

LIMERICK MUSEUM

6.6 EDUCATION POLICY



Date Approved:

Date to be Discussed Annually:

Review Period: 5 Years

Review Date:

6.6 EDUCATION POLICY (HAS TO BE FORMALLY APPROVED)

Mission statement of Limerick Museum

To collect, preserve and exhibit objects that illustrate and provide insight into the history and cultural heritage of Limerick City and County, creating a vibrant and accessible space that promotes learning, understanding and appreciation among our community and visitors to Limerick.

Education Mission Statement

Limerick Museum is committed to learning as an organisation-wide principle that is fundamental to our role and purpose. Our vision at Limerick Museum is to be democratic, inclusive and relevant. We aim to engage with the widest range of people in meaningful learning experiences that stimulate their imagination and curiosity, using the collections, exhibitions and online learning content as inspiration.

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide Limerick Museum with a structured approach to meeting our mission as an educational resource. This policy will be reviewed annually and amended if necessary.

Context

The small staff compliment at Limerick Museum has, and remains, an impediment to the delivery of a comprehensive education policy. Up until 2022, there was only one member of curatorial staff - a figure that increased to two that year - with the employment of an assistant curator. We do not have a dedicated museum education officer, and the provision of educational outreach is shared amongst the two curators. Presently, Limerick Museum does not have a dedicated budget for education services, and education activities and programmes are funded via the Museum's annual budget. Notwithstanding this, Limerick Museum is committed to learning as an organisation-wide principle that is fundamental to our role and purpose.

Our permanent displays provide an overview of the core areas of Limerick history, and as such are a key component of our educational offerings here at Limerick Museum, attracting some 48,082 visitors to the Museum in 2026.

Our permanent exhibitions are complimented by an ever revolving and regular delivery of temporary exhibitions. In 2026 alone, we delivered twenty temporary exhibitions, both in the

Museum and offsite, in Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick and Kilmallock Library, Co. Limerick.

Our online catalogue, the first of its kind in Ireland for a local authority museum, is a key educational resource, allowing open access to information on some 65,000 artefacts held in our collection. We are regularly contacted by researchers wishing to examine artefacts from on our online catalogue, and every effort is made to facilitate every such query. As a recognized centre of expertise on all things 'Limerick', the curatorial staff receive weekly queries regarding the history of Limerick City and County, and yet again every query is researched and responded to. Lead Curator, Dr. Matthew Potter is a recognized expert in the field of Limerick history and as such is regularly asked to speak on the topic. Dr. Power's specialist interest in the topic of Limerick silver and metalwork is likewise recognized and oft consulted. We also have a strong social media presence and a very good museum website.

In addition to this, Limerick Museum provides regular free tours of the Museum. We participate in annual events such as Limerick's Lifelong Learning Festival, Limerick History Festival and Culture Night by providing free tours of the Museum. For Culture Night 2026 we offered a free tour which showcased a variety of artefacts from our museum store which would not otherwise be on display. And we do, upon request, visit local schools to deliver workshops based on the current curriculum.

In 2025, a pilot scheme was established by Limerick City and County Council to invite an artist to take a temporary residency in Limerick Museum. The Artist in Residence, Mary Conroy created an artwork and exhibition in response to the theme of the Shannon Hydro Electric Scheme. Construction commenced at Ardnacrusha in 1925. Although it was based in Clare, the Scheme had a major impact on Limerick. Ardnacrusha disrupted the fisheries on the Shannon and the livelihood of the fishermen, including the Abbey, Strand, Coonagh and other fishermen. Limerick Museum has a large collection of material relating to the River Shannon, fisheries and leisure, including maps, paintings, photos, objects, and fishing equipment.

Since 2023 Limerick Museum has annually hosted a history student from the University of Limerick's MA in Public and Cultural History Programme. The students are engaged for a period of four months and undertake specially assigned projects relevant to the Museum's collection. Our students of 2026 undertook research on the laneways of Limerick, namely Theatre Lane and Post Office Lane as part of a Limerick Laneways Project headed by Limerick City and County Council to revive the laneways of Limerick city centre. We also host a

Transition Year student every year, for a period of two weeks. Yet again, said student is given insights into day-to-day curatorial work and is generally assigned a special research project.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Excellent exhibitions, both permanent and temporary.
- Quality and size of museum's reserve collection, some 65,000 plus objects.
- Staff expertise.
- Comprehensive online catalogue.
- Very good Museum website.
- Strong social media presence, namely Facebook, X and Instagram.
- Free admission.

Weaknesses

- Small staff compliment.
- No dedicated education budget.
- No dedicated Education Officer.
- Lack of space in Museum for dedicated education workshop.

Opportunities

- We have had successful educational activities that can be built upon, for example, workshops in schools.
- Continued digitization of the collection.
- Plan for cataloguing the collection backlog.

Threats

- Lack of dedicated space for workshops and other educational activities.
- Schools not participating due to economic constraints.
- Community employees scheme staff can leave at any time.

Strategic Aims:

Strategic Aim 1: To provide curriculum-based activities and handling collections to primary and secondary schools.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Provide workshops relevant to the primary and secondary schools' curriculum.
- 1.2 Provide age-appropriate activity sheets for schools based on the Museum's collections.
- 1.3 To market all the above services to local schools.

Strategic Aim 2:

Strategic Aim 2: To further develop the life-long learning opportunities that the museum has to offer.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Arrange public talks to complement our temporary museum exhibitions.
- 2.2 Publish online resources to accompany exhibitions.
- 2.3 Regularly update museum website and online catalogue.
- 2.4 Use social media to highlight objects in the museum collection.

Strategic Aim 3:

Ongoing Training and Development:

Objectives:

- 3.1 Continue to avail of museum training provided by the Heritage Council.
- 3.2 Attend Irish Museum Association Seminars and training days.
- 3.3 Object handling training for staff.

Implementation Plan Overview 2026-27

Objectives for 2026:

- Continue to avail of museum training provided by the Heritage Council.
- Attend LAMN and Irish Museum Association Seminars and training days.
- Object handling training for staff.

- Regularly update museum website and online catalogue.
- Use social media to highlight objects in the museum collection.
- Continue to host a student from the University of Limerick's Public and Cultural History MA programme, and an annual transition year student.
- Continuance of Artist in Residence programme.

Objectives for 2027-28:

- Provide age-appropriate activity sheets for children based on the Museum's collections.
- Arrange public talks to complement our temporary museum exhibitions.
- Publish online resources to accompany exhibitions.
- Provide workshops relevant to the primary and secondary schools' curriculum.

Visitor Survey and Evaluation of Exhibitions

As part of the Museum's *Strategic Plan 2024-2023*, we conducted a visitor survey relating to our permanent displays.

The survey ran from mid-August to the end of September 2023. A questionnaire was given to visitors to the Museum to complete and was also made available on the Museum's pages on the Council's www.limerick.ie website. A total of 101 responses were received, the vast majority completed by visitors to the Museum.

The following are the main points:

- 1) The distribution of respondents by age group was quite evenly balanced with 48% of respondents aged under 40 and 52% over 40.
- 2) Almost half (48%) of respondents came from overseas, England, Australia, USA and Germany being the leading countries of origin. One-third live in Limerick city and county, and the balance came from elsewhere in Ireland, principally from Dublin and Cork.
- 3) This was the first visit to the Museum for 87% of respondents; the majority of those who had been before had visited on just one other occasion, and a small number had visited on multiple occasions.

4) The main reasons for visiting were:

a) To learn about Limerick's history, culture and story.

b) Looking for things to do, e.g., free time/an hour before train, came across it while sightseeing; escaping bad weather; curiosity, great central location and free; just passing; curiosity.

5) Visitors highly rated the exhibitions with 45% giving them between 9 and 10 out of 10, and a further 45% giving them between 7 and 8 out of 10.

6) The most popular exhibits were:

a) Limerick Lace exhibition. (35% response rate)

b) The photo gallery (capturing old pictures of daily life in Limerick and postcards). (27% response rate)

c) The everyday objects (incl. clothes, fabrics, the mummified cat, diving suit, and artefacts in the last room). (20% response rate)

d) Limerick Silver exhibition. (16% response rate)

7) The aspects of the Museum that impressed visitors least were noted by only a small number of respondents. The most frequently mentioned issues were:

a) Museum was smaller than expected; could do with more items and material; limited variety of collections. (17% response rate)

b) The animals/natural history/mummified dissected animals. (13% response rate)

c) Lace exhibition – slightly more lace than may be needed. (13% response rate)

8) Visitors gave good ratings to their overall experience – 55% rated it as between 9 and 10 out of 10, and a further 40% at between 7 and 8 out of 10. 82% said that they would visit again and 98% said that they would recommend it to others.

9) Respondents were invited to add any further comments they wished to make. The following were the most frequently mentioned points:

- a) Very interesting and enjoyable experience; really nice museum with great staff; for the size and assumed funding, exhibits were well curated and preserved, contains diversity and good illustration of collections, would like to see the museum extended to include more exhibits. (49% response rate)
- b) Would like to see bigger information signs and number signs to indicate which artefact is which, larger prints on exhibits too; photos need place names and dates on them. (20% response rate)
- c) More modern and interactive presentation elements (some film clips would bring events to life, voice overs for the visually impaired); film clips and voice overs are a great alternative to reading a lot of text. (12% response rate).

Overall, the survey found a generally high level of satisfaction among visitors to the Museum. There was a broad level of interest in the collections, and the criticism related more to the overall scale of the experience and aspects of the presentation of the exhibits. In the case of the latter, some issues can be addressed fairly readily but others would require some investment in technology and, above all, the use of more space.

As of March 2026, bar a visitor book in the lobby, Limerick Museum does not currently seek regular feedback on either permanent or temporary exhibitions. Following the recommendations of the MSPI assessors, we intend to remedy this by compiling exhibition surveys (5.3) and general visitor surveys (7.7 and 7.8). We will put this into use for our Sybil Connolly exhibition which will run from 1 April – 31 July 2026.

Template Exhibition Survey

1. Did you find the story told through this exhibition interesting and engaging?
2. Was the story clearly told, or confusing?
3. Did you find it easy to find your way around the exhibition?
4. What aspect of it did you find most memorable or enjoyable?

5. Was enough information provided to help you understand the objects and the story they have to tell?
6. Is there too much, too little, or just the right amount of text?
7. Are we getting the balance right between graphics, and object right in the overall presentation?
8. If there was one thing we could do to make it a better exhibition, what would it be?

Template Visitor Survey

1. Would you recommend this exhibition to friends? If not, why not?
2. What did you like most about the exhibition?
3. What did you like least?
4. Have you any suggestions as to how we could improve it?
5. Did you learn or gain anything from the exhibition?
6. Would you visit again?