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Dorset's Cultural Strategy 2021 to 2026

Welcome statement

We want the Cultural Strategy to drive positive change at the individual, sector and county level and to make culture more inclusive, accessible and visible for everyone in Dorset. It is an ambitious document and we will only successfully deliver on the priorities in the strategy if we work in partnership to enable this to happen. As such the Cultural Strategy is not a standalone document but is designed to complement non-arts agendas and integrate with existing regional and council strategies to achieve our collective ambitions for Dorset. Ultimately, we want our communities to feel proud of Dorset's arts, heritage and cultural offer and for it to be shaped by our communities and that culture becomes woven into everyday life as an entitlement and not a privilege.

Cllr Jill Haynes
Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services
Dorset Council

Introduction

Cultural Strategies have been in place in Dorset since 2010. They have helped to increase the opportunities of securing new investment into Dorset and maximise the leverage value of the Council's own investment in arts, heritage and culture.

This Cultural Strategy was developed in the middle of the COVID pandemic which has severely affected the financial health of the culture sector across the UK.

According to a report by UK Parliament:

"The UK's arts and entertainment sector has been one of the areas worst affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The decline in revenues and the number of workers furloughed over the past few months is second only to the accommodation and food sector... According to the Office for National Statistics, the arts and entertainment industry saw a 44.5% reduction in monthly gross domestic product (GDP) output (according to gross value added (GVA)) in the three months up to June 2020 compared with the three months earlier, making it one of the sectors worst hit by the pandemic"

Covid-19: Impact on the UK Cultural Sector – In Focus report for the UK Parliament, published 4 September 2020

This new strategy will play a key part in the recovery of our sector. It will not only inform how Dorset Council will support the sector in the future, but it will set out a united direction for culture in our county for other stakeholders, funders, cross sector partners, Parish and Town Councils, organisations and individuals. A collaborative approach to cultural provision will directly benefit our communities, visitors, and the local economy.

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This Cultural Strategy is for the Dorset Council area of Dorset. The other unitary authority in Dorset – Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) will also have a new Cultural Strategy in place by the end of December 2021.

The two Cultural Strategies are different from each other and will deliver on place-based priorities shaped around a predominantly rural area contrasting with a large conurbation. There are however shared ambitions and priorities within the two Cultural Strategies for Dorset and for BCP around nurturing and retaining creative talent, promoting tourism through the breadth of the 'Dorset destination' and supporting a year round high quality and inclusive arts, heritage and cultural offer which celebrates local identities. Where we can add value and increase inward investment in meeting these shared priorities and sustaining the cultural offer for the benefit of all our communities; we will look to do so in partnership.

Who is the strategy for?

- The cultural sector and cultural providers (including venues, museums, festivals, libraries, arts, heritage and cultural organisations, touring companies, freelance creatives, artists and producers.
- For community and voluntary sector organisations and groups who need a strategic cultural framework to support their work.
- For strategic bodies such as Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Local Authorities and strategic boards for example Our Dorset, Dorset's integrated care system.
- For national and local funding bodies (such as Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England) seeking to verify or validate local need.

What is Culture?

Culture is shared, creative experiences where we express, learn and reflect on our history, place, social issues and personal lives. These experiences can improve wellbeing, strengthen communities and develop vital life skills for employment and a better quality of life.

The culture sector encompasses organisations, freelancers, artists and creatives, public venues, institutions and activities. For the purpose of this strategy, this includes:

- Performing arts including dance, music, comedy and theatre.
- Visual arts, design, craft and makers.
- Digital media and film.
- Museums, collections and archives.
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing.
- The natural, historic and built environment.
- Cultural tourism, locally produced food and drink, outdoor festivals and attractions.
- Amateur and voluntary run arts for example fetes, carnivals and knitting circles.

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The Current National Climate

At the time of writing this Cultural Strategy, there are significant world and UK events which are directly affecting the sector, our communities, audiences and participants, partners and stakeholders:

- Covid-19 has exposed deep economic and health inequalities. Freelancers, emerging artists and disabled artists have suffered disproportionate financial hardship.
- Enforced closures and ongoing uncertainty about future funding and trading conditions have put our cultural venues at risk.
- The immediate shift to delivering digital programmes has highlighted some gaps in skills and resources. However, the culture sector embraced online delivery through live streaming events, producing creative and participatory digital content and using online platforms and social media as a creative tool to reach global audiences. This need/trend for creative, online experiences will continue after the pandemic. Young people represent an increasingly important cohort of consumers within the UK and as a fully 'digitally immersed' generation they are arguably more likely to expect novelty, choice and personalisation from cultural experiences.
- The UK government responded to calls for cultural sector-specific support with the provision of the [Culture Recovery Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/culture-recovery-fund).
- There has been a clear call to our cultural sector to build back differently – to break down hierarchies between freelancers, artists, volunteers, venues and publicly funded organisations. All aspects of our cultural ecology to be equally valued, championed and respected.
- Potentially there will also be extensive, positive opportunities for cultural venues and organisations arising from the predicted growth of domestic tourism within the South West and UK.
- The UK is no longer part of the EU and it is still uncertain what this will ultimately mean for trade with Europe and the wider world economies, and the overall impact this could have on touring and the export of UK culture as well as bringing EU based companies, exhibitions and artists to Dorset.
- [Black Lives Matter](#) shone a global spotlight on systemic racism that still exists in the UK and abroad. The arts, heritage and culture sector will continue to respond, take action and change to work towards true equality within our sector.
- Humanity faces the combined catastrophes of climate change, a mass extinction of vital biodiversity and a degradation of ecosystems health. This is the Climate

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Emergency of which both Dorset Council and BCP Council have also declared. Degradation and loss of cultural fabric such as historic building and landscapes risks loss of local distinctiveness and sense of place. Culture can play an important role in taking necessary leadership in combating these affects and help change behaviour as well as create new stories and visions for our world.

An Overview of Dorset

Statistics taken from sources: Dorset Insights, Office for National Statistics, State of Dorset Reports 2020, Dorset Strategic Alliance – Children, Young People and Families plan 2020-2023, Visit Dorset Recovery Planning 2021 – Internal Summary. Valuing Dorset's VCSE sector 2014 report.

Environment

Dorset is a predominately rural area with the largest town being Weymouth with a population of over 58,000. Dorset is a popular tourist destination and over half of the county is covered by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation and 7% of Dorset is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Jurassic Coast is England's only natural World Heritage Site and was inscribed by UNESCO in 2001 for the outstanding universal value of its rocks, fossils and landforms. Many of the key specimens from this remarkable 185 million years of history are held by the myriad of museums dotted across these 95 miles of coast which stretches from Exmouth to Old Harry Rocks near Swanage. In addition to this unique globally significant geological heritage, Dorset has a remarkably rich archaeological heritage encompassing Neolithic long barrows, Iron Age hill forts, Roman dwellings and Saxon settlements. Concentrations of prehistoric burial and ceremonial monuments in Cranborne Chase and Dorchester and the South Dorset Ridgeway are of international significance.

There are 9,220 Listed Buildings, 984 Scheduled Monuments, 36 Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, and 179 Conservation Areas in the Dorset Council area.

Dorset's natural landscape has an ecological diversity and richness to it including coastal, chalkland, woodland and unique geology. Each environment supports unparalleled wildlife and rare breeds such as Portland Sheep as well as holding Dark Skies status and a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The landscapes also continue to support traditional craft and trade such as coppicing and quarrying for Portland stone.

Over the centuries, Dorset's landscapes have inspired poets, authors, scientists and artists, many of whom have left a rich legacy of cultural associations. The best known of these is writer Thomas Hardy who was born and lived most of his life in the county. Many of the major themes in his work, the characters and the landscapes they inhabit, are drawn from the Dorset countryside. Other literary figures inspired by Dorset's landscapes include William Barnes, John Cowper Powys, Jane Austen, Enid Blyton, John Fowles, Elizabeth

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Muntz, Sylvia Townsend Warner, John Meade Falkner and Kenneth Allsop. William Turner, John Constable and Paul Nash are just a few of the many artists associated with Dorset, while Gustav Holst captured the character of the Dorset heathlands in his work 'Egdon Heath'. Renowned contemporary artists who have strong links to Dorset include musician and singer-songwriter PJ Harvey, painter Lucien Freud, sculptor and print maker Dame Elisabeth Frink, designer Reynolds Stone, Sculptor Mary Spencer Watson, conductor Sir John Eliot Gardiner, sculptor Simon Gudgeon and award-winning designer and furniture maker, John Makepeace. Famous scientists include palaeontologist Mary Anning who in the 1800's became known around the world for finds she made in fossil beds in the cliffs at Lyme Regis.

Dorset regularly provides locations for films, adverts and novel adaptations such as The Cobb at Lyme Regis (for the film - the French Lieutenant's Woman) , Dorchester (used for scenes for Thomas Hardy (films and books) and William Barnes) and Gold Hill, Shaftsbury (the location of the Hovis advert).

Over the last 20 years, arts, heritage and cultural organisations in Dorset have led the way nationally in supporting multi-disciplinary local authority teams (including AONB), to work collaboratively with creative practitioners on making our public spaces special. This is through ensuring improvements are bespoke and suit the unique environment they sit in, whether this is coast, countryside, urban or rural. These improved environments help both the wellbeing of residents and encourages tourism. The projects range from plaza's, to wind shelters, beach promenades, replacement bridges, to walking routes, site specific installations, interpretation and sculpture trails.

People

Dorset has a population of 375,000 residents, of which 4.4% are black and minority ethnic. Approximately 75,000 people in Dorset experience some form of disability. Dorset has an above average aging population and the number of over 65s is growing by 2.2% per annum coupled with the number of 0-15-year olds expected to fall over the next 25 years. It is predicted that by 2025, there will be 10,100 more people living with dementia in Dorset with 3,000 additional carers needed to cope with the increase.

43% of our population live in rural areas. In 2019, Dorset became two Unitary Local Authority areas with the largest urban conurbation remaining in the new Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) local authority area.

There is a perception that Dorset is a wealthy, affluent place but 11 areas of Dorset are some of the most deprived areas nationally in terms of indices of multiple deprivation. 6,800 children live in workless households and Weymouth and Portland have some of the poorest levels of social mobility in the UK. Across Dorset, earnings are below average and house prices are high.

There are 212 schools and FE colleges in Dorset (including independent schools, special schools and learning centres) where 33 different languages are spoken. The numbers of young people in care has risen significantly over the last 10 years. Pupil achievement in

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Dorset is around the national average and there are increasing numbers of children electively home educated.

In a survey undertaken by Dorset Council (July 2019), when asked what would make Dorset the best place to grow up in, young people answered:

- Making a difference and contributing to their local communities.
- Looking after the environment and tackling climate change.
- Learning skills for the future e.g. technology.
- Easily finding out about what's going on and ensuring there are places where everyone can get to.
- Celebrating positive role models from Dorset.

As part of the consultation process in shaping the new Cultural Strategy, the Arts Development Company carried out an online survey between February and March 2021; 384 young people from across Dorset aged between 0-25 responded about their experiences of the current arts, heritage and cultural offer in Dorset. The most popular and well attended cultural events included Music, Theatre and visiting Libraries. Young people expressed a desire to see more of the following events across Dorset in the future: Festivals followed by Music and Theatre. The most significant barriers for young people in accessing cultural opportunities were not knowing what was available and the cost of ticket prices.

The DCMS [Taking Part Survey: England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) showed significantly lower levels of participation in culture, including heritage environments in deprived areas, and particularly urban areas, and lower engagement among ethnicities described as 'Asian' or 'Black'.

Employment and volunteering

The main industries in Dorset are Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Agri-tech and Agriculture, Food and Drink, the Creative Industries and Financial Services. The Dorset Local Industrial Strategy identifies the creative and digital sectors as key agents of growth into the future as we seek to balance the challenges of an aging population with the need to create good jobs for the 21st Century and have the skills in place to deliver those jobs. Our local, independent businesses are often characterised as socially enterprising and community focused. Dorset is the UK's second fastest growing area for business start-ups and 18% of rural Dorset's workforce is self-employed.

Dorset has a very active and strong community and voluntary sector, particularly working in rurally isolated areas and providing key services for those communities such as social gatherings and clubs. 94,000 volunteers provide almost 7 million hours per year and this has a replacement value of about £93.5 million pounds per annum.

Many local cultural venues and events are run at parish and town level by volunteers and amateur groups. The [Artsreach](#) performance programme is managed by a small staff team

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at the Little Keep in Dorchester, working with a network of more than 300 volunteers to put on more than 150 professional events every year, mainly in village halls. A socio-economic impact study commissioned by Artsreach in 2019 estimated that the volunteer time to promote rural arts annually is 4,780 - the equivalent of an additional two and a half paid staff would be needed to deliver the programme without volunteer help.

In the Dorset museum sector, regular regional data gathering, highlights that on average over 1000 volunteers contribute over 100,000 hours annually, with many contributing specialist skills and professional advice and support.

Tourism

Tourism is a key driver for the Dorset economy valued at £1.8 bn, providing a GVA of £1.2bn and supporting over 43,000 jobs in the county. In 2019- 30 million visits were made to Dorset as either a day trip or overnight stay. The Jurassic coast attracts regular holiday makers to the area as well as other popular tourist sites including Maiden Castle, Maumbury Rings, Nothe Fort, Portland Bill, Durdle Door and Badbury Rings. Historic towns and villages including Lyme Regis, Wimborne Minster, Cerne Abbas, Sherborne and Shaftesbury are popular tourist sites.

Dorset is famous for its locally produced food and drink and this continues to be a big draw for tourists. Many esteemed chefs have taken up home in Dorset including the original River Cottage with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, and the Oyster and Fish House restaurant in Lyme Regis run by chef Mark Hix. There are countless independent breweries in Dorset, numerous food festivals – one of the largest being Dorset's seafood festival held in Weymouth and the locally produced cheese, Dorset Blue Vinney is one of our most famous food exports.

Cultural Tourism is a big driver for economic growth and the creation of year-round jobs in Dorset – it is also the reason that many tourists come back to Dorset year on year. An example of this is the 2019 [Dorset Moon](#) (a signature festival event presented in Bournemouth, Sherborne and Weymouth by a Dorset festival consortia of Inside Out, produced by Activate, Bournemouth Arts by the Sea and b-side). A survey of Sherborne businesses evidenced that 60% said they were busier and profit had increased on the weekend of Dorset Moon compared to a normal July weekend and 100% of the businesses said arts festivals were vital for bringing in new visitors from outside of the county to a town. In 2021, the Dorset Festivals Consortium won Bronze at Dorset Tourism Awards for Tourism Event/Festival of the Year and they are committed to continue their collaboration to strengthen the festival offer in the county.

Collectively, Dorset's museums attract over 900,000 visits per year (including 170,000+ children) and deliver approximately 1200 events annually. High profile temporary exhibitions, such as the 2019 *Turner in Bridport* make a strong and distinctive contribution to the cultural tourism offer.

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Heritage

Each village and town in Dorset have features of local distinctiveness which help shape local identity such as food and drink, heritage and the built environment and land/seascapes. Dorset has cultural traditions dating back hundreds of years. These to shape local identity and ensure our communities feel rooted to their local area. These cultural traditions include folk festivals, carnivals, village fetes such as the Filly Loo at Ashmore, Dorset Knob throwing, Sherborne's Pack Monday Fair and Abbotsbury Garland Day. We continue to preserve old customs and traditions such as the Dorset Ooser, old dances, mummers plays and the many traditional tunes and songs which include the richness of our local dialect. The multifaceted social history of Dorset's historic towns and their traditions are preserved and shared in a dynamic network of community museums from Swanage to Sturminster Newton.

The historic and built environment includes thatched cottages and Georgian market towns, hill forts, chalk figures carved onto the landscape and old trade routes criss-crossing the land such as old railway lines and ox drove tracks. The county has a history of migration from Lyme Regis and Weymouth to the New World.

Dorset has strong ties with the Navy and Army, which have been well established since 1702. Bovington, Hamworthy, Blandford and West Moors are still active army bases, and the [Tank Museum](#) in Bovington draws millions of tourists and online audiences each year. 120,000 Australians were stationed in Dorset during WWI and headquartered in Weymouth (Anzac Day is still commemorated every year in Weymouth). The WW1 poet Rupert Brooke trained at Blandford Camp and military strategist and archaeological scholar T.E. Lawrence; known as Lawrence of Arabia, was stationed at Bovington and buried at Moreton. The lasting legacy of Dorset's military history is the number of defence industries and major employers still based in the region – for example at Bovington there is Babcocks and Qinetiq on Portland. [The Keep Military Museum, Dorchester, Dorset](#) documents the stories of Dorset regiments.

Dorset has a great number of local town museums preserving local history and records of human activity going back thousands of years. These museums work collectively with the assistance of the South West Museum Development Programme and the Dorset Museums Association to mentor each other and improve their offer to the public. They work collaboratively with arts organisations to create space for both visual and performance art and link with local public bodies and charities to partner on meaningful community projects.

National heritage organisations, such as the National Trust, English Heritage and Historic England play an important role in conserving natural and built sites and work closely with the local authority's Historic Environment team to ensure they are accessible for future generations.

Dorset's rich historic environment has inspired important archaeological work and provided a backdrop for centuries of agriculture, industry, creative activity, everyday life, and death. Dorset has many 'flagship' monuments and excavations, and a wealth of historic buildings and finds which continue to inspire high quality research, and enormous public interest and enthusiasm.

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There is a large public engagement with heritage. Archaeology and research into local history are popular recreational activities, engaged in by many locals and visitors. Dorset's important archaeology attracts research by a wide range of students and senior academics.

Research by the Heritage Lottery Fund (*New ideas need old buildings*, Heritage Lottery Fund 2013) showed that businesses occupying listed buildings generate £13,000 extra Gross Value Added. Loss of distinctiveness reduces premium values of heritage. Heritage-led regeneration projects are more closely connected to place and people.

Arts and Culture

Dorset is known nationally and internationally for the quality of its outdoor work, range of festivals (from community, grassroots to internationally significant) and for our artists and cultural organisations that use our unique environment as stimulus for creative work and experiences. [Activate Performing Arts](#) have worked internationally for 14 years and from 2021 onwards they are expanding their successful European partnership - LAND (Land Stewards and Artists) <https://www.landartists.eu/> with the original partners: Oerol (NL) and Le Citron Jaune (Fr) along with two new members: Bodo, Norway EU Capital of Culture 2024 and Zilinia in Slovakia bidding for EU Capital of Culture in 2026. They have secured Erasmus+ funding to work up land- based residencies and laboratories for Europe and Dorset-based artists and audiences with partner Dorset AONB.

[Opera Circus](#), has been based in Bridport in West Dorset for over 20 years having come from London where they had developed a reputation for high quality award winning devised experimental work using opera and physical theatre, touring widely in the UK and globally. Opera Circus's work with arts and young people, including arts exchanges with European partners, has brought over €600,000 into Dorset since 2012.

We hold internationally significant collections in Dorset, including the recently acquired Elisabeth Frink Collection of sculptures and prints hosted by [Dorset County Museum](#) and archives at the [Dorset History Centre](#). Collections across Dorset have been designated as nationally significant by Arts Council England including The Tank Museum and the [Etches Collection](#). Dorset also has outstanding geology collections that are exhibited in museums right across the coast.

Dorset has hosted UK tours including [Dippy on Tour: A Natural History Adventure | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#) at Dorset County Museum, which generated a visitor spend of £2,253,406. Many of our Dorset-based producing companies tour internationally. Artistic Director of Gobbledegook Lorna Rees has toured internationally with [Ear Trumpet](#), and [Stuff and Nonsense](#), led by Artistic Director Niki McCretton, work with children, families, artists and theatres from across the globe.

Our sector brings International artists to smaller, isolated communities providing valuable opportunities for Dorset through both putting Dorset on the map reputationally and bringing inspiration to artists and communities. Recent examples include hosting Michael

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Pinsky's [Pollution Pods](#) at Portland and Brownsea Island. [Artsreach](#), as part of the Rural Touring Dance Initiative, has toured exceptional dance companies which would not normally be seen in rural venues, such as village halls. Dorset has hosted Panta Rei from Norway, Tentacle Tribe from Canada and UK companies Protein Dance, Lost Dog Dance Company and Nikki and JD.

[Dorset Visual Arts](#) was the first open studios in the UK and it symbolises the immense strength in collaboration for the benefit of artists, visitors and residents. Each Open Studios has an estimated economic impact of £2.1 million.

[Dorchester Arts](#) has a specific commitment to developing and supporting local talent, through directly commissioning or producing work. Local writer Sue Wylie's play *Kinetics* was initially produced by Dorchester Arts as a touring stage play. With their support Sue established DT2 Productions and *Kinetics* was made into a 45-minute feature film shown by Parkinson's groups and medical institutions in the USA, Canada and Holland and was featured at the World Parkinson's Congress in Kyoto in 2019.

Our cultural offer ranges from grassroots organisations delivering creative opportunities for local communities to large scale cultural events which attract great numbers of visitors and are of UK and international significance. What makes our cultural ecology so strong is we support, commission and produce work of varying scale. This includes mentoring and training to bringing large scale work to big audiences to national and international performers presenting touring work to rural communities in intimate venues such as village halls or to unexpected locations which often highlight or offer access to heritage sites or sites of environmental importance. We co-produce with communities and develop meaningful participatory projects which have a long- lasting legacy.

All these ways of working contribute towards Dorset as a destination for visitors and for artists to live and create in. Artists help sell the "Dorset Lifestyle" story and celebrate the distinctness of Dorset and its heritage through our regular festivals, performances, arts and crafts attracting both visitors and locals alike. Our cultural offer is one of the main reasons tourists to Dorset come back every year – our year-round cultural offer coupled with our beautiful land and seascapes is an essential contributor to our local economy.

We have a diverse mix of organisations of varying scale based in Dorset, those supported through Arts Council England's national portfolio programme (including museums, arts centres and organisations, festivals and touring companies), local authority supported libraries, museums and archives, organisations and venues including (voluntary run) museums, arts centres, theatres and organisations specialising in participatory arts and creative learning. Many of our independent smaller companies produce and tour new work across the UK (including theatre, dance and outdoor arts). We have a wealth of freelancers, artists, curators, producers and technicians in Dorset who work independently as well as bring their expertise to many of the organisations and festivals above.

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Culture Statistics

Sources: Arts Council England, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership.

Over many years, Dorset has successfully attracted and sustained investment for our arts, heritage and culture sector. A strong position has been retained with a range of public and private funders who are confident in and recognise the quality of our cultural offer. Most recently (2020-2021), there has been the preservation of the Dorset Council arts and heritage budget, which in turn will help retain commitment from other key stakeholders to invest in the ambition and opportunities within this new Cultural Strategy:

- Between 2019 and 2021, nearly 7.5 million of revenue and strategic funding was invested into arts, heritage and cultural organisations by Arts Council South West.
- In the last 5 years, over £87 million worth of capital and revenue funding has been externally invested into Dorset's arts, heritage and culture sector.
- In 2019, the Dorset LEP valued our creative industries at £425 million.
- *Dippy on Tour* generated an estimated 1.1 million added value into the local economy and increased visitors to the Dorset County Museum by around 20 times.
- 50% of graduates working in the film, visual effects or video game industries in the UK come from Dorset.
- Between 2010-2017, Dorset Creative Industries grew by 29% compared to an 9% growth by any other industry.

Cultural Strategy Vision

Arts, heritage and culture is at the heart of Dorset's Future

By 2026 we want Dorset's arts, heritage and culture to be a significant force for positive change. Dorset will have a full and diverse programme of meaningful cultural experiences all across our county that will improve wellbeing, reduce inequalities, build an environmentally conscious society and sustain a healthy economy.

There are 4 overarching priorities

1. **Community:** we want everyone in Dorset's communities to have more opportunities to participate in and benefit from arts, heritage and culture
2. **Cultural County:** we will continue to build a strong, sustainable, and diverse cultural infrastructure
3. **Environment:** we envisage a green future for our county; using arts, heritage and culture to celebrate the environment and inspire action to tackle the climate and ecological emergency
4. **Economy:** we will position arts, heritage and culture as part of Dorset's sustainable economic growth, ensuring all communities across Dorset benefit

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These are supported by the following 10 ambition statements

Community

- Through arts, heritage and culture, we will improve health and wellbeing within our communities
- Culture will bring communities together; breaking down social isolation and helping build happy, empowered, and connected communities (particularly targeting areas of rural isolation and older people)
- We will encourage the nurturing and development of all creative talent in Dorset. In particular, we will identify better pathways for young people to get into creative industries and form new ways for young people to create and curate their own culture

Cultural County

Continue to develop a high- quality arts, heritage and culture offer that can command regional, national, and international recognition. We will be known for our festivals, outstanding museum exhibitions and events, site specific and outdoor arts and our independent creatives and makers

- We will embed access, inclusivity, diversity, and equality at every level of the arts, heritage and culture sector
- We want all artists, freelancers, volunteers and our creative workers to have the opportunities to thrive in Dorset at all stages of their life and career. Artists and freelancers are valued, championed, included in decision making and paid a fair rate of pay
- We will engage with more communities and build cross sector connections through our developing expertise in using digital technology and a blend of live/digital cultural experiences

Environment

- The cultural sector will reduce its carbon footprint in Dorset, help change public behaviour to reduce environmental impact (both locally and globally) and support communities to develop sustainable and regenerative responses to the climate and ecological emergency. Working sustainably with what we have, to give new life to these important assets and learning from them are crucial to the future well-being of places and people.
- Our unique environment will inspire our cultural offer, creating memorable experiences which help enrich, interpret, and celebrate our coast, towns, and countryside

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Economy

- Positioning Dorset as a cultural destination, attracting visitors and new businesses to Dorset and increasing year-round employment for local people

Target Groups

The accompanying delivery plans to this strategy will particularly target these places and people:

- People aged 65 and over, and those living with dementia.
- Young people aged 25 and under.
- Emerging artists and creatives.
- Disabled artists and creatives.
- People of South, East and South East Asian heritage, African or Caribbean heritage and people who experience racism.
- Those living with poor mental health.
- The 'culture cold spots' in Dorset. These are geographical areas which historically have had less provision and the least amount of communities participating in culture. These include North and East Dorset and Purbeck.
- Areas of socio- economic disadvantage- Weymouth and Portland.

What will we achieve?

The following outcomes will be achieved by working in collaboration with cross sector partners, artists and cultural organisations:

- Our arts, heritage and cultural offer is accessible and open to everyone; encouraging more people to regularly engage in arts, heritage and culture.
- More young people entering our sector and working in Dorset.
- Greater support for the future leaders, curators and producers of arts, heritage and culture.
- Increased diversity of people participating in culture and those entering employment in our sector, including disabled people and people of South, East and South East Asian heritage, African or Caribbean heritage.
- Co-producing and co-designing creative programmes with our communities; genuinely listening to different voices and valuing our communities' innate creativity. Museums, heritage and cultural sites will inspire and host progressive, cross sector programming.
- Our sector is more widely valued, and its impact evidenced and recognised by stakeholders.
- Increased collaboration between freelancers and organisations to work together equally in sharing both power and decision making, demystifying the commissioning process and greater paid involvement on board level for freelancers.

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- We sustain and aim to grow levels of funding for the arts, heritage and culture sector.
- Through cross sector partnerships, we secure non arts funding into the sector.
- We continue to retain strong relationships with key funders and stakeholders such as Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and the National Lottery Community Fund.
- Stronger relationships with a wide range of cross sector partners in particular health and wellbeing partners such as those in “Our Dorset” – the integrated care system (NHS, CCG, Public Health Dorset) and Dorset Council directorates including parks and green spaces, adult social care, education and environment.
- Dorset will be at the forefront when it comes to how arts, heritage and culture can deliver on social prescribing and early prevention initiatives.
- An improvement in health and wellbeing and a decrease in social isolation in our communities, for example, less reliance on prescription drugs and antidepressants.
- A reduction in the carbon and environmental impact of our sector and a change in public behaviour which helps protect and regenerate our environment.
- An increase in Dorset's national and international reputation. We will promote Dorset as a place where opportunity knocks for artists and creative industries, and heritage-based industries. We value our resident artists from all disciplines and welcome visiting artists from across the UK and beyond.
- Arts, heritage and culture bringing communities together and with the predicted growth in housing needed in Dorset; how arts and culture can help integrate people moving into Dorset for work, create that sense of belonging and “feeling like a local”.
- In a post pandemic world, maximising on the acceleration of our sector's digital global reach and the wider promotion of Dorset this brings. Capitalising on the trend of populations moving out of big cities to rural areas and showcasing the quality cultural experiences that happen out of London which can also be exported.

Making it happen

- In Dorset, a collective of arts organisations and museums are part of the Government initiative called [Kickstart](#) to increase job opportunities for 16-24-year olds on universal credit. In 2020/21, over 20 new jobs will be created for young people in the creative sector, who ultimately will be supported to gain further employment after their 6 months paid placement ends. The placement also includes skills development and training, mentoring and the opportunity to gain a national accreditation through Arts Award.
- Dorset's Cultural Education Partnership (CEP). There is a strong commitment amongst the Dorset cultural sector about the value of our work in the lives of children and young people. ACE encourages Cultural Education Partnerships to bring together cross sector partners to share resources and bring about a more coherent and visible delivery of cultural education. The Arts Development Company and Dorset Music Hub will lead on this area of work, establishing a focussed network of cultural education stakeholders and learning from regional and national partners.

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The impact of the CEP will be to increase the visibility and accessibility of the arts, heritage and culture offer for children and young people across Dorset. We will deepen existing, and broker new links with the education sector across Dorset and identify and develop opportunities for the Dorset CEP to pursue new funding to improve the lives of Dorset's young people.

- Continue to forge new links and beneficial partnerships with our higher and further education providers across the cultural sector. The Government's latest Further Education white paper encourages greater links between education and industry and at Weymouth College, they have Bay Theatre that houses professional touring companies, community groups, corporate events, stage schools and student productions. Exploring partnerships and joint projects has worked well in the past to allow organisations to utilise the facility at greatly reduced cost in exchange for students gaining free access to arts experiences.
- The economic and social impact of the arts, heritage and cultural sector will be both evidenced and collated through Dorset Council. A significant proportion of revenue funded organisations (2021-2024) will be asked to measure their social impact through the HACT social value calculator which measures both social and wellbeing impacts and savings to the NHS. Museums will continue to utilise the highly regarded Association of Independent Museums Economic Impact Toolkit and participate in the longstanding South West Museum Development data collection framework, which annually demonstrates the impact and value of Dorset museums in relation to visitor reach, employment, volunteering, formal learning and events provision.
- Physical improvements to and an increase in spaces to both produce and present arts, heritage and cultural experiences in. This will be supported through the Local Enterprise Partnership Investment Prospectus (2021-2031) and within this the identified need for a high quality cultural, heritage and hospitality infrastructure across Dorset over the next 10 years. The impact of which will be for key venues and organisations across the county to "level up" their facilities, lower their carbon footprint and increase their capacity to host high quality cultural activities both for residents and visitors.
- [Dorset Visual Arts](#) has been invited by the Canon Foundation to be based at and manage an exciting visual arts programme at Sherborne House once the renovation and additions have been completed in 2023. The configuration includes a dedicated gallery space and accommodation for artists residencies as well as establishing a film/moving image programme. Plans for the high-quality exhibitions programme will include a strong cohort of Dorset based artists, invited national and international artists and a bursary or other studio-based opportunities - primarily for emergent graduate artists and designers.

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- The Parish boundary project that Dorset Coast Forum (DCF) collaborated with the [Arts Development Company](#) on, demonstrated how creative thinking can improve coastal walking routes for our visitors and residents. 10 artists were commissioned in stage 1. The brief requested that these sculptural installations creatively referenced the lesser known stories behind each of the 10 Parishes along the South West Coast path, thus walkers, could find their way and learn about the Parish they are walking through. This project has proved to be so successful, that DCF now want to extend the route from where we left off at Abbotsbury and continue it on to Weymouth.
- Through the [What Next? Dorset chapter](#), artists, freelancers and cultural organisations can come together to share knowledge, skills and experiences and influence change at a local, regional and national level. What Next? Dorset has been active since late 2019 and through this chapter we will commit to finding better ways of working together and at the same time, showcase the strength of Dorset's cultural sector at a national level.
- With thirty well established sites, Dorset museums will play a strong role in local placemaking, with capacity to provide a year-round, rich, multi-faceted and weather-proof offer. This will encompass a clear commitment to contemporary collecting and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.
- Dorset arts, heritage and cultural organisations implementing the [5 Guiding Principles](#) across Dorset which includes fair pay for freelancers.
- Through both the Dorset Museums Association and the Wessex Museums Partnership, skills and knowledge exchange is available for our Dorset museums and heritage organisations to help maximise their impact, foster partnership work and create space for arts and artists in their venues.
- Dorset has a strong track record in developing initiatives around diversifying leadership in the cultural sector. We want to ensure the continuation of this at board, management and practitioner levels. During 2021/2022 a consortium of South West organisations including four from Dorset are managing a leadership programme called The Women Leaders South West which will transform leadership in the arts and tackle the systemic inequalities around women leadership in our sector. The impact of this initiative will be to increase women leaders in Dorset at both senior leadership and at board level and remove the obstacles women face in becoming leaders in the arts.
- [Diverse City](#) who have strong roots in Dorset are working with seven communities across the UK in 2021 to 2023 including Poole, Plymouth, Rochdale, Brighton, Barnsley, Sunderland, and Brixton. Through Diverse City's unexpected leaders

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programme in each of these seven communities, two new leaders from the community will be supported to design and deliver work in their own communities. This involves a de-centering of power and ultimately increases the sustainability of the creative work. Diverse City support the Dorset CEP and The Women Leaders South West programme.

- Arts, heritage, and culture will support placemaking in Dorset, growing confidence in Dorset for future investment, increasing productivity and year-round employment. A 2020 tourism study identified that a key priority for tourism in Dorset in the future needed to be improving productivity through sustainable growth, increasing off-peak business. Through arts and culture, we will reinforce the Dorset Lifestyle which makes Dorset a great place to live, work and visit and extend the tourism season and tourism day by increasing the number of high- quality indoor and evening activities. This in turn will increase year-round employment in Dorset and sustainably boost the local economy by encouraging tourism in the shoulder months and in the evenings without having to increase any infrastructure (e.g. roads).
- The production of high quality, innovative digital creative content which is monetised and supports creatives/cultural organisations to augment their live offer. This in part will be supported through partnership with Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) in growing the skills base and expertise of our creative and cultural sector through skills development classes and knowledge exchange with access to the latest technologies such as virtual and augmented reality, and advanced digital manufacturing resources. The impact of this will be wider and new audiences and training opportunities for the cultural organisations and new beneficial cross sector partnerships formed between researchers, programmers, creatives, digital and high-tech companies.
- The arts, heritage and culture sector will actively tackle the Climate and Ecological Emergency here in Dorset and inspire others to do the same. They will achieve this through mitigating and reducing the carbon and environmental impact of our sector and supporting the change in public behaviour needed within Dorset to reduce the impact on the environment and help protect, preserve and regenerate our natural environment. Through cultural interventions building communities that can feed themselves, clothe themselves, repair their tools and regenerate their landscapes and soil. An example of this approach is through Raise the Roof, a pilot programme based in West Dorset and Somerset which is developing a new model for social housing – building affordable houses utilising only local materials and skills based within the community.

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A number of arts and cultural organisations in the county have signed up to the [Culture Declares Emergency](#) movement about creating real change and raising awareness of our Climate and Ecological Emergency.

How will we measure impact?

How will we know if we are successfully delivering on the ambitions within this Cultural Strategy? How do we know if we are creating real change and social value for our communities through arts and culture and who will be holding us all to account?

The home of the Cultural Strategy will sit within a new framework – a new vehicle for driving the vision and supporting the delivery of the Cultural Strategy based on the model for a [Cultural Compact](#). In 2019 Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) supported the creation of 20 Cultural Compacts. These Compacts are cross sector partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to the life of that place.

Our new framework will consist of cross sector partners including representatives from the cultural sector (including freelancers and creatives), health, education, business, community and environment. This collaboration will ensure co-ordinated action to support the delivery of the ambitions within the strategy; sustain our cultural infrastructure, drive lasting social and economic benefits and leverage new resources.

Part of the role of this new framework is to commission and coordinate effective data capture and to share and promote the social and economic benefits that having the Cultural Strategy in place enables.

Key to measuring success will be having effective ways of both benchmarking where we are currently and capturing data to know we have made a difference. It is proposed through this new framework, we will set the measurable indicators of success for the strategy (including leverage value, social impact measurements, increased sense of pride by local people in arts and culture, growth in sector employment opportunities and increased diversity of audiences, and have the bench mark data in place to evidence growth/change. This framework will be a central point for data sharing, to tell the story of our success and to be able to incorporate this data into strategic county wide decision making.

The framework will also be monitoring where we are delivering on the priorities within the strategy and where the gaps are – keeping us all on track so the strategy remains a live and purposeful document which can ultimately flex and change to respond to place based priorities.

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Recommendations

It is recommended the following actions and immediate next steps are taken in Year 1 to ensure the successful delivery of the Cultural Strategy:

- The need to consult further with communities in Dorset in particular young men under the age of 30, rurally isolated communities and people over the age of 60. This is to ensure all communities in Dorset benefit from having the Cultural Strategy in place and that we remain flexible and responsive to local need throughout the lifetime of the strategy.
- Establish and put into place a framework inspired by the Cultural Compacts model to help deliver, monitor, and jointly resource the priorities and ambitions within the Cultural Strategy.
- Ensure the Cultural Strategy is aligned with work across Dorset Council directorates, helps to influence future policy making and there is buy in to this strategy through strategic partnerships such as "Our Dorset", Dorset's integrated care system.
- For the Cultural Strategy to be successful it also needs to be embedded across and have continued buy in from the cultural sector, cultural providers and cross sector partners.
- Prioritise the collection of bench marking data and improve how we collect, share and translate data so that it tells a compelling story about the work and impact of the sector across Dorset.
- Delivery plans for Years 1 and 2 will be drawn up by Dorset Council to help monitor the delivery and measure the impact of the Cultural Strategy. Within these plans, partners, resources, and key performance indicators will be identified.
- Develop a joined-up county approach and an actionable plan to increase levels of training and development for disabled artists, freelancers and creatives in Dorset to thrive at all levels of their career.
- Establish a county wide, Access Group. Led by disabled people from Dorset, the group would be a central point for paid for access advice to any cultural, arts or heritage organisation looking to improve their accessibility.
- Address digital poverty as a barrier to accessing online culture including poor broadband in rural areas, a lack of digital access (equipment and data) in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and low confidence within some communities in how to assess and engage in the offer.

Appendices –

Appendix 2: List of consultees for the Cultural Strategy development

Appendix 3: Desk research

Appendix 4: Results of Young Peoples' survey on culture 2021