
Lanesborough Amphitheatre

Commercial Plan



AUGUST 1, 2025
LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



Tionól Reigiúnach
Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly



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Introduction

This report sets out a commercial plan for the proposed amphitheatre and performance venue in Lanesborough, Co. Longford. The concept and vision for the amphitheatre has been led by Longford County Council (the Council) in a co-design process along with key stakeholders including:

- The local Lanesborough community
- The arts and cultural sector in Co. Longford
- Strategic and county-wide tourism development organisations

The Council engaged the services of Venture International Limited (Venture) to prepare this commercial plan. Venture is a consultancy with over 30 years' experience in delivering project development services for local authorities and community-led initiatives across Ireland and internationally. Their expertise spans feasibility studies, commercial planning, and strategic development for arts, performance, and tourism infrastructure.

The process of preparing the commercial plan involved extensive consultation with:

- The local community in Lanesborough
- Backstage Theatre, a key regional arts organisation
- Longford County Council's Arts, Tourism, and Regeneration sections

This initiative is funded by the EU Just Transitions programme, a core element of the European Green Deal. The programme supports communities transitioning from reliance on fossil fuels and carbon-intensive industries to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. This is particularly relevant to Lanesborough, which was home to the ESB-operated peat-fired Lough Ree Power Station, supplied by Bord na Móna. Its closure in December 2020 resulted in the loss of 392 jobs.

In response, the Council, in collaboration with elected members and the local community, developed a vision for Lanesborough based on:

- Its strategic location within the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands tourism region
- Its proximity to the River Shannon, Lough Ree, and existing/planned greenways
- Its regional accessibility
- Its rich natural assets

This vision led to a recovery and transition strategy focused on:

- The development of a Community Enterprise Food Hub projected to create 90 jobs

- Enhancing tourism potential by encouraging visitors from adjacent greenways and the River Shannon to stop and dwell in Lanesborough
- Creating conditions for a strong hospitality and tourism sector, including additional accommodation
- Building on its reputation for hosting high-quality events, such as the Gale-force event

The commercial plan was commissioned through a competitive procurement process to bring independence and commercial realism to the proposal. It sets out:

- The vision and objectives for the Lanesborough amphitheatre
- Financial projections
- Key design considerations, operational capacities, and visitor flow
- Outline operational plan
- Revenue generation and sales activation plan

Vision and Objectives

The vision and outcomes for the proposed amphitheatre in Lanesborough, County Longford has been developed based on:

- Consultation with the arts, cultural and creativity sector in the County
- Consultation with tourism development organisations for both the County and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands (11 County sub-regional tourism brand)
- Consultation and engagement with community leaders in Lanesborough
- A review of existing amphitheatre and outdoor performance venues in Ireland and external to it
- A review of the key strategic document for arts and tourism for both the County and sub-regionally (Ireland's Hidden Heartlands)

Vision

The vision for the project is:

Provision of a regionally significant amphitheatre and performance space in Lanesborough which supports arts, culture and creativity development, adding to the visitor experience to County Longford and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands... strengthening the local economy and enhancing the visitor experience and quality of life in Lanesborough

Clear and appropriate objectives

The vision is supported by a number of outcome statements. Delivery and the sustainable management of the Lanesborough Amphitheatre will deliver the following outcomes:

- County Longford has an increased range of performance infrastructure to develop and host regionally significant events and performances
- The amphitheatre maximises the strategic location of Lanesborough adjacent to the River Shannon, Lough Ree and the emerging greenway network
- The investment complements existing events in Lanesborough supporting it to transition its economy from a reliance on fossil fuel energy generation to tourism, hospitality, arts and culture
- Lanesborough has an increasing volume and range of accommodation options for visitors
- Lanesborough's economy generates an increasing level of income from visitors, their increased dwell time and the diversification of its economy including hospitality and secondary spend

- The investment in the Lanesborough amphitheatre makes the town more attractive for people who want to return to relocate to the area
- The amphitheatre creates opportunities for training and employment in the arts, technical production and tourism/events management disciplines

Objectives

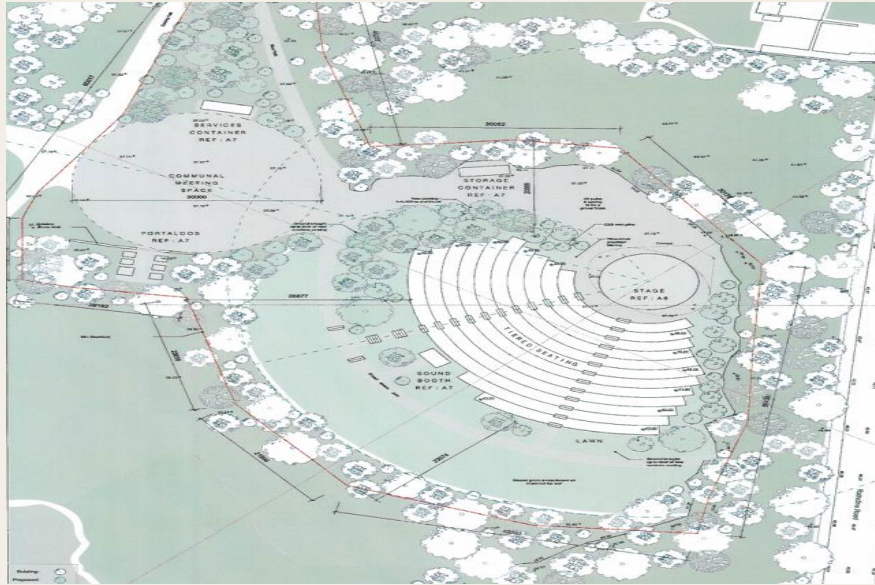
The following SMART objectives have been agreed and adopted by the promoter and the project stakeholders:

- To submit a Part 8 planning application by August 2025
- To secure Part 8 planning consent by June 2026
- To secure the capital delivery funding (100%) by December 2026
- To carry out a compliant procurement process and appoint a contractor by March 2027
- To complete the capital delivery of the project by December 2027
- To establish the Lanesborough Amphitheatre CIG by May 2026
- To formalise a SLA with Backstage Theatre by October 2026
- To finalise and agree tier 1 events for 2028 by December 2026
- To deliver three tier 1 events in 2028 and three tier 2 events across 2028-2030
- To attract an audience of 2400 per annum from 2028 to 2030 with 40% from outside Co Longford
- To add a tier 1 and tier 2 event annually across 2031 to 2033
- To increase the annual audience from 2400 in 2030 to 4800 by 2033
- To attract 50% of the audience from outside Co Longford by 2033

The Concept

This commercial plan focuses on a concept to deliver a 500 seater amphitheatre in Lanesborough, County Longford. The proposed amphitheatre will be built in a manmade site which was a former quarry owned by Longford County Council. The historical excavation works has created a brownfield landscape which lends itself to the development of an amphitheatre.

A significant feature of this site which will add to the visitor experience is that it is located adjacent to and connecting with Lough Ree at a point where the River Shannon enters the Lough. The wider curtilage of the site is used by the community as green and recreational space (with pathways) with water based recreational and competitive sports activities taking place on Lough Ree. It also includes mooring for hire of a privately owned leisure cruisers. The site includes two separate car parks, a toilet block and a play park.



The concept not only focuses on the provision of a new outdoor 500 seater performance area developed as an amphitheatre but also focuses on how it can be integrated in a master planning approach with the wider site. This creates an opportunity for it to enhance the site with some of the services and a structural investment in the amphitheatre project complimenting existing provision on it creating opportunities to improve the experience of the local community and users or visitors to the site. The amphitheatre project will provide the following:

- 500 seats in permanent tiered seating
- A stage with a canopy and steel support structure to provide weather cover for performers
- A functional sound and lighting provision which can be erected and removed outside key performances
- Temporary public toilets (suggested at 12)
- An accessible portable toilet
- Equipment storage facility (suggested at 14sqm and constructed from a container)
- A green room, artist hospitality area and dressing area including a first aid facility and temporary bar (suggested at 20sqm)
- A sound booth (suggested at 6-10sqm)
- Wider site lighting and associated landscaping

The proposed amphitheatre will operate 6-12 times per annum (1-2 days per event). Generally, will be open between 3pm and 11pm to host these events. The amphitheatre will serve both the local community and a wider county/regional audience, attracting new visitors to the area and encouraging longer 'dwell times' within the county. Its annual programme will include

- Tier 1 events: Significant 1–2-day events which can attract out of county visitors
- Tier 2 events: Locally focused events organised by the local community

The overall concept of the amphitheatre is one of a number of projects identified by the community, the Just Transitions activator and Longford County Council as part of a strategic approach to transitioning the Lanesborough economy post the closure of the ESB Lough Ree Power Station.

Further Context

Lanesborough is located on the River Shannon at the northern tip of Lough Ree, straddling the border of County Longford and County Roscommon. It is approximately 16km north of Longford town, 15km south of Ballymahon, and 14km west of Roscommon town, positioning it centrally within the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands region. The N63 national route runs directly through Lanesborough, linking Longford to Roscommon, while the R371 provides access northwards towards Strokestown and further into north Roscommon. Its strategic location on the Shannon is significant from a tourism and cultural development perspective, as it lies directly on the waterway and within easy reach of Athlone (30km), a major tourism hub in the Hidden Heartlands. This proximity to established visitor centres, combined with the town's riverside setting, strengthens the case for the amphitheatre as a complementary attraction that can draw audiences from both the local population and the wider regional visitor flow.

Strategic Context

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands includes counties Leitrim, Cavan, Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath, Galway (east), Offaly, Clare, Tipperary and part of north Cork. The region is guided by the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023–2027, which sets out a framework for sustainable growth, enhanced visitor experiences, and increased economic benefit for local communities. This regional strategy builds on national tourism frameworks, including the Government's Tourism Strategy – People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025, Fáilte Ireland's Corporate Strategy 2021–2023, and the recommendations of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group (2021–2023).

The Ireland's Hidden Heartland strategy works to a 10 year vision statement as follows:

"Its 2032 and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is one of Europe's leading regenerative tourism destinations (top 10 ranking), a place where tourism works to create flourishing places and thriving communities.

The region has become well known as a sustainable destination where visitors can reconnect with nature whilst taking time out to reconnect with family and friends. With the River Shannon and the Beara Breifne Way at its heart, a well-connected web of greenways and blueways spread throughout the region, this is a place where

nature is the backdrop to a wide range of compelling visitor experiences, from outdoor activities covering intriguing heritage and cultural gems that continue to surprise and exceed visitor expectations.

Active fun-filled days roll into relaxing, cosy evenings in historic hotels and lakeside lodges. Its characteristic towns and villages are vibrant and bustling with great restaurants and musical pubs. The region, which is highly valued for its special environmental qualities and biodiversity and its ease to access outdoors, has also earned a reputation for its wellness qualities, where the visitor is re-energised by nature.”

Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Strategy 2023–2027 — Core Objectives

According to Fáilte Ireland, the strategy focuses on transforming the region into a sustainable, high-quality tourism destination—with these five strategic goals:

1. Raise awareness of the region
 - Increase national and international recognition of the Hidden Heartlands brand
 - Encourage longer visitor stays, especially among domestic tourists
2. Improve visitor experiences sustainably
 - Diversify and elevate tourism offerings based on natural and cultural strengths
 - Embed eco-tourism principles in experience development
3. Boost economic impact and local employment
 - Grow tourism revenue in less-visited areas
 - Support the tourism industry to build capacity, capability, and reduce carbon emissions
4. Set the region as a regenerative tourism leader
 - Ensure tourism delivers net-positive outcomes for both communities and the environment
5. Foster stakeholder collaboration
 - Build a strong coalition among stakeholders to guide sustainable development

The proposed Lanesborough Amphitheatre directly supports the aims of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Strategy by creating a new cultural landmark that raises awareness of the region and encourages visitors to extend their stay through unique event-based experiences. By providing a sustainable outdoor venue, the amphitheatre will increase Longford's tourism offering and help to attract both domestic and international audiences to the area. Its integration with arts, cultural, and community initiatives ensures that it delivers positive cultural and economic outcomes while aligning with eco-tourism and regenerative tourism principles.

The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027

This is the overarching strategic plan for the county. The County Development Plan recognises Lanesborough as a 'Self-Sustaining Town' with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base whilst also building on its location along the River Shannon and at the Longford–Roscommon border as a natural focal point for growth and investment. Lanesborough's location directly supports the case for the proposed amphitheatre, which would serve not only local residents but also attract audiences from a wider regional catchment across multiple counties."

The Longford County Development Plan 2021–2027 establishes clear policy objectives for Lanesborough as a Self-Sustaining Town, identifying it as both a population growth centre and a driver of economic development. The plan seeks to *"support the further development of Self-Sustaining Towns as key locations of population growth and as drivers of economic growth and prosperity"* and to *"promote consolidation in Self-Sustaining Towns coupled with targeted investment where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining settlements."*

Crucially, the plan also commits to *"support Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough as key tourism hubs within the County and wider region and the further integration of the centres as features of the wider tourism network."*

The proposed amphitheatre is fully consistent with the Longford County Development Plan 2021–2027, aligning with its objectives to strengthen Lanesborough as a self-sustaining town, drive economic growth, and enhance its role as a key tourism and cultural hub within the county and wider region

Longford County Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-29

The LECP aims to capitalise on the county's strengths, address challenges, and leverage opportunities with a vision that Longford is a location of choice to live, visit, learn, work and play. It sets out the framework needed to promote and support the County's economic development and local and community development over the 2023 – 2029 timeframe and identifies six key goals as follows:

Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.

Goal 2: Resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.

Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education, smart technology and digitalisation.

Goal 4: A strong economy, positioning Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.

Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, fostering climate action and building on Longford's strengths and resources.

The LECP recognises that over the last decade, County Longford has undergone notable transformations, witnessing the highest population growth rate in the country, a substantial net immigration, proportional increases in both young (aged 15 years and younger) and older (aged 65+) populations, a rise in the diversity of nationalities residing in the county, and a surge in employment rates. The proposed Lanesborough Amphitheatre aligns strongly with Longford's 2023-29 LECP by contributing to economic growth, cultural vibrancy, and community wellbeing. It supports the plan's goals by attracting visitors and enhancing Longford's cultural infrastructure, and providing an inclusive space that strengthens local identity and pride of place positioning Longford as a better location to visit and live.

Longford Tourism Strategy 2023-2027

The Longford Tourism Strategy's vision was to position Longford as a distinctive visitor destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands by growing visitor numbers, overnight stays, and spending in the county by leveraging its natural, cultural, and heritage assets.

A number of key strategic goals within the strategy include:

- Develop new tourism experiences by encouraging innovation, particularly outdoor recreation, greenways, and heritage-based attractions.
- Strengthen the events calendar: Support festivals, cultural events, and create year-round visitor draw.
- Maximise Longford's waterways especially Lough Ree and the Royal Canal, as central pillars of tourism growth.
- Sustainability focus: Develop tourism in an environmentally conscious way, reducing impacts while supporting communities.
- Build capacity in the sector: Support local tourism businesses and foster collaboration across stakeholders.

Key Opportunities Highlighted within the Strategy

- Growing daytrip and domestic market from Dublin/Leinster.
- International potential via Ireland's Hidden Heartlands branding.
- Underdeveloped cultural and events infrastructure (gap for larger venues).
- Need to create a "must-visit" attraction to compete with nearby counties (Roscommon, Westmeath, Leitrim).

The proposed amphitheatre in Lanesborough directly responds to the Longford Tourism Strategy's call to establish a signature "must-visit" attraction capable of competing with neighbouring counties. By filling the identified gap in cultural and events infrastructure, the amphitheatre will provide a unique outdoor venue that enhances Longford's visitor appeal. In addition, it will strengthen the county's annual events calendar, enabling the creation of new arts, music, and cultural programming that drives both day-trip and overnight visitation.

County Longford Arts Strategy 2023-2028

The Longford Arts Strategy 2023–2027 sets out a vision to strengthen the role of the arts as a driver of cultural vitality, community wellbeing, and local identity. Guided by the ethos *"Art for People, Art for Place,"* the strategy aims to ensure that every community in the county has access to high-quality arts experiences while also supporting artists to develop their practice in Longford.

The strategy is structured around six thematic pillars that shape its creative ambitions and implementation roadmap:

1. Arts Contribution to the Development and Promotion of County Longford
 - Embed the arts as a vital driver of social well-being, tourism, economic growth, and community development.
2. Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability
 - Use arts and culture to promote green awareness and align creative programming with environmental responsibility.
3. Connecting Artists and Citizens
 - Build stronger bonds between artists and the community through inclusive, participatory, and accessible arts engagement.
4. Collaboration and Engagement
 - Foster partnerships across public, creative, educational, and community sectors to amplify cultural reach and impact.
5. Infrastructure Development
 - Address the absence of large-scale arts infrastructure by investing in venues, outdoor spaces, and delivery platforms for performances and creative activity.

6. Supporting the Living Artist

- Provide financial, professional, and developmental support for local artists to sustain creative livelihoods and build capacity within the cultural economy.

By providing a new purpose-built outdoor venue it will create space for local artists, theatre groups, musicians, and community performers to showcase their work, directly nurturing creativity within the county. At the same time, the amphitheatre addresses the identified gap in cultural infrastructure by offering a flexible, high-capacity venue that can host large-scale performances and festivals, expanding access to the arts for both residents and visitors.

Lanesborough – Ballyleague Economic and Enterprise Development Strategy – 2021

The vision of the Lanesborough-Ballyleague Strategy was that by 2040 Lanesborough–Ballyleague will be *“a better place to live, work, visit, and study; a thriving, integrated, attractive town with sustainability at the heart of the economy; a hub for the Mid-Shannon area.”*

The strategy is structured around four enabling pillars:

- **A Better Place to Work & Learn** – fostering new opportunities in enterprise, food, energy, and co-working.
- **A Better Place to Live** – enhancing public realm, village vitality, and sense of place.
- **A Better Place to Visit** – maximising tourism through improved recreation infrastructure, wayfinding, visitor experiences and attractions.
- **Increase the Visibility of Lanesborough–Ballyleague** – developing digital marketing, branding, and promotional strategies

The proposed amphitheatre aligns with this vision by positioning Lanesborough–Ballyleague as a more visible and attractive destination, serving as a cultural landmark that draws visitors, enhances the town’s profile, and maximises tourism potential in the area.

Market and audience need

In order to understand the potential audience and community reach of the proposed amphitheatre, it is important to consider the existing facilities, educational network, and cultural infrastructure in Lanesborough and within the wider 40-mile catchment:

Community facilities within Lanesborough include:

- Education: Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (primary) and Lanesborough Community College (post-primary).

- Recreation & Sport: Local GAA grounds, soccer pitches, playgrounds, and the marina facilities along the Shannon.
- Culture & Community: The parish hall, library and churches
- Tourism & Leisure: The Lough Ree Access for All Boat, nearby fishing facilities, and walking trails connecting the town to its natural assets

Theatre Presence within 40-mile radius to Longford

- Backstage Theatre (Longford Town, Longford): This is one of the region's few professional-scale venues, offering a full schedule of theatre, dance, music, comedy, and community events.
- Dean Crowe Theatre & Arts Centre (Athlone, Westmeath): A notable regional venue, offering performances, community theatre, and workshops.
- Athlone Little Theatre (Westmeath): A long-standing local theatre established in 1936, known for community-driven productions and arts development.

Schools in Lanesborough

Lanesborough is home to two schools that form the core of the local education network:

- **Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (Lanesborough Primary School)** – 87 pupils (44 female, 43 male) enrolled for the 2024–25 academic year.
- **Lanesborough Community College (Post-Primary)** – 281 students (149 male, 132 female) enrolled for the 2024–25 academic year.

Together these schools represent the immediate educational catchment in Lanesborough. In addition to the local schools in Lanesborough, a wider analysis was carried out to identify all national schools within a 40-mile radius of Longford. The table below presents enrolment figures for these schools, providing an overview of the wider educational catchment and the potential youth and family audience base for the proposed amphitheatre.

Third Level Campuses

Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) – Athlone Campus (Athlone, Co. Westmeath) – the closest university campus, ~41 km by road from Lanesborough which hosts approximately 6,500 students. Consultation with TUS has confirmed that it is willing to consider the venue as a training and placement environment for students undertaking arts, tourism or environmental qualifications (given that the location is adjacent to Lough Ree and the River Shannon).

National Schools 40 Km Radius of Lanesborough

Schools in a 40km radius of Lanesborough are part of the potential audience for space and for events and productions delivered from it(as a base for school productions, prize giving)The following table sets out the schools in the catchment:

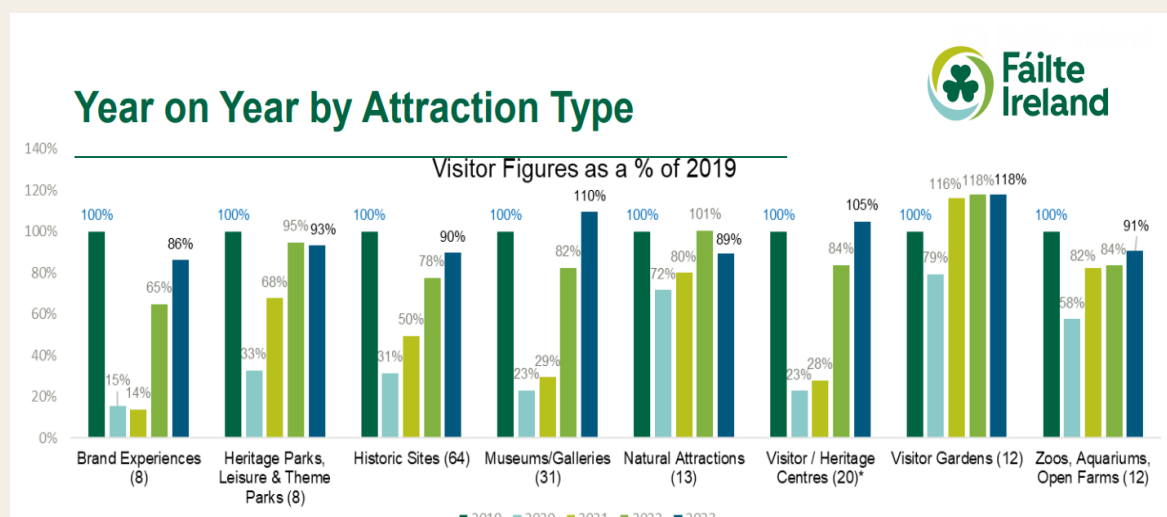
School Address	Total Number of Students	Distance from Lanesborough
St. Sinneach's National School Tennalick, Colehill, Co. Longford	103	25 min (27.9 km)
Fermoyle National School, (Newcomen), Lanesborough, Co. Longford, Ireland	119	6 min (5.6 km)
St. John's National School Ballinalee Road, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford, N39 F211, Ireland	66	27 min (28.3 km)
Scoil Bhride Glen, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford, N39 TD42, Ireland	43	27 min (28.3 km)
Ballyleague National School Ballyleague, Lanesborough, Co. Roscommon, N39 PX49, Ireland	71	2 min (1km)
Stonepark National School Stonepark, Co. Longford, Ireland	239	13 min (13.4 km)
St Joseph's National School Dublin Road, Longford, N39 DY23, Ireland	541	17 min (16.1 km)
Saint John's National School, Battery Rd, Abbeycartron, Longford, Ireland	66	18 min (19.0 km)

Melview National School Knockawalky, Longford, Ireland	309	21 min (21.9 km)
St Teresa's National School Clontumper, Co. Longford, Ireland	152	29 min (30.2 km)
Scoil Samhthann School Land, Ballinalee, Co. Longford, Ireland	152	29 min (30.8 km)
Bunlahy National School Bunlahy, Ballinalee, Co. Longford, Ireland	51	34 min (36km)
St Marys Mixed National School Drumlish, Co. Longford, Ireland	213	28 min (28.3km)
St Patrick's School Gaigue, Co. Longford, Ireland	60	33 min (33.8km)
St. Patrick's National School, Dromard	118	39 min (41.1km)
Total	2,303	

Existing Tourism Performance

A review of the 2023 Failte Ireland tourism performance data for 2023 provides an insight into tourism on the island and regionally and by county. An analysis of this data and its categorisation of attractions into eight category types provides some sense of current performance.

It establishes that the majority of visitors to attractions engage with historic sites that is just over 1/3 or 36%. Visitor/heritage centres at 17% and museums and galleries at 15% are the second and third most popular categories. The report notes that Ireland's Ancient East at 45% and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands at 42% have the highest proportion of historic sites compared to other regions. The following diagram establishes the specific performance of attraction sites during the 2019-2023 timeframe.



Visitor Origin and Profile

The report examines where visitors are from in respect of the national overview and the sub-regional branding consortia. Nationally 43% of visitors are from our way with 57% being international visitors (as would be expected the highest proportion of international visitors visit Dublin).

It is noted that Ireland's Hidden Heartlands has the highest amount of domestic visitors at 68% and only 32% of its visitors being international. There may be many factors which result in this position including: lack of product development, lack of joined up marketing... or sustained marketing investment; lack of visitor attractions which on their own right attract visitors once they have entered Ireland (are of a significant scale, vision, ambition to be the reason to travel to that area rather than something that you do when you get to that area).

The analysis also examines the attractions in County Longford and the numbers of people attending them. They are set out in the table below:

Attraction	2022	Type of Admission
Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre	14,487	Free
Knights and Conquest Heritage Centre	8,988	Fee charging
Maria Edgeworth Centre	1,830	Fee charging

The following table provides an overview of the visitor profile to Longford attractions and those outside the County but within a 40 Km radius to Lanesborough:

Name of Attraction	Total no. of Visitors per annum	Admission status Charge/Free	Opening Months	Distance from Lanesborough
Lough Ree Access For All Boat Trips	Approx. 1800 per year	Charge	Open all year	At Lanesborough
Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre	14,487 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	13.1 km (12 min)
Knights and Conquests Heritage Centre	8,988 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	40.8km (36 min)
Strokestown Park House & National Famine Museum	28,939 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	15.61km (15 min)
Athlone Castle Visitor Centre	34,879 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	40.3km (36 min)
Maria Edgeworth Centre	1,830 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	24.74km (22 min)
Derryglad Folk & Heritage Museum	1,606 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	45mins. 53.4km/33 miles
Elphin Windmill & Farm Museum	5,000 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	28.1km (26min)
Roscommon Co. Museum	2,126 (2023)	Free	May – Oct.	27.3 km (24 mins)
The Hill of Uisneach	10,000 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	40.5km (34 min)
Rathcroghan Visitor Centre	23,949 (2023)	Charge	Open all year	26.6km (23 min)
Centre Parcs Longford Forest	206,700 (April 2023-April 2024)	Charge	Open all year	23.5km (21 min)
Total	340,304			

Market Need Background

The market need for the proposed project is both local (local community organisations and schools as an example) and visitors to the County and the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands tourism region.

On that basis the context for demand is set by the current dynamic in those markets and the wider strategic direction being implemented by the organisations with leadership and market development roles and responsibilities.

Day Trip Market Overview

Day trips form a substantial segment of Ireland's domestic leisure market and represent a proportion of the potential audience base for regional attractions and events. Fáilte Ireland's *Day Trip Deep Dive – Consumer Planning & Insights* (2024) identifies day trips as a significant and consistent part of the Irish leisure market. Day trips are defined as visits for leisure, recreation, or social purposes that do not involve an overnight stay and typically take place within a two-hour travel radius from home. From the perspective of developing an amphitheatre in Lanesborough the market is likely to be in a 40-50 km radius from the town. They are a year-round activity, with general leisure trips peaking during the summer months, while trips to visit friends or relatives are more common in the winter period. The research finds that the majority of day-trippers travel in small family or friend groups, with convenience and travel time being key factors, with most are unwilling to travel more than 2 hours each way for a day trip.

General Leisure is the largest category of day trips in Ireland and shapes the seasonal pattern of overall day-trip activity. It accounts for 45% of all day trips, with public events such as sports fixtures, concerts, plays, and festivals making up 15% of total day-trip occasions. Attendance at public events remains relatively consistent year-round, ranging from 13–18% of trips. October records the highest share at 18%, while the summer months of May, June, and July average 16%. In contrast, the winter months see a slight drop, with public events accounting for around 13% of day trips. The proposal to develop the amphitheatre will seek to target the 15% who travel for concerts, plays and festivals.

Families represent the highest percentage of day trippers, accounting for 41% of the total attendance. Whilst unconstrained adults also make up a significant part of the total attendance, with 27% under the age of 45 and 32% over the age of 45. This spread indicates that the day trip audience is diverse in both age and life stage with both family groups seeking shared experiences.

Motivation for day trips are present year-round, with key themes such as Adventure, Exploration, and Bonding consistently attracting visitors. Adventure and Bonding were key themes during the summer months, whereas Exploration was more present in the Autumn months. Families are driven by bonding and adventure, with bonding being the most prevalent motivation for day trips at 26% showing a significant opportunity for families to create family moments outside of school, midterms and breaks. Unconstrained adults under 45 were motivated by adventure and social energy, whilst unconstrained adults 45+ saw a mix of exploration, social energy, and adventure. The Lanesborough amphitheatre proposal will provide a programme which focuses on the social energy motivation and the growing 45+ age group (tend to be more mobile and with disposable income).

Understanding the regional distribution of general leisure day trips provides insight into current visitor patterns and highlights potential areas for growth. Analysis of recent day trip data shows that Ireland's Ancient East attracts the largest share at 37%, followed closely by the Wild Atlantic Way at 36%. Dublin accounts for 23% of the most recent general leisure day trips, reflecting its role as both a population hub and a tourism centre. In contrast, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, which includes County Longford, records a smaller share at 4% of recent general leisure day trips. A significant proportion of these trips occur within the visitor's own county, with intra-county travel highest in Cork (51%), followed by Dublin (29%), Galway (30%), and Kildare (20%). While this represents a limited portion of the domestic day-trip market, it also indicates an opportunity for growth through the development and promotion of visitor experiences.

Travel time plays an important role in shaping general leisure day trips. The largest share of trips (42%) involves journeys of one to two hours each way, while 24% are completed in under an hour. Longer trips are less common, with 19% lasting between two and three hours and 14% exceeding three hours. This research suggests the importance of destinations being within a reasonable travel distance to help day trippers attend regularly. Furthermore, visitors on average spend at least 4 ³/₄ hours at their chosen destination. The consistency of time spent across different trip motivations suggests that most visitors have a clear idea of what feels like a comfortable day trip, typically around three to five hours on site, regardless of the purpose of their visit. This three-to-five-hour range is the most common duration, accounting for 36% of visits. Within this range, the highest proportions are seen for trips motivated by Exploration (44%), Bonding (41%), Celebration (35%), Reconnection (33%), Time Out (32%), Adventure (32%), and Social Energy (31%). This indicates that, regardless of purpose, most day-trippers tend to allocate a similar amount of time to their experience once on site.

Consumers most frequently cited the opportunity to explore further and positive past experiences as the primary reasons for returning for an overnight stay. Additional motivators included the atmosphere of the destination, its convenient location, and the appeal of taking a short break away from daily routines. Conversely, factors discouraging a return visit included proximity — where the location was considered close enough for a day trip — and cost considerations. Some respondents also felt that a day trip provided sufficient time to experience the destination, or that the location lacked enough attractions or activities to justify an overnight stay.

Arts Attendance Market Overview

Analysing and understanding the current market for arts events can help to provide context for assessing the potential market and audience for cultural infrastructure. The Arts Council's Arts Insights 2024 report offers plenty of information on who is engaging with the arts in Ireland, what artforms offer the largest attendances, and what motivates and prevents attendance.

The report highlights a very strong engagement with 83% of adults aged 16 and over attending any arts events within the last year. This marks a full recovery to pre-COVID levels, reaching the highest attendance rate since 82% in 2018. Attendance is dominated by accessible and performance-based art forms. Attendance has increased across almost all art forms, with Films, Rock music, and Plays among the most popular. Artforms such as Films, Plays, Musicals and Stand-up Comedy have increased from 6-8% each since 2023. Festival culture is particularly strong, with 53% of adults attending at least one festival in 2024.

The proposal to develop a 500 seater amphitheatre in Lanesborough creates a regionally significant outdoor performance space which can accommodate this range of performances.

The audience base is segmented, with Enthusiasts (highly engaged attendees) making up 20% of the population but accounting for over half (51%) of total arts attendance. These individuals are more likely to be under 50 (69%), female (54%), and urban-based (73%). Non-arts attendees who are willing to attend are more likely to be over 50, lower socio-economic bracket and are significantly less likely to have a family connection to the arts.

Motivations for attendance are varied but largely social and experiential. The most common reasons for participating in the arts are to have fun and enjoy oneself (59%), to spend time with friends and family (54%), and to see a specific performer or show (31%). Barriers remain present, with lack of time, cost, and limited choice or quality of events locally cited most frequently. Cost is a particular constraint for younger audiences, while older and rural audiences are more affected by availability and access issues.

The Lanesborough amphitheatre proposal will directly address the rural accessibility issues identified in the Arts Council's Insights 2024 report.

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Tourism and Travel Overview

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands (IHH) has continued to strengthen its profile as a distinctive regional tourism brand since its launch by Failte Ireland in 2018. Historically IHH attracts fewer overnight visitors compared to more established brands such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East, however the Hidden Heartlands is now gaining momentum through increased international exposure, targeted trade promotion, and the implementation of a dedicated regional tourism development strategy.

The region which promotes "slow adventures" along inland waterways, greenways and rural landscapes, recorded significant growth in its share of international visitors in 2023. According to Failte Ireland's Visitor Attractions Survey 2023, the IHH region increased visitor share from 21% in 2022 to 32% in 2023 – a notable increase and evidence of the brand's growing appeal in overseas markets. Overall visitor attraction in Ireland recovered to 95% of pre pandemic (2019) levels in 2023, with international visitors accounting for 57% of total attendance nationally. Within the Hidden Heartlands this recovery has a more balanced audience profile such as domestic day trippers and short break visitors while the international segment has grown significantly.

Furthermore, according to Failte Ireland's Key Tourism Facts 2023 Ireland's Hidden Heartlands attracted approximately 1.3 million domestic visitors, 357,000 overseas tourists, and 85,000 visitors from Northern Ireland, generating a combined revenue of 492 million (246m domestic, 224m overseas, 22m Northern Ireland). On average, visitors spent 2.5 nights domestically and 7.1 nights overseas, reflecting strong appeal as both a short break, and extended-stay destination. Notably, half of overseas holidaymakers were first time visitors to the region, with 23% visiting as holidaymakers were first time visitors to the region, with 23% visiting as holidaymakers and 62% visiting friends or family.

In 2024 the vast majority of visitors to the region were domestic tourists (76%) which underlines the importance of the home market in sustaining regional tourism. International visitors are steadily growing in significance with 11% coming from Britain, 5% from Mainland Europe, 3% from North America and 1% from other areas. The total number of visitors from these areas all increased from 2023 showcasing that Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is becoming a more appealing place for visitors overseas.

Tourism revenue in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands also demonstrated balanced growth in 2024. Domestic visitors accounted for 53% of total revenue (€326 million), while overseas tourists contributed 42% (€259 million), with both segments showing increases compared with 2023. Northern Ireland make up the remaining 5% of revenue increasing from €22 million in 2023 to €33 million in 2024.

The profile of domestic holidaymakers to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in 2024 shows a broad mix of audiences, with a particularly strong family market. Families accounted for 47% of holidaymakers, while unconstrained adults made up the remainder (21% under 45 and 32% over 45). In terms of age, the visitor base was relatively evenly spread across younger and middle-aged cohorts, with 28% aged 18–34, 28% aged 35–44, 15% aged 45–54, and 15% aged 55+. Travel parties were most commonly couples, representing 47% of all domestic holidaymakers, underlining the role of both family-oriented and couple-focused experiences in shaping demand.

Domestic holidaymakers to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in 2024 were drawn from across the country, reflecting the region's wide catchment appeal. Visitors originated primarily from the rest of Leinster (29%) and Dublin (22%), together accounting for just over half of the domestic market. Significant proportions also travelled from Munster (18%), Connacht/Ulster (15%), and Northern Ireland (15%), demonstrating that the region attracts both short-break travellers from nearby counties and longer-distance visitors from further afield. This geographic spread underlines the potential of the Hidden Heartlands to capture audiences from multiple regions, particularly the large Dublin and Leinster markets within easy driving distance.

Domestic holidaymakers were motivated to travel to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in 2024 for a variety of factors. The most common reason cited was bonding (23%), highlighting the importance of family and shared experiences. This was followed closely by adventure (22%) and social energy (19%), showing a strong appetite for active, engaging, and socially connected trips. Exploration (17%) also featured prominently, indicating demand for discovery of new places and experiences.

Domestic holidaymakers to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in 2024 engaged in different activities primarily in outdoor and leisure pursuits such as walking, swimming, and shopping, which were the most common activities across the region. Participation in arts and cultural experiences formed a smaller but significant part of the visitor profile: 12% attended a museum or art gallery, 10% attended a festival or event, and a further 7% attended a non-traditional festival or event.

The proposal to develop the amphitheatre in Lanesborough has the potential to expand the offer for the 10% who travel to attend a festival or event and the 7% who travel to attend a non-traditional festival or event.

Longford Tourism and Travel Overview

County Longford is one of the smallest counties in Ireland with a population of just over 46,000 people. Its demographic profile reflects a mix of young families and older cohorts, providing a balanced local audience base for family events and cultural programming. The county has experienced gradual population growth in recent years supported by improved transport and inward migration which has brought greater diversity and new cultural influences to the area.

Tourism performance in Longford has been modest compared to neighbouring counties. Data from Fáilte Ireland's *Irish Resident Travel by County 2023* indicates that Longford accounts for a relatively small share of domestic trips and limited overnight stays. In Roscommon and Longford 277 trips and 641 nights were recorded. The average length of stay was 2.3 nights with the annual spend recording €57 million. Many visitors arrive as day trip visitors from surrounding counties from nearby counties such as Cavan, Roscommon, Leitrim and Westmeath. This underperformance highlights a clear gap in the Longford's visitor economy however provides a significant opportunity to increase visitation, local spend, and length of stay.

According to Fáilte Ireland's *Annual Visitor Attractions Survey 2023*, Longford's visitor attractions remain relatively modest compared to other counties, but they highlight some of the county's key attractions such as Longford's cultural and heritage offer. The Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre attracted 14,487 visitors, reflecting interest in Longford's unique archaeological and historical assets. The Knights and Conquests Heritage Centre in Granard welcomed 8,988 visitors, while the Maria Edgeworth Centre recorded 1,830 visitors, underscoring the niche but important role of literary heritage in the county. These figures point to a visitor economy anchored in heritage interpretation and community-based attractions, but with no single high-capacity cultural draw. This illustrates both the existing appetite for cultural experiences in Longford and the opportunity to diversify the county's tourism portfolio with new event-based infrastructure capable of attracting larger audiences.

Culturally, Longford benefits from strong participation in the arts, particularly in amateur drama, traditional music, and community festivals. The county is home to established venues such as Backstage Theatre in Longford town which is an indoor theatre which hosts a range of cultural events on a regular basis prominently in months September to May. However, there is currently a lack of an outdoor venue that can accommodate larger performances, festivals, and public gatherings. This gap in infrastructure limits the scale and diversity of events that can be delivered locally.

The promoter has an aspiration to use the investment to add to the quality of life for the citizens of Lanesborough and its hinterland and to improve the experience of people who already use or visit the site in which the amphitheatre will be developed. On that basis the market is defined by the function of site and where it is positioned.

Lanesborough is strategically located on the Shannon and Lough Ree and is becoming more accessible through the ongoing development of the greenway network.

The delivery of tier 1 events at the amphitheatre will seek to attract visitors to the river, Lough greenways and existing tourism attractions in a 40k radius of Lanesborough.

Key Design Considerations, Operational Capacities and Visitor Flow

The commercial plan has generated information which can be used by the architect led design team to influence the design of the proposed amphitheatre in Lanesborough so that:

- It integrates with the settlement and especially the natural assets adjacent to it i.e., Lough Ree, the River Shannon, walkways and forestation in addition to the existing play area and car parks
- From a functional point of view, it creates as little disruption for its neighbours (especially the housing development adjacent to it)
- It can meet the needs of both significant touring productions and that of local community groups and organisations
- It removes potential barriers for touring productions...in simple terms, it becomes recognised as an easy venue to set up

The direction on design has been developed through:

- Engagement with the local community and representatives of the organisations in that community (including existing users of the site)
- A review of ten existing and sustainable amphitheatre and outdoor performance spaces in and external to the island of Ireland (overview included as Appendix A)
- Engagement with an events specialist who has experience of supporting productions in formal and informal outdoor venues across the island of Ireland
- Engagement with the market

These engagements have identified a number of key directions for the architect led design team (de Blacam and Meagher ARCHITECTS). Based on the feedback provided the following table sets out design guidance against the following:

- Site integration
- Sound and Lighting/Tech Support
- Hospitality
- Services

Theme	Design guidance
Site integration	All of the engagement underpinning the commercial plan has referenced the strategic location of the proposed site for the amphitheatre(from County and regional perspectives) and where it is positioned in Lanesborough in relation to the town centre and the wider community spaces. There is a clear consensus that the investment in the project presents the opportunity to enhance what is already in Lanesborough and especially the facilities leading to and providing access to Lough Ree and the River Shannon. The commercial success of the project and its sustainability will be impacted by how it integrates with the wider site and the range of functions the site provides for both visitors and the local community. The development of this commercial plan has established the following direction in respect of the site integration:

Theme	Design guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of the amphitheatre should be set in the context of a masterplan for the site which references the existing facilities on the wider site and the functions and services it provides. This includes the community centre on the entrance to the site, the toilet block on the right hand side of the entrance road(and adjacent car parking) the play park, the significant green area to the right hand side leading to the mooring area and access to Lough Ree(which also benefits from car parking. It should also reference the existing walkways with the entrance point at the opening into the former quarry and now site for the amphitheatre • The site masterplan should consider a strategic approach to signage from the town and to the wider site including the amphitheatre; this might include a mix of branded orientation signage combined with interpretative panels or signage which tells the story of the areas rich biodiversity assets(this can also support the use of the amphitheatre as an outdoor education space of the three schools in Lanesborough and Ballyleague and the 50 schools in a 40km radius from the site • The site masterplan process should include engagement with existing event's organisers and users on/off the site to examine how the site to determine how investment in the amphitheatre space and supporting infrastructure can also add value to their experience on the site and the quality of any events they deliver(e.g. Gaelforce).This could include signage, storage, securing the site, toilets and accessible/changing places toilets, showers, presentation space and orientation points • The site landscaping should be incorporated into landscaping on the main and adjacent site so that from a 'sense of arrival' perspective the site has a connected visual presentation and a sense of integration. This is also important as it will form the visual definition of the visitor flow from the town to the wider site and then to the security screened venue(for ticketing purposes).
Amphitheatre Design	There is consensus that the design should be for a permanent structure which provided seats for events of up to 500 people. This is seen as a complementary scale to the existing theatre

Theme	Design guidance
	<p>space provided by Backstage Theatre in Longford Town(240 seater).This would provide an alternative performance space for the County an allow it to attract acts(music, dance, musical theatre and drama) which require a medium scale(400-500) space to make the production viable. Backstage has confirmed that it receives requests from productions requiring this scale of space and at this point it cannot accommodate them. Several points have been raised in the development of this commercial plan in respect of the design of the amphitheatre space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 seats with a design that allows it to function as a recreational/public realm space or family space between performances and events • Integration of the green/brown space from the entry point to the quarry and to the back of the formal amphitheatre so that it can be used as spill over area for patrons for music and other events for which patrons may want a non-seated option(thus expanding the event scale and capacity) • Permanent weather cover for the performers(designed in such a way that it may contribute to sound mitigation for the private dwellings adjacent to the back wall of the quarry and what will be the behind stage area of the amphitheatre) • In addition to using design to mitigate noise the process also identified that some policies should be set by the ClG which will manage the performance venue in relation to acceptable sound levels and timing of events(say a 11.30pm cut off) • Consideration of a semi-permanent wet weather cover for the seating • Consideration of the positioning of stancions, lighting/sound pillars and any columns so that they do not impede the views of patrons as this eventually ends up with seats not being booked as regular patrons recognise that their views will be restricted. In simple terms it

Theme	Design guidance
	<p>removes a percentage seat and therefore impacts negatively on earning potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that whatever provision for a greenroom/dressing or costume space and artist preparation and changing/hospitality space is adjacent to the stage area and provides an element of privacy from patrons. This might also incorporate a site management area and a first aid room. A space of 20 M2 is deemed sufficient • Storage should be provided adjacent to the amphitheatre and should be waterproof and designed in a manner that people cannot use it inappropriately when there is no event activity at the site(e.g. people climbing on it).A 14 M2 container is deemed sufficient
Sound and Lighting/Tech Support	<p>There is a recognition that the specification of lighting and sound infrastructure is set in a context including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closer that the amphitheatre can get to a 'plug and play' provision the more attractive it will be to productions and artists • Equally technology advances every 2-4 years so too much up-front investment might end up redundant or obsolete • Hire and outright purchase are both options(and the best option may be dictated by where the Council can source funding) • Some artists and performances prefer to use their own equipment • At a minimum the amphitheatre should provide a sound and lighting booth(6-8 M2) • At a minimum there should be a pa and lighting system that local groups can use(for tier 2 events)
Hospitality	<p>The site masterplan should consider where food and drink concessions are located.</p>

Theme	Design guidance
	<p>This consideration should consider wider site events which include the use of the wider site and the amphitheatre and others where the amphitheatre is managed as a closed performance and event space(fenced off).</p> <p>There is a preference to ensure that some of the hospitality is accessed in the town, and this might be facilitated by events planning in addition to signage.</p> <p>The site design should incorporate some service points for vendors and adjacent recycling facilities(which can be accessed by wider site users).</p>
Services	<p>Whilst the amphitheatre will be used on an occasional basis(6-10 times per annum) for tier 1 and 2 events there was consistent feedback that it has the potential to provide services which support the functionality of the wider site on an all year round basis...this recognises that it already serves the needs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and families in Lanesborough (as a causal recreational amenity space and play area) • Individuals and teams using the area for sports and physical activity including running and swimming and water sports(in Lough Ree) • 55 boats moored at the marina in Ballyleague(adjacent and connected town in Co Roscommon) • 650 per annum hire cruiser and private boats which exit the River Shannon • Motorhomes stopping off in the carpark adjacent to Lough Ree (estimated at 300 stop overs per annum) • Participants in existing events on the site(e.g. 700 people participate in Gaelforce per annum with an estimated 1500 spectators and support team in attendance) <p>Feedback also recognises that there is an existing (masonry built)toilet block off the entrance road to the site and adjacent to the first carpark and public play area.</p>

Theme	Design guidance
	<p>Based on the feedback from stakeholders, a review of the experience of precedent amphitheatre and outdoor performance projects and broad industry guidelines the design process should seek to provide events toilets for tier 1 events as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowance of one portable toilet per 75 people where food and alcohol are served. If the maximum seating capacity is 500 but use of the wider site or the area leading up to the amphitheatre is used for patrons, the maximum capacity is up to 1000. Therefore the design should allow for up to 13 portable toilets <li>• Two of the portable toilets provided during tier 1 events should be accessible <p>The specification above is deemed appropriate at an initial phase one investment stage. Feedback indicates that as the project develops it would add value to the overall site to add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full changing places specification toilet at a location which would service both the amphitheatre and the wider site users <li>• Showering facilities which would meet the needs of people staying overnight at events and performances in addition to motorhome visitors, people engaging in water based activities (including Gaelforce)

Outline Operational Plan

This section of the commercial plan sets out how the promoter and the project stakeholders will govern the amphitheatre project.

Operating model, staffing and governance

This section of the commercial plan for the proposed Lanesborough Amphitheatre project focuses on the governance and management of the amphitheatre. There is a clear recognition from all stakeholders that focusing, solely, on the capital investment is not sufficient to deliver a project which can meet the stated vision and outcomes.

As part of the process leading to the development of the commercial plan Venture engaged with nine existing amphitheatres and outdoor performance venues across Ireland and external to it. The rationale for undertaking these engagements was to learn from these existing outdoor performance spaces and identify the key determinants for their success post-capital investment. A common theme from these engagements was that the sustainable amphitheatres and outdoor performance areas are underpinned by:

- An appropriate governance vehicle (typically a company limited by guarantee or trust)
- An appropriate range of people in governance roles; in simple terms a mix of directors or trustees with sufficient skills to manage, promote, market, operate and sustain the venue
- A clear operational management structure aligned with and reporting to the governance structure
- A clear understanding of the resources required to operate the amphitheatre

As part of the process of developing the commercial plan a number of governance and management options have been developed and considered by the project stakeholders including:

- Longford County Council (Arts and Tourism)
- Community stakeholders in Lanesborough
- Backstage Theatre in Longford Town
- The Just Transitions Activator

In line with the standard approach to appraisal of projects seeking public sector investment (the Public Spending Code Appraisal or PSCA). The options are detailed with an independent assessment of their relative strengths and constraints. The stakeholders were facilitated to examine that independent analysis, add to it and ultimately agree the most appropriate governance and management approach for

the proposed investment in the amphitheatre in Lanesborough. This was achieved by assessing each of the four options against a number of agreed appraisal criteria.

The following options were identified and appraised:

- Option 1: Council Governed and Managed
- Option 2: Establish A Locally Led Community Limited Company (CLG)
- Option 3: New Community Limited Company with a SLA Management Arrangement with Backstage Theatre
- Option 4: As above with Procured Operational Management

The following tables set out a description and independent analysis of the four options:

Option 1: Governed and Managed by Longford County Council

Description: In option 1 the Council would take on full responsibility for the governance and management of the amphitheatre. This would entail:

- Employing an Events Manager and including the animation and management of the space as part of their job description (Appendix B contains a Job Description for the role)
- Agreeing an annual programme of events/performances which have the potential to impact on the County's arts and tourism objectives
- Promoting the amphitheatre space and each event hosted by it
- Managing ticketing
- Liaise with event's organisers/touring productions to provide security, logistics, technical requirements
- Facilitate concessions for drink and hospitality
- Engage with the local community to ensure they are involved and have the potential to benefit

Option 1 presents the following strengths:

- It does not require the establishment of a new company or trust to manage the project
- Council already has responsibility for arts and tourism, and it can manage the project to deliver impact in both of these areas of its work

Option 1 presents the following constraints:

- Management of events/performance space is not a core Council function; it does not have the skills, experience, networks or connections required to effectively govern or manage the investment in the amphitheatre. This creates a risk that the capital investment does not deliver on the vision and outcomes in addition to project viability/financial sustainability
- If Council is to employ an Events Manager for the County this post should be a strategic role with a County wide focus. Option 1 would divert this role to a semi-full time management function for the amphitheatre
- Council could not avail of all of the capital (for ongoing additions to the amphitheatre assets) or revenue funding (for marketing, operational costs, animation and programming) which might be available to a separately constituted CLG
- There is a risk that the local community does not have a 'voice' or role in the decisions related to the amphitheatre and become alienated from it ... it becomes viewed as 'done onto them rather than with them'

Option 2: Establish a Local Led Community Limited Company (CLG)

Description: Option 2 would involve the Council facilitating local community leaders to establish a new community owned company (CLG) to lead and manage the amphitheatre. Council would provide a long lease of the land, amphitheatre and associated rights of way to that company.

The directors of the company would be responsible for all aspects of governance and management including:

- Adhering to all of the governance responsibilities of a company including annual returns, insurances, employee terms and conditions, conditions of letters of offers
- Agreeing the annual programme
- Applying for revenue funding to help promote, develop and deliver events
- Engaging with the promoters and events managers(including community organisations)
- Promoting the amphitheatre space and each event hosted by it
- Managing ticketing
- Liaise with event's organisers/touring productions to provide security, logistics, technical requirements
- Liaise with local event organisers(e.g. Gaelforce) to help develop their offer through the development of an entertainment element of it
- Facilitate concessions for drink and hospitality
- Secure local volunteer input to the management and delivery of events and provide supervision, training and support for the volunteers
- Work with local landowners to secure land for parking and camping

Option 2 presents the following strengths:

- It ensures that the local community are fully involved in the management of the amphitheatre ... and have a sense of ownership
- It should prove easier to get the local community involved in the project as volunteers
- The project can meet the needs of local organisations (clubs/schools) and events

Option 2 presents the following constraints:

- The majority of the members of the Lanesborough community have little relevant experience in the governance and management of a specialised events/performance space such as an amphitheatre
- The new directors will not have the connections with agents/promoters or artists required to develop a strong annual programme which appeals to the local community, Longford County citizens and the wider Ireland's Hidden Heartlands regional catchment

- There is a risk that the project loses sight of its vision and becomes locally focused rather than part of a County and regional vision which also meets local needs
- The new community owned company is unlikely to have the working capital required to fully resource the promotion and development of its audience over the first five years; without this it is unlikely that the project can meet its vision and desired outcomes
- In the eyes of the Community the Council may be perceived as having led the investment but not having the long term commitment to creating the conditions for the project to be successful
- The animation of the performance space will not necessarily contribute to County or regional visions for arts and tourism

Option 3: New Community Limited Company with a SLA Management Arrangement with Backstage Theatre

Option 3 would mean that the Council and its stakeholders would establish a new CLG to provide the governance vehicle for the amphitheatre. The directors of the CLG would reflect the vision for the project and its aspiration to become regionally significant and yet meet local needs. The Board will reflect:

- Council responsibilities and direction for arts and tourism(perhaps regional for tourism)
- Council Events Manager(should LCC progress with an appointment of an Events Manger)
- Backstage Theatre representation
- Community representation

In respect of good governance it might seek Directors with technical skills or experience including:

- Financial management
- Legal
- Risk management/event management
- Marketing and promotion
- Human resource management
- The new CLG would enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Backstage Theatre to manage tier 1 events (Appendix C contains the SLA)

Option 3 presents the following strengths:

- This option provides a balance between the governance(CLG) and operational requirements(Backstage)
- It addresses the weakest element of the project, the lack of operational experience and connection with the market
- It ensures that the implementation of the vision and concept helps deliver on the wider arts and tourism agenda (County and regional) and has a strong local connection and influence
- Backstage's peak responsibilities for productions in its theatre in Longford is September to May whilst the amphitheatre will be across the summer period

Option 3 presents the following constraints:

- It is acknowledged that Backstage cannot deliver the operational requirements within its current resources
- It is only deliverable if it is an element of Backstages' Strategic Plan

Option 4: As above with Procured Operational Management

Option 4 is the same option as Option 3 with the exception that the operational management of the amphitheatre will not be undertaken by Backstage Theatre via a Service Level Agreement(SLA).

In option 4 the operational management responsibilities will be undertaken by an organisation(community or private) which will be engaged via a procurement exercise.

Option 4 presents the following strengths:

- It brings the same level of governance and leadership to the project and has representation from all key stakeholders both at County/regional and Lanesborough levels
- It creates the opportunity to access the experience, network and resources of an established events organiser and manager
- If performance targets are agreed the provider can be removed if their performance falls below expectations

Option 4 presents the following constraints:

- This option will require the new CLG to undertake a RFQ process; there is no guarantee that this will identify an appropriate operational partner
- There is no guarantee that the appointed operational manager will have a commitment to the County or to Lanesborough
- This may be one of many responsibilities so their focus on the Lanesborough may become diluted
- There is less control over the type of events promoted and their impact on the Lanesborough community
- There is a risk that local service suppliers may not have the opportunity to become part of the amphitheatre supply chain
- It is less likely that the external provider will buy into the wider strategic vision for arts, tourism and events across the County and region. This would mean that the vision and outcomes would not be fully delivered, and the impact of the capital investment diluted

Appraisal of the Options

The tables above detail the four options for governance and management of the amphitheatre and establish the known strengths and constraints of each.

The stakeholders considered the options against the following appraisal factors:

1. Potential to deliver on the vision and outcomes
2. An integrated and strategic approach to performance space provision and the development and delivery of events
3. Creation of the conditions for a sustainable strategic performance space for the County (whilst meeting local needs)
4. Creation of the conditions for community engagement and benefits
5. Potential to attract additional public funding to promote and animate the space

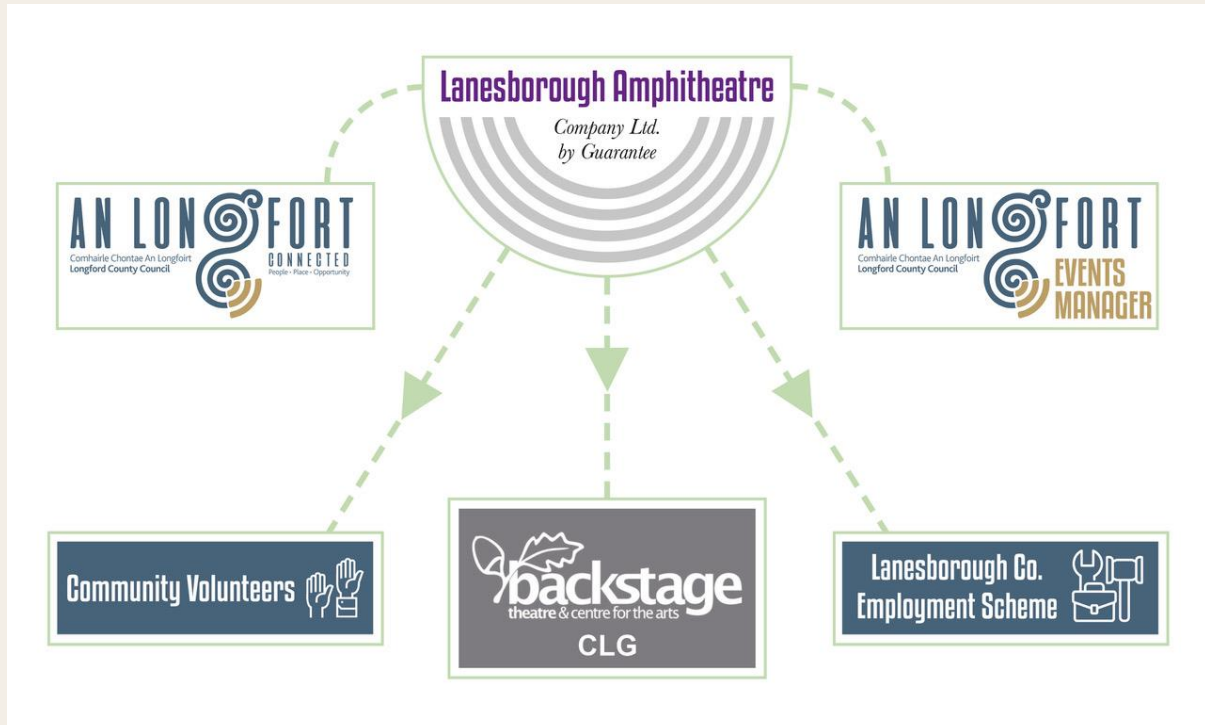
The following table summaries the output of the assessment of the four options against the five criteria. Each of the four options have been scored out of 10 against each of the criterion. The performance of the options against the scoring matrix is :

Criterion	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Potential to deliver on the vision and outcomes	5	3	8	6
An integrated and strategic approach to performance space provision and the development and delivery of events	8	3	9	5
Creation of the conditions for a sustainable strategic performance space for the County (whilst meeting local needs)	3	2	7	4

Creation of the conditions for community engagement and benefits	5	8	8	3
Potential to attract additional public funding to promote and animate the space	3	6	7	3
Total Score	24	22	39	21
Rank	2	3	1	4

On the basis of the assessment process the stakeholders have agreed to progress with option 3.

The implementation of option 2 will create the following governance and operational management structure for the amphitheatre project:



The following table sets out the responsibilities of each element of the governance and management structure:

Element	Responsibilities
Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG	<p>The CLG will have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a strategy for the amphitheatre • Implementing this commercial plan (updating it annually based on performance feedback) • Establishing the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Backstage Theatre CLG • Ensuring that all appropriate consents, legal agreements and policies are in place • Carrying out an annual review of performance against the Service Level Agreement targets with Backstage Theatre Company • Identifying opportunities for additional revenue funding to support the development of the annual programme • Ensuring the strategic linkages and coordination between art and tourism at a County, Ireland's hidden heartlands and local Lanesborough levels
Longford County Council	<p>Longford County Council will have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To appoint appropriate officers to the board of Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG • To apply for Part 8 planning for the proposed amphitheatre project • To liaise with the architect led design team to formalise the concept and designs post any advice or direction from the Part 8 planning application process • Secure capital cost projections for the final design option • Lead the processes required to make formal capital funding applications to RRDF or Just Transitions funding schemes • Subject to a full funding package being in place, carry out a contractor procurement process in line with the Council's procurement guidelines and policies • Manage the capital delivery phase of the project

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to the employment of an events manager ensuring that the development of an events programme at Lanesborough Amphitheatre is part of that postholder's job description • Fund the balance required to sustain the development of the amphitheatre over years 1 to 5
Longford County Council Events Manager	<p>Longford County Council's Events Manager will have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and secure agreement on a Longford County events strategy and annual delivery plan • Ensure that Tier 1 events in Longford are in the Lanesborough Amphitheatre are factored into the Council's events strategy and annual plan • Work with Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG to identify production revenue funding opportunities through public funding or sponsorship • Ensure that the annual programme is coordinated with over key events including Gaelforce • Provide support to the local community and its organisations to lead and deliver on Tier 2 events
Backstage Theatre	<p>Backstage Theatre CLG will have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To lead on the development and delivery of the Lanesborough Amphitheatre's Tier 1 events annually across the duration of the Service Level Agreement • Take responsibility for engaging with artists and performers and securing date commitments and input to proposed events • Carry out all marketing and promotional activities for the annual agreed Tier 1 events • Provide ticketing support and revenue handling • Liaise with brought in services and the local community to ensure the smooth delivery of each Tier 1 event • Provide a performance report post each Tier 1 event to the Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG
Lanesborough Community Employment Scheme	<p>The Lanesborough Community Employment Scheme will have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake all site maintenance and caretaking • Support installation and take down activities • Support the delivery of Tier 2 events

Lanesborough Community Volunteers	Local Volunteers will have the following responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a lead in the delivery of tier 2 events • Provide support in the areas of stewarding, experience making and orientation
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Developing an operations manual

The stakeholders have agreed a preferred option for the governance and operational management of the project (Option 3). This engages Backstage Theatre with experience of managing the theatre from 1995. It focuses on developing and delivering an annual programme in its 212 seater auditorium in addition to managing outdoor performances and events.

It will be engaged via a Service Level Agreement to deliver an agreed number of tier 1 events per annum in the Lanesborough Amphitheatre.

In doing so the amphitheatre project will become fully integrated into the operational systems and processes developed and refined by Backstage Theatre from 1995 including those for:

- Developing an annual programme
- Identifying and booking acts and performances
- Marketing, promotion and ticket management
- Budgeting and revenue management
- Technical assessment and management of events sound and lighting
- Risk assessment and health and safety
- Events monitoring and evaluation
- Engaging service suppliers

Measurement – of performance and risks

The measurement of performance and risk responsibility lies with the Board of the newly formed Company limited by Guarantee. To ensure that performance and risk are managed and therefore good governance is applied to the project, a number of key actions will be undertaken.

The Board will adopt this commercial plan. It recognises, based on the smart objectives included in it, that the amphitheatre will be available for programming in the year commencing 2029. Therefore it will carry out the following actions:

- It will revisit the financial assumptions and projections contained in the commercial plan. Allowing for elapsed time, it will update them and agree these as the key targets for audience, income, operational costs and surplus/deficit.
- Based on the Service Level Agreement appended to this commercial plan, it will work with Backstage Theatre to translate the first year of the commercial plan into an operational plan for year 1 (i.e. 2029). Targets will be agreed for each of the three Tier 1 events including those for audience numbers, revenues generated from ticket sales, any non-ticket revenue incomes and operational costs.
- As part of the SLA, Backstage Theatre will be required to provide an event plan in advance of each of the Tier 1 events and complete a post-event report setting out the performance against these targets.
- On an annual basis, the Board of the CLG will review the performance of the Tier 1 events collaboratively with Backstage Theatre and identify how opportunities for improvement in performance and event quality can be integrated into the annual plan for the incoming year.

Based on the principles of good governance, the Board of the CLG will seek to identify risks and maintain a live risk register which ensures that they are aware of them, the responsibility for managing that risk is identified and appropriate risk mitigation strategies are agreed and actioned.

Based on the work developing the commercial plan, the promoters have identified a number of risks leading up to the capital delivery of the project and which require to be addressed to create the conditions for a successful project post capital delivery. They are set out in the table below:

Risk	Risk description and mitigation
1	Lack of appropriate governance and leadership: a review of precedent projects has identified the importance of strong governance and leadership as being central to creating the conditions for a successful amphitheatre project or outdoor performance space. The vision, outcomes and objectives set out in the commercial plan confirm that there is an expectation that the project will deliver benefits at regional,

	<p>county and local (Lanesborough) levels. It cannot achieve these benefits if it does not have representative and strategic leadership.</p> <p>The governance and leadership risk has been addressed through the proposal to establish a new company limited by guarantee which includes representatives of key stakeholders. This includes Longford County Council's representatives for the arts and tourism, the Longford County Events Manager, a representative of Backstage Theatre, a technical expert in relation to events management, and representatives of the Lanesborough community.</p>
2	<p>Lack of operational experience: the engagement with other precedent projects confirms strong operational leadership is central to the effective implementation and management of the project. The promoters propose to address this through the engagement of Backstage Theatre as the experienced manager of Longford County's main performance venue (i.e. Backstage Theatre in Longford Town). This will be done through the appended Service Level Agreement.</p> <p>It will have responsibility for leading and managing the delivery of three tier 1 events in years 1-3 and then four in year 4, five in year 5 and six in year 6.</p>
3	<p>Lack of a local engagement in the project: The rationale for the proposed investment in the Lanesborough amphitheatre is to support the economy of the area to transition from its historical reliance on the ESB peat powered generation station to a balanced economy which includes a growing reliance on tourism and hospitality with the project helping to create the conditions to attract additional visitors.</p> <p>To ensure that the local community is centrally involved in the project and has a voice in its governance and implementation the local community has been engaged in the development of the commercial plan and will be represented on the Board of the Lanesborough Amphitheatre ClG. In addition the local employment scheme will provide input to the maintenance and caretaking of the facility (creating local employment).</p> <p>The annual programme of events in the amphitheatre will focus on providing events designed to attract visitors to the County and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands catchment (tier 1 events) and local community events including schools, festive and cultural and local fundraising (tier 2). This ensures that the project has a balance between its strategic vision and its locally focused outcomes.</p>

4	<p>Understanding of Market and the Management of the New Outdoor Performance Venue: All of the stakeholders recognise that it is important to take a prudent approach to the management of the amphitheatre as a new regional outdoor performance venue. The development of the governance and management systems will take place to become fully embedded and effective(given that the project requires collaborative working across a range of stakeholders).Based on the direction from the existing outdoor performance venues engaged to inform this commercial plan it takes a period of time to understand the market(need for test marketing to understand the types of events which can deliver on the vision and outcomes) and develop an annual programme which meets its expectations. To manage the risk of putting too much pressure on the systems and processes or to invest in a full annual programme without a detailed understanding of the market the promoters are commencing with a three year 'Soft Launch and Learn' approach scheduling three tier 1 events per annum across years 1-3(50% of the eventual targets).This allows all of the stakeholders to develop their collaborative working arrangements, the events management systems and to test the market to refine the annual programme.</p>
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Revenue Generation and Sales Activation Action Plan

Sales and marketing activities will generate the revenues set out in the attached financial assumptions and projections. The promoters and stakeholders have agreed a preferred option for the governance and operational management of the project which involves engaging Backstage Theatre through a Service Level Agreement (SLA). This brings with it its experience since 1995 in the marketing and promotion of an annual programme of events and performances in its theatre in Longford Town.

It is proposed that the tier 1 events scheduled in the Lanesborough Amphitheatre will be the responsibility of Backstage Theatre from a sales and marketing perspective. On that basis it will undertake the following:

- Post the capital delivery of the amphitheatre (scheduled for end of 2027), Backstage Theatre will begin to engage with the market, artists, performers and agent in 2026 to identify acts for the 2028 and 2029 programmes

- It will integrate these within its overall sales, marketing, promotion and communication plans for Backstage Theatre
- A specific marketing and promotional plan will be developed for each of the tier 1 events focusing on the target market and a promotional mix to ensure that the target audience is engaged

Central to the project development process and the development of this commercial plan has been an engagement with ten existing amphitheatre and outdoor performance spaces. Part of that process was to capture learning in relation to how they developed their project and brought it to its peak trading position. Feedback from these projects was that it takes a period of between five to seven years to fully understand the market and develop an annual programme which meets the market's expectations and which can generate repeat bookings. In addition their feedback confirmed that for many their initial approach was to try and schedule a full programme from year one. However, for most this proved to be overly ambitious and placed significant pressure on the project promoters (often led by volunteers) and on the available working capital. Based on this feedback, the promoters of the Lanesborough Amphitheatre have agreed to take a "Soft Launch and Learn" strategy across years one to three. Rather than trying to deliver up to six tier 1 events per annum from year one, they will focus on delivering three tier 1 events annually for years 1-3 underpinned by significant performance analyses and evaluation. This will be used to:

- Learn more about the market and fully understand the experience of the patrons so that decisions around the management of the amphitheatre as a performance venue and the annual programme can be taken on board
- To ensure that stakeholders learn how to collaborate in a way which ensures that the vision and outcomes stated in this commercial plan are realised

Sales generation targets have been established through the assessment of the market, engagement with precedent projects and on the basis of backstage knowledge of the market across County Longford. They are articulated in the following table:

Target Market	Market Assessment	Sales Projections
Visitors to Irelands Hidden Heartlands	An assessment of the market confirms that Irelands Hidden Heartlands attracts 1.3 million visitors per annum with 10% attending a festival or event and 7% attending a non-traditional festival event. At 10% this equates to 130,000 visitors which might have an interest in the amphitheatre offer. With a projected three tier 1 events per annum across years 1-3 and a maximum capacity of $500 \times 3 = 1500 \times 2 \text{ days} = 3000$. Given that this market is projected at 40% of tier 1 ticket sales this equals less than 1% of visitors to the region who have a interest in and pay for tickets for events and festivals	40% of the audience for tier 1 events x an average of €25 per ticket x 415 ticket sales per event (assuming that not all shows sell out) x 2 nights = €8,300 per annum
County/40Km Radius	There are 12 tourist attractions within a 40k catchment which attract 340,304 visitor annually. Backstage Theatre has a track record and visibility in the County from 1995 so it is reasonable to expect that it can draw existing patrons to tier 1 performances in Lanesborough.	60% of the audience for tier 1 events x an average of €25 per ticket x 415 ticket sales per event (assuming that not all shows sell out) x 2 nights = €12,750 per annum
Local	Central to the vision for the amphitheatre is its role as a local venue and performance space to support a minimum of three tier 2 events per annum rising to six by year 6. Local consultation identifies a need for 1 x school event/performance per annum: 1 x Local Club or Charity Fundraiser and 1 x thematic event (Christmas or Halloween). There are 14 National Schools with 2303 pupils in a 40K catchment which have an interest in using the space for prize giving and school performances (especially the two in Lanesborough and Ballyleague)	Ticket cost projected @ €10 x 100 people x up to 6 events per annum (year 6 and ongoing)

Financial Assumptions and Projections

This section of the commercial plan establishes the financial baselines for the project and provides an assessment of operational viability and sustainability. The assessment has included establishment of baselines consistent with precedent projects where similar lettable space is evident and a full consideration of current and future facility users by way of need and demand appraisal.

Using these baselines, a 5-year projection of cashflows, profitability and balance sheets have been prepared which establish the conditions for the projects' viability and sustainability following capital investment.

A summary of the assumptions and baseline data used to underpin the financial forecasts is set out, below.

Assumptions to Financial Forecasts

Baseline Assumptions

- All calculations are in € [Euros]
- The project commencement date of April 2026 reflects the post capital investment stage of the project i.e., its trading stage following investment [the details of the capital investment for the project is established in an opening balance sheet in the financial forecasts]
- All costs and incomes are presented net of Vat
- Sales from trading activity are assumed to include 75% within 30 days and 25% within 60 days
- Expenditure is payable at 75% within 30 days and 25% within 60 days [relating to costs associated with running community events]
- Bank overdraft interest rate assumed at 10%
- Schedules of income, variable overheads, fixed overheads, staffing, capital costs & funding are set out below

Capital Cost Assumptions:

The capital costs for the project have been independently developed by the architect led design team.

The design team presents a project capital cost element of €1,425,600 net of vat.

Project cost elements	Total [€]
Capital delivery	800,000
Fixtures & fittings	300,000
Preliminaries	100,000
Contingency [10%]	120,000
Fees [8%]	105,600
	1,425,600

Capital Funding Assumptions

The project is the subject of a number of capital income assumptions and applications, as follows:

Potential Funders	Potential %age	Status
Rural Regeneration Fund	100%	Application to be made
EU Just Transitions Fund	100%	Application to be made
	100%	

Income Assumptions [project revenues]

- The project has two main revenue streams [Tier 1 events and community events] that are specific to delivery of events at the amphitheatre.
- Income assumptions are based on assessment of precedent project and norms associated for revenue generating models of similar projects [i.e., the letting of community space]. The project will also benefit from management by 'Backstreet Theatre' in Longford Town who will oversee the delivery of Tier 1 events
- Revenues have been based on an assumption that the facility will deliver 3 Tier 1 events per annum rising to 4 events in Year 4 and 5 events in Year 5. The facility will also support 6 community events per annum
- Tier 1 Revenues are based on an average incomes for Tier 1 events - €20,750 per event [2 days x. £25 per ticket x. 415 ticket sales each day]
- Community event revenues are assumed at £1,000 per event

Income schedules

The income schedules are summarised, as follows and assume a 2.5% inflation uplift per annum

Revenue stream	Ticket sales	Rate	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tier 1 events	830	€25	62,250	63,806	65,401	89,380	114,250
Community events	100	€10	6,000	6,150	6,304	6,461	6,623
			68,250	69,956	71,705	95,841	121,143

Expenditure schedules & assumptions [i.e., the projects overheads]

Assumptions relating to project overheads have been established using precedent project data. A schedule of costs have subsequently been developed and include an allowance for inflationary increases of 2.5% to all costs.

The overhead costs are assumed to be the same for all options. Allowance for depreciation will vary for each option given the changing investment costs associated with each option.

OVERHEADS					
Salaries & Wages	53,000	54,325	55,683	57,075	58,502
Governance costs	6,000	4,100	4,203	4,308	4,415
Tier 1 event costs	60,000	61,500	63,038	86,152	110,381
Repairs & renewals	1,200	1,230	1,261	1,292	1,325
Insurance	2,400	2,460	2,522	2,585	2,649
Marketing & promotion	1,000	1,025	1,051	1,077	1,104
Other contingency costs	1,200	1,230	1,261	1,292	1,325
TOTAL	124,800	125,870	129,017	153,781	179,701

Other Assumptions

- Depreciation on fixed assets is assumed at 2%. It can be typical in local community-led projects, that have a high capital value and [relatively] low income levels, that allowances for depreciation can be impactful upon the profit statements. In real terms, if buildings are maintained properly, it is likely that they will increase in value across the medium to longer term. In this case profitability is impacted by depreciation and LCC should consider a sinking fund to account for the depreciation associated with the asset
- Bank interest on short term borrowing [overdraft facilities] has been calculated at 10%
- Financial forecasts have not assumed any level of borrowing and as such it is assumed that capital costs will be fully recoverable without the project being incumbered by debt. Funding from a range of sources have been assumed
- The 'variable cost' overhead associated with the project relates specifically to community events and allowance of 20% of income against costs
- The costs of Tier 1 events have been accounted for separately as overheads at €20k per event

Summary Financial Projections & Assessment of Viability and Sustainability

5-Year Profitability Statement Summary

PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT	Mar-27	Mar-28	Mar-29	Mar-30	Mar-31
SALES	68,250	69,956	71,705	95,841	121,143
Cost of Sales	1,200	1,230	1,261	1,292	1,325
GROSS PROFIT	67,050	68,726	70,444	94,549	119,818
	98%	98%	98%	99%	99%
Grants	80,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
Overheads	124,800	125,870	129,017	153,781	179,701
Depreciation	50,969	51,206	48,061	45,174	42,522
Finance Charges	28	1	0	0	0
NET PROFIT	-28,747	-48,351	-46,633	-44,406	-42,404

Assessment of project profitability:

- The project demonstrates modest levels of income which are dependent on the sales of tickets linked to events delivered at the amphitheatre
- Profitability is heavily impacted by depreciation – this is typical of community projects that have low income levels and significant investment requirements
- All costs are exclusive of Vat
- Overheads are based on evidence gathered from precedent project and from a full assessment of current and future facility users.
- All costs have been subject to an annual 2.5% uplift
- An assumption that LCC will subvent the project annually [€80k year 1 and €60k per annum thereafter]
- Assuming LCC subvention, the project presents as viable and sustainable with the support of ongoing revenue grant support [despite losses impacted by depreciation, the cashflow position of the project is maintained, see overleaf]

5-Year Cashflow Statement Summary

CASHFLOWS	Mar-27	Mar-28	Mar-29	Mar-30	Mar-31
Receipts from Sales	46,500	69,413	71,148	95,271	120,557
Overheads	125,800	127,095	130,272	155,068	181,020
Capital Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Introduced	80,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
SURPLUS/-DEFICIT	672	2,317	875	203	-463
OPENING BANK	0	672	2,989	3,864	4,067
Bank Interest	28	1	0	0	0
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	672	2,989	3,864	4,067	3,604

Assessment of project cashflows:

- The project demonstrates positive cashflows assuming the inclusion of LCC annual subvention
- There will be a requirement to address cashflow shortages should LCC subvention reduce and/or cease – this would present cashflow challenges for the project
- The forecasts assumes [in cashflow terms] that all capital costs are recoverable in full by capital grant support and any balance of capital

5-Year Balance Sheet Statement Summary

BALANCE SHEETS	Mar-27	Mar-28	Mar-29	Mar-30	Mar-31
Fixed assets	1,374,631	1,323,425	1,275,364	1,230,189	1,187,667
Current assets	22,422	25,282	26,715	27,489	27,612
Current liabilities	200	205	210	215	221
<i>Net Current Assets</i>	<i>22,222</i>	<i>25,077</i>	<i>26,505</i>	<i>27,274</i>	<i>27,391</i>
NET ASSETS	1,396,853	1,348,502	1,301,869	1,257,463	1,215,059
Funds and investments	0	0	0	0	0
Projected P&L reserves	-28,747	-77,098	-123,731	-168,137	-210,541
TOTAL FINANCING	1,396,853	1,348,502	1,301,869	1,257,463	1,215,059

Assessment of balance sheets:

- With capital costs fully recovered the project presents as a viable and sustainable life time asset
- Consideration should be given to the maintenance of the fixed asset as in time this will increasingly require financial resources for its upkeep [allowance for which will be made by LCC by way of a significant maintenance allowance [sinking fund] for the project].
- The balance sheet is negatively impacted from P&L losses associated with the impacts of depreciation. LCC subvention is inputted at a level to address cashflow shortfalls]
- The balance sheet demonstrates high levels of fixed assets and modest levels of income [typical of many local community-led capital projects that act as a catalyst for intervention in the absence of the private sector [in projects where it is less attractive for the private sector to intervene]

Detailed Financial Forecasts

Profitability

PROFIT & LOSS

A/C

YEAR ONE

[illegible]

Insurance	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	2,400
Marketing & promotion	250	0	0	250	0	0	250	0	0	250	0	0	1,000
Other contingency costs	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1,200
TOTAL	7,067	7,817	4,917	25,167	4,917	4,917	5,167	24,917	4,917	5,167	4,917	24,917	124,800
Depreciation:													
Capital delivery	1,333	1,331	1,329	1,327	1,324	1,322	1,320	1,318	1,316	1,313	1,311	1,309	15,854
Fixtures & fittings	2,500	2,479	2,459	2,438	2,418	2,398	2,378	2,358	2,338	2,319	2,299	2,280	28,662
Preliminaries	167	166	166	166	166	165	165	165	164	164	164	164	1,982
Contingency [10%]	200	200	199	199	199	198	198	198	197	197	197	196	2,378
Fees [8%]	176	176	175	175	175	175	174	174	174	173	173	173	2,093
TOTAL	4,376	4,352	4,328	4,305	4,281	4,258	4,235	4,212	4,189	4,167	4,144	4,122	50,969
Finance Charges:													
Bank Interest	0	2	0	18	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	28
TOTAL	0	2	0	18	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	28
NET PROFIT	-4,776	-4,704	-2,578	-1,272	-2,531	-1,708	-2,735	-920	-2,439	-1,867	-2,394	-822	-28,747
DRAWINGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

NET PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS	(4,776)	(4,704)	(2,578)	(1,272)	(2,531)	(1,708)	(2,735)	(920)	(2,439)	(1,867)	(2,394)	(822)	(28,747)
RETAINED PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS		(9,480)	(12,058)	(13,330)	(15,862)	(17,570)	(20,305)	(21,225)	(23,664)	(25,531)	(27,925)	(28,747)	(28,747)

PROFIT & LOSS A/C

YEAR TWO

	Apr-27	May-27	Jun-27	Jul-27	Aug-27	Sep-27	Oct-27	Nov-27	Dec-27	Jan-28	Feb-28	Mar-28	TOTAL
SALES	0	1,025	0	22,294	0	1,025	0	22,294	0	1,025	0	22,294	69,956
Cost of Goods Sold	0	205	0	205	0	205	0	205	0	205	0	205	1,230
GROSS PROFIT	0	820	0	22,089	0	820	0	22,089	0	820	0	22,089	68,726
LCC subvention	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	60,000
	5,000	5,820	5,000	27,089	5,000	5,820	5,000	27,089	5,000	5,820	5,000	27,089	128,726
OVERHEADS													
Salaries & Wages	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	4,527	54,325

Governance costs	0	3,075	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	4,100
Tier 1 event costs	0	0	0	20,500	0	0	0	20,500	0	0	0	20,500	61,500
Repairs & renewals	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	1,230
Insurance	205	205	205	205	205	205	205	205	205	205	205	205	2,460
Marketing & promotion	256	0	0	256	0	0	256	0	0	256	0	0	1,025
Other contingency costs	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	1,230
TOTAL	5,193	8,012	5,040	25,796	5,040	5,040	5,296	25,540	5,040	5,296	5,040	25,540	125,870
Depreciation:													
Capital delivery	1,307	1,305	1,303	1,300	1,298	1,296	1,294	1,292	1,290	1,287	1,285	1,283	15,540
Fixtures & fittings	2,261	2,242	2,224	2,205	2,187	2,168	2,150	2,132	2,115	2,097	2,080	2,062	25,924
Preliminaries	163	163	163	163	162	162	162	161	161	161	161	160	1,942
Contingency [10%]	490	488	486	484	482	480	478	476	474	472	470	468	5,748
Fees [8%]	173	172	172	172	171	171	171	171	170	170	170	169	2,051
TOTAL	4,394	4,370	4,347	4,324	4,301	4,278	4,255	4,232	4,210	4,187	4,165	4,143	51,206

Finance Charges:													
Bank Interest	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NET PROFIT	(4,587)	(6,562)	(4,387)	(3,032)	(4,340)	(3,497)	(4,551)	(2,683)	(4,249)	(3,663)	(4,205)	(2,594)	(48,351)
DRAWINGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NET PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS	(4,587)	(6,562)	(4,387)	(3,032)	(4,340)	(3,497)	(4,551)	(2,683)	(4,249)	(3,663)	(4,205)	(2,594)	(48,351)
RETAINED PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS		(39,897)	(44,284)	(47,315)	(51,655)	(55,153)	(59,703)	(62,386)	(66,636)	(70,299)	(74,504)	(77,098)	(77,098)

PROFIT &
LOSS A/C

YEAR
THREE

	Apr-28	May-28	Jun-28	Jul-28	Aug-28	Sep-28	Oct-28	Nov-28	Dec-28	Jan-29	Feb-29	Mar-29	TOTAL
SALES	0	1,051	0	22,851	0	1,051	0	22,851	0	1,051	0	22,851	71,705
Cost of Goods Sold	0	210	0	210	0	210	0	210	0	210	0	210	1,261
GROSS PROFIT	0	841	0	22,641	0	841	0	22,641	0	841	0	22,641	70,444
LCC subvention	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	60,000
	5,000	5,841	5,000	27,641	5,000	5,841	5,000	27,641	5,000	5,841	5,000	27,641	130,444
OVERHEADS													
Salaries & Wages	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640	55,683
Governance costs	0	3,152	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	4,203

Tier 1 event costs	0	0	0	21,013	0	0	0	21,013	0	0	0	21,013	63,038
Repairs & renewals	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	1,261
Insurance	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	2,522
Marketing & promotion	263	0	0	263	0	0	263	0	0	263	0	0	1,051
Other contingency costs	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	1,261
TOTAL	5,323	8,212	5,166	26,441	5,166	5,166	5,428	26,178	5,166	5,428	5,166	26,178	129,017
Depreciation :													
Capital delivery	1,281	1,279	1,277	1,275	1,272	1,270	1,268	1,266	1,264	1,262	1,260	1,258	15,232
Fixtures & fittings	2,045	2,028	2,011	1,994	1,978	1,961	1,945	1,929	1,913	1,897	1,881	1,865	23,447
Preliminaries	160	160	160	159	159	159	159	158	158	158	157	157	1,904
Contingency [10%]	466	464	462	460	458	457	455	453	451	449	447	445	5,467
Fees [8%]	169	169	169	168	168	168	167	167	167	167	166	166	2,011

TOTAL	4,121	4,100	4,078	4,057	4,036	4,015	3,994	3,973	3,952	3,932	3,912	3,891	48,061
Finance Charges:													
Bank Interest	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NET PROFIT	(4,445)	(6,472)	(4,244)	(2,857)	(4,201)	(3,340)	(4,422)	(2,510)	(4,118)	(3,520)	(4,077)	(2,429)	(46,633)
DRAWINGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NET PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS	(4,445)	(6,472)	(4,244)	(2,857)	(4,201)	(3,340)	(4,422)	(2,510)	(4,118)	(3,520)	(4,077)	(2,429)	(46,633)
RETAINED PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS	(88,014)	(92,258)	(95,115)	(99,316)	(102,656)	(107,078)	(109,588)	(113,706)	(117,226)	(121,303)	(123,731)	(123,731)	

PROFIT &
LOSS A/C

YEAR
FOUR

	Apr-29	May-29	Jun-29	Jul-29	Aug-29	Sep-29	Oct-29	Nov-29	Dec-29	Jan-30	Feb-30	Mar-30	TOTAL
SALES	0	1,077	22,345	1,077	0	23,422	0	1,077	22,345	1,077	0	23,422	95,841
Cost of Goods Sold	0	215	0	215	0	215	0	215	0	215	0	215	1,292
GROSS PROFIT	0	862	22,345	862	0	23,207	0	862	22,345	862	0	23,207	94,549
LCC subvention	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	60,000
	5,000	5,862	27,345	5,862	5,000	28,207	5,000	5,862	27,345	5,862	5,000	28,207	154,549
OVERHEADS													
Salaries & Wages	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	4,756	57,075
Governance costs	0	3,231	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	4,308

Tier 1 event costs	0	0	21,538	0	0	21,538	0	0	21,538	0	0	21,538	86,152
Repairs & renewals	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	1,292
Insurance	215	215	215	215	215	215	215	215	215	215	215	215	2,585
Marketing & promotion	269	0	0	269	0	0	269	0	0	269	0	0	1,077
Other contingency costs	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	1,292
TOTAL	5,456	8,418	26,833	5,564	5,295	26,833	5,564	5,295	26,833	5,564	5,295	26,833	153,781
Depreciation:													
Capital delivery	1,256	1,254	1,251	1,249	1,247	1,245	1,243	1,241	1,239	1,237	1,235	1,233	14,930
Fixtures & fittings	1,850	1,834	1,819	1,804	1,789	1,774	1,759	1,744	1,730	1,716	1,701	1,687	21,207
Preliminaries	157	157	156	156	156	156	155	155	155	155	154	154	1,866
Contingency [10%]	443	442	440	438	436	434	432	431	429	427	425	423	5,200
Fees [8%]	166	165	165	165	165	164	164	164	164	163	163	163	1,971

TOTAL	3,871	3,852	3,832	3,812	3,793	3,773	3,754	3,735	3,716	3,697	3,679	3,660	45,174
Finance Charges:													
Bank Interest	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NET PROFIT	-4,328	-6,408	-3,319	-3,515	-4,087	-2,400	-4,318	-3,168	-3,204	-3,400	-3,973	-2,286	-44,406
DRAWINGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NET PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS	(4,328)	(6,408)	(3,319)	(3,515)	(4,087)	(2,400)	(4,318)	(3,168)	(3,204)	(3,400)	(3,973)	(2,286)	(44,406)
RETAINED PROFIT LESS DRAWINGS	(134,467)	(137,786)	(141,301)	(145,388)	(147,787)	(152,106)	(155,274)	(158,478)	(161,877)	(165,851)	(168,137)	(168,137)	(168,137)

Recommendations

Based on the process of developing a commercial plan Venture presents a range of recommendations to guide the development, implementation and management of the amphitheatre.

There is a high level of support for the proposed project at a number of levels. It is clear that for those involved in strategic leadership roles around arts and tourism (both in County Longford and within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands) the proposal to develop an amphitheatre in Lanesborough creates an additional opportunity to deliver on their arts, creativity, tourism and inclusion strategies through the provision of a unique outdoor performance venue. Subject to an appropriate property governance and operational management there is a strong belief that the project can attract additional visitors to the area and help increase the dwell time of existing visitors.

There is also clear consensus that the proposal to develop the amphitheatre must work not only at a strategic level but that it must meet needs of the Lanesborough community; it should play a part in the transition of the Lanesborough economy from its significant reliance on the employment opportunities provided by the former ESB Power Station and the Bord na Móna supply chain. In simple terms it must be done 'with' rather than 'to' the Lanesborough community.

To ensure that the project vision, as articulated in this commercial plan and the associated outcomes, are delivered it is recommended that a new Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) is established which brings together stakeholders for which the project can contribute to their agendas. The Board of the new CLG should include representatives of Longford County Council and especially its arts and tourism functions, Backstage Theatre as the main arts sector organisation facilitating performances in the County, local community representatives and someone with a technical events management/delivery/technical expertise.

The commercial plan recognises that the Council is considering appointing an Events Manager with a focus on the strategic development of events across the County. This is considered a preferred course of action and one which will significantly increase the potential for the proposed amphitheatre in Lanesborough to deliver on its vision, outcomes and objectives.

As part of the commercial planning process Venture engaged with ten precedent amphitheatres and outdoor performance venues within and external to Ireland. This engagement identified the importance of strong governance and also the importance

of strong operational experience, processes and systems. This perceived as one of the significant risks for the project. However, consistently the experience and track record of Backstage Theatre has been referenced, and the commercial plan sets out that a preferred option where it would take a lead in the development, delivery and management of up to three tier one events per annum. This brings not only the experience but the existing marketing, ticketing and event management experience and processes of Backstage to the Lanesborough amphitheatre project. It also provides access to Backstage Theatre's network with artists, agents and performers, significantly increasing the potential to attract them to Longford and to a new performance space.

The commercial plan recognises that the amphitheatre is a novel approach to providing performance space in Lanesborough which will benefit the community but also can play a strategic role in relation to the County and Irelands Hidden Heartlands agendas around arts and tourism. On that basis the commercial plan sets out a strategy which commences with a three year "Soft Launch and Learning" strategy. This will allow all stakeholders to test the assumptions (set out in this plan) and develop their working relationships.

It is recommended that the Council fund the revenue required to develop this strategic arts and tourism project across its initial five years. Engagement with ten precedent outdoor performance spaces confirms that it takes between five to seven years to fully understand the market and develop and market an annual programme which meets the expectations of visitors and the local market. This timeframe is also required to develop and refine the marketing, promotion, events management, ticketing and administration systems. This proposal has one significant advantage in that Backstage Theatre already has these systems developed and 'proofed' in the context of Co Longford. The proposed approach to engage Backstage to manage the new outdoor performance space significantly derisks the project and 'buys in' its track record, connections with the artists, performers and agents as well as its market tested marketing, promotion and ticketing systems.

If the proposal for the amphitheatre is to be effective it must work within the context of its location and the wider site. This is a site of significant scientific and biodiversity interest based on the edge of Lough Ree at the point where the Shannon River connects with the Lough. The site already hosts a wide range of activities including casual recreation, water sports, national swimming events, motorhomes and includes a play area and green space provision. On that basis, the design should be set in the context of a wider site masterplan which ensures that it is integrated and also has the potential

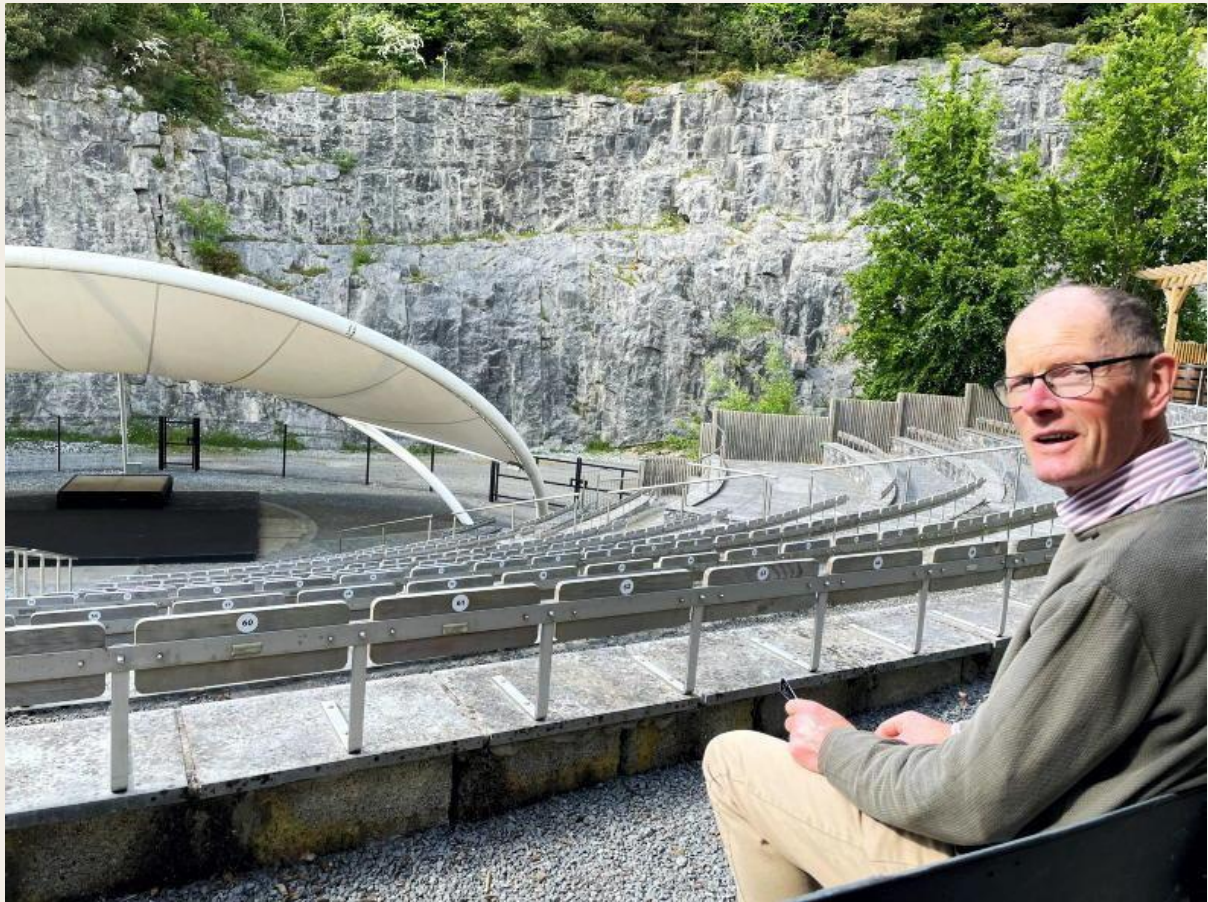
to better support existing activities on the site. In addition, it should contribute to the wider public space available for individual and families in Lanesborough.

Engagement with existing outdoor performance venues confirm that typically peak trading is up to seven years post launch. They provide circa six tier one type events per annum (this allows for weather and in some cases depending on the location of the performance space the tourism season). It must be recognised that the stakeholders in the project should consider not only the capital delivery costs but also the project development costs over that five to seven year timeframe to afford it every opportunity of delivering on its vision as a regionally significant performance venue which contributes to the quality of life in its host location, Lanesborough.

Appendices

Appendix A: Learning from Precedent Amphitheatre and Outdoor Performance Space Projects

OTG Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre, Ballykeeffe, Co Kilkenny, Ireland



Description, Location and Context

Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is situated in the old Ballykeeffe limestone quarry and surrounded by Ballykeeffe Wood, between the villages of Ballycallan and Kilmanagh, County Kilkenny. The site has a long shapeshifting history; it was a limestone quarry for most of its history before becoming a place for local farmers to store sugar beets, then a scrap yard for old cars and appliances before its current use as a vibrant cultural venue. Through its many uses, the site remained a place of social, cultural,

and historical significance to the local community.

However, during its use as a scrap yard, the quarry fell into disarray. Out of use by the local community, in the late 1990s, a team of volunteers formed to clean up the site. Through this effort, it was recognised that the shape of the quarry would lend itself to the design of an amphitheatre. In 2000 Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre hosted its first concert under the management of Kilmanagh, Ballycallan, Killaloe Community Enterprise Group Ltd (KBK). To this day the amphitheatre is maintained and all its activities are programmed and delivered by KBK and a wider group of volunteers. All activities are supported on a purely voluntary basis. Matt O'Sullivan (resident and farmer) came with the initial vision and formed the steering team behind Ballykeeffe – KBK (Kilmanagh, Ballycallan and Killaloe) Group was set up in 1986. At the time there was a lot of unemployment and it was decided to get a kind of FAS scheme going. LEADER, St Canice's Credit Union and the County Council supported the project to get off the ground in 1999 and the first concert took place in 2001, this was a free concert with 700-800 in the audience. The programme started with one concert per year then three to four and now ten with additional smaller events.

"It probably took us about 10 years before we felt a change. The Saw Doctors played one night, there was about a 1000 people here, it was raining and nobody minded a bit! That night put us on the map." Matt O'Sullivan.

"Some of us were already aware of the Minack Theatre, a very successful cliff-top amphitheatre in Cornwall, so we readily accepted the idea and you could say that Ballykeeffe is modelled on Minack". Padraic Flaherty – Treasurer of KBK.

After rebranding as Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre the venue became a multifunctional resource offering walks in the attached nature reserve, whilst traditional and sports climbing continued to co-exist easily beside a summer programme of theatrical performances and concerts. Soon performers such as Andy Irvine, Anuna, Kila, Cora Venus Lunny and Noirin NiRain praised the great acoustics and unique atmosphere of Ballykeeffe.

In 2011 the makeshift stage was replaced by an innovatively designed outdoor stage costing £100k the first of its kind in Ireland. Since then it has enabled them to welcome larger acts such as Saw Doctors, Bagatelle, Maria Doyle Kennedy and two sold out performances by country music star Nathan Carter.

Proposals then came to upgrade the amphitheatre to a 1000 seat auditorium;

Regional Context

Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is located roughly 5km from the border with Tipperary, 10km from Kilkenny City and Callan Town and 18km from the base of Slievenamon. The site is broadly situated between the M8 and M9 motorways and access is limited to cars and busses for all those aside from the local community.

The amphitheatre is the only venue of its kind in the area, and provides unique events that are frequented by people from all over the region. Locally the site is used as a walking trail and nature preserve. The site is one of the few high points of the region and has long views, that gives it a relationship with Slievenamon. The quarry walls have been bolted for rock climbing, and are used by climbers from all over Ireland.

Operational Structure

KBK (Kilmanagh, Ballycallan, and Killaloe) Enterprise which runs the Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre was founded in 1986 by a group of local people in order to develop and promote community development. The Enterprise Group is a company limited by guarantee; having charitable status.

Ballykeeffe is run by 40-50 Volunteers for car parking, set up and smooth running of events.

New Enterprise Creation

Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is maintained by volunteers who are members of the KBK Enterprise and who work tirelessly all year round to maintain the grounds. In addition to running Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre, KBK Enterprises has been involved in a number of community projects.

The enterprise prints a weekly Parish newsletter called the Acorn and has been involved with the Tidy Towns competition.

They have also provided an interest free loan to facilitate the refurbishment of Ballycallan Community Centre and have been involved in the creation of local employment by supporting small local businesses including a small printing business and duck rearing enterprise.

Finance Model

LEADER, St Canice's Credit Union and the County Council supported the project to get off the ground in 1999 and the first concert took place in 2001.

Under the organisation rules, no individual may make any profit from the organisation and there is no private gain.

In the event of the Enterprise being wound up, any remaining funds will be used for socially beneficial purposes. Currently our enterprise group has a board of 10 and

membership of fifteen to twenty people. Expenditure to date amounts to €250,000 of which €200,000 Has been grant aided by various bodies such as the Department of the Arts, Culture & Heritage, B.N.S Leader and Kilkenny County Council.

The amphitheatre can seat an audience of 850 visitors on its tiered limestone benches, while the surrounding grass area can accommodate another 400 people. Funds produced from the sales of tickets maintain the amphitheatre and support local initiatives. The amphitheatre has also received funding from various national and local funding bodies to develop the facilities on the site.

In 2019 4,840 paid visitors visited 8 volunteer run events at Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre. In 2021, during Covid 19 restrictions and with limited capacity the venue was still able to attract 1,103 paid customers to 9 volunteer run events, a further 14 events were organised by outside promoters that were eligible for state grants. It is also estimated that over 1000 visitors a year visit Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre for casual recreation such as dog walking and accessing nature, in the summer months this can be as many as 30 people in a day.

Other Activities/Attractions/Accommodation

The quarry itself is every rock-climber's paradise with groups meeting regularly to scale its dizzying heights, while the surrounding woodland is popular with families, joggers and cyclists. The only amphitheatre in Ireland, this venue can seat 850 visitors on its tiered limestone benches.

Ballykeeffe is also used for fun days, lectures, exhibitions and as a picnic and recreational facility by voluntary organisations, schools and outdoor activity centres. The amphitheatre itself is a visitor attraction in its own right.

It is a place of pride to the local community and local authority, both valuing its significance as a vibrant and successful community project and its uniqueness in rural Ireland. With the shifting focus on outdoor events due to Covid-19, its relevance and potential were further amplified. Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre shares the site with a public access climbing wall. Kilkenny County Council own the site and are operational on the part of the site. An adjacent nature reserve is maintained by National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS). Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre has an excellent relationship with all stakeholders.

Other significant attractions in the area include the Ballykeeffe Distillery.

There are options of cottage, air bnb, hotels and other holiday rentals around Ballykeeffe and Kilkenny.

Facilities:

- Ample parking (provided by farmers' fields across the road)
- Full Bar facilities, hot food and snacks available on-site
- Toilets on site
- The venue is wheelchair accessible
- Seats 850
- Located in beautiful countryside, Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is approximately 7 miles from the centre of Kilkenny City



Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is now a thriving community asset to County Kilkenny and a rural cultural and tourist attraction by National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS). Unique to the South East of Ireland. Operating for over 20 years. In that time, it has developed and honed the experiences it offers and increasingly attracts bigger acts and bigger crowds. The programme has expanded too, and while it remains a seasonal programme the administration and maintenance work to support this extends through most of the year.

The organisation is run entirely by a volunteer committee and is currently robustly supported by volunteers from the local community. The voluntary structure allows for volunteers to give as much of their time as they can. Some volunteers work events only while others support the daily administration and maintenance of the organisation and site; some take on particular roles such as treasurer or health and safety officer. Throughout this structure, the skills and interests of individuals are nurtured and encouraged. All volunteers report the experience of being part of the Ballykeeffe community as positive and enriching.

The organisation now finds itself at a pivotal moment. The programme and remit of activities at Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre have the potential to expand. With this expansion, there is the potential to provide employment for the local community and a resultant need to establish sustainable structures for the future. This is a

fundamental organisational change but is also an opportunity for Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre and the local community.

A Feasibility Study was completed in 2022, central to it was the need to strengthen Ballykeeffe's Amphitheatres organisational structure, in keeping with its core values, to allow the organisation to develop beyond its pioneering phase.

The study revealed that the following which can be used as learning to be considered for the potential development of Lanesborough Amphitheatre:-

- A central challenge for Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is a disconnect between the meaning and character of the project to the people involved, and how the site is experienced
- Ballykeeffe has long been a place of significance for the local community. Even in its current form, it has a 20-year story of community initiative and dedication to tell. Creating opportunities for people to share their experiences, capturing some of that history and making it available for others to encounter will instil a deeper connection with all who visit the site
- Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is of great value to children from the area. It is a place to access nature, for exploring and recreational activity. Although many children had attended events at Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre they also experienced it as an activity based place for fun and adventure. More family focused events programming and interactive and playful installations would increase the value of Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre for children, young people and families
- Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre needs to tell its story. By creating an online and on-site communication infrastructure, the amenity can extend a clear offer and invitation to all its visitors and communicate the volunteers' dedication that keeps the site running year-round
- Storyboards can invite visitors to share their stories and experiences of Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre. They can also direct visitors to fully appreciate what is already available at the site, such as the bug hotel, fairy houses, Tufa Spring and other natural attractions
- Opportunities to expand Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre's heritage, biodiversity, education and hospitality offerings alongside the core community led programme
- A carefully considered income generating programme and funding opportunities will support a paid co-ordinator role
- Clarity between the core community led programme of music acts on the main stage and more discreet income generating activities and events will create operational transparency around capacity and volunteer opportunities

- Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre's future will be sustained by widening its base of what supports and nurtures through inclusive activities that engage with all aspects of the site; heritage, biodiversity, recreation and culture. This focus will engage a broader network with the site putting Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre in a strong position for funding opportunities
- In addition the income generating social enterprise activities will create employment and training opportunities
- Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre is valued as a space for local people to use on a casual basis, for walks, picnics, and to access nature. It is also a contained ecosystem that borders a climbing wall and the NPW operated woodland. The distinction between these different entities must be clear
- The invitation to use Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre should be clear, equal access for buggies and wheelchairs should be accommodated where possible and considered in all future planning. Areas that are accessible to the general public and areas that are not accessible should be signposted both onsite and online. Equally, the website and onsite signage should clearly state wheelchair and buggy access and toilet facilities
- There is a clear opportunity to trial collaborations with other organisations for programming opportunities: Kilkenny is a hot spot for festivals and cultural activity
- There are multiple funding opportunities to support rural biodiversity and recreational and cultural programmes
- Partnerships need to be balanced, and the benefits for Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre fully understood. For instance, partnering with a large festival could be financially beneficial. Nevertheless, a two-week run of concerts could be detrimental to the committee's time, resources, and energy and cause noise disturbance locally
- A series of design interventions such as opening up the vista across to Slievenamon and restoring the Lime Kiln will open up new viewpoints, experiences, and understanding of the site
- Balance programming and activities across music, heritage, biodiversity, education and hospitality offerings. Consider inclusive and diverse programming to engage a wider audience with the site. Balance the programme across income-generating, artistic and community-led events. Prioritise inclusivity in programming, considering activities that engage with all aspects of the site; heritage, biodiversity, recreation and culture. This focus will engage a broader network with the site putting Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre in a strong position for funding opportunities
- Continue to sustain a core community led and seasonal music programme on the main stage, protecting Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre's reputation for outstanding acts, professional, friendly and welcoming atmosphere, and championing and cherishing the volunteer opportunities that support it.

However, expanding the main stage programme at this stage beyond Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre's main community-led programme is problematic on several levels. For example, it requires significant committee resources and volunteer hours, parking infrastructure, causes sound disturbance and lacks shelter outside of the summer season. Recommendation: Build on existing infrastructure to support the growth of Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre's programme

- Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre's core community-led programme must be explicitly marketed with consistent communication branding and messaging
- Rain interrupts outdoor performances; a sheltered space for smaller events will allow events to expand beyond the summer season. Small events will not cause a noise disturbance, and they offer income generating and community opportunities. Smaller events require less volunteer input and generate income and employment opportunities. They expand the Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre offer to the local community without draining local resources
- Consider the following offerings: weddings, small acoustic gigs, outdoor education, corporate events, community events and catering. Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre has delivered on these events and has proven it has the capacity to do so; however, a lack of sheltered space and a reliance on volunteers limits the growth of this programme
- Create a family-friendly programme to expand the local customer base beyond attendees at gigs; this will retain community ownership for future generations

Respondents listed involving young people, retaining community ownership, utilising the amphitheatre all year, and creating employment opportunities for the running of the space, which would ease the load of volunteers while maintaining the essence of the space. "Needs a manager either full time or part time to ease the load of committee and volunteers."

What was mentioned frequently both in the surveys and workshops carried out as part of the Feasibility Study by Workhouse Union:

- The main thing that participants called for was paid employment opportunities
- Current committee members explained that they would love either to be offered employment at the amphitheatre or for a hired manager to ease their workload
- Other suggestions of changes that could be made to the space included introducing a weekly lunch for locals, especially older people, to share stories about Ballykeeffe
- The leasing out of a coffee shop at the amphitheatre, and increased

education for the community about the space.

What should stay the same? When asked what absolutely must stay the same about Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre, participants in the study frequently mentioned:-

- the ambience of the space and the friendliness, as well as the community focus and the natural beauty of the amphitheatre
- -Despite calls for more paid roles in the running of the amphitheatre, participants also felt that the space should remain largely volunteer-operated. This was mentioned frequently
- -They also stressed the importance of the friendly atmosphere of the amphitheatre and its oneness with nature

Feedback comments:-

"The benefits that the community enjoys from the Amphitheatre include musical acts playing on their doorsteps, financial aid to local organisations, and a place of peace and tranquility for walking."

"At dusk on a still night in summer with an event taking place cant be captured in photos or videos, you have to be there!"

"Music belting out, smell of BBQ and everyone is enjoying themselves."

Minack Theatre Cornwall

The Minack Theatre is an open-air theatre, constructed above a gully with a rocky granite outcrop jutting into the sea. The theatre is at Porthcurno, four miles from Land's End in Cornwall, England. The Minack's performing season runs from Easter to the end of October and includes a wide range of music and theatre. The theatre seats 750 people.



The Minack is a living theatre in every sense. Its dramatic setting and the remarkable woman who built it are equally inspiring.

The world famous theatre is perched on the rugged cliffs of South-West Cornwall. They welcome over a quarter of a million people each year to enjoy the stunning ocean views and experience the magic of live performance in this iconic space.

Their story is also the life story of the Minack's creator, Rowena Cade. Brought up in a genteel Edwardian family, she was inspired to transform a Cornish cliff-face into an open-air arena, much of it literally built with her own hands.

Each year, they stage over 200 live performances at the Minack, including plays, musicals, opera, music and children's events. Tens of thousands of people go to experience a show at the theatre under the stars and become a part of its extraordinary, on-going story. There is a dedicated exhibition centre alongside the theatre telling the story of its founder Rowena Cade.

The formal objects of The Minack Theatre Trust CIO are "to educate the public in the

dramatic and operatic arts and to further the development of public appreciation and taste in those arts". These formal objects translate into three core objectives, which are to:

- Engage the public through creative performance and the living and visual arts embodied in the Minack Theatre
- Enhance people's lives through the shared experience of live performance and of visiting the Minack Theatre
- Inspire people by the remarkable story of Rowena Cade, and young people especially through active participation in creative activities

The aims of the charity were revised by the trustees in 2023 were to:

- Programme a wide range of theatre and other events to engage a diverse audience and enable active community participation while maintaining standards of excellence
- Provide a wide range of creative opportunities, to inspire people, particularly Cornish children and students, to learn and develop all skills associated with live performances
- Educate visitors about Rowena Cade, her story and that of the Minack. Inspire them through creative presentation of exhibitions, live narration and digital interpretation
- Develop and nurture the natural environment of the Minack, especially the garden, to enhance the experience of visiting the theatre and inspire people through its unique balance of natural and human art
- Provide sustainable, modern facilities for audiences, visitors, staff and performers that are suitable to the unique environment of the Minack and reflect its status as an attraction of international repute
- Develop and support an outstanding team of versatile people to ensure visitors, performing companies and participants enjoy a life enhancing experience at the Minack
- Develop retail and catering strategies to meet the reasonable expectations of visitors given the nature of the site and generate funds to support aims 1 to 6
- Generate sufficient funds through core activities to achieve aims 1 to 6 in a viable manner for the very long term

In 2023 Minack worked to develop and nurture the natural environment of the Minack, especially the garden, to enhance the experience of visiting the theatre and inspire people through its unique balance of natural and human art.

- Throughout 2023 our garden team continued to work to make the Minack garden more accessible and appealing to the public, remodelling paths to create easier access and putting particular emphasis on keeping pathways clear and bedding areas weeded and trimmed

- We were delighted to be invited into the Great Gardens of Cornwall group during 2023. This invite is testament to the hard work of Jeff Rowe and Claire Batten, Head Gardeners over the last four years
- An extensive project to remodel the pedestrian route along the main entrance drive was completed early in 2023 with the previous timber fence being removed and a new footpath created, bordering new areas of planting. This work was extended through the year with a new bank bordering the road to St Levan Church meaning the unsightly chain link fence could be removed
- The garden team continued to deliver the plan for the garden to enable plants to thrive and to give a better viewing experience to the public. This includes grouping plants in the same area, so it is easier to see the differences within plant families such as Eryngiums (Sea Holly) and Agapanthus
- In more exposed areas where high levels of damage occur, they continue to use hardy annuals and annual bedding plants that are a cheaper alternative when it comes to being replaced
- They have also continued to plant more hardy perennials, which suffer less damage as they are dormant in the harsher winter months. This also reduces the necessity to replace plants in spring
- The garden team have thinned out the existing planting to give individual plants more space, making them stronger and more able to cope in winter. This is essential to preserve succulents and South African plants
- The turf on the well-used grassed seating was renewed as usual in the autumn of 2023 ready for 2024, The Minack was awarded Plastic Free status during 2021 as part of Planet PK's bid for the village to be designated Plastic Free and has continued to operate with minimal use of single use plastic products

Governance, Operational and Management Model and Operational Structure

The Minack is a Charity Incorporated Organisation overseen by seven trustees. The Minack Theatre Limited (Company Registration Number 03833428) is a wholly owned trading subsidiary of The Minack Theatre Trust CIO. Minack Productions Limited is a wholly owned trading subsidiary of The Minack Theatre Trust CIO.

The Minack is one of the area's biggest employers with a total wage and in 2023 had a salary bill of £1,095,930 in 2023 (2022: £937,558).

The Minack has core staffing consisting of 5 staff including Director, Associate Director, Production Manager, Visitor Experience Manager and Business Support Director.

In 2023 The Minack employed 46 people year-round and 64 people during the height of the performing season. In 2023, all staff over the age of 21 were paid at least 10p above the 'Real Living Wage' (£10.90 per hour) and were offered flexible working. Over 85% of staff live in the rural area to the west of Penzance. From 1 January 2024 the minimum wage for all staff over the age of 21 will be £12 per hour which is the 'Real Living Wage' as determined by the Living Wage Foundation.

Staff training through the year focused on training in operational aspects such as first aid, safeguarding, fire safety and terrorism awareness. Members of the management team are undertaking Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training and Zoe Curnow was awarded a place on the Oxford Cultural Leaders residential programme for 2023.

Over 150 freelance practitioners were engaged on Minack productions and the education programme during the year. Over 70% of these are based in Cornwall. They have recognised the challenges for people working on short term contracts and always work to treat them fairly, offering paid development opportunities and being conscious to ensure planning time is factored into contract arrangements.

Finance and Revenue Model

The trustees consider that the open-air theatre is a 'heritage asset'. The theatre itself was built during the 1930s by Rowena Cade, the founder. Since the Minack Theatre Trust was originally founded in 1976, repairs have been carried out.

Reliable information on historic cost or valuation is not available for the theatre. This is due to the lack of information available concerning purchase and building cost and the lack of comparable market values given the uniqueness and location of the theatre itself. Additionally, any valuation would involve costs that are likely to be excessive and unproductive. The theatre itself is therefore not reported as an asset on the balance sheet, other than recent improvements to the theatre which are reported at cost.

Theatre revenue mostly comes from renting the theatre to successive production

companies, ticket sales for the Minack's own productions, booking charges and subscriptions from Members, Visitors pay for admission to the site where, in the Exhibition Centre and through access to live interpretation and an audio app, they learn how Rowena Cade, the founder of the charity, came to build her remarkable theatre and how her work is being carried forward today. A cafe, shop and takeaway outlets provide souvenirs and catering for all visitors, sold through a subsidiary limited company which covenants any profits back to the charity.

Retail and catering provision was affected by the refurbishment of the Visitor Centre which meant the cafe and shop were closed until the end of November. Despite this, the takeaway outlets performed well achieving a spend per head on catering of £1.66, a slight drop on 2022's £1.72.

Unlike most theatres in the UK, the Minack depends almost exclusively on earned income. In 2023, despite a planned investment in the event programme and a season of unusually poor weather we still achieved a surplus to maintain our ongoing programmes and help protect the historic fabric of the Minack Theatre.

During 2023 income from the theatre performances (including Theatre Tax Relief) was £1,071,939 against £939,592 in 2022. Expenditure on Minack productions increased from £466,320 in 2022 to £645,267. Apportioning a share of the overhead cost of operating the theatre and visitor centre, on the basis of the percentage of visitors who watch a performance, shows the theatre programme cost £250,700 (2022: cost £86873).

The expenditure associated with staging productions, including research and development, producing, running and closure of productions were made through Minack Productions Limited. Minack Productions Limited plans to claim a payable tax credit (Theatre Tax Relief) for its productions, pursuant to Part 15C of the Corporation Tax Act 2009 of £114,570 (2022: £73,533)

The education programme in 2023 cost £180,694 in direct costs (2022: £95,208) however there were an additional £84,548 in wages and salaries attributable to this programme (2022: £72575) and £10,470 of overhead costs. The programme generated £47,566 of income. The net cost of education therefore was £228,146 (2022: £169,630). This cost has been drawn from the designated reserve to support education projects.

Visitor admissions in 2023 totaled £986,589 (2022: £864,957). Apportioning a share of the overhead cost of operating the theatre on the basis of the percentage who visit rather than see a performance, shows a net income from visitors of £256,633 (2022: contribution £247,943)

During 2023, £150,998 (2022: £159,415) was spent on repairs and £401,482 (2022: £78,990) on capital items.

Expenditure on projects costing more than £5,000:

- Refurbishment of the visitor centre
- £319,887 Upgrade of sewage pumps
- £29,960 Upgrade to the boundary of the Sports Field to remove fence
- £12,822 Continued upgrade of theatre lighting
- £10,000 Replacement radio microphones
- £10,057 Three phase power to Pol Minack: £9,451

In 2023 the charity's wholly-owned subsidiary Minack Theatre Limited generated a net income of £31,206 (2022: £28,458) on trade through its retail shop. The company made a profit on ordinary activities of £6606 which it gifted back to the charity (2022: £7258).

The trustees confirm the availability of assets to fulfil the obligations of the charity without recourse to borrowing. The trustees do not believe that any material difference that may exist between the book values and actual values of assets has any material effect on the ongoing activities of the CIO. Voluntary income totaled £15,922 (2022: £22, 770). This heading covers the income from the "Members" subscriptions of £13039 (2022; £77488) and donations of £2883 (2022: £5282).

The reserves retained in cash and cash equivalents at the year-end are required to provide security for the sustaining of the charity's activities at an undiminished level in the event of a material adverse change, and, more specifically to:

- Fund routine seasonal commitments which will continue to run at a high level. A net cash outflow of over £200,000 can be experienced in the winter, £150,000 has been designated to cover this winter cash outflow, as in the previous year.
- Withstand the financial consequences of a significant reduction in visitors, for example due to a season of particularly poor weather, or due to enforced closure arising from an event outside the Minack's control. A 20% reduction in visitors with no associated reduction in expenditure could see a reduction of cash inflow of about £387,500. The amount designated to mitigate this risk remains at £400,000.
- Fund unexpected repairs particularly those relating to the construction work carried out by Rowena Cade the founder between 1932 and the late '1970s. This reserve remains at £500,000. In part, this reflects the speed with which unexpected repairs might have to be undertaken to protect both visitors and the season of performances.
- Subsidise three years of the education programme and associated Minack productions at £200,000 per year to enable the programme to be maintained: £600,000.

The total reserves also provide for a capital reserve equating to the written down value of the fixed assets, recognising that these assets are not readily convertible into cash. This reserve is currently £2,514,194.

The Minack staff and trustees note that the purchasing power of the overall reserves has been significantly diminished given the general inflation of 2022 and 2023, and the inflation of specific goods and services purchased by the Minack, repair and construction costs for example.

In 2024, the trustees plan to review the reserve for the continuing education programme and associated Minack productions in light of growing experience in how to deliver this important charitable objective. They will also review what is an appropriate level of free reserves for the charity. The charity's reserves and its income are used in pursuance of its objectives as set out above.

The trustees are entitled to place funds in any kind of investments that they see fit. The current policy of the trustees is to hold surplus funds on short term investments and deposits, applying the income generated to charitable purposes for which the funds are intended. The trustees recognise that a higher level of return could be obtained by placing funds in riskier equity or other investments. This is outside the parameters of the current investment policy. Investments generated in 2023 were £75665 (2022: £7898) interest receivable for the year. This reflects the substantial increase in bank of England base rate.

Business Model

During 2023 the Minack had 272 performances including 39 storytelling shows for children and families. Of their main programme, 88 performances included community or non professional players, 66 involved children, young people or students and over 120 gave employment to Cornwall-based professional companies or performers.

212,431 people visited the Minack in 2023 (including show audiences), 2.6% more than budgeted and 1.8% lower than the 216,235 who visited in 2022. The shows performed to 61% capacity (against 70% capacity in 2022). This drop was due to more performances scheduled in the shoulder months which were planned at a lower capacity. 4,394 tickets (2022: 2,669) had to be refunded for nineteen (2022 nine) cancelled performances as the weather significantly disrupted the experience for audiences.

In 2023 the Minack made a direct annual contribution to the Cornish economy of over £2m. It attracted 212,431 visitors, of whom 90% had home addresses outside Cornwall. The majority of these visited as part of their holiday in Cornwall, staying locally and spending at other businesses on their way to and from the theatre. Wherever possible, the Minack sources goods and services from within Cornwall. Over the last twenty years, using Cornish companies, it has completed building

projects costing more than £2,000,000.

The Minack is located in the heart of West Cornwall and there is holiday accommodation nearby to suit every budget. There are also backpacker hostels in Penzance and St Just and several campsites within a short drive of the theatre. The closest villages are Porthcurno, Treen, Sennen, St Buryan, Lamorna and Mousehole, all of which offer a range of accommodation.

The Future

Plans for future years Events and Visitors A season of productions will run from late March until October with a short additional season in December. This will include productions of theatre and musicals, plus a programme of one or two night events mainly of music and comedy.

The first two weeks of September are being programmed as a 'Festival of the Sea' in collaboration with the RNLI's bicentenary. All events in this period will tell stories of the sea through theatre, music, dance, opera and spoken word.

There will be storytelling events in the school holidays, and a programme of appearances by Mark Harandon telling the history of the Minack through the eyes of Rowena Cade's gardener, Billy Rawlings. There will also be opportunities for visitors to learn more about aspects of the Minack through a series of tours.

Improving accessibility to the full experience of the theatre for all visitors remains a priority.

Improvements

Having offered over 4,000 sessions in 2023 and 2022, the education and participatory programme has made good progress in recovering from the pandemic years. The aim for 2024 is to stabilise this, continuing to provide opportunities to inspire people to take part in performances. Work with west Cornwall schools will include opportunities to take part in Shakespeare Festivals, regular performance skills workshops for all age groups and a developing programme to support delivery

of theatre and music skills within the schools. A more extensive programme of workshops will be offered to all Cornish state schools throughout Shakespeare week in March, There are performance opportunities planned for Cornish young people through the Minack Youth Theatre programme.

- 6 young people age 7 to 12 from across Cornwall are taking principal roles in the Minack production of Carrie's War, scheduled to perform in April 2024
- A cast of 12 children age 7 to 11 will perform in our third production of David Wood's adaptation of The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch as part of the Festival of the Sea
- The members of the Acting Academy will perform The Light Burns Blue by Silva Semerciyan at the Minack and on a short tour in July 2024

- The members of the Musical Theatre Academy will perform a showcase, Shaw Tunes of the Sea in September 2024 as part of the Festival of the Sea alongside two west end stars
- A group of Cornwall-based musical theatre students will perform in Footloose Junior alongside students from the British Theatre Academy in October 2024
- Over 200 west Cornwall school children will take to the stage as singers, dancers, actors and musicians to perform Operation Kernaw, written by John Brolly
- 20 Rising Stars will continue to offer west Cornwall children the chance to perform in a musical theatre show in Penzance

In addition, there are many education projects planned including continuing the Minack's out reach project in the Treneere Estate, Penzance. This area is one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Cornwall.

The Education Team will produce at least six "plays in a day" during the year, including at least one in which adults can take part.

There will be further implementation of the Arts Award programme to accredit young people's efforts, and the continuation of programmes to support playwrights of all ages in partnership with Kernow Education Arts Partnership (KEAP).

All the education activity will be directly funded by the charity and remain free of charge to participants.

Additional Plans

All visitors will continue to be encouraged to book their visit in advance in order to control numbers, giving a less congested experience in the theatre and on the surrounding road network.

The Minack aims to provide sustainable, modern facilities for audiences, visitors, staff and performers that are suitable to the unique environment of the Minack and reflect its status as an attraction of international repute.

The Estate Management Strategy is now in place. This is a framework within which the buildings and grounds can be developed in order to accommodate the medium to long term strategic aims of the Minack as a theatre and a visitor destination.

Further progress has been made through 2023 to ascertain the structural integrity of Rowena Cade's original work which dates from 1932 to the late 1970s.

A detailed survey has been received from a concrete specialist and a maintenance and replacement strategy is now in place to protect the iconic features of the Minack stage and auditorium.

In addition to routine repairs and maintenance, there will be a programme of capital

projects including ongoing improvements to the sound and lighting systems and continued development of the garden. Following Zoe Curnow's (Director) resignation effective in April 2024, the role of Director will be recruited during the initial months of 2024.

The most significant risks following the 2024 review are:

- Accidents due to the hazardous nature of the site.
- Compromise of IT systems or data.
- Loss of cash deposits.
- Concerns over the stability of Maunsell's Hill —the public highway used to access the Minack.

Captured Learning

The Minack as the oldest and most established amphitheatre in the UK provides a strong precedent example of how successful a project like this can be and how it can become sustainable in the long-term. As is demonstrated by the success of its 2023 programme:-

In 2023 the Minack made a direct annual contribution to the Cornish economy of over £2m. It attracted 212,431 visitors, of whom 90% had home addresses outside Cornwall. The majority of these visited as part of their holiday in Cornwall, staying locally and spending at other businesses on their way to and from the theatre. Wherever possible, the Minack sources goods and services from within Cornwall. Over the last twenty years, using Cornish companies, it has completed building projects costing more than £2,000,000.

Brighton Open Air Theatre (BOAT) Brighton, East Sussex, England



Description, Location and Context

Brighton Open Air Theatre (BOAT) is a 400-seat theatre nestled in Dyke Road Park, Brighton. Opened in 2015 for a few weeks in the summer it has gone from strength to strength ever since.

Brighton is a seaside resort and one of the two main areas of the city of Brighton and Hove in the county of East Sussex, England. It is located 47 miles (76 km) south of London. Brighton and Hove district has a resident population of about 277,965 and the wider Brighton and Hove conurbation has a population of 474,485 (2011 census). Brighton's location has made it a popular destination for tourists, renowned for its diverse communities, shopping areas, large and vibrant cultural, music and arts scene, and its large LGBT population.

BOAT hosts a wide range of performances, including theatre, music, comedy, dance, opera, circus and family shows. BOAT exists to provide our community with outstanding entertainment, and to provide a platform for artists from all

backgrounds to express themselves.

In April 2013 Brighton playwright and construction manager, Adrian Bunting, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He died in May 2013, aged 47. In his final days Adrian threw his efforts into realising a long held ambition; the creation of a permanent open-air theatre for the city he loved.

Adrian identified the perfect site, the redundant bowling green in Dyke Road Park, drew up designs and left his life savings of £18,000 to kick-start the project. Shortly before he passed away he asked four friends – Steve Turner, Claire Rafferty, James Payne and Donna Close – if they would see his dream through. Steve, Claire, James and Donna became BOAT's founding Trustees.

Working with supporters and partners, Adrian's friends negotiated the design and planning process, established Brighton Open Air Theatre as a charity and ensured an additional

£100,000 was raised through stand-up comedy benefits, an art auction and many hugely generous individual donations. In October 2014 planning permission was granted. Construction began in January 2015.

BOAT was formally opened by Adrian's Mother; Isobelle Bunting, on the 9th May 2015, almost two years to the day after Adrian passed away.

Since its opening in 2015 BOAT has gone from strength to strength. They are now well- established as one of the UK's premiere outdoor theatres and are a key cultural touchstone within Brighton and Hove.

BOAT's story touches the hearts of all those who hear it. It is testimony to the power of friendship and collective goodwill. That 'BOAT spirit' is perfectly crystallised in the amazing work of its volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure BOAT remains a magical place to be.

BOAT has cemented its place as one of the UK's finest outdoor venues. Audience numbers increase year on year as our reputation grows, and we continue to attract the very best of UK touring theatre, music, comedy, dance and more to our stage. In 2021, despite a delayed opening and reduced capacity, BOAT's summer season welcomed 148 performances and over 22,700 audience members through our gates.

BOAT is a theatre nestled in Dyke Road Park, Brighton. Opened in 2015 for a few weeks in the summer and have gone from strength to strength ever since.

It hosts a range of performances, including theatre, music, comedy, dance, opera,

circus and family shows. BOAT exists to provide community with entertainment, and to provide a platform for artists from all backgrounds to express themselves. BOAT is the brainchild of the late Adrian Bunting, a local playwright and performer. Since opening in 2015, BOAT has become one of the UK's premiere outdoor performances spaces. BOAT regularly works with internationally recognised companies of as well as up-and-coming artists, and local groups. A new building was opened in 2022, including toilets, accessible facilities, a box office and crew room. Further infrastructure investment is planned.

Brighton Open Air Theatre has been established in order to create Brighton and Hove's first dedicated open air theatre venue. The seating capacity of BOAT is 400.

BOAT's objectives are: Create a new cultural venue for the city that ensures the highest possible production values for outdoor performances and exhibitions and which diversifies the type of work that can be enjoyed in the open air

- To work with the cities festivals, programmes and curators to attract high quality productions and events
- To create a community of local artists and practitioners that make new work for the open air
- To engage with the local community to provide a platform for cultural activities and creative learning
- To bring an under used space back to life as a vibrant green cultural facility

The 2023 season began in late April. They worked with Brighton Fringe Festival where they have the opportunity to have riskier performances. May/June led to great success in sales due to good weather. July sales were affected by bad weather and they had mixed success in August as English school holidays/families travelling elsewhere affected attendance. In 2023 summer season the attendance figures were up from the previous year at 23,492 (up 6%) across 70 productions.

During off season extensive renovation work took place, all wooden sleepers that comprise the auditorium seating had to be replaced with sustainably sourced treated oak sleepers, resurfacing of the majority of pathways with a recycled plastic resin in order to reduce gradients to make the venue more accessible, and to prevent debris washing onto the stage. In addition they created 4 new wheelchair spaces in the auditorium, increasing their overall wheelchair capacity to 8.

Governance, Management Model and Operational Structure

BOAT is a registered charity in England and Wales their charitable objective is 'the advancement of education in arts culture through the establishment and maintenance of an open-air theatre in Brighton & Hove for the use of residents and visitors.

BOAT is governed by a board of 5 trustees. It has a team of 2 Managers and 6 Duty Managers and a Communications Assistant.

Employs 2 people on a part time basis and relies on a number of casual staff/volunteers as needed on a production by production basis.

Facilities

Facilities on site include an accessible toilets, wall-mounted baby changing unit, box office, 8 wheelchair spaces and a bar area.

Finance and Revenue Model

The project started by gaining £18,000 to kick-start the project (Founder: Adrian Bunting).

£100,000 was then raised through stand-up comedy benefits, an art auction and many hugely generous individual donations.

BOAT does not receive regular public funding, relying instead on ticket sales, bar sales, sponsorship and donations. They collect donations after every performance, and online donations.

BOAT Accounts information 2023 details:

- Gross Income: £400.47k
- Expenditure: £360.74k
- Cost of Productions: £249,716
- Insurance/Licences: £7,784
- Staffing Costs: £54,393
- Premises Costs: £24,837

Reserves

In 2023 the surplus added to reserves was £42,138 the reserves at that time carried forward were £336,136. Trustees have set up a designated reserve of £93k to cover the cost of future essential repairs, namely seating replacement and resin paving. The trustees are endeavouring to maintain reserves of 10% of turnover.

Future Plans/Captured Learning

BOAT continues to invest the majority of surpluses generated into improvement of the BOAT site and facilities.

Consolidation of programming with a range of shows to appeal to as wide an audience as possible has meant that they are beginning to succeed in attracting a more diverse audience and aim to extend their reach through outreach programmes plus diversity of types of shows they host.

Since opening in 2015, BOAT has risen to become one of the UK's premiere outdoor performances spaces. They regularly work with companies of international renown, as well as up-and-coming artists, and local groups. A new building was opened in 2022, including toilets, accessible facilities, a box office and crew room, and further infrastructure investment is planned.

The Lenches Amphitheatre, Evesham, England

The Lenches Amphitheatre is a unique and exciting modern amphitheatre for the arts, set within the rural community of The Lenches, in the beautiful Vale of Evesham. Nestled into the natural curve of the land, the outdoor theatre sits alongside The Lenches Sports & Recreation Club, in a truly wonderful site, which offers spectacular views across the Severn Valley to the stunning Malvern, Clent and Abberley Hills in the West.



The 250-seater venue provides a superb amenity, bringing theatre and live music to The Lenches, not to mention a fantastic spot to watch the cricket on a Saturday afternoon! The new building next to the amphitheatre seating provides a brand-new green room, offering a flexible space and wide glass doors opening onto a balcony from which to view both the stage and take in the superb views. This iconic outdoor venue is a wonderful asset for the wider community, drawing a variety of performers and a multi-generational audience from far and wide. The Lenches Amphitheatre aims to host a wide programme of events, to appeal to all age groups, including a variety of outdoor theatre performances, live music concerts and community events.

Church Lench is a village and former civil parish, now in the parish of South Lenches, in the Wychavon district, in the county of Worcestershire, England, approximately 5.5 miles due north of Evesham and 13 miles due west of Stratford-upon-Avon. It is the largest of the surrounding Lenches, accommodating the Lenches Sports Club, the Lenches Members' Club, Church Lench First School, Church Lench preschool and the Church Lench Village Hall.

The Lenches comprises a group of five, rural villages surrounded by farmland, woodland and orchards, set in the beautiful county of Worcestershire. Situated on a ridge, which forms the northern boundary of the Vale of Evesham, the word Lench is derived from an old Anglo- Saxon word meaning a hill or area of high ground.

The Lenches Amphitheatre is located in the heart of Church Lench, the larger of the five villages and benefits from far reaching views across the valley and the River Severn to the spectacular Malvern Hills.

On a Summer evening, the view from The Lenches Amphitheatre is simply breathtaking and often accompanied by the most incredible sunsets.

The ambitious amphitheatre is the final phase of a 20 year long, community fueled dream for this spectacular site, overseen by The Lenches Sports and Recreation Club (LSRC).

The LSRC is a charity organisation, which runs sports facilities at its ground in Church Lench. There are two tennis courts and a multi-use games area on one level and a sports field with a modern pavilion on the lower level. They host two cricket and football teams, together with thriving tennis, netball and boules clubs. It's a wonderful site offering spectacular views across the Severn Valley to the Malvern, Clent and Abberley Hills to the West.

The Vision

The Lenches Sports Club has always wanted to make the most of this glorious location, a gentle slope of thirty metres, set into a curve, running down to the level surface of the wide-open sports field. The slope felt a little like an Amphitheatre.

They had the idea that if terracing could be put in, looking out across to the Malvern Hills, it would make a great space for an Open-Air Theatre. It's a beautiful setting. In the summer months plays could be staged, and live music concerts performed if we got the acoustics right. There would be nothing like it in the Midlands! What a great way to spend a summer evening with friends and family, relaxing with food and a drink, whilst you watch the entertainment.

Wychavon District Council recognised the exciting opportunity to create a unique

space and asked the LSRC to apply for a Community Legacy Grant. The local community was consulted and they were keen to support the idea of an outdoor theatre. It was clear there was great enthusiasm for the plan. The council applied to Wychavon District Council Community Legacy Grant Fund, designed to assist parish councils to invest in capital projects which provide a long-term legacy for the community. Wychavon awarded a grant of £95,000 to develop the amphitheatre, alongside a related building, to provide a green room and storage facilities.

Making The Vision A Reality

The LSRC put together a team to take the project forward. There was no shortage of enthusiasm. Skilled professionals, who wanted to be involved, offered their services for free. Architects, a quantity surveyor, structural engineers, a planning consultant and a builder all joined the team to plan and deliver the unique project.

The £95,000 grant would allow only a basic design, concrete terracing and a steel frame building with metal cladding. That wouldn't do justice to our beautiful rural environment. The free professional services were hugely helpful but what has really transformed the project was a very generous donation of 45,000 bricks by Jewson, who also agreed to supply additional materials at cost.

But it wasn't just big business that helped. One local business donated 100 pallets to store the bricks on. Another provided a forklift to move them. They all wanted to be associated with this outstanding and unique project.

They set our sights high. An acoustic expert from the US gave advice to the project and a final design was settled on.

Governance, Management Model and Operational Structure

The ambitious amphitheatre is the final phase of a 20 year long, community fueled dream for this spectacular site, overseen by The Lenches Sports and Recreation Club (LSRC).

The LSRC is a charity organisation, which runs sports facilities at its ground in Church Lench.

Thanks to relentless work by tireless villagers, successful community fundraising efforts, alongside the generous financial help from the Wychavon Community Legacy Grant and donations from a wide range of local businesses, The Lenches Amphitheatre has finally come to fruition.

The impressive 250-seater amphitheatre has been created by a group of dedicated volunteers, led by The Lenches Sports and Recreation Club working with London-based acoustic specialists SWAP architects.

The £250,000 venue, on Ab Lench Road, provides a high-quality space to put on live entertainment, theatre and community events.

It has already hosted its first performances to rave reviews and a full programme is lined-up for this summer, with outdoor cinema events also in the works.

Finance and Revenue Model

The Lenches Sport and Recreation is a Company Limited by guarantee and a registered charity overseen by 7 trustees. The charity generated an income of £61,016 in 2023 and a surplus of £32,346. They carried forward reserves of £88,836 making a total of £184,327 which is tied in land, building and equipment.

Wychavon District Council backed the amphitheatre project by giving South Lenches Parish Council £95,000 from its Community Legacy Grant scheme.

Another £19,000 came from Wychavon's share of the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Scheme. Another £20,000 came from the Garfield Weston Foundation and community fundraising.

The rest of the money came from community fund-raising events and a generous donation from building material supplier Jewson.

A grant of £5,000 from National Grid's Community Matters Greenspaces Initiative has also helped plant 85 trees and bulbs across the site.

The charity has a restricted fund, funded by South Lenches Parish Council, for the purpose of building the open-air amphitheatre and adjacent building. These facilities are being depreciated over their expected useful life of 20 years.

The Future and Captured Learning

The Lenches is an example of a project in very early development stages having just been launched in May 2024.

A second phase of the project is set for completion this year and includes a two-storey building built next to the current sports and recreation club pavilion.

This will provide storage space along with a multi-use room for hire with a balcony offering spectacular views of the stage below.

Neil Pearce, chairman of The Lenches Amphitheatre Committee, said: "This is an incredibly exciting and unique community-led project.

"We are all very proud of this facility and we look forward to welcoming residents and visitors this summer for another exhilarating programme of family events and

shows."

Councillor Rob Adams, executive board member for stronger communities, culture and sport on Wychavon District Council, said: "This is a spectacular project which has created a first- class facility for residents across the district and another example of how we are investing to make a lasting difference to our communities."

Neil Pearce, chairman of The Lenches Amphitheatre Committee, said: "We are all very proud of this facility and we look forward to welcoming residents and visitors this summer for another exhilarating programme of family events and shows."

A second phase of the project is set for completion later this year and includes a two-storey building next to the current sports and recreation club pavilion.

This will provide storage space along with a multi-use room and a balcony.

Chris Seabourne, chairman of South Lenches Parish Council, said: "We're so excited about the new opportunities that the amphitheatre will bring to the Lenches and the wider community.

"Sports teams, performers and spectators will all benefit so much from it."

The Community Legacy Grant scheme seeks to support capital projects that meet local needs and have a lasting benefit.

Since it launched in 2018, almost £3 million has been committed to 27 different projects across the district, such as the new village hall in Whittington and the renovation of the Evesham Lock Island building.

Councillor Rob Adams, executive board member for stronger communities, culture and sport, said: "The Community Legacy Grant scheme has been a great success, and this is just another example of the difference that investment is making throughout Wychavon."

Waterperry Open Air Theatre at Waterperry Gardens, Wheatley, Southern England

Description, Location and Context

Waterperry is a village and former civil parish, now in the parish of Waterperry with Thomley, in the South Oxfordshire district, in Oxfordshire and close to the county boundary with Buckinghamshire, England. It is beside the River Thames, about 7 miles (11 km) east of Oxford.

The 2011 census combined data for the village with Waterstock, due to the small population of the village.

The amphitheatre is a performance space for opera, theatre and music. It hosts a number of performances throughout the summer months. The amphitheatre is also available for hire for events with seating for around 300 people.



Waterperry gardens hold shows many weekends throughout the summer months but the gardens are the main attraction.

Waterperry Opera Festival uses the amphitheatre for two weeks a year. Waterperry Opera Festival is a unique and innovative opera festival hosted at the beautiful Waterperry House & Gardens in Oxfordshire. The festival offers high-quality, accessible and socially relevant work, created and performed by a diverse company, which bridges the gap between artists and audiences.

The 2023 Waterperry Opera Festival takes place on the Waterperry Estate each summer it uses of the many and varied spaces available on the Waterperry Estate to maximum advantage to provide a unique experience for audiences.

The programme was led by 5 performances of Carmen (Bizet), conducted by Festival Musical Director, Bertie Baigent, which was staged in front of the main Waterperry House façade. Audiences enjoyed performances in the open-air auditorium on the front lawn, with many taking their picnics in our dining pavilion. In 2023 in the amphitheatre, they hosted their first ever Waterperry Prom night, including popular orchestral and operatic repertoire, with a flurry of fireworks to finish off the evening.

They also have a Young Artist Programme which supports promising young practitioners (singers, directors, designers, musical directors) who are given the opportunity to gain experience in a professional environment together with coaching, mentoring and careers advice.

There was also a series of pre-show talks by industry professionals and prominent artists, and singing workshops held in Waterperry House.

Governance, Operational and Management Model and Operational Structure

The amphitheatre is owned by the School of Philosophy and Economic Science. It is an education charity with subsidiary business Waterperry Gardens Limited which runs the site on a day to day basis. It is run by six Directors and volunteers. In order to programme the amphitheatre (open air theatre) it works with Waterperry Opera Festival to run a programme of summer events.

The following findings and financial information are from Waterperry Opera Festival in relation to the work that they do at Waterperry Gardens Open Air Theatre.

Waterperry Opera Festival could not function without the significant support it receives from volunteers, many of whom return year after year. A wide range of roles are covered by volunteers including: kitchen/catering duties for cast and crew, cleaning' housekeeping, box office and stewarding throughout the Festival itself, the period preceding the Festival opening and various preparatory work beforehand. Total volunteer hours in 2023 were recorded as 1,028; at £11 per hour, the total

volunteer input has been valued at £11,308.

A total of 4,970 attendees came to the festival in 2023; concessionary discounted ticket prices were made available to unwaged, disabled, students and NHS staff to support their objective and commitment to accessibility.

Finance and Revenue Model

The following findings and financial information are from Waterperry Opera Festival in relation to the work that they do at Waterperry Gardens Open Air Theatre.

One third of the box office income comes from touring theatre groups. They start most of their performances at 5pm whilst the retail areas are still staffing from the day, this works well.

Waterperry Opera Festival had the following Income during 2023 - £615.3k which comprised of:

- Donations/Grants - £151.5k (Including gift aid of £21.1k)
- Charitable Activities - £341.6k (Including TTR of £94.5k)
- Other Trading Activities - £23.6k
- In Kind Support Valuation - £95.5k
- Other - £3.1k Expenditure - £629.2k, which comprised:
- Fundraising - £1.8k Charitable Activities
- £413.2 k Other Trading - £12.1k
- Core Support Costs – £106.6k In Kind Support Valuation
- £95.5k Net Expenditure 2021/2022
- £13.9k Total Funds Carried Forward £6.7k (All unrestricted)
- Cash Balance – at the end of the financial year, the combined cash balance was £18.4k

Other Activities/Attractions/Accommodation

Waterperry Gardens is in Waterperry Village near Wheatly in Oxfordshire. The gardens attract thousands of visitors a year. There are various options for accommodation in and around Waterperry.

Waterperry House is a 17th-century mansion, remodeled early in the 18th century for Sir John Curson and again around 1820. It is now a house of seven bays and three storeys with a balustraded parapet and ionic porch.

The house has extensive grounds, and until 1971 housed the Waterperry School of Horticulture under Beatrix Havergal. Since 1971 the house has been owned and used

as a country retreat by the School of Economic Science. The gardens are now a horticultural business and visitor destination, Waterperry Gardens. The 8 acres of gardens include rose and alpine gardens, a formal knot garden, trained fruit and nursery beds and a riverside walk. The grounds also have nurseries, orchards, plant centre and teasshop. Gardening courses are still taught here. The grounds host the annual Art in Action festival of art and craft each July. The gardens also house the amphitheatre.

Captured Learning

Being alongside another tourist attraction can be beneficial for developing audiences and income generation. The main attraction at Waterperry is the gardens the amphitheatre's positioning in the gardens has benefited from additional audiences due to the garden as the gardens attract thousands of visitors per year.

Utilising touring groups to populate the programme of activities is a recurring theme throughout all of the precedent examples, utilising already established popular arts organisation to generate income.

Wet weather cover is always an ideal but Waterperry have found this to be difficult and very expensive to do well. However, in the last ten years they have only had to call off one show completely because of the weather.

They have found that handrails and more health and safety is always important but can cause problems with seating flexibility.

Cloughjordan Community Amphitheatre, Ecovillage, Oxpark,
Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, Ireland



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Description of Location and Context

Located within Cloughjordan ecovillage, the Amphitheatre is an outdoor community arts amenity. It is a multi-purpose facility with a 300-audience capacity that is capable of staging a diverse range of cultural events. Built using a permaculture design process, it symbolises a dedication to both the Arts and the natural world. The amphitheatre is run by Cloughjordan Arts and operates from May to September.

Cloughjordan is an ecovillage in Co. Tipperary Ireland with a population of 900. The amphitheatre, Ireland's first ecovillage is sculpted from the Tipperary landscape and built by Cloughjordan Arts CLG. It is a not-for-profit company.

Description of the Amphitheatre

The amphitheatre is built on the former sub soil heap that was created during the construction of the Cloughjordan eco-village residential infrastructure. It was designed without the assistance of an acoustic engineer, built using exclusively reclaimed and/or recyclable materials and all labour and contractors were local. The amphitheatre is located 750 metres from the Main Street and its capacity is 250 seated on bench seating

Although events at the amphitheatre are powered either by off-grid renewable energy sources or via a local renewable energy company, in the early days of the project a diesel generator was used. Lighting is provided by solar power.

In 2016 Caelan Bristow was commissioned by Cloughjordan Arts to design a roof canopy measuring 5metres x 6metres. The specially designed canopy provides a little protection against the unpredictable Irish summer weather and also contains special features for lighting, drapes, and aerial circus performers. The installation of a "hard stand" provides a place for a temporary WC

"Theoretically there is universal access, however some pathways' are unfinished"

Finance and Revenue Model

The amphitheatre building work commenced 2016 and opened in 2017 and completed (in as much as ever) in 2018.

- Overall capital cost: €150k
- Capital funding model: Leader/Dept. of Arts capital grants and some philanthropy
- 90% of turnover is ticket sales and a very small programming grant (€5k) from the local authority

Governance and Ownership

Cloughjordan Arts CLG is a registered charity –which fundraised for, owns and insures the technical infrastructure and structures.

The Cloughjordan Arts Committee is made up of a small majority of Ecovillage residents, with the remaining members coming from Cloughjordan village cultural and business interests. The amphitheatre, it is hoped, will reflect the ethos behind the Ecovillage and provide a cultural focal point for the community there.

The land is leased under a 5 yearly licence from the landowners, Sustainable Projects Ireland CLG, which is also a Registered Charity.

Marketing and Audience Model

The Cloughjordan Community Amphitheatre has its own Facebook page.

Opened by President Michael D Higgins, in April 2017, the amphitheatre hosted its first festival, the Free Reed Gathering. Musicians included Andy Irvine, Don Baker, Brendan Power, and blues guitarist, Seamie O'Dowd.

Since the venue was opened in April of 2017 by it has seen great success throughout the years as a fantastic local venue that has become known for securing interesting and eclectic acts that have been greatly enjoyed by people far and wide over the years. and operates from May through to September.

"We see ourselves as having a much broader cultural, and perhaps even political, remit in terms of the type of programming we put on. It's all about community. The land is co- operatively owned, and the company is not-for-profit. The whole ethos of it is to be embedded with the community, but we strive to bring visitors into the town and generate economic activity in the town, through drawing people in."

Hermitage Millenium Amphitheatre



Located along the River Medway in Maidstone Kent, The Hermitage Millennium Amphitheatre, is a Council owned charming outdoor stage surrounded by trees and roses, inspired by the style of Roman Amphitheatres. It was designed and built in 2000 and resurfaced in 2021 thus creating a revived presence to the area



The site was constructed as part of a £4.1million project to celebrate the millennium and was funded by the National Lottery. With tiered seating, a convenient location within close proximity to Maidstone Town Centre and a delightful scenic setting, it is an ideal location for drama, theatre and music performances. This space is free to use. Several theatre companies have used this space for outdoor performances.

There is no parking on site but there is parking nearby at locations such as Mill Street, Palace Avenue and College Road. There are no toilet services at the site, However, portable toilets can be placed near the main entrance for events.

There is an electrical box on site, which is useful for some added lighting. The location is close to residential properties therefore no amplified music is permitted. The amphitheatre has a seating capacity of about 250 people. The site is owned and managed by Maidstone Borough Council which collaborates with theatres like Hazlitt Theatre and Parkwood Theatres and funds summer events.

Library Park Amphitheatre, Barrack Lane, New Ross, Co. Wexford. Y34 NW56

Description of Location and Context

New Ross is a town in Southwest County Wexford, Ireland. It is located on the River Barrow, near the border with County Kilkenny and is around 20 kilometres Northeast of Waterford. In 2022 it had a population of 8,610 people, making it the fourth largest town in the county.

New Ross Town has a significant number of attractions, hotels, and other accommodation and is rich in large scale and high-quality public spaces that contribute to the very good standard of the town's public realm.

Particularly outstanding examples are:

- High Hill Norman Gardens
- Library Park Pearse Park
- The Quays Linear Park
- Emigrant Park (under construction)
- Southeast Greenway (under construction)

Other creative spaces in the Town include Craft Central, the New Ross Art Collective Gallery, and St Michael's Theatre, a community-based Arts Centre.

The Park, which was opened in June 2016, is fully accessible and occupies a site in the heart of New Ross and surrounds New Ross Library. Facilities within the park include.

- Children's Play Area
- Education Centre
- Events, Parking
- Public Sculpture
- Wildflower Area
- Amphitheatre

Description of Library Park Amphitheatre

The centre piece of the park is the amphitheatre with its intertwining 8 metre diameter sundial and performance circles. The seating and grass mounds surrounding the theatre/sundial space all radiate out in ever increasing concentric circles.

The radius of the amphitheatre main circle is 8m. Seating capacity is 100 seats.

The design of the park reflected its location and steepness. The location was previously the site of the old public John F Kennedy Memorial Swimming Pool and the derelict Barrack Lane apartment blocks which were demolished CCTV is installed



The park, of which the amphitheatre was a central element, was conceived by New Ross Municipal District Council and supported by the Elected Members.

It was estimated that the cost to construct would be €332,000. However, estimated final costs are approximately €500,000.

Governance, Operational and Management Model:

It is an open space in a public park and is managed by the Council. There are no operational costs, etc., for the Amphitheatre

Council staff are used at any events

Council collaborates with local St Michael's Theatre and support events with the theatre

The Summer Series is an event that is in the space every Summer, and this is run by the local theatre with council and funding.

Marketing

A series of concerts and events known as the 'Summer Sessions' are run by the Council from July until August. The Sessions are free of charge, with Wexford County Council with local councillors providing the funding for the gigs at The Library Park. If any other groups or organisations need to use the performance space they will most likely be accommodated but must cover their insurances.

The Library Park has been awarded a [Green Flag Award](#) - a benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor space.

Somers Park Outdoor Performance Space, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon



Description of Location and Context

Castlerea is centrally located in County Roscommon and is a focal town for both outdoor and heritage tourism offerings (for both Roscommon and Ireland Hidden Heartlands). It has a population of 2970 and significant tourist attractions include the Historic Clonalis House, the Suck Valley Way and the Demesne (formerly the Sandyford Estate) which is comprised of woodland, walkways and a fairy village).

The location of Somers Park is in an area with ample parking, just off the busy town centre and part of the green area of Castlerea Demesne, ensuring that it is a safe space that allows for safe gatherings. The space has been respected and appreciated by the local population since it was developed for recreation in 2019. The Garda Station is a 5-minute walk from the park.

The existing walkway, mature trees and exercise equipment were retained as was a substantial grass area around the perimeter.

The space is convenient to the toilets and changing area at the Council's Outdoor Swimming Pool, which is very advantageous for outdoor events. There is also a Council Car Park at the site.

The Trinity Arts Centre is very close.

There are a number of accommodation options for tourists and visitors including B&B, Air B&B, Camping, Tully's Hotel and the Georgian residence of Clonalis House, which offers both Guest House and Self-Catering accommodation

Description of site and performance space.

Somers Park Outdoor Event Area

Capital funding from Outdoor Public Space Scheme 2021, Dept Tourism Culture Arts Gaeltacht Sport with ORIS funding, developed as an outdoor recreation area with outdoor gym – opened in 2018

The Castlerea Festival Committee was one of the many stakeholders involved in this application and have equipment for an outdoor cinema and other live events

Working with Connaught Construction, Somers Park Outdoor Event Area was constructed to hold events such as concerts, movie nights and other events in the area. Councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice was the driving force behind getting the project completed in Castlerea and it was funded by Roscommon County Council

The theatre/performance space was developed as an added element to the park in 2022

Overall capital cost €300,000







Description of the Performance Space

The event space consists of flat Paved spaces with a canopy structure. The objective is that the space has multiple purposes such as a performance area, an area for stalls/markets, an area for audiences etc. Cabling and power points for 3-phase power and lighting is installed on site. There is a sound system for small events, but larger sound and lighting equipment is mainly hired in for events. There are no permanent seats. The performance space does include:

- Hard surface with landscaping
- Paved spaces with a canopy structure. Multiple purposes such as a performance area, an area for stalls/markets, an area for audiences etc.
- Pathways with access to performance area
- Cabling and power points for 3-phase power and lighting
- Artistic feature (Per Cent for Art)
- Landscaping/Ancillary site works carried out by contractors
- Existing walkway, mature trees and exercise equipment retained and a substantial grass area around the perimeters

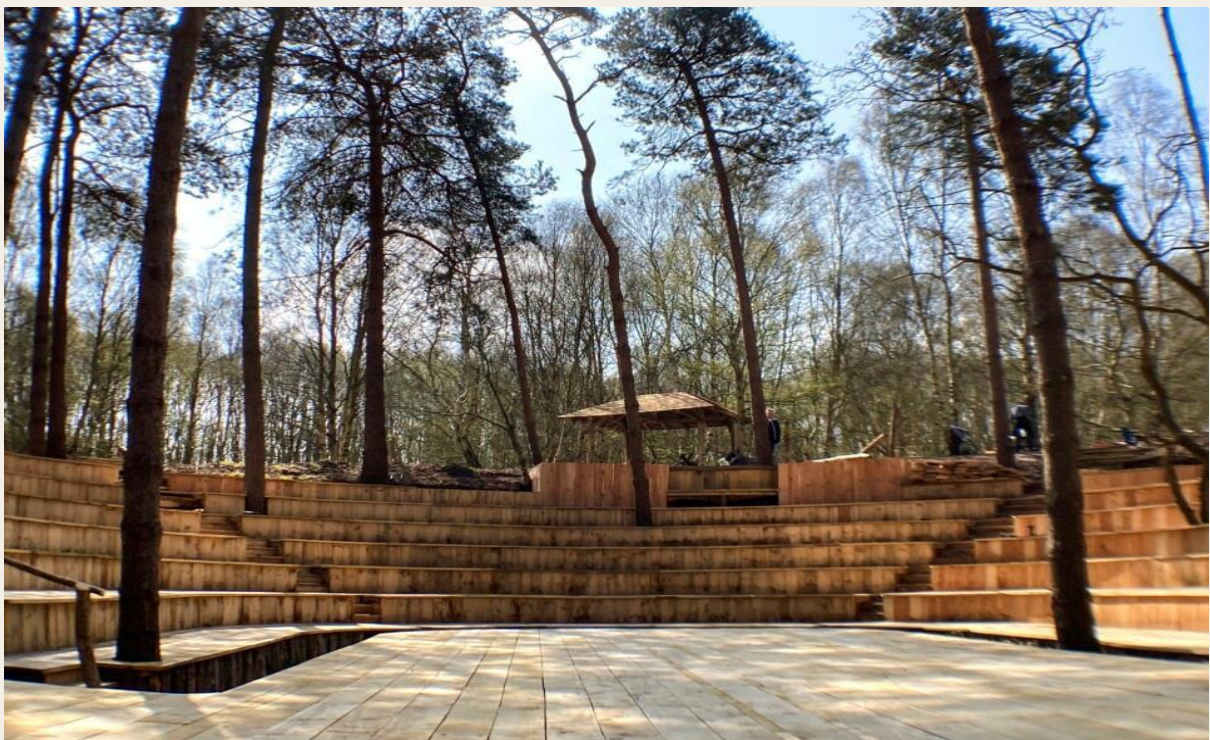
Marketing/Audience model

Arts Office/RCC Departments use the space for occasional events. Local organisations use it classes e.g. yoga under the canopy.

Events are staged by Castlerea Rose Festival mainly during the festival in August annually but also during the year

The Creative Vision for Roscommon is: A Creative Place and A Creative People. The Roscommon Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 provides an opportunity to encourage a multiplicity of voices and forms of expression from which new ideas can emerge and old stories can be reimagined. As part of the programming for events Roscommon County Council advertise an "open call" through the Creative Roscommon Open Call, seeking proposals for outdoor events at any of the Council's newly developed outdoor spaces in the County. These events are supported and funded by RCC.

Thornington Amphitheatre



Description, Location and context

In 2020, two farmers and a carpenter had an idea: to turn a Second World War bomb crater on their land which left a natural amphitheatre that inspired them to construct an open-air theatre.

Situated between Southwold, Walberswick and Aldeburgh. Sussex, England. Significant attractions in the locale include, Britten Pears Arts, Aldeburgh.

Other creative spaces in the area are Southwold Theatre, Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh, The Cut, Halesworth.

There are numerous hotels and various types of rental accommodation as the location is near to holiday seaside towns. The amphitheatre is constructed with the smallest carbon footprint possible; all the timber has been sourced through sensitive and sustainable coppicing of surrounding chestnut trees.

The site is a bomb crater from WWII, which left a natural amphitheatre. Thorington Theatre aims to be as eclectic and inclusive as possible; productions range from those of local youth theatre groups to national touring companies and from Shakespearian classics to folksy musicals.

Description of the Theatre

The amphitheatre is wooden construction set in a woodland area on a 2-acre site and accommodates 360 people. There are two wheelchair platforms at the theatre which are accessed via a pathway and the stage area is 20m x 12m without a canopy. Amenities include, a green room, toilets, bar, picnic area and parking facilities.

When the construction of the amphitheatre was completed electricians then created the capacity to put in lighting rigs, sound equipment or anything related to production. An electric buggy is used as transport around the site to bring in supplies.

Water is syphoned from stables around half a km away and gravity fed which meant that there was no need to install pumps, just piping.

Visitor numbers to date average

12000 PA Wi Fi has just been

installed.

Ownership and Governance

The Theatre is owned privately by Thorington

Estates There are 5 employees and 2

volunteers

The core team is now made up of the owners, Mark and Lindy O' Hare, the Theatre Manager, Marketing and administration person who also deals in contracting with the touring companies, and a front of house and a bar team. External help is brought in as and when it's needed. The owners, are responsible for the pre-show setup, liaising with touring companies and organising the schedule. The theatre manager takes over once the companies arrive on site, making them feel comfortable and helping them to adjust what they're doing to fit the space. If it's a theatre company that's been touring outdoor venues it tends to be pretty simple. Whereas if you're bringing in a band that's used to indoor venues, they tend to need more hands-on support. But everyone that's been coming in has used the space fantastically, and often just goes with the flow.

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Revenue Model

The programme season is run in the summer months and weather does not always fair well, however performances continue and audiences appreciate the uniqueness of the venue.

There is a performance/event at least once a week during the season.

Earned income does meet operating costs. All events are ticketed and priced for the event and revenue is split 60/40 in the visiting companies' favour.

Impact on Tourism in the area

They won the New Tourism Business of the Year award at the 2023 East of England Tourism awards.

Appendix B: Job Description

Job Description

Job Title:

Events Manager – Longford County Council

Grade:

Local Authority Grade (to be confirmed)

Section:

Tourism, Arts, Culture & Events

Directorate:

Community, Culture & Tourism – Longford County Council

Responsible to:

Acting Director of Services – Integration, Enterprise & Tourism **or** Director of Services – Corporate, Library & Cultural Services

Responsible for:

Temporary/casual staff, volunteers, and contracted event suppliers

Location:

Main Offices Longford County Council, Great Water Street

Contract:

Full-time [specify fixed-term/permanent]

Purpose of the Role

The Events Manager will lead the planning, coordination, and delivery of Longford County Council's events strategy with a particular focus on:

- Leading the development and agreement of a County wide Events Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Developing existing flagship Council events such as *Longford*

Lights, Dead of Night Festival, Summer Festival Series, Culture Night, and other seasonal celebrations

- Liaising with stakeholders across arts, tourism and communities
- Establishing collaborative arrangements as appropriate with organisations extended to the county e.g. Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Roscommon County Council, and Arts Council of Ireland
- Assist in the programming of existing and emerging event spaces including the Lanesborough amphitheatre
- Identifying new event opportunities and put in place appropriate actions to pilot and test the market

The role will ensure these events are safe, inclusive, and high-quality, reflecting Longford's ambition to be regionally significant while meeting local community needs, and supporting the wider promotion of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands as a tourism destination.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Event Development & Programming

- Develop and agree on an annual events programme for the County Council area, including music, theatre, festivals, community, sports and heritage events.
- Support and develop existing local events and festivals across Longford, working with community groups, partner councils, and promoters.
- Identify and introduce new events that enhance Longford's cultural offering and attract regional and national visitors.
- Ensure programming supports the objectives of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and the Council's arts, cultural and tourism plans.

Event Planning & Management

- Lead the end-to-end planning process for Council-led events,

including setting objectives, creating event concepts, timelines, and budgets.

- Co-ordinate all logistical arrangements, including site layouts, staging, lighting, sound, power, waste management, traffic, accessibility, and crowd safety.
- Liaise with statutory agencies (Garda Síochána, Fire Service, HSE, Civil Defence) to ensure compliance with licensing, safety, and operational requirements.
- Prepare and manage Event Safety Management Plans, risk assessments, and emergency plans in line with Irish standards (e.g., IS 3217/3218, IS 10101) and recognised best practice (Green Guide).

Stakeholder Engagement & Community Liaison

- Build positive relationships with local businesses, voluntary groups, artists, schools, and cultural organisations to encourage participation in events.
- Act as the Council's point of contact for event enquiries, ensuring clear and timely communication with residents and stakeholders.
- Work collaboratively with other local authorities, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and regional tourism partners to co-promote events and develop cross-county initiatives.

Supplier & Contractor Management

- Procure and manage event suppliers, including production companies, security providers (PSA-licensed), catering, cleaning, and medical services.
- Negotiate contracts and monitor delivery to ensure quality, compliance, and value for money.

Marketing & Promotion

- Work with the Council's Communications team to develop and deliver marketing campaigns for events.
- Ensure consistent branding that reinforces Longford's cultural identity and the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand
- Manage event listings, ticketing systems, and online booking platforms where required.

On-Site Event Delivery

- Lead on-site delivery for Council-led events, overseeing set-up, rehearsals, technical coordination, front-of-house, and volunteer supervision.
- Troubleshoot operational issues in real-time and make clear decisions to ensure events run smoothly and safely.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Collect and analyse attendance, engagement, and feedback data to evaluate event success.
- Produce post-event reports to inform future planning and demonstrate impact to stakeholders.
- Maintain accurate budget and financial records for each event in line with budget allocations in the Longford County Annual Events Strategy and Plan.

Generic Duties

- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in all event planning and delivery.
- Ensure compliance with Longford County Council policies on health and safety, procurement, and data protection.
- Source external funding to implement the Longford Events Strategy Plan
- Support emergency and priority situations as required.
- Carry out other reasonable duties commensurate with the grade of the post

Appendix C: Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Between

Longford County Council

and

Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG

(together, "the Client")

and

Backstage Theatre Company CLG

("the Service Provider")

1. Parties

This Agreement is made between:

- **Longford County Council**, which will lead the capital delivery of the amphitheatre in Lanesborough.
- **Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG**, a Company Limited by Guarantee, established to provide governance and strategic oversight of the Lanesborough Amphitheatre, Co. Longford.
- **Backstage Theatre Company CLG**, a professional theatre operator based in Longford, is engaged to deliver operational and event management services for the Lanesborough Amphitheatre.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this SLA is to formalise the working arrangement between the Client and the Service Provider to ensure the **safe, professional, and high-quality management** of the Teir one events at Lanesborough Amphitheatre.

The Service Level Agreement supports the CLG's mission to create a **regionally** significant arts and events performance space that meets local community needs, supports Longford County Council's arts, tourism, and events strategies, and contributes to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands aims and objectives.

3. Background

The Lanesborough Amphitheatre project is a strategic initiative led by Longford County Council and stakeholders in Lanesborough to enhance the county's events and performance infrastructure, support economic and tourism growth, in Lanesborough and across the County.

The CLG Board reflects:

- Council responsibilities for arts, tourism, and events
- Council Events Manager (if appointed)
- Backstage Theatre representation
- Community representation

The amphitheatre will facilitate the delivery of the following:

- Tier One Events: Significant events with a County or Regional significance
- Tier Two Events: Local events organised by community organisations in Lanesborough

Backstage Theatre has been engaged under this SLA for its expertise in professional venue management, technical operations, and event delivery to lead the delivery of the Tier one events.

4. Agreed Outputs

The Service Provider will deliver a minimum of three tier one events each year:

Operational Management

- Operational management for Council-led and CLG-approved tier one events at the amphitheatre.
- Staff and volunteer co-ordination and management for each Tier one event.

Event Delivery at the Lanesborough Amphitheatre

- Operational management of all three tier one events at the amphitheatre, as agreed annually with the CLG and in line with the Councils Events Strategy Plan.
- Technical production services (staging, lighting, sound).

Safety Compliance

- Development and implementation of Event Safety Management Plans.
- Compliance with Irish standards (IS 3217/3218, IS 10101) and best practice (Green Guide) and ensure that any events specific licenses and permissions are in place.
- Liaison with Garda Síochána, Fire Service, HSE, Civil Defence, and other statutory agencies as appropriate.

Ticketing s Box Office

- Provision and operation of online and in-person ticketing.
- Accurate and timely sales and settlement reports.

Marketing Promotion

- Integration of amphitheatre events into Backstage Theatre's marketing channels.
- Collaboration with the CLG and Council to promote the venue as part of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

Supplier s Contractor Management

- Procurement and management of PSA-licensed security contractors, medical cover, catering, and cleaning contractors.

5. Agreed Outcomes

The Service Provider's work will deliver the following **outcomes**:

- Increased **audience attendance** at Council-led events, with year-on-year growth.
- High **audience satisfaction** ($\geq 80\%$ rating in post-event surveys).
- A varied programme that balances **regional appeal** with **local community access**.
- Strengthened reputation of Longford as a cultural destination within **Ireland's Hidden Heartlands**.

- Zero critical safety breaches and full regulatory compliance.
 - Increased collaboration between local artists, community groups, and regional partners.
-

6. Reporting s Monitoring

- **Monthly Reports** to the CLG Board including:
 - Event attendance figures and financial performance
 - Incident and safety compliance reports
 - Marketing activity summaries
- **Quarterly Review Meetings** between the Service Provider and the CLG Board to evaluate progress against KPIs.
- **Annual Review** to assess performance, agree adjustments, and decide on SLA renewal.

7. Support from the Client (CLG / Council)

The Client will:

- Provide annual programme funding and cover agreed operational costs.
- Maintain the amphitheatre facility in safe and functional condition.
- Support marketing and PR for flagship events through Council channels.
- Facilitate introductions and partnerships with local, regional, and national cultural bodies.

8. Financial Arrangements

- The CLG will pay the Service Provider an agreed **Management Fee** of €[amount] per annum, payable in [quarterly/monthly] instalments.
- All ticketing revenue for Council-led events will be collected by the Service Provider and settled to the CLG within 30 working days post-event, less agreed deductions for costs.
- Any expenditure over €[amount] requires written approval from the CLG.

9. Term Renewal

- This SLA is effective from **[start date]** and will continue for a period of **[3/5 years]**.
 - Renewal will be subject to performance review and mutual agreement.
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10. Dispute Resolution

- Any disputes will first be addressed at the quarterly review meeting.
 - If unresolved, they will be referred to the Chairs of both parties for mediation.
 - Failing resolution, an independent mediator will be jointly appointed.
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11. Termination

This Agreement may be terminated:

- By either party with **6 months' written notice**; or
 - Immediately, in the case of:
 - Material breach of obligations not remedied within 30 days
 - Insolvency of either party
 - Serious health C safety breaches
-

12. Signatures

Signed for and on behalf of **Longford County Council**:

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signed for and on behalf of **Lanesborough Amphitheatre CLG**:

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signed for and on behalf of **Backstage Theatre Company CLG**:

Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____
