



## Agenda for Arts and Culture Forum Wednesday, 12th June, 2024, 2.00 pm

### Members of Arts and Culture Forum

Councillors: J Bull, A Mendham, R Doorbar, O Davey, P Fernley, N Hookway, V Johns, J Whibley, Sneller, I Barlow, S Gazzard, T Olive, J Brown and C Buchan

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**Venue:** Online via the Zoom app

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Tuesday, 4 June 2024

### Meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum

- 1 Public speaking  
Information on [public speaking is available online](#)
- 2 Appointment of Vice Chair
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 10)
- 4 Apologies
- 5 Declarations of interest  
Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)
- 6 Museum Development South West - report on progress of the East Devon Culture Strategy (Pages 11 - 15)  
Presentation.
- 7 Villages in Action - report on progress of the East Devon Cultural Strategy (Pages 16 - 22)  
Presentation.
- 8 Arts and Culture East Devon update and Arts Council bid (Pages 23 - 25)
- 9 Thelma Hulbert Gallery update and Arts Council bid  
Verbal update.
- 10 Cultural tourism update

## Verbal update

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL****Minutes of the meeting of Arts and Culture Forum held at online via zoom on 8 November 2023****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.15 pm

**1 Appointment of Vice Chair**

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.

Nominations for Vice Chair were received for Councillor Nick Hookway.

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor Nick Hookway be appointed Vice Chair of the Arts and Culture Forum for the ensuing year.

**2 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 March 2023 were agreed.

**3 Declarations of interest**

Minute 8 & 12 Councillor Vicky Johns declared an Affects Non-Registerable Interest as she was an art administrator for an arts charity which THG was hosting an exhibition in 2014, and had attended ACED workshops in a personal capacity.

Minute 8 Councillor Ian Barlow declared an Affects Non-Registerable Interest as director of Sidmouth School of Art, which had applied to ACED for a small grant.

Minute 8 Councillor Jenny Brown declared an Affects Non-Registrable a trustee of the Beehive, Honiton which was applying for a grant from ACED.

Minute 9 Councillor Joe Whibley declared an Affects Non-Registerable Interest as he was in the process of becoming a trustee of Exmouth Museum.

**4 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

**5 Matters of urgency**

There were none.

**6 Confidential items**

There were no confidential/exempt items.

**7 Arts and Culture Forum constitution update**

The Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure's report proposed some minor amendments to the original Arts & Culture Forum Constitution which were agreed by the  
page 3

Council in 2013. The amendments were intended to reflect the increased activities brought about by the adoption of East Devon's Cultural Strategy 2022-2031 and the need for the Arts & Culture Forum to have oversight of its delivery plan. The appointment of East Devon DC's Cultural Producer to drive the delivery of the Cultural Strategy meant there was now increased project activity which required reporting on. Also, there would be funding bid applications moving forward which would require input from the Forum before they were submitted. This could require a decision from the Forum to agree and support an allocation of funding to enable funding bids succeed.

The report also highlighted the development of the Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) Network since 2021/22 which brought together East Devon's creative communities and organisations and provided a much stronger and more visible platform for communities to proactively engage in East Devon's creative arts and cultural programmes. This has resulted in there no longer being a specific need for community representatives on the Forum as that was their original intention to provide a community platform for arts and culture. This coincided with the resignation of the one remaining community representative due to ill health.

The minor proposed changes were contained in the report and noted by the Forum. The changes would update the Forum's terms of reference to reflect the changes since it was last revised in 2013, including the adoption of East Devon's Cultural Strategy 2022-31 and the creation of the ACED network, which now represented the activities and networking of the district's cultural and creative arts communities.

It was noted assistant portfolio holder roles were still being looked at by Cabinet.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Cabinet recommend to Council the proposed changes to the terms of reference of the Arts and Culture Forum.

## 8 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Cultural Programme**

The Cultural Producer's report provided a summary of the first year of outputs of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) cultural programme (January – March 2023). This was a three-year funded programme which would help to both support the delivery of East Devon's Cultural Strategy 2022-2031 as well as deliver funding into the district's diverse and distinctive creative communities and help to support their activities and events. The three-year cultural programme would also help to enable the delivery of the Council Plan 2021-2023 strategic aim to 'develop a stronger commitment to and offers in arts and leisure through the development of a Culture Strategy and an Events Strategy for our own land'. It was therefore a significant programme that would benefit the whole of the district.

The Arts and Culture Forum would be informed annually on the progress of the three-year UK SPC cultural programme in a reliable and transparent manner. The cultural programme year one outcomes would feed into the overarching monitoring and evaluation being reported into the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the Economic Development team as the UK SPF programme co-ordinators.

The vision of the cultural strategy 2022-2031 was for East Devon to be a vibrant cultural ecosystem whose distinctive communities and outstanding natural environment were enhanced and enriched through creativity, curiosity and collaboration. There were eight core themes:

- Strengthening the community.
- Protecting the environment.
- Growing cultural tourism.
- Creative enterprise and skills.
- New places for culture.
- Connectivity.
- Cultural leadership.
- Capture value.

Specific focus had been on theme one – strengthening and supporting the ‘people that do’. Free training sessions had covered fundraising, marketing, volunteer recruitment, carbon literacy, collection care for museums and governance. Future sessions would include a public speaking workshop and mentoring training.

The Cultural Producer’s presentation explained that Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) was a network connecting the creative communities in East Devon and provided a central platform to engage, promote and talk about Arts and Culture across the region. It currently had 113 members.

The Creative East Devon Fund (£50,000) provided discretionary financial support to local art and culture initiatives and projects that could demonstrate a commitment to developing the East Devon Cultural Strategy. This recently launched scheme was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and had received a positive response. Organisations could apply for a maximum of £3,000, with applications being thoroughly scrutinised. The closing date for the first applications was 15 November 2023, with a second funding opportunity available in April 2024.

The goals of the Cultural Strategy were contained in the presentation and considered by the Forum. It was noted that the SPF provided funding for the first three years so other sources of funding would be needed for the remaining seven years, to 2031.

It was suggested that the success of the cultural programme so far be widely shared and publicised. A great deal of work had taken place during the first three months of its delivery and officers including the Cultural Producer and economic delivery team were praised. As well as enhancing quality of life it also helped promote East Devon’s economy.

**RESOLVED:** that the Arts and Culture Forum endorse the Cultural Producer’s report and the successful delivery of the year one outputs of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund cultural programme.

## 9 **South West Museums Development**

Vic Harding, Programme Manager, South West Museum Development introduced herself and thanked the Forum for her invitation to present to them. She began by giving context and providing key regional and national museum statistics for 2022/23 explaining that the majority of museums in the south west were small-medium, independently run and volunteer led. The south west had the highest proportion of independent museums, at 67% (58% nationally) of the museums in the region, with the vast majority being ‘micro museums’ (fewer than 10,000 visitors annually) at 57% (46% nationally). The cultural sector was working hard to regain visitor numbers following the ongoing impact of the covid-19 pandemic, with the south west doing well in comparison to the rest of the country. Although visitor numbers were still down 8% in the region the figure nationally

was 18%. 42 % of museums in the south west were wholly volunteer run (31% nationally).

The Programme Manager went on to explain South West Museum Development as a team of museum and heritage development specialists working with the museum and heritage sector in the south west to effect positive lasting change and deliver public value. It was an Arts Council England funded Sector Support Organisation, and one of nine Museum Development providers across England. Museum Development activity in East Devon included organising the East Devon Museums Group meetings in March 2023, museum accreditation support given to Ottery St Mary, Exmouth Museum and Whimble Heritage Centre and successful submission of accreditation return for Sidmouth Museum achieved in October 2023. Support and advice with grant applications had been provided to Fairlynch Museum, Exmouth Museum, Allhallows Museum and Whimble Heritage Centre. The South West Museum Development Officer was also the Arts and Culture East Devon Museum and Heritage Champion.

The Wild Escape was a new project bringing museums, schools and families together to engage young people, with the UK's natural environment, drawing inspiration from the art and objects in museums and the creative and learning opportunities they could deliver. The Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Honiton Museum had been awarded £6000. It was hoped to raise the profile of activities in East Devon with the Arts Council.

201 museums had benefitted from support during 2022/23, with the provision of targeted grant application support, and in person training and online workshops. An 40% increase in investment had been generated from the Arts Council grant, increasing value for the sector to £820,000 in 2022/23. It was reported that Arts Council England funding had been successfully secured for the following two years 2024-26. The Programme Manager was congratulated on this and it was suggested that EDDC issue a press release.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Programme Manager for her presentation.

## 10 **Villages in Action presentation**

Mair George, Creative Director, Villages in Action had given her apologies for the meeting but the Forum noted the East Devon highlights from March-October 2023. This included £4385 box office takings in East Devon (£12,597 in total), 503 audiences in East Devon (1250 in total) and 6 hosted events (20 in total).

## 11 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Culture and Leisure and Tourism Fund update**

The Management Information Officer gave the Forum an update on the UK Shared Prosperity fund Culture and Leisure and Tourism Fund. This grant scheme which was run over the summer provided almost £190,000 of funding to help community groups and tourism businesses in terms of decarbonisation. Community organisations of any type, with a rural focus were able to apply for grants of up to £20,000 and tourism businesses were able to apply for grants of up to £5,000. In total 38 applications were received and 20 community groups were awarded over £117,000 in grants. There would be £320,000 available next year to do more such decarbonisation work. The process would be similar, however officers were looking at ways in which to improve. It was hoped to

provide more support beforehand to help organisations understand exactly what decarbonisation meant and what they needed to do to apply. A full list of all the successful organisations was available on the EDDC website: Approvals – East Devon.

The Management Information Officer was thanked for all her work on the initiative and the efficient way in which the scheme was handled. The Forum was made aware of a wider corporate piece of work the Assistant Director – Place, Assets and Commercialisation was undertaking on decarbonising the Council's asset base.

In response to a question the Management Information Officer advised that the scheme had been oversubscribed, with just under £300,000 of applications received. Almost £90,000 was given to tourism businesses in terms of grants, but their grants were limited to £5,000. It was estimated that as a result of the money spent through the fund this year there should be a saving of 70 tons of carbon.

## 12 **Thelma Hulbert Gallery presentation**

The Chair welcomed Gemma Girvan, Manager and Curator of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG). He also thanked Ruth Gooding, who had recently left EDDC and the role of THG Manager.

The THG Manager gave the Forum a presentation which included the highlights of 2023:

- Paradise Found – New visions of the Blackdown Hills - record sales and pre-pandemic visitor figures.
- Present Makers 2023 – Christmas selling event – co-ordinating workshops sold out.
- Arts Council funding – The Wild Escape – project aimed to inspire children to visit museums. The largest ever collaboration between UK museums.
- Arts Council funding – Create Our Space – aimed to create opportunities to engage with arts, culture and climate, responding to the needs of East Devon's young people 7-25.
- Funding highlights also included network meetings, workshops, festivals and events, THG events, Summer Art week, engagement with over 600 local school children and outreach engagement with over 3700 adults and young people.
- BBC coverage of summer workshops.
- Record breaking applications to OPEN2023.
- Carbon literacy training.
- 62% increase in gallery sales.
- 17% increase in donations.
- 5% increase in gallery visitors

The THG was aligned to the East Devon Cultural Strategy and was a vital partner delivering against the strategy for East Devon communities. The THG Manager and Curator's presentation gave examples of how the THG had delivered against some of the core themes of the strategy. She then went on to outline the 2024 Process and Places Programme. Creative process would be explored through time and place;

- Art in the form of climate care and action.
- Supporting and showcasing local Southwest artists.
- Considering human engagement with the earth, art and artefacts.
- Researching the cultural heritage.
- Engagement and reviving of forgotten craft techniques.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Manager and Curator of the THG for her presentation and urged members to attend the Present Makers exhibition, which began on 11 November 2023. Those present agreed that the THG was making brilliant connections between arts and culture with the environment and climate change. It also

raised East Devon's profile as a place for the arts, as well as doing fantastic outreach work. The post covid performance recovery had been excellent, with income and footfall being close to pre-pandemic figures.

### 13 **Manor Pavilion theatre update**

The Forum received a verbal update from the Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager, Graham Whitlock. He reported that the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Paul Taylor Mills Summer Season had been incredibly successful this year with over 10,000 people attending the building in three months. Although some people had not returned to the theatre since the covid-19 pandemic, there were also new audiences.

The Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager reported that the theatre business changed on a regular basis and it was important to change and adapt. The team had been working hard to use Facebook and other forms of social media as a different approach to marketing the theatre. There was a change to the autumn programme in that there was no longer a 'What's On' guide, but shows were being sold well in advance and earlier than usual. There was a demand for theatre of all types and an increase in prices had not deterred people. A new Box Office system had been installed and an increase in staff.

The Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager outlined a great forthcoming programme and stated that the future of the theatre was positive, upbeat and cheerful. There was a mixture of performances planned for 2024, with bookings being taken for 2025.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager for his update.

### 14 **Wild East Devon update**

James Chubb, Countryside Team Leader began his presentation by giving the Forum an update on the Wild Honiton project. The public launch event had been attended by 250 people and included partner organisations such as Devon Wildlife Trust, Creative Cabin and Devon Loves Dogs. There had been a further four public events through the town and an explorer trail created, to be installed in five locations around the town (wooden posts containing QR codes).

The Countryside Team Leader went on to update the Forum on countryside events that had taken place across the district. There had been 42 public events held since March 2023, with 702 people booking to attend and eight explorer trail events installed during the school holidays. The Countryside Service now had a stand-alone website which was an important resource for publicising all the work carried out across the district.

The Countryside Team Leader outlined initiatives that had taken place to increase volunteering. There were currently 250 people registered for volunteering and 78 volunteers had participated in activity since March 2023. This amounted to 2793.5 hours of work over 815 shifts, which was a huge benefit in kind to the service. 1396 school children had also been hosted on an educational site visit.

Seaton Wetlands had been a huge success. A full site interpretation refurbishment had been initiated and a cycleway connection was imminent. There was a footpath all the way from Seaton Jurassic to Colyton and the wetlands was included on the tram halt. A



Birds of the Axe Valley book had been published. Seaton Wetlands had the first ever breeding success for Avocets in Devon. ITV Westcountry evening news conducted a live interview and the result of this was a 40% uplift in footfall week-on-week and 30% of annual donations pledged in a week. Visitor numbers to the wetlands had already surpassed 100,000 for 2023 for the first time.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Countryside Team Leader for his interesting presentation and the fantastic work being done across all the nature reserves. Others present praised the Countryside Service for all the work being done and agreed that the QR codes on country walks as part of the explorer trails was a great idea. Working with local businesses also boosted tourism. It was noted that the Countryside Service had an ambitious nature recovery plan for the following year involving engagement with communities.

The Chair thanked all those present for attending the meeting and urged all councillors to attend the next meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum.

### **Attendance List**

#### **EDDC Councillors present:**

O Davey  
P Fernley  
N Hookway  
V Johns  
J Whibley

#### **Town Representatives**

I Barlow, Sidmouth Town Council  
R Doorbar, Budleigh Salterton Town Council  
L Goudie, Cranbrook Town Council  
N Sneller, Ottery St Mary Town Council  
A Singh, Seaton Town Council

#### **Officers in attendance:**

Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure  
Graham Whitlock, Theatre and Arts Centre Manager (Manor Pavilion Theatre)  
Gemma Girvan, Gallery Manager and Curator  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer  
Jo Avery, Management Information Officer  
James Chubb, Countryside Team Leader  
Sarah Elghady, Cultural Producer  
Victoria Harding, Programme Manager, South West Museums Development  
Jess Magill, Arts Manager, Exmouth Town Council  
David Knox, ACED Music Champion

#### **Also Present**

P Faithfull  
P Arnott  
G Jung  
M Rixson

E Rylance  
J Brown  
K Bloxham  
R Jefferies  
C Fitzgerald

**Apologies:**

A Mendham, Seaton Town Council  
Burrough, Axminster Town Council

Chair .....

Date: .....

## EAST DEVON CULTURAL STRATEGY - OUR GOAL IS THAT BY 2031:

1. East Devon’s cultural offer is perceived by residents as high quality, interesting, fun, relevant, accessible and well-promoted
2. Residents who have taken part in cultural activity feel that their health, happiness and wellbeing have improved as a result
3. Children and young people across the district feel they have ample opportunities to take part in cultural and creative activities
4. More people work in the cultural and creative industries in East Devon, backed up by more training, skills and pathways to employment
5. Cultural organisations, artists and creative businesses feel connected, resilient and creatively ambitious (professional and voluntary sectors)
6. Investment into arts, museums and heritage through earned income, grants, sponsorship and philanthropy has increased
7. The number and diversity of visitors, audiences and participants in culture and creative activity in East Devon has increased
8. Culture is helping to tackle the climate emergency

As grant recipient, we would be grateful if you could help us track progress by completing the following questions, if relevant, using quantitative and qualitative data, for activity between April 2023 and March 2024. Please keep answers to a maximum of 250 words.

### 1. Please provide a brief summary of your work this financial year.

South West Museum Development (SWMD) is a business-to-business sector support programme providing development services to the museum and heritage sector in the south west of England.

The following museums in East Devon benefit from Museum Development services provided by SWMD:

- Allhallows Museum
- Axminster Heritage Centre
- Exmouth Museum
- Fairlynch Museum and Arts Centre
- Sidmouth Museum
- Ottery St Mary Heritage Museum
- Whimble Heritage Centre

All museums except for Sidmouth Museum are classed as Micro Museums receiving less than 10,000 visitors per annum. Sidmouth Museum is classed as a Small Museum receiving 10,000 – 20,000 visitors per annum.

In 2023/24 the following services were provided to museums:

- Local place-based Museum Development Officer support



- Specialist services in audiences, conservation and collections, digital and volunteering
- Technical Accreditation Advice
- Small Grants programmes
- SW Museum Skills training programme
- Development programmes: Organisational Health Check, SW Visitor Insights, Volunteering Fit for the Future

In East Devon in 2023/24 museums received the following support:

- Museum Development Officer support
- Specialist services: digital, conservation and collections
- Technical Accreditation advice to support Accreditation Returns and applications to the scheme
- 14 training attendances to the SW Museum Skills training programme
- 1 participant in Volunteering Fit for the Future programme
- 1 On Display! Grant recipient, awarded £1,000 (2022/23 and 2023/24)
- 1 The Wild Escape Grant recipient, via Thelma Hulbert Gallery in partnership with Honiton Museum, awarded £6,000 (2022/23 and 2023/24)

**2. How are you tracking if audiences are finding your work high quality, interesting, fun, relevant, accessible and well-promoted? What feedback have you had?**

SWMD operates the Annual Museum Survey which captures audience data from participant museums across the south west and England. Our most recent Annual Museum Survey which covers **2022/23** tells us in the south west:

- There was a median 45% increase in visitor numbers compared to the previous year. For Micro Museums (All) this was 53% and for Small Museums (Sidmouth) this was 35%.
- The median museum website visits were 31,000 and median social media followers were 5,096.

**3. What evidence do you have that your audience's and volunteers' health, happiness and wellbeing have improved as a result?**

SWMD operates the Annual Museum Survey which captures audience data from participant museums across the south west and England. Our most recent Annual Museum Survey which covers **2022/23** tells us in the south west:

- The median number of volunteers per museum is 44, contributing a median of 3,125 volunteer hours.
- £44,730 is the median value of volunteer hours per Museum.
- 31% of museums reporting an increase in volunteer hours per Museum.



- 37% reported an increase of new volunteers per Museum.

Museum and heritage organisations provide opportunities to connect with others through volunteering opportunities - supporting residents to connect with others, mitigating social isolation, supporting mental and physical health, and allowing residents to learn new skills including employability skills, returning to work opportunities, as well as giving back to their local community.

**4. How many children and young people (under 25) have been able to engage with your offer?**

SWMD operates the Annual Museum Survey which captures audience data from participant museums across the south west and England. Our most recent Annual Museum Survey which covers **2022/23** tells us in the south west:

- 93% of museums provided on-site education sessions. For Micro Museums this was 89% and for Small Museums this was 95%.

**5. Have you been able to offer job opportunities in the cultural and creative industries? Or training, skills and pathways to employment?**

SWMD delivers the SW Museum Skills training programme. The programme provides training and skills development opportunities online and in-person to staff, volunteers, trustees, students and trainees in the museum and heritage sector. The programme provides sector specific training to develop skills, increase confidence support wellbeing.

In 2023/24 53 formal training opportunities were delivered through SW Museum Skills reaching 629 participants. Museums in Easton Devon participated in training to build their knowledge and skills in the following training sessions:

- Accreditation – the UK sector standard for museums
- Conservation and collections
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Governance
- Rights Management
- Volunteering

**6. Which partnerships (e.g.: cultural organisations, artists or creative businesses) have been key to building your resilience and creative ambition?**

In 2023/24 SWMD has worked with the following organisations to enhance its Museum Development offer to museums:

- Arts Council England



- Art Fund
- Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy
- Bristol City Council – Bristol Culture and Creative Industries
- Collections Trust
- Digital Culture Network
- Kids In Museums
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- The National Archives
- Touring Exhibitions Group

**7. Has the funding from East Devon District Council helped you leverage increased funding?**

Funding from East Devon District Council forms part of funding from 18 Local Authorities across the south west. This investment in **2022/23** equated to £147,600.

In Devon, the funding from East Devon District Council forms part of Local Authority investment at district and parish level from councils for Budleigh Salterton, Mid Devon, North Devon, Sidmouth, South Hams, and Torridge.

This funding from East Devon District Council has, and will continue to, enhance the collaboration and partnership of museums across East Devon.

**8. How many visitors/audiences/participants in East Devon have you reached this year? And how does that compare to last year?**

All the museums in East Devon have been reached with access to development support, training, specialist expertise and opportunities for funding.

SWMD’s most recent data set is for **2022/23**. In 2022/23:

- 201 museum and heritage sites benefitted from our support
- 529 delegates attended our SW Museum Skills training programme.
- 112 museums received support to improve collections care.
- 24 museums received support to develop their audiences.
- 37 museums were supported to develop their digital engagement.
- 50 museums were helped with volunteering development.

**9. Are you monitoring diversity, equality and inclusion in your audiences and cultural teams? For example do you have a breakdown of your work force/audiences by age groups, ethnic groups, disability, sexual orientation and gender?**

Monitoring of protected characteristics is undertaken by Bristol City Council as the host of SWMD. Due to the size of the SWMD team it is not possible to release this data set as individuals would be identifiable.



**10. How has your work helped to tackle the climate emergency? Are you monitoring the environmental impact of your work?**

Museums and heritage organisations can provide a space for, and contribute to, the wider debate on the impact of the climate crisis through their collections on topics such as the reduction in biodiversity, increase in waste materials and sustainable energy use.

One of SWMD's five strategic aims is *To acknowledge the climate emergency and take an active role in the green recovery.* In 2023/24 SWMD continued to deliver Carbon Literacy training to the museum and heritage sector including a bespoke commissioned training programme for cultural organisations in East Devon.

SWMD's partnership with the Art Fund for The Wild Escape project which took place over 2022/23 and 2023/24 saw over £70,220 of grant investment to museums in the south west to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity in response to the climate emergency in children.

SWMD monitors the carbon impact of its programme through Julie's Bicycle.

**11. What challenges have you faced in the last year?**

During 2023/24 the SWMD team has undertaken a comprehensive open application process to Arts Council England and secured funding for 2024-26 in order to continue the role as Museum Development provider for museums across the South West. Opportunities in the future programme will see more funding streams, an increased funding budget available to Accredited and working towards Accreditation.



## EAST DEVON CULTURAL STRATEGY - OUR GOAL IS THAT BY 2031:

1. East Devon's cultural offer is perceived by residents as high quality, interesting, fun, relevant, accessible and well-promoted
2. Residents who have taken part in cultural activity feel that their health, happiness and wellbeing have improved as a result
3. Children and young people across the district feel they have ample opportunities to take part in cultural and creative activities
4. More people work in the cultural and creative industries in East Devon, backed up by more training, skills and pathways to employment
5. Cultural organisations, artists and creative businesses feel connected, resilient and creatively ambitious (professional and voluntary sectors)
6. Investment into arts, museums and heritage through earned income, grants, sponsorship and philanthropy has increased
7. The number and diversity of visitors, audiences and participants in culture and creative activity in East Devon has increased
8. Culture is helping to tackle the climate emergency

We would be grateful if you could help us track progress by completing the following questions, if relevant, using quantitative and qualitative data, for activity between April 2023 and March 2024. Please keep answers to a maximum of 250 words.

### 1. Please provide a brief summary of your work this financial year.

To date we have:

- Hosted 25 high quality arts performances for 1496 live audiences with 5 participatory wraparound activity sessions
- Delivered 3 Village Exchange intergenerational skill-share projects in Ottery St Mary (young people - music focus, 4 sessions) & Honiton (older adults - reminiscence, 6 sessions) & Membury (mixed ages - heritage storytelling, 3 sessions)
- Grown the scale of our Active Care Homes commission, producing over 12 high quality digital works for use in care settings, engaging excluded participants, developing specialist digital production team & content (older adults dementia)
- Collaborated with 44 co-curators in developing our responsive programme of activity, gathering as a network in person for the first time in 4 years
- Supported over 80 artists including 8 open-call From Devon With Love scratch artists
- Nurtured artists through the current fundraising re-submission cycle (ACE)
- Developed a new relationship with University of Exeter Drama focusing on graduate retention in SW
- Completed 2 Ripple Effect Mapping cycles. Deep dives enabled gathering of qualitative data (alongside trad audience & artist surveys & environmental monitoring) that allows us to be responsive to emerging opportunities





**2. How are you tracking if audiences are finding your work high quality, interesting, fun, relevant, accessible and well-promoted? What feedback have you had?**

We ask all audiences to complete a Post Event Audience Survey - we provide paper forms, QR codes for display which link to our online audience survey and a post event email goes out with link to those who book online.

Alongside demographic questions, there are freeform response boxes which solicit creative responses- people often reflect on their engagement with the artist(s) in an intimate setting, affirming how talented they are, with repeated use of the following words: 'wonderful, superb, excellent, fun, amazing, professional, amazing, accomplished, relevant, extraordinary, funny, high-energy.'

We also ask audiences how they heard about an event, with the following breakdown of responses: 41% word of mouth, 20% social media, 14% local posters/ flyers, 18% online blogs, newsletters and direct mails from Villages in Action.

*A great evening [sic] entertainment, which surpassed our expectations!*

*I always [sic] think it's unique to Rural Touring that we get to meet the artists and the team. It was extraordinary on every level. Funny magical clever heartbreaking . The actors were full of integrity. The audience engagement was just right ...how we got duped and tricked and whipped into the whole sorry madness of that time. And how that time is this time and we are still in it.*

*It was a phenomenal performance. Hilarious, entertaining, and deeply meaningful. Thank you!*

*Excellent! talented, funny and engaging. High energy and riveting*

*We really enjoyed the show and thought it was of a great standard. As good as anything we've seen at the Theatre!*

*A great night, very inclusive.*

**3. What evidence do you have that your audience's and volunteers' health, happiness and wellbeing have improved as a result?**

We ask local promoters (or ViA staff in attendance) to complete an Event Observation Form where they are asked to give three words that describe the atmosphere of the event. Like audiences, our volunteers tend to feedback most on the performance alongside audience reactions, we see repeated use of the words 'fun, wonderful, well-received, enjoyed highly.' Anecdotally we know that some people's happiness is tied into the success of the event, and when they perceive low audience or engagement numbers/ low box office returns for the effort put in (average 24 hours per event)



they are less motivated. While we do not currently monitor wellbeing outcomes for our volunteers, this is an area for evaluation development during 2024.

As part of our Zest: Active Arts partnership project with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Wellmoor and independent dance practitioner Clare Parker we have been monitoring participants/ audience responses in care homes through an Impact Measurement Framework using 2 validated scales: Arts Observation Scale (performing arts in care homes) and Euroquo EQ-5D-5L (health) alongside case studies. Data showed improved physical, mental and social benefits from sustained engagement with our online arts platform with a majority of staff and residents recording an increase in positive change in the mood, physical function and mobility of residents, with visitors commenting on the happy sociable atmosphere in the home around Zest time. It is worth noting that a majority of the audience/ participants had dementia and so creative digital content produced by Villages in Action was bespoke for this audience.

**4. How many children and young people (under 25) have been able to engage with your offer?**

On average across all our performances, 22% of our audiences are made up of young people aged between 0-25. This figure is based on a post event form completed by volunteer promoters or paid members of the ViA team. While we issue Audience post event surveys these are suitable for completion by adults only (in line with sector best practice and guidance from Arts Council England).

Through the Village Exchange project that took place in East Devon both in Membury and Ottery St Mary there were 36 attendances by young people through targeted sessions for CYP.

**5. Have you been able to offer job opportunities in the cultural and creative industries? Or training, skills and pathways to employment?**

Yes, this is a key driver of our work. Alongside employing over 74 performance artists over the last 12 months, we have also worked with creative specialists to deliver a series of participatory and community-based workshops/ sessions. Specifically in East Devon we have given paid engagement (beyond performing artists) to 9 creative facilitators/ producers. Through our From Devon With Love (Talent Development) strand of work we have worked alongside ACED Music Champion Dave Knox to provide opportunities for young musicians to learn more about rural touring and creating their own freelance pathways, and through an introduction to Lewis Gibbs at the Devon Music Education Hub, Dave has engaged in CPD by training with the Hub on 'Challenging Voices' (music/ mental health).

While none of our residencies have focused on East Devon during the last 12 months we're busy cooking up an arts and heritage-focused ambassador programme for those in the mid stages of their professional career, alongside one of our volunteer co-curators.

**6. Which partnerships (eg: cultural organisations, artists or creative businesses) have been key to building your resilience and creative ambition?**



Through the Village Exchange project as well as our wider programme we have been able to develop deeper relationships with East Devon based organisations and artists including: TRIP community transport & befriending, Honiton Health Matters, Honiton Memory Cafe, Honiton Carers, and Honiton Sheddars, Beehive Honiton, Creative Beings, Libraries Unlimited, Devon Music Education Hub, Ottery Town Council, The King’s School, The Space and Action East Devon, Membury Primary Academy, Stockland School, Stockland Parochial Parish Council.

During 2023-2024 we have also been building our partnerships with a number of larger cultural organisations through commissioned work including: Exeter Phoenix and Theatre Royal Plymouth. These organisations recognise our responsiveness alongside our rural cultural network and wish to build on partnership working to increase rural engagement with their programme.

Our Creative Director, convened a country-wide meeting to discuss professional small-scale touring and talent development in February 2024. In attendance were representatives from Theatre Royal Plymouth, Landmark Theatres, Beyond Face, Doorstep Arts, Exeter Phoenix and Exeter Northcott, and it was agreed that ongoing network development would be key to ensure a joined-up approach to support the evolving cultural ecology in Devon. We believe our collaborative and non-competitive approach is key to ensuring participation from established cultural institutions as well as smaller, more responsive cultural leaders.

**7. Has the funding from East Devon District Council helped you leverage increased funding?**

Yes, we are confident that being able to demonstrate Local Authority financial support increased our chances of success when applying for project grant funding from Arts Council England (£89,163. April 2023-Sept 2024) as well as National Lottery Community funding (£9985 January- May 2023).

While many councils are reversing years of arts funding, EDDC is demonstrating incredible cultural leadership by continuing to fund the arts and culture, recognising its importance in place-based community development, alongside employment and business sector development. With small amounts of funding, the impact we are able to have is huge and the continuing investment in Villages in Action whose focus has broadened beyond impact for isolated and ageing communities to having regional impact in terms of the Creative Industries sector, and serving more members of our community more meaningfully.

**8. How many visitors/audiences/participants in East Devon have you reached this year? And how does that compare to last year?**

|                             | April 2022- March 2023 |            | April 2023- to date          |            |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------|------------------------------|------------|
|                             | Devon-wide             | East Devon | Devon-wide                   | East Devon |
| Box office income           | £15,326                | £4,135     | £15,302                      | £5,624     |
| Other community fundraising | Unknown                | Unknown    | Av. £70.19 across all events |            |



|                                  |         |     |      |     |
|----------------------------------|---------|-----|------|-----|
| Audience attendances             | 1479    | 620 | 1496 | 645 |
| Number of performances           | 44      | 12  | 25   | 10  |
| Participant attendances          | Unknown | 61  | 519  | 203 |
| Number of participatory sessions | Unknown | 6   | 18   | 13  |

**9. Are you monitoring diversity, equality and inclusion in your audiences and cultural teams? For example do you have a breakdown of your work force/audiences by age groups, ethnic groups, disability, sexual orientation and gender?**

At ViA we have been developing our EDI Policy and Governance Action Plan. Our key objectives over the next 24 months (December 2023- December 2025) are:

1. To focus on embedding three protected characteristics within the work of our organisation: Age, Race/ethnicity and Sexual Orientation. Our approach must be individualised and nurtured over time, recognising that no one size fits all
2. To adopt a proactive approach to communicating the charity's commitment to EDI with a public audience, and leading the network by example.

We monitor our workforce at the end of each financial year so as not to create survey overwhelm. In terms of artist employment we can report that in the last 12 months as part of our Talent Development strand of work we have been exploring issues of identity, culture and access for artists to rural spaces; 30% of artists supported to date have been from the Global Majority and 23% identifying as deaf, neurodivergent and/or Disabled.

Furthermore, we know that artists across all our strands of work identify in the following ways:

**Gender:** Female (44%), Male (43%), Non binary (7%), Prefer not to say (6%)

**Sexual Orientation:** Heterosexual (56%), Bisexual/ pansexual (19%), Homosexual (13%), Prefer not to say (12%)

**Disability/ long-term health condition and/or Neurodivergence:** No (88%), Yes (13%)

In terms of our audiences, we will have a robust data set in terms of demographic data by October 2024, however, we can highlight the following information for consideration:

**Age:** 35-49 years (10%) 50-64 years (39%) 65+ years (10%)

**Gender:** Female (75%), Male (22%), Prefer not to say (4%)

**Sexual orientation:** Heterosexual (76%) Homosexual (2%), Bisexual/ pansexual (6%) Prefer not to say (16%)

**Ethnicity:** White British (95%), Black/Black British (2%), O3ther Asian (1%), East Asian (2%)



## 10. How has your work helped to tackle the climate emergency? Are you monitoring the environmental impact of your work?

Through 6 month CPD support from Planet & People CIC we have refined our Environmental Policy & Action Plan. The organisation's refreshed development priorities are improving sustainable practices, communicating sustainability effectively and monitoring and improving education & travel outputs.

As a small, flexible and part-time team we recognise that our direct carbon impact is low, however we have begun to monitor how audiences and artists get to the venue:

- Artists responses to date: Driving alone (31%), Car share (63%) and walking (6%)
- Audience responses to date: Driving alone (15%), Car share (58%) and walking (27%)

Additionally, we are supporting artists whose creative output focuses on environmental themes. This might involve co-production or awareness raising of climate-change impacts on communities both locally and further afield. We feel that it's important to bring rural perspectives to the discussion so that local audiences are able to see their own perspectives being both represented and challenged.

Some audience feedback on Hattie Collins' East Devon performance of *Kindle* whose rural Devon perspective on climate change and other environmental and social factors got audiences thinking:

- *Powerful performance with a very thought provoking themes*
- *I liked the way that environmental and social themes were interwoven throughout*
- *Extremely engaging and sensitively acted. So many contemporary themes of rural hardships, social and economic pressures that are dealt with in a touching and relevant way.*

## 11. What challenges have you faced in the last year?

1. As a third sector organisation heavily reliant on grant funding there has been increased need / competition, where we find ourselves competing with projects that focus on feeding people or providing hardship funds. While we have been successful with a number of applications, we were unsuccessful with an application to the Postcode Lottery so that we could continue the work that we began in Honiton and Ottery St Mary as part of the Village Exchange. This targeted work supports the workforce of the future, as well as those in the third age through creative interventions. We feel this area of work has real potential for growth and alongside additional financial support for our future ambition, we would be keen to have conversations with other community-focused organisations to establish an East Devon hub that values and advocates for arts-based initiatives that support these groups.
2. We are heavily reliant on volunteers to host events and while we have grown box office income in the last year, the number of volunteer promoters in East Devon has decreased over the last 10 years. Historically (pre 2021) there used to be a large emphasis from village hall committees on fundraising, instead we now engage with volunteers who want to



experience excellent art and culture in their places and value the change that a vibrant creative offering can make to *all* members of their community, rather than seeing events solely as a fundraising opportunity. So to temper returning promoters' expectations, we have developed an Onboarding pack that clearly articulates our [Agri\[Culture\]](#) approach.



Report to **Arts and Culture Forum** Choose a meeting:

Date of Meeting June 12 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

**Arts Council Bids****Report summary:**

Two applications to the Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant scheme plan to be submitted this year, 2024, to further Theme 2 of the East Devon Cultural Strategy: protect and enhance the natural environment.

Application 1: To be submitted in Summer 2024 by Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG)

Application 2: To be submitted in Autumn 2024 by EDDC, Cultural Producer

**Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

**Recommendation:**

That the Arts & Culture Forum:

- Note and support the two funding bids to the Arts Council to support Thelma Hubert Gallery and East Devon Museums.

**Reason for recommendation:**

To ensure that the Forum is informed of fundraising efforts to deliver the East Devon Cultural Strategy.

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## Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Tourism, Sport, Leisure & Culture
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; .

**Links to background information** N/A

**Link to [Council Plan](#):**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
  - Outstanding Homes and Communities
  - Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
  - Outstanding Council and Council Services
- 

## **Report in full**

Two applications to the Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant scheme plan to be submitted this year, 2024, to further Theme 2 of the East Devon Cultural Strategy: protect and enhance the natural environment with the objective of establishing East Devon as an innovator and regional beacon of culture-led environmental protection, enhancement and activism. Both bids will be for approximately £30,000, with match funding of 10% from EDDC which has been allocated and approved from this year's budget.

### **Application 1: To be submitted in Summer 2024 by Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG)**

With support from a freelance fundraiser, THG plans to submit a bid to continue the success of their current programme, engaging young people with the gallery space, with a particular focus on EDI and climate. THG also aims to explore alternatives to their outreach offer as the Creative Cabin currently has many logistical limitations and pressures, therefore they are exploring a more portable 'Creative Cabinet'.

### **Application 2: To be submitted in Autumn 2024 by EDDC**

The Cultural Producer plans to submit a bid to work with several of the coastal museums in East Devon, as well as the Jurassic Coast Trust, to fulfil the following aims of the East Devon Cultural Strategy:

1.2 Enhance the quality and appeal of collections, and the sustainability of local museums, through a programme of shared capital investment in display and interpretation

2.1.2 Work with local museums and South West Museums Development to engage in national conversations about the climate crisis and enable displays of natural science and biodiversity collections in East Devon's museums

The Arts Council have confirmed these bids would not compete against each other as they are for different projects and would be staggered in submission.

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## **Financial implications:**

There are no financial implications arising from the report.



**Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report.