



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023–2027



Kilkenny

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Contents

	Foreword	02
01	Creative Ireland 2023–2027	04
02	Culture and Creativity in Kilkenny	06
03	The Creative Ireland Vision for Kilkenny	10
04	How The Creative Ireland Programme Works Principles and Values of Creative Communities	11
05	The Strategic Priorities for Kilkenny	12
06	Implementation by the Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Team	14
	Map of Kilkenny Council Area	15

Foreword

County Kilkenny has a proud creative tradition and abundance of cultural heritage and a rich natural and built environment, which all together, contributes to a vibrant creative and cultural sector.

Kilkenny County Council is committed to supporting all communities in our county to reach their full potential as creative communities having positive effects on the health and wellbeing of our communities, in encouraging social cohesion and supporting economic growth in the Arts, Tourism and Creative Industries.

The Cultural Services Team within Kilkenny County Council played a key role in the development and implementation of the first Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018–2022.

Despite the significant challenges of COVID19 over the past two years, the Heritage, Arts, and Library departments of the local authority have delivered strong inclusive projects to engage all of our communities in creative and cultural initiatives. During periods of isolation and lockdown the initiatives provided connections for vulnerable people including door to door library services, outdoor performances, on-line learning and mental health supports. The Creative Ireland Programme has, through its Pillar 2–“Enabling Creativity in Every Community”, enabled the Cultural Services Team to build strong foundations in collaborative working with individuals and agencies across the county. These collaborations have included the Kilkenny Carlow Education and Training Board, the HSE, Kilkenny Childcare, Butler Gallery and many more.

We welcome the certainty of the Creative Ireland Programme nationally for the period 2023–2027 and the opportunities that it provides to build on existing programmes and relationships in our county to embed culture and creativity in all services areas within Kilkenny County Council.

The contribution that the creative and cultural sector can make to our collective wellbeing and our development as an inclusive society has been seen in recent years and will be developed further. The continued development of the vibrant and successful creative Arts and Tourism sectors will add to the local economy and support sustainable local jobs. The Cultural Services team recognise the importance of tourism and visitors to Kilkenny in supporting and further developing this new strategy for the next five years.

Cultural heritage and an increasingly vibrant creative economy can increase the attractiveness of our county for talent, tourism, and investment. The role of culture in innovation can deliver new solutions to social and climate challenges as well as supporting wellbeing, health, life-long learning and social cohesion.

Utilising creativity and culture to help address the challenges of climate change, and to galvanise climate action and support sustainable development, will be a key focus of this strategy.

The creative and cultural sector relies on creative talent as our primary source of value. This strategy will support the development of such talent to generate an even more vibrant and successful sector in the future, where skilled, creative workers and artists can build sustainable jobs and contribute to Kilkenny’s continued reputation in Arts, Creativity, Culture and Heritage, that everyone can experience, enjoy and learn from.

Pat Fitzpatrick

Cathaoirleach, Kilkenny County Council



Knitted Together 2022 project
- Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed
members Vincent Doran, Paddy
Corbett & Paddy Flood at work
on the stools. **Photograph:**
Dylan Vaughan photography

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



Cabinet of Curiosities workshop
– Cruinniú na nÓg 2022.
Photograph: Roisin O'Sullivan



Seán Mac an sSithigh and Muiris Ó Súilleabháin pictured at Knockroe Passage Tomb as part of the Second Chamber project 2022.
Photograph: The Second Chamber

2 Culture and Creativity in Kilkenny

Kilkenny is a location rich in cultural heritage and creativity. Once known as the Capital of Ireland, it is a city recognised for its medieval landmarks and its year-round calendar of festivals, along with its countryside landscape and native wildlife and plants. Kilkenny's culture and creativity are what makes the county unique, and what gives it its special character and sense of place, for example the passage tomb of Knockroe, medieval town wall remains and having the only example in Ireland of a 17th Century merchant's house. The history, heritage, and culture that Kilkenny has to offer are bountiful, along with its natural biodiversity.

The Creative Ireland Culture and Creativity Strategy in Kilkenny is overseen by our Cultural Services Team. The Cultural Services Team is comprised of the Arts, Heritage, Libraries, Conservation and Architecture services, with an ambition that all citizens have equal access to the range of culture that Kilkenny has to serve. Quoted by Laura Ní Fhlaibhín: "As a Creative Associate, I was delighted to have been offered the opportunity to support a pilot programme with Heritage in Schools. Funded by Kilkenny County Council, the Heritage Council & Creative Ireland, the project centred on Kilkenny's heritage, emphasizing biodiversity, and the initiative combined resources from both the Creative Schools & Heritage in Schools Programmes. The partnership between the two programmes worked very successfully, & eased communication and planning between all parties". The Heritage in Schools Visits project allowed 3,948 primary school children throughout County Kilkenny to creatively explore and learn about their local heritage and culture, co-ordinated by the Heritage-in-Schools programme and the Heritage Office of Kilkenny County Council. This project promoted the importance of national and local heritage in schools across Kilkenny,

enabling primary school children who may not have resources or facilities to engage in their local heritage to participate.

The Creative Ireland Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Strategy integrates with themes of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy 2018–2022. The Cultural Strategy plan focuses on the social and economic value of culture that echo Kilkenny's Creative and Culture Strategy. The social value of culture provides positive outcomes to all members of our community—it encourages people to share cultural experiences, to access resources and education, to become more involved in their community. It focuses on wellbeing, health and social cohesion as significant benefits of culture. Focusing on the wellbeing of our people leads to healthier communities who become more engaged with their environment and talents.

There are a variety of culture-based strategies published by Kilkenny County Council in collaboration with various organisations:

- The Kilkenny County Council Corporate Plan 2014–2019
- Kilkenny Age Friendly Strategy Plan 2017–2022
- The Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014–2020
- Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–2021
- Kilkenny County Councils Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017–2022
- Healthy Ireland Community Plan 2018–2021
- Kilkenny County Councils Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017–2022
- Creative Ireland Kilkenny has worked alongside these plans and will ensure that cultural impact will be central to future plans and policies.

Kilkenny County Council will focus on increasing and diversifying participation in creativity and culture. In 2019, a photographic collection of the aesthetic and design qualities of Kilkenny City's traditional shopfronts was delivered by Trevor Finnegan, and commissioned and co-ordinated by the Heritage Office.

"The shop has been in my family for generations. I'm so delighted that the beautiful shopfront is being photographed as a record for future generations"—Retailer, Kilkenny City.

This project was intended to increase public knowledge and awareness of the visual aesthetic features of Kilkenny shopfronts and inform a healthy discussion on the character, visual appeal and cultural heritage that Kilkenny has to offer.

The economic value of culture is also hugely significant. Culture is a key component to the local and national economy. It supports communities in their cultural, economic, and social development. In 2021, the World Craft Council officially accredited Kilkenny the title of "World Craft Council–World Craft City and Region" thanks to Made in Kilkenny, supported by Kilkenny County Council, the Design and Craft Council Ireland and Cartoon Saloon. This honorary title has been awarded to four other cities in Europe in total. It is anticipated that the World Craft Council network will help to promote interaction between local Kilkenny crafts and other creative industries along with highlighting Kilkenny city and county on a global platform as part of a network of creative craft cities.

Culture and creativity motivate citizens and communities to become more engaged in their surroundings, society, and promotes individual wellbeing. They are also strong assets for long-term tourism and creative supports. The Medieval Mile Museum, based in the medieval 13th century St. Mary's Church is an example of this. It opened in 2017 and displays important tombs, artefacts, and monuments dated from the Middle Ages onwards, which are available for public viewing. Encouraging people to participate in cultural and creative outlets fosters respect, enjoyment, and a greater

understanding to the value of culture that Kilkenny has to provide.

The Kilkenny County Library Service plays a formative role in the development of creative communities. Our library service focuses on an intergenerational approach and encourages the social value of culture by providing access to public spaces in eight areas of Kilkenny City and County. It aims to enhance the lives of the communities in Kilkenny and encourage culture, lifelong learning, and imagination. The Kilkenny City Mayfair Library is due to be opened in 2023. Located within the former Smithwicks Brewery site, it is anticipated that this new library will include dedicated areas for access to culture, heritage, local studies, online resources, multi-cultural, and social inclusion programmes. Bookville, facilitated by the Kilkenny Library Service and Kilkenny Arts Office is an exciting book festival orientated towards children and families. Feedback from parents and teachers surround Bookville events are as follows;

"The variety of workshops offered has been great. The boys loved the creativity and the intimate nature of the sessions, it has been great for their learning and promoting curiosity in discovering new things".

Kilkenny is fortunate to have a wide range of cultural and artistic infrastructure; Evans Home Butler Gallery, the Watergate Theatre, the Medieval Mile Museum, Barnstorm Theatre Company, Ballykeefe Amphitheatre and the Young Irish Filmmakers to name a few. Kilkenny County Council is proud to have a strong alliance with these organisations and to provide a diverse arts environment around Kilkenny City and County. Creative Ireland Kilkenny will continue to ensure that Arts, Culture and Creativity will all be co-ordinated as a driving force for the county making a positive contribution towards inclusive social and economic development recognising the societal right that all citizens have access to these opportunities.

The Creative Ireland Programme has made substantial impact across Kilkenny in the last five

years. The total *Creative Communities* investment between 2018–2022 amounted to €834,305. This funding has given access to over 100 projects being held throughout Kilkenny. The programme has dismantled barriers and encouraged inclusive access and participation across all age groups and communities in Kilkenny.

One particular project funded by the Creative Ireland Programme, Knitted Together—is now in its third year. This project enables us to work with a diverse range of groups and individuals across the county and beyond, focussing on the older generation and intergenerational activity. To date we have engaged with over 400 participants, resulting in hundreds of beautifully knitted and crocheted blankets being created. All of the blankets were, in turn, donated to local charity shops to raise much needed funds. The ambition to foster community spirit and connection and to mitigate against the effects of social isolation was further elevated in 2022 as it was the first year of the project where groups and individuals were able to gather together to create without restriction. This was facilitated by hosting a number of very successful Maker–Meet–Ups. These sessions are designed to support and encourage participants involved in the project and to ensure they get to socialise, to exchange skills and ideas and enjoy creating together.

The activity of making is the constant in this project, the foundation from which many positive factors will emerge, supporting positive ageing by creating social connections, skill exchanges, positive reinforcements and friendships. Whilst there will be joy and appreciation for the finished items, the emphasis and benefits lie in the process.

“Knitted Together was amazing. We held a coffee morning so people could pop in and discuss the blankets. It raised awareness about the shop too.”—Rachel, NCBI Charity Shop, Castlecomer.

The Heritage, Arts, and Library services within Kilkenny County Council, working with many other stakeholders across Kilkenny have very effectively achieved engagement in creativity and culture amongst marginalised groups in our

society. A creative writing initiative that ran in 2021, developed by award winning writer and poet Colm Keegan, called *The Writing Home Programme*, promoted creative engagement specifically for homelessness service users and providers. The six–week workshop programme received funding and support from the Creative Ireland Kilkenny programme. By promoting engagement with creativity within marginalised groups this programme promoted self–expression and enabled those in emergency accommodation to recognise their creative contribution to society. Organiser Colm said:

“At times the work shared was incredible, other times truly heart–breaking, but to work through the whole process, from participants saying they didn’t see themselves as artists to six sessions later, standing up and celebrating their powerful work at the end, either on stage, to camera or in print, it was always inspiring, especially given the incredibly difficult circumstances. Making art is a transformative process that profoundly impacts the individual, but it can go even further than that. I believe this transformative process could be used to improve a multitude of systems in Ireland, especially those tasked with caring for people in challenging circumstances. Initiatives like this, help systems not just to function better, but to understand those they serve better. This documentary aims to bear witness to that process, and to advocate for this approach.”

This project has been recognised for its educational and training initiative by the local government All Ireland Community and Council Awards by receiving a gold award in 2021. Engaging with groups who have never previously had a creative experience is transformative and has been achieved in Kilkenny.

The Kilkenny Creative Ireland Programme will focus on the wellbeing of our citizens and communities across the whole Kilkenny region. It will share the responsibility of enabling access, engagement and participation of culture and creativity and ensure that Kilkenny is a region that supports and encourages the creative wellbeing of its people. The Cultural Services Team of Kilkenny



Knitted Together Launch 2022 – Grandmother Monica Dunne and her grandchildren Lucy Hayes (9) and Billy Hayes (5). **Photograph:** Patrick Browne

County Council will continue to embed creativity in policy in collaboration with its mission of “*Creating and sustaining great places and communities*”.

The Creative Ireland programme has enabled access, engagement and participation in creativity and culture, ensuring that Kilkenny is a county that supports and encourages the creative wellbeing of its people, particularly through the challenges of the COVID–19 pandemic.

Innovative projects delivered in collaboration with artists, makers, educators, state agencies and voluntary groups have provided positive impacts for a huge number of people living and visiting our

county. It is our ambition to expand those positive impacts through integrated policies, increased collaboration, and investment in the creative and cultural sector going forward.

The Healthy Kilkenny programme aims to create resilient communities, improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens, and reduce health inequalities in the most disadvantaged areas in Kilkenny. The Healthy Kilkenny programme will continue to work in collaboration with Creative Ireland to target hard to reach groups with the shared objective to create resilient, creative, and healthy communities.

3 The Creative Ireland Vision for Kilkenny

Kilkenny's Creative Ireland Programme aims to empower creatives and communities to express creativity throughout society and relevant programmes and policies. Its vision is that every person living in Kilkenny will have the opportunity to fully realise his or her creative potential. This Creative Ireland vision is also integral to Kilkenny County Council's current plan: "Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy 2018–2022" and future programmes. This plan identifies five strategic priorities with clear objectives to fulfil the Council's creative vision for Kilkenny:

- Enable best practice delivery of culture and creativity
- Increase and diversify participation in culture and creativity
- Support culture and creativity in rural and urban areas
- Engage children and young people in culture and creativity
- Communicate the value of culture and creativity

These strategic priorities will enable the Cultural Services team to concentrate on areas which will lead to a more integrated cultural offering into the future. These actions promote participation in our culture and creativity across all age, social, and socioeconomic groups of Kilkenny, and encourage the best practice in the delivery of culture. Kilkenny is currently reviewing its Local Economic and Community Plan (LEOP) and has brought forward these objectives in drafting up this new plan for all sectors in Kilkenny. Similarly, the Creative vision for Kilkenny has been referenced in our Traveller Action Plan, Active Travel Plan, Healthy Ireland Kilkenny Plan, Migration Action Plan and Corporate Plan, to ensure more co-ordinated creative outcomes for all communities in its county.

We believe that creativity and culture are deeply connected, but they are different. Creativity is the process where, either individually or with others, we make something new. Culture comes from that creative process and allows us to encounter things in the world that define places and people, like museums, galleries, festivals and events, waterways and castles, digital spaces and musical awakenings.

Creativity and culture together help us to make sense of ourselves, of each other and of the world around us.

The Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Team will be broadened to include all service areas within the local authority and will engage directly with other communities and stakeholders across the county who form a vibrant creative and cultural sector, outside of the local authority. Close co-ordination of activities either by private companies, individuals or state agencies will help to recognise and champion creative activities and cultural experiences for people living in and visiting every town and village in Kilkenny.

It is envisaged that encouraging engagement with our natural environment will foster the development of creative solutions at local level to impact climate change. Closer working relationships with our Local Enterprise Office and existing creative enterprises will grow the creative and cultural economy going forward.

By 2027, we want Kilkenny to be a county where the creativity of everyone is valued and given the chance to flourish, where everyone has access to a range of high quality and participative cultural experiences.

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 Kilkenny 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 Kilkenny

The Culture and Creativity Team in Kilkenny have reviewed the outputs of the Creative Ireland Programme over the last five years and have recognised the strong achievements in engagement with diverse and marginalised groups in our county, the development of inter-generational programmes and the creation of strong online content, accessible to all. Building on these strengths in delivery, the next Creative Ireland Programme in Kilkenny will endeavour to improve accessibility and develop the creative economy through closer co-ordination of all activities and initiatives within the creative and cultural sector.

As part of a consultation process to engage with all stakeholders and to prioritise the areas for action, these high-level priorities of the Creative Ireland Programme are reflected in the priorities listed hereunder. These priorities were circulated within all sections of the local authority and stakeholders across the county as part of a consultation process to prioritise the areas for action in the Kilkenny Creative Ireland Programme 2023 to 2027.

- Making counties great places to live, work, visit and invest in
- Housing
- Climate action (including sustainable/ active travel) and biodiversity
- Local economic development
- Attracting inward investment
- Town Centre First (Challenges to retail economy) and/ or rural economy
- Changing population /demographics
- Post-COVID renewal and resilient communities
- Digitalisation and ongoing transformation

Based on the preliminary results of the 2022 Census, 103,685 people currently live in County Kilkenny.¹ Data from the 2022 Census is not yet available regarding the age demographics of Kilkenny, however in the 2016 Census, young people (aged 0–24) stood at 32,977 with 25,944 aged under 18. With the notable elderly dependency rates and higher youth category it is important to take this into account for our strategic priorities.

Having learned from the successes of previous projects in Kilkenny and identified the need for improved collaboration and co-ordination with areas such as enterprise, tourism, and climate action to embed the creative and cultural sector in all aspects of life in Kilkenny, additional focus is placed on broader stakeholder and citizen engagement, policy development and co-ordinated resourcing in our next programme.

Kilkenny is home to the Design and Craft Council of Ireland, the Heritage Council, the Butler Gallery, the Watergate Theatre, Cartoon Saloon, and the Kilkenny Arts Festival and other festivals.

All of these entities play an important part in defining Kilkenny's reputation as an attractive location for people to develop cultural and creative enterprise, to visit for a cultural and creative experience and to celebrate our natural and built environment.

Increased engagement with all such stakeholders will allow the creative and cultural agenda to infiltrate all policy areas and investment proposals in the coming years.

The empowerment of all residents in Kilkenny to increase participation in cultural and creative programmes and opportunities does contribute to social cohesion, wellbeing and integration and it is proposed to promote increased engagement through collaboration and accessibility to programmes for all.

It is the strategic objective of Kilkenny County Council to strengthen creativity in all areas across our county through the following objectives:

Vibrant communities:

- Promote active participation in creativity and culture across all ages, communities and abilities in our county.
- Support the development of skills and talents in the creative and cultural sector through education, training and new enterprise and investment opportunities.
- Expand our Cultural and Creativity Team and actively engage with other agencies and bodies and individuals operating in the creative and cultural sector on a regular basis to co-ordinate actions for the county.

Town Centre First:

Kilkenny County Council's contribution will be aligned to the Creative Ireland Programme. Regeneration projects will be focused on investment in both tangible and intangible resources and supports. Kilkenny County Council will continue to invest in tangible infrastructure to support creativity and culture and to protect our collective heritage including museums, theatres, civic spaces, public infrastructure, and parks.

- Investment in intangible resources including artists, creatives, local services, and tourist experiences will be supported to strengthen Kilkenny's creative and cultural sector.
- Towns and villages are made up of a rich tapestry of people, places, heritage, and culture Kilkenny County Council will work to build cohesive and creative communities and facilities within the existing natural and built environment of our settlements.

Climate Action:

- Harnessing the potential of culture and creativity to help galvanise climate action in County Kilkenny will be a key focus of the Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027. Kilkenny County Council recognises that Culture and Creativity can meaningfully connect people with the profound changes that

are happening in our environment, society and economy arising from climate change, and can help transform that connection into behaviour change or climate action

- The Council will encourage creative and cultural projects which align with the aims and objectives of the five-year County Kilkenny Climate Action Plan 2023–2026, currently in preparation. Themes may include, but are not limited to, the following: emissions, energy, climate justice, the circular economy, Sustainable Development Goals, decarbonisation, nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, transport, recording culture threatened by climate-induced managed retreat etc.
- Creative solutions will deliver active participation in climate change initiatives. Kilkenny County Council will encourage community engagement with environmental sustainability.

Local Economic Development:

- At the heart of every creative district beats the pulse of its creative economy. Kilkenny County Council will develop opportunities to establish sustainable creative enterprises, to support full time artists, and to attract investment in our existing creative industries.
- Culture and heritage define Kilkenny as a destination and Kilkenny County Council will actively support initiatives to allow residents and visitors to have quality cultural experiences through the promotion and interpretation of heritage sites and the provision of quality cultural events and festivals, museums, and destination visitor experiences.

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