



# TOWARDS A POLICY FOR THE TRADITIONAL ARTS

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## FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF THE ARTS COUNCIL

The publication of *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts* constitutes a significant step forward for the Arts Council in its relationship with the traditional arts. It consists of two parts: firstly, the report of the Special Committee on the Traditional Arts, and secondly, the resulting principles agreed by the Council, on the basis of that report.

The Special Committee on the Traditional Arts was established by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Mr John O'Donoghue TD, in December 2003. He appointed Jerome Hynes, Deputy Chair of the Arts Council, as Chairman of the Committee. The Committee was charged with reviewing the structures, supports and policy for the Irish traditional arts and was asked to make recommendations to the Arts Council. The report was presented to the Council on September 13th 2004 and was warmly received and commended for its constructive approach and its wide-ranging recommendations.

This document, therefore, provides an important opportunity for the state to begin to embrace and support the traditional arts in a co-ordinated and realistic fashion, and to ensure that this unique expression of our culture is protected and developed.

In any discussion of a policy there will be differences of opinion on what the Council's priorities should be. The Arts Council would, therefore, welcome feedback on this document from the traditional-arts community as part of the constructive process which the Council is undertaking in its preparation of a new arts strategy.

I pay special tribute to the Chairman and members of the Special Committee for their commitment, dedication and hard work.

The Arts Council is confident that this document, *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts*, offers the possibility of a significant improvement in the prospects for the traditional arts in the years ahead. It will act as our road map.



Olive Braiden

Chair  
Arts Council

20th September 2004

## FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

I was delighted to accept the Minister for the Arts, Sport and Tourism's request to chair the Special Committee on the Traditional Arts. The depth and breadth of the traditional arts and the manner in which they have enamoured, engaged and inspired people all around the world is truly admirable. Not only do traditional artists enrich our lives and our communities, but their work is integral to the expression of contemporary Irish identity.

Equally impressive is the strength of feeling that surrounds the traditional arts, both among the traditional-arts community of practitioners as well as the hundreds of thousands of admirers and supporters. Their passion fuels these art forms and makes them one of the most distinctive expressions of Irish people and culture today.

I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Special Committee, to everyone who made submissions, to the Project Officer, Toner Quinn, and to the executive of the Arts Council, for their dedication and commitment.

I have found the debates during my time on the Committee both fascinating and stimulating and I am confident that the report herewith offers the possibility of a significant improvement in the provision for the traditional arts in Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome Hynes." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a distinct 'H'.

Jerome Hynes

Chairman  
Special Committee on the Traditional Arts



# Report of the Special Committee on the Traditional Arts

Submitted to the Arts Council on 1st September 2004

## INTRODUCTION: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Special Committee on the Traditional Arts was established in December 2003 under the provisions of Section 21 (1) (a) of the Arts Act 2003 to advise the Arts Council on matters relating to the traditional arts. The members appointed were Jerome Hynes, Philip King, Mícheál Ó hEidhin, Úna Ó Murchú and Katie Verling.

### Terms of Reference

The Committee's Terms of Reference were as follows:

Having regard for the statutory functions of the Arts Council as set out in Section 9 of the Arts Act, 2003, and in accordance with Section 21 of that Act, a Special Committee has been established to advise the Arts Council on matters relating to the Traditional Arts. The Committee should deliver its advice to the Council by 1st September 2004.

In particular the Special Committee's advice should include specific recommendations for implementation over three to five years regarding:

- the role of the Arts Council in relation to framing a coherent policy for the Traditional Arts, taking account of existing support systems, facilities and funding programmes for supporting the Traditional Arts across all Government Departments, non-governmental agencies, and Local Authorities;
- the applicability and relevance of the terms 'amateur', 'professional' and 'voluntary' in contemporary practice in Traditional Arts and;
- If the Committee considers it appropriate, proposals for an effective framework for assessing funding proposals. This should include a review of whether the position of the Traditional Arts in the cultural life of the nation is appropriately reflected in the assignments within the Council's authorised staffing complement. Proposals must be framed in accordance with the Government's current policy on the need to reduce public service staff numbers.

The Committee was furthermore requested by the Minister, in addressing the Terms of Reference and formulating its advice to the Council, to take account of the cultural, social, political and economic dimensions of the traditional arts.

The Committee's approach to the Terms of Reference informs the manner in which this document is constructed. Key questions guided the deliberations throughout the process. There was agreement among the Committee that the traditional arts comprise an exquisite range of artistic forms of expression and that we are fortunate in Ireland to benefit from the work of many excellent traditional artists. On that basis, therefore, we asked: Are these art forms and artists being adequately supported? How could they be supported better? What direction should future policy on the traditional arts take? and, What recommendations would serve the traditional-arts community best in the future?

### Seeking Public Opinion

Members were conscious from the start that the establishment of the Committee represented an exceptional opportunity for the traditional arts, it not only being a chance to focus on contemporary critical issues, but also to draw a line under differences of opinion of the past and make long overdue progress in the support of the traditional arts. Towards this, it was felt that it was important that we sought the opinions and views of those involved in these art forms at all levels. At an early stage, therefore, the Committee took the decision to publicly invite submissions from interested parties to inform its deliberations.

The Committee considers that this action was immensely valuable. Eighty-seven submissions were received in total, some short letters of concern, others comprehensive documents containing quite detailed analysis. The submissions were both stimulating and informative and, for members of the Committee, confirmed some of their views and challenged others. All members received copies of the submissions and these were constantly referred to at subsequent meetings, often acting as a sounding board for the Committee's deliberations. The passion and commitment shown by many in the submissions affirmed for the Committee the importance of these art forms and indeed the importance of the task set for it by the Minister.

### **Seeking Financial Information**

In order to take account of existing support systems, facilities and funding programmes, as per its Terms of Reference, the Committee wrote to all Government departments, non-governmental agencies and local authorities in order to furnish itself with a picture of present supports for the traditional arts. While the replies were not always as comprehensive as the Committee might have liked, the information that was made available, combined with the public submissions and the deliberations of the Committee, informs the recommendations in this report.

The Committee also consulted many other documents that were relative to their task including:

- *Report on Traditional Irish Music*, Joint Committee on Heritage and the Irish Language, January 1999
- *Towards a New Framework for the Arts: A Review of Arts Legislation*, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 2000
- *Report on Submission Received in Response to 'Towards a New Framework for the Arts'*, Theo Dorgan, February 2001
- *The Arts Forum, 11th–12th May 2001*, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, August 2001

## SECTION 1: TERMINOLOGY

### 1.1 Definition of Irish Traditional Arts

In formulating a definition of Irish traditional arts for use in the Committee's report, the Committee was conscious that the term 'traditional arts' is not one that practitioners would use on a day-to-day basis. The Committee believes, however, that the term is acceptable for the work of the Arts Council in supporting this particular range of art forms.

- 1.1.1** The Committee believes that, as traditional music, song and dance are, in the general view, central to traditional-arts practice, and are intrinsically connected not only in performance but in their history also, they should naturally be included in the definition. Traditional music, song and dance can, of course, take a wide variety of forms and the Committee would stress that their definition in this regard seeks to be as inclusive as possible.
- 1.1.2** The oral arts practices of storytelling and *agallamh beirte* have also been included on the basis that they are valuable traditional-arts practices.
- 1.1.3** There have been some suggestions that the definition of the traditional arts should be far more inclusive of practices that could be considered traditional arts, e.g. handcrafts, textiles, and so on. However, it is the Committee's view that the Arts Council cannot concern itself with these as they are responsibility of bodies other than the Council.
- 1.1.4** Central to the Committee's deliberations was the view that any definition of the traditional arts must resonate with those who are being classified as 'traditional artists', as well as being in line with the definition of the arts as provided in the Arts Act 2003. For the purposes of this report, therefore, the Committee has agreed on the following definition of the traditional arts:

The Irish traditional arts comprise any creative expression that is based on, or arising from, our own repertoire, style or structure, in whatever form, including music (instrumental solo and group playing; percussion, i.e. lambeg, bodhrán, bones); song (singing that is of the tradition in both Irish and English; sean-nós, liling, *luibíní*); dance (sean-nós step-dancing, set and céilí dancing, contemporary step-dancing); and oral arts such as storytelling and *agallamh beirte*, in both Irish and English.

### Recommendations

- 1.1.5** The Irish traditional arts should be defined as comprising 'traditional music, song and dance, and oral arts such as storytelling and *agallamh beirte*'.
- 1.1.6** Any definition of the Irish traditional arts which is to serve the purposes of the Arts Council must seek to be as inclusive as possible.

## 1.2 The Applicability and Relevance of the Terms 'Amateur', 'Professional' and 'Voluntary'

Such is the informal nature of these art forms that trying to place a traditional artist solely in one of these categories would often be inappropriate. Not only would artists generally engage in activities across these kinds of groupings, but the status of an artist within the traditional-arts community would rarely be determined according to such terms.

While taking into account concerns expressed in the public submissions regarding the ambiguity of the terms, the Committee also considered the purpose that these terms would serve with regard to the Arts Council. The Committee's conclusions were threefold.

- 1.2.1 While a 'professional' traditional artist may be said to derive all or most of their earnings from their artistic practice, those practitioners would make up only a small percentage of all those involved in the traditional arts. Furthermore, the traditional arts are quite unique in that some of the most exceptional and influential practitioners might not be, nor ever aspire to be, 'professional' artists. Therefore, while 'professional' traditional artists should be adequately supported by the Arts Council, were the Arts Council's emphasis only to be on the funding of 'professional' traditional artists, we might find ourselves deprived of the opportunity to develop the work of many of our finest practitioners.
- 1.2.2 It can be said that much activity in the traditional arts – not only performing, but organising also – is indeed 'voluntary', in the sense that the purpose of participants in engaging in this activity is not financial reward. There is some concern among the traditional-arts community that this situation excludes a large proportion of traditional-arts activity from Arts Council funding. The Committee felt that that the 'voluntary' nature of traditional-arts activity should never be a stumbling block towards providing support.
- 1.2.3 There was a general consensus in the public submissions that the term 'amateur', when applied to a traditional artist, would not only be considered inadequate but derogatory. On the basis that the term serves no purpose within the traditional-arts community, the Committee considers it irrelevant to the Arts Council's dealings with these art forms.

### Recommendations

- 1.2.4 The terms 'professional' and 'voluntary' are relevant to the traditional arts in the following ways:
  - a 'professional' traditional artist may be said to derive all or most of their earnings from their artistic practice;
  - much activity in the traditional arts can be said to be 'voluntary', in the sense that the purpose of participants in engaging in this activity is not financial reward.
- 1.2.5 The term 'amateur' is not relevant for describing traditional-arts activity.
- 1.2.6 The fact that some of the most exceptional and influential practitioners in the traditional arts might not be 'professional' artists must be taken into account when considering applications for support.
- 1.2.7 The 'voluntary' nature of traditional-arts activity should never be a stumbling block towards providing support to the traditional arts.

## SECTION 2: IRISH TRADITIONAL ARTS: TOWARDS A COHERENT POLICY

In framing a coherent policy for the traditional arts, the Committee felt that the following points must be taken into consideration:

- 2.1** The traditional arts consist of several art forms that are contemporary and vibrant.
- 2.2** They are quintessentially Irish art forms, in that Irish people have definitively shaped them over time.
- 2.3** The traditional arts are a responsibility of the Arts Council along with all other art forms.
- 2.4** The traditional arts deserve parity of esteem with other art forms.
- 2.5** The traditional arts are deserving of appropriate state funding.
- 2.6** The Arts Council's traditional-arts policy must take a dual approach, as follows:
  - (i)** to guide its own funding work;
  - (ii)** to inform policy across other state agencies, local authorities and Government departments in their engagement with the traditional arts.
- 2.7** The artist and arts practice should be central to a traditional-arts policy. In the case of the traditional arts, transmission, i.e. the passing on of style and repertoire, is an essential part of arts practice.
- 2.8** Support for the traditional arts is fragmented across a variety of sources and they can receive funding for reasons other than the support of arts practice, e.g. their relationship to the Irish language, their contribution to social and cultural identity, their impact on tourism.
- 2.9** The traditional arts throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first have had to develop without the state support that many might have considered appropriate. The vibrant cultural scene that has developed, which is ad-hoc, geographically far-reaching and self-reliant in nature, gives great room for expression to traditional artists. It provides them with informal and formal opportunities to perform and allows them to develop their art in an organic way. Any coherent policy should, therefore, be resolute about adhering to the considerable inherent strengths within the traditional arts and allow it to follow its course naturally as opposed to imposing any particular direction upon it.
- 2.10** The perception among traditional artists that Ireland is lacking a credible policy on the traditional arts is essentially based on the following points:
  - The importance of the traditional arts as contemporary art forms, their potential to enrich our lives and strengthen our sense of personal and cultural identity, is not reflected in the Arts Council's work;
  - The degree of subsidisation of other art forms suggests that the voluntary activity fuelling the traditional arts is taken for granted;
  - There is no real provision for traditional-arts education within the state school system;
  - The Arts Council has a selective policy, whereby key aspects of these art forms are deemed ineligible for support, or receive only moderate support, and this frustrates the potential in these art forms;
  - The Arts Council's emphasis on the professional wing of traditional-arts activity, as articulated in the *Arts Plan 2002-2006* (albeit now set aside), suggests that the majority of traditional-arts activity, which does not come under this category, is being neglected;

- The contribution of the traditional arts to the economy via tourism is not reflected in the support by the state.

**2.11** The last century has seen enormous changes in the fortunes of Irish traditional arts, and yet some of the fundamental ambitions remain unachieved and uncatered for. The traditional-arts community seek:

- Recognition and support for the traditional artist;
- Proper provision for education in the traditional arts;
- Appropriate environments for performance and transmission, that is, the passing on of style and repertoire.

### **Recommendations**

**2.12** The Arts Council must assume and fulfil a primary role of responsibility for the development and support of the traditional arts and work towards the informed integration of the traditional arts into the central structures, systems and philosophy of all the Council's activities.

**2.13** The Arts Council must develop a public traditional-arts policy with a dual role, (i) to guide its own work, and (ii) to inform policy across other state bodies and departments.

**2.14** Traditional-arts policy must be inclusive, not selective, and built upon the inherent strengths of the traditional arts.

**2.15** In order to inform its future policy initiatives for the traditional arts, the Council should engage in ongoing consultation with traditional artists.

## SECTION 3: THE FUNDING ROLE OF THE ARTS COUNCIL

### 3.1 Current Funding

Arts Council support of the traditional arts primarily takes the form of 'revenue funding' (grants to arts organisations) and the 'Support for Artists' programme of awards, bursaries and schemes (grants to individual artists or groups of artists).

- 3.1.1** Members and organisations of the traditional-arts community have regularly contended that Arts Council funding of the traditional arts is inadequate and has never been above three per cent of the Arts Council budget. It is clear from the public submissions to the Committee, as well as earlier publications and reports, not to mention ongoing public debate, that the traditional-arts community perceives this as evidence of the Arts Council's lack of understanding of the needs of these art forms.
- 3.1.2** Revenue funding is the main source of funds for art forms from the Arts Council and it is clear that the amount of revenue funding received by the traditional arts is the second lowest (only architecture receives less) of all Arts Council funded categories (the 2004 commitments amount to €891,150, i.e. 2.4 per cent of the Arts Council's total 2004 revenue funding commitments (€37,268,683)).
- 3.1.3** The Committee estimates that the allocation to individual traditional artists under the Support for Artists programme was 3 per cent of the total in 2002, 1 per cent in 2003 and 3 per cent in 2004. The Committee considers these figures to be low. The reasons for this level of funding, it would seem to the Committee, are as much to do with the wording and structure of the awards as the fact that there is a lack of awareness among traditional artists that these awards are available to them, or are even relevant to them. The particular awards that traditional artists tend to focus on are, firstly, schemes that assist them in producing recordings or publications, and secondly, travel awards. There has been little, if any, take-up by traditional artists of other types of awards.
- 3.1.4** The recently developed 'Small Arts Festivals Scheme', which is aimed at small festivals regardless of theme, genre or profile, is to be welcomed. Of €240,020 allocated in 2004, the Committee estimates that 29 per cent (€70,370) of the funding went to twenty-nine festivals wholly or partly dedicated to the traditional arts (a total of seventy-five small festivals received support under this scheme in 2004). This represents an example of a key aspect of the traditional arts being supported by a newly developed Arts Council initiative.
- 3.1.5** While it could be suggested that the traditional arts benefit from a certain amount of indirect funding, through multi-disciplinary revenue funding of other, larger festivals, the Committee considers that the amount of indirect funding is not significant enough to raise the traditional arts from near the bottom of the table of Arts Council funding.

### 3.2 Perceived 'Barriers' to Funding

It is worth speculating on why support for the traditional arts, in the form of revenue funding and the Support for Artists programme, is at this low level. According to many, the explanation lies in a general reluctance, both officially, in the media, and elsewhere, to take the traditional arts seriously, and this attitude is, in their view, apparent in the track record of the Arts Council. It could be added that because of a long-standing lack of adequate funding of the traditional arts, traditional artists' perception is that they do not have a relationship with the Arts Council and thus they are not applying in large numbers for grant-aid. The Committee makes the following additional observations on this subject.

- 3.2.1** The Committee has detected what many perceive as 'barriers' to supporting critical aspects of these art forms, for example:

- the lack of attention to the importance of transmission in the traditional arts;
- the way in which the awards, bursaries and schemes are constructed;
- the absence of a Traditional Arts Officer or Specialist;
- the use of the word 'innovation' in Arts Council policy, a term which can be ambiguous in the context of the traditional arts;
- the emphasis on the 'creative artist' (i.e. the creator of the work) in Arts Council policy and the relationship of this to membership of Aosdána;
- the ineligibility of events classed as competitive;
- the emphasis in Arts Council policy on professional activity;
- the difficulty for Comhaltas local branches in obtaining support as a result of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs' annual grant to Comhaltas headquarters.

The lack of faith in some quarters in the traditional-arts community in the ability of the Arts Council to adequately support their activities is as a direct result of such policies.

- 3.2.2** The Committee believes that the popularity of the Irish traditional arts, nationally and internationally, has led to a situation where support for these art forms is not considered a priority; indeed, financial support may even be perceived as unnecessary.

Not only does such a view ignore the fact that only a small minority of artists are successful in translating this popularity into a full-time career, but it also means that the real potential within the traditional arts for development is overlooked.

The achievements of Irish traditional artists thus far should not be a reason for keeping support at a minimum and aiming low. Rather, they are a compelling reason for developing more supports and aiming higher.

Two of the most striking examples of events which are under-supported are the world-renowned traditional-arts festivals, Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, which received €27,000 in 2004, and Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, which receives no support from the Arts Council.

- 3.2.3** The ubiquity of traditional-arts activity in Ireland should not be interpreted as proof that no support is needed in the areas of performance, audience development, access or education. The fact that traditional artists consistently find public opportunities to play, in public houses notably, clouds issues such as the suitability of the performing environment and audience appreciation, all of which are as important to traditional artists as they are to practitioners in other art forms.

- 3.2.4** Despite the world-wide acclaim and growing popularity of Irish traditional arts, there remains a common misconception that traditional arts are of a relatively 'primitive' nature, incapable of the range of expression of more 'sophisticated' art forms, and do not warrant serious consideration. This perception, perpetuated by a lack of widespread education, information and understanding regarding the traditional arts, has, in the opinion of the Committee, created a culture that inhibits serious state investment.

## Recommendations

- 3.2.5** The Arts Council must review immediately, through consultation with traditional-arts expertise, the suitability of existing awards, schemes and bursaries to contemporary traditional-arts practice.
- 3.2.6** The Arts Council should keep under constant review, in consultation with traditional-arts expertise, the suitability of its revenue application arts policies to contemporary traditional-arts activity.
- 3.2.7** The Arts Council needs to undertake a fundamental public awareness initiative to (i) convince traditional artists that the Council is serious about supporting them, and (ii) inform the traditional-arts community of the grants and funding available to it through the Arts Council.

## 3.3 Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

- 3.3.1** Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has made a very important contribution to the popularisation and development of the traditional arts over the past fifty years and more. Through organising tuition, festivals, competitions and tours on a national and international level, and providing a platform for young artists, CCÉ has proved itself to be a highly effective and significant cultural organisation.
- 3.3.2** It has been pointed out that the traditional arts would be in a far weaker position today were it not for the work of CCÉ and there is a perceived injustice in the fact that it does not receive a large amount of funding from the Arts Council. There have even been calls for a separate 'Traditional Arts Council'. CCÉ has not applied for revenue funding from the Arts Council since 1999, when it was refused. CCÉ receives its principal annual state funding from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (€540,000 in 2004), plus €85,000 per annum from RTÉ, while very moderate funding is received by a handful of local branches from the Arts Council. In eighteen applications received from CCÉ local branches between 2000 and mid-2004, five were approved for funding for specific festival activities, amounting to €6,210 (from a total requested amount of €17,522). Some local branches also receive small 'Arts Act' grants from local authority arts offices.
- 3.3.3** Members of CCÉ have commented that a decline in volunteerism will ultimately inhibit the activities of CCÉ and insist that the Arts Council should assist the organisation with funding to compensate for this fact. In correspondence with the Committee, CCÉ estimated the total expenditure of the organisation – from the smallest branch to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann – to be €11,376,800 in 2003. CCÉ stated that all income is generated by local funding, fund-raising events and branch activities. The administration and organisation of all local events and activities are undertaken by Comhaltas volunteers, and, the organisation stresses, while some artists and teachers may be remunerated, the organisers are not.
- 3.3.4** The Arts Council should not dilute its responsibility to funding specific activities by passing funding to a third party. It is the Committee's view that the way forward for Arts Council funding of Comhaltas activities is to develop funding relationships with local branches of CCÉ. This should not preclude a national body bringing forward a project which has merits for consideration by the Council.
- 3.3.5** With regard to calls for a separate 'Traditional Arts Council', while the Committee acknowledges that the credibility of the Arts Council among sections of the traditional-arts community has been damaged as a result of its track record, it feels strongly that it would be inappropriate for a body other than the Arts Council to assume custodianship of any art form, including the traditional arts, or for the traditional arts to be funded outside the Arts Council or separately to other art forms. Therefore, the Committee feels that the Arts Council must assume its primary support and development role, and responsibility for, the future of the traditional arts.

- 3.3.6** With a view towards creating a new environment of co-operation, it is the Committee's recommendation that the Arts Council and CCÉ, as with any organisations working together in the same area, should make a concerted effort at improving the relationship between the two. Failure to reach partnership will not progress issues that are common to both.

## Recommendations

- 3.3.7** The Arts Council must fulfil its responsibilities to the traditional arts. A 'Traditional Arts Council' should not be established.
- 3.3.8** The Arts Council should develop funding relationships with local branches of CCÉ around the country.
- 3.3.9** The Arts Council and CCÉ must make new efforts to improve their relationship.

## 3.4 Fostering the Traditional Arts

- 3.4.1** It cannot be ignored that the Irish traditional arts are unlikely to be fostered, developed or financially supported to a significant degree anywhere but in Ireland itself.
- 3.4.2** Regardless of the present relatively buoyant situation, the Arts Council must seriously consider what the future for the traditional arts is on its present trajectory. Although it is true that these arts are presently enjoying a period of increased activity and a new degree of popularity, were they to subsequently experience a 'dry stretch', with no prior efforts to firm up the support structures for these art forms, even a slight decline in their fortunes would do serious damage to the traditional arts.
- 3.4.3** Issues such as the decline in volunteerism, the collection of royalties on traditional music performance, or the new legislation that prevents those aged under eighteen years attending public houses after 9pm, and thereby attending or participating in traditional music 'sessions', are examples of the new challenges that the traditional arts face. They are also excellent opportunities for the Arts Council to become more involved in the traditional arts and make its presence felt.
- 3.4.4** Funding is about two principal things. It is about resourcing an organisation or individual to allow them to reach their potential and allow them to create good work; but, critically, it is also about acknowledgement, recognition, the conferring of a certain degree of status on the artist or organisation and their work, and the offering to that artist or organisation a degree of self-confidence and belief that what they are doing is good.

Probably uniquely among art forms there is a huge range of traditional-arts activities which are currently existing without any or with a little public funding. For them to receive some, or more, funding would confer this sense of approval or acknowledgement on them. It is, therefore, very important that the Council is able to fund a large range of activity.

- 3.4.5** The Committee believes that the traditional arts, neglected for too long by the Arts Council, should be brought up to a reasonable level of parity with other art forms.

In response to the Terms of Reference, therefore, and the requirement to make specific recommendations for the traditional arts for implementation over three to five years, and recognising the restraints on the Exchequer funds, it is the Committee's view that the financial assistance provided to the traditional arts should be brought, within three to five years, to the level where the traditional arts are among the top four art forms funded by the Arts Council. At present, the three art forms that receive

the most revenue funding are Drama (2004: €13,317,269), Visual Arts (2004: €3,960,500) and Music (2004: €3,217,000).

The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Arts Council seek a commitment from Government that would assist it in achieving this aim without damaging or affecting the funding to other art forms.

The Committee believes that parity for the traditional arts in terms of Council staff and resources, allied to a statement by Council itself that the traditional arts have been unjustly neglected, will provide impetus towards prioritising these arts over a three- to five-year period, thereby greatly improving their status and condition.

The Committee considers this action necessary in order to begin to reflect the centrality of the traditional arts to Irish life, to correct the current inadequate support by the Government for these art forms, to begin to assure traditional artists that they have a place at the Arts Council table, and to affirm that they are valued as artists and contributors to the cultural life of this country.

## **Recommendation**

- 3.4.6** The Arts Council must seek a commitment from Government to allow it increase its funding for the traditional arts, such that, within three to five years, they would be among the top four art forms presently funded by the Arts Council. This additional finance should allow it to respond to the needs of the traditional-arts community without affecting the funding for other art forms.

## SECTION 4: THE ARTS COUNCIL IN RELATION TO OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES

### Introduction

While recommending an augmented role for the Arts Council in the matter of funding the traditional arts, the Committee also urges the Council to play an active role with regard to other supporting agencies.

#### 4.1 The Arts Council of Northern Ireland

**4.1.1** The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has had a consistent policy of employing a Traditional Arts Officer and of treating the traditional arts as a separate area for funding. The ACNI's funding for the traditional arts in the 2003-2004 funding year amounts to STG£919,952 (€1,384,657) or 5.5 per cent of their total budget (STG£16,719,455 (€25,165,773)). The ACNI also runs a 'Musical Instruments for Bands Scheme' which includes flute, pipe and accordion marching bands. In 2003-2004 the ACNI allocated STG£484,762 (€727,688) to this scheme. If the marching-band sector were to be classified under 'Traditional Arts', that would bring the overall figure to STG£1,404,714 (€2,108,448), or 8.4 per cent of the entire ACNI budget.

The ACNI directly funds a certain amount of traditional-arts activity in the Republic of Ireland, notably the Irish Traditional Music Archive, which most recently received STG£20,000 (€30,150) in 2004, whereas the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon does not directly fund traditional-arts activity in the North of Ireland. A traditional-arts organisation in the North such as the Armagh Pipers' Club receives no funding from the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, despite the fact that its activities impact directly on counties Louth and Monaghan in the Republic.

Overall, the approach of the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon is short-sighted given the interconnectedness of traditional-arts activity across the entire island, and, in the current climate of cross-border co-operation, most surprising. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland's engagement with the traditional arts is admirable and it behoves the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon to respond to this commitment.

### Recommendation

**4.1.2** The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon should be open to funding traditional-arts activity across the island of Ireland in co-operation with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

#### 4.2 State Promotion of Irish Traditional Arts Internationally

**4.2.1** The Irish traditional arts have a reputation outside Ireland of which Irish people can be proud. Not only have audiences been developed internationally, but also, people from all over the world have taken up these art forms and there now exists an international network of performers and enthusiasts. This has principally come about through the work of many individual artists, groups and promoters. Again, it must be stressed that much of the development of the reputation of the traditional arts has taken place with little state support. Indeed, the state has taken this quite unique situation for granted and has not made a concerted effort to maximise its potential.

The main mechanism for state promotion of Irish culture abroad is the Cultural Relations Committee, yet the CRC's spend on the traditional arts can be inconsistent – extremely low some years and comparatively reasonable in others. 'Traditional Arts' is not a category that is used in CRC funding. The Committee estimates, however, that CRC expenditure on the traditional arts was €2,400 in 2002 (2% of the total spend); €30,000 in 2003 (20% of the total spend), and €5,240 in 2004 (3% of the total spend).

The Department of Foreign Affairs has an annual budget of €725,000 for the promotion of Irish culture abroad. It distributes these funds in response to requests from Irish embassies. There are no figures available for the proportion of these funds spent on the traditional arts, but the Department estimates that the traditional arts feature as prominently as other art forms in its cultural work.

The Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism has recently commissioned a review of international arts policy and, on the basis that the traditional arts have a considerable audience-base in the world already, and with many opportunities still for development, the Committee believes it is imperative that, in whatever new structures arise, the traditional arts play a central if not leading role in the promotion of Irish culture abroad.

## Recommendations

- 4.2.2** The Arts Council must focus relevant supports such as mobility grants to assist traditional artists to maximise the potential of the appeal of Irish traditional arts abroad.
- 4.2.3** In whatever new structures that arise as a result of the review of international arts policy, the traditional arts must play a central role in the promotion of Irish culture abroad.

## 4.3 Local Authorities

- 4.3.1** Local-authority arts offices have the potential to play a dynamic role in supporting and developing the traditional arts. While there have been some excellent initiatives, for example, in County Roscommon (the Traditional Arts Forum), Fingal (the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre) and County Clare (the Traditional Music Project), the capacity of local authorities to impact upon traditional-arts activity is still relatively unexploited.

Local-authority arts office activity is guided by Arts Council policy. The lack of a comprehensive traditional-arts policy, not to mention the significance of there being no traditional-arts expertise in the Arts Council, has a very real knock-on effect (it is interesting to note that only one local authority made a public submission to the Committee). Local-authority arts offices, the Committee believes, require more leadership from the Council, as well as support, in order to co-ordinate and facilitate traditional-arts activity in their own county.

Support from local-authority arts offices is in two forms, funding for specific arts programmes, which constitutes the main source of funding, and smaller 'Arts Act' grants. Aside from this direct support for the traditional arts, which varies across all local authorities, funding is also channelled through multi-disciplinary activities and general music programmes.

The Arts Council provides part funding to local authorities for some of their programmed arts activity. The Arts Council's contribution to local-authority arts programmes and 'Arts Act' grants in 2003 was €1,019,880. Of that amount, an estimated €70,000 (7%) went directly to traditional-arts initiatives.

Expenditure on the traditional arts by local arts offices tends to focus on the following areas: master classes and workshops; independent concert promotion; Music Network touring; independent local initiatives; Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann branch activities; festivals; summer schools; capital grants; instrument grants; recording projects; the collection of music or song; publications; purpose-built centres; and bursaries for musicians.

There is great potential in the relationship between the traditional arts and the local-authority arts office, and further possibilities in combining with local-authority-supported venues. However, to this end, there needs to be increased subsidisation of traditional-arts tours throughout the country to allow local authorities programme more events. Local-authority-supported venues should be encouraged and facilitated to programme a traditional-arts activity at least once a month. In particular, programming should at times put an emphasis on 'master' artists, whether engaged as full-time artists or not, and emerging artists, thus bringing to the fore local musicians.

Full parity of esteem for the traditional arts, which is a priority for this Committee, can only be achieved when traditional artists are seen to be valued and given opportunities for performance equal to other art forms, nationally and in their own communities.

### Recommendations

- 4.3.2** The Arts Council should encourage local authorities to engage in consultation with local traditional artists and organisations with a view to developing policies that match their needs and that pay specific attention to the potential of the traditional arts in their area.
- 4.3.3** There should be increased subsidisation of traditional-arts activities in local-authority areas and increased traditional-arts programming through local-authority-supported venues.

## 4.4 Irish-Language Supports

- 4.4.1** The traditional arts have an intrinsic connection with the Irish language, not only in arts activity in the Gaeltacht areas but also in its repertoire and history. The relationship between the Irish language and the traditional arts was repeatedly emphasised in the public submissions and there are opportunities for both the language and the traditional arts to benefit from this connection.

The primary sources of support for traditional-arts activity through the Irish language are the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Ealaín na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge. The Department provides grant-aid to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (€540,000 in 2004) and Gaelacadamh Teoranta (which provides traditional arts tuition in the Gaeltacht in Co. Galway, and which received a grant of €16,700 in 2003).

Ealaín na Gaeltachta was established in 1998 by the Arts Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta to support arts development at a regional Gaeltacht level. It funds a range of arts activity in the Gaeltacht areas. The budget for Ealaín na Gaeltachta over the period of its first plan (2000-2003) was €1,686,245, 50 per cent of which was committed by the Arts Council and 50 per cent by Údarás na Gaeltachta. In its first pilot programme (Scéim na bPríomhreisí, 2001-2003) its spending on the traditional arts amounted to €189,152.

Sean-nós singing, while it is greatly valued and respected among traditional artists, and has various events dedicated to it, is inevitably in danger because of the decline of the Irish language in Gaeltacht areas. Foras na Gaeilge's support of traditional-arts activity focuses on sean-nós singing in particular. Foras na Gaeilge's estimated funding for the traditional arts was €40,000 in 2001, €70,000 in 2002 and €80,000 in 2003.

It can only be of benefit to both the Irish language and the traditional arts that the relationship between the two be nourished and encouraged, both for reasons of enrichment and continuity.

## Recommendations

- 4.4.2** The Committee recognises that the Irish language must be an important part of any coherent policy on the traditional arts and that the Arts Council should encourage broad-based support for traditional-arts activity in the Irish language.
- 4.4.3** The Arts Council should support initiatives to develop the teaching of sean-nós singing within and outside of the Gaeltacht areas.

## 4.5 Television and Radio Broadcasting

- 4.5.1** There are several national radio programmes during the week in Irish and English dedicated to playing traditional music. RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta plays a distinguished role in the promotion of traditional music and song and its support of sean-nós singing through the years, in particular, has been exemplary. RTÉ Radio 1 and RTÉ Lyric FM also have quality traditional-music programmes that make a definite contribution towards promoting traditional artists and informing Irish people of the quality of traditional-arts activity today. These programmes underscore the crucial role that a national broadcaster can play, and must continue to play, in promulgating traditional music and song. The total annual summary estimate of radio spend on traditional music by RTÉ, inclusive of staff costs across three radio services (RTÉ Radio 1, Raidió na Gaeltachta and Lyric FM) is estimated at €1.67 million.

It must be said, however, that what is missing in the national broadcaster's schedule is regular critical discussion of the traditional arts. In radio and television, the emphasis in critical reviews and features is still very much on literature, the visual arts and drama. The traditional arts are seriously disadvantaged in this regard. Critical, informed discussion is crucial in order to raise awareness of an art form's aesthetic qualities, to raise standards, to increase respect for the art forms, and to inform the Irish public of the depth and widespread existence of traditional-arts activity. Parity of esteem can only be achieved if the traditional arts are exposed to the same critical rigor that other art forms receive.

RTÉ's commitment to traditional-arts television programmes in 2003 – *The Raw Bar*, *Still Beating Time*, *Fleadh Cheoil* and *Come West Along the Road* – amounted to €302,000, while TG4 has broadcasted a regular traditional music programme, *Geantraí*, since its inception, as well as the series *'Sé Mo Laoch*, *Fiosc*, *Abair Amhrán* and *Ceol Cois Locha* among others. RTÉ also makes an annual payment of €85,000 to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in return for access to major events and co-operation in the making of a variety of radio and television programmes. Payments to the various collecting agencies (e.g. IMRO (Irish Music Rights Organisation), PPI (Phonographic Performance Ireland), MCPS (Mechanical Copyright Protection Society)) by way of music licenses for radio and television programming is in excess of €6 million, although no separate breakdown for traditional music is available.

The national broadcaster RTÉ has a huge influence on the fortunes of the Irish traditional arts, playing a crucial role in the exposition, celebration, archiving and popularisation of all traditional art forms. As a medium that can act as a power supply to encourage new talent and bring Ireland's finest artists to the attention of a wider public, as well as introducing Irish and international audiences to the qualities and importance of the Irish traditional arts, the significance of the medium can not be overstressed. While all of RTÉ's commitments to traditional-arts programming are to be welcomed, there are many issues to do with commissioning, co-producing (with specific reference to broadcasters in Northern Ireland), scheduling, programme content and budgets that could only be discussed and/or resolved through creating a new relationship between the Arts Council and RTÉ. The Committee believes that the Arts Council should initiate a series of meetings with RTÉ with a view towards creating a new structure for co-operation.

With regard to the only national commercial television station, TV3, it is regretted that it has not engaged in any serious way with the traditional arts. As regards commercial radio, it is clear to the Committee that some stations give the traditional arts admirable support while others entirely neglect it. The Committee believes that a commitment to the traditional arts should be part of any future licensing agreements with broadcasters.

## Recommendations

- 4.5.2** On the basis that the activities of RTÉ are crucial to the traditional arts, the Arts Council should endeavour to strengthen the relationship between the two bodies. A regular forum between the Arts Council and RTÉ should exist to discuss matters related to the arts generally and, clearly, the traditional arts should form a central part of this relationship.
- 4.5.3** The Arts Council should encourage Government to include a commitment to exposure of the traditional arts as part of its licensing requirements.
- 4.5.4** The Arts Council should begin to engage with the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI). A series of meetings, with the traditional arts as a key item on the agenda, should take place between the Arts Council and the BCI within six months.

## 4.6 IMRO (Irish Music Rights Organisation)

- 4.6.1** IMRO administers the performing right in copyright music in Ireland on behalf of its members – songwriters, composers and music publishers – and on behalf of the members of the international overseas societies that are affiliated to it. IMRO’s function is to collect and distribute royalties arising from the public performance of copyright works. IMRO is a not-for-profit organisation.

Approximately 14 per cent of all works registered with IMRO from their members are traditional arrangements and IMRO distributes in excess of €130,000 to its members on an annual basis for these traditional arrangements. IMRO is also involved in the promotion of Irish traditional music, and a number of traditional-arts fairs and festivals held during the year receive the support of IMRO. This amounts to close on €22,000 a year. According to the organisation, some thirty fairs and festivals have received grants from IMRO over the last four years.

Notwithstanding this, it is the Committee’s view that there exists a large degree of confusion, not to mention controversy, regarding the issue of traditional music and the collection of royalties. In particular, given that there are many issues with regard to Irish traditional music and the collection of performance royalties that need to be resolved, the Committee notes with some concern the agreement that arose between IMRO and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, in which Comhaltas agreed to pay IMRO an annual fee for a blanket licence, and in return received financial subventions over five years.

The Committee believes that the Arts Council should engage with the PPI, MCPS and IMRO to make a combined effort to address the matter of royalties for traditional artists and produce solutions that would be acceptable to all parties.

## Recommendation

- 4.6.2** The Arts Council should take the lead in investigating the issue of royalties and traditional arts and encourage the relevant organisations both to address the matter of royalties for traditional artists and to produce solutions that would be acceptable to all parties.

## SECTION 5: AN EFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR FUNDING

### Introduction

In this section, the Committee sets out what it considers to be the essential elements for assessing traditional-arts funding applications in the future.

### 5.1 The Appointment of a Traditional Arts Officer

**5.1.1** The current absence of a Traditional Arts Officer in the Arts Council executive is perceived by many as a clear indication that the Arts Council has not taken its responsibilities to the traditional arts seriously. It is clear, therefore, that there will be no better confirmation of a change of attitude within the Council towards the traditional arts than by the appointment, within six months, of a dedicated Traditional Arts Officer.

The Committee specifically recommends a 'full-time Officer' as opposed to a 'Specialist'. Art-form specialists are presently employed on a part-time capacity by the Arts Council, but the Committee believes that the Council requires the commitment of a full-time Officer in order to make the required impact on traditional-arts activity. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the traditional arts should be deeply resourced within the Arts Council, both in the financial sense in that there should be increased funding for the traditional arts, and also in the establishment of a team or department within the Arts Council so as to ensure that the responsibility for the traditional arts does not become dependent on the calibre and commitment of one particular person.

The Committee recognises that many initiatives will flow from the appointment of a Traditional Arts Officer. However, the Committee sets out in the sections below the main considerations which it believes should inform the Officer's activity.

### Recommendations

**5.1.2** A full-time, respected and high-profile Traditional Arts Officer should be appointed, within six months, by the Arts Council.

**5.1.3** This position should be deeply resourced within the Council, both in terms of finance available and supporting staff.

### 5.2 Policy Objectives

**5.2.1.** Council resources should be focused on supporting and developing:

- (i) The Traditional Artist**
- (ii) Transmission, i.e. the passing on of style and repertoire**

Supporting the **traditional artist** implies attention to:

- Artist **support** through awards, bursaries and schemes, and revenue funding of relevant organisations for traditional artists;
- **development** of the careers of Irish traditional artists, both internationally and domestically;
- formal **recognition** of traditional artists who have made an outstanding contribution to Irish cultural life.

Supporting **transmission** implies attention to:

- **archiving** and improving access to source material for artists and communities;
- traditional-arts **education** for present and future performers and audiences;
- supporting opportunities for traditional-arts **performance**.

### Recommendation

**5.2.2** The Arts Council should focus its resources on supporting and developing the following core aspects of the traditional arts:

- The Traditional Artist
- Transmission, i.e. the passing on of style and repertoire

## 5.3 The Traditional Artist

### 5.3.1 Awards, Bursaries and Schemes and Revenue Funding

In order to support the artistic and professional development of traditional artists, the Council's programme of supports must be revised in consultation with traditional-arts expertise. The Support for Artists programme must be capable, in particular, of supporting traditional artists who wish to undertake periods of artistic research and development.

An equally important action will be to raise awareness among traditional artists with regard to what the Arts Council does for artists and how they can avail of the relevant opportunities. In this task the efforts of the Traditional Arts Officer will need to be assisted by a larger public information initiative.

Revenue funding to traditional-arts organisations should be assessed on the basis of clear benefits to traditional artists, and how well the organisation's work contributes to transmission.

### Recommendation

**5.3.2** Arts Council revenue funding and the Support for Artists programme of awards must realise clear benefits to (i) the traditional artist, and (ii) transmission.

### 5.3.3 Career Development

The Committee recognises the difficulties experienced by traditional artists in making a living. Most, if not all, professional traditional artists must tour abroad regularly to supplement their income and they should be supported by mobility grants in this work.

With a view towards broadening appreciation of the art forms and encouraging respect for traditional-arts activity, the Arts Council should support the development of traditional-arts criticism in Ireland. Television, radio, print-media, seminars, conferences, public lectures and informal talks and debates at festivals all have a role to play in this regard.

## Recommendations

**5.3.4** The Arts Council must develop supports for traditional artists to perform abroad.

**5.3.5** With a view towards broadening appreciation of the traditional arts in Ireland, the Arts Council should support the development of traditional-arts criticism.

### 5.3.6 Recognition and Support

The Committee believes that there is a need for an award/recognition system for traditional artists who have made an outstanding contribution to Irish cultural life and indeed a possible payment system. The Committee recommends that either the membership of Aosdána be broadened or the Council should explore the possibility of an alternative form of recognition.

## Recommendation

**5.3.7** The Arts Council should develop an award /recognition system for traditional artists who have made an outstanding contribution to Ireland's cultural life.

## 5.4 Transmission

### 5.4.1 Through Archiving

In the transmission of the traditional arts, the role of archiving and of making source material available to artists is crucial. The Irish traditional arts have clearly benefited from the establishment of a national traditional music archive in 1987, utilising it both as a source of information and of material to fuel their performing, recording and publishing activities. It is notable how often a new CD, publication, or piece of research acknowledges the assistance and value of the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA), which is funded by the Arts Council (€332,000 in revenue funding in 2004, and advance capital funding of €100,000 for agreed activities).

Aside from being a practical resource for artists, an archive also engages in background work such as detailed cataloguing and copying of material, ensuring off-site storage of copies in case of disaster, and generally following professional archival procedure. It has come to the attention of the Committee that there is a number of private and regional collections of material around the country which are possibly in need of cataloguing, copying and off-site storage. It is necessary that any archive or private collection of traditional-arts material that is to receive Arts Council funding in the future adhere to professional archiving procedure and make its material available to the public. The Committee also recommends that copies of all such material be submitted to the Irish Traditional Music Archive for additional safe-keeping for future generations.

With a view towards the safe-keeping and making available of all such material, around the country as well as in the ITMA, and given the fundamental importance of such resources in the transmission of the traditional arts, the Committee strongly recommends that the Arts Council increase the amount of funds dedicated towards archiving.

## Recommendations

- 5.4.2** The Arts Council should increase the amount of funding dedicated to professionally archiving the traditional arts.
- 5.4.3** The Arts Council should support professionally managed and publicly accessible archives and private collections, and projects to assist in the researching, recording and documenting of local traditional-arts activity. Any archive or private collection of traditional-arts material that is to receive Arts Council funding in the future must adhere to professional archiving procedure and must make its material available to the public.
- 5.4.4** Copies of all material deposited in traditional-arts archives around the country should be submitted to the Irish Traditional Music Archive for additional safe-keeping for future generations.

### 5.4.5 Through Education

It is clear to the Committee that the issue of traditional-arts education is of the utmost importance to many in the traditional-arts community. Many, having enjoyed the benefits of their involvement in the traditional arts, wish to see many more people in Ireland, particularly children and teenagers, receive the opportunity to partake in these vibrant art forms, not least because they wish to keep them alive. They also wish to see a greater appreciation of, and respect for, these art forms among people in Ireland generally, and they believe that education is key in this regard. Many of the public submissions stress the real social, cultural and economic benefits to be realised through more widespread involvement in the traditional arts.

Traditional-arts education can take various forms:

- firstly, there is the regular (weekly or monthly), formal, one-to-one or group tuition, provided privately by many artists throughout the country; through organisations such as Na Píobairí Uilleann, Cairdeas na bhFidléirí and branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann; through local music schools; and through primary and secondary schools;
- secondly, there is annual summer schools and festivals where intensive daily tuition can take place, usually over a period of a week;
- finally, an essential aspect of the education of a traditional artist takes place outside formal tuition, in performance situations where transmission can take place.

Traditional-arts education can be supported by:

- (i) improving traditional-arts education within the formal primary and secondary level system, and
- (ii) increasing provision for traditional-arts education outside the school system.

The first objective could be achieved through (a) the introduction of a module on the traditional arts in schools, and (b) increased engagement of traditional artists and organisations with schools. With regard to the latter, at present the amount of in-school activity that traditional-arts organisations undertake is relatively small. Many individual artists undertake some teaching in schools but the extent is impossible to quantify. Often it depends on the location and/or the initiative of the school itself. The Committee believes that the Arts Council should actively encourage, and support, traditional arts organisations and artists to develop more arts-in-schools initiatives. The Support for Artists programme of awards should, in particular, encourage traditional artists to undertake this work. Introducing the traditional-arts to school-children on a wide scale is essential in increasing appreciation for these art forms. The Committee

recognises that the 'Artists in Schools Guidelines' presently being developed by the Arts Council will provide both artists and schools with a framework for effective collaboration and will encourage the engagement of artists in such work.

With regard to the second objective, the Arts Council's present support of out-of-school traditional-arts education is primarily through its funding of numerous summer schools and festivals where classes take place, and its support of the work of Na Píobairí Uilleann, Cairdeas na bhFidléirí, Cairde na Cruite, Ionad Chúlurtha Baile Bhúirne, Alternative Entertainments and others. Increasing such support and facilitating organisations to grow will naturally have a positive impact on traditional-arts education. The Committee also believes there is potential for traditional-arts education in Music Network's Local Music Education Science.

Another essential aspect of traditional-arts education is the need to increase accessibility to quality instruments. It is often the case that the first instrument a beginner obtains tuition on is the tin whistle. If a pupil does not have an interest in this instrument they may never try another. The Committee believes that this should be addressed, but the traditional arts face several challenges in this regard. A full set of uilleann pipes presently costs c. €8,000 (and there is often a waiting list of several years to have a set made); a good concertina costs €2,000-€3,000; a beginner button-accordion costs €600-700; and a harp costs €2,500-4,000 (waiting lists for quality harps in Ireland is also an issue). Beginner fiddles and wooden flutes are more easily available, but the Committee strongly believes that the Arts Council should support and encourage the establishment of traditional-arts instrument-banks nationwide to facilitate beginners in exploring a range of instruments and providing promising students with quality instruments. The Committee believes that the benefits of such an initiative throughout the country would be incalculable.

In addition, given that an instrument such as the uilleann pipes is unique to Irish traditional arts – yet the price and availability of the instrument are inhibitive – the Arts Council should support research into their production to stimulate innovation and increase productivity. This could possibly be carried out in co-operation with Na Píobairí Uilleann, an organisation that has carried out excellent work in promoting the playing of the uilleann pipes over the last four decades.

The status of the traditional arts at third-level is also worth consideration. At present, there are two degree courses in traditional-music performance, although several third-level colleges feature Irish traditional music as part of their music degrees. The Irish World Music Centre in Limerick has developed postgraduate courses in Irish traditional music and dance. All of these initiatives are crucial in order to give traditional artists additional skills in developing a career, to encourage research and the development of our understanding of these art forms, and, not least, to give parity of esteem to the Irish traditional arts as an area of study, a career and an art form. Any initiatives that enhance the status of the traditional arts at third-level must be encouraged.

## Recommendations

- 5.4.6** The Arts Council should press for formal provision for traditional-arts education in the school system and also encourage and support arts-in-schools activities by traditional artists and traditional-arts organisations.
- 5.4.7** The Arts Council should increase its support for out-of-school traditional-arts education.
- 5.4.8** The Arts Council should encourage and support the establishment of traditional-arts instrument-banks nationwide.
- 5.4.9** The Arts Council should encourage and support research into the production of the uilleann pipes.

#### 5.4.10 Through Performance

Crucial to sustaining the traditional arts is the act of supporting events where transmission takes place. Such events include festivals, *fleadhanna*, summer schools, informal 'sessions', and more formal performances.

##### *Festivals, fleadhanna and summer schools*

It is indicative of the importance of transmission in the development of the traditional arts that so many small, independent traditional-arts festivals have sprung up in recent years around the country. Festivals, summer schools and *fleadhanna* are opportunities for artists to meet, socialise, perform, discuss and learn and they are vital for strengthening the traditional-arts community and developing the traditional arts. They are not only celebrations of these art forms for spectators and fans, or opportunities for increased tourism and its accompanying benefits, they are significant and intensive periods of learning and transmission for practitioners that can fuel their activities and artistic imagination for periods of weeks or even months afterwards.

This is equally the case with events that would normally be categorised as competitive events, i.e. *fleadhanna* and Oireachtas na Gaeilge. In the opinion of the Committee such events should be supported by the Arts Council on the basis that they are important occasions for transmission in the traditional arts.

##### *Sessions*

There is a widespread perception that the practice of performing traditional arts in public houses is essential to the traditional arts. Not only does the informal nature suit many artists, but the 'paid session', in which two or three anchor musicians are paid to perform on a regular basis in a venue, can also be a welcome source of income.

While the right environment – a good audience, good acoustics, a comfortable place to perform – can create many a memorable experience for artists and audience alike, it must be pointed out that the environment in which traditional artists perform is often less than conducive to performance and they would benefit from having further alternatives. It is also worth considering the repercussions of recent legislation, which prevents children under eighteen from being in public houses after 9pm. This deprives them of the opportunity that they formerly had to join in music sessions and learn, informally, from more experienced musicians.

In this new situation, it is crucial that the Arts Council encourage and support the traditional-arts community in developing opportunities for informal and formal performance in quality environments.

#### **Recommendations**

- 5.4.11** The Arts Council should continue to support as well as progressively develop its programme of funding for traditional-arts festivals and events.
- 5.4.12** The Arts Council should support traditional music events classed as competitive on the basis that they are important for transmission.
- 5.4.13** The Arts Council should assist in developing new opportunities for children and teenagers to perform the traditional arts in social situations.
- 5.4.14** The Arts Council should encourage and support the development of quality environments for traditional-arts performance.

## CONCLUSION: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude its report, the Committee presents below its entire set of recommendations concerning the traditional arts.

### Definition of Irish Traditional Arts

- 1.1.5** The Irish traditional arts should be defined as comprising ‘traditional music, song and dance, and oral arts such as storytelling and *agallamh beirte*’.
- 1.1.6** Any definition of the Irish traditional arts which is to serve the purposes of the Arts Council must seek to be as inclusive as possible.

### The Applicability and Relevance of the Terms ‘Amateur’, ‘Professional’ and ‘Voluntary’

- 1.2.4** The terms ‘professional’ and ‘voluntary’ are relevant to the traditional arts in the following ways:
- a ‘professional’ traditional artist may be said to derive all or most of their earnings from their artistic practice;
  - much activity in the traditional arts can be said to be ‘voluntary’, in the sense that the purpose of participants in engaging in this activity is not financial reward.
- 1.2.5** The term ‘amateur’ is not relevant for describing traditional-arts activity.
- 1.2.6** The fact that some of the most exceptional and influential practitioners in the traditional arts might not be ‘professional’ artists must be taken into account when considering funding applications.
- 1.2.7** The ‘voluntary’ nature of traditional-arts activity should never be a stumbling block towards providing support to the traditional arts.

### Irish Traditional Arts: Towards a Coherent Policy

- 2.12** The Arts Council must assume and fulfil a primary role of responsibility for the development and support of the traditional arts and work towards the informed integration of the traditional arts into the central structures, systems and philosophy of all the Council’s activities.
- 2.13** The Arts Council must develop a public traditional-arts policy with a dual role, (i) to guide its own work, and (ii) to inform policy across other state bodies and departments.
- 2.14** Traditional-arts policy must be inclusive, not selective, and built upon the inherent strengths of the traditional arts.
- 2.15** In order to inform its future policy initiatives for the traditional arts, the Council should engage in ongoing consultation with traditional artists.

### The Funding Role of the Arts Council

- 3.2.5** The Arts Council must review immediately, through consultation with traditional-arts expertise, the suitability of existing awards, schemes and bursaries to contemporary traditional-arts practice.
- 3.2.6** The Arts Council should keep under constant review, in consultation with traditional-arts expertise, the suitability of its revenue application arts policies to contemporary traditional-arts activity.
- 3.2.7** The Arts Council needs to undertake a fundamental public awareness initiative to (i) convince traditional artists that the Council is serious about supporting them, and (ii) inform the traditional-arts community of the grants and funding available to it through the Arts Council.

## **Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann**

- 3.3.7** The Arts Council must fulfil its responsibilities to the traditional arts. A 'Traditional Arts Council' should not be established.
- 3.3.8** The Arts Council should develop funding relationships with local branches of CCÉ around the country.
- 3.3.9** The Arts Council and CCÉ must make new efforts to improve their relationship.

## **Fostering the Traditional Arts**

- 3.4.6** The Arts Council must seek a commitment from Government to allow it increase its funding for the traditional arts, such that, within three to five years, they would be among the top four art forms presently funded by the Arts Council. This additional finance should allow it to respond to the needs of the traditional-arts community without affecting the funding for other art forms.

## **The Arts Council of Northern Ireland**

- 4.1.2** The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon should be open to funding traditional-arts activity across the island of Ireland in co-operation with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

## **State Promotion of Irish Traditional Arts Internationally**

- 4.2.2** The Arts Council must focus relevant supports such as mobility grants to assist traditional artists to maximise the potential of the appeal of the traditional arts abroad.
- 4.2.3** In whatever new structures that arise as a result of the review of international arts policy, the traditional arts must play a central role in the promotion of Irish culture abroad.

## **Local Authorities**

- 4.3.2** The Arts Council should encourage local authorities to engage in consultation with local traditional artists and organisations with a view to developing policies that match their needs and that pay specific attention to the potential of the traditional arts in their area.
- 4.3.3** There should be increased subsidisation of traditional-arts activities in local-authority areas and increased traditional-arts programming through local-authority-supported venues.

## **Irish-Language Supports**

- 4.4.2** The Committee recognises that the Irish language must be an important part of any coherent policy on the traditional arts and that the Arts Council should encourage broad-based support for traditional-arts activity in the Irish language.
- 4.4.3** The Arts Council should support initiatives to develop the teaching of sean-nós singing within and outside of the Gaeltacht areas.

## **Television and Radio Broadcasting**

- 4.5.2** On the basis that the activities of RTÉ are crucial to the traditional arts, the Arts Council should endeavour to strengthen the relationship between the two bodies. A regular forum between the Arts Council and RTÉ should exist to discuss matters related to the arts generally and, clearly, the traditional arts should form a central part of this relationship.

**4.5.3** The Arts Council should encourage Government to include a commitment to exposure of the traditional arts as part of its licensing requirements.

**4.5.4** The Arts Council should begin to engage with the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI). A series of meetings, with the traditional arts as a key item on the agenda, should take place between the Arts Council and the BCI within six months.

### **IMRO (Irish Music Rights Organisation)**

**4.6.2** The Arts Council should take the lead in investigating the issue of royalties and traditional arts and encourage the relevant organisations both to address the matter of royalties for traditional artists and to produce solutions that would be acceptable to all parties.

### **The Appointment of a Traditional Arts Officer**

**5.1.2** A full-time, respected and high-profile Traditional Arts Officer should be appointed, within six months, by the Arts Council.

**5.1.3** This position should be deeply resourced within the Council, both in terms of finance available and supporting staff.

### **Policy Objectives**

**5.2.2** The Arts Council should focus its resources on supporting and developing the following core aspects of the traditional arts:

- The Traditional Artist
- Transmission, i.e. the passing on of style and repertoire

### **Awards, Bursaries and Schemes and Revenue Funding**

**5.3.2** Arts Council revenue funding and the Support for Artists programme of awards must realise clear benefits to (i) the traditional artist, and (ii) transmission.

### **Career Development**

**5.3.4** The Arts Council must develop supports for traditional artists to perform abroad.

**5.3.5** With a view towards improving appreciation of the traditional arts in Ireland, the Arts Council should support the development of traditional-arts criticism.

### **Recognition and Support**

**5.3.7** The Arts Council should develop an award/recognition system for traditional artists who have made an outstanding contribution to Ireland's cultural life

### **Archiving**

**5.4.2** The Arts Council should increase the amount of funding dedicated to professionally archiving the traditional arts.

**5.4.3** The Arts Council should support professionally managed and publicly accessible archives and private collections, and projects to assist in the researching, recording and documenting of local traditional-arts

activity. Any archive or private collection of traditional-arts material that is to receive Arts Council funding in the future must adhere to professional archiving procedure and must make its material available to the public.

- 5.4.4** Copies of all material deposited in traditional-arts archives around the country should be submitted to the Irish Traditional Music Archive for additional safe-keeping for future generations.

### **Education**

- 5.4.6** The Arts Council should press for formal provision for traditional-arts education in the school system and also encourage and support arts-in-schools activities by traditional artists and traditional-arts organisations.
- 5.4.7** The Arts Council should increase its support for out-of-school traditional-arts education.
- 5.4.8** The Arts Council should encourage and support the establishment of traditional-arts instrument-banks nationwide.
- 5.4.9** The Arts Council should encourage and support research into the production of the uilleann pipes.

### **Performance**

- 5.4.11** The Arts Council should continue to support as well as progressively develop its programme of funding for traditional-arts festivals and events.
- 5.4.12** The Arts Council should support traditional music events classed as competitive on the basis that they are important for transmission.
- 5.4.13** The Arts Council should assist in developing new opportunities for children and teenagers to perform the traditional arts in social situations.
- 5.4.14** The Arts Council should encourage and support the development of quality environments for traditional-arts performance.

This report was formally approved by Jerome Hynes, Philip King and Katie Verling on Tuesday 13 July 2004. Úna Ó Murchú and Mícheál Ó hEidhin indicated that they would set out their position separately. The Arts Council considered this report at its meeting of September 13th 2004 and its response can be found on page 36.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

- Jean Byrne, Souk-el-raab, Leopardstown Road, Dublin 18
- Margaret Hogan, Administrator, Brú Ború Cultural Centre, Cashel, Co. Tipperary
- Fintan Vallely, Lecturer in Traditional Music, School of Music, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Co. Louth
- Tadhg Maher, Tipperary Youth Officer, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
- Bill Cunningham, Cloonbrackna Avenue, Roscommon
- Eilís Ní Mhearraí, Rúnaí Naisiúnta, Cairde Rince Céili na hÉireann, 39 Moyne Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6
- Eibhlín Uí Mhaoldomhnaigh, Rúnaí, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Cho. Luimnigh, Cullina, An Cheapach Mhór, Co. Luimnigh
- Caroline Ganley, Project Manager, Dún na Sí Heritage Centre, Moate, Co. Westmeath
- Tomás Ó Baoill, Ball an Choiste Gaeilge, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Áras Mac Piarais, Cliath Mhór, Béal Átha na Slua, Co. na Gaillimhe
- Proinnsias de Priondargást
- Diarmuid Ó Gráinne, Corrantorgán, Mullach na Sí, An Caisleán Rabhach, Co. Ros Comáin
- Tom Munnely, Fintra Beg, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare
- Liam Murphy/Anne Farrell, Cuala Verbal Arts, 53 Priory Lawn, Ballybeg Two, Waterford
- Frank Whelan, Head of Traditional Music Regional Archive, Cois na hAbhna, Ennis, Co. Clare
- Peter McAuley, Seskin, Kilsheelan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
- Jim McAllister, Chairman, Craobh Cluain Tarbh, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, PO Box 5681, Alfie Byrne Road, Dublin 3
- Joe Burke, Kilnadeema, Loughrea, Co. Galway
- Caitriona Ní Oibicín, Riarthóir, An Gaelacadamh Teo., An Spidéal, Co. na Gailimhe
- Sarah-Jane Woods, c/o Culturlann na hÉireann, 32 Belgrave Square, Monkstown, Co. Dublin
- Professor Séamus Ó Catháin, Department of Irish Folklore, John Henry Newman Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4
- Padraig O'Dufaigh, Woodland Drive, Birr, Co. Offaly
- Muiris Ó Rócháin/Harry Hughes, Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, Sráid na Cathrach, Co. an Chláir
- Brian Ryan, Moneyquid, Killeigh, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
- Daniel Dowling, Glenmore, via Waterford
- Garry Shannon, Ruan, Co. Clare
- Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, 93 Páirc an Aird Mhóir, Bré, Co. Chill Mhantáin
- Cáit Bean Uí Éaneacháin, Cathaoirleach Craobh an Comhaltas, Caisleán An Bharraigh, Co. Mhaigheo
- John McGettrick (on behalf of the Cultural Centres Network), Coleman Heritage Centre, Gurteen, Co. Sligo
- Niall Ó Callanáin, Uachtarán, Traditional/Folk Musicians' Committee, Musicians' Union of Ireland, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1
- Catherine Maguire, Rúnaí na Craobhe, Craobh Chill Aichidh, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Knock, Daingean, Co. Offaly
- Cara Trant, Manager, The Kerry Literary & Cultural Centre, 24 The Square, Listowel, Co. Kerry
- Roibeard Ó Ceallaigh, Ros Leamhain, Bóthar na Tulaí, Inis, Co. an Chláir
- Dr C. Lennon, Cuan Studios, An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe
- Domhnall de Barra, Cáirde Duchais, Athea, Co. Limerick
- Sinéad Nic Chraith, Runaí, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Cho. Aontroma, 25 Gortahar Road, Rasharkin, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, BT44 8SB
- John McNulty, Lyreneague, Rockchapel, Co. Cork
- Peadar Ó Maoláin, 7 Cormac Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
- Padraig O'Leagain, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Corcaghan, Co. Monaghan
- Michael Coleman Heritage Centre/Ceoláras Coleman, Gurteen, Co. Sligo
- Michael Fitzpatrick, 11 Cluainin, Gorey, Co. Wexford
- Jim Anglim, Chairman, Naomh Mhichil CCÉ, 5 River Road, Rebogue, Limerick
- John Deaton, Slievemoyne, Dundrum Road, Dublin 14
- Deirdre McCrea, Chief Executive Officer, Music Network, The Coach House, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2
- Cathal Ó Broin
- Liam Guiney, Meelin, Newmarket, Co. Cork
- Mary McPartlan
- Eleanor McElligott, Branch Secretary, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Lixnaw, Co. Kerry
- David Shaw-Smith, Barranna, Rinaneel, Ballyglass, Claremorris, Co. Mayo
- Willie Larkin, Chairman, Meitheal Cultur Luimni, Doonakenna, Templeglantine, Co. Limerick
- Attracta Ní Bhrádaigh, Meitheal Education Group, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
- Seamus Mac Mathúna, Cathaoirleach Coiste Teagaisc, 57 Barton Road East, Churchtown, Dublin 14
- Brenda Kent, Voluntary Arts Ireland, PO Box 200, Downpatrick BT30 6WE

- Steve Cooney, Development Co-Ordinator, Filí, Amhránaithe & Ceoltóirí na h-Éireann (FACÉ)
- Matt Cranitch, Kerry Pike, Co. Cork
- William Hammond, Cork Folk Festival, 17 Victoria Avenue, Ballinlough, Cork
- Dermot McLaughlin, 5 Beechwood Park, Ranelagh, Dublin 6
- Siobhán Mulcahy, County Arts Officer/Diarmaid Moynihan, Regional Arts Co-ordinator, Clare County Council
- Domhnall Ó Loinsigh, Cathaoirleach, Coiste Fleadh Nua, Inis, Co. an Chláir
- Brian Vallely, Secretary, Armagh Pipers' Club, 14 Victoria Street, Armagh BT61 9DT
- Kathryn Marsh, Irish Independent Music Producers Association (IIMPA), Castlevew, Tobersool, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
- Nina Watrelot, Teach Fhionian, Ballyconnell, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal
- Marianne Kennedy, General Manager, Siamsa Tíre, Town Park, Tralee, Co. Kerry
- Cathal Johnson
- Toby Dennett, Director, The Sculptors' Society of Ireland (SSI), Corner of Halston Street, Mary's Lane, Dublin 7
- Margaret O'Sullivan, 16 Upper Cattlemarket Street, Shandon, Cork
- Irene Martin, Silvermount, Strawberry Beds, Dublin 20
- Margaret Saunders, Irish Pipe Band Association, 3 Hawthorn Drive, Wyckham Park, Dundrum, Dublin 16
- Eilís Ní Shúilleabháin, Runaí, Éigse Dhiarmuid Uí Shúilleabháin, F/ch 10 Cúil na Coille, Baile Bhúirne, Magh Chromtha, Co. Chorcaí
- Tom Coughlan, Chairman, Glór Board of Directors, Director of Services, Clare County Council
- Professional Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin/Sandra Joyce/Niall Keegan/Dr Catherine Foley/Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain, Irish World Music Centre, Foundation Building, University of Limerick, Limerick
- Mícheál Ó Ferraigh, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Na Doirí Beaga, Tír Chonaill, Co. Dhún na nGall
- Noreen Lawler, Carrigaline I.C.A., 31 Lisburn, Carrigaline, Co. Cork
- Séan Ó Morónaigh, Stiúrthóir, An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta, Camus, Conamara
- Marius Ó hEarcéim, McGlinchey Summer School, Clonmany, Inishowen, Co. Donegal
- Nicholas Carolan, Director, Irish Traditional Music Archive, 63 Merrion Square, Dublin 2
- Liam Ó Maolaodha, Stiúrthóir, Oireachtas na Gaeilge, 6 Sráid Fhearchaair, Baile Átha Cliath 2
- Na Píobairí Uilleann, 15 Henrietta Street, Dublin 1
- Seán MacPhilibín, Director, Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre, Naul, Fingal, County Dublin
- Brian Prior, Projects Officer, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Belgrave Square, Monkstown, Co. Dublin
- Dr Peter Staunton, 37 Woodlands Park, Mount Merrion Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
- Adelaide Nic Chárthaigh, Leas-stiúrthóir Gníomhach, Comhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, 46 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2
- Domhnall Ó Lúbhlaí, 2 Teach na mBráthar, An Muileann gCearr, Co. na hIarmhí
- Larry Dunne, 13 The Green, Woodbrook Glen, Bray, Co. Wicklow
- Kathleen Nesbitt T.T.C.T., Ceol le Chéile Traditional Folk Orchestra, Loughmore, Templemore, Co. Tipperary/ Martin Power T.T.C.T., Ceol Le Chéile Traditional Folk Orchestra, 142 Pine Walk, Muskerry, Ballincollig, Co. Cork
- Éamonn Ó hÓgáin, 17 Páirc na Mainistreach, Cluain Dolcáin, Baile Átha Cliath 22
- Tom Sherlock, 71 Carysfort Ave, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
- Jack Roche, Chairman, Bruach na Carraige, Cultural & Heritage Centre, Rockchapel, Co. Cork

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD

### **First meeting, 15 December 2003**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Mícheál Ó hEidhin

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Fionnuala Sweeney

### **Second meeting, 19 January 2004**

Philip King (Chair)

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Jerome Hynes (participated in the meeting by phone)

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Séamus Crimmins

### **Third meeting, 4 February 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Fionnuala Sweeney

### **Fourth meeting, 18 February 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Fionnuala Sweeney

### **Fifth meeting, 25 February 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Fionnuala Sweeney

### **Sixth meeting, 12 March 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Philip King

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Fionnuala Sweeney

### **Seventh meeting, 22 March 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**In attendance:** Arts Council staff member, Fionnuala Sweeney;  
Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

*\* Ms Ó Murchú and Mr Ó hEidhin withdrew at an early point of the meeting*

**Eight meeting, 8 April 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Mícheál Ó hEidhin, Úna Ó Murchú

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

**Ninth meeting, 23 April 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Mícheál Ó hEidhin, Úna Ó Murchú

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

**Tenth meeting, 20 May 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Mícheál Ó hEidhin, Úna Ó Murchú

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

**Eleventh meeting, 11 June 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Úna Ó Murchú

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

**Twelfth meeting, 30 June 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

**Thirteenth meeting, 7 July 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**Apologies:** Mícheál Ó hEidhin

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

*\* Ms Ó Murchú withdrew at an early part of the meeting*

**Fourteenth meeting, 13 July 2004**

Jerome Hynes (Chair)

Philip King

Mícheál Ó hEidhin

Úna Ó Murchú

Katie Verling

**In attendance:** Project Officer to the Special Committee, Toner Quinn

# THE ARTS COUNCIL AND THE TRADITIONAL ARTS

The Arts Council welcomes the report of the Special Committee on the Traditional Arts as a significant step towards a comprehensive policy on these valuable art forms. The Council considers the recommendations and observations of the Committee to be informative and instructive, and that there is now an excellent opportunity to significantly improve provision for the traditional arts in Ireland.

The report of the Committee outlines a number of very detailed recommendations which the Council broadly accepted, but clearly further consideration is necessary before we understand how to progress them most effectively.

What follows is the Council's initial response, which draws the principal strands from the report, and which will form the basis of discussion around Council's future support for the traditional arts.

## **Defining the Traditional Arts**

The Arts Council has agreed that the definition of the traditional arts should include traditional music, song and dance, as well as oral arts such as storytelling and *agallamh beirte*, and that the definition should, in its use by the Council, be interpreted as being as inclusive as possible. While the Council agrees that the Irish language is an integral part of the traditional arts, the Council is committed to supporting traditional-arts practice whether it is in the Irish or English language.

The Council accepts the conclusions of the Special Committee regarding the applicability and relevance of the terms 'amateur', 'professional' and 'voluntary' and it is committed to respecting their relevance or otherwise within the traditional-arts community in its dealings with these art forms.

## **The Role of the Arts Council**

The Arts Council acknowledges the historic neglect of the traditional arts and the present underfunding of these art forms, and is committed to undertaking a more active role in the development of the traditional arts in order to assist these art forms and traditional artists to maximise their potential. The Council recognises the importance of building upon the inherent strengths of the traditional arts and the need to develop an inclusive policy for these art forms. The Council believes that a more effective relationship needs to be developed with the traditional-arts community, one which is based on ongoing communication and consultation.

The Council recognises that there is a large amount of valuable activity in the traditional arts presently being undertaken by a range of organisations and personnel, and it seeks to complement and support this work. It would be neither appropriate nor possible for the Council to assume the role of sole provider of funding and support for the traditional arts, but the Council does intend to pro-actively work with other parties to ensure the state's support is both adequate and sensitively applied, and to help sustain the voluntary supports that are in place. In supporting current activities, the Council also seeks to encourage new initiatives that empower artists and that strengthen these art forms domestically and internationally.

Towards these objectives, the Council has committed to immediately making a strong case to Government for additional financial resources which will allow it increase its support for the traditional arts, such that these art forms would feature prominently in Council funding alongside other policy priorities. Furthermore, the Council is committed to ensuring that it secures the necessary expertise and personnel to allow it play an informed role in the development of the traditional arts: the appointment of staff to support the new and enhanced traditional-arts role of the Council is therefore a priority.

## **Awards, Schemes, Bursaries and Revenue Funding**

The Arts Council has agreed that, as part of an overall review that is presently taking place of Council awards, schemes and bursaries and revenue funding policies, the needs of traditional artists will be duly

considered and integrated into the 'Support for Artists' programme and revenue funding policy. The Council accepts that funding under these programmes should realise clear benefits to (i) the traditional artist, and (ii) transmission, i.e. the passing on of style and repertoire.

The Council is determined to address the alienation from the Council among the traditional-arts community, which has clearly resulted in the situation where traditional artists are not availing of the awards available to them.

### **The Arts Council and Traditional-Arts Education**

The Arts Council is entirely committed to the provision of arts education – which includes traditional-arts education – at first, second and third level, as well as traditional-arts education outside of the formal education structures.

As one part of this commitment, the Council recognises the challenges facing sean-nós singing and accepts that the teaching and transmission of this art form must be encouraged and supported.

### **Traditional-Arts Instruments**

In the context of the recommendations made in the Special Committee's report regarding traditional-arts instrument banks, the Arts Council is committed to reviewing its overall policy on instrument banks with a view towards accommodating the needs of traditional artists and the traditional-arts community.

The Council believes that research into the design and manufacture of the uilleann pipes and the Irish harp should be supported, with the aim of increasing the availability of high-quality instruments.

### **The Traditional Artist and Transmission**

As part of the emphasis in policy on (i) the traditional artist, and (ii) the process of transmission, the Arts Council believes that traditional-arts activity in the areas of recording and performing should receive particular attention. The Council also acknowledges the importance of archiving and access to source materials in the traditional arts, and, in particular, the role played by the Irish Traditional Music Archive. It is committed to assisting the traditional arts through supporting archiving, as well as projects which document local traditional-arts activity.

The Council acknowledges the crucial role that festivals, summer-schools, informal sessions and various other traditional-arts events play in transmission and in these art forms generally, and it is committed to developing its support of these activities. The Council recognises that the issue of the performance environment for the traditional-arts needs to be examined, with particular reference to the development of suitable performance opportunities for traditional-artists under the age of eighteen.

### **The Arts Council in Relation to Other Organisations and Supporting Agencies**

The Arts Council acknowledges the role that has been played by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann over several decades in popularising and developing the traditional arts and in stimulating and encouraging traditional-arts practice, particularly among young people. The Council is committed to establishing a productive relationship with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. The Council would welcome future funding proposals from Comhaltas local branches seeking to further develop their traditional-arts activities.

The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon is committed to working with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland towards improving provision for the Irish traditional arts and supporting the activities of traditional artists.

The Arts Council acknowledges the crucial and strategic role that local authorities have to play in supporting the traditional arts, particularly in strengthening local traditions, and it is committed to working with these important bodies in order to maximise their potential in supporting traditional-arts activity and traditional artists.

The Council recognises the importance of broadcasting in the promulgation of the traditional arts and is committed to advocating a strong presence for all art forms, including the traditional arts, in national broadcasting schedules.

The Council has agreed to develop a policy on the collection of royalties on traditional-arts performance, with a view towards encouraging best practice and advocating a position that respects the interests of traditional artists.

### **Irish Traditional Artists Abroad**

The Arts Council is committed to supporting, in a variety of ways, the arts practice of traditional artists in their work abroad, and to advocating a role for the traditional arts in the state promotion of Irish culture internationally.

### **The Arts Council and Competitive Events**

Although it is Arts Council policy not to support competitive events directly, as competition is an established practice in the traditional arts, the Council has agreed to consider funding proposals from traditional-arts events which contain a competitive element. However, Council's policy on direct support for competitive events will not change.

### **Traditional-Arts Criticism**

The Arts Council acknowledges the benefits to practising artists, as well as audiences, of high-quality traditional-arts criticism, and it is committed to supporting a variety of initiatives to assist in its development.

### **Recognition of the Traditional Arts**

The Arts Council recognises the need for an award or recognition system for traditional artists who have made an outstanding contribution to Ireland's cultural life and it is committed to researching and developing a proposal for such an initiative.