



2nd October 2026

To: The Cathaoirleach and Each Elected Member of the Metropolitan District of Limerick

Re: Panel Recommendations: Christmas in Limerick 2026 Funding Open Call

A Chomhairleoir, a Chara,

Enclosed for consideration is the Assessment Panel Report and funding recommendations in respect of the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Creatives, Communities and Cultural Institutions Open Call.

- An Open Call for funding applications under the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Festival was launched on 28th August 2026, with a closing date of 12:00 noon on 18th September 2026.
- The Open Call sought proposals for festivals, events and creative initiatives taking place within Limerick City that would enhance and complement the Christmas in Limerick 2026 programme.
- A total funding allocation of €15,000 was made available under the Open Call.
- 17 eligible applications were received, seeking a combined funding amount of €69,710.
- In addition, six applications were deemed ineligible for assessment. Of these, one application was received after the published deadline, while five applications were deemed ineligible as the proposed events were not scheduled to take place within Limerick City, as required under the Open Call criteria.
- The Assessment Panel convened on 1st October 2026 via Microsoft Teams and evaluated all eligible applications in accordance with the published Open Call guidelines, eligibility requirements, assessment methodology, and scoring criteria.

The enclosed report outlines the assessment process undertaken and sets out the panel's recommendations for the allocation of funding under the Christmas in Limerick 2026 programme.

Background – Christmas in Limerick 2026 Creatives, Communities and Cultural Institutions Open Call

As part of the Christmas in Limerick 2026 programme, Limerick City and County Council launched a competitive Open Call for Creatives, Communities and Cultural Institutions to support the delivery of additional cultural, artistic and community-led programming within Limerick City. The initiative was designed to complement and enhance the core Christmas in Limerick programme while providing opportunities for artists, community groups, cultural organisations, educational institutions, creative collectives and not-for-profit organisations to participate in the festival.

The Open Call provided a total funding allocation of €15,000, with individual awards ranging from €500 to €5,000. Funding was available for proposals that demonstrated strong artistic merit, public engagement opportunities and alignment with the overall vision and objectives of Christmas in Limerick 2026. Applicants could seek either full or partial funding, with the Council retaining discretion

to award a lesser amount than requested or to make no award where proposals did not meet the required standard.

The Open Call formed part of the implementation of the *Christmas in Limerick 2026-2028 Strategy*, which seeks to develop Christmas in Limerick into a nationally recognised signature winter festival and establish Limerick as a premier seasonal destination. The festival vision is centred on creating a cohesive and walkable Christmas experience extending from King John's Castle to O'Connell Crescent, celebrating Limerick's Georgian heritage, culture, retail offering and public realm through high-quality programming, community participation and strong stakeholder partnerships.

Applications were assessed by an independent evaluation panel against a published scoring framework comprising:

- Creativity of Proposal and Public Engagement (50%)
- Alignment with the Christmas in Limerick Vision and Programme (25%)
- Deliverability and Organisational Capacity (15%)
- Value for Money (10%)

Applicants were required to achieve a minimum score of 500 marks (50%) in order to be considered for funding.

The Open Call was guided by the overarching festival theme "*Together for Christmas in Limerick*", which focuses on unity, belonging, community participation and celebrating the spirit of Christmas across the city. Particular emphasis was placed on proposals that supported community participation, children's and family programming, arts and heritage, storytelling, light-based installations, music and performance, accessibility and inclusion, environmental sustainability, and engagement with underrepresented communities.

Applicants were also encouraged to demonstrate how their proposals would support responsible tourism objectives, minimise environmental impacts, promote accessibility and inclusion, and contribute positively to Limerick's cultural identity, visitor experience and city centre animation. The overall objective of the Open Call was to broaden participation in the festival, showcase local creative talent, strengthen community involvement and enhance the overall Christmas in Limerick visitor experience.

Assessment Panel

The applications received were assessed by a panel comprising of representatives from the Arts, Community Development and Marketing Departments of Limerick City and County Council. The panel members were:

- **Chairperson: Sarah O'Farrell, Assistant Arts Officer, Limerick City and County Council.** Sarah provided specialist expertise in assessing the artistic quality, creativity, cultural merit and overall contribution of proposals to the Christmas in Limerick programme. Her role helped ensure that recommended projects aligned with the Council's cultural objectives and enhanced the quality and diversity of the festival offering.
- **Jade Ryan, Staff Officer, Community Development, Limerick City and County Council.** Jade's role was to assess the extent to which applications delivered community benefit, promoted inclusivity, encouraged participation, and supported wider community

development objectives. Her input ensured that proposed projects demonstrated meaningful engagement opportunities and positive outcomes for local communities.

- **Aoife Coughlan, Assistant Staff Officer, Marketing Department, Limerick City and County Council.**

Aoife contributed expertise in audience development, destination marketing, brand alignment, communications and promotional strategy. Her involvement ensured that applications were evaluated not only on their creative and operational merits, but also on their capacity to attract audiences, enhance Limerick's profile as a destination, and contribute to the overall objectives of the Christmas in Limerick programme.

The Assessment Panel considered all eligible applications in accordance with the published Open Call guidelines and evaluation criteria, ensuring a fair, transparent and competitive assessment process.

Recommendations

Having considered all eligible applications received under the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Creatives, Communities and Cultural Institutions Open Call, the Assessment Panel is satisfied that the evaluation process was conducted in accordance with the published guidelines, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria. The panel carefully assessed each application against the four specified criteria: Creativity and Public Engagement, Alignment with the Christmas in Limerick Vision and Programme, Deliverability and Capacity, and Value for Money.

The panel noted the strong level of interest in the Open Call and the overall quality of submissions received.

Following detailed assessment and scoring, the panel recommends that funding be awarded to the five highest-ranking applications, all of which achieved scores in excess of 700 marks and demonstrated a strong alignment with the objectives of Christmas in Limerick 2026, together with clear evidence of creativity, public engagement, deliverability and value for money. These projects will enhance the overall festival programme and contribute positively to the visitor experience, community participation and city centre animation objectives of Christmas in Limerick.

The Assessment Panel therefore recommends the following allocations:

<u>Name of Applicant</u>	<u>Funding Sought</u>	<u>Funding Granted</u>	<u>Funding Granted (%)</u>	<u>Total Score</u>
<u>Qualified - Awarded Funding</u>				
Europe Together in Limerick - Winter Wonders in the Storytelling Yurt (Storygate)	€2,245	€2,000	89%	825
Christmas at the Milk Market	€5,000	€4,000	80%	820
The Hunt Museum	€5,000	€4,000	80%	795
Christmas at Markets Field: A Community Christmas Experience	€5,000	€4,000	80%	730
Tales by the Fireside (Daithí Collopy)	€1,500	€1,000	67%	705

- Europe Together in Limerick – Winter Wonders in the Storytelling Yurt (Storygate) – €2,000 (Score: 825/1,000)
- Christmas at the Milk Market – €4,000 (Score: 820/1,000)
- The Hunt Museum – €4,000 (Score: 795/1,000)
- Christmas at Markets Field: A Community Christmas Experience – €4,000 (Score: 730/1,000)
- Tales by the Fireside (Daithi Collopy) – €1,000 (Score: 705/1,000)

The recommended allocations total €15,000, fully utilising the budget available under the Open Call. Please see the attached signed marking sheet, for reference.

While a number of other applications achieved the minimum qualifying threshold of 500 marks, the panel considered that, given the limited funding available and the competitive nature of the process, priority should be afforded to the highest-scoring proposals. Consequently, eligible applications scoring below 700 marks are not recommended for funding on this occasion.

The Assessment Panel is therefore pleased to recommend approval of the above funding allocations under the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Open Call. These projects represent a strong mix of cultural, community and visitor-focused initiatives that will complement the core Christmas in Limerick programme and support the Council's objective of further developing Christmas in Limerick as a premier festive destination

The Members of the Metropolitan District of Limerick City and County Council are hereby requested to approve these grants under the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Open Call to the amount of €15,000.00. A breakdown of the funding amounts sought and recommended can be found in Appendix 1 attached.

Is mise le meas,



John Moran

Mayor of Limerick

Report on Panel Recommendations for the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Funding Open Call

(i) Europe Together in Limerick - Winter Wonders in the Storytelling Yurt (Storygate)

Funding Awarded – €2,000

- German storyteller Simone Schuemmelfeder and Irish Puppeteer Michael Phelan from StoryGate offer to bring Christmas delighted from all around Europe to Limerick.
- Heartwarming Christmas tales from European countries together with charming puppetry and seasonal craft will delight the visitors of Limerick's Christmas experience.

(ii) Christmas at the Milk Market

Funding Awarded – €4,000

- 12 Magical Days at the Milk Market. Saturdays and Sundays will feature very special guests with Fidget Feet bring elves to the Milk Market from 9am to 3pm on Saturday and 10am to 3pm on Sunday.
- Santas Lego Inspired Grotto will return with a bespoke but affordable option for families at the Milk Market Saturday and Sundays – 28th November to 20th December over 4 weekends.
- Live Music will feature on 12 select days.
- Magical Saturday Christmas at the Milk Market for a full feast of the senses with over 80 seasonal food, craft and vintage traders.
- Sundays will feature special Christmas themed events, including:
 - Santa Paws & Crafts Stalls
 - Christmas Art Fair
 - Christmas Vintage Fair
 - Christmas Craft and Antique Fair
- Fringe Events will include:
 - Friday 4th December – Student Enterprise Market
 - Friday 11th December – Limerick Suicide Watch Santa and Fundraiser Day
 - Friday 18th December – Open Air Christmas Concert
 - Thursday 24th December – Christmas Eve Final Market 2026

(iii) The Hunt Museum

Funding Awarded – €4,000

- Nollaig le Chéile ag an Hunt will round out the museum's year with a welcoming programme of festive activities taking place during December as part of Christmas in Limerick 2026. Through music, storytelling and creative workshops, the programme will invite families, friends and communities to come together in the heart of Limerick City to celebrate the Christmas period.

(iv) Christmas at Markets Field: A Community Christmas Experience

Funding Awarded – €4,000

- Treaty United Football Club proposes to deliver a new community-focused Christmas experience at Markets Field on Saturday 5th December 2026, from 4pm–7pm, bringing together local families, residents, businesses, community organisations, local creatives and football supporters for an inclusive festive event.

(v) Tales by the Fireside (Daithi Collopy)

Funding Awarded – €1,000

- Christmas Tales by the Limerick Fireside is a traditional Irish storytelling and cultural performance experience featuring renowned Limerick storyteller Daithí Collopy, bringing festive folklore, music and local heritage to life for audiences of all ages.
- This family-friendly Christmas production celebrates Limerick's rich storytelling traditions through an engaging blend of story, song and verse, offering a uniquely Limerick festive experience that connects generations and showcases the city's cultural identity.
- Venue – The People's Museum of Limerick.