

Cultural analysis (=)

The cultural situation of South Tipperary could be described as a jigsaw that needs to be put together. If the County Strategy for Cultural Development is to make any difference, it must:

- build on the strengths (pieces of the jigsaw),
- address the weaknesses (jigsaw pieces are disjointed),
- optimise the opportunities (there is increasing empirical evidence that culture impacts on quality of life, there is more funding available and this funding needs to be directed strategically to professional backing/co-ordination, to facilities that are accessible and sustainable (appropriate level); to volunteer support and to outreach activities that will increase participation in culture)
- minimise the threats by finding the right balance in communicating with the stakeholders (consensus on the way forward with all key stakeholders agreed and clear on strategies including volunteer enhancement; and in communicating with the general population (activities that enhance critical faculties, visual awareness, appreciation of excellence and participation in culture.

Many of the pieces to make up the jigsaw are in place. These need to be linked to each other by a coherent strategy. Central to that strategy is professional support for the co-ordination of the arts, heritage and sport. Missing pieces (gaps in infrastructure) need to be identified and a facility development strategy agreed for a generation (20 years).

There are three different types of stakeholder who have a role in putting the jigsaw together – cultural providers, volunteers, and citizens.

Cultural providers are being given an opportunity to come together as part of the process in developing and implementing a County Strategy. These stakeholders must deliver coherence and consensus on the way forward.

Volunteers have a major role to play in the delivery of cultural activities. The changing nature of volunteerism needs to be understood and their needs, especially in getting recognition (qualifications and support) for the time given, are met.

The cultural sector needs to reach out to the general population in proven ways and in new innovative ways to enable citizens improve and enhance their quality of life.

The Cultural Working Group's perspective on the value that a County Cultural Strategy needs to add to the cultural situation of South Tipperary is:

- Professional backing at county level for culture
- An agreed facility development strategy (for a generation) which is attracting public resources
- An emphasis on enabling volunteers get more recognition (for the time spent) especially qualifications
- More emphasis on outreach activities in the resourcing of the cultural sector.

In linking the output of the Cultural working Group with that of other groups, the County Development Board identified eight strategic themes including a cultural development theme (on which the cultural development innovation programme is based); and a facilities/services infrastructure theme (which is incorporated into the Local Agenda 21 Innovation programme).

The focus of the Cultural Development Innovation Programme is on co-ordination.