PUBLIC ART POLICY
WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
February 2016

FRONT COVER IMAGE
(Grainne Óg & The Norse and the Gael)

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Public Art

What is public art?

Public Art is art that exists in the public realm and this is recognised to include literature, dance, music, film and drama as well as the visual arts and that public art works may be indoor, outdoor permanent or temporary. Public Art reflects the distinctiveness of a locality and people and can build upon guiding principles of quality, inclusion, access and long-term value.

“Public art is not an art ‘form.’ Its size can be huge or small. It can tower fifty feet high or call attention to the paving beneath your feet. Its shape can be abstract or realistic (or both), and it may be cast, carved, built, assembled, or painted. It can be site-specific or stand in contrast to its surroundings and can take many forms ..... Public art is a reflection of how we see the world—the artist’s response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are.”

National and local contexts

Per Cent for Art Scheme

Public art creates a dialogue with a people, a time and a place. The Per Cent for Art Scheme gives the Irish public the opportunity to experience a vast range of contemporary art, borne out of capital constructions projects, in their everyday life. In turn it provides a challenge and an opportunity to a wide range of artists to create work for public engagement and response.

The Per Cent for Art Scheme is a government funded programme whereby an additional fund of up to 1% of the cost of a publicly-funded infrastructure or building, can be applied for by the Client (typically a Local Authority, School, Hospital, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Irish Water, the OPW) to commission original, site and context specific works of art. The Per Cent for Art Scheme supports the commissioning of artists and artworks across all contemporary art forms.

See Appendix 2
Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme – General National Guidelines 2004
Westmeath Public Art

The next Westmeath Arts Plan is due for publication at the end of 2016 and will cover the period 2017-2023.

The current Westmeath Arts Plan (2010 – 2016) articulates its Public Art policy aim as follows:

- Westmeath County Council will enhance the public space and cultural experience of communities in the County, through assisting and engaging artists and communities in the development of best practice in public art.

**Individual strategic objectives are articulated as follows:**

- Maximise the resources available from Per Cent for Art Schemes and other investment opportunities in Public Art.
- Utilise existing roundabouts at principal town in the County to develop a new network for public art sculptures.
- Encourage active collaboration between artists, architects, planners, engineers and the Arts Office to deliver best practice in Public Art.
- Explore the potential of art form development within the realm of public art practice in County Westmeath.

In regard to the 2017-2023 County Arts Plan, careful consideration will be given to the changing landscape at both policy and practice levels within the realm of Public Art Projects. The plan will build on the aims and objectives of the current Arts Plan as outlined above, while cognisant of plans for a possible review of the current Guidelines at a National level. It is proposed that the key elements within the current plan’s Public Art objectives will mature within the new Arts Plan under thematic headings such as:

- Maximising Per Cent for Art Scheme participation
- A structured approach to Public Art through the set up of an Advisory Panel
- Appropriate consideration of location and place for an overall Programme of Public art and within individual projects
- Partnership and collaboration opportunities
- The evolving dynamic of public art practice and public engagement

**Per Cent for Art Budgets**

The Government decision of August 1997 approves the inclusion in the budgets for all capital construction projects of up to 1% as funding for an art project, subject to the following limits:

- Construction projects costing up to €2,550,000 may include an art budget of 1% of net construction costs i.e. €25,500.
- For projects costing between €2,550,000 and €6,300,000, an art budget of 1% up to a maximum of €38,000 is allowed.
- For projects costing between €6,300,000 and €12,700,000, an art budget of
€51,000 is allowed.

- For projects costing in excess of €12,700,000, an art budget of €64,000 is allowed.

These figures should not be regarded as an overall limit for art projects as in many cases there may be potential to supplement this with other funding attracted from other sources, (e.g. private sponsorship and pooling of resources, etc).

For Design Build or Public Private Partnership (PPP) capital construction projects, the Council should ensure that the Per Cent for Art Scheme is embedded into the contract.

Westmeath Public Art Policy

Statement of Policy Aim

Westmeath County Council recognises its responsibility to commission Public Art projects under central government funded capital projects such as roads, water services, housing schemes, libraries and swimming pools. Additionally The Council recognises the resource that the Per Cent for Art Scheme offers for creative intervention with communities and the expansion of the County Arts Programme. Westmeath County Council intends to maximise the potential with this policy and a subsequent programme of commissions which reflect current best practice.

Strategic Actions supporting a Public Art policy

1. The setting up a Public Art Advisory Group to ensure effective structures are in place to maximise the potential of the Per Cent for Art Scheme. This group will ensure that Per Cent for Art Scheme is included at an early stage in the capital project design project.

   See Appendix 1 for proposed membership of Public Art Advisory Group.

2. The person responsible for each Capital project shall ensure that a ‘% for Art’ element is included in the budgetary process at the appropriate stage. He/she shall liaise at project inception stage with the Public Art Advisory Group and shall transfer responsibility for the expenditure of the % for Art funding element to the Public Art Advisory Group at the earliest opportunity.

3. Based on successfully securing of Per Cent for Art Scheme funding within the appropriate capital projects, a framework to support innovative Public Art Programming is devised by the Public Art Advisory Group.

4. A single budgetary code is established to allow for the consolidating of funds from the Per Cent for Art Scheme. This is required to facilitate a robust Public Art policy becoming
embedded in the culture of the Council and through this support for the development of best practice within Public Art to develop in Westmeath.

5. As a second phase in the development of Public Arts Policy for County Westmeath the Public Art Advisory Group shall explore the establishment of policies around commemorations, memorials, donations, civic contributions and development of the county art collections.

**Commissioning Options**

The commissioning process will be determined by the nature of the project and the budget. Depending on the project this can be, permanent, process based, temporary, participatory, interactive, site specific - and open to all media or media specific. Relevant procurement guidelines will be adhered to and may involve one of the following three options:

1: **Open Competition option.**

Commissions will be advertised for expressions of interest or proposals. Depending on scale of project/scheme applicants will go through a 1 or 2-stage selection process.

The commissioning process includes:

- A site-visit / presentation for artists
- A selection committee comprising of; representatives with Arts Expertise, representatives from The Public Art Advisory Group and local community representatives.
- The final selection committee is confirmed on the basis of the submissions received. This is to ensure that requisite expertise in all relevant art-forms is covered.
- Artists selected to stage-2 may be paid a proposal fee of a maximum of €500 for the submission of a bona fide proposal.
- Where appropriate, submissions to stage-2 will be placed on public display for comment

2: **Limited Competition option.**

The Public Art Advisory Group will invite artists to apply to be part of a public art panel along the following lines:

- Application process for the panel is every two years and is advertised nationally and artists from all art-forms are encouraged to apply.
- The artists are selected by a selection committee comprising but not solely of people with arts expertise.
- For each of these commissions, a number of artists from the public art panel are invited to submit proposals. (The artists invited are matched to appropriate projects)
- The Limited Competition is a 1-stage competition process.
• A selection committee comprising of; representatives with Arts Expertise, representatives from The Public Art Advisory Group and local community representatives will make the selection.

3: Direct Commission option.

• If appropriate, the Public Art Advisory Group may appoint an artist directly for a public art commission, art purchase or art project. The Advisory Group will ensure in this instance that the artist’s practice or work is appropriate to the aims and objectives of the commission, and if necessary will seek external expert advice.

Public Engagement and Information Dissemination

Westmeath County Council will endeavor to utilise the Per Cent for Art Scheme to maximise exposure to the broadest range of art practices for public audiences. Westmeath County Council will also endeavor to engage the local community of all Per Cent for Art Scheme supported projects.

This can be achieved through some of the following approaches and activities:

• Project-development awareness work in communities
• Local community representatives on selection panels
• Presentation of the projects to local communities
• Participation in community-based projects
• Publicity of the completed Public Arts projects through local and national print and radio media, and via the County Council website and social media
• Development of an education programme around public art for schools

Conservation

Westmeath County Council is the custodian of an extensive collection of Public Art artworks. Budgetary provision for the maintenance of the collection is essential, and shall fall within the remit of the Public Art Advisory Group.

The appropriate insurances must be in place for all Public Art artworks owned by Westmeath County Council.

Procedures for the conservation of Public Art, commissioned by Westmeath County Council (to include insurances and maintenance) will reflect models of best practice nationally.
APPENDIX 1

Membership of Public Art Advisory Group

Cathaoirleach of Westmeath County Council (Chair)
Chair of Housing, Community, Corporate & Cultural SPC
Senior Engineer, Transportation or NRO
Senior Engineer, Water Services
Heritage Officer, Westmeath Co. Co.
Arts Officer, Westmeath Co. Co.
Co. Librarian, Westmeath Co. Co.
APPENDIX 2

Public Art – Per Cent for Art Scheme General National Guidelines 2004
(provided separately as a PDF)

APPENDIX 3

Role of Public Art Advisory Group
(provided separately)
References

http://associationforpublicart.org/public-art-gateway/what-is-public-art/

http://visualartists.ie


Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism – Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme – General National Guidelines – 2004
http://www.publicart.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF_Folder/Public_Art_Per_Cent_for_Art.pdf

Publicart.ie – Irish online public art resource, offering information from the practical to the critical including a directory of over 200 public artworks, news and opportunities and videointerviews with artists and commissioners. www.publicart.ie

Auckland, New Zealand. Accessed at:
http://www.auckCCndcouncil.govt.nz/EN/planspoliciesprojects/councilpolicies/Pages/publicartpolicy.aspx