

Full Council Meeting – 7 February 2023

Portfolio Holder Report for Culture – Cllr Caroline Ellis

Cultural Development Team – Quarterly Update

Introduction: The Cultural Development Team was created in November 2021 with the key objective to deliver the SWT Cultural Strategy as adopted by full Council on 7 September 2021. Since November, the team has gone from strength to strength and is already making a real difference to the communities in our District in respect of the arts and culture offering and support provided.

News and Updates:

The team are pleased to present the annual Cultural Impact Assessment report from September 2021 – September 2022 which evidences how far the team and strategy have come in just one year: [SWT Cultural Strategy 2021 - 2022](#). The report also includes important data on how our Cultural Development team have benefited the local economy, our communities and the cultural sector. Main achievements are:

- For every £1 spent by SWT we raised £5.41 in the local economy.
- Organisations that SWT funded have generated £949,692 in income or match funding from other agencies
- For every £1 generated by the arts and culture industry an additional £1.14 of GVA is supported in the wider economy meaning that an additional £1,082,648 was generated in SWT district.



- **Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) Programme** – Thank you to everyone who got involved with the County-wide Cultural Strategy stakeholder events and fed into the development of the new Cultural Strategy for Somerset. We have received an initial draft of the strategy and the Officer Steering group is collating comments and responses before a final version goes to Members for adoption in February.
- **Events** – The Cultural Development team works closely with the SWT Events Co-ordinator and Town Centre Resilience and Transformation Officer to ensure the SWT events calendar links in with Cultural Strategy.
 - Cultural Forum – 26th January 2023
 - Taunton Dragon unveiling – 11th February 2023
 - Titan Arcadia Gallery opened at Coal Orchard – 6th December 2022
 - West Somerset Arts & Culture Meet-up:



The Somerset West & Taunton Council (SWT) cultural development team invite arts and culture providers and practitioners in West Somerset to an informal social and networking event on Weds 15th February 2023 at 1pm-to 3.30pm. A light finger lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Culture portfolio holder Cllr Caroline Ellis will briefly speak about developments in the SWT area, and we will ask you to share your thoughts on the challenges and opportunities in West Somerset.

There will be opportunities to network and meet other creatives and organisations plus ask our culture team questions in an informal setting.

To register for your free place please visit: [West Somerset Arts & Culture Meet-up Tickets, Wed 15 Feb 2023 at 13:00 | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/s?search=West%20Somerset%20Meetup)

- **Public Art Updates:**

- Installation of the High Street, Taunton Public Artwork (Taunton Dragon Sculpture). Unveiling confirmed 11th February 2022 at 3pm linking in with half term and to serve as a lasting legacy of SWT.



Left: Dragon Sculpture due for Taunton High Street

- Working with Arts Taunton to commission a piece of Public Art in Castle Green, Taunton – artist Emma Smith commissioned for project.
- SWT managing Cotford St Luke Public Art project to ensure £32,968 S106 funding is spent on a piece of Public Art in the community. Artists Denman and Gould commissioned (in progress)
- Staplegrove Bridge – working with Taunton School/GoCreate to create a mural/piece of Public Art on the Railway Bridge (in progress)

Culture Portfolio - Cllr Caroline Ellis Portfolio Holder Activities

Art

Me and colleagues were thrilled to attend **Titan Arcadia Gallery Taunton's** launch event on Wed 6 December. This is a fabulous new pop up at The Quay, Coal Orchard - the brainchild of Matthew Crabb Sculpture Studio supported by his colleague Simon O'Rourke - Tree Carving (who created the amazing somerset tree at The Museum of Somerset) in partnership with Somerset West and Taunton, featuring work by oodles of super talented sculptors and artists including GoCreate Taunton / Arts Hub Taunton talents Circles forever artwork, Georgina Peters Abstract Artist and Janet GlynnSmith and Leo Davey. It is free to visit. Keep an eye out for news on artists residencies and events - they are super keen to enable all sections of community to fully experience this wonderful collection. They are also hosting sessions to advise young artists on starting out and making a living. There are stunning pieces for sale in the gallery too. This is a bit of a game-changer for Taunton and we are looking to support them to continue a presence in the town centre.



I took a gaggle of young people along with family to **Hestercombe Illuminations** this year. A truly magical event for the district! Note that Hestercombe has become a 'warm space' and people taking advantage of that (available Mon-Weds to end March) will be able to visit the art gallery and bookshop for free. Hurrah!

Public Art

Arts Taunton's project for **Public Art on Castle Green**, which SWT is supporting, has moved a step closer with the appointment of leading visual artist, Emma Smith who has an international reputation for her innovative, socially-driven art installations (recently she



engaged with residents of West Penwith to create 85 wooden sculptures along the Penzance to Marazion coastal path as well as creating amazing installations for 10 host cities of the UEFA Women's EURO 2022). This follows interviews with a stunning shortlist of artists before Christmas involving Tom Mayberry MBE, of SW Heritage Trust, public art consultant Suzanne Heath, me and Craig Stone, our Town Centre Resilience and

Transformation Lead. The aim of this project is to engage the community in the creation of a temporary public artwork/installation for Castle Green, inspired by the history of Castle Green and by the story of Taunton people, past and present, building a stronger sense of Taunton's identity and bringing more people to the town. SWT has co-funded the scoping phase of this project. Arts Taunton has now begun raising funds for the final artwork which is expected to be in place by the summer of 2024.

Music

I was thrilled to do a reading at **VOCE Chamber Choir's** festive celebration of winter in words and music in St George's Church, Wilton on 4th December.

NSPCC Carols by Candlelight on 15th December was a beautiful Carol concert in perfect setting of Taunton Minster in aid of NSPCC - bravo to the **Collegium Singers and Stagecoach Performing Arts Taunton**.

Carols around the bandstand on 12th December was as warm and wonderful as ever despite sub-zero temperatures and the tree lighting added huge charm and pzazz. Fabulously cheesy Christmas jokes and hearty singing in aid of Taunton Mayor's Charity, Cancer Research UK, drew a huge crowd. Bravo and thanks to Somerset West and Taunton staff for organising another memorable community event and to Taunton Concert Band Taunton Deane Male Voice Choir, Let's Sing, The West Somerset Singers, Rock Choir Clevedon, Weston super Mare, Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater & Taunton, Taunton Street Pastors and sea cadets.

Young musicians had the chance to take part in a **masterclass with Philippe Scharz the principal trumpet of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales** in December. Organised by the pioneering **Luís Martelo**, this was followed by a very special concert at Taunton Minster on 20th December. Some of the performers had only just started learning the trumpet, others had been playing for a while - they had the chance to make music with two of the most talented trumpeters in the UK.



Theatre

Taunton Brewhouse's magical circus, musical Christmas Production with Meta Theatre had a great run – the talented cast received standing ovations at each of the performances I attended. A notable feature of TTA's Christmas shows is always the local youth ensemble from Taunton and the surrounding areas which brings the talents of children aged between nine and 17 into the spotlight, giving them the opportunity to work and perform with professionals.



Taunton Theatre Association AGM on 13 Jan was an opportunity to reflect on a tough year but also celebrate the achievements of the Brewhouse team in providing so many amazing theatre, comedy, music and community events and workshops. Audience numbers continue to increase post Covid and new Executive Director Vickie Hobbs inspires great confidence with her cultural awareness and focus on increasing accessibility while also improving commerciality, with new corporate sponsors lined up to support what is shaping up to be an amazing spring season. Tickets for the 2023 Christmas Show – a joint production of a Christmas Carol with the acclaimed **Pleasuredome Theatre Company** are selling already!

Post the AGM I popped in to the Brewhouse Studio to take part in one of the creative public workshops organised by the **The Bluebirds Theatre Company** as part of their **Knickerline Project** (with funding from Somerset Community Foundation, Somerset Skills and Learning and SWT). The Bluebirds are developing a brand new music theatre show and exhibition for International Women's Day based on real women's lives and our dealings with knickers among other things!. Stories (through spoken word, song and visual art) are being gathered from women and those who identify as women of all ages and backgrounds in partnership with Taunton Brewhouse, Go Create, and The Princess Theatre, Burnham-on-Sea.



Also Known As (aKa) Dance Theatre (a company in residence at Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre and founded by local talents Jen Grant and Joe Garbett) who specialise in super engaging and accessible dance theatre shows has been touring primary schools with their brilliantly bonkers show, A Real Fiction. I booked a slot for Taunton Home Education and it was quite something, inspiring kids to devise their own shows.

Free shows, funded through the Arts

Council have all been booked up but I would thoroughly recommend this delightful show for any school, children's/youth group or community group.



A REAL FICTION

FREE PRIMARY SCHOOL SHOWS



Many congratulations to the **Regal Theatre, Minehead** and **Wayfarers** on their hugely successful pantos this season. I am very much looking forward to attending **Wellington Arts Association's** Once upon a Time in Pantoland at the Wellesley on 27 Jan.