

Chairperson, Deputies, members and guests of the Committee

Thank you for inviting the National Campaign for the Arts to this meeting on the development of local and community arts (policymaking and funding).

My name is Annette Nugent and I am a member of the NCFA Steering Group. As you probably know, the NCFA is a volunteer-led grassroots movement that makes the case for the arts in Ireland. We work to ensure that the arts are on national and local government agendas and are recognised as a vital part of contemporary Irish life.

Article 27 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community. That means **everyone** in **every** community.

In our submission document on this subject, we outlined five elements which are particularly central to the development and prosperity of arts in diverse localities around the country, and to ensure equitable distribution of arts benefits to Ireland's 5 million+ residents. We also make recommendations for actions by national and local government. In this brief introduction I would like to draw your attention to these.

Firstly, **making space for the arts.**

The chronic lack of affordable, accessible space for artists to make and share their work has escalated in recent years. Lack of investment, soaring energy costs and lack of access to public space – alongside the housing + cost of living challenges faced by all workers - reduces opportunities for artists and also for audiences to experience art near to where they live.

You see in our submission that we recommend the protection of and investment in existing cultural infrastructure; the prioritisation of arts organisations when building stock becomes available for civic/community use; and the introduction of a requirement for arts space in all multi-use developments as a condition of planning.

To ensure everyone in our communities can participate in cultural life - including the 14% with a disability - we need to identify and address barriers to working and participating in the arts.

We would welcome the commissioning of research into **diversity** of the arts to identify the existing barriers, from social and economic through to systemic barriers (that we know are experienced by our disabled artist colleagues). We suggest the creation of a diversity taskforce, to address such obstacles and set out key actions for change.

Like many other sectors, we know we need to adapt our work practices in relation to the **climate emergency**. Investment and training is needed to bring us in line with European models of climate adaptation, and to combat rising energy costs.

We are calling on you to ensure the recently formed Climate Unit within the Department of Culture is funded to support the arts sector in climate adaptation and sustainability; that SEAI energy mentorships be available to the arts sector; and that the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and the Department of Culture work together to create a capital scheme for retrofitting buildings for cultural use.

Finally, we ask that you, in every aspect of your work, continue to invest in placing the arts at the heart of local communities. Invest additional resources in Arts Offices, who are overseeing complex arts and creative programmes, actioning regional and national objectives and affecting real change at a community level.

We, as a sector, recognise the stellar work done by many levels of Government to support artists and art during the Covid emergency.

You know that Ireland's artists are guardians of our global reputation, and equally are invested in improving the quality of our daily local lives.

We look forward to working with our elected representatives, nationally and locally, towards to a sustainable, diverse, inclusive arts sector that is accessible and affordable to every person in this country.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

[www.ncfa.ie](https://ncfa.ie/) #StandByTheArts