

Offaly County Development Plan Submission 2021 -2027 Anam Beo, Offaly Arts, Health & Wellbeing Organisation, No.8 Oxmantown Mall, Birr, Offaly. Anam Beo are enablers of cultural & creative experiences within the community. (see facebook, Instagram). Anam Beo facilitates arts inclusion and participation with the delivery of collaborative projects in care and community settings. As an arts organisation we encourage self-activations, research & development, and empowerment through meaningful engagements with contemporary arts practices. Anam Beo create awareness and are a voice for the needs of older people, believing that if it works for older people it will work for everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to be involved, in a vision for the future of our County and in making a submission for important issues such as culture, climate action, energy, biodiversity, heritage, housing, transportation, environmental protection, employment and enterprise, social inclusion, community, tourism, recreation, regeneration, and retail. Overall Vision: Offaly County Council's mission statement as stated in its draft Corporate Plan 2019-2024 is 'to lead sustainable economic, social and community development in Offaly'. Anam Beo, artists in healthcare and community contexts believe sustainable communities need cultural engagement and artistic thinking, envisage Offaly to become 'the County to embrace a framework of collaboration with the artistic community, designers and creatives, to invest in Offaly as being a cultural, artistic heartland, The central location, a life style choice and place to live for community engagements, narratives, endeavours and social health. To make our place, this place, matter.' Submission County Development Plan 2021- 2027 Anam Beo is an arts organisation with a social conscience who would like to engage with the Council to deliver on the following Strategic Priorities through creative, collaborative community interactions and conversations. Primary Urban Centres 4. Objective to - Strengthen and channel development into the primary urban centres which act as drivers for the wider community. Regeneration or development of the urban environment is a creative act that requires artistic imagination to be interwoven into the County vision. Anam Beo would like to consult with the council regarding how our urban environment can be designed in terms of look and quality of experience. We can help inform the shape of the provision of facilities to enrich the quality of life and experience for all who live and visit there. Anam Beo envisage having creative hubs, centres, museums, tactical placemaking, with civic and public spaces that enable an inclusive community to collaborate with both cultural and contemporary art & design practices to gain feedback with and by the community for the community. Anam Beo would like to see the council continue with the conscious design public spaces and seating facilities that will enhance the environment,

making it attractive and practical so that the needs of older people et al are met. Anam Beo would like the council to confront the insurance industry and other inhibitors which may prohibit and disable involvement. Anam Beo would like the council to not only to focus on a product but on an ambition for living generously together using complimentary frameworks of situated cognition and experiential process led arts practices, archiving, documenting, exhibiting, listening and learning. To generate skills to creatively respond to problems both social and environmental that encourage people to socialise, collaborate & live together. Anam Beo would like to see spaces that can be adapted for usage and fundamental freedoms, to ensure and enable inclusion and means of expression to all members of the community. Anam Beo would like a space in the new Community Arts Centre. We would like the following design considerations to be implemented. Tullamore Community Arts Centre • Wide tables & chairs & counter space, easily cleaned, high enough for wheelchair users. • Sinks /utilities/sockets • A2 drying rack and storage space for artwork in progress. • Dark, easy clean storage with a range of drawers and shelves, for large paper roles, sheets and canvasses which are easily accessible in height and have a diverse functionality. • All of the above to be hidden by sliding doors, as opposed to individual doors on cupboards which can be inaccessible. • Display screen compatible for usb, projector etc. • Wall space that is not precious but functional for hanging/tacking artwork in progress and notices eg. An area of soft wallboard/cork sheet wall section. • Respectful use of space Notice & Agreement. • A happy and collaborative environment. Anam Beo would like the council to provide a meaningful multi-annual funding stream to support the arts and arts practice in the county which will not only grow local artists, attract national and international artists but generate income for the local economy, heighten the cultural profile of the county and enhance social connectedness and positive living for those resident in the county. Heritage & Culture 5. Objective to - Ensure the preservation and appreciation of what is local and distinctive in our County's culture and heritage. Anam Beo encourage the council to bring cultural literacy, critical and shared thinking into the development of the public realm, the learning and creative hubs, through cultural master planning, management of artists' commissioning, exhibitions and events with other activities which add value and distinctiveness to the area and its projects. Anam Beo would like to see new markers created that reflect our present culture, to inspire others in the future in the same way that we can enjoy the legacy of our past. Culture is always a response to circumstance, location, history, landscape, its values should leave tangible marks, embrace, advocate a new and contemporary Offaly. We would like the council to enable cultural engagement & artistic

thinking in tandem with community ownership of spaces. Engagement through collaborative processes ensures community investment is relevant & informed. Anam Beo recommends the County Council set aside a meaningful funding stream to support arts and cultural involvement in the County so as to provide a steady platform from which a new dimension to life in Offaly can grow in a sustainable, economic and relevant way. Anam Beo can be of service to ensure that safe and sustainable communities are facilitated. Where people feel included and involved through relevant and meaningful cultural engagement. Anam Beo envisage being accommodated in the new arts centre about to be built in Tullamore, the organisation requires the advocacy for accessibility and its profile, that a room, desk space or workshop space be provided in the arts centre for community collaborative engagements and visibility. People & Community 7. Objective to - To improve the quality of life for our citizens. Inject creativity and distinction into all that we do. Invest in and utilise the arts to enhance and deliver social health in collaboration with urban planning. Working groups benefit from community arts interactions, open conversations and feedback to inform development and regeneration. Anam Beo organisation recognises the social qualities that becoming involved in the arts can deliver. Artists can explore with the community ways to enhance the physical environment and ways to improve social connectedness through creative methodologies. Lack of a conscious design for cultural engagements is a social injustice as it silences a voice for personal and community narratives. Have the conversations first. Anam Beo provide a high quality arts service for older people in care and community settings in County Offaly. We are keen to be of service with regard to shaping the cultural vision of the County Development Plan and would like to offer our experience and skillsets to inform the strategic development of culture within our County going forward. Anam Beo have empathic, skillful, professional and practical artists who follow best practice guidelines and policies. As an extremely experienced service provider Anam Beo know how to access the local community, how to build relationships, encourage and creatively respond to on the ground interests, issues and concerns.

## **County Development Plan**

### **Strategic Priority 4: Primary Urban Centres**

***Objective to: Strengthen and channel development into the primary urban centres which act as drivers for the wider community.***

Anam Beo Arts, Health & Wellbeing Organisation would like to provide a consultation service with the council with regard to urban planning going forward. To date we have already carried out research with Urban Planner Dr. Owen Douglas from UCD and have consulted with relevant groups in the community regarding certain aspects of designing public spaces in the county.

In particular Anam Beo have identified design solutions that focus on the needs of older people in the community. We have already completed two public consultations that can positively inform the county development plan with regard to creatively designing public spaces and seating facilities that will enhance the environment making it attractive and practical so that the needs of older people and those with mobility issues are also met.

Anam Beo are about to embark on a collaborative initiative with Offaly, Westmeath and Laois arts offices to research and collate data in the area of Arts, Health and Wellbeing in association with a national academic institution that will have lasting implications regarding this sector. Anam Beo has a pool of creative experts, with a knowledge of current, relevant and global models of best practice regarding design solutions to urban development and very much would like to consult with the council going forward offering our expertise and public consultation data so that the council can deliver on all the objectives of Strategic Priority 4.

### **Strategic Priority 5 Heritage & Culture**

***Objective to - Ensure the preservation and appreciation of what is local and distinctive in our county's culture and heritage.***

Anam Beo Arts, Health and Wellbeing have many years' experience looking at how culture not only improves personal wellbeing but influences the community, generating deep social connectedness, building individual and group confidence and helping to generate skills to creatively respond to problems both social and environmental.

Anam Beo would like to consult with the council regarding culture and wellbeing in the community going forward. On a practical level, communities that develop a strong cultural identity naturally influence the local economy and heighten the profile of the area, shape the provision of facilities for the inhabitants and enriches the quality of life and experience for all who live and visit the county.

Anam Beo Arts, Health and Wellbeing are an unusual organisation insofar as the company intersects with high arts practice and social conscience. The organisation recognises the social qualities that becoming involved in the arts delivers. Leading artists can explore with

the community ways to enhance the physical environment and ways to improve social connectedness through creative methodologies.

In strategy 5 of the county development plan Anam Beo would like to provide the county council with recommendations regarding ways to develop, innovate and realise the value of cultural assets and involvement for local community benefit that as a consequence will provide a better way of life for those living in Offaly and a high quality visitor experience.

Anam Beo recommends the county council set aside a meaningful funding stream to support arts and arts practice and cultural involvement in the county. Anam Beo recommends looking at global models of best practice and scaling them to suit the inhabitants of county Offaly. Anam Beo is convinced that only meaningful multi-annual funding will generate a steady platform from which a new dimension to life in Offaly can grow in a relevant and long lasting way. Combating social isolation, generating feelings of connectedness, encouraging participation - all require solid planning and strategic development.

Anam Beo have a skills base, experience and understanding of local requirements that make them the perfect consultants for the council wishing to develop a heritage and culture plan. Anam Beo have been working in the community and environs for over fourteen years and have built extensive relationships. The organisation has experience with consultation processes and has extensive knowledge of how to generate and build on ways to encourage participation and inclusion.

Anam Beo need to be accommodated in the new arts centre about to be built in Tullamore, the organisation is a vital cultural organ in the community and as such requires the profile, accessibility and visibility that a room or workshops space in the arts centre would provide.

With regard to heritage, not all heritage is carved in stone, the heritage of local lore, folklore, history and music has also been captured by the artists working with Anam Beo. The organisation is contributing to the folk, local history and social history of the county, collecting stories, songs, music and memories of those who live and have lived in the county. Anam Beo are actively enriching the archival bank of the county with arts projects that preserve histories, songs, music and memories of ways of life that might otherwise disappear.

Anam Beo have an excellent relationship with the local Arts Office and can envisage ways to work both in tandem with and independent of the Arts Office in a way that ensures an excellent service delivery, all designed to improve, enhance and maximise the potential of those living and working in Offaly.

In short Anam Beo are a leading Arts, Health and Wellbeing Organisation that straddles the two main areas of concern for the county council that of high culture and meaningful social engagement. It is an arts organisation with a social conscience and as such would like to consult with the council regarding Strategic Priority 5 Heritage and Culture going forward.

## **Strategic Priority 7 People and Community**

*Objective to - To improve the quality of life for our citizens.*

Anam Beo Arts Health and Wellbeing provide a high quality arts service for older people in county Offaly. We are keen to be of service with regard to shaping the cultural vision of the county development plan going forward, and would like to offer our extensive skill and experience to inform the strategic development of culture within the county going forward.

As an organisation Anam Beo is concerned that the arts are given suitable funding provision to enable those who might otherwise be excluded from the creative experience to have access to developing their own creativity. As article 27 of the UN declaration of Human Rights has enshrined -

*Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.*

In the county councils *Strategic Priority 7* regarding *People and Community* Anam Beo can be of service to ensure that safe and sustainable communities where people feel included and involved through relevant and meaningful cultural engagement can be facilitated. As an extremely experienced service provider Anam Beo know how to access local community, how to build relationships, encourage and creatively respond to on the ground interests, issues and concerns.

Anam Beo know how to build cultural confidence so that art and the creative experience is not some remote, elitist activity for urbanites or the middle classes. Anam Beo have a stable of highly accomplished, empathic and practical artists who are extremely professional locals that understand the barriers to cultural involvement. Our artists understand local concerns, and how to build on creative projects by providing a high quality service that helps to melt the cultural fears of the participants, helps to build confidence, encourage creative development, involvement and social connectedness.

Anam Beo have extensive experience consulting with the community. As an organisation we understand the process of how to engage with both rural and urban communities. Our remit as an organisation is not only about delivering a meaningful and excellent cultural experience, but a main tenant of the organisation is concerned with 'wellness'. To feel well we need to feel socially connected and that our voice matters. Anam Beo has in built strategies within our organisation to develop, enhance and inspire those who participate in our arts projects to self-activate, take personal ownership and pride in their work and

understand that as individuals we all contribute to the wellness of each other in our community.

As an organisation Anam Beo would like to consult with the council regarding how we can help them to fulfil the objectives of Strategy Priority 7 going forward.