

AR

annual review

Arts Council of Northern Ireland - 2021-22
www.artscouncil-ni.org





Our Vision

Our vision is to ‘place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life’.

In **Inspire, Connect, Lead**, our five-year strategic framework for the development of the arts in Northern Ireland, 2019-24, we identify the main themes covering what we believe needs to be done to achieve this vision.

In this Annual Review 2021-22 you will see the progress that has been made in these areas, including post-COVID recovery, success on the international stage, and renewed impetus for the creative industries.

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Cover Image: Northern Ireland Opera's 'Old Friends and Other Days' wins international acclaim with awards from, among others, Madrid Arts Film Festival, Paris Short Film Awards, London International Short Film Festival, Prague International Film Festival. Original Concept and Direction Cameron Menzies. Image: Ste Murray

MASS, by Ivor Novello-nominated composer Conor Mitchell. A large-scale symphonic audio-visual work co-produced by The Belfast Ensemble, Outburst Arts and the Ulster Orchestra, premiered at Outburst Queer Arts Festival 2021. (Photo by Neil Harrison) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQOFM2vm-nY>

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Welcome

Welcome to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Annual Review 2021-22.

This calendar-style review of our combined Exchequer and National Lottery-funded activities covers many of the artistic highlights of the last (financial) year, expanding in greater detail on several of the most significant events.

A summary of our Accounts for the financial year is included at the end of the report. The complete sets of audited accounts for our Exchequer and National Lottery funds are available on our [website](#).

Bringing great art within the reach of everyone

What we do

The Arts Council is the development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland, providing the main support for artists and arts organisations throughout the region through a range of funding opportunities. We distribute public money and National Lottery funds to organisations and people who develop and deliver arts programmes across all of society.

Our Arts Officers offer specialist guidance on funding and project development to artists and organisations working across the spectrum of arts activities in Northern Ireland.

- Arts and Disability
- Arts and Health
- Arts and Older People
- Circus Arts
- Carnival Arts
- Comedy
- Community Arts
- Crafts
- Creative Industries
- Dance
- Drama
- Intercultural Arts
- International Arts
- Language Arts
- Literature
- Music
- Public Art
- Traditional Arts
- Visual Arts
- Young People Wellbeing & Arts
- Youth Arts

Putting us on the map



Belfast-based Anray Collective become the first artists in Northern Ireland to win the world-renowned £25,000 Turner Prize, with their installation, *The Druidhaib's Ball*. Herbert Gallery Coventry, 2021. Garry Jones Photography

Overview: 2021-22

“One of the major challenges that artists confronted during the pandemic and the enforced hiatus in live, in-person performances and events, was how to remain engaged with their audiences. Embracing digital and online platforms provided a solution which not only helped artists to reconnect with existing audiences, but opened up new, sometimes global audiences for local arts.”

Post-pandemic recovery

Almost exactly two years after they were first introduced, the last remaining COVID-19 legal restrictions came to an end in Northern Ireland in March 2022. Following the government’s successful vaccination programme, public health restrictions eased during the year and we welcomed the cautious reopening of arts venues and the return of live in-person performances and activities. The Arts Council’s funding programmes reflected this transition as well as the new set of challenges presented by the operating environment in which artists and arts organisations now found themselves. The focus shifted from ‘survival’ to ‘recovery’, with specific COVID Recovery Programmes designed to support the sector in rebuilding professional and technical skills and reducing operating deficits which had arisen as a result of the pandemic. In addition, a Health and Safety Capital Programme supported a number of key organisations and venues to reopen their creative spaces safely for the return of practitioners and audiences.

In the year up to March 2022, the Arts Council produced a substantial body of research, which informed the design and delivery of a suite of Emergency Funding Programmes, co-produced with our sponsor department, the Department for Communities. Large-scale surveys of arts practitioners,

freelancers, creatives and arts and cultural organisations, revealed the true extent of the impact of the pandemic on Northern Ireland’s creative sector. The evidence that we gathered also contributed to the work of the Department for Communities’ Culture, Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce, which, in its final report, [‘The Art of Recovery – Survive: Stabilise: Strengthen’](#), recommended additional resources, new partnerships across government, and strategic investment in talent acquisition, retention and development, to return the arts and culture sectors back to good health in post-COVID Northern Ireland.

Blueprint

The long-term sustainability of small- to medium-sized cultural organisations received a significant boost with the introduction of the ‘Blueprint’ programme. Led by Arts & Business Northern Ireland and supported by National Lottery Dormant Accounts Funding NI, a cohort of public and private funders will work together over the coming five-year period to help future-proof a number of arts organisations through training and mentoring and initiatives designed to free up capacity, test new income generation solutions and incentivise financial growth. ‘Blueprint’ represents the realisation of one of the priority development ambitions of the Arts Council’s current 5-Year Strategic Plan, [‘Inspire, Connect, Lead!’](#)

Withdrawal from the EU

The UK's withdrawal from the EU creates particular issues for artists from Northern Ireland, who have a long and distinguished history of international touring, notably across the island of Ireland. The strong historical relationship between the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and An Chomhairle Ealaíon continues to be significant in this respect, as we explore joint initiatives, such as an all-island touring programme, which will build on the framework of support that we already offer to our jointly-funded clients.

To help artists and arts organisations steer their way through the new rules governing travel and trade with counterparts in the European Union, the Arts Council joined with Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, and Arts Council Wales/Wales Arts International to provide guidance and funding support. The collaboration yielded a new pilot funding scheme, the Four Nations International Fund, to support exchanges, residencies, partnership development, co-creation and networking, and the development of new models of international collaboration. It also led to the creation of the Arts Infopoint UK, which provides information on practical issues relating to artist mobility and explores new bilateral initiatives with EU states.

Minority Ethnic and Rural Deliberative Forums

The Arts Council's 5-Year Strategic Plan expresses a clear priority to address opportunities for minority ethnic artists and to increase the rural reach of our funding. Work in both areas got well underway in 2021-22 with the establishment of Minority Ethnic and Rural Deliberative Forums, created to ensure that under-represented groups not traditionally associated with decision-making are implicitly involved in the decisions that affect them. In addition to establishing the Minority Ethnic Deliberative Forum, we opened a new

pilot funding programme to support the development of minority ethnic artists, creative practitioners and administrators. The Mentoring and Residency Programme for Minority Ethnic Artists programme awarded £107,000 to 27 artists, to assist the artists at every stage of their career, through skills development and career pathways, including training, research, cultural exchange, creative residencies, and networking opportunities. A rural engagement funding programme that will provide a cohesive approach to the needs of local rural communities, is scheduled to open early in 2022-23.

Creative Industries

One of the major challenges that artists confronted during the pandemic and the enforced hiatus in live, in-person performances and events, was how to remain engaged with their audiences. Embracing digital and online platforms provided a solution which not only helped artists to reconnect with existing audiences, but opened up new, sometimes global audiences for local arts. Responding to the potential of new and emerging technologies for the production as well as the consumption of the arts, the Arts Council introduced three funding programmes to advance the development of the arts within the digital marketplace. A Digital Evolution Awards scheme for individual artists provided nine artists with access to the specialist skills required to create high-quality arts projects using innovative digital technologies; a similar scheme for organisations opened for applications late in the financial year. We launched a Creative Industries Seed Fund in January 2022, in collaboration with Future Screens NI, to support arts organisations, entrepreneurs and creative businesses to work in partnerships to enhance the specialist skills required to unlock the vast potential of the technology, including future income generation for artists.

Creative Schools

We were pleased this year to be able to resume our Creative Schools Partnership with the Education Authority and Urban Villages, so that professional artists are once again active in educational settings, teaching students the creative skills that will build confidence and self-motivation, as well as contributing to improved mental health and wellbeing. This pioneering arts and education programme, originally launched in 2018 as part of the NI Executive's Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy, is based on research indicating that access to quality arts experiences at school can contribute to improved educational outcomes across all subjects. With a £100,000 investment from Arts Council National Lottery funding, the programme will now run for a further two-year period, supporting 13 schools in areas with histories of deprivation and community tension. The programme received the endorsement of First Minister Paul Givan and Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neil.

Obituaries

We said goodbye this year to a number of significant personages associated with the arts in Northern Ireland, including one of the giants of 20th Century Irish literature, Seamus Deane, and cultural activist and founding member of Northern Visions, Marilyn Hyndman.

Building new audiences for the arts



Lyric Theatre in association with Field Day Theatre Company presents 'Sadie' by David Ireland with Abigail McGibbon in the title role. Filmed at the Lyric and broadcast as part of BBC TV Arts 'Lights Up' Theatre for new Culture in Quarantine Season. Photo: Christopher Heaney

A Year in the Arts 2021-22

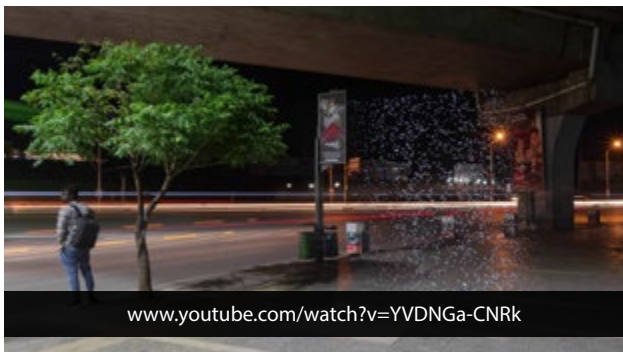
A flavour of the year's activities by the hundreds of artists, arts organisations and venues that are supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through our Exchequer and National Lottery funds.

April 2021

Beyond Skin and the Afghanistan National Institute of Music build relations between young musicians in Northern Ireland and the Afghan Women's Orchestra, which leads to a joint music video celebrating International Women's Day and challenging the recent statement banning girls in Afghanistan from singing in school.



Highlighting Earth Day, NI artist Robin Price's photographic project, 'Air of the Anthropocene', reveals environmental pollution in cities across the world, raising awareness of our growing pollution problem and creating open discussion for potential government-backed interventions.



The Lyric's New Playwrights Programme, now in its fourth year, provides a six-month writing development opportunity for five new and early career writers to create new work: Caitlin Magnall-Kearns, Caoimhe Farren, Rose Coogan, Paul Mallon and Eléonore Maudet.



Digital Arts Studios announces the third year of its Future Labs creative programme, providing training and technical support to upskill artists across all disciplines who wish to experiment with new and emerging technologies, as well as to enhance their skills with more commonly used video and audio equipment and software.



The Arts Council and the MAC, in association with Libraries NI, mark World Book Night by gifting 160 free copies of Glenn Patterson's 'Where Are We Now?' to community groups, book clubs, libraries and members of the public.



Cara Murphy, distinguished NI Silversmith, designs Randox Grand National 2021 trophy with illustrations paying tribute to Covid pandemic key workers.



May 2021

Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company launch an online series of bite-sized courses designed to encourage the exploration of choreographed movement in the comfort of your own home.



The Arts Council announces the award of £13 million in core grants to 97 of Northern Ireland's key arts organisations, through its Annual Funding Programme.



The Arts Council's Head of Community Arts and Education, Gilly Campbell, talks about the importance of the arts to mental health in the lead up to the NI Mental Health Arts Festival, which platforms high-quality art work that deals compassionately and intelligently with mental health, and includes the launch of a specially-commissioned publication on the theme of Loneliness.



Arts Care delivers online arts training to over 150 healthcare workers to give them the confidence to deliver arts activities to vulnerable older people in residential care settings, supported by the Arts Council's Arts and Older People Programme.





Promoting our distinctive cultures

Tim Shaw creates a collection of six bronze sculptures capturing The Armagh Rhymers, featured in Royal Academy of Arts Summer Show in London.

June 2021

BBC Radio 1's Annie Mac unveils her Belfast-set debut novel, 'Mother, Mother', at an online edition of the annual Belfast Book Festival presented by the Crescent Arts Centre.



Belfast Photo Festival becomes one of the first of NI's arts festivals to return to a largely in-person event, using a range of public spaces, galleries and online platforms to showcase local artists and renowned international photographers.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=99P4jZUbmfw

Ulster Orchestra's Learning and Community Engagement Department brings music into the heart of primary schools with its Crescendo Project, working with The Greater Shankill Children & Young People Zone, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and The Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University, Belfast.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tBELyfh6Dg

Curtain up on £12.2m Grand Opera House restoration

The Grand Opera House in Belfast reopens following completion of its £12.2m restoration and development project, which saw the refurbishment of the auditorium, redesign of the foyer and bar, and upgrading of facilities and technical infrastructure.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/curtain-up-on-12.2-million-grand-opera-house-restoration>



www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDa3KnB4QHg

June 2021

Northern Ireland Opera commissions Fionnuala Kennedy and Neil Martin to create an ambitious new teen/young adult opera in collaboration with campaign groups led by young people experiencing housing stress across NI, to be performed by Northern Ireland Opera and the Ulster Youth Orchestra.



Open Arts transforms the personal recollections of older people living in care homes in Belfast into song and creative writing, through its Arts and Older People Project, 'Reminiscence and Song'.



350 guests join the online Arts & Business NI Awards, in partnership with Forestside, to celebrate the inspiring partnerships of the past 18 months between the worlds of business and the arts.



July 2019

Senior representatives of the Arts Council appear before the Northern Ireland Assembly's Communities Committee to brief members on the pandemic's impact on income and revenue generation, employment, and the need for additional emergency funding support for the arts sector.

Artists' Evaluation Survey Findings



Organisations' Evaluation Survey Findings



'The 32: An Anthology of Irish Working Class Voices', edited by Belfast novelist Paul McVeigh, celebrates established and emerging working-class voices from across the island of Ireland.



The Arts Council awards over £1.9 million of National Lottery funding to support 88 arts organisations to deliver a series of high-quality arts projects and events across the region.



Gallery Days

The Arts Council produces a new series of short films promoting visual arts exhibitions across Northern Ireland running over the summer months. Local broadcaster, artist and DJ, Joe Lindsay visits:

Golden Thread Gallery

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4RVQIFJQxg>

Void

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2x5M4yAE_A

Cultúrlann Gallery

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbpV2heb5WA>

Craft NI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16uuPXrs2gA>

R Space Gallery

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBHxzucIwHU>

CCA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KohisWAc7KU>

Belfast Exposed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqzenFt-Lq4>



July 2019

The 34th John Hewitt International Summer School opens in Armagh with online and in-person events addressing the Environment Crisis, under the theme, 'Staking the Future: Politics, People & Planet'.

Foyle O-Bon, an organisation that uses Japanese arts and culture as a way of improving community engagement, releases a new film celebrating their recent work in Claudy.



Boosting the creative economy

Costume Assistant and textile artist Sarah Carey is one of 1433 artists to receive a share of the £2.7m funding through the Arts Council/Department of Communities' Creative Individuals Recovery Programme

August 2021

Camerata Ireland's annual Clondeboye Festival celebrates its 20th anniversary with an exceptional programme of classical music presented both in person to live audiences and live-streamed to those at home.



The Arts Council presents 241 year-old Italian violin to exceptional 19-year-old violinist and the new Ulster Youth Orchestra Leader, Jasmine Morris, to be played throughout her tenure as leader.



Paradosso Theatre's 'Lonely Passions: The Brian Moore Centenary Festival' celebrates the 100th anniversary of the birth of Brian Moore, one of Belfast's most prolific authors.



Craft NI's 15th Annual Craft Month partners for the first time with www.augustcraftmonth.ie to jointly showcase craft and craft events across the island of Ireland.



Portrait of Northern Ireland Centenary exhibition

'Portrait of Northern Ireland – Neither an Elegy nor a Manifesto', a major exhibition supported by the Northern Ireland Office as part of its Centenary programme, runs at Belfast's Golden Thread Gallery and showcases 100 pieces of art featuring the people and places that have defined NI over the past 100 years. Curated by Shan McAnena, the exhibition includes up-and-coming artists who have recently graduated from Ulster University Belfast School of Art, alongside established artists such as Paul Henry, William Scott and Turner Prize nominees.



Image: 'Kilkeel Shipyard' (1943) by Nevill Johnson
© the artist's estate From the Collection of Down County Museum

August 2021

EastSide Arts Festival marks 25 years of the EastSide Partnership delivering regeneration projects in east Belfast, with 100+ artists and 80+ events presented in-person and online.



Féile an Phobail's August Féile offers a blended live/online feast of arts and music with 250+ events, including the annual concert at Clonard Monastery, live theatre from Brassneck, Bright Yellow Umbrella and Aisling Ghéar, and live traditional music sessions.



Edinburgh Festival Fringe showcases theatre & dance from NI to global industry leaders

Ten major works by some of Northern Ireland's leading creators of theatre, dance makers and arts organisations, are showcased at Edinburgh Festival Fringe 'Connect', a new online event and networking platform for arts industry and Fringe artists. The event is curated by the Arts Council in partnership with Belfast International Arts Festival and Theatre and Dance NI, with support from British Council NI.



August 2021

Open House Festival hosts three weeks of music, comedy, spoken word and classic cinema in the beautiful open air surroundings of Bangor Castle Walled Garden



The Belfast Book Festival showcases new works by established and debut talent, with headliners including Booker-shortlisted author Bernard MacLaverty, author and performer Joelle Taylor, and bestselling memoirist Elisabeth Day.



The Arts Council launches a new Instagram account to showcase works from its Collection; the leading public contemporary art collection for Northern Ireland representing artists at the forefront of visual arts practice.



ArtsEkta's Belfast Mela provides a popular week-long programme celebrating cultural diversity, with world music, dance, food and art.



September 2021

First Minister Paul Givan and Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neil endorse the Creative Schools Partnership, a two-year funding initiative from the Arts Council, the Education Authority and the Urban Villages Initiative, designed to promote creative learning in the classroom.



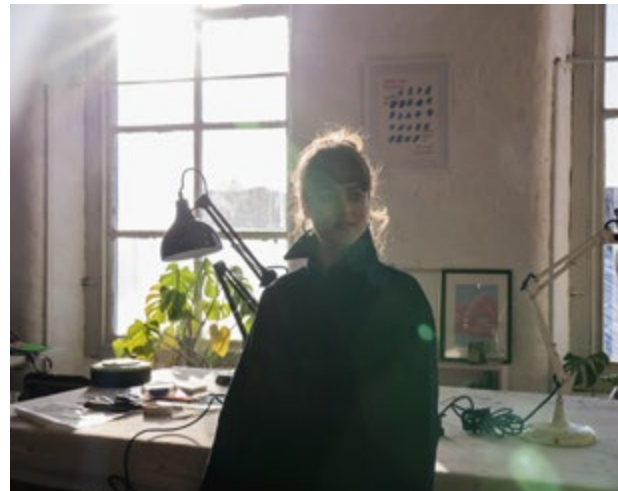
The Arts Council partners with Creative & Cultural Skills to provide a new training and professional development programme, with free expert advice and support to help a wider range of talent enter the creative workforce.



Northern Ireland Opera returns to live performance with a bold new interpretation of Puccini's La Bohème performed at Carlisle Memorial Church.



Leading NI composer and musician, Hannah Peel, based in Bangor, is shortlisted for the 2021 Hyundai Mercury Prize Album of the Year for her album, 'Fir Wave'.



Culture Night Belfast presents The Ogham Grove

Two spectacular monumental sculptures are built in Belfast city centre by artist Gawain Morrison, creating a vast structural, lighting and sound installation that draws on themes from our ancestral heritage and culture on the island of Ireland. Ogham Grove is installed in Writers Square in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxpQwIEKUdY>

September 2021

Lockdown films celebrate new works by D/deaf, neurodivergent and disabled artists

Twelve D/deaf, neurodivergent and disabled professional artists based in Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland are commissioned to produce new film and audio works as part of BBC Arts' Culture in Quarantine initiative, broadcast on BBC I-Player. Three of the artists are from Northern Ireland: playwright Shannon Yee creates a dance theatre film, 'Pandemic Parenting: Pandemonium', exploring the challenges of parenting during lockdown; animator Joel Simon's 'The Cat, The Mouse and The Sausage' retells a Grimm's Brothers fairy tale; and poet/comedian Alice McCullough adapts her one-woman show 'Earth to Alice' about the twists and turns of bipolar disorder during the pandemic.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqUYu6IZo2U>

The annual Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival returns with a packed programme of live music, comedy, literature, theatre and more, with headliners including The Bonnevilles, Reevah, Teresa Livingstone and a live theatre line-up including 'Anthem' by CQAF bursary award-winner Alice Malseed and Sarah Baxter.



In Your Space Circus brings its flagship Circus, Arts and Music Festival, 'Carnival of Colours', to Derry City Centre for a 14th edition, jam-packed with the best of International Street Theatre, walkabout characters, circus workshops and more.



Arts Council opens first mentoring and residency programme for minority ethnic artists

The Arts Council awards £107,000 to 27 minority ethnic artists, creative practitioners and arts administrators. Individual grants of up-to £5,000 support skills development, specialist training, research, cultural exchange and networking, which will help build careers and increase opportunities for young and emerging minority ethnic artists and creatives. In addition to the new funding awards, the Arts Council establishes a Deliberative Forum to improve understanding of the needs of minority ethnic artists and strengthen their voice in decision making.



Bringing people and communities together



In your Space Circus, 'Carnival of Colours' festival brings laughter back to the streets of Derry City with a Covid-compliant programme of street theatre.

October 2021

The 59th Belfast International Arts Festival presents an inspirational programme to positively contribute to the post-Covid social, economic and cultural revival of the city and connect Northern Ireland with the best of contemporary arts practice from around the world.



Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council's bid succeeds in reaching the longlist for UK City of Culture.



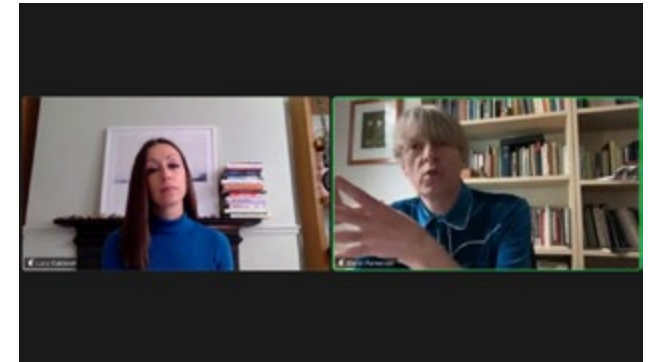
Derry City welcomes the return of the City of Derry International Choir Festival with a sensational programme of world-class choral music, including Grammy award-winners and exclusive global premiere performances.



The team at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Derry celebrate being shortlisted for the 2021 Art Fund Museum of the Year, the world's largest museum prize.



The second annual NI Writers Day, organised by the Royal Society of Literature and the Arts Council, celebrates contemporary voices in literature with a series of free online workshops and events for readers and writers.



South African-born poet, storyteller and playwright Nandi Jola represents Northern Ireland at the 11th annual Transpoesie poetry festival organised by the European Union National Institutes for Culture in Brussels.



November 2021

Arts & Business NI opens applications for its 'Blueprint' pioneering 5-year cultural sustainability programme, designed to enable small- to medium-sized cultural organisations in NI to take a longer-term approach to income generation.



Following almost two years of intensive consultation and evaluation Belfast Community Circus School, which has been operating since 1985, rebrands as Circusful.



Belfast awarded prestigious UNESCO City of Music title

Belfast is awarded the coveted City of Music status by UNESCO, celebrating the city's rich musical heritage and recognising the importance of music to its future. Belfast is only the third city in the UK to become a City of Music, joining Liverpool and Glasgow. There are 59 Cities of Music forming the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.



November 2021

DU Dance and Beyond Skin develop an international youth cultural exchange project, 'Ode to Earth', with German partners as one of seven Cultural Bridge projects funded by the British Council, the UK Arts Councils and other partners.



Belfast Exposed Photography joins the Centre of Contemporary Photography in Melbourne on a collaborative artist exchange residency and exhibition programme, 'We, Us, Them', as part of the UK-Australia Season funded by the British Council and the Arts Council.



Culture, Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce publishes recommendations

The Arts Council welcomes Community Minister Hargey's support for the recommendations made by her Culture, Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce. The Arts Council endorses the Taskforce's recommendations which seek additional resources and new partnerships across government to bring the arts and culture sectors back to good health, and highlights the urgent need in post-Covid NI for strategic investment in talent development and retention.



Silver Win for Stage Beyond

Stage Beyond, the Derry-based theatre company for actors with learning disabilities, receives international recognition with a New York Festivals Radio Award 2021 for Best Digital Drama aired by RTE Radio 1, for their recording, 'Hamlet, Prince of Derry'. This is the theatre company's second award for this production, having earlier received the Achates foundation prize for most innovative and dynamic new works.



Empowering people through the arts



Animation still: Joel Simon's 'The Cat, The Mouse and The Sausage', featuring as part of BBC Arts Culture in Quarantine initiative, championing the creativity of D/deaf, neurodivergent and disabled artists in Northern Ireland.

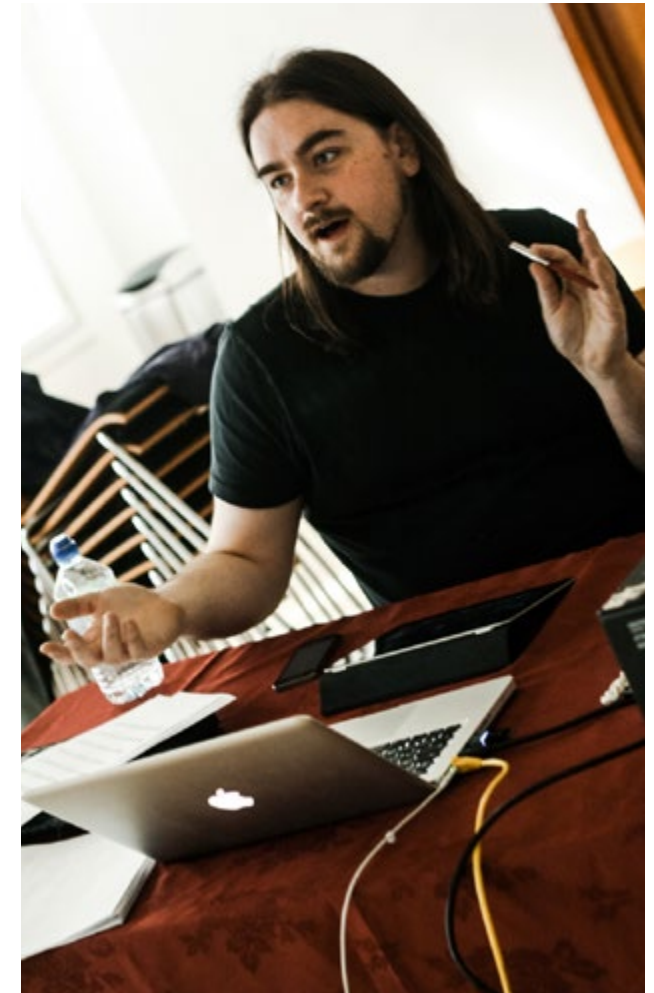
December 2021

Representatives of the arts sector gather at The MAC in an event marking the launch of a new publication, 'Bright Lights in a Dark Year: The Arts in Lockdown', to hear the Arts Council Chair and Board Members pay tribute to the artists and arts organisations who have continued to produce new work for audiences during the pandemic.

The Arts Council, on behalf of Department for Communities, announces £2,711,816 of recovery funding for 1,433 individuals working in the Creative Economy across Northern Ireland, including composer, Matthew Whiteside (pictured).



www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnKWzYf1X6U



January 2022

Future Screens NI, a collaborative partnership between Ulster University, Queen's University Belfast and local industry partners, is announced as arts partner in DfC Covid Recovery Employment & Skills Initiative, allocating funds to arts sector organisations to recruit entry level roles which will support organisational and sectoral growth.



Beyond Skin and The Duncairn host an evening of music featuring Afghan musician Yusuf Mahmoud and his son Ariz, to highlight the plight of refugees & musicians at risk in Afghanistan.



The Playhouse Derry/Londonderry stage 'The White Handkerchief, a major new drama by Liam Campbell, marking the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.



Artist Deepa Mann-Kler, launches a new digital app, 'AR Peace Wall', which aims to enhance the visitor experience at Cupar Way Peace Wall in Belfast.



Sinéad O'Donnell, Accidental Theatre & Three's Theatre Company join international cultural exchange

The pilot 'Four Nations International Fund', devised by the UK arts councils, supports 38 projects to develop innovative models of international cultural exchange and collaboration. The projects bring together 82 UK and 48 international partners based in over 24 different countries, from Mexico to Kenya, Barbados to Australia and throughout Europe and USA. The three projects chosen to take part from Northern Ireland include those led by performance artist, Sinéad O'Donnell, Accidental Theatre and Three's Theatre Company.



Sinéad O'Donnell, 'Resting in the arms of Morpheus'. 2021 live stream event. Photo: Katharine Paisley

January 2022

Author and illustrator Paul Howard becomes the new Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland at the Seamus Heaney Centre, Queen's University Belfast.



Tinderbox Theatre Company trial the Theatre Green Book standards and guidelines as they start a sustainable journey with 'Sylvan', the first production of their new 'Off The Grid' artistic programme.



Promoting health
and wellbeing
through the arts

February 2022

The six current winners of the BBC NI and Arts Council Young Musicians Platform Award perform at the Ulster Hall alongside the Ulster Orchestra in a spectacular concert which is broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster's Classical Connections.



The children's classic, 'The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark', written by Jill Tomlinson and illustrated by Paul Howard, the new Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, is chosen by Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cambridge, as her CBeebies Bedtime Story to mark Children's Mental Health Week.



Theatre for Social Change

Sole Purpose Productions celebrates its 25th anniversary with a new festival in Derry-Londonderry highlighting the power of theatre as a positive force to create social change. The Festival of Theatre for Social Change brings together leading organisations in socially-engaged theatre from across these islands, to address issues including the impact of Bloody Sunday, LGBTQ+ rights, breaking down barriers for deaf and disabled people and theatre from a range of Arab countries. Highlights include Sole Purpose staging 'Scenes from an Inquiry' by Dave Duggan to mark the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciEM4cAuEL8>

February 2022

The inaugural Linen Hall Library Enlightenment Festival presents a series of talks, debates, readings, recordings and recitals in the library and other atmospheric venues across Belfast to catapult abstract 17th-18th century ideology straight into 2022.



Belfast TradFest Winter Weekend brings us the very best of traditional music, song and dance as some of Ireland and Scotland's finest take to the stage in an extravaganza of jigs, reels, strathspeys, sean nós dancing and traditional singing.



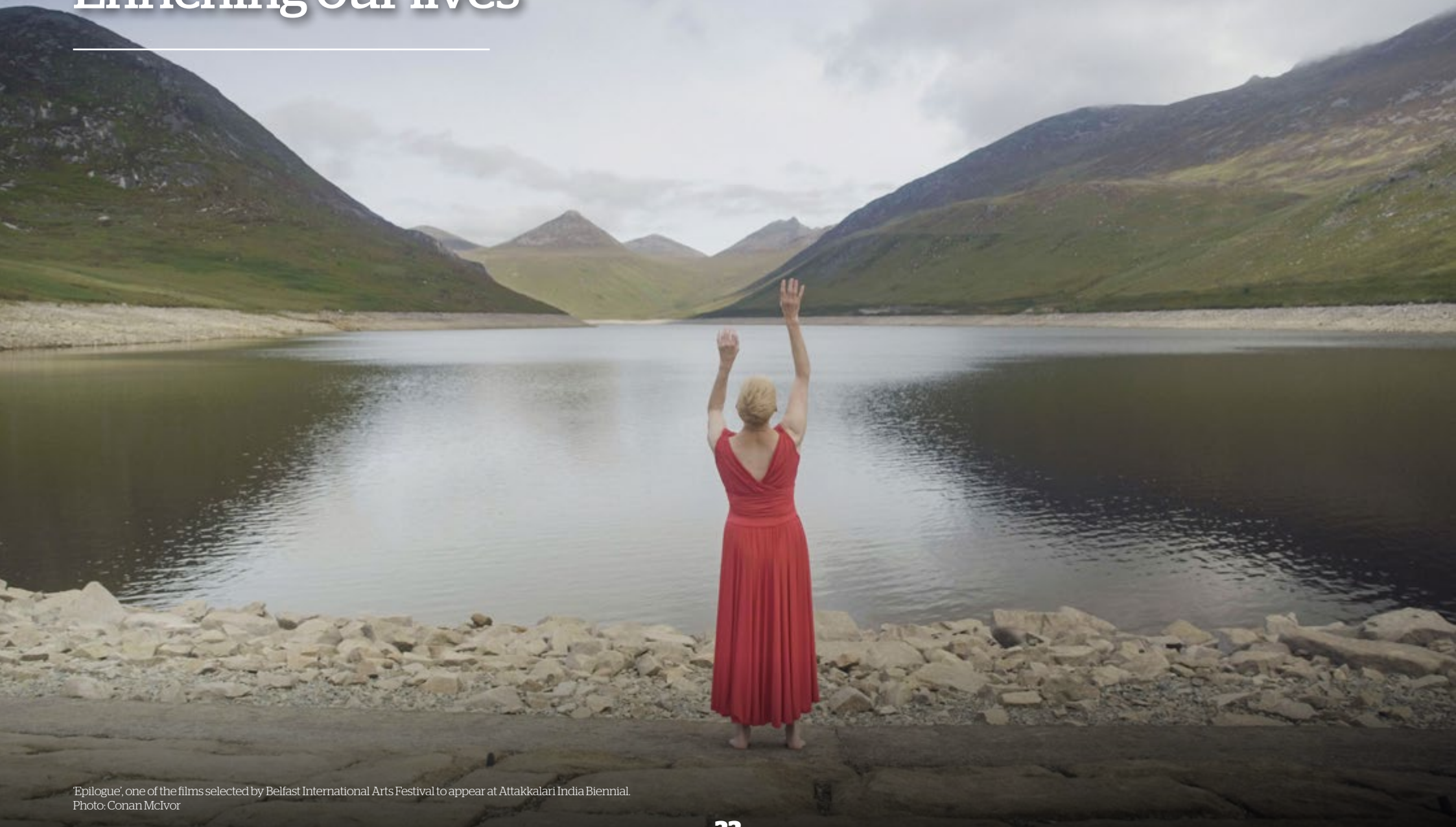
BBC Arts and One Dance UK's 'A Season of Arts' celebrates the world-class dance happening across the UK, including 'Don't Miss Flight', a short dance film about that universal desire to fly, by Northern choreographer/Co-Director, Jennifer Rooney and Co-Director, Ciarán Haggerty.



The inaugural Look North! Festival showcases North Belfast's rich cultural heritage and its creative and literary talents, as it tells the story of a vibrant and diverse community.



Enriching our lives



'Epilogue', one of the films selected by Belfast International Arts Festival to appear at Attakkalari India Biennial.
Photo: Conan McIvor

March 2022

The Irish Pages Press/Cló An Mhíl Bhuí wins 'The British Book Awards Small Press of the Year 2022 (Island of Ireland)', the first time that a press based in Northern Ireland has first been shortlisted and then won any of the three relevant British Book Awards for publishers administered by The Bookseller magazine in London.



Women's Aid ABCLN, an organisation addressing domestic abuse and providing services for women and children across Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey, partners with Spark Opera to deliver a project that uses the arts to help older women who have experienced domestic abuse.



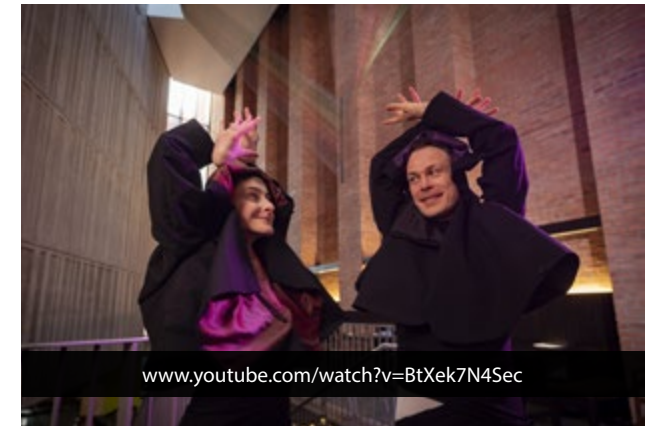
Arts Council research reveals that 900 older people living in care homes in Northern Ireland benefitted from the arts during the pandemic, with the Arts and Older People Programme helping to alleviate isolation and loneliness and promote positive mental health and wellbeing.



The Imagine! Belfast Festival of Ideas and Politics returns to live events after two years operating online, with its biggest ever week-long programme of talks, workshops, theatre, comedy, music, exhibitions, film and tours.



Belfast Children's Festival returns to live events with its 24th edition with highlights including 'Bird Boy' by United Fall and 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings' by the Dan colley company.



Jen Herron wins the 2022 Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing, organised by the Community Arts Partnership, for her powerful poem, 'To an Unborn Daughter'.



Nurturing new talent

Aisling McCormick's 'In-Situ Solos' reimagines Belfast's streets as an outdoor performance space.

Funding Programmes & Research Publications, 2021-22

Almost exactly two years after they were first introduced, the last remaining Covid-19 legal restrictions came to an end in Northern Ireland in March 2022. Following the government's successful vaccination programme in 2021-22, restrictions eased during the year and we welcomed the cautious reopening of arts venues and the return of live in-person performances and activities. The Arts Council funding programmes and research publications reflect this transition and the exceptionally challenging circumstances in which artists and arts organisations nevertheless continued to create great art, connect with audiences, and provide both solace and inspiration.

Arts Council Funding programmes, 2021-22

Annual Funding Programme (May 2021)

Arts Council awards annual funding of £13m to key arts organisations from Exchequer and National Lottery resources.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/ACNI-awards-13-million-in-core-grants>

Lottery Project Funding (July 2021)

Arts Council awards Lottery Project funding of £1.9m to arts organisations to deliver high-quality arts projects across the region.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-awards-over-1.9m-of-national-lottery-funding>

Individual Artists Digital Evolution Awards scheme (August 2021)

The Arts Council, in collaboration with Future Screens NI, opens new funding programme which aims to provide

individual artists from Northern Ireland with skills in the use of digital technology to support sustainability in the context of Covid-19. £85,688 is awarded in November to nine artists.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-new-80000-individual-artists-digital-evolution-awards> (August)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-85688-for-innovative-digital-arts-projects> (November)

Mentoring and Residency Programme for Minority Ethnic Artists (September 2021)

Arts Council opens new pilot funding programme to support the work of minority ethnic artists and creative practitioners living in Northern Ireland. £107,000 is awarded in November to 27 minority ethnic artists.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-first-mentoring-and-residency-programme-for-minority-eth> (September)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-twenty-seven-new-awards-for-minority-ethnic-artists> (November)

Creative Individuals Recovery Programme (September 2021)

Arts Council with funding from Department for Communities opens new recovery programme, co-designed to support individuals working in the arts and creative sectors. £2,711,816 is awarded in December to 1,433 individuals to support one-off costs associated with their arts practice and to build their professional and technical skills.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/5million-recovery-fund-to-support-individuals-in-the-arts-creative-sectors> (September)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-2.7-million-recovery-funding-to-support-individuals> (December)

Musical Instruments for Bands programme (September 2021)

Arts Council, with capital investment from the Department for Communities, opens programme designed to help bands across Northern Ireland upgrade worn out instruments and purchase new ones. Twenty-four bands receive funding in November.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-funding-scheme-to-help-bands-purchase-new-instruments> (September)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-funding-for-24-bands-to-purchase-new-instruments> (November)

Arts & Older People Programme (September 2021)

Arts Council awards £207,000 to enable 27 arts organisations across Northern Ireland to deliver a series of community-based arts projects benefitting older people.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-207000-for-creative-projects-benefitring-older-people>

Health & Safety Capital Programme (October 2021)

Arts Council, with funds from the Department for Communities, opens programme to support arts organisations to reopen their creative spaces safely. £749,226

awarded in January 2022 to 34 organisations.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/acni-announce-750000-health-safety-capital-programme-to-support-the-sector> (October)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/acni-announces-health-and-safety-funding-to-support-arts-organisations> (January)

Four Nations International Fund (October 2021)

Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council England, Arts Council Wales/Wales Arts International and Creative Scotland jointly pilot new fund to support individuals and organisations in developing international partnerships and co-creation projects across the four nations.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/uk-arts-councils-agencies-to-pilot-new-fund-for-international-collaboration>

Creative Schools Partnership (November 2021)

Eleven post-primary schools in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry receive grants of up to £15,000 each to develop landmark arts projects over the next two years, through a cross-departmental fund backed by the Arts Council, the Executive's Urban Villages Initiative and the Education Authority.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/eleven-schools-receive-specialist-funding-to-develop-creative-projects>

Covid Recovery Programme for Arts Organisations

(January 2022)

Arts Council with funding from Department for Communities opens new recovery programme designed to reduce or remove organisations' operating deficits which have arisen in 2021-22 as a result of the pandemic. This new programme for arts organisations is part of DfC's wider Covid Recovery Programme, co-designed with seven sectoral bodies.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/covid-recovery-programme-opens-for-arts-organisations>

Creative Industries Seed Fund (January 2022)

Arts Council in collaboration with Future Screens NI opens new funding programme which aims to develop partnerships that will use the arts within new and emerging digital, immersive technologies to expand the possibilities of how the arts can be distributed and utilised in new and innovate ways

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-new-100000-creative-industries-seed-fund>

Organisations Digital Evolution Awards (January 2022)

Arts Council opens new £40,000 funding programme to provide arts organisations from Northern Ireland with skills in the use of digital technology to create digital art.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-new-40000-organisations-digital-evolution-awards>

Small Grants Programme (January 2022)

Arts Council reopens the Small Grants 'rolling' programme, providing professional arts organisations and community groups with grants between £500-£10,000 to support projects in any art form, including music, drama, dance, literature, visual, and participatory arts.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-councils-national-lottery-small-grants-programme-reopens>

Arts Council Research Publications, 2021-22

Evidencing Need (August 2021)

Arts Council report, working with the Department for Communities and the ministerial Cultural Recovery Task Force group, collating evidence to demonstrate the impact of Covid-19, and making the case for an Arts & Culture Sectoral Survival Fund for Individual Artists.

http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/Evidencing_Need_Individuals.pdf

EU Withdrawal: Key Changes and Implications for Northern Ireland-based Arts Organisations (August 2021)

Arts Council report setting out the key changes in legislation affecting creative workers and arts organisations travelling or trading with EU counterparts.

http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI_EU_Withdrawal.pdf

Freelance Practitioner Research Report (September 2021)

Survey-based research identifying the development, creative and production needs of freelance artists Northern Ireland's theatre and dance sectors.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Freelance-Practitioner-Research-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Stories from the Inside; Isolation, Loneliness, and the arts, in residential care during the COVID-19 pandemic (September 2021)

Study commissioned by the Arts Council about the role of the arts in supporting the residential care sector as it begins the process of recovery and reopening after the pandemic.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Stories-from-the-Inside-Final-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Emergency Grant Programme: Survey of Individual Artists (September 2021)

Findings from a dedicated survey (May 2021) of artists and creatives in receipt of grant support under the Arts Council's Covid-19 Emergency Support Programme, revealing the true impact of the pandemic on NI's creative sector.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Programme-Artists.pdf>

Emergency Grant Programme: Survey of Organisations (September 2021)

Findings from a dedicated survey (May 2021) of arts and cultural organisations in receipt of grant support under the Arts Council's Covid-19 Emergency Support Programme, revealing the true impact of the pandemic on NI's creative sector.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Programme-Organisations.pdf>

Digital Ambitions Survey (October 2021)

Arts Council publishes the findings of its survey (March/April 2021) on the online and digital ambitions of NI's arts and creative sector.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-survey-reveals-digital-ambitions-of-nis-creative-sector>

Bright Lights in a Dark Year: The Arts in Lockdown (December 2021)

Arts Council publishes an account of the journey of NI's arts and cultural sectors through the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, from the first national lockdown in March 2020.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Arts-in-Lockdown.pdf>

Arts Council Art Collection – Acquisitions 2020-21 (February 2022)

Publication of a catalogue of the latest acquisitions to the Collection, featuring new purchases which are available for exhibition both within and outside NI, as part of the Arts Council's Loan Scheme.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Collection-Acquisitions-2020-2021.pdf>

Arts Council Youth Music Strategy and 5-year Action Plan (March 2022)

Arts Council publishes its Strategy and 5-year Action Plan for the development of Youth Music in Northern Ireland. Accompanying reports include the set of strategic recommendations which fall beyond the scope of the Arts Council, and the comprehensive Youth Music Audit, commissioned by the Arts Council.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-publishes-youth-music-strategy-and-action-plan>

Arts and Older People Programme Evaluation (March 2022)

Independent evaluation of Round V of the programme, covering the time period January – October 2021, during which 900 older people in care homes in Northern Ireland benefitted from arts interventions during the pandemic, which helped to alleviate isolation and loneliness, while promoting positive mental health and well-being.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/research-shows-900-older-people-in-ni-care-homes-benefitted-from-arts>



welcome
back

Gift an Arts Experience
#SpendLocal
Music.Theatre.Art

Supported by
THE IRISH NEWS Belfast Telegraph arts council

CLEARCHANNEL

The Arts Council launches a two-week promotional campaign, with sponsors the Belfast Telegraph and the Irish News, urging everyone in the run up to Christmas to 'Gift an Arts Experience', in recognition of the previous challenging 18 months of pandemic experienced by the arts and cultural sectors.

The Board of the Arts Council

The Board of the Arts Council provides leadership for the executive body, in particular in defining and developing its strategic direction. It monitors performance in order to ensure that the Arts Council fully meets its aims, objectives and performance targets, and acts in a way that promotes the highest standards of public finance. The Council is made up of the Chairperson plus members, providing a broad cross-section of expertise and including representatives from the arts and culture sector.

Biographies of board members are available at www.artscouncil-ni.org

**All arts organisations
funded by the Arts
Council are fully engaged
in Outreach programmes**



Mr Liam Hannaway
Chairperson



Mr William Leathem
Vice Chairperson



Mrs Lynne Best



Mr Paul Boyle



Mr Paul Brolly



Mr Joe Dougan



Mr Sean Kelly



Mrs Laura McCorry



Dr Gearóid Trimble



Mr Ray Hall
joined 01/09/2022

Una McRory
resigned 01/08/2021

Julie Andrews
resigned 1/07/2022

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir
resigned 30/06/2021

Board Members of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland 2021-22

The Executive of the Arts Council

Chief Executive



Roisín McDonough

The Chief Executive sets the direction and oversees the operations of the Arts Council. She is responsible for the development and implementation of the strategic plans and policies established by the Board.

Arts Development



Noírin McKinney,
Director of Arts
Development

Arts Development is the largest department in the Arts Council. It provides funding support to artists and arts organisations through its Exchequer and National Lottery funds. Funding is available through dedicated funding programmes which are linked to the Arts Council's policies and strategies for the development of the arts in Northern Ireland. The Arts Council's art form officers provide specialist expertise and advice. This department is also responsible for corporate communications, including press and media relations.

Paul Harron,
Director of Operations
(2020 – January 2022)

Maria Lynch,
Director of Operations
(March 2022-)

Strategic Development



Karly Greene,
Director of Strategic
Development &
Partnerships

Strategic Development is responsible for developing the Arts Council's strategic, corporate and business plans. It is in charge of research, policy and advocacy; for ensuring the Arts Council's compliance with statutory requirements such as Equality and Freedom of Information; and for inter-agency co-operation with other government departments and local authorities.

Finance and Corporate Services



Geoffrey Troughton,
Director of Finance &
Corporate Services

Corporate Services provides the core administration for the Arts Council. Its main areas of responsibility are finance, personnel and training, IT support, Reception, Registry and general office services.

Full staff list is available on
www.artscouncil-ni.org

BRIGHT LIGHTS

IN A DARK YEAR

THE ARTS IN LOCKDOWN

Report on the Arts in Northern Ireland during the Covid-19 Pandemic
By the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Arts-in-Lockdown.pdf>

Bright Lights in a Dark Year: The Arts in Lockdown Arts Council publishes an account of the journey of NI's arts and cultural sectors through the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, from the first national lockdown in March 2020.



Financial Summary 2021-22

The Arts Council provides the main support for artists and arts organisations working in Northern Ireland, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through our Exchequer and National Lottery funds. Our funding programmes reflect the aims and objectives of our five-year strategic plan, Ambitions for the Arts, as well as our series of art form funding policies.

The complete sets of audited accounts for our Exchequer and National Lottery funds are made available on the Arts Council's website, www.artscouncil-ni.org

The Arts Council invested £23.094m to support the full range of creative activities across Northern Ireland in 2021-22*

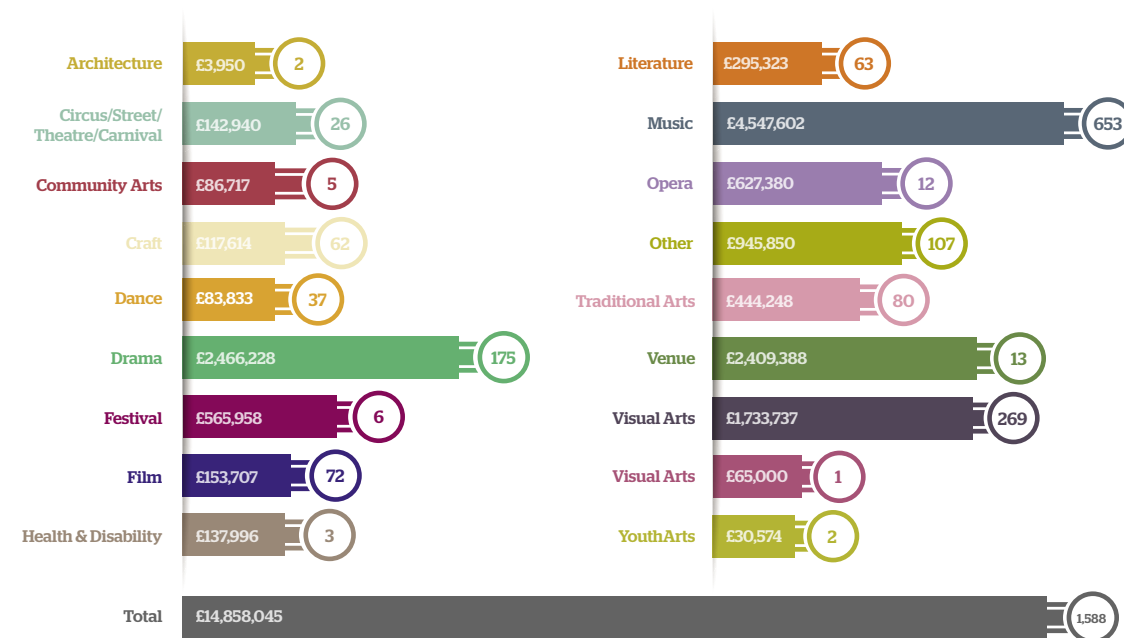
*Based on the Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts for 2021-22

Arts Council Exchequer funding 2021-22[†]

The Arts Council awarded funding of £14.85 million through its Exchequer fund. These funds were awarded through a set of programmes developed to support the full range of activities of artists and arts organisations across Northern Ireland, including:

- Annual Funding Programme
- Arts Development Fund
- Covid Recovery Programme for Arts Organisation
- Creative Individuals Recovery Programme
- DfC additional resources
- DfC Monitoring round
- Health & Safety Capital Programme
- Musical Instruments.

Exchequer Awards



Local Authority Area	Number of Awards	Value of Awards
Antrim and Newtownabbey	89	£187,809
Ards and North Down	112	£545,317
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	81	£189,456
Belfast	738	£11,082,303
Causeway Coast and Glens	67	£352,285
Derry and Strabane	167	£1,423,621
Fermanagh and Omagh	43	£145,643
Lisburn and Castlereagh	49	£109,393
Mid and East Antrim	52	£134,374
Mid Ulster	69	£149,882
Newry, Mourne and Down	117	£340,612
Other	4	£197,350
GRAND TOTAL	1,588	£14,858,045

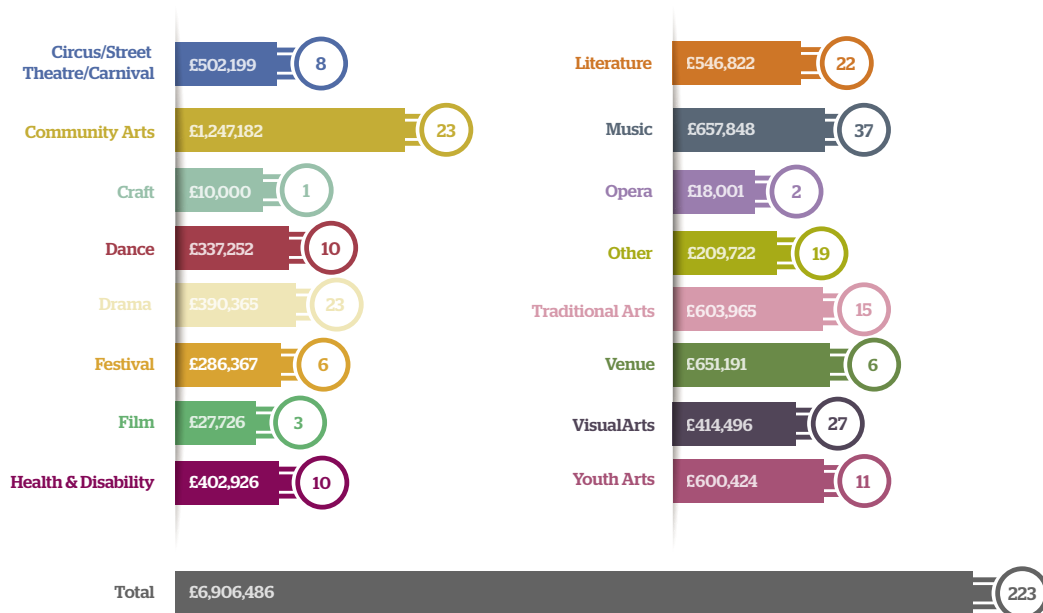
[†]The figures on pages 45-46 represent grants awarded directly to artists and arts organisations. The complete investment picture is available in the Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts, published to the website www.artscouncil-ni.org

Arts Council Lottery funding 2021-22[†]

The Arts Council awarded funding of £6.90 million through its National Lottery fund. Lottery funds supported arts projects throughout Northern Ireland. Funding programmes included:

- Annual Funding Programme
- Arts & Older People Programme
- Arts Development Fund
- Creative Schools Programme
- Individual Artists Digital Evolution Award
- Lottery Project Funding
- Minority Ethnic Artists Mentoring & Residency Programme
- SIAP
- Small Grants

Lottery Awards



Local Authority Area	Number of Awards	Value of Awards
Antrim and Newtownabbey	4	£49,053
Ards and North Down	7	£148,473
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	10	£279,830
Belfast	120	£4,005,982
Causeway Coast and Glens	7	£108,676
Derry and Strabane	28	£1,380,581
Fermanagh and Omagh	6	£147,712
Lisburn and Castlereagh	4	£106,765
Mid and East Antrim	4	£25,683
Mid Ulster	9	£127,920
Newry, Mourne and Down	9	£291,680
Other	15	£234,131
GRAND TOTAL	223	£6,906,486

Note on funding patterns:

Funding patterns in Belfast and Derry/Strabane reflect the high concentrations of artists and arts organisations living and working in these areas, as well as the location of several major 'umbrella' arts organisations whose services extend to Northern Ireland as a whole.

Promoting the value of the arts

Belfast Photo Festival returns with an online and offline programme of immersive exhibitions and large-scale outdoor artworks, including Zanele Muholi's exhibition outside Queen's University Belfast.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I apply for funding?

The Arts Council offers a range of grant programmes that you can apply to for funding. Some programmes are specifically for organisations and others are for individual artists. For full information on all the programmes that we offer, the criteria for each programme, application deadlines and how to apply, visit the Funding pages of our website, www.artscouncil-ni.org

When can I apply?

Most grant programmes take place in funding rounds with specific dates when we will accept applications. Some programmes are open all year round. For information on funding deadlines, visit the Funding pages of our website.

How long will it take to reach a decision?

This may vary with each programme, although we would generally aim to make a decision on applications from individuals and organisations within three months.

Where can I get help with my application?

The guidance notes for each programme provide information on the assessment criteria, eligibility and application process. Our Arts Development Officers can also offer advice and assistance before you submit an application. Contact details are available in the **About Us** section of our website, or you can contact the switchboard and you will be directed to the most appropriate person.

How do I complain to the Arts Council?

The Arts Council has a **Service Charter** which outlines the standard of service our clients should expect from us. We operate a **Service Complaints Procedure** to handle general complaints about our service. In addition, we operate a **Funding Review Procedure** for those who want to appeal a decision about a grant application. These documents are available on the website.

Useful Contacts at the Arts Council:

Arts Development Officers:

- Damian Smyth, Literature and Drama
- Suzanne Lyle, Visual Arts
- Ciaran Scullion, Music & Opera
- Patricia Lavery, Community Arts & Education
- Grainne McCann, Communications
- Lizzie Devlin, Community Arts
- Joanna Johnston, Visual Arts
- Gavin O'Connor, Youth Arts
- Maria McAlister, Music, Traditional Arts
- Joanne Wright, Music, Traditional Arts
- Caoileann Curry-Thompson, Drama & Dance
- Lorraine Calderwood, Arts & Older People/ Young People & Wellbeing
- Matthew Malcolm, Creative Industries Development Officer
- Sonya Whitefield/Siobhan Molloy, Festivals, Venues, International
- Angela Warren, Press Officer

Arts Council

E: info@artscouncil-ni.org

Telling our stories



Lyric Theatre production of 'Rough Girls', a new play by Tara Lynne O'Neill, telling the true story of the first all-female football team in Belfast at the end of the First World War. Photo: Neil Harrison



For further information please contact:

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

E: info@artscouncil-ni.org

W: www.artscouncil-ni.org

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Alternative formats of this publication may be available on request.

For further information,
Email: mhendry@artscouncil-ni.org



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