**3 April 2018**

**Press release**

**More than 100% increase in children attending Wainfest 2017**

Donegal County Council has revealed that the number of children and young people attending Wainfest in 2017 increased by more than 100% to just over 7,100. Wainfest is Donegal’s Arts and Book Festival for Children and is one of the leading festivals for children in the country.

“This increase is phenomenal” says Sinead McLaughlin, Chairperson of the organising committee within the Council’s Cultural Services.

“We had 90 school events and 31 family events in public libraries, Taobh Tire Centres, the County Museum, the Regional Cultural Centre and Partner locations and to see this increase in the number of participants is just so rewarding for everyone involved in organising this wonderful festival.”

“Last year saw the extension of events being hosted by partner organisations also and this certainly contributed to the increase as did the programme itself. We were delighted to have the opportunity to work with local businesses as well as organisations such as Glenveagh National Park, Inch Wildfowl Reserve, Donegal Junior String Orchestra, Inishowen Development Partnership, Letterkenny Family Resource Centre, the Abbey Centre, the Balor Theatre and Cinemas across the county. We are committed to ensuring that we deliver a high quality cultural experience for children and young people in Donegal.”

The 2018 Wainfest will take place from 6 to 14 October and work is well underway in planning for this year’s festival.

“We have already started planning for the 2018 festival and indeed we have plans in place for 2019” says Sinead McLaughlin.

“This year’s festival promises to be even bigger and better and we are continuing to work with our partner organisations as well as corporate sponsors.

Donegal has a strong reputation as a leader in culture and the Council’s Cultural Services Division has set out a comprehensive strategic plan that seeks to maintain high quality sustainable services and a collaborative partnership approach is key for the delivery of these shared cultural goals.

Promoting an interest in children’s reading and creating an awareness of the value of reading is an important part of Wainfest.

“Books, reading and literacy are highly profiled in Wainfest and to be able to bring authors such as Jim Smith, author of the Barry Loser series to Donegal as part of the Wainfest programme is brilliant. To see the children of Donegal having an opportunity to meet and be inspired by these authors makes all the hard work worthwhile," says Sinead McLaughlin.

To keep up to date on Wainfest 2018 visit [www.wainfest.ie](http://www.wainfest.ie) or follow Donegal County Library on Facebook or Twitter.

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