

FLOURISHING CULTURE

**THE NORTHERN DEVON CULTURE STRATEGY:
2022-2027**

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FOREWORD

Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Culture Strategy is another step towards truly delivering on North Devon and Torridge District Councils' Strategic Plans and ensuring that northern Devon really is a great place to live, work and visit.

Culture, in the broadest sense, is how we live our lives. The strategy aims to support our communities to thrive, both in terms of wellbeing and also in creating a stronger cultural economy. It links with other council projects, such as the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre, and the Barnstaple Market Quarter, providing more opportunities to address deprivation and improve lives. It recognises the imperatives of climate change and our unique status as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, it celebrates our long histories and dynamic communities and it prioritises the need to inspire and retain our creative young people.

Northern Devon's cultural ecology ranges from leading lights such as the Burton at Bideford, The Plough Arts Centre, the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon and the theatres in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, to annual highlights such as the Appledore Book Festival and Barnstaple Theatrefest, and through to community museums, events in village halls or music sessions in pubs. This Strategy can be used to support activity at all levels, enabling us to maximise investment in cultural activity.

Culture means different things to different people and *Flourishing Culture* lays out an ambitious but exciting vision for how culture of all forms can be moved forward in northern Devon. But this is not just the responsibility of the two Councils - businesses, communities, creative practitioners and cultural organisations large and small all have a part to play. We now need to create a series of partnerships at a local, regional and national level, with each partner delivering to strengthen the collective and bring smiles to our community's faces.



Councillor David Worden,
Leader, North Devon Council



Councillor Ken James,
Leader, Torridge District Council

NEXT STEPS

Flourishing Culture has been adopted by North Devon and Torridge District Councils as a framework for increasing investment in culture and helping deliver the Arts Council's strategy *Let's Create*. But we are not "in charge" of culture, all we can do is support. While there are some projects where local authorities are in the position to apply for funding, and some organisations that can be supported, building culture in northern Devon is really up to you.

We need to join together to demonstrate that our cultural sector has a common purpose to increase the well being of northern Devon's people, to contribute to the regeneration of our places and to maximise the opportunities that cultural businesses have to prosper.

1. ADOPT THE STRATEGY

Whether you are an individual, organisation, strategic partnership or business, sign up to show your support for *Flourishing Culture*.

2. HELP US FLESH OUT OUR CULTURE MAP

There is a huge amount of culture happening in northern Devon. The process of creating this strategy has drawn in some of the threads, but we know there is a lot of activity missing from our overview and we need you to tell us about it. We need to be able to monitor how things change so we can demonstrate the value of investment in culture.

3. JOIN THE CULTURE FORUM

The Forum is open to practitioners, organisations and communities and will be a space for us to meet, talk and share best practice. A partnership board will monitor progress against the strategy's targets.

4. USE THE STRATEGY TO SUPPORT YOUR ASPIRATIONS

Flourishing Culture includes a number of suggested actions that might deliver its objectives, but these are just suggestions. We have no doubt that the creative people of northern Devon have many more ideas that can create cultural impact.

To sign up to the strategy, or to be part of bringing its aspirations into reality, please email: culture@northdevon.gov.uk or culture@torridge.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

Northern Devon is alive with culture. It is a dynamic ecosystem of organisations, traditions, physical and environmental heritage, creative businesses, freelancers, volunteers, hobbyists and audiences local and national. Together they create a diverse but distinctive cultural identity.

Culture has a vital role to play in the individual and communal pride and wellbeing of people who live in the region, it is an essential driver of the local economy and it has the potential to raise northern Devon's profile on the national stage.

Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Cultural Strategy sets out the value that culture brings to northern Devon, the aspiration for what it could be and some suggested actions for raising the ambition, sustainability and impact of culture in all its forms across the region.



2. CONTRIBUTORS

This strategy was made possible by the knowledge and experience of a wide range of local cultural and community organisations, venues and practitioners, including:

ArtMakers

ArtMakers is an online gallery for artists and makers in northern Devon, UK, providing a platform for creatives to exhibit and sell their artwork. It also provides an online support service for artists and makers across the UK, including a free peer-to-peer network.

Arts Destination South Molton

Arts Destination South Molton is a small charity engaging with a wide audience through the Arts. They celebrate their local surroundings, placing art at the heart of the everyday; providing year-round access to high quality arts, cultural events and participation opportunities.

Beaford

Beaford was established over 50 years ago and is England's oldest rural arts organisation. It works with local promoters to present high quality arts events in rural north Devon; connecting artists and communities with the local environment; finding entertaining and extraordinary ways for local people to explore their land, lives and future.

Bideford Bridge Trust

The Bideford Bridge Trust grew from the group of people who built and managed the various bridges that crossed the Torridge between Bideford and East-the-Water in North Devon, England. Managed by the Trustees, today the Trust provides grants to local individuals and organisations for various purposes.

Bray Leino

Bray Leino is a full-service creative communications agency that helps to solve business and marketing challenges using a variety of specialist and integrated skills. For over 30 years they have been creating world-class live experiences across the globe.

The Burton at Bideford

The Burton at Bideford has been exhibiting and nurturing all kinds of artists since it was established in 1951 by local businessman Thomas Burton, and Hubert Coop, a successful artist. It presents its own local collection as well as important national and international works which ordinarily would not be accessible to the public in the South West.

Exeter Culture

Exeter Culture believes that creative activity happens through conversation and collaboration. They are dedicated to bringing together people from across a broad range of cultural activities to create the right climate in which creative energies can thrive.

Libraries Unlimited

Libraries Unlimited believes in the unlimited potential of library services to make a positive difference to people's lives and communities through a shared love of reading and access to high quality information and facilities.

Multi Story Theatre

Multi Story is a touring theatre company that was created in 2000 by Bill Buffery and Gill Nathanson inspired by their visits to Canadian Fringes and building on years of touring experience in the UK. They specialise in taking big stories to small spaces including theatres, community venues, schools and colleges.

Ilfracombe Museum

The Ilfracombe Museum houses unimaginable finds – from a shrunken head to a collection of pickled bats to a recreated Victorian Kitchen. First opened in August 1932 Ilfracombe Museum has eight rooms for the public to explore, with almost 28,000 items in the collection.

North Devon Academy of Music

North Devon Academy of Music, known as NDAM, is a community-based, not for profit organisation offering low-cost music tuition for groups, ensembles and individuals, in central Barnstaple.

North Devon Biosphere

As part of the global UNESCO MAB network, the North Devon Biosphere provides an open forum for bringing people together with their natural surroundings – to empower them to unlock their potential, and using their local and scientific knowledge to model solutions for sustainable living.

Landmark Theatres

Is a community embedded National organisation designed to deliver the highest quality theatre by with and for the widest possible demographic in the least culturally engaged places in England

Sunrise Diversity

Sunrise Diversity is a dynamic grassroots community organisation. They provide activities, services and events for people living across northern Devon, including those of diverse identities such as minority ethnic groups, disabled people, and the LGBT+ community.

One Northern Devon

One Northern Devon is a partnership of public and voluntary sector partners working together to improve wellbeing in North Devon & Torridge. It aims to reduce health inequalities through coordination of the activity of all partners involved in the wider determinants of health and an approach that is person-centred and place-focused.

Petroc

Petroc college is made up of three campuses situated in Mid and North Devon and offers a wide range of courses for students of all ages and abilities. It is committed to driving forward educational success in further and higher education. They are passionate about raising the aspirations, knowledge and skills of individuals, communities and businesses in Devon and beyond.

Plough Arts Centre

The Plough Arts Centre provides opportunities for all people to experience a wide and vibrant range of high quality arts events both as audience and participants. It is a welcoming and dynamic venue for artistic expression and education, responsive to the needs of the local community and a beacon for the arts across North Devon.



Springfield Pottery

Philip and Frannie Leach are potters who belong to the great West Country dynasty of Leaches, and are based in Hartland in North Devon. Philip is grandson of the legendary Bernard Leach, and son of the late Michael Leach. Frannie also studied in New York, and Philip spent six years in Iran, where he was involved in setting up student workshops. Married in 1977, they opened their Springfield Pottery two years later.

Quince Honey Farm

Quince Honey Farm in South Molton is a family run business which was first established in 1949. Now in its third generation and with over 1500 hives, the venue offers a range of activities, educational talks, honey tasting sessions, book launches and creative workshops.

Red Herring

Red Herring is a theatre company based in Bideford, North Devon that takes a sideways look at the world and encourages people to experience familiar places and familiar stories in unfamiliar ways. They specialise in outdoor, interactive performance on street corners, urban parks and remote, rural locations which blur the edges between the performance and the audience.

Roots Creative

Roots Creative is a marketing agency based in Bideford. They specialise in search engine marketing (SEM), offering a thriving design department through which they offer web design and graphic design services as well as AdWords, Google My Business and SEO services.

Rowden Atelier

For over 25 years, Rowden Atelier has taught fine woodworking to students from across the globe. One of the longest standing institutions of its type in the world, students join a lineage that connects as far back as John Rusking and the start of the Arts & Crafts movement.

Studio KIND.

Founded as a community interest company in 2020, Studio KIND. presents the work of both local and national, early-career and established artists through an ambitious and diverse programme of exhibitions and events, curated to excite imaginations, challenge perceptions and create connections.

The Maker Series

Founded through a love for northern Devon, traditional techniques, modern skills and the passion to create aspiration in the local community; The Maker Series is the brainchild of Jessica Pearson who captures inspirational content whilst documenting how each maker creates a living through their passion in rural/ coastal Devon.

The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon

The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon is the regional museum with collections ranging from geology and archaeology to social history and decorative art. Recently extended, the temporary exhibitions programme aims to bring significant North Devon items from national museums as the focus for local learning and creativity. The museum also carries out a leadership role in developing projects and programmes with community museums.

This is just a small snapshot of the wealth of cultural organisations and creative individuals that operate in northern Devon. If you haven't been involved as of yet and would like to be part of ensuring this strategy becomes a reality then please email: culture@northdevon.gov.uk or culture@torridge.gov.uk

3. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Cultural Strategy has been developed by the district councils of North Devon and Torridge as a vision and action plan for the development of our cultural sector over the next 5 years.

The strategy has been produced in line with North Devon Council and Torridge Council policies including:

North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2018
Torridge District Council Strategic Plan 2020-23
Devon County Council Strategic Plan 2021-25
North Devon Corporate Plan
Northern Devon Economic Recovery Plan
Healthy and Happy Communities – Devon’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

It has been created in collaboration with stakeholders from across the cultural sector as well as environment, business, community and education.

It has also been underpinned by consultation with our communities, engaging over 900 people through individual interviews, workshops, community events and surveys.

This has included:

598 respondents to a public survey
31 respondents to a cultural sector stakeholder survey
98 children, young people and adult learners in consultation workshops
24 attendees at a cultural sector stakeholder workshop
18 residents at community consultation events in Winkleigh, High Bickington and Combe Martin
37 sector stakeholders through one-to-one interviews

Please see Appendix A for a full overview of community engagement findings.



Image Credit: The Burton at Bideford

4. NORTHERN DEVON: CULTURE IN CONTEXT

4.1 WHAT CULTURE MEANS IN NORTHERN DEVON

Culture means different things to different people. For some it is a welcoming and enriching avenue to explore creative expression, for others it's a word that conjures up feelings of elitism, uncertainty and exclusion. There are many that claim to not care for it at all, until you probe a little further and find they have a healthy interest in the live music scene at their local pub.

And that's what makes it so hard to define. None of us really knows what culture means to our counterparts. It's personal to each and every one of us. Whether a garden shed dweller tinkering away with a pile of reclaimed wood, to critically acclaimed print artists utilising their local church hall to make and create masterpieces, from those that find meaning and expression through the land, sharing stories, food, skills and traditions, through to those that feel invigorated by an early morning surf before heading to work.

What we know is that every person, no matter their age, background, ethnicity, religion or financial situation has the right to experience, participate in and enjoy cultural activity, in whichever way they choose to perceive it. It is not something that should feel scary or inaccessible, it shouldn't be laughed at or scorned; instead every last seedling of creativity, no matter how mighty or small, should be cultivated, treasured and celebrated.

When we talk about culture in this strategy, we are talking about this freedom of creativity, interpretation and expression.

4.2 AN OVERVIEW OF CULTURE IN NORTHERN DEVON

Culture has the power to bring us together, keep us active, help us combat loneliness and mental health. It can make us proud of who we are and where we come from.

CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Culture is embedded in our way of life in northern Devon, not just in our arts centres, galleries and museums, but in community halls, pubs, faith centres and homes. 41% of us spend time doing a creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or a craft compared with a national average of 34.67%. Whether it is singing in a choir, knitting, writing or gardening, we are making our own culture.

We have a proud tradition of distinctive local celebrations like the Hunting of the Earl of Rone in Combe Martin, the Pilton Green Man Festival, Clovelly Herring Festival and the Turning of the Devil's Stone in Shebbear. These are often volunteer-run and provide touchstones for our cultural life year-after-year.

Organisations like Sunrise Diversity show how culture and creativity are important connection points, welcoming new arrivals to our places and connecting deep local identities with global cultures.

This grassroots community culture is vitally important to our collective wellbeing and our sense of community. Celebrating it, supporting it and ensuring there are opportunities to participate in it regardless of where you live and who you are is a central focus of this culture strategy.

Challenges to note:

Community fragmentation – A rise in retirees and second home owners has altered community dynamics.

Generational divides – Many people report generational differences between younger and older residents.

Housing – Significant loss of the rented sector to Airbnb and second homes. Reducing permanent population, especially at lower socio-economic groups.

Infrastructure – Many communities have seen the loss of key community infrastructure such as pubs and shops.

Loss of ways of life – The decline of traditional sectors such as agriculture and fishing has impacted community culture.

CULTURE AND LANDSCAPE

The relationships between environment, culture and art are deep and intertwined in northern Devon. It is perhaps unsurprising, given the exceptional characteristics of our surrounding natural landscape, that the coastal areas are a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The UNESCO Biosphere designation and Biosphere Foundation were defined by a concept of landscape that embraces people, culture and ways of life and many of northern Devon's conservationist, environmental and nature organisations are directly engaged in cultural activity. Organisations like the North Devon Coast AONB, Exmoor National Park, Quince Honey Farm, Courage Copse Creatives and RHS Garden Rosemoor regularly host events that integrate cultural activity into environmental education and awareness.

CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DISPARITIES

Northern Devon covers a 2,071 square kilometre area, spanning towns of varying sizes, villages, small settlements and large areas of open countryside. The diversity of our communities is matched by broad variations in wealth, deprivation and education both across different communities and within communities. Together these create a landscape where access, engagement and opportunities for culture differ significantly based on where you live and who you are.

Addressing these disparities and ensuring that culture is addressing the broader social and health challenges in our region is vital. Otherwise even a thriving cultural sector risks being limited to those who can most afford or access culture.

DEPRIVATION & HEALTH

In northern Devon, people in the most deprived communities can expect to die 15 years earlier than those living in the most affluent ones. Factors that influence this are wide ranging and complex, including quality of housing, income, education, access to healthy food, social isolation and access to quality local services. One Northern Devon has been formed in recognition that many of these challenges are inherently place-based rather than clinical. Arts and culture play an important role in tackling some of these issues, including isolation, self-confidence and mental health.

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

On average people in northern Devon report being happier and more satisfied with their lives than national averages. However levels have dropped in the last 2 years, in part due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis which has had a disproportionate effect on elderly and vulnerable members of our communities. We also experience higher overall levels of anxiety and mental health challenges than UK averages.

This is compounded by significant pressures from rising housing costs that fail to keep pace with wages and employment opportunities, which is leading to high levels of depression and a feeling for many residents that they are being priced out of the place they call home.

As a place with a significant rurally isolated population and varying levels of transport poverty the impacts of community wellbeing on personal wellbeing are amplified. People living in strong communities with a powerful sense of trust and communal identity tend to enjoy better personal health. However, in areas that lack this, people are far more likely to suffer severe loneliness and depression. Community wellbeing, measured by factors such as access to opportunities, sense of place, relationships and trust, varies widely in northern Devon, from a score of 33 in Titchberry to 65 in Braunton against a national average of 52.

A key factor of this in our communities is the impact of population churn and second home owners on community cohesion. Many of our communities feel a sense of community bonds stretching and breaking as rooted residents are pushed out, while some new arrivals can feel a sense of resentment or closure.

The role of culture in crossing social divides and engendering a strong sense of collective is therefore doubly important for us in northern Devon.

YOUTH, EDUCATION & SKILLS

Like many rural and coastal areas, northern Devon faces challenges in the retention of young people. Under 24 year olds make up 24% of our population compared with 31% nationally and there is a significant drop-off in numbers at the 18+ stage suggesting many young people move away from northern Devon either for employment, study or work.

A number of factors, ranging from lack of education opportunities including no university, to low wage prospects (average weekly earnings of £518 are the lowest in Devon) and high cost of living (median house prices in North Devon have risen 46% in 10 years) contribute to this. However, our consultation with young people found that cultural perspectives may also be playing a significant role.

For the full report, please see Appendix B

CULTURAL PROVISION

An audit carried out for this strategy suggests there are at least 43 venues where arts and heritage events are regularly taking place, including galleries, museums, theatres and live music venues. Given this does not include the large number of informal venues that play a vital role in cultural consumption across our region such as village halls and pubs this is likely to be an underestimate.

Ranging from large venues such as the Landmark Theatre in Ilfracombe and Queen's Theatre in Barnstaple, through to local arts centres such the Plough Arts Centre in Great Torrington to micro-museums or social clubs putting on occasional live music nights, this infrastructure provides a vital web supporting our cultural activity.

Challenges to note:

Funding - Northern Devon has historically been underfunded by Arts Council England (ACE) with just 2 National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) at the lower end of the funding tiers.

Strategic support - Linked to this funding issue is a lack of strategic funding and support ensuring the sector is well coordinated.

Audience diversity - Organisations and local people report challenges of widening audience pools.

Profile - Many local residents suggest they have difficulty knowing what is happening culturally in northern Devon and how to access it.

MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE

The heritage offer of northern Devon is supported by a large number of local museums including 11 accredited by Arts Council England, mostly sustained by local volunteers. There are also a number of independent and commercial museums and tourist attractions.

Northern Devon's museums are embedded in our communities, providing volunteering opportunities and social events as well as bolstering a sense of place and local pride. Their value in supporting wellbeing is significant, particularly in settlements where they are often the only constant cultural presence.

Northern Devon boasts over 4,500 listed buildings, mostly within our coastal and market towns, and more than 300 scheduled ancient monuments. Our townscapes and historic landscapes form the backdrop to our people's lives, with the potential to inspire creativity and belonging. Heritage is integral to northern Devon's regional tourism industry with visitors drawn to major heritage destinations like Clovelly, Lynton and Lynmouth and Hartland Quay.

Challenges to note:

Precarity - Many local museums rely heavily on a volunteer base and also face infrastructure issues.

Identity - The rich heritage of the region is not always visible or connected.

Heritage buildings - A number of heritage buildings face uncertain futures due to the changing nature of town centres and the need for diversification in the face of maintenance challenges.

ARTISTS AND FREELANCE CREATIVES

Northern Devon has an abundance of artists, makers and creative freelancers. ArtMakers network has identified at least 400 artists and makers operating in our region, ranging from internationally recognised to early career practitioners, as well as creative freelancers across other artforms and the creative industries.

The variety and richness of our makers and creators alone blurs the lines between art, craft and manufacturing, from nationally recognised artists such as Merlyn Chesterman, to contemporary ceramicist Taz Pollard, through to instrument makers and surfboard designers.

Challenges to note:

Insecurity of careers – A targeted survey of 90 northern Devon artists and makers by ArtMakers showed 26% are earning a professional living

Skills and professional support – 36% have no form of online sales currently, 74.3% said that they had no business support information or training.

Paid opportunities – Many creative freelancers report challenges in receiving fair pay for work.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Northern Devon boasts a number of innovative creative industry companies in the fields of immersive media, advertising and design. Film is also an emerging sector of potential importance to our region, with northern Devon being used as a filming location for productions such as ‘A Very English Scandal’, Netflix’s production of ‘Rebecca’ and ‘Aquaman 2’.

There are an estimated 345 creative and cultural industries businesses operating in the region employing around 1,250 people or 1.81% of total employment in northern Devon. This is notably under the sector size for Devon (2.54%) and well below the national proportion of 4.57%.

Challenges to note:

Digital infrastructure – Creative businesses rely on high levels of digital activity. Improving access to high quality internet is vital.

Workspace – Most creative businesses are small scale and flexible, requiring premises that offer short leases at a reasonable cost.

Workforce – Northern Devon businesses have a distinct issue of attracting the right talent, often drawing workers from other parts of the country.

Visibility and business streams – There is a notable lack of a joined-up voice that raises the profile of the creative business offer.

Skills pipeline – Support is required in supporting young people entering creative industries.



Sharon Gale workshops
StudioKIND.
Image Credit: StudioKIND

4.3 THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CULTURE IN NORTHERN DEVON

Communicating the value of culture can often be challenging, meaning it is seen as *nice to have* rather than an essential sector. It is important that the sector is able to argue its importance to a wider range of stakeholders, including the government who prioritise investment based on Green Book principles of economic impact and value for money.

Below we outline some of the key economic benefits of culture within northern Devon.

Arts Organisations

- 45 organisations employing 125 people¹
- £2.07 million GVA to the local economy²
- An estimated 105,630 local people accessed at least 1 cultural event in 2017/18³
- £86.5 million personal wellbeing value derived from people regularly attending cultural events in northern Devon⁴
- On average £1 of public investment in northern Devon arts charities generates £1.34 in earned income⁵

Museums & Heritage

- 96,415 estimated visits per year to accredited museums⁶
- £1,449,756 annual economic impact on the local economy of accredited museums⁷
- £1.77 generated for every £1 provided through donations, grants or public subsidy
- 550 volunteers
- £1,786,950 in wellbeing benefits for volunteers⁸
- £96.6 million estimated value of heritage to the northern Devon Tourism sector⁹

1 Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS
2 Based on analysis of Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by NUTS1 region, ONS
3 Based on analysis of Taking Part Survey 2017/18, ACE
4 Based on willingness to pay research valuing wellbeing value of regular arts participation at £1,500 per person, and estimates of people participating 3+ times per year in arts in Taking Part Survey 2017/18.
5 Based on Charity Commission data of earned and public funded income
6 Estimate based on average footfall by size of museums in Devon.
7 Based on analysis of Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by NUTS1 region, ONS
8 Based on willingness to pay research valuing wellbeing value of regular volunteering
9 Based on national contributions to tourism spend of heritage adjusted for the size of the northern Devon heritage sector

Creative Industries

- 1,250 jobs¹
- £82 million GVA to the northern Devon economy²- Productivity of £54,910 GVA per worker compared with £47,120 GVA in the wider northern Devon economy³
- Growing the sector to Devon levels would bring it up to £115 million GVA
- ‘Film Tourism’ attracted £140 million per year in international tourism to England in 2015 and could support the northern Devon tourism economy by as much as £2.7 million per year based on comparison areas.

Community Culture

- £84.8 million personal wellbeing value derived from people regularly participating in creative arts activities in northern Devon⁴
- 56,566 people in northern Devon are estimated to participate in some form of creative arts activity at least 3 times a year⁵.

Environmental Culture

- 80% of visitors to northern Devon do so to experience its natural landscape
- Supports £384 million in visitor spend per year
- Surfing has a value of £52.1 million to northern Devon per year
- A thriving environment supports everything from farming, fishing to forestry sectors in the region
- Environmental engagement is the main driver of university and research partnerships in northern Devon

1 BRES
2 Based on analysis of Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by NUTS1 region, ONS
3 Based on GVA analysis and BRES data of total employment
4 Based on willingness to pay research valuing wellbeing value of active participation in arts and culture
5 Based on analysis of Taking Part Survey 2017/18, ACE



5. A VISION FOR CULTURE

5.1 THE VISION

In the next 5 years, northern Devon will be locally, nationally and internationally recognised as a place where creativity thrives in unison with its landscape and communities.

Northern Devon will be a place where all forms of culture are nurtured and celebrated.

Our region's creativity, rooted in our identity, heritage and environment, will be as breathtaking as our beaches, wild like our seas and as diverse as our landscapes.

The expressions of our culture will be reflective of all that live here, honouring our past traditions, whilst creating a platform for our dreams of the future.

It will be a place where creativity thrives, where all voices are heard and where culture is used as a vehicle for change and action.

We will be unapologetic, we will be brave and we will lead with ambition.

5.2 THEMES AND PRIORITIES

Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Cultural Strategy focuses on 3 main themes:

HELPING PEOPLE BLOSSOM builds on a long history of culture passing between people in northern Devon, from skills being shared through the generations, to ideas travelling the world through trade. This theme explores how everyone in northern Devon has opportunities to develop their creative potential, share their passions, increase their mental wellbeing and experience great culture.

OUR CULTURAL HUBS recognises the particularly important role that northern Devon towns play as hubs of cultural activity and economic opportunity throughout the region, creating a cultural offering that radiates out of urban areas and into even the most remote rural places.

HELPING PLACES THRIVE takes inspiration from the region's landscape to support a cultural offer that is as unique, diverse, celebrated and generous as its natural surroundings. This theme explores culture that is expressive of place, connects people to where they live, is protective of the environment and is distributed across the whole region. It recognises the built heritage of our towns and the need to support their role as the beating heart of cultural activity.

These three themes are supported by a set of **priorities**. These are targeted areas of focus for developing and sustaining northern Devon's cultural ecology.

HELPING PEOPLE BLOSSOM

NURTURING THE FUTURE - Champion the youth voice in northern Devon whilst actively developing pathways to creative opportunities and sustainable creative careers.

CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS - Ensure northern Devon culture is embedded in regional, national and international networks that extend past the reach of its borders, whilst bringing cutting edge culture and knowledge into the region.

MAKING CULTURE VISIBLE - Collectively celebrate and promote northern Devon culture so that it is a source of pride to our communities and attractive for people who visit.

OUR CULTURAL HUBS

CULTURAL INVESTMENT PLANS - Integrate culture into visions and investment plans for our town centres, positioning towns as the heart of northern Devon's cultural offering.

THE PUBLIC REALM - Maximise the potential for culture in the public realm of town centres throughout the region.

USING VACANT SPACES TO FUEL CULTURE - Leveraging temporary and long term vacant spaces, development opportunities and heritage assets for cultural use.

HELPING PLACES THRIVE

EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE - Create the conditions for our communities to make and experience culture that expresses their connection to the local environment, in the places they live.

PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPES - Recognise the interdependent relationship between people, culture and the environment through cultural activity that acts on the climate crisis.

NAVIGATING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE - Use culture to break down the distance between people, both physical and social, by spreading cultural opportunities across northern Devon.

5.3 MEASURING OUR ACTIONS

Northern Devon’s cultural sector already brings enormous value to the region, from direct economic impact, to social and wellbeing benefits, to the way it helps uplift town centres and attract tourism.

Communicating not only the value culture brings, but also the potential benefit it can offer if enhanced is crucial, both for making the case for additional investment in culture, and for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the sector over time.

Below are measurable goals for the future setting out the values that achieving them will bring to northern Devon. In some cases these measures are already collected by national bodies and can be monitored using existing statistical releases, in other cases, the means of collecting baseline evidence will need to be found.

GOAL	CURRENT METRIC	AMBITION	OUTPUT
Increase the number of people attending more than 3 arts and culture events per year	25.9% of people in northern Devon	30% of people in northern Devon	£13.3m in individual wellbeing value per year
Increase the number of people taking part in more than 3 creative activities per year	33.9% of people in northern Devon	38% of people in northern Devon	£10m in individual wellbeing value per year
Reduce the number of people attending no arts and culture activity per year	Baseline data to be generated: Targeted surveys of rural areas will benchmark this	33% of people in northern Devon	£5m in individual wellbeing value per year
Increase the number of people in rural locations accessing high quality arts and culture	Baseline data to be generated: Targeted surveys of rural areas will benchmark this	10% increase	Increased well being value

GOAL	CURRENT METRIC	AMBITION	OUTPUT
Increase the number of people in deprived areas accessing high quality arts and culture	Baseline data to be generated: Targeted surveys of areas with lowest IMD scores	33% Lowered gap between deprived and affluent areas	Increased opportunity and community wellbeing
Increase the diversity of people (by class, ethnicity and disabilities) accessing high quality arts and culture	Baseline data to be generated through targeted surveys measuring protected characteristics	33% lower gap between people of protected characteristics and other populations	Increased social cohesion
Increase the average projects level of per head funding from ACE Projects Grants and NLHF	£6.12 - 5 year annual average 2015-2020	£8 per head	£1.76m additional earned income catalysed by public investment
Increase the proportion of creative industry employment in northern Devon	1.81% of total northern Devon employment	2.54% of total northern Devon employment	£32.75m GVA uplift
Increase the percentage of artists and makers accessing business support	25.7%	45%	£450,000 GVA improvement
Increase the total floorspace of creative workspaces	Survey required of current creative workspace infrastructure	Benchmark ambition based on survey	3.3% improvement in surrounding property values over 5 year period
Increase the number of young people represented on cultural boards and decision making bodies	Survey of participating cultural organisations needed	5	Leadership skills and diversity of cultural offer
Increase the percentage of young people taking art, design and performing arts subjects at A-Level or further education	Survey of secondary schools and colleges	15%	Larger creative workforce to support the creative economy
Increase the number of followers of northern Devon cultural organisations on social media	Survey of ND Cultural Partnership organisations	20% increase	£25 per 1,000 followers per post in marketing value
Lower collective carbon footprint of board members of the northern Devon Cultural Partnership	Gather from northern Devon cultural partnership using Julie's Bicycle Green Tools	20% reduction	£75 per tonne in improved air quality
Increase the number of national and international cultural partners delivering work in northern Devon	Gather baseline levels from participating northern Devon culture partnership members	20% increase	Raised national profile

6. AN ACTION PLAN FOR CULTURE

6.1 THE NORTHERN DEVON CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

Achieving this vision is the work of more than any single organisation. As a region, we enjoy a rich and diverse cultural sector; from established institutions with deep roots, to exciting new enterprises, alongside a wealth of freelance creatives and volunteer-led initiatives. These offer the conditions for a distinctive cultural identity that can benefit both our residents and visitors.

Positive collaborations are happening across northern Devon between individual groups. However, at times, organisations and places are competing with one another for a limited set of resources, creating a sector that is less than the sum of its parts.

Across the country, culture is taking an active role in the development of thriving places. It brings a strong, unified voice that advocates and promotes the benefits of culture in policy, regeneration, environment, education, wellbeing, economic development and social cohesion.

This cross-sector collaboration is becoming increasingly important in accessing key strategic funding such as the Levelling Up Fund, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Cultural Development Fund as well as protecting cultural sector support in local and regional government budgets. This widens the potential resources available to culture beyond traditional arts funding. As such, a partnership that galvanises the cultural sector, but also brings in the voices of stakeholders from education, environment, social enterprise, business, youth and wellbeing is essential to the delivery of this strategy.

STRUCTURING A BALANCED AND BROAD PARTNERSHIP

In order to successfully deliver *Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Cultural Strategy*, organisations and individuals should come together to develop a shared vision for the region, committing time, resources and knowledge to broadening and deepening the cultural provision of the area.

As commissioners of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy, North Devon and Torridge local authorities have a key role to play in bringing together organisations and individuals; leading on the formation of a northern Devon cultural partnership that makes space for a balanced and broad representation of the cultural sector and beyond. The partnership should enable multiple perspectives to be heard and valued and ensure that existing community groups, who have already proved the power of collaborative, grassroots community activity, are supported and championed.

When considering the formation of a northern Devon cultural partnership it's vital the following are explored:

Create space to organically grow - Research and test mechanisms that can flex and grow to the needs of northern Devon over time. Whilst investing time and resources in a structure is imperative, space should be left for organic development, which enables member partners, local communities and regional needs to have a genuine influence.

Define the term 'cultural' - This strategy lays out an extremely broad definition of culture and is built on the belief that every person, no matter of age, background, ethnicity, religion or financial situation has the right to experience, participate in and enjoy cultural activity, in whichever way they choose to perceive it. The make-up and work of the northern Devon cultural partnership should reflect a definition of culture that is inclusive and accessible.

Identify the skills you need around the table

- The northern Devon cultural partnership is an integral mechanism in driving forwards the delivery of the northern Devon Cultural Strategy. This ambition will require a broad range of skill sets, experience and knowledge and as such the partnership should represent an eclectic mix of cultural sector partners and beyond.

Representation should be balanced - The northern Devon cultural partnership should demonstrate a balanced representation of a variety of sectors and voices. Representatives should include, but not be limited to:

- Venue based arts and culture organisations
- Non-venue based arts and culture organisations
- Freelance cultural practitioners

- Volunteer-led community arts and culture groups
- Creative industry businesses
- Young people
- Educational representatives
- Environmental representatives
- Social, community, health and wellbeing representatives
- Tourism representatives
- Under represented communities
- Urban and rural communities

Integrate the private sector - The private sector not only brings potential resources to the table; they can also provide significant skills, connections, influence and a different way of thinking that supports meaningful place partnership. This can take time and requires making the case for why culture is relevant to companies' business cases, not only their social responsibility goals. Priorities should include:

Property sector and landowners
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector
Manufacturing sector
Retail sector

Protect agility - When forming a cultural partnership that represents the diversity of the local cultural sector, the diversity of the geography of the region and the diversity of interlinked sectors, it remains important to create an agile and flexible vehicle that has the ability to make decisions and deliver, unencumbered by unnecessary bureaucracy. Exploration of a tiered structure that has the space to flex and develop over time can provide this.

TIERS CAN INCLUDE:

Partnership board - a broad representation of organisations and individuals that meet on a monthly or quarterly basis and guide the strategic focus of the partnership, holding responsibility for key strategic decisions and oversight.

Executive group - as the Partnership Board is established and formalised and the work of the partnership increases, you may consider forming a core group of organisations and individuals that hold responsibility for the day-to-day running and decision making of the partnership, ensuring that smaller, non-strategic decisions can be made in an efficient way, yet still embedding accountability.

Working sub groups and forums - as needed, sub groups and forums can be created around focus areas, including specialists that are not otherwise part of the partnership.

Membership - in time, consider opening up the partnership to a wider membership of individuals and organisations across northern Devon. Membership meetings are generally held on an annual basis, guiding performance and direction at a high level.

Partnerships take time to build, establish and evolve; particularly where they involve bringing in voices from outside the core sector, across a vast and diverse region. Giving space for the network to organically grow, and the opportunity to design and formalise an appropriate structure together is essential.

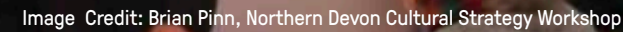
Identify a balanced and diverse group of organisations to initiate the formation of a northern Devon cultural partnership.

Facilitate regular meetings of the northern Devon cultural partnership board, which focus on knowledge sharing, coordination of policy and the prioritisation of shared initiatives across the network, based on the northern Devon Cultural Strategy. Place a focus on practical and proactive outcomes, addressing cultural needs in areas such as regeneration, education, health, environment and economic development, aiming to drive forward shared initiatives.

Establish working groups and forums, as needed for delivery, oversight and expert guidance. Due to the diversity of the northern Devon cultural landscape and the remoteness of the geography of the region, the development and sustained evolution of networks and forums will be key to creating a joined up, accessible and successful cultural provision.

Resource seed funding for the first three years of the establishment of the northern Devon cultural partnership, ensuring that the partnership board has the time to build the capacity for self-financing.

Evolve – As the cultural scene of North Devon and Torridge develops so should the northern Devon cultural partnership. Creating an organisational culture of inquisitiveness, innovation and self-reflection ensures that the partnership doesn't reinforce traditional power structures and narratives, but instead promotes open conversation, forward facing action and transparent decision making.



6.2 HELPING PEOPLE BLOSSOM

We know that when people are able to access cultural and creative activities, the benefits on health, improving social cohesion and reducing social inequalities and inequities are significant.

We want to be a place where everyone has the opportunity to participate in culture at the level they feel comfortable. This means creating pathways for a diversity of people to have an active say in how cultural activity is delivered and how they can access it, rather than having it imposed on them. It means investing in the creative skills of people young and old; championing opportunities for all. It means ensuring those who want to pursue careers through their creativity have the opportunity to do so within a local economy that helps creative businesses to thrive.

Perhaps most importantly, it requires a cultural sector that works together, both across the region and internationally to connect local people with the best possible opportunities not just on their doorstep but also in the wider world.

6.2.1 NURTURING THE FUTURE

Champion the youth voice in northern Devon whilst actively developing pathways to creative opportunities and sustainable creative careers

Northern Devon is recognised as a fantastic place to live, with people from across the country choosing to move here in search of a better quality of life. However, the cost of living and the rising price of property, combined with low wages and precarious employment, makes it a difficult place to build a future, particularly for our young residents.

With limited higher education, there is a regular outflow of young people from northern Devon. This has not only contributed to a gradually ageing demographic, but has also impacted the cultural DNA of our region, where historically social customs and traditions have been passed through communities and generations. This also affects the flow of skills and energy entering the local workforce.

A lack of agency to secure a future affects us all; young and old, and it is imperative that we all feel that northern Devon is a place where we can not only build meaningful careers but also actively participate in the unique life and culture that our region has to offer.

Challenges:

Youth voice - Young people feel particularly disenfranchised and have expressed concerns regarding what northern Devon can offer to their future. They also feel that their voice is absent from decision making within the cultural sector. This is reflected in the local cultural offer, which is geared towards older audiences and is lacking the diversity to engage young people.

Diversity in programming - Lack of diversity appears to extend to underrepresented groups including migrants, people with disabilities and the neurodiverse. Currently, cultural programming does not appear to be reflective of underrepresented groups, which again affects the diversity and richness of the offer.

Generation gap - The absence of the 18-35 age group in our region contributes to a large age gap between young and old audiences. This has started to develop into a cultural divide that is detrimental to both demographics.

Brain drain - There is a perception that creative talent needs to move away from the area to achieve success, which is underpinned by the lack of reliable job opportunities in northern Devon. In turn, local businesses have identified large gaps within the skill sets available.

Precarity - Freelancers, individual artists and makers that remain in the region are often reliant on sales during the tourist season as well as second jobs in order to sustain their creative careers, many eventually leave the sector. The situation is further exacerbated by a local culture of volunteering. Whilst this is positive for many reasons, it also reinforces the belief that culture is something which comes without cost and is delivered for pleasure as opposed to as a career.

Opportunities:

Time for change - Coming out of the pandemic, a number of local cultural organisations are undertaking reviews of their operations, creating an opportune window for expanding representation within the sector in terms of youth voice, diversity and the broadening of who participates. We should use this moment to set the new standards for inclusive cultural management.

Mentoring traditions - Locally there are deep traditions of passing knowledge between generations within the cultural sectors. This is particularly true within the realm of makers where individual craftspeople have taken on young mentees in order to give them a firm grounding within their chosen trade. We should make use of the extraordinary resource to address gaps in mainstream education and provide pathways for developing creative careers.

New knowledge - Young people have a wealth of knowledge, experience and creativity to share. From social media to a powerful awareness of social and environmental issues. By tapping into this and amplifying young voices, we can build confidence and trust, encouraging young people's desire to create change and addressing skill gaps experienced by many in the older generation.

Shifts in the urban/rural power balance Following decades of urbanisation, cultural and social trends are starting to see young people seeking lifestyles outside of major urban areas. Particularly young creatives are attracted to places where they feel they can have an active cultural life, access to a good quality of living and the ability to pursue creative careers. As a region we should position ourselves as a creative destination for those looking for a different way of living while still having access to great culture.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS: NURTURING THE FUTURE

6.2.1a AMPLIFY THE YOUTH VOICE

Commit to increasing the representation of young people in cultural decision making. Plug in the sound equipment, run the sound check and ready the stage so that young people can make a stronger, louder and braver sound than ever before.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

There is a recognised challenge of addressing generational divides in our communities. Our young people have a lot to contribute to our communities, however they feel they have little say in society and feel the impact of living in a place with an older average age demographic.

This can only be addressed if we create space for young people to be leaders and decision makers when it comes to culture and champion their ability to create change.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Proactively make space for the youth voice in the cultural sector of North Devon and Torridge, ensuring that it is not just heard, but is embedded in decision making on a practical and strategic level throughout the region.

- Through consultation young people expressed their desire to not only be consulted, but to also have the opportunity to be part of decision making. The northern Devon cultural partnership is an ideal opportunity to make this happen in a genuine and meaningful way by committing to youth representation within the partnership.
- Create space for youth voices, by including at least 5 under 21 year old individuals or organisations within the partnership. Ensure that representation reflects a diverse cross section of the population; that young people have equal voting rights; that meetings are accessible for those in full time education or equivalent; and that any sub-forums of the partnership include youth representation.
- Encourage all member organisations of the northern Devon cultural partnership to involve young people in decision making within their organisations wherever possible. This could include youth representation at board level of member organisations, commitments to youth-led programming and opportunities for youth leadership.

- When considering youth participation and engagement it is important that as “adults” we do not make assumptions regarding the needs and desires of young people. Leading with open conversations held directly with young people will demonstrate a commitment to not doing things ‘to’ or ‘for’ young people in North Devon and Torridge, but instead ‘with’ and ‘alongside’ them.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM):

Develop an independent platform to amplify a diverse, shared youth voice.

- In partnership with young people, develop a network for young creatives in northern Devon, connecting young people across the region. The network should be developed by and for young people and could result in the following outcomes:
 - Advocate for shared needs
 - Facilitate creative career development support
 - Initiate creative projects
- Wherever possible, cultural funding applications should be developed in conjunction with the network for young creatives. For example, there shouldn’t be an application made for a youth-focused cultural project or programme that has not been directly developed with or by young people. Similarly, wider cultural strategic funding applications should commit to amplifying the youth voice within the wider context.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Strive to become a leading example regionally and nationally of how to amplify and embed the youth voice across all sectors, catalysed by culture.

- Integrate young people into the delivery roles of cultural activity across the region. Rather than viewing the role of young people as only participatory, commit to ensuring that young people are proactively encouraged into roles of cultural delivery and power, such as cultural commissioners and project management.
- In order to nurture the future of northern Devon, young people must feel that they have a shared investment in the region. The cultural sector should aim to become a leading example regionally and nationally of how to amplify and integrate the youth voice at not only a delivery level, but also a strategic level. As such, the northern Devon cultural partnership and the wider sector should advocate for other sectors to adopt the approach.

6.2.1b DEVELOP OUR TALENT PIPELINE

Enhance the quality of creative and cultural education by providing support for schools and opportunities for young people to gain direct experience with creative practitioners

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

One of the biggest barriers to community wellbeing in our area is the feeling that young people have to move away to access opportunities. This doesn't just impact on our young residents but also the sense of community pride and purpose that we all feel.

Northern Devon should be a place where young people believe they can develop and grow as creative people. We have long and proud traditions of passing creative skills and opportunities down through generations. Let's reinvent this for our times. If we invest in their creative skills then our young people will also give back by contributing to the creative and economic life of our communities.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Develop a cultural curriculum that brings together the education and cultural sectors.

- Bring together young people, education professionals and cultural sector partners to assess the potential of developing a northern Devon cultural curriculum that supports young people to explore paths into creativity that aren't currently accessible within the school environment. Together, identify the following:

a) Creative skills young people need and want to develop that they currently don't have the opportunity to explore in school.

b) Key challenges within schools that a creative curriculum could help to address; from creative skills development, to pupil health and wellbeing, to understanding what creative careers exist for the future and how to reach them.

c) Cultural activities that young people want to participate in and engage with, but currently lack access to.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Create formal and informal mechanisms for knowledge sharing, providing work experience opportunities for young people.

- Launch a pilot scheme, 'test bedding' the northern Devon cultural curriculum that could include delivering a diverse programme of cultural workshops, providing teacher training to embed creative practice and cultural education into classes across the curriculum and the development of curriculum resources.

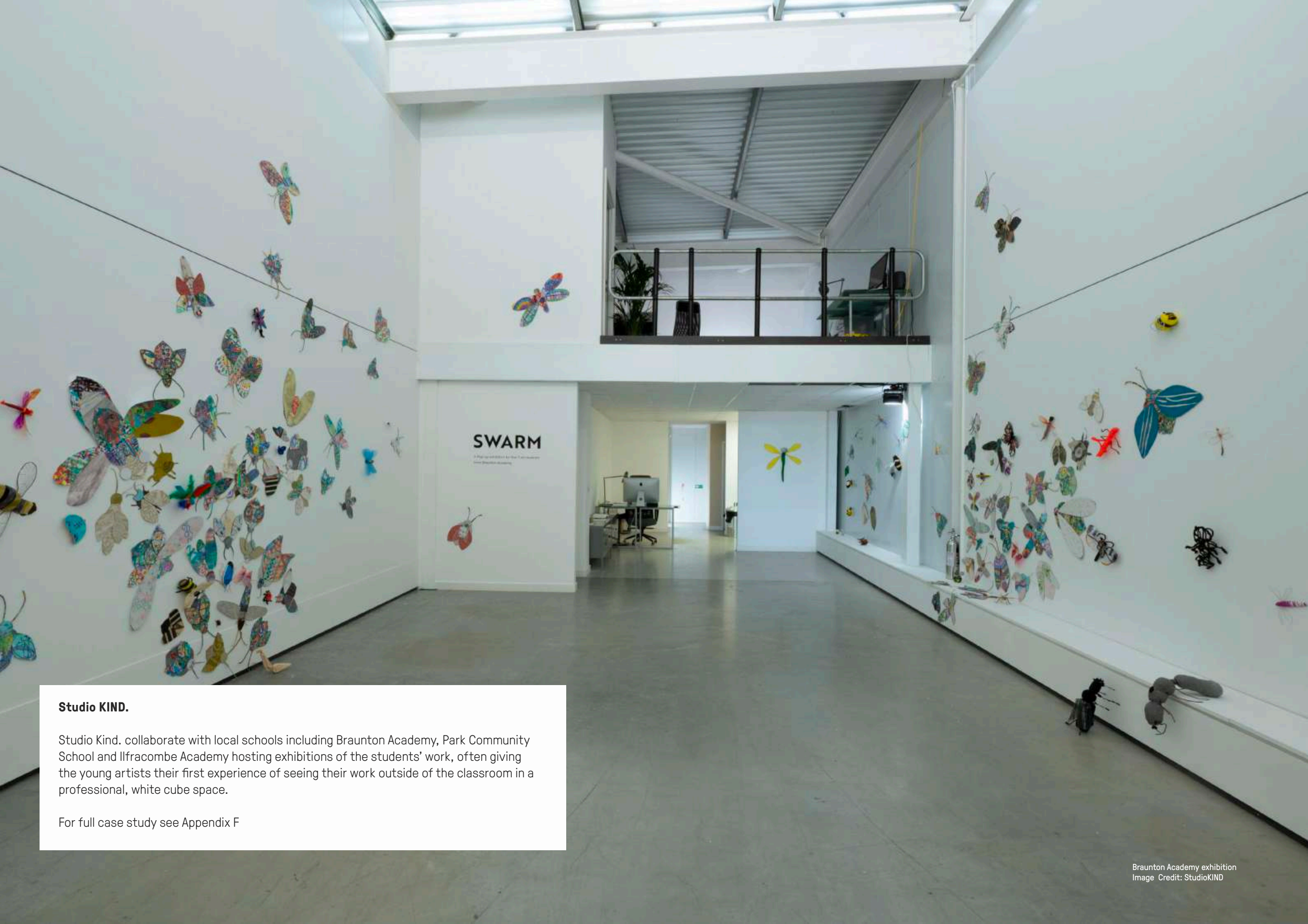
- Explore formal mechanisms to facilitate work experience and training, focusing on opportunities targeting young people between 15 – 24 years old. This may include a programme which supports creative businesses to deliver placements within the cultural sector, such as the Creative Estuary Re:Generation 2031 which offers creative businesses £10,000 towards the salary costs, set-up costs, professional development and travel subsidy of employing and training a young person within a cultural business for 12 months.

- Explore a less formal mentoring, matchmaking system for individual makers and creatives in the region, pairing people who have skills to share with others who desire to learn and develop. This shouldn't be thought of as an exercise in the older generations giving to the young; but instead, should embrace an understanding that both the old and young have valuable skills to contribute.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Strengthen the relationship between the education and cultural sectors through advocacy, partnership working and centralised resources.

- Expand on the learnings of the northern Devon cultural curriculum pilot project, seeking to broaden accessibility to creative pathways through the strengthening of relationships between the education and cultural sectors. Focusing on practical measures, develop a central resource of teaching materials and consider implementing cultural residencies within school settings (such as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at Acland Burghley School), whilst proactively advocating for cultural education and cultural careers.



Studio KIND.

Studio Kind. collaborate with local schools including Branton Academy, Park Community School and Ilfracombe Academy hosting exhibitions of the students' work, often giving the young artists their first experience of seeing their work outside of the classroom in a professional, white cube space.

For full case study see Appendix F

6.2.1c SUPPORT CREATIVE CAREERS

Make it easier for people to pursue creative careers by embedding good practice; including fair pay initiatives, local contracting incentives, maker visibility and business support.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Good, meaningful and well-paid work is one of the biggest contributors to individual wellbeing. In northern Devon too many of our jobs are low paid, seasonal and insecure, leading to brain drain which impacts on the wellbeing of our communities. This is true for the creative and cultural sector as well. The growing potential for remote working, particularly in the creative sector, improving digital infrastructure and the expansion of manufacturing and the creative industries means there is a huge opportunity for northern Devon. If we support our creative workforce then we can be a place that creative talent wants to come to, not to escape.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Support local talent through fair pay, business support and prioritising local workers for local work.

- Compile a comprehensive list of creative suppliers such as web developers, graphic designers, photographers, carpenters and equipment and material suppliers across the northern Devon region, promoting local suppliers and encouraging a ‘shop local’ mindset within the cultural sector.
- Within the northern Devon cultural partnership, collectively develop a shared commitment to fair pay within the cultural sector, ensuring all partner members commit to compensating freelancers fairly for their work.
- Signpost cultural organisations and creative businesses to already existing business support schemes such as 12 hours of free business support from North Devon+ or diagnosis and business support referral delivered by The Heart of the South West Growth Hub.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Create a ‘Made in Northern Devon’ brand to promote locally crafted products, circulating them for sale within venues across the region.

- Use the collaborative power of the northern Devon cultural partnership to lobby major institutions within the region to commit to a policy of prioritising local creative suppliers in procurement processes,

encouraging the subcontracting of creative suppliers within the tender application.

- Encourage and incentivise the circulation of ‘Made in Northern Devon’ products in markets, pop-up spaces and gift shops across the region, focusing on a rotating offer across a variety of locations that expands the reach of local makers into different markets, exposing homegrown talent, whilst supporting a varied and revolving offer in local stores and markets. Consider the following:

- The venue-based partners in the northern Devon cultural partnership will provide a good basis from which to build and grow. When broadening the network, first identify other spaces that are already selling the work of local makers who would support expanding their range, moving onto spaces such as coffee shops, restaurants and libraries.

- Produce a blanket agreement between participating venues regarding sales percentages to ensure that all makers are fairly paid and the network is sustainable and beneficial to venues and businesses.

- Identify makers interested in broadening their sales bases using existing networks such as ArtMakers. Local producers should understand that this is a proactive role that may involve transporting work and engaging with a variety of venues and businesses.

- Create a strong ‘Made in Northern Devon’ identity that is recognisable across the region, which appeals to local residents and tourists alike.

- Evolve, develop and expand the links between sales venues and local makers over time. Consider formalising the networking and outsourcing the delivery to an organisational partner.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Prioritise shared workspace for a diverse range of creative industries in urban areas.

- Prioritise affordable, shared creative workspace that is suitable for a diverse range of art and craft forms within new developments and under-utilised heritage assets, particularly within town centres in the region. Thought should be given to the provision of shared facilities and equipment such as makerspaces and live/work spaces.

- Prioritise affordable co-working spaces that are suitable for a diverse range of creative careers such as Graphic Designers, Web Developers and Architects within new developments and under-utilised heritage assets, particularly within town centres in the region.



ÓBIDOS CRIATIVA

Óbidos is a historic walled town in the Oeste region of Portugal with around 4,000 residents surrounded by around 10,000 in the wider municipality. In order to combat migration of its young residents, Óbidos Requalifica focused on urban regeneration through projects which included the creation of a design and creative industries focused Technology Park.

For full case study see Appendix F

“I appreciate the move towards partnerships, creativity and inclusivity and the growing informality in individuals and organisations locally (and also hopefully nationally/ globally).” - Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.

6.2.2 CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS

Ensure northern Devon culture is embedded in regional, national and international networks that extend past the reach of its borders, whilst bringing cutting edge culture and knowledge into the region.

As well as being a key driver of strategic growth within the cultural sector, partnership working plays a vital role in developing a diverse and distinctive cultural offer.

From ‘Hefted’, which was performed in the North Devon Theatres and produced through the collaboration between Beaford and Multistory, to Red Herring and The Burton’s collaboration on ‘Seeds of Hope’, there are already fantastic examples of collaborative practice between organisations in northern Devon. The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon’s Partridge Family Exhibition and learning programme has enabled the development of relationships with national museums and academics in three continents.

Ensuring that these connections reach beyond northern Devon is vital. Communities of interest that share challenges and opportunities in different geographical locations are becoming a key factor in the development of international cultural policy. Plugging in to activity outside of the region and cultivating connections beyond the borders, ensures that the best of UK culture also feels welcomed into northern Devon.

Challenges:

Political disconnection - As districts within the larger county of Devon, without major urban centres or many large institutions like Universities, northern Devon is often geographically and politically disconnected from regional conversations.

Isolation - Individual artists, makers and even organisations can feel distanced and isolated from each other, let alone the wider national and international cultural sector. This means they may miss out on opportunities or worse move out of the area to pursue other opportunities.

Critical mass - The area has been affected by the loss of important cultural initiatives that previously brought the cultural sector together and drew in culture from beyond the region, such as North Devon Festival.

Neglected - Northern Devon lacks strong partnerships that reach beyond the region, meaning the extent of high quality, national organisations delivering work in the area is limited.

Gaps in provision - Despite the diversity of our cultural sector, there remain gaps in provision. Higher education is the most prominent of these and currently there aren’t sufficient relationships with national bodies to address these gaps.

Opportunities:

Levelling Up - The requirement for ACE funded organisations to deliver work in priority places like North Devon and Torridge, means that there is now an incentive to support partnership development with high quality, national organisations. This will strengthen reach beyond the region and can be utilised to address gaps in the current cultural provision. We should leverage the political advantage of this moment to build long term relationships.

Northern Devon matters - The opportunities and challenges that we face as a region, from retaining young rural populations, to preserving the landscape are global challenges and give northern Devon an opportunity to engage on an international scale. We should reach out to communities of interest to create international networks.

Global names and networks - Northern Devon’s status as a UNESCO Biosphere, World Surfing Reserve, its National Park and North Devon Coast AONB, together with Arts Council recognition as a Priority Place and Levelling Up for Culture Place mean it can leverage existing networks to create cultural partnerships.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS: CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS

6.2.2a NATIONAL CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthen the relationships and partnerships between northern Devon cultural communities and the rest of the UK.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Being hard to get to is a bit of a badge of honour for us. We are proud of the fact that being a little out of the way has helped shape a unique identity in northern Devon. However, ensuring we are connecting people to the best opportunities that surround us is important to creating strong communities in northern Devon. The rest of the UK also has a lot to learn from us and sharing the knowledge and experiences of our cultural life with others is a valuable way to strengthen our own sense of pride in who we are.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Utilise the North Devon Arts Council England (ACE) Priority Place status to leverage relationships with national organisations to both bring cultural activity into northern Devon and to increase the opportunities of our creative practitioners.

- ACE is now encouraging existing and new NPOs to deliver more work in Priority Places across the country. Northern Devon can leverage the status of North Devon as a Priority Place and Torridge as a Levelling Up Priority Place in order to target organisations it would like to partner with and incentivise the delivery of activity in the region.
- In order to benefit from what the nation has to offer, the northern Devon cultural partnership and partner members should together identify existing relationships that may be strengthened and deepened. Many of our cultural organisations already have strong national links to draw on, including North Devon Theatres, Beaford and Multistory Theatre.
- Develop a shortlist of external NPO organisations whose offer may benefit northern Devon, giving particular consideration to key areas of need such as dance, music and arts education as well as key areas of opportunity such as craft, outdoor arts and culture and the environment.

- Work with ACE and the identified NPOs to explore how the activities outlined in the culture strategy for northern Devon can align with their plans for the upcoming round of NPO funding, where we can help them meet their objectives whilst also delivering against the needs of the regional cultural sector.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Design shared programmes of activity that are mutually beneficial for our cultural sector and partner organisations.

- Begin to build a set of shared programmes designed to mutually meet the needs of northern Devon’s cultural sector and partner organisations. This might be by ensuring partnerships always factor in an element of capacity building for the cultural sector via training or development support, exchange programmes that ensure local organisations or artists have opportunities to create work at the partner organisation location, or simply a matching of key targets.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Explore a permanent satellite venture of a large national organisation in northern Devon.

- Mutually beneficial relationships between large national, often city-based organisations with other places sometimes solidify into a permanent presence, as seen in cases such as V&A Dundee. This should be carefully considered before pursuing, particularly taking into account any potentially disruptive impact on existing organisations in the region. However, if a permanent satellite of a large national organisation can act as a catalyst for culture in northern Devon, such as dedicated music provision, this should be explored.

THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY OF BARNSTAPLE

The Partridge Family is a major exhibition and learning programme funded by Arts Council and Art Fund Weston loan programme at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon from May to October 2022. The learning programme includes weaving and dyeing for students in Barnstaple and Mumbai, as well as an adult weekend workshop, and talks from Janice Leoshko from the University of Texas at Austin and Radhi Parekh at Artisans Mumbai among others.

For full case study see Appendix F



BURNOUT

BURNOUT is a short dance film made in collaboration with hip-hop artist Joshua Nash, filmmaker Gemma Pons, and teenage dance students from Unlimited Dance Company in North Devon. Filmed on location in London and Woolacombe beach in Devon, after learning the choreography remotely over Zoom, BURNOUT brings urban culture into contact with our stunning coast

For full case study see Appendix F



6.2.2b THE CULTURAL BIOSPHERE NETWORK

Utilise the 'UNESCO Biosphere Reserve' status to seek out collaborations and cultural co-commissions with the World Network of Biosphere Reserves that celebrate the uniqueness of the landscapes whilst sharing best practice and knowledge.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

We live in a place of global significance. Our UNESCO Biosphere designation is not just a recognition of our natural landscape. It is a recognition of the importance of our people, our culture and our ways of life. Across the world there are communities facing similar challenges to us. By connecting with them, sharing our cultural experiences and learning from theirs, we can build a sense of collective solidarity that can strengthen our communities.

THE WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves is currently made up of 727 biosphere reserves in 131 countries. The network promotes North-South and South-South collaboration and represents a unique tool for international co-operation through sharing knowledge, exchanging experiences, building capacity and promoting best practices.

The North Devon Biosphere Reserve has demonstrated that utilising the world network through partnership working can be both productive and inspiring for northern Devon. From the 'BioCultural Heritage Tourism' programme that brought together biosphere reserves in North Devon, Brighton and France to produce a tourism strategy which reduces visitor impact at sensitive environmental sites, to the UNESCO MAB Programme in the UK, that encourages a balanced relationship between people and their environment, through the representation of various groups such as conservation, cultural, economic, education, environmental, and social sectors; it has been demonstrated that cross Biosphere partnerships are productive in pushing innovation and best practice forwards.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Utilise the World Network of Biosphere Reserves to initiate collaborative projects, bringing together the agenda of culture, landscape and environment partners.

- There are already very productive relationships between the cultural sector and landscape partners such as the North Devon Biosphere Reserve and North Devon Coast AONB, however the full potential of these relationships across the region is not yet truly understood or fully embraced. Use the northern Devon cultural partnership as a platform to develop and deepen understanding of the partnership work already taking place between cultural and landscape partners in northern Devon, as well as sharing the experiences of already existing international collaborations.

- Bring together cultural and environmental partner organisations with the North Devon Biosphere Reserve to explore the opportunities for utilising the World Network of Biosphere Reserves to initiate collaborative, cross sector projects that bring together culture, landscape and environmental partners in a bid to support the mutually compatible agendas of the sectors.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Launch a conference exploring the collaborative potential of cultural partners and the UNESCO and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves

- Broaden and deepen the conversation around the collaborative potential of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and the culture sector by hosting a dedicated conference in northern Devon to discuss, debate and share best practice across sectors and across borders.
- Using the conference as a catalyst, encourage wider partnership working through initiatives such as conference 'Cooperation Awards' which fund small collaborative projects between attendees.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Grow and evolve a collaborative programme of work between cultural partners and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves that places northern Devon as a leader in the field.

- Continue to build robust and meaningful partnerships nationally and internationally, harnessing the potential of a collaborative relationship between the cultural sector and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, whilst strengthening the region's position as a national and international leader in the field of environmentalism and culture.

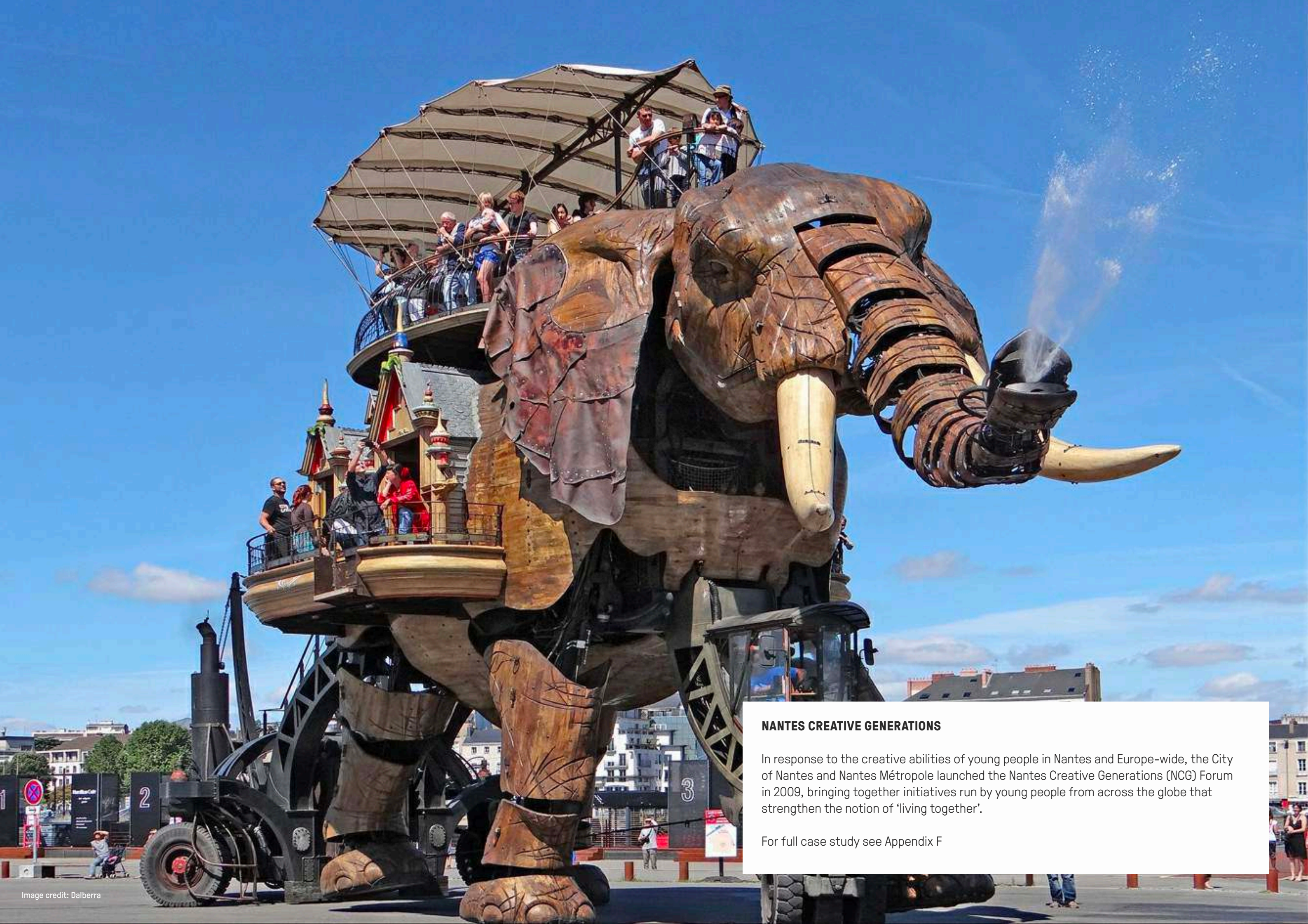
“ It’s untouched and more rugged than Cornwall. Less well kept, but with that attracts a certain type of creative person. Someone with grit and a love for the natural beauty.” - Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.



BIOCULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM (BCHT)

Working with four Unesco Biosphere Reserves including North Devon, the Marais Audomarois, the Iles et Mer d'Iroise, the Brighton and Lewes Downs; BCHT was an EU Interreg funded project that utilised international collaborative learning alongside the concept of Bio-Cultural Heritage to celebrate heritage and cultural practices linked to the environment.

For full case study see Appendix F



NANTES CREATIVE GENERATIONS

In response to the creative abilities of young people in Nantes and Europe-wide, the City of Nantes and Nantes Métropole launched the Nantes Creative Generations (NCG) Forum in 2009, bringing together initiatives run by young people from across the globe that strengthen the notion of 'living together'.

For full case study see Appendix F

“I am keen to do more in my local community and find other beautiful places to explore across North Devon. It’s not always easy to find out about places, activities or events unless you know the right people.” - Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.

6.2.3 MAKING CULTURE VISIBLE

Collectively celebrate and promote northern Devon culture so that it is a source of pride to our residents and attractive for people who visit.

Whilst 160,000 of us call northern Devon home, over 6 million people visit every year, creating a significant audience pool for cultural activity.

At present, our stunning landscapes, surfer lifestyle and breathtaking coastline sit at the forefront of the regional offer, however it is clear that we have a strong and distinctive cultural brand as well, boosted by our independent spirit, a strong connection to place and areas steeped in heritage and history.

To truly unlock the full potential of northern Devon as a place to live, work, play and visit, it is imperative that the stories that sit behind our region’s distinctive cultural DNA are shared both locally and with the wider world.

It is time to celebrate the richness of our cultural offer, to shout about the spirit and tradition that makes northern Devon so special and to shine a spotlight on the plethora of makers, creators and doers that our region boasts.

Challenges:

Lack of identity - At present, whilst there are numerous informal social media platforms, a central information point that showcases cultural events and organisations in northern Devon does not exist.

The face of northern Devon culture - The main platform for tourist information, run by North Devon Marketing Bureau, is based on a paid advertising model. This prevents smaller organisations from featuring on the site and limits the content available. In turn the website fails to promote a full reflection of northern Devon as an experience destination.

Event marketing - Local residents do not always know what cultural events are happening, even in their immediate surroundings. This limits the audience pool greatly to those ‘in the know’.

Hidden gems - There are over 400 makers in the region, however many do not cultivate a visible online presence, whilst for some this is through choice, others lack the knowledge to increase their online profile or do not fully understand the benefits.

Opportunities:

Global brands - Northern Devon boasts a UNESCO badge, World Surfing Reserve status, NPO-level organisations, widely recognised festivals and international profile artists, all of which can be leveraged to build the profile of the region.

The DSCVR app - The app commissioned by NDC and TDC provides businesses and organisers a free platform to promote their activities across the region.

A wealth of content - The world, particularly online, is increasingly visual. Northern Devon is a place that is overflowing with inspiration. Innovative performing arts activities, highly skilled makers and creators, an abundance of heritage sites and the stunning landscape all make for an incredible library of content to support promotion.

Critical mass - The sheer number of individual creatives and creative organisations provides substantial capacity for cross-promotion of cultural activity across northern Devon. If we all shout about each other, our collective voice will be louder.

Improving the economy - Culture and heritage tourism is extremely valuable, bringing in £20bn per year to the UK economy. This provides a strong investment case for strengthening the cultural sector.

ICELAND

Over recent years Iceland has rebranded itself as a year-round visitor destination, developing a range of campaigns and marketing strategies to promote this to the rest of the world. Placing culture as an equal counterpart to the landscape and nature based tourism, has increased the reach of Iceland's appeal as a destination, in turn attracting a greater diversity of visitors whilst creating an incredibly distinctive place identity.

For full case study see Appendix F

PROPOSED INTERVENTION: MAKING CULTURE VISIBLE

6.2.3a NORTHERN DEVON CULTURE: THE BRAND

Develop a distinctive identity and marketing framework that supports northern Devon in showcasing and celebrating local creative expression; inspiring future generations of creators, the development of local audiences and recognition from across the globe.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Place branding can feel like a very corporate, outward facing activity that has little relevance to real people in a place. However, if done well it can create a banner under which people can gather and celebrate what makes their place special. Cities of Culture like Hull and Coventry in recent years have helped turn around negative perceptions of their places both from outsiders and people who live there through strong cultural identities that are projected out into the world.

Northern Devon has so much to shout about. The process of defining what is special about a place and sharing it with the world, if it is done collectively rather than being imposed upon people, can be a powerful community building process.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Create a cultural brand that is owned by northern Devon; identify who we are and the story we want to tell.

- Research cultural branding that exists in other places and create a pool of examples that can influence and inspire your own.
- As a partnership, develop a collective understanding of what makes northern Devon a place of cultural significance - looking to past, present and future happenings as a source of inspiration. From the mighty Biosphere through to the cottage industry creators - every aspect of our cultural expression should be considered. Pay particular attention to the factors that are specific to the region and cannot be replicated or found anywhere else.
- With the themes identified from the above exercises, develop a branding brief that encompasses the messaging and stories you want to share with the world. Engage a designer that has worked on similar projects who will work collaboratively to develop a brand rooted in the cultural identity of northern Devon.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Create platforms that celebrate the local cultural offer, supporting existing creatives and organisations in promoting cultural activity within the region.

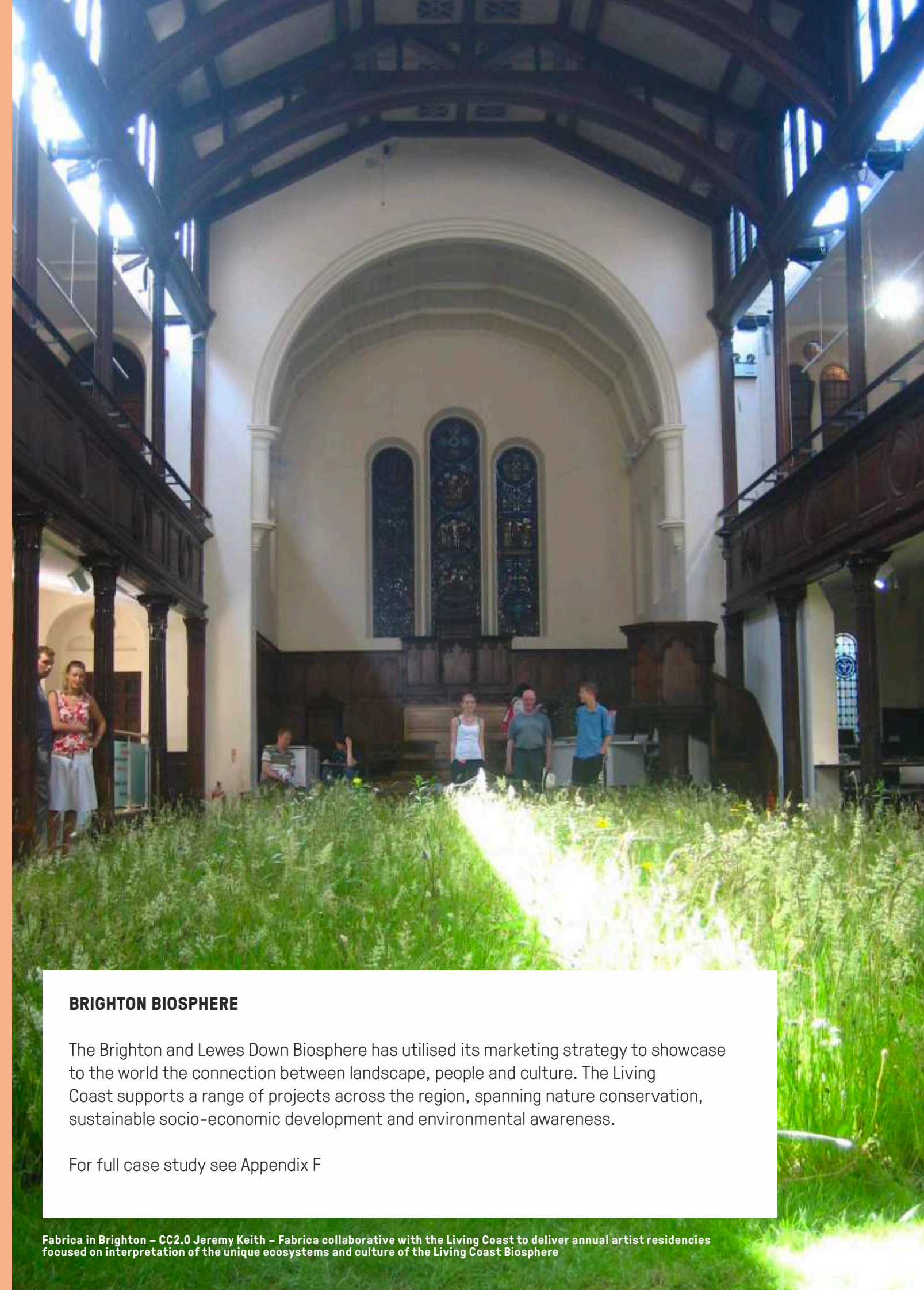
- Develop a website where culture from across the region can be celebrated to its fullest. This should be a central point for information with an open source functionality allowing individuals and organisations to share events, spaces and opportunities aimed at both locals and tourists
- Identify and connect with partner organisations that could elicit some ‘quick wins’ via collaboration. For example this could be working with the County Council to design a ‘culture map’ for the Tarka Trail website, encouraging visitors to explore the cultural offer surrounding the trail.
- Have a shared commitment across the northern Devon cultural partnership and the network of community assets to cross-promote cultural activity across the region.
- Develop a ‘Marketing for Beginners’ tool kit that signposts local creatives and organisations to the promotional opportunities available in the region. Showcase the different mediums that can be tapped into, including traditional press outlets, online platforms such as the DSCVR app, print e.g posters and leaflets and the cross promotion cohort.
- Adopt the recommendations laid out in the Filming in northern Devon plan to enhance the number of productions using northern Devon as a filming location.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Develop a clear marketing strategy that communicates to global audiences and supports northern Devon’s long-term cultural goals.

- Grow and strengthen northern Devon’s cultural identity by identifying key clusters of activity and devising individual identities for places within the region. Is Hartland the home of cottage creatives? Is Barnstaple a hive of historical wonders? How can further development of the cultural identity be used to encourage deeper exploration of northern Devon for both residents and tourists alike.
- Build a cohort of ‘Northern Devon Culture Champions’ who will promote and talk passionately about culture in the region. This should include politicians, celebrities and business people as well as creative individuals and organisations. These are our human connectors and the people that make our brand authentic.

- Look to develop national and international partnerships with places and organisations that share the cultural values of northern Devon. For example, utilising the Biosphere network to improve the global visibility of the region through joint marketing initiatives, exchange visits etc.
- Utilise digital infrastructure to draw in audiences from across the globe, placing North Devon on the map as a hive of creative and cultural ambition.
- Devise and implement a multi-faceted marketing strategy to tell the world what northern Devon has and will be doing in regards to culture. Utilise the cultural brand, connected communication and online platforms as tools to showcase and celebrate what the region has to offer.



BRIGHTON BIOSPHERE

The Brighton and Lewes Down Biosphere has utilised its marketing strategy to showcase to the world the connection between landscape, people and culture. The Living Coast supports a range of projects across the region, spanning nature conservation, sustainable socio-economic development and environmental awareness.

For full case study see Appendix F

6.3 OUR CULTURAL HUBS

THE HEART OF THE NORTHERN DEVON CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM

Our towns have particularly vital roles to play in the creation of a thriving cultural ecosystem across the region. We have three towns of 10,000+ residents, Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. The cultural relationship between our urban and rural areas are reciprocal and co-dependent. Ilfracombe shares the same sea with Combe Martin; the waters that flow through Umberleigh and Torrington also flow into Barnstaple and Bideford. What happens upstream impacts what happens downstream and in the case of culture, the river flows in both directions.

The cultural vision, values and actions outlined in this strategy should be central to cultural development within these towns, the cultural institutions that are based there and how they consider themselves to be part of a broader and mutually beneficial cultural ecosystem.

However, these towns also have challenges, political systems, cultural and social dynamics that deserve particular attention. They include many of the most deprived neighbourhoods in northern Devon, some of the lowest levels of cultural engagement and have high streets and town centres undergoing significant upheaval due to factors such as e-commerce and the historic loss of tourism.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING FOR CULTURE IN TOWNS

More than ever before, culture is finding itself at the centre of conversations about town planning, high street regeneration and the creation of places that offer a good life for all citizens. It is reflected in central government spending for departments beyond DCMS, including the Future High Streets Fund, Towns Fund, the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Cultural Placemaking is also becoming central to Arts Council England funding through strategic programmes such as the Cultural Development Fund.

Each of these requires individual towns to have a shared vision for culture, how it integrates with wider development and how it can create social, economic and well-being impact.

In order to support this, within this section we outline key actions that are applicable across all towns that will both help to catalyse cultural activity, while also giving a roadmap to developing more comprehensive, place-specific strategies. These include:

- (a) Putting culture at the heart of place partnerships to integrate culture into regeneration and town development
- (b) Making optimum use of existing, owned assets and building relationships with landlords to aid the expansion of cultural infrastructure within towns.
- (c) Creating the conditions for attracting and supporting cultural uses within the public realm.

Such a detailed strategic plan, that takes into account the particular context of each individual town, is not something that can be provided by a single overarching strategy such as this. As such we strongly recommend that:

- (a) Key political, town centre management and cultural stakeholders within Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe come together to develop individual cultural strategies for their towns that directly address the integration, role and infrastructure requirements for culture within development.
- (b) District authorities and the northern Devon cultural partnership provide support to parish and town councils within mid-sized towns with populations over 3,000 on working with their cultural organisations to support their roles as regional hubs for culture.

“Culture needs to be seen as second nature, and needs to be ingrained into the fabric of the town and region.”

- Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.

ACTION PLAN FOR NORTHERN DEVON CULTURE TOWNS

6.3.1 CULTURAL INVESTMENT PLANS

There has rarely been a more opportune time for culture to have a seat at the top table of town centre regeneration. Culture is the main focus of Mission 9 within the Levelling Up White Paper, “By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.” Of the 105 successful Round One Levelling Up Fund projects across the UK, 54 included an element of cultural spend and 24.79% of total spend on the fund was allocated towards culture.

Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe have each entered or formulated bids for high street or town centre regeneration funds that included proposals for cultural activity. Whilst these proposals had mixed success, they provided valuable foundations for cross-sector conversations about the integration of culture within regeneration and economic development objectives for each place.

It is important that towns are not simply reactive in their approach to the cultural development of their towns. Strategic funds should be seen as opportunities to unlock key projects within a wider strategy rather than discrete projects that stand alone.

The cultural sector needs to bring together town partners from town centre management, property, business and community to formulate an integrated set of aspirational projects. These can allow towns to match projects to the most suitable funding opportunities and collectively push for change at local and regional government level, rather than trying to devise projects to meet the requirements of funds as they come available.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Town centres have a significant impact on community wellbeing and the sense of satisfaction that people have with where they live. From Stockton to Altrincham, places facing severe social and economic challenges have been transforming their town centres and high streets through brave, community-led cultural plans.

However they are all backed by robust, cross-sector partnerships that are able to deliver on the promise and ambition that local communities have for their towns. Without a strong plan and vision to bring these partners on board, it isn’t possible.

CREATING A TOWN CULTURAL INVESTMENT PLAN

Town team for culture - Bring together all stakeholders previously engaged through consultation in the Future High Streets / Levelling Up Fund bids along with additional stakeholders such as prominent landlords and private sector investors, business groups and third sector partners to identify priorities for longer-term cultural transformation of the town centre. The Town Investment Plan model developed for the government Town Deals programme offers a useful guideline drawing together strategic priorities across a range of public, private and third sector parties and unifying them under a set of longlist projects.

Prioritise the challenges and opportunities - Identify a shared set of challenges facing the town, from both a cultural perspective and a socio-economic point of view along with opportunities for how cultural interventions can improve the overall quality of life within the town.

Set priority themes - Consolidate these into a set of 5 or 6 themes, which will depend on the particular priorities of the place but may include areas such as creative industries, evening and night time economy, tourism and visitor spend, skills and education. These should be justified by a theory of change, a defined goal for how improvements of particular metrics against these themes will lead to wider improvements in quality of life in the town.

Map cultural locations - Map out key cultural assets within the town alongside known upcoming investments. Identify priority strategic areas where cultural interventions could have maximum impact, either by amplifying existing clusters of cultural assets, supporting other key uses such as retail, or reviving a part of the town that has become neglected. Pay particular attention to assets that are owned by partners in the conversation, or are of low value as these will offer the lowest hanging fruit. Sometimes it is not the most obvious location that offers the strongest opportunity.

Define character zones - From the combination of existing assets and opportunity areas, begin to sketch out character zones for culture within the town, identifying where clusters of activity can create critical mass around specific types of cultural use such as creative enterprise, evening economy, heritage, outdoor culture, learning and creative industries.

Apply the northern Devon culture strategy - Identify how the northern Devon Culture Strategy best applies within your town based on the identified challenges, opportunities, themes and opportunity areas.

Devise project longlists - Drawing from the identified priority themes and the opportunity areas, develop a longlist of projects that collectively can transform the town. These should range in scale and timeline, but should evenly address each of the main themes (some projects may address multiple themes), and should be identified based on their anticipated impact against the desired outcomes.

Budgets and Resourcing - Develop outline budgets for each longlist project, allowing you to begin to lobby for support and identify potential sources of funding, be they public sector, debt finance, private sector investment or otherwise.



PRIORITIES FOR TOWNS

6.3.1a ILFRACOMBE

Critical mass - Ilfracombe has a fantastic array of independent galleries, a statement theatre at the Landmark and cultural organisations with strong links in the community like Ilfracombe Museum and the Space. However, no single partner has the capacity to leverage cultural change in the area on its own and established organisations have a responsibility to bring smaller independents into the conversation about collectively supporting change in the town.

Socially engaged culture - 3 of Ilfracombe's neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived in the country, unemployment hits as high as 7% in some areas, the highest in northern Devon, and the town is particularly affected by challenges in domestic tourism and the decline of high street retail. It is important to support the capacity of organisations in the town that are engaging with local communities and helping them to enjoy the benefits of participation in arts, culture and heritage.

Festivalise culture - With iconic venues like the Landmark, stunning setting and tourism heritage, Ilfracombe is ideally suited to festival approaches to culture. Build on existing successes like Ilfracombe Maritime Festival to identify ways of animating the town throughout the year.

Paint the town - The number of artists both within Ilfracombe and in surrounding places like Braunton and Combe Martin alongside the beautiful but decaying architecture of the town lends itself well to public art and street art programmes. These offer a way of supporting the resilience of town centre retail and visitor economies through culture, a good example of this being Folkestone in Kent. Work with town centre managers and landlords to look at ways local artists can help improve the public realm of the town.

Connect with the sea - The recent success of the new watersports facility along with Ilfracombe's associations with sailing, surfing and maritime heritage make a strong thread for the cultural sector to celebrate and amplify.

6.3.1b BIDEFORD

Connect the town - The current cultural offer of the town is fractured and sporadic. For example, there is a strong craft offer highlighted by The Burton at Bideford and independent craft businesses at the Pannier Market. However these are split either side of the town centre with little connection. Finding ways of clustering strengths such as these and encouraging them into the town centre, such as through meanwhile and pop-up activities, can help give stronger critical mass to the overall offer.

Accessible culture - Bideford has some of the highest proportions of people least likely to engage in arts and culture in northern Devon. Activity should prioritise lowering barriers to participation. It is important to bring cultural activity out into public space, onto people's doorsteps or in locations that are informal and unintimidating. This is further emphasised by the general lack of informal community gathering spaces which is a key priority to be tackled.

Youth opportunities - Bideford has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country for children and young people, with 3 registering in the lowest 10% IMD Children/YP Sub Domain. Increasing opportunities to develop creative skills and career opportunities should be a key priority within the town.

Evening and night time economy - Most arts and culture offers in the town close in the evening, this impacts the wider strength of the town centre with little to draw people in after 5pm. Facilitating evening activity is a key area where the cultural sector can work together with business, retail and town centre commercial whether through meanwhile activations, evening events or cultural venues.

Creative Industries - Bideford has got some great small creative businesses, particularly in areas like PR and marketing. However, the sector is small, lacks critical mass and suffers from an absence of supportive infrastructure. Creative workspace and target creative sector business support can help give a centre of gravity to the town's creative industries.

PRIORITIES FOR TOWNS

6.3.1c BARNSTAPLE

Knit culture together – Barnstaple’s recent successes such as the Future High Streets Fund application and the emerging opportunity at Bridge Chambers offer strong momentum to build on. A key next step is to identify how these initiatives will work together and not become a fragmented offer around the town. A spatial plan that ties together different initiatives and how they relate with wider town centre character areas and uses will help further opportunities to emerge.

Creative District – Barnstaple is notable for a number of properties that have come under council ownership, including 36 and 37 Boutport Street, the Pannier Market and Green Lanes shopping centre. This gives a real opportunity for ambition in the cultural vision for Barnstaple. Exploring a Creative District model, a defined area with a strong cultural identity, commitment to cultural infrastructure and integration with the area’s commercial offer is a real possibility. Locations such as Nottingham’s Creative Quarter show how a combination of creative workspace, creative markets, heritage and cultural venues can be combined to make a place more attractive to investors and a source of pride for local people.

Heritage and identity – Barnstaple has a layered and fascinating history of over 1000 years, It retains its Saxon street pattern and important heritage sites like Barnstaple castle mound and the Long Bridge and 375 listed buildings. Foregrounding this heritage in the identity of Barnstaple and making it visible in the public realm through trails, interpretation and public art can help Barnstaple build a more defined identity that tells the story of Barnstaple as a place, that can then be reinforced by the broader cultural offer.

Transformation through culture not for culture – Barnstaple faces numerous economic and social needs. It is important to think about how culture can contribute to wider initiatives of social and economic transition, not just what is needed for the cultural sector. This is an opportunity to show wider stakeholders what culture can do to help them in terms of increasing town centre footfall, youth opportunity, creative industries, visitor economy and community wellbeing.

Connect beyond the centre – As the region’s largest and most connected town, Barnstaple offers the strongest potential critical mass of activity for the cultural sector. It is important though that this isn’t restricted to the town itself, infrastructure within Barnstaple should be seen as a basis to radiate out benefits to its surroundings, whilst at the same time offering a platform for activity across northern Devon to reach larger audiences.

6.3.1d GREAT TORRINGTON, HOLSWORTHY AND SOUTH MOLTON

The smaller towns of northern Devon have a similar albeit more localised impact on their surroundings and it is vital that cultural infrastructure is supported and enhanced. The impact of The Plough Arts Centre in Great Torrington highlights how cultural infrastructure within these places can have a transformative impact on the levels of cultural opportunity in surrounding villages and communities.

Each has important priorities to support their role as centres of culture. Holsworthy is currently underserved in terms of cultural infrastructure which impacts on its surroundings. Addressing this either through increased activity by other northern Devon organisations in the town, enhancement of existing infrastructure such as Holsworthy Amateur Theatrical Society or the development of new programmes is needed.

South Molton has a strong community-led cultural offer, an active One Northern Devon group, vibrant Pannier Market and important assets like Arts Destination South Molton and Quince Honey Farm. Supporting the development of this and spreading learning of best practice to other communities should be prioritised.

Great Torrington has the strongest cultural offer of these towns with a distinctive Civil War story and the benefits of the Plough Arts Centre and nearby RHS Rosemoor. Ensuring that cultural activity is well publicised, accessible and integrates a strong youth offer will help to grow from this strong foundation.



6.3.2 THE PUBLIC REALM

From well-worn footpaths travelled by knowing feet through to expansive gardens visited on balmy, summer days, or parks to kick a football around, the public realm provides a plethora of backdrops for a range of creative interventions. It is the familiarity and accessibility of these spaces that makes them integral to a diverse and inclusive cultural offer.

Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe all boast a range of public spaces that should be looked upon as extensions to the existing (and future) cultural offer, providing further platforms from which the community can exhibit their creativity.

Viewing as such not only assists in the visible uplift of a place and the showcasing of local talent, but also in breaking down barriers to culture for those who may not feel confident in entering a traditional cultural venue. It provides a gentle nudge into the unknown, bereft of expectation, yet full of opportunity.

Whilst both the Torridge District Council website and the North Devon Council website provide comprehensive information regarding council-owned land that is available for events, there is opportunity to expand and develop this to attract and support further cultural activity within the public realm.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Public spaces are the modern commons. The place where you don't have to pay to enter and which you should be able to enjoy regardless of who you are and what your status in society is. However, public spaces are commonly neglected, unloved and underutilised leading to broader poor perceptions of people's local areas. The broken windows theory is a common example of how the physical fabric of a place can impact the social fabric.

Conversely, animating public spaces with festivals, art and creativity that are visible in the public space gives people a sense that their place is alive and animated. It also normalises culture as an everyday activity, like popping down the shops, lowering the barriers to taking part.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS: CULTURE IN THE PUBLIC REALM

MAP YOUR ASSETS

Think holistically - Map the spaces and places within the public realm that have the potential to be utilised for cultural uses. Rather than just focusing on the large rentable areas, also include the smaller spaces that could house street performers or smaller interventions.

Be creative - Is there a rooftop that could transform into performance space or a public balcony that could house a musician on a Saturday afternoon? Look up and around as well as on the ground and identify a broad range of spaces that would suit a range of activations at multiple levels.

Expand your focus - When mapping, include spaces of interest that are not council owned. This will enable you to build a detailed overview of all public realm assets available to cultural and community organisations, which will help signposting later down the line.

Identify patterns - Are there 'cold spots' where there is limited opportunity for cultural activity in the public realm or 'hot spots' where clusters form? Understanding the formation of the public realm available will help you to utilise it effectively and will feed into a plan as to how and what the offer could look like.

Develop a vision - Use the findings from the mapping exercise to inform a place-based vision for the public realm. Do not try to reinvent the wheel, instead work with the existing assets to create an offer that is unique to each town.

THINK LIKE A VENUE

Be visual - Create a bank of imagery, film and promotional materials of public realm activity that has already taken place in the area. Alongside this commission photography of the council-owned public realm, which has been earmarked for potential cultural activity via the mapping exercise.

Promote your offer - Develop a visual, promotional document that showcases the public realm and the spaces available for cultural activity. Sell the benefits of each space and ensure that the information is easy to understand and digest. Keep this light touch, yet informative. This document should include:

- Images of the spaces available
- Plan/map of the space (as already used on Council websites)
- Size of space
- How the space could be used or has been used before - include images if possible
- Capacity

REMOVE THE BARRIERS

Be aware of varying experience - For an organisation or individual that has little or no experience in hosting activity within the public realm, the process and documentation required can be off-putting. Therefore, a conscious effort should be made to ensure the application process is as accessible as possible.

Bitesize chunks - Whilst both North Devon and Torridge have easy to download forms and comprehensive guidance in place regarding events on council land, the amount of information required (before the guarantee of a licence) is overwhelming. This can be remedied by following the steps below:

1) Promote and host quarterly workshop events for those interested in utilising the public realm for cultural or community activity. This provides an informal environment in which questions can be asked and processes explained without leaning too heavily on resources. This will also encourage organisations and individuals to partner up, share experience and potentially develop further public realm interventions.

2) Implement a short, simple EOI process for interested parties to complete prior to the submission of a full Amenity Application form. This will enable the Council to develop an understanding of the activity being proposed and identify whether it is appropriate for the public realm. Whilst this adds an extra layer of administration, in the long run this approach will save time and no doubt frustration on both sides.

3) From the information provided on the EOI, the Local Authority will be able to ascertain what support the applicant requires in regards to the completion of the Amenity Application Form (if any) and can signpost them to the relevant council department/s or an appropriate organisation that can offer advice in developing the EOI and a comprehensive application.

4) Alongside this, the guidelines provided to aid the application process should be reviewed and adapted. For some applicants this is going to be the first time they have filled out a risk assessment or ran an event of such a scale and a text heavy, 9 page guidance document could prove overwhelming. Creating documents that are bright, visual and offer a clear, concise explanation as to what is being asked and why will remedy this.

5) Develop a public realm toolkit, which clearly and concisely demonstrates an overarching timeline towards event delivery. As well as including practical information such as when to apply for a TENs licence or when RAMS documentation should be completed, it should also touch upon the softer elements which make an event a success such as the implementation of strong branding, local marketing and promotional opportunities, trusted suppliers etc.

SPREAD THE WORD

Reconnect - Contact organisations and individuals that have previously delivered activities in the area and encourage them to utilise the public realm. Share the information on spaces available along with updated visual documents to drum up excitement and interest.

Refresh - Utilise the bank of imagery and mapping information to update the council website/s, creating a visual and inspiring online window to the public realm opportunities available.

Steer the ship - Identify potential cultural activations you would like to see in the public realm and develop/circulate briefs that can help to steer the direction of applications you receive.

Seek, test, adapt - Identify some quick win activities that will shine a spotlight on the public realm and showcase it as a place where cultural activity thrives. Explore different forms of activation and monitor how these are received by the public, utilising an action research approach to refine and develop the offer.

6.3.2 USING VACANT SPACES TO FUEL CULTURE

For the last century our town centres and high streets have been defined by retail. Shops have shaped what our town centres look like, how we think of them and how they generate value.

However, with the rapid growth of the internet age, along with broader economic pressures this picture is rapidly changing. Online shopping now accounts for 36% of all retail sales and its market share is accelerating as generations become more accustomed to shopping online for a greater variety of things. As a consequence of this and deeper structural issues, retail vacancies were up to 14.1% at the start of 2021.

Navigating how to use the spaces left over by retail, as well as other town centre assets is one of the main challenges facing towns across the country. For many landlords, accustomed to passively managing their properties, they are still inclined to wait, in the hope that new occupiers will eventually emerge or residual land values will allow them to sell off or redevelop properties as time wears on.

However, the case is becoming clear that towns have to start more actively managing underused properties in order to protect the overall financial resilience of their places. The high street is moving from a retail economy, based on products, brands and sales, to an attention economy, based on footfall, critical mass, dwell time and experiences.

In this landscape, culture is a critical tool, something that can attract people into town centres, capture their attention, keep them engaged and generate activity throughout the day that makes town centres viable for other businesses.

Creative Meanwhile is a must for any town centre.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Retail has traditionally played an outsized role in people's sense of pride in place. North Devon and Torridge & West Devon constituencies both sit in the bottom 15% for place satisfaction in the country.¹ Improving the quality of shops is the second highest priority after improving transport given by people for improving their area. With retail in crisis this is a major problem for people's satisfaction with where they live. As shops close and leave behind empty spaces, a process of blight can kick in that leaves more and more spaces empty as investors lose confidence in the area.

Meanwhile keeps high streets animated, gives opportunities to activities that normally wouldn't be able to afford high street rents to take on high profile space and allows communities to experiment with and imagine what they want their town centres to look like in the future.

THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR CREATIVE MEANWHILE

Resisting blight - There is a tipping point that town centres reach, when the diversity of its offer is no longer significant enough to attract sufficient customers into the area that are necessary to support even the remaining retail businesses. It creates a vicious cycle of closures, dropping visitor numbers and subsequent further closures. Meanwhile use prevents town centres from falling over that tipping point, by keeping activity happening in units, refreshing the offer and therefore maintaining the overall attractiveness of the high street or town centre.

Keeping properties viable - As properties become unlet, they become harder and harder to fill, as commercial managers use the vacancy rates to judge the best locations for their businesses, and steer clear of anywhere that has been unoccupied for a significant period. 3 months is typically a break point where a temporarily vacant location starts to become exponentially harder to let.

Driving footfall - Footfall not only enhances the total spend in surrounding businesses, it is also the most important metric for investor confidence in the high street. Investors are willing to wait longer for a return on investment in a place where they see high footfall, even if the economic outlook is currently poor, as they recognise that if people are still coming to a place, it will eventually turn itself around. This can have exponential effects on land values and rents. If investors have little confidence in a place they will shorten the length of their investment and therefore expect a quicker return, driving up rents.

¹ Demos - Everyday Places Survey. <https://demos.co.uk/project/everyday-places-creating-strong-locations-to-support-daily-life-in-britain/>

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Experience and 18 hour economy – It is clear that the experience economy will take ever greater prominence over the retail economy in high streets. It is already seen from the expansion of hairdressers, barbers and other services that cannot be bought online through to the appearance of crazy golf courses in former department stores on Oxford Street. This economy works in a completely different way, it runs from early in the morning till late at night, it thrives on attention and it is dependent on a collective offer. Unlike the retail economy where primary anchor shops would have a disproportionate impact on footfall, in the experience economy it is far more collective. Just as most people don't go to a theme park for purely one ride, or choose a holiday based on purely one sight, people will come to town centres for a mixed combination of experiences.

Standing out – Westfield recently announced their desire to support local artists within their properties. The reasoning for this was based on the latest How We Shop research which revealed that 74% of consumers want to see retailers adapt to their local areas. Local loyalty, the choice to spend time and money in a town centre or high street rather than online, will be a key differentiating factor.

Diversifying for the future – The reality is we are undergoing a generational transition and nobody is certain what the future shape of the high street is. The retail model has held for over a century and it will take time for the new high street to emerge. Places which have experimented with diversifying their offer, testing different uses, activities and services in temporary locations will find themselves best placed to know what the specific solutions for their place are. This in turn will make them the place businesses are most comfortable investing in, knowing that something has been tried and worked there before. Those that sit and wait will find that when new models emerge, investors will still be reluctant to apply them, as they won't have any evidence to know if they will work in this place.

KICKSTARTING MEANWHILE IN YOUR TOWNS

Each of the towns in northern Devon will have different levels of ownership and control over vacant properties. However, the broad guidelines set out below will help generate meanwhile activity that can then grow and evolve to the needs of each town. Use all the spaces you have to hand, creating an easy to use structure that enables the grassroots growth of cultural and community activity in the heart of urban areas across northern Devon.

CREATE AN EXEMPLAR AT GREEN LANES

Kickstart interest and confidence in delivering meanwhile projects by using publicly owned stock to deliver an exemplar project. Vacant spaces are key assets to cultural provision when venue space is not abundant. With a little imagination a town can become a vibrant hub of diverse culture when an abandoned Thomas Cook becomes a pop-up experimental theatre; a disused Debenhams becomes an emporium of creative enterprise; and a former Dorothy Perkins becomes a meanwhile music studios.

This should not be done in a piecemeal way, on a unit by unit basis; but should be approached with a holistic and committed vision, aiming to create a critical mass of activity in a specific location.

Be bold and brave by utilising Green Lanes Shopping Centre in Barnstaple to create an exemplar programme of cultural meanwhile-use. This can be achieved by:

- Understand how culture has been used to regenerate and reposition shopping centres in other areas by referencing examples such as Westfield's "Curator in Residence" for #LetsDoLondonBetter, Brixton Arcade by Spacemakers and The Quadrant Arcade by Things Made Public.
- Work with Local Authority partners in both Economic Development and Property Service departments to outline a robust economic argument for such an intervention.
- Produce a regeneration/re-positioning culture-led plan for Green Lanes Shopping Centre, utilising vacant space, under used public spaces, marketing and events opportunities, business collaborations and public art commissioning.
- Having led the way by providing excellent cultural meanwhile use programming, engage and support target organisations and businesses who own multiple units, such as the Barnstaple Bridge Trust, Barnstaple Queen's Walk and Bideford Bridge Trust to make their stock available for the use of cultural programming and activity to community groups and cultural organisations on a heavily subsidised or peppercorn basis.

MAKE MEANWHILE EASY FOR LANDLORDS AND OPERATORS

Produce an easily accessible tool kit for community groups and individuals across northern Devon, providing step by step information on how to produce excellent meanwhile use projects. Information should include how to obtain a space, how to operate a space legally and safely, how to successfully programme a space and how to market a programme; all with an emphasis on environmental impact and social value.

Produce a similar tool kit for landlords and landowners across northern Devon, providing step by step information on how to enable community groups and individuals to utilise their vacant spaces. Information should include the benefits of meanwhile use, who to let to, how to claim rates relief where applicable, how to make it as easy as possible for the meanwhile use tenant i.e. a simple, yet effective licence and testimonials from landlords who have successfully benefited from such schemes in the area.

Ensure the tool kits are distributed free of charge to all community groups and property landlords directly via a central body. As well as direct distribution, both tool kits should be available, free of charge online.

Where appropriate, actively approach individual landlords and community groups and 'match make' partnerships with particular potential. For example a space that has sat empty for a long period of time and a well established local charity. This approach will be particularly important for areas such as Ilfracombe as there are fewer landlords with multiple units.

DIGITISE YOUR MEANWHILE

Create an open source, online resource of vacant spaces and creative practitioners, enabling individuals and organisations to come together in an organic way. Think Airbnb, but for cultural meanwhile-use. Ensure that both property owners, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and community groups are consulted prior to the delivery of the platform to ensure that the website is fit for purpose and enables the listing of relevant information.

Actively encourage landlords and property owners throughout the region to list their available stock, and do the same with creative practitioners, cultural organisations and community groups who are looking to transform vacant spaces with activity, utilising the open source platform to create an ever changing, exciting offer in the underutilised spaces across northern Devon.



6.4 HELPING PLACES THRIVE

In a recent survey of 2,000 households, 94% of people identified with 'North Devon' when asked "where do you consider you live" rather than Devon or their town or any other geography. Where you live and where you are from forms a massive part of our self-worth. It is a huge part of what culture is, beyond any individual form of creativity.

The importance of northern Devon is internationally recognised. Not just for our natural assets, but for our people, our culture and the deep connection we have with the place we come from.

Protecting this place, taking inspiration from it in how we express ourselves and ensuring that everyone feels a part of it is essential to northern Devon culture.

6.4.1 EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE

Create the conditions for local people to make and experience culture that expresses their connection to the places they live and the wider environment.

Our people live in settlements ranging from isolated farms to middle-sized towns. Over thousands of years, we have exploited our natural resources, shaping the landscapes, creating places for gathering and trade, learning and culture. The network of community museums, local festivals and community groups nurtures and sustains local distinctiveness at village level. Sustaining festivals and grass roots activities at town level is more difficult, but these have significant wellbeing potential for our most deprived communities.

The northern Devon landscape can only be described as an all-encompassing treat for the senses. From our rolling, woodland encased hills and cultivated pastures through to the picturesque sea fronts and architecturally stunning towns, the variety of our surroundings, habitats and communities is rich and invigorating. The significance of this landscape, both natural and human, is recognised through its UNESCO Biosphere designation.

Moulded by centuries of land use and natural processes, our culture has both shaped and been shaped by the landscape. From the village fairs steeped in tradition and local folklore, through to the ever-growing surfer community that can be found catching a wave along the coast, the connection between creative expression and place is integral to the identity of northern Devon culture.

Challenges:

Old fashioned - Culture and landscape can elicit negative associations to provincialism and nostalgia. Northern Devon's vision of culture and landscape should be contemporary, ambitious and forward thinking even as it draws from the past.

Impersonal - The natural landscape of northern Devon is often foregrounded over the people that live there.

Disconnection - Over time there is more and more of a disconnection between people, cultural identity and sense of place due to changes within agriculture, livelihoods and the ownership of land. Housing and transport issues mean that many people are cut off from our natural and historic landscapes.

Knowledge loss - Due to age and skill gaps in the local demographic, volunteer-led local culture such as museums, festivals and informal cultural activity are under threat, as is the chain of tradition, skills and knowledge that people carry with them.

Opportunities:

Global name - Northern Devon has the chance to be a global leader in the way communities, artists and landscape connect to create new forms of cultural expression supported by the platform provided by its UNESCO Biosphere designation and World Surfing Reserve.

Extraordinary makers - Northern Devon is bursting with makers creating contemporary work both formed of the landscape and expression of the landscape. These makers, numbering at least 400, connect northern Devon's rich heritage of ceramicists, glass makers, milliners and other craftspeople.

Passion for landscape - The desire to connect with, be in and have agency over local surroundings is one that cuts across age, class, ethnicity and gender in Northern Devon. From 'Incredible Edible' programmes in towns to community forests, surfing to refugee food events, connection with land and place is a powerful means of binding communities in the region.

Strategic opportunity - Cultural funding both through DCMS and the Levelling Up Agenda is increasingly focusing on connection and pride in place as a key outcome of cultural activity. Previously neglected art forms like outdoor arts as well as activities that embrace a broad definition of culture are being looked upon more favourably.

"North Devon is such a beautiful surrounding which allows plenty of space for creativity and lots of view to use to create art"

- Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.

GREEN SPACE DARK SKIES

Green Space Dark Skies is a series of 20 events and activities taking place in Dartmoor and Exmoor from April to September 2022. The project aims to enable people from all walks of life to forge new connections with the countryside by supporting those who encounter cultural and physical barriers to experiencing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to access events.

For full case study see Appendix F

Green Space Dark Skies, Valley of the Rocks
Photo: André Pattenden



PROPOSED INTERVENTION: EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE

6.4.1a FESTIVALS AND OUTDOOR ARTS

Place northern Devon at the cutting edge of outdoor arts, embedding culture into the landscape and bringing creativity to people’s doorsteps.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

We’re outdoor people. Not just because of our stunning landscape, but the kind of work people do here, the lives we live and the history that made northern Devon what it is. Great cultural venues are incredibly important to northern Devon, but we also need to break out of the box. Art and cultural events in the outdoors tend to reach more diverse audiences. They include people who would not normally engage in cultural activities and therefore they can have massive benefits for community cohesion and reducing cultural inequality.

WHAT ARE OUTDOOR ARTS?

Outdoor Arts can be hard to define. From theatre, visual arts and music, to dance, digital art and circus; Outdoor Arts can be found on the street and in parks, on roofs and in rivers, across cities, towns, villages and landscapes.

Often producing free and extremely accessible work, outdoor artists operate in different ways; some busk for a living, operating in urban areas with good footfall, whilst others can be subsidised through public funding, performing in less commercial settings, including remote rural landscapes.

Outdoor Arts should not be confused with outdoor events. Whilst many outdoor events could successfully happen indoors, Outdoor Arts embrace the very nature of being outside; flexing to the changes in the weather, the fluid nature of public spaces and the landscape in which they are based.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Understand the existing Outdoor Arts offer in northern Devon and the potential to expand..

- Utilising the abundance of local talent in the area, work with regional experts to develop a shared concept of what Outdoor Arts mean in the context of northern Devon specifically, and how the sector should be supported and grown.
- Where necessary, engage national Outdoor Art bodies to provide support in the areas identified by regional experts; focusing on positioning the North Devon and Torridge Outdoor Arts offer as a leading light in the national field.
- Map the current regional Outdoor Art provision, including both contemporary cultural programmes, community festivals, heritage practices and traditional events and carnivals, producing an annual calendar of activities. Initial mapping should capture current activities, opportunities, gaps in provision and threats.

- As an ACE Priority Place, work with Arts Council England to declare northern Devon’s doors open to Outdoor Arts touring programmes. Working alongside regional artists and organisations, encourage meaningful interactions between northern Devon and touring partners, from which the local community and cultural sector can learn, evolve and exchange best practice in a mutually beneficial partnership.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Develop the Outdoor Arts offer in urban and rural areas, utilising existing assets.

- From Northam May Fair to Woolsery Agricultural Show to Woolacombe Bonfire Night and Fireworks display, there are untapped opportunities to integrate Outdoor Arts activities into existing events. Where possible, the Local Authority and other events providers should prioritise commissioning Outdoor Arts activities at existing public events.
- Ensure the use of public spaces such as squares, streets and parks is easily accessible for busking performance. Consider the following:
 - Identify potential spaces within urban areas to designate as busking spots
 - Produce clear, non draconian guidelines for buskers to adhere to, including online RAMS templates where appropriate
 - Develop a simple, busker led system for allocating spaces and timings
 - Advertise that buskers are welcome, encouraging and incentivising local performers and practitioners to participate
 - Allow buskers to “hat”, earning an income from their art
- Celebrate much-loved rural areas in northern Devon, collaborating with partners such as the Tarka Trail, North Devon Coast AONB and the National Trust to co-commission Outdoor Arts projects that focus on site specific works based on rural locations and walking routes, encouraging wider exploration of the northern Devon region.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Develop a biennial festival celebrating Outdoor Arts across the northern Devon region.

- Bring together Outdoor Arts programming and wider cultural activity from across the region to develop a biennial festival showcasing the very best in Outdoor Arts and northern Devon culture. The biennial festival should celebrate the diversity of northern Devon landscapes and cultural activity; from the grassroots traditions of community-led Outdoor Arts activities to contemporary collaborations between environmental, agricultural, surfing and cultural organisations.
- Supplement existing activities with large and bespoke commissions that align with the wider biennial festival. Commissions should focus on growing the Outdoor Arts provision in both urban and rural areas, positioning northern Devon on the national stage. Whilst the festival has the potential to become a unique and exciting tourist attraction, it is vital that local people are prioritised as commissioners, participants and audience members.



INSIDE OUT DORSET

'Inside Out Dorset' is a biennial international arts festival that launched in 2007 with an aim to celebrate Dorset and promote its natural landscape and sense of place. The festival presents site-specific works in the landscape, as well as animating the country parks, estates and high streets through immersive experiences, trails, installations and performances.

For full case study see Appendix F



D DAY NORTH DEVON

D-Day North Devon was an Arts Council funded community heritage project building on the North Devon Coast AONB's National Lottery Heritage funded Coastal Heritage Project to deliver a wide range of activities and events commemorating our area's unique history of use by the US Army during preparations for D-Day. The programme of events included, a 1940s dinner dance hosted by Braunton Royal British Legion, new permanent heritage trails of WW2 locations, a series of public talks, pop up GIs trained by Multi Story and re-enactment events.

For full case study see Appendix F

6.4.1b CREATED BY AND WITH COMMUNITIES

Develop a cultural ecosystem that local people have the power to shape and direct.

Enabling everyone in northern Devon to decide what culture is, who makes it, where it happens and who experiences it.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Culture isn't something we are given. We've already got it. But we often assume that there are people who commission and make culture and other people who consume it, and others who have nothing to do with it altogether. However, everyone has the ability and the right to decide what their culture is, where, how, with who and for whom it is made. It is one of the areas of life where we can all have an opinion and our opinion is always valid.

Changing the role of our communities from passive observers of culture into creators and decision makers will help us build stronger community bonds, build self-worth and ultimately lead to a more distinctive and diverse culture.

WHAT IS CULTURAL DEMOCRACY?

Cultural Democracy describes an approach to arts and culture that actively hands the power to 'the people', enabling everyone to decide what culture is, who makes it, where it happens and who experiences it.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Test community decision making processes within organisations across the North Devon and Torridge region.

- Working with Arts Council England and the northern Devon cultural partnership, develop a shared understanding of what cultural democracy means in northern Devon. Utilise national publications to help guide and inform regional knowledge:
 - 'Cultural Democracy in Practice' by 64 Million Artists with Arts Council England
 - 'Shared Decision-Making: Tips, tools and case studies from Creative People and Places projects' by Louise White for MB Associates
- Identify opportunities for implementing cultural democracy into the existing cultural offer of northern Devon.
 - Select a project or programme in which to implement cultural democracy through the practice of community decision making.
 - Identify the areas within the programme where there is space for individuals to have influence. What decisions are currently being made by the "powers that be" that can be handed to the community?

- Identify what resources need to be dedicated to commit to delivering community decision making within the project.

- Form community steering groups and panels to oversee selected projects and programmes. When recruiting local people, consider the following:
 - Do you have a balanced group of diverse and representative voices?
 - Do you require particular skill sets within your group?
 - How will you recruit individuals?
 - Are your meetings accessible? Have you considered accessible locations and times? Will you recompense travel costs, childcare or other associated costs of participation?
 - How much time are you expecting individuals to dedicate?
- Work alongside community steering groups and panels to make key strategic decisions as previously identified, ensuring a safe, genuine and balanced space is created for community decision making.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Refine community decision making processes, relinquishing more agency to the community over time.

- Developing community decision making processes is a journey based on trust and should be continuously refined and developed based on the feedback of participants. Over time, an increasing amount of power can be relinquished by traditional decision makers and relocated into the hands of the community.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Promote, incentivise and integrate community decision making into cultural practice across northern Devon.

- Promote and incentivise the implementation of cultural democracy into the everyday practices of cultural organisations across North Devon and Torridge.
- Commit to implementing community decision making mechanisms that are authentic and representative as standard practice when commissioning cultural work through the northern Devon cultural partnership.

CULTURE HEALTH & WELLBEING PILOT

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing pilot project was commissioned through a partnership of organisations under One Northern Devon to test and embed creativity as a pathway to improved health and wellbeing. At least 80% of participants reported experiencing a positive improvement in their mental health and wellbeing, with 100% improvement in 3 of the 4 target areas.

For full case study see Appendix F



6.4.2 PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPE

Recognise the interdependent relationship between people, culture and the environment through cultural activity that acts on the climate crisis.

Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it is happening even more quickly than we feared. No corner of the globe is immune from the consequences of climate change, however our unique ecosystem in northern Devon makes it particularly susceptible to threat.

The pressures facing the natural environment are already impacting our region and the climate crisis is being felt at a hyper local level, placing communities and traditional ways of life under threat. The Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Biosphere Foundation, National Trust and Exmoor National Park are already actively tackling these threats.

Culture is an avenue through which these complex issues can be explored; it's a tool for championing local conversations and climate education, yet can also be utilised to build connections to places across the world facing similar pressures, in turn inspiring action both locally and globally.

“I want North Devon to focus more on using its geography for climate change initiatives. Make renewable energy accessible to population financially and practically.”

- Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.

Challenges:

Awareness - Whilst pride in the landscape is almost universal across northern Devon, public understanding and awareness of northern Devon's UNESCO Biosphere status and its importance is limited. The Biosphere Foundation itself has limited resources for public engagement and the complexities of land management.

Upstream/downstream - There is a disconnect in the relationship between life in towns and surrounding environments, people see a 'green' landscape and assume there is no issue, or that their actions have no impact.

Climate crisis - The pressures on northern Devon's environment are increasing. Rising sea levels, the impact of tourism and the wider development of the region are all affecting the landscape.

Powerlessness - With large swathes of land owned by a small number of people, communities feel that they have little agency or power to protect their landscape. This not only diminishes the relationship between people and place but also prevents a strong volunteering resource from mobilising change.

Opportunities:

Mutually beneficial relationships -

The relationship between culture and environmental action is mutually beneficial. The UNESCO designation brings a global badge of status, whilst the cultural sector can highlight environmental issues that seem abstract and complex to most people.

Local passion - Northern Devon boasts a strong interest in environmental volunteering, with young people feeling a particular resonance with environmental issues. Activities that are weighted in environmental action have the potential to reach a broader audience than traditional arts and culture interventions.

Culture for our time - Climate Crisis is the issue of our time and it is reflected in the way that culture which challenges the climate crisis has a global reach.

Many hands - Connecting culture with environmental protection is a powerful way of pooling resources; attracting partnerships with academic and research sectors as well as funding from a wider set of sources that would not normally be accessible to the cultural sector.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION: PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPE

6.4.2a IMPACTFUL ACTIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

We have been told unequivocally; the science is clear, we are facing an unprecedented global emergency. Make a stand as the northern Devon cultural sector and take action on climate change.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The link between the quality of our environment and the quality of our wellbeing is firmly established. If our environment deteriorates then the quality of life of our communities will too. Sometimes climate change can make us feel powerless. But meaningful collective action, addressing both local and global climate challenges can give communities a sense of agency, a collective pride in tackling the problems that matter and even support reduced anxiety.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Commit to ambitious and exemplary environmental practices as the northern Devon cultural partnership.

- Forefront the climate crisis conversation through the formation of a dedicated Culture & Environment forum within the northern Devon cultural partnership that seeks to identify priority areas and activities that link the cultural and environmental agendas of the region.
- Ensure that the culture and environment conversation is balanced by representing a variety of stakeholders from both sectors. Northern Devon boasts an impressive range of environmentally focused partners including North Devon Biosphere, North Devon Coast AONB, RHS Garden Rosemoor, North Devon World Surfing Reserve, Quince Honey Farm, The Resurgence Trust, Carbon Savvy, Net Zero Heroes and 361 Community Energy.
- The climate crisis conversation can be intimidating and challenging to navigate. As well as drawing from the abundance of regional knowledge available; access national resources and support mechanisms such as the toolkits created by the Arts Council England and Julie's Bicycle to support the journey. For example:
 - Creative Green Tools, developed by Julie's Bicycle specifically for the arts and culture sector provide a free set of carbon and environmental calculators to record, measure and understand the impacts of venues, offices, tours, productions, events and festivals - <https://juliesbicycle.com/our-work/creative-green/creative-green-tools/>
 - Arts Council England have commissioned a variety of resources to support cultural organisation and individuals to lead the way in their approaches to environmental responsibility. This includes commissioning Julie's Bicycle to produce environmental policy and action plan guidance - <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/environmental-programme>

- Together, as the northern Devon cultural partnership, develop an ambitious joint statement and action plan to address the causes and effects of the climate crisis, encouraging every member of the partnership to adopt it on an organisational level. This work should consider the hyperlocal impacts of the climate crisis, alongside the regional, national and international impacts.

- Adopt the northern Devon Culture Strategy as the North Devon Biosphere Culture Strategy to ensure that the cultural sector and the Biosphere are working hand in hand towards joined-up goals.

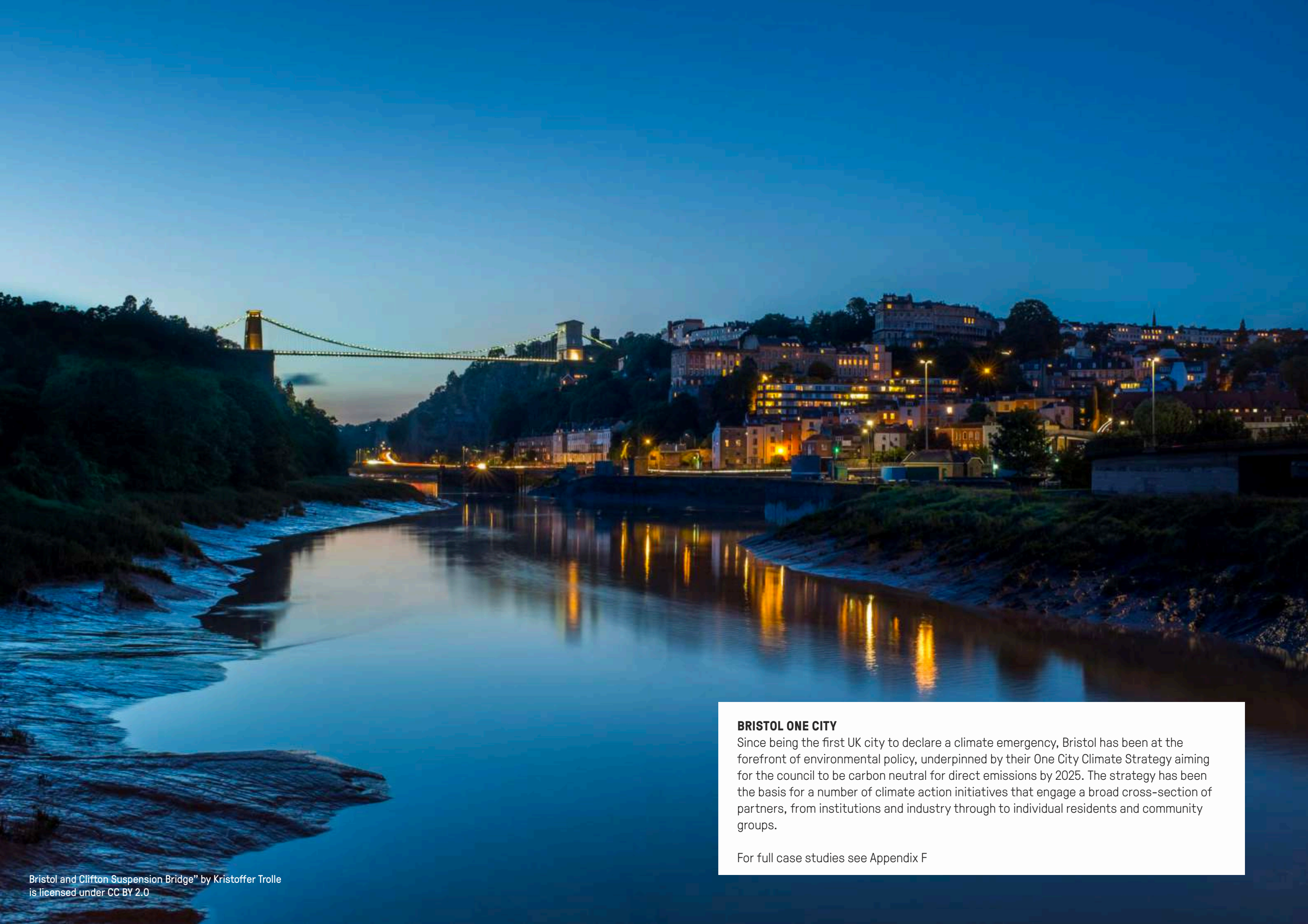
PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Create and deliver a professional development programme to support cultural organisations and individuals to implement best environmental sustainability practice.

- Establish measurement systems to track the environmental commitments pledged, such as measuring carbon footprint, ecological footprint, plastic footprint and/or water footprint. Track and monitor the progress of the northern Devon cultural partnership, making available measurement tools to participating organisations.
- Building on the commitments of the northern Devon cultural partnership, actively broaden regional knowledge of environmental responsibility through the creation of a professional development programme, which targets cultural organisations and individuals not already active within the northern Devon cultural partnership.
- Encourage external contractors and partners to achieve the same level of commitment and accountability pledged by the northern Devon cultural partnership and its members.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

- Benchmark the progress of the northern Devon cultural partnership against leaders in the field in order to ensure an ambitious, yet achievable approach is undertaken.
- Collectively utilise the northern Devon cultural partnership to advocate for responsible environmental practices within the wider cultural sector and beyond.
- The climate crisis is developing rapidly; as are everyday people's attitudes and the scientific knowledge that informs our understanding of the challenges ahead. In order to keep up, ensure that the northern Devon cultural partnership reviews and renews its environmental charter every 2 years. The review should consider the progress that has been made to date, whilst setting realistic yet ambitious targets for the next two years.



BRISTOL ONE CITY

Since being the first UK city to declare a climate emergency, Bristol has been at the forefront of environmental policy, underpinned by their One City Climate Strategy aiming for the council to be carbon neutral for direct emissions by 2025. The strategy has been the basis for a number of climate action initiatives that engage a broad cross-section of partners, from institutions and industry through to individual residents and community groups.

For full case studies see Appendix F

6.4.2b DISRUPT THE CLIMATE CONVERSATION

Utilising the natural assets of northern Devon and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, develop and commit to cultural commissioning that supports, disrupts and progresses the plight of the environmental sector in the region.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Culture is a great medium to turn a big confusing subject into something that is locally relevant and emotionally meaningful. We are proud of our environment and landscape in northern Devon. Celebrating it while also raising awareness of the challenges it faces is something that can also build our collective sense of community and purpose.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Form close partnerships with the environmental sector and identify key environmental issues that culture can be utilised to support, disrupt and progress.

- Identify the individuals and organisations already actively working to promote, tackle and improve environmental issues in northern Devon. From the North Devon Biosphere, North Devon Coast AONB and the North Devon World Surfing Reserve to RHS Garden Rosemoor, The Resurgence Trust, Carbon Savvy, Net Zero Heroes, 361 Community Energy and 2021's 'Greenest Family in the UK', the region has an abundance of knowledge, passion and experience in the field of environmentalism that the cultural sector should utilise as a catalyst from which to collaborate, amplify and broaden the environmental conversation.

- Working with environmental partners identify the core local environmental issues that are being tackled in the region. What are the most critical issues in North Devon and Torridge to address? What are the barriers to addressing them? How can culture be utilised in support of traditional conservatism to disrupt the conversation and push it forwards?

- This is a field of innovation and progression; seek support and inspiration from others by looking nationally and internationally at challenging case studies in which culture has been utilised to support the cause of environmentalism and push forwards the climate crisis conversation.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Commission cultural programmes that address local environmental issues head on, with an emphasis on broadening and deepening conversations.

- Drawing on cultural and environmental partners, collectively commission cultural projects that seek to address environmental issues in a proactive manner. Encourage the integration of education into all commissions, being brave and ambitious in the commitment to disrupt, broaden and deepen the conversation around the landscape and our impact on it.

- Build a relationship with local Universities in order to embed research, innovation and education into the foundations of the cultural and environmental collaborations in northern Devon. Neighbouring Universities provide a wealth of knowledge; from The University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute which leads world class research and education in enhancing people's lives by improving their relationships with the environment and identifying solutions to problems of environmental change; to The University of Plymouth who have created an Arts Institute research cluster, bringing together researchers and practitioners whose work recognises how the arts, culture and the humanities are inextricably bound up with environmental challenges, aiming to foster collaborations across traditional disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

- The cultural and environmental sectors of northern Devon have an abundance of willing volunteers to draw from, yet the infrastructure to support the facilitation of these volunteers would benefit from strengthening. Working cross-sector, pool resources to create and grow volunteering opportunities regionally, leveraging much needed investment.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Grow and evolve a brave and ambitious environmental cultural programme of work that places northern Devon as a leader in the field.

- Taking advantage of the outstanding natural assets of North Devon and Torridge, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status and the developing partnership between the environmental and cultural sectors, work together to leverage funding to commission more extensive cultural programming that directly addresses the climate crisis and local environmental issues.

- Position the region as a national and international leader in the field of environmentalism and culture, setting the standard and evolving the practice of culture as a vital mechanism in addressing the global climate crisis on a local, regional, national and international level.

SPLASH AND BURN

Splash and Burn is an artist-led initiative using creativity to encourage a wider conversation on unsustainable slash and burn approaches to clearing land for palm oil production and the adverse effects this has on the forests and dwindling wildlife population of South East Asia.

For full case study see Appendix F



NORTH DEVON TREESCAPES

Devon's treescapes are under threat from Ash Dieback which is estimated to kill at least 90% of Devon's ash trees in the coming years. Via cross-sector partnership working, Saving Devon's Treescapes is facing this issue head on, utilising crowdfunding and public funding including the National Lottery Heritage Funding, One Tree Planted and Tesco Bags of Help, to take action that protects and restores Devon's internationally renowned treescapes.

For full case study see Appendix F

6.4.3 NAVIGATING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Use culture to break down the distance between people, both physical and social, by spreading cultural opportunities across northern Devon.

Northern Devon boasts a diverse and rich landscape, yet the navigation of our terrain can be challenging, time consuming and costly. Participation in cultural activity is undoubtedly impacted by location and accessibility, with many reliant on intermittent public transport or the ability to drive as a means to getting around.

In some areas this is balanced by thriving and diverse local creative and cultural activities. Choirs, craft workshops, art groups and village events and activities play an enormous role in northern Devon culture.

But not every area has these and others are precarious, reliant on single individuals who drive forward community life. We want a place where people make culture and identity on their doorstep. But also a place where great things happening in the region reach every corner and community.

Main barriers to participation in culture in northern Devon:

Transport issues - 37.1%
Cost - 38.7%

- Northern Devon Cultural Strategy public survey.

Challenges:

Movement - Public transport is restrictive in terms of frequency and routes which affects young people, old people, those with low incomes and those who can't drive.

Travelling at night - Movement between places is particularly difficult in evenings when cultural activity typically takes place, meaning a reduced catchment for culture and a risk of social introversion among people.

Lack of diverse audiences - The cultural sector can be narrow in terms of audience reach. A small subset of mobile people willing to travel for cultural consumption make up a substantial proportion of overall audiences leading to a lack of diversity.

Rural touring - Touring cultural works into rural communities can be particularly challenging, which places undue pressure on touring organisations and the community spaces that host them.

Opportunities:

Gathering spaces - There are a multitude of community assets in villages and towns across the region including, but not limited to, pubs, village halls, churches, community shops, community centres, community woods, parks and vacant shops. Many already host a wealth of creative and community activities. By broadening the scope of where culture can 'happen', existing public community assets can be utilised to showcase cultural activities. This forms a strong network for touring cultural programmes and reduces the travel barriers that are preventing people from accessing high quality culture.

Community spirit - There is a strong culture in northern Devon of communities uniting to solve local problems. This is underpinned by an active volunteering culture, which although varies from place to place, can be utilised and developed to expand the cultural offer and opportunities available.

Digital culture - Ongoing improvements to digital infrastructure create the opportunity for digital culture to bridge the geographic divides in northern Devon. Innovations such as the success of live streamed performances in cinemas show that digital technology can expand the reach of culture while still remaining communal.



BARNSTAPLE FRINGE THEATREFEST

Fringe Theatrefest, now in its 16th year, was created by Bill Buffery and Gill Nathanson of Multi Story Theatre and inspired by their visits to Canadian Fringes and building on years of touring experience in the UK. A strand of their work since 2002, Multi Story have utilised rural touring to promote some of their most challenging work for adult audiences.

For full case study see Appendix F

PROPOSED INTERVENTION: NAVIGATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

6.4.3a A CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

Create a large and established network of community assets across northern Devon, bringing high quality and affordable cultural activity within easy travelling distance of every person in the region.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Community infrastructure is vital to our collective wellbeing. Inclusive places where people can gather, make and experience culture are the heart of our communities both in towns and rural locations. Ensuring every place has these and that they are animated with activity that is meaningful to the people who live there will help us reduce rural isolation and loneliness whilst ensuring opportunity is well spread across our region.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Map the community assets throughout northern Devon to identify more opportunities for cultural programming as well as current gaps in provision.

- Building on the cultural infrastructure mapping undertaken for this strategy, map community assets in areas that have the potential to host cultural activity. These could include community centres, village halls, shops, pubs, churches and other gathering spaces; mapping should be distributed evenly throughout northern Devon.
- When mapping community infrastructure opportunities for cultural use, include information regarding the facilities available and the current cultural offering, if any.
- Northern Devon is currently home to established and successful examples of rural touring that can be learnt from, developed and expanded. Share regional expertise and best practice alongside examples from further afield to gain a deep understanding of the opportunities, benefits and challenges of rural touring in northern Devon. Examples of countywide formal rural touring networks include:
 - Highlights Rural Touring Scheme based in Cumbria are a network of over 65 village halls providing a touring programme of live arts and events - <https://highlightsnorth.co.uk/>
 - Arts in Rural Gloucestershire are a network of village halls and community space across the county hosting a programme of cultural performances - <https://airing.co.uk/>
 - Arts Alive & Flicks in the Sticks promote professional arts and film events in partnership with local people across Shropshire, Herefordshire and surrounding areas - <https://artsalive.co.uk/>

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Bring together and establish a network of local people and organisations running community assets across the region to identify opportunities for touring cultural work and partnership working.

- Based on the information gathered through the mapping of community assets, alongside the best practice shared by regional experts, build a network of community assets and cultural partners that together can provide a diverse and accessible cultural offer across rural communities in northern Devon.
- Encourage the participation of non touring cultural organisations and venues, or those who would like to expand current touring practices to help establish the network and provide an even more extensive rural offer.
- Through the rural touring network, test-bed, develop and grow rural touring projects that build capacity within venues and organisations, strengthen partnership working and evolve the regional rural touring offer in an experimental and brave way.
- As a network, consider how the local community can direct what they see and how they participate in it. Whilst it is essential to bring high quality and affordable cultural activity within easy travelling distance of every person in the region, it is equally important that local people can drive what they see, do and participate in.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Grow and strengthen a self-sustaining network of local people and organisations running community assets across northern Devon, developing the capacity for touring cultural opportunities and community direction across the region.

- Consider formalising the network as an independent organisation, capable of applying for external funding and creating a sustainable legacy.
- Having tested approaches to financial sustainability through small scale projects, as a network identify a means of self sustaining. This may be through a mixture of ticket sales, sponsorship and external funding.

HIGHLIGHTS NORTH

The Highlights Rural Touring Scheme connects over 65 venues, an army of volunteer promoters and an ever-growing list of artists to bring great arts and unmissable culture to rural areas, lighting up village halls, schools and community centres with music, dance, theatre and storytelling.

For full case study see Appendix F



6.4.3b DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES

Develop and establish mechanisms that enable the transmission of cultural activity across the region via digital technology.

PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Digital culture has had a transformative impact on our lives. From Netflix to Fortnite we live in a world where global entertainment reaches every corner and community of the world. While this has advantages it also has arguably had damaging effects on community, local identity and civic life, pushing us further away from one another rather than bringing us closer together.

However there is the potential in technology to reverse this trend. Providing local culture on digital platforms can reduce physical distances, increase accessibility and lead to a stronger sense of a northern Devon identity.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (IMMEDIATE):

Identify existing cultural material appropriate for live streaming and the organisations and institutions who are producing such material.

- Identify types of cultural activity that already exist in northern Devon that are suitable for live streaming; taking into consideration a diverse range of offers and embracing an experimental approach.
- Bring together a diverse range of cultural organisations that are already live streaming content, have a cultural offer that would be appropriate to live stream or would be interested in developing content for live streaming.
- Collectively undertake exploratory work focusing on the benefits of live streaming to cultural organisations, an options analysis of accessible distribution mechanisms and the capacity building requirements for the sector to expand live streaming opportunities.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TERM):

Build a diverse and varied live-stream cultural programme to ‘test bed’ across the region.

- Having identified the areas needed for capacity development within the sector, invest into specialist training, developing collaborative partnerships with experts in the field and the necessary equipment for quality live streaming.

- In addition to paid training opportunities, access free guides such as ‘Introduction to Digital Production for Live Performance’ by Social Convention to provide an overview of the opportunities and challenges ahead.

- As a network, decide on the most appropriate platform for centralised live streaming. There are a multitude of options out there that suit different needs. Consider what type of material is being produced; whether you expect your audience to interact; whether you will be ticketing events. Ensure that research and experimentation are embedded into the decision making process.

- Identify a diverse and experimental programme of cultural events to be live streamed across the region, reflecting the broad offer of culture in northern Devon.

- Secure venues across northern Devon to showcase the live-stream cultural programme. This could include collaborating with the village hall networks, established organisations such as The Plough Arts Centre, Quince Farm and the Burton Gallery or directly into people’s homes.

- Consider realistic types of income generation that ensure the programme is affordable and accessible yet are financially sustainable. Income generation opportunities are broad and can include subscriptions from participating screening venues, subscriptions from local residents, centralised online ticketing, ticketing on the door or even a ‘pay what you can’ honesty box.

- As a network, consider how the local community can direct the live stream cultural programme and how they can participate in it. Whilst it is essential to bring high quality and affordable cultural activity within easy reach of every person in the region, it is equally important that local people can drive what they see, do and participate in.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS (LONG TERM):

Test, evolve, deliver, test, evolve, deliver, repeat.

- Through action research, grow and strengthen the network of organisations that are live streaming cultural activity across the region, whilst developing and evolving an ambitious, accessible and affordable programme of live streamed cultural activity.

- In conjunction with live streaming existing cultural work from Northern Devon based organisations and practitioners, develop a cultural programme created specifically for digital distribution.

- Work with national bodies such as Arts Council England to reach out to national and international organisations who live-stream cultural activity in a bid to attract them to share work in the region. Where possible, opt to work in a collaborative fashion, with an emphasis on up-skilling local individuals and organisations and sharing work outside of the region.

- Consider formalising the network as an independent organisation, able to self-sustain and apply for external funding.



SCENESAVER

Scenesaver is an online hub hosting over 600 performances from West End and fringe theatres across the world. Performances are hosted on mainstream video platforms such as Vimeo and Youtube under password protection, with the Scenesaver platform acting as the gateway into productions which are embedded onto the site.

For full case study see Appendix F

7. RESOURCING THE STRATEGY

The actions within this cultural strategy range from long-term strategic programmes that will require the leveraging of significant investment along with small quick win projects that can be unlocked with relatively small budgets.

One of the clear benefits of the formation and development of the northern Devon cultural partnership that has been recommended in this strategy is its potential to leverage funding from a number of different sources. Below we outline some of the most likely sources of revenue for cultural provision, what kinds of projects are most suitable for each funding stream, and how you can increase your chances of success.

These only touch on the range of options that can be explored for pulling together the resources necessary for strategy. It is vital to understand and appreciate that this strategy feeds into a variety of sectors and addresses a multitude of challenges. A strategic approach of embedding cultural provision into funding applications such as environmental research and action, community and youth programmes, health and wellbeing funds and place improvement investments will be beneficial to serving both the needs of the immediate funded programme and cultural provision more widely.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

KEY PROJECTS: Seed partnership support, strategic gaps and cultural regeneration

Northern Devon is a large region, covered by North Devon Council and Torridge Council. Both Local Authorities have a multitude of competing priorities which means that seed funding and strategic support should be targeted and specific, building a strong case for benefit to both areas.

Early stage support for the delivery of the Cultural Strategy will be key from both North Devon and Torridge Councils, with particular emphasis on the formation and development of the northern Devon cultural partnership. This strategy provides a strong case for the potential of a partnership and must be followed up with robust plans for leadership and sustainability, indicating that seed investment would give the partnership the initial boost needed to begin self-sustaining through other forms of revenue generation.

Other key opportunities that would benefit from Local Authority seed funding include the initial formation and development of networks and forums, key mapping exercises and initial capacity building where highlighted.

Additionally, commitment demonstrated by both North Devon Council and Torridge Council to utilising

existing resources, ranging from the commissioning of Outdoor Arts at local fireworks nights; to the integration of cultural needs into planning and Section 106 conversations; to the dedication of Council owned vacant space to cultural use, will be critical to the successful application of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy.

Finally, Local Authorities have a key role to play in the integration of culture within regeneration, making best use of local authority owned assets to support cultural uses within the region.

Requests for Local Authority support should be targeted, consistent and based in robust plans with a strong rationale for where support can be most effective.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

KEY PROJECTS: Small scale community-led activity

There are over 120 parish and town councils across northern Devon ranging significantly in resource and influence, however all play a vital role in their relationship with local communities and understanding of local needs.

Leveraging resources from Town and Parish Councils is likely to be low in capital, but valuable particularly in projects such as the Network of Community Assets, where micro-pots of funding can be the catalyst for communities mobilising around a project.

COUNTY AUTHORITIES & LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

KEY PROJECTS: Regional strategic projects and seed support

Devon was named in the Levelling Up White Paper as one of the first areas to be fast-tracked for a County Deal under the new arrangements for distribution of spending powers and governance across the UK.

The exact nature of these deals is yet to be fully established, however it will likely mirror in some form the Town Deal format already adopted within the Levelling Up Agenda. This will in all likelihood see county authorities become more central brokers of strategic spending within their areas, taking on many of the powers previously held by Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Northern Devon has previously had difficulty making its voice heard in conversations at the county and South West regional level.

However it has a strong case to make as a hotbed of creativity and culture, a tourism powerhouse and at the forefront of environmental issues for the region. Positioning strongly can help leverage strategic funding for key cultural programmes within the strategy, particularly those that will equally put Devon as a whole on the cultural map such as ambitious culture and environment commissions, and the development of Outdoor Arts in the region.

CROWDFUNDING & INDIVIDUAL PHILANTHROPY

KEY PROJECTS: Project based public cultural commissions such as public art, culture trails, and public events

Crowdfunding is a potentially effective way of raising funds for cultural activities, asking large amounts of people to donate small amounts of money.

Traditionally, if you want to finance a project, you'd have to ask a small number of people for large sums of money; crowdfunding has turned the tables on this traditional method and allows you to use the internet to engage with thousands of potential funders.

Specialist platforms such as Spacehive are dedicated to placemaking projects that seek to create benefit within their local area and communities, encouraging people to back projects in their own backyard. Crowdfunding is an excellent way of combining fundraising with the notion of cultural democracy in that it empowers people to fund exactly what they want to see.

Crowdfunding is reliant on critical mass and momentum so it is best suited to projects that already have some form of public backing and that will have a clear public and community benefit. Having some existing financial backing for the project prior to launching is also advantageous as donations tend to increase once projects reach 70%+ of their target.

DIRECT SPONSORSHIP

KEY PROJECTS: Events and public art

Corporate sponsorship can be an effective method of generating funds for cultural institutions, programmes or events. It is common for the private sector to choose to sponsor a charity for a period of time, or to sponsor a particular campaign or event. However, it is key to remember, sponsorships are not philanthropic donations – they are business investments from which companies want a return.

Rebecca Burton, Marketing and Communications Leader at Ernst & Young outlines why the professional services firm sponsors culture, “we look at the merits of each sponsorship proposal, but ideally we are looking for relationships which have brand alignment, connect with our people and clients, and are sustainable over the longer-term. We believe the inspiration generated by visual and performing arts aligns with our purpose to build a better working world.”

It is vital that sponsorships are mutually beneficial and in line with not only a company's brand values, but also those of the cultural institution, programme or event itself. In 2016, BP announced the end of its 26 year sponsorship of the Tate. Prior to this, numerous public protests had highlighted dissatisfaction that a cultural institute accepted funds from an environmentally harmful firm.

RATES MITIGATION

KEY PROJECTS: Pop-Up and Meanwhile activation

Since 2008, owners of empty property in England and Wales have been liable to pay the full business rates on their property. However, business rate mitigation has been introduced to ease the burden on landlords with vacant premises. If empty and not a listed building, a property is exempt from business rates for a three-month period from the date on which the property became empty. If the property is classified as industrial the business rate exemption is extended to a six-month period. The empty property must be occupied for at least six weeks before any rates exemption period can begin.

Approaching landlords with vacant properties who will likely be paying business rates on them, and offering to unlock business rates relief in return for a peppercorn rent and a small amount of sponsorship for pop-up activity within the space is a tried and proven way of activating meanwhile opportunities.

It is possible to unlock rates mitigation for cultural use using the following means:

- (1) Cultural organisation to sign a Tenancy at Will agreement with the property owner for a period of six weeks and one day on one or more vacant units.
- (2) Cultural organisation to occupy the site(s) for a period of six weeks and one day, allowing for set-up, the live project and take down.
- (3) Cultural organisation to ask the property owner to fund the cultural activity the equivalent of 3 months business rates on the unit(s) that the cultural organisation occupies (or a percentage of that total).
- (4) On the departure of the cultural organisation the property owner will be able to claim 3 months business rate relief from their Local Authority.
- (5) It is with these savings that the property owner made on their business rate bill (due to occupation) that they can fund part or all of the project.
- (6) It is also possible to use this method without project sponsorship, but instead to secure a low rate of peppercorn rent space.

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

KEY PROJECTS: Culture and creative projects and programmes aligned to place, arts organisations and individual practitioners

The Arts Council England have named North Devon a Priority Place and North Devon and Torridge as a Levelling Up for Culture Place based on the identification that it is an area of most need and high opportunity. Gaining status as a Priority Place, means that ACE will study local strategic plans and consult with key stakeholders to identify shared aspirations and will support Priority Places to achieve these through additional investment and allocation of staff resources.

The Arts Council England states that “There is no specific budget or fund allocated to priority places, so this will be achieved by increasing the amount of funding going into them from existing funds. In particular, we would expect priority places to benefit from the new Place Partnership Fund. We will also seek opportunities to invest in new National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in priority places, increase investment in existing NPOs in priority places and incentivise other NPOs to undertake more activity in priority places.”

Existing ACE funding opportunities that are relevant to the delivery of the Cultural Strategy include National Lottery Project Grants, Developing Your Creative Practice, Cultural Development Fund and the Place Partnership Fund. It is recommended that close work is undertaken alongside ACE to identify the most appropriate alignment of funding opportunities and Cultural Strategy recommendations.

NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND

KEY PROJECTS: Heritage Projects

The National Lottery Heritage is the largest dedicated grant funder of the UK’s heritage, providing funding for heritage projects from £3,000 up to millions of pounds. The National Lottery champions the value of heritage for all and funds projects that sustain and transform the UK’s heritage.

The National Lottery Heritage funds a broad range of projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional and local heritage of the UK. These include, but are not limited to:

- Oral history recordings of people’s stories, memories and songs, as a way of communicating and revealing the past
- Cultural traditions exploring the history of different cultures through storytelling, or things that you do as part of your community. This could be anything from dance and theatre, to food or clothing It could also include the heritage of languages and dialects
- Nature works to improve habitats or conserve species, as well as helping people to connect to nature in their daily lives
- Large-scale rural projects that help improve landscapes for people and nature, by for example, restoring habitats and celebrating the cultural traditions of the land
- Commemorations and celebrations telling the stories and histories of people, communities, places or events related to specific times and dates

Northern Devon already has a successful relationship with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and it is recommended that this is developed, ensuring that existing funding opportunities are utilised to fundraise for offers that bring together the arts, heritage and the landscape.

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NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

KEY PROJECTS: Community focused projects

The Community Lottery Fund is the most common source of public funding for projects that show the potential for tangible benefits to people’s health, wellbeing, sense of community and overall opportunity. Funds tend to be targeted towards projects that are addressing real community need and therefore should be reserved for activities within the Cultural Strategy that are significantly beneficial to direct user groups in the community and meet the following needs:

- (a) Bring people together and build strong relationships in and across communities
- (b) Improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- (c) Help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage.

The National Lottery Community Fund includes a variety of programmes, including short term projects under £10,000.00 through the Awards for All fund, to partnership programmes for over £10,000.00 for up to five years. All programmes will benefit from a community led approach, ensuring that the community have involved people and communities from the start, build on people’s strengths and are connected to their communities.

It is recommended that the National Lottery Community Fund programmes are explored in detail and opportunities are developed in line with the Cultural Strategy recommendations.

BRITISH COUNCIL

KEY PROJECTS: International partnership projects and culture and environmental projects

The British Council has a wealth of resources and funding opportunities that are focused on finding new ways of connecting with and understanding each other through the arts and building creative and collaborative global communities that inspire innovation, knowledge, prosperity and peace, believing that connections we build through arts and culture transform lives and create positive change.

The British Council deliver this through three main programme of work, which include:

Cultural exchange: supporting organisations and artists to build networks and collaborate and bring artists and audiences together to share and exchange creative ideas.

Creative economy: working with creative leaders to support sustainable and inclusive creative economies.

Culture responds to global challenges: Through the transformative power of arts and culture to change mindsets, supporting more connected and equal societies and the protection and promotion of cultural expression, diversity and heritage at risk.

Northern Devon has the scope to connect across borders, being inspired and inspiring international work, in particular around culture and the landscape. It is recommended that a strong relationship with the British Council is nurtured, enabling northern Devon to benefit from the existing research, resources, opportunities and funding programmes on offer in this area.

THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

KEY PROJECTS: Large-scale programmes

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been billed as the replacement for the EU Regional Development Fund for the UK and is seen as the most substantial support mechanism for place resilience and transformation in the coming years. Although the initial funding allocations provided for 2022 – 2025 are below expected figures, it must still be seen as a critical strategic mechanism for furthering cultural development in the region. In itself it will not be able to deliver the full desires of the cultural sector, but it must nonetheless be seen as a route to create a springboard into wider opportunity.

The fund has 3 core themes and is subdivided into 41 intervention themes:

- (1) Community and Place
- (2) Supporting local business
- (3) People and skills (from 2024-25)

Under the Community and Place heading, E4 and E6 are of critical note, although many of the opportunities and actions recommended in this strategy can also be delivered through other themes:

- (1) “E4: Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.”
- (2) “E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.”

This fund will follow closely the priorities of the Levelling Up Agenda meaning applicants will need to show significant economic benefits of their project within an area that has either previously received little support, or that faces particular challenges, whilst also taking a strategic step to address deprivation as part of the full investment plan to be submitted by local authorities.

It is recommended that whilst developing a proposal that shows significant community ownership and support, leadership and a strong economic case, the integration of culture into the bid will serve to strengthen the case for boosting productivity (with regard to creative industry interventions), restoring a sense of community (with regard to cultural programmes) and empowering local leadership (with regard to the development of strategic partnerships).

8. CONCLUSION & SUMMARY

Flourishing Culture sows the seeds for how a connected cultural sector, working in partnership across public, private and third sectors, can achieve a thriving, sustainable and impactful cultural offer in northern Devon.

In order to successfully deliver the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy it is vital that organisations and individuals come together with a shared vision for the region, committing to dedicating time, resources and knowledge to broadening and deepening the cultural provision of the area

Delivering against this in one go is unrealistic, therefore the recommendations for next steps in delivering the strategy are:

- Launch the strategy with stakeholders from the cultural sector
- Use the launch event as a springboard for the northern Devon cultural partnership
- Work with the partnership to prioritise the projects and actions outlined in this plan
- Assign clear owners and responsibilities for each action along with target timelines for delivery

In order to aid this process, below is a summary of the 'Flourishing Culture' priorities alongside indicative measures of what they should achieve and the range of funding sources that would be best suited to resourcing these.

GOALS AND FUNDING KEY

- (1) Increase the number of people attending more than 3 arts and culture events per year
- (2) Increase the number of people taking part in more than 3 creative activities per year
- (3) Reduce the number of people taking part in no arts and culture activity per year
- (4) Increase the number of people in rural locations accessing high quality arts and culture
- (5) Increase the number of people in deprived areas accessing high quality arts and culture
- (6) Increase the diversity of people (by class, ethnicity and disabilities) accessing high quality arts and culture
- (7) Increase the average level of per head funding from ACE and NLHF
- (8) Increase the proportion of creative industry employment in northern Devon
- (9) Increase the number of artists, makers and creative businesses accessing business support
- (10) Increase the total floorspace of creative workspaces
- (11) Increase the number of young people represented on cultural boards and decision making bodies
- (12) Increase the number of young people taking arts and design subjects at A-Level or further education
- (13) Increase the number of followers of northern Devon cultural organisations on social media
- (14) Lower the collective carbon footprint of board organisations of the northern Devon cultural partnership
- (15) Increase the number of national and international organisations working in partnership with northern Devon

FUNDING

- (1) Local Authorities
- (2) Town and Parish Councils
- (3) County Authorities and LEPS
- (4) Crowdfunding and Philanthropy
- (5) Direct Sponsorship
- (6) Rates Mitigation
- (7) Arts Council England
- (8) National Lottery Heritage Fund
- (9) National Lottery Community Fund
- (10) British Council
- (11) The UK Shared Prosperity Fund

THEME	ACTION	GOAL	FUNDING
PREPARING THE GROUND	NORTHERN DEVON CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP	10, 13	1, 3, 7
NURTURING THE FUTURE	AMPLIFY THE YOUTH VOICE	10, 11	1, 9, 11
	DEVELOP THE TALENT PIPELINE	10, 11	1, 3, 9, 11
	SUPPORT CREATIVE CAREERS	7, 8, 9, 11	1, 3, 7, 11
CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS	NATIONAL CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS	5, 8, 11, 14	7
	THE CULTURAL BIOSPHERE NETWORK	14	3, 5, 10
MAKING VISIBLE	NORTHERN DEVON CULTURE: THE BRAND	1, 2, 3, 4, 12	1, 3, 11
OUR CULTURAL HUBS	CULTURAL INVESTMENT PLAN	9	1, 2, 11
	THE PUBLIC REALM	1, 2, 3, 5, 12, 14	1, 2, 11
	USING VACANT SPACES TO FUEL CULTURE	1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 12	1, 2, 5, 6, 11
EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE	FESTIVALS AND OUTDOOR ARTS	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 14	1, 2, 3, 5, 7
	CREATED BY AND WITH COMMUNITIES	1, 2, 3, 4	4, 7, 8, 9, 11
PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPE	IMPACTFUL ACTIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE	13	1, 3, 7, 10
	DISRUPT THE CLIMATE CONVERSATION	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10
NAVIGATING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE	A CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9
	DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13	1, 3, 4, 5, 7

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THE NORTHERN DEVON CULTURE STRATEGY