



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023–2027



Fingal

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Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council



Forewords

Mayor’s Foreword

The development of a new Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027, a five-year plan for Fingal under the Creative Ireland Programme, will provide a framework for ongoing engagement between the community, creative practitioners, artists, and Fingal County Council. This is the second Creative Ireland strategy and in looking back at our achievements over the past 5 years there is a real sense of a widening of participation of our communities in the arts and creative activities. Over the past five years, Fingal has engaged thousands of citizens with a wide range of programming which aimed to be creative, inclusive, and innovative. These projects ranged from Concerts in Care Homes to *Cruinniú na nÓg* projects for young people to community funding for groups for exhibitions and festivals.

It is true that Fingal is a county rich in diversity and culture and Fingal County Council actively engages with communities and citizens to encourage this. The Creative Ireland Programme will continue to foster this diversity and interest in creativity and culture at a local and national level.

Creativity is also at the heart of healthy and happy communities, whether through placemaking, celebrating cultural diversity, integration, or encouraging a creative and innovative population. The next five year strategy will continue to build on these principles while encompassing strategic priorities around our places, citizens, services, and communities. The new strategy will build on networks and collaborations established very successfully through the lifetime of the first strategy and will further enhance collaborative projects across the county.

Over the course of my time as Mayor, I have been delighted to launch and participate in a number of events including the launch of the *Write Time Festival* and the *Festival in a Van*, which

welcomed our Ukrainian guests in two Fingal centres, and I welcome the opportunity provided by events such as these to engender a growth in community engagement, creativity, and integration.

I welcome this strategy which identifies strategic priorities to underpin, inform, and develop a wide-ranging response to creativity and culture in the community. This strategy will continue to build on successful collaborations across organisations and communities and facilitate the sustained impact of the Creative Fingal initiative through ongoing public engagement and interagency collaboration with a range of stakeholders across all sectors in Fingal.

Howard Mahony
Mayor

Chief Executive’s Foreword

The Creative Ireland Programme is a creative and wellbeing programme built around the premise that everyone should have the opportunity to realise their creative potential. Themes of collaboration, identity, wellbeing, and creativity underpin every aspect of the programme. The Creative Communities pillar of the programme has been entrusted to local authorities and they have had a crucial role in the overall local delivery of the programme through their Culture and Creativity teams.

In 2017, on foot of the success of the 2016 centenary celebrations, each local authority was tasked with the development of a Creative and Cultural strategy to span a five-year period. Our ambitious strategy set out our vision, values, and strategic priorities for Fingal in relation to culture and creativity. In the last five years much has been achieved.

The *Cruinniú na nÓg* programme has grown from strength to strength and has seen hugely diverse arts and cultural events for children including *Fox, Bird, River, Sing!* – a unique audio play commissioned for children, created by artists Thomas Johnston and Orla Kelly. *If Trees Could Talk* invited children to explore the photographic work of artist Louis Haugh, and the *Talisman* exhibition at Newbridge House resulted in a collaborative exhibition between artist Barbara Knezevic and students at St. Joseph’s Secondary School Rush. Two story trails have also been established in Argillan Castle and Kenure Park. A STEAM programme has been established across the library network with a fully functional maker space operational in Blanchardstown library, which encourages community learning and involvement in creative activities.

We have engaged with and supported many local community groups including men’s and

women’s sheds, local heritage groups, local artists, early years practitioners, musicians, authors, illustrators, filmmakers, and more. This engagement has led to positive and strong growth in culture and creativity in all its guises across Fingal.

The aim of the first Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018–2022 was to harness the wealth of creativity across Fingal, to foster a sense of wellbeing, integration, and inclusivity and to effectively use a collaborative and cross departmental approach in Fingal County Council using the skills of staff under the umbrella of the Culture and Creativity team. This team included staff from arts, libraries, heritage, architects, IT, economic development, and communities. It is through this team that many wide-ranging projects were undertaken.

The new five-year strategy was built on a strong consultation process with input from the public, the Culture and Creativity team, the Public Participation Network, community groups and arts practitioners, illustrators, architects, and authors. This has informed a strategy that looks to high-level strategies, goals, and policies including those around our changing demographics, making our cities and towns great places to live, work, and invest in, digitalisation, our towns and town-centres, and climate change. The new five-year strategy will seek to work within these strategy areas to deliver an enhanced approach to enabling creativity and wellbeing for all of our citizens. We believe that this strategy will support further development of cultural and creative capital in Fingal and support the talented, diverse, and growing population to explore their potential.

AnneMarie Farrelly
Chief Executive

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



Daily cloud, Chris Judge and students at Balbriggan ETNS.
Photograph: Coalesce



Design a buggy with the Fingalmaker.
Photograph: Coalesce

2 Culture and Creativity in Fingal

Fingal's vibrant community is one of the youngest and most ethnically diverse in the country and is continuing to grow rapidly. Preliminary results of the 2022 census indicate that the population of Fingal has grown to 329,218, representing an increase of 11% since 2016 compared to national average growth of 8% (LGMA 2022)¹. The county also has three of the fastest growing electoral divisions in the state, namely Balbriggan, Blanchardstown, and the Ward.²

Fingal has significant economic advantages, not least of which are a young and well-educated workforce and relatively high employment rate. Proximity to Dublin City and Port, Fingal's location on the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, and Dublin Airports position in the heart of the county are also significant economic drivers. The Dublin Enterprise Zone, located in Blanchardstown, comprises of companies in the IT and pharmaceutical sectors, and Fingal is also home to the Technological University Dublin (formerly the Blanchardstown Institute of Technology) and has close links with Dublin City University.

Fingal is steeped in history and rich agricultural, industrial, and maritime heritage. This cultural resource is an important aspect to tourism in Fingal, with key visitor attractions including Ardgillan Demesne, Newbridge House, Malahide Castle and Gardens, and Skerries Mills. The county has rich biodiversity and natural heritage including landscapes, geology, habitats, wildlife, and the distinctive coastline and islands off the coast of Fingal.

The culture and creativity of previous generations is reflected in the landscape, from archaeological sites and monuments to thatched houses, castles and demesnes, to music, the arts, and folklore. Mumming (masking or masquerade), one of Fingal's long and continuous traditions is even included in Ireland's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage.³ In more recent times,

the 16% of our citizens that are non-Irish nationals (2016 Census) have further enriched the cultural heritage of the county with diverse tradition, arts, and creative practice. Fingal has a vibrant and diverse community of creative practitioners, a network of community groups passionate about culture and creativity, and a curious community, who have shown strong engagement with the Creative Ireland Fingal Programme.

Fingal libraries engage the community through an innovative programme of events and activities, which encompass all facets of creativity from art to technology with an emphasis on inclusion for all. Collaboration across the community and within the local authority has helped to foster an inclusive approach to culture and creativity.

Libraries also have a key role in delivering Creative Ireland projects within our library network and ensuring that our citizens have access to emerging technologies by offering STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) based activities for all ages. Fingal libraries have also had a role in the delivery of the *Cruinniú na nÓg* programme since its inception with events throughout the library branches, maker events, the creation of two permanent story trails and sensory events.

The creation of the maker space in Blanchardstown library and the appointment of a maker in residence have provided a space for the community to learn about innovative technologies in a unique setting where creativity is encouraged and protected. This space aims to encourage an entrepreneurial, enquiring and learning mind set in our citizens and a creative approach to problem solving.

¹ Source: Census 2022 Population, Review of preliminary data published by the CSO. LGMA Research, September 2022
² Source: Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy 2019 - 2024
³ Source: National Inventory of Intangible Heritage <https://nationalinventoryich.chg.gov.ie/mummers-of-fingal/>

The co-location of the new County library in the Swords Cultural Quarter with a theatre, gallery and maker space will create synergies and new ways of working creatively with the community in relation to creative and cultural programmes. An opportunity exists to further cement successful collaborative projects with the Arts Office within this space.

Fingal Arts Office offers commissioning opportunities and encourages broad public participation in and through the Public Art Programme and Youth and Education Programmes. 'Developing our Capacity' is a pillar of the Arts plan, and the Arts Office are constantly looking for ways to develop new creative spaces for people. Through Fingal's Youth & Education Programme (*Cruinniú na nÓg and Music Generation*), more children and young people across the county have had the opportunity to explore their creativity, and deepen their learning in and through the arts, thus ensuring a place for the arts in their lives. Fingal's Public Art Programme commissioned several signature initiatives, that have encouraged and enabled people from all our communities to engage with art.

The Arts Office supports the development of the Swords Cultural Quarter and the *Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Programme*, which are in delivery at present. Draíocht Arts Centre and the Seamus Ennis Arts Centre, continue to provide a variety of studios and education spaces for creativity and creating art. During *Cruinniú na nÓg 2022*, Draíocht provided a venue for Make Space — for open-ended, intergenerational, play-based creativity for an early years and family audience. Creative practitioners collaborated in an interdisciplinary way to develop and curate the space where visitors were encouraged to manipulate and explore the characteristics of natural materials through pouring, weaving, tracing, mark-making, and arranging.

Reflecting on the Creative Ireland Fingal 2018–2022 Strategy

At local level, the implementation of Creative Ireland Fingal has been making a difference through successful delivery of a myriad of initiatives with

interdisciplinarity, innovation and collaboration at the core, which have raised the profile of arts and creativity. This has presented opportunities for cross departmental collaboration within the Council, which supports embedding culture and creativity to provide opportunities for all of our citizens to engage in culture and creativity, in the broadest sense.

Community consultation

Consultation with creative practitioners, members of the public, and community groups revealed the views of those consulted, on the strengths of the programme. The support provided to artists including provision of space, funding and infrastructure were identified as having strong appeal.

"The Universal support for artists and creativity, with specific pillars that show a willingness to listen to artists on the ground is promising and encouraging".

"The focus on infrastructure. Once there is a creative space available to artists/ studios/ communal print studio/art gallery... it will enable the creative potential to flourish".

The inclusive and broad scope of the programme, and how it defines creativity is valued and has enabled the programme to reach a range of audiences of all ages and backgrounds, including those that are underserved in terms of access to the arts. Funding enabled community groups including bands, residents' associations, early years education providers and scout groups to be involved in a diverse range of projects. Programmes that involve public art displays, performance in public spaces, and teaching music are valued, and continued support would be welcomed.

"The financial and practical support given to groups such as ourselves to deliver programmes in a non-elitist way have enabled us to reach out to parts of the community often left behind. We very much welcomed this..."

The role of the programme in raising awareness of climate change was also acknowledged.

“The Creativity and Climate Change initiative is a great initiative to drive awareness of the core issue facing this generation. It would be great for that strand to become a foundational part of every strategy moving forward...”

Creative practitioners welcomed opportunities for co-creation or collaboration with audiences, which is central to art and creative practice for younger people in particular. Models of sustained engagement and commissioned projects (rather than once-off events) are seen as beneficial in terms of creative practice and audience experience. Heritage properties (e.g., Swords Castle, Ardgillen Park) and parks provided wonderful venues for community use, while pop-up spaces in other Council properties also extended opportunities for engagement.

Showcasing Success

- **Let’s Play Rush** is a partnership approach to developing opportunities to introduce and develop play and placemaking activities in the town. The project is part of an EU URBACT project called the “Playful Paradigm” with a National Transfer Network Initiative in Ireland that aims to share good practice with Irish towns, including Rush. Rush’s plan focused on raising awareness of the benefits of play, increasing public play opportunities, using play as a catalyst for inclusion, promoting integration and community building. The partners developed creative approaches to bringing play to the fore for people of all ages including a story trail in Kenure Woods, a boules court for older people, play bags with equipment for use on green spaces, and art classes for senior citizens. Streets were closed for play with drumming circles, dance troupes and music. Community stakeholders have taken ownership of the project, which is stimulating community response, getting people involved on the ground, and building collaboration at local level to make the project more sustainable.

- *Cruinniú na nÓg*, Fingal has a young population and has embraced *Cruinniú na nÓg* and delivered a diverse and exciting programme annually. The Arts Office has commissioned new, high-quality work with or for children and young people, which supports artists and creative practitioners involved in design and delivery of the programme. Commissioned projects provided opportunities for testing new, interdisciplinary models of engagement with key target groups, resulting in an exciting crossover between art, play, architecture and design, nature study, and history. For example:

- **Fox, Bird, River, Sing!** A unique audio play commissioned for children created by artists Thomas Johnston and Orla Kelly, which premiered on RTÉ Junior Radio. A website of resources for family and early years audiences extended the engagement.

- **If Trees Could Talk** invited children to explore the photographic work of artist Louis Haugh. A billboard and bus shelters in Portmarnock were activated as public outdoor sites for learning and enabled children to view his work at scale, creating an art trail throughout the coastal town.

- **The Talisman** exhibition at Newbridge House was a collaborative exhibition between artist Barbara Knezevic and students of St. Joseph’s Secondary School Rush. The project provided young people with an opportunity to meaningfully engage with the rich material collection of Newbridge House through a series of artistic workshops led by the artist, and curator Cathal Dowd Smith.

- Local young people (aged 14 – 18 years) joined Islander Architects at Mill Pond Park Balbriggan, for **Plyscape**, a free interactive architectural workshop which invited participants to build increased agency over their built environment as they customised plywood elements to build, reconfigure, and rebuild over the course of the day-long workshop.

Fingal STEAM Programme

Fingal Libraries have spearheaded the design and implementation of the Fingal STEAM Programme, a strategic priority identified in the Fingal Culture and Creativity strategy 2018–2022. This aligns with the *Fingal Digital Strategy 2020–2023* objective of supporting digital education and training to increase citizen digital skills and digital literacy.

In 2021, Make Create Innovate were contracted by Fingal Libraries to set up a custom-built maker space in Blanchardstown library and to develop and roll out a maker programme for the people of Fingal. The project was co-funded under the Creative Ireland Programme and by July 2022, 1,500 people had engaged in 150 sessions and events. A diverse programme was rolled out to attract those who may not already have had maker skills and workshop topics included: 3D printing, laser cutting, game development, coding, t-shirt making, visible mending, and web design. Independent evaluation found that:

“Children, young people and adults have been provided with free access to a contemporary new space, with new tools, new people and new experiences that have relevance to their lives... The act of making, in a way that combines creativity with technology, provides people with invaluable dynamic learning experiences, which differ from the type of teaching and learning they may be more commonly exposed to in formal educational and professional contexts. This not only opens up new ways of learning but, importantly, engages people who learn differently”. (Whitebarn Consulting 2022)

The STEAM programme also provided mini maker days in Balbriggan and Donabate libraries and an online STEAM programme was delivered in 15 schools. Coding education in libraries has been augmented by the purchase of coding licenses that learners and parents can access for free. Collaboration between the

maker and TU Dublin has resulted in delivery of an introduction to computer aided design for makers and educators.

Festival of History (Decade of Commemorations)

The Culture and Creativity Team was set up in 2017 and brought together expertise from throughout Fingal County Council to develop a five-year programme of events for the Decade of Commemorations. There is a wealth of local history knowledge in Fingal, which the Festival of History taps into. The programme of talks explores a range of events from the centenary of the First Dáil, to the Sack of Balbriggan in 1920, the Burning of the Coastguard Stations in 1921 and the Trams of Howth Hill. This decade-long programme is facilitating sustained community engagement, increasing awareness of local history and will provide a legacy piece for future generations in the form of the Fingal Decade of Centenaries Digital Repository.

The Arts Office has also been collaborating with Local Studies and Archives on creative approaches to commemorations. A unique film and writing commission about the *Burning of the 6 Coastguard Cottages* in Fingal by the IRA were developed in partnership with the Irish Writers Centre. In 2022 a new film entitled *Peace to the Ashes*, was commissioned about the life and legacy of local volunteer Frank Lawless, and the historical significance of his funeral which took place in 1922, at Rolestown Cemetery outside Swords.

3 The Creative Ireland Vision for Fingal

Making Fingal a great place to live, work, visit, and do business lies at the heart of all of the Council's plans and policies and the vision for this strategy is that creativity, culture and the arts will be accessible to and valued by everyone. This Culture and Creativity Strategy will support the delivery of objectives in relation to wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, heritage, arts, culture, tourism, and economic development through cross departmental collaboration. This strategy is underpinned by our core values including democratic and civic leadership, a focus on engaging and inspiring our citizens, inclusion, valuing people and encouraging their development, and sustainability.

The Culture and Creativity Team has identified specific areas of focus that have most potential for long-term impact in Fingal. This will facilitate and consolidate efforts to embed creativity across the work of the Council and align with the vision, principles, and values of Creative Communities. Creative Ireland Fingal will build on successful implementation to date and continue to support access and participation for all our citizens by providing space for culture and creativity and continuing to support artists and creative practitioners, to build capacity for connecting artists and other creative practitioners to communities.

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 Fingal 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 Fingal

Changing population and demographics

Preliminary results of the 2022 census show that Fingal continues to be one of the largest and most rapidly growing counties. Data from the previous census in 2016 revealed that about 42% of the population of the county were under 30 years of age, as compared to the national average of 39%. Over 13% were aged 60 and over as compared with 18% nationally, although there is still a high population of older people in the county. Fingal substantially exceeded the national profile in the 0–15 and 25–39 age categories and 16% (65,000) of the population were non-Irish nationals.

This strategy and the Creative Ireland Fingal Programme will need to respond to the demographic profile of the county to reflect the core values of Creative Communities such as broadening access to, and participation in, cultural, and creative activities locally. This local context supports the rationale for embedding culture and creativity as a catalyst for community wellbeing and health, social cohesion, and economic development across the work of the Council. Access to appealing opportunities to develop and express creativity and celebrate diverse cultures can support representation. We will continue to develop models that promote culture, creativity and arts, support social inclusion and show leadership in embracing diversity and opportunity.

Delivery of this strategic objective will be aligned with other policies and plans. For example, the *Fingal Local Economic Community Plan 2016–2021* sets out themes of Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion, Tourism, Environment and Heritage, within which culture and creativity have a natural fit. The process for devising the new Fingal Local Economic Community Plan 2022–27 is underway and will continue to incorporate these thematic areas in the new plan.

The Healthy Fingal Strategic Plan 2021–2025

presents a vision for a Healthy Fingal where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and well-being to their full potential, and where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society. Nurturing creativity and the sense of belonging supported by engaging with and celebrating culture can contribute to good mental health and wellbeing in all age ranges.

Culture and creativity can also continue to support delivery of the *Fingal Age Friendly Strategy 2018–2023* which recognises the importance of participation in leisure, social, and cultural activities with family and in the community, to allow older citizens to continue to exercise their competence, enjoy respect and esteem, and maintain or establish supportive and caring relationships.

Fingal County Council Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy 2019 – 2024 outlines a range of actions, the delivery of which can be supported by Creative Ireland Fingal. For example, providing opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity in Fingal, both at a local level and at county wide events, and the further development of collaborative initiatives to promote integration in libraries, parks, community centres, and schools.



Make space at Draiocht.

Photograph: Coalesce

Making cities/counties great places to live, work, visit and invest in.

The strategic vision of the Draft Fingal County Development Plan 2023–2029 seeks that:

Fingal will embrace healthy placemaking and economic prosperity through building cohesive and sustainable communities, where our cultural, natural and built environment is protected. Fingal will continue to be a county of distinctive environmental, historical and cultural assets and local communities, with sustainable development fostering a high-quality of life for those who live, work and visit here. A sustainable future for the county will be based on the interdependence of the themes of economic growth, social progress and environmental quality with the aim of increasing the county's self-reliance and resilience.

Placemaking attracts people and inward investment to the county. Culture and creativity are a vital catalyst for collaboration and innovation in achieving community wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development. Focusing on this strategic priority will strengthen our capacity to integrate culture and creativity across placemaking and regeneration programmes and the development of more vibrant, creative, and sustainable places where heritage, arts, and culture are treasured and celebrated.

The *Fingal County Council 2019–2025 Arts Plan* envisions a county which invests in and champions the arts and where the arts are valued in people's everyday lives. The Creative Ireland Fingal Programme will continue to collaborate with the Arts Office in enabling and encouraging public participation; enabling the creative and professional development of artists, creatives and arts organisations; fostering a culture of innovation and exemplary practice; and developing capacity of Fingal County Council and its Arts Office in terms of knowledge, skills, and resources. *Fingal Heritage Plan 2018–2023* highlights how our cultural heritage enriches our lives and adds to a sense of wellbeing and belonging. It is part of each

local area's distinct identity and adds to our sense of place. Sharing and celebrating our heritage and diverse cultures promotes wellbeing and supports social inclusion. Communicating our heritage to a wide audience is a key aspect of protecting and celebrating our unique history and culture.

Working cross-departmentally we will continue to leverage the opportunities presented by the Creative Ireland Programme for Fingal to develop and implement creative, innovative, integrated ways of public engagement with heritage. We will target new audiences across all social, ethnic, and age groups with programmes and events and support community led heritage initiatives. In terms of tourism, the primary appeals and motivations to visit the county are embedded in its built heritage, its coastline, and its urban/rural balance of living culture and festival experiences. Creative Ireland Fingal can help to optimise the experience for visitors.

Climate action

Fingal County Council Climate Action Plan 2019–2024 sets targets of a 33% increase in energy efficiency by 2020 and a 40% decrease in CO₂ emissions by 2030 for the Council's activities. The Council will help to make Fingal climate-resilient and play a leadership role in transitioning to a decarbonised society, climate proofing our strategies, policies and procedures and actively engaging our citizens. The plan recognises the crucial role of the community and the need for a range of innovative programmes and partnerships to facilitate bottom-up, community-led solutions.

This strategic priority can ensure that creativity and culture are used to support delivery of one of the four main target areas of the Climate Action Plan by actively engaging and informing citizens on climate change. This can build on exciting, creative initiatives such as Linte na Farraige, a series of light installations across Irish coastal sites including Balbriggan Lighthouse, which reveal the risks of rising sea levels and demonstrate the need for climate action to protect our coastlines.

Town Centre first and/or rural economy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019–2031 for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Area, which sets out a strategic plan to shape development is underpinned by three cross cutting principles; healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity. The plan has a section on 'Access to Arts, Culture, Language and Heritage' and sets out Regional Policy Objectives relating to culture and identity, culture/heritage led regeneration, the audio-visual sector, Irish language, cultural tourism. Investing in culture, and creativity can support environmental, social, and economic returns that help deliver regional and local plans.

The Creative Ireland Fingal Programme will be leveraged to support regeneration initiatives that are already underway or planned over the lifetime of the strategy including, for example, the *Swords Cultural Quarter* and *Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Programme*. Nurturing the cultural and creative potential of Balbriggan as a visitor destination, location for investment and place which attracts, nurtures, and retains creative skills and talent forms a key part of *Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Programme*, led by Fingal County Council's Economic, Enterprise, Cultural, and Tourism Department.

As part of the rejuvenation of Swords town centre, Fingal County Council are planning to build a new Civic and Cultural Centre in the heart of Swords' county town. The building will include a County Library that will cover 3,000m², a theatre with seating for 165 people, an art gallery and exhibition space, a maker space to encourage creativity, studios and rehearsal rooms for the arts, an archive and local studies library and a café.

Digitalisation and ongoing transformation

The Fingal County Council Corporate Plan 2019–2024 highlights how the Council will use digital technologies to enable the design of services which meet the needs of citizens and businesses, which are easier for citizens and businesses to use, and which are more cost-effective for the council to deliver. A strategic focus on digitalisation and ongoing transformation for Creative Ireland Fingal will support the delivery of the Digital Community

Pillar of the *Fingal Digital Strategy 2020–2023*.

This aims to enable communities to access digital skills and services and unlock opportunities for all. Specific objectives relate to promotion of digital inclusion and improved digital equality, engagement amongst minority groups, and supporting digital education to increase citizen digital and literacy.

Fingal Libraries Development Plan 2018–2023 sets out a vision for our branch network as dynamic and inclusive spaces supporting culture, recreation, literacy, education, and economic development in the county. Libraries are also key points of access to information technology and digital services for the community. The development of the Fingal STEAM programme, with support from Creative Ireland is already delivering on actions and objectives of the Digital Strategy and Library Development Plans for the county through the development of library maker space, makers in residence initiatives, and STEAM programmes for the community.

Stakeholder feedback indicates that Creative Ireland Fingal support has shifted the focus from purely tech-based making, which has enabled broader creative practices. This has resulted in programmes appealing to a wider audience, in particular women and girls. A multidisciplinary approach provides more entry points for people to start with something they are comfortable with and then develop new skills. Artists and creatives bring strong practice and develop their skills in using the equipment to develop workshops.

Creative practitioners involved in the delivery of the Creative Ireland Fingal Programme highlighted the fact that digital engagement offers huge potential to continue to engage schools in interactive art and creativity. This approach was developed during the pandemic and reached large audiences in schools.



Grasshoppers Early Years
Festival. **Photograph:** Coalesce

6 Implementation by the Fingal Culture and Creativity Team

Fingal 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 Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural development and the members of the Culture and Creativity Team for Fingal County Council which includes the Arts Officer, Youth Arts Officer, County Librarian, Senior executive librarian, SEO EECTD, Heritage Officer, Conservation Officer, Communications Officer and the Fingal Events Officer.

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

Playscale Balbriggan architecture
Photograph: Coalesce



Map of Fingal



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