



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023–2027



Sligo

Contents

	Forewords	02
01	Creative Ireland 2023–2027	04
02	Culture and Creativity in Sligo	06
03	Creative Ireland Vision for Sligo	10
04	How the Creative Ireland Programme Works Principles and Values of Creative Communities	11
05	The Strategic Priorities for Sligo County Council	12
06	Implementation by the Sligo County Council Culture and Creativity Team	18
	Map of Sligo	19



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

Sligo.

Foreword

“I spent every summer at Rosses Point. That Garavogue gateway to the beautiful, old, ever active, and intelligent, ever lovely, and ever young City of Sligo.” — Jack B Yeats

Sligo as a county is steeped in culture, heritage and creativity. The implementation of this new Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 -2027 will build upon the successes of the previous Strategy. In partnership with the offices of Creative Ireland, the Council looks forward to continuing its work in putting in place the supports and opportunities for each citizen and community to realise their full creative talents.

The task for Sligo County Council in supporting cultural development and creativity throughout the County has emerged over the years as one of our main priorities. Sligo County Council now plays a leading role in cultural development in a way that supports both inclusiveness and diversity. Culture and creativity spans across many of our core services from supports to the creative sector, enterprise development, smart and digital development, community enhancement, community wellbeing, climate action, tourism and the pursuit of high-quality cultural programming.

Sligo County Council has promoted Sligo as a great place to live, invest and visit, and we believe that this five-year Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 – 2027 will go a long way towards supporting these goals.

During the consultative process for this new five-year plan, we were delighted with the response from our communities and stakeholders and by the many ideas shared such as continuous development and support for new partnerships between creatives and communities.

Sligo County Council has been at the heart of the community for many decades playing a significant role in supporting the creative economy and the creative sector as well as promoting our rich culture and heritage. We will continue to support and develop the broad creative sector in Sligo pursuing the continued evolution of Sligo as a premier County, renowned for its rich literature, music, visual arts, heritage and beautiful landscape.

Cllr. Michael Clarke
Cathaoirleach

Mr. Martin Lydon
Chief Executive



Sligo Children's Community
Garden Workshop

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



Cruinniú na nÓg – Nature Clay
Pots Workshop

2 Culture and Creativity in Sligo

The context for the development of the Sligo strategy is shaped by the key learnings and successes of our Culture and Creativity 2018-2022 Strategy as well as the evolving policy environment in which Sligo County Council operates.

A key focus for the Sligo Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 is the integration with existing local authority strategies as prioritised by Sligo County Council in relation to wellbeing, biodiversity, climate change, tourism and economic development. The new strategy will be guided by the draft vision for the county as outlined in Sligo 2030 One Voice One Vision which will become Sligo's new Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and will be underpinned by Sligo's vibrant culture, heritage, and the arts.

Our vision is for a smart, sustainable, and socially inclusive Sligo; one that cherishes its vibrant communities, protects and celebrates its unique environment and rich culture, and is a champion of innovative growth and development.

Profile of Sligo

County Sligo, located in the northwest of Ireland, encompasses a total land surface of approximately 1,837.11 sq. km, bordered by Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo, and flanked to the west by almost 200 km of Atlantic coastline. The population of County Sligo is 69,819 according to the 2020 census (Central Statistics Office) making it the third most populated county in Connaught. The number of people in the older age categories is significantly higher than the national average. The average age in Sligo is 39.2 (Census 2016) and it is predicted that by 2025, 26% of the population of County Sligo will be over 65 (LECP, 2016–2021, p.36). Sligo is in the top five Irish towns with an ageing population.

The largest centre of population in the Northwest, Sligo City has grown to be a regionally important urban centre, serving as the administrative, commercial, service, health, and educational focus for a large hinterland. Sligo City is a designated regional centre in the government's Project Ireland 2040 and is one of two gateway cities designated by the National Spatial Strategy in the border region of Ireland. As outlined in Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023, Sligo has a significant 'capacity to enhance its regional role and Sligo Gateway has been able to establish itself as a high-quality location for business, with several international companies choosing to locate in Sligo.

County Sligo is synonymous with culture and heritage and its remarkable landscape, rich cultural heritage, music and literature has for many years attracted and appealed to generations of creatives. County Sligo is the very essence of culture and creativity as Sligo's cultural pedigree is known throughout the world as 'Yeats County'.

Sligo's unique archaeological and historical sites have also moved one step closer to being considered UNESCO World Heritage sites with their inclusion in the new World Heritage Tentative List for Ireland to demonstrate their outstanding universal value. Sligo's archaeological and historical sites comprise more than 5,000 recorded archaeological sites dating back over 6,000 years, including the Neolithic sites of Carrowmore, Carrowkeel and Creevykeel.

This beautiful landscape and rich cultural heritage have inspired many musicians, writers, artists and poets, including Lilly and Lolly Yeats, WB Yeats and Jack B Yeats, and Michael Coleman. This has given Sligo strong international recognition on which to base a thriving tourism industry, to develop new cultural and creative experiences and to harness the potential of new infrastructure that is being developed such as the National Surf Centre, Strandhill and Queen Maeve Square.

Over the past 20 years, Sligo County Council has been to the forefront of cultural development in the county across a range of services and facilities and is a leading development agency and strategic partner in cultural development. County Sligo is a vibrant, artistic county that supports a dynamic, diverse and engaging range of creative livelihoods and cultural experiences. Sligo is home to many thriving and connected communities of artists, creative people and organizations, working in a diverse range of forms and genres. The social and economic benefits they bring to the county are understood and valued. While the sector was severely impacted by COVID-19, the contribution of culture and creativity to the wellbeing of citizens, social innovation and social cohesion during the pandemic also demonstrated the potency and value of the sector.

The next five years of Sligo's Culture and Creativity Strategy will provide a framework to support closer collaboration with local and national organisations across third level institutions, heritage, language, arts organizations, tourism, cultural venues and creative enterprises to maximise resources across urban and rural communities. The strategy will compliment other programmes currently been implemented by the Council such as Healthy Ireland, Age Friendly, the new LEADER programme and PEACEPLUS.

It will also provide a framework for greater integration of culture and creativity into Sligo County Council's social, economic and tourism development policies through working with key stakeholders in Sligo and the region, to ensure the culture and creativity are central to civic life in Sligo. These policies include Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023; Sligo 2030 One Voice, One Vision; Sligo's Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024; County Sligo Tourism Strategy 2018-2023; Sligo Heritage Plan 2016-2020; County Sligo Biodiversity Plan; Sligo Library Development Plan 2019-2023 and Sustain, Renew, Collaborate Sligo Arts Plan 2020-2025. The plan will also be informed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Impact of Sligo's Creative Ireland Programme

Sligo's Creative Ireland Programme has made a significant impact at local level. It has supported over 130 projects over five years targeting disability groups, children and young people, older audiences, artists and creatives and communities across Sligo, giving them the opportunity to explore creativity and change their lives for the better.

The public consultation on the first Culture and Creativity Strategy showed that a wide range of diverse projects and programmes were supported that included festivals and events such as Fleadfest, Sligo MusicFest, Sligo Children's Community Garden, Sligo Artist Network, a short film based on the historical background and heritage of Aughris coastal walk as well as history projects and public exhibitions. The programme also provided opportunities among young people for conversations on the climate crisis, concerts and sculpture inspired by landscape, nature and place, active conservation works, placemaking and community engagement - none on which would have been possible without Creative Ireland funding.

The following projects provide an insight into the interdisciplinarity, innovation and collaboration that characterised Sligo's Creative Ireland programme and a full list of projects is included at the end of this document.

Open Call

Through the Open Call, 116 projects were supported across a wide range of areas. Highlights include Ancestors - an art project that responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and Climate Change challenges in the form of an outdoor site-responsive installation of new sculptures by Bettina Seitz on Oyster Island, Rosses Point, Co. Sligo. Sligo Music and Landscape project encompassed a concert inspired by landscape, nature, and place - Dancing Landscapes of Sligo. In collaboration with Sligo Environmental Network, Kids' Own developed and facilitated the Children's Manifesto on a Climate Action project with children from 3rd class to 6th class in a selected school in County Sligo.

Sligo Arts Network

The Sligo Arts Network was set up to create a group that can act as a support network to each other through providing space and time for the network to meet, opportunities for artists to discuss projects and share information and set up a group that can co-mentor each other. The Sligo Artist Network has 294 members all of which can access online talks, opportunities, and events via the network Facebook group.

The Word

The Word, a collaboration between Sligo Libraries and ATU Sligo BA (Hons) Writing & Literature, is a monthly literary event held on the last Wednesday of the month in Sligo Central Library. An established writer and an up-and-coming writer or special guest perform their work, followed by Q & A, and an open mic section of 3-minute slots of poetry/flash fiction/music/song.

The Book of Sligo

This celebrated community arts publication The Book of Sligo was published by Blue Raincoat Theatre Company in November 2021. An elegant and beautifully designed publication The Book of Sligo is a completely unique celebration of one county. Each page draws upon ancient Civic Parish structures, to bring the reader an eclectic sampling of Sligo's diverse social, archaeological, and ecological heritage from every corner of the county. Between November 2021 and May 2022, 32,000 free copies of the book were distributed to households throughout County Sligo as the key part of one of the most ambitious community arts projects to have been staged in Ireland. This delivery programme was carried out by a host of community groups and volunteers. Inspired by the life of Colmcille, the 1500th anniversary of whose birth occurred in 2021, and his reputed association with the Battle of the Books which is said to have taken place on the lower slopes of Ben Bulbin, The Book of Sligo is a significant county-wide cultural initiative, and an important part of Sligo's Decade of Commemoration.



BaHa - Unoccupied Art Exhibition

RIOT Conference: Re-Imagining Our Town

Four internationally curated conversations probing the role of culture in the development and regeneration of small cities took place on the 23rd and 24th March 2021. SLIGO virtual conversations looked at how to develop the resource of culture to the benefit of people, community, and economy. Conversations focused on a rethink of Sligo Town to design its potential future in a way that can be shaped by the creativity, imagination, innovation, heritage of the county and the ability of people to work together through culture. Curated conversations and working challenges were presented from a cross section of experts and innovators, from places and projects that have been transformed through groundbreaking regeneration collaborations.

Monumental Landscapes of Sligo

Sligo County Council, with its partners, and in collaboration with the local community, has embarked on an ambitious, innovative and creative, high-quality initiative that specifically aims to enhance and extend the public's experience of Sligo's monumental landscape through the media of film which was showcased during Heritage Week 2022.

Made in Sligo

Sligo County Council's 'Culture and Creativity Team Working Group' worked with the 'Made in Sligo' Craft Collective to enable them to realise their vision of establishing a tangible exhibition and retail space in County Sligo. Creative Ireland support was

used to facilitate the establishment of a unit to showcase the creative talents of the 'Made in Sligo' collective, to heighten awareness of the 'Made in Sligo' brand and to support the collective to connect with their target audience.

3 The Creative Ireland Vision for Sligo

Our vision is to champion the importance and value of Sligo's unique creativity and culture as a catalyst to empower our communities and foster new ideas and ways of thinking to achieve Sligo's ambition to be a sustainable place to live, work, visit and invest in for the benefit of all our citizens.

Our vision is firmly based on the importance of retaining a strategic focus and supporting that focus through a strong Culture and Creativity team that is aligned with the delivery of the strategic priorities of Sligo County Council.

The values that underpin our vision are as follows:

- **Collaboration and Partnership** — Develop and maintain positive and engaged communities, who promote the development of the vision and priorities.
- **Leadership** — Lead by example and actively implement, promote, and support the strategy and take responsibility for outcomes.
- **Innovation** — Provide a proactive and adaptable environment that embraces emerging trends and opportunities, where new directions are considered in the achievement of goals and objectives.
- **Teamwork** — Empower people with shared responsibility, provide access to expertise.
- **Sustainability** — Ensure that sustainability becomes embedded into all aspects of what we do and how we do it
- **Monitoring and Evaluation** — Ensure measures are put in place to capture and communicate the impact of Sligo's Culture and Creativity Strategy

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 Sligo County Council

The Culture and Creativity Team working in consultation with the sector, led out on identifying and developing the strategic priorities for Sligo County Council.

A public survey that was undertaken to capture feedback on Sligo's Culture and Creativity Strategy showed that 83% people agreed that Sligo's Creative Ireland Strategy is extremely/very important to their community and 88% agreed that the strategy delivered on its vision: "A Creative Sligo where communities are aware of and appreciate the uniqueness of Sligo's landscape and heritage which have inspired creativity and enriched the cultural experiences of all residents and visitors. A place that values creativity, culture and through collaboration and sharing of resources provides greater access to participate and engage in culture and creativity at all levels".

In considering the themes and areas of focus for the 2023 -2027 strategy, the intention is to build on the key learnings and successes of our 2018-2022 strategy as well as responding to the changing policy environment in which Sligo County Council operates, to place a greater focus on harnessing the potential of culture and creativity to make Sligo a great place to live, work, visit and invest in and respond imaginatively to the challenges of climate change.

Creative Communities (Pillar 2) is the partnership pillar between the Creative Ireland Programme and local authorities, and therefore the main focus for Sligo County Council's Culture and Creativity Strategy.

The strategic priorities outlined below are all of equal importance and reflect specific areas of focus for Sligo County Council that will build on what has been achieved over the past five years and offer potential for long-term impact, after careful consideration of the options and opportunities.

Strategic Priority 1: Creative Place

County Sligo is synonymous with culture and heritage and its remarkable landscape, rich cultural heritage, music, literary traditions, craft and arts and has for many years attracted or appealed to generations of creatives. County Sligo is the very essence of culture and creativity as Sligo's cultural pedigree is known throughout the world as 'Yeats County'. Culture, heritage, outdoor environment and the scenery of County Sligo offers huge potential to create many different and compelling experiences of interests to support placemaking and revitalising our town centres which will be delivered through the following actions:

- Harness the potential of culture and creativity to re-imagine and revitalise our town centres and spaces as creative spaces making them attractive places to live, work and visit.
- Develop the role of the culture and creative sector in supporting the nighttime economy and creating safe places for people to socialise, meet and enjoy.
- Build on the opportunity to amplify Sligo's recreational outdoor offering and grow active engagement with the landscape such as the Sligo Way.
- Build on the opportunity to amplify Sligo's historic built environment through creative approaches to heritage led regeneration.
- Harness the creative potential of Sligo's built environment through an Engage with Architecture Programme in partnership with YADA at ATU.
- Build on Sligo's natural and built heritage assets to inform innovative approaches to placemaking in partnership with local communities.



Cairde Sligo Arts Festival – Transcendent Documents



Kid's Own – Green Futures Children's Art Project



Cruinniú na nÓg - Robotics Workshop

- Celebrate Sligo’s cultural and creative reputation for art, music, literature and drama as well as its outstanding natural heritage and environment to attract local, national and international audiences through world class visitor experiences such as annual themed celebrations based on music, literature etc.

Strategic Priority 2 Creative Economy

County Sligo is a vibrant, artistic and creative county that supports a dynamic, diverse and engaging range of creative livelihoods and cultural experiences. Sligo is home to a thriving and connected community of artists, creative people and organizations, working in a diverse range of forms and genres and which bring important social and economic benefits. Through the following actions the cultural and creative industries and creative economy will be supported and developed to create sustainable job creation and employment and build Sligo as an innovative and successful regional growth centre.

- Work to create the conditions to facilitate a sustainable culture and creative sector and retain and attract more creatives to live and thrive in Sligo through programmes such as bursaries and residencies.
- Harness the potential of the AIM Centre to grow the research and innovation capabilities of the creative industries in response to the challenges emerging from Industry 4.0.
- Assist in the technical development of a Sligo Cultural Hub to support artists and their creative business to make work, develop community projects and present their work.
- Strengthen and develop the opportunity for cross-sectoral collaboration across cultural and creative industries, including third level and research institutions.
- Develop a pilot engaging business with the Sligo Culture and Creativity Programme to support

Sligo’s culture and creative sector through initiatives such as the Creative Heartlands project.

- Capture the wider economic impact and benefits of culture and creativity to the county.

Strategic Priority 3 Creative Communities

Sligo is home to a diversity of nationalities, whose own cultural traditions are now interweaving within the fabric of cultural life in Sligo. Creativity and culture play a central role in building vibrant communities and promoting social inclusion and wellbeing through participation and engagement. Through the following actions, the creative potential of all of Sligo’s communities will continue to be recognized and celebrated.

- Provide opportunities to support the time and space needed to cultivate community engagement programmes and support a more long-term outlook e.g., commissions to support research and development.
- Maximise the opportunity of community facilities such as An Chroi to support creative start-ups, creative enterprise and creative careers in remote rural locations across the county.
- Lead in the development of innovative new projects that celebrate our communities and promote active citizenship/volunteering (building on the success of The Book of Sligo)
- Build on existing relationships with all communities and support new initiatives that make creativity and the arts accessible to all groups, including minority and marginalized groups.
- Continue to ensure access to and support in developing funding programmes across all communities.

Strategic Priority 4

Climate, Biodiversity and Environment

The beautiful landscape and rich cultural and natural heritage of Sligo has inspired many musicians, writers, artists and poets. Cultivating increased awareness and appreciation of the importance of sustainability and understanding, valuing and caring for Sligo's unique landscape in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss will be addressed through the following actions:

- Support creative projects that promote and champion positive climate action in communities across the county.
- Support creative projects that create better awareness of our natural environment, its importance to our health and wellbeing and the change that is required across society to rethink how we use energy and resources.
- Explore the opportunities for schools involved in the national Green Schools program to use culture, creativity, and the arts as a way to help children and students to express themselves when it comes to their concerns and visions for a cleaner and healthier environment, and a stable climate.
- Provide support and guidance to the culture and creative sectors in helping to address climate action through the organisations they work in.
- Create more opportunities to cultivate awareness, appreciation, enjoyment and the sustainable promotion of County Sligo's unique landscape and natural environment which is central to Sligo's identity.
- Ensure the ongoing preservation, conservation, and protection of the cultural and heritage legacy left by our ancestors is achieved in a sustainable way.
- Support creative projects that create better awareness of and engagement with Sligo's biodiversity.

Strategic Priority 5

Creative Youth

We will continue to increase opportunities for activity and participation in culture and creativity among children and young people to develop their creative potential and ensure they have the necessary tools to build and develop their resilience, imagination and creative confidence. The actions below will provide children and young people access to creative activity that is important and meaningful to them.

- Continue to implement a programme for Cruinniú na nÓg, the National Creativity Day for Children and Young People.
- Sustain the Council's partnership with Music Generation Sligo and explore ways for further creative collaboration.
- Strengthen and develop our work with Comhairle na nÓg to expand opportunities for creative engagement.



Soundtrack for Life – Nazareth Care Village



Traveller Pride Event – The Dead House – Martin Beanz Ward

6

Implementation by the Sligo County Council Culture and Creativity Team

Sligo 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,

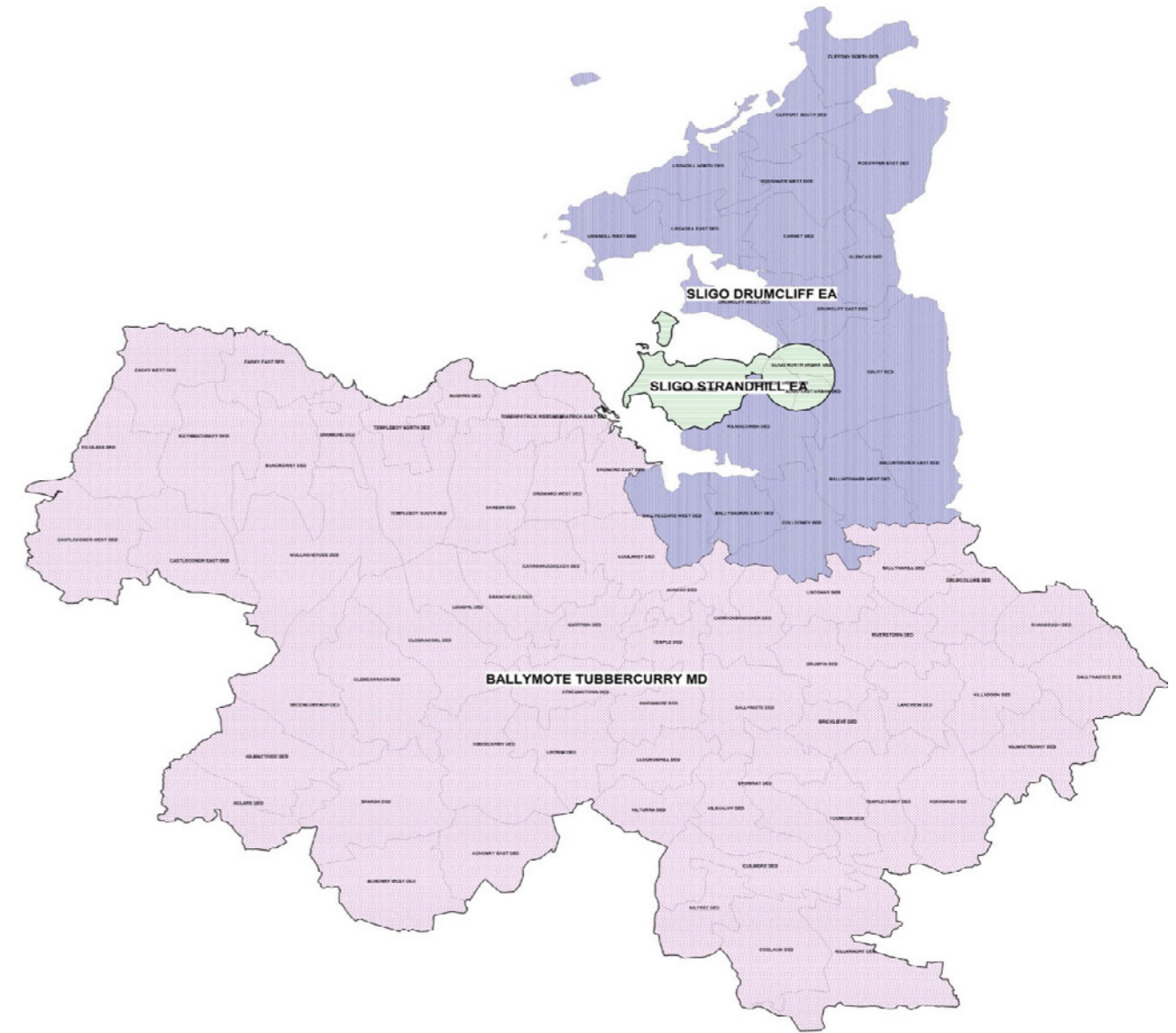
- Drive cross-collaborative actions that support change and positive outcomes locally, and potentially between local authorities at regional level, and
- Be innovative and take risks – try new projects and new ways of working.

The delivery of the Strategy is led by the Director of Services and the members of the Culture and Creativity Team for Sligo County Council include:


- Director of Planning, Community and Economic Development
- Library and Arts Service
- Community and Economic Development
- Sligo Local Enterprise Office
- Heritage Service
- Tourism
- Energy Efficiency and Climate Action


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


Map of Sligo Local Authority / Municipal Districts



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

—
 CreativeIrl

 creativeirl

 creativeireland

—
creativeireland.gov.ie

CREATIVE IRELAND

*Inspiring and transforming people,
places and communities through creativity.*