

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Arts and Culture Forum held at online via Zoom on 1 March 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.10 pm

18 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

19 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 October 2022 were agreed.

20 Declarations of interest

6. South West Museums - Vic Harding and Joanna Cairns.
Councillor Andrew Moulding, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Trustee of Axminster Heritage Centre Museum.

21 Introductions and update from ACED network - Sarah Elghady, Cultural Producer

The Arts Development Manager, Ruth Gooding introduced the newly appointed Cultural Producer, Sarah Elghady to the meeting. She also welcomed the ACED member champions present and invited them to introduce themselves. The first ACE meeting in Exmouth was hosted earlier in the week, where the Cultural Producer shared her plans for the network and cultural development across the district. Members of the network meeting were asked what they most enjoyed about being part of the ACE network and how the network could be improved. General feedback was that it was an incredibly helpful way to connect, collaborate and share best practice. They were also asked what the current biggest challenges were to their cultural industry and what specific areas of training would be useful. There would be three ACE network meetings a year, to be held at different venues across the district.

The Cultural Producer would be delivering the Council's ambitious 10 year culture strategy. She was an experienced fund raiser. Funding had been received from the Government's shared Prosperity Fund which would enable the delivery a three year cultural programme strengthening and supporting people.

One of the Cultural Producer's priorities was to launch an ACE website in June which would include a search directory for individual or organisational creative practice and enable better connection and collaboration. Another priority was delivering a three year training programme to include fundraising, marketing and volunteer recruitment training.

The Cultural Producer reported that the communications manager from East Devon Excellence had been commissioned by EDDC to establish and run the East Devon tourism network, which would include maintaining an online what's on listing of visitor

and cultural events across East Devon. ACE network members could promote their events.

The Chair thanked the Cultural Producer for her update. The Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure wished to formally recognise the work of the Cultural Curator and Marketing and Fundraising Officer for all their work with the Shared Prosperity Fund and ambitious three year programme.

22 **South West Museums - Vic Harding and Joanna Cairns**

The Arts Development Manager introduced Victoria Harding, Programme Manager and Jo Cairns, Devon Museum Development Officer, South West Museum Development to the Forum. The Programme Manager began the presentation by giving the Forum some context and key regional museum statistics:

- The South West had the highest proportion of independent museums at 67% of museums in the region.
- 66% of museums were independent charities.
- 43% of museums were 'micro' with fewer than 10,000 visitors annually.
- 44% of museums were wholly volunteer run.
- Visitor numbers were still down 43% in the region on 2019/20 level.
- 36% of museums reported an annual turnover of less than £25,000 in 2020/21.

The Programme Manager explained that South West Museum Development was a team of museum and heritage specialists working with the museum and heritage sector in the South West to create positive, lasting change and deliver public value. It was an Arts Council England funded Sector Support Organisation and had been an Arts Council's National Portfolio Organisation since 2018. It was one of nine Museum Development (ONS) providers across England.

Last financial year 227 museums had benefitted from South West Museum Development Programme support. It had provided targeted grant application support as well as in person training and online workshops with specialist officers. A 40% increase in investment from the Arts Council grant had been generated, increasing value for the sector to £758,300 in 2021/22.

The Devon Museum Development Officer explained that she helped museums achieve and maintain accreditation status. Between November 2022 and February 2023 museum accreditation support had been provided to Ottery St Mary Heritage Museum and Sidmouth Museum. She had also organised Devon Digital Engagement workshops and was the Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) Museum and Heritage Champion.

The Programme Manager outlined investment in East Devon's museums, which was comprised of:

- Local authority investment.
- Museum Development Officer provision.
- South West Museum Development (SWMD) specialist services.
- Value of SWMD grants.
- Training and skills.
- Special projects.

She also explained that investment in East Devon's museums had been broken down over four years and the museums had benefitted from a range of support services and good levels of engagement. Five museums had received over £48,400 of development services:

- Whimble Heritage Centre.
- Sidmouth Museum.
- Fairlynch Museum and Art Centre.
- Allhallows Museum.
- Axminster Heritage Centre.

At the end of the presentation the Programme Manager explained 'The Great Escape' which was an exciting programme being led by the Art Fund with funding by Arts Council England. Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Honiton Museum had been awarded £6000 for the programme which was aimed at bringing museums, schools and families together to engage young people with the UK's natural environment, drawing inspiration from the art and objects in museums and the creative and learning opportunities they could offer.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Programme Manager and the Devon Museum Development Officer for their presentation.

23 **University of Exeter, Creative Peninsular - Dr Tom Treavor**

The Arts Development Manager introduced Dr Tom Treavor, Director of the new MA at the University of Exeter, on curation, contemporary art and cultural management. He was also the director of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Creative Peninsular 'knowledge exchange' project, which explored collaborative approaches to place-making and culture led regeneration in Devon and Cornwall. The project focussed on increasing access and exchange between urban and rural communities, celebrating the region's distinctive landscape and Atlantic coastline whilst exploring its complex histories, through socially engaged arts programming.

Creative Peninsula aimed to establish a network of partners across Devon and Cornwall and to create a platform with local communities for re-telling the 'stories of place', working to overcome barriers to social inclusion, wellbeing and environmental sustainability. The AHRC were particularly keen that the university worked with local authorities, museums and arts organisations to establish a network of partners around the area to help influence policy, as well as creating platforms with communities for retelling stories of place.

The south west peninsula was defined by the relationship to the sea; geographically, culturally and economically. It was noted that the south west had really pronounced levels of deprivation. The Creative Peninsular project built on some work being done with Exeter City Council. The Creative Arc was a knowledge exchange partnership acting as a catalyst for culture-led regeneration and economic development in the City of Exeter. The three themes were:

- Health and wellbeing.
- Heritage and place.
- Environment

Thematic strands of the Creative Peninsular were:

- Atlantica/Black Atlantic – Reimagining the South West's relationship with the Atlantic and its histories, including Plymouth's maritime history.
- Ruralities – dispersed communities and intergenerational support networks.
- Queer Peninsula – map revealing Britain's gay capitals, with rural Devon and Cambridgeshire almost as popular as London, Brighton and Manchester. The South West was an area rich in LGBTQ+ history and culture.
- A Parliament of Waters - local communities giving a voice to their waters, for example Salmon Run; a community relay run of 50 miles along the river from the coast at the

mouth of the River Exe to Exmoor, following the migration of Atlantic Salmon, through the city of Exeter..

- Outdoor Cultures – examining the cultural identity of the South West and its relationship to the outdoors, for example sea swimmers and Exmouth beach rescue club.
- Digital Coast.

The Forum agreed that it was a very interesting presentation, with great potential and endorsed further developing relationships with the University of Exeter.

24 **Villages in Action - Mair George and Wendy Van Der Plank**

The Arts Development Manager introduced Mair George, Programme Manager and Wendy Van Der Plank, Community Animator from Villages in Action (VIA) to the Forum.

The Programme Manager explained that VIA was a charity enabling and promoting engagement in the arts, working largely with volunteer promoters, but since January they had also been working on a national lottery funded project called Village Exchange, between Membury, Honiton and Ottery St Mary.

VIA aimed to empower communities to develop, organise and sustain their own cultural activity, enhancing quality of life, social inclusion, self-confidence and enterprise. The VIA ongoing work enabled community participation in the arts through activating or presenting creative work at grassroots level, building a network of people engaged and identified as artists, art enablers and supporters. VIA acted largely as a broker, facilitating links. She demonstrated some East Devon events and participation highlights from October 2022 to February 2023 to the Forum, and shared some positive feedback.

From April 2022 to present date over £3500 had been taken in box office income from 12 local events, with additional money made on bar takings and refreshments. Over 620 audience members had experienced a VIA show in East Devon, with another few hundred taking part in creative workshops or other engagement activity. VIA were piloting how they were working in East Devon, which was advancing quickly, mainly due to support from the district council.

25 **Wild Honiton - James Chubb**

EDDC Countryside Team Leader, James Chubb, gave the Forum a presentation on Wild Honiton. He began by explaining that Wild Honiton was a partnership project led by EDDC's Wild East Devon team that was aimed at improving the green space and residents' connection to green spaces. It had been developed from experience with the previous Wild Exmouth project. The two themes were nature recovery and nature connection, along with two flagship species; hedgehogs and beavers.

The project had 10 public events programmed through the year aimed specifically at a Honiton audience. The first event was a family fun day at Honiton Bottom Community Nature Reserve on 1 May. Four practical volunteering sessions were also planned for a younger family audience. The hope was to continue to recruit new volunteers from within the local community as well as tapping into existing groups.

A discovery trail had been commissioned for six sites around the town, leading people from one to another. The Countryside team were likely to be taking on responsibility for the Woodland Education Centre at Offwell, with Forestry England acting as a volunteer

group. Local schools would be approached, with environmental education sessions linked to the Wild Honiton project starting in September.

The Countryside Team Leader explained that part of the ethos of the wild towns project was to breakdown silo thinking, engaging more with district council and town council colleagues and bringing in volunteers to help with bigger tasks. He had also been discussing with the Arts Development Manager and the Thelma Hulbert Gallery ideas for a creative arts trail around Honiton and nature through the arts and culture.

The Countryside Team Leader stressed the importance of marketing and publicity, to ensure the correct target audience. There was a newsletter that went out to 3000 people, social media platforms and good connections with local media outlets.

The Forum noted that the intention was that the project would roll out to other towns and the work already undertaken would be embedded in the participating towns, rather than being a stand-alone one year event. The Forum thanked the Countryside Team Leader for his presentation.

26 **Update on ACE NLPG - Wild Escape/Create Our Space - Ruth Gooding and Anna Aroussi**

The Forum received an update from the Arts Development Manager and the Engagement Officer on two projects that had been launched this year; Wild Escape and Create Our Space. Wild Escape was a national project with the premise of connecting schools to heritage and nature using museums and artists. It was funded by Art Fund. The Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) had partnered with Allhallows Museum in Honiton and the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and 28 children across years 4 and 5 in Honiton Town primary school would be taken out into the Blackdown Hills, to the museum and to the gallery. The children would be working with an artist to create a kinetic sculpture. The project would culminate with a procession from the primary school to the THG garden on Earth Day on 22 April 2023, with additional activities planned.

The Arts Development Manager explained the Create Our Space project, which was designed to create inclusive opportunities to engage with arts, culture and climate, responding to the needs of East Devon's young people, aged 7 to 25. It was the first time specific focus had been on that age range and there were some high profile partners. The project was being co-delivered and funded with the University of Exeter, Honiton Community College and Allhallows Museum. There were four pillars in the project. The first was the appointment of an intern. Working with the University of Exeter and their business partnership scheme an intern was being hosted for 15 hours a week for 10 months. Training opportunities were being developed by young people for young people of all different ages at the THG.

The first exhibition a part of Create Our Space was a called Paradise Found and would open on 18 March 2023. It was an ambitious project and included a workshop programme for the gallery.

The Arts Development Manager informed the Forum that funding was available to keep the creative cabin going and it would be present at various festivals across the district and the cabin now had a dedicated culture vehicle. In addition to working with South West Museums and the Arts Council, work could now be done with Cranbrook. It would

also help deliver the Wild Honiton commitment, going to the housing estates in East Devon and also working with the refugee communities.

Following this, Brian Knox, ACE music champion gave the Forum an update on core music activities. The idea behind 'live music at the king of clubs' in Ottery St Mary was to increase access to experience and participate in the arts. The venue was self-funded, with door money paying the artists and hire fees. Last year there had been 20 shows, with opportunities for 60 local musicians, including PR exposure. The Kabins band was an example of success. The focus this year was shifting to emerging artists, with 'Battle of the Bands' and there was involvement in the Ottery Project with Villages in Action. Brian Knox was thanked for his update.

Attendance List

EDDC Councillors present:

J Whibley (Chair)
O Davey
B De Saram
A Moulding
N Hookway (Vice-Chair)

Community representatives:

Town Representatives

C Buchan, Cranbrook Town Council
J Walden, Axminster Town Council

Officers in attendance:

Ruth Gooding, Arts Development Manager/Curator THG
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Anna Aaroussi, Project Co-ordinator
James Chubb, Countryside Team Leader
John Golding, Director of Housing, Health and Environment
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Elghady, Cultural Producer

Also Present

P Arnott, EDDC
A Huskisson, Axminster Town
J Astley, ACED Champion
J Cairns, Devon Museum Development Officer, South West Museums Development
V Harding, Programme Manager, South West Museums Development
M George, Programme Manager, Villages in Action
D Knox, ACED Music Champion
J Magill, Arts Development Manager, Exmouth Town Council
T Treavor, Creative Peninsular, University of Exeter
W Van der Plank, Community Animator, Villages in Action

Apologies:

E Rylance

Chair

Date: