

**Dorset Cultural Strategy
2016 - 2021**

FOREWORD

Culture plays an important part in the quality of life we enjoy in Dorset, and we are delighted to see the publication of our new cultural strategy. Its development was led by the Dorset Cultural Partnership in consultation with individuals and enterprises across the cultural sector.

Culture and leisure are top areas of activity for community and voluntary groups in Dorset, and participation contributes to our health and wellbeing. Reading groups, sports clubs, drama, choirs, local history, outdoor and heritage conservation projects, visual art workshops, creative writing sessions – these and much more, offer opportunities for us to enjoy and benefit as individuals from local culture.

Culture makes a positive contribution to the Dorset economy with the creative industries being a key sector for increasing our prosperity as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership. Culture attracts tourists who appreciate our history and heritage and join us for events and festivals in villages, towns, countryside and coast.

We value Dorset's breath-taking land and seascapes, our ancient landmarks and archaeology, and our UNESCO¹ World Heritage Site Jurassic Coast. The internationally renowned beauty of our county is loved by visitors with attractions such as: Iron Age hill forts; Dorset County Museum; the Tank Museum; Hardy's Birthplace; Kingston Lacy House.

We are proud of our arts programmes and festivals: the acclaimed Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra which won the accolade of the world's favourite orchestra in 2014; the Bridport Prize International Creative Writing Competition with entries from over 80 countries; Dorset Art Weeks; Inside Out Dorset; b-side Festival; the Artsreach rural touring programme of high quality performance in village halls.

We are proud that people of all ages with disabilities or health problems enjoy and achieve through cultural activity – for example the acclaimed Arts in Hospital programme at Dorset County Hospital; award-winning Diverse City which leads ambitious performance and performance-training bringing together disabled and non-disabled people, older and younger people and people from all backgrounds; the Home Library Service bringing books to over 540 people at home supported by some 250 volunteers from the Royal Voluntary Service.

We recognise that culture thrives in Dorset because of the commitment and energy of many people who work and, vitally, volunteer in our museums, arts centres, archives, libraries and more. Their passion and ambition enable the range and quality of performance, exhibitions and activity available for all. Their dedication and vision leads organisations to achieve major investment from such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England. Such successes sustain and develop cultural facilities and infrastructure for future generations.

¹ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

The County Council wants to support this passion and energy. Our vision is working together for a strong and successful Dorset and this cultural strategy fits with that vision, promoting as it does, working together to achieve shared ambitions. We trust that it will play a part in the continued development of our cultural life and opportunities in Dorset.

Robert Gould
Leader, Dorset County Council

Debbie Ward
Chief Executive, Dorset County Council

Roderick Knight
Chair, Dorset Cultural Partnership

INTRODUCTION

Our culture defines who we are. Our creativity is how we express who we are ...

The Dorset Cultural Partnership published its first Dorset Cultural Strategy in 2009. This new Cultural Strategy refreshes that document and builds on the collaboration it generated.

The strategy has promoted working together across publicly funded organisations and bodies, with private sector business, with social enterprises and with community groups. The ethos of collaboration is now well established and examples of the activity and opportunity that has resulted are summarised in our new strategy. The strategy galvanises the sector towards both efficiency and innovation to achieve collective impact and benefit for people and communities in Dorset.

The drafting of this new Cultural Strategy was led by the Dorset Cultural Partnership and shaped by listening to ideas, concerns and aspirations from colleagues and organisations in the cultural arena and others. It recognises and adheres to principles to promote equality, diversity and sustainability and that its successful implementation depends on continued collaboration and partnership across Dorset, with our neighbours and our regional colleagues.

Working together will enable us to achieve our vision and ambitions.

VISION AND OUTCOMES

Our vision is that Dorset places culture at the heart of quality of life

We want to achieve:

- A thriving, competitive economy that delivers good quality employment for people in Dorset
- A resilient infrastructure providing access to cultural and leisure opportunities
- Understanding, enjoying and safeguarding Dorset's environment with planning for the future
- Opportunities for people to enjoy and achieve promoting health and wellbeing within safe and thriving communities

THE CASE FOR CULTURE

Culture makes a positive contribution to the Dorset economy, but probably has an even more significant effect on the health and wellbeing of residents – which adds a further contribution to economic progress².

Culture and leisure are particularly significant in Dorset for the way they provide creative access and experience relating to the natural environment - with the enjoyment of green space further enhancing wellbeing.

Culture and leisure are also top areas of activity for community and voluntary groups in Dorset³.

What do we mean by culture?

- Material dimension

Culture is seen as having a material dimension encompassing the following types of activities - an illustrative, rather than exhaustive, listing. It includes:

- dance, music, theatre and visual arts, craft and fashion
- media, film, television, video and language
- museums, artefacts, archives and design
- libraries, literature, writing and publishing

² World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/hdp/en/>

³ National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises 2010, Cabinet Office

- the built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- sports events, facilities and development
- parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- children's play, playgrounds and play activities
- tourism, festival and attractions
- informal leisure pursuits

- o Value dimension

Culture also has a value dimension and is about:

- relationships - between individuals and groups
- shared memories, experience and identity
- diverse cultural, faith and historic backgrounds
- social standards, values and norms
- what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.

SOME CULTURE FACTS

Almost 60% of people are more likely to report good health if they have attended a cultural place or event in the past 12 months; and levels of wellbeing are generally reported to be higher among those with higher arts and culture engagement [Create, Arts Council England (ACE) November 2014]

Arts and cultural interventions can have a positive impact on specific health conditions such as dementia, Parkinsons and depression [Create, ACE November 2014]

Value of sport for savings to health is £145.1m per year [Sport England Local Sport Profile 2013]

Total direct economic value of sport to Dorset is £117.4m per year [Sport England Local Sport Profile 2013]

The Gross Value Added (GVA) of the UK's Creative Industries which draw on the talent of the arts sector was £71.8 billion in 2012 and accounted for 5.2% of the UK economy; and accounts for 1 in 18 of all UK jobs [Office for National Statistics (ONS); Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)]

With GVA of £394.3 million in Creative Industries in the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area, GVA per full time equivalent employee is above the all industry average in Dorset, but it is below the national average for Creative Industries [ONS; Dorset County Council (DCC)]

Children from low income families who take part in arts at school are three times more likely to get a degree [Create, ACE November 2014]

Students who study arts subjects are more employable and more likely to stay in employment than graduates from other disciplines [Create, ACE November 2014]

EVIDENCE AND CONSULTATION

The breadth of opportunities places cultural activity in a key role supporting many of the challenges facing Dorset. There is a growing body of information and evidence which demonstrates the positive impacts of cultural activity for individuals and communities.

Sources of national data and research are available on line at [CASE](#) - a joint programme of strategic research led by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in collaboration with Arts Council England, English Heritage and Sport England.

In Dorset increasing understanding of audiences, levels of participation and satisfaction is important in the development of future actions. A summary of this cultural evidence base is provided as a separate Evidence document. [Hyperlink]

The Dorset Cultural Partnership consulted widely and a robust evidence base from local and national research has informed development of our refreshed ambitions and priorities.

OUTCOMES: our achievements, ambitions, priorities

Who is the Cultural Strategy for?

- Primarily for the cultural sector and cultural providers as a strategic cultural framework to support their work
- For community groups who need a strategic cultural framework to support their work
- For strategic bodies such as Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board, Dorset Local Nature Partnership, Children's Trust, Community Safety, Local Authorities
- For funding bodies seeking to verify or validate local need

What is the purpose of the Cultural Strategy?

The purpose is to be:

- The sector's articulation of its shared ambitions and strategic priorities for progress towards achieving the outcomes
- The engine that drives collaboration around the shared ambitions and enabling a collective response to changing circumstances and contexts during the five year timespan of the strategy
- An interface for cultural organisations with strategic bodies

Achievements

We have reviewed cultural activity over the past six years because it's important to recognise the achievements of the sector since the last strategy was published. These key collaborative initiatives are set out in Appendix One [HYPERLINK], and are briefly summarised here.

Dorset's Economy

- A Creative Employment Programme of apprenticeships and interns and well-supported voluntary opportunities for young people to develop their skills and experience and seek paid work.
- The Maritime Mix London 2012 Cultural Olympiad by the Sea reached 30,000 people and gained national publicity and recognition. Major investment was secured and the festival has been a foundation for development of culture as part of the visitor economy
- All libraries in Dorset now provide free access to computers and the internet and free Wi-Fi to enable those people without ICT to access e-services including job applications and e-information; and some libraries host Work Clubs.
- Heritage and museums play a vital role in developing an attractive tourism offer. Landmark exhibitions such as the Pliosaur at the County Museum and War Horse at the Tank Museum have generated national publicity and profile; while focused high quality improvements in museums such as Gold Hill in Shaftesbury and Swanage Museum have seen these two entirely voluntary run museums attract nearly 90,000 visitors per year between them
- 'Home and Abroad' - Dorset History Centre, The National Trust and The Priest's House Museum collaborate on a wide-ranging project to catalogue and present the Bankes family archive. It is a huge and eclectic source of information and cultural heritage relating to the 16,000 acre Dorset estate, but containing material of international significance

Strong cultural organisations in Dorset

- Dorset Arts Together is a collaboration of over 80 individuals and organisations working in arts and culture. Their leadership programme provided action learning sets and mentoring for over forty participants drawn from across the cultural sector and generated many opportunities for developing collaborative projects as well as increasing cross sector understanding.
- Eight community managed libraries are now operating, whose development was supported by Dorset Library Service.
- The Playbuilder programme secured over £1million to build twenty-two fantastic new or redeveloped play areas.

- Museums across the county have substantially enhanced their resilience through a comprehensive, robust and progressive set of partnerships which have delivered multifaceted and tangible benefits to the participant museums.

Dorset's Environment

- Nature Network Neighbourhood (N3): the creation of innovative art and design in public places across Dorset which improved public places for community benefit
- Artists, engineers, and architects work together to enhance building projects. New collaborations have improved public spaces including in Chickerell, Newtons Cove, Durlston Castle.
- Landscape based programmes: Creative Coast Arts Strategy and arts programme; South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership arts and heritage programme; Dorset Archaeological Days and Dorset Architectural Heritage Week
- Outdoor arts and festivals programmes and visual arts projects that explore celebrate and transform the landscape such as Inside Out Dorset, b-side, Ex-Lab
- Safe and healthy routes for cyclists and pedestrians; play provision incorporated into country walks and parks; Children's Nature Nursery connecting children and families to nature

Health and wellbeing

We have taken a broad approach to the role of culture in both specific and general health and wellbeing, and have generated a climate of inter-speciality and inter-organisational collaboration. This has led to a change in behaviour and attitude which has resulted in significant health benefits.

- The library service runs a 'Books on Prescription' service which helps people understand and manage their health and wellbeing using self-help reading.
- 'Biophilia' is a new channel of artists' film and video related to the Dorset landscape which is available free to patients and visitors to Dorset County Hospital, including in isolation units and public waiting areas.
- Skills&Learning's partnership working has offered a variety of activities to promote health and wellbeing, improved family relationships and a sense of achievement
- A collaborative programme of events promoting play and physical activity; sustainable transport projects promoting healthy travel
- Cultural organisations have offered a rich range of opportunities and programmes for volunteers

The Outcomes

The cultural partnership works together to achieve four positive outcomes for Dorset, and the strategy sets out the collective ambitions for each outcome, and the priority actions to achieve it.

The ambitions need to be strategic, and applicable to all. They need to:

- Be of benefit to the individual and the community
- Have relevance to the wider cultural sector

We have agreed these ambitions and priority actions through consultation across our cultural sector networks.

Outcome 1. A thriving, competitive economy that delivers good quality employment for people in Dorset

This refers to skills and business development for a thriving creative economy which will benefit the wider economy of the county.

Ambitions: where we want to be by 2021

- a. The creative economy grows and has an increased share of the LEP Dorset economy and the role of culture is recognised and valued as part of economic development within the county
- b. Dorset has a national/international reputation as a cultural destination
- c. Students of culture-related courses find culture-related work in Dorset; with sustainable provision of progression routes into the sector at all levels
- d. To have achieved a sustainable model for the county's recorded and built heritage, encouraging the wider use of heritage assets.
- e. A thriving cultural sector, with sufficient capacity and a well skilled and diverse workforce representative of the whole community

- f. A cultural volunteer training programme through which volunteers gain employment as a result of skills and experience gained

Priorities:

1. LEP Creative Industries sector boards steer engagement; and identify and promote opportunities for the public, private and not for profit sectors to work together in order to devise and achieve strategic outcomes and benefits for the creative industries
2. Support the Digital Inclusion agenda through projects and providing access to technology
3. Strategic approach to develop landscape as Unique Selling Point (USP) and associated cultural offer for Dorset
4. Develop role of culture in the visitor economy through the Culture and Tourism Action Plan
5. Strategic programme to enable organisations to attract, train and employ graduate students
6. Maintain a programme to support cultural providers to employ apprentices and interns
7. Provide a collective narrative and case for the economic, social and wellbeing impact of culture to secure public and political support and to enable access to a full range of funding sources
8. Support the third sector through advocacy, training, low cost accommodation and partnership working.

Outcome 2. A resilient infrastructure providing access to cultural and leisure opportunities

This refers to the resilience of organisations that make up the cultural sector, and the strength of the framework and networks of support, which enable the sector to provide opportunities for people to access culture

Ambitions: where we want to be by 2021

- a. Culture is understood, valued and supported by the public, private and third sector and communities actively engage
- b. Collaborative frameworks and strategies are in place enabling a secure and resilient infrastructure for cultural provision
- c. Cultural organisations have diverse and relevant income streams and business methods
- d. Improved and sustainable access for everyone to participate in cultural activities within local communities.
- e. Promotion and raising awareness of opportunities for cultural activity both as audience, participant and volunteer

Priorities

1. Provide a collective narrative and case for the economic, social and wellbeing impact of culture to secure public and political support and to enable access to a full range of funding sources
2. Identify and address significant gaps in provision including communal spaces for cultural activity
3. A programme of cross cultural organisational development
4. A programme to improve marketing with social media strategy

Training and support

The success of culture in Dorset relies on the ambition and energy of individuals and organisations pursuing their visions with passion. This strategy seeks to highlight where it makes sense to direct that passion towards working collaboratively for the benefit of all our community.

The strategy is a five year partnership plan. It recognises that the detailed action plans will be held and implemented by partners in a range of different partnership frameworks.

We know that organisations are strengthened through training and support and during consultation to develop the strategy we have built on the cultural sector's drive for continuous improvement.

Organisations have identified where there is a need for training and development; and we have also drawn out where organisations have skills and expertise which they could share as part of a peer to peer training programme. This is set out in a separate Skills Development Needs and Offer document [[Hyperlink](#)].

Outcome 3. Understanding, enjoying and safeguarding Dorset's environment with planning for the future

This refers to the role of culture in understanding, enjoying and safeguarding our landscape heritage, and the public space and heritage of our towns and villages

Ambitions: where we want to be by 2021

- a. Cultural needs and culture's potential to improve the public realm and historic environment is integrated into local planning guidance and policy.
- b. Public awareness of opportunities in Dorset's environment for cultural activity.
- c. Dorset is internationally recognised for excellence in using culture and creativity to engender understanding and stewardship of the environment
- d. The collaborative actions of culture and environment organisations has resulted in climate change awareness and mitigation within local communities

Priorities:

1. Secure recognition of cultural infrastructure in planning policy because:
 - i. culture plays a major role in reducing health inequalities through preventative lifestyle changes; and
 - ii. culture offers community and environmental benefit, integrating relevant evidence such as the Historic Environment Record, with the resources of archives, libraries, museums, natural environment, and sport.
2. A commitment to develop a regional network for culture and environment collaborations
3. Convene a national conference on how culture can provide creative solutions to environmental organisations' objectives
4. Action research through cultural commissions targeted at communities at risk through climate change

Outcome 4. Opportunities for people to enjoy and achieve promoting health and wellbeing within safe and thriving communities

This refers to the role of culture in promoting: individual health and wellbeing; personal sense of achievement; and the role of participation and engagement with culture in wider community safety and wellbeing.

Ambitions: where we want to be by 2021

- a. The role of culture in enabling services to be more inclusive is embedded at the heart of day to day service delivery
- b. Integration by cultural providers with other public sector priority plans such as DCC's Pathways to Independence and the Children's Trust Plan, so that the benefits of culture are felt in a range of contexts
- c. Cultural organisations make use of reliable and accurate data about audiences/users/customers
- d. A thriving cultural sector, with sufficient capacity and a well skilled and diverse workforce representative of the whole community
- e. Achieve connection between public health programmes and increasing access to cultural well-being activities.
- f. Reduced health inequalities as a result of engagement in cultural well-being activities.

Priorities

1. Strengthen existing networks such as Dorset Museums Association and Creative Care Dorset, to meet the gaps in leadership, networking, and sharing best practice
2. Provide a collective narrative and case for the economic, social and wellbeing impact of culture to secure public and political support and to enable access to a full range of funding sources
3. Identify target groups as part of audience development plans
4. A programme of cultural workforce development
5. Cultural organisations and services develop a strong focus on outcomes and contribute to the prevention and early help agendas
6. Influence the use of public health and care funding to support a wide range of cultural and learning activity to achieve health and wellbeing priorities and outcomes
7. Connection of online resources for cultural providers to achieve best practice and raise the quality of cultural participation and engagement.

CONCLUSION

Cultural activity at all levels and across a range of experience will contribute to achieving the outcomes; with detailed delivery programmes and plans held by organisations across culture and with other partners. The drive for continuous improvement to achieve cultural excellence is a key aspiration; and so the Dorset Cultural Partnership will report annually against each of the four outcomes.

Achieving the full potential of the cultural contribution for Dorset and building on our unrivalled strengths, assets and opportunities will require shared ambition, passion and hard work. This framework of partnership will enable us to achieve our vision and ambition that Dorset places culture at the heart of quality of life.