



Sinn Féin

Culture, Arts, Heritage.

SINN FÉIN

PROPOSALS

ELECTION

2020

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Introduction

Artists and creative people on this island have always needed to be mobile - to experience different cultures; to work and create with others across the world and amongst our diaspora. But things are different now.

Despite being in charge for the last nine years, Fine Gael have managed to make things worse. Creative people are now leaving for good; unable to access studio space, unable to earn a living wage, unable to afford housing, insurance costs and the cost of living.

We all lose out when people can no longer produce their work or when they make the final call to move abroad. Our culture becomes less diverse and worse, a playground for the rich.

Poverty and inequality have a devastating impact on participation levels, giving fewer people access to ticketed events and shows. Less people are able to afford a music class, a dance class, a show at their local theatre or an after-school activity for their child - even if there is spare capacity and empty seats.

Sinn Féin are proud of our record in advocating for culture, arts and heritage. This manifesto is built on a recognition that cultural production and participation are basic human rights. We invite you to read this manifesto alongside 'For Artist and Audience' at sinnfein.ie/culture and the 2020 General Election Sinn Féin Manifesto.

PRIORITIES OF A SINN FÉIN GOVERNMENT

- >> **Income - Introduce a living wage employment scheme for artists through Local Authorities; increase Arts Council funding by €20 million.**
- >> **Spaces - Establish a fund for the re-development of existing properties for community and creative purposes.**
- >> **Participation and Young Artists - Pilot a national cultural currency, exchanged through a digital app. Develop and implement a Youth Arts Strategy.**
- >> **Nightlife - Introduce a designated 'night venue' classification in planning and licensing law. Intervene in a broken insurance market.**
- >> **Heritage - Increase Heritage Council funding by €3.5 million. Protect and develop Moore Street as part of a wider historic quarter.**



Raising incomes

A thriving cultural economy is built on the work of people, from many different backgrounds, who have the talent and the means to create art.

How do we ensure diversity in that cultural production in the face of rapidly declining artistic incomes, rising property prices and insurance costs? Not only are artists poor, they are getting poorer, even as the cultural sector becomes increasingly valuable.

The harder it becomes to live as a working artist, the more voices we exclude from our culture, the more our culture becomes a playground of the economically privileged, and the more it supports the inequalities and divisions in our society.

The crisis of poverty amongst our cultural and creative workers is not an “employment” or jobs issue, or a market failure issue. There are few jobs for artists. The majority of artists exist on commissions, short term contracts, shares of fluctuating box office income and gallery sales, and - when lucky - royalty payments on their work.

The first step in a thriving cultural economy is to make a creative career sustainable.

PRIORITIES OF A SINN FÉIN GOVERNMENT

- >> **Develop a living wage initiative through Local Authorities with an initial fund of €4 million to hire hundreds of artists across the state.**
- >> **The local living wage initiative will also begin to address the huge disparity in arts spend per head across the 31 Local Authorities in this state.**
- >> **Increase funding to the Arts Council by €20 million.**



Creative spaces

Sinn Féin want to invest in co-operatives of artists and local community organisations to enable the conversion and/or development of existing spaces; and to support the design and conversion costs of such sites on the understanding that they serve both artist and community and that it is managed jointly by the partners.

This model of joint re-development will build vital partnerships between artists, artist led organisations and community organisations and institutions. It will promote engagement, social bridging and new learning. It will bring new life and energy to our communities, towns and cities, contributing to identity, place making, regeneration and tourism.

Creative Ireland and Project Ireland 2040 ignore the need for the provision of working space for artists. This is despite pillars two and three of Creative Ireland focussing on 'Enabling Creativity in Every Community' and 'Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure'.

The role of artists in the development of local communities and economies, and in urban regeneration has been well researched. What is equally well documented is creative flight – the departure of artists, actors, writers, dancers and musicians from places because they can no longer afford to live there, because they cannot access investment or space to work, perform or exhibit.

Maintaining healthy, thriving communities requires numerous policy inputs – including provision for retaining and attracting artistic and creative talent – and not just to the major urban centres.

PRIORITIES OF A SINN FÉIN GOVERNMENT

- >> **Increase funding for the re-development of existing properties for community and creative purposes.**



Participation and Young Artists

Cultural Currency

In an EU-wide survey by the European Commission, 28% of Irish people identified cost as a barrier for access to cultural heritage sites or activities - a reminder if it was needed that access to paid exhibitions in our national institutions, shows in local arts centres or theatres, and music or dance classes are all subject to economic barriers.

On the other side of the relationship many classes, performances and exhibitions have spare capacity – seats and places that have not been sold. Sinn Féin will make it our priority to bring together those who cannot afford to participate, with professionals and organisations that want to engage but cannot discount their costs. We will pilot a cultural currency that seeks to build engagement and also reward and encourage arts professionals who directly facilitate that engagement.

Youth Arts Strategy

We will safeguard the right of every young person to explore their artistic and creative potential. Young people must be seen as artists and participants in their own right rather than as audiences or future artists. Over the course of a Government term, Sinn Féin will develop and deliver a Youth Arts Strategy that promotes participation, progression and provision.

Our strategy will focus on engagement, developing talent, and putting in place the appropriate infrastructure and support, not just in traditional education environments but importantly, developing arts habit in the non-formal education environment such as youth services, youth orchestras and youth theatres.

PRIORITIES OF A SINN FÉIN GOVERNMENT

- >> **Introduce a pilot national cultural currency exchanged through a digital app.**
- >> **Develop and implement a Youth Arts Strategy drawing on positive learning from Scotland.**



Nightlife

Culture, creativity and art are forged in conversation, in chance encounters, in celebration. The night time economy is essential to the wider cultural and creative economy. It is in clubs and cafes, restaurants and bars, theatres and galleries, public squares and late night clubs that the energy and ambition of a place is captured and experienced.

Cities depend on the quality of their nightlife as a key part of their visitor attraction. For example, in 2016 the inbound spend for Dublin was €9.2 billion. A 2008 report on nightclubs identified 4,500 full-time equivalent jobs nationwide. The music industry, which is built on live performance and the availability of venues and audiences, contributes €703 million to the economy. The wider arts sector – so much of which is experienced at night – had a GVA of €1.5 billion in 2010.

Protecting our night life is vital to the growth and development of our arts and culture sector, vital for our musicians, actors, dancers, and poets, vital for the expression of emerging generations and vital to our tourist economy.

At present night life in our cities is under threat from rising property and rental costs, rising insurance costs, licensing costs and regulations that are out of date and no longer fit for purpose. All of these combined with transport issues and costs result in a reduction in live music, the closure of venues for dance and performance and the exclusion of people from our cities.

PRIORITIES OF A SINN FÉIN GOVERNMENT

- >> **Introduce a designated ‘night venue’ classification in planning and licensing law.**
- >> **Intervene in a broken insurance market and provide stability to our small business and community/voluntary sector.** (See ‘Tackling the insurance rip-off’ - 2020 General Election Sinn Féin Manifesto).



Heritage and Moore Street

The heritage sector bore the brunt of funding cuts across culture, arts and heritage. It was mooted at the time that the Heritage Council should be disbanded. Although the Heritage Council remains in existence, its funding is a third of what it was in 2008.

The last available data we have is a 2010, independent report into the economic impact of heritage. The sector had a GVA of €1.5 billion, returned €489 million to the exchequer, and sustained 40,000 jobs. By these metrics the heritage sector has a greater economic impact than both the wider arts sector and the audio-visual sector.

The restored interest in the sector as set out in Heritage Ireland 2030 is welcome. Sinn Féin also welcome the actions taken by Fáilte Ireland, and their willingness to support and invest in local, community heritage projects, effectively replacing much of the lost investment of the last decade.

However, it is important that investment decisions are not solely driven by visitor numbers and bed nights. The natural and built heritage is an enormous contributor to the work of Fáilte Ireland, but heritage - preserved in buildings, local museum collections, and natural landscape is first and foremost a public good, valuable in and of itself, and valuable to the local communities who guard it.

Moore Street

Moore Street is an area described by the National Museum of Ireland as 'a theatre of conflict and the most important historic site in modern Irish history'. It remains neglected and ignored despite having within its boundary four houses that comprise the 1916 National Monument. This heart of Dublin and home of history has become a no go area for citizens, market traders and visitors alike. This is not acceptable.

PRIORITIES OF A SINN FÉIN GOVERNMENT

- » **Increase funding to the Heritage Council by €3.5 million.**
- » **Immediately declare the 1916 terrace, yards and laneways a National Monument.**
- » **Protect, preserve and develop Moore Street as part of a wider historic quarter.**



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