



**Alternative formats of the consultation document
are available on request.**

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Arts Council of Northern Ireland

DEVELOPING A NEW REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR
THE ARTS: ARTS COUNCIL 5 YEAR PLAN (2006-2011)

The Future for the Arts in Northern Ireland

Have your say

5 Public Consultation Sessions are taking place at:

- **The Playhouse, Derry**
22 May: 11.00am - 1.00pm
- **Down Arts Centre, Downpatrick**
23 May: 7.30pm - 9.30pm
- **Market Place Theatre, Armagh**
24 May: 7.30pm - 9.30pm
- **Island Arts Centre, Lisburn**
25 May: 7.00pm - 9.00pm
- **The Black Box, Cathedral Quarter, Belfast**
2 June: 9.30am - 1.00pm



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Developing a New Regional Strategy for the Arts: Arts Council 5 Year Plan (2006-2011)

The Consultation Exercise

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is currently in the process of preparing a new five year plan to cover the period 2006 to 2011. At this stage we are inviting you to share your ideas on how best to take the arts forward, yet, still reflecting the common values and beliefs of the arts lying at the heart of a modern society.

To assist with the planning process, we have outlined a number of themes that we feel are relevant to the continued development of the sector. We will be holding a number of forums - public meetings and themed events - to consult with the sector and wider community on how we might develop a new regional strategy for the arts.

The Current Environment

Looking to the future we are conscious of the prevailing environment in which the arts operate, particularly the following:

- **Restructuring of Local Government:** The Review of Public Administration announced major changes with delegation to local councils for community planning. This restructuring will result in a strong local government, where councils are at the heart of the local community, providing civic leadership and working with local interests to address social, economic and environmental issues. ACNI welcomes this restructuring as a very positive change. Local government is a key partner in achieving and delivering a shared vision for the arts within a wider regional context.
- **Continued Reduction in Funding:** The overall future of funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland is not clear, and although the Arts Council is doing everything in its power to improve government investment in the arts, it is reasonable to assume that there will be no increase in the short term. The

political uncertainty that has existed since the Assembly was suspended does not facilitate effective lobbying for increased funds. The examples below are illustrative of the pressures on the funding streams:

- The EU PEACE II Programme which has provided substantial funding to the arts sector, is expected to draw to a close. This will have a detrimental effect on community groups and may potentially result in an increased reliance on Arts Council funds.
- The most recent Draft Priorities and Budget document (2006-08) indicates a decrease in predicted DCAL expenditure on the arts from £14 million in 2004/5 to £13.2 million in 2007/8. Faced with intense competition for public funds, grants to the arts will be at risk of future cuts unless additional resources become available.
- A large proportion of the funding package for the Olympics in 2012 will come from money generated by the National Lottery with a resulting impact on the funding for the arts and other good causes. The Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) currently estimates that there could be an overall reduction in income to the existing good causes of just over five percent during the seven-year lead-in to the London Games.

Review of the Five Year Plan 2001-2006

In 2005, the Arts Council commissioned an independent review¹ of its current five year plan: 'The Arts - Inspiring the Imagination, Building the Future'. The overall purpose of the review was to assess the impact and achievements of the Arts Council's policies, plans and programmes over this period. The main findings are briefly outlined below.

What we did well

- Better Planning: The five year plan for 2001 to 2006 was clearer and more strategic than its predecessor.
- Overall, there was an increase in revenue funding for the arts.
- The Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP) was valued by artists.
- Key planned initiatives such as Creative Youth Partnership and Audiences NI were successfully delivered.
- Important baselines were established through, for example, Arts and Culture (2004), Disability Baseline and Regularly Funded Organisation Survey.
- Linking with the wider Government agenda has increased the recognition of the benefit the arts can make to society and the economy.
- Promote the Arts as a key mechanism for effecting change in regeneration, reconciliation, education and health contexts.
- Made substantial and continuing contribution to improvements in arts infrastructure (outside Belfast).
- Improvements in internal systems & processes.
- Improved our funding of Community Arts by committing £17.7 million between 2001/2002-2004/2005.

¹ Forthcoming *Review of Strategy 2001-06* by Deloitte MCS Ltd to be published summer 2006.

What we did less well

- Advocate the importance of the arts to Government.
- Delays in implementing some activities (introduction of Business Support Programme and Regularly Funded Organisations' Survey).
- Vulnerability of arts organisations: there are issues of long-term viability.
- Poor physical infrastructure for the arts in Belfast.
- Partnership working with local authorities.
- Engagement with voluntary arts.
- Administrative arrangements - Creative Youth Partnerships and Audiences NI.
- Relationships with some stakeholders.
- Collection of historical data.

The independent review has helped shape our understanding of our performance over the past five years, highlighting areas of strength and weakness. The findings will feed into the new plan as will other long-term initiatives that will be carried forward into the successor plan.

The New Plan 2006-2011

Informed by the main findings from the Review, the Arts Council Board undertook a visioning process facilitated by cultural policy expert Francois Matarasso. The outputs from these processes have been translated into a small number of broad themes which will form the basis for discussion through this consultation exercise. These are:

- **Art at the Heart**
- **Strengthening the Arts**
- **Growing Audiences**
- **Improving Organisational Performance**

Each of the themes are developed in the sections that follow with some questions you may wish to consider.

1. Art at the Heart

The Arts Council is acutely aware of the need to inform key decision-makers of the value and contribution of the arts to daily life and the role of the arts in the future development of Northern Ireland. This is a huge challenge that cannot be achieved by the Arts Council alone. Ideas around this theme include: increased partnership working; showcasing projects that demonstrate how the arts can achieve a range of positive benefits to individuals and communities; highlighting and providing evidence of the social, economic, health and cognitive benefits of the arts. These are three examples, you may wish to identify others.

Q. How do you think the Arts Council can position the arts at the heart of society?

Q. How can the Arts Council strengthen its role as an advocate for the arts?

2. Strengthening the Arts

Support for high quality art and artists has been the cornerstone of our funding, but we recognise the importance of creating a stable and secure environment in which artists and arts organisations can develop both professionally and creatively.

Q. How do you think this can best be achieved?

3. Growing Audiences

Now more than ever arts organisations need to understand audiences and the communities in which they are based. Low levels of attendance generally and the persistence of some barriers to attendance suggest that the new plan should prioritise audience development. But developing audiences for the arts embraces a wide range of activities - from increasing the frequency of engagement by existing audiences, to attracting first timers and broadening the range of people who attend, engage and participate.

Q. What can the Arts Council and its funded clients do to tackle the barriers facing people in accessing the arts?

Q. What do you think should be done to encourage long-term growth in audiences?

4. Improving Organisational Performance

The independent review of strategy comments on the work of the Arts Council over recent years: how we deliver our remit in support of the sector and the promotion of the arts. It has provided a deeper understanding of our performance and capacity and has been a further stimulus for future improvements in our business processes and effectiveness.

Q. Are there aspects of the Council's service on which you would wish to comment?

Q. Are there other services that you think we should be providing that would be valuable?

Giving Your Views

If you would like to contribute to this discussion about the future direction of the Arts in Northern Ireland there are a number of channels through which you can make your voice heard. These are outlined below:

1. Attending one of five public consultation workshops to be held at:

The Playhouse, Derry	22 May:	11.00am - 1.00pm
Down Arts Centre, Downpatrick	23 May:	7.30pm - 9.30pm
Market Place Theatre, Armagh	24 May:	7.30pm - 9.30pm
Island Arts Centre, Lisburn	25 May:	7.00pm - 9.00pm
The Black Box, Cathedral Quarter, Belfast	2 June:	9.30am - 1.00pm

2. Attending one of the themed events being organised with key interest groups and stakeholders throughout the region:

Local Government and the Arts:	Flowerfield Arts Centre	25 May: 11.00am - 1.00pm
Audience Development:	Belfast (venue tba)	tba
Arts and Education:	Omagh Library	30 May: 7.30pm - 9.30pm

3. Email or post your submission no later than **Friday 16th of June 2006** to:

E-mail: newstrategy@artscouncil-ni.org
 Post: Research and Policy Team
 Arts Council of Northern Ireland
 MacNeice House
 77 Malone Road
 Belfast. BT9 6AQ

Copies of the consultation document can be downloaded from www.artscouncil-ni.org or by telephoning Shirley Reid 028 9038 5232. Alternative formats of the consultation document are available if required from the address above.

Feedback Process

Following the first round of consultation, a draft strategy document will be made available by mid-June 2006. A 'Call for Comment' on the draft arts strategy will then seek public comment and suggestions prior to and during the 10-week Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Process during July and August 2006. The New Strategy 2006-2011 will be published at the end of September 2006.

Notes