

## Introduction

When founder Jack Harte dreamed of having a writers' centre, he envisioned "a designated home for practising writers... a home for writers with an open door and a welcome for every hesitant aspiring writer." It is to his credit that such a place still exists, 26 years later, and is going from strength to strength. It is called the Irish Writers Centre.

Our progress, particularly in the last four years, has been one that we can be proud of: the centre is open for business an average of 66 hours per week, and sees in the region of 500 members and 15,000 users per annum in our landmark Parnell Square building alone, and in recent years, IWC supports are being delivered all over the island. Our courses, programmes and events have been transformed by linking with a range of new partners from the arts, festivals, embassies, community groups, libraries and universities, both here and abroad. We have a commitment to the Irish language and a policy to try, wherever possible, to roll out our programme of activities in both English and Irish. We have connected writers and delivered programmes in a national and international context and continue to expand our work in this area.

Being relevant to writers is of huge importance to us, hence the creation of range of professional development supports, as well as a mentoring scheme and 15 writer-in-residence opportunities devised to support the mid-career and established writers. These supports create a virtuous circle: writers evolve while facilitators benefit financially - approximately one third of our annual turnover goes directly back to professional writers in the form of fees. More importantly, we have fulfilled Jack's vision to writers at all stages and they now feel they have a permanent home.

We have a superb patron in the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, and we have six eminent Irish writers acting as IWC ambassadors - namely, Anne Enright, John Banville, Roy Foster, Marian Keyes, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne and Joseph O'Connor. The imprimatur of the President and the ambassadors lends an

endorsement not only of the quality of work done by the IWC, but sends a strong signal that we are here, strong, healthy, vibrant. We acknowledge the invaluable role of our main state funders the Arts Council of Ireland and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for their financial support, and also Fáilte Ireland as our long-time partner-landlord in their support of the IWC. Many of the goals in this document align directly with the An Comhairle Ealaíon's own ten year strategy "Making Great Art Work" and also reflect the aims of the Creative Ireland programme.

As the Irish Writers Centre enters its second quarter century, it is fitting that we are entering a new chapter in our growth as a resource organisation. This chapter will see the IWC reach out to young people and children - our next generation of writers - for the first time in its history. It will also see the expansion of its hugely successful education programme to an online platform, thereby offering the expertise of Irish writers as facilitators to a national and international audience. Finally, as the new Cultural Quarter is beginning to emerge in Parnell Square, we aim to be one of the boats rising in the tide.

The quality of the work and engagement with different audiences is hugely important to us, and these three long-term projects will change the scale of our commitment to writers, readers and audiences, young and old, in Ireland and around the world. The excellent IWC team and I look forward to continuing to support, promote and inform Irish writers now and into the future.

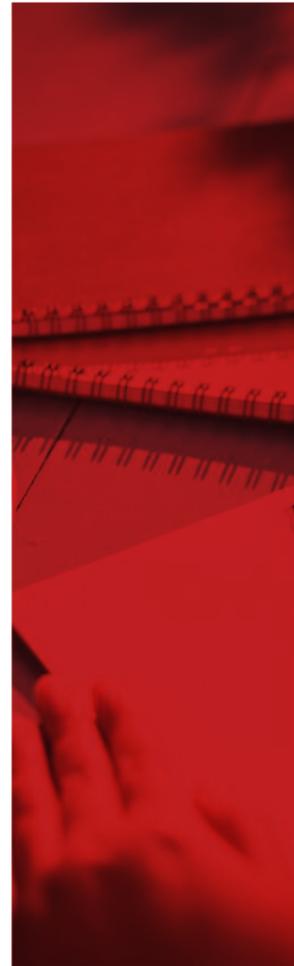


**Valerie Bistany**  
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Director/CEO

## 1 To continue delivering excellent services for and on behalf of Irish writers

**By 2021 we will expand our services, and hence our profile, developing partnerships and delivering programmes on a national and international basis.**

**We will substantiate our reputation as the go-to resource organisation for writers at all stages of their career.**



**To deliver this goal we will:**

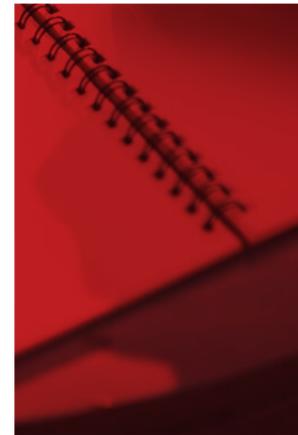
Roll out our four key programme strands for the island of Ireland and abroad:

- Writing courses, including online options
- Professional development
- Literary events
- Information services

Continue to create artistic opportunities for writers by commissioning new work, offering national and international residencies, encouraging community engagement and developing special projects in English and Irish.

Strengthen current partnerships and further develop strategic new ones with national and international literary festivals, organisations and individuals.

Broaden our audience base at a national and international level with programmes and events that resonate with writers and readers.



**How we will know we have achieved this:**

We will have testimonials citing the IWC as a centre of excellence and the go-to resource organisation for writers.

We will have increased national and international brand recognition.

We will have increased financial support from public and private sources.

We will have further increased our membership and the number and status of our residencies.

We will be a leader in facilitating community writing projects in Irish and English.

We will also regularly commission new work and collaborative writing initiatives.

We will be a recognised presence at literary festivals across Ireland and abroad.

We will lead and broker partnerships to create new literary curatorial opportunities.

We will put demonstrable new initiatives in place, such as developing the role of existing IWC ambassadors, and the appointment of a new international IWC ambassador with a remit of supporting and promoting Irish writing abroad.



## 2 To ensure that more people experience writing through our diverse programmes

**By 2021 we will have established a system of accreditation for a number of our in-house courses.**

**We will have developed an online creative writing strand to our education programme which will bring Irish writers to national and international audiences.**

**This will address a core value in enabling access to audiences who wish to engage with us but who cannot access our building.**



**To deliver this goal we will:**

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**How we will know we have achieved this:**

We will have a selection of courses and workshops available online.

A number of our courses will be nationally and or internationally accredited.

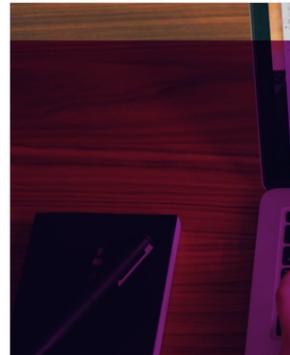
These courses will be available and advertised internationally.



## 3 To extend our services to young people and children to foster the next generation of writers

**By 2021 we will have significantly increased our membership of under 30 year olds.**

**We will develop programmes and opportunities to serve and support our younger writers and audiences.**



**To deliver this goal we will:**

Build links with schools/third level via literary initiatives in English and Irish.

Develop programmes and events specifically for young people under 30.

Appoint a young person as an IWC Ambassador.

Launch an award or bursary for an exceptional writing achievement in Irish and/or English for the under 30s



**How we will know we have achieved this:**

We will have established an annual or bi-annual initiative with schools across the Ireland.

We will have formalised an annual programme of literary events for the under 30s.

We will have created a new Young IWC Ambassadorial post.

We will have established an annual prize for extraordinary achievement for writers under 30s.



## 4 To strengthen and secure our position in the Cultural Quarter

**By 2021 we will have a secure tenure at 19 Parnell Square within the Cultural Quarter.**

**We will also enjoy active partnerships with neighbours in the promotion of Dublin 1.**



**To deliver this goal we will:**

Build the IWC's profile with influencers and key stakeholders.

We will have built a strong collegiate relationship with Dublin City Council and other major stakeholders.

Develop a strategic plan with Dublin UNESCO and DCC libraries for quality programming.

Strengthen partnerships with our cultural neighbours in Dublin 1.



**How we will know we have achieved this:**

We will have secured permanent status as residents of 19 Parnell Square.

We will be recognised as a distinct brand with a national remit for writers.

We will have an ongoing programming relationship with Dublin UNESCO and Dublin City Council.

We will have formalised a collaborative partnership amongst the local arts organisations and with Dublin City Library, with a distinct remit of promoting Dublin 1 through the provision of cultural services.

## 5 To achieve sustainable levels of core funding and capacity to ensure the delivery of excellence into the future

**By 2021 we will have regular and credible sources of income from funders and a reliable and predictable earned income stream.**

**We will refine our management structures, be compliant with recognised arts remuneration scales, and will make best use of space and people as the organisation grows..**



**To deliver this goal we will:**

Continue to liaise with our main funders the Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and others.

Secure funding for our Online Education Programme.

Secure sponsorship for our Education Programme, the Novel Fair and other projects.

Ensure staff are paid appropriate to industry standards.

Implement best practice staff and operations systems.



**How we will know we have achieved this:**

We will attain a reasonable public funding stream commensurate with our standing.

Our Online Education Programme will be up and running.

Our Education Programme and the Novel Fair will be sponsored, ideally with three-year deals.

Staff will be remunerated appropriately for the expertise and skill they bring and for the work they do.

A best practise bible, covering all aspects of the organisation will be available.

## OUR 5 STRATEGIC GOALS

**1:** To continue delivering excellent services for and on behalf of Irish writers

**2:** To ensure that more people experience writing through our diverse programmes

**3:** To extend our services to young people and children to foster the next generation of writers

**4:** To strengthen and secure our position in the Cultural Quarter

**5:** To achieve sustainable levels of core funding and capacity to ensure the delivery of excellence into the future

### Our Vision

We believe in an inclusive society where writers are valued and supported so that literature can thrive and enrich our lives.

### Our Mission

Our mission is to support, promote and inform writers at all stages of their development.

### Our Work

The Irish Writers Centre (IWC) is a national resource organisation for writers. We offer professional supports to meet the needs of writers through training, information, networking opportunities and programmed events. A key part of our role is to offer a comprehensive and innovative toolkit/service to support the career development of writers.

We are committed to fostering connections between writers across Ireland; we also celebrate their writing by creating audiences for their work at home and abroad. Over the period of this strategy, we commit to developing our work in three areas of priority:

- a) We pledge to create and connect writing communities across the island, with a particular focus on building North-South relations.
- b) We would like to be better equipped to provide services for Irish language and bi-lingual writers by adopting a systematic approach to the delivery of meaningful resources to support those writing or wishing to write in the Irish language.
- c) For the first time in our 26-year history, we are reaching out to connect with young people and children as the next generation of Irish writers, through a bespoke programme of activities.

We will achieve these goals through our physical hub in Parnell Square, our national and international outreach programmes and our specialised online presence.

All our actions are guided by the core principles of integrity, excellence and sustainability.

### Our Values

The Irish Writers Centre prides itself on its integrity and implementation of best practices across a range of programmes and services, underpinned by following core values:

**Accessibility:** The Irish Writers Centre is committed to making its courses and resources further accessible to writers from all backgrounds.

**Growth:** The Irish Writers Centre is committed to growth by expanding its services to writers across the island commensurate with our capabilities to deliver a quality service.

**Partnership:** The Irish Writers Centre believes relationships and collaborations are integral to the running of any arts organisation and we openly seek, encourage and welcome partnerships.

**Ethics:** The Irish Writers Centre upholds the highest ethical standards in respect of governance, management and financial structures. We run our business to a high professional standard, ensuring that all stakeholders, especially writers, are treated fairly and respectfully.

## A Word from our Chairperson

'Creativity is a set of innate abilities and learned skills: the capacity of individuals and organisations to transcend accepted ideas and norms and by drawing on imagination to create new ideas that add value to human activity'

This definition - as set out in the State initiative Creative Ireland 2017- 2022 affirms the work of the Irish Writers Centre as a resource for creativity in literature. Encouraging innate talent, teaching necessary skills, facilitating the development of new ideas - this is what we do. Last year we celebrated our twenty-fifth Anniversary. It was a year of celebration of our success over a quarter of a century. Now we are looking ahead.

To meet the challenges of the next five years we will have to build on our strengths. This strategy sets out our aims, strengths and challenges over that time-frame. We are operating in a context characterised by economic uncertainty. The impact of Brexit, the future direction of US policy are matters of concern in relation to Ireland's future in general and the funding of the arts and culture sector, in particular. We cannot influence world events but we can prepare for possible outcomes by building international links and developing an online education programme. These objectives - and the others outlined in this Strategy - are both feasible and necessary to continue to meet the needs of writers and writing.

I am very aware that the greatest strength of the Irish Writers Centre is the people who work in it. The success of the Centre is the result of a daily, understated effort based on co-operation, skill and hard work. The director, Valerie Bistany provides inspired leadership but, without the tireless work of the team of committed and gifted staff, the Centre could not thrive in the way that it does.

As Chairperson of the Board I am grateful to each member of staff for their outstanding contribution. I am grateful too for the dedication and expertise of the Board members who give of their time selflessly to support and oversee the Irish Writers Centre.



Liz McManus  
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Chairperson



President Micheal D. Higgins  
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Patron



Paul Muldoon  
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A Poet's Rising



Dairena Ní Chinnéide  
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REIC



Readers from Dublin Adult Learning Centre  
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Writer-In-Residence Showcase



Valuing and Supporting Writers and their Literature that Enriches our Lives

STRATEGY  
2017-2021