



Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK

November 2025

This research was commissioned by the British Council and authored by Starling Start | starlingstart.com

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**We put
people and their
creative potential at
the centre of growth,
shaping a more
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that works for all.**

Culture Connects: Lives
Entwined, IMMA, March 2025
with musicians Aoife ní Bhriain
and Catrin Finch.

Photo credit: Niamh Barry © British Council

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Overview of the British Council

We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. For over 90 years we have shaped brighter futures through education, arts, culture, language, and creativity.

We uniquely combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, our global presence and relationships in over 100 countries, our unparalleled access to young people and influencers and our creative sparkle. We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefits for millions of people all over the world.

We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2022–23 we reached 600 million people.

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Acknowledgements



This report was commissioned by the British Council and the research team was Starling Start. The Starling Start team was Amberlea Neely and Dr Jane Morrow. The British Council team was Dr Kerry McCall Magan and Angelica Burrill. The original research was carried out between September 2024 and February 2025. The report was completed in August 2025.

The research team gratefully acknowledges the input of Arts Council England, Arts Council Ireland, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Creative Scotland, Culture Ireland, Creative Ireland and the Arts Council of Wales and its international agency, Wales Arts International, arts & cultural organisations from the UK and Ireland, interviewees and survey participants who kindly consented to share their insights and expertise. As participants were assured that their responses would be treated in confidence, we cannot publish their names here, but we wish to extend our warmest thanks and appreciation to them for giving up their time to contribute to the research.

The interpretations offered in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the British Council, its officers, or those individuals who contributed to the research. Similarly, the authors take full responsibility for any errors.

Foreword

I am delighted to share this research with you. *Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK* focuses on cultural mobility and connection across Ireland and the four nations of the UK and, (to the best of our knowledge), is the first report of its kind. It reflects on the movement of artists, cultural practitioners and producers, across and between Ireland and the four nations of the UK and sets out a picture of the way in which the governments across the four nations and Ireland work together. It highlights the inter-government frameworks that exist between the devolved governments and Ireland, as well as between the UK and Ireland, and provides a brief overview of the current funding landscape for UK-Ireland cultural mobility.

This is an important moment in the UK-Ireland relationship after a period of tense years following the UK's exit from the EU. The reset relationship between new governments in Ireland and the UK (UK: July 2024; IRL: January 2025) has highlighted the value and importance of 'the deep ties between our people and cultures' has highlighted the value and 'the unique ability of arts, culture and sport to forge and foster ties between people across these islands' emphasised.

This research sits within this context and intends to provide information, as well as insights, on the current state of play of cultural mobility and connection across Ireland and the four nations of the UK. It details information on strategic funds and partnerships that support collaboration and mobility of cultural professionals, using data made available by arm's length bodies, and it provides analysis of a survey of cultural professionals alongside semi-structured interviews with artists, cultural practitioners and producers located in Ireland and the four nations of the UK. The research team at Starling Start has made a small number of suggestions to enhance existing opportunities and build new ones.

While this research project has not been insubstantial, we recognise that it presents just a partial picture of the UK-Ireland connection and experience of the cultural and creative economy of these islands. The information presented in this report cannot comprehensively illustrate the complex cultural relationship and deep connection that exists between Ireland and the four nations of the UK and that this connection takes many forms – comprising festivals, productions, networks, and artistic and cultural exchanges across ages and generations. Artists, cultural producers and creative practitioners have moved around these islands for centuries and we are deeply entwined in our cultural heritage as well as experience. The history of interconnection, interaction and movement across the islands provides a rich and substantial platform on which contemporary practitioners and producers operate. This research attempts to map this space from a contemporary vantage point focusing on the core of the creative ecology on these islands – artists and cultural professionals.

In the British Council we work in more than 100 countries, brokering relationships, connections, knowledge and insight so that we may know each other better. In this way, we foster peace and prosperity and find mutually beneficial ways to support the bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland. This is always guided by evidence and relevance, drawing on our experience, sector expertise, and commissioned reports such as this. In Ireland, we drive growth and connection between Ireland and the four nations of the UK, highlighting and celebrating the complex connection and collaboration across these islands, informing and enabling the bilateral relationship to thrive.

We recognise the deep and diverse relationships that exist between Ireland and the four nations of the UK – encompassing governments, arm’s-length bodies, organisations, and individuals – and the significant investment and commitment already made to the creative economy and cultural ecosystem of these islands. It is important to note that in the UK, culture is largely devolved, and each of the four nations have their own distinct priorities and approaches to supporting and developing arts and culture. The cultural connections and differences across Ireland and the four nations of the UK are therefore both rich and complex. This research seeks to illuminate these dynamics and provide insights that can support policymakers, strategic agencies, and organisations in further nurturing and strengthening the valuable and important creative economy and cultural ecosystem of these islands.

At the heart of this research project is a desire to: locate initiatives that will enable stronger, more sustainable networks; foster mechanisms that will provide greater collaboration and cooperation; identify new ways of sharing knowledge and best practice experience; and highlight viable long-term supports for professional practice and production. By connecting with each other through the creative economy and cultural ecosystem of these islands, we will grow and evolve in inclusive, rich and dynamic ways.

We are grateful to the agencies, organisations and individuals who have supported us in this research endeavour. We are also grateful for the contribution from across governments, from arm’s-length bodies, from the sector, and from individuals – thank you to you all for your openhearted generosity, openness, support and collaborative energies. We look forward to building on this together into the future.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine ~ we live in each other’s shelter

Dr Kerry McCall Magan

Director | British Council Ireland

Executive summary

Overview

British Council Ireland commissioned Starling Start in August 2024 to conduct research to explore the arts and cultural connections between the UK and Ireland. The original research was carried out between September 2024 and February 2025. The report was completed in August 2025.

This research has focused on geographic specificity, artist and cultural professional mobility, and the structural and enabling mechanisms that influence (and support) collaboration and connection between Ireland and the four nations of the UK. This research engaged with arm's-length bodies, arts and policy makers, strategic cultural organisations, arts practitioners, and cultural producers across Ireland and the four nations of the UK.

Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted across Ireland and the four nations of the UK, and interviewees included arm's-length agencies, cultural organisations and individuals working in different artforms as well as in different countries. Each of the nations' arm's-length agencies also provided information relating to grants and supports from the last two to three years across the four nations and Ireland. Additionally, 255 individuals from across the UK and Ireland also participated in an online survey. Taken together, the analysis and recommendations of this report comprise the first research project of its kind and the report provides a benchmark study in the creative economy and cultural ecology of these islands.

Aims

The overall aim of the research was to better understand artistic mobility and cultural connection between the UK and Ireland with a view to building an evidence base that would deliver insight on how to develop stronger connections, forge sustained alliances and new partnerships that lead to greater cultural collaboration, cooperation and drive growth in building the cultural ecosystem between the UK and Ireland.

The specific research aims were to:

- Establish the current state of play between the UK and Ireland and across several disciplines in the arts – mapping existing or past relationships, and what stakeholders feel is working, or has worked, well.
- Explore any barriers to initiating or maintaining connections, and gather thoughts on how to build greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, and deeper relationships in future cultural connections between the UK and Ireland.

Image credit: Poetic Perspectives British Council panel at the International Literature Festival, Dublin, May 2024
© British Council



Focus

At the core of the creative economy and cultural industries are creativity and intellectual capital.¹ These industries focus on the creation, production and distribution of knowledge-based activities that include tangible and intangible products. They contribute significantly to economies around the world in terms of job creation, GDP, export, societal value and human experience (See UNCTAD's *Creative Economy Outlook 2024* or the European Commission's *Unleashing the Potential of the Cultural and Creative Industries*² for more). Arts and cultural production are at the heart of this increasingly valuable sector at a global,³ European⁴ and UK⁵ level.

Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK has focussed on the visual arts, performing arts (theatre, music and dance), and literature (including poetry). These three sectors feature in categorisations of the creative and cultural industries used by the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Ireland's Department of Culture, Communication and Sport. They are at the core of grant provision and subsidy of each of the arm's-length agencies that participated in this research.

Findings

The research demonstrates the nuance and difference of each of the nations involved and emphasises the commitment across Ireland, the devolved governments of the UK, the arm's-length agencies and cultural professionals of each nation to strengthen cultural collaboration and connection.

It highlights the strengths and initiatives that exist to foster this connection and the resourcefulness of individuals across Ireland and the four nations of the UK to make work, to be mobile, and to collaborate - sometimes in the face of great challenge.

It captures the uniqueness of each of the nations in the study in relation to cultural policy, sectoral support and initiatives that enable cultural mobility and practice.

The research also captures the hopes and ambitions of many to bring about stronger, strategic and sustainable cultural collaboration across these islands.

Throughout this research, policy makers, agencies and arts and cultural professionals have demonstrated a strong awareness of, and significant appetite for strategic and sustainable initiatives that support greater connection, increased quantity and quality of collaboration, and practical enabling mechanisms to bring arts and cultural professionals from Ireland and the four nations of the UK together, for the benefit of the creative economy and cultural ecology of these islands.

1: Creative Economy Outlook 2024 | UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), p.111.

2: European Commission, (2025). *Unleashing the Potential of the Cultural and Creative Industries*.

3: Creative Economy Outlook 2024 | UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

4: EU Survey 2024, *Cultural and Creative Industries*.

5: Gov.UK: *Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, October 2024*.

Opportunities to strengthen the UK-Ireland ecosystem

The researchers have identified the following opportunities that could build on existing initiatives. They provide ideas for greater collaboration, cooperation and growth in the UK-Ireland creative and cultural sectors.

Supported by summary findings, the opportunities below are grouped around policy development (**Steer**), opportunities for strategic collaboration (**Collaborate**), and support for artists and practitioners (**Support**). These are shown at a glance in the table below, with further detail in Chapter 5.

The opportunities highlighted offer a number of potential avenues to support enhanced cultural mobility and connection, foster bilateral partnerships, and ensure that arts and culture remain a dynamic and resilient force within the important creative ecosystem between the UK and Ireland.

We hope this research will be of interest to government agencies, arm's-length agencies, policy makers, analogue organisations, resource agencies and arts and cultural professionals along with those generally interested in arts and culture in a bilateral, UK-Ireland context. We aim for the research to provide information and evidence that can be used by others to support and inform future initiatives that strengthen and nurture the bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland. We note that this report presents only a partial picture, limited by the data available at the time of research, but we hope that you find this landmark UK-Ireland cultural research project an important and valuable beginning to better understanding the nuanced, entwined and deeply important relationship between arts and cultural professionals in the UK and Ireland and Common Travel Area⁶ context.

6: Gov.UK: [Common Travel Area guidance](#).

Table 1: Opportunities to Strengthen the UK–Ireland ecosystem

<p>Steer</p> <p>High-level engagement</p>	<p><i>Steer the bilateral relationship through formalised structured partnerships and brokering at intergovernmental, arm's-length agency and sectoral level with representative bodies and artform specialist agencies (arts centres, artists collectives, artists' studios).</i></p>	<p>Continue to strengthen and support the bilateral intergovernmental frameworks that formally embed culture, language, and heritage as key areas of cooperation.</p> <p>Convene a bilateral cultural diplomacy forum which will use the collective expertise, intelligence, assets and activities of the members of the group to enhance the political, economic and social benefits of bilateral cultural diplomacy initiatives of Ireland and the four nations of the UK.</p> <p>Establish a Citizen's Assembly for Culture as a mechanism for meaningful discussion and two-way communication lead out on a participative deliberative approach to cultural planning and decision-making placing artists and creative practitioners at the heart of this process, so as to ensure creative opportunities can be inclusive and accessible for everyone on our islands.</p>
<p>Collaborate</p> <p>Opportunities for strategic collaboration</p>	<p><i>Instigate opportunities for strategic collaboration at an inter-agency level that would foster enhanced partnership-working and tangible measures to create a better-informed, well-evidenced and interconnected creative ecosystem across Ireland and the four nations of the UK.</i></p>	<p>Develop a dedicated Policy and Evidence Research Centre for Ireland focussed on the creative and cultural economy with the intention of collaborating with its UK counterpart to analysing trends and patterns and identifying gaps in knowledge. supporting policy development, strategic investment and a growth agenda by delivering independent, credible evidence and well-informed policy advice.</p> <p>Enhance existing, and develop new supports that bring together innovators, researchers, and industry professionals from diverse disciplines in order to develop the capacity and scale of interdisciplinary research and innovation on the islands.</p>
<p>Support</p> <p>Support for individuals</p>	<p><i>Create opportunity through funding, information and exchange initiatives for practitioners and producers, to create a more supported, equitable and inclusive cultural ecosystem.</i></p>	<p>Create meaningful mobility opportunities across the five nations which keep the Common Travel Area ecosystem flowing and stimulated.</p> <p>Support enhanced information provision and dissemination expanding existing information points by developing a joined-up UK-Ireland arts opportunities hub.</p>

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1. Introduction



1.1 Research overview

British Council Ireland commissioned this research to understand the connections that exist between the UK and Ireland in arts and culture in order that there is an evidence base on which to forge new alliances, develop sustained connections and enhance existing mechanisms that lead to greater cultural collaboration and cooperation, and drive growth in the creative ecosystem between UK and Ireland.

The value of cultural links to the UK, and to Ireland, is significant. Access to arts and cultural opportunity in both countries is facilitated by a shared language, history and ease of mobility across the five nations. This is underpinned by the Common Travel Area (CTA) which ensures the free movement of goods and people across Ireland and the UK. As a result, artists and cultural workers move easily between the UK and Ireland sustaining a livelihood by the porous and open border provided by the CTA. It is not unusual to work in one jurisdiction and live in another.⁷

The CTA is a long-standing arrangement between the UK, Ireland, and the Crown Dependencies (Isle of Man and Channel Islands) that allows citizens of the UK and Ireland to travel, live, and work in either jurisdiction without special permission or border checks. For many Irish writers, musicians and creatives, entering the UK market is often an early or mid-point in their career path, while many writers have UK publishers and agents, and musicians are signed with UK labels. Many media personalities and celebrities in the UK are Irish (Graham Norton, Dara Ó Briáin, Angela Scanlon) and year on year, Irish artists are winning significant awards such as the BAFTAs (Cillian Murphy for *Oppenheimer*; Element Pictures for *Poor Things*; *Banshees of Inisherin*), Literature awards such as the Booker Prize (Paul Lynch 2023) and the Granta Shortlist (Sara Baume and Thomas Morris, 2023) along with London Fashion week, November 2023 opening with Irish designer Paul Costelloe. A significant number of Irish individuals lead arts and cultural organisations in the UK, for example, Dublin-born Fergus Linehan was appointed Director of the Edinburgh International Festival in 2014 (vacating post in 2022) and ex-Director of Arts Council Ireland Mary Cloake, runs The Bluecoat, Liverpool's centre for the contemporary arts. Conversely, Róisín McBrinn from Clean Break Theatre company in London was appointed Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre, Dr Caroline Campbell, appointed Director of the National Gallery of Ireland came to this role from Director of

Collections and Research in the National Gallery in London and Robert Read, CEO of the National Concert Hall in Dublin, was latterly Managing Director at King's Place, London. Indeed, due to proximity and ease of travel, it is not uncommon for individuals to live in one jurisdiction and work in another (this is across many sectors including banking, IT, manufacturing, higher education, etc).

There are many other UK-Ireland cultural connections to note such as the Liverpool Irish Festival, which is the UK's largest Irish arts and culture-led festival and celebrated its 21st birthday in 2023; in 2025, the London Irish Centre celebrated 70 years in London and continues to promote the values of the Irish community and culture; Culture Night is a UK-Ireland-wide initiative that celebrates arts, culture and creativity; and in 2028, Ireland will jointly host the 2028 UEFA Men's European Football Championship (UEFA Euro 2028) with the UK. In film and television, advertising, VR and AR as well as the performing arts, co-production between Ireland (North South) and the UK (East West) is common.

Of the instances noted here, the connection East West tends to be less frequent and more intermittent, driven largely by personal connection and informal networks and opportunities. Connections North South, between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are arguably more strategic, and have been fostered through formal mechanisms such as the Government of Ireland's Shared Island Initiative⁸ and the context of shared geography. A number of organisations are established as all-island entities or have sister organisations in Northern Ireland, creating strong links between the two territories. Examples include The Tyrone Guthrie Centre, the Heritage Council, Visual Artists Ireland, and the Irish Museums Association. In May 2024, the Arts Council of Ireland launched Luail, the new all-island dance company, which will provide a 32-county platform for dance, collaboration and development on the island. There is also a close working relationship between national bodies in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, such as the Arts Councils and National Theatres as well as not-for-profit agencies such as Business to Arts and Arts & Business NI. Culture Ireland, the Irish State Agency for the arts in the Department of Culture, Communication and Sport, supports artists and cultural organisations from Ireland and Northern Ireland to present and promote their work internationally. Running parallel to these entities are six all-island bodies overseen by the North South Ministerial Council which was set up as a result of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement.

7: Durrer, V., McGrath, A. & McAlister, E. (2023) *Building Capacity for the Cultural Industries: Towards a Shared-Island Approach for Dance and Theatre*. Irish Research Council / Shared Island Unit. Available here: [Building Capacity for Cultural Industries: A Shared-Island Approach](#) | British Council.

8: Gov.IE: [Shared Island initiative](#).

While not necessarily focussed on arts activity, they are a good example of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland all-island, cross-border working across the island. These are: Waterways Ireland, InterTradelreland, Food Safety Authority, Foras na Gaeilge, Ulster-Scots Agency, the Irish Lights Commission and SEUPB.⁹

There is a rich anecdotal and informal awareness of the strong bilateral connections across these islands married with a keen understanding of the importance of this ecosystem to individuals engaged in cultural production and practice but there is limited existing research on cultural connections between the UK and Ireland. This research attempts to address this gap in knowledge by capturing some of the contemporary connections between the UK and Ireland in arts and culture; and exploring geographic specificity and attraction, and the motivations (and challenges) associated with this attraction. The research generates suggestions and opportunities for the type of strategic initiatives and policy supports that could create, or enhance, greater mobility and stronger connections across the UK and Ireland. Of particular interest are the complex connections and nuanced linkages across the islands – North, South, East and West – and the flows of artists and cultural practitioners across the bilateral relationship.

This research works across Ireland and the four nations of the UK. It recognises that each place has its own rich historical and current connection to Ireland and there is great appetite to strengthen opportunities to build further connections and to collaboration. It is important to note that culture is a devolved matter and each government responds to the needs and future of culture through its own laws and policies.

Starling Start was appointed to conduct the research between September 2024 and February 2025. A total of 278 people participated in this research through interviews (23 people) and survey responses (255 people). Quantitative data was also made available by a number of semi-state and arm's-length bodies across the UK and Ireland. The report was finalised in August 2025.

Research aims

The research aims were to:

- Establish the current state of play between the UK and Ireland and across several disciplines in the arts – mapping existing or past relationships, and what stakeholders feel is working or has worked well.
- Explore any barriers to initiating or maintaining connections, and gather thoughts on how to build greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, and deeper relationships in future cultural connections between the UK and Ireland.

9: Gov.IE: North South Ministerial Council.

Research scope

Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK provides an overview of the movement of artists and cultural professionals across, and between, Ireland and the four nations of the UK and sets out a picture of the way in which the governments across the four nations work together. It highlights the inter-government frameworks that exist between the devolved governments and Ireland, as well as between the UK and Ireland, and also provides a brief overview of the current funding landscape for UK-Ireland cultural mobility.

Connections across these islands have existed for centuries and there is a rich and layered history of cultural interconnection and mobility. This research does not rehearse these various and complex layers and connections but does acknowledge that these exist and works to build on and progress this rich context characterised by nuance, difference and resourcefulness. It acknowledges that these connections have been fostered through the context of shared geography, proximity and ease of movement across the islands, in part attributable to the Common Travel Area (CTA) which protects the movement of people across the borders of the UK and Ireland and guarantees the maintenance of associated reciprocal rights for citizens of both countries with respect to all levels of education, employment, healthcare and social benefits.¹⁰

However, the structural and social shock that occurred when the UK left the EU highlighted that there is a need for greater strategic attention on the creative economy and cultural co-operation between Ireland and the four nations of the UK. This was recognised by the UK's Prime Minister and Ireland's Taoiseach in their renewed commitment to a close, cooperative and connected working relationship, which was announced when the UK's Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, visited Dublin, Ireland in September 2024¹¹ and reaffirmed in the March 2025 *UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement*.¹² The value and importance of 'the deep ties between our people and cultures' and 'the unique ability of arts, culture and sport to forge and foster ties between people across these islands' were underscored in this statement.

10: The commitment by both governments to the Common Travel Area (CTA) was reaffirmed in a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2019. See here for more: [Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Ireland on the CTA - GOV.UK](#).

11: Gov.IE: [Joint Statement](#) by Taoiseach Simon Harris and Prime Minister Keir Starmer, 7 September 2024.

12: Gov.UK: [Joint statement](#) between Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Taoiseach Micheál Martin: 6 March 2025.

Responding to a gap in research

This study responds to a significant gap in the existing research field and one which speaks to the need for additional knowledge and insight on UK-Ireland cultural connection, flows and the wider creative ecosystem. It aims to capture the structural and interpersonal mechanisms that influence cultural connection and mobility across Ireland and the UK. In addition to this directional (north-south-east-west) focus, this review is undertaken across numerous layers of the arts and cultural ecology including intergovernmental statements of shared intent, policy frameworks, strategic bilateral funding initiatives, and reports and reviews which illuminate the enduring strength and persistence of practitioners and producers.

Research terminology

- When we refer to the UK, we are referring to the four nations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- When we refer to Ireland, we are referring to the 26 counties that comprise the Republic of Ireland.
- If the island of Ireland is referred to, this is clearly stated in text.
- If Great Britain is referred to, this term relates to England, Scotland and Wales.
- The Arts Council | An Chomhairle Ealaíon is referred to as Arts Council Ireland throughout, with the exception of references.
- The terminology of 'North, South, East and West' is used in the context of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement.
- Bilateral is a term which is used to refer to the two-way relationship between Ireland and the the UK.

Cultural policy

Policies set out guidance and frameworks for decision making, while strategies set goals and direction. In Ireland and in the UK, cultural policy is inferred from government framework, strategy and priority documents. This is because neither Ireland nor the UK have a national cultural policy. What does exist are governmental strategies for growth, investment and intention. Cultural policy can also be derived from the strategies of the national agencies for the arts and numerous agencies, organisations and institutions are responsible for the interpretation and delivery of these priorities and strategies.

In 2024, the UK government released the green paper *Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy*,¹³ which identifies the creative and cultural industries as one of eight areas that it will focus on for growth across the next ten years. Other sectors include Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Defence, Digital Technologies, Lifesciences and Financial Services and Business and Professional Services.

Followed by the UK government's *Arts Everywhere Fund*,¹⁴ the Government announced plans for arts venues, museums, libraries and heritage buildings to receive a share of more than £270 million to support jobs and create opportunities for young people to learn creative skills while helping to boost people's sense of pride in where they live. In February 2025, the Culture Secretary, Lisa Nandy, marked the 60th anniversary of the first ever arts white paper and delivered the inaugural Jennie Lee lecture – *Art for Everyone*.¹⁵

More recently, in June 2025, the UK government launched the *Creative Industries Sector Plan*.¹⁶ This plan sets out the UK government's intention to ensure that the UK is the number one destination worldwide for investment in creativity and innovation and aims to significantly increase investment by 2035. The *Creative Industries Sector Plan* was published alongside the UK's *Modern Industrial Strategy*: this builds upon the 2024 green paper to provide strategic certainty in pursuit of growth and productivity.

Other key documents for the four nations of the UK include:

- Department for Communities (Northern Ireland) *Draft Strategy for Culture & Arts 2016-2026*¹⁷
- *A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan (2023)*¹⁸
- *Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030*,¹⁹ opened for consultation in September 2024 and published in May 2025²⁰

In Ireland, a national cultural policy is currently under development. However, a framework document titled, *Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025* was released in 2020.²¹ In addition, Creative Ireland, an all-of-government programme that aims to inspire and transform people, places and communities through creativity, launched the *Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-26*.²²

In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, cultural policy is largely devolved and set by the devolved governments of each nation. In England, culture is the responsibility of the UK Government (DCMS). The UK Government, through DCMS, also retains responsibility for certain reserved matters and UK-wide functions, working collaboratively with the devolved governments through intergovernmental mechanisms to ensure coordination. At the local level, authorities – and, in some English regions, combined authorities – also have roles in cultural delivery.

It is important to note that that the national cultural agencies of the four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) work separately and together, alongside wider government investment, to support the creative and cultural ecosystem of the UK. They gather data according to that devolved government's own policy priorities and work together to support wider bilateral and multilateral opportunities, particularly since the UK left the EU. Some of these agencies and institutions have inputted into this research, but not all. We recognise therefore that this research consequently offers only a partial picture.

13: Gov.UK: [Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy](#).

14: Gov.UK: [Major investment to boost growth and cement Britain's place as cultural powerhouse](#).

15: Gov.UK: [About us](#). Also see Gov.UK: [Jennie Lee Lecture - Arts for Everyone](#).

16: Gov.UK: [Creative Industries Sector Plan](#).

17: Dept for Communities, NI: [Consultation on the Strategy for Culture & Arts 2016-2026](#)

18: Gov.Scot: [A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan](#).

19: Gov.Wales: [Consultation on the draft Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030](#).

20: Gov.Wales: [Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030](#).

21: Gov.IE: [Culture 2025](#).

22: Creative Ireland: [Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-26](#).

“

The small amount of connections I have found have been extremely fruitful, largely due to the political, civic, and social similarities. I have found many smaller organisations that are structuring and funding themselves in a similar way to Wales, and with similar motivations, that are willing to take risks in the work produced and in the connections made. We have found it very limiting with short term and low levels of funding available, to make longer lasting connections. But the potential is huge, and we keep working where we can.²³

23: Survey response.

1.2 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted in order to achieve a fuller picture of UK-Ireland cultural connection and flows.

Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted across Ireland and the four nations of the UK, and interviewees included arm's-length agencies, cultural organisations as well as individuals working in different artforms and in different countries.

Each of the nations' arm's-length agencies also provided information relating to grants and supports from the last two to three years across the four nations and Ireland. This data was gathered from Arts Council Ireland, Arts Council England, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, British Council, Creative Scotland, the Arts Council of Wales and its international agency, Wales Arts International, as well as Creative Ireland and Culture Ireland, which are unit functions within Ireland's Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. Our analysis draws on the data and gathered from arm's-length bodies as well as information provided through an online survey extended through the arm's-length bodies as well as through a number of artists representative entities. 255 individuals from across the UK and Ireland responded to this survey and their responses have been included in our analysis also.

We have organised the report as follows:

The report comprises a **rapid review of literature** pertinent to the research area and scope of the research project. This section is organised to cover several different sectoral and infrastructural layers including intergovernmental statements of shared intent, policy frameworks, and strategic bilateral funding initiatives. The material reviewed also includes policies, policy reviews, action plans, reports, research papers, surveys, and guidance documents from both Ireland and the UK, as well as some wider-reaching material from the EU.

The next section captures the **quantitative data** from arm's-length bodies and other agencies along with survey responses gathered throughout December 2024 and January 2025. In total, 255 respondents completed an online survey – 119 from Ireland, and 136 from the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales). Survey participants were also invited to respond with longer-form answers which expounded existing or potential relationships between Ireland and the four nations of the UK, perceptions of successes or failings in East-West and North-South collaboration and further detail on the barriers that individual practitioners/producers experience. Survey responses are anonymous.

The following list details the participants of **semi-structured interviews**. These were as follows:

- Six interviews were conducted with arm's-length bodies or government arts agencies with international remits: Arts Council Ireland, Culture Ireland, Arts Council England, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Creative Scotland, the Arts Council of Wales and its international agency, Wales Arts International.
- Four interviews took place with organisations or umbrella bodies working in/across the UK: Centre for Cultural Value (England), Edinburgh Fringe (Scotland), Unlimited (UK-wide), and Theatre & Dance NI (Northern Ireland).
- Eight interviews were undertaken with ten individual artists/collectives/grassroots organisations across disciplines and geographical locations: visual art (Northern Ireland), literature (Ireland), theatre (Northern Ireland), digital and immersive arts (Ireland), theatre and poetry (Wales), theatre (Ireland), music (Wales), music (Ireland and England), and poetry (Scotland). Individual practitioners received an honorarium for their contributions.

In total, Starling Start conducted eighteen multi-layered interviews between December 2024 and February 2025.

The final section of the report offers an overview of opportunities that could support greater cultural connection and collaboration between the UK and Ireland.

Limitations

Time and budget constraints have limited the number of interviews that could be conducted and analysed in-depth. Surveys, while reaching a broader audience are always at risk of self-selection bias, where only the most engaged practitioners respond, potentially skewing results. It should also be noted that responses and findings are overwhelmingly supportive of closer collaboration between Ireland and the four nations of the UK. This could mean that the sample is representative of a more vocal majority who are positive about closer collaboration.

Furthermore, there was limited open-source information available which would have otherwise provided insights on mobility patterns. This presented a challenge to mapping connections between the UK and Ireland as only a partial view was available. Consequently, information was requested from arm's-length bodies and related agencies who provided unpublished data.

“

Thanks to my experience of living and working in the UK for over two decades, I have an extensive network in my field of contemporary art, and an equally extensive network in Ireland. I am always actively seeking opportunities to facilitate the support of UK artists to exhibit in Ireland, and also to support artists based in Ireland to exhibit in the UK. The main barrier to this is funding support, particularly since the UK has left the EU, as EU creative connection funds are no longer eligible. I have been able to invite UK based artists to work with me in Ireland thanks to my role as curator with a regional arts organisation, but the ‘return journey’ – bringing Irish artists to the UK – has not been possible.²⁴

²⁴: Survey response.

2. Review of relevant literature





The border is a practical concern.²⁵

2.1 Introduction to the literature review

The rapid review of literature comprised several different sectoral and infrastructural layers including intergovernmental statements of shared intent, policy frameworks, and strategic bilateral funding initiatives. The material reviewed included policies, policy reviews, action plans, reports, research papers, surveys, and guidance documents from both Ireland and the UK, as well as some wider-reaching material from the EU. Some summary thoughts are captured below and these are followed by reference to a small number of pertinent texts and key governmental initiatives.

2.2 Review

Across the UK and Ireland, the literature can be thematically characterised first by challenges, then by existing strengths and future opportunities. It acknowledges that the arts sector can be particularly vulnerable to high-level nuance or external factors (for example, the COVID-19 pandemic or the UK's departure from the EU) and lacks depth of resilience at a policy and resource level. Notwithstanding this, the resilience of individuals and the adaptability of the sector are its strengths and – despite frequent flux and instability, as well as significant challenges at a policy, government strategy and resource level – arts and culture survive, sometimes thrive. At a governmental and arm's-length agency level, departments are working actively in multilateral ways to nurture and strengthen connection and opportunity across Ireland and the four nations of the UK. Some recent examples of this include the work of Arts Council England with Arts Council Ireland and the Nordic Cultural Forum and also the work of Creative Scotland with Flanders.²⁶

The literature highlights the persistent challenges and limited strategic enabling mechanisms that foster and nurture UK-Ireland cultural connection and collaboration. Funding disparities, limited data availability and alignment, disparity amongst definitions, administrative complexities and

inconsistent data collection also remain significant barriers to bilateral collaboration, arts and cultural worker mobility and exchange. While high-level policy frameworks, such as intergovernmental agreements and wider government investment, signal willingness to strengthen ties, gaps in practical implementation hinder short, medium and long-term impact.

As set out in *Cultural Policy in the UK: counting culture* (2022), what we once called the 'arts' is now designated as the 'cultural industries' and captures 'activities based on individual talent to produce content, services or products with cultural and symbolic value' (p.4, 2022). This shift occurred in the UK in 1997 with the formal origin of the term 'creative industries' located in the establishment of the Creative Industries Task Force by newly-elected Prime Minister, Tony Blair and in the subsequent *Creative Industries Mapping Document* produced by DCMS in 1998 (Flew, 2012). This shift from 'arts' to 'industry' marks a change in how this sector was valued and how it was perceived to contribute to the economy as well as to society.

In Ireland, creative and cultural industries have a more recent adoption and can be traced to approximately ten years ago with a mention in the 2015 Arts Council Ireland's *Making Great Art Work: Leading the development of the arts in Ireland*.²⁷ This is followed by the use of this term in Creative Ireland's *Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-26*²⁸ and echoed in higher education in University College Dublin's BA Hons in Creative & Cultural Industries (launched 2022)²⁹ and also the Institute of Art, Design and Technology's rebranding in 2025 as Ireland's campus for Creative Industries.³⁰

Space is limited to review global, EU, UK and Ireland usages of the terms creative and cultural industries and understandings of creative economy but for a global perspective and overview, consult the 2024 United Nations *Advancing the Measurement of the Creative Economy: a Revised Framework for Creative Industries and Trade* ³¹, for an EU perspective, the European Commission's 2025 *Unleashing the Potential of the Cultural and Creative Industries*,³² and for a UK-wide view, see the Creative PEC's 2024 State of the Nations report, *Arts, Culture and Heritage: Audiences and Workforce*.³³ These research-focussed reports show that the contribution of the creative and cultural industries is widely acknowledged globally, locally and transnationally but that there are significant differences in definitions, data measurement and data parameters. As a result, some measures are not comparable nor is analysis satisfactory, aligned or complete (p.3, UNCTAD, 2024).

27: Arts Council Ireland (2015). *Making Great Art Work*.

28: Creative Ireland - *Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-26*.

29: *UCD launches new BA in Creative & Cultural Industries* - UCD College of Arts and Humanities.

30: IADT *Strategy*.

31: United Nations (2024) *Advancing the measurement of the creative economy*.

32: European Commission, (2025). *Unleashing the Potential of the Cultural and Creative Industries*.

33: Creative PEC's 2024 State of the Nations Report, *Arts, Culture and Heritage: Audiences and Workforce*.

25: Hadley, S. and Woodley, S. (2023). *The Future of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Arts: Research and Policy Findings from Ireland and Northern Ireland*. [online] Irish Studies in International Affairs, Volume 34, Number 2, Analysing and Researching Ireland, North and South 2023, pp. 48-77 (Article). Available at: muse.jhu.edu/article/886124/pdf.

26: NEMO – Northern European Mobility Opportunity.

However, what is widely agreed is that the creative economy (and as such the goods and services of the creative and cultural industries) are on a growth trajectory and make a significant contribution to trade, reputation and GDP.³⁴ UNCTAD's global survey reveals that 'creative and cultural industries generate annual revenues of almost US\$ 2.3 trillion globally, and that Europe is the largest exporter of creative services (with the exports of creative services³⁵ reaching US\$ 720 billion in 2022), followed by Asia (US\$ 359 billion) and Northern America (US\$ 274 billion). In the UK, official economic estimates suggest that the cultural sector annually contributes £30.6 billion to the economy in gross value added and accounts for 703,000 jobs (p.5, Hopkins, Hay, Taylor, O'Brien, 2024).³⁶

'Creative services are increasingly significant contributors to global services exports, primarily dominated by developed economies due to their advanced human capital, skills, and digital infrastructure. The world's largest exporters of creative services, including both developed and developing economies, have abundant human capital and skills and possess sufficient digital infrastructure' (p.43, UNCTAD 2024). The UNCTAD report highlights that Ireland is in the ten major creative services exporters which account for 69 per cent of global exports. The report places Ireland second to the US in the export of creative services (with 244 billion and 231 US\$ billion respectively) and the UK (at 81 US\$ billion). Ireland ranks highly on the human capital index (World Bank 2020) and is amongst the most educated nations in the world (OECD 2023). Many multinational companies are now located here and strongly contribute to creative services exports, especially in computer services, as they report their global copyright and license income from here (p.26, UNCTAD 2024).

The UK government in 2024 released the green paper *Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy*,³⁷ which identifies the creative and cultural industries as one of eight areas that it will focus on for growth across the next ten years. Other sectors include Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Defence, Digital Technologies, Life sciences, Financial Services and Business and Professional Services.

In June 2025 the green paper was followed by a 10 year, multibillion-pound *Industrial Strategy* aimed at backing priority sectors, creating jobs and driving long-term economic growth.³⁸ It sets out a blueprint for the next decade as part of the UK government's

wider *Plan for Change* and seeks to overhaul the UK's skills system, support innovation, and channel fresh investment into high-growth areas. The creative industries are worth £124 billion to the UK economy, and are recognised as a valuable sector for jobs, growth, opportunities and soft power.³⁹ In February 2025, the UK government announced the £270 million *Arts Everywhere Fund* which is directed towards arts venues, museums, libraries, creative skills generation and the heritage sector in a major boost for growth. In June 2025, a further £75 million to expand two major AHRC-led creative industries programmes followed as part of the government's *Creative Industries Sector Plan*.⁴⁰ The *Creative Industries Sector Plan* was published alongside the UK's *Industrial Strategy*, and builds on the green paper to provide strategic certainty in pursuit of growth and productivity. The Plan is framed in the context of sustaining and investing in the UK's position as a global leader for creativity and innovation.

In the UK, there is a developing body of research that analyses the creative industries through the lens of growth for the economy and jobs, evidenced by bodies such as the Creative Industries Policy and Research Centre.⁴¹ The PEC, which is funded by the AHRC and jointly hosted by the University of Newcastle, alongside the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), comprises a research consortium made up of Sussex University, Sheffield University, Work Advance, and Newcastle University. It works to support the UK's creative industries through the production of independent evidence that supports research that explores 'causal relationships between economic variables as opposed to correlations' and highlights the 'importance for tracking data on a longitudinal basis for policymaking and authoritative decision-making' (O'Brien, Taylor, Wang, 2025).⁴²

An example of this is the 2024 Arts, Culture and Heritage Audiences and Workforce Policy Brief⁴³ which provides a 'state of the nation' research report using data from the DCMS Participation Survey and Labour Force Survey and Census 2021. It shows how cultural engagement is uneven across the four nations of the UK and also shows significant differences in participation in arts, culture and heritage based on gender, ethnicity, and disability status.

34: See p. 112, UNCTAD'S *Creative Economy Outlook 2024* for current definitions of 'Creative Economy' and 'Creative and Cultural Industries': [Creative Economy Outlook 2024 | UN Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#).

35: The six services groups include: advertising, market research; and architecture; audiovisual; cultural, recreational, and; heritage services; Information; research and development; software (p.23, [UNCTAD Creative Economy Outlook, 2024](#)).

36: Hopkins, E. Hay, B. Taylor, M. O'Brien, D. (2024). *Audiences and workforces in arts culture and heritage*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC). doi: 10.5281/zenodo.12806196. Available [here](#).

37: Gov.UK: [Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy](#).

38: Gov.UK: [Industrial Strategy](#).

39: Gov.UK: [Major investment to boost growth and cement Britain's place as cultural powerhouse](#).

40: [AHRC welcomes significant DCMS funding for creative industries – UKRI and Gov.UK: Creative Industries Sector Plan](#).

41: [Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](#).

42: The four areas of focus by the CPEC are: State of the Nations regular thematic reporting; commissioning and conducting research to address evidence gaps; developing briefings and submissions to respond to priority policy issues; embedding knowledge exchange via strategic policy engagement across government. CPEC also convenes networks, including Research Fellows, Global Creative Economy Council and Industry Champions. The Creative PEC's flagship *State of the Nations* reports cover four priority thematic areas, with each partner organisation leading on a specific theme: Internationalisation – led by Newcastle University; Arts, Culture and Heritage – led by University of Sheffield; Research & Development, Innovation and Clusters – led by University of Sussex; Creative Education, Skills and Talent – led by Work Advance. See here for more: [Research - Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](#).

43: Hopkins, E. Hay, B. Taylor, M. O'Brien, D. (2024) *Audiences and workforces in arts culture and heritage*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC). doi: 10.5281/zenodo.12806196. Available [here](#).

The report provides information on workforce demographics and geographic concentration for those who work in arts, culture and heritage. This research, alongside others produced by the Creative Policy and Evidence Centre, provides significant evidence to support policy development, analysis and 'the production of independent and authoritative evidence and policy advice'.⁴⁴

Other initiatives such as the Centre for Cultural Value (Leeds)⁴⁵ have been established in recent years to undertake 'rigorous research and evaluation of what works and what needs to change'. The Centre for Cultural Value (Leeds) project *Making data work: A scoping survey to develop a mixed-methods evaluation framework for culture* recommends the development of unified principles for quantitative data gathering and cultural data trusts, which could subsequently be adopted by 'policy/practice networks at local and national levels'.

At the same time, in cultural policy studies, the resilience and adaptability of artists, organisations and policymakers demonstrate the sector's capacity to innovate and overcome structural limitations, the lived experiences of artists and their mobility across borders has been increasingly studied and show that borders impact artists' livelihoods and practice.⁴⁶

In the context of Ireland, the economic value of the creative and cultural industries has not yet prompted dedicated state investment in research that examines impacts and contributions to the economy. There is a significant lack of analysis of the creative and cultural industries in Ireland — including their overall value to the country, employment figures, existing skills gaps, and potential inequalities. The contribution of these sectors to GDP remains underexplored, as does the complexity and intersectionality of the workforce, effects of inward investment, or indeed outward migration or interdependencies with other sectors. (See Brook, O'Brien, and Taylor 2020; Hopkins, Hay, Taylor, O'Brien, 2024; Bakhshi, Cahill-Jones, 2025; O'Brien, Taylor, Wang 2025 for comparable studies in the UK).

The rapid review of literature also highlights the limited and inconsistent collection of data across Ireland and the four nations of the UK. In 2023, Hadley and Woodley noted that they found that the data they requested (from Arts Council Ireland (2014–2017) and Arts Council of Northern Ireland (2015)) could not be 'provided in a standardised format, and we understand that neither arts council specifically aims to gather data on cross-border activity and/or cooperation'. Researchers Victoria Durrer (University College Dublin),⁴⁷

44: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.

45: Centre for Cultural Value, School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds.

46: Durrer, V., McGrath, A. and Campbell, P. (2022). Artists' Mobility Across Borders: A Mixed Methods Approach to Understanding Dance on the Island of Ireland. *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy / Zeitschrift für Kulturmanagement und Kulturpolitik*, 8(2), pp.115–136. doi.org/10.14361/zkmm-2022-0205. Available here.

47: Durrer, V. and McCall Magan, K. (2017). Cultural policymaking and research on the Island of Ireland. *Cultural Trends*, 26(3), pp.189–194. doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2017.1342982. Available here.

Aoife McGrath (Queen's University Belfast),⁴⁸ Pat Cooke (University College Dublin) and Kerry McCall Magan (British Council),⁴⁹ have also noted the lack of data, the need for data and the importance of data across many years.

*'The reality of the research to date is that it highlights how little we know about the mechanisms, both structural and interpersonal, that support the cultural and creative networks across the island of Ireland.'*⁵⁰

This quotation, taken from Hadley and Woodley's ARINS (*Analysing and Researching Ireland, North and South*) research, refers to the context of the island of Ireland. However, the same sentiment can be expressed, perhaps even more vigorously, within the context of the two islands – UK and Ireland. Indeed, existing research relates primarily to a 'North-South' axis on the island of Ireland and does not capture 'East-West' concerns between the island of Ireland and England, Scotland and Wales. Nor indeed does any existing research acknowledge the nuance and specific context of working across the devolved governments of the four nations of the UK and exploring this within the context of greater collaboration and connection across the Common Travel Area and with Ireland.

A review of pertinent literature also shows that cultural practice and production are interconnected on the island of Ireland, with cross-border movement and mobility registering as an expectation amongst cultural professionals.⁵¹ The trope of artists and art workers as 'highly networked individuals for whom to travel, live in new places and engage with different cultures is part and parcel of a continuing search for meaningful encounters'⁵² is only partially true in certain contexts, and unreflective of contemporaneous political, social, environmental and financial pressures.

In July 2021, an Arts Council of Northern Ireland report outlined the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on individual artists, Arts Council of Northern Ireland make the following formal acknowledgement to the NI Executive in a bid to secure further recognition of the issues and the impacts of not receiving additional financial support: 'there is significant risk that our talent pool will be diminished as artists and creatives leave to find alternative work.

48: Durrer, V., McGrath, A. and McAlister, E. (2017). *Building Capacity for the Cultural Industries Towards a Shared-Island Approach for Dance and Theatre*. Available here.

49: Cooke, P. and McCall, K. (2015). *View of Conference Organisers' Introduction*. Irish Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy, culturalpolicy.ie. Available here. Also McCall Magan, K. (2023). *Cultural Participation and the perpetuation of middle-class privilege in Dublin, Ireland*. UK: Palgrave MacMillan; Durrer, V., FitzGibbon, A., and McCall Magan, K. (Eds.). (2025). *Cultural Policy: Perspectives on the Island of Ireland* (1st ed.). Routledge. doi.org/10.4324/9781032716466 Available here.

50: Brook, O., O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2019). *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries*. Available here.

51: McAlister, E.J., Durrer, V. and McGrath, A. (2022). How might we nurture a shared-island approach to supporting the performing arts? Paper presented at Irish Society for Theatre Research.

52: Rand, S. and Felty, H. (2013). *Life between Borders: The Nomadic Life of Curators and Artists*. New York: Apexart.

This is a pool which will take years to get back'. Whilst this research was COVID-19-specific, there is a historic precedence that artists from the island of Ireland will – at some point – either leave the sector to find employment in other sectors, or aim to continue to work in the sector elsewhere – usually the UK (primarily England and Scotland), or Europe.

This 'nomadeology'⁵³ by no means represents a unanimous sectoral decision (where choice is possible) nor is it monolithically accessible for artists who face a range of barriers to mobility. These conditions are more recently understood – primarily through lobbying from the grassroots sub-sector, the efforts of unions,⁵⁴ the strength of professional networks and four nation initiatives such as Arts Infopoint UK,⁵⁵ and the public platforms offered to individual practitioners/producers through social media with increasingly expressed concern from artists and practitioners that they feel excluded from decisions that impact them.

The freedom of movement provided by the Common Travel Area has been impacted by the profound consequences of the UK's departure from the EU including a 'quagmire' of increased costs, emotional stress and confusion around legal complexities and mobility requirements. In a survey of international activity published by Arts Council England in 2023:

*'Respondents identified a challenging regulatory / trade and financial environment as barriers to international activity between April 2018 and May 2022, and there was little optimism that these barriers will ease in the near future.'*⁵⁶

On the island of Ireland, discrepancies within artforms are also highlighted, with a preference noted amongst visual artists to 'put forward the idea (or ideal) that art doesn't have borders', whilst theatre practitioners focus on the administrative and logistical challenges (Hadley and Woodley, 2023).

The literature also demonstrates that mobility across borders is impacted by the asymmetry and disparity of the funding within, and across borders. The Windsor Framework was agreed by the EU-UK Joint Committee, with a view to restoring 'the smooth flow of trade within the UK internal market; safeguard[ing] Northern Ireland's place in the Union; and address[ing] the democratic deficit that was otherwise at the heart of the original Northern Ireland Protocol'.⁵⁷

Increasingly, the implementation of the EU General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR) in Northern Ireland as well as potential VAT differences are impacting the movement and work of artists.

Though this is a rapidly evolving context, these arrangements threaten to undermine efforts to strengthen collaboration between the UK and Ireland.

Arts Council of Northern Ireland, occupying the most disinvested of all arts sectors in the UK, pay close attention to the levels of funding and spend per capita:

*'ACNI receives the equivalent of £5.07 of arts funding per head of population. Its nearest comparator, Arts Council Wales, received £10.51 per head of population. The disparity in government support for the arts is even greater on the island of Ireland. [Arts Council Ireland] received £25.90 from its own exchequer sources.'*⁵⁸

A recent report reveals that Northern Ireland's arts sector receives less funding than it did before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Key drivers of this decline include sustained cuts to public funding, the long-term impacts of COVID-19, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, all compounded over the past decade (Smyth, 2025).⁵⁹

Indeed, two mid to large-scale surveys in 2024 by both Culture Action Europe (*Creative Pulse: A survey on the status and working conditions of artists and CCS professionals*)⁶⁰ and Arts Council of Northern Ireland (*Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland*)⁶¹ indicate a bleak working context for Northern Ireland. The picture is of precarious contracts, low rates of remuneration (with a mean income for artists in NI of just £11,200), labour inequality, and disproportionately high levels of anxiety, compared to the general population, as an outcome of these structural, sectoral insufficiencies.

In contrast in Ireland, in both ambition and action, significant funding has been directed towards arts and culture. The Basic Income for the Arts⁶² research pilot was conceived as the Irish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This investment of €25m from the Government of Ireland through the Department of Culture, Communication and Sport) enables artists and creative arts workers – a sample

53: Term coined by Belgian sociologist Pascal Gielen. Gielen, P. (2015). *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and Post-Fordism*. Antennae ed. Amsterdam: Valiz.

54: Ireland joined England and Scotland in having an artists' union in 2021. Whilst Praxis' remit is all-island, obvious difficulties emerge when aiming to work across policy and levels of investment. Wales does not have a specific artists' union.

55: 'Arts Infopoint UK's function is to support the continued mobility of artists internationally by providing practical advice and information on issues such as visas, work permits and residencies. It also hosts country-specific webinars, signposts resources and researches contemporary challenges to artist mobility.' Arts Infopoint UK. (2025). *About us | Arts Infopoint UK | Gwybodfan Celf y DU*.

56: BOP Consulting, Parker, L., Coriette, B. and Naylor, R. (2023). *International Activity of the Arts Council England*. Arts Council England. Available [here](#).

57: Gov.UK: [The Windsor Framework - further detail and publications](#).

58: [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Government's lack of investment in the arts is affecting those most in need](#).

59: [Arts Professional: Northern Ireland's arts sector worse off now than before peace agreement](#).

60: Clarke, M., Kula, W., Fengler, M., Pencheva, G., Vermeij, R., Ebert, L. and Moroz, L. (2024). *Creative Pulse: A survey on the status and working conditions of artists and CCS sector professionals in Europe Survey report*. Panteia and Culture Action Europe. Available [here](#).

61: Perspective Economics (2024). *Arts Council of Northern Ireland – Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland*. Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Available [here](#).

62: The Government of Ireland highlights that the Basic Income for the Arts Pilot is not a Universal Basic Income, which is outlined in the Programme for Government. This scheme was extended until February 2026 and subsequently made permanent in 2025. Gov.IE: [Minister O'Donovan announces 6-month extension to the Basic Income for the Arts pilot scheme](#).

of 2000 were selected from a randomised pool following an open application process – to receive a non-means-tested basic income grant of €325 per week. The impacts for practitioners and producers have been transformative, with recipients reporting they spend on average 8 hours per week more on their practice; invest an average of €550 per month (almost 40% of their BIA payment) more into their practice, and are, on average, 18.8% less likely to have difficulty making ends meet, amongst many other benefits.⁶³ They also reported ‘much needed stabilisation to the precarious working conditions of our highly skilled arts workforce’, not least in the improvement of their mental health.

This governmental initiative suggests a shift towards more sustainable and inclusive support mechanisms offering a model that could inform future funding approaches across these islands. It has led to the EU Culture & Education Committee making a subsequent recommendation to create an EU-wide framework which guarantees acceptable pay, and social security benefits for cultural practitioners.⁶⁴ The Basic Income for the Arts scheme is referenced on numerous occasions within the interview and survey responses which follow in later sections of this report.

Key governmental frameworks

While a government policy on arts and culture in Ireland does not exist, the Irish Government has articulated its vision through *Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework*. This framework sets the direction for an ‘all-of-government’ approach, positioning culture laterally across all departments. While this is not a cultural policy for Ireland *per se*, the framework document establishes that arts and culture ‘are integral to all aspects of Irish life’ and establishes a cross-departmental strategy for nurturing and celebrating Irish culture across multiple domains.⁶⁵ In addition, Creative Ireland, an all-of-government programme focusing on creativity and well-being, launched the *Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-26*. This roadmap focuses on three key areas of digital creative industries in Ireland: commercial design; digital games and content creation.⁶⁶ It calls for a digital creative industries forum and highlights a need to map sector priorities, build infrastructure, fund strategic enablers, and create strong government-industry partnerships to support sustainable growth in Ireland’s digital creative economy.

Intergovernmental statements of shared intent

Since 2021, the Government of Ireland has introduced two intergovernmental statements of shared intent which reference culture, with both the Welsh Government (*Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021–25*) and the Scottish Government (*Ireland-Scotland Joint Bilateral Review: Report and Recommendations 2021–25*) which demonstrate a clear willingness and intention to connect and collaborate. Both Scottish and Welsh intergovernmental frameworks were reconfirmed and released in the latter half of 2025.

In September 2024, Taoiseach Simon Harris and Prime Minister Keir Starmer issued a joint statement which emphasised the importance of cultural ties between Ireland and the UK, agreeing to host annual summits starting in March 2025 to deepen cooperation in key areas, including culture.⁶⁷ The statement describes a proposed ‘ambitious reset of the UK-Ireland relationship’⁶⁸ and in March 2025 at the inaugural Leaders’ Summit they recognised the unique position of arts and culture in developing, strengthening and forging the deep ties between our islands.⁶⁹

A strategic partnership of cultural cooperation was announced, which seeks to ‘value the extraordinary influence and contribution of British and Irish cultures and heritages to the artistic and cultural wealth of the public realm and creative industries and institutions in both our countries’.

63: Feldkircher, N. and O’Donnell, B. (2024). *Basic Income for the Arts Impact Assessment (First year)*. Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Available [here](#).

64: Manders, A. (2023) *Report with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors* | A9-0304/2023 | European Parliament.

65: Gov.IE: [Culture 2025](#).

66: Creative Ireland: [Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024–26](#).

67: The four priority areas are: Security, Justice and Global Issues; Climate, energy, technology and innovation; Growth, trade and investment; and Culture, education and people.

68: Gov.IE: [Joint Statement](#) by Taoiseach Simon Harris and Prime Minister Keir Starmer, 7 September 2024.

69: Gov.UK: [Joint statement](#) between Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Taoiseach Micheál Martin, 6 March 2025.

Wales-Ireland

The *Ireland-Wales Joint Shared Statement 2030*⁷⁰ builds on the 2021 Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan has six priorities of which Culture, Language and Heritage are one. There is an emphasis on cultural exchange and community programming including policy development and bilingualism with a focus on increased connections and partnerships in music, literature and other artforms.⁷¹ Interviews indicated the significant level of investment made by the Welsh Government into this relationship through the Shared Statement. The Welsh Government has developed *Agile Cymru*, a cooperation and economic stimulus programme which enables partnerships to 'scale up activity, achieve critical mass and increase profile'.⁷² *Agile Cymru* offers grants across a range of locations and sectors, with a specific strand called the Irish Sea Framework, which aims to underpin all Welsh Government policy areas, including culture and the arts.⁷³ Wales continues to prioritise relations with Ireland and works to strengthen the 'rich tapestry which weaves and connects our national stories'⁷⁴ and is underpinned by historical connections and shared heritage.⁷⁵

*'Ireland and Wales benefit from a rich and often shared cultural heritage which flourishes in each country. Artists play an essential role in both countries, preserving traditional art forms and also re-imagining and representing our current societies through a modern and creative lens.'*⁷⁶

70: [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030](#).

71: Theatre, music and community engagement are highlighted for collaboration in the *Ireland-Wales 2030 Joint Statement* and in the *2024 Shared Statement* four festivals are highlighted for collaboration: St Patrick's Festival, WOMEX, Horizons, and the National Eisteddfod; whilst organisational partnerships include Poetry Ireland, the Irish Writers Centre, Literature Wales and Academi; Other Voices Festival and Lleisïau Eraill between South Wind Blows, Theatr Mwlán and Triongl TV.

72: Gov.Wales: [Agile Cymru](#).

73: Smaller projects, which include travel and engagement, can be awarded up to £5,000, where much larger 'strategic projects, such as forming networks, feasibility studies and pilots' are considered up to £50,000 (though may be subject to specific calls).

74: Senedd.Wales: [Wales-Ireland relations: Exploring an old relationship in a new age](#).

75: [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030](#), p.15.

76: [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-25](#).

Scotland-Ireland

The *Ireland-Scotland Joint Bilateral Review 2021-25*⁷⁷ provides a framework for cooperation across six thematic areas, where the Scottish Government has devolved responsibility. In September 2024, the Irish Government and Scottish Government met and reaffirmed their commitment and shared ambition for a strong bilateral relationship and are working towards a new cooperative framework for the post-2025 period.⁷⁸ The new *Ireland-Scotland Bilateral Cooperation Framework 2030* is in preparation and is expected to be launched by end 2025. The Joint Bilateral Review reported particularly high levels of engagement in public consultation areas around the arts, language and sport. One example highlighted as a case study is the *Edinburgh Festival Fringe*, which in 2019 boasted shows by 191 artists from Ireland and 44 artists from Northern Ireland. Also noted were the high instances of leadership roles occupied in Scotland by Irish directors, and, vice versa. Cultural organisations highlighted include *Showcase Scotland* and *Tradfest*, minority language partnerships such as *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* and *Foras na Gaeilge* (which, again, may include arts), as well as those considered more broadly as part of the creative industries, such as *Glasgow Film Festival* and *Dublin International Film Festival*.



77: [Ireland-Scotland Joint Bilateral Review - Report and Recommendations 2021-25](#)

78: [Scotland-Ireland Joint Bilateral Review communique](#): September 2024.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

As a result of the *Belfast/Good Friday Agreement* (1998),⁷⁹ numerous implementation and cooperation mechanisms have been established, including, for example, the North-South Ministerial Council whose policy oversees InterTradeIreland, the North South Language Body and Waterways Ireland amongst others such as the Shared Island Unit.⁸⁰ Within an all-island context, the shared government frameworks of the *Belfast/Good Friday Agreement* and *New Decade New Approach* (2020)⁸¹ acknowledge the importance of cultural expression in building a shared and inclusive society in Northern Ireland, through recognition and promotion of cultural identity, language rights, and parity of esteem between communities. Within these all-island frameworks, while there is no dedicated body or intergovernmental framework on arts and culture, it is noteworthy to consider the North South Ministerial Council and the bodies and sectors they represent.

Ireland-UK

The *Belfast/Good Friday Agreement* (1998) sought to build relationships within Northern Ireland; between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and between Britain and Ireland. This third strand established East-West institutions, including the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, and the British Irish Parliamentary Association to ‘encourage cooperation and develop good relations between Britain and Ireland’.⁸²

Currently, between Ireland and the UK, *The Memorandum of Understanding on the Common Travel Area* reaffirms these deep cultural, social, and historical ties by safeguarding reciprocal rights, ensuring freedom of movement, and preserving a shared space of identity and heritage. The MoU acknowledges that ‘the arrangements hold a special significance in people’s daily lives and are of immense importance to Ireland and the UK. The detail of these arrangements has developed over time and will continue to do so’.⁸³

On 17 July 2024, only two weeks after the formation of the current UK Labour government, the UK’s Prime Minister and Ireland’s Taoiseach announced a reset in UK-Ireland relations. Culture, education and people to people connections were at the heart of this announcement. The subsequent March 2025, *UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement* recognised the ‘extraordinary influence and contribution of British and Irish cultures and heritages to the artistic and

cultural wealth of the public realm and creative industries and institutions in both our countries,’ and looked forward to forging and fostering ‘ties between people across these islands’ using the ‘unique ability’ of arts, culture and sport.⁸⁴

Ireland and the UK remain supportive of initiatives that foster collaboration and connection, and both governments have been working to develop a strategic partnership that will facilitate new and deepened cultural cooperation between a broader range of institutions and practitioners. A five-year work programme to 2030 has been proposed which focuses on three thematic strands: one on joint programming and curatorial collaborations; a second on professional exchange and development; and a third on joint research and policy initiatives across areas of shared interest. This work programme will develop collaboration between major cultural institutions, projects and people in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Ireland. It is envisaged that the first slate of confirmed joint projects will be announced at the next UK-Ireland Summit in Ireland expected in 2026.

In summary, the literature identifies considerations around terminology, resources and data and the specific challenges faced by the subsidised arts across the Common Travel Area, within the context of the UK leaving the EU and within a wider creative and cultural industries economic context. At a policy level, cultural mobility is widely agreed upon as a significant priority. Fundamentally, the literature underpins the bilateral commitment to fostering UK-Ireland connections and collaboration and acknowledges that success rests not only on high-level agreements, resources and funding but also on the personal networks that individuals need to cultivate, often outside formal structures.

79: Gov.UK: *The Belfast Agreement: An Agreement Reached at the Multi-Party Talks on Northern Ireland*.

80: As a result of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998), numerous implementation and cooperation mechanisms have been established, including, for example, the North-South Ministerial Council whose policy oversees InterTradeIreland, the North South Language Body and Waterways Ireland amongst others.

81: Gov.UK: *New Decade New Approach*.

82: Northern Ireland Assembly: *The Three Strands*

83: Gov.UK: *Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Ireland on the CTA*.

84: *Joint statement* between Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Taoiseach Micheál Martin, 6 March 2025.

“

Awareness of how things operate in a different jurisdiction/geography/cultural environment allows me to keep my imagination alive - it reminds me that things don't need to be the way they are and that it may be possible to change things for the better. It also reminds me that our history and environment have taught us things that others don't yet know and that we have something of value to offer to others.⁸⁵

⁸⁵: Survey response.

3. Strategic funding initiatives and data gathering



3.1 Strategic funding initiatives and data gathering

In the section that follows, it is important to highlight that there are a number of funding initiatives that exist across the UK-Ireland relationship, which are supported by various agencies.

The table below provides an indication of the main significant sources for arts and culture between Ireland and the UK (including Northern Ireland and Great Britain) that support collaboration, accessibility, mobility, touring, exchange, and cultural diplomacy. These funds are designed to maintain and deepen cultural links, and some are all-island (Ireland – Northern Ireland) while others support specific collaboration between Ireland and the four nations of the UK.

Table 2: Summary overview table of UK-Ireland funding

	Agency	Focus	Website
Ireland–Northern Ireland	Department for Communities (DfC)	The Department for Communities (DfC) has strategic responsibility for equality, anti-poverty, sports, arts and culture, languages, finding employment, historic environment, housing, regeneration, benefits and pensions, community and voluntary sector development, social legislation and child support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports arts and culture policy and development. • Funds institutions and community cultural initiatives, sometimes in partnership with Ireland’s government. 	communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/about-department-communities
	Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI)	Supports cross-border and cross-channel cultural exchange. Offers collaborative funding to artists and organisations based in Northern Ireland and the UK, particularly through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Programme for Organisations • Travel Awards 	artscouncil-ni.org
	EU/Peace & Reconciliation Programmes	PEACE IV and PEACE PLUS (2021–2027) EU-funded cross-border initiatives aimed at peace and reconciliation. Supports arts, youth, and cultural projects across Ireland and Northern Ireland. Managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).	seupb.eu
	North South Ministerial Council (NSMC)	Set up under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the NSM oversees Language and Culture Bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes Foras na Gaeilge (for the Irish language) and Ulster-Scots Agency. • Supports cultural exchange, language initiatives, and festivals across the island. 	northsouthministerialcouncil.org

Wales– Ireland	Arts Council of Wales / Wales Arts International	<p>Arts Council of Wales is the official body that funds and develops the arts in Wales. Wales Arts International is the international agency of the Arts Council of Wales, which provides advice and support to artists and arts organisations from Wales who work internationally.</p> <p>They co-fund Ireland-Wales collaboration, especially around shared themes and work in collaboration with other arts councils in the UK, as well as British Council Wales on joint projects and funding initiatives and offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Opportunities Fund • Connect and Flourish Fund (can include Irish partnerships) • Strategic support for Welsh festivals, artists and cultural exchange, including Welsh language, music, and performing arts. <p>Arts Infopoint UK is hosted by Wales Arts International. It is a dedicated resource supporting international artist mobility to and from the UK. It offers comprehensive, free information for artists, cultural professionals, and organisations navigating the complexities of cross-border creative work.</p> <p>Arts Infopoint UK is a collaborative effort led by Wales Arts International (the international agency of the Arts Council of Wales), in partnership with Creative Scotland, Arts Council England, and Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The initiative is supported by the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government, and it forms part of the On the Move network of mobility information points across Europe and worldwide.</p>	<p>arts.wales wai.org.uk artsinfopointUK.com</p>
	Welsh Government	<p>Agile Cymru – Irish Sea Collaboration Fund</p> <p>The Agile Cymru initiative encourages applications from organisations operating in Wales that aim to increase and sustain cooperation across and around the Irish Sea region. This initiative supports activities and expenditures between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026, reflecting the strategic context of the Irish Sea Framework priority areas.</p> <p>Future Generations Fund</p> <p>The Future Generations Fund, established in partnership with Principality Building Society, offers grants of up to £20,000 per year for two years to third sector organisations whose work focuses on supporting young people under the age of 25. This fund aims to have a positive impact on society and the lives of young people in Wales.</p>	<p>Gov.Wales</p>

	Irish Consulate in Cardiff and Welsh Government Office in Dublin	Small-scale diplomatic cultural support for events, exchanges, and public diplomacy projects promoting Ireland–Wales cooperation.	ireland.ie/en/greatbritain/cardiff/Gov.Wales/welsh-government-international-office-remits-html/#54868
Scotland–Ireland	Creative Scotland	Scotland’s national arts agency. Distributes funding for international collaboration including between Scotland and Ireland. Key funds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Fund for Individuals and Organisations • International Creative Collaboration grants (for festivals, exchange) 	creativescotland.com
	Irish Consulate in Edinburgh and Scottish Government Office in Dublin	Support small-scale cultural initiatives, particularly around strengthening Scotland-Ireland cultural connection, young people, Gaelic language and heritage. Flexible, short-term grant support or in-kind assistance.	ireland.ie/en/greatbritain/edinburgh/Gov.Scot/publications/international-offices-guide/pages/dublin/
	Colmcille	Joint Ireland–Scotland funding initiative focused on Irish and Scottish Gaelic language and culture. Managed by Foras na Gaeilge (Ireland) and Bòrd na Gàidhlig (Scotland). Supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist residencies • Gaelic festivals • Youth exchanges • Cultural heritage projects 	colmcille.net
Ireland–UK	Four Nations of UK Arts Councils	Four Nations International Fund: A fund co-invested by Arts Council England, Arts Council Northern Ireland, Arts Council of Wales/WAI, and Creative Scotland. It encourages in-person, digital, and hybrid collaboration between artists, creative practitioners, and organisations across the UK and with counterparts from elsewhere in Europe and beyond. Creative Scotland manages the application process on behalf of the four nations’ arts councils.	creativescotland.com/funding/funding-programmes/targeted-funding/four-nations-international-fund
	Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Arts Council Ireland	The All In fund aims to improve the experience of deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people when attending arts and cultural events in the UK and Ireland. Arts Council Ireland committed €225,000 to the development of the scheme.	www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/diversity/all-in
	Arts Council Ireland	Offers North-South and international collaboration funding, which can include partners in the UK. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds for artist residencies, mobility, and co-productions. • Specific funding strands: Travel & Training, Touring & Dissemination, Projects. 	artscouncil.ie

	Creative Europe	Ireland is still a full member of the EU's Creative Europe programme. Ireland-UK partnerships remain possible. UK organisations can partner (but not lead) in cooperative cultural projects. The Creative Europe desk is hosted by Arts Council Ireland.	creativeeuropeireland.eu
	Creative Ireland	Creative Ireland is a cross-government programme aimed at promoting creativity and cultural participation as a core component of individual and societal wellbeing. It aims to put creativity at the heart of public policy and ensure every person in Ireland has the opportunity to realise their creative potential. It operates through five pillars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Youth • Creative Communities • Creative Health & Wellbeing • Creative Climate Action • Creative Industries 	creativeireland.Gov.IE
	Culture Ireland	Promotes Irish arts abroad, including in the UK. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers funding for artists from Ireland and Northern Ireland touring or presenting work in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. • Supports festivals, showcases, and touring. <p>Since the UK left the EU, has increased support for GB-focused projects.</p>	cultureireland.ie
	British Council	Cultural relations agency that facilitates UK–Ireland cultural exchange and connection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports artist mobility, joint residencies, brokering opportunities, insight and connection between Irish and UK institutions/artists. 	britishcouncil.ie

	<p>Govt of Ireland</p>	<p>Shared Island Initiative Government of Ireland programme to fund North-South and East-West (GB-Ireland) projects. Some funding streams include cultural, youth, peacebuilding and community initiatives with UK partners. Often partners with other departments and funders. Significant funds allocated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Island Civic Funds • Dept of Taoiseach funding • Cultural Cooperation Fund <p>Announced following the reset to UK Ireland relations, €20million each year, for 5 years available to deepen cultural cooperation, exchange and understanding on the island of Ireland in new Arts and Cultural Heritage projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an agreement to establish a strategic partnership to deepen and amplify co-operation between leading cultural institutions. • support wider public engagement with the contemporary culture and heritage of both Ireland and the United Kingdom. • support collaborations in programming, professional exchange, research and policy, and an annual joint meeting of leading cultural institutions. <p>Department of Culture, Communications and Sport Provides support for cultural exchange, cross-border projects, and major initiatives like Creative Ireland and Culture Ireland.</p>	<p>Gov.IE/sharedisland Gov.IE/en/department-of-tourism-culture-arts-gaeltacht-sport-and-media/press-releases/minister-odonovan-announces-plans-for-a-shared-island-cultural-cooperation-fund/</p>
<p>Various</p>	<p>National Lottery Heritage Fund (UK) & Heritage Council (Ireland)</p>	<p>Both support heritage-led cultural projects, sometimes including cross-border or cross-channel collaboration.</p>	<p>heritagefund.org.uk heritagecouncil.ie</p>

3.2 Data gathering and comparisons

This section captures the **quantitative data** from arm's-length bodies and other national agencies along with survey responses gathered throughout December 2024 and January 2025. In total, 255 respondents completed an online survey – 119 from Ireland, and 136 from the UK (England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland). Survey participants were also invited to respond with longer-form answers which expounded existing or potential relationships between Ireland-UK, perceptions of successes or failings in East-West and North-South collaboration, as well as further detail on the barriers that individual practitioners/producers experience. Survey responses are anonymous.

Starling Start made the following request of Arts Councils (Arts Council England, Arts Council Ireland, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Creative Scotland) and Wales Arts International (as the international agency of Arts Council of Wales) for the years 2022/23 and 2023/24:

- (for Ireland) how many organisations have been supported to make work in the UK? How many partners did they have?
- Which artforms did they represent?
- (for UK) how many organisations have been supported to make work in Ireland?
- How many partners did they have? Which artforms did they represent?

These questions were also posed to Culture Ireland – the body under the directive of the Government of Ireland's Department of Culture, Communications and Sport – which exists 'to build relationships and networks with arts and cultural organisations, relevant public bodies, state agencies and Government departments at home and abroad to advance the global impact of Irish artists'.

We also explored the same questions, across the same years, in relation to the British Council – through centrally-funded grant schemes such as the British Council's International Collaboration Grants⁸⁶ as well as British Council Ireland initiatives supporting arts and culture in a UK-Ireland context.

3.3 Strategic funding initiatives of arm's-length bodies

We requested information from existing funding schemes relating to subsidised arts between Ireland and the UK, including: the *four nations International Fund*, which is administered by Creative Scotland; the *International Opportunities Fund* and *Strategic Awards* administered by Wales Arts International; the *International Residency Scheme Initiative*, which is administered by Arts Council Ireland; the North-South cross-border partnerships with Ireland-based organisations supported through Arts Council of Northern Ireland's *Regularly Funded Organisations*; and Culture Ireland's *Regular Grants Scheme*. Information was also provided from Arts Council Ireland relating to Creative Europe. We have also included an overview of initiatives provided by the British Council relating to UK-Ireland activity and provided a high-level of overview of recent all-island work by Creative Ireland.

All agencies who supplied data for this research demonstrated a willingness to engage, and a desire towards more alignment to better understand cultural exchange between the UK and Ireland.

It is important to acknowledge that the funding schemes that support mobility between each nation and Ireland do not exist in isolation but are located within a broad kaleidoscope of agency funding and range of supports. This funding also exists alongside wider governmental investment in arts and culture that exist at governmental or intergovernmental levels such as Shared Island, Creative Ireland and the PEACE I, II, III and IV programmes (see Table 2). It is also important to note that this data was provided in the interest of supporting greater information provision, and inter-agency collaboration on this subject.

⁸⁶: British Council. [International Collaboration Grants](#).

Arts Council Ireland

Arts Council Ireland / An Chomhairle Ealaíon is the national agency for the funding, development and promotion of the arts in Ireland. Their stated role is ‘to advocate, advise, invest and work in partnership with others, to cultivate a vibrant arts environment at the heart of Irish society’.⁸⁷ A number of funding schemes exist, and of specific interest to this research are the supports, and related data, available for International Arts. Through their 2022 International Arts Policy, Arts Council Ireland frames the arts as a ‘positive evolutionary force’, stating that they ‘thrive on the cross-fertilisation of ideas, connections and collaborations that extend across national borders’.⁸⁸ Within their portfolio, they manage the *International Residency Initiatives Scheme* and the successful *Creative Europe* fund, where they co-fund projects with the European Union. These are both outlined in brief below.

International Residency Initiatives Scheme⁸⁹

The purpose of this scheme is to support arts organisations in the delivery of residency initiatives and to create opportunities for transnational exchange and cooperation across all art forms.

The scheme aims to facilitate diverse residency programmes that involve partnerships with organisations based outside of Ireland, thus creating a supportive framework for the international mobility and professional development of artists and art practitioners.

Arts Council Ireland notes that:

‘To date, Arts Council Ireland has funded a total of 42 projects through this scheme since its initiation in 2022. The total demand from 2022-2024 has been €4,925,972, with the total awarded at €512,195. The applications for this scheme are across multiple artforms, with the most applications under visual arts and theatre. It is an eligibility requirement for applications to this scheme to have at least one named international partner.’

Table 3: Arts Council Ireland International Residency Initiatives Scheme

	Applications	Awarded	UK partners
2024	38	11	10 (3 Scotland, 7 England)
2023	44	14	13 (3 Northern Ireland, 2 Scotland, 8 England)

Source: Arts Council Ireland

The two years of available data show approximately a quarter of the total number of applications were successful in receiving funding in 2023, and just over a third in 2024. The majority of successful UK partners in both years were located in England.

In 2024, the Arts Council received 38 applications to the International Residency Initiative. Of these, five applications with UK partners were successful out of the 11 that were funded. There was a total of 10 UK partnerships within these successful applications. This included three in Scotland and seven in England. Of the partnerships in England, three were based in London. In 2023, The Arts Council received 44 applications, of which 14 were funded. Of the applications, three partners were in Northern Ireland, two in Scotland, and eight in England.

The majority of applications were from those working in the visual arts, followed by dance, festivals and theatre. The least amount of applications were from Opera and Street Arts.

The total amount requested was €1,890,000 with €600,160 approved as awards. The winning partnerships represent a wide geographical spread and art forms, with applications from the UK, Europe, North and South America, and Australia.

87: Arts Council Ireland: *Making Great Art Work Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland Arts Council Strategy (2016 - 2025)*.

88: Arts Council Ireland: *International Arts - The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon*.

89: Arts Council Ireland: *International Residency Initiatives Scheme - The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon*.

Creative Europe

Creative Europe Desk (CED) Ireland is the national contact point for the EU Creative Europe funding programme for the culture and audio-visual sectors. The Arts Council is a partner of CED Ireland and co-funds this Culture Office with the European Commission. CED also hosts the information desk for the Culture sub-programme.⁹⁰ The Co-funding Award is designed to support Irish arts organisations towards their artistic activities under the European Cooperation Projects and European Platforms strands of the Creative Europe Programme 2021–27.⁹¹

Table 4: Creative Europe (strand: Support for European Cooperation)

	Awarded	Projects involving at least one UK partner
2014-2019	55	30

Source: Arts Council Ireland

Between 2014 and 2019, a total of 609 cultural projects involving UK beneficiaries received funding from *Creative Europe*, contributing significantly to cultural relations between the UK and other European countries.

After the UK left the EU, the United Kingdom voluntarily withdrew from the Creative Europe programme. UK organisations cannot receive monetary support as a lead partner on a Creative Europe application.

In a letter to the Senedd Cymru (Welsh Parliament)'s Committee Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport & International Relations Committee, the Director of Arts Council Ireland unpacks these statistics for *Creative Europe's* main funding strand (*Support for European Cooperation Projects*) as follows:

*'There were 55 projects funded with Irish organisations with 30 projects involving at least 1 UK organisation (or 54% of the overall projects). However, when you look at projects led by UK organisations the number falls to 10 which represents 18% of all 55 projects. While Irish organisations worked with 50 UK based organisations (2 in Northern Ireland) during this period they also partnered with 351 non-UK European partner organisations in 33 countries.'*⁹²

These figures indicate that when mobility is encouraged at a governmental level, and underpinned by action around both funding and strong communication networks (evidenced later through qualitative data relating to this programme), cultural connections are fostered, collaboration occurs and the rate of mobility grows.

This is further underpinned by the Welsh Government's efforts to reassociate with programmes such as *Horizon Europe* and *Interreg* from 2024 as part of wider UK realignment, and 'on equal terms with other associated countries'.⁹³

Changes are expected to Creative Europe in the future. In July 2025, the European Commission unveiled a proposal to merge Creative Europe into an integrated initiative, *AgoraEU*, to support culture, media, civil society and democratic values. The proposal suggests increasing the budget for culture within the 2028 to 2032 budget. The plan remains in the proposal and negotiation stage and has not yet been formally adopted.

90: Creative Europe Desk Ireland.

91: Creative Europe Co-funding Award, The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

92: Senedd Wales, 2024. Letter to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport & International Relations Committee: [Culture and New Relationship with the European Union Inquiry: Response from Arts Council Ireland Providing information in relation to the Committee's inquiry int.pdf](#).

93: European Commission, 2023, [United Kingdom joins Horizon Europe programme | Shaping Europe's digital future](#).

Table 5: Creative Ireland Pillars and Funding distribution

Name of Pillar	Number of projects	Number of partners in Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland	
Cruinniú na nÓg	10	11RoI 10 NI *plus all island online	21
Creative Youth	6	16 RoI 16 NI	32
Creative Communities	9	14 RoI 11 NI *plus a pan NI project	25
Creative Climate	3	6 RoI 8 NI	14
Creative Health and Wellbeing	4	8 RoI 5 NI	13
	32	Total number of partners across the island	105

Source: Creative Ireland

Creative Ireland

Creative Ireland is a cross-government programme aimed at promoting creativity and cultural participation as a core component of individual and societal wellbeing. It aims to put creativity at the heart of public policy and ensure every person in Ireland has the opportunity to realise their creative potential. Its strategic goals are to establish practice and participation, promote understanding of the value of creativity, measure impact and build evidence and embed creativity in public policy and it operates through five pillars: Creative Youth; Creative Communities; Creative Health & Wellbeing; Creative Climate Action; Creative Industries.

In 2022 the Creative Ireland Programme was allocated €6 million over three years (2023-25) to support 23 projects from four open calls across the Creative Communities, Youth, Climate Action and Health & Wellbeing pillars, along with investment in Cruinniú na nÓg with strategic partners and the local authorities. See Table 4 above, and Table 5 below.

2023 marked the first year of Creative Ireland's participation in the Shared Island initiative, which aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future.

Table 6: Creative Ireland Pillars and Funding distribution

	2023 spend	2024 spend	2025 allocation	Total
Cruinniú na nÓg	€81,889	€442,760	€537,530	€1,062,179
Creative Youth	€105,007	€237,918	€1,025,170	€1,368,095
Creative Communities	€151,208	€378,654	€1,075,677	€1,605,539
Creative Climate	€16,000	€415,685	€600,000	€1,031,685
Creative Health and Wellbeing	€50,000	€266,601	€302,623	€619,224
	€404,104	€1,741,618	€3,541,000	€5,686,722

Source: Creative Ireland

Outlined above is a year-by-year breakdown of the €6 million allocation. Not included are the provisions for programme supports; an evaluation of the initiative, and a *Creative Ireland: Shared Island Conference* in November 2025.

Table 7: Culture Ireland Regular Grant Scheme

Projects led by:	Project partners in:	2022/23	2023/24
Scotland		11	14
	Ireland	3	2
England		19	16
	Ireland	1	1
Wales		4	4
	Ireland	1	1
Northern Ireland		4	5
	Ireland	1	3

Source: Culture Ireland

Through this allocation, 105 partners are involved in 32 projects funded under the *Creative Ireland Shared Island initiative* and these cross artforms and locations. Projects range from coastal communities engaging in marine environments and creative exploration, mythical story exchanges, craft and social prescribing, creation of original parades, residential musical hothousing projects and interactive theatre performances, script, prose and songwriting and projects range across the island and regions from Dublin to Belfast, Antrim to Galway and elsewhere. Appendix 1.4.4 outlines a short description on each of the projects.⁹⁴

Culture Ireland

As a division of the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, Culture Ireland creates and supports opportunities for Irish artists and companies to present their work internationally across the creative spectrum, including visual art, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, and film. This is achieved primarily through three schemes: the *Regular Grant Scheme*, the *Showcase Scheme* and the *See Here Scheme*.

Regular Grant Scheme

Culture Ireland's *Regular Grant Scheme* is aimed to assist Irish artists in presenting and promoting their work at strategic international festivals and venues by providing funding for costs which relate directly to the international presentation of the event.

There are four grant rounds annually. The table above outlines successful *Regular Grant* applications by artform with value of grant noted where the UK

is a partner across the funding years of 2022/23 and 2023/24. The percentage of these projects with only a UK partner is significant in number and highlights the importance and significance of the bilateral relationship in cultural collaboration. The figures demonstrate the value placed by individuals on collaboration and connection between arts and cultural workers across the UK and Ireland. It also perhaps reflects a perception by Irish artists that the UK offers a fertile and vital platform for not only collaboration, but profile and engagement with wider audiences, significant platforms and experiences. Given the high numbers of music projects funded, this may allude to a specific art form and 'UK music scene' which is specifically robust, in demand, and receptive to showcasing Irish artists.

In addition to the *Regular Grant Scheme*, Culture Ireland's *Showcase Scheme* aims to create new opportunities for Irish artists to present at industry-oriented events which attract international presenters. The *See Here Scheme* supports incoming programmers, curators and festival directors to visit Ireland to see the work of Irish artists, with the aim of securing future presentation opportunities abroad. The support is focused on the calendar of festivals across the island of Ireland to ensure that there is a concentrated programme of Irish work to be experienced and artists and companies available to meet. *See Here* applications to Culture Ireland are usually coordinated through the host festival/event. In addition to these three schemes, Culture Ireland regularly curates and delivers special initiatives, with a particular territory or artform focus. These initiatives promote Irish arts on a global platform and include the recent *Zeitgeist Ireland 24* – a year-long programme of Irish arts and culture across Germany in 2024.

⁹⁴: More here: [Six diverse projects awarded funding for Shared Island Creative Youth Partnerships](#) - Creative Ireland Programme.

Table 8: Four Nations International Fund

Year	Total projects with UK partners	% of these projects with only UK partners	Total funding	Average grant	Artforms awarded
2022	133	80%	€1,064,440	€8,003	17 visual art, 14 theatre, 3 opera, 70 music, 11 multi-disciplinary, 10 literature, 4 film, 1 dance, 2 circus, 1 architecture
2023	168	74%	€1,948,680	€11,599	16 visual art, 19 theatre, 1 opera, 91 music, 15 multi-disciplinary, 8 literature, 11 film, 3 dance, 4 circus
2024	128	78%	€878,350	€6,862	12 visual art, 14 theatre, 67 music, 7 multi-disciplinary, 9 literature, 14 film, 3 dance, 2 circus

Source: Creative Scotland⁹⁵

Four Nations International Fund

The *Four Nations International Fund* supports those working in the arts and creative industries across the UK, together with their counterparts in Europe and beyond.

With co-investment from Arts Council England, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council Wales / Wales Arts International and Creative Scotland, the fund has supported in-person, digital, or hybrid activity including exchanges, residencies, partnership development, co-creation and networking, with priority given to applications experimenting with innovative models of international collaboration.

The *Four Nations International Fund* ran twice, in 2022/23 and 2023/24. The figures above show a slight increase in the number of Irish partners in UK projects, from six to seven. There was least collaboration between countries, proportionate to the number of projects, between England and Ireland.

Wales Arts International

Wales Arts International (WAI) is the international agency of the Arts Council of Wales, funded by the Welsh Government and works in partnership with the British Council and UK government agencies. WAI participates in a number of key European networks and are members of IETM, On the Move, Culture Action Europe and Res Artis, and works to nurture Wales's international artistic, creative and cultural potential in a way that is fair to people and the planet. WAI's recently launched *International Strategy (2024-2034)*, captures the rich history of international collaboration by Welsh cultural figures and the importance of 're-imagine a different, more equitable and peaceful future' (WAI, 2025, p.6).⁹⁶

WAI's recently launched *International Strategy (2024-2034)*, captures the rich history of international collaboration by Welsh cultural figures and the

importance to 're-imagine a different, more equitable and peaceful future' (WAI, 2025, p.6). This Strategy also reaffirms a commitment to partnering with nations or regions with longstanding cultural and linguistic connections to Wales, such as Ireland.

Activity that Wales Arts International has supported includes ten projects (worth £49,346) since 2021, that involved direct collaborations with Ireland, through a combination of the *International Opportunities Fund* and some strategic awards made by Wales Arts International. Almost all were multi-artform, with the equivalent of (rounded up): four visual art, two music, one literature, three festivals, one digital arts, one carnival/circus, one dance, two exhibitions, and one theatre. Arts Council of Wales core funding for *Multi Year Funded Organisations* as well as *Create Lottery Fund* also fund activities in Ireland/with Irish collaborators (organisations and individuals). Wales Arts International also alluded to much richer and more numerous connections than their systems automatically report on, including any activity with Ireland that is funded through other lottery schemes, festivals where artistic collaborations have taken place, and any small delegations visits between Ireland and Wales that WAI has supported.

It is also important to note that Wales Arts International hosts Arts Infopoint UK desk, an initiative in partnership with Arts Council England, Creative Scotland and Arts Council Northern Ireland. This initiative develops resources to support international artists visiting the UK for creative work and purposes. Offering free, practical information and support to help artists, creative professionals, and organisations to understand the rules and guide you through some of the administration requirements for creative visits to the UK.⁹⁷ Arts Infopoint UK is also part of a wider network of Mobility Information Points across Europe and the USA, and members of On The Move mobility network.⁹⁸

95: Creative Scotland. (2024a). Four Nations International Fund. [online] Available at: creativescotland.com/funding/funding-programmes/targeted-funding/four-nations-international-fund.

96: Wales Art International, *International Strategy Framework 2024-2034*.

97: Arts Infopoint UK - [Supporting creative visits to and from the UK](#)
Arts Infopoint UK | Gwybodfan Celf y DU.

98: [On the Move](#).

Table 9: Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants

Year	Number of awards to projects with location, activity, or partner in Ireland	Total awarded	Size of grant	Artforms
2022/23	Total: 58 (30 individuals, 29 organisations)	£2,813,176	43 £30,000 and below; 13 Above £30,000; 1 Above £30,000 - Over £30k Touring project; 1 Above £30,000 - Place Partnership project	16 combined arts, 10 dance, 6 literature, 8 music, 13 theatre, 5 visual arts
2023/24	Total: 59 (24 individuals, 35 organisations)	£2,437,645	43 £30,000 and below; 11 Above £30,000, 5 Above £30,000 - Over £30k Touring project	10 combined arts, 6 dance, 4 literature, 9 music, 5 theatre, 1 visual arts

Source: Arts Council England

Arts Council England

Arts Council England (ACE) is the national development agency for creativity and culture, working to address need, respond to opportunity, and support and grow talent, so that communities across England can develop their creativity and enjoy rich cultural lives.⁹⁹

Arts Council England was able to provide full data for *National Lottery Project Grants* which were successfully awarded funding in 2022/23 and 2023/24 with a location, activity, or partner detail which indicates the Republic of Ireland. *National Lottery Project Grants* is ACE's open access programme for arts, museums and libraries projects. There are no deadlines for applications and funds are multi-annual, of up to three years. *National Lottery Project Grants* support costs between £1,000 and £100,000+ across four designations: *£30,000 and below*; *Above £30,000*; *Above £30,000 - Over £30k Touring project*; and *Above £30,000 - Place Partnership project*. Across financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24, the total awarded to 117 projects was £5,250,821, with an average of £44,879 per project.

Arts Council England, in addition to *National Lottery Project Grants*, also distributes Grant in Aid (worth £343m in 2023/24) to a portfolio of just under 1,000 regularly funded organisations, many of whom will have relationships with and activity in and with Ireland. However, the current data monitoring system does not allow ACE to pull this type of geographical information from across the portfolio. Arts Council England also gathers data by activity type based on designations.

These designations are:

*Digital Experience; Digital Experience – static; Live events – multiple locations/touring; Live event – static; Longer term public engagement in England; One physical place; Several physical places; Streaming or broadcasting.*¹⁰⁰

What is clear is that there is a significant number of project partners between England and Ireland, and that the majority of projects supported identify as 'combined arts' and are in the lower award range of £30,000 and below. Dance projects are the next most funded ACE award.

99: Arts Council England.

100: Due to multiple activities, duplication occurs in the data provided and therefore was not used for totalling and tallying.

Table 10: Creative Scotland Awards

Year	Number of awards to projects with location, activity, or partner in Ireland	Total awarded	Artforms/funding strand
2022/2023	3	£125,000	Music (<i>Open Fund Organisations</i>); film (<i>Audience Development</i>); and theatre
2023/2024	4	£117,333	Music; film (<i>Audience Development</i>); <i>Film Development & Production</i> ; and dance and theatre (<i>National Lottery Open Fund for Organisations</i>)

Source: Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland supports culture and creativity in Scotland. As a non-departmental public body, Creative Scotland is sponsored by the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers, with funding from both the Scottish Government and the UK National Lottery. In this capacity they work as a development organisation, a funder, an advocate, and as a public body that seeks to influence others to increase opportunity and maximise the impact of their resources.¹⁰¹ There were seven awards made to Scottish organisations with plans to work in Ireland for the financial year 2022/2023 or 2023/2024, with investment totalling £242,333. Of the three projects awarded funding in 2022/23 and four in 2023/24, most awards were made to music, followed by film.

Here the artforms represented within each arm's-length body's funding portfolio diverge: film is included under the funding remit for both Creative Scotland and Arts Council Ireland. Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Wales Arts International both specify clearly that applications for film will be ineligible (as the remit of Film Cymru Wales, British Film Institute and Northern Ireland Screen), except where the work can be considered moving image, lens-based or digital¹⁰² (more commonly associated with visual arts disciplines). Wales Arts International signpost towards resources at Film Cymru Wales.

Arts Council England do fund artists' work in the moving image, and a range of creative media projects, but narrative feature films intended for commercial release do not fall within their remit and are funded by the British Film Institute. This is also the case in Ireland, whereby the development, production and distribution of films with commercial release are funded through Screen Ireland.¹⁰³ A variety of other funding mechanism also exist through government and agency funds.

101: Creative Scotland.

102: Arts Council Northern Ireland: [Guidance Notes for - Project Funding for Individual Artists](#).

103: [Development Funding Guidelines](#) | Screen Ireland.

Table 11: International Activity: number and location of *Annually Funded Organisation* activity delivered outside Northern Ireland

Type of activity	Year	Number of organisations	Number of activities	RoI	GB
Co-productions / co-commissioning	2022/23	18	41	14	8
	2023/24	21	61	12	8
Arranging work for NI based creative practitioners	2022/23	25	173	13	16
	2023/24	28	279	14	19
Touring productions/exhibitions (including loans)	2022/23	23	34	13	9
	2023/24	17	64	12	7
Stand alone activity, not part of a tour	2022/23	28	638	23	12
	2023/24	25	357	19	13
Borrowing collections for exhibitions or loans in NI	2022/23	2	4	1	2
	2023/24	7	48	5	3
Hosting creative practitioners in NI from other countries	2022/23	27	358	20	19
	2023/24	30	970	20	17
Research with partners from outside NI	2022/23	19	92	12	13
	2023/24	24	129	17	13
Total 2022/23		60	1,340	96	79
Total 2023/24		59	1908	99	80

Source: Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is the main public body responsible for developing and funding the arts in Northern Ireland. As the official funding and development organisation for the arts in Northern Ireland, they support the vital contribution that the arts make to the region through a broad range of funding opportunities.¹⁰⁴

Arts Council of Northern Ireland holds information on partnerships with Ireland-based and other UK-based organisations through their Regularly Funded Organisations fund. All activity undertaken outside Northern Ireland is gathered by Arts Council of Northern Ireland within the heading: *'International Activity: Number and location of activity delivered outside Northern Ireland'*, perhaps in recognition of Northern Ireland's unique position within these islands. The data in Table 11 reflects where activity took place, and originated from, and includes both activity hosted by funded organisations in

Northern Ireland and that delivered outside Northern Ireland. The data gathered also includes activity which took place in the EU/ EEA/ Single Market (excluding Ireland), North America, Middle East and North Africa, and other global regions.

The above data refers to Arts Council of Northern Ireland's *Annually Funded Organisations*,¹⁰⁵ of which 70% either delivered activity outside Northern Ireland or hosted international working. Within that 70%, a further 59% of activity was with organisations or individuals based in Ireland or in England, Scotland or Wales. Arts Council of Northern Ireland noted that this funding enabled organisations to 'diversify their artistic product, increase the visibility of NI talent, generate new investment opportunities and provide a platform for knowledge and information exchange'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴: Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

¹⁰⁵: The Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Annual Funding Programme (AFP) is designed to sustain and develop the region's arts infrastructure by providing financial support to a diverse range of arts organisations. This funding encompasses core operational expenses and programming costs, ensuring that these organisations can deliver year-round arts activities across various disciplines.' Email from Arts Council of Northern Ireland, February 2025.

¹⁰⁶: Email from Arts Council of Northern Ireland, February 2025.

It is interesting to note that in 2022/23 and 2023/24, approximately 60 organisations partnered with approximately 97 individuals or organisations in Ireland and approximately 80 individuals or organisations in Great Britain. When we consider the size of population, there are substantially more partnerships between Northern Ireland and individuals or organisations in Ireland than with Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). It is also interesting to note that the proportion of activity delivered in the EU/EEA/ Single Market (excluding Ireland) fell by 4% between 2022-23 and 2023-24, with funded organisations citing ‘continued friction associated with the movement of goods and people to and from Northern Ireland restricting the extent and nature of possible collaborations’.¹⁰⁷

ACNI have sought to address the challenges faced by artists / organisations wishing to travel to and from the UK / Northern Ireland. They have found that, given the unique position of Northern Ireland remaining within the EU single market for goods, this often requires dedicated initiatives that can help unpack the unique set of conditions faced. This can often require an ongoing discussion with artists to develop a deeper understanding of the new regulatory environment and is frequently nuanced depending on the activity of the organisation.

Examples of events and supports that have taken place include:

- A dedicated NI Webinar on General Protection and Safety Regulation, hosted by Craft NI.¹⁰⁷
- Online Coffee Morning event hosted by Arts InfoPoint UK looking at the visa requirements when travelling to UK. This event was chaired by Úna Boyd, Immigration Project Solicitor & Coordinator from The Committee on the Administration of Justice.¹⁰⁸
- ‘Moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland’ training event for artists and creatives moving artworks and creative goods between GB and NI, provided by Trader Support Service and Arts Council of Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁹

In addition to these initiatives, ACNI also participates on the NI UK-EU Civic Working Group (convened by Prof Katy Hayward of Queens’ University Belfast). This group is focussed on strengthening understanding, communication and information-sharing regarding the Windsor Framework and its implementation ‘on the ground’ in NI civic society, including in sectors most affected. ACNI draws evidence from the creative sectors, north and south to feed into the Civic Working Group and Arts InfoPoint UK.¹¹⁰

107: [Craft NI Webinar](#) on General protection and Safety Regulation.

108: Arts InfoPoint UK Webinar on [Visa Requirements](#).

109: [Trader Support Service](#) and Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

110: Email from Arts Council of Northern Ireland, April 2025.

British Council

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Established in 1934, it operates in over 100 countries with the aim of building connections, understanding, and trust between people in the UK and other countries through the arts, education, and English language.

The International Collaboration Grants (ICG)¹¹¹ is a flagship British Council grant and cultural relations programme for UK arts and culture organisations. It supports artists to make and develop creative artwork with their international peers, to share that work with audiences, and to encourage new international partnerships, innovative ways of collaborating, the expansion of global networks, and the deepening of existing partnerships. The International Collaboration Grants (ICG) has awarded over 100 grants and over £6 million to support the creation of new cultural collaborations between the UK arts sectors and their peers in over 50 countries across two rounds since 2021.

This grant programme sits within the Culture Connects global programme, which aims to enable connection between UK cultural and creative industry professionals and organisations and their international peers and audiences, providing intelligence, and catalysing and facilitating creative collaboration, showcasing and touring.

In 2021, the ICG programme welcomed applications from collaborating partners across 41 countries, including countries that are eligible and ineligible for Official Development Assistance. At least one UK-based organisation and one organisation based in an eligible country needed to apply to collaborate together.

In the 2021 grant cycle, projects from organisations based in Ireland were eligible. Amongst the 944 applications, 32 involved partners in Ireland. Ireland had a 6% success rate as two were awarded funding. Amongst the 32 applications, 25% featured collaborating organisations in Scotland (8 from 32); seven in Northern Ireland, one from Wales and two from England. The two successful proposals were between collaborating organisations in the West Midlands and Cork, and Leeds (West Yorkshire) and Kilkenny.

Table 12: Overview of British Council ICG recipients with a partner in Ireland 2021

	UK partners	Application	Awarded
2021	Northern Ireland	7	0
	Scotland	8	0
	England	16	2
	Wales	1	0

Source: *British Council*

The second funding round, 2024-25, operated on a smaller budget and focused on supporting partnerships between organisations in ODA eligible countries and the UK: consequently organisations in Ireland were not eligible to apply.

British Council Ireland

British Council Ireland aims to be a generous cultural relations knowledge partner, brokering and sharing expertise and insight with government, state agencies, institutions and civil society, in order to build the recognition and value of the UK and the British Council in Ireland. It acts as a catalyst in strengthening the bilateral relationship in Arts and Education between Ireland and the UK by acting as a valued broker and convenor, nurturing growth through building connections, creating opportunities, collaborations, networks and partners, in order to support greater trust, understanding, knowledge and respect between people of the UK and Ireland. They work closely with colleagues in the British Embassy in Dublin to do this and together foster areas of mutual interest in UK Ireland arts and education. British Council Ireland's overall goal is to work towards a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future on these islands.

Areas of focus are the British Council global programmes of Creative Economy, Culture Connects, Culture Responds, Student Mobility and Internationalisation, Alumni, Research and Insight, and Non-Formal Education. British Council Ireland also supports parallel business activities in Ireland to foster the growth of English language research and exams.

In Arts, British Council Ireland drives experiences, connections and opportunities for artists, cultural professionals and organisations so that they can grow into new markets, increase agency and autonomy, and strengthen capacity and opportunity. This can take the form of events, wrap-around panel discussions, inward and outward mobility and collaborative projects. Every project or initiative they do has a central UK element, an Ireland connection and is based on partnership and building relationships.

¹¹¹: [British Council International Collaboration Grants](#).

The table below demonstrates arts activity between the UK and Ireland across 2021-2022, 2022-23 and 2023-2024.

Table 13: Overview of British Council Ireland UK IRL initiatives 2021-2024

	Overview	Total	UK element
2023-24	4 delegates 11 projects 14 events 2 insight	31	15 England 7 Northern Ireland 3 Scotland 2 Wales
2022-23	8 delegates 6 projects 14 events 1 insight	29	9 England 6 Northern Ireland 2 Scotland 1 Wales
2021-22	3 delegates 11 projects 4 events 1 insight	19	4 England 5 Northern Ireland 2 Scotland 0 Wales

Source: British Council Ireland

The table above illustrates that the British Council Ireland office operates across all four nations of the UK. There was a significant increase in activity from 2021–22 to 2022–23 (+10 activities), with a slight plateauing of activity in 2023-24 (+2 activity). Overall, activity levels have remained strong after an initial growth phase.

British Council Ireland’s work includes supporting both incoming and outgoing delegations, conducting research and insight projects, and organising initiatives focused on creating events and collaborative projects. The British Council in Ireland maintains a broad and varied remit. Through peer-to-peer engagement within the bilateral relationship, it fosters knowledge, trust, and mutual understanding, while also strengthening networks and expanding opportunities for collaboration.

3.3 Survey analysis

3.3.1 Respondent overview

In December 2024 and January 2025, we distributed an online survey which sought the perspectives of Ireland and UK-based artists on a range of interrelated subjects, including their discipline, mobility, the nature of opportunities they have undertaken in either the UK or Ireland and the barriers they have faced to working in either the UK or Ireland. 255 respondents completed the survey. 47% (119) were resident in Ireland, and 53% (136) were resident in the UK. UK respondents were located across the four nations as follows: 42 responses from England, 40 from Wales, 32 from Northern Ireland, and 22 from Scotland.¹¹²

Subsidised artforms

A broad range of disciplines responded to the survey and are included in the analysis below (including those beyond the 'subsidised arts' scope of this study such as architecture, design, fashion and film). However, the majority of respondents (52 Ireland, 57 UK) are from a subsidised visual arts background, followed by multidisciplinary (31 Ireland, 47 UK), theatre and dance (21 Ireland, 35 UK), music (17 Ireland, 28 UK) and literature (16 Ireland, 23 UK).

3.3.2 Opportunities analysis

The locations of opportunities (and their types, elaborated on in Table 8, below) identified by survey respondents in the UK highlighted that 95 took place in Ireland. Responses from Ireland indicated that 123 were located in the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and/or Wales). We subsequently asked Irish-based respondents to break down the opportunities that they have had by the nation in which they occurred:

- England - 67
- Northern Ireland - 65
- Scotland - 34
- Wales - 26
- None of the above - 29

As participants could select more than one option, the total is higher than the 123 stipulated, and speaks to the higher degree of mobility for Ireland-based practitioners/producers, and may demonstrate a high level of North-South cooperation. Subsequent questions broke down opportunities by type (appropriate to artform). The high number of responses to 'Collaborative opportunity or project' may be attributable to a particular understanding of the term 'collaborative' within the arts sector in Ireland to describe socially-engaged, participatory, or artist-with-community practices, rather than the UK understanding which indicates artist-with-artist practices. The relatively high figures for one-off opportunities corroborates our findings through the literature review, interviews and long-form survey responses, where the short-term nature of projects, and the opportunity (or lack of), is raised on numerous occasions.

41 respondents (23 Ireland-based, and 18 UK-based) chose 'other'. Their longer-form answers are expanded on and analysed in the next Chapter.

Table 14: Type of opportunities identified by survey respondents

Type of arts opportunity that led to mobility	Ireland-based respondents	UK-based respondents
Professional network (online or in-person)	53	71
Research & development	26	53
Once-off e.g. exhibition, gig	59	60
Collaborative opportunity or project	42	78
Longer-term e.g. commission, tour	25	39
Residency	16	31

¹¹²: Creative Scotland suggested 'survey fatigue', having just completed a nationwide survey. Following the initial deadline, we recognised this disparity and subsequently reopened the survey for Scotland-based respondents only for a further two weeks. We are grateful for the support of Creative Scotland in disseminating it again on our behalf.

Table 15: Factors which limit connection for practitioners/producers across UK-Ireland

What factors, if any, limit your ability to connect with arts and cultural professionals / organisations in...	The UK (answered by 119 respondents based in Ireland)	Ireland (answered by 136 respondents based in UK)
I don't know who to contact	46	50
I don't have any networks there	60	51
I don't know what opportunities exist	62	60
I don't know enough about how my sector operates in...	44	38
I don't have knowledge of opportunities in...	53	55
Challenges accessing relevant funding	73	65
My visa prohibits me	2	2
I don't feel my ability to connect is limited	9	23

Source: Cultural mobility and connection research survey

Respondents were also invited to expand on their answers, examples of which are included in the next chapter. These responses include greater detail and nuance around specific artforms, perceptions of identity, shifting priorities at policy levels, or are reflective of increasingly heightened gig economies and precarious artistic labour.

3.3.3 Limitations analysis

Factors limiting the ability to connect with arts and cultural professionals and organisations across the UK and Ireland centre on lack of information, lack of contacts and networks and challenges accessing funding. These findings are consistent with the literature of the rapid evidence review. It is clear that more expanded or newly established initiatives are required to increase awareness of sources of funding, of existing networks and opportunities and measures taken to establish connection between, and across communities of practice. Opportunities lie here for umbrella bodies and resource agencies that are either artform-specific or multi-region in/across the UK, and which often take on wider communication, information dissemination or advocacy roles. However, it is acknowledged that many of these bodies and agencies also experience similar exigencies and pressures to individual artists and cultural workers and are subject to precarity, peripatetic working and an uneven and uncertain distribution of funds. They are also subject to regional funding discrepancies and inconsistencies, which may leave their operations unequal.¹¹³

¹¹³: This is echoed in the literature: 'Calls from the sector in our research for more signposting, information and guidance on opportunities for cross-border collaboration may be indicative of a lack of awareness of the work of these organisations, or resource constraints that prevent these organisations from promoting their work more widely'. Hadley, S. and Woodley, S. (2023). The Future of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Arts: Research and Policy Findings from Ireland and Northern Ireland. Irish Studies in International Affairs, Volume 34, Number 2, Analysing and Researching Ireland, North and South. Available [here](#).

“

I've found the Universal Basic Income pilot for artists in Ireland is a complicating factor to me as an artist based in the North; it's made the instability of my professional practice here feel even more pronounced. It hasn't affected my ability to connect exactly, but it's exacerbated my imposter syndrome and been a drag on my motivation. Anything even approaching that kind of practical support seems so utterly out of reach here, and is heaped on top of the already gigantic disproportions in per capita funding between NI and GB/Ireland. Exchanges and cross-border projects do tend to highlight those discrepancies, and it's tough to face, to be honest.¹¹⁴

114: Survey respondent.

4. Qualitative data overview



4.1 Introduction to qualitative data overview

The following section explores responses to interviews conducted between December 2024 and February 2025. In total, Starling Start conducted eighteen multi-layered interviews between December 2024 and February 2025. Six interviews were conducted with arm's-length bodies or government arts agencies with international remits; Arts Council England, Arts Council Ireland, Wales Arts International, and Creative Scotland. Four interviews took place with organisations or umbrella bodies working in/across the UK: Centre for Cultural Value (England), Edinburgh Fringe (Scotland), Unlimited (UK-wide), and Theatre & Dance NI (Northern Ireland). Eight interviews were undertaken with ten individual artists/ collectives/ grassroots organisations across disciplines and geographical locations: visual art (Northern Ireland), literature (Ireland), theatre (Northern Ireland), digital and immersive arts (Ireland), theatre and poetry (Wales), theatre (Ireland), music (Wales), music (Ireland/England), and poetry (Scotland). Individual practitioners received an honorarium for their contributions.

This section is organised into three subsections: Policy; Organisations; Practitioners/producers and each subsection is analysed on themes arising from the semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Policy

The arm's-length bodies and government agencies interviewed played a key role in sustaining and developing cultural relationships between Ireland and the UK. These relationships, while shaped by historical ties and geographical proximity, have also evolved in response to contemporary challenges, including the UK's departure from the EU, shifts in government priorities, funding disparities, strategic priorities, and environmental concerns.

*'Our closest neighbours should be the ones that we extend our hand to. Proximity matters!'*¹¹⁵

Despite these challenges, there is a strong mutual interest from interviewees in maintaining and expanding collaboration, whether through structured partnerships, informal artistic networks, or emerging policy frameworks.

4.2.1 Existing partnerships

Interviewees spoke about the power of their **strategic partnerships**. These can take the form of formal intergovernmental frameworks such as the Scotland's Bilateral Review or at a bilateral intergovernmental level, the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan (2021–2025) which formally embeds culture, language, and heritage as key areas of cooperation.

*'Having the statement of intent has been really beneficial as it's brought a focus that might otherwise be lost.'*¹¹⁶

Interviewees also referenced the significance of existing partnerships between the four UK arm's-length bodies (Arts Council England, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland) as part of the *four nations International Fund* which has also included representation from Arts Council Ireland. Both Arts Council Ireland and Arts Council of Northern Ireland also referenced collaborative north-south initiatives such as co-funding the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig¹¹⁷ and the newly launched all-island dance company Luai¹¹⁸ which provides a 32-county platform for dance, collaboration and development. There is also a close working relationship between national bodies in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, such as the National Theatres as well as not-for-profit agencies such as Business to Arts and Arts & Business NI. Running parallel to these entities are six all-island bodies overseen by the North South Ministerial Council which were set up as a result of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. While not necessarily focused on arts activity, they are a good example of Northern Ireland and Ireland all-island, cross-border working across the island. These are: Waterways Ireland, Intertrade Ireland, Food Safety Authority, Foras na Gaeilge, Ulster-Scots Agency, the Irish Lights Commission and SEPUB.

In addition, it was felt that North-South and all-island collaborations remain strong through initiatives like Poetry Ireland, and the All-Ireland Poet Laureate programme, while East-West links are weaker and sustained by initiatives such as the Horizons programme at WOMEX fostering cross-border collaboration.¹¹⁹

UK interviewees agreed that Ireland is a **key international partner** for the UK, by being positioned as both a close neighbour and an international cultural partner, and Scotland in particular sees Ireland as a key collaborator for EU engagement.

¹¹⁵: Interview with representative from Wales Arts International, November 2024.

¹¹⁷: [The Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig](#).

¹¹⁸: [Luail – Ireland's National Dance Company](#)

¹¹⁹: We acknowledge that other partnerships exist outside of those mentioned by interviewees.

¹¹⁵: Interview with representative from Arts Council Ireland, September 2024.

Meanwhile it was generally viewed as a mutually beneficial relationship, with Irish organisations relying on the scale and capacity of larger UK organisations and Ireland positioned as close and culturally proximate neighbour.

In England, it was noted that engagement with Ireland often occurs indirectly via Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales through Arts Council of Northern Ireland-led discussions in the ‘four nations’ framework. There was interest from all interviewees in formally including Ireland as a partner to this fund and creating a context for a UK-Ireland funding framework.

‘One of the ways we want to reconnect is on projects beyond exchange beyond two countries only. It’s a bit limited to just do that. Any type of activity is not just bilateral - we seek to bring in more partners, more complex partners.’¹²⁰

Interviewees spoke about how Culture Ireland uniquely supports artists across the 32 counties of Ireland, enabling Northern Ireland-based artists to access **funding and showcase opportunities**, including at the Edinburgh Fringe, and that Culture Ireland has a Cultural Officer based in the Irish Embassy in London – developing touring networks that Irish work can move through. Other governmental initiatives referred to include Ireland’s Shared Island initiative which provides support for cross-border (North-South) and also East-West collaboration.

4.2.2 Challenges of mobility and collaboration

Interviewees spoke about how the UK’s departure from the EU has **disrupted many previous relationships**, and ‘made things harder’ by introducing administrative, visa, and touring challenges. While the Common Travel Area (CTA) allows citizens of Ireland and the UK to work and collaborate freely, logistical and financial barriers persist. Interviewees expressed a desire to reconnect and rebuild touring projects affected by the UK’s departure from the EU, ensuring a mutually beneficial approach.

There is a **unified challenge with financial resourcing** for the arts, with a limited history of philanthropy to supplement public funding (despite the discrepancies in arts funding per head of population across Ireland and the UK).¹²¹ It was noted that the financial cost of travel between regions, particularly for independent artists and smaller organisations, poses a significant barrier. In particular, culture is not high on some government priorities;

for example, there is a lack of dedicated arts and culture support within Northern Ireland’s *Programme for Government*.

‘Note the differences of funding between north and south and our capacity to develop new initiatives is hamstrung to our lack of funding.’¹²²

In addition, interviewees noted how **sustainability concerns** and high costs related to touring and mobility are increasingly shaping strategic and organisational priorities, with resource-sharing and joint funding seen as potential solutions to support mobility while reducing environmental impact.

‘Doing such extraordinary work with minimal resources. Good to think about combined resourcing with the aim of improving mobility and sustainability of touring.’¹²³

4.2.3 Future focus and strategic opportunities

Across all regions, stakeholders expressed a strong desire to strengthen UK-Ireland cultural collaboration through **formalising cross-regional policy and funding**. Suggestions included establishing a more structured UK-wide approach to international cultural collaboration, potentially expanding the four nations Fund to include Ireland as a formal fifth partner, and developing co-funded initiatives to support mobility, mitigate challenges related to the UK’s departure from the EU, and address sustainability concerns.

‘Because we’re leading from a cultural (rather than international) perspective, we see Ireland as our closest and dearest neighbour and this will frame future working.’¹²⁴

Interviewees highlighted that improved recording of mobility and cross border projects would improve ability to assess gaps and advocate for targeted funding. It was felt that developing better tracking mechanisms could improve decision-making, resource allocation and impact measurement.

‘Everything is felt, rather than analysed.’¹²⁵

Interviewees felt that artists and cultural practitioners should have a voice in shaping future partnerships, enhancing discussions to policy and funding bodies and they encouraged the development of platforms and initiatives that focus on **relationship-building and problem-solving within the cultural sector**.

By embedding collaboration within a strategic, well-resourced framework, arm’s-length bodies can continue to play a crucial role in deepening the UK-Ireland relationship in the years ahead.

120: Interview with representative from Wales Arts International, November 2024.

121: Arts Council of Northern Ireland receives the equivalent of £5.07 of arts funding per head of population. Its nearest comparator, Arts Council Wales, received £10.51 per head of population. The disparity in government support for the arts is even greater on the island of Ireland. An Chomhairle Ealaíon received £25.90 from its own exchequer sources: [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Government’s lack of investment in the arts is affecting those most in need.](#)

122: Interview with representative from Arts Council of Northern Ireland, September 2024.

123: Interview with representative from Wales Arts International, November 2024.

124: Interview with representative from Wales Arts International, November 2024.

125: Interview with representative from Arts Council Ireland, September 2024.

*'Bring the arts sector in to see what they need. AND creating and assisting organisations to develop platforms or opportunities that are focused on building relationships or problem solving.'*¹²⁶

4.3 Organisations

Each of the organisational representatives interviewed displayed a huge passion and advocacy for the sector. It was clear from the conversations that their work spilled beyond the proximity of their organisation, as they actively searched out opportunities to network and collaborate across the UK and Ireland, championing the rights of, and providing opportunities for artists.

*'Be the conduit, not the gatekeeper.'*¹²⁷

4.3.1 Existing relationships and collaborations

Some interviewees noted that academic institutions serve as key connectors for both research and artistic exchange. Universities provide structured environments where cross border collaboration can flourish, helping to formalise relationships between institutions in the UK and Ireland. Some interviewees reflected that festivals act as major cultural hubs, bringing artists, audiences, and industry together in ways that foster long-term partnerships. They noted that events such as Edinburgh Fringe, Dublin Fringe, and residency initiative Weft Studio have been instrumental in showcasing Irish work and expanding networks. Weft Studio has played a key role in developing opportunities for artists of colour across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

They also highlighted that although collaboration between organisations is already active across the UK and Ireland, with Culture Ireland playing a major role in supporting Irish artists at international platforms like Edinburgh Fringe, there were barriers existing in terms of a perceived disconnect between policy and practice and fragmented touring networks.

It was felt that arts and culture provide a natural space to explore shared histories, traditions, and languages, strengthening cultural diplomacy and fostering dialogue between different communities. However, interviewees felt that the lack of dedicated UK-Ireland joint funding presented barriers.

Interviewees reflected on how the UK remains a crucial market for Irish artists, with many seeing it as a key stepping stone towards broader international reach. Cross-border exchange is mutually beneficial, offering larger audiences and access for UK institutions to high-quality work.

4.3.2 Challenges limiting deeper collaboration

Interviewees spoke about a **disconnect between policy and practice**. In particular it was noted that policymaking often lacks practitioner input, leading to strategies that do not fully address the needs of artists and cultural workers. There is a perception by those interviewed that there is greater opportunity to engage and consult with artists and creatives at the beginning of policy development. A lack of structured mapping makes it difficult to identify existing opportunities, funding streams, and areas for growth.

*'Policy is dreamed up in absence of a proper understanding of the arts landscape.'*¹²⁸

Interviewees talked about the lack of a **dedicated UK-Ireland joint funding** mechanism, making long-term collaboration difficult. Most funding remains short-term or project-based, limiting depth of connection and sustainability of networks.

They spoke about how international touring networks are fragmented, with large shows often stopping in Scotland but not continuing further, which not only limits access for audiences outside major urban centres but also raises sustainability concerns due to inefficient resource use. In addition, those interviewed talked about barriers to accessibility and inclusion, with no clear policy existing to support accessibility-related costs, making it harder to work inclusively across borders. It was noted that programmes are not always designed with equity in mind, making it more challenging for disabled artists, parents, or those with additional needs to participate fully, and that the costs of working with disabled artists are higher, yet existing funding structures do not account for this, limiting access to opportunities.

4.3.3 Opportunities for strengthening UK-Ireland Collaboration

*'A more mature conversation could happen in terms of policy and practice and share and join up the thinking.'*¹²⁹

It was felt that establishing a **joint funding programme for sustained UK-Ireland collaboration** would provide the financial security needed for long-term partnerships. Aligning funding structures would help remove administrative barriers and allow for greater arts and cultural mobility leading to more sustained connection and collaboration and deeper networks and relationships.

*'At a more human and local level, there can be much more connection between things that look and feel alike.'*¹³⁰

126: Interview with representative from Arts Council Ireland, September 2024.

127: Interview with arts organisation based in England.

128: Interview with arts organisation based in Scotland.

129: Interview with arts organisation based in Scotland.

130: Interview with arts organisation based in Scotland.

It was hoped that policymakers could actively seek out and **involve practitioners in strategic discussions** to ensure policies reflect real world challenges. Recognising artists and cultural workers with voice and agency would not only inform and shift strategic narratives, but bring first hand lived experience to highlight key issues such as exclusion, access, fair pay, diversity, mental health and insight into emerging trends and real world issues in policy discussions. Suggestions included a forum to bring together initiatives such as a Citizens Assembly for culture as a way to facilitate meaningful discussion.

In addition, increased support for grassroots organisations would help independent artists and smaller organisations build partnerships.

Accessibility must be embedded from the start, ensuring that disabled artists, caregivers and underrepresented groups have the same opportunities to participate.

Introducing mobility grants or **slow travel initiatives** could help artists move between the UK and Ireland while reducing the environmental impact of travel. A dedicated mobility project could highlight infrastructure gaps and provide a roadmap for improving accessibility across borders.

A stronger **UK-Ireland touring network** could strengthen existing relationships, allowing artists and cultural organisations to tour more widely and ensuring that large-scale international productions reach a broader audience. Better resource-sharing and co-commissioning between venues and festivals could reduce costs and increase opportunities for artists.

*'There isn't a lens in terms of the absolute potential of these two islands working closely together.'*¹³¹

4.4 Practitioners/ Producers

Cultural exchange between Ireland and the UK operates on multiple levels, from institutional partnerships to grassroots collaborations led by artists and practitioners. These relationships are deeply rooted in shared histories, artistic traditions, linguistic ties, and mutual professional benefits. While long standing relationships persist, challenges around funding disparities, administrative complexities, and mobility restrictions related to the UK's departure from the EU have reshaped the landscape making it more costly and complicated (detailed under *Challenges and structural barriers* in the following pages). Despite these barriers, there remains a strong desire to sustain and deepen creative connections.

*'If there is to be any cohesion, it has to start with us.'*¹³²

*'It is difficult to overstate the value of greater connection to England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales for visual artists and curators. Greater mobility, enhanced networks and the potential to collaborate, research, participate in residencies, and make new work are all benefits of being able to avail of opportunities to visit the UK in a professional capacity.'*¹³³

4.4.1 Building and sustaining relationships

Practitioners conveyed a deep and heartfelt passion for strengthening cultural connections between the UK and Ireland, particularly in the survey responses. Many expressed a profound **sense of belonging** and creative enrichment tied to these relationships, whether through establishing connections with new audiences, rediscovering ancestral traditions, or immersing themselves in the cultural landscapes that have shaped their work. Their words are deeply personal and demonstrate a longing to engage, learn, and collaborate across Ireland and the UK.

Personal networks drive collaboration, with practitioners from Ireland recognising the importance of maintaining relationships with UK organisations, particularly in sectors like publishing, where the UK 'dominates the market'. However, many prioritise working with authors, magazines, and small presses due to ease of access in Ireland. **Artist-led collaboration remains highly informal**, relying on personal connections rather than structured institutional support. Ireland-to-Northern Ireland connections have become more pronounced as a result. There is a lack of structured networking opportunities to help emerging artists and organisations develop new relationships between the UK and Ireland.

Touring remains a **key vehicle for cultural engagement**, for some of the practitioners we spoke to. UK audiences are highly engaged with Irish work and many artists from Ireland noted how they rely on UK touring opportunities due to the absence of dedicated venues and smaller audiences at home. In contrast, it was felt that the same opportunities did not exist for some UK practitioners, with one person explaining *'Not every organisation operates with an open-door policy'*¹³⁴ and another saying *'we don't have the same opportunities'*¹³⁵ In addition, it was felt that while some UK-Ireland venue partnerships are well established, London-based partnerships tend to shift more frequently.

133: Survey respondent.

134: Interview with Wales-based practitioner/producer.

135: Interview with Scotland-based practitioner/producer.

131: Interview with arts organisation based in Northern Ireland.

132: Interview with arts organisation based in Northern Ireland.

*'Theatre especially is a tougher artform to travel with (personnel-heavy and expensive to tour) - but every interaction or visit brings huge insight into new ways of making. Exchange across nationalities is the core of my experience as an immigrant and always throws up fantastic conversations and revelations when it happens in the arts. We need cultural exchange to thrive.'*¹³⁶

Cultural institutions and leadership development opportunities are valued by practitioners and many reference how Culture Ireland has been instrumental in supporting international opportunities that have led to professional development. They specifically highlight how it is predicated on a funding model that is primarily focused on exporting work from Ireland rather than supporting inbound collaborations and so, whilst an average of 77% of Culture Ireland support has gone to artists whose projects are with UK partners between 2022 and 2024, there is no equivalent analogue organisation. Leadership development programmes like the Clore Leadership Programme have played a **crucial role in initiating relationships** between UK practitioners and those in Ireland, fostering long-term professional development.

4.4.2 Challenges and structural barriers

Practitioners consistently highlighted how persistent **financial pressures impact the sustainability** of UK-Ireland projects, with funding often short-term or project-based, making long-term collaboration difficult. In addition, some mentioned how cross-border funding is complex, with administrative challenges such as differing tax years creating barriers for UK-based artists seeking funding from Ireland and vice versa. This is not a unique challenge specific to this particular set of relationships but a common challenge for the sector. However, unlike some European partnerships, there is **no dedicated UK-Ireland joint funding stream** to facilitate sustained artistic exchange and cultural collaboration.

*'The funding streams to co-create work are very binary - I am currently working on a show that got funding in the UK - but I'm struggling to get match funding to stage the work in the two countries - the team is a combination of UK and Irish artists.'*¹³⁷

The logistical challenges posed by the UK's departure from the EU were mentioned in relation to artist mobility and professional development, including increased costs and administrative burdens for touring. In some cases, this has led practitioners from Ireland to redirect their focus towards mainland Europe.

Despite the Common Travel Area, barriers remain for artists moving between Ireland and the UK, particularly regarding equipment transport and tax regulations. A lack of institutional knowledge among emerging artists about funding structures and opportunities limits engagement. Many artists spoke about their struggle to navigate the **complex cultural landscapes** of both regions. Dual-taxation issues create further obstacles, particularly for musicians (e.g., Irish Music Rights Organisation members in Ireland are ineligible for Performing Rights Society for Music membership, and therefore funding in the UK, limiting financial viability).

*'There's no funding available where we can collaborate.'*¹³⁸

Many artists in both Ireland and the UK face financial instability, despite a more supportive climate in the former. Practitioners mentioned how they often take on unrelated work to sustain themselves, **reducing their capacity for creative practice**. Funding disparities affect mobility, particularly for artists relocating between Ireland and the UK, making it difficult to sustain relationships and collaborative work. In Northern Ireland for example, Arts Council of Northern Ireland funding caps limit repeat grants within a two-year period, further challenging career sustainability for Northern Ireland-based artists.

136: Survey respondent.

137: Survey respondent.

138: Interview with Ireland-based practitioner/producer.

4.4.3 Opportunities for strengthening collaboration

Interviewees expressed a clear need to expand networks and create more structured opportunities for artists and organisations to build relationships beyond their personal networks. Whilst they expressed the need to be part of strategy and policy development, interviewees and survey respondents also told us how they value **time and space for experimentation**, prioritising relational, grassroots collaboration over rigid policy-driven frameworks.

Collaborations between Ireland and Scotland, and Ireland and Wales have explored common themes such as language and cultural loss, demonstrating the potential for deeper engagement beyond bilateral UK-Ireland partnerships.

‘What works best for artists is the opportunity to make work together and be in the room with one another, funders and strategic partners.’¹³⁹

‘The most exciting and fruitful grant would be one to play and experiment.’¹⁴⁰

There is a growing interest by practitioners in developing **alternative travel** models (e.g. slow travel grants, overland touring) to balance sustainability with artistic exchange. Some practitioners suggested integrating the travel experience itself into the creative process, transforming mobility from a logistical hurdle into a meaningful part of artistic practice. Incentivising in-person networking by providing financial support for artists to travel and meet face-to-face is seen as essential. Digital engagement alone is not considered sufficient for building meaningful relationships.

Wales-Ireland collaborations have benefited from a clear strategic framework (Ireland-Wales Shared Statement), highlighting the potential benefits of more **structured policy alignment across regions**. Different funding priorities in Ireland and the UK create both opportunities and obstacles: for example, Wales Arts International funding embraces Ireland as a partner, whereas the scope of Culture Ireland’s focus is primarily on artists from the island of Ireland. A joint funding mechanism could facilitate deeper, sustained peer collaboration between artists and organisations across Ireland and the UK.

‘Due to the size of our population, the cultural sector in Ireland is small. So it is essential to connect and collaborate with others internationally. As our closest neighbours, and those with whom we share an island/archipelago, languages, and a long and complicated history, it makes clear sense that we should engage in creative explorations together.’¹⁴¹

In summary, arts and culture can play a significant role in fostering bilateral engagement beyond formal policy agreements and to an individual level. Practitioners and producers highlighted the power of cultural conversations and the importance of ensuring the exchange is not one-sided. They also highlighted a need to **support artist and grassroots organisation-driven initiatives that prioritise relationship building** over immediate outputs, allowing time for projects to develop organically.

By addressing structural barriers, championing direct artist involvement, and creating sustainable funding mechanisms, the UK and Ireland can ensure that artistic exchange remains vibrant, reciprocal and evolving.

139: Interview with Northern Ireland-based practitioner/producer.

140: Interview with Northern Ireland-based practitioner/producer.

141: Survey respondent.

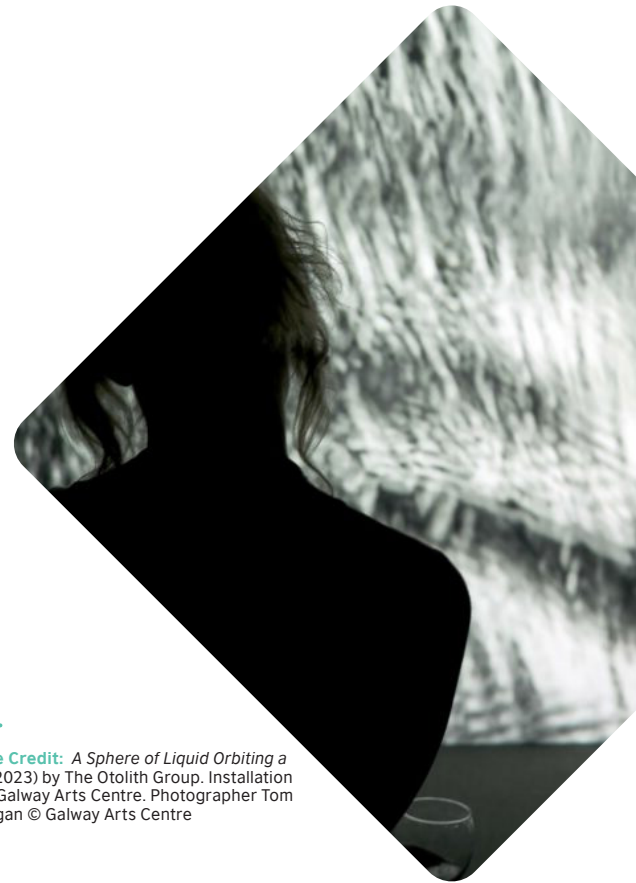


Image Credit: *A Sphere of Liquid Orbiting a Star* (2023) by The Otolith Group. Installation view, Galway Arts Centre. Photographer Tom Flanagan © Galway Arts Centre

“

Being in the room matters. The most successful relationships develop through in-person engagement rather than digital interaction.¹⁴²

¹⁴²: Interview with Northern Ireland-based practitioner/producer.

5. Opportunities to strengthen the UK-Ireland ecosystem



The following opportunities respond to the themes that arose from the preceding chapter and are grouped by policy, through to organisations, and then to practitioner/producer. They are developed around three themes: **Steer** (high-level engagement); **Collaborate** (opportunities for strategic collaboration); and **Support** (support for cultural professionals).

Arts and culture can support a strong growth agenda between the governments of Ireland and the four nations of the UK. One that is focussed on harnessing the strengths of each nation, while strategically aligning and maximising growth across a shared ecosystem. By supporting collaboration and connection in this way, the full breadth and possibility of creativity and interdisciplinary innovation is stimulated and aids investment, prosperity and growth. This agenda could be multi-layered.

5.1 Steer

Steer the bilateral relationship through formalised structured partnerships and brokering at intergovernmental, arm's-length agency and sectoral level with representative bodies and artform specialist agencies (arts centres, artists collectives, artists' studios).

5.1.1 Intergovernmental

The significance of strategic frameworks such as the Scotland-Ireland Bilateral Review and Ireland-Wales Shared Statement are not to be underplayed in this regard. They provide enabling frameworks that formally embed culture, language, and heritage as key areas of cooperation and have provided significant support to the bilateral relationship across Ireland and the four nations of the UK during difficult times. This work could be strengthened and resourced to achieve more and its importance recognised.

Now that the UK-Ireland 2030 Statement is also in place there are further opportunities and possibilities to consider. With an expected annual Summit, this initiative can support UK-Ireland wide strategic partnerships at various levels and in various sectors. While the Statement is positioned at an intergovernmental and national cultural institution level, it's additional focus on the deep ties between people and culture and 'wider public engagement' suggests the statement could extend to include arm's-length agencies, representative bodies and specialist agencies. With a more segmented or kaleidoscopic approach taken, wider public engagement could be achieved and the enabling framework of the statement activated to support the 'ambitious programme of co-operation between our two countries through to 2030' (Gov.UK, 2025).¹⁴³

5.1.2 Agency

There exists an opportunity to convene a bilateral forum which will use the collective expertise, intelligence, assets and activities of the members of the group to enhance the political, economic and social benefits of bilateral cultural diplomacy initiatives of Ireland and the four nations of the UK. This group would comprise cultural leaders and meet to share intelligence, consider mutual understanding and align strategic opportunity across countries. It could identify medium to long-term needs and critical success factors and work towards increased growth of the creative economy through bilateral engagement focussed on cultural diplomacy on these islands. As a convening and brokering bilateral body and trusted partner across governments, the British Council would be well placed to support this as it does in its secretariat position to the Cultural Diplomacy Group for the four nations of the UK. Populated by key cultural leaders from across the creative and cultural sector, a five nations Cultural Diplomacy Group could act as a strategic forum that could strategically plan for, and contribute meaningfully to, large-scale creative and cultural initiatives such as UK Capital of Culture, EU Presidency and Euros 2028 and be able to signal longer term strategic opportunities, resource planning and sharing of information.

5.1.3 Artists

Much of the research has demonstrated that artists feel their voice is not fully heard nor experience taken into account when high level policies are formed. and strategic initiatives designed. By embedding cultural representation in decision-making, we can create a more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable cultural sector that genuinely supports the needs of those who drive it. A Citizen's Assembly for Culture is a mechanism for meaningful discussion and two-way communication. A deliberative, democratic and participative process, citizen assemblies are a tried, tested and respected model for garnering views, recommendations and concerns. An example of this is the Citizen Assembly for Culture in the West of England.¹⁴⁴ Established in 2021 this initiative empowers people to build democracy into cultural decision-making and support individuals in understanding how they can engage with creative practitioners. An opportunity exists for artform representative bodies to advocate for and lead out on a participative deliberative approach to cultural planning and decision-making that places artists and creative practitioners at the heart of this process, so as to ensure creative opportunities can be inclusive and accessible for everyone on our islands.

143: Gov.UK: [Joint statement](#) between Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Taoiseach Micheál Martin, 6 March 2025.

144: [Citizens for Culture - Citizens For Culture](#).

By building out from strategic partnerships and examples that already exist at intergovernmental, arm's-length agency and sectoral level, we can expand collaboration and ambition across the islands through structured partnerships, strategic fora, new networks and processes, or enhanced policy frameworks. By supporting a creative economy growth agenda across the UK-Ireland, with arts and culture at the centre, the ecosystem can more readily flourish and support economic, social and civic priorities.

This stronger intergovernmental commitment can solidify the role of the arts and culture in supporting peace, building trust and driving prosperity and we can build a more resilient, interconnected, prosperous and well-supported creative and cultural sector for the future.

5.2 Collaborate

Instigate opportunities for strategic collaboration at an inter-agency level that would foster enhanced partnership-working and tangible measures to create a better-informed, well-evidenced and interconnected creative ecosystem across Ireland and the four nations of the UK.

5.2.1 Develop a dedicated resource for evidence and research focussed on the creative and cultural economy in Ireland

With the intention of supporting policy development, strategic investment and a growth agenda by delivering independent, credible evidence and well-informed policy advice to support the bilateral relationship. UK policy development has been shaped by extensive long-term research on the economic impact of the cultural and creative industries. However, there is a considerable gap in information to support policy-making, investment and growth in an Irish context. This is disabling growth, capacity building, infrastructural development and knowledge sharing. The UK is a leader in this regard and inspiration can be taken from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre in the UK (C-PEC) which provides 'independent data, evidence and policy advice...enabling the UK's creative industries to thrive, fuelling economic growth, international influence and innovative solutions to global challenges' (C-PEC, 2025). Led by a consortium of universities with the Royal Society of Arts and funded by the UK research body, UKRI, they commission and conduct research to address evidence gaps, respond to policy priority areas through briefings, engage in regular thematic reporting and knowledge exchange activities.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵: See for example comment on the recently launched Creative Industries Sector Plan, which is part of the UK Gov Industrial Strategy. The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (2025). [Taking stock of the Creative Industries Sector Plan - Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](#).

An opportunity exists to collaborate with C-PEC to address the major data and analysis gap in Ireland and consider the key linkages and flows between Ireland and the UK's creative and cultural economy.

Enhancing consistency in data collection and sharing would generate vital information to evidence value, benchmark progress, identify gaps and opportunities, and deepen understanding of nuances and alignments. This, in turn, would help inform strategic decision-making. A Policy and Evidence Research Centre for Ireland could then collaborate with its UK counterpart to examine broader opportunities within the creative and cultural ecosystem – analysing trends and patterns and identifying gaps in both provision and knowledge. For transparency and accountability in the use of public funds, it is crucial to have evidence to show the maximisation and utility of this expenditure as well as design targeted strategic future investment.

5.2.2 Continue to enhance and develop supports that bring together innovators, researchers, and industry professionals from diverse disciplines within and connected to the creative and cultural industries

This collaborative approach will foster the development of knowledge, networks, and capacity – securing the future pipeline of creativity across these islands. By connecting these key actors, we strengthen resilience and safeguard our shared future through applied research and innovation spaces that encourage exploratory inquiry and developmental collaboration.

This can be done at a practice, academic and academy level. Valuable inter-agency relationships already exist such as between the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Research Ireland (RI) who have previously worked together to support a bilateral project and research fund in the Digital Humanities. A Creative and Cultural Industries research fund that can support bilateral research networks and projects is imminent. Other examples exist between the Scottish Government in Ireland (one of Scotland's international offices) and the Royal Irish Academy.¹⁴⁶ These are valuable initiatives that create bilateral networking opportunities and excellence in research that help build capacity, scale and networks in inter-disciplinary research on the islands. We can learn from examples of excellence in other nations such as the Creative Economy Atlas in Wales.¹⁴⁷ Bringing together innovators and researchers to learn from each other in initiatives like these, and understand which would be valuable at a nation, and a pan-nation level, would be welcomed as these will be crucial to support any forthcoming policy and evidence research.

¹⁴⁶: [Ireland-Scotland bilateral network grants](#) - Royal Irish Academy.

¹⁴⁷: [Creative Economy Atlas Cymru](#) | Clwstwr.

By fostering spaces for collaboration and experimentation, we enable innovators, researchers and industry to come together to connect, innovate and ideate – securing the future pipeline of creativity across these islands.

5.3 Support

By creating opportunity through funding, information and exchange initiatives for practitioners and producers, we can create a more supported, equitable and inclusive cultural ecosystem, where individuals can access the supports they need to sustain and develop their work, regardless of location and need.

5.3.1 Create meaningful mobility opportunities across the five nations which keep the Common Travel Area ecosystem flowing and stimulated.

Cultural exchange between Ireland and the UK operates on multiple levels, from institutional partnerships to grassroots collaborations and this is led by artists and practitioners. The funding available for culture and bilateral mobility varies from country to country and the funding available impacts opportunities for mobility and collaboration bilaterally. Creating opportunity for practice and exchange is vital and this can be enabled through joint funding initiatives, flexible funding models, information dissemination and residency partnerships.

Whilst funds reviewed in this study include provision for access with equity and inclusion built into the design, many arts practitioners and cultural producers highlighted that they continue to experience general barriers to mobility and inclusion e.g. lack of support for artists with disabilities, parental or caring responsibilities, those from underrepresented or minority communities, and those who require additional regional/rural infrastructural access. By investing in exchanges, mentoring, and training, we can create pathways that not only support individuals but also strengthen the creative sector as a whole. Prioritising inclusion in mobility frameworks will ensure that cultural exchange reflects the full diversity of cultural voices across the UK and Ireland.

Significant existing partnerships already exist such as between the four UK arm's-length bodies (Arts Council England, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council of Wales/Wales Arts International, Creative Scotland) as part of the four nations International Fund. This could be extended to include Ireland. Examples of bilateral or multilateral initiatives that involve Ireland and the four nations of the UK are the Northern Europe Mobility Opportunity¹⁴⁸ and All In¹⁴⁹ the new access for culture and creativity across the UK and

Ireland. Another model which exists is the Shared Island Civic Fund¹⁵⁰ and this is open to individuals for civic society initiatives across the island. There is also a model in Creative Ireland where there is significant provision dedicated to creativity in an all-island context (as noted in Section 3). There is the potential to develop a Shared Islands or UK-Ireland pan-Nations fund for the mobility and exchange of cultural practice. This fund could support individual artists as well as large scale touring and could be designed with inclusivity and SDG imperatives built in.

Addressing the needs articulated in this research project begins to create greater connection and inclusion in the cultural sector across Ireland and the four nations of the UK and Ireland. It would also further sustainability initiatives and capacity-building across a connected and long-standing ecosystem that is valued and for many, is a priority.

5.3.2 Support enhanced information provision and dissemination by amplifying information on opportunities available and rolling out workshops on key issues and obstacles for artists and creative practitioners

Artists and practitioners who want to connect and collaborate across the UK and Ireland are not aware of the opportunities which exist to support this. While the UK is well served through the information hub, Arts Infopoint UK, which is run by Wales Arts International on behalf of the four nations of the UK, the potential exists to capture and disseminate information on relevant opportunities that would support cultural mobility across the Common Travel Area specifically. There is a clear opportunity to increase awareness of opportunities and networks for artists and practitioners who wish to work across the UK and Ireland. A dedicated online platform – accessible by both arm's-length bodies, government agencies and arts organisations – could serve as a vital bridge for artists and cultural professionals across the UK and Ireland. By further developing the existing work and increased signposting to Arts Infopoint UK, this hub would streamline access to resources, making it easier for artists and cultural workers to connect, create, and thrive.

Such a platform would not only reduce fragmentation but also foster deeper multi-national and international partnerships, ensuring that artists and organisations can navigate opportunities with clarity and confidence. By establishing a dedicated UK-Ireland information point, opportunities are collated, centralised and their possibilities maximised. This strengthens artistic networks, encourages mobility, connection and unlocks new avenues for creative exchange. This could be a new endeavour or could be a development of an existing initiative such as *Arts Infopoint UK*.

148: NEMO – Northern European Mobility Opportunity | In Focus | Nordic Culture Fund.

149: Home - All In.

150: Gov.IE: Shared Island Civic Society Fund.

The functionality of this information provision could be extended to include online webinars and workshops on key issues. Navigating the complexities of collaboration between the UK and Ireland can be a challenge for practitioners and cultural organisations. Dual taxation, visa constraints, and funding eligibility (such as differences between Irish Music Rights Association and Performing Right Society for Music) create unnecessary hurdles that can limit artistic mobility and collaboration. Establishing a dedicated UK-Ireland information resource would help reduce misconceptions, misinformation and support greater mobility and enhanced connection through the provision of knowledge and information.

6. Conclusion



This research underscores the immense potential and appetite for further cultural collaboration between the four nations of the UK and Ireland, driven by the passion, creativity, and resilience of artists, producers, and cultural organisations. It builds on current funding and initiatives across a range of organisations and bodies and highlights the enthusiasm for deeper engagement and the pressing need to form strategic bilateral relationships, address research and information gaps, and create supports for artists and creative practitioners and all of those in the creative and cultural economy so that we can harness the significant potential and rich cultural history and interconnection across these islands.

The voices of those working across these islands make it clear that cultural collaboration is not just about policy and infrastructure, but about relationships between people, places, and communities. A strategic, well-supported approach can unlock opportunities for those engaged in the creative and cultural sectors at every stage of their careers, foster new partnerships, and ensure that the UK and Ireland remain vibrant, interconnected cultural landscapes – developing, sustaining and nurturing this ecology for future generations.

This report hopes to provide a roadmap to achieve this vision, and ensure that cultural collaboration and connection is accessible, sustainable, and firmly embedded in policy and practice. By prioritising investment, inclusivity, and long-term thinking, the UK and Ireland can build a future where the deep cultural ties between our people continue to be forged, enriched and strengthened for a rich and shared future.



Appendices



Appendix 1: Sources

Appendix 1.1 Interview questions

Our research questions were semi-structured to enable interviewees to respond according to their experience at both policy and practice levels:

1. Through the work that you do/make, what current relationships/projects, arts and cultural connections are you aware of between the UK and Ireland?
2. Are there other relationships/projects that currently exist or previously existed that you think are particularly good?
3. In your opinion, what works well at a practice level? Who do these initiatives or opportunities benefit, and how do you think they could be strengthened?
4. What do you think the barriers or challenges are in developing or maintaining arts and cultural connections/relationships across these islands?
5. What system-level supports for artists could drive greater artform as well as individual connection between artists and cultural practitioners in a UK-Ireland context?



Appendix 1.2. Interview participants

All interviews were undertaken online via Zoom between December 2024 and February 2025.

Table 16: Interview participants by type, location and artform

Type	Location	Artform
Arm's-length bodies	Arts Council Ireland	Multi-artform
	Culture Ireland	Multi-artform
	Arts Council England	Multi-artform
	Arts Council of Northern Ireland	Multi-artform
	Wales Art International	Multi-artform
	Creative Scotland	Multi-artform
Organisations or umbrella bodies working in/across the UK	Centre for Cultural Value (England)	Multi-artform (cultural policy)
	Edinburgh Fringe (Scotland)	Multi-artform
	Unlimited (UK-wide)	Multi-artform
	Theatre & Dance NI (Northern Ireland)	Theatre, dance
Individual artists / collectives / grassroots organisations	Northern Ireland	Visual art
	Ireland	Literature
	Northern Ireland	Theatre
	Ireland	Multi-artform
	Wales	Theatre
	Ireland	Theatre
	Wales and Ireland/England	Music
	Scotland	Poetry

Source: Culture Connects primary research

Appendix 1.3 Survey questions

1. I confirm I am an artist/work in the creative and cultural sectors and am resident in:

- UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales)
- Ireland (Republic of Ireland)

2. Practice or discipline (please select all that apply):

- Architecture, Design and Fashion
- Digital Arts
- Film
- Literature
- Music
- Theatre and Dance
- Visual Art
- Multi-disciplinary
- Other

3. What is your place of birth?

- Ireland (Republic of Ireland)
- UK (England)
- UK (Northern Ireland)
- UK (Scotland)
- UK (Wales)
- Other

4. We are interested in mapping artist/cultural worker mobility between Ireland and the UK. If you are based somewhere other than the country you grew up in, is this because of:

- Professional opportunities
- Education
- Family reasons
- Other (please do not specify)

5. If you would like to add more information in relation to your answer to Q4, please detail this here.

1. As an artist/cultural worker have you been involved in projects or opportunities that connected you to the following places (please mark all those that apply):

- England
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- None of the above

2. If you would like to add more information in relation to your answer to Q6, please detail this here.

3. Please tell us what type of arts / cultural activity or opportunity you were involved in:

- Professional network (online or in-person)
- Research & development
- Once-off e.g. exhibition, gig
- Longer-term, e.g. commission, tour
- Residency
- Other

4. If 'Other' was selected in Q8, please provide a little more information here.

1. What factors, if any, limit your ability to connect with arts and cultural professionals/ organisations in Ireland (Republic of Ireland) or the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and/or Wales)?
- I don't know who to contact
 - I don't have any networks there
 - I don't know what opportunities exist
 - I don't know enough about how my sector operates in Ireland (Republic of Ireland)/ the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)
 - I don't have knowledge of opportunities in Ireland (Republic of Ireland)/ the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)
 - Challenges accessing relevant funding
 - My visa prohibits me
 - Something else (please specify in the next question)
 - I don't feel my ability to connect is limited

2. If you would like to add more information in relation to your answer to Q10, please do so here.

1. If 'Something else' was selected in Q10, please detail a little more information here.

2. How would you describe the value, or potential value, of greater connection with Ireland (Republic of Ireland)/ the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) to your practice / work?

Appendix 1.4 - Arm's-Length Agencies

Appendix 1.4.1 Arts Council Ireland/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon

Arts Council Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon is the national government agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland.

They are an expert, autonomous body, established by statute in 1951, and guided by the Arts Act 2003.

Their role is to:

- **Advocate** We actively deliver projects which value and promote the arts in Ireland, and commission and publish arts research and information.
- **Advise** Our work with government and other state bodies informs arts policy.
- **Invest** We invest public money into the arts in Ireland. We provide funding and a range of supports to artists and arts organisations.
- **Partner** We collaborate with arts practitioners and organisations to cultivate and promote Ireland's cultural landscape.

The Arts Council of Ireland's current strategy, 'Making Great Art Work', outlines five key strategic priorities:

- supporting artists
- public engagement
- strategic investment
- spatial and demographic planning
- developing capacity.

Their work is underpinned by a set of values that includes:

- freedom of thought and expression
- commitment to excellence
- integrity, accountability and transparency
- respect for diversity
- collegiality

Appendix 1.4.2 Culture Ireland

Established in 2005 as a division of the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht,¹⁵¹ this year Culture Ireland celebrates 20 years creating and supporting opportunities for Irish artists and companies to represent their work at international festivals, venues, showcases and arts markets.

Culture Ireland operates on an all-island basis, with its funding programmes available to professional artists from across the island of Ireland.

Through its Showcase Programme, Culture Ireland develops opportunities for Irish artists and companies, through the presentation of their work at international showcases and arts markets including the Edinburgh Festivals, Celtic Connections, the Venice Art and Architecture Biennales, WOMEX World Music Expo, South by Southwest (in partnership with First Music Contact), Frankfurt Book Fair (in partnership with Literature Ireland) and Tanzmesse.

Culture Ireland also runs a regular funding scheme to support the international presentation of work by Irish artists and companies. Support is provided for in-person presentation with a focus on supporting travel costs for paid opportunities. Submissions are accepted from either participating artists or international presenting partners.

Culture Ireland also operates See Here, a scheme to support the inward travel to Ireland of international presenters, curators and promoters to see new Irish work available for touring.

Full details of Culture Ireland's grant schemes are available at: cultureireland.ie

- This year, its annual budgetary allocation is €8million, the highest amount in its history.
- In 2024, Culture Ireland supported over 5,500 artists and arts professionals to present internationally, reaching a global audience of 6.7million.

¹⁵¹: now known as Department of Culture, Communications and Sport

Appendix 1.4.3 Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. They look to address need, respond to opportunity, and support and grow talent, so that our sector can enable communities across this country to develop their creativity and enjoy rich cultural lives. Arts Council England play a vital role for this country's cultural sector as an investor, convener, partner, advocate and constant champion. They work in partnership locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, with and for the cultural sector, with local and central government. Their work helps build the creative industries of England as an engine of economic growth and brings benefit to the wellbeing of our wider society.

Arts Council England work to a 10-year strategy – Let's Create – that is built on the following vision:

'By 2030, England will be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.'

At the heart of their investment is the National Portfolio made up of 939 organisations from every corner of the country. As well as organisations working in each of the artforms that Arts Council England supports (combined arts, dance, literature, music, theatre, digital and visual arts), their portfolio includes museums of every size and scale and a growing number of library organisations.

The open-access National Lottery Project Grants programme run by Arts Council England supports a wide range of individuals and organisations, professional companies, and non-professional groups to undertake projects ranging from small-scale research and development through to large national and international tours. Overall, 88 (to date) tours were awarded over £8.6 million NLPG Touring strand funding in 2024/25, and many of these productions will be on the road this year.

Over the last year, Arts Council England have funded projects that have ranged in scope and scale from individual composition projects to a national digital network for libraries, from one-person plays to tours overseas.

In 2024/25 they supported more than 2,600 creative projects. They also run a range of other programmes and activity including a Capital programme, Music Hubs, and Developing Your Creative Practice which supports individual creatives wanting to make a step-change in their career.

Their England-led international projects include bilaterals with Italy on disability and dance; the International Touring and Environmental Responsibility fund with the arts agencies of Denmark and Norway; and place-based partnerships between England and Denmark. Alongside this, we work with our partners in the other UK nations together to support Cultural Bridge (with Germany), Magnetic residencies (with France) and the four UK Nations International Fund.

Appendix 1.4.4 Creative Ireland

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government, culture-based initiative, led by the Department of Culture, Communication and Sport. The first iteration of the Creative Ireland Programme ran from 2017-2022. The second iteration began in 2023 and runs to until 2027.

The strategic vision of the programme is to put creativity at the heart of public policy to afford every person in Ireland the opportunity to realise their creative potential.

Through the Creative Ireland pillars of Community, Youth, Health and Wellbeing, Climate Action and Industries, their mission is to act as a catalyst for policy and systems changes in the public sector to access and harness our creative potential.

The core values of the Creative Ireland Programme are:

- **Creativity** - We encourage ourselves, and others, to think differently, to try things out, to be innovative, to be solutions-focused.
- **Collaboration** - We harness the power and creative potential of people, organisations and government departments working together, sharing expertise, to catalyse ideas and action.
- **Transformation** - We believe in the transformative power of creativity and consider Creative Ireland to be a catalyst for positive change.

Their Strategic Goals are to establish practice and participation, promote understanding of the value of creativity, measure impact and build evidence and embed creativity in public policy.

Creative Ireland and the Shared Island Initiative

In 2022 the Creative Ireland Programme was allocated €6 million over three years (2023-25) to support projects from four open calls across the Creative Communities, Youth, Climate Action and Health & Wellbeing pillars, along with investment in Cruinniú na nÓg with strategic partners and the local authorities.

The Shared Island dimension to the Creative Ireland Programme seeks to deploy creativity on a shared island basis to:

1. Increase opportunities for cross-community cultural and creative initiatives between children and young people;
2. Support local authorities to enhance networks of creativity in support of vibrant and inclusive people-to-people and community-to-community partnerships;
3. Position Ireland as a global leader in demonstrating the value of creativity and mental health including in post-conflict societies;
4. Deepen collaborations for a more environmentally and socially sustainable island.

The following pages are summary tables for each of the projects funded.

Creative Ireland: Shared Island Projects

Creative Communities

Name of Project	Short description	Lead Organisation	Locations
Dance Connects in Rural Border Regions	This 24-month creative collaboration partners Culture and Creativity Teams in the local authorities of Cavan, Monaghan and Fermanagh-Omagh with practitioners of diverse dance communities in their border area, and researchers from Queens University Belfast and UCD. The project strategically builds on existing community relationships and works across professional, amateur, community and commercial dance in contemporary, jive/country, line/social, Sean-Nós, hip hop/urban, Scottish Country and Flamenco	Cavan County Council	Cavan, Monaghan, Fermanagh, Omagh
Birds of a Feather	A project that brings together women from various backgrounds: Catholic, Protestant, nationalist, loyalist, ethnic minorities, Travellers, inner-city working class, islanders and people with physical disabilities or mild dementia through the shared activity of craftwork – traditional and contemporary	Clare County Council	Ennis, Ballinasloe, Innisbofin, Belfast
Farm Walks	Farm Walks brings together a cross-border network of farmers with shared interests and values from different rural communities in Leitrim and Fermanagh to co-create a programme of activities that deepen common concerns using new and creative approaches.	Leitrim County Council	Leitrim, Fermanagh
The Ties That Bind	A partnership between The Duncairn in inner city Belfast and Levis in Ballydehob in rural County Cork working to establish a cross border network that has enabled exchanges for creatives living in rural Cork and inner-city Belfast, allowing creatives to work collectively on new composition through a series of exchanges, culminating in weekend collaborative working sessions, and mini festivals where both communities come together showcasing new work, creativity, arts and community.	Cork County Council	Ballydehob, Belfast
Building Shared Creative Communities	Through this joint project, Waterford City & County Council and Mid & East Antrim Borough Council will work together to foster social interaction, engagement and dialogue with each of the local communities. Concentrating initially on the theme of People, Place and Connections through areas of commonality in mural art, literature, craft, heritage and wellbeing,	Waterford City & County Council	Waterford, Antrim
Laces of Ireland	The project focuses on supporting collaboration and exchanges between lacemaker groups and heritage institutions on the island of Ireland. The long-term goal is to create and promote a lace trail through the majority of historical lacemaking centres on the island of Ireland. A joint calendar of coordinated events focused on August Craft Month in 2024 and 2025. A digital platform (Laces of Ireland), a trail map will be created.	Limerick City & County Council	Limerick, South Armagh, Cork
Shared Histories	Shared Histories engaged communities on both sides of the border, bringing them together to explore their heritage and to share experiences, utilising photography's unique ability to unlock a shared past	Donegal County Council	Derry, Donegal, Louth
Sharing Songs and Unforgettable Voices	Through a shared love of singing a sustainable cross-border, cross community two-year creative arts and cultural project with dementia inclusive community-based choirs from North Dublin and Counties Antrim and Down. Collaboration has focused on building personal and community relationships between people with and without dementia, and their carers, with in person exchanges	Fingal County Council	Dublin, Antrim, Down
aRchive	To promote dialogue between young people and older generations in Belfast (Shankill/East Belfast communities) and Dublin (North East Inner City communities). These communities share experience of a post-industrial legacy connected to city Docklands. The project will include a programme of engagement and the sharing of stories of older generations, focusing on dreams, aspirations, the past, present, and future.	Dublin City Council	Dublin, Belfast

Cruinniú na nÓg and local authorities

Name of Project	Short description	Lead Organisation	Locations
Youth Centre Twinning	Inspired by the post-World War II practice of twinning towns to promote solidarity and cooperation, our initiative adapts this concept to focus on youth centres, aiming to facilitate civic dialogue and understanding among the next generation.	Dublin City Council	Dublin, Belfast
Deep Dive Game Jam	A gaming adventure exploring the environmental issues facing two maritime communities. Building the cohort from the Creative Youth Lab at Wexford Arts Centre and the MAC Creative Learning programme	Wexford County Council	Wexford, Belfast
Tada!	Swinford Cultural Centre invited 10 participants and their families from the North and 10 from the South to Swinford for Cruinniú na nÓg, as well as children from Swinford for a gathering event and exhibition	Mayo County Council	Down, Mayo
Border Beats	Connecting children and young people residing along Monaghan / Fermanagh border in a series of creative projects with a music and performance arts focus.	Monaghan County Council	Monaghan, Fermanagh
Convergence	A cross-border arts initiative for young people from Derry/ Londonderry, and Tallaght exploring the importance of cultural connection, diversity, pride of place and what it means to be a young person living on the island of Ireland today	South Dublin County Council	Tallaght, Derry
Fairly Folklore at the Geopark	Building on existing work within the Geopark and Creative Cavan, the landscape is the inspiration for endless creative possibilities. On Saturday 15th June, creatives used a wide range creative genres to spark the imagination of children and young people grounded in the heritage and folklore the Geopark	Cavan County Council	Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark (Cavan & Fermanagh)
Bridging Borders, Embracing Diversity	a cross-border, cross-community multi-cultural Arts and Cultural Diversity project. This initiative is designed to foster cultural exchange, promote understanding, and celebrate diversity among students, educators, and the wider community.	Donegal County Council	Waterside Theatre, Scoil Cholmille and Lisnagelvin primary schools

Cruinniú na nÓg – Strategic Partners

Name of Project	Short description	Lead Organisation	Locations
Circus Explores	Designed to broaden the reach physical creativity of circus to create deep and lasting cross-community cultural experiences for young people across our whole island	Irish Street Arts, Circus & Spectacle Network	Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Derry, Cloughjordan
Rhyme Island	An all-island Rap initiative, facilitated by GMCBeats & The Kabin Studio, aimed to promote rap as a powerful tool for self-expression	GMC Beats	Cork, Belfast
This Is Art!	The theme for 2024 is “This is Imagination!” This is wonder, creativity and boundless possibility. Young people on the island of Ireland were invited to let their imagination take the lead to create amazing works of art!	RTÉ Kids	On-line all island

Creative Youth

Name of Project	Short description	Lead Organisation	Locations
To the Power of Three	A creative exchange between communities in Derry, Dublin and Wexford exploring the importance of cultural connection, diversity, pride of place and what it means to be a young person in Ireland today through performances	Tallaght Community Arts	Derry, Dublin and Wexford
A Shared Island Song writing Project	Delivered through a series of residential music 'hot houses' with and for children and young people	Music Generation Laois	Laois, Offaly, and across Northern Ireland
Living Legends: A Cross-Border Cultural Exchange of Stories, Myth and Landscape	Young people will write their own new living legends based on their counterpart's story, drawing on the mythical landscape of the Aran Islands and the Giant's Causeway	Narrative 4	Antrim, Aran Islands
Future Parade	Bringing together young people from communities in Belfast and Galway to investigate if parade can be utilised as a medium for sharing a new vision for the future, through workshops, residencies, and performances	Macnas	Belfast, Galway
Shared Lived Experience Through Creative Arts	Working with 20 young people from Greater Belfast and Dublin, who have multiple and complex needs providing a safe space for them to tell their stories using 'Theatre of the Oppressed' as the creative medium	Extern NI	Belfast, Dublin
Creative Connections - Shared Writing Across the Island	Engaging children and young people aged 15-24 through connected creative writing initiatives, including scriptwriting, poetry, prose, and song writing	Fighting Words	Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Armagh, Monaghan, Down, Louth

Creative Health & Wellbeing

Name of Project	Short description	Lead Organisation	Locations
Creative Cafés	Working with social prescribers and community groups, creative workshops to promote social connection and health and wellbeing	Monaghan County Council	Monaghan and Fermanagh
Weaving Worlds Together	Addressing social isolation, anxiety and loneliness by connecting communities through craftwork	Kerry County Council	Ballyheigue, Listowel, Kenmare, Belfast, Omagh, South Armagh, Kilkeel
The Art of Life	Supporting positive ageing and end of life care	Cavan County Council	Cavan, Fermanagh, Tyrone
'Dear Future Me' - Promoting Positive Mental Health Through Creative Expression On Our Shared Island	Supporting the mental health of young people in Louth and Down through craft, heritage and performance	Louth County Council	Louth, Down

Creative Climate Action

Name of Project	Short description	Lead Organisation	Locations
Divergently Together	This will empower neurodivergent communities to engage in climate action by platforming their voices and exploring ways in which climate policy can be more inclusive.	Dublin City University and Insight Centre DCU	Laois, Cavan, Fermanagh, Waterford, Galway, Dublin
Shifting Tides and Sea Change: Creative Coastal Conversations	The project aims to connect coastal communities along Carlingford Lough, to forge new connections between communities and local marine environments through a unique blend of practical ecology and collaborative creative arts.	The Wheel and NICVA	Rostrevor, Carlingford, Warrenpoint, Omeath, Greenore
Creative Boardroom: Collaborate 4Climate	This initiative aims to generate dynamic and creative solutions that can meaningfully address the complex environmental and social challenges that we currently face as a result of climate change.	Institute of Directors in Ireland	Dublin, Belfast

Appendix 1.4.5 Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland, inclusive of Screen Scotland, is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland. They are a Non-Departmental Public Body, sponsored by Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers and we receive our funding from both the Scottish Government and the National Lottery.

They support culture and creativity in Scotland as a development organisation, a funder, an advocate, and as a public body that seeks to influence others to increase opportunity and maximise the impact our resources can offer.

They work in partnership with Government, Local Authorities, and the wider public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver this support. We also have a staff team who are passionate about culture and the arts, screen and creativity, using our extensive knowledge and experience, as well as funding, to support creative development across Scotland. More detailed information on this can be found in their Strategic Framework and Annual Plan. Their latest Annual Review shows that throughout 2023/24, Creative Scotland supported a wide range of creative projects, organisations and initiatives. The Open Funds awarded £12.2 million to 634 applicants, providing vital support for artists and creative practitioners and, helping sustain careers. This impact is evident in the vast reach of cultural events. In 2023/24, 120 organisations receiving £32.7 million through Regular Funding (RFOs), delivered 33,721 public events, with 4.4 million attendees – equivalent to nearly 80% of Scotland's population experiencing the transformative power of arts and culture.

Additionally, £42.9 million in Targeted Funding supported 833 projects addressing specific artistic, developmental and regional needs. This included national programmes such as the Youth Music Initiative (YMI), support for Screen Scotland, and strategic initiatives like the Place Partnership Programme, fostering collaboration between local partners and creative communities.

2023/24 marked a significant milestone for Screen Scotland with the launch of its strategy outlining ambitious plans for the economic and creative growth of Scotland's film and TV sectors. Reinforcing this vision, new industry figures highlighted the sector's sustained expansion and increasing economic impact.

Creative Scotland's international projects and partnerships span the creative and cultural sector to deliver a range of aims, encompassing our business development fund Go See Share; Screen Scotland's Production Growth Fund; the PRS Foundation International Showcase Fund; Scotland+Venice; Creative Scotland/ British Council Scotland partnership; Horizons at Womex; the International Translation Grants scheme with Publishing Scotland and the Momentum delegate programme with Festivals Edinburgh and British Council.

Alongside this, they work together as the four UK nations arts councils to deliver the four nations International Collaboration Fund and support initiatives such as Arts Infopoint UK and cross-border funds including Cultural Bridge (with Germany), Magnetic residencies (with France), and most recently, the Northern European Mobility Opportunity with Arts Council Ireland and Nordic Culture Fund.

Appendix 1.4.6 Arts Council Northern Ireland

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the main public body responsible for developing and funding the arts in Northern Ireland.

Core Functions (The Arts Council NI Order, 1995).

- Distributes public funding from the Department for Communities and the National Lottery to individuals and organisations across all art forms.
- Advises government on arts policy and cultural strategy.
- Promotes the value and impact of the arts in social, educational, and economic contexts.
- Supports arts organisations with training, resources, and development opportunities.

Strategic functions are to:

- Develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts – they produce strategic research and intelligence and work with partners in the cultural sector to advise the Department for Communities, Local Authorities and other bodies on matters relating to the arts. We also have strong international links in the UK and beyond.
- Increase public access to and participation in the arts –to create an innovative, creative and diverse society where people can fulfil their potential and contribute fully to society.
- Advise the Department and other government departments, local councils and other bodies on matters relating to the arts - raising the profile of the arts in Northern Ireland. Arts Council of Northern Ireland are the national voice for the arts in Northern Ireland, promoting the quality, value and importance of the region's artists/arts organisations and the impact that they make.

Support and develop high-quality arts activity –invest public funding to create opportunities for more people, from all backgrounds and communities, to enjoy and take part in the arts.

- Distribute National Lottery funds –fund projects that develop new arts activity, supporting individuals, communities and organisations through applications to our National Lottery funding programmes.
- Develop international opportunities in the arts – Arts Council of Northern Ireland have developed partnerships with cultural organisations such as the British Council and we work collaboratively with all the UK nations to promote Northern Ireland art internationally. They encourage international exchange and collaboration between artists and arts organisations.
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders and the public – ensuring that programmes of work deliver public benefit by seeking and listening to feedback through our formal consultations and open conversations.
- Work across art forms – including community arts and education, circus and carnival, creative industries, drama, dance, festivals and venues, literature, music, opera, theatre, traditional arts, visual arts, craft and many more.
- Foster innovation between the arts and the wider creative industries – by facilitating skills development and knowledge transfer in digital technology for the arts sector, encouraging collaboration, leveraging additional funding and expertise through key partners, and encouraging the creation of digital artwork to ensure the arts evolve with audiences.
- Influence decision-makers - the arts take place in many different settings. They can have a dramatic impact on the quality of people's lives and the places in which they live and work.

Appendix 1.4.7 Arts Council of Wales / Wales Arts International

The Arts Council of Wales is the country's official public body for funding and developing the arts. Every day, people across Wales are enjoying and taking part in the arts. They help to support and grow this activity, by using public funds from the Welsh Government and by sharing the money we receive as a good cause from the National Lottery. By managing and investing these funds, the Arts Council contributes to people's quality of life and to the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of Wales. More information about us and the work we do may be found on our website: arts.wales/

Wales Arts International is the in-house international agency of the Arts Council of Wales, the public body responsible for funding and developing the arts in Wales. They provide advice and support to artists and arts organisations from Wales who work internationally and are a contact point for international artists organisations and agencies working in or connecting with Wales.

Wales Arts International has a strategic partnership with Welsh Government to support the delivery of their international strategy, including in priority countries such as Ireland, where there is a joint Ireland-Wales Shared Statement. Wales Arts International runs a small mobility fund – the International Opportunities Fund – to support artists and organisations based in Wales to work internationally. This can be through international collaboration and partnership development; participation in international networks and events or international presentation of work. One of the priority geographic focus for this fund is Ireland.

Through Wales Arts International, the Arts Council of Wales co-invests in programmes as part of the 4 UK Nations Arts Councils and Creative Scotland – for example, the 4 Nations International Fund. Wales Arts International hosts the Arts Infopoint UK desk, an initiative in partnership with Arts Council England, Creative Scotland and Arts Council Northern Ireland. This initiative develops resources to support international artists visiting the UK for creative work and purposes. They offer free, practical information and support to help artists, creative professionals, and organisations to understand the rules and guide you through some of the administration requirements for creative visits to the UK.

Arts Infopoint UK is part of a wider network of Mobility Information Points across Europe and the USA, and members of the On The Move mobility network. They work closely with these specialist organisations as well as our international contacts by sharing information, resources, and best practice on artist mobility between countries. In an Ireland context have run webinars specifically on the changes post Brexit for artists in Northern Ireland, and in the Common Travel Area.

Appendix 1.4.8 The British Council

The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. For 90 years the British Council has shaped brighter futures through education, arts, culture, language, and creativity. Operating in over 100 countries throughout the world, in 2022-23 we reached 600 million people.

Working directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world, the British Council supports people and organisations to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

The British Council is founded on the principle of mutuality and works to strengthen relationships between the people of the UK and the countries in which it is based. It operates as an arm's-length body of the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office of the UK government.

The British Council office in Ireland was first established in 1955 in order to provide welfare support for Commonwealth students at Irish universities. The number of students declined and in 1969 the office closed. It reopened in 1989 and has worked on a Cultural Engagement (Arts and Education) brief ever since.

In Ireland our key sectors and our vision is to be a catalyst in strengthening the bilateral relationship in Arts and Education between Ireland and the UK.

We aim to act as a valued broker and convenor nurturing growth through building connections, creating opportunities, collaborations, networks and partners, in order to support greater trust, understanding, knowledge and respect between people in the UK and Ireland, working towards a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future on these islands.

It is important to us to be a generous cultural relations knowledge partner, brokering and sharing expertise and insight with government, state agencies, institutions and civil society, in order to build the recognition and value of the UK and the British Council driving growth through soft power and cultural diplomacy, specifically highlighting and celebrating the complex connection and collaboration across these islands, informing and enabling the bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland to thrive.

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Starling Start

Starling Start¹⁵² is a consultancy that undertakes research in inter-related fields of arts, culture and placemaking, and co-designs inclusive and ambitious strategic plans, blueprints, or approaches that guide cultural development. The research team includes Starling Start Founder and Director Amberlea Neely, with collaboration from Researcher Dr Jane Morrow.





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