

**Pre-Budget 2023 submission**

**Policy and Climate Action supports  
for the Performing Arts Sector**

**By**



Building a stronger  
performing arts  
community in Ireland.

&



Green Arts Initiative in Ireland

15 July 2021



Pre-Budget 2023 submission

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The various reports referenced in this submission are as follows:

**National Development Plan (NDP)** the investment framework to achieve Project Ireland 2040 aims  
**Life Worth Living**, The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce, October 2020  
**Arts Centre Policy and Strategy**, Arts Council



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## Summary

### Budget 2023 Climate Action supports for the Performing Arts sector

Theatre Forum and the Green Arts Initiative ask that Minister Catherine Martin and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media negotiating team look to secure the resources to in their Budget 2023 to align policy and budgetary resources to support and enable the arts sector to respond effectively to the climate emergency.

#### A sector-wide approach

Establish an all-of-government approach involving funders, local government and local authority stakeholders, government departments and their agencies concerned with the arts, environment, sustainability and climate action to evolve and align climate action policies that embed sustainability in the arts and culture sector's organisations and their activities.

#### Sustaining the Arts Infrastructure

Theatre Forum and GAI is committing to carrying out a survey in 2022 to determine the capital investment required to carry out a national survey to sustainability and accessibility standards.

#### Budget 2023

In relation to Budget 2023. Theatre Forum and GAI ask that future capital investment required to raise both sustainability and accessibility standards in the arts infrastructure be considered in the context of the Government NDP and decarbonisation goals.

#### Sustaining Arts Organisations

##### Budget 2023

Secure and maximise the Budget 2023 arts and culture allocation to enable arts funders to evolve the financial models of arts organisations and align policy and resources to maximise their impacts

#### Sustaining Artists

##### Budget 2023

Theatre Forum and the Green Arts Initiative wholeheartedly support the NCFI position on sustainable careers pay and conditions for all artists and arts workers.



## **Context**

Living through and with the Covid pandemic showed how we took the arts and live entertainment for granted. By extension, we probably took our theatres, venues, and arts centres for granted too. Now we appreciate just how much going to a concert or exhibition, the cinema or a festival, theatre shows or pantomimes, singing in a choir or playing in a band enriches our lives.

### **Policy and investment alignment**

As we emerge from this crisis, there is an opportunity not just to rebuild the arts and culture sector's infrastructure, but to build it better making it more sustainable and accessible. Budget 2023 is an opportunity to accelerate the decarbonisation of the arts sector goals with a capital investment plan that makes arts sector buildings exemplars of sustainability and accessibility.

Responding to the Climate Action challenges ahead of every sector, organisation and individual is more urgent than ever. Depleted from the already low pre-Covid levels of reserves, the arts and culture sector is without the reserves or expertise needed to respond quickly and coherently to a challenge on the scale of the Climate Action one.

Theatre Forum and the Green Arts Initiative's priority in anticipation of Budget 2023 is to ask that policy is evolved while looking to secure the financial resources needed to sustain the arts infrastructure, arts organisations, and artists in 2023 and future Budgets.

### **A sector-wide approach**

A sector-wide approach is essential. Current standards must first be quantified to devise and deploy cost efficient and effective responses. Theatre Forum and GAI propose the adoption of an all-of-government approach involving funders, local government and local authority stakeholders, government departments and their agencies concerned with the arts, environment, sustainability, and climate action to evolve and align policies that embed sustainability across the arts and culture sector's organisations and activities.



## Sustaining the Arts Infrastructure

### Arts infrastructure is a cultural asset

This funded arts infrastructure in cities, counties, and towns nationally, a keystone of the arts ecosystem, is a cultural asset. Along with the National Cultural Institutions, there are 88 Arts Council funded theatres, venues, arts centres and galleries in all parts of the country.

Each operates on its bespoke financial model of Arts Council, Local Authority and Fáilte Ireland funding, box office and other earned income. A high-quality arts and culture infrastructure such as the one as described in the National Development Plan (NDP), must be built on strong foundations. To deliver on the Plan's Strategic Investment Priorities 2018–2027, investment in the arts infrastructure is urgently required.

*Plans for investment in culture and heritage recognise that high quality infrastructure is critical for a vibrant heritage and culture sector and that investment in our cultural heritage underpins social cohesion and supports strong, sustainable economic growth. In terms of regional objectives, specific priorities are to enhance arts and culture centres throughout the country, develop the sustainable tourism potential of our culture and heritage infrastructure and improve Ireland's outdoor recreation infrastructure and natural heritage.*

**National Development Plan.**

*The quality of life in our regional towns and villages will play a key role in delivering a balanced regional economy as envisaged in the National Economic Plan.*

*The Taskforce believes that all across Ireland, there are spaces which can, with imagination and a well-funded capital improvement programme, be adapted to allow live performances in a safe environment, adhering to public health guidelines, and enriching life in our towns and villages and cities.*

**Life Worth Living, The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce**

### Sustainability in the arts infrastructure

Few theatres, arts centres, venues, arts centres or galleries planned for their sustainable future, and none are in a financial position to fund raising their environmental sustainability and accessibility standards.

Since the building of local authority arts centres at the end of the last century, capital expenditure has been modest. Competing with other priorities for capital funding has led to a cycle of underinvestment resulting in capital projects that only partially address arts infrastructure issues and sustainability. Now, non-existent, inadequate, or poor building management systems mean that the arts sector is not well-positioned to achieve either the government targets for decarbonisation or NDP goals.

While an arts sector-wide response to the climate crisis is desperately needed, staggering energy cost increases have focussed attention on the impact of climate change on building-based arts organisations making it imperative to seek longer-term systemic solutions. Work must be done to establish the extent of the upgrade to building-based arts organisations for them to meet with government targets for decarbonisation. There is always strong demand too for small capital schemes for maintenance and upgrades with bigger capital projects deferred until time and resources are more available. As we know, theatre maintenance budgets are often not a priority and capital programmes have often failed to fund 'invisible' upgrades.



### **A systemic approach**

Data needs to be collected systematically and analysed by building and at national level to estimate the level of investment required for the built arts infrastructure to operate sustainably into the future.

The Theatre Green Book initiative was developed in response to a comparable situation, launched within the UK theatre sector during Covid lockdown in summer 2020. As part of its Sustainable Buildings Toolkit, sustainability engineers Buro Happold compiled a comprehensive database of possible sustainability works for theatres, The benchmark for 'sustainability' has been set not at 'zero carbon' (which would push costs still further out of reach and may be unattainable for some historic theatres) but at a reasonable level of sustainable operation, which broadly correlates with government targets.

In the context of the Theatre Green Book and Buro Happold Toolkit, to upgrade a 'typical' theatre means to:

- Bring it to a reasonable level of environmental sustainability
- Make it accessible
- Upgrade public areas and develop facilities for community engagement, which also enable additional revenues.

Each upgrade is then ranked for impact; tagged as an 'easy win', a 'maintenance project' or a 'capital project'; and annotated to flag the challenges likely to be encountered in buildings of different ages. Site surveys such as this one conducted by the UK Theatres Trust identified the following issues common to many UK theatre buildings:

- Uninsulated roofs and walls.
- Single-glazed windows, doors without seals, and entrances unprotected by draught lobbies.
- Ageing (sometimes original) plant, generally powered by fossil fuels, and energy hungry
- plant and equipment.
- A lack of services controls to permit efficient building management.

These problems were common to many theatres surveyed, including some that carried out recent refurbishment projects. No doubt a survey of Irish theatres would identify those same issues.

### **Infrastructure and organisation level sustainability reports**

Analysis of the survey findings has meant that capital investment required to improve the sustainability standards of the built arts infrastructure could be estimated. In addition, each arts organisation would receive its own report setting out and rank the works according to how they will raise sustainability standards most effectively.

Arts venues have already taken steps through the Green Arts Initiative in Ireland (GAIL) Greening Venues programme to respond to climate change and to make the necessary changes that are needed to decarbonise arts organisations, make them more energy efficient and adapt their activities and practices to be more sustainable. The GAIL has tested a version of the Theatre Green Book/Buro Happold survey with Greening Arts Centres project participants and provided feedback to Buro Happold to optimise a version of this survey for Ireland. These and other Green Arts initiatives offer useful insights into the arts centre group of arts organisations.

### **Accessibility**

Environmental sustainability is not the only challenge for our arts buildings. Historic theatre buildings are innately challenging for access. Even for those built more recently, standards have continued to



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evolve to the extent that few are accessible in the way that audiences and artists today rightly expect they should be. Post-Covid, our theatres, venues and arts centres face an enormous task in rebuilding audiences, including new constituencies, and re-engaging with communities. The quality of access to the public and workplace areas is often ignored.

Investment in effective building management systems will also be a much wider investment in these public arts spaces enabling them to offer more attractive and adaptable artists' workspaces, bars and cafes for audiences and communities. Success in winning back audiences will depend, in part, on investment in the infrastructure of foyers and outside social spaces, community facilities and public spaces.

### **Sustaining the Arts Infrastructure**

**Theatre Forum and GAI is committing to carrying out a survey in 2022 to determine the capital investment required to carry out a national survey to sustainability and accessibility standards.**

**In relation to Budget 2023. Theatre Forum and GAI ask that future capital investment required to raise both sustainability and accessibility standards in the arts infrastructure be considered in the context of the NDP and decarbonisation goals.**



## Sustaining Arts Organisations

The pre-Covid and current financial model of not-for-profit arts organisations is typically pieced together from mostly annual applications to a variety of funders plus earned income, mostly from box office with some limited philanthropic support. The enforced Covid-19 pause suspended that financial model left many reliant on employer supports to get them through the pandemic years.

Since reopening, many factors have undermined that model. Production risks are now higher with the threat of cancelled shows and tours which, along with a shortage of production and technical people, is driving up production costs. Other costs, especially energy ones, have risen dramatically and there is increased usage of and demands on building management systems, especially HVAC ones where they are in place. Capacities and box office income are not returning to pre-Covid levels as quickly as hoped for since re-opening.

As a result, arts organisations are squeezed with higher costs, especially energy ones, higher risks and associated costs of mitigating them with reduced ticket sales income.

*...the Taskforce's recommendations are underpinned by the conviction that it is both urgent and important that Ireland's cultural life - subsidised and commercial - is protected and sustained so that it can survive and adapt to these changed circumstances, recover its equilibrium, and contribute to the renewal of our collective sense of wellbeing and purpose. Ireland's creative and cultural industries are large and vital components of our economy and are critically dependent on the sustained recovery of our arts, culture and entertainment sector. Supporting this sector is both an economic priority and a social imperative. Public investment to that end will return distinctive benefits for our lives as individuals, as social beings, and as communities.*

Life Worth Living, The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce

### Arts Organisations and Leadership

Arts organisations must be supported to further reduce their own Green House Gas emissions and contribute to the decarbonisation of the Irish economy. Some have made inroads already, but all are ideally positioned to act to reduce the carbon footprint of their own organisation as well as the overall environmental impacts of the performing arts sector. Arts organisations are ideally placed to lead by example making the transition to an energy efficient low carbon economy

- Arts organisations can take action to reduce their carbon footprint and overall environmental impacts.
- Arts organisations can enhance the sustainability competencies in their own organisation and the wider community through training and networking.
- Arts organisations can document improvements in their own sustainability establishing a benchmark for accurate measurements of future reductions.
- Arts organisations can reduce their energy, waste, and travel bills and become part of a wider community of arts organisations shifting towards a green economy.

There is an opportunity to support arts organisations with a policy framework and resources, including funding, to show how climate and environmental issues can be addressed by making changes to their own buildings, working more sustainably as well as being spaces from which artists and communities co-create programmes to build a better – and more sustainable – shared future.



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### Individual organisation reports

A useful outcome from any national survey of arts organisations such as the Buro Happold one is that each participating organisation receives its own report. It can be used to direct the attention and resources of the organisation and its stakeholders to that organisation's sustainability priorities and align them to a large-scale capital investment programme.

### Collective support

To support arts organisations to act on foot of their sustainability report, a co-ordinated approach involving funders, local government and local authority stakeholders, government departments and their agencies to evolve and align climate action policies that embed sustainability in individual organisations and activities is key. Each arts organisation would benefit from access the resources and expertise of their local authority, CAROs, the CCMA, SEAI, CODEMA, the Arts Council, and Creative Ireland to name just a few. Time, resource and cost efficiencies would also be achieved. To this end, Theatre Forum and GAI would highlight the importance of maximising the Budget 2023 arts and culture allocation, aligning policy and resources to maximise their impacts.

### Budget 2023

**Secure and maximise the Budget 2023 arts and culture allocation to enable arts funders to evolve the financial models of arts organisations and align policy and resources to maximise their impacts**



## Sustaining Artists

The following comments are in the context of a sustainable arts sector able to offer artists quality work opportunities. Key issues of concern to artists and arts organisation are set out in the NCFA pre-Budget submission which is wholeheartedly endorsed and supported Theatre Forum and the Green Arts in Ireland Initiative. For the sake of brevity, they have not been repeated in this submission, but are in addition and complementary to it.

Arts organisations, venues and centres, theatres and galleries, festivals and production companies are much more than their buildings – they are teams of professional, experienced people dedicated to supporting artists make and present work in their communities. At the heart of their communities, they can improve access for all, be inclusive and celebrate diversity in their programmes, activities and events. A systematic approach to support these arts organisations to broaden their community remit as workplaces for artists to work with and for their communities, to engage with audiences of all ages, abilities, orientation, and ethnicity would create some much-needed energy and vibrancy to rebuild our communities.

### Art for communities

*The quality of life in our regional towns and villages will play a key role in delivering a balanced regional economy as envisaged in the National Economic Plan. The Taskforce believes that all across Ireland, there are spaces which can, with imagination and a well-funded capital improvement programme, be adapted to allow live performances in a safe environment, adhering to public health guidelines, and enriching life in our towns and villages and cities.*

Life Worth Living, The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce

Arts centres, venues, theatres and galleries are the visible part of the arts infrastructure for communities and audiences around the country. Working with a host of public and private sector partners as well as local groups, they are spaces close to home where community and youth projects can expect professional production and presentation of their work and an important touchstone for arts engagement connecting communities.

The value of Arts Venues and Centres in their own communities is clear in the Arts Council's own definition:

Arts centres are full-time, public-facing, professionally managed, building-based organisations. They support the creation, presentation and mediation of the arts across a range of art forms, and arts practices. They support professional, collaborative, voluntary and amateur arts practice.

Forging connection between the arts and the public is a defining characteristic of the work of Arts Council-supported arts centres.

Arts Centre Policy and Strategy, Arts Council, 2019

As we shift towards a more sustainable future, the arts has an important role in communicating with audiences the culture shift required to confront climate change. In achieving increased sustainability, arts organisations and centres can also function as leaders in communities.



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As our population grows but also disperses, there is an obvious need to maintain, upgrade and enhance the infrastructure to ensure citizens have access to the arts in their own areas. In their own locality and community, Each Arts Centre fulfils various roles in response to the arts and culture needs and desires of its community.

Arts Centres are safe workplaces for staff teams, artists, arts workers, community leaders and volunteers and ultimately, safe places of assembly for the public.

Arts Centres can develop and deliver alternative programmes and channels, including digital ones, to broaden and deepen engagement with artists, arts workers, touring companies, audiences and their community.

Arts Centres can create opportunities for diverse communities to work with artists in new and inclusive ways, making spaces and technology available locally for creativity and development.

Arts Centres can adapt to be public spaces where people can gather safely.

Importantly, arts organisations around the country are also workplaces for artists. For performing artists, theatre-makers, musicians, dancers, production and technical staff, venues and arts centres are their places of work whether that is development, production, exhibition, rehearsal or performance. Arts organisations are ideally positioned to offer quality work opportunities to artists and arts workers in their own locality.

The ability of Arts Centres to grow and develop, to support and employ artists, engage with their communities, should be supported with the necessary resources: longer term funding, physical space, production expertise, human resources and funding to produce work in, with and by communities. Investment in the sustainability and accessibility of the arts infrastructure as well as arts organisations means that arts organisations in the arts ecosystem are well-positioned to offer artists and arts workers quality work opportunities as part of sustainable careers in the arts.

Budget 2023

**Theatre Forum and the Green Arts Initiative wholeheartedly support the NCFCA position on sustainable careers pay and conditions for all artists and arts workers.**



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Building a stronger  
performing arts  
community in Ireland.

Established over 18 years ago, Theatre Forum is a national performing arts membership organisation with more than 200 members. Roughly half of these members are organisations and half of that number again are arts centres, theatres and venues.

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## Green Arts Initiative in Ireland

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