

“Playing by ear”
(or)
“Follow the money”

A Short History of N Ireland’s attitude to funding policy for creative communities and community arts.

Conor Shields

“Playing by ear”

- *“Third Sector Organisations work to change the paradigms within which the policy development process takes place.” John Casey*
- Third Sector participation in the policy process: a framework for comparative analysis. John Casey, Policy and Politics vol 32 no 2 p249
- This ‘agenda setting’ within community arts, was previously achieved by artistically depicting political desires as murals or street theatre pieces; this context has changed as the sector itself has professionalised.

- Participatory arts may well have a long history in Ireland however the area of policy-making in the arts and particularly, in the more radical, equalising sphere of community arts, has until very recently been an area 'closed' to policy input and only available to be critiqued, after the fact.
- Our local particularities of politics, conflict and a peace process ebbing and flowing along with devolved local administration, have opened more channels to a policy debate that had witnessed significant growth in recognition of its role and crucially the resourced capacity to operate.
- But, that tide has obviously turned again.
- Whilst I aim to speak most particularly to the practice and arena of community arts, the opportunity afforded to the widest arts sector was not a formally policy driven one in any case. For community arts, organised locally organically and often with more democratising values at its core, the distance between their policy aspiration and policy access was and to some extent remains, difficult

- The public funding of community arts in Northern Ireland began in 1975 when the Labour government minister Lord Melchett allocated £100,000 to the Arts Council in order to undertake work in areas of deprivation in Belfast and Derry.
- This was seen as political whimsy at the time by Secretary of State Roy Mason, who thought Melchett 'naïve', but was applauded by leading civil servants, Kenneth Bloomfield and Maurice Hayes.
- Today across some 28 AFP clients are bundled into the participatory category – with only 13 ascribed the status 'community arts' –
- Today 28 receive a combined £2.2M or 17% of the £13M in AFP
- The 13 receive £0.9M or 7%

“Playing by ear”

Dr. Maurice Hayes recommended four lines of approach;

- *Spend the resources available to community arts in the most effective way i.e. concentrate on supporting those organisations which have their own workers but not attempt to initiate any new or independent activity.*
- *Look to other agencies to take over responsibility for performances in deprived areas.*
- *Support community arts activities wherever they are found.*
- *Look to government for additional resources to support increased activity.*

“Playing by ear”

- *Politicians and senior bureaucrats are often happy to react to events, create symbolic policies and leave harder and more controversial decisions to lower-level organisations and local authorities which can take the blame if a policy fails –*

Peter John, analysing public policy

- “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27

- This ‘top down’ approach seems perfectly exemplified in the actions of the very helpful Senator Maurice Hayes. Indeed, it is relatively simple to divine the policy formation path that was taken.
- If Hayes is to be seen benignly as a “**policy entrepreneur**”, he spoke only to those in a position to affect the resourcing of this area and didn’t establish a network or consultative panel who may have been in receipt of such a policy, be they communities or practitioners within them. Instead, he went to local District Councils (primarily in Belfast and Derry) and to administrative organisations such as Making Belfast Work and the Arts Council of NI staff.
- In fact, in the reactive scramble to offer some alternative means to engage communities, there may have been some elements of ‘backward’ policy formation, in that there was an unsanctioned soft policy of helping community arts practitioners but not in a formal manner.
- It could be further argued that this was indeed a phase of ‘top down’ implementation and formation of policy, but also the beginning of an inevitable ‘policy drift’, an evolutionary view where the policy is constantly being reacted to and readdressed.
- In this realm, a ‘rationalist’ approach to analysing this policy development is frankly unfeasible, because there were no clear benchmarks and so nothing to measure against. Indeed, this presupposes an intact policy, this is cultural policy primeval soup and to an extent we are still supping it today.

“Playing by ear”

- Clive Priestly in his report of 1992 proposed to set up a Forum for Local Government and the Arts.
- Jeremy Hanley MP introduced the phrase “the new constituency”
- In launching the report Jeremy Hanley MP introduced the phrase “the new constituency” focusing on creativity of and access by the young, the elderly, people with disabilities and the community at large.
- This report, although firmly in the policy domain of the Department of Education, saw this “new constituency” as being materially different and a focus for future policymaking.
- But, to be engaged would still have to wait.

“Playing by ear”

- Comedia reported in June 1995 in its ‘Within Reach’ report that many people were involved in the arts at community level and that:
- *“the sheer number of events, workshops and performances is very significant in the social and cultural life of the city.” “absence of a co-ordinated, policy-driven approach on the part of bodies supporting or funding the activity” and that the groups lacked management skills”*
- CAF’s foundation
- “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27

“Playing by ear”

- “Community arts can play a valuable role in the process of community development. As the first stage, well designed community arts can encourage people to resurrect their imagination, to make ideas, to fashion words or music or materials, in short to become both critical and creative. As such community arts have much to teach the wider society” - The Arts Council, ‘consolidated’ community arts policy in the 1994 report “To the Millennium”
- In this report the Arts Council stated its commitment to a proactive approach to community arts throughout Northern Ireland with sustained commitment, support and planning. It also extended the Artist in Community scheme to “draw more fully on the often unacknowledged base of artistic and organisational talent that is present in the local community.

- 1995 Community Arts Forum – predecessor of CAP – was established
- the introduction of the Arts Lottery in May of 1995
- By 1995 community arts was flourishing and in receipt of considerably enhanced funding through other organisations such as Making Belfast Work, Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, Workers Education Association, Cultural Traditions Programme initiated by the Community Relations Council and District Councils.
- BUT The Arts Council were still resistant to any procedural policy shift to formally support community arts. Perhaps however the most important development on the part of the Arts Council was the introduction of the Arts Lottery in May of 1995

“Playing by ear”

- In UK the election of the Labour government in 1997 signalled the arrival of evidence-based policymaking based on a philosophy of ‘what counts is what works’

- Up until that point, community arts was still marginalised, seen disparagingly as ‘social engineering’ by the then Chief Executive, Brian Ferran and resisted by his grant giving departments, although there was by now an allocation of £500,000. However, at this point a ‘policy window’ opened
- The Access to the Arts Lottery programme was launched in 1997 and, as its title implies, had, the principle aim of contributing to the growth of the arts in communities primarily through participative projects.
- Of all the Lottery funded programmes it could be seen to promote social inclusion, fund programmes for the groups in areas of high deprivation (responding to the governmental strategy Targeting Social Need) or in rural areas, always with a priority of supporting the involvement of children and young people
- All of this considerable growth was mapped (in Belfast only) by the Comedia organisation and in its report “Vital Signs” 1998. Matarasso claimed that community arts in Belfast were not only vibrant and varied but vital.
- “It is a significant force in community development, urban regeneration and personal change”

- Establishment of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in 1999 came about the first “joined up” strategy “Unlocking Creativity” initiative
- Unlocking Creativity initiative had a wide brief, working across Departments, principally with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning, to "harness" and mainstream creativity within the cultural, educational, training and economic areas.
- Its mission was:
 - *To develop the capacities of all our people for creativity and innovation, and so promote and sustain the social, cultural and economic well-being of Northern Ireland.*
- And its aims were:
 - *To ensure full and co-ordinated provision for creative and cultural development in the curricula of formal and informal education and lifelong learning.*
 - *To ensure access to training and employment opportunities, and promote business development through creative and cultural development.*
 - *To validate the concept that creativity is central to all aspects of work, learning and leisure in Northern Ireland through ensuring effective partnerships between organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors.*
- To develop the capacities of all our people for creativity and innovation, and so promote and sustain the social, cultural and economic well-being of Northern Ireland.
- Unfortunately for creative communities or community arts organisations, none were selected to actively take part in the programme, rather to become intermediary beneficiaries, brought in piecemeal

“Playing by ear”

- In their 2000 report “Opening up the Arts” Everitt and Jackson developed
 - A special focus on the needs of unemployed people.
 - Targeting other forms of social need, for example in health, housing and education.
 - The promotion of social inclusion which would seek new and creative ways of helping people who are disadvantaged and cannot enjoy the full range of life opportunities which most people take for granted
- Four tasks in this non-funded programme were itemised for the Arts Council;
 - To develop of a programme of arts activities in schools and youth centres in socially disadvantaged areas.
 - To include New TSN weighting in funding community arts.
 - To assess the impact of the arts in socially disadvantaged areas.
 - To increase employment or training opportunities in media and cultural tourism.

“Playing by ear”

- *Arts Council response:*
- *"We intend to have our new strategy fully in place by April 2001. This will mean a period of intensive work for all of us in the Council, in addition to our normal responsibilities. But we are determined to listen to the public and to the arts constituency and to deliver whatever change is required – Professor Brian Walker*

- This top down “applied” nature of community arts was only now becoming government policy. In their 2000 report “Opening up the Arts” Everitt/Jackson paper also highlighted the threat to organisations as a result of short term funding and offered a challenge to ACNI .
- One suggestion in the report was not acted on: to delegate responsibility to District Councils for community arts by claiming that community development was best handled by decision makers located as close as possible to the communities involved.
- Had this been made policy, pressure groups and the community arts sector would have campaigned to oppose such a shift, fearing that political interference would politicise the sector adversely.

“Playing by ear”

- Historic context 1972 – 2005
- Arts Council’s Strategic Responses
 - Hayes Review, TTM, Within Reach, CAF, MBW & Europe, Vital Signs, Opening up the Arts, etc.
- DCAL Unlocking Creativity & Face to Face, Community Arts Review
- New TSN & Positive Steps
- Arts Council current Community Arts policy

- There now WAS a 'ringside seat'. The 'power-control' model or a tokenistic model of consultation does not forward any agenda, in fact it diminishes the ability to affect the paradigm.
- The dissatisfaction of non-statutory members of the Working Party on Draft Strategy is further compounded by the relationship that all have with the Arts Council as client organisations.
- It is in the overlap between service delivery and an increasing contribution to the policy that the Arts Council has enjoyed an advantage in terms of knowledge and appeared as a deficit in terms of conflictual proximities.
- What seems clear in the various machinations of the Arts Council of N Ireland, is that they had fought all the way to subvert a truly consultative and engaged approach to policy development and that in effect it had taken a complete transition of Executive personnel to allow for the inclusion of community arts practitioners and organisations in any planning or strategic process.
- It could be argued that after years of exclusion, creative communities were being offered access via policy intermediaries, like CAF and now CAP – up until perhaps 2008. From that point on, once again resource management more exclusively dictated that policy development and implementation became subservient.
- Now, as policy shifts to implementation and adherence to internal functions of accepting grant aid, true consultation and agenda setting become fraught and organisations engaged in the process become nervous and hamstrung.
- There is an innate desire of ambitious programmes to see themselves involved, but when reflected against the aims of the wider community, objectives can become diluted .

“Playing by ear”

- DCAL Vision 04 07 was apparently published in March 2004
- This appears to be an internal document that I have stumbled upon the name but never the content. Yet it has been quoted as underpinning areas of discrete policy like community arts. Ironical where we still have no overarching policy nor formation framework to build one.
- Community arts strategy begun in 2006, completed 2007 – meant to run to 2012
 - Signed off by Carál Ní Chuilín last formal Minister for Culture and Arts (and Leisure) May 2016
 - No sign of new process

“Playing by ear”

- ACNI 2007 2012 Creative Connections
- Policy opportunity for input?
- RPA looking 25+ consultations
ACNI held:
 - 5 public events
 - 11 sectoral consultations

“Playing by ear”

- 2013 2018 “Ambitions for the Arts”
- In development during 2012
 - 5 sectoral consultations
 - 2 of them by CAP

- Where was the Dept all this time.
- Slide of DCAL connections – See below
- NO OVERARCHING STRATEGY
Ministerial Arts Advisory Forum
7 months. 17 person process across Dept, ACNI, arts orgs, one token academic - first formal attempt at interdepartmental strategic alignment and open policy formation across all policy planes, agencies
- November 15
“strengthening and refocussing the proposals to ensure they prioritise the twin principles of promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion”
- Last Minister for Culture swiftly drew line through it and instead offered - show both
It’s worthwhile to note that at this time 11-16 £32m awarded directly by Dept without a strategy. Equating to 51% of DEL monies awarded to ACNI over same period.
But no policy.

The MAAF 10 Strategy Draft

SUGGESTED VISION

".....Investing in a Dynamic Creative Future Where Arts and Culture are celebrated, valued and available to all...."

SUGGESTED MISSION

The NI Executive is committed to investing, supporting and promoting Arts and Culture to maximize the impact and benefit of our vision

STRATEGIC THEMES

| | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Economy | Access for everyone | Cultural expression | Valuing the Arts | Creativity and Skills | Community cohesion | Well Being |
|---------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|

OUR VALUES

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Promoting equality of opportunity |
| Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion |
| Promoting Excellence |
| Rewarding Innovation |
| Connecting Community |

OUR PRINCIPLES

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Participative |
| Responsive (to need) |
| Open to all |
| Multi-layered and multi-disciplined |
| Outcomes-focused |
| Trend setting |
| Excellent |

The right of everyone to take part in cultural life

1. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly notes that the right of everyone to take part in cultural life presupposes equal and free access for all to a variety of cultural resources. This participation may be more or less active, depending on whether one is a member of an audience, practises an activity as an amateur or engages in artistic or creative activities on a professional basis. (Eurovoc)

DCAL Consultation Doc

Response to MAAF 2015

The so-called “Clip Art” or “Death by a Thousand Fonts” consultation 15/16

Valued arts and culture

4.8 → The theme, **Valued arts and culture**, is about recognising that arts and culture can be a fulfilling part of the life experience of everyone in society. It is about recognising the huge impact the arts and culture sector and creative industries make across our economy and society, cementing a foundation that creates career opportunities and encourages and sustains community aspirations. → It is about building in community cohesion, breaking down barriers and reaching those who are socially and culturally isolated and disadvantaged.

Section Break (Continuous)

Aims

- a. → Understand and appreciate the role arts and culture can play in the personal and social development of every one of all ages and from all backgrounds.
- b. → Support and celebrate our unique artistic and cultural achievements promoting who we are and what we do.
- c. → Making connections between arts and culture and community planning.
- d. → Exemplifying our rich cultural identity affirming the place in which we live and its place in the world.
- e. → Maximizing connections between arts and culture and museums and libraries.

What will success look like?

We will belong to a society where everyone will respect and acknowledge our rich and diverse arts and culture sectors and where arts and culture will be supported and appreciated by local and central government policy makers and funders.

STORIES OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. → "My local Community Arts Group has taught me a lot over the years, helped me grow as a person and gave me strength to achieve my goals. After finishing school, I felt lost but my Community Arts Group has helped me find myself and given advice and support for my future career path. I thank them and can't wait to see what our future brings."

2. → The Belfast International Arts Festival's Embrace programme is aimed at engaging communities and groups. The programme is designed to both engage audience enjoyment and understanding of the events presented and to encourage active participation in the arts.

3. → Kids in Control, the forerunner in physical theatre for youth in the island of Ireland, consistently manages and produces innovative, unique bespoke and socially relevant programmes in the community for marginalised young people of all abilities. In 2015/2016 an estimated 566 from a mix of rural, urban, special needs, able-bodied, various religious/community backgrounds, at risk and looked after youth participated. KIC is the only all-ability physical theatre company for youth in Ireland within communities of need and disadvantage.

4. → Draw Down the Walls has been working to connect young people and adults living in interface communities across north Belfast for a number of years. A series of events brought local residents together with an internationally renowned artist to meet, share stories and create an artwork together with the aim of improving community relations.

5. → The Treasure House project run by National Museums addresses issues of social isolation and loneliness engaging older people in creative and cultural activities including art, object handling, local history, dance and drama. Participant: "I enjoy the company and the friendship. I am mostly on my own."

THE WAY AHEAD

“Playing by ear”

- 2018 now, no current strategy in place, nor developmental process ACNI
- The publicly reported tensions and difficulties at the heart of the ACNI board now seems to be playing out across a range of funding decisions in the Annual Programme that have little or no discernible pattern and are not to be measured against any strategic context – save for a conversation in Belfast and Derry that should not have influenced funding decisions but may well have done so.
- Slide to show dwindling funds at start
- Slide to close.
- No strategy just cuts

Comparative Findings

ASOP Spend 01'-05'

| | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Community Arts | 978,500 | 1,334,300 | 1,038,750 | 1,088,100 | 1,164,600 |
| Architecture | - | - | - | 19,000 | - |
| Dance | 27,500 | 35,000 | 70,000 | 78,000 | 69,000 |
| Drama | 1,709,900 | 1,797,100 | 1,732,300 | 1,721,950 | 1,836,290 |
| Development | 296,500 | 308,200 | 279,000 | 297,000 | - |
| Health/Voluntary Disability | - | - | - | - | 283,990 |
| Literature | 208,000 | 195,585 | 331,200 | 417,048 | 331,413 |
| Music | 1,575,000 | 1,680,500 | 2,025,000 | 2,112,700 | 2,287,921 |
| Other | - | - | 315,300 | 346,500 | 335,000 |
| Traditional | 167,000 | 245,000 | 232,500 | 259,000 | 274,000 |
| Visual | 514,500 | 479,000 | 688,000 | 720,818 | 586,332 |
| Youth | 82,000 | 82,000 | 457,700 | 413,000 | 484,269 |

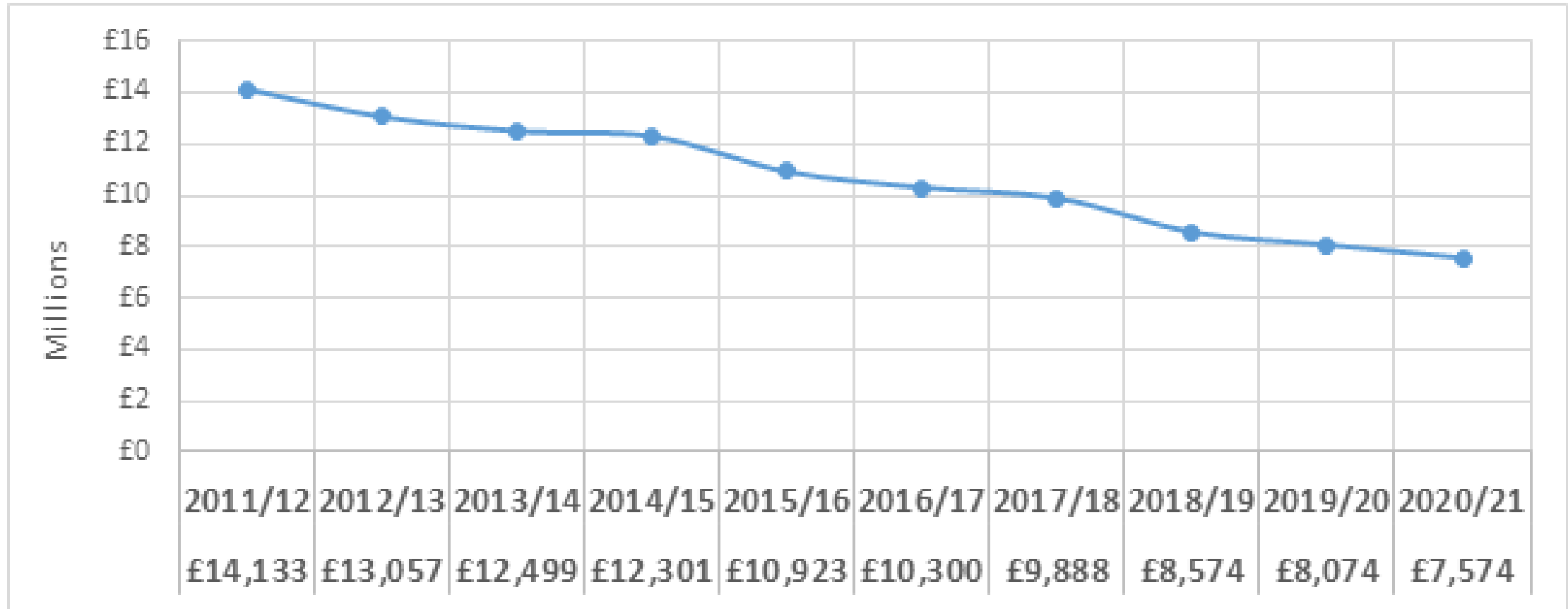
ACNI ASOP 2001 – 2005/6

| | 2001/02 | | 2002/03 | | 2003/04 | | 2004/05 | | 2005/06 | |
|------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|
| Community Arts | 978,500 | 18% | 1,334,300 | 22% | 1,038,750 | 14% | 1,088,100 | 15% | 1,164,600 | 15% |
| Architecture | - | | - | | - | | 19,000 | 0%- | | |
| Dance | 27,500 | 0% | 35,000 | 1% | 70,000 | 1% | 78,000 | 1% | 69,000 | 1% |
| Drama | 1,709,900 | 31% | 1,797,100 | 29% | 1,732,300 | 24% | 1,721,950 | 23% | 1,836,290 | 24% |
| Development | 296,500 | 5% | 308,200 | 5% | 279,000 | 4% | 297,000 | 4%- | | |
| Health/Voluntary | - | | - | | - | | - | | 283,990 | 4% |
| Disability | | 0% | | 0% | | 0% | | 0% | | 0% |
| Literature | 208,000 | 4% | 195,585 | 3% | 331,200 | 5% | 417,048 | 6% | 331,413 | 4% |
| Music | 1,575,000 | 28% | 1,680,500 | 27% | 2,025,000 | 28% | 2,112,700 | 28% | 2,287,921 | 30% |
| Other | - | | - | | 315,300 | 4% | 346,500 | 5% | 335,000 | 4% |
| Traditional | 167,000 | 3% | 245,000 | 4% | 232,500 | 3% | 259,000 | 3% | 274,000 | 4% |
| Visual | 514,500 | 9% | 479,000 | 8% | 688,000 | 10% | 720,818 | 10% | 586,332 | 8% |
| Youth | 82,000 | 1% | 82,000 | 1% | 457,700 | 6% | 413,000 | 6% | 484,269 | 6% |
| Total | 5,558,900 | | 6,156,685 | | 7,169,750 | | 7,473,116 | | 7,652,815 | |

Comparative Findings
AFP Spend 2018 19

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 2018~19 | |
| Total Participatory Organisations | £2,200,246.00 |
| Total AFP | £13,079,922.00 |
| Total Participatory Organisations out of RFOs (%) | 16.82% |
| Total Community Arts out of RFOs (%) | 7.03% |
| Total Health / Disability / Voluntary (%) | 2.31% |
| Total Circus / Youth (%) | 7.48% |

“Playing by ear”



- As of now, after these cuts, every person living in Northern Ireland, citizen or subject, receives just one penny per day from voted-for funds, ie those monies coming from government.
- That is not only the smallest amount per head in these islands but it is less than half that enjoyed by people in the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales or England. Against this mammoth disparity, how can the arts really hope to survive in Northern Ireland?
- It is deeply regrettable but the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has had to make these cuts. It's regrettable indeed that they had to make any but their hand has been forced in that regard.
- If ACNI had passed on a "salami slice" cut of 5.2%, everybody would've quite understood that they had little option but to do so, and got on with less.

“Playing by ear”

In a letter back from Dept for Communities, the true strategy emerged

- A. “Current forecasts suggest we will face very significant financial pressures arising from the need to sustain and support priority public services.”
- B. “Therefore, the overall disposition of the arts bodies supported by the Arts Council and of voluntary and community organisations more generally, must be one of planning to live with a reducing public sector subvention in the coming years.”
- C. “Arts Organisations must consider seriously how they can become more sustainable in the face of budget reductions which are likely to be unavoidable...it should not be assumed that any additional funding will be available”
- D. The Arts sector is by its nature innovative and resilient and ...is equipped to produce creative solutions moving forward”

**STOP THE CUTS
FIND THE MONEY
FUND THE ARTS**

#ArtsMatterNI

**RED ALERT:
State of Emergency**

FURTHER CUTS TO THE ARTS

41. If we invest, intellectually, politically and financially in our creative capacity, Northern Ireland can be a place that understands the power of the arts in and of themselves and that also has figured out how to translate that power into having meaningful, deep, resonating impact across our whole community.

65. All appropriate and necessary investment should be predicated on a strategy that should seek to ensure our diverse and often contested cultural heritage is explore and celebrated;

- 66. to raise the profile of the arts and cultural sector at home and abroad
- 67. to attract increasing numbers of visitors, students and businesses
- 68. to ensure that culture and arts sit at the heart of our communities, our collective quality of life and our promotion of wellbeing: empowering the generations, enabling our communities and enriching our lives;
- 69. to create and supportive creative haven, capable of attracting talent and reflecting the best of ourselves to the world.

Arts Matter here – empowering the generations, enabling our communities, enriching our lives.



We reject these cuts and instead ask for additional investment, at the very least, **a penny a day extra for everyone**, so that creativity and the enabling culture of hope that it provides, can offer residents and visitors with a reflection of the best of ourselves.

We ask for a strategy that consults and adequately projects the true resource needs of the arts and cultural sector be developed.

We urge the new Secretary of State, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, to alter these determinations, meet with our representatives and explore ways to support our sector.

We urge David Sterling, Head of the NI Civil Service and Leo O'Reilly, Permanent Secretary of Dept for Communities, to consult with us and develop strategies to properly invest in the creative future of Northern Ireland.

We urge our politicians to recognise the incredible value for money that the arts provide locally and the spectrum of services and supports offered in each and every constituency here.

We urge all colleagues in the arts to actively support this campaign and lobby and advocate at every opportunity to see these proposed cuts reversed and long term investment secured.

And we urge the public to support our campaign to provide adequate access for all sections of our community to enjoy the benefits of the arts.

#ArtsMatterNI

Support our campaign enrichinglives@artsmatterni.co.uk