DESIGN CHALLENGE -WATERFORD

Waterford Cultural Quarter - building creative communities | Design led Competition

Workshop Summary 1

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ABOUT DESIGN CHALLENGE WATERFORD

Design Challenge Waterford is about the role creativity can play in solving some of the daily challenges encountered by our communities in the O'Connell Street area of Waterford. It is an initiative being delivered by WIT Creativity and Culture Research Group (CCRG) and Garter Lane Arts Centre.

The process encourages local or community groups to identify specific challenges for designers and creative practitioners to respond to. You can **submit a design challenge here**.

On Wed 30th May Garter Lane Arts Centre hosted a Community Workshop as part of the initial launch of Design Challenge Waterford.

This document will give you an overview of what was discussed which will in turn help you with the design challenge.

Particular attention will be given to supporting specific challenges and creative solutions that can play a part in responding to the *Priority Focus Areas* or the *High Level Issues Key Themes* identified during the community workshop*.*

Communication Priority Focus Areas	High Level Issues Key Themes
Outreach and Engagement	Better Buildings + Spaces
Information Sharing + Raising Awareness	Diverse Mix of Use
Local Meetings + Conversations	Attractive + Animated Streets
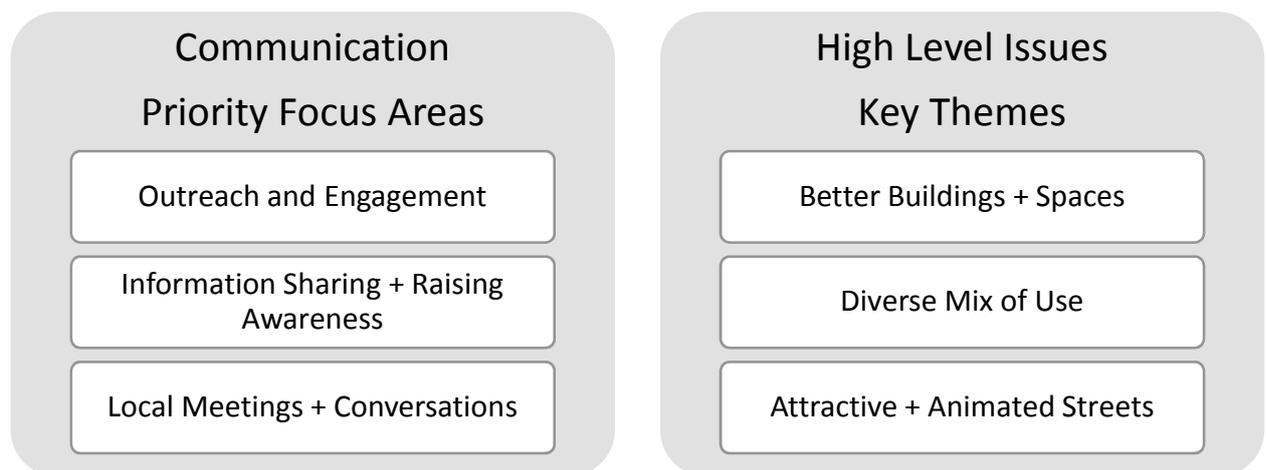
Designers will be selected to develop responses to the community identified challenges and the public will be invited to give feedback.

Through a competitive process, shortlisted responses will receive seed funding to refine their solutions. Shortlisted design solutions will be exhibited, and one will be selected as winner to receive an activation fund towards implementation.

Designers and creative practitioners are invited to participate by **expressing interest to respond to the challenges**.

Find out More at www.designchallengewaterford.ie

Design Challenge Waterford is one initiative being supported as part of the wider Waterford Cultural Quarter (WCQ). It supports the development of proposals for creative actions that add value to existing projects and activities.

INITIAL LAUNCH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

The Design Challenge Initiative has an open, inclusive citizen engagement approach. This purpose of this first community workshop was to:

a) **To meet** some of the creative communities from Garter Lane Arts Centre's outreach programme who are leading innovative projects in dance, film making, visual art and lots more in the local area;

b) **To share** diverse experiences and consider what are the common hopes and challenges for the future of the local area;

c) **To begin to think about specific issues and ideas for action** that could be addressed by creative projects in the community.

Further stages of the initiative will promote ongoing engagement and inclusivity, through opportunities for public feedback and a second workshop. All information will be shared and promoted on the dedicated website.

There was lots of rich discussion on the day. This is a high-level summary of the key issues and insights that emerge from the discussions.

The insights and issues from the workshop will be shared with attendees, WQC stakeholders and made available publicly. The Design Challenge team have taken stock of the discussions to inform the competitive process for the initiative.

Particular attention will be given to supporting specific challenges and creative solutions that can play a part in responding to the *Priority Focus Areas* or the *High Level Issues Key Themes* identified during the community workshop*.*

We hope that sharing the summary of the discussions from this community workshop will contribute to developing the ongoing conversations in the area. We hope it will inspire other additional actions and community collaborations towards realising the potential and opportunity to continue to support creative and sustainable local area development.

Next Steps: From June to September the Design Challenge Initiative will be working with local groups and communities to support them in identifying specific challenges to submit.

ATTENDANCE AND FORMAT

The workshop was attended by 50 people. Attendance reflected a good mix of people who work, live and use the local area for diverse activities. There were 5 local residents and 15 people who worked in the area, including small business owners and attendees from a local health centre and the local library. The remainder of the attendees were members and participants of local community groups with diverse ages, cultural backgrounds and abilities who engage in activities in the area at least once a week.

The initiative promotes an open, inclusive and engaged approach. The workshop was open for anyone to attend but had a limited capacity of 50 attendees. Information about the event was shared publicly and locally across the following channels and platforms:

- On Waterford Cultural Quarter, WIT and Garter Land websites and social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter;
- Press release to local press/radio;
- Radio interview on WLRFM's On the Fringe radio programme;
- An event listing in 2000 Bealtaine Festival brochures, 1000 of which were distributed via Waterford Today to City Centre homes and businesses;
- Direct emails to Garter Lane community groups and arts groups.

Part 1 – Sharing Our Experiences

During the first part of the workshop, creative groups and communities from Garter Lane Arts Centre's outreach programme shared information about their activities and experiences. The room heard from:

- Waterford Women's Centre & St. Brigids Family Resource Centre Bealtaine Festival Photography Programme
- Waterford Integration and Support Unit, Asylum Seekers and Refugees Film Making Project
- Red Lead Productions- Amateur Film Makers with Acquired Brain Injuries
- Best Foot Forward Older Women's Dance Group

Apologies were sent by Waterford Young Arts Critics- Youth Arts Programme who were unable to attend on the day.

Part 2 – Facilitated Discussion

The second part of the workshop was dedicated to facilitated group discussions about 'What Matters to Us?' and 'What Problems Are We Trying to Solve?'. A summary of the discussions that took place on the day is outlined in this document.

Part 3 – Presentation About Waterford Cultural Quarter

Katherine Collins presented more information about the work being done by Waterford City and County Council and other stakeholders around the Waterford Cultural Quarter project.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

WHAT MATTERS TO US? – VALUES

Workshop attendees expressed shared values of inclusivity, participation, engagement and integration.

Although there were diverse perspectives in the room, a strong sense of common values among the participants emerged. The need to value the existing strengths of the local communities came through all the discussions.

This included:

- Valuing the arts, more and better use of creative and cultural spaces and activities,
- Valuing the role of locally owned businesses that bring character and distinctiveness,
- Valuing diversity, accessibility and inclusivity for **all user groups** including youth, diverse abilities, multi-culturalism and diverse socio-economic demographs,
- Valuing the goodwill that exists locally in the community for the area to develop as an attractive place to live, work or visit.

Reflecting these values, a central concern arose around developing better models and solutions for the Waterford Cultural Quarter project to communicate and work locally with the people who live, work and use the area.

Over 35% of the attendees prioritised communication issues, by far the highest compared to the next highest, of 15% of attendees prioritising issues related to public realm improvements (including safety, accessibility).

Under the broader theme of communication*, three priority focus areas* emerge from the conversations as critical to enabling successful area improvements.

Overall whilst there was evidently some frustration over these issues, many attendees were keen to recognise the value of the discussions taking place on the day and the opportunity to further enable and support a positive, creative approach by local communities to be part of helping shape the future of the area and a sense that "things *can* happen**".**

COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS – 3 PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS

1. *"Getting People to be Part of It" - Support outreach and engagement*

There was a good mix of different user groups in the room, however the group clearly expressed concern around the level of engagement with certain user groups, in particular local residents.

The group identified the need for the activities of the Waterford Cultural Quarter (WCQ) to better engage local residents, businesses and communities in the process.

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions around outreach activity to connect with and across the diverse user groups.

> *Snapshot of some specific ideas and contributions:*
>
> - *"We need a community worker on the ground to help integration"*
> - *Library –"Looking forward to working with communities and CQ Team."*

2. *"Inform the public about current events"* – Support information sharing and raising awareness

Participants discussed their own experiences of the area and identified high level barriers and opportunities. Common 'high level issues' identified reflected those that emerged during the public consultation process around the WCQ held in October 2017.

It was noted that some actions are already being delivered by the local authorities and other stakeholders to begin to tackle these issues.

There was a sense that different people in the room have different levels of awareness both of the work being delivered as part of the WCQ as well as the range of ongoing activities and efforts being delivered by diverse local communities and groups.

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions around information sharing and raising awareness about what's being done and what's going on locally.

> *Snapshot of some specific ideas and contributions:*
>
> - *"Advertising in media to encourage and inform people about current events"*
> - *"Calendar of events."*

3. *"Real integration and participation"* - Support Local Meetings and Conversations

Different user groups were represented on the day and there was a recognition of the diverse needs of the different groups. The group identified the need for more opportunities and platforms for different voices to come together and to be represented and visible in the wider conversations about the local area.

Using the right language was considered essential to facilitate and enable conversations with and between the different voices, with inclusivity and integration strongly emphasised.

There was common ground around the need to support the capacity for local, grassroots, bottom up approaches and local activity for successful local area development.

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions around facilitating local conversations and building capacity for locally-led initiatives.

Snapshot of some specific ideas and contributions:

- *"Creative consultation with residents, business, customers etc."*
- *"A residents' forum."*
- *"A wider forum for action."*
- *"More platforms for people to meet."*
- *"Socialising – looking for possible collaboration."*
- *"Information – e.g. visitors centre."*

HIGH LEVEL ISSUES – THREE KEY THEMES

The group considered what problems are we trying to solve? Broadly, the common *High Level Issues* can be grouped into *three key themes*, albeit with some overlap between the discussions and ideas. A cross cutting issue is attracting footfall in the area.

1. Support for Better Buildings and Spaces

The built fabric of the area featured strongly in the discussions. The local culture, community feeling, heritage and historic attributes of this city centre location were all cited as local strengths. There were many contributions around hopes and concerns for the vacant or derelict buildings in the area, and it was noted that 'buildings were ripe for development'.

Discussions touched on addressing vacancies and tenancies. This overlaps with the following theme of ensuring appropriate mix of uses and creating fit for purpose spaces to support diverse uses identified.

Other discussions highlighted the need and opportunity for specific physical building improvements; to improve buildings already in use (e.g. making them more accessible), to make more vacant spaces available, or to simply improve the appearance of buildings in the area.

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions to improve the fabric of buildings and spaces in the area making the accessible for use.

> *Snapshot of some specific ideas and contributions:*
>
> - *"Encourage community or creative groups to reside in buildings."*
> - *"Painting buildings."*
> - *"Divide up larger retail areas into smaller spaces."*
> - *"Ramps and handrails."*
> - *"Community spaces for meetings that are cheap, attractive, warm, accessible."*
> - *"Event venues."*

2. Support for Diverse and Appropriate Mix of Uses

Attendees reflected on why they come to the area. People come to go to the theatre, shops, pubs, cafés and tea rooms, to work, to live, to learn and to engage with diverse creative or community projects and activities. Many broad and specific issues came through relating to ensuring and enabling an appropriate mix of uses in the area.

It was recognised that diversity and quality of offering in the different uses of buildings and spaces attracts visitors and plays an important role in attracting footfall.

There was a concern expressed around ensuring balance and scale with a hope for sensitive and balanced development, i.e. not all pubs, large retail chains or all one use.

Small and local businesses and creative activities were identified as important for creating unique local character for the area as a destination. Many of the discussions tackled the challenges around supporting and sustaining local, smaller scale businesses, creative and community activities.

The group highlighted barriers and opportunities to making it viable for small, local businesses and creatives to stay in and use the area. Specific issues included rents and rates, access for delivery, availability of appropriate spaces for smaller businesses / creative uses, as well as the wider issue of funding and support for arts, culture or community activities.

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions to facilitate small businesses and creative uses of the area.

Snapshot of some specific ideas and contributions:

- *"Pop up shops."*
- *"Attract families with activities for children."*
- *"Reduced rates scheme for CCIs."*
- *"Incentives for [artisan] businesses."*
- *"More bollards for deliveries."*

3. Support Active and Attractive Streets

Many of the discussion identified that the 'streets' and public realm is an important space that can be animated by different uses and activities, adding to the mix of uses that exist in the buildings in the area.

This is supported by ensuring an accessible and attractive public realm. The overall common purpose expressed is to create an attractive, clean, safe and accessible public realm.

Specific issues identified included safety and lighting as well as a risk of ghettoization. Equally it was identified that the area should be accessible for people of all backgrounds, not just "middle class foodies".

When asked to consider their experience of getting around participants were relatively satisfied with getting around on foot, by bike and public transport. However, traffic flow and parking was consistently raised as a key issue for the area and a barrier for local residents and business owners.

Suggestions were made around opportunities for pedestrianisation and uncertainty expressed about current plans.

The group also noted the importance of connecting with the wider county in attracting interest and engagement with the city centre and WCQ.

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions around physical improvements for attractive streets.

Specific ideas and contributions:

- *"Removing street advertising which is difficult for people with visual impairments"*
- *"Seating."*
- *"Bins and litter."*
- *"Flowers."*
- *"Integrate creatives with lighting design." [installations]*
- *"Extension of the greenway to the city centre."*

The opportunity is to enable supporting actions around generating activities for active streets.

Specific ideas and contributions:

- *"Markets."*
- *"Street food."*
- *"Open screen."*
- *"Spaces and activities for youth that are not hidden."*
- *"Temporary or partial pedestrianisation."*
- *"Community alert scheme."*
- *"[Sensitive] Gardai presence."*
- *"More parades."*

The Design Challenge Team would like to sincerely thanks everybody for their attendance and contributions on the day, in particular the groups from Garter Lane Arts Centre outreach programme and the community arts leaders who helped to facilitate and capture the discussions on the day.

We look forward to collaborating with creatives and communities through the Design Challenge Waterford initiative.