

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Arts and Culture Forum held at online via zoom on 8 November 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.15 pm

1 Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.

Nominations for Vice Chair were received for Councillor Nick Hookway.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Nick Hookway be appointed Vice Chair of the Arts and Culture Forum for the ensuing year.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 March 2023 were agreed.

3 Declarations of interest

Minute 8 & 12 Councillor Vicky Johns declared an Affects Non-Registerable Interest as she was an art administrator for an arts charity which THG was hosting an exhibition in 2014, and had attended ACED workshops in a personal capacity.

Minute 8 Councillor Ian Barlow declared an Affects Non-Registerable Interest as director of Sidmouth School of Art, which had applied to ACED for a small grant.

Minute 8 Councillor Jenny Brown declared an Affects Non-Registrable a trustee of the Beehive, Honiton which was applying for a grant from ACED.

Minute 9 Councillor Joe Whibley declared an Affects Non-Registerable Interest as he was in the process of becoming a trustee of Exmouth Museum.

4 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

5 Matters of urgency

There were none.

6 Confidential items

There were no confidential/exempt items.

7 Arts and Culture Forum constitution update

The Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure's report proposed some minor amendments to the original Arts & Culture Forum Constitution which were agreed by the

Council in 2013. The amendments were intended to reflect the increased activities brought about by the adoption of East Devon's Cultural Strategy 2022-2031 and the need for the Arts & Culture Forum to have oversight of its delivery plan. The appointment of East Devon DC's Cultural Producer to drive the delivery of the Cultural Strategy meant there was now increased project activity which required reporting on. Also, there would be funding bid applications moving forward which would require input from the Forum before they were submitted. This could require a decision from the Forum to agree and support an allocation of funding to enable funding bids succeed.

The report also highlighted the development of the Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) Network since 2021/22 which brought together East Devon's creative communities and organisations and provided a much stronger and more visible platform for communities to proactively engage in East Devon's creative arts and cultural programmes. This has resulted in there no longer being a specific need for community representatives on the Forum as that was their original intention to provide a community platform for arts and culture. This coincided with the resignation of the one remaining community representative due to ill health.

The minor proposed changes were contained in the report and noted by the Forum. The changes would update the Forum's terms of reference to reflect the changes since it was last revised in 2013, including the adoption of East Devon's Cultural Strategy 2022-31 and the creation of the ACED network, which now represented the activities and networking of the district's cultural and creative arts communities.

It was noted assistant portfolio holder roles were still being looked at by Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet recommend to Council the proposed changes to the terms of reference of the Arts and Culture Forum.

8 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Cultural Programme**

The Cultural Producer's report provided a summary of the first year of outputs of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) cultural programme (January – March 2023). This was a three-year funded programme which would help to both support the delivery of East Devon's Cultural Strategy 2022-2031 as well as deliver funding into the district's diverse and distinctive creative communities and help to support their activities and events. The three-year cultural programme would also help to enable the delivery of the Council Plan 2021-2023 strategic aim to 'develop a stronger commitment to and offers in arts and leisure through the development of a Culture Strategy and an Events Strategy for our own land'. It was therefore a significant programme that would benefit the whole of the district.

The Arts and Culture Forum would be informed annually on the progress of the three-year UK SPC cultural programme in a reliable and transparent manner. The cultural programme year one outcomes would feed into the overarching monitoring and evaluation being reported into the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the Economic Development team as the UK SPF programme co-ordinators.

The vision of the cultural strategy 2022-2031 was for East Devon to be a vibrant cultural ecosystem whose distinctive communities and outstanding natural environment were enhanced and enriched through creativity, curiosity and collaboration. There were eight core themes:

- Strengthening the community.
- Protecting the environment.
- Growing cultural tourism.
- Creative enterprise and skills.
- New places for culture.
- Connectivity.
- Cultural leadership.
- Capture value.

Specific focus had been on theme one – strengthening and supporting the ‘people that do’. Free training sessions had covered fundraising, marketing, volunteer recruitment, carbon literacy, collection care for museums and governance. Future sessions would include a public speaking workshop and mentoring training.

The Cultural Producer’s presentation explained that Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) was a network connecting the creative communities in East Devon and provided a central platform to engage, promote and talk about Arts and Culture across the region. It currently had 113 members.

The Creative East Devon Fund (£50,000) provided discretionary financial support to local art and culture initiatives and projects that could demonstrate a commitment to developing the East Devon Cultural Strategy. This recently launched scheme was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and had received a positive response. Organisations could apply for a maximum of £3,000, with applications being thoroughly scrutinised. The closing date for the first applications was 15 November 2023, with a second funding opportunity available in April 2024.

The goals of the Cultural Strategy were contained in the presentation and considered by the Forum. It was noted that the SPF provided funding for the first three years so other sources of funding would be needed for the remaining seven years, to 2031.

It was suggested that the success of the cultural programme so far be widely shared and publicised. A great deal of work had taken place during the first three months of its delivery and officers including the Cultural Producer and economic delivery team were praised. As well as enhancing quality of life it also helped promote East Devon’s economy.

RESOLVED: that the Arts and Culture Forum endorse the Cultural Producer’s report and the successful delivery of the year one outputs of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund cultural programme.

9 **South West Museums Development**

Vic Harding, Programme Manager, South West Museum Development introduced herself and thanked the Forum for her invitation to present to them. She began by giving context and providing key regional and national museum statistics for 2022/23 explaining that the majority of museums in the south west were small-medium, independently run and volunteer led. The south west had the highest proportion of independent museums, at 67% (58% nationally) of the museums in the region, with the vast majority being ‘micro museums’ (fewer than 10,000 visitors annually) at 57% (46% nationally). The cultural sector was working hard to regain visitor numbers following the ongoing impact of the covid-19 pandemic, with the south west doing well in comparison to the rest of the country. Although visitor numbers were still down 8% in the region the figure nationally

was 18%. 42 % of museums in the south west were wholly volunteer run (31% nationally).

The Programme Manager went on to explain South West Museum Development as a team of museum and heritage development specialists working with the museum and heritage sector in the south west to effect positive lasting change and deliver public value. It was an Arts Council England funded Sector Support Organisation, and one of nine Museum Development providers across England. Museum Development activity in East Devon included organising the East Devon Museums Group meetings in March 2023, museum accreditation support given to Ottery St Mary, Exmouth Museum and Whimble Heritage Centre and successful submission of accreditation return for Sidmouth Museum achieved in October 2023. Support and advice with grant applications had been provided to Fairlynch Museum, Exmouth Museum, Allhallows Museum and Whimble Heritage Centre. The South West Museum Development Officer was also the Arts and Culture East Devon Museum and Heritage Champion.

The Wild Escape was a new project 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 deliver. The Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Honiton Museum had been awarded £6000. It was hoped to raise the profile of activities in East Devon with the Arts Council.

201 museums had benefitted from support during 2022/23, with the provision of targeted grant application support, and in person training and online workshops. An 40% increase in investment had been generated from the Arts Council grant, increasing value for the sector to £820,000 in 2022/23. It was reported that Arts Council England funding had been successfully secured for the following two years 2024-26. The Programme Manager was congratulated on this and it was suggested that EDDC issue a press release.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Programme Manager for her presentation.

10 **Villages in Action presentation**

Mair George, Creative Director, Villages in Action had given her apologies for the meeting but the Forum noted the East Devon highlights from March-October 2023. This included £4385 box office takings in East Devon (£12,597 in total), 503 audiences in East Devon (1250 in total) and 6 hosted events (20 in total).

11 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Culture and Leisure and Tourism Fund update**

The Management Information Officer gave the Forum an update on the UK Shared Prosperity fund Culture and Leisure and Tourism Fund. This grant scheme which was run over the summer provided almost £190,000 of funding to help community groups and tourism businesses in terms of decarbonisation. Community organisations of any type, with a rural focus were able to apply for grants of up to £20,000 and tourism businesses were able to apply for grants of up to £5,000. In total 38 applications were received and 20 community groups were awarded over £117,000 in grants. There would be £320,000 available next year to do more such decarbonisation work. The process would be similar, however officers were looking at ways in which to improve. It was hoped to

provide more support beforehand to help organisations understand exactly what decarbonisation meant and what they needed to do to apply. A full list of all the successful organisations was available on the EDDC website: Approvals – East Devon.

The Management Information Officer was thanked for all her work on the initiative and the efficient way in which the scheme was handled. The Forum was made aware of a wider corporate piece of work the Assistant Director – Place, Assets and Commercialisation was undertaking on decarbonising the Council's asset base.

In response to a question the Management Information Officer advised that the scheme had been oversubscribed, with just under £300,000 of applications received. Almost £90,000 was given to tourism businesses in terms of grants, but their grants were limited to £5,000. It was estimated that as a result of the money spent through the fund this year there should be a saving of 70 tons of carbon.

12 **Thelma Hulbert Gallery presentation**

The Chair welcomed Gemma Girvan, Manager and Curator of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG). He also thanked Ruth Gooding, who had recently left EDDC and the role of THG Manager.

The THG Manager gave the Forum a presentation which included the highlights of 2023:

- Paradise Found – New visions of the Blackdown Hills - record sales and pre-pandemic visitor figures.
- Present Makers 2023 – Christmas selling event – co-ordinating workshops sold out.
- Arts Council funding – The Wild Escape – project aimed to inspire children to visit museums. The largest ever collaboration between UK museums.
- Arts Council funding – Create Our Space – aimed to create opportunities to engage with arts, culture and climate, responding to the needs of East Devon's young people 7-25.
- Funding highlights also included network meetings, workshops, festivals and events, THG events, Summer Art week, engagement with over 600 local school children and outreach engagement with over 3700 adults and young people.
- BBC coverage of summer workshops.
- Record breaking applications to OPEN2023.
- Carbon literacy training.
- 62% increase in gallery sales.
- 17% increase in donations.
- 5% increase in gallery visitors

The THG was aligned to the East Devon Cultural Strategy and was a vital partner delivering against the strategy for East Devon communities. The THG Manager and Curator's presentation gave examples of how the THG had delivered against some of the core themes of the strategy. She then went on to outline the 2024 Process and Places Programme. Creative process would be explored through time and place;

- Art in the form of climate care and action.
- Supporting and showcasing local Southwest artists.
- Considering human engagement with the earth, art and artefacts.
- Researching the cultural heritage.
- Engagement and reviving of forgotten craft techniques.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Manager and Curator of the THG for her presentation and urged members to attend the Present Makers exhibition, which began on 11 November 2023. Those present agreed that the THG was making brilliant connections between arts and culture with the environment and climate change. It also

raised East Devon's profile as a place for the arts, as well as doing fantastic outreach work. The post covid performance recovery had been excellent, with income and footfall being close to pre-pandemic figures.

13 **Manor Pavilion theatre update**

The Forum received a verbal update from the Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager, Graham Whitlock. He reported that the 10th year of Paul Taylor Mills Summer Season had been incredibly successful this year with over 10,000 people attending the building in three months. Although some people had not returned to the theatre since the covid-19 pandemic, there were also new audiences.

The Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager reported that the theatre business changed on a regular basis and it was important to change and adapt. The team had been working hard to use Facebook and other forms of social media as a different approach to marketing the theatre. There was a change to the autumn programme in that there was no longer a 'What's On' guide, but shows were being sold well in advance and earlier than usual. There was a demand for theatre of all types and an increase in prices had not deterred people. A new Box Office system had been installed and an increase in staff.

The Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager outlined a great forthcoming programme and stated that the future of the theatre was positive, upbeat and cheerful. There was a mixture of performances planned for 2024, with bookings being taken for 2025.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager for his update.

14 **Wild East Devon update**

James Chubb, Countryside Team Leader began his presentation by giving the Forum an update on the Wild Honiton project. The public launch event had been attended by 250 people and included partner organisations such as Devon Wildlife Trust, Creative Cabin and Devon Loves Dogs. There had been a further four public events through the town and an explorer trail created, to be installed in five locations around the town (wooden posts containing QR codes).

The Countryside Team Leader went on to update the Forum on countryside events that had taken place across the district. There had been 42 public events held since March 2023, with 702 people booking to attend and eight explorer trail events installed during the school holidays. The Countryside Service now had a stand-alone website which was an important resource for publicising all the work carried out across the district.

The Countryside Team Leader outlined initiatives that had taken place to increase volunteering. There were currently 250 people registered for volunteering and 78 volunteers had participated in activity since March 2023. This amounted to 2793.5 hours of work over 815 shifts, which was a huge benefit in kind to the service. 1396 school children had also been hosted on an educational site visit.

Seaton Wetlands had been a huge success. A full site interpretation refurbishment had been initiated and a cycleway connection was imminent. There was a footpath all the way from Seaton Jurassic to Colyton and the wetlands was included on the tram halt. A

Birds of the Axe Valley book had been published. Seaton Wetlands had the first ever breeding success for Avocets in Devon. ITV Westcountry evening news conducted a live interview and the result of this was a 40% uplift in footfall week-on-week and 30% of annual donations pledged in a week. Visitor numbers to the wetlands had already surpassed 100,000 for 2023 for the first time.

On behalf of the Forum the Chair thanked the Countryside Team Leader for his interesting presentation and the fantastic work being done across all the nature reserves. Others present praised the Countryside Service for all the work being done and agreed that the QR codes on country walks as part of the explorer trails was a great idea. Working with local businesses also boosted tourism. It was noted that the Countryside Service had an ambitious nature recovery plan for the following year involving engagement with communities.

The Chair thanked all those present for attending the meeting and urged all councillors to attend the next meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum.

Attendance List

EDDC Councillors present:

O Davey
P Fernley
N Hookway
V Johns
J Whibley

Town Representatives

I Barlow, Sidmouth Town Council
R Doorbar, Budleigh Salterton Town Council
L Goudie, Cranbrook Town Council
N Sneller, Ottery St Mary Town Council
A Singh, Seaton Town Council

Officers in attendance:

Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Graham Whitlock, Theatre and Arts Centre Manager (Manor Pavilion Theatre)
Gemma Girvan, Gallery Manager and Curator
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Jo Avery, Management Information Officer
James Chubb, Countryside Team Leader
Sarah Elghady, Cultural Producer
Victoria Harding, Programme Manager, South West Museums Development
Jess Magill, Arts Manager, Exmouth Town Council
David Knox, ACED Music Champion

Also Present

P Faithfull
P Arnott
G Jung
M Rixson

E Rylance
J Brown
K Bloxham
R Jefferies
C Fitzgerald

Apologies:

A Mendham, Seaton Town Council
Burrough, Axminster Town Council

Chair

Date: