

IAF



**Building
Our
Knowledge**

**Strategy
2026–33**

IAF

Contents

Chair's Statement	2
Strategy	4
Context	6
Work	8
Profile	10
Gallery	11
Identity	20
Strategic Pillars	22
Workplan	24
Credits	26



IAF

As the IAF enters its third decade, this new strategy — sets a clear course for the organisation. It builds on the strong foundations established, retaining a belief in architecture as a public good while evolving the ways we engage with audiences, communities, and partners. The strategy reflects an organisation that is confident, collaborative, and forward-looking — one that embraces innovation and takes seriously its role in shaping Ireland's civic landscape. The context for

architecture, and for cultural practice more broadly, is changing. The climate emergency, social and spatial inequalities, rapid technological advancement, and shifting cultural and economic conditions all require new forms of leadership, learning, and imagination.

The IAF recognises that architecture is deeply embedded in these challenges, and that meaningful progress depends on collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and communities.

Over the next eight years, the IAF will continue to lead with openness, excellence, and courage — expanding access to architecture and ensuring that it is recognised as a vital cultural force and civic right. By deepening public understanding and building collective knowledge, the IAF seeks not only to respond to the needs of today but to imagine, with others, the Ireland of tomorrow.



Chair’s Statement

Architecture shapes not only our built environment but also our cultural identity, social cohesion, and collective imagination. The Irish Architecture Foundation (IAF) stands as a vital force in Ireland’s cultural landscape — connecting people to architecture through education, engagement, and innovation. Its work empowers the public to see architecture not just as buildings, but as a reflection of who we are and who we aspire to be.

As Chair, I have been motivated by the IAF’s unique ability to democratise architectural discourse and foster inclusive conversations about our cities, towns, and communities. The IAF is a catalyst for change — bringing together architects, artists, educators, and citizens to reimagine Ireland’s future through design.

From a governance perspective, the organisation has remained steadfast in its commitment to transparency, accountability, and strategic oversight. What has remained constant is our belief in architecture as a public good. What is evolving is our approach: embracing new partnerships, diversifying funding streams, and strengthening our operational resilience.

The IAF is adapting with purpose. Over the past year, the Board and leadership team have worked closely to future-proof the organisation, including investing in digital infrastructure, expanding outreach, and embedding sustainability into our programming. These efforts ensure that the IAF not only survives but thrives in a rapidly changing cultural and economic landscape.

Under the leadership of the Director and the dedication of the remarkably creative IAF team, the organisation is delivering with clarity and impact. Their work continues to position the IAF as a leading voice in architectural culture, both locally and internationally. With this new strategy, we reaffirm our commitment to bold ideas, public engagement, and architectural excellence.

Brian Moran,
IAF Chair

When we set out to develop a new strategy that would replace *Shaping Our Future, 2019–23*, which had helped guide us over the past five years, we found that much of the direction outlined in it remained deeply relevant to the organisation and its mission. We believed that the opportunity was not to reinvent our strategic fundamentals, but to undertake an update that made our long-term objectives clearer and less tied to specific projects and activities.

To accompany this eight-year organisational strategy, we will develop two four-year work plans that further translate long-term objectives into operational activity. These work plans will make it easier to understand and act upon across our team, and support us to remain responsive, agile and resilient in a fast-moving world.

A strategy is a vital tool for any organisation. Our strategy makes public our vision for delivering value and impact, drawing clear lines between ambitious long-term aims, and the methods we will use to achieve them.

At the time of going to print, the IAF is celebrating its 20th year as an independent cultural organisation. Today, the founding idea of the IAF — to bring architecture to public audiences — remains central to our mission.

Architecture is not distinct from society; it is embedded, right at the heart of it. Architecture survives and endures as a relevant and valuable cultural practice through reciprocity, on its unique potential to foster a diverse range of creative, collective exchanges between people and place, each informing the other over time.

These exchanges happen at a range of scales, but have the most impact when you meet people right where they are — in the cities, towns, rooms or landscapes that matter to them. The IAF has grown its ambition and capacity across two decades to do just that, uniquely delivering high-quality architecture programming right across this island, from capital to coast, from bogs to buildings.

Among our many projects, our festival Open House Dublin has encouraged a culture of creative care needed between the city, county, and the people who live and work in it. Bog Bothy, a placemaking project, has afforded communities the opportunity to first co-create, and then use, new structures and practices that are informing, from the ground up, our national understanding of what’s next for boglands in Ireland. We tour our work, meeting people in town halls and tax offices, sharing award-winning exhibitions such as *The Reason of Towns*. And, we empower the next generation of young people to find and use their voice in discussions about their built futures through our national Architects in Schools programme.

As an organisation our impact depends on our own openness to reciprocity. IAF works nationally and internationally with a range of individuals, partners, organisations, policy makers, cultural actors, and agents to co-create and deliver our work. This is not only a strategic position for IAF to take, but a realistic one — and, in architecture, a position of leadership.

We understand we are part of a wider set of actors and organisations in culture, architecture, and society. We work to eliminate barriers and silos, knowing from experience that it is through working with others that we can begin to ensure that the value of architecture to society is understood, defended, and sustained.

Architecture’s embedded nature also means, as both a cultural practice and professional discipline, it is implicated in current social challenges. Climate change, social and spatial justice, economic inequalities that lead to inequitable access to housing and public infrastructure, and the lack of public support for creative risk and innovation in design and architecture, all impact architecture and the work we do in IAF.

IAF has a role in supporting discourse and conversation around these issues, finding new ways to communicate to audiences what architecture can do now, and how architecture might next change, to help mitigate these challenges.

To play its part, IAF is working to expand our own knowledge in and of architecture and we will work to find the resources to make our knowledge available to all. After 20 years of action, activity and public investment, our knowledge of architecture is specific and unique and of real long-term value to our stakeholders, funders, partners, and collaborators.

Our entirely rebuilt digital platform and website will provide new access to this unique knowledge for national and international audiences, some of whom may be accessing it for the first time. Further investment in communications by IAF will ensure that the programmes on architecture that we have always delivered can now be further attuned to the specific needs of the audiences we already work with and those we have yet to reach.

In parallel, we know from our work and from feedback, that a physical venue for architecture is needed to further expand our audiences. To make more room for architecture, to fully realise its value and impact, and to align Ireland’s commitment to architecture with that of other countries, we need a house and a home for it. Evidence is that this will further strengthen community participation in and engagement with architecture.

Our new strategy will not only guide the high-quality programming and engagement for our audiences, it will also guide our team. We will advance our own culture of learning, innovation, risk, and knowledge exchange in our work in order to keep pace with a changing and dynamic cultural, social, and economic world.

IAF exists to expand and deepen understanding, and advance thinking and opportunities for the ways architecture weaves into and shapes our lives, and what that means for us as individuals, as communities, as a culture, and as a nation. To achieve this, we have two main workstreams.

Expanding and deepening understanding

Exhibit

We conceive, curate, produce, and present unique exhibitions that highlight different aspects of architecture, culture, and the value these have for our lives.

Festival

We gather diverse audiences and cross-disciplinary collaborators around festivals that celebrate the stories of architecture that bind people and place.

Place

We work with communities across Ireland, connecting them with practitioners and policymakers, to co-create and develop the places in which they live, work, learn, and play.

Advancing thinking and opportunities

Learn

We develop new pathways and opportunities for a diverse range of audiences and groups to be empowered to learn more about the value of architecture, to develop personal knowledge, and to better respect others’ lived experience.

Futures

We actively research, explore, develop, and support emergent approaches, models, and architects that embrace creativity and risk, to advance the future of architecture for the public good.

Knowledge

We package, translate, and disseminate the new knowledge our work generates in a range of formats, to a range of audiences and stakeholders, communicating the value and impact of architecture to society.

Profile

Yvonne Farrell and
Shelley McNamara,
Co-founders,
Grafton Architects

“The Irish Architecture Foundation is actively communicating to the public a deeper understanding of architecture as a civic right. Outside of architects themselves and the architectural institutions, there is no other body fulfilling this critical role. If we are to develop and grow the culture of architecture in Ireland, we need the public to understand architecture’s potential to improve lives and transform our environment. Architecture is currently understood as ‘design’ and as an instrument of commercial forces. Only when it is understood as a key cultural force will the public be in a position to demand that architecture be valued and promoted as a civic right.”

Nora Hickey M’Sichili,
Director,
Centre Culturel Irlandais

“The IAF/CCI residency embodies the shared belief of the IAF and the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris that architecture’s value lies as much in the exchange of ideas and perspectives as in the built environment.”

Mary McCarthy,
Director,
Crawford Art Gallery

“The Irish Architecture Foundation is a unique structure in the Irish cultural ecosystem. It has established itself as this powerful adaptive agency that is both agile and urgent. Through its leadership and team it creates platforms for exploration, interrogation, and debate on issues of wide cultural significance through the medium of architecture and the built environment. It’s a truly imaginative, nimble, and relevant organisation that steps outside being defined by national boundaries and links Ireland to a wider international cultural context through practice and thinking.”

Professor Lesley Lokko OBE,
Director,
African Futures Institute

“Speaking from the West African region, Ireland has a curious role for us, as part of both the colonial world and post-colonial world. In terms of finding a voice, authenticity, and a way forward for architecture in this space, Irish architecture has been doing that for a long time. IAF is a really interesting role model for us — a model for doing things differently, that helps us see architecture’s strong role in identity, placemaking, culture, and nation building.”







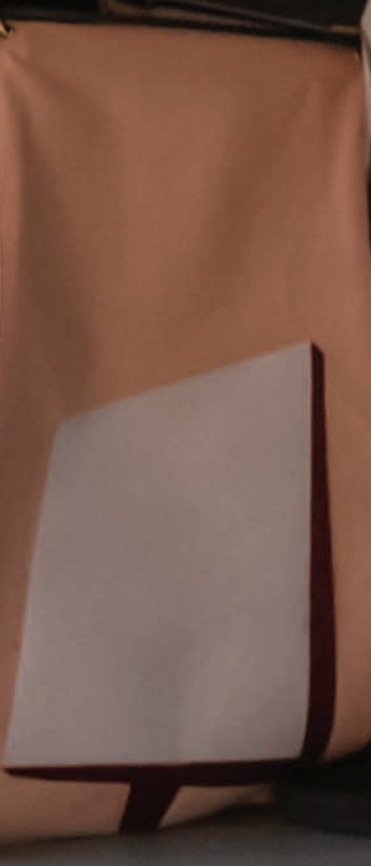
KEYS



CAN I
BE
HOME

BUILD
A
SWING

chat
on
Kerbs







- A Benchmark installation by Rubble for Open House Dublin, IAF House, Dublin, 2024. Photo by Paul Sherwood.
- B The Reason of Towns: an exhibition with Valerie Mulvin, The Architecture Fringe, Glasgow, 2025. Photo by Peter Molloy.
- C Bog Bothy, 12th Field and IAF, Girley Bog, 2025. Photo by Ste Murray.
- D SCALA workshop by Asbestos, Open House Junior, IAF House, Dublin, 2025. Photo by Ste Murray.
- E General Post Office, O'Connell Street Endless tour, Karl Whitney, Open House Dublin, 2025. Photo by Ste Murray.
- F A Place Belongs Forever To workshop, IAF House, Dublin, 2024. Photo by Paul Sherwood.

Identity

● Purpose

To empower people to imagine and build a better world together.

● Vision

Where architecture is fundamental to the inclusive building of our fabric of life — culture, identity, and future.

● Mission

To champion the power of architecture to transform lives and improve the places where we live, learn, work, and play.

Values

Our values remain consistent from our previous strategy. What these mean and how we activate them is articulated in our four-year work plan.

→ Openness

We are open to ideas, inclusive of all people, and generous in creating opportunities for everyone to engage with and be engaged by architecture.

→ Excellence

We promote best practice in all that we do and are committed to sharing the exceptional work of others.

→ Courage

We have the confidence to ask questions, to challenge norms, and to try things out. We embolden others to do so too.

Strategic Pillars

These are the factors our organisation must use to orient and guide our long-term thinking and actions. We should revisit them often and invite others to support and contribute. These connect with our purpose and help us deliver on our mission.

ADVANCING

We increase understanding of the public, cultural, societal, and national value of architecture.
↓

EMPOWERING

We create opportunities for more people to think about and engage differently with architecture.
↓

IMAGINING

We advance new ways of practising architecture that embrace public involvement and creative risk to drive societal improvement and change.
↓

CATALYSING

We bring people and organisations together to inspire action and increase the reach and positive impact of architecture in people's lives.
↓

Long-term objectives

Under each pillar we have a set of long-term objectives that guide our thinking and actions, and that all our work should advance.

- **Greater visibility**
A growing range of perspectives that help people understand architecture more broadly and tangibly.
- **Deeper engagement**
The quality and creativity of our work inspires people to engage more regularly and deeply.
- **Clearer value**
The public, cultural, societal, and national value of architecture is articulated and shared.
- **Evidenced impact**
The positive impacts of architecture on people's lives are better evidenced.

- **Increased participation**
A growing number of people that feel invited and empowered to participate in the development of places and spaces.
- **Greater inclusion**
A widening set of groups and perspectives are actively and respectfully included in the thinking, conversations, and shaping of the built environment.
- **Enabling learning**
A diversifying range of pathways to enable learning about architecture.

- **Interrogating futures**
More critical emergent issues will be surfaced and interrogated for the benefit of public and practice.
- **Developing knowledge**
The knowledge we develop will be shared and utilised widely for the advancement of practice.
- **Incubating collaboration**
Development of interdisciplinary, collaborative, and participatory practices and ways of working.
- **Scaling opportunities**
Our successful new models are scaled to create new opportunities for practitioners and better outcomes for people.

- **Critical conversations**
We convene the most critical conversations of the day with those most impacted by them.
- **Growing influence**
Our unique, independent position and growing network deepens trust in architecture as a vehicle for positive social change.
- **Stronger destination**
Investing in infrastructure that makes us a primary physical and digital destination for our expertise and insight.
- **International reputation**
Building an expanding international platform that promotes the distinct perspectives and identity of Irish architecture practice.

Workplan

While our deep organisational remit has not changed, the contexts in which we work continue to develop rapidly. With this in mind, we are shaping our strategy in a way to best support these real-world challenges.

This eight-year organisational strategy will ensure we stay true to our vision and mission and embed it more deeply for the long term.

A four-year work plan will allow us to respond to, focus on, and make an impact in the areas we feel are critical to how architecture impacts our world now and in the future.

A synopsis of our four-year work plan — 2026–29 — is outlined here.

To deliver on our Advancing pillar we will:

Highlight the most pressing and critical ways architecture weaves into and shapes our lives and culture now.

- Focus our efforts
Over the next four years we'll focus on advancing the understanding of architecture and its role in creative transformation in four key areas:
→ Culture & Identity
→ Climate
→ Health & Wellbeing
→ Publicness

- Connected programming
We'll thread aspects of these themes through our exhibition, festival, and place work over the next four years, to make visible multiple aspects and encourage deepening engagement.

- Advocacy platform
Develop an inbound advocacy platform to connect the media with expert voices (IAF and partners) to speak to architecture's role in these areas and the value it creates for people.

- Sustaining activity
Develop frameworks — programming, operational, funding — to support longer-term project and subject impact and build deeper value for the public and our partners.

- Measuring impact
We'll develop tools to measure the impact of our work and projects in expanding understanding, advancement, and opportunities in these areas.

To deliver on our Empowering pillar we will:

Expand who gets to — and how they get to — engage, inform, and shape architecture.

- Increasing inclusion
We will balance projects that have broad public appeal, with those that seek to engage a series of specific groups that we believe should be made central to emerging conversations around the built environment and the impact it has on their lives. This includes:
→ Young people
→ Rural & regional communities
→ Under-represented groups

- Deepening understanding
We'll build consultation into our projects to ensure we fully understand the groups and their needs.

- Diversifying perspectives
We'll expand our collaborators and partners on projects to ensure we continue to increase diversity of thought and experience within our approach.

- Weaving learning
We'll weave learning and participative opportunities into all our projects to provide alternative pathways of engaging and understanding.

To deliver on our Imagining pillar we will:

Explore ways architecture and our work can evolve to meet new challenges.

- R&D taskforce
We'll establish an internal working group tasked with cultivating the signals, opportunities, and projects to build our future pipeline — and to explore opportunities to scale previous learnings, skills, or projects.

- Constructing knowledge
We'll capture and publish the knowledge developed via the taskforce and across all our projects to advance thinking on critical emergent areas.

- Scaling place
Scaling the impact we've had with our placemaking work via new partnerships and the development of an enterprise version of the offering, to increase opportunities for practitioners, advance people-centred placemaking and provide financial support for the organisation.

To deliver on our Catalysing pillar we will:

Develop new relationships, opportunities, and conditions for progress.

- Expand network
Actively expand our network by hosting critical conversations, focusing on key areas:
→ All of govt
→ All Ireland
→ EU

- Convening spaces
Continue using pop-up and temporary spaces to host these while also building advocates for a more permanent space — IAF House.

- IAF House
To accelerate the process of finding and establishing a permanent venue for the IAF to help grow the reach, reputation, and impact of our work.

- EU placemaking
To establish IAF and Ireland as key partners with the EU placemaking communities, making us a hub for connections and opportunities.

In the development of this strategy, we undertook engagements with key stakeholder groups to better understand our progress and value as an organisation, and inform our thinking regarding our future orientation.

This strategy was produced with IAF by wove.

● 1-on-1 interviews

Fionnuala Sweeney — Head of Film and Architecture, The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon
with Alan Mee — Architecture Adviser

Daniel Sinnott — Principal Officer, Built Heritage & Architectural Policy Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Conor Sreenan — State Architect and Principal Architect, Office of Public Works

● Industry stakeholders workshop session

Colum O’Riordan — Irish Architectural Archive

Frank Monahan — Architecture at the Edge

Dr. Sandra O’Connell — RIAI

Ciarán Fox — Royal Society of Ulster Architects

Colin Mackay — Hawkins\Brown

Laura Carroll — Islander Architects

Emma Geoghegan — TU Dublin

Amberlea Neely — Starling Start

Tara Kennedy — Work Shop Bantry

Denise Murray — Metropolitan Workshop

Alice Casey — TAKA Architects

● International cultural partners workshop session

Manijeh Vergheze — Open City, London

Andy Summers — Architecture Fringe, Scotland

Lesley Lokko — African Futures Institute

János Klaniczay — KÉK, Contemporary Architecture Centre, Hungary

Kieran Long — Amos Rex, Helsinki

Brendan Cormier — V&A East at the Victoria and Albert Museum

The strategy process was overseen by the IAF Board during the first half of 2025.

The Board includes:

Brian Moran — Chair

Michael Goan

Claire Healy

Aoife Hurley

Michael Pike

Sophie El Nimr

Francesca Ferguson

Laura Murray

Scott Burnett

Professor Margaret Barry

The Executives that participated in this process are:

Emmett Scanlon
Director

Breena Cooper
Head of Strategic Communications

Karen Lee Walpole
Senior Manager,
Festivals and International

Hannah Rickard
Senior Manager,
Funding and Development

Bláithín Quinn
Manager,
Education and Learning

Vanessa Menegaldo
Manager,
Engagement and Enterprise

Felix Hunter Green
Manager,
Exhibitions and Publications

Dean Black
Manager,
Placemaking and
Architect Supports

Felicity Maxwell
Assistant Manager,
Communications and Publications

Alba Ferrero
Assistant Manager,
Festivals and International

Niamh McDaid
Assistant Manager,
Production and Finance

Katie Fitzgerald
Officer, Audience and Volunteers

Niamh Dillon
Finance Manager

Irish Architecture Foundation

iaf.ie



Published Nov 2025
Edition of 1000

This strategy is
available in Irish
and English at
iaf.ie/strategy

Typeset in IAF Sans
& Bradford Mono
Designed by Post
Printed by Plus Print

IAF

15 Bachelor's Walk,
D01 EA02, Ireland

+353 1 874 7200
info@iaf.ie

IAF Charities
Regulator number
20068578

IAF Charity number
CHY 18069

Support us



Irish Architecture Foundation

**Shaping
Our
Future**

iaf.ie