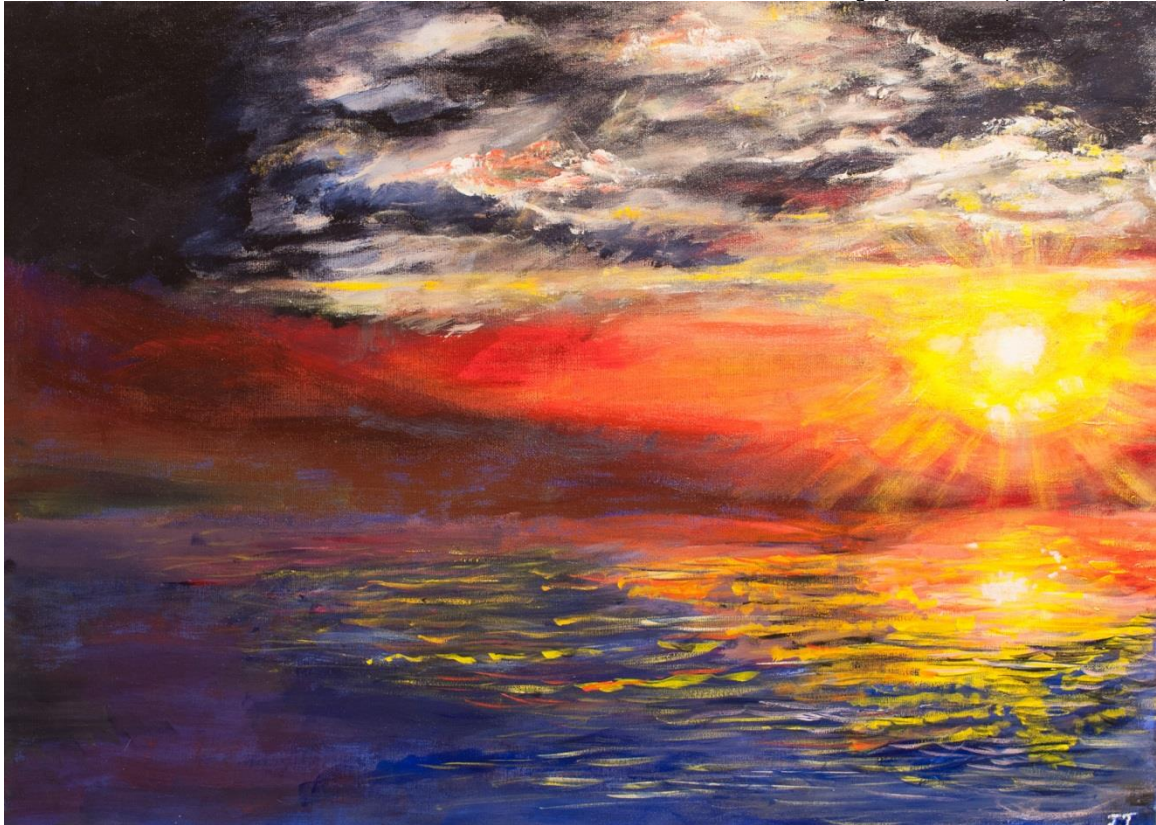


Painting by Arts for All participant Jim Tynan



**Arts for All
Response to the draft budget
2015-6**

Arts for All response to the Northern Ireland Executive budget consultation

Preamble

Arts for All welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this enquiry.

Arts for All is operating a cultural hub and delivers the arts in the heart of an area of multiple disadvantage - Duncairn1 Super Output Area (SOA) – one of the top 20 Super Output Areas. In this SOA, 5.4% of the population is educated to degree level and 80.3% have no, or a low level of qualifications. This makes Arts for All's work necessary, challenging and complex. Arts for All promotes the use of the Arts to tackle social exclusion and promote equality.

1. Arts for All

1.1 During 2013, Arts for All worked with 829 participants, 95 artists, over 50 community groups and ten schools. Participants and groups come exclusively from disadvantaged communities and/or marginalised groups. The Arts for All management board is made up of members of the local community and community groups.

1.2 Arts for All (AfA) promotes, develops and encourages the arts within disadvantaged north Belfast communities. It has four aims to:

- Encourage and stimulate the artistic creativity of people from north Belfast
- Encourage appreciation of and participation in community arts
- Provide advice, training and information on the arts
- Promote and conduct research benefiting the arts

1.3 Aims are realised by providing arts workshops for community/youth groups, schools and partnerships across north Belfast and operating a Cultural Hub in a derelict, disadvantaged area. Arts for All programmes offer opportunities for participation in the arts – for people living in disadvantaged communities to create art. Arts for All runs the only community gallery in north Belfast – the **John Luke Gallery** - and the only one honouring the work of a local artist - John Luke – recognising and celebrating his life, his art work and his working class roots. The Cultural Hub houses one artist in residence, the only one in the vicinity and supports three north Belfast artists with space. The artist in residence delivers workshops with local groups, transferring skills to community workers and groups.

1.4 Arts for All delivers a wide range of short, medium and long term programmes including:

- A capacity building community arts training programme designed to build the capacity of local groups and north Belfast communities. Artists deliver short, medium and long term arts workshops with community and youth groups and schools
- The Port and docks of Belfast: imagined through textiles: this is an intercultural and cross community project using drawing and textiles to explore life in port and dockside communities
- The mentoring programme pairs emerging artists with established artists thus helping to transfer creative skills. The programme supports up to 30 mentees and 20 mentors each year.

1.5 North Belfast continues to be affected by sectarian tensions, as evidenced by the ongoing parades dispute in the area. Over the past year, the protestant community has been grappling with issues around history, identity and capacity. Arts for All projects provide a crucial space to explore these challenging issues within a safe environment through arts workshops and projects, study visits and lectures.

1.6 Arts for All programmes expose participants to fresh and/or different ideas, concepts and information. They directly and indirectly confront prejudice, sectarianism, racism, ignorance, mistaken ideas about people from different communities and stereotypes. They inform people about the past, recent and ancient history and models of reconciliation from across the globe.

Performance of My Duncairn Diary at Crumlin House Gaol: Photograph: Ephy McConnell



1.7 Almost all Arts for All programmes are free. Arts for All ensures that cost is not a barrier for north Belfast residents seeking opportunities to participate in the arts. In addition, Arts for All organises trips and study visits to cultural venues, ensuring that artistic activity within the organisation does not happen in isolation, but is part of a larger, coherent whole.

1.8 Arts for All has made a significant contribution to physical regeneration within north Belfast by developing public art projects which improve the physical appearance of the area. One such mural is painted on the side of the building, by recognised street artists Dermot McConaghy and Jonny McKerr, improving a very derelict part of north Belfast.

1.9 Arts for All creates opportunities for participation in the arts for participants and groups from all backgrounds including children and young people, older people, people with disabilities, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, women, men and members of the GLBT community. Arts for All exists to deliver and promote the Arts in working class areas of north Belfast.

1.10 Arts for All is funded by a cocktail of funders including

- Arts Council of Northern Ireland (core funding)
- Belfast City Council (core funding)
- Department for Social Development Neighbourhood Renewal fund (core funding)
- Department of Foreign Affairs (project funding)

2. Community arts

2.1 Community arts has enormous value in a society which is emerging from major social and political upheaval. Community arts engages with communities which have a poor or non-existent arts structure.

2.2 The impact of community arts has been widely researched. Research carried out by Arts for All found that:

- 72% of participants indicated that they felt better or healthier
- 85% of participants reported increased levels of happiness
- 84% of participants reported increased levels of confidence
- 90% of participants indicated interest in taking part in new activities after participating in a community arts project

2.3 These outcomes are particularly important within disadvantaged communities.

3. Response to the Northern Ireland Executive budget consultation

3.1 Arts for All is deeply concerned that proposed changes within the budget will have a negative impact on the arts in Northern Ireland.

3.2 The Northern Ireland Executive invests just 13p per person per week in direct funding for the arts. This represents just 0.1% of total government spending.

3.3 It is essential that this budget is not cut any further.

3.4 For a tiny investment in the arts, wide ranging benefits are delivered across Northern Irish society:

- The arts support government departments to deliver targets
- They promote Northern Ireland as a positive region which values the creativity of its people
- They are a key driver for tourism – Ulster Bank Festival at Queen’s alone generated £577,180 in tourism revenue
- They provide major employment through the creative industries – 5% of total employment within Northern Ireland is within the creative industries
- They regenerate our towns and cities
- They bring people and communities together

3.5 Essentially, the arts create a society which people want to live in.

3.6 In addition, the arts help teachers to deliver a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum in the classroom, which helps promote positive mental health. The arts help strengthen the voice of vulnerable people and marginalised communities.

3.7 The Northern Ireland Executive is proposing to impose one of the largest cuts to one of the smallest departments. A cut in the budget of 10% to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) will translate into a cut to the arts budget of, at best, 11.2% (£1.38m).

3.8 Arts for All supports the case ‘no more cuts to the Arts’ from the 2015-6 budget.

3.9 Arts for All requests that this submission is formally recorded as part of the public consultation on the draft budget.

Belfast Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon launches Midland Seniors Arts Club at the **John Luke Gallery**

