



connecting creativity and community

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**community arts partnership**

**Community Arts Partnership  
Draft budget 2015~16 response**

In response to the public consultation on the NI Draft Budget 2015-16, Community Arts Partnership wish to register our concerns regarding the impact that further cuts to the Arts will have, not only on the arts in general, but on community arts in particular.

We believe the Arts matter. The Arts matter to individuals, to communities, to families, to employers and to young and old, to people with and without disability, to people who have been educated to a high level and to those who have struggled in schools and college and to others who feel themselves on the margins of this society. The Arts and the Creative Industries, generate significant levels of employment and act as ambassadors nationally and internationally for the progress that we have made here.

The world can see and hear the impact of the Arts from the celebrated successes like Game of Thrones and The Fall, or internationally respected poets like the late Seamus Heaney and Sinead Morrissey, or supremely talented musicians like Van Morrison or Cara Dillon. These successes promote Northern Ireland as a positive, forward-looking country where creative industries flourish.

But the Arts do much more than this. The Arts also play a vital role in supporting local communities, often living in difficult circumstances, to make and create, engage and discuss, shape and invigorate lives in a way that is often denied through personal or community situations. Engaging in the arts, especially community arts, is as much about valuing our creative energies as it is about harnessing that energy to change the places in which we live.

The Arts help our society move away from sectarianism and racism, towards inclusive, dynamic, vibrant, healthy and welcoming communities. The Arts help drive our social and economic regeneration, opening up possibilities for our next generation of talented creators, of actors, poets, songwriters, visual artists and filmmakers to develop no matter what their background may be.

It is essential for the day to day health of our society to see creative engagement and community arts flourish, facilitated by organisations like the Community Arts Partnership. These positively sustaining opportunities, increasingly demanded and needed by people everywhere, are under threat through further cuts to funding provision.

We know the Executive currently invests just 13p per person per week in direct funding for the arts. We also know that represents just 0.1% (1/1000th) of total government spending. This seems like a tiny amount in comparison to what is delivered for this funding. We urge that at the very least, investment in the Arts is maintained.

We, staff and trustees of Community Arts Partnership, wish to register our opposition to these cuts and we submit this document as a formal response to the public consultation on the draft budget.

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## General comments on draft budget 2015-16

1. Some 3 years ago, Community Arts Partnership made a response to the CSR Draft budget by acknowledging the UK Government's then envisaged response to the global financial banking collapse as 'conspicuously draconian'.
2. The current fiscal crisis that besets the people of Northern Ireland, is predicated on an ideological political position by the incumbent coalition government at Westminster. CAP believes that it is not in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland, for the most economically and socially marginalised in particular, to have a local administration do anything other than resist these cuts. Our political parties must ensure that real spending power to support essential public services and public confidence is retained before developing arrangements where that may be further undermined.
3. Now, our local Assembly has set out a budget that effectively reduces Northern Irish public spending by an unprecedented cut, to levels of expenditure not experienced for over 10 years, but in real terms taking us back even further.
4. This overarching NI budget, with pressures being felt across most executive departments, reduces the ability for the fledgling devolved administration to support the necessary processes that a state emerging from long years of conflict must achieve. The risk to all aspects of the management of change and the development of a normal, peaceful, interdependent and viable society, is made all the more challenging.
5. Whilst political leadership has not come to any agreement as to the way forward through two sets of crisis-talks separated by political stalemate on a range of crucial issues and we face into another year with the growing certainty. Even the institution of the Northern Irish Assembly itself is under threat of collapse due to this budget crisis.
6. The promotion of the Northern Irish economy and the perilous state of public finances are ineluctably wedded and the benefit of one *should not* be achieved by the detriment of the other.
7. This raises the very questionable appeal of corporation tax levying powers being locally devolved, and whilst any sophisticated economy must strike pragmatic balances, such a shift, without due diligence in the investigation of the immediate financial impact of already stretched public finances, would be premature. Given our economic history, it is understandable that N Ireland is a special case in this regard.
8. Our local economy cannot be viewed as having reached a sufficient level of output to actively forego huge levels of public subvention annually. This 2015~16 budget clearly demonstrates that with public spending reductions from the UK Treasury alone, Northern Ireland struggles to cope with the potential impact on a range of public services and indeed, private enterprise as well. The impact on an already beleaguered society, riven still with division relating to our past and our present, with political disunity more and more prevalent and increasing levels of inter-ethnic tensions, what hope can be conjured for the future when public subvention of our stretched status quo is also under threat.
9. If tax breaks are being explored to develop economic attractiveness, then consideration should be given to harmonising tax thresholds for artists to the ROI government level, €50,000 pa, then Northern Ireland would attract more EU, EEA and GB based creatives to live, work and produce here in Northern Ireland. Income earned by writers, composers, visual artists and sculptors from the sale of their works is exempt from tax in Ireland in a range of circumstances.
10. Furthermore, if the financial arrangements ensuing from this Budget setting for 2015/16 are to be the baseline for future CSR budgetary adjustments, then some specific measurement of the impact of foregoing millions

in subvention, should be factored in. In a consultation briefing from DFP at NICVA, the only extraneous non-d.e.l. loses of funding mentioned attached to the so-called loan of £100M and the potential full impact of Welfare Reform penalties of £114.

11. To the communities and professionals that CAP serves, any lack of investigation and miscalculation of funding impacts of whatever new financial arrangements are envisaged, would be highly negligent and runs the risk of not enhancing but severely depleting the public purse in so doing. Esmond Birney, of PWC, on 16th December, has in fact suggested that the budget cannot be viewed as a balanced one for a range of factors, including welfare reform non-compliance penalties.
12. Government departments have reported that £100M in an exit programme has been made available but have also reported that this amount will be insufficient by £50M at least.
13. 75% of the community programme that CAP supports, is provided and actively welcomed, among the worst-off communities in Northern Ireland, within the top 20% of deprivation. These populations, with poor life chances across a range of determinants in health, education, economic activity and civic and social engagement, are utterly dependent on continued and supportive public services and expenditure. These are the same populations who have felt the full impact of the sectarian conflict and are still awaiting the dividend of peace to be fully realised in their communities and their lives.

### **Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure budget**

The public support the arts:

In Northern Ireland:

- 81% of the public believe the arts enrich the quality of our lives
    - 75% of the public agree that there should be public funding for the arts
    - The number of adults engaging in the arts has grown to 79%
    - 70% of people living in the most deprived areas engage in the arts
    - 96% of young people engage in the arts
    - 87% of the public appreciate that the arts attract tourists
    - Rural engagement now exceeds urban engagement in the arts
    - 52% of disabled people engage in the arts
- (SOURCE: General Population Survey 2014)

14. The arts, which are highly effective promoters not only of creative excellence but employment, social cohesion, civic participation, economic growth and our sense of well-being, play a prominent role in many of our best-loved events.
15. Northern Ireland already has, by some margin, the lowest per-capita spend on the arts across Great Britain, N Ireland and the Republic of Ireland at one hundredth of 1% (0.01%) of all exchequer subvention. The compounding effect of any further withdrawals of exchequer funding would impact increasingly negatively not only on local and national audiences and participation but our international tourism offer as well. The arts support a deep, local creative heritage whilst enabling a broad global appeal and in so doing, are fundamental in offering vibrant, authentic cultural experiences to citizen and visitor alike.
16. Arts funding is an investment in optimism. It is an investment in a society, in a project that is as various as it is creative, as colourful as it is melodic, as hopeful as it is realistic. It is an investment in the future, valuing creativity as the primary human instinct that sets us apart and supports every aspect of our lives. Think of how central creativity is to all of us and the connection it makes - think of the first time you heard your child sing,

or her first painting, or the first time you read your favourite book, or that moment when you finally understood why we dance! Or the elegy that still reminds you of a moment or a someone, or the how you're transported to that inside of a moment when you hear THAT song, even the first bars of it

17. And many would say the enterprise of art making is more expressive and more honest than much of our modern life. And for those who think creativity is a luxury, ask the top CEOs of large scale industries what they consider to be the top attribute of their workforces - creativity. [Americans for the Arts](#) shows that low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more than twice as likely to graduate from college as their peers with no arts education and the Conference Board's joint "[Ready to Innovate](#)" report shows that 72 percent of business leaders say that creativity is the number one skill they look for when hiring. These new approaches to problem solving, to innovation, to development across a whole range of areas are extensions of artistic exploration and imagining. The behaviours we learn from artists are some of the most beneficial and applicable life-skills we can have

Business Area	2014-15 Opening Budget £k	2015-16 Draft Budget £k	Per cent cut
Department	20.91	18.57	11.19%
Libraries NI	31.82	29.43	7.51%
National Museums NI	12.76	11.33	11.21%
Arts Council NI	12.3	10.93	11.14%
Sport NI	9.27	8.23	11.22%
Other ALBs *	2.93	2.6	11.26%
Languages**	5.77	5.13	11.09%
Waterways Ireland**	4.19	3.73	10.98%
<b>Total Resource Departm</b>	<b>99.95</b>	<b>89.95</b>	<b>10.01%</b>
* Other ALBs include: NI Screen, AOP and NI			

18. As a proportion of total departmental outturn, DCALs allocation fell from 1.11% in 2012/13 to 0.89% in 2015/16. A reduction of 0.21% or £21.2m.
19. As a proportion of total department outturn, DCALs allocation fell from £61 per capita in 2012/13 to £56 in 2014/15.
20. In 2014/15 Health comprised 45% of the total departmental outturn. Culture Arts and Leisure equated to 1% and ACNI, 0.1%.
21. Comparative budget allocations per head of population (per annum) in 2014/15 equated to: Health £2,466; Culture, Arts and Leisure £54 and ACNI £6.68.
22. Spend per head of population (per week) in 2014/15 equated to: Health £47.43; DCAL £1.04 and ACNI £0.13
23. In 14/15, with the exception of OFMDFM (which tends not to provide frontline services) DCAL received the smallest proportion of Departmental budget allocation at 1%
24. The Arts Council's draft baseline figure for 2015/16 of £10.92m is less than the same figure for 2006/07 (£10,78m). That equates to a difference of £143,000
25. The projected, combined, Arts Council lottery and exchequer income for 2015/16 is less than half that planned for An Chomhairle Ealaíon (£21.00m v £44.77m3).
26. In the three years since the 2011/12 Comprehensive Spending Review the Arts Council has lost almost £1m of its planned annual baseline allocations.
27. The Culture Arts and Leisure budget is to receive the most significant cut of all Departments of 11.2%.

28. The current budget of ACNI, at £12.3m, would not even sustain the Health Service for one day.
29. Based on ACNI's current budget, a cut of 11.2% would equate to a loss of £1.4m to the Arts.
30. Today the Arts only cost 13p per person per week in Northern Ireland

### **Value For Money, £ for £**

31. Bearing in mind that whilst Northern Ireland has only 3% of the UK population, it produces only 2% of GVA. This points to the infrastructural need to support those areas of the economy that are producing higher pro rata levels of GVA – like the Arts.
32. It has been proven, time and again, that the arts outperform other areas of investment, £ for £. In fact, should a sector that that creates 4% of GDP from 0.1% of public investment, not be supported further?
33. The level of subvention that created just over 6,000 jobs though DETI's Invest NI support in 2013/14 was £115M. The arts support over 5,000 jobs for a fraction of level of funding, given that the total funding for DCAL amounted to less than £100 and to the Arts, less than £13M.
34. Gross Value Added (GVA) for the creative industries was £714 million in 2012. This was equivalent to 3.9% of Northern Ireland's total GVA. Compare this to agriculture and the DRD budget, with output of 5.8% for the same period but receiving 5 times the level of public subvention at departmental level and 40 times the level of Arts funding.
35. GVA for the creative industries increased by 11.7% between 2011 and 2012.
36. The estimated number of business units in the creative industries sector was 2,415 in 2013. This represented 3.6% of all business units in Northern Ireland

### **Community Arts**

37. When looking at the situation in Northern Ireland where working-age economic inactivity is 28%, which is the highest of any UK region and where the public purse provides subvention for all aspects of society of over 33% of all economic activity, it is clear that the challenges are all the greater. Against this backdrop, at the time of austerity where our most marginalised are up to £1000 a year worse off than 10 years previous (PWC Report, Esmonde Birney, 2013 NI), making the arts more relevant requires sensitive, appropriate, specialised and well-resourced and well-targeted processes and ideas.
38. It is pressingly necessary that we offer the population locally arts venues supported by a mosaic of appropriate support and community-based initiatives that can see local populations emerge as creative communities. Providing creative platforms is one of the most successful ways of bringing marginalised voices into the civic arena. In so doing, the arts not only become more relevant to more people but also start to serve a greater civic purpose. DCAL's current business plan has reframed the work of the arts to develop greater equality and promote social inclusion. If the department understands the power of the arts to be used in this instrumental context, then there is an implicit understanding that the arts can develop and deliver a range of outcomes that can enable the most marginalised.
39. It is a right, not a privilege, to participate in the cultural life of a community and enjoy the arts<sup>1</sup>. Community arts do so much for our society: building confidence and ability; supporting a sense of community; supporting inter-community contact and good relations; offering services and activities for young people and for older people, for people with a disability, for members of diverse minority groups marginalised by their religion or

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<sup>1</sup> Article 27 UN Declaration of Human Rights

ethnicity or their sexual preference; introducing the arts often for the first time to a huge section of our community and bringing that experience into local community centres, church halls or schools.

40. The Arts matter to individuals, to communities, to families, to employers and to young and old, to people with and without disability, to people who have been educated to a high level and to those who have struggled in schools and college and to others who feel themselves on the margins of this society. The Arts and the Creative Industries, generate significant levels of employment and act as ambassadors nationally and internationally for the progress that we have made here.
41. We know also that community arts has an even greater impact on our society. At the forefront of community arts practice, Community Arts Partnership works with people where they are located, supporting their choices in design and production and listening intently to the issues and ideas that come from our communities. And through that engagement, we facilitate the creation of original artworks in a myriad of disciplines often to communities who would not otherwise have the possibility of exploring their creative potential.
42. Over the last three years the organisation has worked with more than 350 community organisations and 180 schools right across Northern Ireland. Alongside this we have a dedicated Intercultural Support Programme (PICAS), a dedicated disability arts programme (Side by Side), a dedicated dementia research programme, a dedicated rural community arts research programme and an international community culture research initiative. CAP also has the most used e-news resource in Northern Ireland for the arts. It is that provision, free of charge to communities most in need, which is directly under threat.
43. And in particular, community arts organisations that support communities marginalised by socio-economic situation, physical or intellectual challenges or a range of life challenges, by promoting interculturalism, inter-community relations and socially inclusive programmes, should they not be further supported again to promote this crucial area of work?
44. Community arts programmes in particular and so-called 'outreach' programme in general, are utterly dependent on publicly funded support to operate. It has been noted with 5% in year cuts to the major 37 arts organisations that the majority have had to curtail significant elements of their participatory programmes. This undermines the delivery of DCAL PETS targets and immediately starves a population eager to engage in the arts from that very opportunity. Community Arts Partnership can demonstrate over-subscription to all community processes, in some instances to the order of 4:1. If Community Arts Partnership had significant levels of increased investment, it would still struggle to meet the demand for highly professional facilitated community arts programmes and projects.
45. Community groups, arts development officers, artists and community leaders all recognise the impact that the arts make. Not just the intrinsic power to make and create but to harness that the solving problems and highlighting issues in rural areas like social isolation, suicide, low educational attainment, mental health services, supporting detached youth etc. The arts are changing lives, offering development and employment and are supporting people every day.
46. The DCAL budget highlights the community impact of libraries and has accordingly sought to protect that budget by passing on higher cuts elsewhere. But we insist that community arts has an even greater impact on our communities, working with people where they are located, supporting their choices in design and production and listening intently to the issues and ideas that come from our communities.
47. CAP alone has worked with over 350 community organisations and 180 schools across Northern Ireland in the last 3 years. In fact, alongside this we have a dedicated Intercultural Support Programme (PICAS), a dedicated disability arts programme (Side by Side), a dedicated dementia research programme, a dedicated rural community arts research programme and an international community culture research initiative. We also

have the most used e-news resource in Northern Ireland for the arts with a website that has over 7 million hits years on year. If that isn't community reach I don't know what is. So, why is that libraries are protected when the budgets that support community arts are not.

48. On a one year community arts programme, Community Arts Partnership was able to demonstrate a social return of £14 for every £1 invested. This study monetised the benefits of people coming off benefits, visiting the doctor less, gaining employment due to skills acquired through training, as per government Green Book appraisal standards. This did not account for any social return from enhanced community relations, which is often one the primarily effects of such activity.
49. Nevertheless, despite the economic difficulties and the heightening of intercultural tension, there is ample evidence of sentiment for a shared, safe and inclusive future that Community Arts Partnership, in harmony with the central aims of the Together Building a United Community strategy, works in all avenues whether in delivery, support of, research and advocacy for community arts practices towards a shared, safe and unsegregated society and in so doing welcomes the inquiry into the "Together Building a United Community" strategy document put forward by the Office of First and Deputy First Minister.
50. Community Arts Partnership, paying particular attention to our work in intercultural relations, where our PICAS project is ground-breaking in the mainstreaming of ethnic minority artists, promoting an interculturalisation of Northern Irish society. CAP recognises the potential for a community arts based exploration in areas of civic engagement. If Together Building a United Community is to be realised then connectedness to and ownership of this project would need to be felt fully in all our communities with particular emphasis on the most marginalised economically and those discriminated against on the basis of social or sexual orientation or disability.

### **The myth of philanthropy**

51. Whilst there is some limited funding of the arts from private or business sources locally, the sector is still wholly dependent on the public subsidy. A culture of philanthropy towards the arts, whilst desirable, is an unrealistic ambition in the current economic climate and would in any case takes years to become a sustainable avenue of funding for community arts in particular. Social models of economic enterprise are still predicated on public investment and a private investment model, adequately resourced and socially targeted, is still some way off.

### **Inequalities of impact from the spending proposals:**

52. We would query why Libraries NI have relatively smaller proposed reductions than ACNI: the primary reason given was that libraries have a greater community reach. As stated earlier, we would dispute that the 164 arts organisations, dotted across the region, most with outreach initiatives would indeed have a community reach commensurate with any other. Reason given was that it would be a big job to get that infrastructure going again.
53. It must be pointed out that the arts infrastructure, almost wholly dependent on revenue funding from ACNI, will be decimated and that infrastructure, already weak, will be plunged into crisis. ACNI talk of 100 full-time posts being lost as a result but within the employment profile of the arts, this is more likely to mean the loss of 1,000's of project-based jobs for artists, actors, administrators and the loss of key agencies, painstakingly developed over the last 15 years.
54. Already our organisation, Community Arts Partnership, has recently lost programme elements due to the 5% in year cut.

55. Whilst DCAL representatives were at pains to talk of the “equality of impact” on the arts, has the department outlined how Equality Impact Assessments might be carried out? Who would the stakeholders be in such a test? Against what policy areas would such an assessment be made, given that this budget round is only for the year ahead?
56. Why has grant aiding via ALBs been prioritised as areas to cut over departmental savings? Whilst departments are being shielded because of longer horizons to look at redundancy procedures and packages, the arts sector will effectively be on protective notice from 31st December this year. EQIAs in this regard alone might present a less than universal impact against Section 75 criteria.

### **Impact on community arts**

57. It is a right, not a privilege, to participate in the cultural life of a community and enjoy the arts<sup>2</sup>. Community arts do so much for our society: building confidence and ability; supporting a sense of community; supporting inter-community contact and good relations; offering services and activities for young people and for older people, for people with a disability, for members of diverse minority groups marginalised by their religion or ethnicity or their sexual preference; introducing the arts often for the first time to a huge section of our community and bringing that experience into local community centres, church halls or schools.
58. The Arts matter to individuals, to communities, to families, to employers and to young and old, to people with and without disability, to people who have been educated to a high level and to those who have struggled in schools and college and to others who feel themselves on the margins of this society. The Arts and the Creative Industries, generate significant levels of employment and act as ambassadors nationally and internationally for the progress that we have made here
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60. Over the last three years the organisation has worked with more than 350 community organisations and 180 schools right across Northern Ireland. Alongside this we have a dedicated Intercultural Support Programme (PICAS), a dedicated disability arts programme (Side by Side), a dedicated dementia research programme, a dedicated rural community arts research programme and an international community culture research initiative. CAP also has the most used e-news resource in Northern Ireland for the arts. It is that provision, free of charge to communities most in need, which is directly under threat.
61. In terms of equality testing the impact of these cuts, the effects on the most marginalised groups, as identified by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act will be felt disproportionately heavily.

### **Conclusion**

62. Community arts have only begun to achieve the level of impact through sustainable funding, to see real progress made in a variety of areas of community life. Reducing funding of this sector back to levels of 15 years ago will have considerable impact on those most marginalised in our society.
63. The well-being of the arts is a barometer for the health of a society in general. We understand there are incredible pressures on budgets, but for so little a percentage of the total, the arts budget represents the

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<sup>2</sup> Article 27 UN Declaration of Human Rights



ambition, dynamism, creativity and cultural expression of a recently devolved state that wants to be attractive to visitors and investors and to support community. If this budget does not fairly and equally support the rights of local people to participate, both professionally and voluntarily, in the arts, then we run the risk of losing the little we have gained.

The arts, and community art in particular, speak to each and every government department and their relevant remits. There is no area of civic life that is not touched by the creative and cultural community



Whether it is:

- Supporting mother and toddler groups through creative practice, dance and movement classes or supporting their educational development;
- Assisting formal educators through curriculum-supporting programmes of skills development, across all art forms, in venues and schools alike;
- Offering challenging, yet sensitive and supportive creative projects to young people with special needs, in schools, hospitals or community settings
- Assisting older people with projects aimed at supporting creativity and wellbeing in residential settings as well as community and medial setting like hospices
- Supporting community development in rural areas through locally provided programming and consultation and research
- Developing high-quality saleable product that can act as cultural ambassador to the world for the rich talents that we have locally
- Enlivening our towns and cities with events that put us on the map
- Creating supportive and creative engagement programmes that support the bonding linking and bridging dynamic of community development across our traditions and our region
- Increasing the educative and earning capacity of artists and non-artists, support the Creative Industries and the knowledge based economy

## **\*Community Arts Partnership**

**Community Arts Partnership** takes the lead in the **promotion, development and delivery of community arts practice**, in the belief that the arts can transform our society at a cultural, social and economic level. We support and collaborate with community groups, centres of learning, artists, arts centres and other organisations in Northern Ireland and beyond.

Our mission is

To take the lead in the promotion, development and delivery of community arts practice, to affect positive change.

Our vision is

To see the emergence of a just, inclusive, peaceful and creative society, where difference is welcomed and participation is valued.

We have a two-fold approach to arts development:

- firstly supporting access and participation by seeking to affect policy through advocacy and leadership and
- secondly, promoting authorship and ownership through the active engagement in projects and programmes.

Put simply, Community Arts Partnership provides opportunities to give agency, to people, to be artists.

We offer a platform for policy consultation and development, whilst at the same time, develop new creative opportunities for artists, communities and individuals through:

- Arts workshop programme
- Arts workshop services
- Advocacy
- Information
- Research
- Platforms for networking and sharing experiences
- Professional training
- Other initiatives to promote engagement.

CAP is supported by its principal funder, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and by Belfast City Council.

For more information please feel free to contact Gordon Hewitt - Information and Policy Manager - Community Arts Partnership - [gordon@comartspartner.org](mailto:gordon@comartspartner.org) - Subscribe to our growing arts news network - [www.comartspartner.org](http://www.comartspartner.org)

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