

Opening Statement – Theatre Forum

Align policy, purpose and investment

The Covid-19 crisis has affected everyone and every sector. The impact at every level has been devastating. As we emerge from this crisis, there is an opportunity not just to rebuild the arts and culture sector, but to build it better and make it more sustainable. It is crucial to protect and invest in our arts sector and ensure the years of investment, experience, and artist support infrastructure in Arts Venues are not lost. Arts Venues must be enabled to purposefully do more for, in and with their communities.

This Committee has an opportunity to sync NDP and arts and culture policy, to draw together a capital and programme investment plan to evolve Arts Venues as a key channel of the arts and culture sector in order to contribute to all of Ireland's societal recovery and continue to enrich all our lives.

Ensure survival plus future viability

Right now, extending the Government employer supports for what is hopefully the last stage of the Covid-19 crisis is critical to the survival and stability of most of the country's Arts Venues. A commitment from the Government and Revenue that the Employer Wage Subsidy (EWS) Scheme will remain in place until audience capacities and box office income are restored to reasonable levels is essential if Arts Centres are to survive this crisis.

Longer term and planned funding commitments to Arts Venues would enable them to better plan projects and programmes, deepen engagement with artists, audiences and their communities and foster collaborations with communities of interest that continue beyond the limitations of sporadic projects in a 12-month funding cycle.

Promote sustainability

There is an opportunity for Arts Venues to show how climate and environmental issues can be addressed 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.

Arts Venues are also ideally positioned to offer quality work opportunities to artists and arts workers in their own locality. As art venues move to medium and longer financial planning cycles, that will translate to arts venues able to offer artists longer term and better-quality work opportunities.

Put Arts Venues at the heart of their communities

Arts Venues and Centres are 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 arts centres to broaden their community remit as safe workplaces for artists to work with and for their communities, to engage with audiences of all ages, abilities, orientation, and ethnicity would create the much-needed energy and vibrancy to rebuild our communities.