

EVERYBODY MATTERS: A CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR GALWAY



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
CREATIVITY COMMUNITY
BOTTOM-UP SUPPORT
WELL-BEING STRATEGY
INCLUSION**

1. Context

LOCATION

Galway, European Capital of Culture 2020, is perched on the edge of the Atlantic surrounded by beauty; the unique karst limestone landscape of the Burren to the south; the iconic Conamara landscape to the north; the celebrated Galway Bay and Aran islands to the west and to the east, arable land and a network of lakes and rivers, great houses, castles and monasteries.

Galway has a thriving creative industry sector; an international medtech hub; a vibrant educational sector and is a centre for marine research and development for both marine and fresh water.

Galway has the largest population of inhabited islands in the country and the Irish language and linguistic heritage is an intrinsic part of the cultural experience and life of Galway. A series of internationally-known cultural organisations and festivals – such as Galway International Arts Festival, Druid Theatre, Macnas amongst many others - help to make Galway an internationally recognised cultural destination.



2. Goal

Our ambition is to design, drive and deliver a strategy that transforms Galway into a working model of cultural sustainability, community participation, best practice and world-class cultural and creative experiences.

THE SEVEN STRATEGIC AIMS IN THIS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK WERE INFORMED BY THE NINE COMMITMENTS IN CULTURE 21 ACTIONS AND EACH OF THESE HAS A NUMBER OF OBJECTIVES OR GOALS.

3. Origin of project

This first Cultural Framework devised for Galway came about as a result of the long-held recognition of:

- the pivotal role of culture in Galway's past, present and its future;
- the connection between culture and local sustainable development; and
- the potential growth of the cultural and wider creative industry sectors.

The City & County Councils recognised that if Galway is to continue to evolve, maintain and secure sustainability under the shadow of fundamental changes in the economic, social and environmental frameworks, it must respond to a rapidly-changing world, a rapidly-changing cultural framework driven by new technologies, a rapidly-changing community affected by both immigration and emigration, particularly of our young people. Both Councils saw the need for cohesive policies and plans; creative hubs to bring and keep cultural actors together; new much-needed cultural infrastructure to support the cultural communities and greater investment in the cultural life of a city and county deeply affected by the recession.

4. Content and development

IN SUMMARY THIS STRATEGY SEEKS TO

- Identify a sustainable path for cultural development in Galway
- Highlight the contribution of culture to the sustainable development of Galway

- Provide fully-realised access for all to all cultural actions
- Provide access to resources that will help people pursue cultural interests and identity
- Foster employment opportunities for the cultural and creative sectors
- Support cultural and creative innovation in all its forms.
- Protect and enhance Galway’s distinctive cultural heritage and unique Irish language culture
- Recommend practical delivery mechanisms and the resources required to implement the strategy including infrastructural development.

The seven strategic aims in this strategy framework were informed by the nine commitments in Culture 21 Actions and each of these has a number of objectives or goals.

STRATEGIC AIMS

1. Access and Cultural Rights
2. Cultural Heritage
3. Culture Education and Excellence
4. Culture Environment and Place
5. Culture and Economy
6. Culture Health and Wellbeing
7. Culture Information and Knowledge

INFORMING THE OBJECTIVES & GOALS

The objectives and goals were agreed as a result of a detailed consultation process with communities, individuals and sectoral groups and a Stakeholder Workshop held in April 2016 as part of the **Pilot Cities Europe 2015 – 2017 Programme**, participating in the **Culture in Sustainable Cities – Learning with Culture 21 Actions**.

When a series of actions was agreed for each of the objectives, these actions set the agenda for each of the three three-year **Implementation Plans** that are contained within the ten-year time frame of the strategy.

THE AMBITION IS TO DESIGN, DRIVE AND DELIVER A STRATEGY THAT TRANSFORMS GALWAY INTO A WORKING MODEL OF CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, BEST PRACTICE AND WORLD-CLASS CULTURAL AND CREATIVE EXPERIENCE.

5. Main actors

The Project has been led by the Galway City Council, with a strong involvement of the Galway European Capital of Culture 2020 Team and local cultural institutions such as the Galway City Museum. The workshop held in the context of the Pilot Cities programme also involved a wide range of arts organisations (theatre companies, festivals, etc.), artists, business agents (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, restaurants, etc.), civil society organisations, universities and local personalities with an interest in the links between culture and sustainability.



6. Evaluation

The establishment of a Cultural Sustainability Strategy Framework has been of great importance to both the City and County of Galway. It afforded us the opportunity to carry out a detailed mapping exercise, followed by a detailed consultation process and these actions, measured against the Culture 21 Actions, oriented the participants in this exciting and challenging process towards a whole series of sustainable solutions for cultural development in Galway. The actual impact is that now we have begun to implement the first phase implementation plan, in collaboration with our key partners and communities and significant strides are being made to realize our aims, objectives and actions.

7. Recommendations

Consultation is key – it should be well-planned, methodical, well-recorded and meaningful/real. If we could have – we would have spent more time on this and my advice to other cities would be to give this adequate time. In conjunction with this, mapping is essential – what have you got, who have you got, what are they doing, what help do they need; what is unique about your city, what are the common problems solved elsewhere.

8. Other information

This article was written by Eithne Verling, Director, Galway City Museum.

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