Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Department for Communities

ARTS POLICY CONSULTATION

Published on Thursday 12 November 2026

Mr Lyons (The Minister for Communities): In July 2024, as part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme, I made a commitment to deliver a new policy for the arts in Northern Ireland. Today marks an important step in that process.

The arts have always been central to life here. They shape our earliest memories, give expression to who we are, and foster activity and social connection within our communities.

From school plays and church choirs to internationally acclaimed poets, writers, musicians and performers, creativity is woven into our identity and shared experience.

The arts enhance our daily lives, supporting personal wellbeing, inspiring creativity from an early age, and contributing to education, health, community cohesion and economic prosperity.

They shape our sense of place and identity, offering ways for individuals and communities to express themselves, share their stories, and build connections across traditions.

It is an important principle that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, can access and benefit from the arts.

Support for community organisations is key to widening participation, alongside ensuring arts organisations and creative practitioners have the foundations, skills and opportunities to innovate, grow and contribute to a vibrant cultural infrastructure.

We should also be realistic about the challenges and the pressures of public finances that are likely to continue. Building capacity, strengthening infrastructure and widening access, all of which are essential to realising our long-term vision, will take sustained commitment and cannot be achieved overnight.

The consultation I am launching today gives everyone the chance to share their views on how we can harness the value of the arts, support growth and strengthen cultural and creative life for everyone in Northern Ireland.