

LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL
FESTIVALS AND EVENTS STRATEGY
2024-2028

EMBRACE THE EXPERIENCE



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council

ATLANTIC EDGE
LIMERICK
EUROPEAN EMBRACE

COVER IMAGE Riverfest
Picture: Brian Arthur


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Royal De Luxe Giant's Journey.
Picture: Alan Place/FusionShooters.





Limerick has a number of unique characteristics and assets that set it apart from other places and destinations.

Limerick's diverse festivals and events offering encompasses a broad range of local community festivals to major international events across arts, culture, food, sport and heritage including business events and conferences. These festivals and events offer a platform to reflect and celebrate the energy, excitement, grit and limitless possibilities of Limerick from its Atlantic location, to its timeless, creative and hospitable European character.

Limerick has a number of unique characteristics and assets that set it apart from other places and destinations. Used collectively, these have potential to inspire and shape the development of an enhanced dynamic portfolio of festivals and events which represent Limerick today:

- Limerick is a Gateway City to the Wild Atlantic Way.
- Limerick is the only city located on Ireland's largest river, the River Shannon.
- Limerick has an international reputation as a centre for sporting excellence.
- Limerick is a cultural centre, home of Ireland's first National City of Culture and EVA – Ireland's Biennial of Contemporary Art.
- Limerick has a burgeoning film industry driven by Film in Limerick and Troy Studios.
- Limerick has a proud reputation for nurturing Urban Music and Art talent.
- Limerick is the home of the Irish Aerial Creation Centre.
- Limerick offers itself as an iconic stage, with unique natural and built heritage.
- Limerick has a rich tradition of marching bands, celebrated annually by the International Band Championship.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Cont'd)

Giving consideration to these unique selling points, this strategy aims to develop a festivals and events portfolio of authenticity, inspired by Limerick as captured in our brand – Atlantic Edge, European Embrace – celebrating and promoting Limerick as a vibrant, innovative, open, inclusive place to live, visit, study and work.

In 2027 Adare, Limerick will host the Ryder Cup, an event which will reach a global audience, providing an international platform for Limerick. Limerick City and County Council is committed to harnessing the knowledge gained, lessons learned and partnerships forged across the public, private and voluntary sectors during National City of Culture 2014. This once-in-a-lifetime mega event will provide an opportunity to further develop the expertise and professionalism of the tourism industry in Limerick, securing a legacy which will benefit citizens and visitors alike.

Our Vision

The vision of Limerick's Festivals and Events Strategy is **"Limerick will inspire and engage local residents and visitors through an authentic, distinct and diverse year-round programme of festivals and events, that celebrate Limerick's culture on a world stage."**

Our Objectives

The key objectives of our strategy are:

- 1 To develop a portfolio of festivals and events building momentum towards and beyond Ryder Cup 2027.
- 2 To reflect the essence of Limerick as captured in our brand – Atlantic Edge, European Embrace – celebrating and promoting Limerick as an innovative, open, inclusive place to live, visit, study and work.
- 3 To develop our local communities, support universal accessibility, wellbeing, civic engagement and place-making.
- 4 To incorporate the UN Sustainable Development Goals in all aspects of planning, management and implementation of festivals and events.
- 5 To develop a compelling portfolio of year-round festivals and events.
- 6 To position Limerick as a festivals and events destination for leisure, weekend breaks, day-trips and to support seasonality, to motivate and attract domestic and international visitors to Limerick and increase length of visit and dwell time.
- 7 To leverage national/international public and private funding streams and set up multi-annual planning, to increase investment for festivals and events.



Walk the Plank at
St Patrick's Day Parade
Picture: TrueMedia

Strategic Goals

The strategic goals and actions provide the framework for Limerick City and County Council to focus its time and resources to achieve Limerick's ambition to be a high quality festivals and events destination. The strategic plan provides a targeted platform for development and investment in existing and new festivals and events, to create a world class offering that contributes to Limerick's economic, cultural and social development. We will achieve our vision and objectives through our seven strategic goals.

Goal 1: Develop: To maximise the potential of Ryder Cup 2027

An example of an action to achieve this is to develop a wrap-round cultural programme and legacy signature event for Ryder Cup 2027.

Goal 2: Support: To enable an innovative and productive sector

An example of an action to achieve this is to support professional development programmes for festival and event organisers.

Goal 3: Sustain: To establish new structures and processes within the Local Authority

An example of an action to achieve this is to establish a festivals and events unit in the Council, led by a dedicated Festivals and Events Coordinator who will work with colleagues across the tourism, culture, arts and operations departments to deliver, communicate and evaluate the festivals and events strategy.

Goal 4: Promote: To grow domestic and international visitors

An example of an action to achieve this is to develop and resource a year-round marketing plan and brand to promote Limerick's festivals and events locally, nationally and internationally.

Goal 5: Build: To create new festival and event infrastructure

An example of an action to achieve this is to review and assess the need for a new multi-purpose venue and cultural centre in Limerick.

Goal 6: Invest: To increase funding and investment

An example of an action to achieve this is to continue to leverage national funding streams to increase investment in festivals and events in Limerick.

Goal 7: Monitor: To capture and measure impact

An example of an action to achieve this is to develop an impact and evaluation framework for festivals and events, to capture return on funding and investment.

Limerick City and County Council has played a pivotal role in the festivals and events ecosystem and Limerick is already starting from a place of strength with its diverse offering from international sporting events, arts, cultural and food festivals, parades, concerts, conferences and tourism events.

Through this strategy, we will work with our stakeholders and partners to develop a sustainable festivals and events portfolio that reflects the unique story of Limerick and supports the identity, brand and positioning of the destination. While there are significant challenges to be addressed, Limerick City and County Council is committed to providing the leadership and direction to unlock the potential of the festivals and events sector.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Tiger Woods at Adare Manor
Picture: PAUL SEVERN

Limerick's festivals and events are an essential part of the social, economic and cultural fabric of the city and county

Limerick's rich, diverse and dynamic festival and events offering encompasses a broad range – from local community festivals to major international events – across arts, culture, food, sport and heritage, including business events and conferences. Inspired by the authenticity and uniqueness of Limerick, they reflect the essence of Limerick as captured in our new brand – Atlantic

Edge, European Embrace – celebrating and promoting a forward thinking, open, inclusive place to live, visit, study and work.

Limerick's festivals and events are an essential part of the social, economic and cultural fabric of the city and county, attracting a growing number of domestic and international visitors while also helping to shape communities and support a professional industry of suppliers, infrastructure and specialised event personnel.

Identifying the Need

The need for a festivals and events strategy was first identified in the Limerick Cultural Strategy 2016- 2030 to build on the legacy of City of Culture 2014 and the process of bidding to be European Capital of Culture 2020. Among the many benefits of these initiatives was the knowledge gained, lessons learned and partnerships forged across the public, private and voluntary sectors. It also demonstrated the potential within Limerick City and County Council to lead and deliver an ambitious, visionary and large-scale annual

programme of events. This was further recognised in the Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023, Limerick 2030: Economic and Spatial Plan, Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway Strategy, Belonging to Limerick 2018-2022: Limerick City and County Integration Plan and Limerick Public Realm Strategy.

Potential for Growth

The Ryder Cup, which will take place in Adare, Limerick in 2027, will reach and captivate a global audience presenting a once-in-a-life time opportunity to further support the development of the festivals and events industry in Limerick. Limerick City and County Council is committed to ensuring that this opportunity is leveraged to secure legacy benefits for Limerick.

Festivals and events in Limerick have played an important role in Limerick's social, cultural and economic development to date, from improved quality of life for residents, to creative place-making, to attracting investment, tourism, jobs, talent and building international links and networks.

There is compelling evidence from various reports carried out over recent years to support the contribution of the sector to Limerick's economy and society:

- In 2022, the Shannon Region Conference & Sports Bureau supported business and sports events worth in excess of €18m to the economy of the Mid-West and attracted over 16,000 people¹
- The four major Limerick City and County Council owned festivals and events annually attract over 150k visitors²

¹ Shannon Region Conference & Sports Bureau

² Let's Talk Festivals, 2016, Limerick City and County Council

INTRODUCTION (Cont'd)

- The Great Limerick Run (2016), the largest mass participatory event outside of Dublin and the only annual 'Tier One' event in the Mid-West region, generated a total economic impact (including multiplier impacts) of €4.04 million, based on an investment of €265,000³
- Limerick's City of Culture in 2014 attracted 1.8m people and generated €13.4 million economic impact from a €12million investment programme of 3000 events⁴
- A review of Limerick City and County Council investment data by Nordicity in 2020, as part of the development of this strategy, showed that the Council's investment in festivals and events increased from €600,000 in 2016 to €1.6million in 2019. A review of the impact of this investment by Nordicity estimates that the additional economic impact was equal to 84 Full Time Equivalents of paid employment, €2.9m in Compensation of Employment and €5.6m in Gross value added in 2019.⁵

Research shows that festivals and events are a central component of Ireland's tourism economy, ranking as the third most important positive factor influencing Irish Tourism Businesses and among the top 5 activities that are most engaged in by domestic holidaymakers. In 2018 the festivals and events industry in Ireland generated in excess of €3.5bn towards the Irish economy and €850m towards the Irish export market, employing an estimated 35,000 full time and part time staff. In 2018 over 4.8 million people attended live events including over

550,000 overseas visitors⁶. In a broader context, cultural and creative employment now accounts for up to 1 in 20 jobs in some OECD countries, and up to 1 in 10 jobs in major cities. These jobs are "future proof" (10% at high risk of automation vs. 14% in general workforce)⁷.

This data and research is proof that opportunity exists for Limerick to reap further benefits to generate business, create jobs and boost the economy whilst delivering impacts and legacy that will benefit all of Limerick's communities and build on its growing reputation and international attractiveness.

Overriding Status of the Strategy

Implementing this Strategy will involve Limerick City and County Council helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans setting out public policy for sustainable development, including that relating to land use developments, land use activities, tourism and environmental protection and environmental management.

This Strategy is situated alongside this hierarchy of statutory documents that has been subject to environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment, as appropriate, and forms the decision-making and consent-granting framework. The Strategy does not provide

³ W2 Consulting, 2016

⁴ Economic Impact Evaluation of Limerick 2015, Grant Thornton

⁵ Nordicity 2020

⁶ <https://eventindustryireland.com/events-industry-report-2020/>

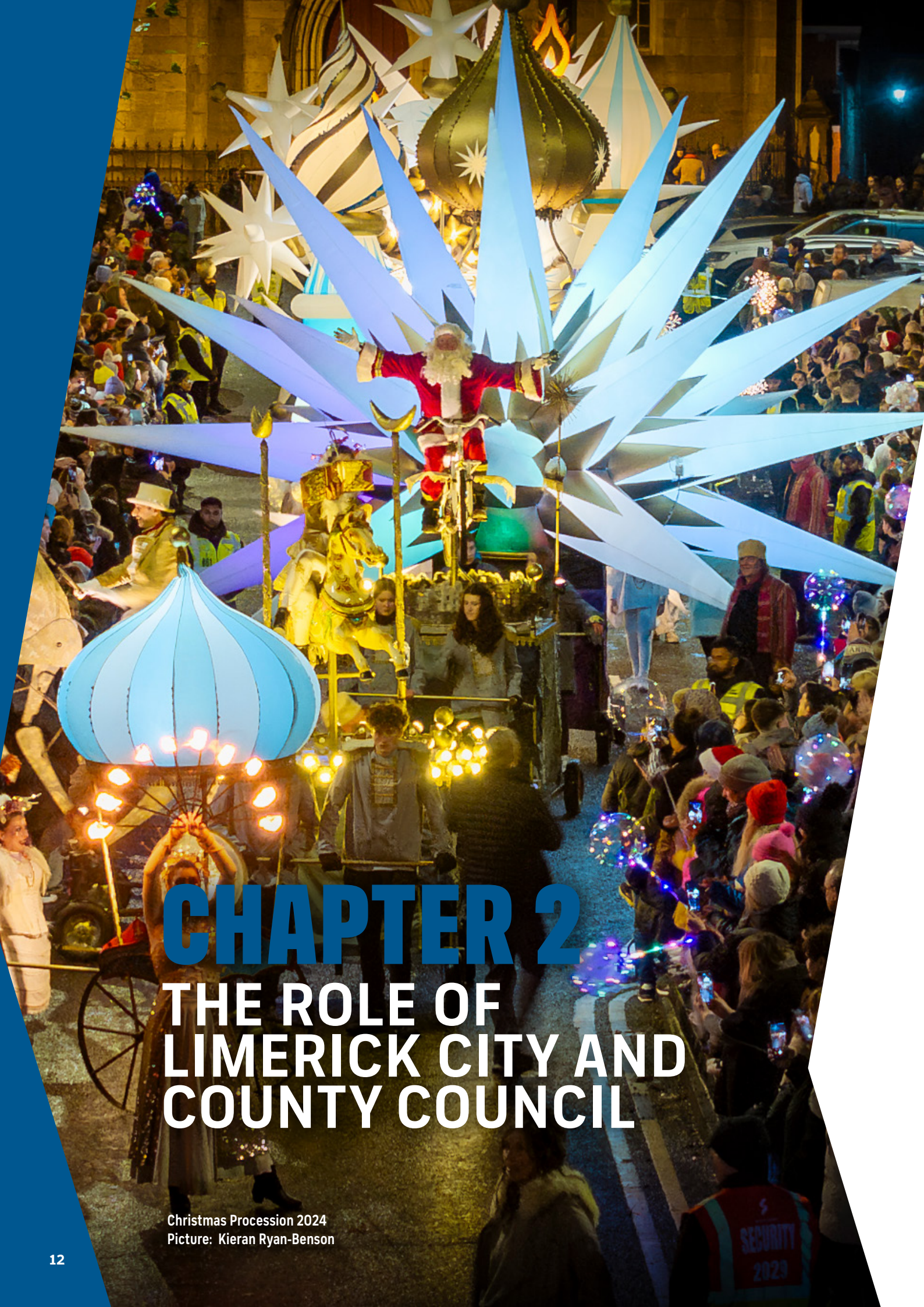
⁷ OECD (2022), The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries, Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/991bb520-en>

consent or establish a framework for granting consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent.

The Strategy fully aligns with the provisions of documents including the existing National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and associated Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, the Limerick Development Plan (2022 - 2028), all of which have been subject to legislative requirements relating to public consultation and environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment. As such, the Strategy is wholly subject to the requirements of the provisions set out in these documents, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents, including through SEA and AA processes, and does not introduce any alterations or additions to those provisions.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Strategy (in a similar way to other projects from any other sectors) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework. It is a specific provision of this Plan to ensure that all of the provisions from the Development Plan (including those provisions identified in the accompanying Screening SEA report) shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Strategy.





CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL

Christmas Procession 2024
Picture: Kieran Ryan-Benson

Limerick City and County Council had significantly increased investment from €600,000 in 2016 to €1.6million in festivals and events in 2019

The vibrant festivals and events offering in Limerick is a result of the commitment and creativity of a wide range of individuals, performers, suppliers, venues, businesses and academic institutions across the public, private and voluntary sector. Limerick City and County Council

has played a pivotal role in the festivals and events ecosystem, through directly investing in the people, funding and time required to build and develop the capacity of the sector; facilitating access to public spaces; supporting and partnering with stakeholders to bring new festival and event experiences to the county and promoting Limerick's festival and event offering. Prior to the impact of Covid 19, Limerick City and County Council had significantly increased investment from €600,000 in 2016 to €1.6million in festivals and events in 2019. The Council continues to support the festivals and events sector in the following ways:

Funding and Investment: The Council is the primary public funder in Limerick, accounting for 63% of the public spend on festivals and events.⁸ This is delivered through:

- Limerick Festivals and Events Grant Scheme, a competitive grant scheme awarded under 3 strands
 - Strand 1: Delivery and Programming of Small and Community focused Festivals and Events
 - Strand 2: Delivery and Programming of Medium and Large-Scale Festivals and Events
 - Strand 3: Festival Development and Sustainability

- Festival Innovation Support
- Repayable loans through the Local Government Act 2021 in accordance with section 67 of that Act
- Training and development, marketing and communications supports
- Delivery of the Council owned Festivals Programme.

Festival Creation and Production: Limerick City and County Council is directly responsible for the funding, production and development of Council-owned festivals and events annually which include:

- Limerick's St Brigid's Festival, a celebration of the contribution of Mná na hEireann to Ireland's rich cultural tapestry
- Limerick's St Patrick's Festival, which includes the traditional St. Patrick's Day Parade and is one of six national festivals support by Fáilte Ireland as part of the Global St. Patrick's Day Celebrations
- The International Band Championship which takes place alongside St. Patrick's Festival, attracting international marching band musicians from across Ireland, Europe and America, for Ireland's only International Band Championship
- Riverfest, which takes place on the May Bank Holiday weekend attracted over 120,000 visitors in 2019, winning the Event Industry Award for Best Festival
- Cruinniú na nÓg and Culture Night are National events supported by Creative Ireland and the Arts Council
- Christmas in Limerick provides a programme of seasonal events, markets and family fun.

⁸ Nordicity 2020



Grand Marshal Marion Fossett is greeted by Fidget Feet at Limerick's 2018 Saint Patrick's Day parade.
Photo: Sean Curtin True Media

THE ROLE OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL (Cont'd)

Partnership and Collaboration: Limerick City and County Council actively works across the public and private sector, with a wide range of local and national organisations, to support event bids, events and conferences, to create synergies and grow investment. These include:

- Shannon Region Conference and Sports Bureau, University of Limerick and Limerick Chamber in developing and delivering bids, events and conferences for Limerick
- The Arts Council and Creative Ireland who are key funders and partners of festivals in Limerick including Culture Night and Cruinniú na nÓg
- Fáilte Ireland in the development of tourism-focussed festivals such as St. Patrick's Festival and Samhain to motivate domestic and international visitors.

Facilitation and Co-ordination: Limerick City and County Council has played a key role in positioning the region as a collaborative and open one, by facilitating festival and event production and providing a wide range of essential services in the delivery of festivals and events across its directorates in the areas of:

- Event licensing
- Road closures
- Provision of information and guidance to event organisers
- Facilitating the use of public spaces and parks
- Investing in the development of new infrastructure to support the presentation and staging of festivals and live events.

Marketing and Promotion: Limerick City and County Council is responsible for the management of Limerick.ie, Discover Limerick and Brand Limerick. The Council recognises the importance of festivals and

events as a platform to promote Limerick and therefore supports festival and event organisers to promote their events to a wide audience through the provision of:

- Printed marketing materials
- Marketing and media campaigns
- An online calendar of events easily accessible to event organisers and visitors alike
- Spotlight promotion through digital and social channels
- Local and national press
- International tradeshows and trade and investment opportunities.

Moving Forward

Limerick City and County Council is well positioned to provide the leadership and direction to unlock the potential of the festivals and events sector and be a catalyst for change. This change will involve re-designing the internal structures within the Council to ensure an “all of Local Authority” integrated and coherent approach to supporting and delivering festivals and events.

Limerick City and County Council will continue to work with key stakeholders in the public and private sectors to support festival and event organisers in developing their capacity to grow sponsorship, earned income and philanthropy.

Equally, Limerick City and County Council will continue to develop formalised structures for collaboration and partnership; to attract greater support, co-operation and funding in order to deliver brilliant festival and event experiences that celebrate Limerick as a home of culture, creativity, history, heritage and sport.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPING A WORLD CLASS FESTIVAL AND EVENTS PORTFOLIO



Limerick City of Culture
Picture: C. Reinhardt

DEVELOPING A WORLD CLASS FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PORTFOLIO

International research shows that the most successful festival and event places and destinations have a diverse festivals and events portfolio, ranging in size and scale from large to small, delivered by diverse organisers and at different stages of maturity, with support for

feasibility into new ideas. Each place will have a different combination of Mega, Hallmark, Regional and Local Festivals and Events with differing measures of value as outlined in Table 1 below.

Possible Measures of Value

- Growth potential
- Market share
- Quality
- Image enhancement
- Community support
- Environmental
- Sustainability

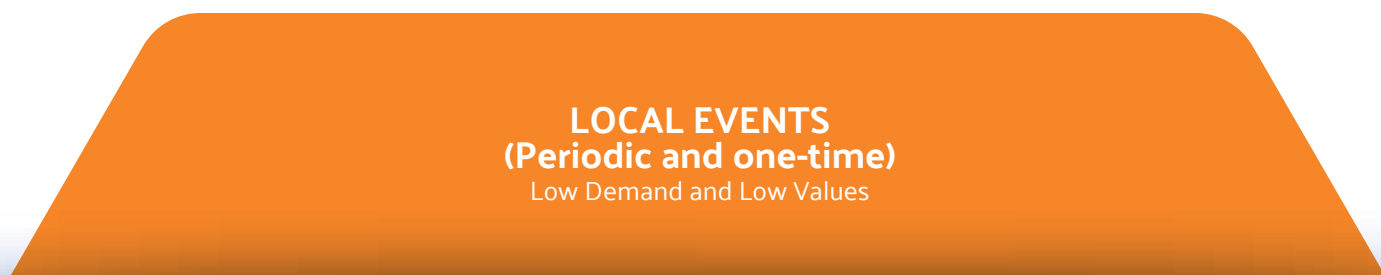


Table 1: The portfolio approach to event-tourism strategy – making an evaluation. Source: Getz (2005)

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright red long-sleeved dress and red leggings, is suspended in the air by a red aerial silk. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a clear blue sky. The image is partially obscured by a white diagonal shape on the right side of the page.

LIMERICK'S FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PORTFOLIO

A high-level review of Limerick's portfolio of festivals and events, conducted for this strategy, identified approximately 111 annual festivals and events in a typical year. Of these 111, 106 or 95% of the current portfolio can be classified as "local", which means that they are primarily of interest to local audiences. Only 25% of the 111 festivals and events appeared to operate without the financial support of the Council.⁹

In developing Limerick as a festival and event destination, a more diverse and higher-value portfolio is required, and the portfolio approach offers a useful model to achieve this. Under this strategy Limerick City and County Council will adopt this model of classification.

⁹ Nordicity 2020



Mega Events

- One Mega Event every 10-years with commitment to an ambitious connected cultural programme (Ryder Cup 2027).

Major Events

- One Major Event, that engages with all local stakeholders and includes a smaller wrap-round cultural programme that enables local engagement led by the Council.

Signature Festivals

- One Signature Festival operating within a 3-year business planning cycle and developed in partnership with the Council to complement strategic plans. Owned externally with support from the Council.
- One annual Signature Festival every year, grown from the Council portfolio, that delivers the vision in its purest form, is used to demonstrate leadership, establish best practice, and stimulate co-operation between the sector and engage a wide range of local people and stakeholders. Owned by the Council.

Growth Festivals

- Four to six annual growth festivals. Each at a different stage of development and all operating within a 3-year business planning process. Owned externally with dedicated support from the Council.

Local Festivals and Events

- A diverse local events portfolio, shaped by the sector but funded and/or supported by the Council at a level appropriate to the organisers capacity and ambitions.

The overall aim of the festivals and events portfolio is to reflect the unique story of Limerick and support the identity, brand and positioning of the destination. Limerick is already starting from a place of strength, with its diverse offering, from international sporting events, arts, cultural and food festivals, to parades, concerts, and tourism events, but there are gaps in its overall offering that need to be recalibrated and adequately supported and funded, in order to achieve an optimum portfolio.



CHAPTER 4

CONSULTATION

The development of this strategic plan was informed by a wide consultation process involving Limerick City and County Council, the festival and event sector, key stakeholders in the public, private and third level sectors and members of the public. The consultation took place in 2020, building on work that had been undertaken in previous years, and continued up until 2023, taking account of the impacts of Covid 19 on the sector. The consultation identified a number of areas that present challenges and opportunities for Limerick which are summarised in the SWOT analysis.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

Limerick has key cultural strengths and unique selling points with its reputation for sport, the River Shannon and film	The lack of a shared strategy for festivals and events across the key stakeholder groups in Limerick, is preventing it from reaching its potential
Limerick is home to Munster Rugby	There is a need for structure in the Council to facilitate a co-ordinated approach in the development and support of festivals across different directorates
The experience of creating and hosting the successful City of Culture in 2014 delivered significant cultural, economic and social impacts	The small amount of Council and other public funding invested in individual festivals and events, preventing the ability to achieve scale and impact
Shannon Region Convention Bureau has been successful in attracting business and sporting events and conferences, working with other partners and stakeholders	Low levels of private/corporate sector support of festivals and events
The Council have been successful in securing and increasing co-funding for festivals and events, working with key funders such as Creative Ireland and Fáilte Ireland	Local partnerships and networks for bidding-for, planning and developing festivals and events are not as effective as they could be
Limerick's new brand Atlantic Edge, European Embrace	There is a lack of visibility, profile and brand identity for the range of festivals and events that take place across Limerick
The quality of Limerick's hospitality sector including its 3-, 4- and 5-star hotel offering	Connectivity between different parts of the county and city could be improved
Limerick's proximity to Shannon Airport for international travel	There is limited data on the impact and evaluation of the festival and events sector
Limerick's heritage, museums, arts and culture including Irish World Academy of Music & Dance at UL, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Limerick City Gallery of Art, RTE Lyric FM, Irish Aerial Creation Centre	The current portfolio of festivals and events are overly reliant on the Council for funding
Limerick's further and higher educational institutions offer courses in festival arts, event production and event management with the Technological University of the Shannon, University of Limerick and Mary Immaculate College	Limerick has a weak night-time economy
Limerick's inclusion in the national Night Time Economy Pilot	The lack of a large size multi-purpose cultural venue to host conferences, exhibitions and events prohibits bidding for major events
	Post Covid impact has led to a decline in the number of trained producers, event managers, performers and professionals in the festival and events sector

CONSULTATION (Cont'd)

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS

Limerick will host the Ryder Cup in 2027	There is a need for clarity within Council on what they want festivals and events to do and how they should be structured
Limerick retains a relatively strong national 'ownership' of May Bank Holiday weekend	Lack of sufficient investment to create festivals and events of scale and impact
Strong but informal partnership working amongst stakeholders across Limerick and a great deal of enthusiasm for festivals and events	Retaining a skilled workforce with the expertise and talent in festival production and event management
Development of more sustainable and commercial financial models for the sector	Challenges for a cross-departmental role within the Council to take leadership and effect change
Redevelopment of the city centre improving flow and dwell times	Consultation exhaustion in the sector – sense of too much talking, not enough action
Troy Studios – its skills, resources and the content it creates	Rising cost of living, insurance and skills shortage
Limerick is a Gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way	COVID-19 and its short-term impact on the events sector, mid-term effect on the economy and longer-term effect on audience behaviours
Recent opening of the International Rugby Experience	Climate change and its effect on the economy and society
Development of festival and events incubation and production hub to support and grow professional talent and skills	Brexit and its effect on visitors from the UK

CONSULTATION (Cont'd)



KEY THEMES Arising from the SWOT Analysis

Particular challenges need to be addressed in order to harness the opportunity and unlock the potential that lies ahead.

Portfolio of Festivals and Events

The current portfolio of festivals in Limerick can be classified as “local”, which means that they are primarily of interest to local audiences. In developing Limerick as a festival and event destination, a more diverse and higher-value portfolio of scale and international appeal is required.

Leadership

Limerick City and County Council needs to develop new ways of working in a co-ordinated and collaborative way, to build on the work with existing agencies and partners in order to maximise the potential of the festival and events sector. A new structure within Limerick City and County Council, with dedicated expertise to work more effectively both internally, across directorates, and externally, with existing agencies and partners, to promote and market festivals and events and capture their impacts will enable this.

Festivals and Events as a platform for Limerick

The development of an integrated marketing strategy for the festivals and events sector – which is properly resourced – to promote Limerick nationally and internationally as a leading cultural brand and attract new audiences is a key requirement.

Talent and Skills, Capacity, Volunteering

Despite Limerick's third level institutions providing courses in Event Management in Limerick, there is a skills shortage within the sector, particularly in the areas of event management and production as well as challenges in retaining creative professionals to live and work in Limerick. The Council must continue to work with our partners in third level institutions to create employment opportunities in Limerick for graduates.

There are wide variances in the management capacity of the sector – which is hugely reliant on volunteers and public funding – and a need for increased professionalism and sustainable business models. Further targeted and tailored measures are required, such as the Council's partnership with the LEO to support organisers with the business of festival management. Actions like this can help to address this skills gap, particularly among festivals and events that show high potential to deliver cultural, economic and community benefits.

Limerick's festival and events sector is hugely reliant on volunteers. With increased competition across all sectors for volunteers, there is a need to think in a creative and innovative way to invest in volunteers and ensure their ongoing commitment.

Infrastructure

The need for more spaces, both indoor and outdoor, to support the creation, production and presentation of work is critical to grow and develop capacity.

Investment


Limerick's ambition to develop a world class festivals and events offering requires greater financial investment from all of the key stakeholders, including Limerick City and County Council, and public and private sources, in order to generate the desired economic and social impacts and to support long-term planning.

Data

The development of measures and indicators to evaluate the social and economic impact of the festival and event sector are essential in capturing impacts and return on investment.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING IT HAPPEN - A 5 YEAR STRATEGY FOR FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN LIMERICK



Ayana Daly, Limerick Filipino Community, taking part in Limericks Saint Patrick's day parade.
Picture: Sean Curtin, TrueMedia

MAKING IT HAPPEN - A 5 YEAR STRATEGY FOR FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN LIMERICK

The vision, goals and actions that form the core of Limerick's festivals and events strategy are underpinned by the potential to harness what is unique to Limerick and sets it apart as a forward thinking, open, inclusive place to live, visit, study and work.

They provide the framework for Limerick City and County Council to focus its time and resources to achieve Limerick's ambition to be a festivals and events destination. The strategic plan provides a targeted platform for development and investment in existing and new festivals and events. This platform will deliver on the shared ambition across all of the key stakeholders and partners in Limerick to work collectively to create a world class offering that contributes to Limerick's economic, cultural and social development.

Our Vision

The vision of Limerick's Festivals and Events Strategy is

"Limerick will inspire and engage local residents and visitors through an authentic, distinct and diverse year-round programme of festivals and events, that celebrate Limerick's culture on a world stage."

Our Objectives

The key objectives of our strategy are:

- 1 To develop a portfolio of festivals and events building momentum towards and beyond Ryder Cup 2027.
- 2 To reflect the essence of Limerick as captured in our brand – Atlantic Edge, European Embrace – celebrating and promoting Limerick as an innovative open, inclusive place to live, visit, study and work.
- 3 To develop our local communities, support universal accessibility, wellbeing, civic engagement and place-making.
- 4 To incorporate the UN Sustainable Development Goals in all aspects of planning, management and implementation of festivals and events.
- 5 To develop a compelling portfolio of year-round festivals and events.
- 6 To position Limerick as a festival and events destination for leisure, weekend breaks, day-trips and to support seasonality, to motivate and attract domestic and international visitors to Limerick and increase length of visit and dwell time.
- 7 To leverage national/international public and private funding streams and set up multi-annual planning to increase investment for festivals and events.

MAKING IT HAPPEN - A 5 YEAR STRATEGY FOR FESTIVAL AND EVENTS IN LIMERICK (Cont'd)

Strategic Goals

We will achieve our vision and objectives through our seven strategic goals as follows:

Goal 1: Develop: To maximise the potential of the Ryder Cup 2027

Goal 2: Support: To enable an innovative and productive sector

Goal 3: Sustain: To establish new structures and processes within the Local Authority

Goal 4: Promote: To grow domestic and international visitors

Goal 5: Build: To create new cultural infrastructure

Goal 6: Invest: To increase funding and investment

Goal 7: Monitor: To capture and measure impact.

Strategic Goals and Actions

Goal 1: Develop: to maximise the potential of the Ryder Cup 2027

- Develop an optimum portfolio of festivals and events in line with the industry standard for festival and event destinations
- Strengthen the relationship with all communities and promote cultural integration and inclusion of all citizens of Limerick
- Identify and develop a number of existing independent festivals with growth potential to maximise their contribution to culture, tourism and economic development
- Strengthen our relationship with key partners (Fáilte Ireland, Shannon Region Conference & Sports Bureau, Technological University of the Shannon, Mary Immaculate College and the University of Limerick) to identify opportunities for bid-for events
- Continue to lead and deliver an annual programme of key Council-owned events, including St Patrick's Festival, International Band Championships Riverfest and Christmas in Limerick and identify opportunities to scale up and adapt these events to reflect Limerick's unique culture attributes
- Position Riverfest as Limerick's flagship festival by carrying out a full review and rebranding of the festival in line with Brand Limerick.

Goal 2: Support: to enable an innovative and productive sector

- Continue to support professional development programmes for festival organisers to support sustainable development within the sector such as on-line toolkits, mentoring and training programmes
- Support best-practice in volunteering, across recruiting, managing, retaining volunteers and engaging with community groups
- Continue to support the festivals and events sector through advocacy and representation on their behalf
- Support the greening of festivals and events, promote environmental sustainability, reduce waste, and implement the principles of the circular economy
- Establish/support a professional development programme for graduates and creative producers who can work with communities, cultural organisations, businesses and/or local authorities to design and curate strategic creative festival programming
- Work with partners to assess the feasibility of establishing a Producer Incubation Hub for the festival and events sector
- Support the sector to work more effectively as a festival and events network.

Goal 3: Sustain: to establish new structures and processes within the Local Authority

- Establish a Festival and Events Unit within Limerick City and County Council, responsible for the co-ordination, delivery, communication and evaluation of the Festivals and Events Strategy
- Establish a Festivals and Events Strategy Implementation Group to maximise the potential for collaboration on the delivery of this strategic plan
- Create a more formal structure to enhance joint planning across LCCC directorates and strengthen the flow of information internally and externally
- Develop a more formal process for joint planning and co-ordination with key strategic funding partners such as Fáilte Ireland and the Arts Council
- Prepare an annual implementation plan for this strategy that follows the principles of the UN Sustainability Goals, providing leadership on innovative ways of changing how we do things and aspiring to improve the environmental sustainability of festivals and events.

Goal 4: Promote: to grow domestic and international visitors

- Develop and resource a year-round marketing plan and brand to promote Limerick's festivals and events locally, nationally and internationally
- Develop a joined-up approach to getting the city and county 'en fete' through signage and dressing for festivals and events to increase visibility and impact
- Develop resources and support for the sector in effective marketing and promotion.

MAKING IT HAPPEN - A 5 YEAR STRATEGY FOR FESTIVAL AND EVENTS IN LIMERICK (Cont'd)

Goal 5: Build: to create new Festival and Event infrastructure

- Harness the potential of the public realm for cultural and creative activity
- Review and assess the need for a new multi-purpose venue and cultural centre
- Assess the potential to license existing and suitable key public sites for events in Limerick and introduce a formal application process for events
- Identify new sites for major events to encourage diversification across the city and county and support wider placemaking objectives and feasibilities for new capital developments
- Assess and enhance the en-fete infrastructure (flags & bunting) in Limerick City to ensure visual celebration of festivals and events throughout the year

Goal 6: Invest: to increase funding and investment

- Increase investment in festivals and events with partners, to meet the existing needs and growth ambitions of this strategy
- Review the Limerick City and County Council Festivals and Events Grant Scheme and strands, to ensure it is designed to deliver on the scale and ambition of this strategy
- Explore the potential to strengthen and develop new processes to support key commercial events such as the refundable contribution via Section 66 of the Local Government Act
- Continue to leverage national funding streams to increase investment in festivals and events in Limerick
- Engage the private sector in identifying opportunities to support Festivals and Events

Goal 7: Monitor: to capture and measure impact

- Improve the quality of data on festivals and events through the development of robust research methods
- Harness the potential to improve the accuracy of data capture through digital technology and other alternative means
- Develop an impact and evaluation framework for festivals and events, to capture return on funding and investment
- Monitor, through data collection, the environmental sustainability of festivals and events, to gather knowledge that will inform ongoing improvements
- Publish regular reports and communication on successes and learning

Implementation and Evaluation

Limerick City and County Council are committed to ongoing monitoring and evaluation as we progress the implementation of this strategy and the following approach will be used to measure our progress:

- Preparation of annual work plans
- Preparation of a Financial Plan
- Defining Key Performance Indicators
- Gathering qualitative and quantitative feedback from the public
- Gathering feedback from partners in all our joint festivals and events
- Monthly and yearly updates to Limerick City and County Council and key stakeholders



Pegasus at Riverfest 2024
Picture: Kieran Ryan-Benson

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Riverfest 2023
Picture: Diarmuid O'Donovan



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& Contae **Luimnigh**
Limerick City
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