



Learning Limerick

Together for a brighter future

Newsletter

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Chairperson's Reflection

As proud members of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and the Irish Network of Learning Cities (INLC), we are delighted to include content in this Newsletter on our partnership with the Irish Network and a piece on the work undertaken with the Shared Island funding. The Shared Island project was launched in Cork last November and it has been fascinating to see firsthand the work being undertaken by our partner learning regions and it was great to meet up with our colleagues from across the island. These important relationships provide the opportunity for the sharing of best practice initiatives between partner cities, which can be then incorporated into our own festival's development. We were delighted to host visiting delegates to our own Learning Exchange in Limerick in May. Overall, this Learning Exchange received very positive feedback and attendees expressed an interest in attending similar events in the future. Many delegates have made connections with other groups/individuals that have the potential for a joint project going forward. There were also tangible suggestions given for a follow up to the Shared Island Learning Cities Exchange.

Shared Island Initiative

The Shared Island Programme, supported by the Irish Government Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Housing, Planning, Local Government and Heritage, supports projects and initiatives between Local Government partners North and South. Working with the support of all city partners, the programme which was launched in Cork last November has involved a series of exchanges and consultation workshops in Cork, Belfast and Limerick Learning Cities.

All five cities in the Irish Network of Learning Cities (Cork, Limerick, Belfast, Dublin and Derry Strabane Learning Cities) have committed themselves to becoming Learning cities; and all are members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. In 2019 the Mayors of all five cities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing to work together and to supporting each other's development as Learning Cities.

Learning Limerick remains committed to supporting, promoting, and improving lifelong learning across the city and county. We held our 13th Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival from March 27th – April 2nd this year. The average reported attendance at events was 31 people at each event, so for the entire festival of 165 events the attendance was over 5,000 people. We are committed to taking event organiser and participants' suggestions on board for future festivals and to continually learn from our experience each year. Overall, 2023 has been a fulfilling, successful and busy year so far for Learning Limerick.



Eimear Brophy

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and Chair of Learning Limerick

The vision behind this commitment is to improve the quality of life for everyone in our cities, by delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and making sure that no-one is left behind.



The Shared Island programme was launched in Cork in November 2022. Over the three days there was a varied programme. Day one of Cork Exchange saw visiting delegates treated to a Welcome Reception in Cork Lord Mayor's Chambers in Cork City Hall; before attending the 2022 Cork Celebrates Lifelong Learning Awards in Millennium Hall. Day two consisted of several presentations from the Learning City delegations, where collaboration and communication between Learning Regions was the common theme. The second day concluded with site visits to various initiatives across Cork City including a visit to the Bantry Longboat on the river Lee and the Meitheal Mara's workshop at Crosses Green. There was also a visit to Nano Nagle Place to meet with some of the people behind a range of Cork's urban growing and sustainable food initiatives, and a live music performance from young musicians in the Kabin in Knocknaheeny; along with a lesson on how to play the Indonesian Gamelan in Cork City Library Hollyhill.



In March 2023, there was a Learning Exchange to Belfast Learning City for the launch of Belfast's Lifelong Learning Festival. There was a bus tour of the city in the afternoon highlighting political and cultural history; with a stop at Footprints Women's Centre. The Learning Exchanges and site visits at the various cities have highlighted that no matter the location, the challenges faced by the communities we support, and challenges faced by the organisations that support the communities are very similar. Also, the Learning Exchanges have highlighted that there is no better way to build a working relationship with other projects/communities/agencies, than to meet in person.

The Limerick Learning Exchange took place from 15th – 17th May. On day one, delegates from the UNESCO Learning Cities on the island enjoyed a welcome reception in Shannon Rowing Club hosted by Mayor of Limerick City and County, Councillor Francis Foley. On day 2, there was a

seminar held in the Strand Hotel, Limerick attended by 66 people; including 25 delegates from the visiting cities. The Learning City delegations from Derry-Strabane, Belfast, Cork and Dublin were welcomed by Limerick Mayor, Councillor Francis Foley, Limerick City and County Council Chief Officer Seamus O'Connor and Learning Limerick Chairperson Eimear Brophy, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. There was a morning of presentations and break-out group discussions. There were three site visits in the afternoon: to the Learning Hub in Kileely, the College of Further Education and Training, Raheen Campus and to the Urban Coop, Eastway Business Park.

The purpose of these learning exchange visits is to make contacts and develop links with people from similar backgrounds and with similar interests in future projects on an all-island basis.

Networking Meeting



In January, the Learning Limerick Festival Organising Committee hosted a Coffee and Information Morning in the Castletroy Park Hotel for those interested in taking part in the 2023 Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival. As such, this gathering provided an ideal opportunity for potential event organisers to network with other like-minded individuals from the City and County and to share their plans, ideas, and resources for this year's festival. Eimear Brophy, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and Chair of Learning Limerick welcomed the attendees and delivered a presentation on the Shared Island Programme. Learning Limerick Festival Co-Ordinator, Yvonne Lane, presented the key details of this year's festival including the festival theme of "Come Learn with Me in 2023" which stays true to our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility for all. The morning's keynote presentation was from Theresa Mulvihill of SMART Marketing Limited who delivered a presentation on marketing and promotional tips for event organisers. Attendees received useful and practical advice

on some of the key factors to keep in mind when it comes to networking and promoting and advertising their events for this year's festival. We also heard from two event hosts, Dr. Anca Minescu, University of Limerick and Mary McGrath, Hospital Family Resource Centre, on their experience of running festival events.

The final presentation of the morning was from Adrienne O'Connell, Education and Training Co-Ordinator, West Limerick Resources CLG, who championed the Learning Ambassador Initiative and encouraged attendees to link in with the ambassadors to promote and draw attention to their events. The Learning Ambassador Initiative has proved to be both hugely popular and beneficial for all those involved with it and has gone from strength to strength with each festival.

Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival 2023

The Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival returned for a 13th iteration this Spring with its most comprehensive line-up of events to date. It took place from Monday 27th March to Sunday 2nd April and featured over 165 free events and activities to choose from throughout the week both online and in-person. The festival presented a wide variety of interesting and diverse topics that included Art, IT Skills, Language Tasters, Entrepreneurship, Guided Tours, Open Days, Educational Pathways, Music, and Cookery. Participants could also choose from Diversity and Inclusion discussions, Personal and Professional Development talks,



Family Learning activities, Public Lectures, Martial Arts and much more.

This year's festival was officially launched in Istabraq Hall, Limerick City Hall by the Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick, Cllr Kieran O'Hanlon. Guests were treated to a Zumba lesson from Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board tutor, Angel Catala Sempere, along with speeches from members of the Festival Organising Committee and Steering Group.

Some of the key learning and recommendations arising from the Festival evaluation process included:

- Continue with hybrid model for the festival and events including in-person, online and hybrid.
- Networking meetings – hold these early in the planning process.
- Consider training/guide to using Eventbrite
- Continue with successful social media/digital marketing campaign.
- Make the festival programme (brochure) available earlier.
- Consider a larger launch; e.g., perhaps including all event hosts; with longer lead in time to festival.
- Plan for flagship event early on in festival planning process.
- We still need to reach out to the County for increased participation.
- Event organisers workshop key to kickstarting planning process.

Learning Ambassadors Initiative

The Learning Ambassadors Initiative is a hugely successful programme which has been running in Limerick since 2019 and embodies the learning ethos Limerick strives to encourage. Learning Ambassadors are Limerick people who are united by a shared interest in promoting learning in all its forms across Limerick City and County. Learning Ambassadors assist in dismantling the barriers to learning through the sharing of their inspiring learning stories and serve to motivate and empower others to take the first steps on their own learning journey. They spread the word and help promote the idea of lifelong learning in their communities, workplaces and neighbourhoods and they show that learning is for people of all ages, from all areas, and from all backgrounds. They have been an integral component of the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival over the past few years.



The Learning Ambassadors Initiative received national recognition in 2023 with a nomination and short-listing in the Learner Voice Category in the AONTAS Star Awards. Established in 2006, these acknowledge adult learning groups and projects that are making an impact in people's lives and in communities across the island of Ireland. The Learning Ambassadors also took part in a number of recent events, including the Shared Island Limerick Learning Exchange on 16th May and in the Africa Day celebrations on 1st June in Mary Immaculate College.

Erasmus+ Visit from Finland

On 24th May, a delegation from Kuopio Community College in Finland visited Limerick and were given a tour visiting St. Mary's Adult Education Centre, Further Education and Training Centre, O'Connell Avenue Campus, Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre and Northside Family Resource Centre. The group from Kuopio were very interested in lifelong learning opportunities that were available to older people in Limerick. They found it fascinating and loved the idea of having older people who were acting as Learning Ambassadors. They were also very impressed with how the community education sector in Limerick supports the creation of educational programmes that are based on local need and focused on a wide variety of interests.



Many thanks to all our partners in Learning Limerick:

- Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board
- Limerick City and County Council
- PAUL Partnership
- University of Limerick
- Mary Immaculate College
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- West Limerick Resources
- Ballyhoura Development
- Limerick Childcare Committee
- Limerick Community Education Network
- National Learning Network
- Limerick Mental Health Association
- Youth Work Limerick
- Department of Social Protection
- Mid West Regional Skills Forum
- Limerick Chamber Skillnet
- Learning Ambassadors Sub-group
- Limerick Local Enterprise Office