

Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2018-2028

Summary for Consultation

Vision: Herefordshire by 2028 will be a culturally vibrant, prosperous and sought after county in which to live, work and to visit. Hallmarks of the County will be its glorious landscape, its heritage and history, its diverse cultural offer and its youthful ambition.

The formation of Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP) in 2016 was an important step towards providing the cultural leadership necessary to ensure that creativity and heritage in Herefordshire continues to grow and thrive, and that culture plays an increasingly vital part in the lives of all those that live, work and visit the County.

In March 2017 Arts Council England awarded HCP a grant to commission a consultancy to better inform the development of a Cultural Strategy for Herefordshire. Create Associates <https://createassociates.co.uk> were appointed and have produced the report '*Looking to Herefordshire's Creative and Cultural Future*'. Rural Media Charity www.ruralmedia.co.uk, supported by an HCP steering group, is providing co-ordination and administrative capacity to produce this Cultural Strategy.

The Report recommends a framework for cross-partner work in support of cultural events, arts, heritage, libraries, archives, creative industries, public health, education, planning, and other partner areas. As a priority the Report recommended that HCP should evolve into a robust accountable body to oversee the development and delivery of the Cultural Strategy.

What is a Cultural Strategy?

Successful areas are recognised by their quality of life, by strong communities, their creative vibrancy and cultural identity, all of which underpins an area's economic performance and standing nationally and internationally.

A cultural strategy seeks to identify, expand and make more accessible the range of opportunities for residents and visitors to experience and enjoy the arts and heritage that surround them. It is a means by which a wide range of relevant partners – individuals, organisations and institutions – can work together to achieve a prioritised range of outcomes that will improve the lives and prospects of their communities, and enhance their sense of place and identity through increased awareness of their heritage.

A cultural strategy provides the basis for planning and undertaking ambitious actions to bring about change, and the means for effecting that change through collaborative bids for funding, planning and organisation.

Culture is taken to be the broad framework that defines how people live and that give their lives value and meaning. It encompasses creativity, imagination, ambition, joy and delight, and is normally though not necessarily expressed through cultural activities and institutions. Although we are not treating culture so broadly as to include shelter, health, education, nutrition or social welfare, it is now recognised as an essential and powerful basis for their effective provision and enhancement.

Why do we need one?

Create Associate's report, *Looking to Herefordshire's Creative and Cultural Future*, based on desk research and interviews with over 50 individuals and organisations identified a range of strengths, needs and opportunities to grow the cultural offer of Herefordshire, including:

- Identifying and building consensus around a clear set of cultural priorities
- Embedding a cross-sector approach to culture, including public, voluntary and private sectors
- Collaborative working, and of identifying and promoting the County's cultural assets, including its venues, landscapes, heritage sites and festivals
- Strengthening communications across the County including digital communications and effective use of cultural data
- Engaging young people in cultural development and leadership
- Collecting, conserving and celebrating the County's physical & cultural heritage – landscape, museums, historic sites for future generations
- In an age of austerity, developing new funding models and financial instruments to sustain cultural growth
- Supporting creative micro-businesses which are the building blocks on which to develop and retain talent
- Re-generating underused and out-dated buildings to provide 21st Century offices, studios and meeting spaces for cultural entrepreneurs
- Mitigating the County's challenging age demographic by initiatives that connect young talent with the knowledge, contacts and resources of older residents.

What are we aiming to achieve?

The Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2018-28 will continue to evolve over its 10-year journey towards achieving its vision. It is important that the strategy remains flexible and consultative in order to stay fresh and embrace new ideas, people and technologies. The Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and its members will undertake on-going research and evaluation to inform the implementation of the strategy. An annual culture conference will bring together all interested parties together with inspirational cultural leaders from other areas of the UK and Europe to help shape plans for the year ahead.

The strategy will set out a 10-year vision for the cultural life of Herefordshire, building upon the County's existing heritage and creative activity and organisations. Our prioritised aims are proposed as:

1. Great Place – we will raise Herefordshire's profile nationally and internationally as a great place to live, work and visit
2. Children & Young People – we will engage more effectively with children and young people, and make the county a more exciting place for them to live
3. Creative Economy – we will build a stronger and more visible creative economy supported by the development and retention of creative and entrepreneurial talent
4. Rural engagement – we will increase participation in arts and heritage, and promote inclusion in cultural and creative activity within our dispersed and rural county.

How will we deliver these aims?

A number of cross-cutting themes that align well with the current policy and funding context will be usefully and effectively mapped on to our aims, and will be used as criteria for evaluating and developing projects and activities.

1. Partnership – effective collaborative working, information sharing and action is the fundamental key to making best use of resources, taking in both public and private sector partners: the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership will play an important role in supporting this.
2. Economic Growth – prosperity and the development of new and digital technologies will be the key to attracting and retaining people in the county, and in turn providing support for the cultural activities we aim to develop; mapping of existing provision and activity will be key to evidencing the value of the cultural sector to the County
3. Health and Well Being – exciting and engaging cultural activities support better lives, and we should recognise and use this explicitly in our aims and funding bids
4. Inclusion - providing opportunities for those currently excluded by the rural context of Herefordshire, and in particular to help address the glaring demographic age imbalance across the county
5. Lifelong Learning – increased educational and training opportunities are key to attracting and retaining young people and in supporting economic development: the university will be fundamental in making major changes to opportunities within the county.

Immediate actions

1. Engage and consult with a wider range of people and in particular engage more young people with developing the Cultural Strategy and in strengthening and making more representative the Cultural Partnership.
2. Discuss and agree the vision and priorities for the strategy based on those proposed above.
3. Establish the extent and base of cultural and creative activity and potential, and map existing activity.
4. Agree and support a short list of Big Ideas – strategic projects that will contribute towards delivering the 10-year vision.
5. Draft and circulate final strategy, together with Action Plan
6. Launch Cultural Strategy at Herefordshire Culture Conference March 2018

Big Ideas - will emerge from consultation, but some to consider might include:

1. **County of Culture** – our UK CoC bid was unsuccessful this time, but produced a wide range of positive and exciting proposals that should be followed up and delivered as resources permit. The HCP's role might initially be to provide coordination and sharing of information as well as support for funding bids.
2. **Festivals** – the wide range of existing festivals across Herefordshire could be jointly supported and extended, perhaps through the development of a framework that could both

promote and add additional resources while developing new festival proposals for delivery by members of the partnership.

3. **Cultural Quarter** – the future of our city library, museum and art gallery could form the basis for an ambitious cultural quarter in Hereford and we should work to support a great outcome, perhaps in collaboration with the university’s development.
4. **Creative Workspaces** – the spaces exist and are not hugely resource intensive to provide, and by working in partnership these could be delivered to genuinely enhance and strengthen the creative and tourist economy. A range of infrastructural needs to support creative practitioners also exists, from display and gallery to rehearsal and performance spaces. A ‘hub and spoke’ model could provide well-connected infrastructure across the county.
5. **Digital Connections** – the County urgently needs to harness the power of digital technology to address the challenges of social, cultural and economic inequality. A ‘digital first’ cultural strategy aligned with the further development of universal broadband access and supported by a Digital Media Hub would combine creativity and technology, enabling the county to push past its geographical restraints, better able to present itself nationally and globally.

Feedback and Consultation

We welcome your suggestions, ideas and proposals. Visiting www.herefordshireculturalpartnership.co.uk and taking part in our online survey is just one of the ways will be gathering your feedback.

Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP)

The Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP) was initially formed in 2015 to lead Herefordshire’s bid to become UK City of Culture 2021. Despite an energetic and distinctive campaign Herefordshire did not make the shortlist. However the City of Culture bid process demonstrated an outstanding measure of partnership and collaboration working at its best. It also generated wide public support for a more ambitious approach to cultural development across the County.

Already HCP has won significant investment (£900k) through the Great Place Scheme <https://www.greatplacescheme.org.uk/> to pilot over three years new approaches that enable cultural and community groups to work more closely together and to place heritage at the heart of local communities.

Herefordshire’s cultural landscape comprises a remarkable and rich range of arts and heritage activity, buildings, organisations, and natural assets. Through creation of a vision and cultural strategy for the County HCP aims to support and grow the cultural sector, enabling more people who live, work or visit this beautiful County.

To view this Summary and a copy of *Looking to Herefordshire’s Creative and Cultural Future* visit www.herefordshireculturalpartnership.co.uk

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