

**DUNAMAISE ARTS CENTRE**

**DEEP**

**WELCOME**

**POLICY**

**MOVING TOWARDS**

**EQUALITY**

**DIVERSITY**

**AND INCLUSION**

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## Our Vision

A centre of excellence for creative engagement, practice, programming and production in the Midlands region, engaging artists and audiences through delivery of high quality programmes and experiences, to support practice development, participation, engagement and access to the arts. To create an equitable, diverse and inclusive artistic and social space which embodies a feeling of **deep welcome** for all people and groups who engage with us on every level.

## Our Location

Dunamais Arts Centre is rooted in Portlaoise, the county town of Laois, prominently placed in the centre of Portlaoise, rich in history being placed in the former Maryborough Gaol, in the heart of the Irish Midlands.

Dunamais Arts Centre is excellently placed to embody a practice of deep welcome, with the doors of the centre always open to community members who need to or want to come in and use the facilities, access the arts, entertainment, request information or use the café. Welcome is in the everyday practice of the Dunamais team and this Deep Welcome policy will serve to amplify, enhance and commit in writing the procedures and practical steps necessary to continue this effort at Dunamais Arts Centre.

## Our Mission

- To encourage, develop, foster and inspire public engagement in all aspects of arts and culture.
- To enhance access to high quality artistic programming for the people of Laois and the Midlands region.
- To create opportunities for connectivity and creative engagement between artists and people of all ages.
- To be a hub for the development and presentation of new arts and cultural programming as a centre for creative development, engagement, performance and exhibition in the Midlands.
- To nurture and develop local artists in the development and promotion of their practice.
- To work collaboratively and in a spirit of partnership with all individuals and in partnership with organisations and groups who share our vision.

*We wish to host the community in many ways, including; performances, exhibitions, cinema screenings and to proudly host many diverse community groups both as part of our busy programme of events, exhibitions, gatherings and performances, as well as being home to a vibrant social space. We recognise that many people belong to multiple groups, or share an interest in varied events, simultaneously and at different moments in time.*

## **Our Values**

### **Access**

We are committed to providing a range of programmes, experiences, opportunities and facilities for artists, individuals and all communities in Laois and the Midlands region, and recognise the value and transformative power of the arts in our communities and beyond.

### **Inclusivity**

We build inclusiveness into the design, development and delivery of our projects, programmes and initiatives and across our organisation. We are enriched by engaging with varied backgrounds, international influences, a wide array of shared individual and group experiences and ideas.

### **Artistic Excellence**

We strive to deliver excellence through a multidisciplinary programme of quality, equitable arts practice, artist-led initiatives, community-led initiatives, programmes and performances for our audiences. We value passionate, contemporary voices from all parts of our diverse society.

We acknowledge that ideas of quality and excellence in the arts are in constant motion and need ongoing interrogation by us, challenging our own biases as well as those across the sector.

### **Sustainability**

We invest in the greening of our organisation to reduce our carbon footprint, and as a leading arts organisation delivering on Ireland's climate change goals.

### **Community**

We value the input of our cultural practitioners and local communities, supporting the development of artists and community arts practice through opportunities for creative development, engagement and exposure. We value reflecting our communities, not just in our programming but also in our organisational make-up.

### **Collaboration**

We consider partnership and collaboration central to meeting our objectives, seeking to work with specialist art form practitioners and cultural networks to design and deliver exciting and engaging programmes for our audiences. We cease to exist without our artists and audiences. We need to share knowledge, experience and skills for mutual benefit.

### **Communication**

We are committed to communicating our work and the role and value of the arts to the people of Laois and the Midlands region, building trust as a foundation stone of our communication, by taking care, respect and time in our communications.

*We will strive to remain adaptable and open at all times, as we learn and grow within these values, so that we continue to operate as a flexible, learning, and growth-oriented organisation...*

## **Relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

We accept and acknowledge that through structural and systemic discrimination, groups have been minoritised, and the only way to break this cycle is to become informed, specific and active in noticing and challenging structural discrimination when it arises in our workplaces, in our communities and in ourselves.

The way in which inequality is experienced is complex and intersectional, and our understandings of inequality are constantly changing. We need to monitor all aspects of our language, programming and operations on an ongoing basis to ensure we stay up to date with current thinking, and open to new connections and ways of working.

As an organisation we are currently led by a majority of Caucasian, able bodied people. We accept and acknowledge the part each of us may have each played in upholding these systems through our own lack of awareness of the existence of systemic or structural inequity.

We acknowledge that these structural inequities and discriminations may have at any time caused groups to experience barriers to participation, opportunity, funding, production or programming opportunities and dissemination opportunities in the Irish arts ecology.

Resources are not equally accessible and opportunities to benefit from publicly funded arts resources are not equally shared. Informal networks exist among those of us who manage arts resources and this can mean the same cohorts of makers, audience members, or workers benefit, while others are excluded. Addressing this inequality is both our responsibility and our opportunity.

As an arts organisation in receipt of public funding, we must develop strategies to connect with the widest diversity of artists and audiences, to address inequality and also as a means of constantly reenergising the work we present.

## **A Note on Language**

Words can mean different things to different people so we have tried to be explicit in our descriptions. However, we see Equality as an effect we are working towards – a world where people have the same access to opportunities and resources regardless of their identity or background. However, we also see clearly that the world is not equal, and resources cannot always be shared in equal measure if we want a fair outcome. We understand Equity to be integral to the process of being fair.

We understand Diversity to be a recognition of the wide range of perspectives, approaches, practices and lived experience that co-exist in society. We value the opportunity Diversity provides to enrich our work.

We understand Inclusion to be the practice of welcoming Diversity in all we do. When we talk about being an inclusive organisation, we are talking of a structure and a culture that is flexible, open, responsive and mindful of the different identities and perspectives in the world and community around us.

## **Real change must happen structurally**

We strive to see our commitment to diversity reflected in the makeup of our Board, staff, and membership, as well as in our partnerships and connections with artists, audiences and local communities.

Change requires an investment on our part to deliver this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This includes a commitment to invest in time, staffing, and other resources, and in the artists and communities on whose expertise we draw. Without this investment, the policy will become a token gesture.

Change requires our flexibility as things move on and thinking changes. In order to be effective, we need to remain open and flexible with this policy, taking feedback and responding to new ideas.

Communication is crucial to making this policy a team effort between Dunamais Arts Centre and the individuals and groups we associate with. While we have already developed some exciting equality, diversity and inclusion programmes and facilities, in order to reach a broader cohort of artists and audiences, we need to commit to enhancing our communication with the wider public on these topics.

*The commencement of our Deep Welcome Process, as part of the wider NASC network commitment in March 2021 was the beginning of formalising a connected approach across venues to work within a set of shared values towards a set of clear goals, with one guiding purpose...*

## **The Purpose of this Deep Welcome Process**

That Dunamais Arts Centre, individually and as part of the NASC venues network\*, including all Dunamais Arts Centre staff and personnel, alongside all NASC venue teams, including each member from all tiers of the organisation, shall participate in upholding active cultures of explicit and deep welcome to all groups, including those who have historically been excluded or minoritised.

To deeply welcome all people as audiences, artists, producers, creators, learners and members of a thriving cultural community, setting an example of how, by welcoming all people we are welcoming a future which is rich in culture and is thriving.

The terminology of *Deep Welcome* was specifically chosen because it embodies the intrinsic Irish values of warmth, welcome, community, collaboration and care. The depth element has been included because it embodies the depth of learning required when new cultures are meeting and learning how to welcome each other emphatically and deeply and in a culturally relevant way.

Therefore, Deep Welcome has been chosen as the title for this process as it embodies the active, supportive, generative purpose of the behaviours, practices and principles which operationalise anti-oppression behaviours. An approach towards creating truly equitable societies, workplaces and teams.

## **Foundations of this Process**

*Supported by legislation, sustainable development goals and guiding principles*

This process has its foundations in compliance with several key pieces of legislation and law. This policy, takes account of the Arts Council's Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy as well as current legislation including the employment Equality Acts (1998 – 2015) and the Equal Status Acts (2000-2018), as well as Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, otherwise known as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Dunamaise Arts Centre recognise the inherent value, dignity and rights of all humans, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which forms the basis of all international human rights law.

The Dunamaise Arts Centre Deep Welcome Process also draws inspiration from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, namely:

- 3 – Good Health & Wellbeing
- 5 – Gender Equality
- 10 – Reduced Inequalities
- 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

The management acknowledge the concept of vicarious liability, and that it is their ultimate responsibility as employers to ensure that all team members are operating in accordance with Irish Law around equal treatment and equal status.

All management and Board Members of Dunamaise Arts Centre actively oppose any form of bullying or discrimination based on; ethnicity, race, nationality, colour, religion or faith, age, sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, physical or mental health, language spoken, class, family status or reputation, receipt of state benefits or charitable benefits, public assistance and having time spent or pardoned criminal convictions.

We are cognisant of the discrimination often experienced by artists, audiences and arts workers in terms of age, civil status, disability, family status, gender, membership of the Traveller community, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background.

Dunamaise Arts Centre recognises freedom of conscience and religion as a fundamental individual right, and actively challenge religious discrimination of any kind, including antisemitism, islamophobia, sectarianism and any other form of religious discrimination.

Dunamaise Arts Centre encourages diversity of thought and discussion amongst all its staff team and operational teams.



Our Deep Welcome Policy has been developed alongside Dunamaisé Arts Centre's current Strategic Plan (2021 – 2025), and will serve to enhance the current Strategic Plan as it is rolled out.

This policy is a result of the Deep Welcome Learning Process which the Dunamaisé Arts Centre team has been following since March 2021. This included an 18-month process of learning, arising from a desire to connect venues in order to share learning, to develop, and to take action to collaborate and become relevant to all people in our communities. This policy is supported by the NASC Network-wide deep welcome policy. Like the network-wide policy, this venue specific policy understands that people, communities and groups have and, in many cases, continue to experience minoritisation and oppression through systemic, structural, interpersonal and individual factors.

\*NASC is an Irish word meaning link or relationship, and describes the linking of venues to develop touring programmes. The network was conceived in 2006 when a number of venue directors met to discuss joint programming and marketing opportunities.

The key purpose and objectives of the network are to harness the buying power, infrastructure, professional expertise, art form knowledge, contacts, loyalty and support of the 8 members to present high quality work.

It aims to impact positively on arts sector strategy and future development and to be a brand synonymous with high quality work.

The NASC Venues include:

- An Grianán Theatre
- Backstage Theatre
- Dunamaisé Arts Centre
- Glór
- Lime Tree Theatre
- Pavilion Theatre
- Siamsa Tíre
- Town Hall Theatre.

## **Ambitions, Commitments and Actions**

Dunamais Arts Centre is committed to ongoing learning for all core team members, with optional learning for all volunteers to be made periodically available as appropriate and meaningful to development.

Dunamais Arts Centre is also committed to practical behaviours which will uphold the principles of this Deep Welcome process into the future.

We specifically commit to the following ambitions, commitments and actions as explored throughout the foundational Deep Welcome NASC-wide training and exploration:

### **1.**

#### **Ambition**

That Dunamais Arts Centre will attract audiences, teams and associates broadly representative of the communities in which they are based, and also the island of Ireland.

#### **Commitments and Actions**

- Dunamais Arts Centre is committed to making reasonable adjustments to ensure those with additional access needs may participate as fully as possible, and learning from requests for reasonable adjustments so that longer term, deeper systemic changes may be made to remove these barriers to participation. An ongoing building audit and feedback process will be upheld to reflect on areas for improvement. For example: liaising with the NCBI on our internal signage.
- A commitment to collation and understanding of anonymised equality and diversity monitoring data from team members, visiting companies, visiting productions, audiences and volunteers. It is intended that this data will be analysed and compared to locally held census data to enable a data driven approach to understanding and monitoring progress in becoming more representative of the communities in which venues are based, and also the island of Ireland. No identifying data will be collected. Dunamais Arts Centre understands that without data-based approaches, realistic and meaningful goals cannot be set, and the authenticity of any actions made cannot necessarily be relied upon.
- A commitment to relationship building. This means doing the steady and progressive work of building relationships with people from minoritised communities. This is not for the purpose of recruiting their authenticity, but rather to build a relationship which will help embody an authentic invitation for them to self-elect or self-propose to create or deliver a project with Dunamais Arts Centre or any venue when the time feels right for them, or when sufficient relationship has been cultivated that an authentic and direct invitation can be made to those communities from the venue itself.

This point builds on an established good practice by Dunamais Arts Centre in this area and enshrines it in policy, so it may become a core practice for future organisational cultures.

## 2.

### **Ambition**

That Dunamaise Arts Centre can become a leading light in the good practice of Deep Welcome as a tangible and actionable practice methodology for developing equitable cultural programming and production.

### **Commitments and Actions**

- Alongside other partners in the NASC Network, Dunamaise Arts Centre is committed to making access to all funds, programmes, dissemination opportunities, services, operations, performances and public groups or decision-making processes equitable, in line with the Strategic Welcome Plan
- A commitment to fair compensation for expertise gained through experience. This outlines Dunamaise Arts Centre's commitment to fairly and equitably compensating those with direct experience for their time.

It is an ongoing commitment by Dunamaise Arts Centre that a person's socio-economic status should not be a barrier to attending arts events. We offer regular dynamic pricing, where available, on shows and events where cost might be a barrier to attendance.

## 3.

### **Ambition**

That this learning process and practice will help Dunamaise Arts Centre shake any legacy of colonialism or systemic and structural oppression which may be present in working practices or existing team and organisational structures. We aspire that all people from diverse backgrounds will feel valued and respected and free to self-identify in their dealings with us.

This will be a rolling process of realisation and improvement over the coming years.

### **Commitments and Actions**

- A commitment to safety for groups who have been minoritised. This means ensuring that those who have historically faced minoritisation are not always in the minority when attending Dunamaise Arts Centre. This might include organising events which are designed with, by and for members of a particular community. Some examples are the Sightless Cinema Programme, hosting Laois Africa Support Group, venue for Pakistan Independence Celebration, hosting Choirs, Screenings and Events in the language requested by the organising groups, adding Open Captions to morning screenings of our regular Cinema Programme.
- People from diverse backgrounds will not feel the onus to educate our staff about language.

#### 4.

##### **Ambition**

That the Deep Welcome approach will aid in creating a truly inclusive, welcoming, equitable approach to recruitment, artistic creation and programming and assist us in compassionately and actively re-thinking old patterns and improving them so that all NASC venues are future focused and leading the way on inclusive practice.

We want potential touring artists and companies to look at Dunamais Arts Centre and feel like their performances are welcome here, including those who historically may have considered that their performances or work might not have 'fit in' with existing programming.

We want potential new team members, board members, artists and audiences to come from all backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, heritages, sexualities, genders and gender expressions, abilities and communities, and we want all people to feel deeply welcome in Dunamais Arts Centre and that they really fit in and are meant to be here.

##### **Commitments and Actions**

- Dunamais Arts Centre is committed to working with recruitment processes, practices and pathways, and using an evidence based approach, to ensure that future recruitment is equitable and accessible to people of all backgrounds and identities. In line with the Strategic Welcome Plan, using a data-based approach, Dunamais Arts Centre will aim to use inclusive recruitment and hiring practices so that all teams, volunteers groups and boards members begin to more accurately represent the communities in which they are based.
- A commitment to representation and peer-assessment. For example; Ensuring that interview panels are representative of the groups who may apply, and ensuring that from the outset, project and programme design groups are representative of the communities which may be served by those projects.

This is a core principle, which Dunamais Arts Centre understands is essential to incorporate if true inclusion and Deep Welcome will be achieved. It is also understood that the relationships which might enable such representation to be immediately implemented might not immediately be available. Which leads directly to the following commitment;

- We aim to engage leadership, artists, audiences, teams, crews and volunteers of Dunamais Arts Centre, and all NASC venues that reflect the communities in which the venues are based and also of the island of Ireland.

We welcome other colleagues from across the arts and culture sector in Ireland into this practice of Deep Welcome so that we can lead by example, develop best practice together and truly make the cultural sector in Ireland a place where all

people and their cultures, heritages and identities are welcome, where they feel like there is a place for them to be included and appreciated.

- A commitment to leading by example, with staff, Board and clients aware that the language, behaviours and practices which they themselves follow are examples to others as to what are the accepted norms in the organisation. Therefore, as the Dunamaise Arts Centre venue director and wider team continue to develop their own practice of this Deep Welcome process, so will our example inspire others who work with us to do the same. This includes the regular tabling of an agenda item around equity, access, inclusion and Deep Welcome at each Dunamaise Arts Centre team meeting so the conversation is kept alive.
- A meaningful induction into this practice of Deep Welcome for all team members. All team members shall complete our customised Deep Welcome induction training.
- A commitment to capacity-building. Training will be delivered by in-house trainers who themselves have completed Deep Welcome learning, and have been continuing their own learning in an on-going manner. The training itself will evolve over time to reflect and support evolving learning in the public and professional realm, and it will be the responsibility of the trainers to continue to pay attention to and enhance their own awareness such that they can continue to keep the training current.
- A commitment to ongoing learning. Ongoing training will be given in collaboration with our NASC colleagues as well as internally within the staff team. All paid team members will dedicate time to learning and discussing that learning with their colleagues and peers within a participatory learning structure. The model of this structure will be exemplified for team members when completing our Deep Welcome induction training. Learning will be shared among the NASC network of arts organisations.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy has come from a process of reflection and discussion with Staff, Board and wider Community Groups, and with significant input from an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training team commissioned by the NASC network.

This policy is not all encompassing, but is an ongoing commitment to the important piece of work ahead. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the policy, we have developed the following plan for monitoring and evaluating progress going forward.

- A Board sub-committee will oversee the commitments outlined and enable appropriate monitoring and evaluation, as well as to report back to the Full Board and Staff Team.
- Staff will reflect upon and report on their progress on an ongoing basis in staff meetings and as part of feedback sessions on individual projects or events.
- Staff will also engage in a more formal evaluation process, which will be documented, annually over the next five years.
- At Board level, there will be requested regular progress reporting on the policy roll out of the Deep Welcome Process, and it will be an agenda item in the annual review. The Board will evaluate whether the aims and objectives of the policy are being achieved or whether additional measures are required.
- We will invite feedback from artists and the public and document this for consideration and further action.