

Prepared by Síle Penkert
& Derek Lowry



garter lane
arts centre

2024–29

**Strategic
Plan**

More Than a Theatre

5 & 22a O Connell St
Waterford, Ireland
www.garterlane.ie



Table of Contents

01

History of Garter Lane

02

Mission / Vision /
Values

03

Background to Strategic Plan

- Embracing a changing sector
- Stakeholder Feedback

04

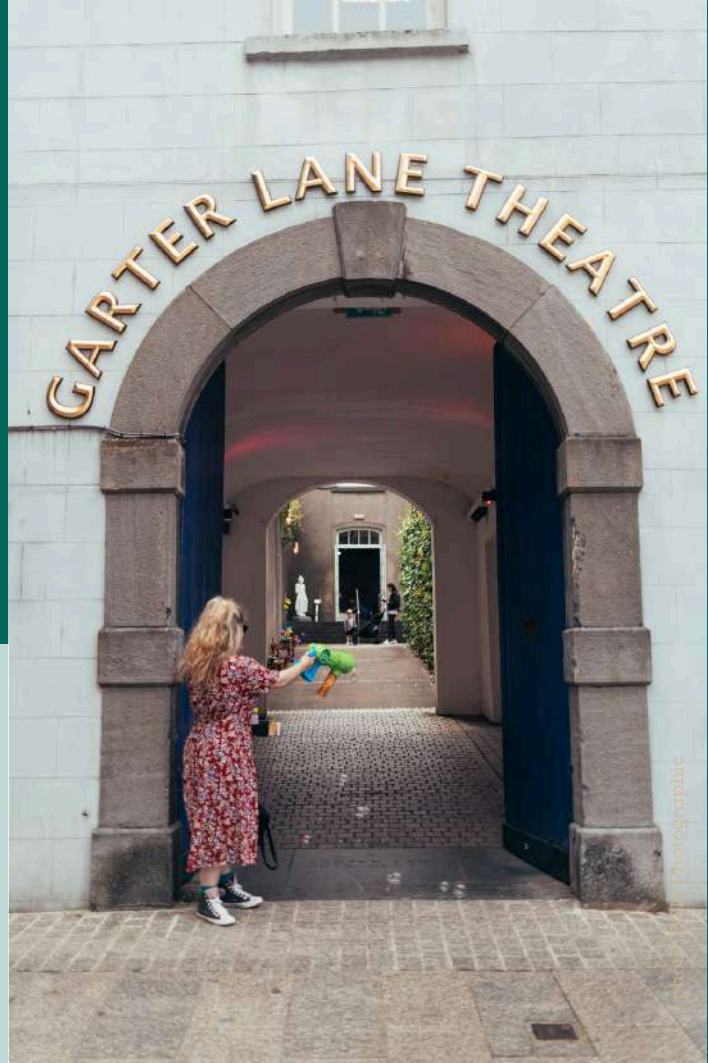
Strategic Objectives

05

Conclusion

History of Garter Lane

Garter Lane Arts Centre is a vibrant and thriving venue for Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance, Comedy, Music, Film and Literature in the heart of Waterford City. First opened in 1984 as the city's arts centre supported by the Governmental/Arts Council strategic mission to see regional arts centre infrastructure developed throughout the country.



Local advocates having long campaigned for broad and wide-reaching arts programming to be a mainstay of the city's cultural landscape would eventually see many impactful artistic initiatives emerge from under the Arts Centre's framework. Since inception the Centre possesses a strong community emphasis and both its buildings are regular hosts to groups, individuals, audiences, producers and makers alike, all who live, make their work, and experience arts engagement in Waterford city and the South East region. Garter Lane Arts Centre welcomes over 35,000 visitors annually and is supported by the Arts Council, Waterford City Council, the Department of Social Protection, its Patrons, Friends and enthusiastic audiences year-round.



Through a diverse multidisciplinary programme of exhibitions, performances, education, outreach, and professional development engagement the centre ensures consistent wide-ranging arts provision both centrally and further afield.

The centre's outreach programme (one of the first in the country) has a remit of creative activities for children and their families, young people's programmes, educational and ancillary programming that engages broad spectrum audiences while also delivering for hard-reach and marginalised groups.

Proudly fully operational over two large Georgian buildings of heritage significance, the centre is located on O'Connell St and is believed to be the former (1780 five story) townhouse residence of Quaker Merchant Banker Samuel Barker and The Quaker Friends Meeting House respectively.

The centre operates a 164-theatre space, fitted with a 4K Digital Projector and Cinema Screen, a Rehearsal Space and Exhibiting Gallery Space, 10 Visual Art studios, 1 Project Space, a Dance Studio, Childrens Workshop Space, Theatre Development Space, and Administration Offices located at No. 5 O'Connell Street, Waterford. This building (with anchor tenant a local Children's Theatre Co., Little Red Kettle) has undergone major refurbishment work in the past 24 months increasing its studio space capacity and enhancing its offering to the local community and regional arts infrastructure. In 2024 (May 3rd) this building was officially renamed as Garter Lane Studios.

Garter Lane is celebrating 40 years of arts provision for Waterford in 2024. This Strategic Plan is the first step in a new direction of travel for an arts centre that is representative of and advocates for a local/regional prolific, aspirational, and highly ambitious arts and culture sector.





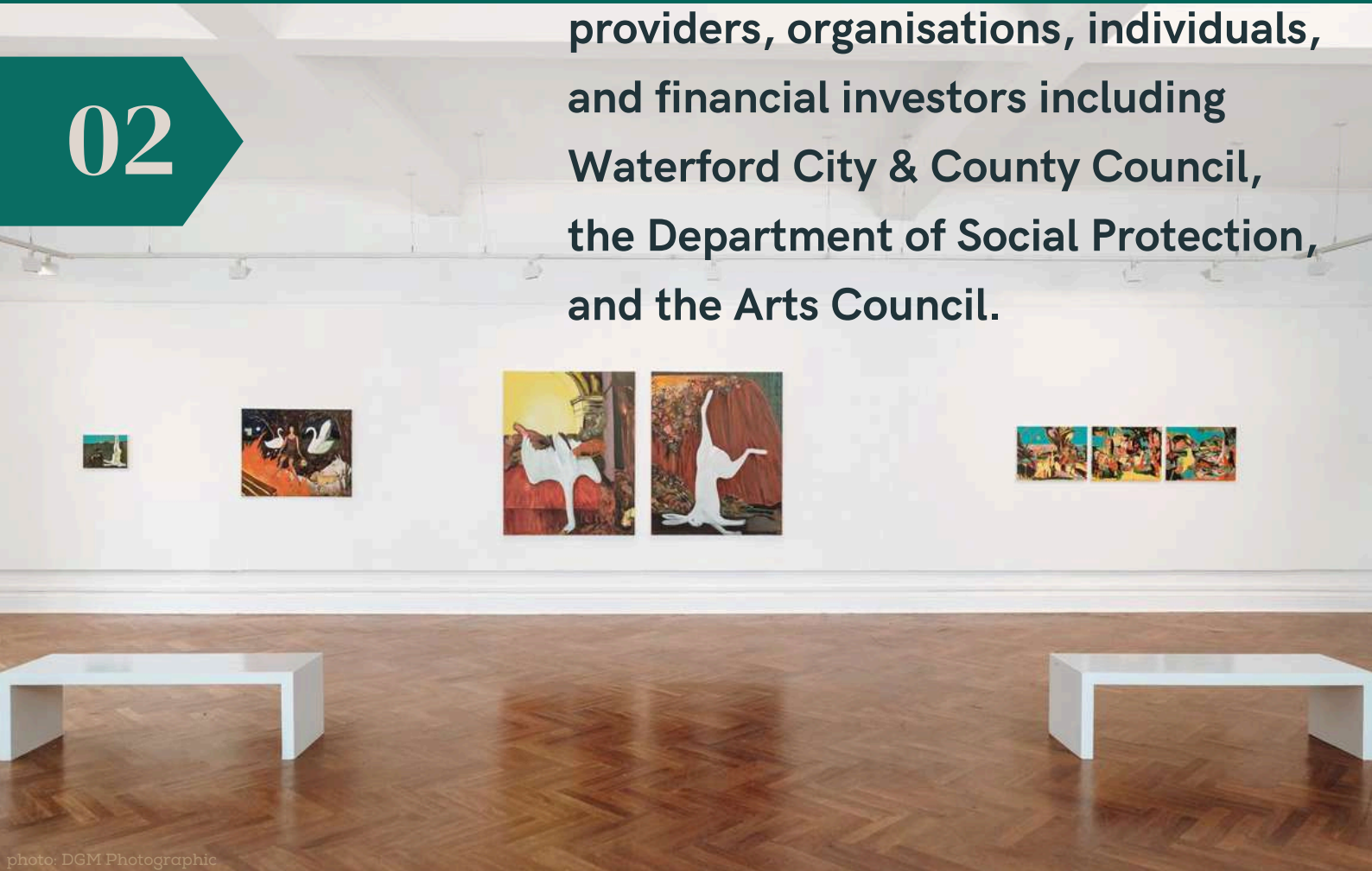
Mission

Garter Lane has as its mission statement to develop, promote and initiate creative activity, particularly in areas that have until now been underdeveloped.

Delivery of this Mission Statement is achieved through programming a **Multidisciplinary Arts**

Centre on a year-round basis and partnering with a broad and widely recognised range of cultural and arts providers, organisations, individuals, and financial investors including **Waterford City & County Council, the Department of Social Protection, and the Arts Council.**

02



Vision

The vision of Garter Lane is the promotion of culture and arts for public benefit, local, national, and international audiences through the provision of a broad multidisciplinary

programme. Featuring but not exclusive to: Theatre, Exhibitions, Film, Music, Dance, Comedy, and training, festival programming, educational and Continued Professional Development programming and other cultural events in Waterford City and its environs.



Photo: Light Sensitive Photography

VALUES

1

CREATIVITY

Encourage artistic exploration, experimentation and development

2

EXCELLENCE

Strive for the highest standards, artistic quality and professionalism

3

DIVERSITY

Embrace and promote diverse perspectives, cultures and artistic traditions

4

ACCESSIBILITY

Ensure that the arts are accessible to all members of the community, regardless of background or ability

5

COLLABORATION

Foster collaboration and partnerships with artists, organisations and the community

6

SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the long-term viability and financial stability of the Arts Centre

BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC PLAN

03



photo: DGM Photographic

Garter Lane emerged from the Covid 19 pandemic as a stronger organisation, more resilient and forward focused. Having recently completed a re-development and upgrade of its Studios building, Garter Lane is well positioned to deliver a strong arts programme for the city of Waterford over the next 5 years.

In ensuring its strategic plan resonated with its stakeholders Garter Lane engaged in a survey with them to understand their current engagement and requirements from a new strategic plan going forward. The results of this survey are detailed below.

GARTER LANE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON ITS KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS WHICH ARE :

- Devising and delivering engaging arts programming across all artforms.
- Initiating and developing impactful opportunities for artists and audiences.
- Creating an environment that encourages ambition and excellence in artistic output.
- Collaborating and advocating with a broad range of artists, audiences and academia to help strengthen the sector.
- Strategically informing and engaging with our stakeholders through a variety of communication channels.

EMBRACING A CHANGING SECTOR

As the aforementioned pandemic altered many sectoral perspectives and outlooks, so too did that shift in “how we view ourselves” affect the arts sector.



As the aforementioned pandemic altered many sectoral perspectives and outlooks, so too did the change in “how we view ourselves” affect the arts sector. Numerous organisations and cultural institutions reported significant workforce disruption and ‘leakage’ of personnel. Expertise and knowledge base was, as a result, significantly weakened across the field and yet in tandem new mechanisms for consistent, comprehensive communication with the wider public were being implemented. Moving digitally and with stealth is an imperative in an environment that quickly became digitally literate on a universal scale.

These major developments in the Arts Centre’s trajectory after a period of more than 18 years of relatively unaltered proceedings, coupled with re-structured management (2018) demanded that the organisation, inclusive of its Board, readdress the Centre’s reason for being and its effectiveness in delivering its mission. In order that an accurate assessment of the organisation as a whole be undertaken, an application was made to the Arts Councils CBSS (Capacity Building Support Scheme) and both newly appointed Executive Director and Board of Directors (2018) drove the immersion into a strategic plan process under the following three headings: People, Place, Programme.

PEOPLE, PLACE, PROGRAMME

The resulting Strategic Plan is made up of an initial Strategic Operations Overview presented to the Board in 2022. From here, together with Almega Consulting and Stakeholder input, the centre is embracing its future, assisted by this robust plan, affording the organisation and its many associated artists, groups, producers and patrons and audiences a future proofing ambition. Should the organisation successfully deliver on the objectives set out here Garter Lane Arts Centre is set to steer a course toward being a truly multidisciplinary, inclusive and ambitious Arts Centre, venue, and facility for both the City and the Region.



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

03

In order to engage with all our stakeholders and ensure the strategic plan met their needs, they were invited to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to a broad base of Garter Lane's stakeholders with over 57 responses received. The respondents included artists, group members, funders, employees, board members and patrons. The results are summarized below and the key points are:



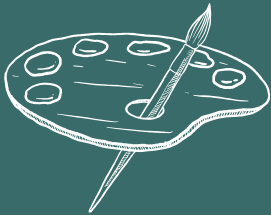
STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK



Theatre



Film



Visual Art/
Exhibitions



Dance



Workshop/
Classes



Professional
Development

The results are summarized below and the key points are:

86% of respondents said Garter Lane as a cultural outlet was very important to their wellbeing.

85% of the relevant respondents were dependent on the arts sector for an income and **91%** of these respondents viewed Garter Lane as important to their overall career trajectory.

92% of the respondents were more than satisfied with their engagement with Garter Lane and a further **96%** believe Garter Lane is delivering its strategic mission.

92% of respondents were likely to advocate for Garter Lane.

75% of respondents believed that Garter Lane would be relevant for Waterford City for the next 40 years with the remaining **25%** acknowledging the challenges of competing with changing trends and attitudes to be faced by Garter Lane in the future.

Objective	What we will do?	How we will do it?	Timeframe
<p><i>Devising and delivering engaging arts programming across all artforms.</i></p>	<p>Programme the arts centre, in partnership with artists, producers and makers and partner companies, across art forms, including comedy, dance, film, literature, theatre, musical theatre and visual arts.</p>	<p>Through ensuring that access to the centre's many facilities are consistent and access mechanisms are easily navigated and transparent.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
	<p>The programme will integrate work by local, national and international practitioners both professional and voluntary and will engage the centre's professional team in delivering these actions.</p>	<p>Team members responsible for programming will continue to seek work that will engage Waterford audiences through, viewing, seeing and experiencing work, locally made and from other parts of the country.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>
		<p>The professional team acts as both internal producers and as informal mentors for programmed elements.</p>	
	<p>Ancillary/Educational & Professional Development Programming are now a feature of the Arts Centre's focus and "lifeblood" and will continue to be so.</p>	<p>The presentation programme of Theatre/Visual Art/Dance/Music, Comedy is both solicited and recommended and Key Programmers assess each presentation on the basis of engagement potential, and budgetary value.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
	<p>We will engage a wider audience. Make our programming attractive and enticing. Build relationships in new areas and develop a comprehensive Friends programme.</p>	<p>Through alignment of presentation programming with current curriculum trends and through detailed Professional Development Programming which seeks to address sectoral gaps regionally, the centre will work closely with affiliated partners in achieving a consistent level of both Education and Practice focused engagements.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
		<p>Through the appointment of the Centre's 1st Marketing & Communications Manager. By appointment of a Friends Coordinator.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
		<p>We will assess all marketing and comms to decipher more effective and appealing modes of dissemination and communication. We will address our website functionality and capacity to act as resource.</p>	

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
		<p>We will re-invigorate our Friends Scheme, reassess offers and benefits, and be more public facing in the roll-out of Friends events and gatherings.</p>	Short Term
		<p>We will monitor our sales progressions and engagement statistics through newly enhanced ticketing/booking systems.</p>	Medium
<p><i>Initiating and developing impactful opportunities for artists and audiences.</i></p>	<p>The organisation will assist practitioners to develop new work and engage audiences by mentoring and advising them on practical issues ranging from funding applications to involving professional artistic supports, through marketing and audience development.</p>	<p>Through ensuring access to the Centre's facilities are consistent and mechanisms are easily navigated and transparent. By being accessible for informal meetings and mentoring assistance. Through free flowing knowledge transfer resulting from sharing a busy working environment. Through securing and delivering Continued Professional Development CPD programmes. Responding to artists' needs yearly.</p>	Medium

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
<p><i>Creating an environment that encourages ambition and excellence in artistic output.</i></p>	<p>The Centre’s newly expanded studios will have a separate operational plan implemented over the next 3-5 years. The plan will address the Studios & Gallery exhibiting spaces including policies for both. Here artists and makers will have access to clear routes into studio usage, exhibition potential, selection processes and Continued Professional Development CPD programme opportunities.</p>	<p>Through continued working with an expert in the area of Studio and Gallery Management, to consult with artists on site, staff and audiences, assessing feedback to create and deliver an operational plan, encompassing both Studios & Gallery/exhibition spaces and associated policies. Site visits, research and data gathering will inform this process. All plans will be approved at Board level.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
	<p>The Visual Arts and Outreach Manager works to enhance the Centre’s capacity in exhibition promotion, public understanding and sale of artworks.</p>		

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
	<p>The Visual Arts and Outreach Manager also delivers complimentary arts education and ancillary programming already greatly enhancing public access to the arts. Delivered with schools, marginalized communities, elderly, third level, and artist groups.</p>	<p>The Visual Arts and Outreach Manager also delivers complimentary arts education and ancillary programming already greatly enhancing public access to the arts. Delivered with school, marginalized communities, elderly, third level, and artist groups.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>
	<p>Work with the local authority to identify routes to professional development opportunities that contribute to a sustainable arts career path.</p>	<p>Garter Lane & WGOA (Waterford Gallery of Art) partnered for the 1st time in 2024 to deliver a professional development programme The Local Authority support 1 Studio Bursary (for 1yr)</p>	<p>Medium</p>
		<p>Actively seek sponsorship of annual Childrens' Festival SprÓg.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
		<p>Support from WCQ (Waterford Cultural Quarter) in respect of symbiotic programming enhances opportunity for greater impact locally, engaging with local communities while supporting local professional arts makers. Examples include: SprÓg Childrens Festival, Deirdre Dwyer 2021/22, Rachel Ní Bhraonáin's upcoming show due 2024.</p>	Medium
<p><i>Collaborate and advocate with a broad cross-section of artists, audiences and academia to help develop and strengthen the sector.</i></p>	<p>We will engage more proactively with other arts organisations locally and regionally. Connecting our organisation with a regional pool of knowledge and personnel contact.</p>	<p>Through meetings and informal and formal network setup. Garter Lane is now a member of the South East Venues Network (SEVN) Connected with Libraries Services, WGOA, Spraoi, Waterford Youth Arts.</p>	Medium
	<p>We will re-evaluate and continue our relationship with SETU , mining for potential intersection opportunities.</p>	<p>Through meeting with relevant key SETU personnel to identify project opportunities that are broad in their reach. Benefiting both students and offering public engagement opportunities in an accessible venue.</p>	Medium

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
		For example the First View (Visual Art Degree Students Pop up studio/exhibition) open to the public, while also facilitating a course element.	Medium
		Annual Degree Show, Visual Art Exhibition of Degree Students & Official Opening, work hung and exhibited and marketed professionally for 1-2 months.	Medium
		UCC Creative Producer Internship (Year 1 2024)	Ongoing
<p><i>Offer work experience, professional development opportunities and support individuals and organisations interested in creating and delivering arts engagements and cultural events.</i></p>	<p>We will work to identify routes to “presentation” with all Artists in Residence, mining our resources to achieve outcome resulting in engagement.</p>	<p>We will advocate for A Little Room (TCD), continue to support its resident artists through stipend and platform.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
		<p>We will engage with “new” mechanisms for performance and presentation as proposed by Artists whose securing of support is dependent on venue, marketing and mentoring support being in place.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
	<p>We will listen to those in our locality and region who request appropriate professional development opportunities, addressing their practice and sectoral needs.</p>	<p>We will continue regular engagement with collegiate organisations Waterford Libraries, WGOA, SETU, SPRAOI, WC&CC, WCQ, WYA, ALR, LRK, to develop collaborative methodologies that support new work realisation e.g.. WCQ Support for FOH Exhibition Space for new and emerging talent. WGOA & GL Partnership on 2024 Continued Professional Development CPD.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
		<p>Programme for Visual Artists featuring lecture and one-to-one crit and mentorship with Artist Jane Morrow. Repeated 5 times throughout the year. Open to all to attend in an accessible venue.</p>	

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
		<p>We will continue to actively converse and support artists in their bid for funding/support where we have agreed mutual benefits for the centre, its audiences and the maximum exposure for the artist/creator from their specific project.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>
<p><i>Maintain a robust organisational structure while advancing the organisations charitable status and overall mission.</i></p>	<p>We will ensure we have an engaged and task orientated Board of Directors in place. Directors will be recruited on the basis of genuine interest, relevant expertise and ability to add to the overall skill set of the Board.</p>	<p>The Management & Board will embrace all regulatory policies and measurements in order to achieve high standards in governance and transparency. Eg. publishing annual accounts, profiling all Directors reviewing Board performance.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
		<p>Board meetings will take place monthly. Sub committees are/will be formed to adopt execution of specific tasks related to the organisation's improvements and smooth running, being ultimately risk averse and prudent regarding available working capital and how best to utilise it.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
	<p>We will be a safe and inclusive environment to develop and work in.</p>	<p>We are SAFE TO CREATE: A staff are trained & clear in both their duty and willingness to adopt the Safe To Create Charter and to continue operating with its values at the core of their working practice.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>
		<p>The Management & Board will be mindful of the Centre's EDI Policy and continue in endeavors to see its implementation and aspirations achieved across the Centre.</p>	<p>Longterm</p>
<p><i>Proactively support and protect our organisations staff, and CE Scheme Participants.</i></p>	<p>We will support staff through regular team meeting cycles, and through annual "Check-in" opportunities, affording Dept heads opportunities to feed back to the Exec. Dir & Board if applicable.</p>	<p>We will address staff and HR matters through up-to-date knowledge at Management & Board level of current and developing Employment Legislation.</p>	<p>Medium</p>

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
<p><i>Consolidate efforts around our Public Engagement Systems.</i></p>	<p>Appraisal and target setting will be set in key areas requiring performance enhancement such as aforementioned "Public Engagement Systems".</p>	<p>In 2024 a Marketing & Communications Manager was recruited in response to a need to address the centres "Public Engagement Systems broadly. This new departure for the Centre, is in the initial findings phase and will produce evidence based reporting to the Management & Board on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><i>Strategically inform and engage with our stakeholders through a variety of communication channels including website, media, social media, e-bulletins and in-person.</i></p>	<p>We will address our website functionality and capacity to act as resource. We will re-invigorate our Friends scheme, reassessing offers and benefits, and be more public facing in the roll out of Friends events and gatherings.</p>	<p>Upon appointment the Marketing & Communications Manager will devise and deliver an overview of the Centre's reach. The findings of initial research will be presented to the Board in early 2025.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>

Objective	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Timeframe
		Upgrade all social media and bulletin outputs to work in tandem, be "clickable", and stylistically coherent	
	We will monitor our sales progressions and engagement statistics through newly enhanced ticketing/booking systems.	Upgrade our telephone systems internally and externally. Have all staff members and their contact details present on the website.	Completed
		Gather statistical information prior to every performance and event and make comparative analysis year on year. 2022 saw 15% more events at Garter Lane than in the year previous.	
		Upgrade signage and rename one of the Centre's buildings from Garter Lane Gallery (defunct) to Garter Lane Studios.	Short Term



Conclusion

photo: DGM Photographic

Garter Lane has been an integral part of the arts sector for Waterford and its environs since 1984. For over 40 years Garter Lane has continued to develop, grow, mature and expand thus ensuring its readiness to meet the evolving needs of the arts sector. With the opening of Garter Lane Studios and the celebration of Garter Lane's 40th birthday in 2024, the Arts Centre is looking to build on the successes of the past years and to future proof the organisation for the next 40 years.

This strategic plan sets out challenging but achievable objectives which embrace the vision, mission, and values of Garter Lane Arts Centre.

The strategic objectives set out in this plan are supported by a clearly defined and achievable plan which will enable Garter Lane to successfully achieve its objectives over the life of this plan.

Garter Lane, celebrating 40 years of arts provision for Waterford in 2024, views this strategic plan as "a first step in a new direction of travel for an arts centre representative of and advocating for a local, regional prolific, aspirational and highly ambitious arts and cultural sector." Exec.Dir. Síle Penkert (2024)

Prepared by Síle Penkert, Executive Director of Garter Lane
& Derek Lowry of Almega Consulting

05

Garter Lane Arts Centre is supported by



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City
& County Council



An Roinn Coimírce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

www.welfare.ie