



Public Art Policy 2025 – 2030

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

This policy provides a framework to Louth County Council for the management and development of Public Art in Louth. The policy and framework will formalise systems and structures for public art while giving scope for programming and commissioning. It is intended it will have a positive impact on the county and its citizens while offering established and emerging artists exciting and challenging opportunities to make new work with Louth County Council through their delivery of public art.

Background and context

Louth County Council is the smallest but most densely populated county in Ireland outside of Dublin with a population density of 169.1 per kmsq (Census 2022). The county connects Ulster and Leinster in the region of Oriel and possesses a network of attractive and inviting towns and villages. The richness of the arts in Louth cannot be understated. The positive impact of arts is recognised with the benefits being seen by practitioners, participants and audiences alike. Arts can be a tool to engage our communities, express ourselves and promote our heritage and culture.

Louth County Council is committed to supporting artistically ambitious public art programmes across all art forms. We offer opportunities for artists to engage with Louth, making new work that responds to the context of Louth as a county, its communities and its localities.

Since 1997 and the publication of the National Guidelines for the Percent For Art Scheme in 2004¹ the understanding of public art has broadened to include all artforms and artistic disciplines. Louth County Council is committed to following best practice in the planning and implementation of public art programmes and commissions.

Scope of the Public Art Policy

The scope of this policy covers the commissioning of permanent and temporary public artworks sited both indoors and outdoors in the county. This commissioning policy will reflect the vision, mission and aims of the County Arts Development Plan 2022-2026² and the Louth County Development Plan 2021-

¹ *Public Art: Percent for Art Scheme, General National Guidelines 2004* [Percent for Art](#)

² *Louth Arts Development Plan* [Louth Arts Development Plan](#)

2027³. It is envisaged that this document, once adopted will be reviewed intermittently to ensure alignment with the new National Guidelines due in 2026 and any subsequent Arts Development Plans or County Development Plans.

The scope of this policy covers Public Artwork funded both via the national Percent for Art Scheme and internal council budgets.

The scope also covers any proposed loans, gifts, or proposals from the public regarding artworks for public display on sites owned or managed by Louth County Council.

The scope of this policy does not include work that falls under the remit of the County Collection which is housed in the Council Offices.

Artistic Principles and Aims

Public Art Commissions will aim to encompass a broad range of artistic practice and will pursue artistic excellence in process and delivery.

Participation and engagement will form part of public art development. This participation and engagement will include promoting awareness of the programme as well as presentations and consultations at various intervals during the lifetime of the policy.

³ Louth County Development Plan [Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 - Louth County Council](#)

SECTION 2 – TYPES OF PUBLIC ART FUNDING

There are 2 main sources of funding for Public Art:

- The Percent for Art Scheme budgets generated through central government-funded capital construction projects delivered by Louth County Council
- Individual Council departments that are delivering internally funding capital projects may also contribute to a pooled fund for the commissioning of Public Art

Percent for Art Scheme

A Percent for Art budget can be drawn for any capital project which is funded through a department of the government such as the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Department of Rural & Community Development & the Gaeltacht, for example. It can also be drawn for capital projects from other public bodies including Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the Health and Education sector and the Office of Public Works.

Nb – it should be noted that Percent for Art does not take from the budget to be spent on the capital project works but is an additional amount to be drawn from the relevant government department.

Types of Projects

Funding allocations for arts projects can be anything from small amounts up to €500,000 depending on the value of the project. In general, the conventional approach is where one capital development leads to one arts project in the place where that development is carried out. However, where there are a number of small capital developments it is not practical to undertake a commission for each one as it could diminish the quality and rationale of the percent of art programme. In such cases pooling smaller funds is encouraged so more considered projects can be commissioned. While this means the traditional geographical relationship between project and art piece is less relevant, it does offer opportunity for arts projects to be delivered in other areas of Louth where capital development may not be as vast.

Examples of the types of projects that can be commissioned include:

- Commissioning new work (temporary or permanent) in any artform including, but not limited to, visual art, film, music, dance, literature, and theatre
- Interdisciplinary projects
- Purchasing existing artwork
- Collaborative and socially engaging projects
- Artist in Residence Programmes

It is not possible to fund the following through Percent for Art:

- Revenue expenses for groups or organisations
- Projects which have already started or have already occurred
- Annual events
- Logos or graphics
- Individual workshops/masterclasses/lectures/seminars not part of a wider arts project

- Landscaping or hardscape elements already associated with a capital project

How the Percent for Art budget is calculated

The Percent for Art budget is 1% of the Net Construction Cost before VAT or other costs such as professional fees, contingencies etc are added. This is subject to the following bands:

Band A	Projects costing up to €5m may include a maximum art budget of €50,000
Band B	Projects between €5m and €20m may include a maximum art budget of €125,000
Band C	Projects between €20m and €50m may include a maximum art budget of €350,000
Band D	Projects in excess of €50m allows for a maximum art budget of €500,000

Other Funding for Public Art

Aside from the national Percent for Art Scheme, the local authority may at times be able to contribute to the commissioning of Public Art through internal funding.

Council led internally funded capital construction projects may contribute in line with the following criteria:

- Projects funded by the Council's Capital Programme with construction costs of between €500,000 and €5 million (ex VAT) may add 1% percent of the amount of the Council's own resources, subject to a max contribution of €25,000, for the public art programme.
- Any projects on the Capital Programme with construction costs of over €5 million (ex VAT) may make a contribution of €40,000 from the Council own resources to the project for the public art programme.

Nb – the above is subject to Capital Programme budget availability.

Note – departments/sections must consider Percent for Art eligibility at the earliest stage of the project and include reference in the Capital Projects Checklist to contribution anticipated. Consideration of such proposals will form part of the normal capital appraisal process and is an Executive function. All proposals for public art commissions initiated within the Council will be brought to the Public Art Working Group for consideration and approval.

SECTION 3 - IMPLEMENTATION

The Public Art Programme will be overseen by a Public Art Working Group and will be made up of Council officials from relevant departments/sections.

The Arts Office will have responsibility for the coordination, administration and implementation of the Public Art programme.

Public Art Working Group

The purpose of the working group is to identify capital project opportunities for commission, both internal and external, and to ensure that all applications, procurement and commission guidelines are adhered to. The working group will provide for the efficient delivery of the public art programme in order to maximise its potential and will work to reflect objectives set out in other local policies such as the County Arts Plan, County Development Plan and any other policies deemed relevant.

The working group will include the Arts Officer (who will also act as group facilitator) and Directors of Services/nominated senior officials from the following departments/sections:

- Housing & Cultural Services
- Major Infrastructure & Capital Projects
- Operations & Environment
- Finance & Procurement
- Planning
- Corporate Services & Community

Key responsibilities of the Working Group and Arts Office:

- The working group will work towards the efficient delivery of public art via identification of capital project opportunities for commission and will ensure the requirements of this policy document are met
- The working group will oversee an all of local authority approach to public art policy, including sourcing Percent for Art funding, and will bring coordination and coherence to sourcing public art funding from capital projects and programmes
- The Arts Office will keep a record of budget/finances in the pipeline to be generated from central government funded capital construction projects
- The relevant department/section who is overseeing each project will be responsible for drawing down the Percent for Art money for their own projects
- The Arts Office will oversee a central Public Art job code where allocations for maintenance and commissioning and curation fees will be paid out of
- A Public Art Co-Ordinator will be contracted on a retainer basis to assist the working group on the tendering and commissioning process
- The Arts Office will work with the Public Art Co-Ordinator and each relevant section on any public engagement required for relevant commissions

Public Art Advisory Group

This group will be established to advise and assist on the public art programme. The group will include membership as follows:

- 3 elected representatives (1 per Municipal District)
- 3 Council officials from the Working Group including the Arts Officer
- 2 external arts experts or artists

Key responsibilities of the Advisory Group:

- Work with the Arts Officer and Public Art Facilitator by contributing to commission briefs for artists and criteria selection
- Advise on the assessment panel for the commissioning process
- Advise on project themes and general direction
- Advise on any projects for implementation
- Feed into any future development of Public Art policies and general arts policies in the county
- Provide support and feedback for the Arts Office

The terms of the Advisory Group will be defined as follows:

- Elected representatives will be appointed by the Council and will serve for the period of that Council term
- Officials will be nominated by their Directors of Services and will remain as long as the Director or Chief Executive determines
- External advisors will be appointed by the Chief Executive for a period of 3 years and may serve a maximum of 2 terms. It is the responsibility of the Arts Officer to provide a shortlist of potential external advisor candidates to the Chief Executive

The Advisory Group will comprise of 8 people with a quorum of 5 required which must include at least 1 elected rep, 1 internal staff member and 1 external advisor.

Chief Executive/Management Team

Key responsibilities of the Chief Executive/Management Team:

- Approve public art projects for implementation
- Approve budgets for Council led internally funded public art projects arising from capital programme
- Approve an assessment panel for any commissioning process
- Consider proposals or donations separate to Council-initiated commissions

Public Art Expertise

The role of Public Art expertise is recognised by Louth County Council as an essential part of the support and development of public art. The Council will retain the services of a public art curator when required to work closely with the Public Art Working Group and the Public Art Advisory Group to assist and advise on the commissioning process and to assist in proposing selection panels for commissions. They will also work with the Arts Officer on overseeing any issues with the commissions and assist in

the delivery of the projects. The Arts Officer will be responsible for consulting with the designated Public Art Facilitator on a regular basis and arranging meetings with relevant section representatives on the commissioning of public art for their projects.

Selection Panel

Selection panels will be appointed by the Chief Executive/Management Team to undertake the short-listing and selection of artists for each relevant commission. These panels will consist of members from the Working Group and members of the Advisory Group. Other internal/external expertise may also be considered for appointment by the Chief Executive/Management Team. The method of selection will depend on the scale and nature of the commission and will be made based on the most appropriate procurement procedure.

Shortlisting may apply to commissions and details of any shortlisting criteria will be outlined in the procurement guidelines.

Selection of Artists

The Arts Officer will oversee the Selection Panel Terms of Reference and Guidelines. The method of selection will depend on the scale and nature of the public art commission and will be made based on the most appropriate procurement procedure.

Conflicts of Interest – Each member of the Public Art Working Group, Public Art Advisory Group, Management Team and each selection panel undertakes to declare, should it arise, any relationship, filial or otherwise, or any interest, shareholding or possible conflict of interest arising with any tender, service provider, firm, agent, contractor or other organisation involved in the commissioning of the artwork.

Confidentiality – Each member of the assessment and selection panels also undertakes to maintain the total confidentiality of all documentation and information received in relation to the commissioning of the artwork including applications, proposals and any other item of commercial and artistic sensitivity. This confidentiality will be maintained both during the process of the commissioning and into the future.

Procurement Procedures

The commissioning process for public artworks outlined in this document is used and approved by local authorities and OPW. Commissioning artworks will follow all relevant local authority & national procurement legislation and the National Percent for Art Guidelines; the procurement process must be fair, open, transparent, and accountable.

There are three options under the National Percent for Art Guidelines that may be considered in terms of procurement:

- Open competition (one or two stage depending on the value of the competition)
- Invited or limited competition
- Direct commission

It is envisaged that direct commission will only be used in exceptional circumstances. Where it is believed after a period of research and discussion that a specific artist's practice or work is absolutely appropriate to the aims and objects of the commission, the Public Art Working Group, working with curators or advisers where required, may propose that artist directly for a commission or to work with a given budget.

SECTION 4 – DECOMMISSIONING OF WORK AND MAINTENANCE

Decommissioning of work

Louth County Council recognises that not all artworks have an indefinite lifespan, and some may become unsuitable for display in a particular location either because of changes in the surrounding context or deterioration of the artwork. The Council has developed comprehensive guidelines around the decommissioning of work that will be adhered to by all departments/sections. These guidelines are on [Appendix 1](#) of this document.

Respect for the artist, the artwork and the community where the work is sited will form an integral part of any decision-making process. In cases where an artwork is identified as presenting a real risk to public safety, this will be the overriding factor in any decision making around the removal of a work. In such cases, the Arts Office, in consultation with relevant health and safety personnel, will be responsible for making such decisions.

Maintenance

The lifespan of a permanent work can vary depending on materials, location and environment.

The Arts Office will be responsible for securing independent professional advice with relation to the maintenance of the public art collection on an on-going basis.

Maintenance of works sited in parks and the public realm will fall under the remit of the Parks Section; the Arts Office will provide advice as required.

The Arts Office will be responsible for coordinating the maintenance of the remainder of the public art collection in conjunction with the relevant internal department/section.

The Council will allocate a percentage of the collective Percent for Art funding to provide an annual budget to fund the on-going maintenance of public art works owned, commissioned and cared for by the Council. This percentage is to be up to a maximum of 5% and will be reviewed biannually to allow for any rising costs or other environmental issues and factors to be considered.

An offer from a third party, external to the Council, to fund the repair of an existing artwork will be welcomed; the Public Art Working Group will be responsible for making a determination on such offers.

SECTION 5 – DOCUMENTATION AND PROMOTION

The Council will endeavour to record a substantial archive of the public art collection to date and, going forward, to document new commissions. This Public Art Register will be made available online detailing locations and details of each piece. Documentation relating to all tenders and commissions will be held in the council offices as per the National Retention Guidelines⁴.

A comprehensive PR and marketing campaign will be undertaken during the lifetime of this policy promoting Public Art and highlighting key projects.

The life of the Policy is 2025 – 2030. A mid-term review of the Policy will take place during its lifespan and in line with any associated policies such as the Louth Arts Development Plan and County Development Plan.

References:

1. *Public Art: Percent for Art Scheme, General National Guidelines 2004* [Percent for Art](#)
2. *Louth Arts Development Plan* [Louth Arts Development Plan](#)
3. *Louth County Development Plan* [Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 - Louth County Council](#)
4. National Retention Policy which can be found on the LGMA (Local Government Management Agency) site here - [NRP](#)
5. [Public Art Policies and Strategies | Dublin City Council Arts Office](#)
6. 'Making Great Art Work', Arts Council Public Art Policy - [PA Policy 2018.pdf](#)
7. [Public Art & Art Collections | Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council](#)

⁴ *National Retention Policy which can be found on the LGMA (Local Government Management Agency) site here - [NRP](#)*

Appendix 1**Guidelines for the Decommissioning of Public Artwork****1. Introduction**

Louth County Council has many public artworks in its care. These range from protected structures and works of great historical and artistic significance to works of art commissioned in recent decades.

Occasionally issues arise regarding the condition or location of artworks and their impact on the county, its communities and visitors which involves proposals to move or remove artworks. Reasons for such proposals include:

- The reconfiguration of the public space
- The condition of an artwork
- The context or relevance to a site has changed or complaints regarding impact that work is having on a community

These guidelines deal with issues relating to the decommissioning of artwork including relocation, storage and full deaccession (i.e. removing a piece completely from the county's collection)

2. Principles

Decommissioning will not be decided upon on grounds of historic meaning or artistic merit alone. While political, social or artistic viewpoints can change it is not the role of Louth County Council to arbitrate in retrospect on their merits, especially in view of the fact that political and artistic trends continuously change.

The decommissioning of artwork should only take place after a considered process which includes assessment against the stated criteria in section 3 below and by following the agreed procedures in Section 4.

3. Criteria

Criteria for the initiation of a review for the removal, relocation or deaccession of artworks include:

- The artwork is considered beyond repair or that maintenance and conservation work will undermine the integrity of the artwork or that the cost of such work is considered excessive.
- That the artwork has serious or dangerous faults in design or workmanship that cause it to be a danger to public health and safety
- That the current location of the artwork is no longer suitable or available or that another site compromises the integrity of the artwork or requires incurring excessive expenses or that another site is unavailable
- That the terms of acquisition can no longer be met
- That the loan agreement with the owners of the artwork (where applicable) has expired or that the council is no longer able to meet the conditions of the loan agreement
- That both the council and the artist agree to have the artwork decommissioned
- That the council has regard to clauses in contracts which allow for the decommissioning of an artwork after a defined period of time

- That the artwork has been unsolicited
- That the public artwork has been lost or stolen and formal removal from the Public Art Register is required

4. Procedure

- Proposals to relocate or decommission an artwork may be made by artists, donors, lenders, county councillors, council officials or members of the public
- Proposals to relocate or decommission an artwork will be made in writing to the Arts Office setting out which criteria are met and why the work should be relocated or decommissioned
- All proposals made to the Arts Office will be presented to the Public Art Working Group for consideration
- The Arts Officer will undertake to get an initial assessment of the proposal to relocate, store or fully decommission the work
- A further assessment will take place if, in the opinion of the Arts Officer, there are grounds for relocation or decommissioning
- The application will be dismissed if, in the opinion of the Public Art Working Group, the proposal to relocate, store or decommission does not meet with any of the criteria
- Relevant council officials will be consulted such as heritage, planning, conservation etc where required)
- Independent expertise will be consulted for works valued at more than €20,000
- Every reasonable effort will be made to consult with the artist, donor or lender or the legally recognised representatives of these parties
- Representatives of local communities will be notified and/or consulted
- The final decision to relocate, store or decommission rests with the Chief Executive/Management Team
- The review process and action taken will be fully documented and filed in the council
- The Council reserves the right to take immediate and appropriate action to protect public health and safety if the artwork is considered to be a cause of imminent danger. In this case the work may only be removed to storage

5. Decommissioning Options:

Relocation – Artists should be consulted regarding proposals to relocate work. Consideration must be given regarding the impact on the appearance or meaning of the artwork.

Storage – at times of infrastructural works in the area there may be reason to move public artwork to a storage facility. The storage of work should only be considered as an interim measure. Storage conditions should be such that the work is protected including proper climate conditions, protection from theft, vandalism or accidental damage.

Deaccession – this involves removing an artwork from the county collection. This can include the return to the artist, donor or lender or the destruction of work. The permanent removal and destruction of artwork should only take place as a last resort. A full process of assessment and consultation with the artist will have taken place before such action is taken.

6. Records and Documentation

The Public Art Register will be updated to reflect the status/location of works. The artwork and decommissioning process will be fully documented and filed in Louth County Council.

7. Future Contracts

All future contracts commissioning 'permanent' public art will have a clause relating to the decommissioning of artworks. Issues to be included in contract are life expectancy, review periods and maintenance agreements.