



An Invitation to  
Collaboration Scheme 2020

# art in the landscape

January 2021



## **Research undertaken by Ms. Terre Duffy, Q4 2020.**

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## Contents

Executive Summary	5
The Brief	7
Methodology	9
Context	10
Commissioning sculpture in the Irish context	11
Socially Engaged Practice	14
Sculpture Dublin	15
The Sculpture Parks/Trails Ireland	16
Case Studies for Learning	28
Measuring Impact	42
<b>Lough Boora Sculpture Park</b>	43
3P's - Potency, Problems & Potential	45
Lough Boora – New Opportunities	51
Framework	53
Potential Partners	54
<b>Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail</b>	55
3P's - Potency, Problems & Potential	57
Tír Sáile – A New Purpose	62
Framework	64
Potential Partners	65
Annex	66



# Executive Summary

In early 2020, the partner organisations of Offaly County Council, Mayo County Council and Visual Artists Ireland were awarded funding under the Arts Council's 'An Invitation to Collaboration Scheme', a scheme open to local authorities to deliver projects or research that have strategic significance to arts development in Ireland.

The opportunity to conduct this research comes at a very opportune moment for both Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail. For each site, the location stakeholders recognise that in the years since the beginning of each project, the champions, ideas, focus and values have changed locally and nationally and thus there is a need to reconsider the purpose, commitment and value of each site in this changed context of 2020.

A summary of the development of the land art and the environmental art movement is presented as the contextual inspiration for both Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park. The research also maps Irish Sculpture Parks and Trails and this mapping demonstrates that Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park are by far the most significant in Ireland. The Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail was

listed in the top 10 sculpture parks in the world by National Geographic in 2014 and to deliver Lough Boora Sculpture Park today would cost in excess of €2 Million.

The tourism sector is aware of the potential and the economic return on investment from Irish arts and culture. However, there appears to be a disconnect between tourism and the arts and culture sector. The future opportunities for both Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail might lie in a deeper relationship between both sectors.

The international case studies chosen act as an international reference to what have been identified as challenges to each of the locations including management, maintenance and promotion, ambition, culture and the climate change emergency and culture and tourism.

To facilitate the readers, this research focused on the potency, problems and potential of each location separately and a broad next steps framework for each.

**Lough Boora Sculpture Park**, represents a very powerful and developed body of twenty-five large scale sculptures and from the mapping exercise undertaken for this

study, is by far the most significant and important collection of public sculpture in Ireland. However there have been no new sculptural commissions since 2010, some of the current work is undermaintained and the overall product feels somewhat 'tired' and is not performing to its full potential as a cultural tourism product.

The sculpture park is part of Lough Boora Discovery Park which is one of six lead projects in the Tourism Strategy for Offaly, with Lough Boora Sculpture Park remaining a key element of the customer experience at the Discovery Park. In 2019, Bord na Móna commissioned Tourism Development Ireland (TDI) to undertake a feasibility study / strategic report to develop 'compelling, exciting and unique visitor experiences of national and international significance'. This comprehensive report identifies six principal additions for Lough Boora Discovery Park including 'extending the park's art and nature sculpture provision through the encouragement of artistic development and growth'. The report also outlined potential opportunities and synergies for an expanded vision for Lough Boora Sculpture Park connected to the 'Boora Works Events Centre' which recommends a repurposing of the redundant industrial buildings close to the entrance of the park. However no further consideration was given to the current status of the sculpture park, any detail on its future development and no funding requirement was identified in the TDI feasibility report. The time is right to ascertain the full potential of the sculpture park element with a view to developing an ambitious strategy to yield the full social, creative, economic and tourism potential of Lough Boora Sculpture Park. As Bord

na Móna are not a cultural, recreational or tourism development organisation, external expertise is required to create this strategic road map.

**Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail** represented the best of community engaged practice when it was developed in 1993. The trail is currently being promoted as a cultural tourism product in North Mayo and although the brand name has currency locally, the product needs serious decisions and investment in order to ensure it delivers a great cultural experience at national and international level. Hard discussions and decisions are now required by relevant local stakeholders on whether to decommission Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail or to determine if the significant investment required would deliver an adequate return on investment.

Note: Although beyond the scope of this research, it would appear that the organisational deficits that have facilitated the decline of both Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail are not unique to Offaly and Mayo County Council but would seem to be symptomatic of public sculpture in general in Ireland. In truth, there is usually funding to complete the commission, install, publicise, launch it but in the main, there is no long-term legacy planning regarding maintenance. All assets and infrastructure need a resourced maintenance plan – as with machinery, roads and sewerage treatment plans, public sculpture also needs the same resourced commitment. Local authorities are addressing this difficult, expensive and often time-consuming issue through an increasing reluctance to commission permanent sculpture.



# The Brief

In early 2020, the partner organisations of Offaly County Council, Mayo County Council and Visual Artists Ireland were awarded funding under the Arts Council's 'Invitation to Collaboration Scheme 2020'. This is a scheme open to local authorities to deliver projects or research that have strategic significance to arts development locally, regionally and nationally and in this instance the research project focuses on Lough Boora Sculpture Park in Co. Offaly and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail in Co. Mayo.

This document presents findings and insights from an intensive four-month research period from August to November 2020, involving a high-level literature review, desk-based research and an extensive list of one-to-one consultations listed in the Annex Section. The opportunity to conduct this research comes at a very opportune moment for both Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile sculpture Trail. For each site, the location stakeholders recognise that in the years since the beginning of each project, the champions, ideas, focus and values have changed locally and nationally and thus there is a need to reconsider the purpose of each site and a framework to move forward in this changed context of 2020.

## What are the proposed research outcomes?

The proposed research outcomes for this project are both comprehensive and varied and are intended to provide an increased level of awareness and understanding of land art and sculpture parks in regional locations in Ireland, while assessing how each designated site can be further developed. This research seeks to:

- Present the context for the development of land art and environmental sculpture
- Present the methodology for this research
- Map existing sculpture parks and sculpture trails in Ireland with emphasis on operational, financial and curatorial models
- Identify issues and extrapolate learning from relevant national and international case studies
- Understand impact measurement with respect to public engagement and audience development
- Identify the potency, problems and potential of each location



In distilling insights and learning, the research will:

- Propose a new purpose for each site
- Present an outline framework for the future development of each site
- Investigate / identify potential partners and opportunities for collaboration in Ireland and internationally.

Visual Artists Ireland as the third partner in this project acts as the national representative partner. Formerly Sculptors Society of Ireland and as the national representative body, Visual Artists Ireland, offers a critical and theoretical response in terms of national/international contemporary arts practice.





# Methodology

The research process involved a high-level literature review of policy and relevant local and national strategic documents. Desk-based research also included navigating relevant web-based information, insights, data, examples and case study suggestions. In light of the evolving Level 3 and Level 5 restrictions implemented during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic in Ireland whilst undertaking this project, the research process opted for detailed one-to-one consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including relevant cultural providers - locally, nationally and internationally. Detailed conversations were conducted with stakeholders and personnel from relevant sectors including leisure and tourism, heritage, environment, local government, general public, local communities and artists who

have experiences of the sites and public art practice in Ireland. A list of those who kindly gave their time and insight is contained in the Annex of this report.



## Understanding the differences between land art and environmental art

Land art and environmental sculpture are not the same. For simplicity, land art is typically built into the landscape whereas environmental art and environmental sculptures are built on the landscape.

Land art, also known as earthworks, or earth art was an artistic movement that emerged in America during the 1960s when a number of sculptors and painters sought to heighten public awareness of man's relationship with the natural world by intervening in the landscape in a series of thought-provoking constructions. These frequently massive, land-based interventions or artworks took a variety of forms and although the precise meaning of each construction varied, the underlying aim of this novel type of visual art was to create artistic imagery embedded into the landscape using earth, rocks, soil and other natural materials, with a view to increasing our sensibility towards our environment. Due to the fact that this form of visual art uses natural materials which decay, wither or melt, many constructions were intended to be temporary. The works made during Tír Sáile were primarily part of the land art or earth art movement (although the Stratified Sheep Sculpture is an exception here).

The 1980's and 1990's saw an increased number of environmental art projects internationally. Environmental art rejects the gallery space for the presentation of work outdoors and is motivated by ecological concerns. Lough Boora would be described as a series of environmental art commissions where the artists were invited to create environmental art

*Like any trend, art movements come and go. A question for measuring success is whether the process, the product and the purpose that inspired both Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park are still relevant and warrant a new phase of development.*

sculptures focusing on the natural and industrial legacy of the bog lands.

In summary, Tír Sáile sculptures can be best described as being predominantly part of the Land Art or Earth Art Movement whereas Lough Boora is primarily a commissioning series where the brief is focused on the environment and therefore would be considered environmental art.



A large excavator is lifting a circular sculpture in a field. Several people are standing around the site, and there are other sculptures in the background. The scene is outdoors, possibly a construction or art installation site.

# Commissioning Sculpture in the Irish Context

There are essentially only a few methods open to commissioners in Ireland to secure artists to make land art or environmental sculptures. These are open competition, Limited or Curated Competition, Direct Invitation, Purchase / Gift and The Residency Symposium Model.

**An open submission competition** usually involves a two-stage process. Stage 1 is an initial call for artists and usually asks for minimum information such as CV, examples of past works, sketch ideas, proposals and an outline budget. In some cases, it may only involve a request for an artists' CV and samples of past work. Stage 2 involves shortlisting a small number of artists to develop their ideas further. Sometimes an interview process is part of this selection. Artists are usually paid a fee for Stage 2 development of original context or site-specific proposals ideas.

**A Limited/Curated Competition** is where a curator invites a select group of artists to submit a proposal for a competitive process. Again, artists are usually paid a fee for developing proposals. Limited competitions work to ensure that artists who might not ordinarily consider applying for an open competition, are invited to

participate in the selection process. It is highly recommended to include curatorial expertise in generating a shortlist of artists.

**Direct Invitation** is where an artist is directly invited to make work or awarded a commission with no competitive process and also requires curatorial expertise.

**Direct Purchase** is possibly the least used commissioning process in Ireland. This is probably due to fear of lack of transparency and problems such as individual taste being such a subjective concept or perhaps lack of time to travel to artists' studios. Sculpture In Context at the National Botanic Gardens is the only show in Ireland for the display / sale of large-scale sculptural work.

**Donation / Gift is Self-Explanatory.**

**The Residency Symposium Model** is where sculptors come together and work intensively over a small number of weeks to create a new piece of work. Sites like Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail started as a one-off sculpture symposium project.

An advantage of the Symposium Model is that established artists often work with emerging artists, and international artists work with national artists. Often the focus is

material specific such as wood or concrete. The model allows for experimentation as there is no procurement element or value for money requirement. The model gives the artist the site, time, materials, machinery and the technical and curatorial support to make new work, provides the opportunity to learn and hone skills, encourages peer critique and peer support and brings artists together which can be a welcome change from the isolation of working alone.

The objective may be to create temporary sculptures, or the objective may be to create permanent sculptures that can remain in place long after the symposium is complete. Many of the sculpture parks and sculpture trails that developed in Ireland, UK, Europe and the US used the residency symposium model for commissioning in the early nineties and early noughties. The artist usually receives a small travel budget, a small fee, a place to stay in residence, access to materials, machinery and sometimes local technical assistance. In the case of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail, it was local men from a Community Employment Scheme and in the case of Lough Boora Sculpture Park, it was

*Local Authorities are the biggest commissioning agents of sculpture in Ireland over the last three decades. However, this research has identified anecdotal evidence to suggest that commissioning sculpture has become increasingly 'off-trend' for a range of reasons.*

Bord na Móna staff. There have been few traditional sculpture symposia opportunities in Ireland since the mid-nineties.

Except for the residency symposium model, all procurement methods above have been endorsed under the Irish government Per Cent for Art Scheme Guidelines and all have their strengths and weaknesses in commissioning new sculptural work. The open submission process appears to be the predominantly favoured procurement process of local authorities in Ireland.





It has been suggested that there has been an increasing poverty witnessed in technical expertise / creativity / aesthetic and experimentation in the commissioning of sculpture in Ireland. There is an increasing tendency to 'play it safe' by commissioners at the point of selection, due to issues such as health and safety, risk avoidance, maintenance, theft, public approval, possible inexperience in some panel jurors and issues relating to Value for Money. It has been suggested that proposals may have become 'formulaic' and that selection panels across the local authorities have seen the same proposals being submitted with little or no alteration to address the brief provided. It has also been suggested that lack of training opportunities, including the absence of sculpture symposia are not supporting a new generation of Irish sculptors.

Siting of sculpture on uninspirational sites such as at the side of new motorways or on roundabouts has led to the introduction of reductive language in the community such as 'roundabout art'.

The combined impact has resulted in a decline in the commissioning of sculpture in the last decade. However, this is only part of reason why some of the Irish sculpture trails have fallen into decline and not developed, thrived or reached their full potential. These reasons are addressed in the section potency, problems and potential, with an outline framework for each site to conclude.

***Recommendation: Visual Artist Ireland might be best placed to address this issue***



## **Socially Engaged Practice**

At its inception, the Per Cent for Art Scheme in Ireland was primarily used to commission sculpture. However, in the late nineties, commissioning across the full breath of artistic practice became more widespread and welcomed inspirational commissioning of temporary, ephemeral, cross-disciplinary and important socially engaged work.

With 'socially engaged practice', the focus is on the process between the artist and the target group and generally focuses on social impact and change. Ireland and particularly local authorities have developed a strong reputation for delivering important and high quality socially engaged projects.

This research has identified that there has been an increasing trend in Ireland for commissioners to invite / stipulate that sculptors consider a socially engaged element in their tender response. Whilst this aspiration is laudable in principle, anecdotal evidence would suggest that sculptors may not have the experience, expertise or interest in this specialist field and that at best it is discouraging artists to apply and at worst, it is damaging to the delivery of quality socially engaged practice.

***Recommendation: Visual Artist Ireland might be best placed to take a lead in working with commissioners to identify best practice to address this issue.***

The combined impact has resulted in a decline in the commissioning of sculpture in the last decade. However, this is only part of reason why some of the Irish sculpture trails have fallen into decline and not developed, thrived or reached their full potential. These reasons in relation to Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail are addressed in the section Potency, Problems and Potential, with an outline Framework for each site to conclude.

## **Sculpture Dublin**

‘Sculpture Dublin’ is the most ambitious sculpture-focused commissioning series that Ireland has seen in decades and is commanding a budget in the region of €650,000. According to Dublin City Council, artistic excellent and meaningful public engagement are core principles, but these elements will be delivered in a way that does not compromise the delivery of either great new Sculpture or the process of engagement.

Insights from Sculpture Dublin can support this, as the findings are pertinent to any future developments of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park.

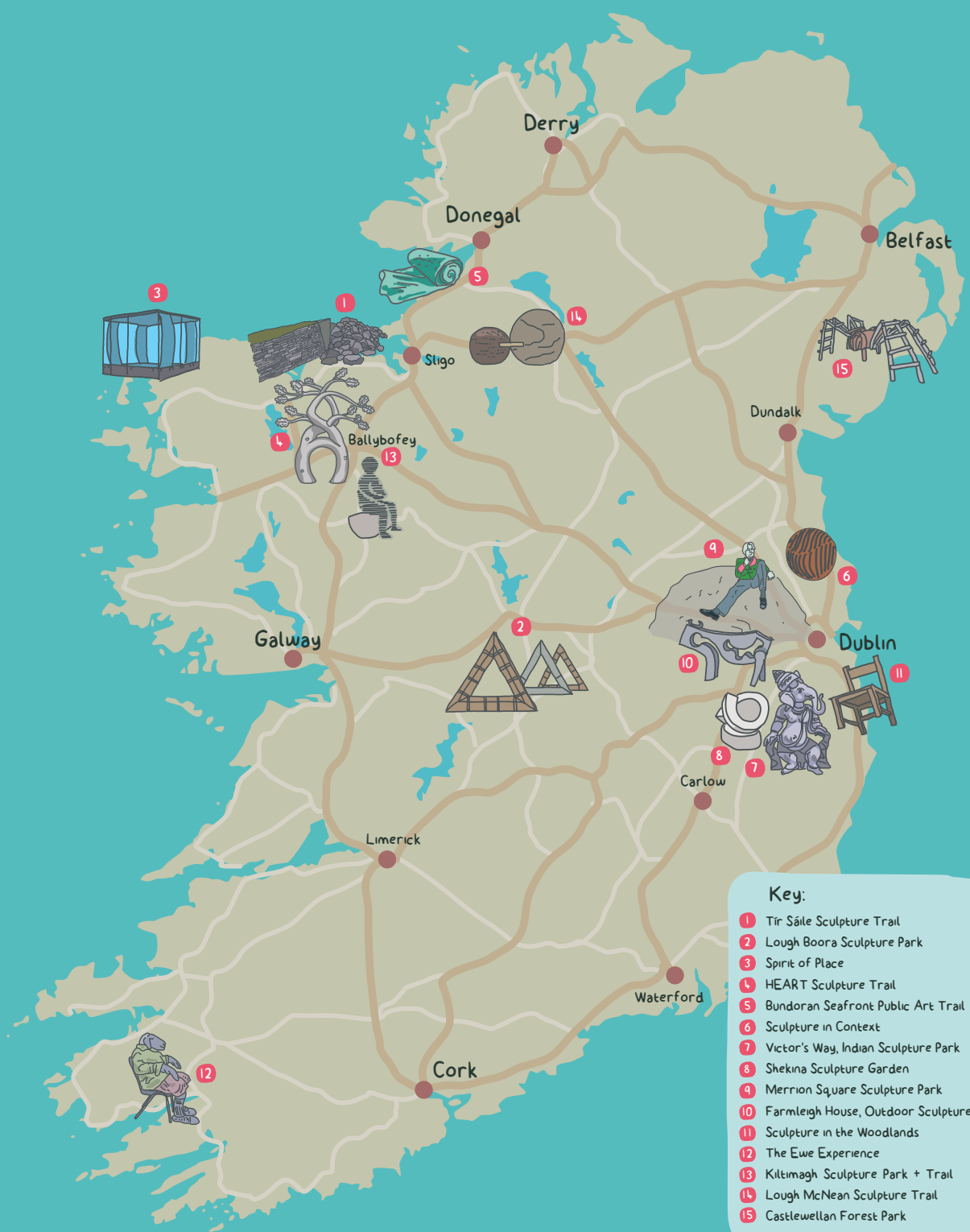
## **Conclusion**

Both Offaly County Council Arts Office and Mayo Arts Service pride themselves on a diverse public art programme and see temporary work as being valid as permanent. However, with the recent welcome announcement of significantly increased budgets under the Per Cent for Art Scheme, it is time to address the reasons why the commissioning of public sculpture in Ireland has lost its appeal. It is time to raise the bar higher and look at what needs to be done to achieve consistently great sculpture in the Irish public domain.



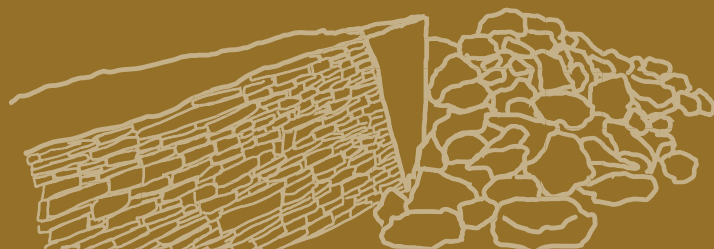
# The Sculpture Parks & Trails in Ireland

Part of this research brief was to map the existing sculpture parks and sculpture trails in Ireland with emphasis on operational, financial and curatorial models. The Sculpture Parks / Trails listed below used one or more of the commissioning options listed above in developing their sculpture collections.





# 1. Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail



**Description:** Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail was developed during a symposium held over a four-week period in June 1993 and resulted in fourteen, site-specific art in the landscape works along the North Mayo Coastline as part of the Céide Fields / Mayo 5000 celebrations. The Céide Fields is the largest Neolithic landscape in the world. The works are made from a specified and limited range of organic materials and are located at sites along the North Mayo Coast, linking the Moy Estuary to the Mullet Peninsula.

**Operational:** The organisation and management of the symposium project was carried out under the auspices of 'Dealbhóireacht 5000 Teoranta', a company specifically set up for this purpose and incorporated representatives of all the various bodies, agencies, and community groups involved in the project. After the 4-week symposium finished, further work including landscaping, paving, access improvements, parking, signage and general maintenance continued under local Community Employment Schemes

supported by FÁS. Part of the original purpose of Tír Sáile was to bring people to this part of Ireland and give them a reason to explore.

**Financial:** Tír Sáile project is the first known example of crowd funding in Ireland for a community engaged arts project. The overall project budget was £100,000 .

**Curatorial:** The project was curated by artist Marian O' Donnell. Eight Irish artists and four invited international artists were selected.

The ethos behind the Tír Sáile Symposium and Sculpture Trial was formulated on the notion of a 'Meitheal', which is a traditional way of working by which groups of people would come together to work towards a common goal. This principle informed all aspects of the development of the project, from the collaboration of artists, the community engagement, to the donation of sites both public and private for the siting of works and the hosting of the artists.

**Note:** At the time of writing only 8 works remain with varying degrees of success in the landscape and make up the Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail. Three new ephemeral works were commissioned in 2017. The original planned exhibition site, The Intercommunication Park, Slí na nÓg, Idir Dhá Sháile and 'Reconnections' (bridge) have been decommissioned as they were not regularly maintained and fell into disrepair.

## 2. Lough Boora Sculpture Park



**Description:** Sculpture in the Parklands has been operating in Lough Boora, County Offaly since 2002, after a highly successful sculpture symposium (Lough Boora International Sculpture Symposium). It was developed, in co-operation with Bord na Móna and Lough Boora Parklands Group, as part of integrated land use programme for the cutaway bogs of Ireland. Since the commencement of the project, over twenty-five temporary and permanent sculptures/artworks have become part of the fifty-hectare sculpture park.

**Operational:** Lough Boora Sculpture Park was both managed and curated by Kevin O'Dwyer who incrementally developed the sculpture park in co-operation with partners and stakeholders from 2002 to 2011. In 2018 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Bord na Móna and Offaly County Council.

**Financial:** Funding came from a variety of sources, but the primary funders were Bord na Móna and Offaly County Council with both cash and in-kind support. Bord na Móna provided the land, artist in residence logistics, manpower and equipment

during the three-week residency and sculpture walkways and general parklands maintenance. Although twenty-five sculptures were completed with additional temporary socially engaged projects, it was identified in the 2011 review that 'inadequate regular funding/revenue stream impacted negatively on the sculpture park to reach its potential' and that 'the low level of funding available from the main support agencies - The Arts Council and Offaly County Council was a threat'. These issues remain and the need for higher levels of regular funding continue.

**Curatorial:** Kevin O' Dwyer was the curator at Lough Boora since 2002 and had a reputation as a competent and connected curator in the field of environmental art. The opportunity to work at Lough Boora was appealing to Irish and international artists with expressions of interest from artists remaining strong during the tenure of curator O'Dwyer. After artist selection, an annual residency programme delivered artworks which were a direct response to the environment, landscape and industrial heritage of the Parklands. As a curator, O'Dwyer consulted with Bord na Móna fabrication team to realise permanent works and this resulted in a unique and rich discourse between Bord na Móna workers. Lough Boora won four national awards since 2002, was reviewed and received critical acclaim in Ireland, England, USA, China, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

### 3. Spirit of Place



**Description:** Spirit of Place project is part of a larger, worldwide programme of modern architectural interventions in the landscape. Spirit of Place is a project conceived and developed by architectural Professor Travis Price from Catholic University of Washington, Washington DC and delivered in-country by students studying under Price. Founded in 1993 'Spirit of Place - Spirit of Design', is an international design-build education programme with a cultural exchange curriculum. For over 20 years, Spirit of Place has been invited by project patrons in host countries to create 'legacy markers' that revitalises a unique aspect of historic culture celebrating the spirit or essence of that place. The first project delivered in Mayo was in 2002.

Over the years, Price has responded directly to the natural environment and landscape of the North Mayo Coastline and seven architectural structures have been constructed.

**Operational:** Six of the eight 'Spirit of Place' Architectural Interventions are part of the North Mayo Sculpture Trail. Like Tír Sáile,

the ongoing management, maintenance, development and promotion of Spirit of Place architectural interventions remain unresolved.

*Consideration of Spirit of Place as part of the future development of Tír Sáile did not form part of this research brief. Currently both projects appear on the same North Mayo Sculpture Trail Website. Although outwardly, the blending of Tír Sáile and Spirit of Place into a single product offering might appear to make practical sense, it has emerged from this research that there is resistance locally to this blending. The origins, intent and commissioning strategies for these two very different approaches sit uneasily side by side. This issue requires a resolution if Tír Sáile enters a new phase of development.*

**Financial:** The eight Spirit of Place projects were funded by Mayo County Council and the Catholic University of America. Of the eight, *The Crossing* was the largest and most costly. It was supported by the university and Mayo County Council, and by a €640,000 grant from Fáilte Ireland, part of the overall €10 million invested in the Wild Atlantic Way initiative in 2014.

**Curatorial:** The works were delivered using the Direct Invitation commissioning process. The design brief was a response to the 'poetic specificity of the culture, mythology, and the ecology of place of Mayo'.

## 4. HEART Sculpture Trail



**Description:** H.E.A.R.T. stands for Heritage, Environment, Art and Rural Tourism. This was a cross-border initiative managed by Strabane District Council with input from Donegal County Council. The overall project focused on twelve towns and villages in both Strabane and Donegal. The aim of this programme was to develop heritage, environmental, regeneration and included a public art commissioning programme which was intended to act as a Public Art Trail. The towns in Donegal were Ardara, Ballybofey / Stranorlar, Ballyshannon, Lifford, Merville, Ramelton and Raphoe and in Strabane the towns are Castleterg, Donemana, Newtown Stewart, Plumbridge and Sion Mills.

**Operational:** This was a project with no legacy planning in terms of promotion, audience engagement, maintenance and further commissioning.

**Financial:** The project was originally as a cross-border regeneration programme and Per Cent for Art Funding was used as an element of matched funding to deliver the work.

**Curatorial:** All twelve commissions were selected by Open Commission and selection was made through a committee process.

## 5. Bundoran Seafront Public Art Trail



**Description:** Bundoran Town Council commissioned four artists, Locky Morris, Grace Weir, Brendan McGloin and Walker & Walker to develop sculptural pieces in response to the local coastal shorefront and sea cliff.

**Operational:** This was a one-off project. There was no legacy planning in terms of promotion, audience engagement, maintenance and further commissioning.

**Financial:** This project was funded through the Bord Fáilte Tourism and Environment Initiative and Bundoran Town Council.

**Curatorial:** The Town Council were assisted by Artworking, a public art consultancy who proposed the direct invitation commissioning process where artists were asked to respond to the traditional nature of Bundoran as a playful, family orientated seaside resort.



## 6. Sculpture in Context



**Description:** *Sculpture in Context* is the largest outdoor Sculpture exhibition in Ireland, currently placing on average 150 sculptural works in The National Botanic Gardens. This project attracts up to 100,000 visitors during its six weeks annual run between September and mid-October. It was set up in 1985 by sculptors. Their aim was to work on behalf of fellow sculptors to provide space for exhibiting work in venues outside of the normal gallery context. It is a not-for-profit organisation. The exhibition was founded by Clodna Cussen, Colm Brennan and Gerard Cox and originated in Fernhill Gardens where it ran for ten years. Since then, it has been hosted in the Conrad Hotel, Malahide Castle, Kilmainham Gaol, the Irish Management Institute, Dublin Castle, Farmleigh House and since 2002 has been held in the magnificent National Botanic Gardens.

**Operational:** *Sculpture in Context* is run by a voluntary committee. This project has strong engagement from staff at the National Botanic Gardens and attracts an audience that might not necessarily engage with work in an indoor gallery. *Sculpture in Context* also has a local following from primary, secondary and third levels education making the exhibition part of their annual curriculum.

**Financial:** *Sculpture in Context* is self-funded and achieves financial success in a number of ways including the application fee as part of artists submission which is currently €15 for one entry and €20 for up to three entries, through a sliding scale commission fee that starts at 20% and is reduced for more expensive works to encourage the making of larger pieces and with small levels of financial support from Mill Cove Gallery, Bronze Art, Gallery Zozimus & McKeon Stone.

**Curatorial:** *Sculpture in Context* is based on an Open Submission Annual call where artists are invited to submit an idea, concept drawing and /or images of existing work for selection. Each year a selection committee of three artists from different arts practice backgrounds are chosen to select work from the submissions.

## 7. Victor's Way, Indian Sculpture Park



**Description:** Victor's Way was designed as a contemplation (or meditation) space for adults who feel the need to take some quality time out for rest, recovery and spiritual reorientation. The garden contains seven major and thirty-seven minor black

granite Sculptures. The garden covers some twenty acres. The contemplation path is 2kms long.

**Operational:** This is a private collection, started in 1996 and has evolved as a Pantheist monastery.

**Financial:** Privately funded with entry fee of €10.

**Curatorial:** The Sculptures are designed by the owner and then hand-cut in a dedicated workshop in Tamil Nadu in India by the artists T. Baskaran and D.V. Murugan.

## 8. Shekina Sculpture Garden



**Description:** This Sculpture collection is in a small one-acre private garden in Wicklow and has evolved over a thirty-year period (1986 – 2020). The garden hosts a varied collection of both purchased

and commissioned small works in stone, bronze, wood, metal and enamel.

**Operational:** Shekina Sculpture Garden was originally developed in private ownership but in agreement will be gifted to the Irish State, to be managed by the National Parks and Wildlife section of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**Financial:** This project is privately funded.

**Curatorial:** Five works were commissioned by direct invitation and fifteen were acquired through direct purchase.

## 9. Merrion Square



**Description:** Merrion Square is one of five Georgian squares in Dublin City Centre. Although identified as Merrion Square Sculpture Park, this is not a 'sculpture park' in the traditional sense but is a green Georgian square in the centre of Dublin city. The park is home to eleven sculptures, the best known of is The Oscar Wilde Memorial.

**Operational:** This square is managed by the Parks Service of Dublin City Council.

**Financial:** N/A

**Curatorial:** The sculptures are not connected to each other by a curatorial statement and have been commissioned over the last number of decades from a range of opportunities.

## 10. Farmleigh House



**Description:** The Office of Public Works introduced contemporary sculptures throughout Farmleigh Estate over several decades. There are seven permanent

sculptures which display a range of themes, from celebrating the accession of new states into the EU to the alignment of the planets in 1916. The sculptures also represent a diverse range of Irish and international artists.

**Operational:** The collection was commissioned on an ad-hoc basis by the Office of Public Works.

**Financial:** The collection was also funded on an ad-hoc basis.

**Curatorial:** There is currently no curatorial policy in place for the Farmleigh House Outdoor Sculpture Collection.



## 11. Sculpture in the Woodlands



**Description:** Sculpture in Woodlands was a project situated in Devil's Glen Wood, Ashford, County Wicklow, featuring a unique collection of contemporary sculpture by Irish and international artists. It was formed through a symposium in 1994 with the aim of creating a greater awareness of wood as an artistic and functional medium. Twenty sculptures were located there by Irish and international artists. The Devil's Glen was chosen as the location for sculpture in the Woodlands because of its rich historic, artistic and

natural heritage. The Devil's Glen Wood is owned by Coillte and is fully accessible to the public with car parking, picnic facilities and a variety of forest walks.

**Operational:** In the first decade after the 1994 Symposium, Sculpture in the Woodlands had a dedicated part-time project administrator. For several reasons, including the Irish recession of the early 2000s, a decision was made not to reappoint this position. The sculpture park has fallen into disrepair and is not part of the current Coillte strategic ambition.

**Financial:** Funded by Coillte with support from Wicklow County Council.

**Curatorial:** Managed by Coillte with support from Wicklow County Council Arts Office on their curatorial advisory panel.

## 12. The Ewe Experience



**Description:** A private garden in an artist's home which has been twenty-seven years in the making by Sheena Wood and Kurt Lyndorff. 'The Ewe Experience' is a unique combination of nature and art - and according to their website, is 'Ireland's only interactive and interpretive sculpture garden'.

**Operational:** This project is operated and maintained by Sheena Wood and Kurt Lyndorff.

**Financial:** This is a commercial venture that is open to the public.

**Curatorial:** The sculptures are made by the owner/artists.

## 13. Kiltimagh Sculpture Park

**Description:** During the Summer of 1993, a sculpture symposium was held in the village of Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo where Irish sculptors assisted by local students, created the nine pieces of sculpture on display in this park at the old railway station. The artists were Seamus Dunbar, Benedict Byrne, Fred Conlon, Jackie Mc Kenna, Vincent Brown and Martha Quinn. Two additional works were made by local students with technical support from the artists attending the symposium. A strong local, voluntary committee went further by introducing six

additional sculptures throughout the town in subsequent years including works on the Main St., Market Square, Wetlands Park and other locations.

**Operational:** The sculpture park and trail is loosely managed by the local development committee and Tidy Towns Committee.

**Financial:** No further commissions were planned at the time of writing.

**Curatorial:** A curatorial policy was not available.

## 14. Lough McNea Sculpture Trail

**Description:** The inspiration for the sculpture trail was for peacekeeping on the borders of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This trail was set in an area of outstanding natural beauty. Communities on either side of the shores and waters of the Upper and Lower Lough McNea are joined by a 15-mile trail that connects eleven small, site-specific sculptures. Eleven renowned

Irish artists worked with local students, scouts and citizens to select sites and help in the creation of the trail and sculptures using mostly local materials. The project is the result of a partnership between Manorhamilton Arts Group and Belcoo & District Development Group. Many of the sculptures have fallen into disrepair and are currently not promoted as a sculpture trail.

## 15. Castlewella Forest Park



**Description:** This 3-mile-long lakeside sculpture trail opened in Castlewella Forest Park in September 1992, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland. Eight sculptures were sited, each made from natural materials found in the forest park, by nine

artists from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Holland and Greece during a three-week sculpture symposium. The majority of the sculptures have fallen into disrepair and have since disappeared.



# Case Studies for Learning

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The research identified four issues that are common to both Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and presents the following case studies to extrapolate learning.

## **management, maintenance and promotion**

Case Study 1: Grizedale Sculpture Park, UK

Case Study 2: ArtScape Nordland, Norway

## **ambition**

Case Study 3: Spiral Jetty, USA

Case Study 4: Angel of the North, UK

Case Study 5: Roden Crater, USA

## **climate change emergency and culture**

Case Study 6: Creative Ireland and Climate

Case Study 7: The Eden Project, UK

## **culture and tourism**

Case Study 8: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK

Case Study 9: Mount Rushmore, USA

Case Study 10: National Tourist Routes, Norway

## Management, Maintenance and Promotion

Rejecting the gallery space for the presentation of work and motivated by growing ecological concerns, the eighties and nineties saw an increased number of Art in the Landscape projects in Ireland, Europe and the US. While many feature the connection between art, nature and the history of the site, few internationally are as deeply embedded in the psyche of the community as the Lough Boora Sculpture Park, and more especially Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail.

Like Lough Boora and Tír Sáile, many sculpture parks started as a one-off

sculpture symposium project and some continued to grow into the sculpture parks and sculpture trails we have today. Many expanded without clear purpose or the absence of a long-term management or maintenance plans and as a result many did not survive. We see this in Ireland with Union Wood Sculpture Trail Sligo and Devils Glen Sculpture Trail Wicklow.

The following two case studies look at lessons for Ireland with regards to the issues of management, maintenance and promotion.

## Case Study 1: Grizedale Forest Park, UK



Grizedale Forest Sculpture Park was started in the seventies by the The Grizedale Society, a programme of site-specific forest sculptures and land art commissions including the notable Andy Goldsworthy and David Nash, making it one of the oldest in the UK. The overall forest park is managed by the Forestry Commission and is a popular tourist destination with waymarked footpaths, mountain biking, an aerial assault course, a 16-bed hostel and a visitor centre with a children's playground, education centre, café and shop. Scattered throughout the forest are approximately ninety sculptures, often made from naturally occurring materials such as stone and wood. In the case of Grizedale Forest, and like Lough Boora Sculpture Park, the Sculptures are a component of the location, rather than its principal attraction.

For a range of reasons, for over two decades, issues relating to on-going management, maintenance and development saw the sculpture element of Grizedale Forest Park fall into a state of neglect. Outdoor gallery spaces, like sculpture parks and trails need the same

care and attention as indoor gallery spaces. Recognising that the Sculpture Park had reached a critical point for its survival, The Arts Council of England stepped in and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Forestry Commission who manage Grizedale. As a result of the MOU, all commissioned works are now incorporated into the Forestry Commission's long-term management plans with annual revenue support from The Arts Council of England.

In addition, Grizedale Arts was established but unlike Grizedale Society who commissioned sculpture, Grizedale Arts is a more experimental organisation and has become an acclaimed and influential model for a new kind of art institution, one that works beyond the established structures of the contemporary art world and gallery space. As an organisation, Grizedale Arts are unbureaucratic and responsive to opportunities. This model is worth consideration for a new phase of Lough Boora Sculpture Park.

Where the natural environment is the primary feature, the sculptures and the programmes of Grizedale Arts act as a significant addition to the experience of visitors. It was only through direct intervention at National Level that the sculpture element of Grizedale National Park survived.

## Case Study 2: ArtScape Nordland, Norway



One of the most respected Sculpture trails in the world is ArtScape Nordland. This trail is spread extensively along the west coast of Norway and is located mostly above the Arctic circle – a place known for its wild scenery and wild weather. From 1992 – 1998 and costing just under €3m million, thirty-five senior international artists created thirty-three site specific artworks in the local government municipalities along the west coast with the aim to bring contemporary art to rural areas. In terms of offering comparison of scale and possible impact, the Tír Sáile budget was IRL 100,000 pounds (estimated at €690,000 which is significant even in today's terms).

ArtScape Nordland remains a stunning collection in the outdoors and each work is cared for by the local government municipality in which it is sited. However, like Grizedale, the issue of long-term management, maintenance and national and international promotion remains a challenge. After twenty years of navigating this challenge, it has been proposed that a new government funded, visual arts gallery currently under construction in Tromsø, North Western Norway will be allocated a budget from central government. Where the new gallery will act as managers and custodians of this important collection of contemporary heritage. This new arrangement seeks to address the ongoing issues of management, maintenance, marketing and future development.

There is an on-going issue of maintenance of sculpture in Ireland, not limited to the works at Tír Sáile and Lough Boora Sculpture Park but also those commissioned under the Per Cent for Art Scheme in Ireland. Each local authority continues to struggle with this issue and the legacy problems manifests in a range of negative ways.

***Recommendation: With the re-establishment a government inter-agency group to improve information gathering and collation and sharing of best practice on Percent for Art schemes, and the proposed new link with the Arts Council to seek to enhance the Council's existing advisory role in relation to the Scheme, is there a case to be made for the City and County Managers Association to work with both the Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht and the inter-agency group to address maintenance in the Irish Context.***

## Ambition and Mega Projects

In Ireland, as each Local Authority manages its own public art commissioning, is it possible to overcome this county-based approach and deliver projects of greater scale & ambition? Is it possible to deliver mega projects that are locally located but command an international reputation?

Megaprojects are large-scale, ambitious and complex projects that take many years to develop, involve multiple public and private stakeholders, are transformational, and impact people in amazing ways. The case studies presented below are examples of public art mega-projects.



### Case Study3: Spiral Jetty, USA



Undoubtedly the most celebrated piece of contemporary land art is Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty of 1970. In the completion of this land art sculpture, Smithson had to rearrange rock, soil and algae to form a 1500 feet long spiral-shaped jetty jutting out into the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

### Case Study 4: Angel of the North, UK



It is said that the birth of the Angel of the North marked the remarkable beginning of a great deal of change in the depressed UK Borough of Gateshead, and indeed the wider region. It is as much a part of Gateshead's identity now as the Statue of Liberty is to New York. Since it first spread its wings in February 1998, The Angel of the North has become one of the most talked

about and recognisable pieces of public art ever produced in the UK. Residents have fallen in love with the Angel and it has become synonymous with Gateshead. Its 54 metre (175 foot) wingspan is almost the same as a Jumbo jet. The budget was £800,000 and the aspiration is that it will last for more than 100 years.

## Case Study 5: Roden Crater, USA



James Turrell, considered to be the greatest American land art artist, who designed and constructed Sky Garden at Liss Ard Estate, Cork costing in the region €1m, is currently undertaking the largest and most expensive land art commission ever attempted in the world. After acquiring a dormant volcano in 1977, over the last 45 years and almost complete, Turrell is ambitiously turning Roden Crater into a site containing tunnels and apertures that open onto the sky, capturing light directly from the sun in daylight hours, and the planets and stars at night. The final cost of the work is not available in the public domain, but Turrell was recently gifted \$10 million USD by Kayne West to complete the work.

These public art mega projects are

presented to raise the issue of ambition and scale in an Irish context. The research notes the announcement of new significant measures aimed at increasing funding for public art and artists. The new upper limit is significantly increasing from €64,000 to €500,000. The new limits are set out in the Annex of this report. However, if each local authority manages its own commissioning, then how is it possible to overcome this county-based approach to projects of scale and ambition – projects that are locally sited but could command an international reputation. The stakeholders of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park may want to reconsider their ambition in the context of the case studies presented.

***Recommendation: Again, with the re-establishment of a government inter-agency group to improve information gathering and collation and sharing of best practice on Percent for Art schemes, and the proposed new link with the Arts Council to seek to enhance the Council's existing advisory role in relation to the Scheme, there is a case to be made for the City and County Managers Association to work with both the Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht and the inter-agency group to address greater ambition in the Irish Context.***

## The Climate Change Emergency and Culture

In Ireland, although there is unanimous scientific and general political consensus on the urgency of climate change and the need to bring about a deep decarbonisation of society at scale, there is less agreement on the specific actions that need to be taken and the best approaches for engaging the public in an ongoing dialogue on these actions.

Culture is a powerful conduit for public engagement, with artists, cultural and creative practitioners historically playing a crucial role in social and political transitions. Many forms of cultural expression seek to address complexity and confront challenges in ways that are provocative and engaging, often opening dialogue and engagement with and about new social and political

contexts and using creative forms of critical inquiry as opposed to seeking or presenting technical solutions. Similarly, heritage can be an important channel through which people can understand, interpret, and engage with many aspects of climate change, including impacts, mitigation and adaptation.

Does Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail, with its wonderful connection to man's symbiotic and respectful relationship with land and Lough Boora Sculpture Park which explored our relationship with the peatlands have a powerful role to play in the local and national conversation on our climate emergency as proposed in the following case study?

## Case Study 6: Creative Ireland and Climate

It is evident that the role of the cultural sector has rarely featured in key climate change reports, strategies and policies. *'Engaging the Public on Climate Change through the Cultural and Creative Sector'* Report commissioned by the Creative Ireland Programme 2020 highlights that

there is a need to encourage dialogue on how the cultural and creative sectors can engage the Irish public on climate change and in undertaking climate action, and to make themselves an essential part of the climate narrative.

## Case Study 7: The Eden Project UK



Based in Cornwall in UK, The Eden Project team understand the powerful and important role of making climate change a relatable social and cultural issue and places the cultural and creative sector at the core of all its partnerships for successful delivery.

The Eden Project began as an idea in 1995 and opened its doors to the public in 2000. Since then, more than 19 million people have come to see what was once a sterile pit turned into a cradle of life, containing world-class horticulture and startling architecture symbolic of human endeavour. Eden has contributed over £1.9 billion GBP into the Cornish economy and is proud of its success in changing people's perception of the potential for and the application of science, by communicating and interpreting

scientific concepts through the use of art, drama and storytelling as well as living up to its mission to take a pivotal role in local regeneration.

The Eden Project are now working with a variety of international partners to establish a sisterhood of new Eden Projects around the world, with the ambition to have a presence on every inhabited continent.

***Eden's mission is to explore our dependence on the natural world, to use that understanding to excite people into delivering transformation where they live and to ask really serious questions about what a great future might look like for all of us.***

Each of the International Eden Projects will share common values and a message of the importance of the natural world, but each will be unique to its area and a product of its surroundings. The vision is for Eden Projects around the world to work together and learn from one another, a global network of local projects. The Eden Project recognises that climate change constitutes not only an environmental and scientific challenge but a cultural challenge, and that there is a need to make climate change and climate action more meaningful and personally relevant in order for a comprehensive transition to take place.

***Recommendation: The Midlands Regional Transition Team has already been established but the Mulvey report recommends that ad-hoc subcommittees of The Midlands Regional Transition Team be established. In light of the recently published report on the role of the Cultural Sector in the Climate Change Debate commissioned by Creative Ireland outlined in the case study above, it would be strategic if Creative Ireland play a role in advocating for representation on this cross sectoral team so that the true and broad potential of creativity is harnessed. There are significant opportunities presenting in the midlands focused on our climate emergency where the role of culture might be an integral component. We need champions at government level who allow space to explore the important role and extraordinary potential of culture and creativity to help navigate the climate change tensions between day to day local experience, national interests, EU regulations and global policies.***

## Culture and Tourism

A flourishing tourism industry is vital for Ireland's economic well-being. It also contributes to shaping our image and attractiveness as a great place to live, work and invest. While Ireland has a global reputation as a top tourism destination, it is now time to be more ambitious and to tap into the huge potential that exists in this sector. We are, after all, unrivalled when it comes to what we have to offer: breathtaking natural beauty, rich heritage and enviable culture.

Ireland's tourism tentacles reach into every village, town and city, employing in the region of 205,000 people, or eleven per cent of the working population. One in nine people are employed in the sector and up to one in five along the Wild Atlantic Way. In total, the sector contributes over €6 billion to the economy, and accounts for four per cent of our gross national product. Any future tourism growth in Ireland will be hard won and the key will be innovation, adding value and strengthening the appeal of Ireland in international markets.

***“Data insights suggest that the culturally curious market segment spend almost twice as much as other segments and the World Tourist Organisation claims that Cultural Tourism represents between 30-40% of all tourism worldwide.”***

What can we learn from international examples that might help Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park to lever competitive advantage in the arena of cultural tourism?

## Case Study 8: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK



Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) opened in 1977 with the goal of providing 'great art for everyone'. The sculpture park located outdoors in 500 acres of land in Wakefield, United Kingdom is designed to remove barriers to art and encourage greater participation. The Park forms a 'gallery without walls' and began with £1,000 GBP investment and thirty-one sculptures. Since then the Park has expanded, now including five indoor galleries.

***Yorkshire Sculpture Park is now an international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture with regular changing exhibitions and attracts over 300,000 visitors annually.***

The open nature of the Park is designed to encourage visitors to explore the relationship between art and nature, allowing all visitors to make their own personal discoveries. Sculptures and site-specific permanent works from some of the 20th Century's leading artists including Antony Gormley, Henry Moore, Anthony Caro, Barbara Hepworth, James Turrell, Andy Goldsworthy and David Nash, are on display both outdoors and in the indoor galleries. Although somewhat dated, an Economic Value and Impact of Yorkshire Sculpture Park Report in 2011 suggested that the estimated economic impact of visitors to YSP is worth at least £4.96 million and could well be in the order of £5.53 million GDP in its value to the local economy. In terms of employment this is the equivalent of supporting between 63 and 70 full-time jobs.

## Case Study 9: Mount Rushmore, USA

Completed in the 1920s, the colossal and familiar Mount Rushmore National Memorial was carved into granite over fourteen years by sculptor Gutzon Borglum and 400 workers. Of interest to this research was that it was conceived with the intention of creating a site to lure tourists and one hundred years later, it attracts more than two million visitors annually.





## Case Study 10: Scenic Routes, Norway



*In the desire to lure more tourists to remote areas, Norway's National Scenic Routes Project recognised early on that using outstanding art, architecture, and landscape design would be an effective draw.*

Norway's National Tourist Routes or Scenic Routes Initiative have now successfully commissioned eighteen large-scale,

landscape and place-specific design commissions incorporating a high level of innovation and a range of smaller works to compliment the larger ambition. The commissioned works imbue architectural design at its best. The works are as much a draw as the scenery. In 2019 over 150 structures existed, with the completion of 249 projected by 2023. The cost of the project had reached €100 million which includes monies from other public sources beyond the National Roads Authority.

*Recommendation: This research has identified that tourism is clear about its relationship with culture but there is less clarity and certainly less comfort in the relationship the cultural sector has with economic development and specifically with tourism, at best provoking indifference and at worst provoking hostility. Although the 'Framework for Collaboration' between The Arts Council and the City and County Managers Association acknowledge that 'the arts can actively contribute to local economic development, whether in terms of attracting inward investment and improving opportunities for cultural tourism,' practical application of this is not maximised nationally and this was evident specifically in both Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and Lough Boora Sculpture Park. It is necessary to address this 'elephant in the room'. This report recommends that The Arts Council takes a lead role in bringing the stakeholders together to explore problems, synergies and opportunities with regard to culture and tourism.*

## The importance of Sculpture Parks and Trails and Measuring Impact

*Some suggest that public art humanises the environment and tames our wild places, some suggest that public art can provide an intersection between past, present and future and some suggest that parks, trails and safe spaces in nature are best left untouched and that the addition of public art can destroy the simple beauty of nature working alone.*

The limitations placed on us as a nation during the Covid-19 pandemic has focused our attention on the need for quality space and demonstrated the vital role that 'parks, trails and safe spaces in nature' play in the everyday lives of so many people. As restrictions increased, it confirmed the value of parks and trails to help us maintain our health and well-being. Access to 'parks, trails and safe spaces in nature' are now seen more than ever as a tangible reflection of quality of life and access is cited as an important factor in how liveable and bearable communities are as we continue to navigate a world with Covid-19. Through this pandemic, 'parks, trails and safe spaces in nature' provided gathering places for social groups, families and individuals of all ages and economic status. In addition, our 'parks, trails and safe spaces in nature' have demonstrated a value to communities transcending the amount of money invested and have provided a sense of public pride and cohesion to every community that had quality access.

But what does the addition of public art to these 'parks, trails and safe spaces in nature' bring? It can be as simple as an additional source of pleasure. Some suggest that good public art reflects and reveals our society, adds meaning to our public spaces and uniqueness to our communities, some suggest that public art humanises the environment and tames our wild places, some suggest that public art can provide an intersection between past, present and future, between disciplines and between ideas. Some suggest that 'parks, trails and safe spaces in nature' are best left untouched and that the addition of public art can destroy the simple beauty of nature working alone.

But with the addition of public art in public spaces, how do we measure success and impact?

**Impact measurement** is the process of gathering evidence to assess the change or opinion that any activity or commission has for individuals, groups or communities. This information can support organisations to identify opportunities for improvement and demonstrate the value of the work and benefits created for their participants and community.

In 2016, The Arts Council of Ireland made a commitment to understand and measure the impact of arts in Ireland. To deliver on this commitment, the Outcome Measurement Guidebook and Framework was published in November 2020 which outlines a simple yet comprehensive process to measure impact of all public art projects henceforth. The Arts Council Outcome Measurement Guidebook and Framework is available online.

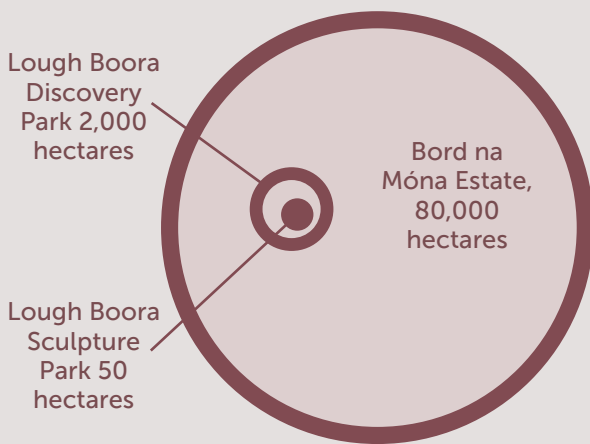


# Lough Boora Sculpture Park

The section focuses on Lough Boora Sculpture Park and after desk based research and extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders identified the potency, problems and potential and in distilling these suggests a simple and practical framework to move forward.

## Context

Lough Boora Sculpture Park was developed on a 50-hectares section of the cutaway bog at Lough Boora which is owned by the state and managed by Bord na Móna. Lough Boora Sculpture Park is part of Lough Boora Discovery Park (2,000 hectares) which in turn is just a small part of the overall 80,000 hectares managed by Bord na Móna.



The concept of the Sculpture Park at Lough Boora Discovery Park (formerly known as Sculpture in the Parklands) was developed during an international Sculpture symposium held in Lough Boora in 2002. Over the nine years that followed and involving a partnership arrangement with Bord na Móna and Offaly County Council (supported by the Arts Council and others), and delivered on a tight budget, the Sculpture park evolved to become a highly respected, award winning cultural project with national significance and a dedicated site, unique in Ireland for environmental art commissions, receiving numerous awards not just for the quality of the work but also for the innovative nature of the partnerships.

Through an impressive annual residency programme, usually beginning in September, when Bord na Móna manpower

and expertise were available for support and installation, over twenty-five temporary and permanent Sculptures became the central offering at Lough Boora Discovery Park.

The success of this impressive body of work is that each sculpture is a direct and easily interpreted response to the environment, landscape and industrial heritage of the bog.

Over the years, the overall Discovery Park infrastructure has also grown with trails, car parking, toilets, bike hire, visitor pavilion and coffee shop. Today Lough Boora Discovery Park attracts up to 100,000 visitors annually with the Sculpture Park being a significant part of that offering.

The principle partners of Bord na Móna (landowner) and Offaly County Council (commissioners) ratified their partnership in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in 2018. While the management committee, established through this MOA acknowledge the importance and legacy of the Sculpture Park as it has developed to date, it also recognises the significance of the changing landscape and biodiversity of the Parkland and acknowledges that this evolutionary process should not impact on the decision-making in terms of strategic artistic policy and the longer term sustainable development of the Park.

In early 2020, 'Deep Mapping Lough Boora Sculpture Park' by Tom Collins and Reiko Goto Collins was published. This was a conceptual review of Lough Boora Sculpture Park from an arts perspective but placed its development alongside the historical and industrial perspective. This research project is a follow on from their work and seeks to present a practical response to what the future of Lough Boora Sculpture Park might be.

## Potency

- Lough Boora Sculpture Park represents a very powerful and developed body of work that is unique in Ireland and has a national and international reputation for the location, scale, quality of the work and seniority of the artists engaged. Gravitas also comes from the industrial materials used, the special relationship that the artwork has with the landscape, the traditions and heritage of the site and from the extraordinary relationships that developed between the artists and the local Bord na Móna engineering and maintenance team during production.
- Lough Boora Sculpture Park commands a strong reputation within the arts community and with the national cultural statutory agencies winning several national awards during the peak of its commissioning period.
- The opportunity to create work at Lough Boora Sculpture Park had appeal to Irish and international artists alike. Former curator Kevin O'Dwyer had a deep understanding of monumental art in the landscape, he understood what was possible from artists and had a strong reputation as a curator and project manager. He also had an established and expansive network nationally and internationally in the genre of art in the landscape. This skillset will be required into the future to maintain and exceed the original artistic standard set.
- The presence of the sculpture park at Lough Boora is what makes the overall Discovery Park unique. Many areas of cutaway bog in Offaly and the surrounding counties have biodiversity recolonising post harvesting but it is the sculptures which give such a clear sense of place to Lough Boora Discovery Park. This can clearly be seen with the difference in visitor numbers between Lough Boora and adjacent Finnermore and Turraun bog walks which are mostly left to the naturalist and occasional walker.
- Each of the twenty-five sculptures explore part of the Irish bog story from wasteland to domestic fuel, to large scale extraction and the economic success of The Midlands. This is a hugely important collection of work. It is also a powerful legacy asset for Bord na Móna as the current state custodians of the peatlands.
- The flat, vast, open, peaty landscape that characterises the Irish boglands provides a site and setting that is unique and wonderful both for the soul and as a canvas to present the work.
- Lough Boora Discovery Park, with its car parking, trails, bike hire and coffee shop is one of six key tourism sites identified in Offaly for Development (Clonmacnoise, Birr Castle, The Shannon, Tullamore Dew, Sliabh Bloom Mountains). Current visitor numbers are estimated between 87,000 – 100,000 annually.
- Lough Boora Sculpture Park is

accessible from many parts of Ireland, is open air, free of charge, family friendly, open throughout the year and is the current anchor offering in the Lough Boora Discovery Park.

- The 2018 MOU between Offaly County Council and Bord na Móna represents a strong basis for moving forward.

## Problems

- No new sculptures have been commissioned since 2010.
- Due to lack of attention to maintenance of the current collection, some of the works have become compromised and the product overall has become somewhat 'tired'.
- There are some interpretive panels in the Pavilion, and some plinths with faded sculptor references are still there. The Discovery Park website has a certain amount of marketing information but a regular and dedicated marketing programme or dedicated marketing material for Lough Boora Sculpture Park is either non-existent or weak. There are no regular guided tours which can bring the experience to life.
- Although a partnership committee of representatives from Bord na Móna and Offaly County Council ratified a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in 2018 and are working to establish a framework for the development of Lough Boora Sculpture Park over the next ten years, there is no clear owner, driver or funder and even with

the best intention, the full potential of Lough Boora Sculpture Park may not be achieved by the current committee process.

- Bord na Móna are not a cultural, recreational or tourism development organisation.
- Some of the personnel / champions who were initially involved in the project have moved.
- A Community Benefit Obligation is not written into Bord na Móna 'Licence to Operate' as it is in Coillte, for example.



- As is often the case in the development of such projects, original funding for Lough Boora Sculpture Park was secured in an ad hoc way from funders including Bord na Móna, Fáilte Ireland, Offaly County Council, The Arts Council, Offaly Leader, Offaly Local Development Company/West Offaly Partnership, University College Dublin, Crafts Council of Ireland, European Culture Programme and local businesses.
- Offaly County Council have consistently provided a small level of annual funding for the project. Once annual commissioning ceased, only small temporary projects were initiated.
- The current level of annual funding under the Framework Agreement is not adequate to maintain this gallery – albeit an ‘outdoor gallery’ and there are limitations on accessing funding due to its current legal status. During the course of this research, this researcher has not become aware of any ‘indoor gallery’ that would consider operating if faced with the same financial or operational arrangement.
- There has been no focused and consistent marketing and promotion of Lough Boora Sculpture Park. Marketing and promotion during the commissioning phase of 1992 – 2010 was ad hoc and project-focused and as a result, Lough Boora Sculpture Park is not widely known in a national context or as a national asset locally located.
- Tourism Development Ireland Feasibility Report 2020 (TDI) recognised the significance of the Sculpture Park and its development as one of the six key recommendations ‘extending the Sculpture Parks Nature Sculpture provision through the encouragement of artistic development and growth’. However no further consideration was given to its poor current status, future development and no funding requirement was identified in the TDI Feasibility Report. Perhaps it is not too late to expand the terms of reference which might be used to fully ascertain the full potential of the Sculpture Park element with a view to developing an ambitious strategy for development.
- As the current site size of the Sculpture Park has been defined, there is only space / site for 2-3 more sculptures unless some decommissioning occurs, which might be necessary now due to natural decay or similar.
- Large environmental Sculptures are part of the land art movement that began in the 1960s in America and peaked in the late nineties. Although the general public still appear to be interested in sculpture parks and sculpture trails, this has not been determined in any rigorous way.
- Large scale sculpture is both expensive to commission and expensive to maintain.
- As Ireland has not been offering opportunities for large-scale land art commissions, there may be an absence of technical expertise to commission ‘best in class’.

- The Residency Symposium model was a successful, cost effective method of achieving large scale land-art commissions both nationally and internationally in the nineties and early noughties (Ireland - Hazel Wood Sculpture Trail Sligo, Devils Glen Sculpture Trail Wicklow, Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail Mayo and Lough Boora Sculpture Park Offaly. International examples include – Tout Quarry Sculpture Project UK, Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail UK, Wanas Foundation Sweden, TICKON Centre for Art & Nature Denmark and Herring Island Environmental Sculpture Park in Australia). For several reasons, the Residency Symposium model may not

be a viable commissioning process for Lough Boora Sculpture Park going forward.

- The Midlands does not have a strong reputation as a top tourist destination. Any future tourism growth in the Midlands will be hard won and the key will be innovation, adding value and strengthening the appeal of the Midlands. A flourishing tourism industry is vital for the Midlands economic well-being and recovery. To stimulate innovation and improve competitiveness, projects such as Lough Boora Sculpture Park will have to work hard to successfully and consistently deliver a strong, unique and fundable visitor experience.





## Potential

- Lough Boora Sculpture Park is unique in Ireland in terms of scale of the work, number of pieces in the collection and the landscape which it is set in. There are no other sculpture parks or sculpture trails of such significance in Ireland. It is estimated that to recreate Lough Boora Sculpture Park today would cost in excess of €2 Million Euros.
- Lough Boora Sculpture Park is an important national art collection and as such, there is merit in conversations for national support including with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht and more specifically with the Office of Public Works.
- The suggestion of re-branding the Sculpture Park as the National Sculpture Park was presented in 2011. Although consideration of this suggestion has merit, it is not a strategic direction being supported under the current MOU.
- Lough Boora Discovery Park is one of the six lead projects in the Tourism Strategy for Offaly, with Lough Boora Sculpture Park remaining a key element of the customer experience at the Discovery Park. In 2019, Bord na Móna commissioned Tourism Development Ireland to undertake a Feasibility Study / Strategic Report. One of the objectives was to develop 'compelling, exciting and unique visitor experience of national and international significance'. This comprehensive report identifies six principal additions for Lough Boora Discovery Park including 'extending the Park's Art and Nature Sculpture provision through the encouragement of artistic development and growth'. The report also outlined potential opportunities and synergies for an expanded vision for Lough Boora Sculpture Park connected to the 'Boora Works Events Centre' which recommends a repurposing of the redundant industrial buildings close to the entrance of the Park.
- The 21st century is about a new, more respectful relationship with nature. A new commissioning series at Lough Boora Sculpture Park is now required and has the potential to address and communicate these issues to the corporate aspect of Bord Na Móna, in a very powerful and positive way, as the company strives to implement its "Brown to Green" strategy.
- A new commissioning series at the sculpture park can also work to address the growing awareness of the uniqueness of the Irish bog, its industrial past, the important function of arts and heritage in the cultural identity of the Midlands.
- The role of the peatlands in economic development of Ireland and the importance of nature to our wellbeing should also be acknowledged.
- Just Transition of the Midlands and the role of the artist in the climate change debate are also worthy of recognition in this discussion.

- The post covid reality for tourism will most likely mean a shift in focus to outdoor visitor attractions that have scale, impact and can be bundled with other offerings and can work to address regionality.
- Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand identity was developed after months of extensive market testing both in Ireland and overseas. The overwhelming feedback is that visitors from key markets want the opportunity to explore Ireland's natural gems and rural communities. Creating linkages with Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Brand identity for the Midlands represent important opportunities in any new phase of development for Lough Boora Sculpture Park. In addition, any future development of Lough Boora Sculpture Park might be guided by the principles of 'slow tourism'.
- The delivery of the Midlands Cycle Strategy will see the completion of Lough Boora Discovery Park Connections 2020 which is high quality greenway link between the key town of Tullamore and the Lough Boora Discovery Park via the Grand Canal Greenway (25-30kms). There is potential to expand the geography of the sculpture park and consider new art in the landscape sites along this greenway route as part of the Unique Selling Point (USP) of Midlands Cycling and along the expanded cycling network within the park as proposed by TDI in their recent feasibility study.
- The Lough Boora Sculpture Park Arts and Education Programme is strong in content and design. There are opportunities to maximise this offering to 'Connected Families' which was a focus segment identified by TDI for Lough Boora Discovery Park.
- Bord na Móna has been working with several partners to progress the establishment of a Peatlands Centre of Excellence which would focus on the role peatlands can play in climate mitigation and adaptation. There will be a strong focus on the Just Transition in supporting communities and SMEs in developing low carbon, sustainable and circular economy enterprises.
- A large-scale funding application has been made under the EU LIFE Programme Structural Funds and several Government Departments and agencies have also committed resources to this project. Pillar 3 of this application is exploring the Feasibility of an Eden LIFE Bid. If the Eden LIFE Bid is successful, the Discovery Park Site may be considered.
- For Ireland's first appearance at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, the architect Tom de Paor built a pavilion from 40,000 peat briquettes and it was never reconstructed after its five-month stint at the Italian event. Its material presence was strong and simple, almost primitive. The Irish Architecture Foundation is curating a retrospective of Tom de Paor at Visual, Carlow opening February 2022. This represents an opportunity for a new commission for Lough Boora Sculpture Park. The commissioning process might be by direct invitation.

# Lough Boora Sculpture Park

## A new phase



Previous tourism strategies have indicated that a large-scale tourism capital infrastructure is neither desired nor feasible at the Lough Boora Discovery Park.

However, as presented in the section on Case Studies, The Eden Project in the UK shows how arts and culture successfully play a role in the Environmental, Climate Change debate and local economic development through tourism. Funding has now been secured under the EU LIFE Integrated Structural Funds to deliver a major multidisciplinary environmental programme in the Midlands which includes a workstream to undertake a feasibility study to potentially deliver a €70 Million Eden International type project (It cannot officially be called an Eden International Project until this is approved by Eden, UK). The feasibility study will explore amongst other things, location and the legal framework for delivery. There are obvious synergies for Lough Boora Sculpture Park and an Eden International Project.

Plans are also being discussed for a Peatlands Centre for Excellence in the Midlands and the recent Kieran Mulvey

Interim report suggests that the Peatlands Centre of Excellence could be further enhanced with the co-location of a Peatlands Visitors Centre which would appear to make sense.

The TDI Study for Lough Boora Discovery Park identifies the Sculpture Park as one of the six visitor experiences to deliver an overall product of national and international significance. The report also outlines the opportunity for creating the 'Boora Works Events Centre' which is a repurposing of the redundant industrial buildings close to the entrance of the Park.

However, with such significant transition in the Midlands and new projects in discussion, there is a possibility that Lough Boora Sculpture Park, already tired and lacking investment and promotion, may become diminished by other new developments currently being discussed for the Midlands. The Lough Boora Sculpture Park committee needs to remind itself of the extraordinary asset that it holds and remain committed and energised to maintaining the asset to fully deliver on its social, cultural and more importantly, its full tourism potential.

An expanded conversation is necessary to maximise any potential synergies between The Eden Life Project, The Peatlands Centre for Excellence, Peatlands Visitors Centre, the TDI proposed 'Boora Works Events Centre' at the Discovery Park, Fáilte Ireland, The Arts Council and Lough Boora Sculpture Park.



## Framework

In developing a new framework for Lough Boora Sculpture Park, it needs to be consistent with relevant local and national culture, tourism and recreation plans, as well as biodiversity and carbon reduction policies for peatlands in general. It is also imperative that a new framework for Lough Boora Sculpture Park is informed by the linkage strategy with other developments and attractions in County Offaly, in order that overall provision in the area is embedded, connected and enhanced and that multiple benefits for singular actions are achieved.

The principle partners of Bord na Móna (landowner) and Offaly County Council (commissioners) ratified their partnership in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in 2018. While the management committee, established through this MOA acknowledge the importance and legacy of the Sculpture Park, there appears to be a disconnect in terms of understanding the imperative to address the urgent operational requirements (maintenance and promotion) but more importantly, the medium to long term development purpose and the requirements necessary to deliver that purpose.

This €2m Sculpture Park is at the risk of dying as has happened with other outdoor sculpture collections nationally and internationally previously identified in this report.

### Consolidation Phase 2020/21

- Agree and complete outstanding maintenance (Visual Artists Ireland will supply 'Best Practice Guidelines' on Maintenance) and complete outstanding interpretation panels.
- Agree a 3-Year Maintenance Programme that may include de-commissioning.
- Secure funding to undertake a costed 'Lough Boora Sculpture Park 5 Year Strategic Plan' to deliver the full cultural, social and tourism potential of Lough Boora Sculpture Park. This strategy will build on the research findings of this report and the TDI Feasibility Study / Strategic Plan. Terms of Reference might include:
  - > A New Commissioning Series (using the commissioning processes identified in this research) and / or a Large-Scale Art in the Landscape Sculpture Symposium
  - > A bi-annual Temporary Model based on the UK 4th Plinth idea
  - > Funding
  - > Promotion and Marketing
  - > Staff Structure for Project/ Operational Management
  - > Maintenance Programme
  - > Decommissioning
  - > Linkages and Synergies (including with Boora Works Events Centre, Canal Greenway from Tullamore, the role of Culture in the Climate Change Debate, Offaly Cultural Infrastructure Plan, Eden International for the Midlands, The Peatlands Centre for Excellence, Peatlands Visitor Centre)
- CEO of Offaly and Bord na Móna to write to Fáilte Ireland and Creative Ireland to deliver a comprehensive and ambitious Lough Boora Sculpture

Park 5-Year Strategy that looks at the full cultural tourism potential of Lough Boora Sculpture Park based on the Terms of Reference as above.

- Establish a Legal Structure for Lough Boora Sculpture Park to deal with specific issues relating to the Sculpture Park including ownership of the artworks and a leasing arrangement for the land. Having explored the options available, a Company Limited by Guarantee is proposed. This can also facilitate more expanded funding applications to deliver the Lough Boora Sculpture Park Strategic Plan that may include new commissions and projects.
- Business Case to Bord na Móna for new commission for Lough Boora Sculpture Park for 21st Birthday Celebration. Lough Boora Sculpture needs to raise its profile in terms of commissioning and promotion so as in the short term to secure its relevance, in the medium term, its ability to secure innovative partnerships and funding and in the longer-term, that Ireland retains commitment for its only national sculpture collection. A new 21st Birthday commission also represents a strong public relations opportunity for Bord na Móna to communicate/ acknowledge its brown to green transition, to showcase and celebrate its community engagement over the two decades and can be used as a platform to announce new directions. Exploring potential synergies with the retrospective exhibition being organised by The Irish Architecture Foundation to celebrate the legacy of

Irish architect Tom de Paor in Visual, (gallery) Carlow, in February 2022 is worth consideration.

## 21st Birthday 2023

- The launch of a dedicated marketing and promotion drive for Lough Boora Sculpture Park to coincide with 21st Birthday.
- Unveiling of new 21st Birthday Sculptural Commission.
- Year 1 implementation of 5-Year Strategy. (It is recommended that this does not begin until Q1 2023 when there is a clearer understanding of transition opportunities in The Midlands that are currently in their infancy).

## Partners and Opportunities

There are a range of potential partners and sources of collaboration on this project, locally, nationally and internationally. These are outlined below.

**Local:** Bord na Móna, Offaly County Council, Fáilte Ireland, LEADER, Per Cent for Art Scheme, Offaly Creative Ireland Team, Kilcormac Development Association.

**National:** The Arts Council, Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht in relation to Per Cent for Art Scheme, Creative Ireland, Visual Artists Ireland, The Irish Architecture Foundation.

**International:** The European Land + Art Network, European Innovation in Technology KIC in Creativity and Culture, The Sculpture Network, Europe's Network for three-dimensional art, The Fourth Plinth Model in the UK, Yorkshire Sculpture Park UK.

A stone structure with a triangular roof and a central opening, set against a blue background. The structure is built from rough-hewn stones and has a dark interior. The background is a solid blue color.

# Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail

The section focuses on Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and after desk based research and extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders identified the potency, problems and potential and in distilling these suggests a simple and practical framework to move forward.

## Context

Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail was developed during a four-week symposium in June 1993 and resulted in fourteen, site-specific art in the landscape works along the North Mayo coastline and formed a significant pillar of the Céide Fields / Mayo 5000 celebrations. The Céide Fields Settlement is the largest Neolithic landscape in the world. Simply put, an extensive field and farming system was discovered under the bog in North Mayo. If the bog is 5000 years old, it means that the farming system was there long before that. This discovery was phenomenal. Its excavation by Archaeologist Dr. Seamus Caufield led to the building of a major and impressive interpretative centre just outside Ballycastle in remote North Mayo which is operated by the OPW.

The development of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail must be read in the context of the opening of the Céide Fields Interpretative Centre. Suddenly, this remote community in North Mayo became the custodians of the oldest Neolithic site in the world and a community engaged Sculpture symposium with visiting artists was a perfect vehicle for the community to get involved and get onboard. The Sculpture Trail of fourteen land art sculptures was built upon the idea of the Meitheal – the traditional way of working where groups of people come together and work as a community towards a common goal.

To coincide with the 25 year anniversary of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail, in 2017 funding was secured for a new phase of Tír Sáile and included the commissioning of the Tír Sáile residency programme which resulted in strong, community engaged

temporary projects, a one-day symposium and publication, some limited restoration and repair of the eight existing works and the development of a new website. The artist residencies with local communities illustrated how the original sites can be animated with new artistic vision and approaches to contemporary public art practices. The residencies and seminar were an opportunity to reflect on Tír Sáile's history and context. With the renewed recent focus on Tír Sáile, this research is a natural follow on from the 2017 project where Mayo County Council recognises the need to address the purpose and future direction of the trail.





## Potency

- Although hard to quantify, twenty seven years after the original Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail was commissioned, the brand name and identity of Tír Sáile appears strong locally, nationally and internationally.
- This was the largest and most ambitious Public Art Project in Ireland in the nineties commissioning fourteen site specific sculptures across a range of rural environments.
- The buy-in and support from local community through the spirit of 'meitheal' for the original project was outstanding and this support seems to have endured. Original practical demonstration of this includes that Tír Sáile was the first, successfully crowd funded arts project in Ireland and thirty-four sites were offered by local, private landowners as potential sites for the artists site-specific work.
- Some of the sculptures that remain are sited in the most outstanding areas of natural beauty.
- Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail is a unique form of storytelling that is hard to replicate in another artform.
- The opening of Céide Fields, Mayo 5000 celebrations and the development of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail brought a pride of place and a sense of place to North Mayo during a time of recession in Ireland in the early 1990s. The success of the Wild Atlantic Way is currently having a similar impact.
- Mayo was one of the first Local Authorities in Ireland to employ a full time Arts Officer and has a well-established and integrated Arts Section within the County Council, which includes a full-time Public Art Co-ordinator.
- Mayo Arts Service has a strong national reputation for its public art programme and endeavours to represent national best practice. It is the council's intention to; develop a wide range of commissioning practices, to encourage a wide diversity of contemporary art forms and to takes a partnership approach in delivering projects working with local and national arts organisations, communities and individuals.
- Funding in 2017 from Mayo County Council, The Arts Council of Ireland, Community Gain Investment Fund and Áras Inis Gluaire provided resources for some maintenance, signposting, website development, interpretation and a project publication. The funding also supported three residency commissions and a one-day symposium. The commissions were a reflection and celebration of Tír Sáile, providing an opportunity for the artists to work with new communities and according to Catherine Marshall, former Senior Curator with IMMA 'represent the best of cutting edge, temporary, socially engaged commissioning'.

## Problems

- Local people are unhappy and feel Tír Sáile has been neglected and fallen into disrepair over the years. Local people would suggest that Mayo County Council has 'abandoned' this project. However, it is important to clarify that the original project was not a Mayo County Council project but was established by the Dealbhóireacht 5000 Teoranta consortium for Mayo 5000. This was a company, limited by guarantee and incorporated representatives from various bodies, agencies and community groups involved in the project. The artworks are hosted by the landowner and are owned by the artists. There was no long-term plan and despite the perception that it is a Mayo County Council project, it was not.  
However, Mayo County Council has facilitated the inclusion of the sculptures on their 'asset register' and provides public liability insurance for access to the sites.
- Mayo County Council were only part of the original consortium, they are not solely responsible for the future development of the trail. This issue of responsibility must be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- There are only eight of the original fourteen sculptures remaining, and all the works require some level of additional maintenance. That said, the original brief to the artists was that the works should last through the next five millennia and be recognisable for the Mayo 10,000 and therefore barring simple routine maintenance, the pieces should be allowed to age gracefully and voyage through the next five millennia independently. The primary issue is more related to the sites, all needing some level of immediate investment – additional signage, repair to damaged tourist amenities, improved interpretation panels, access issues and so on.



- The project would benefit from investment in well designed, quality marketing material, signage and promotion. Although some monies were invested in the rejuvenation of Tír Sáile in 2017, managed by Mayo County Council, in taking a ‘customer journey’ to research and discover this project, it was noted that marketing material was difficult to obtain and when available, was ‘dated’ in look and feel, overused and compared less favourably to competing promotional material. The level of signage was insufficient in the main, which was problematic given that mobile coverage in this area can be poor and non-existent and the mobile version of the website was occasionally glitchy.
- Whilst some promotion does occur there is a need to enhance the overall visitor experience.
- Tír Sáile has the potential to perform well as a tourism product but the following issues need to be addressed and clarified - it’s purpose, ownership, resourcing and strategic function.
- Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail takes 135kms to complete from start to finish.
- There was a direct link between the opening of The Céide Fields and the symposium that led to the development of Tír Sáile, and there is potential to maximise the partnership between Tír Sáile and The Céide Fields.
- Consideration of Spirit of Place as part of the future development of Tír Sáile did not form part of this research brief. Currently both projects appear on the same North Mayo Sculpture Trail Website. Although outwardly, the blending of Tír Sáile and Spirit of Place into a single product offering might appear to make practical sense, it has emerged from this research that there is a resistance locally to this blending. The origins, intent and commissioning strategies for these two very different approaches sit uneasily side by side. This issue requires a resolution if Tír Sáile enters a new phase of development.
- Although some of the individual artworks remain strong, there is a need to focus on the overall experience of Tír Sáile as a sculpture trail to maximise its potential.
- Large environmental sculptures are part of the land art movement that began in the 1960s in America and peaked in the late nineties. Although the general public still appear to be interested in Sculpture Parks and Sculpture Trails, this has not been determined in any rigorous way.
- Large-scale sculpture is both expensive to commission and expensive to maintain.
- As Ireland has not been offering opportunities for large-scale land art commissions, there may be an absence of technical expertise to commission ‘best in class’.

## Potential

- In 2014, National Geographic named Tír Sáile in the Top 10 Sculpture Trails in the World.
- Tír Sáile is on The Wild Atlantic Way which was created to achieve greater visibility for the west coast of Ireland in overseas tourist markets.
- There is potential to develop and deepen mutually beneficial synergies between Céide Fields Interpretative Centre and Complex and Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail. Céide Fields are currently investing €1 Million into the interpretative panels. There is a long-term ambition to extend a greenway walking / cycling trail from Céide Fields Interpretative Centre to Down Patrick Head. Céide Fields owns 400 acres that extends almost to Tír Sáile 'Wind Trees' sculpture and the currently untapped marketing / promotion / development opportunities that exist between Céide Fields and Tír Sáile.
- The mission of Ballinglen Arts Foundation and Residency Programme, located in Ballycastle in North Mayo is to support not only artists, but also the local community and visitors to the area. As the artists benefit from the resources of the rural landscape and community, the community and visitors benefit from the Foundation's activities including; exhibitions, lectures and educational programmes for children and adults, all resulting in a very measurable, local economic impact. With the recent opening of the Ballinglen Museum of Contemporary Art on the main street of Ballycastle and the undeveloped structures to the rear of the Foundation, there is potential for synergy development.
- Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht and achieves this by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community-based activities. As much of Tír Sáile is in the Gaeltacht then there is a development opportunity to be explored with Údarás na Gaeltachta and initial conversations were very supportive and positive.
- Ancient languages that have been spoken for thousands of years are rooted in the landscape. Irish, having been spoken on the island for at least two thousand years and possibly longer can offer intelligence and insight into how we might live lightly within the limits of available resources. In the recent book, 'Thirty Two Words for Field', lost words of the Irish Landscape, author Manchán Magan gives specific examples of how intimate, local language (rather than the broad generalised one), provide a transfer of traditional knowledge across generations about medicinal plants, food, cultivation, irrigation techniques and seasonal calendars. In an era of increasing dependence on new technologies in navigation, fishing and meteorology for example, many words are falling into disuse.

This was an area of investigation for some of the artists in the 2017 Tír Sáile Residency commissions. This important knowledge in the Irish Language offers profound possibility as inspiration for developments to Tír Sáile in this regard.

- The new Climate Action Regional Office - Atlantic Seaboard North, is now located in Mayo and there are possible opportunities for exploring shared objectives that might lead to arts / science/ environment collaboration potentially addressing the climate crisis and issues of sustainability.
- As the new Tourism Strategy for Mayo is developed 2021 – 2025, it is timely that the future purpose of Tír Sáile and Spirit of Place are considered in the context of their role in the Cultural Tourism provision in the county and where synergies might be identified.
- North Mayo Tourism has made significant progress in the development and promotion of Walking and Walking Trails in North Mayo. These trails present as potential new sites if a second phase of Tír Sáile were to be delivered. Similar models internationally include Refuges d'Art, France.
- To maximise the economic benefits and return on investment that might be levered from a cultural tourism focus, a broad range of experiences should be called on to participate in any new phase of Tír Sáile.
- The post Covid reality for tourism will most likely mean a shift in focus to outdoor visitor attractions that have scale, impact and can be bundled with other offerings and can work to address regionality.
- There is a dedicated Tourism section in Mayo County Council.



# Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail

## A new phase



A flourishing Tourism Industry is vital for Mayo's economic well-being. It also shapes the image and attractiveness of the county as a great place to live, work and invest. While Ireland has a global reputation as a top tourism destination, it is now time for Mayo to ambitiously tap into the huge potential that exists in this sector. Tourism return on investment is local, it reaches into every village and town employing one in nine people nationally but up to one in five along the Wild Atlantic Way. Any future tourism growth in North Mayo will be hard won and the key will be innovation, adding value and strengthening the appeal of North Mayo in both the international and domestic market.

Mayo is unrivalled when it comes to what it has to offer: breath-taking natural beauty along the Wild Atlantic Way and a well-earned reputation for an established walking trails network. North Mayo has a profoundly rich heritage in the Céide Fields. The Interpretative Centre achieves over 30,000 tourists annually and at the time of writing, €1 million was being invested in new interpretative panels and there are aspirations to open a greenway along the cliffs to Down Patrick Head.

North Mayo has a reputation for its cool culture. Ballinglen Museum of Contemporary Art has just opened its gallery on the main street in Ballycastle and despite falling into a state of disrepair, Tír Sáile is still in the Top 10 Sculpture Trails in the world according to National Geographic. There is still huge community interest in Tír Sáile and the community are heartbroken to see Tír Sáile in its current state.

Data insights suggest that the culturally curious market segment spend almost twice as much as other segments and the World Tourist Organisation claims that cultural tourism represents between 30 - 40% of all tourism worldwide.

The case studies chosen in previous chapters were cognisant of the potency, problems and potential of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail and were presented to inspire a new ambition for North Mayo to lever competitive advantage in the arena of cultural tourism from an expanded Tír Sáile.

This research has identified that Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail needs serious attention and investment to ensure it is fit for purpose. 2023 marks the 30th Birthday of Tír Sáile and this date could present an opportunity either to launch a revived and / or expanded Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail or a farewell project to acknowledge and mark a large-scale decommissioning of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail.

The section below presents a simple framework to move forward.



## Framework

### 1. 2017 Project

Complete outstanding items from the 2017 Project:

- Complete signage installation
- Complete updating of website
- Complete Photography Commission of new images of Tír Sáile in partnership with Mayo County Council Tourism Department.

**Owner:** Mayo County Council.

**Outcome:** 2017 Project Complete.

### 2. Establishing a local stakeholder committee

Invite relevant organisations and community members to be involved in a local stakeholder committee to consider the findings of this report and to explore and agree possible actions in relation to the future development of Tír Sáile.

**Owner:** Mayo County Council to initiate meetings.

**Outcome:** Establishment of local stakeholder committee with Terms of Reference and Action Plan for the development of Tír Sáile.

**Considerations for the committee will include, but are not limited to, the following:**

#### Commissioning a Feasibility Study for Tír Sáile

Local stakeholder committee to draft Terms of Reference for Feasibility Study on the tourism potential of an expanded Tír Sáile Project including: Identification of the true cost of management, maintenance and

promotion of current Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail, current purpose of Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail, needs, unique selling point (USP), benchmarking, value for money, cost of new Tír Sáile commissioning phase being cognisant of the cost of different commissioning options, delivery structure (staff/resources/reporting), cost/benefit analysis, community engagement, long term maintenance and operation, identification of funders.

The outcome of a feasibility study may lead to the committee deciding one of the following actions:

#### a. Decommissioning Project

Implement a large-scale decommissioning and decommissioning communication strategy for Tír Sáile Q2/Q3 2021

#### b. Tír Sáile: New Commissions

A New Commissioning Series or a sculpture symposium like the original Tír Sáile project would result in new sculptural works being added to the Tír Sáile Trail. Secure funding which may include Mayo County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland and Community element through LEADER, Mayo Association and Mayo Crowd Funding. It is recommended that funding would include a budget for a dedicated Project Manager to ensure project reaches its full potential.

If funding is not secured, the committee can consider option a. Decommissioning Project.

**Note:** As a guideline the costing for a feasibility study, project manager and symposium would be in the region of €440000.



The symposium commissioning model, as used in the original project, is suggested here in that it is one of the most cost-effective ways to secure a new collection of work. The local stakeholder committee may wish to explore the other commissioning options outlined in this report; however these will incur a different level of investment.

### **30th Birthday 2023**

September 2023 marks the 30th birthday of Tír Sáile and would be a fitting date to launch a new commissioning project announcement or a farewell decommissioning project.

## **Partners and Opportunities**

**Local:** Mayo County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Udarás na Gaeltachta, LEADER, Per Cent for Art Scheme, Céide Fields, Ballinglen Arts Centre.

**National:** The Arts Council, Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht in relation to Per Cent for Art Scheme, Creative Ireland, Visual Artists Ireland, Curator Kevin O'Dwyer.

**International:** Arte Stella Italy, Sculpture Trail on Walking Routes, The European Land + Art Network, European Innovation in Technology KIC in Creativity and Culture, The Sculpture Network, Europe's Network for three-dimensional art, The Fourth Plinth Model, UK, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK.



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- [www.issuu.com/caraugust/docs/cara\\_june\\_2019\\_low\\_res?fbclid=IwAR2b3RU3CgefeBVa9iWtdBd8\\_KPJNM\\_oWrcMkKXgNSMrAKdFfE7XRMAKZs](http://www.issuu.com/caraugust/docs/cara_june_2019_low_res?fbclid=IwAR2b3RU3CgefeBVa9iWtdBd8_KPJNM_oWrcMkKXgNSMrAKdFfE7XRMAKZs)
- How an Irish Bog got a Second Life as a Sculpture Garden. Emily Toner, June 2019. [www.atlasobscura.com/articles/where-is-lough-boora-discovery-park](http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/where-is-lough-boora-discovery-park)
- Economic Impact of Yorkshire Park Final Report 2011 [www.ysp.org.uk/media/editor/file/YSP%20Economic%20Impact%20Final%20Report%20Web%20251011%20CF.pdf](http://www.ysp.org.uk/media/editor/file/YSP%20Economic%20Impact%20Final%20Report%20Web%20251011%20CF.pdf)

## List of Consultations

### Mayo

1. Aoife O'Toole: Public Art Co-ordinator (Acting) Mayo County Council
2. Gretta Byrne – Director of Céide Fields
3. Barbara Kelly – Community Representative, Ballycastle
4. Una Forde – Director Ballinglen Arts Centre
5. Seamus Caulfied – Senior Archaeologist
6. Anne-Marie Flynn, Manager Mayo North Tourism
7. Joanne Grehan – Director of Services, Mayo County Council
8. Mick Bulfin - Co-Ordinator of Tír Sáile and Artist at Tír Sáile
9. Marian O'Donnell – Artist and Project Lead Tír Sáile 1992/93
10. Catherine Marshall : Former Senior Curator with the Irish Museum of Modern Art
11. Míchaél Ó hÉanaigh, CEO, Údaras na Gaeltachta
12. Anne Mc Carthy, Head of Community and Integrated Development, Mayo County Council.

### Offaly

1. Sally O'Leary – Arts Officer, Offaly County Council
2. Sharon Kennedy – Director of Services, Offaly County Council
3. Olive Farrelly – Offaly Tourism Officer
4. Amanda Pedlow – Heritage Officer, Offaly County Council
5. Andrew Murray – Senior Planner, Offaly County Council
6. Lorraine Sheehan – Officer, Ireland's Ancient East, Fáilte Ireland
7. Mary Brady – Former Acting Arts Officer, Offaly County Council
8. Tim Collins – Author of Deep Mapping – Lough Boora Sculpture Park
9. Anna Marie Curry – Company Secretary – Bord na Móna
10. Joe Ryan – Estates Manager – Bord na Móna
11. Mark Mc Corry – Bord na Móna
12. Tom Egan – Bord na Móna
13. Deirdre O' Mahony - Artist adviser on Lough Boora Sculpture Park Management Committee

## General

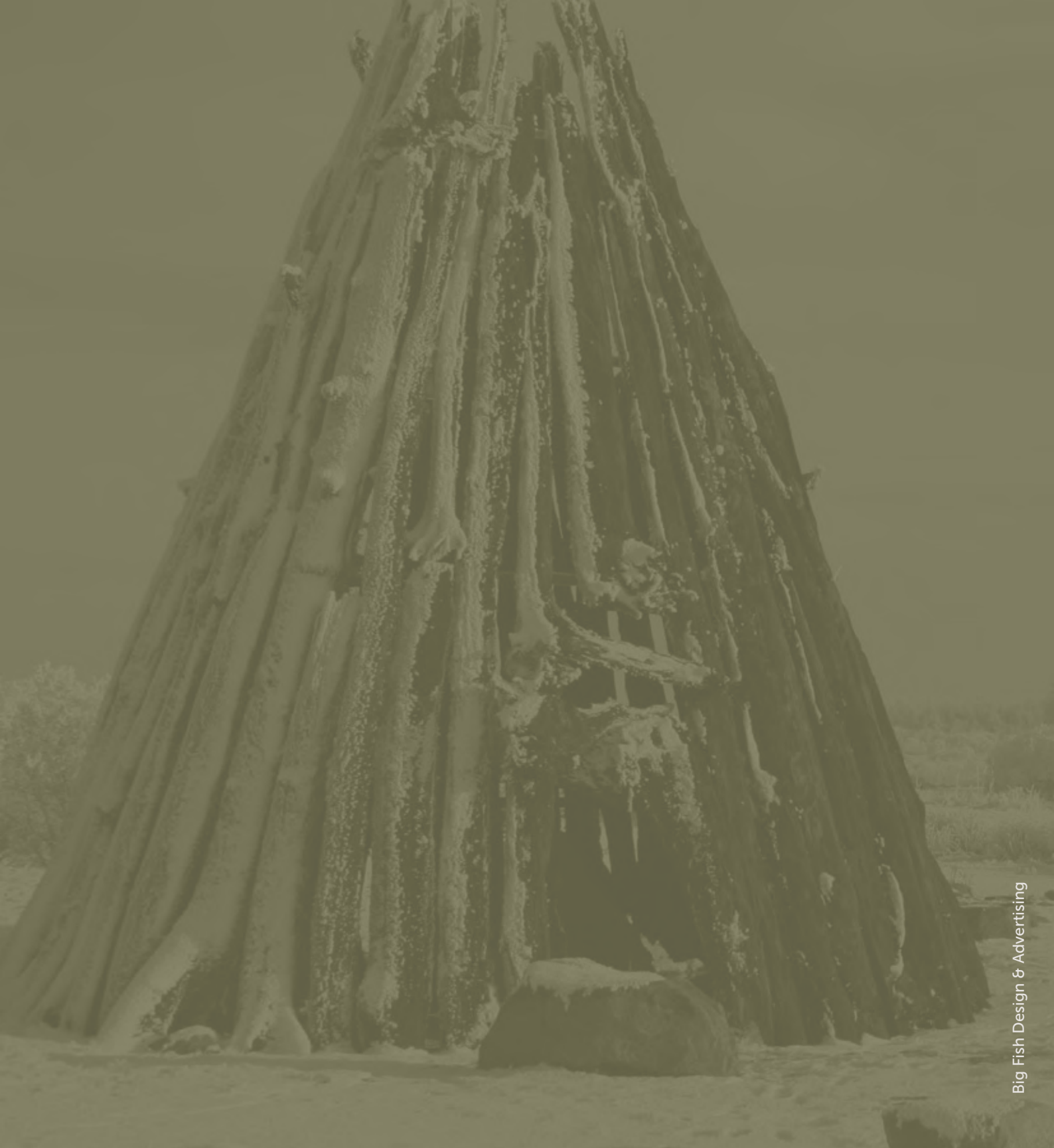
1. Mary Mc Auliffe – Arts Consultant & Public Art Specialist with Arts Council
2. Ruairi O Cuiv – Public Art Officer, Curator and Public Art Specialist, Dublin City Council
3. Noel Kelly – Director of Visual Artists Ireland
4. Mick Bulfin – Former Chairperson of Sculptors Society of Ireland, Co-Ordinator/Artist of Tír Sáile, Artist Lough Boora Sculpture Park
5. Catherine Mc Cann – Owner Shekina Sculpture Garden
6. Jenny Sherwin – Arts Officer, Wicklow County Council
7. John Lynch – Incontext, Service Design Innovation using Design Thinking
8. Jackie Bell – Sculpture in Context
9. Robbie Mc Donald – Former Director Leitrim Sculpture Centre, Director Tyrone Guthrie Centre
10. Annette Moloney – Public Art Specialist and Curator.
11. Hannah Hamilton - Coillte Nature
12. Astrid Kristine Stensønnes Arnøy – ArtScape Nordland
13. Michael Heaney – CEO Údarás na Gaeltachta
14. David Mc Nulty – Tourism Development Ireland

## Increased Per Cent for Art Amounts January 2020

Current project cost band	Current Maximum Limit	Proposed project cost band	Proposed Maximum Limit
€0 – €2.55m	€25,500	€0 – €5m	€50,000
€2.55m – €6.3m	€38,000	€5m – €20m	€125,000
€6.3m – €12.7m	€51,000	€20m – €50m	€350,000
€12.7m +	€64,000	€50m +	€500,000

## Art In the Landscape Photo List

Page	Artist	Title	Location
Cover	Alan Counihan	Tearman na Gaoithe	Tír Sáile
2	Marian O'Donnell	Acknowledgement	Tír Sáile
4	Julian Wild	System No. 30	Lough Boora
5	Mariyo Nagi	Echo of Nawascape	Tír Sáile
6	Michael Bulfin	Deirbhle's Twist	Tír Sáile
7	Walter Michael	Caochán	Tír Sáile
8	Michael Bulfin	Sky Train	Lough Boora
9	Alfio Bonanno	Earth to Sky	Lough Boora
10	Johan Seitzema	Bog Wood Road	Lough Boora
11	Kevin O'Dwyer	Tippler Bridge	Lough Boora
12	Julian Wild	System No. 30	Lough Boora
13	Walter Michael	Caochán	Tír Sáile
14	Alan Counihan	Passage	Lough Boora
15	Alan Counihan	Tearman na Gaoithe	Tír Sáile
17	Fritze Rind	Battling Forces	Tír Sáile
18	Kevin O'Dwyer	60 Degrees	Lough Boora
19	Travis Price	Tale of the tongs - the gathering	Spirit of Place
20	Cod Steaks, UK	Matrimony Tree	Ballybofey
21	Locky Morris	Towels	Bundoran
22	Paul Flynn	Untitled'	Sculpture in Context
23	T. Baskaran	Contemplation	Victors Way Sculpture Park
23	Eileen Mc Donagh	Untitled	Shekina Sculpture Garden, Wicklow
24	John M. Wildman	Mechanical Cow	Farmleigh Estate
25	Unknown	Chair	Devils Glen Forest Park
27	Wild Deck Company	Spider	Castlewellan Sculpture Park
31	Markus Raetz	Head	ArtScape Nordland
33	Robert Smithson	Spiral Jetty	Great Lake, Utah
33	Anthony Gormley	Angel of the North	Gateshead, UK
34	James Turrell	Roden Crater	Arizon, USA
39	Andy Goldsworthy	Spiral	Yorkshire Sculpture Park
40	Gulzon Borglum	Mount Rushmore National Monument	Mount Rushmore, USA
43 & 46	Caroline Madden	Cycles	Lough Boora
43 & 46	Michael Bulfin	Sky Train	Lough Boora
48	Caroline Madden	Cycles	Lough Boora
51 & 52	Kevin O'Dwyer	60 Degrees	Lough Boora
55	Alan Counihan	Tearman na Gaoithe	Tír Sáile
56	Mariyo Nagi	Echo of Nawascape	Tír Sáile
58	Michael Bulfin	Deirbhle's Twist	Tír Sáile
61	Marian O'Donnell	Acknowledgements	Tír Sáile
63	Niall O' Neill	Stratified Sheep	Tír Sáile
65	Michael Bulfin	Deirbhle's Twist	Tír Sáile
71	Niall O' Neill	Stratified Sheep	Tír Sáile
Back Cover	Alfio Bonanno	Earth to Sky	Lough Boora



Mayo Arts Service



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí  
Offaly County Council



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo  
Mayo County Council

