

Leitrim Puts its Artists in the Creative Frame

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IT WAS A sunny Saturday afternoon and the function room of Ballinamore Library was packed. Over 65 writers had travelled from all parts of Leitrim and from the surrounding counties of Longford, Roscommom, Donegal, Cavan, Sligo and Mayo to take part in a meeting for professional writers that had been organised by Creative Frame and Words Ireland. The main point of discussion was how to sustain yourself as a professional writer and for the two hours that followed there was a generous sharing of experiences and advice among peers, creating a map of what would be needed to help them in their professional development and to support them as writers working and living in the region.

With the highest population of artists compared to any other county, Leitrim is renowned for being an attractive place to live and work, but making a living as an artist in rural Ireland is not without its challenges. Education and training opportunities are often centred around Dublin and to progress your career can be difficult. It was to address these issues that the Leitrim County Council Arts Office and the Local Enterprise Office set up Creative Frame early in 2016. Its aim, to support the professional development needs of Leitrim's artists and to ensure that Leitrim continues to remain an attractive place to live and viable place to develop and create new artistic work.

Creative Frame is a free membership network for artists and creative practitioners that are based in Leitrim and the surrounding counties. Any artist, in any discipline, at any point in their career can become a member by registering on the Creative Frame website www.creativeframe.eu. As a member, an individual



Creative Frame
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artist or group of artists can make a request for training or professional development. This is then proposed to the wider membership and if there is a strong interest, it is supported. This ensures that the membership have a direct input and influence over the supports that they need. Over the past 6 months Creative Frame has organised a variety of training events, meetings, seminars and workshop programmes including *Pitching Your Work*, *Writing Creative Proposals*, *How to Photograph and Document Your Work*, *Developing a Social Media Strategy for Artists* and *Building Your Own Website*, all following the requirements and requests of the membership.

Partnership with other national support agencies for artists is also important. Already this year Creative Frame has worked with First Music Contact, the Irish Writers Centre, The Design and Crafts Council and Visual Artists Ireland in developing collaborative training opportunities and they will continue to work with other agencies to ensure their supports are more accessible regionally to the Creative Frame membership.

The membership of Creative Frame (which currently exceeds 100 and is growing daily) is made up of artist's musicians, writers, visual artists, designers, makers, illustrators, film makers and theatre practitioners, all at different stages in their career. Developing

audiences for their work, having places to create, more opportunities for learning and sharing and income generation are all key challenges that they share. But among these challenges there are also great opportunities to gain from the wealth of knowledge and experience within the membership, Creative Frame wants to create opportunities for its members to learn from each other though mentoring and networking, and also to be able to generate additional income by providing training to other artists in the network.

While training and professional development is a central part of Creative Frame, it is hoped that the network will also become a platform for collaboration and project development between its members. On the website you can view the portfolios of member artists, post news and opportunities, initiate discussion on the forum and get feedback and support from other members. Creative Frame has the potential to become a unique and sustainable model for professional development for artists everywhere. It encourages us to think collectively about our professional development, and how we can benefit by connecting with and supporting each other as a community of artists.

To view the work of Creative Frame members or to join the Creative Frame network visit www.creativeframe.eu