

ARTS AND CULTURE - CULTURAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To consider and support the development of a Cultural Strategy for the New Forest.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The New Forest was identified as one of 54 priority places by the Arts Council England (ACE) in 2022 due to low cultural investment in the area, community engagement in art and culture being below that of the national average and the opportunity for increased investment and partnership working to increase engagement.
- 2.2 The Council currently employs a Creative and Cultural Development Manager (CCDM) whose role is to lead on the development and growth of arts, cultural and the creative sector within the District, including development of a cultural strategy.
- 2.3 The New Forest has many local arts and cultural organisations, businesses and an extensive freelance industry and is a creative and culturally active District; however, it is one of only a few districts in Hampshire without a cultural strategy.
- 2.4 A cultural strategy would promote and help drive positive economic and social outcomes for the District and contribute effectively to a strong place-shaping approach promoting well-being, community cohesion, supporting businesses and enhancing the District as a place to live, work and visit. A cultural strategy would bring together a shared vision with residents and cultural partners and enhance opportunities to create healthier neighbourhoods. It will also increase the likelihood of securing future funding, by demonstrating a strategic commitment to culture and the role it plays for our communities.
- 2.5 The method for developing a cultural strategy is important, in order to build upon research and evidence and through consultation, with a wide range of stakeholders, introduce differing values and commitment to culture. If designed and delivered effectively, a cultural strategy can trigger social and economic outcomes that will significantly enhance our communities and place.
- 2.6 Any cultural strategy that is developed for the District would also feed into Hampshire County Council plan for a Hampshire-wide cultural strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Local Government Association Independent Commission on Culture published a report in December 2022 “Cornerstones of Culture” which found that culture, heritage, and creativity are essential to future national prosperity, levelling up and recovery from the pandemic.
- 3.2 It identified that a healthy local cultural ecosystem is essential to:

- tackling inequalities in health (mental health, isolation, health & wellbeing)
- providing educational opportunity (education, skills, employment)
- increasing social mobility and,
- creating resilient places and boost the economy.

3.3 In order to achieve creative industry growth, quality cultural education and pathways to creative employment, fair access and inclusion and improved health and wellbeing, it is essential that evidence-based priorities are identified and there is leadership, capacity and funding to ensure successful delivery.

4. CULTURAL STRATEGY METHODOLOGY

4.1 Regionally there are a wide variety of cultural strategies. It is important that the Council develops a strong place-based strategy to meet the needs of the New Forest communities, creative industry, assets and identity. The stakeholder and community journey and input to the strategy are important so that there is wide buy-in to the objectives of the strategy, thus maximising its effect and success.

4.2 A recognised approach by ACE and Local Government Association is for a Cultural Compact model, which is essentially a partnership of relevant bodies who can support the development of a cultural strategy. Establishing a steering group of key senior stakeholders from a cross-section of sectors, which could include the education sector, local businesses, the creative sector, health and the Council, as well as town and parish councils in the District, is considered to be the preferred approach to help deliver the strategy. This partnership would establish culture as a shared strategic agenda and ensure there is a dedicated team overseeing the production and delivery of the cultural strategy. The Council would play a pivotal role in this process (see further below at paragraph 5).

4.3 The proposed process to develop a Cultural Strategy, with appropriate timescales is detailed in Appendix 1 and includes the following stages.

- **Asset mapping** – mapping the District’s current creative industry and community infrastructure to understand the current position; carry out gap analysis and identify potential opportunities.
- **Literature review** – Reviewing cultural strategy guidance documents, local authority cultural strategies and aligning NFDC strategies such as health and wellbeing, climate change, regeneration plans to the development of broad objectives.
- **Baseline data** – External consultancy to support in compiling all existing data ensuring we have a comprehensive profile and baseline of our current position.
- **Consultation and engagement** – Running a series of stakeholder, community, and local authority consultation meetings with external facilitators, to ensure we fully understand views, opinions, and expressions of interest across the board.
- **Priorities and themes** – identify our priority areas, overarching themes, and key development opportunities.

- **Strategy writing** – using baseline data, consultation outcomes, agreed priorities and themes to write a 10-year strategy.
- **Action plan** – an initial 3-year action plan to be developed which would accompany the 10-year strategy. The action plan would produce clear and ambitious delivery objectives, identify key delivery partners, and ensure accountability. Scoping and applying for delivery funding would take place.
- **Measuring impact** – an annual review using project evaluation tools will be established to effectively measure the impact and report/review the findings.
- **Promotion** – publication of the strategy through effective communications, partnership work and events with a focus on the creative industry, local businesses, local authority, public services and third sector organisations.

4.4 The proposed timeframe work towards an Autumn 2024 completion date for the strategy, with mapping and consultation completed by Spring 2024. Publication and promotion of the strategy will be planned for late 2024/early 2025.

4.5 Further background reading about Cultural Strategies and their development can be found at Appendix 2 to this report.

5. THE ROLE OF NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

5.1 The Council's commitment to funding the CCDM role until May 2025 is a significant contribution and commitment to the development of culture and a cultural strategy in the New Forest. Further business support resource will also be required to assist with day-to-day organisation of the process.

5.2 It is proposed that the Council will lead in the development of the strategy and coordination of the delivery plan using the CCDM resource (approximately 60% of the post) to ensure the strategy is authentic, locally driven and connected to place. However, sections of the project will be outsourced including facilitation of consultation sessions, data mapping and analysis and graphic design work.

5.3 The Council will play a key role on the Cultural Compact partnership, our role as catalyst and a leader of the process will ensuring effective management and forward momentum.

5.4 By leading on the cultural strategy, the Council will also ensure it aligns with other corporate priorities, including the new Corporate Plan and strategies on economic growth and regeneration, future planning policies, health and wellbeing action plans and climate change strategies.

5.5 As part of the strategy process we will develop an initial 3-year delivery plan. It is proposed that the Council remains in a position of leadership and coordination for the delivery plan. This role will be one of influence, consultation and support with a focus on accessing funding, guiding spending and relationship building. All direct delivery will be in partnership with Folio partners and other external organisations.

6. COMMITMENT FROM OTHER PARTNERS

- 6.1 Many other local partners are committed to the development of this work. These include Culture in Common, Hampshire Culture Trust, ACE and the New Forest National Park Authority. There are on-going discussions to establish levels of support; at the present time we have the following proposed commitments.
- 6.2 Culture in Common has a commitment to delivering New Forest based cultural strategy work under their strand of work labelled 'Forging Cultural Rights.' This work is committed to ensuring the local community, including those least engaged in culture, have the power to shape, change and own the cultural landscape. Culture in Common will fund the community element of our consultation work.
- 6.3 Arts Council England are committed to supporting cultural development throughout the UK especially in Priority Places and are specifically providing ongoing support and guidance to NFDC. A request for £25,000 from the ACE Southwest Area Funds has been submitted and approved in principle.
- 6.4 Hampshire Culture Trust have recently been awarded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status from ACE and have received funding which they have part allocated to be used for the benefit of the New Forest. Further discussions are being undertaken on how this can contribute to the development of a New Forest Cultural Strategy.
- 6.5 The New Forest National Park Authority are supporting this work in a key advocacy role and we are currently exploring staff training days for Arts and Culture learning and consultation and how we develop our partnership approach.
- 6.6 Folio, our collective of 15 arts and cultural organisations and over 150 creative freelancers, based in the New Forest district, are committed to the promotion, advocacy and support of arts and culture in the New Forest. We have support from all Folio partners in the development of a cultural strategy and we will look to include their professional insight where possible. Folio's support will be integral to a local, place-based delivery plan.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Councils are finding it increasingly difficult to unlock the required resources to support and develop cultural initiatives. The design of a Cultural Strategy over the following 12-18 months will focus our priorities, support the continued building of relationships and increase the opportunities to gain co-investment in arts and culture for our communities.
- 7.2 It is important that as a local authority we move our relationship with the creative and cultural sector forward. Whilst local authorities have stepped away from the traditional role of primary funder of arts and cultural activity, this has been replaced with a lead developing role, advocating for and supporting creative activity.

8. FINANCIAL IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has already made a contribution to the development of Arts and Culture in the district by establishing the Creative and Cultural Development Manager role. With around 60% of the CCDM time being spent on this project, the Council will be committed to the timely completion of the work.
- 8.2 Further costs of developing and delivering the strategy are to include external agency support in delivering facilitated consultation sessions, understanding our baseline

data and final graphic design work. We estimate a project total cost of £55,000. With our grant of £25,000 from ACE towards developing the strategy, this will leave a shortfall of approximately £30,000. Culture in Common have confirmed that they will contribute £15,000 towards the community consultation work. The remaining £15,000 has been identified from current budgets and will ensure the project can move forward fully funded.

- 8.3 Once the strategy is developed and delivery plan outlined, we will be required to seek further funding to achieve our delivery outcomes. We would scope funding opportunities, likely to include, Arts Council England, LEP funding, regeneration and place-based funding, future high street funds and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

9. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A successful cultural strategy will see long term impact in areas such as regeneration, health and well-being, as well as place-shaping and society. It is through this work we can improve pride in place, reduce antisocial behaviour and create more employment and training opportunities.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Environmental impact will be considered throughout all stages of the cultural strategy development process. Working closely with the Climate and Sustainability Manager we will seek out opportunities for arts and culture to sustainably improve our local environment and raise local awareness of environmental challenges and opportunities to support.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion will be considered at all stages of the cultural strategy development process and by carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. Equal access to all is a crucial component within the strategy to ensure arts and culture play a key role in our communities' lives. Improved health outcomes will also be a priority that the strategy aims to deliver and will be monitored and measured throughout implementation.

12. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 12.1 As the new Portfolio Holder responsible for overseeing Arts and Culture, I am pleased to support the development of a cultural strategy for the District, bringing benefits to our communities, economy and place.

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Background Papers:

None

Proposed timeline

Task		2023					2024					2025													
		J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	
Current position	Asset mapping	■	■																						
	Literature review		■	■	■	■																			
	Baseline data (possible tender to consider)			■	■	■	■																		
	Scope stakeholders				■	■	■	■																	
Develop a strategy and delivery plan	Build cultural compact						■	■	■	■	■														
	Consultation and engagement							■	■	■	■	■	■												
	Review engagement data										■	■	■	■	■										
	Develop priorities and themes												■	■	■	■	■								
	Strategy write up														■	■	■	■	■						
	Delivery plan write up																■	■	■	■	■				
Delivery and measure impact	Application process for delivery funds																	■	■	■	■				
	Establish measurement tools																		■	■	■	■			
	Establish review process																			■	■	■	■		
	Publication and promotion																				■	■	■	■	

Further reading:-

Advice, guidance, and report documents

[Local Government Association Cultural strategy in a box](#)

[ACE What Works – Strategy Content Checklist](#)

[Review of the Cultural Compacts Initiative 2020](#)

[Becoming a culture compact](#)

[Culture and Place in Britain February 2023](#)

[Cultural Cities Enquiry Case Studies](#)

[Cornerstones of Culture | Local Government Association](#)

Local authority led cultural strategy examples

A number of example documents can be found here: [Examples](#)