



Topical Digest

Public funding of the arts

SUSAN MASSEY, KAREN MCCALLION AND NEIL SEDGEWICK

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This Topical Digest provides a reading list about public financing of arts and culture in Northern Ireland. The digest includes weblinks to a selection of recent research papers, Assembly questions, government department publications, academic journal articles, stakeholder reports and media articles.

Should MLAs or their constituency staff have suggestions for information they would like to see in the guide, or have links to useful sources that they would like to share, please feel free to contact the Research and Information Service at:
RaISe_CSU@niassembly.gov.uk

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1 Introduction

This Topical Digest provides a reading list about arts and culture public funding, budgeting and expenditure in Northern Ireland. The department responsible for arts and cultural services in Northern Ireland is the Department for Communities (DfC). Although DfC also has responsibility for the [Creative Industries](#), this digest is focused on arts and culture public finance. While reviewing the information included in this digest, it is useful to acknowledge the difference between amounts of exchequer support budgeted for in bid documents published during the negotiation process of annual funding rounds and the amount of actual expenditure published after a financial year ends by departments and their arm's length bodies in annual reports. There can be stark differences between the two.

What counts?

The culture and arts sectors have raised the issue of under-funding, particularly in [comparison to other jurisdictions](#). Comparisons of budgeted figures require careful consideration, as often the amount that is bid for during the annual budgeting rounds differs to what was subsequently allocated and spent. Also, the grant-in-aid allocated by the Department for Communities to the Arts Council, is not the total amount of exchequer funding allocated for all of 'the arts' in Northern Ireland.

Definitions

HM Treasury uses the United Nations Statistics Division [definition of cultural services](#) when accounting for public expenditure. This includes:

- Provision of cultural services; administration of cultural affairs; supervision and regulation of cultural facilities;
- Operation or support of facilities for cultural pursuits (libraries, museums, art galleries, theatres, exhibition halls, monuments, historic houses and sites, zoological and botanical gardens, aquaria, arboreta, etc.); production, operation or support of cultural events (concerts, stage and film productions, art shows, etc.); and
- Grants, loans or subsidies to support individual artists, writers, designers, composers and others working in the arts or to organisations engaged in promoting cultural activities.

These figures also include: national, regional or local celebrations provided they are not intended chiefly to attract tourists.

In a recent University of Warwick review of arts funding in the UK, a discussion of what counts as 'the arts' included the following:

'We do not divorce heritage, libraries or media from our consideration of 'the arts'. This is partly due to their inseparability from other arts within much cultural policy and funding. It is also on principle: because so much of our heritage and historic environment is an artistic inheritance; our libraries are gateways to literature just as concert halls and gig venues are gateways to music; our public service broadcasters are cultural organisations supporting artistic expression and engagement.'

Public funding for 'the arts' also includes: central and devolved government funds, local government funds, National Lottery funds and the BBC licence fee. And, the main public bodies in Northern Ireland arts and culture include: Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI), Northern Ireland Screen, Northern Ireland Museums Council, Libraries Northern Ireland, Department for Communities Historic Environment Division, National Museums Northern Ireland, and Public Records Office Northern Ireland.

A useful source of information about the range of arts funding accessed by arts organisations in Northern Ireland is ACNI's annual funding survey results. For 2023, it [highlighted that ACNI funding accounts for 49% of total sources of public funding](#) for the sample of 83 arts organisations that received ACNI annual funding. Also, a recent University of Warwick report stated that grant-in-aid income per capita to Arts Council Northern Ireland was £6.99 compared to £9.46 for Arts Council England, £10.50 for Arts Council Wales and £10.86 for Creative Scotland. It also reported between 2009-10 and 2022-23, in real terms, core grant-in-aid funding of the Arts Councils per person decreased by 18% in England, 22% in Scotland, 25% in Wales and 66% in Northern Ireland. Whereas, [an OECD report stated](#) that in 2019, Northern Ireland spent more per head of the population on recreation, culture and religion than any other region in the United Kingdom, including London. This finding is consistent with figures for Cultural Services expenditure listed in [HM Treasury's Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis found in Table 10.8](#); where in 2022-23, £121 per head of the

population was spent on Cultural Services in Northern Ireland, £62 in England, £78 in Scotland and £77 in Wales.

This reading list therefore provides an overview of public funding, expenditure and budgeting information for the arts and cultural services provided by organisations such as HM Treasury, the Department for Communities, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and a range of different reviews of arts funding for Northern Ireland and its neighbouring jurisdictions.

1 HM Treasury Expenditure Statistics

- Country and Region Analysis, Statistical estimates for the allocation of identifiable expenditure, [UK identifiable expenditure on services by function per head, found in Table A.16](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis, [Table 10.4 Total identifiable expenditure on services in Northern Ireland by sub-function, 2018-19 to 2022-23](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)

2 Department for Communities

- [2024-25 Budget Document](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- [Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended March 2023/24](#)
- [Partnership Agreement between the Department for Communities and Arts Council of Northern Ireland](#) (March 2024)
- [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)

3 Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Arts Council's [website](#) includes information on funding for [organisations](#) and for [individuals](#). There is an archive of [news articles](#) on funding; a section on [other arts funders](#), and the following publications may be useful:

- [Business Plan 2023-24](#) (May 2023) (At the time of writing, the Business Plan for 2024-27 is yet to be published)
- [Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23](#) (January 2024)
- [Strategic Plan 2024-34](#) (May 2024)
- [National Lottery Distribution Account 2022-23](#) (February 2024)
- [Annual Review 2022-23](#) (November 2023)

- [2023/24 Annual Funding Survey Finding](#) (September 2024)
- [2022/23 Annual Funding Survey Finding](#) (October 2023)
- [Response to Department for Communities Consultation 2023-24 Budget Allocations](#) (June 2023)

4 Local government grant funding

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, [Arts and Heritage Grants](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)
- Ards and North Down Borough Council, [Arts Grants](#) (Accessed 9 September)
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, [Community Grants](#) (September 2024)
- Belfast City Council, [Culture Funding](#) (August 2024) and [A City Imagining – Culture Strategy](#) (July 2024)
- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, [Culture, Arts & Heritage Grant](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)
- Derry City and Strabane District, [Arts and Culture Strategy 2019-2024](#)
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, [Grants, Sponsorship & Bursaries](#) (Accessed 9 September)
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, [Community Grants](#) (Accessed 9 September)
- Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, [Online Grants Hub](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)
- Mid Ulster District Council, Dungannon, [Strategic Arts and Culture Grants](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, [Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2022–2027](#) (July 2022)

5 Other sources of arts funding

- The National Lottery Community Fund, [National Lottery Awards for All Northern Ireland](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund, [Northern Ireland](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024)
- Northern Ireland Screen, [Funding](#) (Accessed 9 September 2024) and [Business Plan 2024-25](#) (July 2024)
- The PRS Foundation, [Funding](#) (May 2024)
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation, [Funding](#) (September 2024)
- Jerwood Foundation, [Funding](#) (August 2024)

- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, [Grants](#) (September 2024)
- Ulster Garden Villages, [What We Fund](#) (April 2024) and [Annual Report 2023](#)
- The Community Foundation Northern Ireland, [Applying For A Grant](#) (April 2024)
- Foyle Foundation, [Arts Charities](#) (August 2024)
- Halifax Foundation Northern Ireland, [Plan Your Funding](#) (June 2024)
- The Ireland Funds, [Grants](#) (July 2024)
- British Council Northern Ireland, [Artists' International Development Fund](#) (April 2024)
- The Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, [Available Funding](#) (August 2024)
- Culture Ireland/Cultúr Éireann, [Support Schemes](#) (May 2024)

6 Reports, research and funding trackers

- OECD [Recreation, culture and religion as a share of subnational government spending](#) (June 2022)
- Equity, [Arts funding tracker](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Arts Professional, [Arts funding in the devolved nations](#) (December 2022)
- Campaign for the Arts and The University of Warwick, [The State of the Arts](#) (July 2024)
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland, [Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland](#) (April 2024)
- J Wright and A FitzGibbon '[Collaborative cultural leadership: Northern Ireland's response to the COVID-19 crisis](#)' in A Gilmore, D O'Brien and B Walmsley (eds) *Pandemic Culture* (2024) pp163-184
- S Hadley and S Woodley, '[The Future of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Arts: Research and Policy Findings from Ireland and Northern Ireland](#)', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* (2023) Volume 34, pp48-77
- V Durrer, A Gilmore and D Stevenson, '[Arts councils, policy-making and "the local"](#)', *Cultural Trends* (2019) Volume 28, pp317-331
- ArtsMatterNI, [Briefing for Department for Communities](#) (May 2018)
- G Moriarty '[Grown from Shattered Glass: A View from Northern Ireland](#)' in A Jeffers and G Moriarty (eds) *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art* (2017) pp115-130
- M Jennings, M Beirne and S Knight '[Just about coping': precarity and resilience among applied theatre and community arts workers in Northern Ireland](#)', *Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy* (2016/17) Volume 4, pp14-24

7 RalSe papers and visualisations

- RalSe Service Briefing Paper, [Impact of COVID-19 on arts and culture in Northern Ireland](#) (18 December 2020)
- RalSe Data Visualisation, [How has Arts Council NI COVID-19 emergency funding been distributed to arts organisations?](#) (9 March 2021)
- RalSe Briefing Paper, [Local council spending on culture and heritage](#) (2 March 2015)
- RalSe Briefing Paper, [Non-governmental funding for arts organisations](#) (29 September 2014)
- RalSe Briefing Paper, [Background briefing: Arts Council of Northern Ireland](#) (10 June 2011)

Assembly Questions on the topic of arts funding can be accessed via this [link](#), or by navigating to the AIMS Portal on the Assembly website.

8 Scotland

- Scottish Parliament Information Centre, [Trends in Funding for Culture](#) (June 2023)
- Scottish Parliament, [Funding Culture in Communities](#) (14 September 2023)
- Scottish Parliament, [Putting Artists In The Picture: A Sustainable Arts Funding System For Scotland](#) (12 December 2019)
- Scottish Parliament, [Pre-Budget Scrutiny 24-25: Funding for Culture](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Scottish Government [Draft Budget 24/25](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Scottish Government [Investing in cultural infrastructure](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Scottish Government, [Annual culture funding](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Scottish Government, [A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#) (February 2020)
- Creative Scotland [Funding Programmes](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)
- Creative Scotland [Other sources of support](#) (Accessed 19 September 2024)

9 Wales

- Welsh Parliament [Assistance for the arts – a guide for constituents](#) (May 2021)
- Arts Council of Wales, [Strategic Plan](#) (April 2023)
- Arts Council of Wales, [Investment review 2023](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Arts Council of Wales, [Funding for individuals](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Arts Council of Wales, [Funding for organisations](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)

10 England

- House of Commons, [The funding decisions of Arts Council England](#) (January 2023)
- House of Commons, [Arts Funding: Statistics](#) (July 2016)
- House of Lords, [Arts Council England: Funding and regional distribution](#) (December 2022)
- Arts Council England, [Open Funds](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Arts Council England, [National Lottery Project Grants](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Arts Council England, [Other sources of funding](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, [A new deal for arts funding in England](#) (12 January 2023)
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Culture Secretary declares culture, media and sport sectors crucial to national growth mission-press release](#) (July 2024)

11 Ireland

- Arts Council Ireland, [Available funding](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Arts Council Ireland, [How the arts council funds and supports the arts](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Arts Council Ireland, [Strategic funding](#) (September 2024)
- Culture Ireland, [What we do](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Culture Ireland, [Funding](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, [Culture 2025](#) (April 2019)
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, [Basic Income for the Arts Pilot Scheme](#) and [Minister announces €6million in funding for artist workspaces nationwide-press release](#) (Accessed 20 September 2024)

12 Selection of media and other articles

- [Funding a Resilient Creative and Cultural Infrastructure](#). Arts & Business Northern Ireland, 3 September 2024
- [Arts finances in worst state for five years](#). Arts Professional, 29 August 2024
- [Local government funding for culture and leisure down £2.3bn since 2010](#). Museums Journal, 5 August 2024
- [LGA infographics reveal fragmented culture funding needs reform](#). Local Government Association, 31 July 2024

- [‘We put our heart and souls into this for little reward’: NI artists earning just £11,200 a year from work](#). Belfast Telegraph, 19 July 2024
- [A fresh blueprint for funding arts organisations](#). Arts Professional, 2 July 2024
- [Summer of creativity ahead as ‘Bank of Ideas’ recipients are announced](#). Belfast City Council, 20 June 2024
- [Stormont short-sighted on arts funding – Lightbody](#). BBC News, 16 June 2024
- [Imelda Staunton and Olivia Colman call for urgent political support for the arts](#). The Guardian, 12 June 2024
- [‘Our shows can be as good as anything in Belfast’](#). BBC News, 26 May 2024
- [Arts Council Northern Ireland publishes 10-year strategy](#). Arts Professional, 8 May 2024
- [ISM raises concerns about cuts to Northern Ireland arts funding](#). ISM (Independent Society of Musicians), 28 April 2024
- [Arts Council of Northern Ireland warns of 10% funding cuts](#). BBC News, 7 April 2024
- [Belfast 2024 programme to spotlight city's cultural and community spirit](#). Belfast Live, 2 March 2024
- [Will the restoration of Stormont benefit the arts in Northern Ireland?](#) Arts Professional, 20 February 2024
- [Chart-topping young pianist urges Stormont to ‘protect the production line of new NI stars’](#). Belfast Telegraph, 4 January 2024
- [The arts ‘give colour to the world’ – but cuts pushing NI sector to ‘crisis point’](#). Belfast Telegraph, 27 October 2023
- [‘Imbalance’ in NW arts funding raised as Derry artist speaks of challenges](#). Derry Journal, 11 October 2023
- [Concern over impact of 5% cuts to Northern Ireland’s museum bodies](#). Museums Journal, 23 May 2023
- [Equity: Actors union says it will fight cuts to NI arts](#). BBC News, 25 April 2023
- [Cost of living: NI artists call for more funding to support sector](#). BBC News, 10 December 2022
- [Arts funding in the devolved nations](#). Arts Professional, 8 December 2022
- [Councillors seek answers over distribution of arts funding as Belfast received 11 times more than Derry](#). Belfast Telegraph, 13 April 2022
- [£500,000 Dormant Accounts grant supports positive Blueprint for the Arts](#). News Letter, 16 September 2021
- [NI arts sector critical of Stormont over funding delay](#). Belfast Telegraph, 22 September 2020
- [Survival and sustenance; the challenge for the Arts](#). News Letter, 20 August 2020

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