

Developing Youth Arts in Longford

Youth arts in Longford look set to receive a massive boost in the coming years, with the Longford Arts Strategy 2015 – 2019 to place a larger emphasis on a younger demographic.

The strategy, the fourth of its kind for Longford, is being researched and written by County Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy and Sally O’Leary, Independent Arts Administration Consultant

Explaining the task at hand, Sally revealed that it involves the consideration of all existing arts and cultural provision as well as a review of the current Arts Strategy. Other elements have to be taken into consideration, according to Sally, including “the context of the arts in Longford, both rural and urban, the policies that have been successful as well as any challenges or gaps that may be perceived within the confines of the current economic environment”.

“At the same time cognizance is also taken of relevant local, national and international frameworks for arts policy.”

Though it’s difficult to say what direction the strategy will ultimately take, Sally revealed that initial discussions have included a focus on Arts and Artists of the future.

“This focus will concentrate limited resources on initiatives which will develop both artists and audiences for the future, thus concentrating on areas such as Youth Arts, Arts in Schools and the development of Professional Arts Practice in the county (spanning all arts forms), developing initiatives which will encourage professional artists to want to live, work and practice in County Longford,” Sally continued.

Throughout the process, local opinion will play a key role, as Sally believes that consultation and liaison with key stakeholders, communities and artists is an “essential part of the process when researching and writing an Arts Strategy, which is, after all for the benefit of artists and the community as a whole”.

Pointing to some of the initiatives supported by the Arts Office for youths in Longford, including the secondary schools photography programme and the School of Rock, Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy explained that, “We’re exploring all the funding and development initiatives that exist to see can we run with them and develop synergies and pool resources.”

He agreed that public participation is extremely important in the development and implementation of the strategy, adding that “the public have an excellent insight based on their own experiences”.

Though it will be a while before the strategy is complete, Fergus is already looking forward to the results, saying, “it could give way for new and exciting developments in the county”.

Words 416