A Kingdom of Words

Joint Committee on Culture

4th July 2018
Listowel Writers Week Mission:

Listowel Writers’ Week is an international acclaimed literary festival devoted to bringing together writers and audiences at unique and innovative events in the historic and intimate surroundings of Listowel, County Kerry.
Listowel Writers’ Week – The Facts

• The annual event is located in the North Kerry town of Listowel
• First Festival took place in 1971
• Founding members include John B Keane, Bryan MacMahon and Seamus Wilmot
• The Festival was established to celebrate these writers and to provide an opportunity for writers in general to develop their talents and meet new audiences.
• The concept of the Creative Writing Workshop was first introduced at Listowel Writers’ Week in 1971 by Dr. Bryan MacMahon.
• Five Presidents of Ireland have officiated at the Opening of Listowel Writers’ Week over the years, the latest being President Michael D. Higgins in 2012
• In 2012 a new strand was added to the Festival, Young Adult BookFest designed specifically for secondary school students.
• In 2014 The Listowel Writers’ Week Children’s Programme was renamed and registered as The National Children’s Literary Festival.
• The 50th Listowel Writers’ Week will take place in 2020
Listowel Writers’ Week... Event Management Capacity

Board of Directors
- Liz Dunn Chairperson
- Catherine Moylan – Vice Chairperson

Voluntary Committees

Office Staff
- Maire Logue (Festival Manager)
- Eilish Wren (Festival Manager)
- Sinead McDonnell (Administration)
- Maria McGrath (Event Co-ordinator)

- Literary
- PR and Marketing
- Finance
- Children’s Nat Lit Festival
- Young Adult Fest
- Tours
- Theatre
- Art
- Opening Night
Listowel Writers’ Week .... the experience: 

Ireland’s longest running literary festival – delighting audiences for over 48 years.

- Literary Competitions
- Creative Writing Workshops
- Readings, Book Launches & Meet the Author
- Seminars & Lectures
- Theatre, Art & Concerts
- National Children's Literary Festival
- Young Adult BookFest
- Historical Walks, Bus Tours & Street Entertainment
The Festival Approach to Programming

• Post Festival Review
• New Festival year – new blank page.
• Research – what’s hot and not. What is in the news, who are the main literary prizewinners.
• Festival Volunteers submit suggestions.
• Invitations issued to authors, speakers, theatre companies and artists.
• Festival builds on responses.
Words that best describe our programming:

- Exciting
- Interactive
- Joyous
- Topical
- Diverse
- Discursive
- Challenging
- Colourful
- Demanding
- Educational
- Celebratory
- Inclusive
- Sociable
What Authors say about Listowel Writers Week

“Always a pleasure to be in Listowel.” – Eimear McBride

“Listowel Writers’ Week is my first time to Ireland. I was spoilt – nothing is ever going to compare to this.” – Scarlet Sabet Poet

“Lovely festival of intimacy and great readers everywhere.” – Colm Tóibín

“Listowel Writers’ Week is fantastic. I had a great and memorable time.” – Edna O’Brien

“Listowel Writers’ Week is a revelation that words just cannot describe.” – Jimmy Page Led Zeppelin

“I love this festival... all the charm and friendliness of Ireland without the formality. Warmth, intellect and hospitality in generous measures.” – William Sieghart Poet
Listowel Writers’ Week.. why so special?

Creative
Fun
Beautiful
Relaxing
Historic
Cultural
Inspirational
Craic
Role of the Our Audiences

- Participation
- Audience feedback
- Audience suggestions
- Market research
- Word of mouth
Listowel Writers’ Week... what are audiences saying about us?

“Everyone says hello”

“Being inspired by writers of all hues to write more”

“Close to heaven here”

“Having a ball”

“A total pleasure”

“Warm, fun and full of life”

“All about books”

“My second home”

Slightly crazy

“Amazing festival”

The Planet’s No 1 Festival!
Programme Aims

- Develop and sustain unique literary festival
- Run well managed events across the Arts
- Develop and expand target market
- Attract new audiences
- Be fully inclusive
- Give audiences variety and choice
- Build and grow our Children’s Festival & our Young Adult BookFest
Influences on shape and content of programme

- Artist availability
- Venue availability
- Funding & Sponsorship
- Staff
- What’s hot and what’s not
- Marketing
Digital Growth

Online Sales
15% increase over 3 years now at 45%

Twitter
257% increase over 3 years. Now over 5k followers

Instagram
Maximise use of our photographic content through this channel

Facebook
232% increase over 2 years. Reach through the festival last year over 90,000

Email Marketing
Nearly 5.5K subscribers
Open rates as high as 46%
Long Term Challenges for Listowel Writers’ Week

- Funding
- Growth
- Accommodation
- Staff
- Sponsorship
- Competition
- Accessibility
Listowel Writers’ Week... Partnerships
Do we think differently for 2019 and beyond

• Always...
• We are looking forward to celebrating Listowel Writers‘ Week 50 in 2020 and planning has commenced!
Go raibh maith agaibh

29th May to 2nd June 2019