to concerns over global warming and an end to racist and homophobic sentiment around the globe.

“I want to live in a world where everyone can be who they want, wear what they want, love who they want, and be happy!”

If that mythical helicopter had flown on up, high above the school, it would have taken in a county much the same as the one celebrated and occasionally berated in the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh several decades earlier, but criss-

crossed with new lines, and overlaid with changed demographics and evolving ideas.

Next to the school, still standing proud, it would have seen St Michael's Church, designed by William Alphonsus Scott in the 1920s when Kavanagh was learning the farmer's trade and just beginning to 'dabble in verse'. Scott was interior designer for the stately home of that other great Irish poet of the early 20th century, William Butler Yeats, whose homeplace could scarcely have been more different to Kavanagh's humble farm twenty miles south at Inniskeen.

Returning to Dublin, along the old Monaghan Road, the chopper would have spotted Swallow Studios where renowned hand-weaver Liz Christie creates exquisite scarves described once as 'wearable art'. Liz shares her charming rustic studio complex with batik artist Louise Loughman. When the views of all 250 pupils at this national school had been compiled and collated, it was agreed that a collective visual art project across all classrooms would commence in 2022. Louise along with her sister Joanne came in to lead this process, under the banner of the Creative Schools Programme. While the emphasis in Creative Schools is on learning and process rather than polished product, parents attending an end-of-year ceremony were greatly enchanted by the samples of floating fabric and paper works hanging all around the school hall, a vivid capture of the creativity of a community of children as diverse and visionary as any in the world.

Up until 2007, anyone driving North from Dublin to Derry would have taken that winding Old Monaghan Road through Annyalla village, past the Swallow Studios, past St. Michael's church and school and on past St Coleman's Church of Ireland in nearby Clontibret. Now the fast cars whizz up the N2 bypass. Far from lost and forgotten, however, the village communities of Monaghan spared the highway traffic have thrived socially and culturally. Driving the bypass at night, strangers catch sight of the new Monaghan GAA Centre of Excellence,

floodlit like a futuristic sporting hive. The Entekra Centre is home for all 20 county GAA teams: football, hurling, ladies' football, camogie, and colleges. The complex at Cloghan also serves as a headquarters for the association's full-time administrative and coaching staff who work with clubs and schools across the county, emphasising 'participation, fun and improved coaching standards at all levels'. Kavanagh, who played goalkeeper on a mucky sloping field for Inniskeen Rovers, would have marvelled at the sight of it!

'Participation, fun and improved standards' might equally describe the remarkable impact of the Creative Ireland programme on the cultural life of Monaghan since its inception in 2017.

The Cultural Overview contained in the first Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy (2018-2022) captured a county steeped in literary and musical tradition, with vibrant and growing visual arts, crafts, film, and heritage sectors. Through Creative Ireland it has complimented and enhanced those traditions with new energies coming into play.

Cruinniú na n-Óg is now a major event on the annual county calendar, bringing creativity into the public realm and engaging children and young people as participants as well as onlookers. Participatory arts, while by no means a new phenomenon, has now moved to the centre of national and local cultural and social policy. In a world changing at a rate never before experienced, creativity has come to be understood as key to who we are, what we are capable of and how we need to be.

Creativity of course is a human instinct and behaviour much broader than the practice of the arts alone. But, belatedly perhaps, it is now understood that art and creativity is the engine that drives a creative nation. Artists and creatives are innovators by nature and trade: their role in guiding society through change, directly and indirectly, is vital.

Ireland has gone through exceptional change, even in the five years since Creative Ireland was launched by the then Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Heather Humphreys, (as it happens, a Monaghan woman). The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought

thousands of refugees to our shores, including many to a hospitable welcome in County Monaghan. Our schools are now representative of our culturally diverse society, as yesterday's migration patterns become today's richly textured communities. Meanwhile, Brexit and the changes it has wreaked continue to exercise the people of Monaghan, bordered as the county is by three of the six counties of Northern Ireland.

In the midst of all this upheaval, two of the past five years were taken up with the hitherto unimaginable crisis of a global pandemic, from which we are now just emerging. Among the sectors most set back by COVID-19 restrictions was the cultural and arts. Concerts, theatre, cinema and even gallery and museum visits all stopped. And yet never before was there such public and official acknowledgement of the importance of the arts in Irish society. It took scarcity to highlight the value. Online performances during darkest lockdown, and outdoor public art events during easings of restrictions, were welcomed and supported.

In County Monaghan, three key centres of arts programming, Íontas Arts Centre, the Garage Theatre, and the Patrick Kavanagh Centre, all turned on a sixpence and began to generate online programmes. Audiences at home began to notice the sheer breadth of artistic talent on their doorsteps, a phenomenon that had grown around us but often so organically that we scarcely noticed. Cruinniú na n-Óg went online. Amateur drama groups gamely put out content on Tik-Tok and YouTube.

Schools soldiered through the COVID-19 waves. Arts and drama workshops in the county's designated Creative Schools took place online, or, between lockdowns, in school yards or the football pitch.

Mural art flourished. Patrick Kavanagh, ubiquitous always on the Monaghan cultural landscape, became even more ubiquitous when his beaming visage appeared giant-sized on the wall at Rosie's Corner in Carrickmacross, the handiwork of noted muralist Omin. Ballybay commissioned a mural by another famous street artist, Maser, beautifully depicting local flora and fauna. The trend had already been set in Castleblayney where



Tradoodle Festival

a beautiful, rare image by Edwardian photographer JJ Clarke was reinterpreted on a wall opposite his old family home on York Street, by Omin.

Of course, all these artists and all of this activity were there prior to COVID-19. Before they sang and talked to us out of our laptops and phones, Monaghan's artists and appreciative audiences gathered at the Carrickmacross Arts Festival or the monthly Monaghan Arts Network events in the Market House, Íontas or The Garage. This is a showcase where visual artists show and speak about their work; composers try out new tunes; Monaghan bands and musicians with international profile do quiet homecoming evenings..

It is everywhere in Monaghan, this love of culture. The old blends with the new in calculated or accidental fusions that remind us how change

– perceived sometimes as frightening – can be wonderful. One magnificent moment during the pandemic was an intimate online concert at the Patrick Kavanagh Centre by contemporary composer Michael Gallen. As his band Sudden Wells gave their final song of the evening, “Going Gentle”, Michael was joined onstage by John McArdle who recited Kavanagh’s poem “October”. It was a moment of radiant beauty that provoked emotional responses around the country, even across the unsatisfactory online airwaves. Gallen’s remarkable opera “Elsewhere”, a telling of the forgotten tale of the Worker’s Soviet lock-in of 1919 at St. Davnet’s psychiatric hospital, premiered a year later at the Abbey Theatre, in a co-production with Once-Off Productions (Ireland) and Miroires Étendus (France). That opera had

already been previewed, not in Lille or Dublin or Paris, but at St Maeldoid’s church in the composer’s native Castleblayney, following a two-week residency by the international ensemble at Íontas. It is hardly an exaggeration to say the whole town turned out to see the performance, an experimental modern opera brought down home, a community making welcome a troupe of exotic artists who sang like rare calling birds by night, rehearsed all day, but got along just fine in between with everybody around the town, in the houses, tearooms, shops and bars. It was a visit that reminds us that artists are no more and no less than hardworking women and men with talents that can touch our hearts and intellects in new ways.

The weave of cultural connections within the county is endless. The Monaghan Soviet had appealed as a theme just a year earlier to another stalwart of the local stage, the much-loved amateur drama personality Aidan McQuillan whose untimely death in 2022 caused great sadness. Along with Brian Kenny, Aidan wrote and then directed “And a Red Flag Flying”, telling the same forgotten tale in a more traditional form with a local community cast. Aidan, as he often acknowledged, discovered his lifelong love of drama as a teenager, when he went out on the road with the legendary Ballintra Players – led by none other than John and Tommy McArdle.

Continuing this circular weave, the county’s main performance space, the Garage Theatre, was located for its first two decades on the very St Davnet’s grounds that featured in the above stage shows. It has now settled well into its new (2013) state of the art facility on the nearby Cavan & Monaghan Education & Training Board campus.

The Garage was one of the first regional theatres outside the larger cities to welcome touring professional theatre as well as hosting local shows. Its current location and association with CMETB make it an ideal resource to schools and educational bodies in the county. Home to the highly regarded Monaghan Youth Theatre, it is now also a hub for educational arts activity.

Many schools in County Monaghan are now centres of creative excellence. There were always school musicals and plays and art classes, but the modern Irish primary or secondary school is

radically different to those of even twenty years ago. The education system has taken immense strides forward, adjusting to the responsibility to provide modern, student-centred, creative learning to a culturally diverse population. The new Primary School Curriculum (2022) builds on the strengths of the 1999 curriculum, emphasising values such as inclusion, equality, and wellbeing side-by-side with subject-based learning. Arts Education is now one of the six core curriculum areas. The new Junior Cycle and proposed Leaving Cert reforms will guarantee a continuum of this creative journey through second level.

Sixteen County Monaghan schools have taken part in the Creative Schools programme since its inception in 2018, rising from just one in the first year to eleven in Year 3. Others have engaged with Creative Clusters which encourages schools to collaborate creatively and learn from one another. It is envisaged that more and more Monaghan schools will avail of these programmes as they continue to roll out nationally.

Such things were unimaginable when young Patrick Kavanagh traipsed off with his satchel to Kednaminsha School in the years before the Irish State was formed, and they remained a remote hope for generations despite the best endeavours of individual teachers, artists, and policy advocates.

When Kavanagh left school at 13 to farm, and began in his late teens to submit poetry, he was perceived – by his own description – as a ‘fool’ and felt compelled to migrate to Dublin. In 2022, a busload of second year pupils from Inver College in Carrickmacross drove out the few miles to visit the newly re-purposed Patrick Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen in the company of Monaghan artist Kate Beagan and Fingal poet Enda Coyle-Green. They stopped outside a local shop to picnic and sang and played Raglan Road. They rambled up a lane to the still-standing Billy Brennan’s barn, with the kind permission of the landowner. There, they sketched the buildings and landscape and wrote notes towards poems they would compose back at the school over the following weeks.

The student journals displayed later had notes and scribbles in Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian as well as English. A film of the day was made

by cameraperson, Barbara Egan. At the launch of the film, vivid charcoal, and painted works by the second year Art students showed detail of flaking barn doors, trees, fauna, the Fane River, and the window of Kavanagh's tiny bedroom. Three students read aloud poems they had written – one of them a fourteen-year-old girl of African heritage: the school caretaker and two students played traditional tunes. There was no song and dance about it all, no audience other than the students themselves, a few teachers, and the chairperson of CMETB who kindly dropped by. It was a special day, and yet just another day in a modern Monaghan creative school.

These are snapshots, this is County Monaghan now, in 2022, a place peppered with cultural surprises, a contemporary open, learning society where art and creativity is valued and practised. The trail was blazed for decades by courageous innovators, often striking out alone on lonely roadways, authors such as Evelyn Conlon, Mary O'Donnell, Patrick McCabe and

the many other writers and artists cited in the 2018 County Monaghan Overview of Culture. Far from threatened by the improved reception and wider public participation in culture, those established, living artists of excellence, are now more understood and appreciated. New artists and artforms are meanwhile emerging each year with support gradually increasing.

At the same time, in the same county, children and adults who may never take up a violin or paintbrush professionally are guided and encouraged in school, in clubs and on the streets of Monaghan, Clones, Castleblayney and the spaces in-between, to face forward and embrace change in new ways that are inclusive, questioning, and creative.



Mapping Nature Through Senses,
Art and Poetry Workshop

3

The Creative Ireland Vision for Monaghan County Council

The vision of Creative Ireland is that all citizens living in Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise his or her creative potential.

The Programme of initiatives and activities delivered under the Monaghan Culture and Creativity strategy will create space for people to explore creative activities, develop skills and hobbies, find their voice, develop and express opinions, become informed and develop knowledge, build awareness, take action, connect and engage with others, to participate in community action and activities, build their own confidence, nurture and release their inner creativity, laugh and have fun, relax and de-stress, feel good about themselves and with others.

Creative Ireland in Monaghan is:

- all about the journey, not the end result, it's about having a go and embracing the messiness of the creative progress;
- it's about expressing an inner voice in a way that makes your heart sing;
- it's about growth, development and sustainability;
- it's about taking small risks and becoming more ambitious;
- it's about the taking part and connecting with others;
- it's about the discovery and learning on the way;
- it's about embracing life and living more fully.

We want to enable local people to enjoy creativity, arts and culture on their own doorstep, facilitate access to creative and collaborative learning, and be a place where artists and creators can prosper

and contribute to society, by placing culture and creativity at the heart of the community. Monaghan County Council supports the practice of creativity in whatever form or medium and recognises that a vibrant cultural sector can enhance the socio-economic achievement of our county. It also recognises that creativity and culture can play a role in furthering our aspirations in respect of Climate Action and Health and Wellbeing. To this end, these Creative Ireland Pillars will be woven into the strategic priorities developed for the Pillars of Creative Communities, Creative Youth and Creative Industries.

Our vision for Creative Monaghan is:

In 2027, County Monaghan is a place where individuals and communities actively engage in cultural and creative opportunities which nurture our creative talent and mindset, whilst contributing to individual, social and economic benefits.

4

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

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

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

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

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

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

5

The Strategic Priorities for Monaghan County Council

The Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 had to respond to the circumstances in terms of delivery and engagement and that is what it did with comfort zones being pushed, previously identified impossibilities became possibilities and then realities. Creative practitioners and artists were empowered to think bigger, they were nurtured and facilitated to be ambitious, to take risks and to push their creative boundaries on a small scale, and then grow them on a larger scale. The programme has been responsive in its approach to supporting artists and creatives in their development of initiatives, projects, and programmes.

The first Culture and Creativity Strategy has introduced much broader thinking in the community at large about creativity and local culture. It has been proven as an effective vehicle for engaging members of the community in creative conversations about topics which are not historically seen to be associated with the creative field, but that can come alive to the participants when introduced through the context of the arts, creativity, heritage, and culture.

This Strategy for the period 2023-2027 will seek to build on the great foundation established working specifically on the three Pillars of Creative Youth, Creative Communities and Creative Industries but embedding the two Pillars of Creative Health & Wellbeing and Creative Climate Action and Sustainability.

Through this strategy:

- We want to continue utilising the methodologies that worked well in the past five years and to build on them;
- We want to engage a broader range of people, connecting them to each other and to their own self-expression through creativity and culture;

- We want to support creatives and creative industries to become stronger and more sustainable, presenting creativity as a worthy and valued life skill and potential career path to young people in the county.
- We want to elevate the presence of creative industries in the county and to explore the possibilities they present for County Monaghan in the future, in terms of creative achievement, economic and employment contribution and in terms of how it supports the sustainability of rural life.

Strategic Priority 1 Creative Youth

The second Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 will build on the engagement with children and young people achieved in the first strategy, increasing the impact of activities, and targeting harder to reach children and young people in both formal education settings as well as informal and community settings.

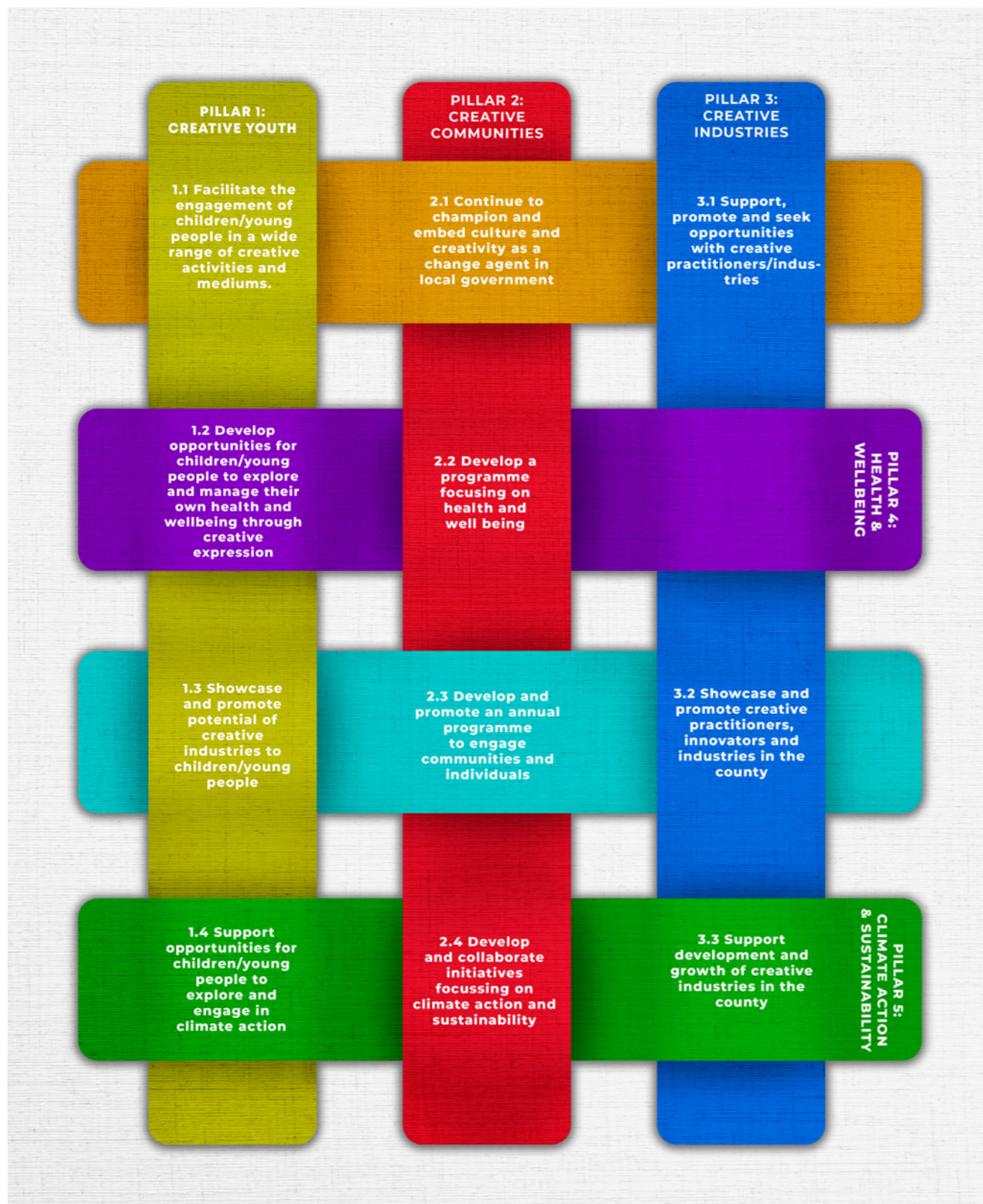
Given the significant high-growth potential associated with Creative Industries, allied with greater employment opportunities, these industries have the capacity to operate from and contribute to the rural economy of County Monaghan. Consequently, there is a role for this Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy to introduce young people to the opportunities of this sector over the next five years so that young people can explore and recognise the possibilities that may exist for them in this sector.

Embedded in this Pillar of the Monaghan Culture and Creativity strategy will be opportunities for children and young people to be empowered to explore, contribute to, and take positive action in respect to the issues, concerns and challenges of Health & Wellbeing and Climate Action.



Rossmore Castle through Minecraft. **Project by:** Monaghan County Museum

Rossmore Castle through Minecraft. **Project by:** Monaghan County Museum



Monaghan's Woven Objectives

The Creative Youth Pillar of the Creative Ireland Monaghan Strategy will ensure that children and young people embrace and develop their natural creative capacities, establishing practices which offer them full self-expression, contribute to their wellbeing and also nurturing skills which are sought after by employers the length and breadth of the country.

Priority 1 Objectives

1.1 Facilitate the engagement of children and young people in a wide range of creative activities and mediums as a means of developing their self-expression, personal agency, and voice in formal and informal education settings

- a. Through the Arts in Education Partnership deliver on the Arts in Education charter.
- b. Support & collaborate in actions from the Creative Youth Plan.
- c. Support & collaborate roll-out of the Music Generation Programme.

1.2 Develop opportunities for children and young people to explore and manage their own health and wellbeing through creative expression in collaboration with relevant key stakeholders (Links to Pillar 4: Creative Health & Wellbeing)

- a. Introduce children and young people to creative activities which can contribute to better mental health and self-regulation.
- b. Engage children and young people by creating opportunities to have discussions about relevant health care topics which could impact on building their resilience.
- c. Support and collaborate with the Planet Youth Programme.

1.3. Showcase and promote the potential of the creative industries of the county to children and young people (Links to Pillar 3: Creative Industries)

- a. Through collaboration with players in the Creative Industries, create and promote opportunities to make children and young people aware of the breadth of the Creative Industries and to explore the training, career and engagement possibilities that exist within its disciplines.
- b. Develop a series of personal profiles for Creative Heroes of the County utilising multimedia approaches.
- c. Create a virtual conference where young people can explore various avenues of the Creative Industries with some of the County's Creative Heroes.

1.4. Support opportunities for children and young people to explore, engage and collaborate on the topic of climate action and sustainability empowering them to take positive action (Links to Pillar 5: Creative Climate Action & Sustainability)

- a. Support creative activities for youth which engage and empower them to act progressively and collaboratively in relation to climate action and sustainability.
- b. Support creative opportunities for children and young people to engage with environmentalists to explore through the vehicle of creative activities/pursuits, how to effect positive change in their own communities.

**Strategic Priority 2
Creative Communities**

Under the Creative Communities Pillar of activity within the Monaghan Culture and Creativity Strategy for 2023-2027, the utilisation of a broad range of mediums will continue including visual arts, theatre, music and singing, storytelling, poetry, dance, crafts, film, photography, design and much more, as mechanisms to engage audiences of all ages from across the county in self-expression across a variety of cultural domains including language, cultural, artistic & built heritage, landscape, place and belonging and topical themes of importance such as health and wellbeing, bio-diversity, environment, climate action and sustainability.

The Strategy will adopt a specific focus on creatively engaging the harder-to-reach and less well integrated members of the community including new communities, whose individual cultural backgrounds offer opportunities for creative exploration and sharing through the programme. The key to engaging with these target groups will be to work in collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders in the county and to add creative value to existing programme delivery.

Through the programming delivered under this Strategic Priority, new ground will be broken on how challenging issues like the environmental protection, climate change, health and wellbeing can be engaged with, through the lens of creative work. This focus will promote learning, collaboration and partnership working between creatives, health professionals and environmentalists in order to creatively engage communities, businesses and individuals.

Priority 2 Objectives

2.1 Continue to educate, champion, and embed culture and creativity as a change agent which has relevance and a positive contribution to make in all facets of local government, agencies, and enterprises in the county.

- a. Promote and educate within Monaghan County Council the benefits of engaging with a culture & creativity lens in all aspects of work.
- b. Promote, educate, and share the benefits of adopting culture & creativity with partners, organisations & collaborators across the county as a vehicle for engaging public and effecting change.

2.2 Develop a programme focusing on health and wellbeing benefits (Links to Creative Wellbeing)

- a. Support creative practitioners to upskill and engage in how to creatively explore health & wellbeing and how to bring it to mainstream communities and to groups in the community who need a more tailored creative experience.
- b. Develop a range of initiatives which are recognised as contributing to better health and wellbeing and which provide individuals and communities with the tools to support their own self-care.
- c. Collaborate with key Health and Wellbeing partners to co-create or add value to initiatives i.e., HSE, Health Ireland, CYPSC, Mental Health, National Childcare Network.

2.3 Develop and promote an annual programme of initiatives that engage communities and individuals in accessing the benefits of creativity and culture, in person and through online platforms, which utilise the broadest range of creative mediums/vehicles () to engage audiences across the domains of language, cultural, artistic & built heritage, bio-diversity, environment, climate action, health & wellbeing, landscape, place and belonging, cultural integration, rural life etc.

- a. Support, promote and seek opportunities to further develop cultural & creative festivals in the county which reflect all aspects of cultural heritage.



Children enjoying 'Curious Creatures' creative art workshop with visual Artist Orla Kelly



Connecting through Clay Project



Carrickmacross Lace.
Photograph: Monaghan Tourism

- b. Support initiatives which engage with new communities in creative cultural activities which allow them to express and share their cultural heritage.
- c. Work with key partners to reach the harder to reach people in the community on issues that will make a positive impact on their lives.

2.4 Develop a programme of creative activities and initiatives that focus on the theme of Climate Action and Sustainability (Links to Creative Climate Action & Sustainability)

- a. Support opportunities for creative practitioners to upskill and engage with climate activities in collaboration, to further mechanisms to involve

people of Monaghan in conversations, activities and initiatives which progress action in relation to Climate Action and sustainability.

- b. Support a range of creative initiatives which focus on education and awareness building about climate action and sustainability matters as they relate to County Monaghan.
- c. Support a programme of activities which empower people and community groups in County Monaghan to take action on local climate action initiatives in line with the county's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

**Strategic Priority 3
 Creative Industries (including people & places)**

Through the Creative Industries pillar of the Creative Ireland Monaghan strategy, we will seek to create a sharper focus on the creatives in the county in the broadest sense. We want to get to know the industry representatives in County Monaghan from the creative arts practitioners to the businesses operating in the arenas of digital creative, design-based and content creation.

To support the Creative Industries, to grow and develop in County Monaghan we need to identify, showcase, and highlight the work done in the sector in the county. This will provide a platform collaboration with the sector and for introducing young people to the potential careers which exist in the sector.

Integral to the broader delivery of creative and culture-oriented programmes and initiatives under Priority 2, will be building the capacity of creative practitioners from within the county and to increase the pool of practitioners who are enrolled in delivering community programmes in different settings and on different themes including Health and Wellbeing and Climate Action and Sustainability. With both these new themes, creative programming will contribute to the goal of empowering individuals and communities to be able to take action themselves. Collaboration with practitioners in digital, design and content creation will further enhance the variety and methodologies which can be used to engage individuals and communities in nurturing their own creativity.

Priority 3 Objectives

3.1 Support, promote and seek opportunities to engage creative practitioners/industries based in the county in the roll out of creative programming which engages communities and individuals and in sustainable businesses which contribute to the economic, social, and cultural environment in the county.

- a. Identify opportunities that help develop local creative economies that support creative

practice to develop skills so that they can better engage with specific community audiences especially in the delivery of activities that impact on health and wellbeing and climate action and sustainability.

- b. Identify and support initiatives which engage new and younger creatives in programme delivery in the county e.g., buddy/mentoring scheme.
- c. Develop a forum for engaging creative practitioners, creative industries, creative places, and spaces as a mechanism for further learning, sharing and collaborative working.
- d. Establish an active and developing Creative Monaghan database capturing details of practitioners, creative industries, creative places, and spaces as a mechanism for further engagement, development, showcasing and engagement of practitioners of all mediums in the county.

3.2 Showcase and promote creative practitioners, creative innovators, and creative industries of the county

- a. Promote models of good creative practice emanating from the county as well as creating opportunities for creative practitioners and industry promoters to share in examples of good practice from further afield.

3.3 Support the development and growth of creative industries in the county

- a. Collaborate with the Local Enterprise Office and other relevant national agencies to create development opportunities for the creative industries in the county to develop their skills and therefore economic sustainability.
- b. Explore with creative industries and other relevant agencies in the county their needs to develop and grow in terms of facilities and workforce skills and engage in collaborative approaches to addressing these needs.

6 Implementation by the Monaghan County Council Culture and Creativity Team

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

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

The role of this team is to:

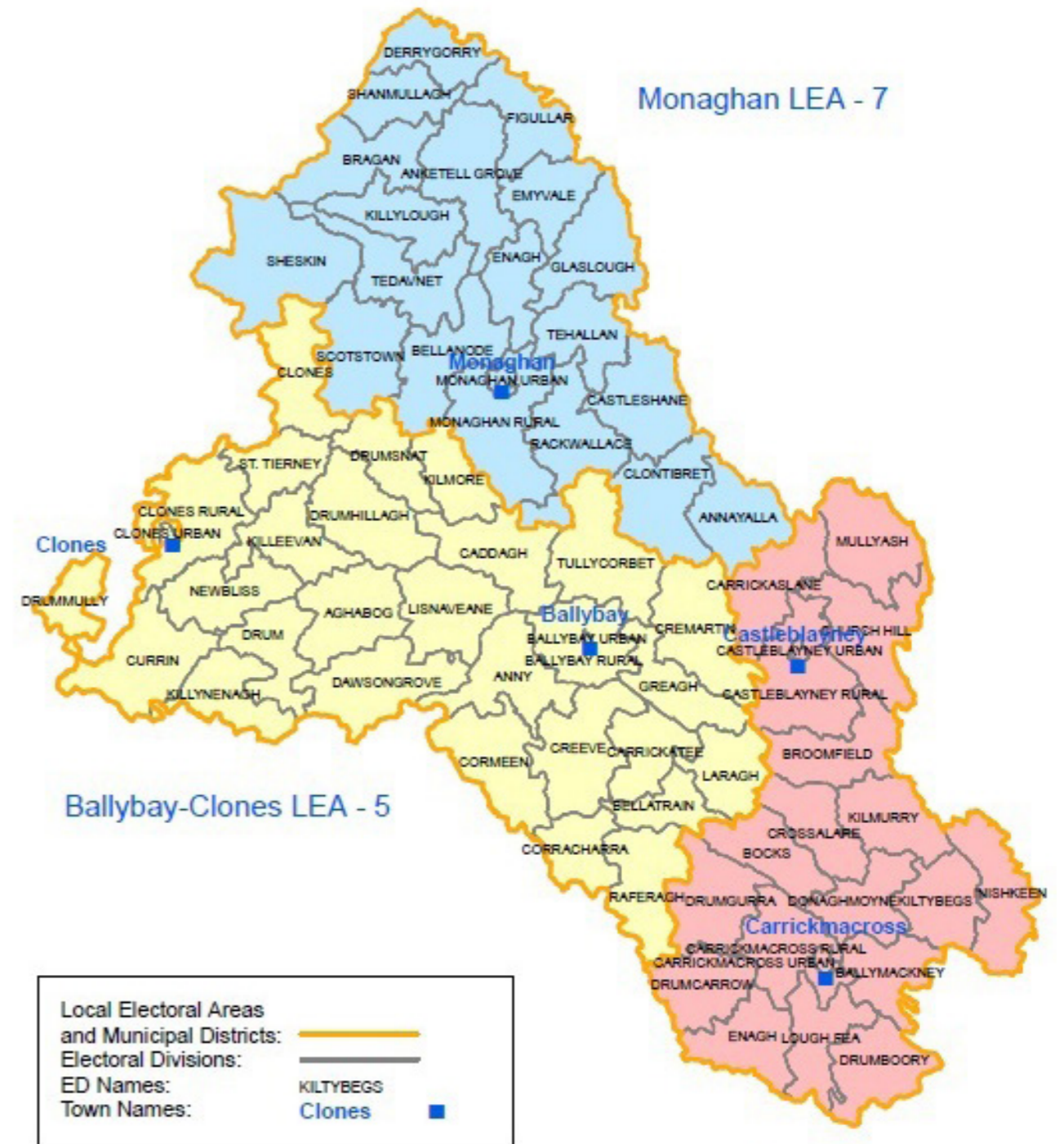
- Provide a collective forum for the ambition of culture and creativity within the local authority,
- Focus on diversity and inclusivity and enable harder to reach communities to participate in cultural and creative activities,
- Build on existing in-house expertise and strategies across areas of wellbeing,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

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


The delivery of the Strategy is led by the Director of Services for Finance, Housing & Culture and the members of the Culture and Creativity Team for Monaghan County Council include: County Librarian, Senior Executive Librarian, Museum Curator, Arts Officer, Heritage Officer, Patrick Kavanagh Centre Manager, Tourism Officer, LEO Business Advice Officer, Environmental Education Officer, Executive Planner/Economic Co-Ordinator, Age Friendly Officer, Europe Director Centre Coordinator, Local Arts in Education Partnership Coordinator, Healthy Ireland Coordinator


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


Map of Monaghan



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