

Report to: ACED Forum



Date of Meeting 12<sup>TH</sup> October 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## East Devon Culture Strategy progress update

### Report summary:

The purpose of this report is to update ACED Forum members on plans and the progress being made in delivering the East Devon Culture Strategy 2022-31. Also the details of the proposed three year cultural programme being funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF).

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That the ACED Forum notes the plans being made in delivering the East Devon Culture Strategy 2022-31 and the UK SPF cultural programme 2022-2025.

### Reason for recommendation:

To enable the ACED Forum to have oversight of the progress being made in delivering the East Devon Culture Strategy 2022-31 and receive updates and reports at its meeting as part of the monitoring and review framework for the Culture Strategy's implementation.

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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

This is a report on updating members of the ACED Forum on plans and progress being made in delivering the Culture Strategy

### Climate change Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; There are no risks associated with this report and its recommendation.

**Links to background information** Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt 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. Culture Strategy summary update

1.1 Since the adoption of the East Devon Culture Strategy 2022-31 in July 2022 there has been progress with a number of the actions identified within the document. The Strategy being a 10 year document means that there is enough time to help develop and identify new partnerships, funding and community support for a number of new areas of cultural development across the district.

1.2 The recent adoption of the 5 year East Devon Tourism Strategy along with East Devon DC's Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy 2021-31 means that there is now a coherent policy and delivery framework for the Council to progress its ambitions in these three sectors as well as enabling multiple opportunities for collaboration. The Tourism Strategy in particular has been developed with a view to help support and develop a number of ambitions within the Culture Strategy around cultural tourism, place making and the marketing and promotion of our cultural and natural environment.

1.3 To be able to progress the delivery of the Culture Strategy the Council agreed to appoint a Cultural Producer to act as an enabler and lead officer to take forward the priorities identified within it. The role is currently out to advert and it is hoped that an appointment will be made by December 2022. Once in post there will be a focal point for not only delivery but also the monitoring and reviewing of the Strategy. This is a very important appointment for the Council and will enable the new postholder to work in collaboration and in partnership with our internal "cultural providers" such as the THG, Manor Pavilion theatre, Countryside team, Economic Development team and our Property & Estates team on actions within the Strategy.

1.4 The Cultural Producer will also be responsible for securing the long term future of the ACED Network and ensuring it remains pivotal in bringing East Devon's creative and performing arts sector together to help provide a strong voice for the cultural ambitions of East Devon. The development of an East Devon Cultural Compact will help with developing strategic funding applications to bodies such as the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund. The Cultural Producer will enable both district-wide and south west networking to help market and promote the district's creative arts and cultural sectors activities and events in a more joined up way. This will be crucial to help support East Devon's year round visitor economy. This work will be in support of and alongside the promotional strategies of the Economic Development and Communications teams.

1.5 Finally the planned three year cultural programme funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (an announcement is expected in October 2022) will provide an initial injection of funds to help take forward some of actions identified within the Culture Strategy. This will enable some early "wins" in delivery and enable funds to be released this year into supporting some of our local cultural organisations. The details of the programme are in section 2 of this report.

## 2. The UK SPF cultural programme

### **Project description:**

In January 2022, East Devon District Council (EDDC) began working with specialist consultants, FEI, to develop a Cultural Strategy and an Action Plan.

#### Aims:

- *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*  
We will draw on and reflect the diversity of contemporary society and celebrate the variety of activity that takes place in East Devon
- *Connected with nature*  
East Devon has an abundance of opportunities to connect nature, culture wellbeing and people in mutually beneficial ways. We will amplify how culture enhances, inspires and engages people with the countryside, coast and climate and the challenges we face in protecting them.

The programme of projects over the 3 year funding period delivers East Devon's Culture Strategy's theme on 'Strengthen and support the 'people-that-do''. It will specifically assist in creating cultural opportunities for some of East Devon's most socially deprived communities and those who have little or no access to cultural activities or events.

The programme of cultural projects will also help build civic pride with the focus being on celebrating and supporting the work of volunteers who ensure our local cultural assets e.g. museums, theatres, community centres etc. are managed and open to the public as well providing opportunities to develop skillsets such as fundraising, developing business plans etc. to help support these cultural assets futures

#### Culture Strategy 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 policy support and good practice for village halls and other cultural venues, to ensure their place at the heart of our communities	Med	Place, Assets & Commercialisation team 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)

## Stage 2 project details:

- Any data regarding local **challenges** in our area which this project will help to resolve
  - East Devon has an ageing population, including the 3rd highest proportion of retired people in the UK. At the same time, health is generally high. By investing in community cultural activity through volunteering and community leadership, this project will enable many among this key demographic to stay active and continue to contribute to their communities.
  - Overall, the population of East Devon has lower levels of cultural engagement than Devon as a whole.
  - The project proposal will take forward **one of the 5 Key Themes in the Culture Strategy** that seeks to help provide support and additional resource into the volunteer network supporting much of the cultural activities in East Devon's communities;
  - The current volunteer network is disparate and uncoordinated across the district with multiple challenges around receiving support for fund raising and accessing appropriate training to build capacity, the project proposal will help target resources through events, professional support and a single point of contact (volunteer portal) to provide capacity into this area;
  - This project will pilot an infrastructure model for volunteer networking and capacity building, seeking to empower the volunteer base to grow in confidence, capacity and skill (rather than disempowering by doing everything for them)

- Audience development especially with young people is also a key challenge the project will seek to overcome and enable young people in the district to participate, engage and have a voice for their needs through the creation of a Youth Forum;
- East Devon has significantly fewer 20-29 year olds than Devon as a whole. While culture alone cannot solve this problem, the targeted support and opportunities within this project will help more young people to feel that they have a voice, something to do and potentially a role in their community.
- FEI's 2022 consultation revealed a strong community desire for more joined-up promotion and publicity. Some commented that there is 'little to no capacity' for marketing within volunteer organisations. This project will build skills in digital marketing and explore options for a joined-up model.
- The lack of single point of information through a digital 'what's on' guide that enables the diverse and numerous cultural activities being delivered within the district has meant that local people and visitors have been unable to access or even been aware of events. The project will seek to set up a digital 'what's on guide' to overcome this issue working in collaboration with tourism to create a destination portal;
- As a first step, this project will commission a community information systems mapping exercise and feasibility study. Using external expertise, this exercise will map the strengths and weaknesses of existing human and digital information systems in the community / VCSE sector against the various audiences for information, their needs and preferences. This will ensure that any digital guide does not 'reinvent the wheel' while also allowing it to be shaped by proven audience / end-user need.
- The Strategy covers a ten year timespan and a number of the project proposals will require this length of time to fully develop from the concept and initial 'start-up' position the SPF will support. The challenge will be to sustain and scale up these areas following the initial injection of funding from the SPF.

2.1 Any data or information regarding local **opportunities** in our area which this project will help to realise

- East Devon has more than 100 public venues for culture, including 25 community museums and heritage sites, libraries, 7 small-scale performing arts centres, 35 village halls and an art gallery. The majority are partly or entirely volunteer-run. This project will help this largely volunteer-run cultural ecology to realise its full potential as community assets (FEI mapping)
- For example, up to 700 people volunteer in East Devon's community museums which, between them, welcome quarter of a million visitors per year (extrapolated by FEI from South West Museums data). This project will ensure volunteers benefit from the most up-to-date skills in order to deliver a high quality experience for visitors. (FEI mapping)
- East Devon is home to 17 festivals and 54 clubs and societies offering opportunities to take part in activity (FEI mapping)
- 49% of East Devon's adult population visit or take part in theatre. (FEI mapping)
- FEI's consultation showed that the community support an assets-based approach to empowering people to make things happen in their own communities.
- The approach set out in the project will target those actively engaged in volunteering for their local cultural organisation or as a lead for their community where there is a need and opportunity

to provide targeted training e.g. writing funding applications that can help support and sustain local cultural activities;

- The project proposal will help support the work of Arts Culture East Devon (ACED) Network that is supporting creative arts professionals with talks, sharing information and accessing events that supports the cultural sector in the district;
- Partnership working is fundamental to the project and will ensure co-ordination of volunteer activities across all East Devon's communities providing advice and guidance on establishing groups interested in running events and activities.
- The project will encourage utilising the district's outstanding natural environment and developing programmes of activity that have a low carbon footprint.
- The delivery of specific training needs into our volunteering community will require the use of specialist training providers who can go into our communities and deliver workshops that cover a wide range of identified "skillset needs" that can support the delivery of locally delivered cultural activities;
- FEI's 2022 consultation revealed a desire for better connectivity among artists, practitioners and networks, including better access to information, spaces and opportunities.
- There are significant opportunities for improving access to training needs, engage our younger audiences, provide a co-ordinated cross district what's on guide, develop a volunteer portal that is accessible to every community and local resident. The benefits of volunteering in particular are well known for both mental and physical wellbeing, which links well and compliments the Council's Public Health Strategy.
- Cranbrook is a new town with limited cultural facilities and a very different demographic to the rest of the district and there is a need to engage the younger families and younger population in volunteering and setting up new cultural programmes as well as providing training to support this work;

2.2 How much **experience** do you have in managing this type of project and what **capacity** do we have to deliver this proposed project.

- There is 'strong' experience both within the Council in managing volunteers and supporting their development;
- The project will require additional expertise and experience in key areas such as the provision of freelance trainers to deliver courses and workshops; also to set up the what's on guide and the digital platform required to promote all the activities and events across the district;

### 3. Next steps

3.1 The funding submission for the cultural programme over three years is £91,800 with the majority of expenditure identified for years 2 and 3. The year 1 target is to set up the training modules for our voluntary and community cultural groups and run a limited number of courses as the funding allocation for Year 1 will require spending by March 2023.

3.2 The initial thinking is for the training modules and booking processes to be set up and co-ordinated through the ACED Network digital platform which will be developed as part of the secured funding for year 1. The modules that will be provided in year 1 will be offered in the following years along with an expanded portfolio of modules to provide expertise in a wide range

of areas from fund raising to audience development plans that will help provide the district's creative arts and cultural organisations and its volunteers with the skill sets to help secure their long term futures.

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**Financial implications:**

The financial details are contained in the report with the proposed UK SPF cultural programme proposal

**Legal implications:**

The report does not identify any legal implications requiring comment'