



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023–2027



Kildare

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Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

Foreword

When Kildare’s Culture and Creativity team prepared the previous Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018–2022, we could not foresee that during the life of that strategy we would live through a global pandemic. Thankfully, we are emerging from the shadow of the pandemic with a reinforced appreciation for the extraordinary role that creativity played in helping people to stay connected and nourished. These difficult circumstances also prompted a rethinking of our immediate environment and outdoor spaces, further supporting the value we place on the distinct topographical landscape in Kildare, which is steeped in history, heritage and story.

The success of Kildare’s Creative Ireland Programme to date can be credited largely to the wealth of knowledge and ambition of the artists, creatives, local history, environment and heritage experts and enthusiasts who have embraced it. Existing projects have been reimaged or expanded and new projects were sought out and nurtured. Under the stewardship of the Economic, Community and Cultural Development Strategic Policy Committee, we have drawn on the collective expertise of our Culture and Creativity team to get this far.

Preliminary data from Census 2022¹ indicates that Kildare has the fifth largest population in Ireland, with 246,977 individuals living here, an increase of 11% since 2016. This additional demand on resources presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the cultural offering in the county. We also know that many creatives live and work in County Kildare. This was reaffirmed in autumn 2022, when 84 artists from Kildare were awarded support under the Government’s ground-breaking Basic Income Scheme², with the 4th highest allocation of artists per county in the country. ‘*Creative Communities*’ is the partnership between central and local government within the Creative Ireland Programme. It sets out the framework to support the delivery of our ambition, applying the national to the local, while drawing on the knowledge of our local authority counterparts across the country. For parity of opportunity and to celebrate the particularity of place, this Strategy confirms the commitment to provide opportunities throughout Kildare; across the 5 Municipal Districts. This strategy extends the Council’s commitment to value the work of artists and creatives in their own right to connect communities to further support their practice through Kildare’s Creative Ireland Programme — they provide the heartbeat for what we do.

Looking ahead, the Strategic Objectives highlighted in the new Strategy (2023–2027) have been prioritised following regular engagement with creatives, strategic partners and stakeholders. We are also cognisant of how the world is in a state of flux, amid the climate crisis and the war in Ukraine. Such uncertainty can seem overwhelming, but as we saw with Covid19, working through creative methods, we can offer empathic and

considered ways to engage and work towards understanding and alternative solutions. No doubt, there will be plenty of opportunity for fun and sparks of magic too!

Fintan Brett
Cathaoirleach

Sonya Kavanagh
Chief Executive



George Mansfield Photographic
Archive digitisation project,
Kildare Local Studies &
Archives collections.

1 Census 2022 Population. Review of preliminary data published by the CSO. LGMA Research. September 2022.
Dr. Bernie O'Donoghue Hynes and Dr. Des Delaney

2 gov.ie - Groundbreaking Basic Income for the Arts pilot scheme grants awarded (www.gov.ie)

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:

- Creative Youth
- Creative Communities
- Creative Industries
- Creative Health and Wellbeing
- 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 Kildare Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027 is to support participation, inclusion and expression within communities, and further strengthen local creative economies.



HerStory Illumination project,
Kilkea Castle, Kildare, St. Brigid’s
Day 2022. **Photograph:** Michael
O’Rourke Photography

2 Culture and Creativity in Kildare

Reflecting on the 2018–2022 Culture and Creativity Strategy and emerging from Covid 19, the importance of creativity and culture in the lives of communities in Kildare, as active participant or audience have been reaffirmed for Kildare’s Culture and Creativity team. Over the course of the 5-year strategy, it was our intention to extend the opportunity for everyone in County Kildare to be creative and to create work that sustains, provokes and inspires individuals and communities.

From 2018–2022, the total investment from Creative Ireland to Kildare’s Creative Ireland programme was €801,250, which was assigned to a diverse range of projects across climate action, citizen scientist, technology, wellbeing, social inclusion, art and Irish Language projects, which reflects our ambition. Significant funding was allocated annually for Bursary Awards that prioritised collaboration across multi-disciplinary and creative practices, stimulating the formation of new and exciting relationships. The programme enabled events and seminars including the Creative Rathangan Meitheal series, a cross-disciplinary Art and Heritage Seminar, Military Seminar, Curragh Seminar and a Walking Festival.

Complementary to the ethos of our work, the pandemic reminded us of the importance of our locality and outdoor spaces, for wellbeing and recreation, as an outdoor classroom and to connect with nature. Bespoke projects such as the annual *Cruinniú na nÓg* programme celebrated creativity in children and young people, while also embracing the outdoors, with Forest Schools workshops in Mullaghcreelan and the grounds of Castletown House and Go Fly Your Kite creations. Play Acting and Griese Youth Theatres have created a range of novel site-specific plays in response to their locale and also joined Explore and Kildare Youth Theatres to participate in Youth Theatre Ireland’s Cruinniú programme. We seek out creative interventions to

support the physical wellbeing of our communities and promote physical literacy. One such example is the Tow Path Trails Booklet, a walker’s guide and information resource for tow paths along the Royal and Grand Canals in Kildare. A playful approach to physical activity was adopted in Dance Bualadh Bos, an interactive workshop and performance created in collaboration with older communities in Kildare by dance artists Ailish Claffey and Philippa Donnellan.

In response to identified needs, the skill development of artists, creative practitioners, heritage experts, community facilitators and community groups were enhanced through a series of Digital Skills training courses with folklorist Michael Fortune. This culminated in an online showcase event, ‘Stories from the Short Grass’, introduced by Eleanor Mannion, Digital Native Video Journalist, RTE News, with short films, inspired by place in March 2021. Local heritage was further embedded, and local capacity enhanced, through courses in Know Your Locality, Oral Recording Training and a Traditional Building Skills Weekend in Castletown House, the impact of which can only be realised in years to come.

We recognise the potential of digital technologies to support creativity and connections. The Kildare Covid Notebook project targeted older people and those isolating to capture their thoughts on the pandemic for an archive for County Kildare. In a short documentary film ‘The Covid Diaries’, funded through the Creativity in Older Age initiative, 6 participants were interviewed. The film received widespread attention and the project won the Chambers Ireland Local Government Award for Sustaining the Arts in 2021. Kildare’s Creative Ireland Programme received a significant award under the ‘Creativity in Older Age 2021’ scheme, for the ‘Making MAC’ project, where older citizens are invited to engage with artworks from Kildare’s Municipal Art Collection with artist Vera Mc Evoy. Musicians and arts and health specialists Sadhbh

O’Sullivan and Sharon Murphy have long standing relationships with Kildare County Council, directing community choirs and delivering music sessions for people living with dementia and other age-related illnesses, receiving funding for their Rhinestone Cowboys song series through the Creative Ireland bursary award. With grant aid from the Creative Ireland’s 2020 Government Jobs Stimulus Package, a response to Covid 19, their Embrace Music social enterprise delivered a digital outreach to nursing home residents and home carers, with weekly live and interactive Sing-Along sessions from their Facebook Page. Through the Kildare Creative Ireland Programme, digital technologies have been encouraged through the climate action inspired ‘*Stitching the Community Together*’ which incorporates Virtual Reality technology. It builds on Kildare Libraries use of innovative technologies to their STEAM programme, robotics, coding, and forensics as well as infrastructural investments in sensory pods and the interactive Tovertafel projector.

The Irish Language is supported by initiatives such as the Sult na Sollain Festival. A magical family friendly theatre show Creative Theatre/Cruthú amharclannaiochta le Olíona de Brí, promotes Gaeilge through puppetry, mask and movement. Irish Sign Language, an official language of the State since 2017, is championed in Kildare by Athy Sing and Sign. They have received grant aid for their ISL Festival events including Sign and Sign karaoke, publications and murals commissioned to promote ISL in a visual and subtle messaging. In 2022, Amanda Coogan and the Theatre for the Deaf ‘The Possession Project’ headlined the festival.

Through the Library & Arts Services, the world of literature is promoted via the annual Kildare Readers Festival, the Connections Through Literature programming in collaboration with The Irish Writers Centre and our inaugural Reader in Residence programme for young rural based children in 2022. ‘Voices From The Land: Writing by

Irish Farmers’ was curated by Ryan Dennis, as part of his Writer in Residence programme in 2021/22 with Kildare County Council Library and Arts Service and the Department of English, Maynooth University. With support from Kildare’s Creative Ireland Programme, copies of the publication were produced for the National Ploughing Championships 2022.

Aspects of Kildare’s history and heritage has benefited from Kildare’s Creative Ireland Programme. ‘*South! Always South*’, marking the story of explorer Shackleton on the 100th anniversary of his death was composed and performed by Brian Hughes, with music with the County Kildare Orchestra, and scripted and narrated by John Mac Kenna. It premiered in St. Brigid’s Cathedral in 2022, where it was filmed for broadcast by RTE’s Nationwide. The plans to commemorate the 1500th anniversary of the death of Brigid of Kildare in 2024 was boosted by the commissioning of a report by Abarta Heritage report and the HerStory Illuminations Project on Feile Bhríde 2021. Brigid 1500 is a priority for the Kildare Creative Ireland Programme 2023–27.

Climate Action is an integral part of Kildare’s Creative Ireland Programme. We value the presence of Maynooth University in the county and recognise the importance of working with academics and artists for research, presentation and evaluation for work in this area. An exemplar of such practice is the ‘Earth Writings: Bogs, Forests, Fields and Gardens’ (2020), a publication edited by Karen E. Till, Professor of Cultural Geography at Maynooth University, and featuring writings by artists and academics, which received the Geographical Society of Ireland Book of the Year Award. Visual artist Martina O’Brien has been supported to explore phenological methodologies and practices throughout Co. Kildare with the creation of a novel network of digital wild-sensing cameras ‘of ephemeral measure’.

3 The Creative Ireland Vision for Kildare County Council

This Strategy aligns with Kildare County Council's requirement to provide and support the social, economic and cultural environment for its citizens. Kildare's Culture and Creativity Team will maintain a strategic focus, aligned to the broader strategic priorities of Kildare County Council. Notwithstanding this, we will maintain a flexible approach to ensure that we can adapt and respond to policy development and changing circumstances, while also allowing for new ideas.

We have seen the value in supporting large scale programmes over extended periods, with our strategic partners. This allows for deepened engagement with communities and communities of interest, greater opportunities for creative practitioners, and with greater impact and potential to extend the legacy.

With our strategic partners and collaborators, we aim to amplify, enhance and embed an ethos of culture and creativity in County Kildare across programmes, practice and policies in the local authority and beyond.

Over the course of the 2018–2022 Strategy, membership of the Kildare Culture and Creativity team was extended to include representatives in Climate Action, Architectural Conservation, Irish Language, Local Studies and Senior Library Services. Acknowledging the potential to further support creative industries, we will extend the Kildare Culture and Creativity Team to include a representative of the Kildare Local Enterprise Office.



Brian Cregan photographing the Abbey in Castledermot, Mapping Kildare holy wells project.
Photograph: Andrew Sweeney.



Ta Tum Tum! music performance Kildare Cruinniú na nÓg 2022, William Kanela, Kasia Eliaz, Márcio Tarkta.
Photograph: Gustavo de Morais

4

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

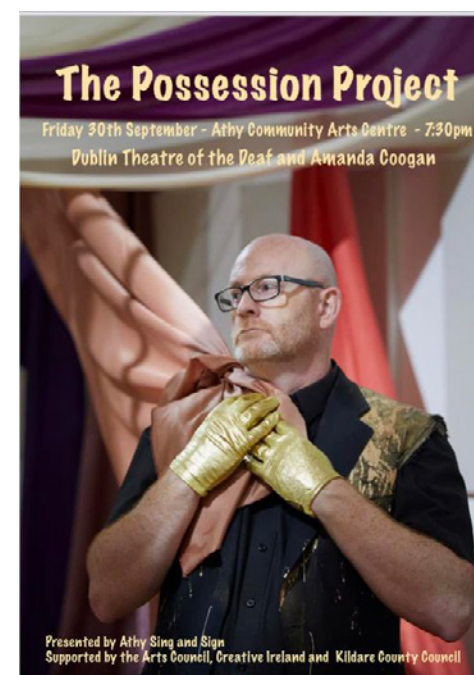
Creative Communities will continue to support local authorities as a wellbeing strategy through:

- **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.
- **Partnership** — Between central and local government, and Kildare 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.



Pages from Kate O'Rourke's notebook Kildare Covid Diary project. **Photograph:** Lucina Russell

The Possession Project Athy Sign and Sign ISL Festival 2022. **Photograph:** Denis Mortell

5 The Strategic Priorities for Kildare County Council

The Strategic Priorities for Kildare’s Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027 were identified with particular consideration for Kildare County Council’s Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019–2024, Kildare’s Healthy Ireland programme, the 2020–2026 Kildare Integration Strategy and In Perpetual Motion– An Arts Strategy for Kildare County Council 2023–2027. Notwithstanding this, we aim to embed the next Culture and Creativity Strategy and programme across all departments across the local authority. We are also committed to enact future policies as they are developed.

Artists and creatives are fundamental to developing rich and meaningful experiences across these priority areas. They will also be supported to work on their own creative practice, where it aligns with our priorities. This plan will also encourage creative opportunities to support heritage led regeneration.

Over the course of the previous strategy, relationships with strategic partners such as the Department of Geography, Maynooth University were greatly enhanced through programmes exploring innovative approaches to climate action. We will continue to develop strategic relationships with UCD, and the National Biodiversity Data Centre and continue to support the work of local biodiversity and climate action groups.

We are committed to working with strategic partners to maximise opportunities to better realise our ambition. Partnerships include the Irish Writers Centre, Irish Georgian Society, Federation of County Kildare Local History Groups, County Kildare Archaeological Society, Local Heritage groups. We actively encourage new collaborations.

Priorities from Kildare’s 2023–2027 Strategy:

- Build creative responses to Climate and Biodiversity crises through focused actions.
- Embed Equality, Cultural Diversity and Integration across programmes.
- Enhance wellbeing through creative participation across programmes that support mental and physical health.
- Provide creative opportunities to explore Sense of Place, Heritage and Identity.
- Enhance and support our local cultural and creative community by providing a tailored series of programming, networking and mentoring opportunities.



A Human Knot, Explore Youth Theatre's Group Dynamic Workshop, Kildare Cruinniú na nÓg 2022.
Photograph: Tamara McCarthy

6 Implementation by the Kildare Culture and Creativity Team

Kildare 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:

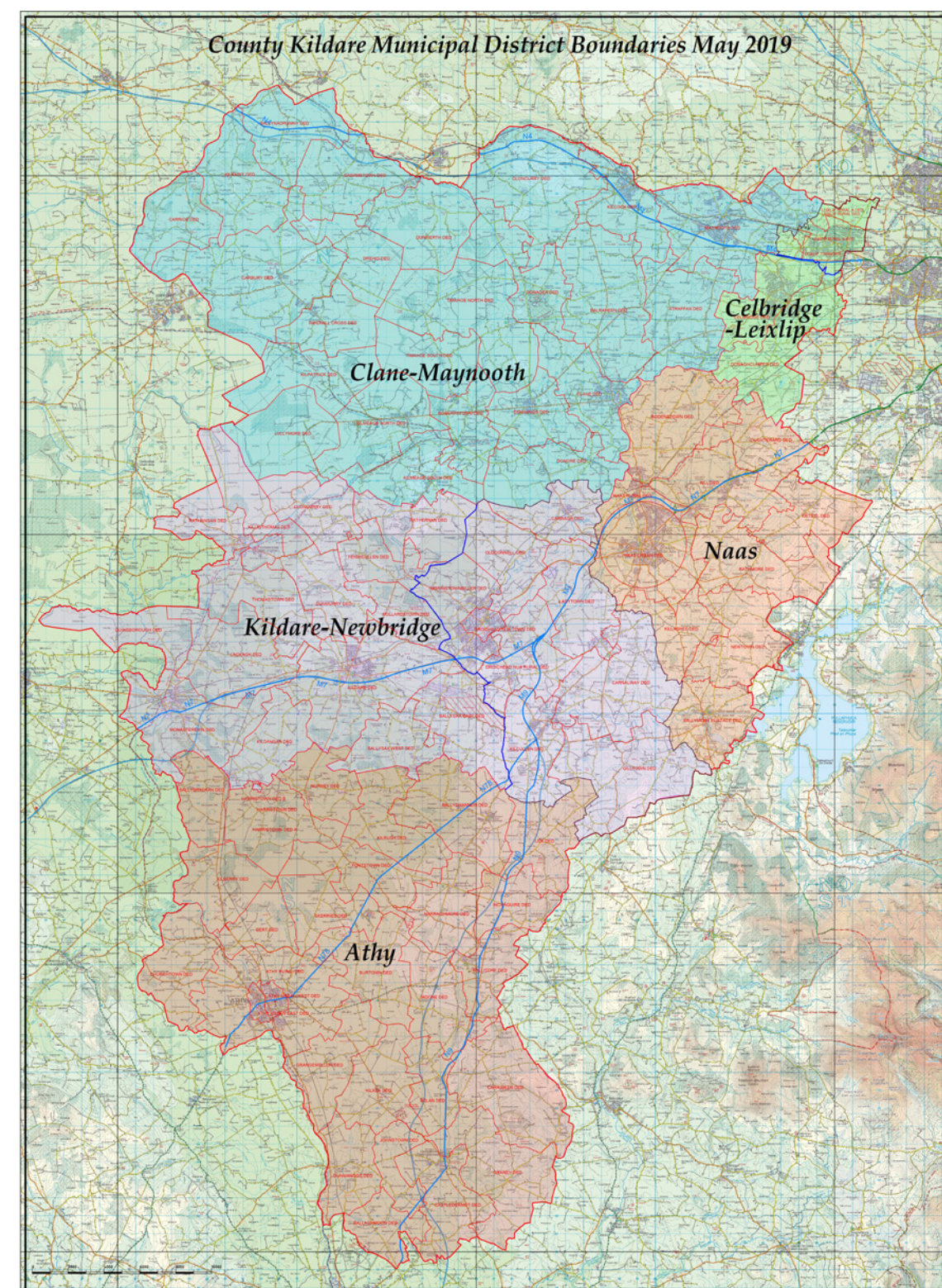
- Provide a collective forum for the ambition of culture and creativity within the local authority;
- Focus on diversity and inclusivity and enable harder to reach communities to participate in cultural and creative activities;
- Build on existing in-house expertise and strategies across areas of wellbeing, 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, Community and Cultural Development and the members of the Culture and Creativity Team for Kildare County Council include Architectural Conservation Officer, Climate Action Coordinator, County Librarian, Library Staff Officer, Senior Executive Librarian, Senior Executive Officer Community and Culture, County Heritage Officer, County Arts Officer, Irish Language Officer, Kildare Sports Partnership Coordinator, Local Studies Librarian and Local Enterprise Officer

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

Map of Kildare



A Government of Ireland Initiative.
Tionscnamh de chuid Rialtas na hÉireann.

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