



**East Devon District Council
A New Cultural Strategy**

27 May 2022





Contents

Foreword.....	2
1. Introduction	2
1.1 Why we need a strategy	2
1.2 What we mean by culture.....	2
1.3 How we developed the strategy	3
2. The Strategy	3
2.1 Vision, mission and values.....	3
2.2 Indicators of success.....	4
2.3 Themes	4
3. Next Steps	6

Appendices

Appendix 1: Cultural Producer – a new role	7
Appendix 2: Action Plan	8
Appendix 3: Case Studies.....	17
Appendix 4: Next steps in developing the strategy	17



Foreword

From the Leader / Portfolio holder, TBC

1. Introduction

1.1 Why we need a strategy

Across towns and villages, along the seaside and in the rolling hills of our countryside parishes, East Devon has a thriving cultural scene, with many opportunities for local residents and visitors to get creative.

This Cultural Strategy aims to strengthen and promote our excellent existing offer. It also recognises that our district has a highly polarised demographic profile – with notably high proportions of both older residents and very young children – and so needs to offer high quality opportunities, accessible to people of all ages, in all communities.

Some progress has already been made. The new post of Portfolio Holder for Culture, Sport, Leisure and Tourism provides political leadership for culture. And, during the pandemic, our team at Thelma Hulbert Gallery established a new network for artists and creative practitioners called Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED), helping local people stay in touch (albeit virtually at first), access funding opportunities and connect with others across the district.

These ACED meetings identified shared opportunities and challenges and the need for a joined up approach if we want to make culture an even greater part of East Devon life.

So, in January 2022, East Devon District Council (EDDC) began working with specialist consultants, FEI, to develop a Cultural Strategy and Action Plan which will help us achieve our goals.

(I've kept this section very short, as most readers will want to get to the 'meat' of the strategy, but we could add in a summary of the SWOT here – or add it in at the end as an Appendix)

1.2 What we mean by culture

'Culture' is used in this document to mean all those areas of activity associated with the artforms and organisations in which Arts Council England invests: collections, digital and combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre, and the visual arts.

Culture can be made and shared by a huge range of organisations and individuals: creative practitioners and artists, entrepreneurs and volunteers, community groups and businesses, local authorities and friends' groups, and many more.



Culture can take place in purpose-built and unusual venues, in parks, high streets, village halls and natural landscapes. Culture is where creativity is shared with others.

1.3 How we developed the strategy

To ensure our strategy is distinctive, ambitious, relevant and deliverable, a range of work was undertaken to provide the evidence base for the approach we are taking.

We reviewed local, regional and national policies and plans, such as Levelling Up, that could influence our Cultural Strategy and gathered information about capital projects that are under development in East Devon.

We mapped people, places, organisations and activities to find out what is already happening across East Devon and how it is currently funded. This included arts organisations, events, festivals, museums and classes – 235 were identified, with activity in all towns and parishes. We explored the local and regional market for culture and the potential for future growth of audiences and visitors.

And we consulted widely, through interviews, workshops and a public survey which had nearly 500 responses. This all took place between February-March 2022.

2. The Strategy

2.1 Vision, mission and values

Our vision is for East Devon to be a vibrant cultural ecosystem whose distinctive communities and outstanding natural environment are enhanced and enriched through creativity, curiosity and collaboration.

Our mission is to balance the unique identities, independence and quirks of each East Devon community with the need to work together on ambitious, shared initiatives that transcend any one organisation, artform or place. This will include partners from within and beyond our district.

Our values underpin the strategy. We will be:

- **Resilient**
We will build resilience of the creative and cultural sector by connecting, supporting and securing investment in local artists and practitioners, and attracting new investment
- **Collaborative**
Local community spirit drives much of our current cultural activity. This will be a strategy that empowers more local people to shape and get involved with culture at all stages of their lives, delivered with and for local people from all parts of the district
- **Diverse and inclusive**

We will draw on and reflect the diversity of contemporary society and celebrate the variety of activity that takes place in East Devon, ensuring an inclusive approach and equality of opportunity

- Connected with nature

East Devon has an abundance of opportunities to connect nature, culture wellbeing and people in mutually beneficial ways. We will use culture and creativity to enhance, inspire and engage people, to support our goal of carbon neutrality by 2040 and help mitigate against the threats of climate change on our communities.

2.2 Indicators of success

To be scoped / included in final version, once objectives and actions agreed. They will be included in detail in the Delivery Plan, and summarised briefly here.

2.3 Themes

We have identified five themes that encompass *what* we want to achieve and three themes related to *how* we will deliver an effective strategy. We have developed a set of objectives and actions to implement them.

See Appendix 2 for a detailed Action Plan.

Theme 1

Strengthen and support the ‘people-that-do’

Objective

Support the unique, community-led cultural organisations whose efforts enhance the high quality of life and wellbeing in East Devon’s towns and villages.

Actions

- Invest in and strengthen our many thriving, often volunteer-run cultural venues and programmes
- Support and champion volunteering.

Theme 2

Protect and enhance the natural environment

Objective

Establish East Devon as an innovator and regional beacon of culture-led environmental protection, enhancement and activism.

Actions

- Develop a year-round programme that celebrates and connects people with East Devon’s natural environment and inspires them to protect and enhance it – potentially in collaboration with South Somerset
- Improve the environmental practices of the district’s cultural festivals to establish them as leaders in sustainable event management.



Theme 3 Cultural tourism

Objective

Establish new cultural products, partnerships and promotional activity, to mutually benefit and grow the creative and visitor economies.

Actions

- Test new collaborations and ideas, such as joint marketing and communications, through a cultural tourism partnership pilot
- Support and promote major events which bring significant visitor spend and profile to East Devon, such as Sidmouth Folk, Beautiful Days and events that take place beyond the peak summer season.

Theme 4 Creative enterprise and skills

Objective

Build inspiring talent development pathways for the current and next generation of East Devon creatives.

Actions

- Develop opportunities for young people to learn and apply creative and cultural skills in East Devon
- Utilise empty or underused spaces for creative activities.

Theme 5 New places for culture

Objective

Ensure all East Devon residents, especially children and young people, have the opportunity to experience high quality culture and creativity in their local areas

Actions

- Explore the concept of Exmouth Cultural Quarter as a way to link the town's activities and develop new or improved places and spaces for culture
- Integrate cultural spaces and opportunities into new housing developments.

Theme 6 Connectivity

Objective

Support the sector to connect, work collectively, share best practice and lever investment through greater joint working.

Action

- Resource and promote Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) as a network, connector and champion of the local creative and cultural sector, working with members to shape its ongoing development.



Theme 7 Cultural leadership

Objective

Be ambitious and drive change through bringing together a diverse range of partners to drive forward and advocate for the Cultural Strategy and secure inward investment.

Action

- Provide leadership and stewardship to drive forward the strategy and bring partners on board.

Theme 8 Capture value

Objective

Ensure continuous learning and improvement by monitoring and evaluating the change that creativity and culture has on people and place.

Action

- Develop a single evaluation process that captures the social and economic value of culture and allows organisations to advocate for the sector as a whole.

3. Next Steps

The priority is to begin implementing the strategy by putting in place the partnerships and resources required to achieve our ambitions.

This includes bringing together partners from a range of disciplines, both within and beyond East Devon District Council, to set up a Cultural Compact or other similar strategic alliance. It also includes the appointment of a Cultural Producer (see Appendix 1) who will be a lynchpin for coordination, communications, fundraising and new initiatives. We will also work with the members of the nascent Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) network to connect artists and practitioners with the potential work programmes (listed in Appendix 2) that deliver the strategy and which can attract funding – through, for example, bids to the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) and the next round of Arts Council England's [Cultural Development Fund](#).

Our aim is to have the Cultural Producer in place within the next three months to support strategic funding applications such as these.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Cultural Producer – a new role

Note for Steering Group / Arts & Culture Forum: This role is subject to funding and Council approval.

A new role will be created for a Cultural Producer.

This role will take forward the Action Plan's ambitions and act as a conduit and enabler both between East Devon District Council's services (Growth, Development & Prosperity, Countryside and Leisure, Property Services, Marketing and Communication and Events) and also to seek out fundraising opportunities to help support the wider ambitions outlined in the Action Plan.

The Cultural Producer will provide a central hub for advocacy, communications and development of the strategy, including coordination of the Cultural Compact/partnership and the Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) network.

The Cultural Producer will be situated within the Thelma Hulbert Gallery / ACED team who would support the post to meet deliverables by utilising existing networks, resources and shared expertise in cultural engagement, marketing and programming.

The ACED Network will be developed into a supportive, consultative resource, operating internally and externally, supporting fundraising, education and outreach, cultural tourism and partnership building.

It is clear that without identifying additional capacity and resource the ability to take forward many of the exciting project opportunities that are identified within the Culture Strategy and its Action Plan will be limited.

Appendix 2: Action Plan

This section describes in more detail each Theme and Objective, listing potential work programmes that could be delivered to achieve each Action, plus brief details on the timescale and potential East Devon District Council (EDDC) lead.

Definitions

- Short-term: Already underway or can be within 3-6 months, via existing resources or once the Cultural Producer is appointed
- Medium-term: To be undertaken within 3 years; requires additional planning, fundraising and resources, including partnership working
- Long-term: 3-10 year timescale for more complex work programmes

Theme 1

Strengthen and support the ‘people-that-do’

Objective: Support the unique, community-led cultural organisations whose efforts enhance the high quality of life and wellbeing in East Devon’s towns and villages.

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
1.1 Invest in and strengthen our many thriving, often volunteer-run cultural venues and programmes across East Devon	1.1.1 Build post-Covid confidence and capacity for volunteers and community groups in our towns and parishes through training in governance, business planning, digital transformation and fundraising, as well as training in core creative skills, such as producing live events, interpretation, collections management	Short/Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team, via UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) bid Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	1.1.2 Enhance the quality and appeal of collections, and the sustainability of local museums, through a programme of shared capital investment in display and interpretation	Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team (UK SPF bid) Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	1.1.3 Explore the potential of a new network that supports more community asset transfers and sharing of	Med	Place, Assets & Commercialisation team

	policy support and good practice for village halls and other cultural venues, to ensure their place at the heart of our communities		Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
1.2 Support and champion volunteering	1.2.1 Celebrate East Devon's volunteers through recognition and rewards	Short	Growth, Development & Prosperity team (UK SPF bid) Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	1.2.2 Explore the potential for promoting and diversifying volunteering opportunities through a central portal, such as Volunteer Makers	Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team (UK SPF bid) Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)

Theme 2
Protect and enhance the natural environment

Objective: Establish East Devon as an innovator and regional beacon of culture-led environmental protection, enhancement and activism.

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
2.1 Develop a year-round programme that celebrates and connects people with East Devon's natural environment and inspires them to protect and enhance it – potentially in	2.1.1 Link with a range of nature, tourism and cultural organisations, and the University of Exeter, to audit/understand the current offer and develop an ambitious year-round programme, connecting culture and nature across the district	Short/Med	EDDC Countryside team and Arts Development Manager to convene the group

collaboration with South Somerset	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	Med	Arts Development and SW Museums Development Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	2.1.3 Invest in initiatives which work closely with communities in creative, innovative ways to connect local people with nature and the challenges we face in preserving it. For example: Tidelines (Exmouth), Sidmouth Seafest, Thelma Hulbert Gallery's Creative Cabin (touring)	Short	Via ACED network Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
Improve the environmental practices of the district's cultural festivals to establish them as leaders in sustainable event management	2.2.1 Use Julie's Bicycle, a recognised tool for monitoring cultural impact, to support EDDC-funded and independent festivals to monitor and improve their environmental performance	Short/Med	Events Team to research/convene

Theme 3 Cultural tourism

Objective: Establish new cultural products, partnerships and promotional activity to mutually benefit and grow the creative and visitor economies.

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
3.1 Test new collaborations and ideas, such as joint marketing and communications,	3.1.1 Develop a 'what's on' guide and shared assets for cultural tourism, using an existing portal such as East Devon Excellence as a host	Med	via Tourism Strategy implementation plans



through a cultural tourism partnership pilot			
	3.1.2 Support new 'product development' in the tourism sector to attract visitors beyond the peak season by working with cultural partners, to promote art classes, retreats, workshops, links with food, wellbeing and nature	Short	Via ACED network Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	3.1.3 Invest in key cultural visitor attractions that have potential to bring year-round visitors: e.g. Thelma Hulbert Gallery, aligning calendars and sharing programmes/events with tourism partners	Short	via Tourism Strategy implementation plans Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
3.2 Support and promote major events which bring significant visitor spend and profile to East Devon, such as Sidmouth Folk and Beautiful Days, and events that take place beyond the peak summer season	3.2.1 Work with independent promoters, as well as the in-house events, to maximise impact from major events and festivals	Med	Events Team

Theme 4
Creative enterprise and skills

Objective: Build inspiring talent development pathways for the current and next generation of ED creatives

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
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4.1 Develop opportunities for young people to learn and apply creative and cultural skills in East Devon	4.1.1 Explore the concept of a creative digital skills hub for films, TV and gaming – possibly linked to the Future Skills Centre run by Exeter College	Med/Long	Growth, Development & Prosperity team Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	4.1.2 Join Devon Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) and/or explore the value in setting up a more localised LCEP to strengthen links between the cultural sector and schools / education providers	Short	THG Engagement Officer Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	4.1.3 Coordinate a programme of paid creative apprenticeships across a range of East Devon cultural organisations, to provide pathways to employment and increase capacity of the local cultural sector	Med/Long	Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting) and with support from e.g. ACED members
	4.1.4 Establish a regular Youth Forum for young creatives and activists to help shape and influence the cultural offer	Short	THG Engagement Officer Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
4.2 Utilise empty or underused spaces for creative activities	4.2.1 Run a pilot programme to enable artists and community groups to take meanwhile leases on empty shops, for use as studios, workshops and pop-up galleries	Short/Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team / Arts Development Manager Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)

	4.2.2 Invest in co-working, workshop and mixed use spaces to strengthen community infrastructure, especially in new developments, and take advantage of the shift away from commuting and towards local working	Med/Long	Local Plan team
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Theme 5 New places for culture

Objective: Ensure all East Devon residents, especially children and young people, have the opportunity to experience high quality culture and creativity in their local areas

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
5.1 Explore the concept of Exmouth Cultural Quarter as a way to link the town's activities and develop new or improved places and spaces for culture	5.1.1 Link with the Exmouth place-making plans and masterplan to audit/understand current provision, local needs and opinions to shape a vision and delivery plan for culture in the town	Short	Exmouth/Place team
	5.1.2 Explore the role of the Exmouth Pavilion as a potential creative hub for young people	Med/Long	Exmouth/Place team
5.2 Integrate cultural spaces and opportunities into new housing developments	5.2.1 Work with local residents, Libraries Unlimited and other partners to ensure Cranbrook and other new housing developments have an appropriate, high quality cultural offer co-designed with local residents	Med	Local Plan team / Arts Development Manager / THG Engagement Manager Supported by Cultural



			Producer (recruitment permitting)
	5.2.2 Lever planning gain to embed new indoor and outdoor cultural spaces for culture in new developments	Med	Local Plan team Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)

Theme 6 Connectivity

Objective: Support the sector to connect, work collectively, share best practice and lever investment through greater joint working

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
6.1 Resource and promote Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) as a network, connector and champion of the local creative and cultural sector, working with members to shape its ongoing development	6.1.1 Continue building the ACED network via regular meetings, newsletters, information-sharing and socials	Short/ Med	Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	6.1.2 Convene a steering group to devise a business plan for ACED, reflecting on success to date and exploring how best to democratise its leadership and management, maximise effectiveness and build its role in supporting delivery of this Cultural Strategy	Short	Arts Development Manager Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	6.1.3 Establish new/linked networks that feed into ACED, to provide specialised	Short/Med	Cultural Producer



	communities of practice across the variety of activity on offer		(recruitment permitting)
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**Theme 7
Cultural leadership**

Objective: Be ambitious and drive change through bringing together a diverse range of partners to drive forward and advocate for the Cultural Strategy and secure inward investment

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
7.1 Provide leadership and stewardship to drive forward the strategy and bring partners on board	7.1.1 Establish a Cultural Compact or other partnership to lead this strategy, including collaborative projects and shared funding bids, such as the Cultural Development Fund	Short	Service Lead - Countryside & Leisure Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	7.1.2 Integrate Cultural Strategy Objectives and Actions into wider Council plans, staff work schedules and resource planning to understand what resources are available and where gaps remain	Short/Med	All
	7.1.3 Invest in a Cultural Producer to provide a central hub for advocacy, communications and development of the strategy, including coordination of the Cultural Compact/partnership and the ACED network	Short/Med	Service Lead - Countryside & Leisure
	7.1.4 Assign a small budget to pay freelancers for their time in strategic leadership roles, such as the Cultural Compact	Short	Service Lead - Countryside & Leisure

Theme 8



Capture value

Objective: Ensure continuous learning and improvement by monitoring and evaluating the change that creativity and culture has on people and place.

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
8.1 Develop a single evaluation process that captures the social, economic, environmental and health & wellbeing value of culture, enabling advocacy for the sector as a whole	8.1.1 Work with Arts Council England and other regional partners, such as Plymouth or Exeter to explore tools available for measuring impact across East Devon cultural organisations	Med	Via ACED network



Appendix 3: Case Studies

We will add in 4 or 5 short case studies for the final report, to give a snapshot of the range of cultural activity currently taking place in East Devon.

Appendix 4: Next steps in developing the strategy

(Information for the Steering Group and Arts & Culture Forum. This section will, of course, not be included in the final strategy doc)

An earlier draft strategy (v2.0) was reviewed by the Steering Group (25th May) and their comments are incorporated within this draft (v3.0) to be shared with East Devon District Council's Arts & Culture Forum (15th June) for their feedback too.

The FEI team will then produce a final version of the strategy document, accompanied by a detailed Delivery Plan, to include:

- Evaluation metrics
 - To indicate how we will measure impact. These will be listed briefly in the strategy itself (section 3.2 above – 'Indicators of success') but with further detail in the Delivery Plan.
 - Indicators will be both qualitative and quantitative and may include metrics which are already being measured or are available easily, such as visitor numbers to cultural venues
- Governance and management.
 - More detail on how a Cultural Compact or other leadership group might be scoped and implemented
- Resource and funding plan
 - Including: who will lead on each action; current resources available to drive an action forward; additional resources required; timetable/milestones; partners essential/desired.