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FOREWORD

Cllr Damien Geoghegan Mayor of Waterford City and County Council



Waterford Cultural Quarter is centred on the O'Connell Street area of Waterford City from Great George's Street to Waterford Distillery on Mary Street. The linear streetscape of fine buildings that was once the business and enterprise hub of Waterford supporting the Port now provides an opportunity for us to embrace its continued evolution; to support liveability, knowledge, experimentation, creativity and innovation in new ways. Reuse, adaptation

and upgrading of the historic and more recent buildings in a sustainable and holistic way will ensure that our built heritage is a significant resource for our city in the long term. Provision of space to socialise and mix outdoors, for performance and artistic expression, to flourish and live vibrant lives is essential. Linking the Greenway to the City Centre via the Cultural Quarter along a safe, interesting and environmentally friendly route provides opportunities for local enterprises to flourish. The development of Waterford Cultural Quarter involves the re-imagination of this urban space as a place to live, work and play and I look forward to the transformation over the lifetime of this new plan.

Michael Walsh, Chief Executive Waterford City and County Council



In 2017 Waterford City and County Council approved the first Waterford Cultural Quarter Strategic *Plan A Cultural Quarter for Waterford 2018-2021* which sought to develop the O'Connell Street area of Waterford City via culture-led regeneration. Culture plays a major role in city-making, in developing identity for city neighbourhoods and in delivering social and economic outcomes. Waterford City and County Council is committed to

supporting the vibrancy and diversity of the area and developing its potential for a new generation, community and neighbourhood. I would like to thank the numerous residents, individuals, organisations, businesses and creatives who continue to work with us to realise this vision.



REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Waterford Gallery of Art moved from its former home in Greyfriars Street. Opened in 2020.
- ✓ Former "Roxy" nightclub, and more recently the "Gopher It" retail shop at 16/18 Barker Place was acquired by WCCC and renovated on the upper floors to provide social housing. WCCC Culture Department has taken over the ground floor, due for renovation in 2021.
- ✓ 7 Thomas Street was acquired by WCCC and is currently being examined for a variety of cultural purposes including office and exhibition space for the arts organisations.
- ✓ Waterford Institute of Technology has been recognized as a key partner in the development of educational and creative initiatives in the area and the Departments of Architecture and of Design have worked closely with WCQ on initiatives such as Design Challenge & Vertical Studio as well as other projects.
- ✓ WCQ has developed close relationships with Garter Lane Arts Centre, collaborating on initiatives including Front of House and Spróg.
- WCQ, Waterford Area Partnership (WAP) and Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board (WWETB) have partnered on examining options relating to Adult and Community education for the diverse

population of Waterford and particularly of the Cultural Quarter area.

- ✓ Due to the multicultural mix of the residents in the area, WCQ has collaborated with **Waterford Integration**Services (WIS) to organise Africa Day and to develop programmes related to integration and access to learning opportunities. Africa Day 2018 and 2019 were highlights of the WCQ festival calendar showcasing cultures from a number of African countries including music, food & dance.
- ✓ CreateFest, Waterford's inaugural Festival of Creativity was launched in 2019 in the WCQ. It aims to create a learning and networking platform for creative industries and people working creatively.
- ✓ Other activities in the WCQ included Polish Day, Waterford Walls, Harvest, Spraoi, CruinniunanÓg, Mosaic Trail, Summer in the City Block Parties and Winterval.
- ✓ As part of the economic recovery of Waterford City Centre during the Covid -19 pandemic, road closure of the upper end of O'Connell Street was put in place to allow for businesses to use the streetscape each weekend, enhancing pedestrianisation and ownership of the urban street.

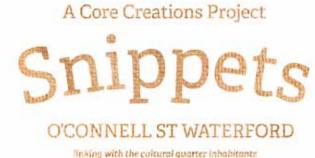


Africa Day 2019 © Waterford Integration Services



CreateFest 2019 Launch in WCQ





Snippets" community engagement project by Core Creations 2019 © Enda Moran

- ✓ WCQ and Core Creations partnered to examine place making in the WCQ through Snippets, a multidisciplinary community engagement project.
- ✓ The Quaker Trail was established; O'Connell Street and surrounding area were home to many people of the Quaker faith throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The trail showcases the fine architecture and social history of the community in this area. It can be found at www.waterfordculturalquarter.ie
- ✓ Establishment of brand and branding; through extensive engagement with stakeholders and community the WCQ brand of "the creative neighbourhood" was put in place with an attractive multifunctional cross hatch and logo.
- ✓ WCQ website was developed www.waterfordculturalquarter.ie to host information about events, festivals and animation on the street, to act as an information source and to host the WCQ Quaker map. Social media sites were set up on facebook, twitter and instagram.
- Business liaison was put in place in tandem with WCCC City Centre liaison to develop relationships with the business community, to facilitate meetings and develop communications processes.
- ✓ Community meetings were hosted in the WCQ to inform the strategic plan. A number of presentation and talks were given to arts groups in the city to inform them about the vision, mission and plans for WCQ development.
- ✓ Waterford Cultural Quarter Steering committee was set up in 2018 with the aim of providing advice and support to the Project Team. Representation is made up by three Waterford City and County Council Councillors as well as members of the residential, business and creative community of the area and representatives of creative and community organisations. The committee meets on average 6 times per year.

- ✓ Waterford City and County Council has committed €150,000 per annum funding to the WCQ initiative. WCCC was successful in obtaining EU funding for projects under Urbact III and Creative Europe programmes in 2017 2019 and 2018 2020
- ✓ Waterford partnered in **Creative Spirits**, an Urbact III Implementation Network 2017-2019. Its aim was "boosting creative entrepreneurship through creative based urban strategies" and involved 9 EU cities. Waterford hosted two case study visits and participated in 8 city visits to cities in Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovenia, Poland, Italy and Bulgaria to learn and share knowledge about supporting creative enterprise in urban settings.
- Murals for Communities (2018-2020) was a Creative Europe funded programme which developed a methodology for community engagement through mural arts. Waterford City and County Council took on the role of project lead and worked with The Walls Project in Waterford, Stiching Street Art in Heerlen, The Netherlands, and Kaunas Technological University in Lithuania to carry out research, work with communities, businesses and mural artists to create 18 murals in the three participating cities. Covid 19 impacted the artist transmobility options, however the project showed great agility and moved much activity online in 2020 allowing it to continue.



Decals of WCQ Branding 2019 © Waterford City and County Council





Case Study Meeting in Waterford with representatives from 9 projects partners ©WCCC





WCQ VISION

"To deliver inclusive and sustainable innovation and growth for the cultural and creative sectors of south east Ireland; to become a distinctive and engaging place to the heart of Waterford which is open, inspiring and a vital addition to the city's creative, knowledge and visitor economy".

WCQ MISSION

"A vibrant, creative, sustainable and supportive community for residents and creative business, and a cultural destination which showcases the best of south east Ireland".



INTRODUCTION

The WCQ Strategic Plan Phase II aims to build on the achievements of its predecessor and looks to develop the O'Connell Street area of the city under key themes as outlined below. The plan will support these themes as priority areas for growth while allowing for flexible approaches to opportunities as they arise under its lifetime. At present the WCQ initiative is directly managed by Waterford City and County Council and will continue to work within the values and aims set out in the **Corporate Plan 2019 - 2024.** The progress of the WCQ initiative is only possible with the support of many individuals, organisations and agencies, and it is anticipated that new governance structures will be developed to allow this initiative the ability and flexibility to grow in new directions over time in open, accountable and transparent ways. Collaboration is a key theme of the plan, and it is written into each objective as together we are stronger and can achieve much more.

KEY THEMES OF WCQ STRATEGIC PLAN PHASE II 2021-2025

Buildings & Uses

The area is made up of a number of buildings of historic importance including those that housed the merchant class and their grain stores, the Port of Waterford, a number of banks and trading companies. The Quaker families of White, Penrose, Jacob and Strangman had a strong foothold in the street – shipbuilding, glass production, biscuits and brewing were important businesses in the area. Partially due to the post industrial decline of this area of the city, a number of these fine buildings were re-imagined and are in use for new purposes bringing life and vibrancy to the area. Cultural production and creative industry can continue to be the lifeblood of this area; a mixture of big open work spaces and performance places, public and creative thinking spaces to complement community development and retail business.



Public buildings:

Waterford Gallery of Art (WGOA) moved to its new location at 32/33 O'Connell Street and opened its doors in 2020. WGOA is home to a permanent collection, the Waterford Municipal Art Collection, started by the Quaker community in the 1930s.

16-18 Barker Place, WCQ Hub, a ground floor space at the base of an apartment block populated by social housing tenants, is planned to provide a flexible multi purpose space fulfilling the need for a community education space, to assist in the development of community migrant integration and as a venue for creative and cultural activity including festivals, events, conferences and more.

7 Thomas Street, WCQ Art House, was a residential building with ground floor commercial units. It is proposed that the Rogue Gallery and Studios and The Walls Project moves move in to this building once it is fit for purpose.

Garter Lane Arts Centre, 22 O'Connell Street is owned by Waterford City and County Council and is leased to the Barker Trust to be run as an Arts Centre. The building provides a huge element of community engagement, artists and creative work as well as its work in theatre, visual art and support for groups and individuals.

Garter Lane 2 / 5 O'Connell Street The building is on a long term lease from Waterford City and County Council to the Barker Trust for use by Garter Lane Arts Centre for administrative purposes and artist in residence spaces as well as other activities. A funding application was submitted to the Department of Heritage, Culture and the Gaeltacht for funding to renovate the building. Renovations would make the building more energy efficient and provide additional space for offices, storage, community engagement and artists in residence.

The **Granary** building is leased from Waterford City and County Council to the Granary Café and to Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) Architecture Department. The Architecture Department runs its academic programmes from this location on O'Connell Street and brings a valuable addition to the vibrancy of the area while also being an important resource for urban study and research on the Waterford Cultural Quarter area. Arts Centre



Private Buildings:

Buildings in private ownership: WCCC has identified a number of buildings in private ownership that could potentially be repurposed for cultural and creative uses.

3 & 4 Great Georges Street (Presbytery); these buildings are in the ownership of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore and are on lease to Waterford City and County Council. They are on the Record of Protected Structures registry maintained by WCCC. These buildings have many potential uses including third level and / or enterprise uses by WIT or a private developer or as a centre for cultural production / training, bearing in mind their position as an important and prominent feature of the streetscape, contributing to the sophisticated and historic character of Great George's Street.

Waterford Distillery bookends the Cultural Quarter. Founded in 1792 by William Strangman as a brewery, the Distillery now produces high end Waterford Whiskey sold around the world. It is hoped that the Distillery will develop a factory tour including the old distillery building which is in excellent condition. This could be a huge attraction for the "culturally curious" segment of the Ireland's Ancient East marketing strategy as well as a draw for Greenway users.

Munster Express newspaper production offices and old print works. These are two significant buildings in the WCQ area located on Hanover Street and Thomas Hill. Both buildings have substantial heritage and cultural linkages to the area as well as housing businesses and organisations such as South East Maker Space (SEMS)



Cafes / Pubs / Restaurants: WCQ hosts a number of hospitality providers including;

- Pubs: Tullys Bar, Tom Mahers, Henry Downes & Co, J&K Walsh, T&H Doolans.
- Cafés / Restaurants: The Granary Café, The Old Couch Café, Bell Pepper and others.
- Hotels: Dooleys Hotel, Treacys Hotel, The Fitzwilton Hotel and nearby The Granville Hotel.
- There are numerous independent retailers in the area who breathe life into the street. Great shop fronts and products for diverse communities provide interest for customers seeking unique shopping experiences.

Vacant buildings:

Within the WCQ there are a number of currently vacant or under-utilised buildings that could be revitalized to achieve the strategic vision for a transformational place-based change in the area. WCCC has applied for URDF funding to support the following objective "To create Ireland's most liveable City by developing a green, healthy, socially cohesive and safe city with affordable and diverse housing linked by convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure that enables people to live, work and play and innovations are created that drive broader social and economic agendas and deliver sustainable outcomes for prosperity across the City, County, the South East region." ²

If successful, funding will go to support the development of the public realm within the WCQ and the acquisition and upgrade of a number of key identified buildings within the area to support the aims of the URDF application and the WCQ Strategic Plan Between 2021 & 2025.

The Granary Café



BUILDINGS

Objective

To increase the use of WCQ buildings, bearing in mind the important architectural heritage of the area, creating maximum public visibility of the cultural activities and engagements that are accommodated within.

To establish a number of well managed buildings within WCQ to become inclusive spaces that can be used as hubs of activity for groups and organisations while tackling vacancy rates in the area.

Actions

Develop 7/8 Thomas Street to become an arts and creative hub (WCQ Art House) which supports a range of creative organisations and industries

Investigate using 16/18 Barker Place as a base for community education and creativity; art classes, dance studio, rehearsal space for choirs

Collaborate with WCQ stakeholders to utilise buildings as a class rooms, meeting rooms with hot desks for art projects, work shop space for craft workers, rotating artistic display area (window), week end drama classes, visual arts classes for youths of the area, cooking demonstrations.

Examine options for building management e.g. groups/organisations and voluntary groups

Investigate buildings in the O'Connell Street area with potential to host pop-up style centres for artists and cultural practices

Develop clear protocols for use and maintenance of public spaces controlled by WCQ.

Endeavour to ensure that street level spaces of buildings in the WCQ can be prioritised for access to cultural spaces to entice locals and visitors to participate in activities.

Consider ways to encourage wider public engagement or enhance the identity of the WCQ as the place where culture is generated in Waterford city.

Explore different options to make WCQ buildings socially inclusive for all who wish to use them

PUBLIC REALM

Waterford Cultural Quarter is first and foremost people-centric. Made up of an increasingly intercultural residential population, creatives and businesses who interact in this area, it is vital that the public realm facilitates an inclusive area suitable for living, working and playing. Waterford City has the highest amount of improved sustainable priority public realm relative to its size anywhere in the country and is seen as best practice for sustainable mobility. In essence, walkable cities are liveable built environments which lead to whole happy and healthy lives for the people who live and work in them. They keep jobs and attract young adults, families and children. The presence of footpaths and other walking facilities has proven to increase property value, promote tourism and drives economic development as it is a major determining factor for people when they look for a place to live, work & play. Walkability is the key to an urban area's efficient ground transportation and remains the cheapest form of transportation and so provides cost savings both to individuals and to the public purse. One of most important benefits of walkability is the decrease of the automobile footprint in the community. While more people choose to walk rather than drive or use public transportation carbon emissions are reduced and space is freed up. Hence, the benefits of fewer emissions include improved health conditions and a better quality of life, and thus a reduced contribution to global climate change. Hence, Waterford City can benefit economically and environmentally from being more walkable.

Proposed Public Realm Improvement Scheme

WCCC Architects Department has examined and developed a preliminary design for public realm improvements in O'Connell Street. This design examines options for partial pedestrianisation, set down area, parking, traffic calming, speed as well as consideration of how cyclists can access the Waterford Greenway and the City using a contraflow system.

The main provision for improvements to public realm in O'Connell Street can be summed up as:

- Create a public 'living room' which is seen to be a shared, self regulating and pedestrian priority space space extending the public realm spine from John Roberts Square all the way to the Greenway as it enters the city. Cyclists can pass down O'Connell Street via a two way contra flow arrangement on a shared surface.
- Maintain the high quality of materials used in the city to date, augmented and manipulated to create a distinctive variation and colour. Control streets linearity by innovative street furniture, shading, and soft landscape to give gathering spaces and quiet spaces.
- Introduce creative place making for all ages and backgrounds; animated street life, light programming, space for public performances, street fairs by temporary re-routing of traffic, intelligently curated public art, comfortable for walking, clear connections to rest of city and thriving street frontages that spill out onto the street.



PUBLIC REALM

Objective

To prepare and achieve Planning for a Public Realm improvement scheme for Waterford Cultural Quarter.

To introduce more Green Spaces/Public Spaces/Shared Spaces within the WCQ to ensure the Community have areas to utilise on their doorsteps and spaces are available for street animation, markets and entertainment. To ensure that the WCQ is identified as a distinctive, vibrant, creative, and place for all who live, work and visit there.

To align with the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals which will ensure long term sustainability of the Cultural Quarter Public Realm

Actions

Explore new projects to link into the "Green Deal" to make WCQ sustainable going into the future

Introduction of additional public/green spaces within WCQ for residents and visitors

Collaborate with the WCCC Road Dept to devise a new lighting scheme to enhance the area and create a feeling of security for people in the area

Investigate designated areas for multiple uses e.g. busker spots, market stalls etc.

Install bicycle infrastructure in WCQ to enhance tourist offering from Waterford Greenway

Align our place making and public realm objectives to provide for outdoor arts and creative spaces

Roll out street furniture open call to artistic community

Collaborate with Community Garda to foster a sense of safety and security

Examine PPS - Project for Public Spaces in collaboration with place making objectives to make best use of the public realm.

Investigate suitable areas to develop as play areas for children

PLACEMAKING

The Project for Public Spaces defines place making as;

"Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution" Placemaking process promotes the 'lighter, quicker, cheaper' solutions that can transform spaces affordably and in a short time. Inspiration is also taken from a collaboration between the Irish Architectural Foundation and Creative Ireland's Reimagine Project which sets out to "meaningfully listen to, involve and collaborate with those most connected to design projects"





PLACEMAKING

Objective

To bring life and vibrancy to Waterford Cultural Quarter by planning and designing places and spaces with the people who use them.

Actions

Collaborate with organisations (business, social enterprise, community, education) and community to create discussion opportunities including those around public realm improvements.

Put an annual / regular WCQ placemaking expression of interest in place to provide for animation and ownership of public spaces with collaboration and public engagement at its centre.

Propose a WCQ steering committee member to join the City Centre Management Group, Winterval Committee and other decision making bodies to advocate for the WCQ involvement in city based expenditure on programming and other activities

Develop a subcommittee / forum of community members to bring their voice to decision making and design of public space.

Examine EU place making funding opportunities e.g. URBACT, Interreg etc

Engage the services of a place making broker and provide for learning / training opportunities for WCQ Steering Committee , community reps and stakeholders on place making

Support development and implementation of WCQ market and support activities that animate the street.

Extend the Quaker Trail concept to include digital technology.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is a key underpinning theme of the WCQ Strategic Plan. Collaboration with stakeholders, community, artists, business and organisations will be the main driver of the actions in the plan. By planning, implementing and working together activation of projects can take off in meaningful ways and it is a given that each objective in the plan will be delivered via collaborative actions.

Objective

To ensure that collaboration will underpin the vision and the mission of the WCQ project; reaching out to all those involved in the area through life, work and leisure and endeavouring to make certain that their voices are included in decision making.

Actions

Collaboration will be inherent in the actions of each objective of the WCQ strategic plan

Engage with stakeholders; e.g. WWETB - Youth Reach, Community and Adult Education, WIT, WIS, business, community and creative representatives to bring relevant voices into discussion and actions.

Support collaboration with WIT / TUSE e.g. research opportunities in areas such innovation development, smart cities etc.

Provide an atmosphere of openness to new collaborations as they arise, e.g. EU networks, social enterprise etc.

Collaborate with the Creative Ireland Programme Waterford on activities that bring about the objectives of "Creative Communities"

Engage with and keep abreast of collaboration opportunities with the development of Waterford's North Quays.

Engage creative and other expertise on methods for genuine public engagement leading to clear actions and deliverables for the WCQ community.

Create a databank of information using WCCC and other resources, e.g. CSO, small areas, migrant data etc to support the work of WCQ.

Devise and support events and festivals that encourage collaboration; Africa Day, Polish Day, St Patricks Day and events that foster pride of place and in people.

Work with the Waterford LCDC to implement relevant actions within Waterford Migrant Integration Strategy 2020 - 2023

Use 16/18 Barker Place as community hub to encourage collaboration between community, residents, business

Seek collaboration internally within WCCC; set up WCQ regular meetings to examine which projects can be progressed.

Provide a notice board in the area to keep WCQ community up to date with upcoming events.

BRANDING / MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS

Telling the story of Waterford Cultural Quarter through regular communications in a variety of ways is important to gain trust, to provide information and to bring out the character of the area. Creative people have superb skills in storytelling through a variety of media, and this, linked with social media, press, website and other measures will help express the WCQ narrative. Visible consistent branding throughout the area is an important component in identifying that this is a creative neighbourhood, where values of friendliness, sharing and collaboration are at its core.

Objective

To collaborate with all WCQ stakeholders to deliver a cohesive marketing & branding plan that will ensure the consistency of the brand and to ensure that the Cultural Quarter story is available to all through strong communications and visible branding.

Actions

Collaborate with organisations within WCQ to build the brand of the Creative Neighbourhood e.g. WWETB, WIT School of Architecture, Garter Lane Arts Centre

Devise and implement a robust Marketing Plan for Waterford Cultural Quarter that will serve as a strategic roadmap for WCQ communications and branding for Phase II (2021-2025)

Partner with the arts organisations based in WCQ to continue to animate the area, building a unique brand distinctive to the area e.g. The Walls Project, The Rogue Gallery etc.

Roll out "Street Branding" project to continue animate of the area by working with local artists, businesses and community groups

Examine branding of WCQ Markets by obtaining Casual Trading by-laws to allow creative makers to showcase their products in a creative and vibrant designated market

Increase collaboration with the local businesses to make WCQ promotion material accessible for them to use to promote their businesses as part of the Cultural Quarter

Develop a digital assets page on the WCQ website to allow stakeholders to have instant access to branding such as logos, crosshatch etc.

Investigate multiple marketing strategies to attract new interest into the Cultural Quarter to enhance footfall in the area.

GOVERNANCE

The role of good governance is to facilitate good decision making processes, to facilitate accountability and to streamline processes. For WCQ to be successful it is imperative that relevant governance structures are brought into play and used effectively. Waterford City and County Council are currently the overall project managers of the WCQ initiative, aided by the WCQ Steering Committee. During the lifetime of this plan, we commit to examining options relating to alternative forms of governance and using them effectively.

Objective

To facilitate development of strong governance structures that allow the WCQ project to reach its full social & economic potential in a transparent and accountable manner.

Actions

Research best practice examples of companies set up for similar purposes.

Consider and decide on the role of WCCC, WCQ Steering committee and other stakeholders in a company structure

Engage expertise to guide Steering Committee through this process

Facilitate dialogue with WCCC in relation to company purpose, progress and procedures

Decide on WCQ company role and structure; CLG, social enterprise etc.

Agree mission, vision, constitution and articles of association for a WCQ company.

Set up WCQ company including recruitment of Directors while ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly communicated.

Examine and respond to funding opportunities that arise for the WCQ company and / or WCCC.

Investigate opportunities to support social enterprise development for organisations and emerging business in the WCQ.

REFERENCES:

Government of Ireland; Project 2040

Southern Regional Assembly; Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

WCCC Development Plan; https://www.waterfordcouncil.ie/departments/planning/index.htm

Waterford City and County Council; Corporate Plan 2019-2024

Waterford Libraries; Library Development Plan

Waterford Arts; A Shared Vision for Waterford Arts

Creative Ireland; https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/about

Irish Urban Design Manual: <u>A Best Practice Guide 2009; https://www.opr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/1999-Urban-Design-Manual-1.pdf</u>

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