

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Arts and Culture Forum held at Online via the Zoom app on 20 January 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.10 pm

1 Public speaking

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

2 Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair informed those present that co-opted community representative, Sally Twiss, had stepped down from the Forum. On behalf of the Forum he thanked Sally for her time and valuable contribution to the Arts and Culture Forum.

RECOMMENDED: that the recommendation that Councillor Nick Hookway be appointed Vice Chair of the Arts and Culture Forum for the remainder of the civic year be passed for approval.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 February 2021 were agreed.

4 Declarations of interest

7 & 9. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Andrew Moulding, Personal, President of Axminster Musical Theatre, president of Cloakham Lawn Sports Centre and trustee of Axminster Heritage.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Bruce De Saram, Personal, Exmouth Town councillor.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Joe Whibley, Personal, Exmouth Town councillor.

10. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Paul Millar, Personal, Director of Sideshore.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Vicky Johns, Personal, Art Administrator for the South West Academy of Fine and Applied Arts.

Declarations of interest.

Penny Lewis, Personal, Budleigh Salterton town councillor.

5 East Devon AONB culture update

The Chair welcomed Emma Molony to the meeting to give an East Devon AONB culture update to the Board, which included a presentation on 'creative nature connections' –

engaging with nature through project and events. Routes was a partnership project with Double Elephant Print Workshop, working with Active Devon, University of Exeter and the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG).

The project involved public engagement with creative nature boxes at Harpford Woods, with a partnership between THG, East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Clinton Devon Estates. The social media engagement with the creative nature boxes had been great. Schools were able to engage and workshops were held May – July 2022, involving 250 children from five local schools. The children took part in mapping, different ways of looking, collecting materials to print and mindful activities. The children also produced linear maps of Harpford Woods for the creative nature boxes.

A downloadable literary soundwalk was recorded along the East Devon Way entitled 'Pebbled heaths, mossy depths'. Public workshops were held during Heath Week, with family creative writing workshop and a printmaking drop-in workshop.

During October half term there were 4 sessions of 10 participants taking part in family printmaking sessions at Harpford Village Hall, using the soundwalk and the East Devon Way as inspiration.

A partnership project with Active Devon brought together nature connections and creative activity. The Connecting Actively to Nature programme ran over 8 weeks for 20 participants over 55, with the aim of increasing levels of activity outside and providing respite from caring responsibilities as part of a supportive artist-led group. The participants were given sketchbooks to maintain engagement throughout the programme and afterwards all said that they felt encouraged to continue with creative activities.

Activities for 2022 included:

- Production of an intergenerational community-designed creative map of Harpford Woods (Tipton/Newton Poppleford primary schools, Sidmouth College and Sid Vale Memory Café).
- Trial hybrid courses to encourage nature connections and creative activity (combination of online and in-person supported group sessions).
 - 'Walking the Seasons' mindfulness courses in partnership with Exeter University.
 - Nature focussed creative hybrid courses in partnership with THG.
- Developing strategic partnerships to cross sector creative engagement with Active Devon and Devon Wildlife Trust.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked Emma for her interesting presentation. It was felt that there were opportunities to widen the project beyond the AONB and for collaboration across the district, or Devon as a whole. From a public health perspective there were many ways to engage with the physical and mental health agenda, with activities transferable across all ages. It was agreed that this project should be 'upscaled', with EDDC facilities being used to progress this.

6 **Culture Strategy workscope**

The Service Lead – Countryside and Leisure outlined his report, which provided a workscope for the planned ten year Culture Strategy that was approved by Cabinet in May 2021.

It provided a detailed scoping document for the future development and enhancement of the Council's ambitions for cultural development as articulated in the Council Plan. The Culture Strategy would seek to build on the existing work of the Council focussed mainly

around the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, as a cultural hub and the Arts & Culture Forum and the newly created Arts Culture East Devon (ACED) network through a more cohesive and strategic approach to arts and culture and also seeking to add capacity and resource into meeting these ambitions.

The Culture Strategy workscope would also seek to synergise with the planned Tourism Strategy work to enable an enhanced cultural programme, and to help 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 through cultural tourism, green initiatives, educational opportunities and 'Made in Devon' retail.

The Culture Strategy workscope was an opportunity to place culture at the heart of the Council's recovery planning (both economically and socially).

The aim of the Culture Strategy was to:

- Build and secure place-based strategic partnerships and local community ownership around a shared 10 year vision for East Devon and the surrounding areas.
- Reflect the needs of people who live and work in the district.
- Provide a compelling and robust framework to attract future investment from public, private, community and social enterprise sectors, including national investment sources such as Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Arts Council England and the National Lottery.
- Guide a sustainable, inclusive development of the area that is fit to meet global challenges of climate and ecological breakdown and growing inequalities.

The Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) Executive Group would act as the steering group for the cultural strategy development and was one of the primary consultative platforms. Consultants with extensive experience in cultural strategy, process, development and design were sought. The Service Lead reported that there had been a fantastic response; interviews would be held the following week it was hoped consultants would be appointed by 31 January 2022.

Those present agreed that it was a fantastic strategy and essential to finding funding from elsewhere, especially during the current financial challenges. There were other challenges involved with bringing diverse groups together across rural areas and understanding the priorities for towns. The strategy would help to create a map of activities across the district.

It was suggested that an additional aim of the cultural strategy should be to 'harness the talents and aspirations of the people that lived in the district' – to provide opportunities for people to be able to get involved and be part of a cultural collaboration/community.

RECOMMENDED: that the Arts and Culture Forum recommend to Cabinet that the scope of work for producing the Culture Strategy evidence base as detailed in the report, be approved.

7 **Thelma Hulbert Gallery programme 2022/23**

The Arts Development Manager explained that the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) operated as a 'cultural hub', supporting communities in their health, environment and well-being through a programme of exhibitions, events and workshops, which inspired, challenged and excited. It worked to support innovation in rural cultural production

through partnership and collaboration. During her presentation the Arts Development Manager listed a number of partnerships and collaborations.

The Creative Cabin was developed in 2020-21 as a mobile creative space, which enabled the THG to take nature and culture on tour during the pandemic. It hosts an array of activities including workshops, exhibitions, talks, performances and film. A new activity was 'The Creative Cabin – Climate Conversations on Tour'.

During 2021 a Mike Perry Land/Sea exhibition was held at both THG and Ocean, Exmouth.

The Arts Development Manager outlined the 2022-23 forward programme for the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) and how it linked with the Council Plan and its priorities. This included:

- The 'Towards a new model for rural cultural production' project, which would extend the THG's impact across East Devon, rooting creativity in community and place and establishing a sub-regional strategic role for culture. It would help to stabilise East Devon's arts ecology as a whole, linking culture and creativity into wider agendas such as climate emergency, inequality, rurality and post-pandemic recovery.
- Creative communities and the land – responding to diverse artistic perspectives, this would join with East Devon communities to explore inequality and environmental injustice, helping to realise a better future through individual and collective creative expression.
- Emerging Maker was the THG's investment in the research and development of emerging craft makers. 30 graduate makers would be given a public platform at THG and Ocean, with mentoring and exhibition making support.
- Creative Cabin: climate conversions and routes for roots – Clyst Valley Regional Park
- Audience development:
 - Re-engaging core audiences who had lapsed during the pandemic.
 - Increasing the diversity of the audiences.
 - Building the audience for contemporary art.

The THG was working in collaborative partnership with Leisure East Devon (LED) and had a second creative 'hub' at Ocean, Exmouth. This had a different character to THG and it was hoped that it would appeal to a different age group. At Ocean the aim was to engage a younger and more diverse audience, by offering an informal experience linked to social time and enjoyment of the beach and sea.

The Forum thanked the Arts Development Manager for her great presentation and congratulated her on all the fantastic work of the THG. They were delighted with the concept of the gallery being a cultural hub; taking the essence of the gallery into the community (outside of Honiton) and linking with other agencies, and encouraged the team to continue the journey. The Chair thanked the THG team for its adaptability and resilience and the Arts Development Manager commented on the support they had received in order to be so resilient, and in turn thanked the Council for being given drive, renewed energy and commitment. She also invited members to attend the ACED meeting on 7 February 2022.

8 **Arts and Culture East Devon members network update**

In February 2021, the THG launched Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED), a forum connecting the artistic communities of East Devon and providing a central platform to engage, network, promote and talk about arts and culture across the region.

The aims of the ACED were:

- Provide support for professional and artistic development, enabling partnership.
- Develop and promote local authority arts and culture-led economic growth initiatives.
- 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.
- Embed the role of the arts in the cultural, social, educational, environmental and economic life of the district increase participation in cultural activity in the district, developing a healthy social and cultural ecology which engages and enriches communities

The ACED's Network and Participation Co-ordinator's role focus was:

- ACED's membership framework.
- Volunteer engagement at THG and Ocean.
- Create a community hub (Ocean).
- Co-ordinate training, development and innovation at ACED.

There were four champions and the Arts Development Manager gave a brief summary of them all:

- Decolonisation champion
- Art champion
- Education champion
- Theatre champion

Members of the Arts and Culture Forum were invited to attend the next meeting of the ACED on 7 February 2022 at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.

9 **Net zero by 2040**

The Forum received a presentation from EDDC's Climate Change Officer about the Devon climate emergency and the Council's climate change action plan and strategy, and how art had a role to play in promoting this. Art could be powerful in that it was able to discuss big issues, it could be brave, it could be shocking and art could say the things that sometimes people can't.

The Climate Change Officer explained that 42% of carbon emissions came from buildings, 37% from transport, with remaining from a combination of waste, industrial processes and land use. The figures involved with climate change were huge. The carbon footprint across East Devon was 1,000,000 CO₂e tonnes, with EDDC's carbon footprint being 29,000 CO₂e tonnes.

It was anticipated that the final Devon Carbon Plan would be ready in January 2023, with the report out for public consultation in summer 2022.

The themes in the plan where the Council could make meaningful climate change interventions included:

- Energy supply and consumption.
- Permitting and encouraging low carbon development.
- Improving the carbon footprint of existing buildings (public and private sector).
- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- Water supply and flood protection.
- Transport and travel.
- Purchasing and consumption.

- Community resilience.
- Education, communication and influencing behaviour.

EDDC also had its own climate change action plan and strategy and as a council were working really hard to reduce the carbon footprint. A 60% behaviour change was required. There was a huge amount that could be done in terms of public education and awareness raising, to help people engage with and understand some of the difficult issues and decisions that need to be made.

The Climate Change Officer was thanked for her excellent presentation and the Forum discussed how it could be used to engage with the climate change conversations. The THG was praised for the fantastic outreach work they were doing and providing the opportunity for engagement through the arts. It was noted that during the THG workshops at Sideshore, Exmouth, there had also been climate change stand enabling public engagement. The Arts Development Manager commented that she was heartened to hear the enthusiasm for climate change. There was already a dynamic engagement structure set up, including strong links with the AONB teams and environmental exhibitions.

10 **Blackdown Hills AONB - East Devon art and culture update**

Tim Youngs, Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership Manager introduced himself and outlined how arts and culture was woven into the Blackdown Hills AONB, connecting culture into the outstanding natural environment in East Devon.

The Blackdown Hills AONB was spread across four districts and two counties, with EDDC being the largest district council. The Partnership comprised of a small team, with inclusion and diversity at the heart of everything it did. All AONBs had signed up to the Colchester Declaration which was set up in July 2019 to consider:

- Opportunities for AONBs
- Nature resource
- Current state of nature
- Future state of nature
- England nature recovery target

A visualisation of the Blackdown Hills AONB current landscape and then a woodland and hedge network was used as a tool to demonstrate what a future, resilient and nature rich Blackdown Hills AONB could be. The Partnership Manager reported that visualisations had been very helpful in engaging and connecting people.

2021 had been the 30th anniversary of the Blackdown Hills AONB and to celebrate this was a project '30 ways to experience the Blackdown Hills AONB'. This included a series of stories and activities relating to hillforts, examples of accessible woodlands to draw people out of towns, expansive views and expansive. There was also a monument management scheme. The Forum were advised to see the website for the full list.

The Creative Cabin had run roadshows around parts of the AONB and joint events had been undertaken to engage young people.

The Partnership Manager went on to outline the Robert Beven and the Camden Town artists project which would be brought to the THG in 2023 and gave an impressionist view of the landscape 100 years ago.

Over the next 12 months the Blackdown Hills AONB planned to:

- Work with the THG team on climate conversations and the Camden Town Exhibition.
- Embed 'Art in the Landscape' strategy into all the Blackdown Hills AONB work.
- Increase outreach work with parishes and support their aspirations for a wilder Devon.
- Engage artists and project makers in projects.
- Provide benefits for local tourism businesses.

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership Manager was thanked for an interesting and thought provoking presentation and the Forum agreed that there was plenty more scope to nurture and develop a relationship between the Blackdown Hills AONB and the THG, as well as the East Devon AONB, and they were looking forward to hearing about future collaborations.

Attendance List

EDDC Councillors present:

J Whibley (Chair)
B De Saram
A Moulding
N Hookway

Community representatives:

Brian Norris

Town Representatives

P Lewis, Budleigh Salterton Town Council
C Buchan, Cranbrook Town Council
J Loudoun, Sidmouth Town Council
E Beech, Exmouth Town Council

Officers in attendance:

Ruth Gooding, Arts Development Manager/Curator THG
Charles Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure
Graham Whitlock, House Manager (Manor Pavilion Theatre)
Fiona Page-Turner, Marketing and Fundraising Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Catherine Causley, Climate Change Officer
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Emma Molony, Freelance Project Manager, East Devon AONB
Tim Youngs, Partnership Manager, Blackdown Hills AONB

Also Present

P Arnott
P Faithfull
V Johns
P Millar

Apologies:

E Pang, Ottery St Mary Town Council
O Davey, East Devon District Council
D Housom, Sidmouth Town Council

J Whipps, Exmouth Town Council

Chairman

Date: