

AR

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024-25

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THE
NATIONAL
LOTTERY®

Our Mission

To develop and champion the arts in Northern Ireland through investment, partnership and engagement.

Our Vision

Our vision is “A society where all people can experience a thriving arts sector that is recognised as essential to creativity, well-being and social and economic prosperity.” Our draft strategic plan, [Championing the Arts – Investing in the next 10 years](#), identifies the outcomes and priorities that will help us achieve this vision.

In our Annual Review 2024-2025, we will show the progress that we have made in these areas, from the launch of a new £600,000 programme of investment in a three-year Mental Health and Arts Programme, to the landmark celebration of three decades of game changing National Lottery funding for arts in Northern Ireland.

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Siobhán Molloy, Arts Development Officer: Festivals and International, speaking at the launch of the **Belfast Book Festival**, at the Crescent Arts Centre.



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Cover image : Seacourt Print Workshop contributes to Bangor's regeneration.

Seacourt Print Workshop in Bangor has opened its new exhibition, featuring work by acclaimed artist Joe Tilson (1928-2023). This was Seacourt's second exhibition since it reopened its doors in October 2024, following extensive renovations to its home at the former historic Ulster Bank premises on Bangor's Main Street. Supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through National Lottery funding, Seacourt was originally set up in 1981 with a focus on promoting the art of printmaking in Bangor and creating opportunities for people to engage locally.

Welcome to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's (ACNI) Annual Review 2024-25.

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 some 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](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

What we do

The Arts Council is the official funding and development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. We support the vital contribution that the arts make through the region through our broad range of funding and development 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
- Voluntary Arts
- Young People Wellbeing & Arts
- Youth Arts

Bringing great art within the reach of everyone

A General Population Survey commissioned by the Arts Council (2023):

“87% of respondents believe that arts and creativity play a role in good health and wellbeing”

Craic Theatre's Identity project, which was funded by The National Lottery Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP).

Arts Council of Northern Ireland funding 2024-2025 - At a Glance

2024-25 Exchequer Awards by Programme

Programme	No.	Value £
Annual Funding Programme	40	£10,161,036.00
Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP)	119	£653,673.00
Arts Development Programme	1	£10,000.00
Musical Instruments Scheme	88	£689,274.00
Small Capital Programme	43	£250,326.00
TOTAL	291	£11,764,309.00

2024-25 Lottery Awards by Programme

Programme	No.	Value £
Annual Funding Programme (AFP)	48	£3,080,465.00
Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP)	211	£961,157.00
Arts Development Programme	3	£24,171.00
National Lottery - Project Funding	72	£2,048,487.00
Arts and Older People Programme (AOPP)	20	£159,999.00
Rural Engagement Arts Prog (REAP)	51	£349,553.00
Creative Schools Programme (CSP)	10	£73,263.00
Individual Artists Digital Evolution Programme	8	£75,835.00
Organisations Digital Evolution Programme	4	£39,860.00
Other Grants	1	£50,000.00
TOTAL	428	£6,862,790.00

Overview 2024-25

Championing the Arts – 2024-34

We opened the year with the launch of Championing the Arts 2024-34, the Arts Council's new draft strategic plan and the first ten-year strategy produced by the organisation.

The draft strategy establishes our goals and ambitions for the coming decade and outlines the future direction for the organisation, detailing our new mission, vision and values. It charts six outcomes and priorities that will help us to achieve our longer-term vision of a society where all people can experience a thriving arts sector that is recognised and valued as essential to creativity, well-being and social and economic prosperity.

Arts budget

The arts budget continues to present significant challenges to the sector and to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's ability to meet the needs of artists, arts organisations and their audiences.

The Department's baseline revenue grant to the Arts Council remained at a standstill in 2024-25, at £9.708m. However, the allocation of additional in-year funding, raising the final resource budget allocation to £12.245m, alleviated some of the immediate pressure on funding.

National Lottery – 30th anniversary

The National Lottery marked its thirtieth anniversary in 2024-25. Since it launched in 1994, more than £217m of Good Causes money has been invested by the Arts Council in approximately 9,680 Northern Ireland-based arts projects.

The anniversary was marked by a series of nationwide celebratory events, including Northern Ireland-based poet and playwright, Nandi Jola, featuring as part of a UK-first AI artwork which illuminated the façade of London's V&A Museum.

At a special event held in Stormont, Ministers and MLAs were introduced to a range of organisations which have benefitted from Lottery funding, from grassroots community groups to large-scale institutions, including representatives from The Playhouse Theatre, Lyric Theatre and Open House Festival.

National Lottery investment also enables the Arts Council to work with partners such as the Baring Foundation and the Education Authority to make targeted interventions in areas of identified need, including arts and wellbeing programmes for older citizens and for school students in areas of deprivation.



Gordon Lyons, Minister for Communities of Northern Ireland, pictured with Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, at The National Lottery 30th anniversary celebration at Stormont.

The Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland

Following significant research, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland produced a new study entitled The Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland. The document, which examined responses from a wide range of artists across various demographics, career stages, and artistic disciplines, found that loss of public investment for the arts, the short-term and long-term impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis to be among the challenges which have shaped the arts sector over the last ten years.

Worryingly, more than half of those surveyed indicated that they have or would consider leaving Northern Ireland in search of better career prospects, a very serious issue which needs to be addressed to retain our artists.

Notable successes

Artists from Northern Ireland continued to achieve notable success in 2024-25:

- Cahoots NI brought their runaway 2023 Broadway success, The Vanishing Elephant to local audiences at the Belfast International Arts Festival
- Maiden Voyage Dance became a foundational partner in Luail, the first all-island contemporary dance company, which will transform dance for practitioners and audiences, across the island of Ireland
- New works by Northern Ireland's leading theatre, dance and arts organisations featured at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival as part of a Spotlight initiative delivered by Theatre and Dance NI, in collaboration with Belfast International Arts Festival, and supported by the British Council Northern Ireland and the Arts Council.

Digital and Immersive Technologies

We continued to support the development of the Creative Industries in Northern Ireland, with two funding programmes focussing on digital and immersive technologies and encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration.

Continuing our partnership with Future Screens NI, we supported eight individuals and four organisations with grants of up-to £10,000 each, through the Digital Evolution Awards.

We also celebrated leading artists working at the interface of cutting-edge technology and the arts, at a public showcase event at The MAC in Belfast.

Visual Arts achievements

This was a significant year for the visual arts in Northern Ireland:

- The region's longest-running artists' studio, Queen Street Studios, marked their 40th anniversary with a major exhibition of works from past and present members
- Seacourt Print Workshop relocated to new premises in Bangor, placing them at the centre of the city's ongoing cultural regeneration
- Northern Ireland's leading contemporary art gallery, the Golden Thread Gallery, celebrated their 30th anniversary with the opening of their new gallery space at the heart of Belfast City Centre.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Arts Programme

This year saw the introduction of a major new £600,000 National Lottery investment programme designed to improve mental health and wellbeing through the arts.

Developed in partnership with the Baring Foundation, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Arts Programme will upskill artists working in this field, before pairing artists and arts organisations with specialists in mental health work, to develop bespoke community arts programmes for vulnerable groups.

The new programme is one of the first major investment programmes to emerge in response to the extensive consultation which preceded the launch of the Arts Council's new ten-year draft strategy, Championing the Arts, 2024-34.



National Lottery Commissioning Programme

I've always liked the name Marcus:

Written and performed by Matthew Sharpe (left) and directed by Patrick J. O'Reilly (right), this funny and thought-provoking play, explores the complexities of identity and diversity, drawing inspiration from Matthew's own life experiences.

International creative and cultural exchange

This year we enhanced the support we provide to artists by building opportunities for greater international creative and cultural exchange.

In February 2025, we worked in partnership with the Chinese Consulate General in Belfast to stage a celebration of Chinese culture at Translink's newly-opened Belfast Grand Central Station. The event, which marked Chinese New Year, introduced the celebrated Guizhou Acrobatic Troupe to delighted local commuters.

Collaborations like this continue to contribute positively to bilateral cultural relations, and we look forward to realising new exchange possibilities for our artists.

Partnerships

Marking our joint support for the development of artistic talent from Northern Ireland on the world stage, the Arts Council and British Council Northern Ireland renewed our existing twelve-year commitment with the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding. We are committed to working closely together to create a more prosperous, connected and globally-recognised Northern Ireland and a robust creative and cultural sector.

Accessibility and inclusion

The Arts Council places considerable emphasis on promoting accessibility and inclusion. As reflected in our draft strategy, we reiterated our commitment to working with the Arts Councils in the UK and the Republic of Ireland to develop the All In access scheme, which will support venues to improve access to arts and cultural events for d/Deaf, neurodiverse and disabled audiences.

This year we announced an important next stage in the development of All In, with the appointment of disability-led charity Attitude is Everything as the standards supplier for the scheme. They will develop a set of sector-wide standards for theatres, galleries, museums, libraries and other creative organisations and hope to open the scheme in 2026.

Obituaries

We said goodbye this year to a number of significant people associated with the arts in Northern Ireland, including the novelist and playwright Jennifer Johnston; pianist, producer, arranger and composer Brian Connor; Irish language activist Gearóid Ó Cairealláin; and poets Tom Morgan and Gerald Dawe. This year we also sadly lost Michael Longley, one of the great Northern Ireland poets of the last century.

The Anne O'Donoghue Award for community arts

Kate Guelke (pictured above centre), opera and theatre director of Spark Opera, a Northern Irish community opera company, has been presented with the Anne O'Donoghue Award, a £5000 National Lottery funding award by Community Arts Partnership and Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The career development award is presented in memory of Anne O'Donoghue who was a Director of Play Resource Warehouse in North Belfast and one of the NI arts sector's leading lights, who sadly passed away in 2014.

www

A Year in the Arts 2024-25

Highlights 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 2024



Fisherman's Friend

Sarah Lyle from Cre8 Theatre and Paula Clarke, artist, activist and performer, are pictured with Zoë McWhinney, performer in The Fisherman's Friend.

NI writers join Laureate na nÓg's 'Wild' bus tour

Former Children's Writing Fellows for Northern Ireland Máire Zepf and Paul Howard are among the writers and illustrators joining Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde on the road for the Whole Wild World Bus Tour.

[www](#)

Landmark show that places deaf artists centre stage opens at The MAC

The Fisherman's Friend, an innovative new theatre show which places deaf artists centre stage opens at The MAC, Belfast, as part of the Deaf Arts Festival NI.

[www](#)

Arts Council announces new Irish-language Theatre Production and Touring Award 2024

An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland announce the new Irish-language Theatre Production and Touring Award 2024, which will support the creation and touring of an exceptional theatre production in the Irish-language.

[www](#)

May 2024

**Identity**

Young people from Coalisland pictured after performing their theatre piece, *IDENTITY*, at Stormont. The piece was supported by funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's National Lottery Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP).

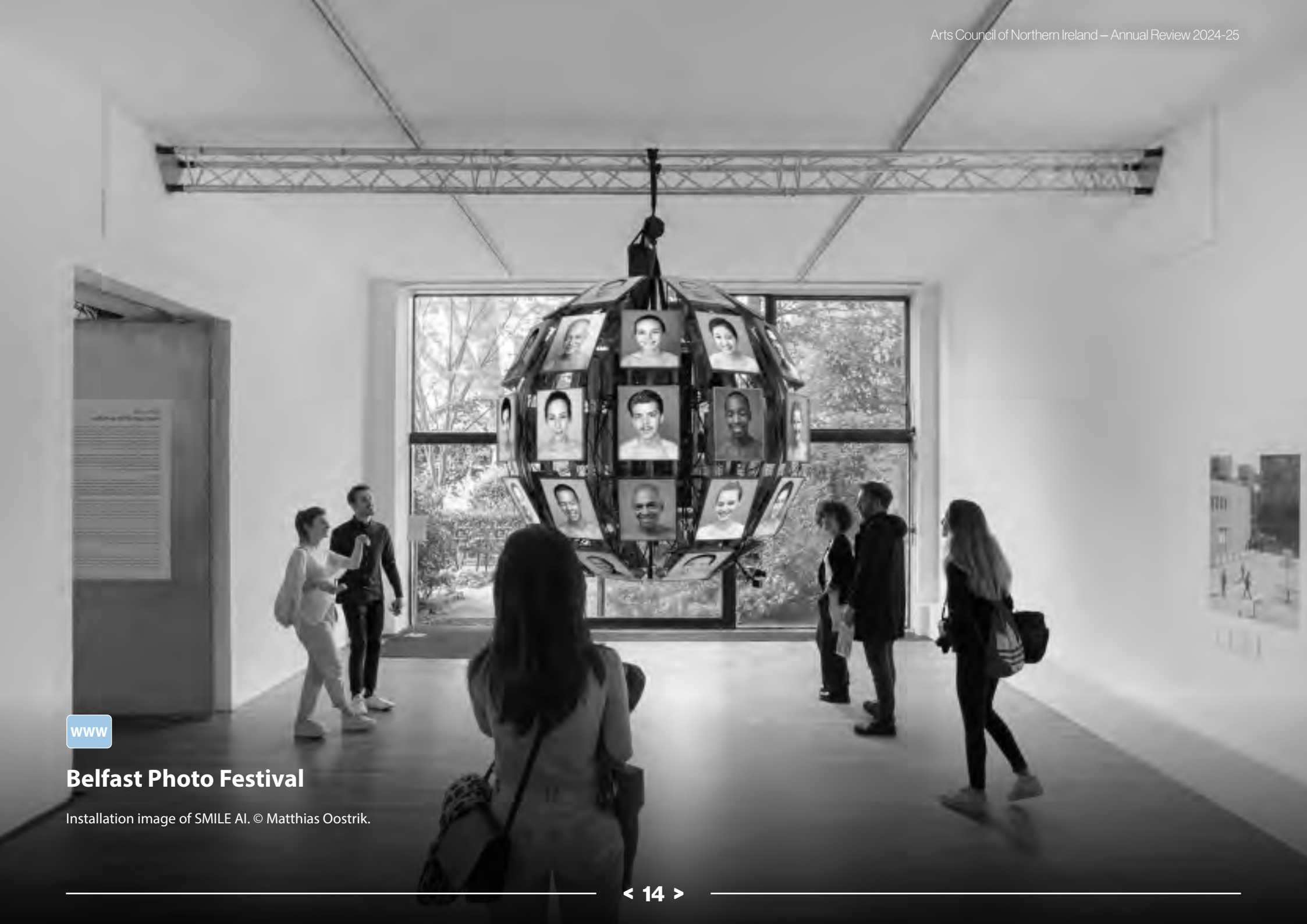
Young people from Craic Arts Centre perform theatre piece highlighting the value of the Arts to Communities Minister at Stormont

Young people from Craic Arts Centre in Coalisland perform a theatre piece at Stormont entitled *IDENTITY*. The piece was the result of a ten-week process which explored confidence, self-worth, and wellbeing, through a series of multi-arts disciplinary workshops with industry professionals.

[www](#)**Belfast Photo Festival marks milestone 10th edition with Broken Spectre premiere**

Belfast Photo Festival reveals the programme for its 10th anniversary edition, animating public spaces and the city's built heritage with exhibitions from a host of international visual artists, including the island of Ireland premiere of *Broken Spectre* by Richard Mosse.

[www](#)



www

Belfast Photo Festival

Installation image of SMILE AI. © Matthias Oostrik.

June 2024

New £600,000 Mental Health and Arts Programme launched

Artists, arts groups and representatives from mental health organisations gather at a special event in the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast to hear about the new £600,000 programme of investment in a three-year Mental Health and Arts Programme.

[www](#)

In Your Space Circus presents Carnival of Colours at the Foyle Maritime Festival, supported by The National Lottery

The Carnival of Colours: The Big Splash, a two-day annual circus, music and street arts festival which showcases local and international circus, theatre, arts and music talent, takes place in the north-west.

[www](#)


Annual Funding Programme

In Your Space Circus delighting young audience members at Carnival of Colours.

June 2024

Arts and Mental Health

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and The Baring Foundation invited health professionals, artists, arts organisations and those working in the field of mental health, to hear how creative based projects can have a positive impact on those living with mental health conditions.



ACNI and PRS Foundation reveal the 21 artists and 7 early career industry professionals receiving support

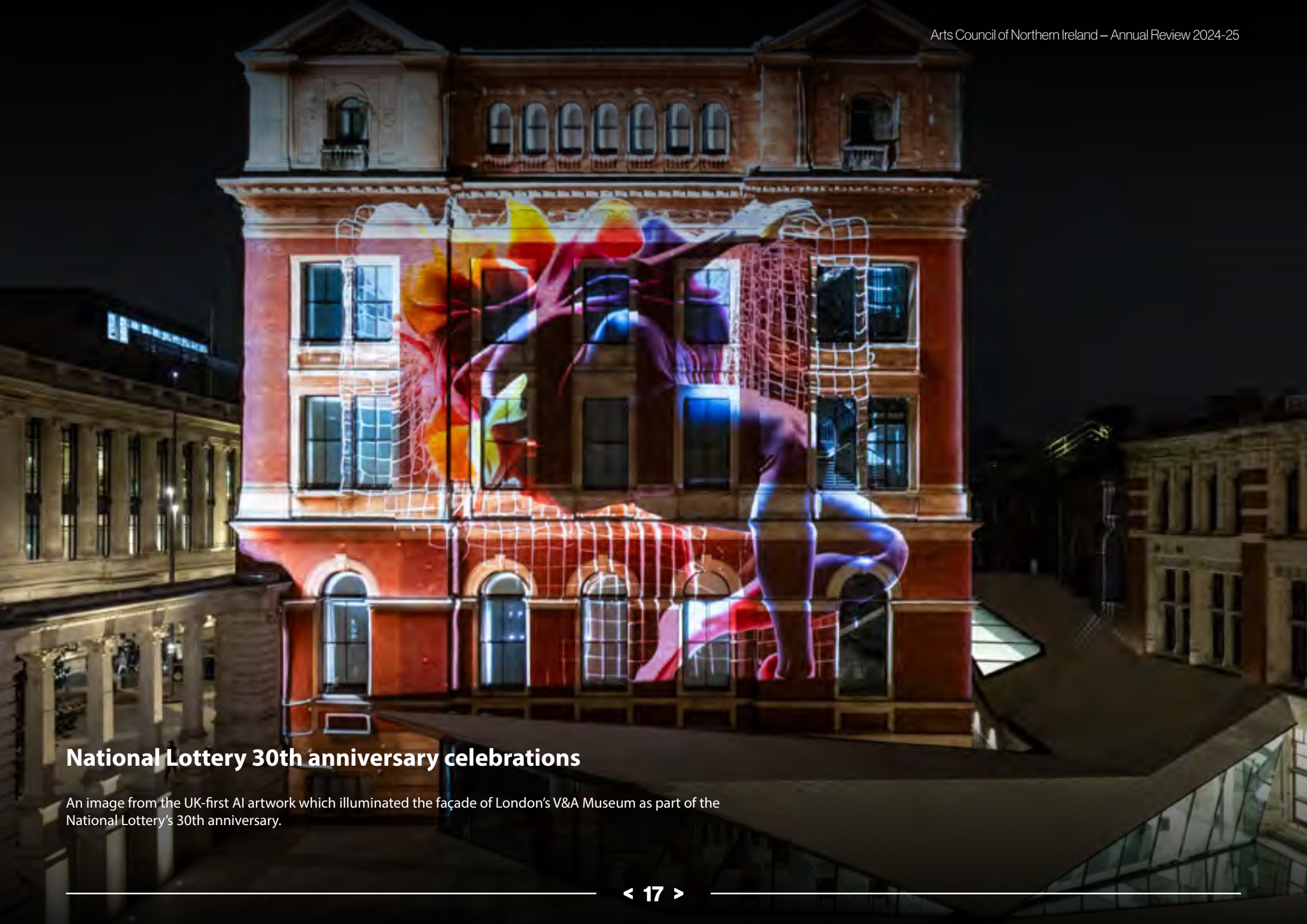
PRS Foundation, the UK's leading charitable funder of new music and talent development, revealed the latest artists across the UK who were selected by a network of industry experts to receive support from the pioneering PPL Momentum Music Fund. Recipients include Northern Ireland band Dea Matrona, who received support for touring and marketing for their debut album.

[www](#)

New report shows artists are struggling to make a living in NI

Artists in Northern Ireland are earning on average just £11,200 per year from their work, according to a stark new report examining the living and working conditions of artists in Northern Ireland.

[www](#)



National Lottery 30th anniversary celebrations

An image from the UK-first AI artwork which illuminated the façade of London's V&A Museum as part of the National Lottery's 30th anniversary.

July 2024

North Belfast's Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain celebrates their 25th Scoil Samhraidh Mhic Reachtain festival, supported by The National Lottery

Supported by National Lottery funding through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the 25th Scoil Samhraidh Mhic Reachtain festival delivers a series of concerts, Irish language courses and trad music workshops.

[www](#)

St. Joseph's Boys' School showcase films at the Millennium Forum

St. Joseph's Boys' School in Derry~Londonderry, showcase films at the Millennium Forum as part of the Creative Schools Partnership.

[www](#)

83% of pupils said the Creative Schools Partnership project had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing



Creative school partnership programme

St. Joseph's Boys' School in Derry~Londonderry - Creative Schools Partnership

July 2024



Part of Annual Funding Programme

Spotlight on Theatre and Dance from Northern Ireland at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Spotlight on Theatre and Dance from Northern Ireland at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Six major works created by some of Northern Ireland's leading theatre, dance and arts organisations, are spotlighted as part of a British Council, ACNI and Culture Ireland event at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Niamh Flanagan, Executive Director, Theatre and Dance NI said:

"The Fringe is the world biggest arts marketplace and this ongoing interest and demand for work from Northern Ireland is from reputable international programmers and audiences and has resulted in further opportunities for our artists/companies, including onward touring nationally and overseas and continues to put Northern Ireland firmly on the cultural map."

[www](#)

Arts Council awards over £2m of National Lottery funding to support arts projects across Northern Ireland

Seventy-three organisations are awarded grants from the Arts Council's National Lottery Project Funding, to support the development and creation of year-round arts activities and events through festivals, literature, drama, visual arts, music and community programming.

[www](#)

August 2024

The Shake: bridging societal divides

Inspired by the space between two hands in Maurice Harron's sculpture Hands Across the Divide, The Shake by Khaled Barakeh, a Syrian multi-disciplinary conceptual artist creates an opportunity for new thinking that could bridge societal divides.

[www](#)

Arts Council announces Annual Funding Programme awards for 2024-25

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland announces that 88 arts organisations will benefit from a public investment of approximately £13.2m for 2024-25 from their Annual Funding Programme (AFP).

[www](#)

“The AFP awards support the core and programming costs of arts organisations who are central to the arts infrastructure in Northern Ireland today.”



Cultural Bridge

Pictured at The Shake exhibition at The MAC are Maurice Harron (left), with The Shake artist Khaled Barakeh. The exhibition was supported by Cultural Bridge and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

18th Outburst Queer Arts Festival supported by The National Lottery

Outburst Arts, Northern Ireland's award-winning Queer arts organisation, returned with their 18th international festival programme. It was an opportunity to celebrate how instrumental they have been to the development of queer arts and LGBTQIA+ representation. Outburst has transformed the narrative, here and far beyond our own shores.



September 2024



Cultural Bridge Colour Stories

Joint Journeys of a Colour Garden, is a Cultural Bridge project presented by Brink! in Belfast in partnership with artpark Hoher Berg in Germany. Pictured amongst the plants in the specially created dyer's garden in Belfast (l-r) are Gavin O'Connor, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Hella Sinnhuber and Stefanie Nowoczin, from artpark Hoher Berg, with Gawain Morrison of Brink!

New Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland announces public events

The new Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, Shirley-Anne McMillan announces the first in a series of outreach initiatives to promote creativity and reading.

[www](#)

Using the arts to tackle climate change

As part of its project funded by Cultural Bridge, Brink! hosts the Climate Craic weekend festival to bring the best of climate and environmental workshops, panels and events to the heart of Belfast.

[www](#)

Number of NI arts events falls year-on-year as impact of financial pressures hit creative sector

An Arts Council of Northern Ireland survey reveals the impact that the cost of living crisis and a reduction in income are having on the arts sector, with 22% fewer performances, exhibitions and events held last year.

[www](#)

September 2024

Northern Ireland Opera presents Unmissable Tchaikovsky's Masterpiece, Eugene Onégin

Based on Alexander Pushkin's classic novel in verse, one of the most lyrical and beautiful pieces of literature adapted for opera, this stunning production is directed by the renowned national opera company's Artistic Director Cameron Menzies.

[www](#)

Entertaining and diverse line-up unveiled at Bounce Arts Festival 2024 launch

Bounce, Northern Ireland's most diverse and eclectic arts festival featuring more than 60 d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists from across Ireland and the UK, launches its programme.

[www](#)

Annual Funding Programme for NI Opera

Pictured (L-R) are Northern Ireland Opera female lead cast members of Eugene Onégin: Mary McCabe, Carolyn Dobbin, Sarah Richmond and Jenny Bourke. Photo by Neil Harrison Photography.



October 2024



Annual Funding Programme

(Left) Liz Roche, Artistic Director of Luail, Ireland's first all-island dance company, pictured with Nicola Curry, Artistic Director of Maiden Voyage Dance, who are partners of the new organisation.

Finance Minister Visits The Playhouse

Finance Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald visited The Playhouse in Derry~Londonderry to hear about the positive impact the arts are having on the environment, jobs, people and communities across the North-West.

[www](#)

LUAIL announces foundational partnership with Maiden Voyage Dance

Luail, Ireland's inaugural national and all-island dance company, is established to embody, embed and empower dance on the island of Ireland, in a foundational partnership with Belfast's Maiden Voyage Dance.

[www](#)

Coalisland Arts Project is helping Young People Paint a Brighter Future

Run by Beam Creative Network, the Artistic Minds project is part of the Young People and Wellbeing Arts Programme, which funds arts-led projects to support vulnerable groups of young people or those experiencing higher levels of disadvantage or exclusion.

[www](#)



Minority Ethnic Artists Mentoring and Residency Programme

Emerging photographer Sheila Chakravarti shared her experiences of applying to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Minority Ethnic Artists Monitoring and Residency Programme with (left) Damian Smyth, Head of Literature/Drama and (centre) Javier Stanziola, Director of Strategic Development & Partnerships, at a special information session held at the Duncairn Arts Centre in Belfast.

November 2024

Leading artists, Ruth McGinley, Richard O’Rawe, Derek Keilty, Ian Cumberland and Darragh Morgan, honoured with Major Awards by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Five acclaimed artists from Northern Ireland are presented with National Lottery Major Individual Artist awards (MIAs), worth up to £15,000 each. These are the highest value honour bestowed on artists in Northern Ireland each year by the Arts Council.

www

Funding boost for local musicians as 20 professional artists awarded grants

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland announces details of an investment of £101,990 through its Musical Instruments Programme for individual artists, thanks to capital funding from the Department for Communities.

www



Major Individual Artist's Programme

Musicians Peter Wilson (aka Duke Special) (left) and Anne Harper (second right) and Peter Wilson are pictured with Communities Minister Gordon Lyons (second left) and Arts Council Chair Liam Hannaway at the Royal Ulster Academy 2024 Exhibition at the Ulster Museum.

November 2024



Poet Nandi Jola, who featured as part of the National Lottery's 30th birthday.

18th Outburst Queer Arts Festival supported by The National Lottery

Outburst Arts, Northern Ireland's award-winning queer arts organisation, returns with their exciting annual international festival. The Programme included an event with University of Ulster to mark the 175th Anniversary of the Belfast School of Art.

[www](#)

Poet and playwright Nandi Jola honoured in UK-first AI artwork to mark the National Lottery's 30th birthday

An AI artwork inspired by the impact of inspirational people across arts and film transforms the façade of one of the UK's most iconic arts buildings, as part of The National Lottery's 30th birthday celebrations.

[www](#)

Arts Council's Project Funding for Individual Artists (PFIA) scheme

204 artists from across the region set to benefit from £1.2m funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The funding which is part of the Arts Council's Project Funding for Individual Artists (PFIA) scheme, supports artists across all artforms who are at various stages of their artistic careers. Pictured (left to right) are Anne Madden, Grainne Maher, Jane Butler and Alex McMillan.



December 2024

Christmas comes early for 204 artists who benefitted from £1.2m of ACNI National Lottery funding

The Arts Council's Project Funding for Individual Artists (PFIA) scheme, supports artists across all artforms who are at various stages of their artistic careers. This year's awardees included a visual artist who creates large-scale murals, a drag comedy artist and a jazz musician, who benefitted from £1.2m of National Lottery funding from ACNI.

[www](#)

Baring Foundation releases a report celebrating the UK's longest running creative ageing programme

A new report commissioned by the Baring Foundation and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, was released to celebrate the success of the National Lottery funded Arts and Older People Programme (AOPP), the longest-running in the UK. The report focused on the perspectives of 11 funded organisations involved and demonstrated how AOPP has helped to reduce social isolation, strengthen intergenerational connections, improve physical health and amplify the voices of older people who often go unheard.

[www](#)


Arts & Older People Programme

Kabosh, leading Northern Ireland Theatre Producer visits Arlington Care House to improve residents health & well-being through the arts

December 2024



REAP

Pictured are Big Telly Theatre Company actors Michael Johnston and Christina Nelson. Big Telly received REAP funding in the past for their pictured project, The Living Room which involved rural communities in Ballymoney, Garvagh, Maghera, Larne and Ballymena.

NI's rural communities set to reap the benefits of Arts Council NI investment of £349,553 National Lottery funding

Fifty-one community groups and arts organisations in rural communities across Northern Ireland benefit from the fourth round of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's National Lottery Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP), with an investment of £349,553.

[www](#)

Obituary: Gearóid Ó Cairealláin

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland learns with great sadness of the death of its former Board member and a leading Irish language activist, Gearóid Ó Cairealláin.

[www](#)





Digital Arts Showcase

Pictured (L-R) are some of the exhibiting artists at the Digital Arts Showcase, including Eileen McClory, Conan McIvor, Thomas Patrick, Katya Solomatina, with Matthew Malcolm, Creative Industries Officer at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

January 2025



Pictured (L-R): Distinguished Northern Irish poets, Michael Longley and Frank Ormsby, pictured with the Chair of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Liam Hannaway.

Obituary: Michael Longley CBE, Poet (27 July 1939 - 22 January 2025)

The Arts Council announced in January, with deep sadness, that Michael Longley, one of the great Northern Ireland poets of the last century, had passed away. His magnificent legacy of poetry and prose remains and will be cherished by generations to come.

[www](#)

Financial boost for musicians as £823,000 of funding announced through the Musicial Instruments Scheme

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland announces details of an investment £823,000 through its Musical Instruments Scheme, thanks to capital funding from the Department for Communities.

[www](#)

February 2025

International Showcase for Music

NI's Winnie Ama, JC Stewart and Wynona Bleach received support to attend SXSW 2025 through PRS Foundation's International Showcase Fund, supported by ACNI.

The Festival in Austin, Texas provided valuable, meaningful opportunities for NI artists to develop and to connect with industry leaders, while shining a light on the tremendous musical talent in Northern Ireland.

[www](#)

Belfast Exposed launches ground-breaking conference exploring the mental health benefits of therapeutic photography

Northern Ireland's leading photography centre announces Healing Through Photography: Trauma & The Art of Recovery, a unique two-day event investigating the powerful role of photography in improving mental health and wellbeing.

Belfast Exposed is the only organisation providing therapeutic photography services in Northern Ireland and the only arts organisation delivering this work at a community level across the UK and Ireland.

[www](#)



Arts Council of Northern Ireland and PRS Foundation Funding

Winnie Ama, one of three Northern Ireland musicians who were supported by the International Showcase Fund to attend the SXSW festival Austin, Texas.

February 2025



International Funding

Guizhou Acrobatic Troupe perform as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations at Grand Central Station.

Play about student life in Belfast makes international debut in Brussels

Capturing the chaos of student life and the heart-breaking complexities of healing after trauma, the play *Float*, made its international debut in Brussels.

The Brussels Platform provides opportunities for NI based artists to showcase their work to international audiences, MEPs and EU representatives in the European capital.

[www](#)

Arts Council helps celebrate New Year with Chinese Consulate

Belfast welcomed in the Chinese New Year with a spectacular performance by the Guizhou Acrobatic Troupe at Belfast's Grand Central Station. The performance was presented by the Chinese Consulate, in partnership with the Arts Council and Translink, building cultural bridges through the arts.

[www](#)

Project funding for individual artists

Dafydd Hall Williams, Ulster Touring Opera, pictured in discussion with Noirin McKinney, Director of Arts Development at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland at the announcement of the Arts Council's Project Funding for Individual Artists (PFIA) scheme.



March 2025



Project Children

Project Children and Brassneck Theatre Company, which receives National Lottery funding through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Pictured from left are: Mary Moulds (actress), Monica Culbert (Project Children volunteer), Sally Brennan (Project Children volunteer) and Nicky Harley (actress).

Six exceptional musicians awarded Young Musicians' Platform Awards

Six exceptional musicians from Northern Ireland – covering classical, traditional folk, contemporary and jazz music - were awarded the NI Young Musicians' Platform Award, supported by The National Lottery through ACNI and BBC NI

This financial award increases access to high quality arts mentorship, and helps recipients develop their musical aspirations. They spend time learning from a master musician, teacher, composer either in Northern Ireland or abroad.

[www](#)

Project Children

Project Children, a play by Brassneck Theatre Company, which receives National Lottery funding through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

The play told the incredible story of the Project Children programme, which spanned 40 years and brought 23,000 Northern Ireland children to the USA during the summer months, as respite from the conflict.

March 2025



National Lottery 30th Birthday Celebration

Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, Emma Little-Pengelly (second right), pictured with guests at The National Lottery 30th anniversary celebration at Stormont.

Bangor's Seacourt Print Workshop launches exhibition of work by Pop Art Pioneer

Project Children, a play by Brassneck Theatre Company, which receives National Lottery funding through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The play told the incredible story of the Project Children programme, which spanned 40 years and brought 23,000 Northern Ireland children to the USA during the summer months, as respite from the conflict.

[www](#)

The National Lottery Celebrates 30 years of Game Changing Funding in Northern Ireland

Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly joined a host of National Lottery-backed projects at a special event in Stormont to celebrate three decades of game-changing funding in NI.

She said, "The fact that funding for good causes has reached every postcode area in Northern Ireland, and that almost everyone has benefited from a National Lottery-funded project, reflects the enormity of what has been delivered."

Community groups, theatre companies, schools, musicians, poets, painters and many more have benefitted from the good causes funding generated through the Arts Council's National Lottery funding.

[www](#)

Funding Programmes 2024-25

Monthly breakdown of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland funding programmes which opening in 2024-25.

June 2024

- Organisations Digital Evolution Awards
- SIAP – WOMEX
- Organisations Digital Evolution Awards
- Rural Engagement Arts Programme

July 2024

- SIAP - Major Individuals
- SIAP – Artists International Development Fund (Individuals + Organisations)
- SIAP - Minority Ethnic Artists Mentoring & Residency Programme
- SIAP - Project Funding for Individuals

August 2024

- Small Capital Grants Programme
- Musical Instruments for Individuals
- Musical Instruments for Groups
- Musical Instruments for Bands

September 2024

- Arts & Older People

October 2024

- Young Musicians Platform

November 2024

- Annual Funding Programme 2025-26

Research Publications 2024-25

March 2024

Increasing the Value of the Arts - A Guide to Advocacy

This guide was created to help artists and arts organisations to advocate on behalf of their own work or organisation and, by raising the profile of that work, to make the wider case for greater government investment in the arts.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/a-guide-to-advocacy>

May 2024

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Action Plan

This policy was developed on the basis that everyone in Northern Ireland has an equal right to engage with and participate in the arts, regardless of age, marital status, having dependants, disability, sex and gender identity, race, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/equality-diversity-inclusion-policy-and-action-plan>

July 2024

Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland

Examining 481 responses from a diverse range of artists across various demographics, career stages, and artistic disciplines, this study found loss of public investment for the arts, the short-term and long-term impact of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis to be among the challenges which have shaped the arts sector over the last 10 years.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/working-and-living-conditions-of-artists-in-ni>

April 2025

Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP) - Round 2 Evaluation

In Round 2 of the Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP), ACNI awarded £400,326 to 63 organisations across Northern Ireland. One of the key findings from an analysis of applications, End of Project Reports and submitted evaluation reports is that: All grantees showed their project reduced isolation or promoted social inclusion (R1 100%).

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/reap-round-2-evaluation>

June 2025

Client Satisfaction Survey and Report –

This survey provided the Arts Council with an overall measure of client satisfaction, as well as feedback on our service, including the grant application process, contact with staff and communication with the sector. It also sought client views on Arts Council's strategy, its role and values, and how clients could be further supported.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/client-satisfaction-survey-and-report-2025>

Young People and Wellbeing Programme Year 2 Evaluation

The Young People and Wellbeing Programme is an arts focused National Lottery funded programme through the Arts Council of NI. It aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people (aged between 12-18) by engagement in high quality arts. Since September 2022 to March 2024 the project has provided £325,463 in funding to 42 projects, across 31 organisations.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/young-people-wellbeing-programme-year-2-evaluation>

July 2025

Economic Impact Report –

This report estimated the social and economic return of ACNI's investment in the arts sector in Northern Ireland, to help raise awareness about the value of the arts in Northern Ireland and provide a framework for organisations to understand and measure their own impact.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/economic-impact-report-july-2025>

October 2025

Official Statistics – Annual Investment Survey –

The Annual Investment Survey provides details of funding distribution and investment across the arts and cultural sector in Northern Ireland, presenting data on levels of financial investment, workforce, audience engagement and participation levels.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/official-statistics>

A woman with dark hair, wearing a grey and red patterned saree, stands smiling next to a large glass display case. The case contains a large, vertical tapestry or artwork featuring numerous black footprints of various sizes and orientations on a light background. To the left of the case, a glass panel has text on it. In the background, there is a large, ornate, golden-colored structure, possibly a traditional stove or a decorative element of the museum.

Support Individual Artists Programme Tappi Odu (Flee) at the Ulster Museum

Tamil artist, Anushiya Sundaralingam, exhibits poignant installation about global displacement at the Ulster Museum. This moving and evocative installation was supported by The National Lottery through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

The Board of the Arts Council

The Board of the Arts Council provides leadership for the executive body, in particular by defining and developing its strategic direction. It monitors performance 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 <https://artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/our-people/our-board>



Mr Liam Hannaway
Chairperson



Mr William Leathem
Vice Chairperson



Mrs Lynne Best



Mr Paul Boyle
(to Aug 24)



Mr Paul Brolly



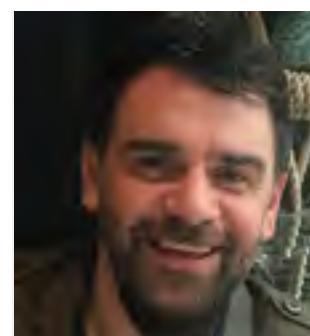
Mr Joe Dougan



Mr Sean Kelly



Mrs Laura McCorry



Dr Gearóid Trimble



Mr Ray Hall

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.

Strategic Development

Javier Stanzola,

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 research, policy, partnership and engagement; 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.

Arts Development

Noirín McKinney,

Director of Arts Development (job share)

Gilly Campbell,

Director of Arts Development (job share)

The Arts Development Department provides funding support to artists and arts organisations through its Exchequer and National Lottery funds. It is responsible for the development of the art form genres supported by the Arts Council. Funding is available through dedicated funding programmes which are linked to the Arts Council's strategic plan. The Arts Council's art form officers provide specialist expertise and advice. This department is also responsible for corporate communications and media relations.

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.

Operations

Maria Lynch

Director of Operations

The Operations Department is responsible for the development, implementation and management of policies and operating procedures relating to the disbursement of all Lottery and Exchequer funding, including ensuring the operational effectiveness of the Council's grant programmes.

“The Arts Council invested £18,627,099 to support the full range of creative activities across Northern Ireland in 2024-25.”*

*Based on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts for 2024-25.

Financial Summary 2024-25

The Arts Council is the official funding and development organisation for the arts in Northern Ireland. We support the vital contribution that the arts make to the region through our broad range of funding opportunities. Our Exchequer and National Lottery funding programmes reflect the aims and objectives of our ten-year draft strategy.

The complete sets of audited accounts for our Exchequer and National Lottery funds are made available on the Arts Council's website, <https://artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/annual-reports>

The Arts Council invested £18,627,099 to support the full range of creative activities across Northern Ireland in 2024-25.*

*Based on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts for 2024-25.

Arts Council Exchequer funding 2024-25

The Arts Council awarded funding of £11,764 million through its Exchequer fund. These funds were awarded through a set of programmes designed to support the full range of activities of artists and arts organisations across Northern Ireland, including:

- Annual Funding Programme
- Arts Development Fund
- Musical Instruments
- Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP)
- Small Capital Programme

The figures on these pages represent grants awarded directly to artists and arts organisations. The complete investment picture is available in the Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts, published on our website.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org>

2024-25 Exchequer Awards by Local Authority

Local Authority	No	Value £
Antrim and Newtownabbey	9	58,034
Ards and North Down	11	118,060
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	23	153,265
Belfast	121	9,216,536
Causeway Coast and Glens	23	305,031
Derry and Strabane	25	1,371,318
Fermanagh and Omagh	12	119,588
Lisburn and Castlereagh	9	51,331
Mid and East Antrim	18	110,248
Mid Ulster	18	115,459
Newry, Mourne and Down	22	145,439
TOTAL	291	11,764,309

2024-25 Exchequer Awards by Art form

Art form	No	Value £
Circus/Street Theatre/Carnival	11	324,809
Combined	26	3,444,915
Craft	1	143,404
Dance	13	123,755
Drama	35	2,306,064
Literature	39	408,115
Music	40	2,701,223
Opera	3	589,748
Other	5	38,170
Traditional Arts	103	798,687
Visual Arts	15	885,419
TOTAL	291	11,764,309

Arts Council Lottery funding 2024-25

The Arts Council awarded funding of £6.86 million through its National Lottery fund. These funds were awarded through a set of programmes designed to support the full range of activities of artists and arts organisations across Northern Ireland, including:

- Annual Funding Programme
- National Lottery Project Funding
- Support for Individual Artists Programme
- Arts & Older People Programme
- Commissioning Programme
- Creative Schools Programme
- Individual Arts Digital Evolution Awards
- Rural Engagement Arts Programme

The figures on these pages represent grants awarded directly to artists and arts organisations. The complete investment picture is available in the Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts, published on our website.

Notes 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 locations of several major 'umbrella' arts organisations whose services extend to Northern Ireland as a whole.

2024-25 National Lottery Awards by Local Authority

Local Authority	No	Value £
Antrim and Newtownabbey	18	124,515
Ards and North Down	22	315,913
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	27	368,694
Belfast	206	3,870,617
Causeway Coast and Glens	14	179,388
Derry and Strabane	49	787,867
Fermanagh and Omagh	12	136,050
Lisburn and Castlereagh	13	154,973
Mid and East Antrim	9	55,110
Mid Ulster	16	223,667
Newry, Mourne and Down	28	264,082
Other	14	381,914
TOTAL	428	6,862,790

2024-25 National Lottery Awards by art form

Art form	No	Value £
Circus/Street Theatre/Carnival	18	288,610
Combined	68	1,839,081
Craft	19	87,430
Dance	15	313,207
Drama	34	594,340
Film	1	141
Literature	23	445,188
Music	121	1,820,992
Opera	8	51,727
Other	9	18,648
Traditional Arts	14	440,275
Visual Arts	98	963,151
TOTAL	428	6,862,790

Annual Funding Programme - Ivor Novello and BAFTA award-winning composers teach the next generation at Dumbworld's inaugural NI Film Scoring Summer School.

Pictured (L-R) are Brian Irvine, Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of Dumbworld/Professor of Music at Ulster University, summer school participant, David Behrens, David Holmes, DJ, composer and producer, and summer school participant, Gemma Doherty.



Jazzlife Alliance's Jazz Juniors
performing at the MAC, Belfast



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For further information please contact:

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

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