



Learning Limerick

Together for a brighter future

Newsletter

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Chairperson's Reflection

Welcome to our March 2026 Newsletter. Spring is always an energising time for Learning Limerick as we prepare for the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival in April. Now in its sixteenth year, the festival remains a powerful reminder that learning belongs to everyone at every stage of life, in every community, and across every sector of our city and county. As a proud member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, Limerick has made a clear commitment: learning must be inclusive, accessible, and transformative. Being a UNESCO Learning City is not a title; it is a responsibility. It calls on us to promote quality education (SDG 4), reduce inequalities (SDG 10), and contribute to sustainable communities (SDG 11) through lifelong learning.

This year marks an important milestone as we launch our new Strategic Plan 2026–2030 during the festival. This plan builds on our strong foundation and sets out how we will widen participation, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that learning is embedded in community development, enterprise, culture and civic life. Our partnership model which spans local government, education providers, community organisations and industry, is our greatest strength. We are also deepening our engagement with our European and North American Learning City

colleagues, sharing ideas and learning from best practice. These connections help ensure that Limerick continues to respond proactively to changing social and economic landscapes.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of our working groups, particularly in advancing the festival, and the Learning Ambassadors initiative. Their work reflects what is possible when a whole region commits to learning. Our vision remains clear: a vibrant Limerick where people live healthier, happier and more productive lives because of their engagement in lifelong learning. I am proud to support this shared ambition and look forward to seeing our city and county continue to grow as a Learning City for All.



Michael MacCurtain

Limerick Chamber Skillnet
& Chairperson of Learning
Limerick

Introducing Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival 2026

Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival 2026 runs from 20th – 26th. The theme this year is 'Discover Lifelong Learning 2026'. It is also based around the power of connections and will have a particular focus on promoting the fun and joy of learning and family-friendly events. Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival has something for everyone - wherever you live, whatever your age is and whatever your particular interests may be. Learning is promoted as fun with events including performances, debates, taster sessions, tours, displays and demonstrations. The free events and activities taking place include Art, IT Skills, Language Tasters, Entrepreneurship,

Guided Tours, Open Days, Educational Pathways, Music and Cookery.



Feedback on Our Festival Last Year

The overall feedback on the festival last year from both event hosts and participants was very positive. The event hosts value the networking meetings, Festival Guide and social media resources. Many of their learning initiatives continue after the festival and programmes are sometimes 'launched' with their festival events. Some suggestions for the future are to look at events that may be targeting similar audiences. This gave rise to a suggestion for more collaborative events; partners working together to run a number of bigger events. Another suggestion was for more hosts to share their venues and host each other's events. A desire to increase events in County Limerick was also highlighted in 2025 and the Festival Organising Committee will work to increase these.



All Literacies Change Lives Seminar



The flagship event for Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival 2025 was a seminar examining the power of literacies. This interactive event had key speakers on financial, health and climate literacy, a networking café and a panel discussion. The festival theme celebrated literacies and collaborated with the national Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) office for the seminar. The keynote address was from Yvonne McKenna, Director, ALL Strategy National Programme Office, SOLAS. The seminar highlighted how the ALL Strategy aims to make Irish society more accessible to people with an unmet literacy, numeracy or digital literacy need. It is really important that organisations deliver services in a literacy friendly and literacy aware way. The event also heard from Literacy Ambassador Pam Noonan and her inspiring story of sitting her Junior Cert at the age of 71. Attendees left further motivated to continue their efforts in promoting lifelong learning and literacy awareness.

European and North American Network of Learning Cities Forum

The Forum of European Learning Cities, a joint initiative of Évry-Courcouronnes and Cork, with the support of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, brought together learning cities from across Europe and North America in September in France to share best practice and shape the governance of a new international learning network.

Michael MacCurtain, Limerick Chamber Skillnet and Chairperson of Learning Limerick, delivered a presentation on the success of the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival and the Limerick Learning Ambassador programme at the forum.



The group also visited the UNESCO headquarters in Paris as part of the event. Next steps include plans for the forum to reconvene in Cork for a second meeting in April 2026.

Launch of Waterford Learning City

Waterford Learning City held its official launch on 16th October, to celebrate Waterford joining both the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and the Irish Network of Learning Cities. It was an opportunity for leaders to come together and strengthen our shared commitment to fostering a culture of lifelong learning for all. As part of the programme, Mayor Seamus Ryan formally signed the Irish Network of Learning Cities' Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Afterwards, the official launch included music and learner inputs and addresses from Waterford Steering Group Members.



Learning Limerick Ambassadors Seminar

Learning Limerick held a 'Learning Ambassadors Seminar' in October. Special thanks to Ambassadors Dave Doherty and Yvonne Madden for sharing their Lifelong Learning stories on the day. Adrienne O'Connell, West Limerick Resources, outlined the goals of the Learning Ambassadors programme; and attendees brainstormed together how to grow the initiative and how to link the Learning Ambassadors more closely with the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival. Lots of ideas were shared for the coming year, and we are looking forward to working with both our new and existing ambassadors in 2026.



Shared Island Visits

The government's Shared Island Civic Society Fund is an initiative to promote practical North-South cooperation and engagement through increased cross-border civic society connections. This fund facilitated a visit to Cork last September brainstorming Learning Neighbourhood and community engagement initiatives and that was followed by a visit to Belfast on the theme of Creativity in November. The most recent Shared Island visit was to Waterford in February; and the theme of this visit was 'Lifelong Learning and Education for Sustainable Development'. These exchanges provide lots of ideas to action for Limerick, while providing opportunities for sharing experiences and indeed brainstorming how to tackle challenges together.



Learning Limerick Networking Meeting – December 2025

A Learning Limerick Networking morning was held on 12th December 2025. Michael MacCurtain, Chairperson of Learning Limerick and Limerick Chamber Skillnet, presented on current developments in Learning Limerick and plans for Festival 2026. There were also two inputs - 'AI in Everyday Life' from Brendan Ryan of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, and an input on 'Making Your Events Fun for all the Family' from Yvonne Lane on behalf of Mary Hughes of Limerick City Partnership. The groupwork discussions then focused on applying this learning for next year's festival and beyond. The Chair of the LLL Festival Organising Committee, Patrick Fitzgerald, LCEN, led these groupwork questions. Thanks as always to the LLL Festival Organising Committee members for planning the day and for facilitating the small groups.



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Many thanks to all our partners in Learning Limerick:

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