

03/07/2012 - Deenihan announces new National City of Culture Initiative

Limerick City will be first National City of Culture in 2014 giving the City an opportunity to shape and brand the new Limerick

Tuesday, July 3rd – Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has today announced the introduction of a new National City of Culture Initiative for Ireland. As part of this initiative a city in Ireland will be selected and designated as a National City of Culture every two years, with the designation itself lasting for one calendar year.

The aim of the National City of Culture Initiative is to deliver a programme of cultural events and engagement in a city for one year, but which also has a longer-term positive impact. The National City of Culture Initiative will seek to bring artists, arts organisations, local authorities and civic groups that are working in a city together through the design of a calendar of events that showcases all that the city has to offer in arts and cultural expression.

The introduction of a National City of Culture Initiative in Ireland follows similar initiatives in other countries, and also follows the well established EU Capitals of Culture Programme which Ireland has held on two occasions. Minister Deenihan has long believed that Ireland should also have a National City of Culture which would allow cities to compete to hold the title every two years.

To start the initiative, Limerick has been chosen as the first National City of Culture. Limerick City is undergoing a process of profound change at present and 2014 is an important year for the city as it will be the year in which a new single local authority will be established. The Limerick Reorganisation Implementation Group (LRIG) is preparing for this change, and Minister Deenihan believes that the designation of Limerick as a City of Culture will help to shape, brand and promote a new Limerick city.

An EU study in 2004 found that the designation of European Capital of Culture served as a catalyst for the cultural development and transformation of the chosen city, and it is aimed to replicate these benefits on the national stage through this initiative. Minister Deenihan, therefore, has brought forward his proposal for the introduction of a National City of Culture Initiative, with Limerick as the inaugural City of Culture.

Minister Deenihan commented:

“I’m delighted to announce this new initiative today. I want the National City of Culture Initiative to be a clarion call to artists and arts organisations, local authorities, City Councils, local representatives and members of the public to work together in the development of an exciting calendar of events in their city.

“Through this, I hope that the selected Cities of Culture will experience an increase in visitor numbers for the period that they hold the designation. But, more importantly, I hope that the Cities of Culture will experience both an immediate and longer lasting engagement in the arts in their locality.

“I hope that local authorities, in particular, see the benefit of this initiative and apply to take part in the years ahead. Particularly in these times of reduced funding, we have to find creative ways of getting people involved in the arts and encouraging cooperation between different groups and individuals who share a common aim. In the arts and culture space, I believe the National City of Culture initiative can play a real role in this task.”

Michael Noonan TD, Minister for Finance, welcomed the initiative:

“This is a new and welcome development which will bring the cultural offerings of Limerick to a wider, national audience. I am confident that Limerick will set a high standard as the inaugural National City of Culture, and will provide an excellent example for the cities that follow.”

Jan O’Sullivan TD, Minister of State, also welcomed the new development:

“This is great news for Limerick. Research clearly shows the significant economic, tourist and cultural benefits that flow from similar initiatives across Europe. We have 18 months to get cracking on a series of year long activities that display all that is creative, progressive and inspiring about Limerick. I intend to work closely with local community, arts and tourist interests to ensure that 2014 is an outstanding success for Limerick and that we leave a legacy for future generations to cherish.”