

IRELAND

Local development

Location

Monalea, Gorey

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 17 811.30

EAFRD 8 634.04

National/Regional 5 114.43

Private 4 062.83

Project duration

2018 – 2018

Project promoter

The Gap Arts Festival

Contact

gapartsfest@gmail.com

Website

<http://gapartsfestival.com/>

A LEADER measure grant helped purchase film and photography equipment and training for a rural arts festival community project.

Summary

The Gap Arts Festival was founded in 2011 with the aim of bringing professional theatre to the rural hillside community of Ballythomas in north Wexford, Ireland: 'bringing arts to places it wouldn't otherwise reach'. Taking place over 2 days in August, it currently also showcases live music, poetry, film, outdoor cinema and creative workshops (including photography, film making, acrobatics and dance). Run by local volunteers on a non-profit basis, it benefitted from a LEADER grant to purchase film and photography equipment and training. This enabled local people to capture and record images and use these experiences to consider the question: 'what is community', using film and photographs.



Results

11 adults participated in a two-month photography training workshop

1 local artist was employed to deliver the two-month photography training

2 films have been made using the equipment by members of the local community focused on topics of local culture and heritage

1 short film is in pre-production

500 plus photographs were taken at the 'Face of the Festival' event during the festival weekend from 10 to 12 August 2018 involving 80 different families and individuals.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ As the LEADER measure funded quite a small part of the project, it was important to consider a diverse range of funding sources in order to find support for the wide range of festival activities.
- ❑ Coming from a voluntary community group perspective, the workload involved in completing a LEADER application was challenging.

Context

There is no real village centre in the very rural community of Ballythomas; with a scattered population of around 1300 inhabitants, the only amenities nearby are a school and a pub within 500 meters of each other.

The population of Ballythomas is a mix of people: some have lived in the area for generations and others have only recently arrived (such as young families, who are helping the local school to flourish). It is a strong and thriving community that goes against the otherwise common trend across rural Ireland, of population *decline*.

The Gap Arts Festival has been running in this setting for the last 9 years, following on from a local tradition - which died out in the 1950s - of travelling theatre companies visiting small towns and rural communities. Nowadays it is volunteers from within the community who organise the festival: building a stage, hiring professional crews and equipment, and making it all happen from the heart of their community.

The Gap Arts Festival has been a driving force behind bringing live arts performances of music, poetry and theatre as well as participatory workshops to this rural area. There is a strong interest in film and photography among members of the community in the Ballythomas area, so in recent years a filmmaking and photography aspect has been added to the festival. A spin-off of this is the independently-established Gap Film and Photography Group, which has been running for about 3 years. They wanted to develop their capacity and activities through equipment purchase and training, and so approached LEADER for support.

Objectives

To support active community participation and the socially engaged approach of the Gap Arts Festival, this grant enabled:

- Development of a bank of film and photography equipment to use in the 2018 Gap Arts Festival, as well as future projects and activities. The equipment is also a wider resource available for community use.
- Enhancement and development of the strong local community interest in film and photography, building capacity through skills development and essential equipment access.

Activities

Award winning photographer Frank Abruzzese, facilitated a series of workshops in the May and June, prior to the Gap Arts Festival in August 2018. The LEADER grant covered the purchase of the photography equipment and the training workshops, which culminated in the 'Community Portrait Project'. The idea of the Community Portrait Project was for members of the community to be photographed by other members of the community and to produce a unique collection of portraits unlike anything that professional photographers would achieve. The aim was to empower participants with the necessary skills to effectively use photography as a medium for representational expression, whilst at the same time reflecting on their and others' understanding of the concept of community.

As part of the Community Portrait Project an event called 'The Face of the Festival' took place during the Gap Arts Festival 2018. Free photo portraits were offered to festival-goers; taken in a pop-up studio housed in the pagoda tent using lighting and a backdrop.

The film equipment was used to produce a short film called Titania's Palace which was premiered at the Gap Arts Festival. The film featured local school children telling the story of how a young local girl sees a fairy disappear into a tree and how her father has a miniature palace built so there is somewhere for the fairy to live. The film captures for posterity the history of the Edwardian miniature fairy palace that took James Hick & Sons, cabinet makers in Dublin, 15 years to complete and which was on display to the local public at Ballynastragh House between 1947 and 1965, before being sold to Legoland in 1978. It is now on display in Denmark. The film is interspersed with older members of the community sharing their associated memories of when it was on display locally.

A documentary project: Healing Shores, by local film maker Terence White has also used the equipment. It was screened at the 2018 Wexford Documentary Film Festival held in Kilmore Quay, as part of the 'Made in Kilmore Quay' event.

The filming equipment was also used to create a 2018 Festival Round-Up Video. It is used for publicity but also gives a real flavour of the events which took place and shows the multi-generational involvement of the community.

An important part of the legacy of this project is that the equipment purchased and the skills gained will be used and shared within the community for years to come.

Main Results

- 11 adults participated in a two-month photography training workshop
- 1 local artist with international exhibitions and reputation was employed to deliver the two-month photography training
- 2 films (a short film and documentary) have been made using the equipment by members of the local community focused on topics of local culture and heritage
- 1 short film is in pre-production
- 500 plus photographs were taken at the 'Face of the Festival' event during the festival weekend from 10 to 12 August 2018 involving 80 different families and individuals.
- Emerging from the photography training workshop and 'Face of the Festival' event, a bank of 80 to 100 community portraits now exists. This forms part of an ongoing, evolving conversation about the meaning and nature of 'community' and how to portray it through photography. This is a resource the festival use to develop new projects and events.

Key lessons

The festival is managed and run by a local committee of volunteers. Key to the success of the festival is a well developed committee that has different roles, such as social media officer, artist liaison, venue managers and child protection officer. Through the years, the roles have been shaped and refined according to the skills and interests of individual committee members.

As the LEADER measure funded quite a small part of the project, it was important to consider a diverse range of funding sources in order to find support for the wide range of festival activities. Increasing funding and reaching out to new potential funders is an important part of developing new ideas and building on activities to expand them.

Coming from a voluntary, community group perspective the workload involved in completing a LEADER application was challenging.



Additional sources of information

<https://youtu.be/dBuJd8GOaE>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SH0kDmLS-kg&feature=youtu.be