Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

Memo

Economic, Tourism, Culture,
Property & Corporate Buildings Directorate

Economic and Tourism Development Department

To: John Moran, Mayor of Limerick

From: Sean Lenihan, Director of Services, Economic, Tourism, Culture, Property & Corporate Buildings

Date: 03/11/2026

Re: Report & Recommendation from the Night Time Economy Christmas Funding Open Call Panel Assessment

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Introduction

Enclosed for consideration is the Assessment Panel Report and funding recommendations in respect of the Night Time Economy Christmas Funding Open Call.

- An Open Call for funding applications under the Christmas in Limerick 2026 Festival was launched on 23rd October 2026, with a closing date of 12:00 noon on 30th October 2026.
- The Open Call sought proposals for events and creative initiatives taking place after 6pm within Limerick City that would enhance and complement the Christmas in Limerick 2026 programme.
- A total funding allocation of €10,000 was made available under the Open Call.
- 7 eligible applications were received, seeking a combined funding amount of €15,394.71.
- The Assessment Panel convened on 3rd of November 2026 in person 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 – Night Time Economy Christmas Funding Open Call

As part of the Christmas in Limerick 2026 programme, Limerick City and County Council launched a competitive Open Call for Businesses, Artists and Community Groups to seek funding for events after 6pm in the city centre that would compliment the 2026 Christmas in Limerick programme. The initiative was designed to complement and enhance the core Christmas in Limerick programme while providing opportunities for artists, community groups, cultural organisations and businesses.

The Open Call provided a total funding allocation of €10,000, with individual awards ranging from €500 to €3,000. Funding was available for proposals that demonstrated unique ideas that would help drive foot fall in the city after 6pm in December and align 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.

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

- Quality of Proposal (60%)
- Value for Money (20%)
- Applicant Experience (20%)

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

Assessment Panel

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

- **Chairperson: Sarah O'Farrell, Assistant Arts Officer, Limerick City and County Council.**
- **Mark Dooley, Senior Staff Officer, Tourism Department, Limerick City and County Council.**
- **Eoin Walsh, Executive Engineer, City Centre Response Department, Limerick City and County Council**.

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.

Name of Applicant	Funding Sought	Funding Granted	Quality of Proposal - 60% - 600 Marks	Value for Money - 20% - 200 Marks	Applicant Experience - 20% - 200 Marks	Total Score	Comments
Afro Pop City Christmas Party	€2900	€1,000	500	75	200	775	Admin costs very high and could be more Christmas Themed
Treaty Christmas Fair	€3000	€3,000	550	200	200	950	Excellent
Lumen Street Theatre Scrooge Night	€3000	€1,000	450	150	200	800	Not expected to drive as much foot fall as other applications seeking max funding. Limited budgets for grant call so only suitable for part funding
Glenduff Creative	€1178.71	€1,100	500	200	175	875	Excellent
Mother Macs	€1516	€500	500	75	200	775	Can contribute to paer/ink and design but suggested that Mother Mac's patrons could pay for the postage themselves
Daithi Collopy	€800	€400	450	200	200	850	Funding awarded to deliver one performance not two
The Milk Market	€3000	€3,000	500	200	200	900	Excellent

Recommendations

Having considered all eligible applications received under the Night Time Economy Christmas Funding 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 three specified criteria: Quality of application, value for money and applicant experience

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 all 7 of the applications, all of which achieved scores in excess of 775 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:=

- Afropop Christmas Party - €1,000 (Score 775/1000)
- Treaty City Christmas Fair - €3,000 (Score 950/1000)
- Lumen Street Theatre Scrooge Night - €1,000 (Score 800/1000)
- Glenduff Creative Christmas Workshops - €1,100 (Score 875/1000)
- Mother Mac’s Christmas Postcards - €500 (Score 775/1000)
- Daithi Collopy Storytelling - €400 (Score 850/1000)

- The Milk Market Christmas with Boherbouy Band - €3,000 (Score 900/1000)

The recommended allocations total €10,000, fully utilising the budget available under the Open Call. Please see the attached signed marking sheet, for reference.

The Assessment Panel is therefore pleased to recommend approval of the above funding allocations under the Night Time Economy Christmas Funding 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

Conclusion

The Assessment Panel undertook a robust and transparent evaluation process in accordance with the published Open Call guidelines and assessment criteria. The applications recommended for funding achieved the highest scores and demonstrated a strong combination of creativity, public engagement, alignment with the Christmas in Limerick vision, organisational capacity and value for money. Collectively, these projects will strengthen the overall festival programme, increase opportunities for community participation, enhance the visitor experience, and contribute to the animation of Limerick City Centre during the festive period.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the funding allocations proposed by the Assessment Panel be approved, as set out in the accompanying Assessment Report, for a total investment of €10,000 under the Night Time Economy Christmas Funding Open Call

Approval of these recommendations will support the delivery of seven high-quality projects that complement the core Christmas in Limerick programme and advance the objectives of the Council's Christmas in Limerick Strategy, including increased cultural participation, enhanced visitor experiences, greater city-centre animation, and the continued development of Limerick as a nationally recognised Christmas destination.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the proposed funding allocations be approved and that Letters of Offer issue to the successful applicants, subject to the standard terms and conditions of funding.

Recommended: **Endorsed:**





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Craig Power,

Night Time Economy Advisor,

Economic and Tourism Development

Brendan Troy,

Head of Economic and Tourism Development

Approved:

Seán Lenihan,

Director of Service,

Economic, Tourism, Culture, Property & Corporate Buildings