

# BETTER TOGETHER

THE THREE SISTERS  
REGIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY  
2016-2025

KILKENNY, WATERFORD, WEXFORD

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## WELCOME

Culture is an integral part of how we lead our everyday lives. It connects us through our rituals and traditions to our region's heritage through our landscape, language, sport, food, song and dance. It roots us and gives us a sense of place. It assists our health and wellbeing, gives expression to our creativity and provides outlets for participation, engagement, reflection, celebration and entertainment for all citizens. But culture can also act as catalyst for change and it with this change in mind that we as joint Chief Executives of the Three Sisters region present our first Regional Cultural Strategy.

This strategy has been developed in part as an output of the Three Sisters regional bid to win the title of European Capital of Culture in 2020 but moreover to respond to an identified need for us to work together in partnership to increase our visibility nationally and internationally, provide greater access to culture throughout our region, promote opportunities for co-creation, innovation and entrepreneurship in culture and creativity, contribute to our economic and societal development, and chart a future for the Three Sisters through culture-led development.

We are a region rich in culture from our national cultural and design institutions and organisations to our production of culture via our cultural players across the arts, heritage and creative industries and our individual artistic practitioners.

This strategy acts provides a vision for the Three Sisters to 2025, delivering an over-arching framework to assist the region within the context of our combined wider economic and social development agenda and sets out high-level goals for cultural development.

Together, we look forward to further developing our joint partnership and implementing our new cultural agenda.

Sincerely,

Tom Enright  
Chief Executive  
Wexford County Council

Colette Byrne  
Chief Executive  
Kilkenny County Council

Michael Walsh  
Chief Executive  
Waterford City and County Council

## **VISION**

**A REGION WHERE CULTURE IS UNDERSTOOD,  
APPRECIATED AND RESOURCED TO IMPROVE  
THE LIVES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS  
FOR ALL WHO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT THE  
THREE SISTERS REGION**

## MISSION

TO TRANSFORM THE THREE SISTERS REGION THROUGH CULTURE-LED PARTNERSHIP AND INVESTMENT TO ENHANCE THE LIVES OF OUR CITIZENS

THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

1. PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE REGION
2. INVESTING IN THE EXPRESSION OF AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AND CREATIVITY THROUGH OUR PEOPLE, PLACES AND PROGRAMMES
3. WORKING WITH LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TO DEVELOP OUR CULTURAL CAPACITY AND POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION
4. CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE OPERATING IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS TO FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL

## VALUES

This Regional Cultural Strategy is guided by our commitment to:

- Providing **leadership and transformational change** to develop the Three Sisters as a functioning region
- **Valuing culture** in all of its forms
- **Inclusivity** in our approach to cultural development
- **Excellence** in our processes, services, programmes and people
- **Providing appropriate resources, structures and processes** to implement the regional cultural strategy
- Fostering a culture of **collaborative working** across the region
- **Building cultural capacity and competency**
- **Supporting innovation and enterprise**
- **Developing opportunities** to share learning across the region, nationally and internationally
- **Ensuring openness** in our communications with all stakeholders

## INTRODUCTION



The Three Sisters is a region in the south east of Ireland comprising the counties of Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford with a combined population of 354,000 people. Together they encompass a rich and diverse tapestry of culture spanning the arts, heritage, sport, language and traditional culture, and the creative industries. A broad base of culture is at the heart of how people live, work and play in the region.

The Three Sisters is an exploratory model of regional partnership development and a new model in the Irish cultural context. The partner counties, working together to improve the future for their citizens and understanding that they are stronger and better together, have set aside their historical rivalries to embrace collaborative cultural planning, which has the potential to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing for citizens, contribute to a developing economy and transform the visibility and competitiveness of the region. Through this Regional Cultural Strategy they have designed their development approach reflecting existing competencies, strengths and distinctive attributes in the individual partner counties and charting the potential for coherent future cultural planning, development and provision.



This strategy is being developed in tandem with and inspired by the Three Sisters regional bid to host the European Capital of Culture in 2020. While distinct and separate documents, the strategy and the bid are inherently aligned in their ambition for culture-led regional transformation, going beyond the region encouraging collaboration with international partners across Europe and further afield.



The strategy is informed by European, national and local policy context, frameworks and plans specifically the Arts Council's Strategy to 2016-2025 – *Making Great Art Work*<sup>1</sup> and the European Union's Strategic Framework – *European Agenda for Culture*<sup>2</sup>. The Three Sisters region is determined to play an innovative, leadership role at European level in highlighting regional transformation through culture. It is also timely in that it is being developed against the backdrop of Ireland's first National Strategy for Culture – *'Culture 2025'*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Making Great Art Work*. Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland. Arts Council Strategy (2016-2025). The Arts Council. Dublin, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution of the Council of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture (2007/C 287/01), European Union, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *Culture 2025* - Discussion Document. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin 2015.

Within the Three Sisters there exists a desire for the value of culture in its widest form to be recognised, valued and effectively planned for and resourced. This joint and complementary approach to culture-led regional development responds to the future of the region as outlined in the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020<sup>4</sup>. Its implementation will enable the partners to align resources from local and national programmes into planning and development for culture through;

- support of the creative and knowledge economy
- enhanced opportunities for cultural and creative enterprise, innovation, programming, practice and engagement
- the development of vibrant urban centres and place-making for rural regions
- enhanced growth in the region's tourism sector in line with Fáilte Ireland's *Ireland's Ancient East* umbrella destination brand<sup>5</sup>
- positioning the region as a place where culture and creativity is embedded in the fabric of life

The partners appreciate the significance that the Regional Cultural Strategy can play in developing a 'functioning region'<sup>6</sup>, a region which is desirable to live in, where people's talents are supported and maximised, where excellence and enterprise are celebrated, creative approaches to funding culture are explored and implemented, and where meaningful access, engagement, participation and inclusion underpin the cultural agenda.

The Regional Cultural Strategy is the beginning of a journey, commencing the process to deliver on the region's currently under-played potential; where working together can deliver multiple economic, societal and cultural benefits. Its objective is to chart a path for culture-led development in the region for the next decade. It aims to reconnect culture to how we think about what it means to live in the Three Sisters region and in turn to present new ways of thinking and resourcing these experiences. It's about people – plugging into the landscape, understanding where we have come from and being part of the decision-making process about where we are going.

This document is an evolutionary process towards 2025. It focuses on policy over and above the issues of delivery. It is concerned with building flexibility and responsiveness to an ever-changing cultural and economic landscape in the region. It will serve as a guidance document, having regard to and

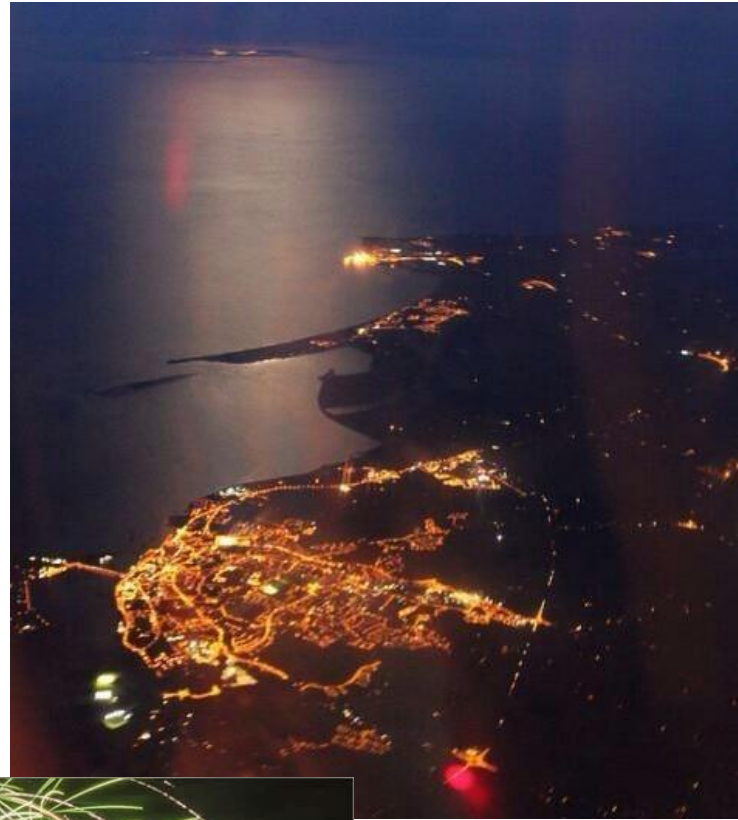
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<sup>4</sup> *National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020 – People, Places and Potential*. Stationary Office, Dublin. 2002.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.failteireland.ie/Ireland-s-Ancient-East.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> By 'functioning region' we are referring to the entire partner counties of Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford which support the Gateway City of Waterford and the two regional urban hubs of Kilkenny City and Wexford Town.

aligning with the strategic objectives of existing statutory plans and frameworks across the partner counties.





## DEFINING CULTURE

There are multiple definitions of culture and for the purposes of this Strategy we reference the definition of culture as outlined in the Government's Discussion Document for A National Cultural Policy - Culture 2025<sup>7</sup> and build upon this definition to reflect the nuances of our region. We define culture as:

- **The arts**, as defined in the Arts Act 2003, which means “any creative or interpretive expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and including, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture and includes any medium when used for those purposes.”
- **Creative industries**, including film and television production, animation, broadcasting, electronic games, architecture, design and fashion, publishing, media and advertising, innovation, R&D and SMART technologies
- **Cultural heritage**, including galleries, libraries, archives and museums, built and natural heritage, Irish language and folk traditions, craft, sport, food and brewing.

*(See Appendix 1)*



<sup>7</sup> Culture 2025 - Discussion Document. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin 2015.

## CURRENT CONTEXT

### CULTURAL SECTOR - HIGHLIGHTS

The arts sector and in particular the festival economy is strong across the region with key festivals in each partner county drawing significant national and international audiences year on year and a high level of participation in visual and performing arts practice and the literary arts. The Three Sisters is home to some of Ireland's leading thinkers in arts and cultural programming and models of excellence in arts and health, collaborative and cross-artform programming, exchange and residencies, street arts and spectacle, and arts networking.

Waterford and Wexford are both pioneers for arts, health and wellbeing, with a track record of long-term partnership and programming in hospitals, care settings, community spaces and in the home, specifically through the Waterford Healing Arts Trust and the nationally recognised Arts Ability model in Wexford. KCAT – Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent is a pioneer in inclusive art practice both in Ireland and internationally, initially via the EU Horizon programme.

The region is home to the National Opera House, located in Wexford town which hosts the acclaimed annual Wexford Festival Opera. Visual arts are well-represented across the region with the Butler Gallery and Lismore Castle Arts of particular significance and the Blackstack Print Studio artists' collective. Wexford Arts Centre is a hub for a blend of voluntary and professional activity and exhibitions with strong national and international partnership links.

Theatre and performing arts are key features of artistic expression in the region, underpinned by numerous theatres born from communities of practice, where amateur activities in rural and urban areas have spawned international excellence and the type of cultural cooperation organisations in larger cities struggle to sustain.



The region's association with festivals is central – Kilkenny Arts Festival has gathered many of the world's finest musicians, performers, writers and artists in Ireland's medieval city each August. Street Arts is well known via

the Spraoi International Street Arts Festival and Buí Bolg. Spraoi also provides professional services in street arts for a range of cultural entities outside the Three Sisters region and has well-established international connectivity across Europe.

The ArtLinks programme is a model providing grants for individual and

collaborative arts practice and a range of mentoring, training and networking supports for professional and emerging artists across the region. ArtLinks is an initiative of the local authority Arts Officers in the region (and the in neighbouring county Carlow).



Traditional culture and heritage are key components of the regional identity and the region has much to offer in terms of

linguistic diversity and cultural richness. 'Gaeltacht na nDéise' in Waterford is one of seven Gaeltacht areas in Ireland where our native language is still spoken as a living, community language as are its associated cultural elements (Irish music, song, dance and storytelling). In addition, our musical traditions are celebrated through local branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and active participation in the Fleadh Cheoil.

Sport is an important element of our cultural heritage in particular hurling – and Gaelic Football organised by the Gaelic Athletic Association. Both have an unparalleled network of voluntary and community activity, which are a major cultural asset for the Three Sisters and a cohort of high-profile players who act as ambassadors for their individual sport.

Our cultural heritage is preserved and managed through our libraries, archives and museums services<sup>8</sup>, which provide a lattice of connectivity between culture and the wider communities of the Three Sisters. The Waterford Museum of Treasures plays a particular role in highlighting the region's heritage of invasion and arrivals. The Three Sisters is a microcosm of European cultural diversity and integration, with an increasingly intercultural

<sup>8</sup> and through the Waterford Institute of Technology, which acts as a repository for knowledge in relation to the region's heritage

community of recent arrivals. Our sport and traditional culture is channelled through the work of the Gaelic Athletic Association and Comhaltas Ceolteoirí Éireann at local level. The built and natural heritage of the region is a key feature of the landscape and presents a backdrop for innovation in new uses for ancient spaces and programmes which celebrate our rich heritage proposition.



## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The Three Sisters is home to a wide variety of cultural and creative industries, mostly micro in scale and across a wide range of industry sectors. Recent research on the current profile of the creative industries in the region was carried out to support the European Capital of Culture Bid<sup>9</sup> and highlighted clusters of activity in specific locations across the region, most being micro in scale, working in isolation and many with no more than one person employed.

It is widely accepted that a vibrant creative industries sector stimulates innovation in other sectors. The importance of this sector to growth and development was outlined in the Indecon Report<sup>10</sup> published by the Arts Council in 2011 which showed the annual value of the creative industries to be €4,644 million GVA to the Irish economy, representing 2.8% of gross domestic product and with 48,000 jobs and more than 29,000 indirect jobs

<sup>9</sup> Baseline research for the cultural and creative industries in South East Ireland (Waterford, Kilkenny Wexford) prepared by Dr Angela Goff and Dr Richard Hayes, Waterford Institute of Technology 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Economic Impact of the Creative Industries in Ireland*. (Indecon Report), Arts Council, Dublin. 2011.

resulting within the sector. In addition a recent landmark research report; *Cultural and Creative Spillovers in Europe*<sup>11</sup>, provides an evidence base which captures the spillover effects of 98 projects across Europe. Further research which supports this thesis was carried out in the craft and design sector in the South East during 2013.

Creative and Cultural Industries in the Three Sisters are of growing significance. An initial baseline regional mapping study was commissioned for the Three Sisters European Capital of Culture 2020 bid and identified over 1700 creative businesses alone, many experiencing development challenges including accessing talent, supports and market knowledge for their continued sustainability. A current mapping process to further define the creative sector in the region is being undertaken as part of the ECOC bid development process and will be completed by June 2016.

The Three Sisters is also home to the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) champion of the craft industry in Ireland, fostering its growth and commercial strength, communicating its unique identity and stimulating quality design, innovation and competitiveness in the craft and design sector with a clear focus on enterprise development. Their strategic focus provides an important backdrop for this strategy document not least of which in its drive to develop centres of excellence for ceramics (Thomastown), glass making and design (Waterford)<sup>12</sup> and Jewellery and Goldsmithing (Kilkenny) providing a regional response to a national policy agenda, cohering the development of the design sector in the region.

## ECONOMY

Waterford was designated as a Gateway City under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) with Kilkenny and Wexford as hubs forming a strategic 'growth triangle' in the south east of Ireland. Together it is intended that they will drive regional growth by building on their complementary strengths (including, heritage, tourism, quality of life, etc), developing substantial capacity for the region to balance the type of critical mass that has been

achieved elsewhere on the island of Ireland.

<sup>11</sup> *Cultural and Creative Spillovers in Europe: Report on a preliminary evidence review.* Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, London, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> *Developing the Vision for Waterford as an International Centre for Glass Design and Making.* (Karan Thompson Consulting) DCCol. Kilkenny, 2015.



*The growth of a Waterford/Wexford/Kilkenny triangle of strength needs to be supported by a co-ordinated and integrated approach that builds on their complementary strengths.<sup>13</sup>*

The significance of interconnectedness of both the rural and urban landscape is also highlighted in the NSS, which states that 'County towns, other towns, villages and more rural areas should be positioned to support the full realisation of the potential for economic development throughout the region, with a particular emphasis on complementing the gateway and hub approach'<sup>14</sup>.

Economic performance in the region is poor and unemployment is higher than the national average. Businesses are predominantly micro in scale with no more than 15 companies employing over 150 people and accounting for 32% of all employment. The Agri-food sector plays an important part in the regional economy where larger firms are increasingly complemented by an emerging artisan food producer base.

Support for the development of the creative and cultural economy provides an opportunity for the region to create new models of enterprise which will stimulate the cultural and creative sectors, grow indigenous industry and support growth in the overall economy of the region over time.

## EDUCATION

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The region is home to Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) a third-level college which caters to a campus population of over 10,000 people. It specialises in research, innovation, technology, creativity and regional development. WIT currently delivers an engaged institutional response to regional need and provides critical and independent thinking, supported by a research agenda which provides a demonstrable impact on the local region and a commitment to cultivating innovation. The cultural agenda for the Institute is serviced through the School of Humanities. WIT acts as an advocate for the region attracting new talent via its student cohort and internationalising its approach to teaching, learning and research.

WIT is currently in the process of finalising its strategic agenda for the next five years. The orientation of the institution is through the continuance of its regional development approach alongside further enhancement of its research capabilities and engagement with the wider community.

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<sup>13</sup> *National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020 – People, Places and Potential*. Stationary Office, Dublin. 2002.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

WIT's Telecommunications Software and Systems Group programme and Arclabs Innovation Centre provide developments in digital innovation and connectivity, cutting-edge technology and embedded human capital with the potential to harness new ideas and convert concepts into thriving, commercial businesses through cross-disciplinary solutions that will bring the region together.

The Wexford Campus is an integral part of the Institute of Technology Carlow and is alma mater to over 3,000 students . **It offers degree and higher degree courses in business and humanities and runs renowned arts programmes and** is home to the School of Art and Design.

The Kilkenny Campus of Maynooth University offers a range of courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level to adult learners from the south east region.

## TOURISM

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Tourism is a key economic driver in the Three Sisters region with 744,000 overseas visitors and 765,000 domestic visits to the region in 2014 alone and over 77% arriving from Britain and mainland Europe by sea and air. It boasts a range of visitor attractions, cultural spaces, and excellent public realm infrastructure across the three counties which reflect the history and heritage of the region and its linkages with European and global communities, while positioning it as a culturally aware destination, one associated with excellence in cultural programming, design and making and a distinct cultural identity.

A strategic priority for tourism development nationally is Fáilte Ireland's

Ancient East umbrella proposition for the south and east of Ireland. This programme is intended to create critical mass and increase consumer recognition for the destination in overseas markets specifically for the culturally curious visitor.

The tourism officers in the region have already begun a collaborative process to deliver a regional marketing focus for the Three Sisters. Development of this working relationship and maximising opportunities presented by both

the ECOC Bid and Ireland's Ancient East will be critical success factors in positioning the region as a destination for culture in the coming years.



## KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

It was appreciated during the information gathering process that embracing a culture-led regional development approach is not an easy route to take given the historical competitive context between the partner counties; however, the potential impact, societal value and benefit for the region and its citizens to deliver transformational change over time, improving visibility and competitiveness of the region and the potential direct and indirect economic impact, was an opportunity not to be missed<sup>15</sup>.

Commitment to the successful implementation of the Regional Cultural Strategy offers the region a chance to increase its cultural capacity to compete on an international stage, develop new enterprises in the cultural and creative sectors and connect people and place across the region.

The four strategic priority areas for culture-led development, as identified during the research and consultation process, are:

1. A Regional Model for Partnership
2. A Creative and Cultural Economy Programme
3. Culture-Led Social Development
4. An Urban and Rural Regeneration Programme

Leadership to drive this culture-led change process is a necessity and needs to be championed at executive level within the partner local authorities for success. It is of vital importance that the strategy be adopted by the local authority leadership and is integrated into Council's core objectives to ensure its successful delivery.

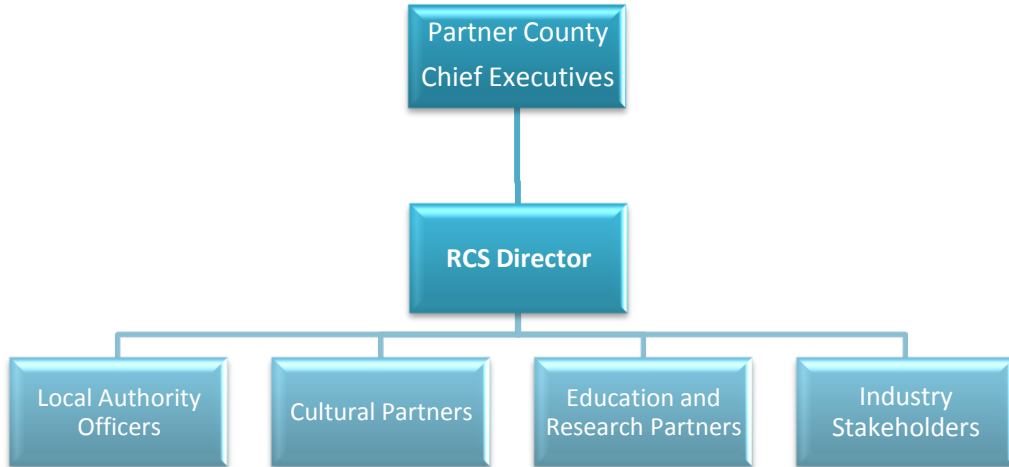
Clear governance and ownership of the implementation of the Regional Cultural Strategy will be a critical success factor in delivering on the above priorities. A bespoke delivery structure, which incorporates key performance indicators linked to existing social and economic goals and a formal evaluation process, is required.

It is proposed that an autonomous, regional executive structure with dedicated resources with relevant skills and experience be put in place as this delivery mechanism and for ongoing culture-led development across the region. *(See Table 1)*

<sup>15</sup> Supporting research examples included in *Creative Dividends: An Assessment of the Economic Impact of Wexford County Council's Support for the Arts Sector*. Wexford County Council, 2013.



Table 1: Proposed structural model for implementation of the Regional Cultural Strategy



The Three Sisters Bid for the European Capital of Culture is already delivering long-term benefit and driving positive strategic change within the region as evidenced by the shared need to developing this Regional Cultural Strategy plus it has already ignited key demonstration projects which bring to the fore collaboration and innovation. Should the bid be successful, it would create an impetus for the implementation of this strategy to be moved forward with urgency and the strategic aims of the strategy itself to be revisited and scaled up to meet the ambition of the ECOC year.

Should the bid be unsuccessful, the Regional Cultural Strategy would be the key apparatus for sustainable culture-led regional development going forward. Its implementation will be imperative for culture-led redevelopment.

## METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

The development of this Regional Cultural Strategy commenced in 2015 as a component part of the first phase of the Three Sister's Bid to become European Capital of Culture 2020 (ECoC). The Bid process made it clear that a joined up regional approach was required for sustainable culture-led development; given the existing issues of a small-scale, fragmented, under-connected and under-leveraged cultural sector which was not achieving its full potential and the positive benefits to be gained by sharing resources and knowledge, interconnecting the region and providing greater access to culture in all its forms.

Having a cultural strategy in place for the region is a requirement of the ECoC Bid process however, the above issues and potential highlighted that a Regional Cultural Strategy was required to move the cultural agenda forward in the region, with or without the ECoC.

Four Strategic Pillars were identified during the consultation process for the Bid and which were outlined in the Three Sisters' pre-selection Bid Book and which are addressed in the following section, they have informed the development of this strategy.

The methodology for the development of this strategy document was based on deep and extensive consultation across the entire region of the Three Sisters and beyond, with expertise and insights provided by cultural players working in the wider European context. The approach taken is outlined below and the full methodology is available in [Appendix 2](#).

- Outcomes from the consultation process which formed part of the pre-selection phase to become European Capital of Culture 2020
- A desk research and information gathering process on existing documentation available from local, regional national and international sources. ([Appendix 3](#))
- A consultation process with relevant internal personnel in the partner counties and external consultees from local and national stakeholder agencies and organisations. ([Appendix 4](#))
- Analysis of the research and consultation findings, review and development into this final strategy document

It is intended that the Implementation Plan to support the Regional Cultural Strategy will be developed towards the latter part of 2016.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic development process identified four core areas to act as the focus for culture-led regional development and in order to achieve a sustainable and significant impact in the region over the duration of the strategy. These priority areas are:

- A. REGIONAL MODEL FOR PARTNERSHIP
- B. CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ECONOMY PROGRAMME
- C. CULTURE LED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- D. URBAN AND RURAL REGENERATION PROGRAMME

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY A: REGIONAL MODEL FOR PARTNERSHIP

#### GOAL 1: CREATE EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES FOR CULTURE-LED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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- 1.1 Commence implementation of the Regional Cultural Strategy during 2016
- 1.2 Establish and effectively resource an independent agency/structure with responsibility for the implementation of the Regional Cultural Strategy and sustainable culture-led regional development
- 1.3 Embed culture in future strategy documents and delivery mechanisms by the partner local authorities
- 1.4 Create an evaluation mechanism to review the implementation and impact of this strategy
- 1.5 Work to deliver an innovative and excellent programme for the European Capital of Culture 2020 (pending a successful outcome from the bid process in 2016).

#### GOAL 2: DELIVER EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

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- 2.1 Effectively resource cultural services to implement the Regional Cultural Strategy to respond effectively to the cultural development agenda at national and international level and develop effective programmes and supports for artists and creatives

- 2.2 Enhance opportunities to share knowledge and learning across local authority services for culture, to include; arts, heritage, libraries, archives, sport, tourism and community services
- 2.3 Adopt cross-sectoral, cross-agency and cross-disciplinary work practices to enhance regional cooperation
- 2.4 Respond to international funding opportunities and programme partnerships – specifically in relation to Creative Europe
- 2.5 Provide a leadership role in promoting the Three Sisters as a 'Region of Culture'
- 2.6 Build transnational partnerships for shared learning and exchange, artistic and creative collaborations and cultural and enterprise development
- 2.7 Embrace the opportunity presented by the European Capital of Culture Bid to promote the region to a European audience and increase partnerships across Europe

**GOAL 3: DEVELOP THE POTENTIAL OF THE REGION TO INCREASE ITS APPEAL TO VISITORS**

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- 3.1 Work in partnership with Fáilte Ireland to deliver on the potential of Ireland's Ancient East to increase visitor numbers and dwell time in the region by 15% to 2025
- 3.2 Develop an over-arching tourism agenda for the Three Sisters which incorporates a framework for regional marketing for tourism and a narrative which positions the region as a 'region of culture'
- 3.3 Further develop the existing regional partnership between tourism officers to build capacity, quality, range and seasonality of the tourism product offer
- 3.4 Create inter-agency supports for micro and SME businesses to develop industry and market-ready, targeted tourism propositions
- 3.5 Support product development within food tourism and micro-breweries
- 3.6 Maximise opportunities presented by built heritage attractions in the region and assess the feasibility of a coordinated management approach for publicly-funded smaller-scale attractions across the region

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY B: CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ECONOMY PROGRAMME

### GOAL 4: DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE AUDIENCES FOR CULTURE ACROSS THE REGION

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- 4.1 Enhance digital connectivity in the region to support regional approaches to marketing and promotion, cultural engagement and participation
- 4.2 Implement the audience development strategy created for the ECoC 2020 Bid, building on the potential for shared programme, services and promotion and learning from international counterparts
- 4.3 Ensure audience development in the region is socially inclusive and cognisant of community led cultural initiatives
- 4.4 Work with the Arts Councils Investment Strategy to investigate the establishment of a multi-annual funding model for cultural organisations/festivals to enable effective long-term planning for culture
- 4.5 Work in partnership with national tourism partners to leverage opportunities for increased tourism to the region

### GOAL 5: EFFECTIVELY RESOURCE AND SUPPORT FESTIVAL ECONOMY

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- 5.1 Facilitate co-creation and shared resourcing for festival programming regionally, nationally and internationally
- 5.2 Support core strengths in festival programming and develop opportunities for increased digital programming (e.g. creative technology festival)
- 5.3 Develop greater convergence between tourism and festival product to maximise the potential from the festival economy and messaging of a region 'en fête'
- 5.4 Design a process to leverage capacity within the festival sector (across professional and community festivals)
- 5.5 Create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation in touring and 365 festival development across and without the region
- 5.6 Leverage opportunities provided by a strong food festival culture to deliver a coherent regional food festival offer

**GOAL 6: BUILD CAPACITY WITHIN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTOR TO SUSTAIN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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- 6.1 Develop new funding/investment models to support innovation, entrepreneurship and research and development in the creative and cultural industries
- 6.2 Develop competency of cultural players in the region to leverage regional expertise in applying for European Commission and other funding programmes for culture
- 6.3 Promote the continuance of the regional Cultural Steering Group to establish mechanisms for co-production and touring, promotion of intangible cultural and linguistic heritage and shared learning from players within the region
- 6.4 Benchmark programmes and projects against international standards/models of best practice in cultural planning
- 6.5 Invite international expertise to build further capacity specifically in the area of digital technology approaches to cultural programming
- 6.6 Measure the spillover effects of the cultural and creative sector into the wider economy of the Three Sisters region
- 6.7 Develop ongoing capacity-building programmes with education providers to support cultural development
- 6.8 Provide supports to artisan food and brewing sectors to reflect growing significance of this industry sector in the region

**GOAL 7: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SECTOR TO BECOME A DRIVER FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE**

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- 7.1 Work with national agency partners to support the development of Centres of Excellence across the region
- 7.2 Continue partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology to commission research into creative industries potential for the region, maintain an enterprise focus and design bespoke programmes to support sectoral development
- 7.3 Work with Local enterprise Offices and Chambers of Commerce in the region to develop cross-agency supports and regional networking opportunities for sustainable business development for micro businesses in the Creative Industries sector
- 7.4 Create 'meanwhile' and 'activation' spaces for creative entrepreneurship and assess the potential for development of new uses for old spaces to house micro-industries in the creative sector

- 7.5 Position the region as a destination for creatives emanating from its historical context of international learning via the Kilkenny Design Workshops and WIT creative industries focus
- 7.6 Utilise the outputs of the mapping of creative industries (part of the ECoC bid) to plan for development of the creative industries sector in the region.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY C: CULTURE-LED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### **GOAL 8: DEVELOP A SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR THE REGION**

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- 8.1 Improve access to culture-in-health and community settings across the region
- 8.2 Work with regional third level institutions and health care providers to devise and implement a new collaborative approach to arts and health through education
- 8.3 Commission research to explore a holistic approach to health care that integrates culture and creativity with care of the most vulnerable in our society

### **GOAL 9: ENSURE ALL COMMUNITIES OF THE THREE SISTERS ARE INCLUDED IN THE CULTURE-LED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

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- 9.1 Embed the voice of children and young people, the old, young, disadvantaged and minority communities in strategic cultural policy development, planning and programming
- 9.2 Work with industry and agency partners to effectively plan for inclusive cultural programming which embraces cultural diversity
- 9.3 Contract partnership agencies e.g. Waterford Area Partnership, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and Wexford Local Development and others to deliver on collaborative regional cultural agendas
- 9.4 Investigate supports for artists/creatives across the region, so that they are facilitated to live and work in urban and rural communities

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY D: URBAN AND RURAL REGENERATION PROGRAMME

### GOAL 10: DELIVER ON PHYSICAL REGENERATION PROJECTS TO SUPPORT THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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- 10.1 Embed culture into future planning and development in the region
- 10.2 Work with industry partners to improve access into and across the region via additional air routes from Europe into Waterford Airport and car and foot passengers via Rosslare EuroPort
- 10.3 Commit resources to deliver planned infrastructural developments including cycle-ways, waterways, driving routes, access roads and cultural trails
- 10.4 Investigate development of creative living/working spaces for those operating in the cultural and creative sector
- 10.5 Resource the upgrade of existing cultural venues/sites and assess the potential of new uses for culture in heritage spaces
- 10.6 Develop a memo of understanding with Office of Public Works for increased access to and development of buildings and lands under their control

### GOAL 11: ENSURE CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS TO CULTURE FOR ALL CITIZENS IN THE THREE SISTERS REGION

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- 11.1 Support community led cultural initiatives, particularly those which support inclusion of people who experience barriers to engaging with cultural activities
- 11.2 Work with WIT to support innovation in the digital sector which promotes accessibility and interaction in the design, development, production and presentation of cultural content
- 11.3 Establish a digital research and development fund to build digital capacity in the cultural sector
- 11.4 Work with industry partners to support the improvement of WIFI and broadband connectivity throughout the region
- 11.5 Work with industry, agency and educational partners to develop supports specifically designed for those operating in the creative and cultural industries



- 11.6 Develop effective responses to networking (digital and native) to connect the cultural community across the region; to include individual emerging and professional practitioners
- 11.7 Promote active citizenship through well supported mechanisms such as resourced volunteering action plans, building on exiting models in our region.



## CONCLUSION

This Regional Cultural Strategy provides the first steps in the Three Sister's culture-led regional development process. It represents the ambition and aspirations of the combined partner counties. It highlights the region's commitment to being "*Better Together*"<sup>16</sup>. It speaks to a regional agenda and responds to regional needs within a wider European context. It shows the commitment of the partners to leading transformational change.

The strategy itself responds to two different agenda – one in fulfilling the requirement as candidate region for the title of European Capital of Culture, and two – in expressing the value of culture in the region and planning for its future development. It is not intended to deliver a script for cultural development in the Three Sisters for the next ten years, but rather to provide an over-arching framework which will embed the cultural agenda into sustainable regional development over the period of the strategy.

The delivery of this culture-led approach to regional development will bring multiple benefits across the Three Sisters region, not least of which by improving access to culture, but also in sustaining and developing cultural provision over time, increasing the capacity and capability of our cultural players, creating opportunities for enterprise development and positioning the region as a place of culture and innovation and a desirable place to live and work and visit.

Effective and timely delivery of this strategy is of paramount importance in maintaining the commitment of the cultural and creative industries sectors to drive growth and development in the region and ensure the protection, development and enhancement of culture for future generations. It is intended that work to develop an implementation plan to support this strategy document will commence during 2016.

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<sup>16</sup> *Currents of Culture - Sharing, Thriving, Re-imagining Together*. Three Sisters Bid Book for European Capital of Culture Pre-Selection Process. 2015.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY SECTORS COVERED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STRATEGY DOCUMENT

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- Arts (Performing, Literary, Visual and Street)
- Advertising
- Architecture
- Broadcast Media / Television and Radio
- Craft
- Cultural Tourism
- Design
- Digital Media
- Festivals and Events
- Film, Video and Photography
- Food and Brewing
- Heritage (Linguistic , Built and Natural)
- Innovation - Gaming, SMART Tech and Agri-tech
- Publishing and Electronic Publishing
- Sport (Indigenous sport – Hurling, GAA Football, Camogie)
- Traditional Culture (Aural and Oral – Music and Dance)

## APPENDIX 2

### REGIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY METHODOLOGY

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#### PHASE 1- PRE-SELECTION FOR ECOC CONSULTATION (JUNE – SEPT 2015)

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Outcomes from the consultation process which formed part of the pre-selection phase to become European Capital of Culture 2020 and which included consultation meetings and/or workshops with:

1. Members of the public across the Three Sisters region
2. Cultural stakeholder meetings
3. National agency partner meetings
4. Cultural Steering Group for the Bid
5. Local Authority Partners at Executive level
6. Local Authority Officers Working Group
7. Community Groups
8. Education and Tourism Partners

#### PHASE 2 - DESK RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GATHERING (JAN – FEB 2016)

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Desk research was carried out on existing documentation including County Development Plans, Local Economic and Community Plans; Arts; Libraries; Heritage; Tourism plans and additional online research into best practice regional strategy development. Documents accessed during the research phase are included in [Appendix 3](#).

#### PHASE 3 - CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS (FEB -MARCH 2016)

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The consultation process included a Regional Cultural Strategy Stakeholder Workshop held in February 2016 and individual telephone interviews with relevant internal personnel in the partner counties and external consultees from local and national stakeholder agencies and organisations. See [Appendix 4](#).

#### PHASE 4 – DRAFT CULTURAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW (MAR 2016)

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This Draft Regional Cultural Strategy is informed by the outputs from the research and analysis process. It presents a series of strategic priorities and goals for successful culture-led regional development for consideration by the Local Authority and supporting partners. This draft document will be reviewed by a team of identified stakeholders in order to inform the final strategy document.

#### PHASE 5 – REGIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY SIGN OFF (MAY 2016)

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Regional Cultural Strategy adopted by each of the Three Sisters County Councils. It is intended that an Implementation Plan to support the Regional Cultural Strategy will be developed towards the latter part of 2016.

## APPENDIX 3

DESK RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION ACCESSED

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Arts in Education Charter. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Department of Education and Skills, 2012.

**Baseline research for the cultural and creative industries in South East Ireland** (Waterford, Kilkenny Wexford) Dr Angela Goff and Dr Richard Hayes, Waterford Institute of Technology, 2015.

**Creative Clusters: Economic Analysis of the Current Status and Future Clustering Potential for the Crafts Industry in Ireland.** (Indecon) Crafts Council of Ireland. Kilkenny, 2013.

**Creative Dividends:** An Assessment of the Economic Impact of Wexford County Council's Support for the Arts Sector. Wexford County Council, 2013.

**Cultural and Creative Spillovers in Europe:** Report on a preliminary evidence review. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, London, 2015.

**Cultural Connections - Strategic Plan for Cultural Services Division, 2009-2014.** Donegal County Council. 2009.

**Cultural Heritage Policy in the European Union.** European Parliamentary Research Blog <http://epthinktank.eu/2014/12/16/cultural-heritage-policy-in-the-european-union/>

**Culture 2025 – Discussion Document.** Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin 2015.

**Culture for Cities and Regions**  
[http://www.cultureforcitiesandregions.eu/culture/project/activities/cultural\\_and\\_creative\\_industries](http://www.cultureforcitiesandregions.eu/culture/project/activities/cultural_and_creative_industries)

**Currents of Culture - Sharing, Thriving, Re-imagining Together.** Three Sisters Bid Book for European Capital of Culture Pre-Selection Process. 2015.

**Design & Crafts Council of Ireland Annual Report 2014.** DCCol, Kilkenny. 2014.

**Developing the Region's Creative and Cultural Sector – Douglas Hyde Conference Presentation,** Western Development Commission, 2015.

**Developing the Vision for Waterford as an International Centre for Glass Design and Making.** (Karan Thompson Consulting) DCCol. Kilkenny, 2015.

**Draft Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan - Part 1 Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals**

**Economic Impact of the Creative Industries in Ireland.** (Indecon Report), Arts Council, 2011.

**Kilkenny Corporate Plan**

**Kilkenny County Arts Plan 2004-2009**

**Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020**

**Kilkenny Heritage Forum Strategy 2006-2012**

**Kilkenny Integration Strategy**

**Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan (2016-2021)**

**Making Great Art Work.** Arts Council Strategy (2016-2025) Arts Council of Ireland. Dublin, 2015.

**Much more than books.** Waterford City Council Library Development Plan 2012-2017

**National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (2002-2020) People, Places and Potential.** Stationary Office, Dublin, 2002.

**Regional Cultural Strategy.** Arts and Cultural Council for Greater Rochester, UK 2010.

**Regional Policy of the European Commission**

*[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/culture/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/culture/)*

**Resolution of the Council of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture** (2007/C 287/01), European Union, 2007.

**South East Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017.** Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. 2015.

**Strategic Action Plan for Creative Entrepreneurship in Donegal.** Local Enterprise Office, Donegal County Council. 2015.

**Strategy for Culture & Arts 2016-2026.** Department of Culture and Arts Northern Ireland, November 2015.

**Waterford City 2013-2019 and Waterford County 2011-2017**

**Waterford City and County Corporate plan 2014 2019**

**Waterford County Arts Plan 2012-2017 / Waterford City Arts Plan 2011 – 2016**

**Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021**

**Wexford Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

**Wexford County Council's Arts Strategy 2011-2015, Wexford County Council. 2011.**

**Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019**

## APPENDIX 4

### LIST OF CONSULTEES REGIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT JAN – MARCH 2016 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

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Individual	Organisation	Role
Louise Allen	Design & Crafts Council of Ireland	Innovation and Development Programmes Manager
Tom Banville	Wexford Local Enterprise Office	Head of Enterprise Course Leader MA in Arts & Heritage Management
Fionnuala Brennan	Waterford Institute of Technology	Arts Officer
Mary Butler	Kilkenny County Council	Chief Executive
Colette Byrne	Kilkenny County Council	Tourism Officer
Lynn Cahill	Waterford City and County Council	City and County Librarian
Jane Cantwell	Waterford City and County Council	Three Sisters 2020
Katherine Collins	Bid Team Lead	Acting County Librarian
Josephine Coyne	Kilkenny County Council	Chief Executive
Tom Enright	Wexford County Council	Creative and Cultural Consultant, Bid Adviser Three Sisters 2020
Tom Fleming	Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy	Heritage Officer
Bernadette Guest	Waterford City and County Council	Tourism Officer
Aisling Hayes	Kilkenny County Council	Head of Humanities
Richard Hayes	Waterford Institute of Technology	Chief Executive Officer
Karen Hennessy	Design & Crafts Council of Ireland	Director Industry Services Manager
Mary Hickson	Clonmel Junction Festival	Heritage Officer
Kathryn Kiely	Waterford Institute of Technology	Independent Arts and Culture Consultant
Dearbhala Ledwidge	Kilkenny County Council	Head of Enterprise
Declan McGonagle		Acting County Librarian
Sean McKeown	Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office	Arts Officer
Eileen Morrissey	Wexford CC	Social Inclusion Coordinator
Margaret Organ	Waterford City and County Council	Three Sisters 2020
Catherine Power	Waterford Area Partnership	Chief Executive Officer
Michael Quinn	Bid Director	Irish Language Officer
Madeline Quirke	Chambers of Commerce South East	Chief Executive
Máire Seo Breathnach	Waterford City and County Council	Head of Enterprise
Michael Walsh	Waterford City and County Council	
Richie Walsh	Waterford Local Enterprise Office	

REGIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY WORKING SESSION ATTENDEES

Name	Organisation	Role
Fionnuala Brennan	Waterford Institute of Technology	Course Leader, MA in Arts & Heritage Management
Mary Butler	Kilkenny County Council	Arts Officer
Lynn Cahill	Waterford City and County Council	Tourism Officer
Jane Cantwell	Waterford City and County Council	City & County Librarian
John Carley	Wexford County Council	Director of Service
Katherine Collins	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team Lead
Josephine Coyne	Kilkenny County Council	Acting County Librarian
Mick D'Arcy	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team
Seamus Doran	Wexford Local Development	Rural Development Programme
Eugene Downes	Kilkenny Arts Festival	Director
Tom Fleming	Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy	Three Sisters 2020 Bid Consultant/Adviser
Rosemary Grant	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team
Bernadette Guest	Waterford City and County Council	Heritage Officer
Emma Haran	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team
Aishling Hayes	Kilkenny County Council	Tourism Officer
Richard Hayes	Waterford Institute of Technology	Head Of Humanities
Maura Hickey	Kilkenny County Council	Tourism Officer.
T.V. Honan	Spraoui Street Arts Festival	Director
Brian Kehoe	Wexford Local Development	Chief Executive Officer
Petra Kindler		Poet and Comedian
Ann Marie Laffan	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team
Dearbhala Ledwidge	Kilkenny County Council	Heritage Officer
Colm Lowney	Bui Bolg	Artistic Director
John Lynch	Irish Rail	General Manager
Rupert Maddock	Waterford City and County Council	Senior Architect
Eamonn Maxwell	Lismore Castle Arts	Director
Mary McCarthy	National Sculpture Factory	Three Sisters 2020 Bid Consultant/Adviser
Eamonn McEneaney	Waterford Museum of Treasures	Director
Declan McGonagle		Independent Consultant
Evelyn McNamara	Design & Crafts Council of Ireland	Project Manager
Maria Melia	Kilkenny County Council	Director of Service
Eileen Morrissey	Wexford County Council	Acting County Librarian
Ann Mulrooney	Carlow VISUAL	Director
Conor Nolan	Waterford City and County Council	Arts Officer
Donal Nolan	Waterford Chamber of Commerce	Strategic Project Director
Naoise Nunn	Cat Laughs / Kilkenomics	Director
Jane O'Reilly	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team
Margaret Organ	Waterford City and County Council	Arts Officer
Anna O'Sullivan	Butler Gallery	Director
Catherine Power	Waterford Area Partnership	Social Inclusion Coordinator
Grace Quinn	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team
Michael Quinn	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Director



<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Role</b>
Declan Rice	Kilkenny Leader Partnership	Chief Executive Officer
Joanne Rothwell	Waterford City and County Council	Archivist
Rosemary Ryall	Waterford City and County Council	Conservation Officer
Máire Seo Breathnach	Waterford City and County Council	Irish Language Officer
Mairéad Stafford	Wexford Craft Trail	Chair
Jimmy Taaffe	Waterford Leader Partnership	Waterford Leader Partnership
Karan Thompson	Karan Thompson Consulting Limited	Three Sisters 2020 Bid Consultant/Adviser
Michael Walsh	Waterford City and County Council	Chief Executive Officer
Elizabeth Whyte	Wexford Arts Centre	Director
Sara Zabola Mari	Three Sisters 2020	ECOC Bid Team