

Report to: **Cabinet**



Date of Meeting 12 May 2021

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Review date for release N/A

Developing East Devon's tourism and creative arts and cultural sector offer

Report summary:

This report considers the importance of tourism to the economy of the District and what role the Council can play to help the sector to thrive in a post pandemic environment.

The report provides a roadmap for the future development and enhancement of the Council's ambitions for cultural development as articulated in the Statement of Intent. The proposals seek to build on the existing work of the Council focussed mainly around the THG, as a cultural hub and the Arts & Culture Forum through a more cohesive and strategic approach to arts and culture and also seeking to add capacity and resource into meeting these ambitions.

The report also recognises how an enhanced cultural programme can help to support and link into the District's distinctive cultural tourism offer through better promotion, marketing and scaling up of the Council's work in this area that are linked directly to the social and economic recovery of the district – connecting to Team Devon's *Build Devon Back Better* - through cultural tourism, green initiatives, educational opportunities and 'Made in Devon' retail.

The opportunity to place culture at the heart of the Council's recovery planning (both economically and socially) is the main driver for this report and its recommendations.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☐ No ☒

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- Note the significance of the tourism sector and culture to the District and the importance of supporting recovery from the impact of the pandemic
- Agrees to progressing a new Tourism Strategy and a revised Cultural Strategy to reflect the new ambitions and opportunities to expand the arts and cultural offer of East Devon with a view to recommending to Council that it supersedes the Culture Strategy 2017-21.
- Receives further reports on the Tourism Strategy and replacement Cultural Strategy as work progresses.
- Endorse the repurposed role of the THG in leading the development of the Council's arts and cultural development ambitions and acting as the cultural hub supporting cross service cultural activities.
- Endorse repurposing the Arts & Culture Forum into Arts Culture East Devon (ACED) which will be supported by the work of the THG as the network for the district's creative arts and culture sector to engage in and also support the bid to Arts Council England to provide funding to manage and fundraise for the network.

That Cabinet recommend to Council:

- That a budget of £50k is made available, to be funded from the Business Rates Retention 100% Pilot Reserve, to develop both a Tourism Strategy and a revised Cultural Strategy.

Reason for recommendation:

To be able to deliver the corporate ambitions identified within the Council's Statement of Intent to develop and enhance the arts and cultural offer as an essential part of the recovery planning work post COVID19 that will help both a social and economic "bounce back". The ability of the East Devon's arts and cultural sector to help support the Council's ambitions for a scaling up of its cultural tourism offer, meeting its climate change emergency response targets and providing a district-wide cultural network (ACED) to engage with the district's creative arts sector.

To ensure that the Council's role in supporting the tourism sector, including in relation to recovering from the impacts of the pandemic, is clearly set out.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergencies
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☒ Culture, Tourism, Leisure and Sport
- ☐ Democracy and Transparency
- ☒ Economy and Assets
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; The report scopes out the potential roadmap for scaling up the Council's stated ambitions for its cultural work linking into tourism, communities, the environment and our events programme. The risk issues are centred around the current capacity of the Council's arts development team and budget being unable to deliver on these ambitions without further resourcing to enable delivery on the recommendations within the report.

Links to background information

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
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Report in full

1. Background and context

The Cambridge Dictionary defines tourism simply as the business or providing services such as transport, places to stay or entertainment for people who are on holiday. The reality is that

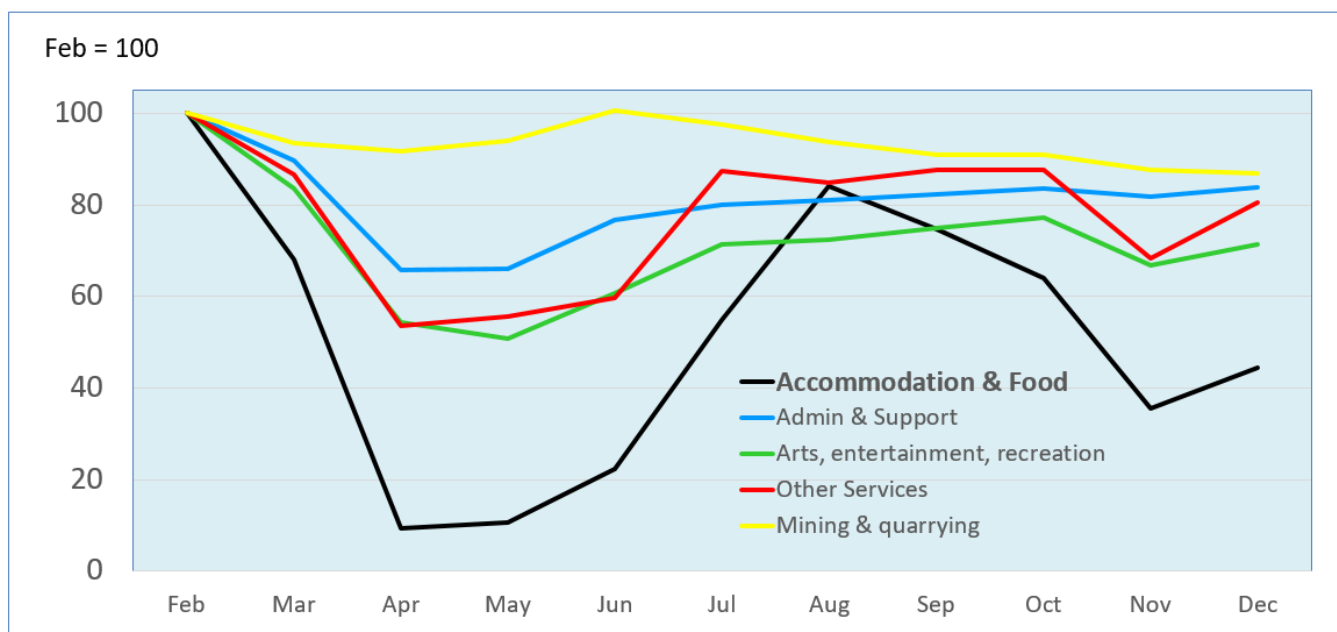
the tourism sector is one of the largest employers globally and that the industry that supports it is diverse, multi-faceted and complex. Different countries, areas and places compete for custom and trade based on the strength of their relative offers.

Devon has one of the largest visitor economies in Britain, drawing in visitor spend of almost £2.5bn per year, primarily driven by the quality of the natural environment. The County attracted 24 million overnight stays from visitors from across the UK and the world in 2016, contributing £2.5bn to its economy and employing 12% of the County's workforce. There are twice as many tourism business in Devon than the national average

In 2015 East Devon attracted over 500,000 domestic and international trips. This resulted in over 2m night stays and spend of £117m. This was combined with nearly 4m day trips with associated spend of over £135m. The sector is one of the District's largest employers with three times the national average of accommodation businesses. The relative productivity of the sector, as measured by the value added by employee, has though remained low (£17,180 as opposed to an East Devon sector average of £20,562 in 2012). Employment is also concentrated in specific areas, notably along the coast. It has been estimated that 28% of employment in Sidmouth, 19% in Exmouth and 14% in Budleigh Salterton is directly related to tourism.

2. Impact of the Pandemic

There is no doubt that the tourism sector has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. This has included business going in to administration, such as Shearings. The following graph shows the five most impacted sectors in the UK in terms of GVA during 2020.



The following tables also illustrate that the accommodation and food sector in conjunction with those in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector have both the highest proportion of employees furloughed and the businesses with less than three months cash flow.

Proportion of Employment Furloughed – UK (source: Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey)

Industry	04/05 - 17/05	27/07-09/08	21/09-04/10	16/11-29/11	14/12-27/12	25/01-07/02
Manufacturing	37.6%	21.3%	23.6%	26.2%	27.6%	27.2%
Water Supply, Waste Mgt	48.4%	31.6%	33.1%	29.0%	32.3%	24.8%
Construction	56.8%	32.3%	32.9%	37.8%	40.1%	38.8%
Wholesale And Retail Trade	41.8%	22.5%	20.2%	24.8%	27.6%	27.8%
Transportation And Storage	49.4%	28.2%	26.6%	26.0%	27.8%	27.6%
Accommodation And Food	66.0%	39.9%	40.1%	48.7%	51.7%	51.3%
Information And Comms	*	19.3%	21.6%	24.8%	24.1%	21.4%
Real Estate Activities	37.8%	21.5%	28.2%	31.1%	26.1%	27.7%
Professional And Technical	46.8%	23.5%	23.1%	24.7%	28.0%	27.8%
Administrative And Support	51.8%	33.6%	34.0%	35.6%	36.7%	35.2%
Education	35.9%	19.2%	24.2%	19.6%	24.2%	23.2%
Human Health And Social Work	35.4%	25.4%	28.7%	27.9%	30.5%	29.1%
Arts, Entertain And Recreation	58.2%	36.6%	25.7%	32.2%	36.0%	37.8%
Other Services			43.0%	53.2%	45.1%	52.8%
All Industries	46.5%	26.8%	27.0%	30.1%	32.1%	31.6%

Businesses with less than 3 months cash flow (source: Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey)

Industry	04/05 - 17/05	27/07-09/08	05/10-18/10	16/11-29/11	30/11-13/12	11/01-24/01
Manufacturing	29.1%	8.9%	3.8%	4.5%	3.8%	5.2%
Water Supply, Waste Mgt	15.3%	4.7%	2.9%	4.8%	4.2%	5.0%
Construction	46.6%	9.2%	2.5%	2.7%	2.8%	3.9%
Wholesale And Retail Trade	23.2%	5.2%	5.6%	17.7%	8.5%	21.9%
Transportation And Storage	38.0%	18.6%	10.9%	12.4%	12.2%	14.2%
Accommodation And Food	82.7%	26.6%	17.5%	42.1%	32.7%	50.8%
Information And Comms	13.1%	7.2%	3.0%	3.8%	3.4%	4.8%
Real Estate Activities	27.1%	12.6%	4.7%	8.9%	6.7%	8.5%
Professional And Technical	15.1%	8.6%	3.9%	3.3%	2.6%	3.8%
Administrative And Support	33.9%	23.8%	11.8%	17.1%	14.3%	17.6%
Education	11.4%	8.7%	3.2%	4.4%	4.6%	7.4%
Human Health And Social Work	7.7%	3.6%	1.8%	3.1%	2.2%	4.2%
Arts, Entertain And Recreation	72.2%	50.7%	27.3%	53.4%	36.8%	58.8%
Other Services	n/a	n/a	15.4%	28.1%	28.0%	26.3%
All Industries	30.9%	13.2%	7.7%	15.5%	10.8%	18.3%

The County Council has recently undertaken a survey of business confidence levels, bookings and prospects for 2021 in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Between February and November 2020 it was estimated that approximately £1.23bn of anticipated tourism business turnover has been lost in Devon due to COVID-19, despite some respite with re-openings. In the November 2020 lockdown alone it was estimated that, as a result of the lost tourism spend, approximately £22 million of supply chain spend is also unlikely to have occurred. 77% of Devon businesses taking part in the survey were closed for the whole of November 2020 as a result of COVID-19, the average turnover change of those still open was -64% of November 2019 turnover.

Despite the tangible impacts from the pandemic on the tourism sector there is now a strong sense of optimism regarding the coming summer period. In the context of ongoing restrictions on international travel, there is significant demand for domestic 'staycations' with evidence of rising prices. In fact attention is now turning to addressing the potential consequences of excess demand and 'over-tourism'. This ranges from potential congestion and dealing with large numbers of motorhomes through to the emptying of bins and the impact on public conveniences. A new 'Reopening Tourism Safely' group has been formed at the Heart of the South West level to coordinate activity strategically in this respect.

3. What role can the Council play in support the tourism sector?

The tourism sector is clearly of significant economic importance to the District. It is relatively diverse and there are a number of leading private businesses providing everything from

accommodation to attractions. The District Council's role in relation to supporting tourism has shifted over time from funding large scale marketing and promotion activity and supporting the operation of Tourist Information Centres to bringing forward physical regeneration projects, such as Seaton Jurassic and Queen's Drive space, designed to improve the offer of specific places. Most recently the Council's role has focused on deploying business grants to compensate for the impact on trade of the national and local restrictions. This is alongside the provision of street scene services, beach safety and maintenance of greenspaces.

As restrictions begin to be lifted there is the opportunity to consider the Council's role going forward and how this can help to support recovery and add value to the sector. It is likely that it will need to focus on improving qualitative outcomes, including raising productivity, for the tourism sector rather than simply the pursuit of more tourists and visitors. Specific dimensions to this could include the following;

- Harnessing the potential to promote culture-led tourism – for example by leveraging the programmes of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and the Manor Pavilion Theatre within the context of the cultural strategy and the Arts & Culture East Devon partnership
- Spreading the geographic focus across the District – for example by working with the AONB partnership and to bring forward initiatives such as the Clyst Valley Regional Park in conjunction with partners such as the National Trust
- Promoting green and eco-tourism – the ability to also support tourism through the provision of EV charging points in our car parks was highlighted recently. Also around 70% of all visitors to Devon are attracted by the quality of the environment which turn speaks to the stewardship role of the farming and forestry sectors as well as to our own role in providing natural attractions such as Seaton Wetlands
- Addressing skills shortages in the sector by working with relevant organisations and the FE sector to ensure provision of relevant training – shortages are likely to be particularly pronounced in the post Brexit environment
- Supporting private sector-led initiatives such as East Devon Excellence – this brings together a range of leading businesses in the District with the potential to support wider industries such as in relation to food and drink.
- Ensuring a thriving festival and events scene – including linking to our own events strategy
- Place making – including utilising the Council's own assets to further develop the offer of specific places. This could range from public realm improvements through to the development of improved facilities.
- Supporting investment - the government recently confirm details of the Welcome Back Fund which will help support the safe return of shoppers and tourists. The deployment of these funds will need to move forward in conjunction with partners such as town councils. Equally there is an opportunity to help sustain recovery through the proposed Adaptation, Innovation and Resilience Fund and to bid into national programmes such as the Levelling Up Fund.

The Statement of Intent commits to producing a tourism strategy. The following are identified under the 'A Resilient Economy' heading:

- Sustainable & green tourism as part of promoting our rural economy
- the need for a Tourism Strategy that focusses on our natural and cultural environments

...and under 'Better Homes & Communities for All':

- Delivering a wide range of events & activities on our land consistent with our Culture Strategy & developing and Events Strategy
- Developing a new Cultural Quarter in Exmouth as part of the seafront regeneration programme that brings the creative arts into the vision for a new tourism offer for the town

It is clearly important that the production of this strategy now moves forward and helps to enshrine the points outlined above and defines specific objectives, outcomes and actions. This

will need to be produced in partnership with key stakeholders including industry representatives and be considered by Cabinet prior to adoption.

It is a specific recommendation of this report that a budget of £50k is made available to fund both the production of a tourism strategy and a cultural development strategy. The latter is the subject of a separate but related report on developing the District's creative arts sector and cultural tourism offer.

Two further factors have become evident in writing this paper. The first is that our evidence base by which to understand and measure the tourism sector is substantially out of date. East Devon has not been part of the Visit Devon's 'Value of Tourism' survey since 2015. Steps are now being taken to address this. The second is that East Devon lacks profile within an already crowded marketplace in terms of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). In March 2021, the government announced an independent review to assess how DMOs across England are funded and structured, and how they perform their roles, in order to establish whether there may be a more efficient and effective model for supporting English tourism at the regional level, and if so what that model may be. Recommendations are due to be made to the Secretary of State this summer and this will need to be taken in to account in the future strategy.

4. The value of culture

4.1 In the Arts Council England report - 'The Value of Arts & Culture to People and Society' there are five key ways arts and culture can boost local economies:

- Attracting visitors;
- Creating jobs and developing skills;
- Attracting and retaining businesses;
- Revitalising places;
- Developing talent.

4.2 Those who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60% more likely to report good health compared to those who had not, and theatre goers were almost 25% more likely to report good health. Research has shown that high frequency of engagement with arts and culture is generally associated with a higher level of subjective wellbeing as well as improve the cognitive abilities of children and young people. There is also strong evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and make communities feel safer and stronger

4.3 The arts and culture industry has grown by £390 million in a year and now contributes £10.8 billion a year to the UK economy. The sector contributes £2.8 billion a year to the Treasury via taxation, and generates a further £23 billion a year and 363,700 jobs.

4.4 Cultural Tourism also plays a crucial role in today's economy. In 2018 it represented 37% of the total tourism sector, with an annual growth of approximately 15%.

- With the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that international tourism fell by around 80% in 2020.
- There is an opportunity to build a more resilient tourism economy, promoting digital transition and rethinking a more sustainable tourism system.
- East Devon has a high cultural, social and environmental potential.

4.5 The LGA refer to the 'pulling power' of arts and culture: visitors to a theatre, museum, or festival spend money on their ticket or entrance fee, meals in local restaurants, spending in local shops, or perhaps hotel bookings as part of their visit. The value of arts and culture to

society has long been debated. We know that arts and culture play an important role in promoting social and economic goals through local regeneration, attracting tourists, developing talent and innovation, improving health and wellbeing, and contributing to the delivery of public services. These benefits are 'instrumental' because art and culture can be a means to achieve ends beyond the immediate intrinsic experience and value of the art itself.

4.6 In its report - *LGA local.gov.uk: The impact of COVID-19 on culture, leisure tourism and sport* it has clearly evidenced the following relevant issues:

- the explosion of culture, sport and leisure consumption and participation during lockdown has demonstrated that these are among the services that really matter to residents. Their value is far greater than the entertainment they provide: they are essential to people's mental and physical health.
- Secondly, councils will have a crucial role to play in delivering economic recovery. Prior to the pandemic, the creative industries were the fastest growing part of the economy, along with tourism. These businesses are integral to our recovery and part of a complex ecosystem which includes the services funded and delivered by councils.
- Lastly as this research has shown, the impact of COVID-19 on culture, leisure, tourism and sport has been severe and this position is likely to remain challenging in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, this sector has a vital role to play in the nation's recovery. Expenditure on culture and leisure organisations is not a sunk cost; it is an investment in the health and wellbeing of a place and its residents.

4.7 The Arts Council England (ACE) Strategy 2020-2030 'Let's Create' has set out an ambition to achieve by 2030, that England is a country in which "the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences". To be achieved through;

- **Creative People:** Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.
- **Cultural Communities:** Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- **A creative and cultural country:** England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

It is through this ACE Strategy ambition and also the LGA's 'Creative Places: Supporting your local creative economy' 2020 document that this report will seek to establish how the Council can put in place various programmes, resources and partnerships to build on its existing commitments within the arts and cultural sectors and also establish a clear "roadmap" to how this can further support the development of East Devon's cultural visitor economy.

5. EDDC's repurposed cultural programme 2020/21

5.1 The majority of the creative arts and cultural work undertaken by the Council is through the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and its Out & About programme which delivers the most high profile projects and PR campaigns that brings a focus to the importance and value of arts and culture within our district. Other important cultural providers are The Manor Pavilion Theatre, Sidmouth which has a popular and successful programme of dance, musicals, drama, comedy and ballet performances throughout the year and is an award winning community theatre.

5.2 The Wild East Devon and AONB teams also deliver programmes which connect culture with our outstanding environment and promote the value of our rich cultural heritage. LED through the Exmouth Pavilion also supports a popular programme of entertainment and finally more

recently the work of the Events Officer has started to explore opportunities for enabling new events activities such as music festivals and outdoor theatre.

5.3 There is no clearly defined cultural or tourism service within the Council and it is through these services along with our Economic Development team which provide the majority of the advice, support and outputs that help to support our visitor economy and provide a diverse and exciting programme of creative arts and cultural activities

5.4 Following recent discussions within the Leadership Group, Portfolio Holders and Culture Champion and the recent Arts and Culture Forum there is a clear ambition to develop on the work of the THG and the Arts & Culture Forum to provide Cultural Leadership and a district wide role for arts development and also supporting our creative arts and cultural sector. This is articulated within the Statement of Intent that will feed into the reworked Council Plan. In the last 18 months the THG has developed a much greater focus on arts and cultural development across the district, delivering the council's priorities through arts and culture, alongside it's already well established and respected exhibition programme. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response from communities and the creative arts sector to this focus but with this it has highlighted that there are capacity issues within the THG team.

5.5 The THG's core work programme currently focusses on:

- Curating a diverse programme between 5 and 7 exhibitions of contemporary art and craft The programme responds to our local community, our local heritage and all our visitors through projects, exhibitions, open selections, touring exhibitions, often including works by artists of national or international significance
- Events - garden parties, feasts, symposiums, artist talks, music events, festivals, film screenings...and much more (revenue raising) craft fair, contemporary craft festival, Gate to Plate, Exmouth festival, Sidmouth sea festival, Honiton festival of imagination, Honiton show.
- Outreach work - a parallel programme working with Young People, Elderly, Schools, and local marginal groups: Families from low socio-economic backgrounds in East Devon e.g. EDDC's housing tenants team & Honiton Children's Centre. Working with rurally isolated older people e.g. Honiton Memory Café and Honiton Dementia Alliance – intergenerational, Devon Insight (people dealing with sight-loss in East Devon. Also working with new audiences with little experience of cultural engagement - non arts partnerships (Forestry England, East Devon AONB, RSPB, Sidmouth Walking Festival, LED Walking for Health, Clinton Devon Estates, EDDC's Countryside team – Wild East Devon. Finally with Community Mental wellness such as NHS – Devon Recovery Learning Network, Arts & Health South West & Honiton Mental Health Friendly Town
- Volunteering and participation - supporting 30+ volunteers in a range of roles: Visitor Experience, Retail, Learning, gardening and events. Following recognised best practice in volunteer management
- Partnership building and advocacy - partners already established in 2021 include: RD&E and North Devon Health Trust (NHS), Routes to Roots, Wild East Devon, AONB Blackdown Hill and East Devon, University of Exeter, the Devon and Exeter Institution, Libraries Unlimited, Devon Artist Network, UNESCO City of Literature, AYCH – Atlantic Youth Creative Hub , Culture Declares Emergency, TATE, Artist Room, Arts Council Collection, Visual Arts South West, SW Museum Partnership, Museum Association, Family Arts Festival, Double Elephant Print Workshop, Natural England, Serpentine Gallery (Melissa Blanchflower)
- Retail and commercial - curation and management of a respected craft and design shop in Honiton with additional online outlet. Manages over 30 ranges of SW based maker/designers. Revenue created is £14K per year and the THG is the only in-house commercial product offer for EDDC

The new post COVID-19 repurposed district wide arts development work the THG has been leading on since 2020 now includes the following programmes:

- **THG 'Out & About'** is our way of bringing the benefits of cultural activities direct to the residents of East Devon and shine a spotlight on the districts outstanding natural environment for all to enjoy. It makes cultural activities accessible and a '*way of life*', where everyone can enjoy culture in the outdoors, benefiting health and wellbeing. THG Out and About works in the outdoors to engage diverse audiences through participatory, interactive and unusual creative processes. It employs a range of creative practitioners from poets to artists, sculptors to designers, sharing ideas on our heritage and natural environment, inspiring and exciting communities locally, nationally and globally
- **The Creative Cabin:** in August 2020 THG, together with Wild East Devon launched a new travelling creative space - the Creative Cabin. This was developed as a fun and creative space to explore art and nature in your neighbourhood safely during the Covid 19 pandemic. The Cabin hosts a broad range of activities, projects, talks, films, performances and workshops which creatively explore our relationship to nature and the climate emergency.



- THG has developed the first strand of the Council's Climate Emergency behaviour change public programme - **Climate Conversations 2021**, a multi-site public programme and touring project developed within the context of East Devon District Council's commitment to Devon's Climate Change Emergency declaration and University of Exeter's declaration of an environment and climate emergency. Together we will creatively explore the climate

emergency through exhibitions, workshops, volunteering opportunities and resources. Working with our partners ANOB, and the University of Exeter we will assist communities to understand complex issues and make real sustainable changes by bringing communities together on a shared challenge.

- **Public Art Commissions and Regeneration projects:** With its specialist knowledge in the curation, delivery and programming of public art projects in both urban and rural areas THG is now starting to deliver these projects. To date the THG has consulted on a Section 106 public art commissions, delivered a public art project for GWR, designed an award winning 'Pocket park' with artist Michael Fairfax and most recently a community mural in Exmouth.

Case Study: THG commission 2020: The Abode of Love in Exmouth.



The Abode of Love is a flood defence in Exmouth. In 2019, East Devon District Council invited Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) to develop an ambitious arts commission for the area complementing the new waterfront developments in 2020 and addressing anti-social behaviour. It was part of a wider initiative celebrating Exmouth, placing culture and creativity at its heart. Due to Covid-19, the project could no longer go ahead, however THG and artist Anna Fitzgerald pledged their commitment to develop a creative response to Exmouth. Anna Fitzgerald created 'To be continued...' a site-specific commission at the Abode of Love where the community of Exmouth including artists and designers collectively transformed the walls with vibrant coloured pixels.

Part II of the project will take place in August 2021

6. Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED)

6.1 Against the context of Covid19, THG took the initiative to develop a public forum to support the cultural and creative sector in its recovery from the pandemic. All cultural services such as local arts, theatres, museums and galleries, festivals, music events, public art, those working with local social, wellbeing, inclusion and economic development agendas, and creative businesses are all invited to participate in a supportive network developing a creative economy and stabilising the cultural ecology of the district.

Brand in development:



6.2 This scaled up Forum will provide the platform for the district's diverse and influential "family" of cultural and creative arts organisations and groups to have a visibility and profile under the rebranding of the original Arts & Culture Forum into ACED. The benefits of such a platform are clearly evidenced in other local authorities such as Exeter, Torbay, Taunton & West Somerset, Cornwall etc. where the joining up cross all the creative arts sectors has brought exciting new initiatives, funding, long lasting social and economic benefits into communities and towns as well as inspiring the next generation of cultural providers.

6.3 The forum is also the first step in launching East Devon's visible cultural tourism campaign.

ACED aims:

- Embed the role of the arts in the cultural, social, educational, environmental and economic life of the district by providing a **supportive network**
- Support advocacy work for local arts and culture services and identify areas for **collaboration**
- Share news, **best practice**, plans and ambitions- aiding **communication** between arts practitioners, arts organisations, non-arts organisations, local government and regional and national bodies
- Develop and **promote** local authority arts and culture-led economic growth initiatives
- Support an increase in **engagement** in cultural activity in the District, developing a healthy social and cultural ecology which **enriches communities and visitors**

It is the intention of ACED to help deliver the cultural ambitions stated within the Statement of Intent and also meet the Arts Council England vision in their 'Let's Create' 2020-30 strategy which will help East Devon DC to align its cultural ambitions with the Government's cultural priorities and secure support and funding for future programmes

7. Resourcing the cultural ambitions

7.1 It is this expanded cross district portfolio of programmes, activities and events that is now driving the cultural development within the Council. The recent development of a Climate Change focused programme - 'Climate Conversations' has shown how the THG can be important conveners bringing together strategic partnership across the locality.

7.2 It is clear that the importance of the THG team has grown experientially in the last 2 years, supporting the Council in wider strategic corporate priorities and also through adopted plans such as the Public Health Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Events Strategy and also linking

into high profile regeneration schemes such as Queens Drive and the seafront enhancements in Exmouth through the Abode of Love project. This alongside sympathetically and innovatively responding to the challenges posed by Covid19.

- 7.3 The need to bring these “threads of cultural activity” together clearly necessitates the need for an overarching Cultural Strategy for the Council which spearheads all cultural activity across services including Streetscene, Countryside, Economic Development, Housing and Property Services. The THG can be used as a “cultural engine”, coordinating with Council teams who engage with art and culture. This will prove most effective in securing funding and provide a joined up approach for PR, aiding cultural tourism.
- 7.4 To continue operating at this ambition, managing a multitude of sites, projects and initiatives, the team needs to be restructured to reflect the increasing workload, responsibility and contribution to EDDC’s strategic plan, specifically with the new ‘ACED’ work stream. The gallery and all its wider activity is currently managed by only 2.5 members of staff.
- 7.5 The team can provide vital support to all services in the council engaging with arts and culture; from public art commissioning to retail merchandising, to outreach, participation and Creative PR, their value is clear. If teams are given capacity to work together collaboratively and support embedded work streams driven by a cultural strategy, it will save the council money in the longer term.

8. Cultural benefits to the visitor economy

- 8.1 In a similar vein following discussions with Portfolio Holders responsible for the economy, culture and tourism there is a linked ambition to promote the diverse and unique cultural sector in the district as an important part of the economic recovery work being undertaken by the Council.
- 8.2 The main area of focus so far has been on tourism in particular the role of cultural tourism and the promotion of the district’s unique and varied cultural offer that could provide a 5-10% uplift in visitor spend into the local economy of the district. The challenges of enabling that uplift and the role that East Devon DC could bring to this sector/theme that adds value to the existing providers in the sector.
- 8.3 This is potentially a significant area of work that crosses many Service areas who have an active role and vested interest in the absence of a bespoke tourism budget and tourism officers. The Council was engaged in tourism development some 10+ yrs. ago working with our tourism sector, and various Destination Management Organisations, TICs and at the time SW Tourism to help promote, support and join up a coherent brand for our visitor economy.
- 8.4 There have been some initial discussions between Portfolio Holders and Officers to further explore how the Council can meaningfully re-engage a role and purpose for the district’s visitor economy. This is potentially a significant area of work that crosses many Service areas who have an active role and vested interest in the absence of a bespoke tourism budget and tourism officers.
- 8.5 This time around there is a view that any value added by East Devon DC re-engaging should be much more targeted and focussed on where we can support organisations and digital platforms that are already in existence e.g. East Devon Excellence and where we can provide content e.g. our cultural and countryside activities & events. There is also an opportunity to draw upon funding programmes being made available for the rebooting of our economy post COVID such as the SW LEPs ‘Levelling Up’ fund and the District’s own AIR Fund enabling projects such as Exmouth’s Cultural Quarter idea to be led as a cultural regeneration initiative that brings together all the various visitor attractions together in a coherent offer for the visitor.

8.6 There are already District Council led “bounce back” programmes we are continuing to develop and invest in initiatives led such as the work to help revitalise our High Streets, help salvage the future of Exeter airport and provide advice to our local businesses that operate tourism businesses. This work is in addition and compliments this work and tries to bring into a more coherent narrative for how we are supporting our visitor economy.

8.7 So what are the potential proposals and opportunities for developing our cultural tourism offer but ensuring that it dovetails into the wider work outlined in this report for the district’s wider cultural sector?

- To develop a cultural tourism offer working with East Devon Excellence by providing content, activities & events to “scale up” our digital presence platform
- To commission external advice to develop a Tourism Strategy that meets the ambitions set out in the Statement of Intent

9. A way forward for East Devon DC’s cultural ambitions

9.1 It is clear that to bring together the ambitions highlighted within this report alongside the existing high profile programmes being delivered by the THG, Manor Pavilion theatre, Wild East Devon and more recently the Events Officer there is a need to replace the existing Cultural Strategy 2017-2021 which is more narrowly focussed to a broader more encompassing Cultural Strategy that reflects the new areas of work such as the potential of culturally led regeneration schemes in the district, the value of our cultural sector for developing our visitor economy and scaling up of our support and promotion of the district’s diverse and vibrant creative arts community.

9.2 Alongside a newly commissioned Cultural Strategy is a need to develop a Tourism Strategy for the district which will help to provide an important link to these cultural development ambitions as there are potentially significant opportunities to develop the cultural tourism offer in East Devon that has a focus primarily on our rural hinterland area as our coastal areas have a well marketed and thriving visitor offer. This work has been picked up by the Service Lead – Growth, Development & Prosperity.

9.3 The developing role of ACED will also provide an important “voice” for the district’s grassroots cultural and creative arts sector that can help to create new opportunities to market, promote and support the sector as well as link into the cultural tourism offer. This network will require support and over the next 6 months it will be supported through the THG team leading to a longer term solution with a proposed new funding application to the Arts Council England to fully fund this role.

10. Summary

Tourism is a significant sector of the East Devon economy. There is an important opportunity to review how the Council can best support recovery post pandemic and add value to the sector. This will need to be developed in to a tourism strategy that will be considered further by Cabinet.

This report has attempted to reflect the creative arts and cultural ambitions of the Political Administration articulated within its Statement of Intent and the way that all the Council’s arts and culture teams have started to mould that into a coherent and exciting programme of projects, activities and new platforms.

The THG has and is showing that it can also be the Council’s primary vehicle for delivering this Council-wide arts and cultural development programme by taking a lead for these areas and

integrating into other Council priorities such as climate change and cultural tourism and regeneration. The successes of many of the programmes within this report have been achieved through close collaboration with other teams such as Wild East Devon, Events, LED and Streetscene.

The ability to “kick on” from here and showcase the value of culture in helping our communities recover from the pandemic or start the conversation with our local residents about how they can engage meaningfully with climate change issues requires an overarching strategic framework that places culture at the heart of the Council’s corporate documents recognising the intrinsic value of culture to our district’s wellbeing and how we can recover from the impacts of the pandemic economically as well as socially.

Financial implications:

The financial details are contained in the report with a request of a £50k budget to meet one off cost being met from a specific reserve. The financial implications that may arise from these Strategies are unknown and will have to be considered by Council along with other priorities.

Legal implications:

The revised Cultural Strategy will require adoption by Council as it is part of the Policy Framework while the Tourism Strategy is a matter for Cabinet. Should Cabinet endorse the repurposing of the Arts & Culture Forum, this will be included within the changes to be presented to Annual Council. Otherwise there are no legal implications requiring comment.