

North West Carnival Annual General Meeting Chairperson's Report 2024

First of all, I'd like to thoroughly commend the hard work that Jim for the amazing work he does year in and year out, keeping this whole show on the road. I know his difficult job is only possible through the graft put in also by part-time staff like Leeann, Margaret and Helen to name but a few and also all the artists that have worked with Jim over the years providing the wide range of community activities, parades and creative artistic experiences, which have greatly enhanced the experiences of all those individuals and community groups down all the years as makers of and participants in that whole sweep of engagements from Halloween through Spring Parades to community workshops.

And big thanks to, for the input, guidance and direction of board members and officers over the years that the NW Carnival Initiative has been doing what it does, so well, so often and with so little.

I think over the past year out of all the magnificent work that this organisation has achieved with Jim at the helm, I'd particularly like to commend the delivery: every August through to the end of October of the 'Walled City of Bones' Halloween programming. The programming involved the rolling out of a range of workshops that included, costume creation, small prop production, face painting, samba drumming and dance and movement workshops. In addition several of participating community groups were engaged in lantern making workshops. Approximately 650 people took part in the parade attracting audiences in excess of 40,000. Our Halloween carnival programming overall delivered 134 different activities with participation numbers reaching 1,446 engaging a total of 29 carnival artists/facilitators and 14 volunteers. I also want to make special mention of the 'Planting a Seed' willow sunflower production masterclass hosted by Strabane Healthy Living Project and targeted at Strabane and Rural participants. The masterclass over 5 days attracted 15 participants each producing their own kinetic willow sunflower sculpture. And Donegal Willow artist Brendan Farren without whom this project may not have achieved all that it did

And also much praise to the further development and delivery of our Service Level Agreement programming relating to the Strabane St Patrick's day parade. Aimed at supporting community participation in the Strabane parade, our delivered programming targeted several community and performance based groups who have traditionally taken part in the parade. Our costume makers in collaboration with Encore, Class Act and Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh produced Costumes & head dresses. A series of carnival based workshops were delivered with Muchado Stage School and Strabane Special Olympics. In total over 250 participants took part in 25 organised activities organised in the weeks leading up to the parade and thanks to John Kerr and Jacqueline Whoriskey at DCSDC for their assistance in this development

I think it is so important that as board members we recognise how our work here rolls out not just across the city but also throughout the rural areas and Strabane.

I also want to acknowledge the huge contribution of the wide range of community and performance based groups that were recruited across the City and District, including many first time groups. I'm sure Jim will/has named them all in his report.

' As you all know There has been ongoing activity with NWCi Board in particular regarding the reviewing and development of NWCi policies and governance. Subgroup meetings continue to provide opportunities for wider stakeholders to engage in further developing the NW Carnival Initiative and enabling the organisation

to grow from strength to strength into the future. As some of you will know this is my last AGM as Chair , so I'd Finally like to again thank the board our carnival artists, facilitators, and volunteers without which we wouldn't be able to deliver on our aims and objectives.

Good luck. I'm sure The whole initiative will progress and thrive in the years ahead.

Annual General Meeting Managers' Report 2024

Artist skills development has been a key area of programming delivery since our last Annual General Meeting. Over this period saw the delivery of a 5 day masterclass in Carnival Parade Mobile Base Production. The masterclass supported by DCSDC was a response to requests from our lead artists who identified mobile base production as an area requiring skills development. Held at the North West Carnival Workshop the masterclass attracted 15 artists in total. Participants learned how to spot weld and in addition the design and production of illuminated inflatable props. Over the 5 days participants acquired sufficient skills and knowledge that enabled them to produce 2 steel framed wheeled bases. Several of the participants later completed the bases with the additional inflatable props over the summer months with the new work showcased at our Halloween carnival parade.

August through to the end of October the main focus of activity was the delivery of the 'Walled City of Bones' Halloween programming. The programming involved the rolling out of a range of workshops that included, costume creation, small prop production, face painting, samba drumming and dance and movement workshops. In addition several of participating community groups were engaged in lantern making workshops. Approximately 650 people took part in the parade attracting audiences in excess of 40,000. Our Halloween carnival programming overall delivered 134 different activities with participation numbers reaching 1,446 engaging a total of 29 carnival artists/facilitators and 14 volunteers. A wide range of community and performance based groups were recruited across the City and District, groups included Kabalikats North West, Macmillan Move On, Destined, Currynierin/Tullyally Community Associations, Extern, Trojans, Bishop Street Community Centre, Youthfirst, Long Tower Youth Club, Match Box Project, In Your Space Circus School, St Mary's Youth Club and Drop Inn. Dance and Performance groups included Urban Shock Dance, Moving Bodies Dance Studio 2, City Dance, Create Dance, Rainbow School of Dance, Ellen Hasson Dance and Cara Wilson Dance. Musical groups participating included Bready and Colmcille Pipe Bands, Small But Massive Samba and are very own North West Carnival Samba Band and complimenting this were a number of NWCI recruited performers and performers from In Your Space.

As part of the wider Halloween Festival we delivered our 'Solas Cholm Cille' light based sculpture trail within the grounds of St Columb's Cathedral. The trail showcased the creativity of artists from across the North West, attracting great audience numbers and received very positive feedback from the general public. Members from St Columbs Cathedral were particularly pleased at our efforts to ensure the event was both sensitive and respectful given the trails location. The Halloween festival also provided opportunities to create revenue through prop and costume hire, approximately £3,000 was generated. North West Carnival provided support over the Halloween festival to New Gate Arts, Bluebell Arts, Destined, St Joseph's Secondary School and Gael Aras. Other activity included a range of media interviews including Radio Foyle, Cool FM, QRadio and broadcasting company UTV. This activity helped to promote NWCI among the general public helping to raise our profile.

Further programming delivery included the 'Planting a Seed' willow sunflower production masterclass hosted by Strabane Healthy Living Project and targeted at

Strabane and Rural participants. The masterclass over 5 days attracted 15 participants each producing their own kinetic willow sunflower sculpture. This programme was funded by the ACNI through their Rural Engagement Arts Programme totalling £3.685. We are currently working on a short film 'Planting a Seed' to celebrate the participants creative achievements.

I have worked closely with Council officers John Kerr and Jacqueline Whoriskey regarding the development and delivery of our Service Level Agreement programming relating to the Strabane St Patrick's day parade. Aimed at supporting community participation in the Strabane parade, our delivered programming targeted several community and performance based groups who have traditionally taken part in the parade. Our costume makers in collaboration with Encore, Class Act and Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh produced 90 Costumes including head dresses. A series of carnival based workshops were delivered with Muchado Stage School and Strabane Special Olympics. In total over 250 participants took part in 25 organised activities organised in the weeks leading up to the parade. Additional support was provided to parade participant groups with the production of small handheld props that included shamrocks and flags, this along with costume production will serve to increase the stock and parade product for future Strabane events.

While on Strabane and Rural related activity NWCI supported the Castlederg Apple Fair by providing dressing for the event, and last month we supported Knockavoe School Strabane in their annual showcase with the provision of costumes.

January through to March saw the delivery of our Spring/St Patricks day carnival parade programming, organised under the theme of 'Out of the Darkness and Into the Light'. After making our usual 'Open Call' for parade participants, we rolled out a series of community based programmes that included workshops in dance and performance and small prop production. Our lead artists in both costume and large scale prop produced new work of a high standard, this included the creation of 2 parade themed inflatables and the design and production of new costumes helping to increase our creative offering. Groups participating in programming and the showcase represented a variety of performance based groups that included North West Carnival Samba and Columbcille Pipe bands, In your Space Circus School, Class Act and Studio 2 Drama. Dance groups from right across the City and District, this included Rainbow School of Dance, City Dance, Long Tower Dance, Create Dance, Urban Shock, Ellen Hasson Dance, Studio 2 Dancers and Fireworks. Sporting organisations represented were Ardmor GAC, City of Derry Rugby Club, Trojans, Na Magha, Doire Trasna and first time parade participants Tristar and Oxford Bulls. Parade newcomers African and Caribbean Community Network, alongside parade regulars Foyle Pride, Destined, Glen Development Initiative and several groups representing the Youth Sector. Our 'Out of the Darkness and Into the Light' programming overall delivered 104 different activities with participation numbers reaching in excess of 1000 participants, engaging a total of 14 carnival artists/facilitators and 13 volunteers. The stand out figure for our St Patrick's day/Spring carnival parade however is participant numbers of 904!

Our Carnival Workshop continues to provide a space for our artists, volunteers and the wider community to work, play and develop their creative skills base. As already outlined the workshop has played host to a number of skills development programmes including masterclasses aimed at artists both experienced and new and emerging. We have continued to provide support through the sharing of carnival

assets to a wide range of organisations within the arts, community, charitable and educational sectors. This has included providing costume, prop, lighting and P.A. systems for several of our member groups or those groups who have taken part in civic celebrations like Halloween or St Patrick's Day. There has been an increase in local schools seeking advice or support, over this period they have included St John's P.S. Holy Childs P.S. Holy Family P.S. and St Joseph's Secondary School, St Cecilia's and St Ethnas. Other organisations and events supported include Foyle Pride, Inishowen Pride, Omagh Pride, International Women's Day, Irish Special Olympics, Hurt, Foyle Hospice, Macmillan Move On Project and Farland Way Residents.

On the funding front June 2023 saw North West Carnival Initiative secure funding of £38,200

through ACNI/Lottery Project Funding programme, this award represented standstill funding. Over the later part of the year I also compiled and submitted an application to the 2024/2025 Annual Funding Programme totalling £100,00 unfortunately the 'application was declined as NWCI are currently operating well within Lottery Funding Programme and have had much success within that portfolio'. A successful application was made under the ACNI/Rural Arts Engagement Programme totalling £3,685. I am currently awaiting an outcome from a new ACNI/Lottery Project Funding programme totalling £62,000 and according to my Arts Council Case Officer 'I have made a strong case for a project funding uplift rather than further standstill funding'

As Project Manager I have had ongoing meetings and engagement with DCSDC's Festivals and Events team, Art and Culture Co-Design Group, Business and Culture Committee, Thrive and the Festivals and Events Organisers Forum. Other meetings have included continued involvement with the Co-Delivery Group, NW Community Network's Roisin McLaughlin initiated by John Kerr. And I've had discussions with Steve Barrett of the IFI, John Kerr and Kevin O'Neill from the Inishowen Carnival Group exploring potential future partnerships. There has been ongoing activity with NWCI Board in particular relating to the reviewing and development of NWCI policies and governance. Ongoing member groups and artistic subgroup meetings continue to provide opportunities for wider stakeholders to engage in developing the Initiative. Finally can I take this opportunity to thank the board for their continued support and guidance, our carnival artists, facilitators and fantastic volunteers without which we wouldn't be able to deliver on our aims and objectives.

Project Photo Gallery



Carnival Parade Base Production Masterclass

Walled City of Bones Carnival Parade Preparation









Press Launch with the Mayor





Lantern Making Workshops



Solas Cholmcille Light Sculpture Trail

Walled City of Bones Carnival Parade Showcase













Strabane and Rural Skills Development Programming









St Patrick's Day/Spring Carnival Programming





























Strabane and Rural Skills Development Programming









'Planting a Seed' Rural Engagement Arts Programme

North West Carnival Initiative 'Plant a Seed' film facebook Link

<https://www.facebook.com/NorthWestCarnivalInitiative/videos/508344111684107/>



NWCI in collaboration with ACNI jointly posted our 'Planting a Seed' film and the below press release on our respective social media platforms in August this year acknowledging project participants creative achievements and National Lottery Rural Engagement Arts Programme funding.

PRESS RELEASE

Planting a Seed is the culmination of a series of willow sunflower making workshops targeted at rural communities and organised by North West Carnival Initiative (NWCI). Jim Collins NWCI manager wished to thank everyone who helped make the project a huge success, this included the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and the National Lottery who funded the activity, Strabane Health Improvement Project who hosted the event and willow maker and artist Brendan Farren who facilitated the workshops. Jim continued that "It's the participants themselves who deserve most credit for their creative endeavours and that the film is a celebration and acknowledgement of their artistic achievement". Jim concluded by saying " He looked forward to delivering further carnival skills development programmes in partnership with Strabane and Rural communities"

Noirin McKinney, Director of Arts Development at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, commented, "The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is delighted to make National Lottery Rural Engagement Arts Programme funding available to North West Carnival for their project, 'Planting a Seed'. We know that taking part in arts activities can raise self-esteem, boost confidence and motivation, as well as alleviate isolation and loneliness. Thanks to The National Lottery players, the National Lottery Rural Engagement Arts Programme has supported 135 arts projects in rural areas across NI with total National Lottery funding of £898,780 since its establishment in 2022. The programme has been making positive impacts in rural communities by increasing opportunities for people to engage and participate in meaningful arts activities, enriching their lives for the better. The Arts Council believes that arts, and coming together as communities, can all make a vital contribution to building wellbeing, confidence, and healthy, integrated communities."







