

St. Patrick's Festival

Strategy 2026 – 2029



Ireland's Flagship National Celebration

St. Patrick's Festival is both a moment of national pride and a globally recognised cultural experience — celebrating Ireland's rich heritage and vibrant contemporary culture, while offering visitors an authentic and unforgettable welcome.



Economic Impact*

- **€138 million** to the economy
- **€32 million** return to the Exchequer

*2025 figures



Tourism Driver

- **40%** of attendees from overseas
- **60%** of overseas attendees were first time visitors to Ireland
- Out of state visitors spent an average **5 nights** in Ireland



Employment

Creation of **over 10k employment days** for creatives and event workers



Global Reach & Attendance

A reach of **600 million people** annually
605k Festival attendees

*All figures above relate to the 2026 Festival unless otherwise stated.

Foreword



It is with great pride that I introduce St. Patrick's Festival's Strategy 2026 –2029, our most ambitious plan to date for Ireland's flagship cultural celebration. Throughout its history, the Festival has served as a vibrant expression of who we are as a people: creative, welcoming, diverse, and endlessly imaginative.

As we look to the future, we do so with a renewed commitment to harnessing that spirit in ways that enrich our communities, elevate our artistic excellence, and share the story of Ireland with the world.

This strategy has been formulated through a collaborative process between the Board of Directors and the Festival's Executive team, ensuring that our long-term vision is aligned, holistic, and informed by the combined expertise, experience and values of our organisation. Guided by this collaborative approach, this strategy reflects careful consideration and a unified commitment to advancing the Festival's mission.

Central to our thinking has been the unique role that St. Patrick's Festival plays in Ireland's tourism landscape and its significant contribution to the national economy. Each year, the Festival welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors to Dublin and inspires millions more around the globe to engage with Irish culture. This influx of domestic and international audiences supports local businesses, stimulates the hospitality and cultural sectors, and showcases Ireland as a dynamic, creative, and welcoming destination. Strengthening this impact—culturally, socially, and economically—remains a priority as we plan for the years ahead.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend my thanks to the Festival team for their vision and dedication, to our funders and stakeholders for their continued support, and to the countless artists, events workers, volunteers and community groups whose work brings the Festival to life each year.
We look forward to embarking on this exciting new phase for St. Patrick's Festival and to celebrating all that Ireland is and all that it can be.

Shane Clarke, Chair
St. Patrick's Festival Board of Directors

Introduction



We are delighted to launch St. Patrick's Festival Strategy 2026 - 2029. This document represents more than just a plan for the years ahead—it is a statement of our ambition, our values, and our commitment to Ireland's cultural vibrancy at home and around the world.

It is an honour and privilege to lead the amazing team who produce the National Treasure that is St. Patrick's Festival. My vision is to run a growth focused organisation coupled with an ambitious programme of development that promotes our iconic status as the ultimate connection to our country and home, whilst promoting culture, diversity and inclusion both internationally and domestically. St. Patrick's Festival means so much to so many people and as custodian's we need to make sure we deliver on an entertaining festival that we can all be proud of.

This strategy outlines how we will evolve—embracing innovation, expanding partnerships with our many stakeholders, investing in artists and communities and strengthening our economic impact. It sets out the priorities that will guide us, the principles that inspire us, and the actions that will shape our future.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our Board of Directors, our staff and wider team, our funders and partners, and the many voices from across Ireland's cultural landscape who will contribute to this strategic vision. Together, we will build a Festival that not only honours our heritage but looks confidently to the future—dynamic, inclusive, resilient, and unmistakably Irish.

I look forward to the journey ahead.

Richard Tierney, CEO

Introduction (Continued)



St. Patrick's Festival is the largest showcase of Irish Arts and Culture in the annual calendar. With audience reach in the millions, it is the perfect opportunity for us to share the depth and breadth of artistry that Ireland nurtures.

For me as Artistic Director, the Artistic Programme is more than showcasing the best of our arts and culture with the world, it is an opportunity for meaningful connection with our cultural community, for engagement with the people of Dublin, and a celebration of the connection between arts and audiences.

Each year, I want the festival programme to develop in such a way that audiences, both domestic and overseas, feel a pull to return to the festival to uncover something new. I want the festival to champion our outdoor arts companies through the parade performances, and through our community work, for the people of Dublin to feel ownership and pride in hosting the National Celebration of St. Patrick's Day. With authentic connection at the heart of everything we do, from presenting performances to community engagement, from business collaborations to large-scale spectacles, I want our audiences to feel that this festival was made for them.

Aoife Carry, Artistic Director



Executive Summary

Our mission is to ensure that St. Patrick's Festival is recognised as one of the top festivals in the world and is the key incentive for visitors to choose Ireland as their travel destination in March each year.

For those that call Ireland home, St. Patrick's Festival is a moment of national pride, showcasing the richness of Irish arts and heritage, reflecting the modern, diverse, and vibrant culture of the country today. For visitors, it's the ultimate unforgettable experience, the chance to immerse themselves in events bursting with joy, warmth and authenticity that offers a Céad Míle Fáilte (a hundred thousand welcomes).

St. Patrick's Festival will strive to push creative boundaries and enhance attendee's experience year on year, ensuring it grows in scale, impact, and international reputation.

St. Patrick's Festival is Ireland's flagship national celebration and one of the world's leading cultural events. Rooted in heritage and propelled by innovation, the Festival reaches over 600 million people globally and plays a vital role in showcasing Ireland's contemporary and traditional culture to the world. The Festival delivers a powerful economic impact for Ireland, generating approximately €138 million for the economy and returning an estimated €32 million to the Exchequer. This 2026–2029 Strategic Plan outlines the organisation's strategy for continued growth, excellence, and impact.



Executive Summary (Continued)

Underpinned by our core values—community, diversity, joy, prosperity and sustainability—this strategy focuses on three interlinked strategic priorities:

- **Festival Programme:** to elevate the programme as an unmissable, internationally renowned cultural experience that blends innovation with deep cultural resonance.
- **Festival Audience:** to deliver an exceptional and accessible Festival that connects with audiences, positioning the Festival as a key driver for both domestic and international attendees.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** to deepen our community and volunteer participation and strengthen relationships with stakeholders, sponsors, and partners.

To effectively deliver on our strategic priorities, we will ensure that St. Patrick's Festival has a strong, resilient foundation underpinned by robust governance, effective leadership and sound financial management.

This strategic plan reflects our ambition to inspire global audiences, nurture artistic excellence, and continue our evolution as an unmissable, iconic cultural event that captures the spirit and vibrancy of Ireland and its people.



Impact: Festival in Numbers

€138 million*

to the Economy in 2025
(15% increase on 2024)

€32 million*

estimated return to
the Exchequer in 2025
(15% increase on 2024)

10,698

total number of days
employment in 2026

+605k

festival attendees in 2026

4,852

total participants in 2026

54%

international attendees
were influenced by the
festival to visit Ireland*

523 million

eyes reached through
festival PR and marketing
campaign in 2026

449

total number of events
in 2026

*Figures provided by Fáilte Ireland

Who We Are

Established in 1996, St. Patrick's Festival is Ireland's official celebration of our national holiday, St. Patrick's Day. Its origins lie in honouring Ireland's patron saint, St. Patrick. Initially, it was a solemn commemorative feast day dedicated to paying tribute to the saint, but over the years, St. Patrick's Day has evolved into a vibrant celebration encompassing the richness of Irish culture.

Today, it marks the opening of the tourist season and is a joyful occasion marked by the iconic Parade, artistic performances, and diverse expressions of Irish heritage; a multicultural international event that is committed to displaying contemporary and traditional arts, culture and heritage of the Irish people and the people who call Ireland home.

It is recognised globally as one of the world's biggest festivals, with attendance figures of 605k and a global reach of over 523 million people in 2026, and an economic impact of €138 million* and a return to the exchequer of €32 million* (*2025 figures).

In 2026 the Festival created a total of 10,698 days employment for artists, creators and events workers The Festival is a key driver for the tourism industry, presenting a world class event that showcases the very best of Irishness and Ireland as a destination, platforming our incredible unique culture, heritage and traditions to a global audience through quality experiences.

St. Patrick's Festival is an independent not-for-profit organisation with charity status, governed by a Board of Directors under the patronage of the President of Ireland.





Our Mission

To organise, create and manage the annual national St. Patrick's Festival in Dublin for the purpose of the promotion, celebration and advancement of the arts, culture, and heritage of Ireland for the benefit of the community and the public good.



Our Vision

1.Cultural Expression: A celebratory showcase of modern and traditional Irish Arts and Culture.

2. Iconic Destination Event:
An iconic, unmissable festival for both domestic and international visitors, driving tourism and economic investment, creating employment opportunities and showcasing Ireland on a global stage.

3. Animation of Dublin City: Vibrant, surprising and joyful experiences that animate indoor and outdoor spaces across the city.

Our Values



Community

Bringing communities and people from all over Ireland together to create, produce and participate as part of Ireland's largest outdoor event.



Diversity

Supporting Ireland's diverse arts, culture and heritage. Representing and celebrating all ages, backgrounds and abilities through both our programme and our operations.



Joy

Capturing the spirit of 'craic' that makes Ireland so special. Embodying in spectacular fashion the essence of celebration, happiness, and positive experiences to create a vibrant and uplifting atmosphere for all.



Prosperity

Contributing to the prosperity of Ireland by influencing domestic and international tourism, generating a significant return to the economy and the creation of employment opportunities.



Sustainability

Passionate about our environment and the climate and committed to our Climate Action Plan 2024. Championing sustainability through our production and programming.


Our Mission
Our Values
Our Vision
Strategic Priority 1
To deliver a world-renowned, unmissable festival programme
Strategic Priority 2
To exceed audience expectations
Strategic Priority 3
To cultivate deeper stakeholder engagement
Our Organisation
Strong Business Foundation
Good Governance, Effective Leadership, Sound Financial Management



Strategic Priority 1

To Deliver a World-Renowned, Unmissable Festival Programme

Objectives

- Ensure that St. Patrick's Festival is a world renowned, unmissable, iconic event.
- Increase Festival attendance and engage new audiences.
- Increase the number of cultural institutions engaged with annually across Dublin to widen the Festival's offering.
- Curate an even more diverse programme of indoor and outdoor, daytime and nighttime events with 'something for everyone'.
- Create more strategic partnerships that will enhance the Festival programme.
- To position the festival as a highly sought after performance opportunity for international bands.
- Ensure that the programme reflects the organisation's values promoting joy, diversity, community integration, prosperity and sustainable practices.

Strategic Priority 1

To Deliver a World-Renowned, Unmissable Festival Programme

Key Actions

- To raise the bar annually by curating a programme of events that is bigger, bolder and more impactful. Events will include the iconic parade, Céilí Mór and city-wide activations that reflects the festival as a globally sought-after, legendary event, blending excellence, innovation, and a strong sense of place to deliver unforgettable moments.
- Include representation of traditional and contemporary Irish arts and culture, as well as representation and involvement of the people who call Ireland home.
- Increase the support to parade companies to provide more development opportunities for both emerging and established artists.
- Create more performance opportunities for international marching bands across the city-wide programme, working closely with tour operators to promote the festival and ensure its prominence as a premier performance opportunity.
- Work with existing and new spaces and venues to create more locations to present the Festival programme and widen the Festival's city footprint.
- Ensure the programme continues to promote social responsibility and sustainability and that these are reflected in all areas of the event.
- The introduction of a new large scale spectacle event by 2028.





Strategic Priority 2

To exceed audience expectations

Objectives

- With 54% of overseas visitors reporting that St. Patrick's Festival influenced their decision to visit Ireland, the Festival is already a powerful driver of tourism. The objective will be to increase this figure year-on-year by enhancing the scale, visibility, and international appeal of the programme.
- Promote Dublin as a cultural hub and Ireland as a must-visit destination.
- To gain deeper insight into audience preferences, to inform the future direction of the Festival.
- Achieve a higher level of domestic and international audience satisfaction ratings.
- Create a festival programme that is accessible to everyone.

Strategic Priority 2

To exceed audience expectations

Key Actions

- Ensure the majority of events are free to attend.
- Prioritise accessibility.
- Targeted marketing campaigns and the development of strategic global partnerships to further position the Festival as a key motivator for travel to Ireland.
- Continue to measure audience satisfaction by conducting feedback surveys, and assist stakeholders in further data collection.
- Analysis of audience feedback and other data sources to create an understanding of who attends the Festival, what the motivators area and how this can be improved and amplified for future events.
- The introduction of a new large scale spectacle event by 2028.





Strategic Priority 3

To Cultivate Deeper Stakeholder Engagement

Objectives

- Increase engagement with local businesses and cultural institutions to increase footfall and create wider economic benefit.
- Cultivate stronger relationships with our stakeholders, sponsors and partners.
- Encourage and increase participation in the Festival through volunteering and community involvement.
- Increase employment opportunities as the Festival grows.

Strategic Priority 3

To Cultivate Deeper Stakeholder Engagement

Key Actions

- Work closely with local authority, emergency response agencies and wider stakeholders to ensure all licensing obligations are met and deliver a safe event for all.
- Create an even stronger volunteer programme that values volunteers' contribution and prioritises their welfare and experience.
- Grow our community arts programme.
- Robust marketing plan to increase the annual reach figures.
- Increase the level of employment opportunities for artists and events workers.
- Carry out thorough post-event reporting for stakeholders, sponsors and partners.





Our Organisation

To effectively deliver on our strategic priorities, we will ensure that St. Patrick's Festival has a strong, resilient foundation underpinned by robust governance, effective leadership and sound financial management.

Objectives

- Create a safe and enjoyable place of work and an organisation that upholds values of inclusion and equity.
- Ensure operational efficiency, by optimizing resources, streamlining processes and promoting sustainable festival operations.
- Adhere to the Charities Governance Code and best practices in not-for-profit management.
- Maintain financial stability and diversify revenue base.
- Ensure financial controls are in place to meet all legal and regulatory obligations.
- Increase organisational resilience to future-proof the organisation against risks and enable sustainable growth.

Our Organisation

To effectively deliver on our strategic priorities, we will ensure that St. Patrick's Festival has a strong, resilient foundation underpinned by robust governance, effective leadership and sound financial management.

Key Actions

- Continue to foster a positive organisational culture, prioritising staff well-being and supporting professional growth.
- Regular reviews of operations, policies, governance and strategic direction to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness and alignment with the company's mission.
- Strengthen existing relationships with core funders and work towards multi-annual funding arrangements.
- Increase commercial and non-commercial income streams.
- Maintain rigorous financial management procedures, including detailed budget tracking and robust internal controls, to ensure accountability, transparency, and the effective use of resources.
- Ensure continuity planning is in place with regular reviews of the company risk register, insurance and legal requirements, and succession planning for key roles.



Measuring Success

Funding the Festival

The Festival is funded through a mixture of core funding (from Fáilte Ireland and Dublin City Council) and other income raised through sponsorship, ticket sales and other sources. The Festival plans to increase income (outside of core funding) by 10% annually.

Supporting Creatives

The Festival aims to increase support to parade companies and provide more development opportunities for both emerging and established creatives. This will be accomplished by increasing the investment available and creating additional work opportunities. Success of this support will be measured by the increase in investment and participation, growth in the number and quality of development opportunities, and positive feedback and outcomes for participating parade companies and creatives.

Audience Satisfaction

Each year Fáilte Ireland conducts consumer research at St. Patrick's Festival's events. In 2025, attendee satisfaction rating was 71%. The Festival aspires to increase attendee satisfaction rating by 2% each year of this strategy to reach a rating of 79% by 2029.

Global Reach

In 2026 the Festival had a 523 million PR and marketing campaign total global reach. The Festival aims to increase this total reach figure to 800 million by 2029.

Digital Reach

The Festival recognises the importance of having a strong online presence and plans to grow its digital reach 10% annually. This will be measured through social media analytics, website traffic, newsletter engagement and data provided by media partners.

Measuring Success (Continued)

Increase Attendance

The Festival had an attendance of over 605,000 in 2026. With plans to curate a bigger and bolder programme of diverse events year-on-year, the aim will be to increase attendance numbers by 2% each year of this strategy.

Spectacle Event

The Festival currently consists of core events the Parade, Céilí Mór, Treasure Hunt and City wide programme. The Festival aspires to introduce an additional large-scale stand-alone spectacle event to the programme by 2028.

Volunteer Programme

The volunteer programme is a very important component of the Festival and the aim is for all volunteers to have an enjoyable and meaningful experience while volunteering with St. Patrick's Festival. While general feedback has been sought from participants following each festival, to quantify the volunteer programme's effectiveness, satisfaction surveys will be conducted. These surveys will be conducted to evaluate the volunteer experience and shape future volunteer programmes, and the aim will be to see an increase in the overall satisfaction ratings each year.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a core principle guiding the Festival's future development, with a focus on reducing environmental impact and promoting responsible practices. The Festival aspires to lead through example in environmental stewardship and works with a number of partners each year on sustainability initiatives and events. The Festival will embed sustainability at the heart of its operations by increasing investment in sustainable initiatives by 10% each year and empower staff through expanded training and development opportunities to ensure staff are equipped to deliver on our environmental goals.

Conclusion

This Strategy for St. Patrick's Festival 2026 - 2029 sets out a bold and dynamic vision for the future of one of the world's most iconic cultural celebrations. As we look ahead, we reaffirm our commitment to artistic excellence, inclusivity, sustainability, and the public good.

Through this strategy, we aim not only to strengthen the Festival's reputation globally but also to deepen its relevance locally, ensuring it remains a source of national pride, opportunity, and shared joy for communities across Ireland. By investing in our people, building strategic partnerships, and delivering a compelling, internationally renowned programme across Dublin's city centre, we will continue to position St. Patrick's Festival as a cornerstone of Ireland's cultural identity and a beacon for global celebration.
Now more than ever, Ireland needs St. Patrick's Festival to act as powerful driver for tourism. As global competition for visitors intensifies, the festival provides a unique platform to showcase Ireland's culture and creativity on the world stage, attracting international audiences, boosting local businesses, creating a wide-reaching digital footprint and delivering significant returns to the national economy.
This strategy will be delivered through annual operational plans which will be created in line with the outlined strategic priorities, objectives and actions. We will annually review the strategic plan to ensure its continued relevance to our mission.
Together with our stakeholders, supporters, artists, and audiences, we will continue to evolve, adapt, and thrive—ensuring that St. Patrick's Festival remains a transformative, inspiring, and unforgettable experience for generations to come.



