



COISCÉIM DANCE THEATRE | THREE ANCHORS TO THRIVE

A Strategic Business Plan 2022-2027

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, ahead of its 25-year anniversary, CoisCéim robustly reviewed itself from the inside out to enable the Board and Executive to lay the best possible foundations for a new five-year strategic plan. We looked optimistically forward to 2020 - working group in place and a certainty that *"by harnessing diversity and concentrating on resilience we could enrich our capacity to make "excellent" work in a republic of equals, where the arts are for all"*¹.

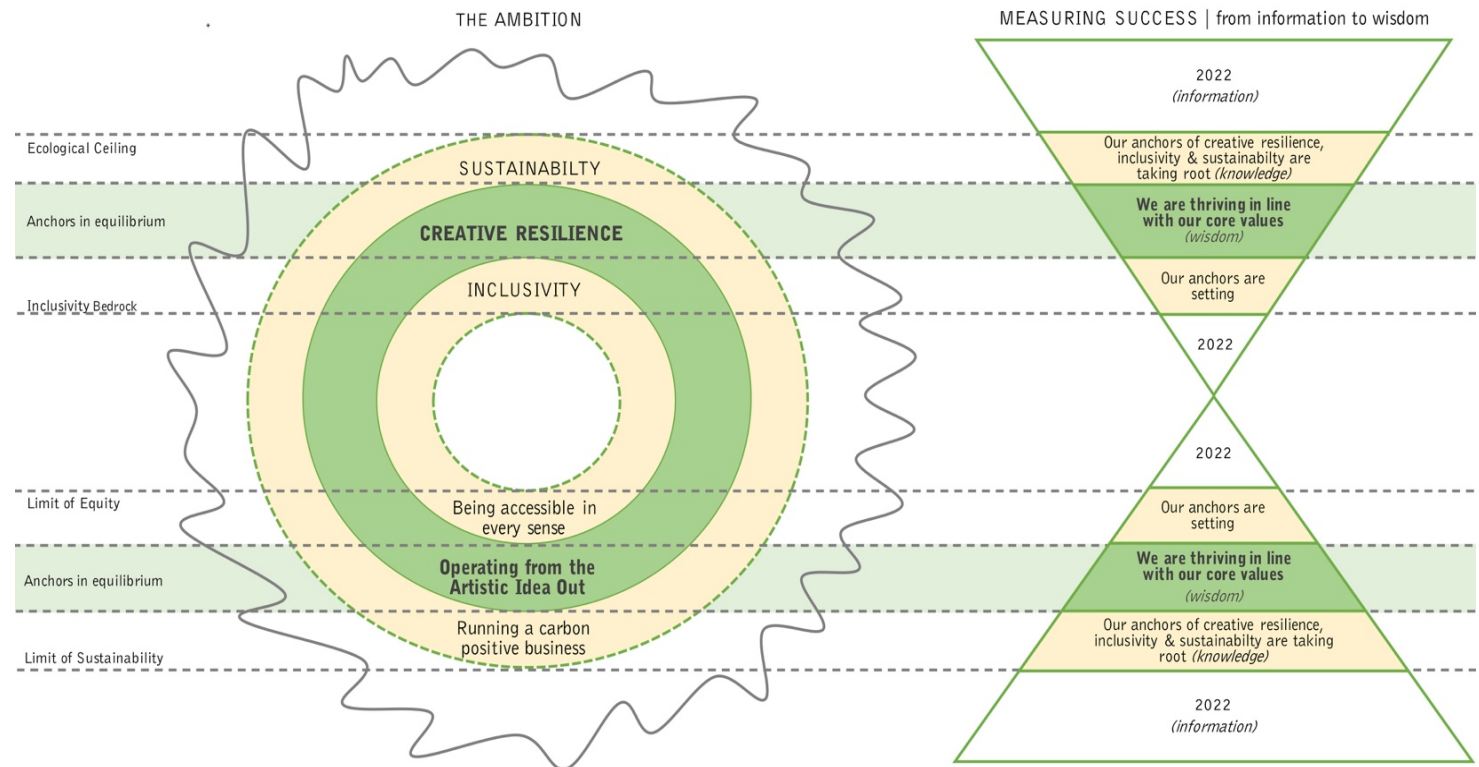
Fast forward to late Spring 2021. As a pathway out of the Covid-19 pandemic started to emerge, we picked up our strategic planning work. All of our research pointed towards the need to take a radical new approach to realise the Vision and Values of the organisation – moving away from a traditional system of parallel policies and plans (artistic, financial, engagement & access, diversity & inclusion etc..) to a balanced system where *"logical time can fully harness creative flow"*²

Developed by the Board and Executive with input from external specialists, our new business model³ is informed by the thinking of Kate Raworth (Doughnut Economics), Marjorie Kelly (Next Generation Enterprise Design), and Elif Shafak (novelist/political scientist) to shape a strategy for a balanced generative enterprise that **"is designed to THRIVE not grow"**⁴

It is anchored by the three keystones of:

- **CREATIVE RESILIENCE** (operating from the artistic idea out to create an enterprise that allows unbounded artistic expression)
- **INCLUSIVITY** (being accessible in all senses through a business that is representative and reflective of the society that it serves)
- **SUSTAINABILITY** (running a company that is sustainable in terms of both physical and human resources)

The four core values of company, INTEGRITY, VIBRANCY, CONNECTION & JOY underpin every aspect of this plan. Its success will be measured using a series of fit-for-purpose internal indicators & external tools including BCorporation certification.



¹ *Arts Council Three Year Plan, 2020 – 2022

² David Bolger, Essay, Empowerment & Creative Flow, 2018

³ Model design by BW, Elif Shafak's distinctions between information, knowledge & wisdom (2019) used to map "hourglass" pathways to space of equilibrium & success

⁴ Kate Raworth

Cover Image by Ste Murray from IN THE MAGIC HOUR at Querrin Pier, Co. Clare

CoisCéim | THE PICTURE NOW. STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON.

The national and international success of recent work including THE WOLF AND PETER, THESE ROOMS and BODY LANGUAGE / IN THE MAGIC HOUR, together with a revitalised and dynamic Board and our new studio at 42 Fairview Strand mean that as we emerge from the pandemic CoisCéim is well positioned to look forward with a degree of confidence – and define a strategic plan that seeks to enable to company to THRIVE.

This plan is designed to be succinct and is structured as a series of tables that articulate the connection between our Values – the anchors of Creative Resilience, Inclusivity & Sustainability – and the company’s priorities for the next five years.

VALUE	DESCRIPTION	WHERE WE ARE NOW KEY STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON		
		CREATIVE RESILIENCE	INCLUSIVITY / ACCESS	SUSTAINABILITY
INTEGRITY	Our actions are rooted in honesty, kindness and respect	We are transparent about & committed to improving pay & conditions - https://coisceim.com/about-us/working-with-us/	Inclusivity is considered in our decision-making processes. Physical accessibility was a critical factor in the selection of our new studio	Sustainability - natural and human - is recognised as essential for the organisation to thrive
VIBRANCY	We celebrate creativity, originality, imagination and experimentation	We have a national & international track-record & reputation for creating works of artistic excellence. We are recognised leaders in our field	We share our skills, resources & space with other artists in the knowledge that unbounded experimentation benefits all	We believe that art can create meaning & dance can be a key catalyst for change as highlighted by our current Broadreach programme
CONNECTION	We believe that working with and for people from different places, cultures, and thinking makes us all better at what we do	We are known for our collaborative approach & ability to lead & be part of multi-partner projects to deliver projects that stretch artforms & audiences	We make work that is relevant, representative & reflective of today’s Ireland and try to present it in a way that maximises accessibility for all audiences	We look for cross-sectoral solutions outside the arts - to harness innovation to find fit for purpose solutions to increase awareness e.g. A REACTION TO PLACE
JOY	We love our work, we are open-minded and aim to find joy in every day	We have a competent, dedicated team who are known for their commitment to dignity at work, kindness and care	Our Broadreach programme is recognised as a model of “best practice” – as an inspirational way to take part in dance and “have fun” – we strive to increase access to the artform in ways that people enjoy	Our new studio gifts us outdoor space to highlight joy in micro-biodiversity including the ability to be part of the NatureRX Pilot Rain Garden project

CoisCéim | OUR AMBITION FOR 2027

CoisCéim ambitions for the next five years emerged from the final element of our strategic planning process – a second facilitated session where the focus was to define the central drivers of this plan – namely⁵:

- AMBITION | BUILDING ON SUCCESS by creating stronger positioning & strengthening and protecting existing human resources
- PLACE | FAIRVIEW & BEYOND by harnessing the potential of place & enhancing international opportunities
- FUTURE | THRIVING SUSTAINABLY by mainstreaming inclusivity and sustainability & managing and mitigating risk

PRIORITY	SUMMARY	AMBITION IN 2027 TO BE FLOURISHING IN LINE WITH OUR CORE VALUES we will		
		CREATIVE RESILIENCE	INCLUSIVITY / ACCESS	SUSTAINABILITY
DYNAMIC AMBITION – FORTIFYING RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SEE. TOUCH. FEEL. DANCE. - continue to strive to show that dance is for EVERYONE – remove the current hidden subsidy in the organisation, – EMBED FLEXIBLE CAPACITY, while keeping it lean and nimble 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continue to build our reputation for artistic excellence – make our achievements more visible in ways that connect widely across communities – enable people to delve deeper into what we do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – foreground professional development to balance equity through formal partnerships and informal supports, masterclasses – expand the opportunities in line with need & make these supports visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continue to articulate climate change in accessible ways through Broadreach participation projects – make these projects more visible through partnership and high-profile initiatives
HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF PLACE – LOCAL TO GLOBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – fully exploit 42 Fairview Strand to MAKE THE COMMUNITY around us PROUD of what we do and give them a sense of ownership – restart international & national touring – develop associated Broadreach projects rooted in the "local" with global reach to make OUR STUDIO A WINDOW TO THE WORLD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – welcome & nurture – artists, neighbours, participants, audiences, stakeholders, funders and the public to 42 Fairview Strand – where creativity connects people, with place - to DANCE & DREAM – open a digital dance portal from north Dublin to the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – develop Broadreach projects with themes relevant to our locality — foster lasting bonds with the neighbourhood to co-create dance that has a CONNECTION TO PLACE – expand & internationalise Broadreach and place it on a firm financial footing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – build on A REACTION TO PLACE to enable 42 Fairview Strand to become a carbon positive space while preserving its heritage & embodied energy – tour nationally/internationally using prevailing models of best practice including digital/hybrid touring through new media
THRIVING SUSTAINABLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – embed inclusivity, sustainability and access as routine in all decision-making processes – become visibly reflective & representative of the societies in which we operate in every aspect of our business – add to and diversify income sources in ethical ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – define our activity programme by its creative cycle – have the financial resources to realise artistic ambition – increase project longevity by remounting productions for new audiences in diverse ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – foster partnerships that enable us to become more inclusive to bring dance to under-represented & new communities – be recognised as model of “best practice” with regard to access (studio, performances, projects, humans) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – closely monitor ongoing risks especially those related to – external macro-economic events that impact on the wellbeing of those with whom we work & those associated with our major stakeholders / funders

⁵ Taken directly from March 2022 Away Day Report by policy analyst & former Board Director, Olwen Dawe, who facilitated the process

CoisCéim | HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR AMBITIONS

CoisCéim's assets are human - we are primarily owned by OUR WORK: the human endeavour that goes into its creation and the audience response to it. We are defined by the marks we make and the traces that are left. We believe that the pathway to achieving our goals is through deepening connections with our audiences and participants so that our activities resonate with their everyday – with lasting impact. We will do this by:

- MAKING THE HIGHEST QUALITY WORK POSSIBLE through collaborating with extraordinary artists, technicians & production teams
- ROOTING OUR VISION & VALUES IN PLACE through vibrant, varied activities that embed our ethos in 42 Fairview Strand, our neighbourhood & beyond
- INCREASING THE VISIBILITY & UNDERSTANDING of what we do, how we do it and the value our work brings to society

PRIORITY	SUMMARY	TO ACHIEVE OUR 2027 GOALS, we will:		
		CREATIVE RESILIENCE	INCLUSIVITY / ACCESS	SUSTAINABILITY
DYNAMIC AMBITION – FORTIFYING RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – create, produce & present work of the highest artistic integrity that meaningfully connects with audiences – invigorate our organisational structure – develop and implement a fit for purpose income diversification & generation strategy that aligns with values of the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – run a company that the world's leading artists want to work with – DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT A FIVE-YEAR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TO IMPROVE VISIBILITY & ARTFORM AWARENESS – work with like-minded ethical & high-profile partners boosting ambition & artistic quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – fortify Broadreach – increase collaborations with resource & similar organisations to foster professional development across the performing arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – expand Broadreach activities with underlying themes of balancing equity & sustainability – start the journey to BCORP certification – DEVISE & IMPLEMENT A NEW PHILANTHROPIC GIVING SCHEME WITH CLEAR TARGETS AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF PLACE – LOCAL TO GLOBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – cement 42 Fairview Strand's reputation as a welcoming, dynamic cultural hub for dance and the performing arts – work with our local community to become a valuable and valued member of the North Dublin neighbourhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – develop & deliver a Broadreach series with the local community focussing on issues/themes that are important & relevant to Fairview/Dublin – restart joined up national & international touring from 2023 with existing projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – devise a studio programme for independent artists to experiment across artform & context – make our building physically accessible to all – MAP THE PATH TO INCLUSIVITY INCLUDING EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –define a realistic timeframe, action plan and milestones to full carbon positivity – experiment & prototype new hybrid/digital ways of presenting work for “hard to reach” & international audiences
THRIVING SUSTAINABLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – put in place processes that embed access & inclusivity into our everyday decision making – work together with our peers to highlight common areas of need (e.g. Dignity at Work, Challenges for Inclusivity, Sustainable touring) for singular solutions that benefit all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – embed “logical time” into all our creative processes & partnerships – DEFINE AND IMPLEMENT A ROBUST METHODOLOGY TO MEASURE CREATIVE RESILIENCE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continue to advocate for clear, equitable, accessible ways for people to CALL OUT bias & unacceptable behaviours & be part of an industry wide solution that protects everybody. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – build connections to access European & other ethical funding streams – remove hidden subsidy & enable elasticity from our organisational structure –DEVELOP A FIT FOR PURPOSE SUCCESSION POLICY

CoisCéim | WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE & HOW WE WILL MEASURE IT

As Lord Kelvin said "To measure is to know. If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it."

Where we differ with Lord Kelvin however, is in the need to attach a number. We fundamentally believe that using empirical KPIs to value our business undermines our innate worth – and the fundamental need for arts and culture to the overall health of society. In addition, many major commercial enterprises now place PURPOSE on a par with profit and measure progress through BCorp certification (www.bcorporation.net). CoisCéim will take this approach in relation to its inclusivity and sustainability goals - as well as putting in place a series of relative metrics to measure creative resilience – these will focus on monitoring the journey rather than the outcome & capture the non-linear nature of our business – *'are we better than we were this time last year/ cycle/ performance /activity/ process...'*

VALUE	HEADLINE INDICATOR	SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE THE FOLLOWING IN 2027...we will		
		CREATIVE RESILIENCE	INCLUSIVITY / ACCESS	SUSTAINABILITY
DYNAMIC AMBITION – FORTIFYING RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have made regular appearances on mainstream radio and the Late, Late Show – be a leader in a movement bringing "dance" into the mainstream as accessible rather than elitist – presented work on the Abbey Stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continue to make & be lauded for "ground-breaking, boundary-busting, magical, excellent" dance theatre work – work with the world's leading artistic collaborators cementing our importance to the dance ecosystem in Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have created a new full-time permanent position of Broadreach Curator – be delivering a national Broadreach programme that is self-financing (2019 levels), unique & stimulates a genuine curiosity in dance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have evolved into an organisation with a fit for purpose structure that allows for elastic shifts in capacity without over reliance on the two founders – continue to attract Board members of the highest quality
HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF PLACE – LOCAL TO GLOBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have an identifiable home - 42 FAIRVIEW STRAND: that is widely known at home & abroad as a sustainable vibrant hub of creativity for professionals & non-professionals alike – and for the people of North Dublin <i>"it is 'theirs', they own it, love it, use it and most importantly brag about it."</i>⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – be touring coherently nationally & globally from major stages & festivals to intimate settings – have rooted our studio in the community & be known as a window to the world for artists, participants & neighbours alike 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – be a model of best practice in relation to accessibility and recognised as such by all our stakeholders – be leading & taking part in multi-partner, transnational cross-sectoral projects funded by Creative Europe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – be recognised as a model of best practice in terms of sustainable practices that underpin our studio operations – be undertaking national & international carbon zero touring
THRIVING SUSTAINABLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have achieved BCORP Certification that has been reviewed and renewed at least once with ongoing improvements noted – be a core strategic client of the Arts Council of Ireland who can secure matching funding for projects from €50K to €1M – have a reserve of 20% of its average annual turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have aligned project development, programming and funding cycles to ensure <i>"logical time can fully harness creative flow"</i> & the non-linear nature of artistic development cycles recognised by core stakeholders – be properly resourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have balanced equity & visibly embedded access & inclusion into our DNA – be representative & reflective of the community around us – be widely known as an active advocate for dance & the performing arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – operate a carbon positive business – have defined & tested a mechanism to measure creative resilience that is endorsed by our peers/stakeholders/funders – have a succession plan in place

⁶ Jacquie Marsh - Feedback on Away Day report, March 2022

NEXT STEPS

The three anchors of this plan will underpin our artistic programme. In addition, we will develop the four following pieces of work over the next twelve months in order to implement the strategy successfully:

- an integrated DEVELOPMENT PLAN to increase visibility, artform awareness & independent funding streams
- a robust series of internal indicators that measure the artistic, access and sustainability journeys over the next five years - these will define THRIVE
- a series of processes (including external oversight) to embed access & inclusion in our everyday within five years
- a SUCCESSION policy

CONCLUSION

CoisCéim exists to create “exceptional, inclusive, and sustainable dance theatre”⁷ – this is our core purpose and it underpins everything we do - every decision we make. This strategic plan outlines how we can achieve this mission using the principle of a CIRCULAR, INTERDEPENDENT ECOLOGY that unites our values of INTEGRITY, VIBRANCY, CONNECTION and JOY with our three keystones to prosper.

In a nutshell by 2027 – we will consider ourselves to be in good health if we have:

- strengthened and evidenced the artistic quality of our work, further enhancing the global reputation of dance made in Ireland
- established a new vibrant, creative hub for dance in Fairview that is valued by its local community and connected to the wider world
- embedded inclusivity into our everyday decision-making processes and are reflective of the society that surrounds us
- evolved into a carbon positive business with a nimble, elastic organisational structure tailored to artistic ambition
- diversified & grown income sources to ensure that Arts Council Strategic Funding accounts for less than 50% of turnover
- been certified and validated as a BCorporation, underscoring our continued commitment to social inclusion and sustainability

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CoisCéim would like say a huge thank you to the current and past Board Directors who have informed this work over the last three years, particularly Jacquie Marsh, who guided the working group. Sincere gratitude to Janice McAdam and Olwen Dawe for facilitating our strategic development sessions and organising our thoughts in 2019 and 2022 respectively and to Amanda Nyoni, Dara Connolly & Jack Kavanagh for helping us challenge our thinking around inclusivity.

⁷ First sentence of CoisCéim’s Mission Statement – “Our mission is to produce exceptional, inclusive, and sustainable dance theatre. We move with integrity, creating distinct and vibrant work that seeks to reflect contemporary Ireland. We are dynamic and forward-thinking in our approach towards performance, access and creative participation. We promote awareness of dance in Ireland and overseas and strive to foster future audiences”