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Foreword

The Creative Ireland Programme defines creativity 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”.

We believe Wexford is a confidently creative county, and we are rightly proud to celebrate all that we achieve in our creative and cultural endeavours. The people of Wexford are passionate about the cultural significance of our arts, our libraries, our heritage, and our natural environment.

The Creative Ireland Programme 2018 to 2022 helped us to coherently communicate the connections between the myriad of individual strategic plans that exist, directing the work we do, and the benefits they can bring when activated creatively. The Culture and Creativity Team in Wexford came together from multiple sections across the local authority and worked collaboratively to ensure the effective delivery of all the programmes and events that occurred over the past five years. The Culture and Creativity Team achieved notable impacts especially during the pandemic period from 2020, ensuring that in times of uncertainty and stress, the benefits of culture were available to our communities.

The success of the first Creative Ireland Strategy for Wexford in fostering creativity in communities of interest, geography, and circumstance, in children, young people, and older generations is something everyone celebrates.

The investment in the Creative Communities programme from 2018 to 2022 amounted to some €850,000 in County Wexford. In partnership with Creative Ireland, this investment has provided the opportunity for communities and individuals from varied backgrounds to actively participate in

cultural activity. This activity has driven interest in the environment, climate action, design, community development, and has fostered resilient communities.

Wexford tourism is underpinned by the strength of our cultural offerings, heritage sites, our developing film industry, and our creative communities. The Creative Ireland Programme in County Wexford has strengthened our cultural offering to our residents and our visitors.

Taking the time to learn from what was achieved in the first five years, and what we are ambitious to activate further, has helped us to formulate priorities for the next five years. Our focus will be on inclusion for all, connection, communication, community wellbeing and resilience, participation for placemaking, and climate adaptation and action.

Cllr George Lawlor, Cathaoirleach
Wexford County Council

Tom Enright
Chief Executive, Wexford County Council



Making and Momentum 'In Conversation with Eileen Gray Exhibition', Wexford County Council. **Photograph:** Richard Malone.

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



Tara Hills Art Trails *Cruinniú*
na nÓg, Gorey School of Art.
Photograph: Gorey School of Art

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Culture and Creativity in Wexford

Located in the Southeast corner of Ireland, County Wexford boasts a rare and stunning mix of mountains, valleys, rivers, slob lands, flora, fauna, and breathtaking beaches.

With a population of 163,527, Wexford is renowned for excellence in music, opera, literature, visual arts, storytelling, drama, craft, tapestry, spinning, needlework, and more. Our county is a living example of the value of culture and creativity in promoting a high quality of life and wellbeing.

A vibrant, dynamic, and engaged creative arts and culture sector is integral to the development and vitality of Wexford communities and economy.

In implementing the *Wexford Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 to 2022*, we grew confidence and creativity in many communities, and developed a culture of collaboration. We achieved positive outcomes in placemaking, wellbeing, climate action awareness, and economic development. Successful programmes led to increased cultural engagement in areas like coding, design, upskilling for artists, and online learning.

This Culture and Creativity Strategy aligns with many other cross-sectoral strategies and policies, including the Wexford County Development Plan (2022- 2028), The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), Wexford's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024), County Wexford Arts Plan 2018-2022 and the Library Development Plan (2020-2025). Nationally it aligns with the Creative Ireland Programme (2023- 2027), The Arts Council's Making Great Art Work Strategy (2015-2025), the Government of Ireland's Culture 2025 Strategy (2020-2025), and the Healthy Ireland Framework (2013- 2025). Many of the ambitions of the strategy align with the principles of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Wexford County Council recognises the distinct contribution of creativity, culture, and the arts to the wellbeing and quality of life of all our

citizens. Culture has an intrinsic value and a role in the preservation of local cultural identity, and the development and maintenance of community resilience. Culture makes a real and vital contribution to our local economy through cultural tourism, the arts, and the creative industries.

The positive effects of culture and creativity on wellbeing were never more evident than during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Creative Ireland Programme came to the fore, supporting the growth of active aging programmes, Screen Wexford initiatives, and the development of skills and confidence in many areas. This includes design, coding, professional development for artists, a new interest in heritage and archaeology, our parks, greenway, trails and biodiversity, community development, social inclusion, and placemaking.

The Culture and Creativity Strategy integrates with existing local authority strategies such as the Wexford County Development Plan, The Local Economic and Community Plan and the Wexford County Council Corporate plan. The Culture and Creativity Strategy, in common with the other policies aims to enhance wellbeing, quality of life, social inclusion, and economic development in County Wexford.

Our Creative Assets

In Wexford, our creative ecosystem is fed by creatives, artists and makers, both professional and amateur. It is built, nourished, and strengthened by our venues, community groups, arts workers, , volunteers, the commercial sector, and countless individuals. Wexford's creatives have achieved excellence and distinction on the world stage, from the Wexford Festival Opera to our writers, theatre makers, and musicians.

The Creative Ireland programme in County Wexford has worked with partner venues including Wexford Arts Centre, The National Opera House, Presentation Arts Centre Enniscorthy, St Michael's

Theatre New Ross, Gorey School of Art, and Blackbird Cultur-Lab in the delivery of the Creative Ireland programme. Some of the noted highlights over the past five years include:

- **Cruinniú na nÓg** A key initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme, Cruinniú na nÓg is the National Day of Creativity held annually in June. It enables the creative potential of children and young people and sparks an interest in participation and inclusion in creative activity. The inaugural Cruinniú na nÓg took place on 23rd June 2018 and over the past four years has grown and thrived in County Wexford
In 2020 and 2021, events ran online and in a hybrid format due to COVID-19. Regardless of format, young people and families have come together to enjoy a wide range of creative activities including workshops, tutorials, recitals, and readings.
In 2022 events ran in 17 venues across County Wexford with 30 individual events and almost 1,000 people taking part. The success of Cruinniú na nÓg is testament to the strategic partners, creative practitioners, and venues who deliver innovative and inclusive creative content every year.
- **The Professional Development and Upskilling of Artists** Over 550 artists received professional development training and mentoring, in person and online, delivered by Visual Artists Ireland and invited mentors and curators, funded through Creative Ireland.
- **Co-design and Placemaking** The co-design of a new proposed Activity Garden in St John's Community Hospital Campus in Enniscorthy, in partnership with the HSE, and in consultation with service-users, staff, and stakeholders.
- **Curious Minds** Creation of an online digital resource pack for educators developed as

part of Living Arts in Schools Programme, along with a Living Arts in School website. <https://livingartsproject.ie/>

- **Design and Architecture** Inspired by world renowned Wexford-born architect Eileen Gray, a number of design and architecture projects were delivered. These included workshops curated by designer Richard Malone. A design programme was delivered in partnership with the Irish Architecture Foundation and Transition Year students from Meánscoil Gharman.
- **Community Music Programme** Community music programmes with client, carers, and family members of Alzheimer Society of Ireland, in partnership with Age Friendly Wexford.
- **Wexford on Screen** The creation of a new Screen Wexford website to develop the screen industry locally, showcase Wexford's spectacular film locations, and support skills development in the industry. <https://screenwexford.com/>
- **Heritage** A series of interactive heritage workshops on Wexford's unique heritage were delivered in landmark heritage venues in County Wexford.
- **Environmental awareness through creativity** A series of artist-led workshops in coastal North and Southwest Wexford have explored the impact of litter pollution on the local marine environment, through a creative and sustainable lens.
- **Inclusive Participation** A number of creative projects were enabled through the Creative Communities programme. These were undertaken by members of the Traveller community, new communities, people experiencing mental health challenges, and people living in rural isolation.

In our Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 - 2022, we observed that creativity is a marathon, not a sprint, that gestation has a slow rhythm. “Wexford Festival Opera didn’t become the best festival in the world overnight but achieved that accolade after 71 years of toil, tears and sweat”. Although much was achieved in the first five years of the Creative Ireland Programme, we are attuned to the fact that there is more to do, and excited by the opportunity of five more years in which to do it.

Opportunity Abounds

This Strategic Plan was developed in partnership with our communities, through five focus groups around the county attended by 150 creatives, representatives of groups and organisations, and community members. Baseline thoughts on our mission and vision were set down through a cross departmental workshop with the Culture and Creativity Team. More in-depth feedback was received through written submissions from forty-seven individuals and organisations.

The focus groups and written submissions were very strongly linked in theme and ambition. Collectively, our communities are seeking more connection and access to cultural experiences, whether they live in an urban or rural environment. Priorities identified include harnessing Wexford’s unique landscapes, stories, and crafts. There was a focus on enriching our environment and sustainability. Feedback advocated for further resourcing of existing activity and to find ways to share skills intergenerationally and between communities, and greater equity for all identities to support our changing demographics.

There was a clearly articulated need for more access to information on what is happening locally and to have spaces available where they can share their skills.





Beat Your Drum, *Cruinniú na nÓg*
Wells House Gorey. **Photograph:**
Mark Stedman.

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The Creative Ireland Vision for Wexford

Our vision for Wexford is for the people who live, work, visit, and love Wexford to participate and collaborate in arts and cultural activities. This will encourage greater connection between communities, for the wellbeing of all.

We will realise Wexford's full potential by connecting our communities through creative and artistic endeavour. Building on the foundations laid in the first five years of Creative Ireland, our collaborations will continue to stimulate the artistic, cultural, environmental, heritage, economic, and societal assets of our county.

This strategy is primarily for people who live and work in Wexford. The inclusion of people who 'love' Wexford was important to the Culture and Creativity Team as well as the participants in our focus groups. It includes our scattered families, our diaspora who share the stories of their love of Wexford with the communities they live among now. It also includes others who, perhaps because of COVID-19, have been precluded from visiting, but who continue to value our beaches, our festivals, our unique stories, and more from afar.

We will achieve 'greater connection' within and between communities through more effective communication. We will incentivise more equitable sharing of our assets and skills and bring more innovative thinking to Wexford.

The vision of Creative Ireland is that every person living in Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise their creative potential, with participation and access central to the vision. We believe that if we work collaboratively, support and advocate for each other, we can ensure access and inclusion for all. We can grow the strength of our communities and deliver sustainable development for the county.

The Wexford Culture and Creativity Team will apply this approach being always mindful of the core themes in our County Development Plan. These include having sustainable urban and rural environments, supported by excellent physical and social infrastructure; valuing our unique natural environment, built and cultural heritage; being a county where biodiversity is restored and flourishes and which offers a range of high-quality experiences to both residents and visitors. It also includes offering high quality sustainable employment opportunities and high-quality residential developments; and being a self-sustaining, low carbon, climate resilient and healthy county where people want to live, work and play.

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How We Work — 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; and
- **Partnership** — Between central and local government, and Wexford 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.

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The Strategic Priorities for Wexford County Council

We have been buoyed in the first five years of the Creative Ireland programme by how creative our communities are. What connects all we do is the ambition set out in the County Development Plan – for Wexford to be a great place to live, work, and play. But also, for us to use all of our assets, to activate communities, and to be sustainable in what we do as we adapt to the challenges of climate change.

Strategic Priority 1 Inclusion for all

Many of our communities experience exclusion or barriers to participation in creative endeavours. Sometimes those barriers are physical, and in plain sight. At other times they are visible in how we organise programmes, the relevance of the content, or how they are communicated. We want everyone to feel welcome and considered in creative activity in Wexford.

Proposed actions:

- Have open and ongoing dialogue with communities experiencing marginalisation to ensure they have what they need to participate in culture and creativity in Wexford.
- Provide intercultural diversity training for facilitators and group leaders in the county, to promote and support inclusion.
- Continue to support inclusive cultural projects with the Traveller Community in Wexford, activating new opportunities to spotlight the skills, traditions, and language of the community.
- Identify and support opportunities for groups of shared interest and experience to connect through cultural activity.
- Build on the success of developing Wexford's Libraries as Creative Hubs over the past five

years, research the opportunity for Mobile Libraries to bring wider cultural benefit to the rural communities.

- Target the inclusion of people alienated or excluded from traditional learning routes through creative and innovative delivery of literacy and other skills.
- Resource opportunities for new communities of circumstance to showcase and share their cultures and to participate in cultural heritage projects.
- Provide support for projects that promote the love and use of the Irish language in our community.

Strategic Priority 2 Connection, Collaboration & Communication

The broad geographic divide between communities has been identified as a challenge for people out of the communication loop, experiencing the digital divide, as well as groups organising activities without access to strong traditional marketing skills. Through the lifetime of the Strategy, we aim to enhance communication and maximise the impact of cultural activity in the county.

Proposed actions:

- Identify, develop, and resource opportunities for communication hubs both on and offline, to facilitate better public engagement with culture and creative opportunities.
- Facilitate greater opportunities for connection between community groups, to allow sharing of information. This should include a focus on communities either side of our borders with connecting counties.



Creative Technology Workshop
Wexford. **Photograph:** Tek Central



Covid Care Concert Wexford.
Photograph: Mobile Music



Curiosity of Purpose Sculpture from
the Psychiatry of Later Life project,
Wexford. **Photograph:** Wexford
Mental Health Association

- Investigate opportunities for reducing transport as a barrier for participation in cultural activity.
- Develop more targeted programmes for creatives collaborating with communities in rural contexts.
- Facilitate regular connection of artists and creatives through in-person meet-up opportunities.
- Promote and support the sharing of Wexford's traditional arts, including tapestry, lacemaking, stitching and spinning, activating intergenerational engagement.
- More effective communication and resourcing of opportunities for creative youth initiatives.

Strategic Priority 3

Community Wellbeing & Resilience

Participation in cultural activities increases personal, physical, and mental wellbeing and helps build healthy communities and vibrant villages. Activating the heritage, architectural, and natural environment assets of a community further help to grow wellbeing. It fosters a sense of pride in place as well as economic opportunity through tourism. Artists and creative people in communities encourage skill-sharing, the development of traditional crafts, and build interest in sustainability.

Proposed actions:

- Identify and support more outdoor free events in a range of locations open to all members of our community.
- Identify opportunities to support Creative Hubs, Schools for Sustainability, and Artist Residencies.
- Continue to activate Cruinniú na nÓg in partnership with communities, allowing the child's voice to direct the themes and activities. Inclusion of multiple languages and cultures will support greater diversity of ethnicities. Seek to create further opportunities for the youth

population in Wexford, and the utilisation of community halls and the touring of cultural events through the county.

- Work in partnership with the Sláintecare Healthy Communities programme to enhance community wellbeing and resilience.
- Continue to develop and support Age Friendly initiatives through the county.
- Continue to support targeted arts and creativity programmes aimed at priority groups through the Creative Community Scheme, providing enhanced support for the application process to ensure inclusion and accessibility for all.
- Inspire connection and collaboration in communities of geography through continuing to support civic events programmes in municipal districts, with further focus in rural villages not previously served through the Creative Ireland Programme.
- Host an active dialogue between arts venues and municipal district managers throughout the county. Activate opportunities for wider programming that responds to the needs of their communities and makes best use of opportunities for creative projects that can be collaborative.
- Provide resources for communities to deliver creative events that celebrate agriculture, food production, and environmental sustainability in their locality.

Strategic Priority 4

Participation for Placemaking

We are ambitious to encourage engagement of those who are not currently accessing creative opportunities, as well as ensuring that we continue to serve and stretch our existing cultural audience.

We will support the identification of spaces and places for participation through creative mapping and auditing of the infrastructure and endeavours through the county and how they can be joined, matched, activated, or highlighted.

Proposed actions:

- Continue to ensure innovation in the programming of events at Wexford's Libraries, venues, and through active engagement with our archives and cultural assets. Ensure we continue to grow and broaden the diversity of people using our collections, venues, heritage buildings, parks, and open spaces.
- County-wide audit of existing and potential spaces for creative activity through self-identification by villages and communities of activity via questionnaire/mapping.
- Identify support opportunities to resource the continued development of creative programming around placemaking, Tidy Towns, festivals, greening initiatives, and sustainable actions for biodiversity.
- Identify stories, locations, and heritage assets to spotlight during Heritage Week, by supporting the development of new projects and ideas brought forward by communities.
- Identify ways to spotlight the risk of climate change to Wexford's unique landscape, architectural and biodiversity conservation areas, and protected structures, such as through projects in schools and with young people.
- Further identify opportunities for development, and/or promote existing walking trails, coastal trails etc in partnership with the Biodiversity Team, Active Travel Team, Sports Active Wexford and Healthy Wexford.
- In partnership with our creative sector in Wexford, and using creative processes, identify opportunities to grow awareness in the community of the potential positive actions individuals and communities can make to protect our environment.

Strategic Priority 5

Climate Adaptation and Action

Wexford has many unique natural resources, rich biodiversity, and a wealth of archaeological, cultural, and built heritage. Climate change has created new challenges for us to protect what we have while adapting to the weather and environmental changes that cannot be reversed.

Proposed actions:

- Working with the Climate Action Team, we will identify, support, and promote programmes and projects that promote positive environment and biodiversity actions. By supporting artists, creatives and filmmakers through relevant up-skilling and professional development, we will aim to ensure they have the resources needed to activate this important subject in their work, should they wish to.



Wagon Wheels – a short documentary about Traditional Barrel Top Wagons in County Wexford featuring Johnny Murphy.
Photograph: Terence White.

Menapia Professional Screenwriters Programme

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Implementation by the Wexford County Council Culture and Creativity Team

Wexford 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:

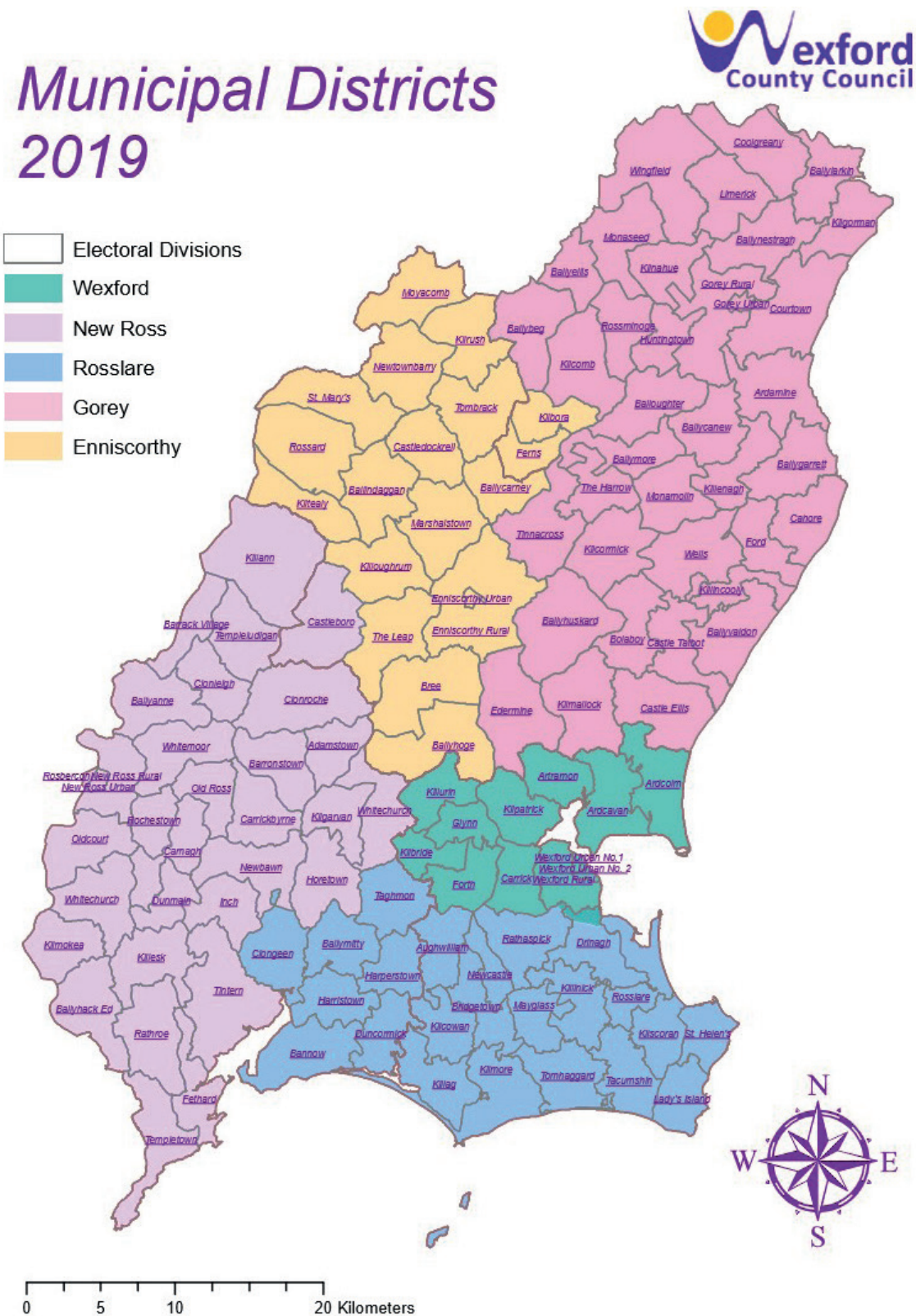
- Provide a collective forum for the ambition of culture and creativity within the local authority,
- Focus on diversity and inclusivity and enable harder to reach communities to participate in cultural and creative activities,
- Build on existing in-house expertise and strategies across areas of wellbeing, 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 Wexford:

- Director of Services, Housing, Community, Libraries, Arts, Emergency Services & Environment
- County Librarian/Creative Ireland Coordinator
- County Arts Officer
- District Manager, Gorey Municipal District
- District Manager, New Ross Municipal District
- District Manager, Rosslare Municipal District
- District Manager, Gorey Area Offices
- District Manager, Wexford Municipal District
- Age Friendly Programme representative
- Sláintecare Local Development Officer, Community Development Department
- Healthy County Co-ordinator, Community Development Department
- Tourism Officer
- Senior Executive Scientist, Environment Department
- Heritage Officer
- Senior Executive Officer, Community Department
- Senior Planner, Planning Department
- District Manager, Enniscorthy Municipal District
- Archivist
- Senior Executive Librarian

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

Map of Wexford Local Authority / Municipal Districts



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