Background

The National Gallery of Ireland was founded by an Act of Parliament in 1854 and opened to the public in 1864. Today it houses over 16,300 works of art, comprising 2,680 oil paintings, some 12,000 works on paper, and the remainder in different media, including sculpture, miniatures and objets d’art. The works range in date from the fourteenth century to the present day and broadly represent the development of the major European schools of painting – British, Dutch, Flemish, French, German, Italian and Spanish – complemented by a comprehensive collection of Irish fine art, library and archive collections. The Gallery is also home to the National Portrait Collection. The Gallery has been extended over the years: in 1903 (Milltown wing), in 1968 (Beit wing) and in 2002 (Millennium wing).

Context

The Gallery’s historic buildings on Merrion Square, namely the Dargan and Milltown wings, are currently undergoing significant refurbishment works as part of Phases 2 & 3 of the Master Development Plan (MDP). Those wings are expected to reopen in 2017. Central to the completion of the MDP is the realisation of Phase 4 which will incorporate a new wing to the Gallery, planned for the coming years and as yet unfunded. This final phase of the MDP would provide for the improvement of visitor circulation, and more critically for the enhancement of the Gallery’s education, conservation, library and archive facilities.

This strategic plan covers the period 2016-2018. The challenges and opportunities identified above provide a backdrop to the development of the plan.
Message from the Chair

This strategic plan presents the Gallery’s programmes and priorities between 2016 and 2018. It has been developed following intensive discussions among the staff, coordinated by senior management, and approved by the Board of Governors and Guardians at the end of 2015. The aims in this strategic plan accord with those published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in its Statement of Strategy 2015–2017.

With the handover of the refurbished historic Dargan and Milltown wings scheduled for 2016, this is an appropriate moment to reset the Gallery’s priorities. The Gallery’s focus on the visitor and on providing the best possible experience for them remains our major priority. Our efforts will be redoubled with the return of the historic wings for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, and the resumption of a full programme of exhibitions, events and educational activities. The reopening will assist the Gallery in its efforts to build fundraising capacity.

These key areas are the foundation for the current and future success of the Gallery. The reopening offers an ideal platform from which to launch a campaign for the completion of the MDP. This final piece of a decades-long programme of modernisation and improvement of the Gallery’s facilities underpins our mission of serving the public in their enjoyment of, and enrichment through, visual art.

Matthew Dempsey
Acting Chair, Board of Governors and Guardians, National Gallery of Ireland
Director’s Foreword

The National Gallery of Ireland is successfully addressing several bracing challenges. These include offering a stimulating public programme in an only partially accessible building and leading a major capital project to modernise the Gallery’s historic wings against a background of much reduced budgets and staff shortages. Creating a visitor-focused experience, founded on the expertise and commitment of the staff and Board, and celebrating the diversity of the collection and our programmes, is at the core of the current Strategic Plan. Above all, the Gallery will adhere to the best practice of corporate governance, through the oversight of its Board of Governors and Guardians.

The completion of the current Phases 2 & 3 of our Master Development Plan (MDP) has been pushed out for reasons beyond our control. In mid-2016 we expect the refurbished Dargan and Milltown wings to be handed back to the Gallery by the contractor. A major challenge will be to secure public resources to staff the refurbished wings and to support the Gallery’s ambitious public programme once fully reopened.

The process of rehanging these historic wings; refreshing the Beit and Millennium wings, which have seen such high usage over the past five years; and moving the entire collection within the building, are the three main tasks that will occupy the Gallery for several months after the handover. Restricted space for public access and programming, combined with the complex logistics of taking back the refurbished galleries, will define the first segment of this Strategic Plan.

The Gallery remains committed to the ongoing cultural programme around the ‘decade of commemorations’. When we fully reopen we will offer visitors a reconceived display of the permanent collection in galleries that will be both reassuringly familiar, but with dramatic new features and newly installed infrastructure. Navigating the galleries will become a far more enjoyable and uplifting experience.

A programme of temporary exhibitions will complement the new displays. Supported by an expanded digital presence, they will together form a considerable attraction to an anticipated increased number of visitors in 2017-18 from Ireland and abroad. We will continue to build capacity in our own efforts to raise additional resources to support the Gallery’s activities. The goal of this Strategic Plan is to ensure that the initial interest in the refurbished galleries can be translated into a lasting increase in visitor numbers and an improved experience of the Gallery’s activities, digital presence and facilities.
Appreciation of the Gallery, its collections and programmes will be much enhanced by the expansion of collaborations with regional, national and international partners on temporary exhibition projects and loans. It is also the Gallery’s aspiration to develop international audiences for Irish art. The Gallery will contribute to the formulation and implementation of ‘Culture 2025’, a National Cultural Policy initiative launched by government in 2014.

With the aspirations of ‘Culture 2025’ in mind, this period of modernisation at the Gallery will provide facilities that enhance the attractiveness of Ireland as a cultural and tourist destination. Our reopening will increase the Gallery’s strong national and international reputation which will be underpinned by the launch of new branding for the Gallery. Furthermore, completion of Phases 2 & 3 of the MDP present the opportunity to offer three dozen new permanent jobs to safeguard the security of the collections.

The conclusion of Phases 2 & 3 will help us create the necessary momentum to realise the full potential of the MDP. Phase 4, the final part of the MDP, requires substantial public and private investment and careful planning. Its completion will give the public fully accessible education spaces and a fit-for-purpose library and archive at the heart of the Gallery. Circulation through the Gallery will be vastly improved. Finally, Phase 4 will provide a conservation centre of excellence enabling optimum conditions for the care of the collection. During the period of this Strategic Plan, the Gallery will continue its preparations while developing a capital campaign to attract public and private support.

Sean Rainbird

Director, National Gallery of Ireland
Mission
To care for, interpret, develop and showcase art in a way that makes the National Gallery of Ireland an exciting place to encounter art

Vision
An outstanding experience that inspires an interest in and an appreciation of art for all

Role
Dedicated to bringing people and their art together

Purpose
To enrich lives

Brand idea
Where Ireland embraces art

Values
Integrity
Inclusion
Creativity
Expertise

Personality
Classic
Contemporary
Surprising
Warm
Knowledgeable
Dedicated
Pillars of New Organisation Structure and Objectives

Collections
- Care for and safeguard the national collection
- Manage and expand the collection actively so that it is relevant and accessible

Public Engagement
- Provide an excellent visitor experience on site and online
- Inspire and promote engagement with art with all individuals and groups in a respectful, non-discriminatory manner

Development & Collaborations
- Develop the Gallery’s Fundraising Programme through active partnerships with supporters and donors across a range of sectors and geographic areas
- Expand the Gallery’s accessibility and sustainability through collaborations

Supported by:

Corporate Services
- Develop a Corporate Governance framework
- Foster an informed, flexible and effective workforce in an environment supportive of equality, inclusion and diversity
- Ensure the Gallery is properly resourced with fit for purpose processes and systems
- Ensure readiness for Gallery re-opening, preparing for Phase 4 and optimal use of Gallery spaces
- Provide enhanced information and reporting on the Gallery’s activities to all stakeholders
Collections

Care for and safeguard the national collection

- Integrate the collection management system with new technologies
- Manage the move of the collection into the refurbished wings effectively
- Assess long term loans-out and review the suitability of the locations
- Verify the collection inventory after the re-opening
- Resource and update systems and facilities for the care of the collection operational areas
- Develop care of collections in collaboration with other institutions and evolve plans for a national Centre of Excellence for Conservation
- Review and update the Collection disaster recovery plan
- Develop a plan to address the preservation and conservation needs of the Library and Archives

Manage and expand the collection actively so that it is relevant and accessible

- Achieve an innovative and attractive re-hang for the re-opening
- Reinstate the temporary exhibitions programme, including necessary financing
- Provide greater opportunities for digital engagement with the on-line collections
- Enhance our understanding of the collections through research
- Continue to expand and develop the collection
- Continue to support cataloguing
- Continue to progress digitisation programmes
Public Engagement

Provide an excellent visitor experience onsite and online

- Align the collection, exhibitions, public and digital programme, facilities and staff to create an excellent visitor experience
- Increase audiences and provide access to all fairly and equally
- Roll out and establish the new brand
- Improve the visitor experience in the Gallery
- Transform digital engagement

Inspire and promote engagement in art

- Deliver high-quality and varied public and community programmes for our diverse audiences in a respectful, non-discriminatory manner
- Lead the development and delivery of visual literacy/art education in Ireland
- Provide an equal opportunities learning environment that meets the diverse needs of all individuals and groups
- Increase access for schools, students, teachers and life-long learners
- Broaden focus and build relationships with schools, 3rd level institutions, and cultural institutions/organisations
- Promote access to the Library & Archives and the Prints & Drawings Study Room
Development & Collaborations

Development

Expand Gallery fundraising through active partnerships with supporters and donors across a range of sectors and geographic areas

- Continue to implement the NGI Development Strategy 2015–2018 by putting in place the essential structures (new Brand Identity, CRM Database system, Reopening Marketing and Readiness) required for a strong and effective fundraising function within the Gallery that is compliant with applicable law and regulation

- Develop the role of the American Friends of the NGI and the British Fund for the NGI

- Develop and implement a strategy for the revitalisation of the Friends of the NGI, beginning Summer 2016 in time for the re-opening of historic wings

- Ensure Phase 4 readiness from both a fundraising perspective and from a wider planning perspective, ensuring that advancing the case for Government support for Phase 4 remains a priority

- Implement the NGI Fundraising Priorities 2016–2017, seeking support from individuals, companies, charitable trusts and foundations, to provide funding support for key areas including Exhibitions, Conservation, Education, Library & Archives, and other Gallery departments and activities, including an Acquisitions Programme linked to Section 1003

- Develop the Gallery’s events and venue hire programme to provide a regular, ongoing income stream following the reopening of the historic wings
Collaborations

Expand the Gallery’s accessibility and sustainability through collaborations

- Work in partnership with the Departments of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), other Government departments, the Office of Public Works (OPW), Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI) and other national agencies to deliver the Gallery’s strategic vision

- Share and enhance expertise and knowledge through partnerships and collaborations with sister institutions, museums, arts, educational and cultural communities

- Collaborate with Irish Museum of Modern Art and Crawford Art Gallery, to develop art research and conservation resources and services for the benefit of the three institutions and the arts community

- Develop opportunities to collaborate with organisations and individuals to enhance all Gallery programmes, conscious always of the need to promote equality, inclusion and diversity

- Promote a greater awareness of the Centre for the Study of Irish Art (CSIA)
Corporate Services

**Foster an informed, flexible and effective workforce in an environment supportive of equality, inclusion and diversity**

- Introduce a new organisation structure, while concluding staffing submission phases
- Obtain finance and staffing with active involvement from the Board and DAHG to enable the reopening of the Gallery’s historic wings on Merrion Square
- Foster positive and collaborative culture and a safe and healthy working environment
- Develop volunteer, intern and fellowship programmes in support of Gallery objectives
- Embed a Development Management System that enables optimum employee performance

**Ensure the Gallery is properly resourced with fit for purpose processes and systems**

- Finance: ensure oversight and accountability for Exchequer grant and revenue generated from sponsorships, fundraising and Gallery activities
- Ensure optimum use of existing Gallery systems, increase automation and integration and introduce collaborative tools
- Develop a Corporate Governance Framework, enhance existing procurement procedures and ensure systems and processes support the identification and management of risk
- Increase digital presence to extend the reach of the Gallery
Ensure readiness for the Gallery reopening, prepare for Phase 4 and optimise use of Gallery spaces

- Prioritise Health & Safety and update Safety Management system for re-opened Gallery
- Prepare historic buildings for public display and manage a successful re-opening programme
- Ensure the remaining Gallery complex is brought to a standard that complements the refurbished buildings
- Prioritise and deliver facilities required for Conservation, Education, Library and Archive Departments and actively progress Phase 4 of MDP

Enhance information on the Gallery’s activities for all stakeholders

- Develop the Gallery’s KPIs to capture and benchmark visitor experience, digital presence and overall performance
- Introduce automated reporting and develop a reporting suite for stakeholders
- Review the communications framework and IT infrastructure to facilitate easier information sharing and data retrieval
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