

Full Council Meeting – 28 March 2023

Portfolio Holder Report for Culture – Cllr Caroline Ellis.





Annual Report.

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.

The team are incredibly proud to have made a real difference to our communities in a short period of time with a small budget (£70,000) and a team of just three officers. The team have raised the profile of Culture and Arts and the importance of how the service enriches all aspects of our lives which in turn has had started a positive movement in our district and reflects SWT's commitment to Culture.




Reflections: Our achievements, future opportunities and aspirations and proven results.

From “The Somerset Dragon” to the Titan Arcadia Gallery, to Cultural Forums (stakeholder engagement), business support and budgeting to support and enable cultural events and ideas to flourish, this has all been made possible by our Cultural Strategy.

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES	ASPIRATIONS	RESULTS
			
<p>Excellent team dynamic – having staff with internal and external knowledge.</p> <p>Having a customer-focused, approachable and supportive team has been key in making strong partner relationships.</p>	<p>Somerset Wide Cultural Strategy – this is a huge opportunity for Somerset and the team have aided development with the other 4 Local Authorities.</p>	<p>Continuing with impact data collection for future funding and grants</p>	<p>For every £1 spent by the Cultural Development £5.41 was generated in the local economy (from a £200,000 budget).</p>
<p>Strong Cultural Forum network has created a "listening council" reputation and enabled partnership working.</p>	<p>Potential partner funding and investment opportunities i.e. partnering on various projects enabled due to partner engagement and development.</p>	<p>Improved grant application process</p>	<p>Successfully encouraging grantees to seek match funding "double your money".</p> <p>Organisations that SWT funded have generated £949,692 in income or match funding.</p>

<p>Passionate, committed, and supportive Executive Members who understand the importance of Culture and Art has been vital.</p>	<p>Opportunities to grow partnerships and explore synergies with new directorate services i.e., sports and leisure and Taunton Town Council.</p>	<p>"Keeping it local" - continuing to use local providers.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Strong partnerships with internal teams i.e. Garden Town, Planning, Regeneration, Heritage, One Teams, Economic Development.</p>	<p>Public Art Projects – appetite has grown for such projects and there is a real opportunity here to improve place, public realm and our environment.</p>	<p>Continuing with strong stakeholder development and engagement i.e. Cultural Forums/communications</p>	<p>Collecting impact data proven to be essential.</p>
<p>Impact focused – data to evidence impacts (Cultural Impact Assessment).</p>	<p>Building on Cultural Forum and networks as we become one council.</p>	<p>Making Somerset a Cultural Destination</p>	<p>Having an externally facing member of the team has been invaluable.</p>
	<p>Events and boosting local economy – SWT supported events saw over 182,131 (as of March 2023) attending and visiting our district just for Culture and Art related activities.</p>		<p>Boosting visitor economy – events supported and hosted by SWT brought in over 182,131 people to the local area.</p> <p>995 events created by SWT funded organisations</p>
			<p>9,395 children have got involved in arts and culture activities in just twelve months with 78 school projects being undertaken.</p>

Key Achievements 2022 – 2023:

PUBLIC ART	EVENTS	PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND ENGAGEMENT
		
<p>The Somerset Dragon (unveiled on 11th February 2023 – attended by 26,000 people in the High Street with 74,000 impressions in the town centre on that Saturday alone).</p>	<p>SWT have supported events and activities that have boosted the local economy bringing in over 182,131 people to the area for Arts and Culture related activities.</p>	<p>Creation and facilitation successful Cultural Forums/specialist Sub-Groups in both Taunton and West Somerset which now have over 150 members.</p>
<p>Staplegrove Bridge Mural (currently in progress, due to be completed March 2023)</p>	<p>The Big Jubilee Lunch (June 2022 – attended by 4000 people)</p>	<p>Cultural Forum Newsletters and mailing list</p>
<p>Cotford St Luke Public Art Project (Over £30,000 in S106 funds were allocated to the provision of Public Art for Cotford St Luke. Artists are now at a design stage in designing this which is due to be completed in September 2023. More information can be found here: https://www.denmangould.com/our-work/cotfordstluke)</p>	<p>Museum of the Moon (March 2022 – attended by 21,000)</p>	<p>Arts Hub at Flook House (in partnership with CICCIC). With just a £10,000 one-off grant awarded by SWT, the Arts Hub have re-invigorated Flook House which creates an annual income of £18,650 for SWT.</p>
<p>Castle Green Public Art Project (SWT have supported research and development for a piece of Public Art for Castle Green. Project is being led by Arts Taunton. An artist has been commissioned - Emma Smith and a timeline is due to be drawn up shortly.</p>	<p>Coal Orchard Launch (5th November 2022)</p>	<p>Titan Arcadia Gallery at Coal Orchard (in partnership with Matthew Crabb and Regeneration Team)has made effective use of a vacant premises and has generated interest and boosted the local economy in this part of the town centre.</p>
<p>Taunton High Street Benches (SWT have commissioned local partners – Go Create in conjunction with Rights Action Groups to re-invigorate the benches in Taunton High Street</p>	<p>Titan Arcadia Gallery Launch (6th December 2022)</p>	<p>Ongoing business support and signposting to stakeholders.</p>

with public artwork following a “don’t sit on it” climate change theme. Work is due to start in March/April2023)		
	The Somerset Dragon Launch (11 th February 2023 - attended by 26,000 people)	The Creative People Project in partnership with CICCIC and other local partners to create a digital hub for young people to access art and creative information and activities is currently in progress. This also includes access to various creative workshops at the Arts Hub. If successful we hope this will be rolled out further afield.
	Sound of the Streets (September 2022 – attended by 6000 people)	Successful administration of Cultural Development Budget and securing of funding for 2023/24 (protection of Taunton Brewhouse).
	Taunton Live and Pride (July 2022 – attended by 9000 people)	Development of Somerset Wide Cultural Strategy (in partnership with the 4 other Somerset Local Authorities).
	Wellington Film Festival (October 2022 – attended by 1500 people)	
	Cultural Forum Open Days in Taunton and West Somerset (September 2022 and February 2023 with quarterly meetings throughout the year – currently 150+ Cultural Forum members)	

Cultural Impact Assessment Sept 2021 - 2022:

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.

Future readiness:

- **Developed new SWT Cultural Strategy and working together on a Somerset wide cultural strategy** - supporting the development of the cultural sector and cultural themes founded on knowledge, culture, and business; a Somerset cultural strategy is now in development.
- **Cultural Forums to continue** – Business as usual as of 1st April. Next forum to be held in April 2023.
- **Collaboration and partnerships already formed with Taunton Town Council officers.**
- **Budget safeguarded for 2023/2024 and grant proposals allocated.**
- **Cultural Services Director recruitment due to be completed in the next month.**

Culture Portfolio - Cllr Caroline Ellis Portfolio Holder Activities

I want to pay tribute to the huge dedication, skill and flair of the Cultural Development Team and colleagues in Economic Development in achieving so much alongside our culture partners to put SWT on the map for arts and culture and enabling so many opportunities for our residents, communities and businesses. Having such strong support from elected members of all parties and of none for the Cultural Strategy has been absolutely invaluable – we can all be proud to have been part of this.

The team has provided an excellent summary of achievements over the past year. Since my last report I wanted to highlight a couple of things.

I am thrilled and relieved that the future of the wonderful public artwork dedicated to Derek the Female Goose in Watchet is now secured. Hurrah!

The Somerset Dragon launch on 11 Feb was an amazing event and the crowning achievement of local chainsaw artist Matt Crabb's career so far. So many businesses and creatives joined forces to provide amazing activities including fire performances by Fuse, live music by Wodwo, crafts by Go Create and Sam Gaden, dragon doughnuts by Dough Bros, dragon wings by the Handmade Boutique (Tissot now sports a pair!) and the awesome AR dragon hunter trail by CICCIC. Points West ran a piece highlighting the benefits of the dragon to our town centre.



Bravo to Taunton Thespians on their brilliant production of Flying Feathers at Tacchi Morris which I caught this week along with a host of other councillors – bravo to Cllr John Hunt for your work supporting and promoting the Thesps! Bravo too to the Bluebirds Theatre and Go Create Taunton for their Knickerline launch on International Women's day – I can't wait to check the exhibition out at Taunton Brewhouse.





We had a brilliant meeting of West Somerset culture providers and creative practitioners in Minehead in mid Feb. We were hosted by The Regal Theatre - great vibe there, wonderful venue and such a great team. Creatives and event organisers from Dulverton, Dunster, Minehead, Porlock and Watchet and further afield (e.g. Sound Foundation Somerset and Trish Caller who is a force across Somerset as a whole!) discussed how we boost participation, opportunities to build audiences (Mike Rigby's night buses will help hugely!!) and how we address deficits in arts

and creative opportunities in formal education. It will be incredibly important to sustain and develop West Somerset networking. Minehead and Coastal Development Trust are also keen to be a voice for arts and culture within their LCN which is brilliant.

The Arts Hub Taunton's monthly weekend markets have really taken off and Titan Arcadia has instigated weekend open studios where local artists rock up and create pieces to raise money for Somerset Youth Theatre who do incredible work enabling young people from so many different backgrounds to express themselves. I was lucky enough to have artist/illustrator Neil Whitehead create this before my eyes in literally minutes!



Last summer I saw the most amazing performance (up in Holford village hall in the Quantocks) by Porlock based youth theatre group, Stacked Wonky. The kids devised it themselves with just a bit of help from adults! Take Art snapped it up for their rural touring programme which I think is a first. They asked us if they could come and perform at Deane House as their piece is inspired by 'meetings' and is designed to be performed in town and parish halls. And so team Wonky took over the top floor of Deane House at the end of January and wowed an audience of Councillors and culture

impresarios here in Deane House. "We Come Before You" received a well-earned standing ovation and there was a brilliant discussion with Sarah Shorten, Wonky's Director and the young performers afterwards. It meant a huge amount to them to have this recognition.

The Fitzwarren Musicians led by the multi talented Jeanette Owens joined forces with the inimitable Luís Martelo last month for a special concert at The Sangha House involving ALL original compositions by Jeanette and colleagues, with lyrics for the second half 'Views of Exmoor' by the talented Philippa Johnson. The audience was blown away by an amazing solo violin performance by a nearly 13 year old Matilda White who can also turn her hand to percussion.



This month a group of students and young film-makers from Bridgwater and Taunton College took over a floor of my house for two days as part of the shoot for their new short film 'What was lost' (dealing with themes of grief, isolation and loneliness), which they funded via a 'Go Fund me'. They told me I would get to see it later 'after they've taken it to all the festivals!' 'Apex Inspired' are definitely ones to watch, they have a 'je ne sais quoi' – check out their YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/@apexinspired>. (Photo – Apex Inspired celebrating end of filming)



For the future we owe it to the Wonkies, to the film students, the Matildas and all the kids who go out on a limb and express their creativity to create the best possible opportunities for them to thrive here in their creative careers.

Oh and finally as SWT's parting cultural gift, we hope everyone will enjoy and be inspired by the amazing 'Gaia' coming to Taunton Minster from 14 April - 1 May.

