



**Age &  
Opportunity**

# **Strategic Plan**

2018 – 2020

# Contents

- 4** Foreword
- 6** Our Strategy at a glance
- 8** Ageing in Ireland: the policy context
- 10** Renewing Age & Opportunity's focus
- 12** Strategic Theme One
- 13** Strategic Theme Two
- 14** Strategic Theme Three
- 15** Strategic Theme Four
- 16** Who we are
- 19** What we do

# Foreword

We are delighted to present Age & Opportunity's Strategic Plan for the three year period 2018-2020.

2018 marks our 30th anniversary as an organisation – we were founded as a response to the need for promotion of more positive attitudes to older people and ageing.

We have established ourselves as leading thinkers on ageing in Ireland, exploring key issues such as what is older age, how we can plan for our own ageing and what positive changes we can make in our own lives to ensure that we live well for longer.

When we started in 1988 the landscape of ageing was bleak – there was no national physical activity programme for older age, no national arts & culture programme celebrating creativity as we age, and no personal development programmes to promote optimal ageing.

In 2018 we are proud to celebrate the significantly altered landscape, where ageing brings many possibilities and opportunities.

Our previous strategic Plan 2015-2017 brought about key successes, and we managed to fulfil all the objectives under our three themes; meaningful engagement, influencing policy and practice and organisational effectiveness, through the dedication and commitment of our Board and staff team.

The Board established a committee comprised of two Board members, the CEO and members of the senior management team to oversee the development of this Plan. The Plan was developed following wide-ranging consultation with older people, our funders, partners and other key stakeholders.

The strategic themes and objectives were informed by a combination of these consultations, an analysis of national policy around ageing and a thorough analysis of all of our areas – what we do well as an organisation and what we need to improve on.

We focus on programmes that improve quality of life for older people in our three core areas: sport and physical activity, arts and culture, civic engagement and personal development.

This Strategic Plan renews our focus. We aim to stimulate meaningful change in the quality of life of older people through an enhanced strategic use and communication of our programme outcomes.

A key focus for the life of this Strategic Plan will be investment in rigorous action research programmes which test, measure and communicate initiatives. We aim to influence perceptions,

policy and practice at international, national, regional and local levels.

We have organised our work for the next three years using four strategic themes which are fundamental to positive ageing. We wish to be a catalyst for a broad range of partners and stakeholders, both established and new, for the development and delivery of high quality outcomes for the older people they serve.

We look forward to the future development of Age & Opportunity, and to bringing about lasting change in an ageing society.



Karen Smyth **CEO**



Ita Mangan **Chair**

## Theme One

### Creating and promoting diverse models for ageing

Fresh thinking, bold experimentation and creativity are all fundamental to delivering a good quality of life for older people. Creativity, innovation and the promotion of excellence are core to our mission.

The pioneering programmes in our three core areas of sport and physical activity, arts and culture, civic engagement and personal development offer diverse models of ageing.

### Objectives

- Configure our work in research frameworks to highlight its effectiveness and its relationship with public policy development.
- Promote approaches which are proven to produce positive effects on ageing.
- Create and continue to deliver programmes that challenge negative stereotypes of ageing.
- Further develop initiatives which can enhance the ageing experiences, especially of those socially excluded and those with illnesses.

## Theme Two

### Influencing public policy

Influencing public policy is a key aspect of our mission. Constructive engagement with policy-makers and service providers, grounded in the views and requirements of older people and informed by evidence, will form our approach.

We will drive the debate on key issues relevant to an ageing society and communicate and celebrate diverse stories of ageing and promote a positive view of the contribution that older people make to wider society.

During the lifetime of this strategy we will track and report on the impact of our programmes on the lives of older people and their communities. The strategic use of this information and experience will enable us to provide nuanced, compelling, evidence-informed arguments for effective change.

### Objectives

- Create opportunities for conversations which empower older people to advocate for measures, policies and services to support positive ageing.
- Build awareness and understanding of the experience and preferences of older people among policy makers.
- Celebrate and profile diverse stories of ageing.
- Provide evidence informed persuasions to policy makers for effective change.

# Our Strategy at a glance

### Our Vision

An Ireland where all older people are more active; more visible; more creative; more connected; more often.

### Our Mission

Our mission is to achieve the best possible quality of life for people aged 50 to 100+.

### Our Values

- Older people first
- Equality / Inclusivity
- Pioneering
- Inspiring
- Excellence

## Theme Three

### Supporting and developing our programme partnerships

We value the strong countrywide partnerships that ensure our work makes a real impact, and we look forward to developing new partnerships.

We will continue to work collaboratively with specialist organisations in our three core areas of sport and physical activity, arts and culture, civic engagement and personal development.

As part of our contribution to these partnerships, we acknowledge our responsibility to help our programme partners with the development and delivery of high quality outcomes for the older people they serve.

We will continue to review, develop and collaborate to provide tailor-made support packages to partners as their needs change.

### Objectives

- Engage strategically with partners and stakeholders to establish and meet our shared development needs.
- Provide relevant and accessible programmes of capacity building, training and information.
- Lead opportunities for practice sharing and mutual learning.
- Develop relevant data gathering approaches and methodologies, and apply the learning from our programmes and activities, to strengthen engagement with older people and policy makers.

## Theme Four

### Optimising our organisational capacity

Ensuring enhanced organisational capacity is critical to the success of this Plan. Investing in resources to enable us to implement our strategy is essential, and requires careful consideration and planning.

The continued review of our governance and organisational transparency is at the heart of our ethos of excellence.

### Objectives

- Enhance cohesion across our core functions, enabling us to work together coherently, effectively and efficiently.
- Develop whole-organisation structures and practices which enable the continued development of staff, optimise the deployment of resources and enhance internal communications.
- Ensure that the organisation employs and enhances the breadth of expertise, capacity and staffing resources required to support the effective delivery of this Strategic Plan.
- Build our capacity to influence and to learn from national, EU and international best practice through collaboration on new projects and networks.
- Continuously review our governance, administrative and financial systems to comply with best practices and regulatory legal requirements.
- Develop a diverse portfolio of revenue in order to ensure organisational sustainability.

# Ageing in Ireland: the policy context

The rapid ageing of the overall population is a key factor in social change in Ireland.

Life expectancy in Ireland has increased by almost 2½ years in a little over a decade. A century ago it was about 50; today it is 81½.

Almost 1 in 3 people in Ireland today are over the age of 50.

The challenge is to ensure that people can grow older comfortably and well. While living longer is clearly one of the great success stories of modern society, positive ageing requires significant policy and programme responses in multiple areas. Current policies and programmes which inform these responses include:

- Project 2040 (2018); the Government’s overarching policy initiative to “make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be”;
- Programme for a Partnership Government (2016); the Programme for Government;
- Healthy Ireland (2013); the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages living in Ireland;
- National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013); the measures needed for Ireland to become an age-friendly society;
- Age-Friendly Cities and Counties Programme; a framework uniting local service providers to improve the lives of older people;
- Older People’s Councils in local authority areas enable older people to influence development;

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- Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI); a national programme of research, data translation, health promotion and dissemination, led by the Department of Health and the HSE;
- National Dementia Strategy (2014); a national strategy setting out key principles to underpin and inform the full range of health and social care services provided to people with dementia, their families and carers;
- Culture 2025 – Éire Ildánach: A Framework Policy to 2025 (2016); a framework policy embracing the whole cultural sector;
- Creative Ireland Programme (2017); a culture-based programme designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing;
- Making Great Art Work (2015); the Arts Council’s ten-year strategy, which commits to increasing public access, participation and engagement in the arts with older people;
- National Physical Activity Plan (2016); a plan to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and well-being of people living in Ireland;
- Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023; a Plan to enhance financial security in older age through a revised suite of pension provisions;
- Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development (2015); a cross departmental, joined up, collaborative and participative approach to local and community development at local level;
- Horizon 2020 (2015); the EU’s largest research and innovation programme to date, focusing on excellent science, competitive industry and better society;
- The European Covenant on Demographic Change (2015); a covenant aimed at gathering all stakeholders that commit to co-operate and implement evidence based solutions to support active and healthy ageing as a comprehensive answer to Europe’s demographic challenge.



# Renewing Age & Opportunity's focus

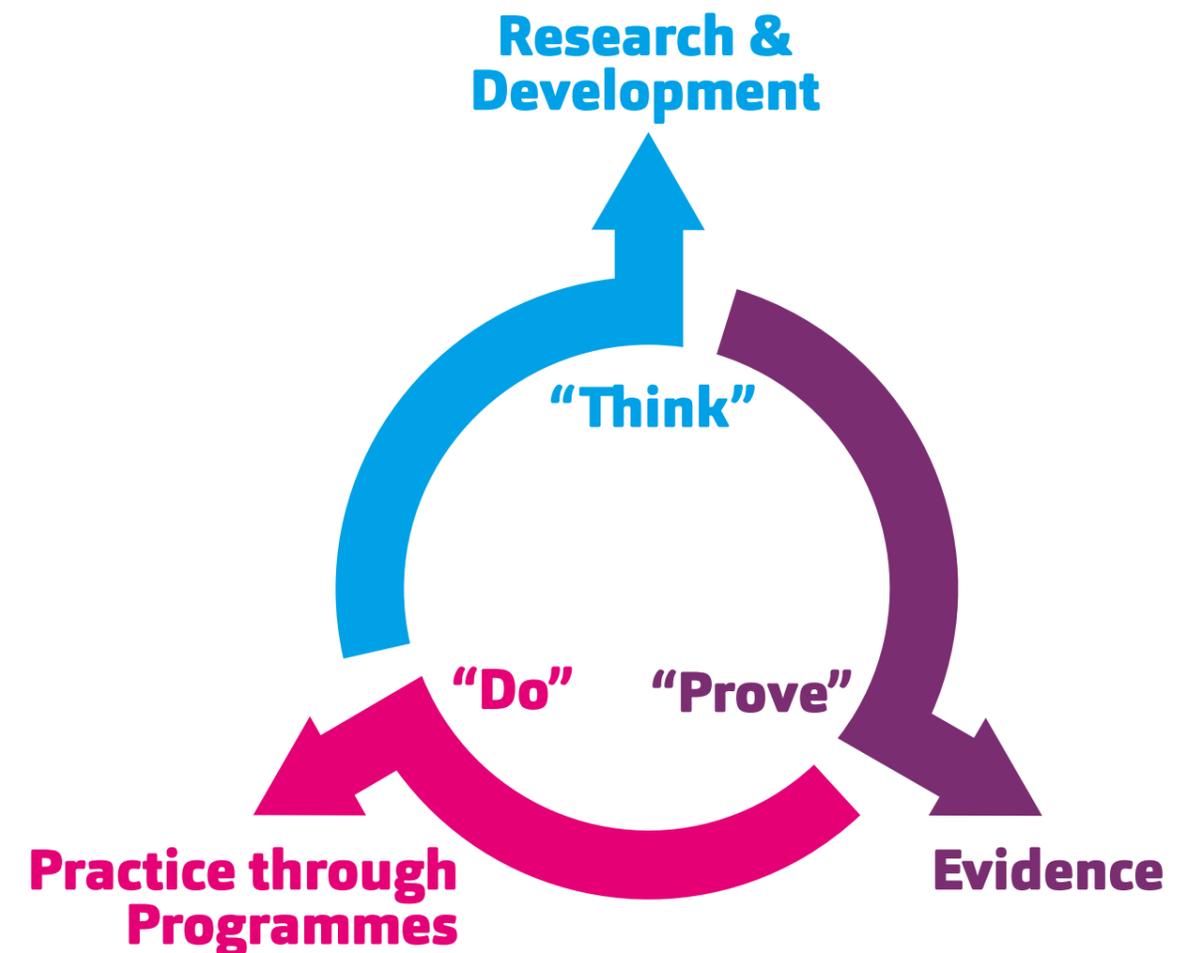
“At Age & Opportunity, older people’s concerns lie at the heart of everything we do. We want to increase our influence on the shaping of policy and service development in order to respond to these concerns. As such a key focus of this strategic plan will be an investment in rigorous research that will test, measure and communicate our initiatives.”

Karen Smyth, CEO



## This will be achieved by:

- Championing the creativity and value of older people;
- Combating stereotypes and negative views of ageing;
- Developing inclusive and engaging experiences which respond to the interests and needs of the diverse older adult population;
- Developing, testing and measuring the impact of pioneering programmes and approaches;
- Making evidence available to policy-makers and service providers;
- Working with partners and stakeholders to ensure that Ireland’s policies, strategies and programmes are directly informed by the needs and experiences of older people;



# Strategic Theme One

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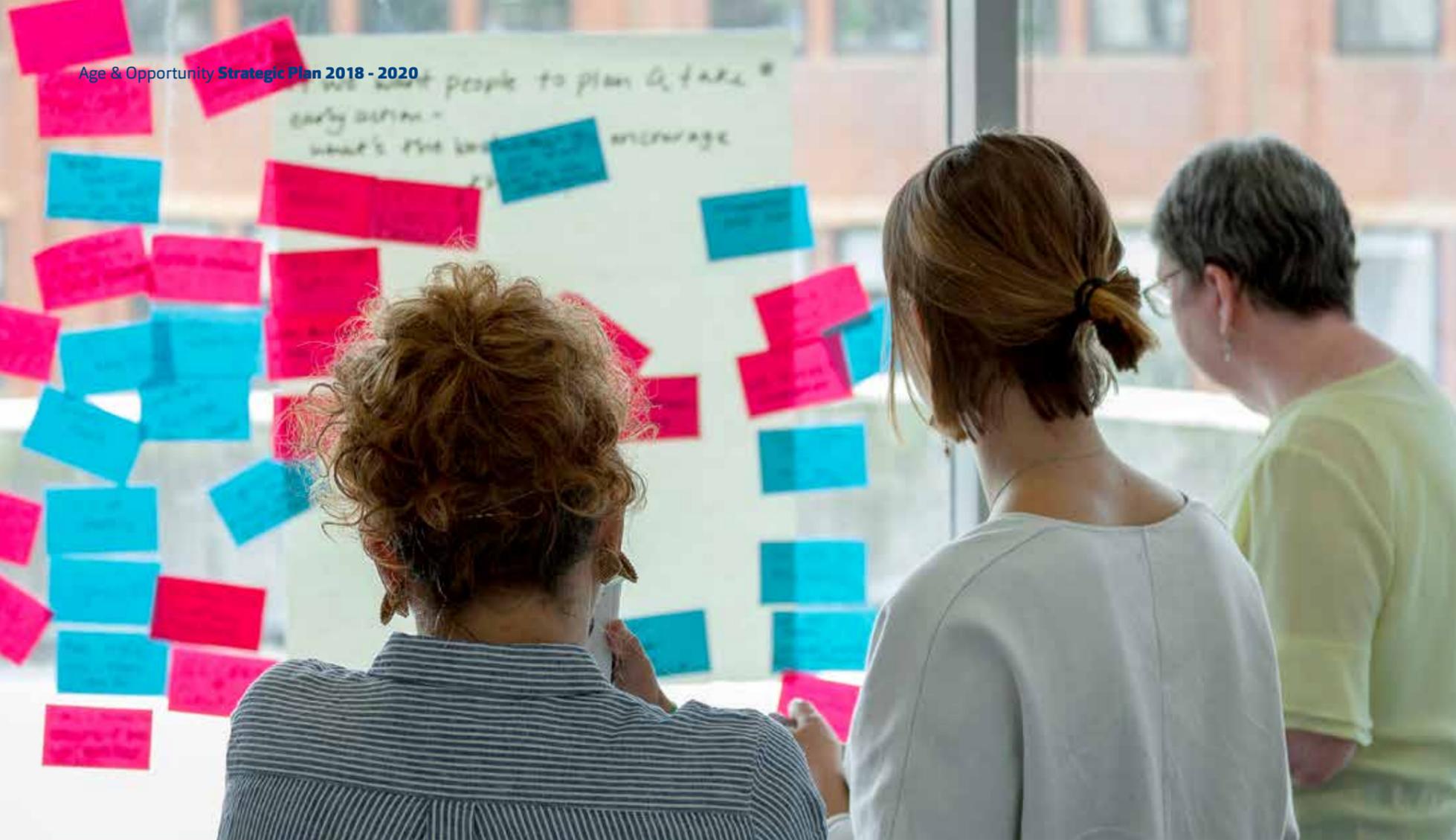
# Who we are

Age & Opportunity is the leading national development organisation improving the quality of life of older people.

## We do this by:

- Championing the creativity and value of older people;
- Combating stereotypes and negative views of ageing;
- Developing inclusive and engaging experiences which respond to the interests and needs of the diverse older adult population;
- Developing, testing and measuring the impact of pioneering programmes and approaches;
- Making evidence available to policy-makers and service providers;
- Working with partners and stakeholders to ensure that Ireland's policies, strategies and programmes are directly informed by the needs and experiences of older people.





# What we do

We provide the following opportunities for older people to be more active; more creative; more visible; more connected; more often:

## Opportunities for sport and physical activity

Our Go for Life Programme is Ireland's national programme for sport and physical activity for older people.

Our Go for Life programme achieves its programme objectives through the use of peer-led interventions:

- PALs (Physical Activity Leaders), an education and peer leadership scheme which trains older people to lead sport and physical activity programmes with peers in their local communities;
- Go for Life Small Grant Scheme, a national grants scheme which makes grants to local groups of older people to support the work of PALs;
- FitLine, a volunteer-led telephone-based motivation line to encourage older individuals to become more active;
- Go for Life Games, which encourages recreational games with a competitive element;
- Creating links between National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of Sport and older people, introducing and adapting sports for groups and providing opportunities to try out new sports.

## Opportunities to engage in arts and cultural activities

Our Bealtaine festival, for example, is Ireland's largest collaborative arts festival and one of the world's first festivals of arts and creativity for older people. We create meaningful participation and representation for all older people in cultural and creative life. We demonstrate and celebrate how our creative potential can improve with age.



Our arts and culture programme achieves its objectives through the following activities:

- Bealtaine Festival, a national festival of arts activities aimed at older people across the arts;
- Cultural Companions, a peer-led social network for potentially isolated older people;
- Arts workshops, geared towards older people;
- Artists Residencies in Care Settings
- Conferences exploring issues impacting on older people through the arts;

### **Opportunities to learn and be involved as active citizens**

Our Engage programme offers a range of workshops and learning initiatives for our own personal development as well as opportunities for us to play an active role in our community.

Its aim is to facilitate participants to develop resilience, build the skills, know-how and the foresight to achieve the best quality of life.

It achieves its programme objectives through the following activities:

- Changing Gears / Taking Stock / Ageing with Confidence, personal development and resilience courses for older people;
- AgeWise, a workshop for workplaces, combating ageism and age discrimination;
- Touchstone and other tailor-made courses and packages aiming to promote active citizenship amongst older people, particularly those operating in Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programmes;
- Azure, a cultural activities programme for people with dementia and their carers.



# Our Vision

An Ireland where all older people are more active; more visible; more creative; more connected; more often.

# Our Mission

Our mission is to achieve the best possible quality of life for people aged 50 to 100+.

# Our Values

## Older people first

The views, opinions and experience of diverse older people inform all that we do.

## Equality / Inclusivity

We work to ensure equality of participation for all older people, irrespective of background, culture, identity, setting or location.

## Pioneering

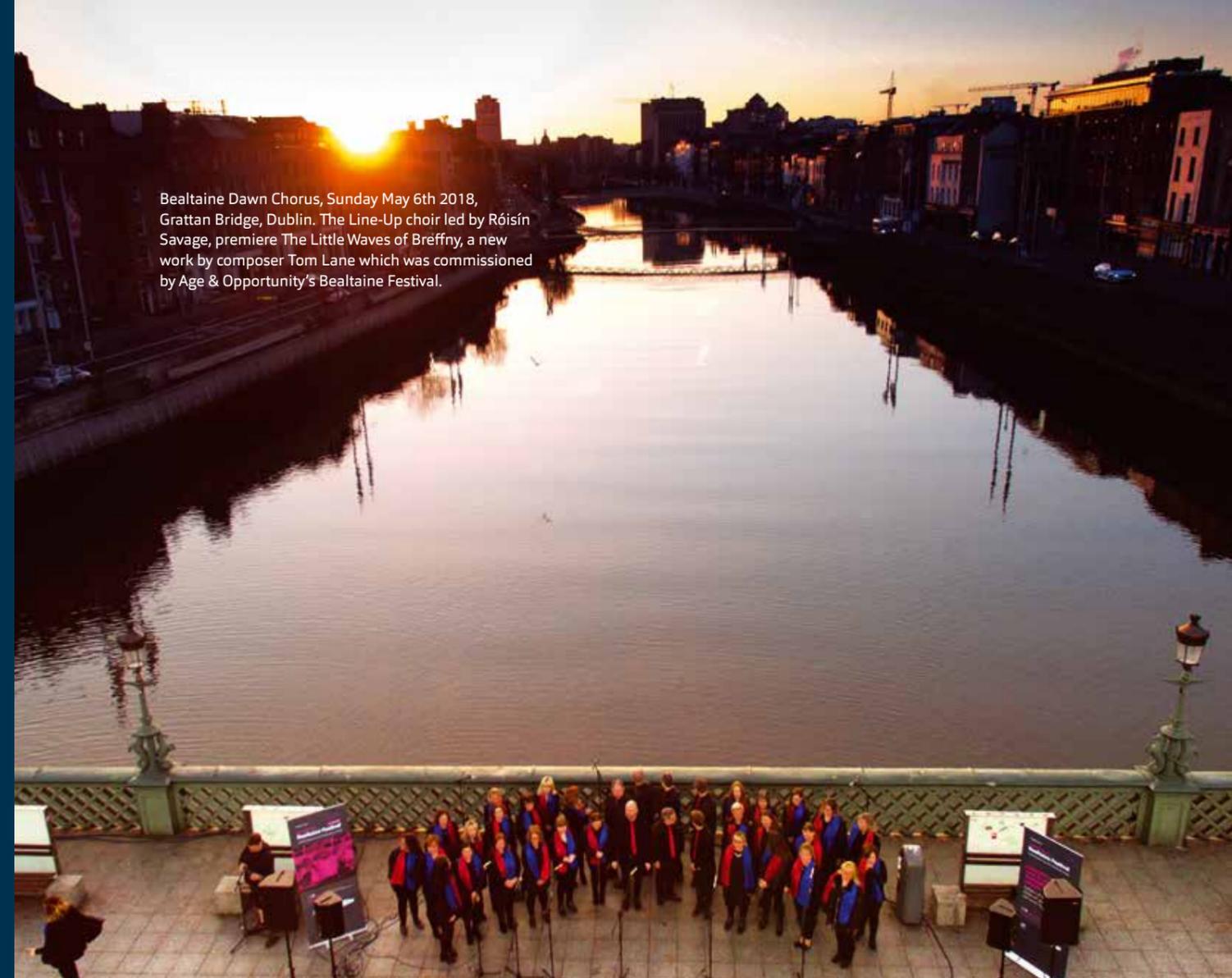
We explore and push out the boundaries relating to opportunities for activity, creativity and visibility.

## Inspiring

We celebrate and showcase stories of ageing.

## Excellence

We strive to create an ethos of excellence with strong governance and clear transparency.



Bealtaine Dawn Chorus, Sunday May 6th 2018, Grattan Bridge, Dublin. The Line-Up choir led by Róisín Savage, premiere The Little Waves of Bréffny, a new work by composer Tom Lane which was commissioned by Age & Opportunity's Bealtaine Festival.





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