

Appendix A



A DISTRICT OF CREATIVITY

A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR STROUD DISTRICT



Word cloud created during the Cultural Strategy Consultation

STROUD - A DISTRICT OF CREATIVITY

INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the context, rationale and recommendations for a Cultural Strategy for Stroud District. It includes a two year Action Plan to support the Strategy as it is launched and becomes established.

The Aim of the Strategy

The Strategy aims to support the district to harnesses the creativity of its diverse communities and generate more opportunities for people to connect, create and communicate. Capitalising on Stroud district's unique heritage, character and landscape, this strategy will unlock ways for creativity to contribute to a greener, healthier and more prosperous district for the generations to come.

This Strategy sets out key challenges and opportunities that the District Council, in partnership with the community, can act upon over the next few years to build on Stroud district's vibrant culture. It outlines how working across traditional agendas, creativity can support regeneration, sustainability and health and wellbeing. It is designed to initiate action, leading from a series of recommendations, some specific and others more aspirational.

The District

Situated in the south of Gloucestershire, Stroud district is home to some 115,000 people in towns, villages and hamlets. It is bordered by the River Severn with historic canals and mills showcasing its unique industrial rural heritage. Its hills and woodland areas are popular with tourists and visitors, and it has a rich cultural heritage; it has long been the home of artists, writers and activists.

Consultant's Work and Support

Over a period of 12 months from December 2022, the consultancy company 64 Million Artists, worked with citizens from across the district to understand the value they placed on culture and creativity, where they saw opportunities and what their hopes and worries were for the district in the future. These conversations, creative encounters and collaborations grew a sense that culture was central to people's lives and their sense of wellbeing and belonging. These conversations, with people across the district, will form the basis for these recommendations and ideas for future action. Everything in this Strategy has been generated and created by the people of the district - 64 Million Artists has coalesced these ideas and hopes into several themes and prioritised suggestions according to what we heard people needed the most.

Equity and Inclusion

A particular focus in speaking to people across the district was to hear from people who feel excluded from culture. These perspectives are particularly important because culture has the power to challenge historic oppression and marginalisation. The approach here is to look at how culture and creativity can be agents for change to improve the lives of everyone in the community and help generate more equitable ways of living together.

The Strategy and its Action Plan should be a clear, positive and ongoing commitment to promote accessibility. It should actively challenge conscious and unconscious discrimination. It must work to ensure, enable and advance equality of opportunity and work to make positive impact for all groups and communities. It must recognise that those with protected characteristics should be positively supported to engage in and benefit from the cultural activity, where race, faith and non-faith, gender status, pregnancy, disability and age are identified as potentially restricting or discouraging full engagement in cultural activity and the pathways to involvement in the activities which are linked to it. This includes enabling and exemplifying good integrated relationships between those who may be discriminated against including those with protected characteristics and those who do not.

This commitment is recognised in the recommendations of the Strategy and the Action Plan and will be a part of the promotion, launch and delivery of the Strategy Ensuring equality of access and inclusion will be part of the Strategy review and evaluation process

A definition of Culture

Culture is the things that define who we are, encompassing actions and activities which have the capacity to transform, challenge, reassure and inspire and that give a place and people a distinct identity.

In this Strategy, 'Culture' is not tightly defined and will always be subject to interpretation and local circumstances, however in practical terms, it is taken to include creative arts, crafts and making, expression through performance such as the spoken word, music, theatre, film and photography, literature, fashion design and extends to include our built environment, our heritage and food/cuisine. It does not ordinarily include sports participation although there is a close link, with some overlap such as around yoga, pilates and exercise to music and the integration between sport, leisure activity and culture is an important consideration.

The District

Stroud District has a vibrant, joyful, and dynamic cultural and creative scene, including excellent cultural organisations, festivals, and craftspeople, alongside a huge and involved community of volunteers. It is home to international creative businesses, world renowned artists, and is a beacon of creativity. Its rich literary and artistic history along with its living heritage of making and creating means it has a reach and reputation internationally - it punches above its weight as an area of culture and the arts.

Culture has long contributed to the district's vision of itself. It is quirky, independent and knows its own mind. It revels in the beauty of its history and landscape but it is gritty and sometimes impatient to try new things. Artists have helped build an identity for the district - whether they grew up here like Laurie Lee or Adjoa Andoh or located here like Sade or Damien Hirst. People from across the district are proud of it and proud to come from here. They enjoy coming together at events and festivals, at gigs and exhibitions, online and in person.

The district is unique. On the edge of the Cotswold's, it is pretty but not picture postcard with an industrial heritage unlike other parts of Southern England. It is quickly connected to Bristol, Cheltenham, Swindon, and London but parts of it are deeply rural and quiet. It has long bred activists and changemakers from William Tyndale to the founders of Extinction Rebellion. It is also forward looking with a young population and business sector quickly embracing the potential of new technologies.

While Stroud has a national and even international profile, it could do more. There is a sense of a potential not quite fulfilled, that more could be done to celebrate, shout and advocate for the district as a whole and what it has, and can achieve. Too many of its cultural highlights are undervalued, obscured or unknown. Too many potential creative citizens are unable to find fellow travellers, explore their creativity or connect with what is on offer. Some residents don't see themselves in the culture that is made visible and feel the culture of the district is not for them.

Opportunity to be involved is uneven. Inequalities that exist in employment, health and education are often emphasised further in access to culture and creativity. National (cost of living) and global (climate) crises are affecting the district and its residents acutely. The next decade will be one of huge change for the district with massive population shifts, digital opportunities, and a revolution in the future of work existing alongside climate changes that will directly affect the district through flooding and the need to change the way we live, work and travel.

While this Strategy cannot solve these issues, it aims to draw on the potential of culture and creativity to bring people from all parts of the district together, to instil optimism, build hope, and generate community and create a more circular creative and regenerative economy. It will specifically point to the ways in which culture can contribute to improving the health and prosperity of the district's residents, as well as the ways in which creativity can offer approaches to climate and the wellbeing of future generations of the district.

For example, the development of digital opportunities to allow greater accessibility is considered and may be a route to mitigating other difficulties or inequity in access; live streams, a digital stroud cultural platform, digital geo located art works above the district creating a digital cultural trail between venues are just some of the ideas which have been raised in discussion with communities and with arts organisations. These opportunities can be developed locally, strengthening the extending the reach of skills in the area.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

By celebrating the value of culture, creativity and the creative industries, Stroud District Council wants to help harness the incredible power of culture to build community resilience and wellbeing; make positive individual, local and district-wide impacts on the environment and climate; and tackle economic and social inequality across the district. Growing awareness of what is happening in the district's cultural sector will build civic pride, enhance people's sense of belonging and burnish the area's reputation nationally and internationally.

Small, coordinated changes along with modest investment over a 2 year period will build on the district's existing strong cultural offer to attract inward investment and boost tourism and employment. The Strategy's Action Plan identifies specific, measurable steps to achieve this.

Tapping into the cultural sector's existing environmental activism will embed a spirit of hope in citizens and in their willingness to tackle global challenges. At the heart of this will be our attempts to set an example by proactively valuing culture and what it has to offer, encouraging others to do the same and enabling all citizens to explore their creativity.

CELEBRATING AND ENCOURAGING

The Council will take the same approach to culture and creativity as it is taking to carbon and climate.

- To always act as an example in the community.
- To be an enabler and encourager of positive action.
- Through its services, policies, and projects to do everything in its power to collaboratively achieve a creative, resilient, inclusive and, equality driven district.
- To celebrate culture, creativity and the creative industries.

It will achieve this by emphasising the impact creativity can have in a district that thrives on its:

- Invention
- Innovation
- Independence
- Industry
- Challenge to effect positive change

To embed the potential of culture and creativity across the District Council's agenda, a strengths-based approach will be necessary: where and how can the council be most useful is promoting, supporting and celebrating what is happening across all the district's communities. There is already a brilliant, imaginative and impressive network of cultural organisations, artists, musicians, crafters, writers, thinkers who are making great culture in the district. They need to be celebrated, showcased, highlighted and valued.

There is also a huge audience for this culture, people who want to dance, sing, laugh, play, eat and be entertained. More can be done to bring these people together with the culture on their doorstep. The Council can also blur the lines between audience and provider by encouraging people to be adventurous, trying new things, seeing other cultures and ways of being, inventing new stories and unearthing hidden ones.

This role of cultural cheerleader needs some resource to be credible and to bring the many different players working in creativity and culture together. Some of this process has begun through the development of this Strategy. The next stage is to build on this and to join the dots, creating a role with influence to act as an agent for change and an internal advocate for culture and creativity.

This leadership role can be ably supported by organisations working across the district to create cultural opportunities for the people of the district. These organisations can be supported to widen their delivery - bringing the excellence of their cultural offer to help geographies and communities which currently have more limited opportunity to access arts and culture.

A wide pool of volunteers exploring their own creativity and creating opportunities for others should be celebrated and bolstered. One approach to this will be to measure and capture the wider impact of culture in the district - looking at numbers of people contributing to the vibrancy of the district. Volunteering contributes economically and as a boost to health and community cohesion. Capturing and celebrating this will help articulate the special qualities of the district.

It is these special qualities which have (particularly in recent years) drawn creatives to the district. The honeypot effect of Stroud district's buoyant creative scene has the potential to create a virtuous cycle bringing people and businesses into the district, growing opportunities and magnifying impact, alongside creating a district in which young people wish to remain in, to live, work and play.

As Stroud grows and changes, its creative history should be celebrated and lauded. As well as the prestigious and well-known artists and histories, under-told stories should be shared. The story of Stroud as a leader in creative health, of creativity in activism, of diverse communities sharing their creativity and culture needs to be shouted from the hilltops.

THE STRATEGY THEMES

The consultation has identified the following six themes:

1. Creativity, Climate and Nature
2. Communicating and Connecting
3. Economy and Regeneration
4. Future Generations
5. Communities and Wellbeing
6. Heritage and Place

Each theme has several recommendations which are explored below.

Whilst the recommendations are specific, it should be noted that the Strategy is designed to be open and encompassing. Culture includes a broad range of disciplines and organisations/ individuals. This is a self-defining strategy and its intention is for organisations and individuals to see connections and opportunities beyond just the recommendations. For example, it could provide context and support for external funding applications for projects aligned with the themes listed above.

The consultation highlighted the need for a strategic approach to make a difference to cultural creativity in the district. The initial 2-year Action Plan is designed to create connections and raise the profile of cultural activity to enable sustainable delivery of cultural creativity in district with a freedom of expression.

1. CREATIVITY, CLIMATE AND NATURE

The Council has an active and ambitious strategy to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. Founded on its mission as enabler, exemplar and encourager the strategy is detailed, wide ranging and focused. The Climate and Nature 2030 Strategy is well placed to enhance and capitalise on what creativity and culture can add to its approach. Creativity and culture can help ground this work in hope, belief and aspiration and act as an enabler of ambitious culturally led imagination for the future.

Without creativity, action on climate could become focused on a sense of what will be lost, rather than what will be gained. Organisations like Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking are already part of a national conversation about climate activism and the role of culture in tackling these challenges. Arts and creativity can help spearhead broad behaviour change - one of the biggest challenges in tackling the climate crisis; and provide commentary on systems and economics. There are creative ways to achieve all sorts of climate and nature outcomes through creative cultural climate festivals and education, through practical workshops, through cultural leadership, through digital cultural campaigns, through narrative storytelling and through reimagining the future.

There is the potential for the Council to use a creative approach to stimulating conversations at a family, business, political and community level to help deliver on its strategy. Beyond this, the Council can rightly celebrate its successes in achieving its climate goals and, again, culture can be an effective partner with the council to celebrate and communicate these achievements. Framing this approach in hope and a focus on future generations will likely embed new opportunities for the cultural sector to generate fresh thinking and action on climate change.

The potential for old and new technologies to help people be more creative and act sustainably is huge. By embracing new digital technologies, the Council can support online cultural activity and sustainable in-person activity (active travel, renewable generators, drone displays replacing fireworks). At the same time, sharing tools, premises and makerspaces will offer new ways of reducing the carbon footprint of individuals and organisations. The Council can lead the way in innovating towards sustainability.

The area's long history of social action has bubbled forth around the need to take drastic and immediate action on climate change and planet preservation. Ensuring that everyone understands the perspectives of other people, communities and ecosystems is essential if climate and nature activists are to succeed. Art and creativity are key to building this understanding and framing the most difficult of conversations in ways that make it possible for people to engage. The Council should be proud of its citizens' passion to save the planet and should unite with storytellers to enable, encourage and set an example.

Recommendations 1 – Creativity and Climate

1. Audit opportunities for old and new technologies to enable cultural activities to reduce their carbon emissions and any impacts on nature and enable the sharing and application of good practice.

2. Support, promote and enable creative storytelling and engagement to bring the complex theories and science on the solutions to the climate and nature emergencies to life for residents.
3. Support Climate Action Networks to engage with and use creative means to raise awareness and engage communities in identifying and delivering local responses to the climate and nature emergencies.
4. Support the district's vibrant creative industries and innovative climate and nature activists to work more closely together to build a distinctive cultural offer based on these two core strengths of the district.
5. Include creativity and climate as part of all the other strands to ensure a connected systems led strategy
6. Embed carbon reduction as part of licensing of events
7. Create an ambitious, nationally significant cultural and climate programme to promote cultural tourism
8. Embed the climate discussion into Stroud District Council staff training programmes

2. COMMUNICATING AND CONNECTING

Crucial to growing the district's cultural and creative future is the means to tell people about what is going on. Investing in what the creative community is already doing to share ideas and promote activity will quickly yield results. At present, communication about cultural opportunities across the district is patchy and unequally distributed. While the Council will not set up its own cultural communications work, it will provide support in developing localised offers to make them district wide. It must be mindful of ensuring access to all and give particular focus to ensuring the varying needs of those, as individuals and communities, with protected characteristics

Further to this, the Council will help support the cultural creative sector to take its existing offer and link it authentically to the needs of the community by forging connections with the community hubs. This Strategy aims to foster an eco-system of a connected, integrated (and celebrated) cultural community which is embedded in its community and not existing alongside or only in relation to certain parts of the community. It will trial support for individual creativity champions to activate and build connections across and within communities through creative activities.

Better communication of cultural opportunities will encourage micro-tourism and foster civic pride. Helping people to explore the wealth of opportunity on their own doorsteps and growing audience and market for local artists, makers and producers. This would foster a more sustainable and durable approach to culture in the district, creating new and younger audiences and potentially fostering dialogue that ensures that the culture that happens locally is made by, with and for local people.

Recommendations 2 – Communicating and Connecting

1. Recognising the importance of a voice for everybody and particularly those with protected characteristics, establish a Community Cultural Panel to oversee the delivery of key Recommendations and Action Plan programme
2. Identify a network of Local Cultural Hubs, strengthening local cultural networking and engaging with other community based groups and organisations
3. Identify cultural advocates to promote cultural activity, networking and partnerships, including within Stroud DC and from groups with protected characteristics.
4. Adopt a district wide communication and promotion plan to underpin a coherent communication network for cultural, creative and arts organisations which will support forums and sharing opportunities and enable co-production, collaboration and promotion.
5. Create and maintain an online platform for detailed 'what's on' information aggregated from other websites.

3. ECONOMY AND REGENERATION

The cultural and creative sector within Stroud's District is a core part of the ecosystem that defines the place. People and businesses move to the district because of what is there already, its reputation, its nightlife, its food, its character. These are all defined and determined by the creatives who live here already. As discussed above, an audit of cultural value will help quantify this and identify opportunities for growth. Beyond this, though, the Council can foster a culture of cross-sector collaboration, encouraging businesses that are not defined as part of culture to consider themselves creative, to challenge themselves to work in new ways and try new things.

The process of researching and creating this Strategy has initiated new conversations, networking and ambitions within and beyond the district's cultural sector. As already embedded in the Council's Economic Development Strategy, investing in the cultural sector will help it become better networked and connected - so that they avoid duplication and find shared ways to work together (e.g. joint bids for funding). There is already evidence of the cultural sector sharing resources - volunteering, fundraising and equipment, more is possible. New and hitherto unimagined projects and partnerships might emerge through a generous approach to creating networking and community building activities with the cultural sector.

A few, small, practical measures would help ease red tape and make delivering creative activity easier. Whether this is help with planning processes, road closures, costs for hiring parks, or in putting on events. It has been reported that the community feels the Council does not currently 'get' culture and its value; while individual officers and elected members may champion the value of culture, there is not a collective, organisational instinct that recognizes culture's wider value.

Town and Parish Councils have a place-based role to play in connecting and supporting cultural organisations. Either directly or indirectly engagement by cultural hubs with Town and Parish Councils will benefit local communities by providing cultural opportunities that are specific and relevant.

The Council wants to support opportunity and certainly not unwittingly block or inhibit unleashing the district's creativity. Training for staff and a process of internal advocacy will help the Stroud District Council build an approach that makes it a valid, genuine and plausible fellow traveller in igniting the district's creative flame. Accompanying this with profile boosting action on the high street and with business partners will potentially generate rich rewards.

Recommendations 3 - Economy and Regeneration

1. Commission an audit of cultural value across the district to establish baseline measures of culture's impact on economy, health, criminal justice.
2. Work with Stroud District Council, the Local Strategic partnership and Town and Parish Councils and local chambers of trade to establish and develop connections between cultural organisations and business to enhance high street regeneration, nighttime economy and event opportunities.
3. Enable co-working opportunities between cultural organisations and the hospitality and tourism sector to promote inward investment.

4. Provide training and advice support to enable sharing of good practice and resources to maximise the benefits of fundraising, volunteering and training opportunities, including, for example with the VCSE alliance
5. Establish training and employment channels between cultural and creative organisations and training and education providers such as Stroud College, Hawkwood College, Create Gloucestershire and local schools' careers leads.
6. Embed involvement in and support for cultural activity as part of staff benefits at Stroud District Council, town and parish councils and local businesses

4. FUTURE GENERATIONS

There has been a national degrading of access to culture for young people both in and out of school. This is in danger of creating a generation of culturally disenfranchised children where only those with family wealth or family connections experience the benefits to their health, learning and future careers that cultural engagement can generate. What is more, many young people don't know what they are missing - if they don't see it. As a consequence, many young people are not in a position to advocate for improved access to culture and the arts. Coupled with a reduction in available opportunities for young people to participate in culture, even young people keen to get involved struggle to find routes to express their creativity.

The Council will draw attention to reanimating youth provision to embed creativity, particularly in parts of the district with the most limited access to other cultural opportunities. By embedding creativity across all sorts of out of school provision, the Council can help build a level of cultural articulacy in young people across the District which will help ensure the district - and all its citizens can benefit from imagining, dreaming and advocating for a bright future. Creativity breeds confidence and a consciousness of the perspectives of others. It generates an appetite for risk and for vulnerability which will be vital in a rapidly changing society. Most pertinently, it builds a meaningful sense of civic rights and community connection which will have benefits in schools and across society.

As this takes hold, a greater range of young people can build skills and enthusiasm for shaping the district's cultural offer. This should take the form of young people being given permission, confidence and space to enable them put on their own events; defining content, building new forms of dialogue and sharing hitherto underground stories to help everyone hear diverse perspectives. This could take the form of an annual event or a fund for young producers. New and emerging artforms can be explored so that agency and the power of production shifts to the next generation.

Further, training and opportunities can be developed that will help young people see their futures in the district. The Council's Economic Strategy has already committed to increasing creative opportunities for young people. These could be developed in partnership with colleges and cultural institutions but also with new and untapped partners in digital technology industries, gaming, design, manufacturing and invention. A focus on young voices will not only benefit this generation of young people but the generations of the future. By exemplifying the concept of being a good ancestor, the Council and its partners will foster a culture of innovation that is future focused and takes into consideration the planet and the heritage we will leave to future generations.

Recommendations 4 - Future Generations

1. Encourage and enable a co-ordinated pathway for young people to launch creative careers through cultural sector apprenticeships, training and mentoring etc
2. Encourage a reanimation of cultural youth provision by supporting creatives to be embedded in youth clubs, schools, after school provision and colleges.

3. Encourage cultural organisations to co-create youth led activity such as diversifying decision-making, providing a ring-fenced resource for a youth led festival or other-celebrations.

5. COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING

The district is nationally renowned for its work in creative health. Dursley was one of the first places to successfully develop arts on prescription - a forerunner of the now national move towards social prescribing. With a track record going back 20 years, Artlift is well established as a nationally significant leader in social prescribing and arts and mental health. Along with Create Gloucestershire and other work across the district, there is the opportunity to build on this history and continue to attract national acclaim for this important work in connecting creativity with health and wellbeing. As the evidence base continues to grow for the role of culture in supporting the health of individuals and communities, this practice will only spread, and the Council can play a significant role in supporting and shaping this to the benefit of all its citizens.

The landscape of the district with its pattern of national paths, historic parks and leisure spaces, lends itself to drawing people outside. Already there is a wealth of creativity on display in festivals in summer and winter encouraging people to get outside and to get involved. While the District Council already draws on the Five Ways to Wellbeing to support residents' mental health, there is room to be more explicit about the ways that culture can connect and contribute to this agenda through joining with cultural sector partners to encourage creativity and curiosity for all. Partnerships with sport and leisure can also draw people to explore creativity and try cultural activities they may have felt weren't for them. There are potential connections through the Council's health and wellbeing team and with both leisure centres moving towards an active lifestyle focus.

There is evidence that a sense of belonging to a place and a community has a positive impact on individual and community wellbeing - and the arts and culture can play a key role in supporting the District Council to foster this sense of place. Crucial to this will be the way in which people and groups who do not typically see themselves represented and reflected in the stories that are shared start to hear and see them and people like them being given platforms to explore creativity. Through actively collaborating with historically marginalised groups, the Council can utilise creativity as a tool to bring communities together through shared storytelling in a range of forms.

By magnifying the role of culture as a tool for the council to achieve its aims to tackle loneliness, social isolation, the needs of an ageing population and contemporary challenges in adolescent mental health, there is the potential for culture to make a significant contribution to everyone in the district living healthy and happier lives. Other local, regional, national public and charitable bodies share this agenda, and these relationships should be fostered and developed.

Recommendations 5 – Communities and Wellbeing

1. Promote and enable partnerships between cultural sector and bodies such as the community response network, ICS, the police, Age UK and VCSE Alliance, to develop new activity and relationship building.
2. Promote and enable opportunities for professional creatives to work with community hubs, schools and hospitals (e.g. a small creative health grants scheme for creatives to support community activity).
3. Being particularly mindful of individuals, groups and communities with protected characteristics, promote and enable intergenerational cultural

practice to build community cohesion focused on the wellbeing of future generations and the role of the good ancestor.

4. Promote and enable life-long culturally enriching learning opportunities to ease social isolation and create a sense of well-being.

6. HERITAGE AND PLACE

Stroud District is visibly a place of the past and the present. Many churches, castles, canals and cottages have a beauty, grandeur and awe that can inspire everyone and needs to be preserved and protected. Alongside this, there are less traditional industrial and railway heritage. In this context, Stories and histories of the past (both uplifting and heartrending) have the means to teach us about the present and learn for the future. Many of these stories are not well known and in shining a light on them, the Council will help to tell a story about a district and its people that is optimistic, inclusive and ambitious. The significant current work in restoring and reimagining the Stroudwater and Thames and Severn canals, of which the District Council plays a leading role, presents a great opportunity to shout about how heritage can connect communities today. The Museum in the Park and Stratford Park itself are much loved and valued jewels in the District's crown but more could be done to connect and highlight the many brilliant groups and communities which are conserving and capturing the history of a unique place.

The District Council has a key role in heritage and place, not just through planning, but also through the district's museum, the Museum in the Park. The Council is also the landlord, and as such supports in partnership, Woodchester Mansion and Kingshill House – both of whom play important roles under the theme of heritage and place. Alongside these, there is a vibrant and diverse mix of organisations across the district delivering activity that supports this theme.

The district's story - and its future - has been and will continue to be shaped by its landscape and developing new ways of interacting with this offers a simple way to help people learn about and love their home. Through reinterpreting landscape names and places, the Council can also unearth hidden stories and address the difficult and even shameful histories that are also an important part of Stroud's story and can be part of a journey to create a equitable community. Artists are skilled at bringing stories to life with nuance and care to help everyone understand where we have come from and where we might go.

While the district has a fascinating history, the present and future will require new infrastructure and growth. This strategy is an opportunity to centralise the value of culture and heritage and by committing new developments to invest in culture, the Council can secure funds to deliver on its cultural and creative ambitions. Adopting creative approaches to planning and development could bring widespread benefits to the whole community.

National policy movers (such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund's new strategy) are strengthening the connection between culture, creativity and heritage. By building on the Council's existing planning heritage strategy but weaving in the contribution of artists and creatives and actively supporting the sharing of stories that have been marginalised, Stroud's heritage can be brought to life for residents and visitors to the district now and in the future.

Recommendations 6 – Heritage and Place

1. Strengthen the connection between culture, creativity and heritage by promoting and enabling activities and educational opportunities around

heritage skills and craft events which capture and share the district's history through innovation and collaboration.

2. Promote and enable the connectivity and development of accessible nature trails across the historic landscape.
3. Identify and promote heritage and cultural hotspots in collaboration with town and parish councils, VCSE organisations and local champions to showcase how creativity and exploration can foster understanding, ownership and involvement in the of heritage of the district
4. Share good practice, peer advice and fundraising expertise across the district to stimulate and support culture sector business development, local economic activity, job creation and training programmes.
5. Promote and enable opportunities for tourism and micro tourism around heritage and crafts and education.

RECOMMENDATIONS INTO ACTION – A DELIVERY ACTION PLAN

There is a lot of community cultural activity already happening across the district – which can and should be celebrated. The Cultural Strategy Action Plan is not about duplication but adding provision where it is absent and building awareness and confidence among our district's citizens to get involved in the activity that is out there.

While these areas of work are self-evidently interconnected, the Action Plan identifies threads of work and allocated pump prime or kick start funding for each. They align to the Strategy recommendations but do not specify the delivery of these in details at this stage or prescribe specific delivery methods. This will be focus of the Strategy's Action plan to create the district's network of community, local government (including town and parish councils) and cultural organisations.

The Strategy's six themes will, at their heart, be brought to life with the precise emphasis in each local area. They will be determined by local communities, while the quality of this activity will be assured by the partnership involvement of local, professional cultural organisations. Organisations with expertise in specific aspects of the Strategy will be engaged to inspire, inform, fundraise and connect across these areas.

To provide a community-based structure to connect communities to cultural activity and focus the work on the six themes and recommendations, a Community Cultural Panel will be formed, along with a Cultural Hubs programme to deliver activity and several Sector Beacon organisations who will champion cultural activity, provide advice and support across the district. Enabling and advancing accessibility and participation by all communities and individuals in the district should be a primary and strongly promoted driver. Supporting those with protected characteristics for example should be at the forefront of this work and a strong and activity should be given to these groups in the cultural panel and the work of cultural hubs.

Budget

An initial period of two years investment by the District Council in culture and creativity will kick start this Strategy and demonstrate commitment to the cultural sector. It is vital that this opportunity is exploited and sustainable longer term.

The budget allocated in the Action Plan will be indicative and subject to approval and amendment, however, until the governance structure is put in place and partners come together to begin work, there is a degree of creative uncertainty.

The Role of the Council

While the delivery of this Action Plan will be in the hands of Community Cultural Panel, Sector Beacons and Cultural Hubs and wider community, the Council will play a role in enabling the governance and environment to bring together these groups and approach this 2-year period of funding as an action learning process for all. By deliberately learning from each other and generating knowledge of impacts and opportunities the case for investment in culture and creativity across the district can be created for the longer term.

It is essential that these first two years act as a springboard for a long lasting transformational way of working into the future, including cross district peer support, making the most out of the cultural resource within the district, levelling up the cultural offer district-wide and ultimately helping make all of the Stroud district a happy place to live, work and play and a region known nationally for punching above its weight culturally.

In making recommendations and through the Action Plan, the District Council acknowledges the fragile ecology that this work is built on – cultural organisations are operating at or above capacity, community organisations are stretched, reliant on volunteers and facing existing challenges in supporting their neighbourhoods. Funds for Action Plan delivery will include resources for participants' time in meeting each other, sharing insight, delivering and communicating activity and contributing to building a more connected and coherent cultural ecology across the district.

Launching the Strategy and this Action Plan

The investment of some time and energy into launching the Strategy will be important. This should be done in a way which embodies a commitment to culture across the district and which harnesses the energy and collaborative nature of the Strategy's development. This could be through a series of events, public announcements, cultural activities in tandem with Cultural Hubs and Sector Beacons. It should be loud and proud and kick off a series of activities.

Consideration can be given to delaying the launch until some of the collaborative partnerships with Sector Beacons and Cultural Hubs are in place. It should not be a website announcement and a straightforward press release. The Cultural Panel could play a key role in shaping and producing the launch of the Strategy and generating excitement among communities. The launch is a key opportunity to engage potential partners (Arts Council, etc) and sponsors. It should demonstrate the district-wide nature of the Action Plan itself – through a series of linked events spread across the district.

A DISTRICT OF CREATIVITY- A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR STROUD DISTRICT ACTION PLAN 2024 TO 2026

Action Plan – the connections



**A DISTRICT OF CREATIVITY- A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR STROUD DISTRICT
ACTION PLAN 2024 TO 2026**

	Action	Detail/context	Lead	Completed Within	Recom'd	Measured by
1.	Establish a Community Cultural Panel (Indicative budget £15K)	<p>The Panel will oversee the delivery of key Recommendations and Action Plan programme</p> <p>It will provide a governance link into other networks, for example SDC and SDYC (Youth Council).</p> <p>The Panel should work to ensure equity of access for all individuals and communities and particularly those with protected characteristics and those who financially disadvantaged.</p>	SDC	4 months	2 3 5 6	Governance of the Panel established: Terms of Reference (TOR). Schedule of meetings diarised for two years. Cultural Panel considers information from sector and hubs. Panel work programme agreed.
2.	Identify place-based Cultural Hubs	<p>Cultural Hubs will promote and enable cultural creativity that is based on the local needs (see Action 3 below). Cultural hubs, as key stakeholders, can advise/update the Panel.</p> <p>Hubs will align with, but not necessarily be located within, community hubs. They should as far as possible, have a district wide spread.</p>	Chair of Panel/S DC	12 months	2 3	<p>Individuals and organisations identified to become involved in the Hubs</p> <p>Governance established: Terms of Reference agreed</p>

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	Action	Detail/context	Lead	Completed Within	Recom'd	Measured by
3.	Deliver an outreach programme (indicative budget £100k)	<p>The outreach programme will promote and enable cultural creativity that is based on the local need.</p> <p>The programme will, in most cases, be delivered through local Cultural Hubs, which will determine how best to tackle outreach into their respective communities such as using creative residencies (aligned to strategy recommendations e.g. heritage, climate, future generations)</p>	Cultural Hubs	24 months	4 5 6	<p>Each local programme has a set of priorities, aims and action plan and KPIs</p> <p>Cultural Hub outreach plans which reflect delivery of recommendations are agreed and funded.</p> <p>Outreach programmes are delivering work across the district.</p> <p>Updates to Panel enable a district wide perspective.</p>
4.	Organise and deliver a programme of Cultural Strategy launch events and promotion across the district. (budget £12k)	<p>Launch events will be delivered across the district and work to raise the profile of the Strategy, the work of local organisations and encourage and enable participation.</p> <p>They will celebrate the culture of the locality and work to strengthen local networks with the Cultural Strategy as common thread.</p> <p>The programme should ensure equity of access for all individuals and communities and particularly those with protected characteristics</p>	Panel	12 months	2 3	<p>At least six Cultural Strategy launch events across district, reflectively communities of place and interest.</p> <p>Diversity of attendance and breadth of cultural creatives involved is monitored and evaluated in feedback to the Community Cultural Panel</p>

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	Action	Detail/context	Lead	Completed Within	Recom'd	Measured by
5.	Identify cultural advocate within Stroud District Council	The advocates encourage and promote cultural sector within SDC's work. This may include an elected Member, Officer and a Youth Council member. They should enable and encourage the work of the District Council to bridge into partner organisations, where culture is a common thread	SDC	3 months	2. 3. 5	Cultural advocates identified within the Council and their work reported in to SDCs Community Services and Licensing Committee.
6.	Provide coordination support (indicative budget £45k)	This two year support resource will work alongside the District Council advocate to enable and facilitate activity and coordination between partners. This will be particularly important as the Strategy is launched and in its initial establishment period. This could be through a secondment arrangement alignment to one of the districts cultural organisations	SDC	3 months	2	Secondment placement filled
7.	Identify beacon organisations (indicative budget £3k)	Beacon organisations will champion, support and promote the Cultural Strategy. They can act as critical friends and advisors, including to the Community Cultural Panel. The work of beacon organisations should strive to advance equity of access for all individuals and communities and particularly those with protected characteristics.	SDC/ Panel	5 months	2	Beacon organisations confirmed.

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	Action	Detail/context	Lead	Completed Within	Recom'd	Measured by
8.	Commission an audit of cultural value across the district and forward funding route map (indicative budget £20k)	<p>To establish baseline measures of culture's impact on economy, health, criminal justice, social value. This should take into account the importance and impact of accessibility and equity of participation of those with protected characteristics</p> <p>This commission will include identify a forward funding route map</p>	Panel	<p>12 months initiation</p> <p>24 months complete</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Independent commission 12 months.</p> <p>Completed 24 months. Feed outputs into SDC Strategies.</p> <p>Data made available to cultural sector to help understand need/gaps.</p> <p>Future funding route map shared with the Community Cultural Panel</p>
9.	Stimulate public awareness of climate change through creativity (indicative budget £5k)	Use cultural creativity to raise awareness of actions within 2030 Strategy with the identification of outputs that support delivery of 2030 Strategy.	SDC's Climate Change and Sustainability Team	18 months	1	Programme of work with Cultural hubs/Panel agreed.

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	Action	Detail/context	Lead	Completed Within	Recom'd	Measured by
10.	Adopt a district wide communication and promotion plan. (indicative budget £15k)	<p>A district wide plan should:</p> <p>Promote the cultural sector and Strategy specific actions.</p> <p>Underpin a coherent communication network for cultural, creative and arts organisations which will support forums and sharing opportunities and enable co- production, collaboration and promotion.</p> <p>Help enable a closer relationship between sector organisations, the business community, the public and the educational sector.</p> <p>SDC can make available a Cultural News and Register page within its website, which would be updated by sector organisations to provide updates and possibly a registration process. This would help enable all sector organisations and heritage skills groups in the district to have a consolidated identity</p> <p>The plan must be mindful of ensuring access to all and give particular focus to ensuring the varying needs of those, as individuals and communities, with protected characteristics</p>	Panel	12 months	2 4	<p>Funded communication plan in place and adopted by the Community Cultural.</p> <p>New Cultural News and Register page made available/offered on SDC website</p>
11.	Support and facilitate coordination in apprenticeship, training, and mentoring	This collaborative approach should develop connections between cultural sector, employment, and training.	SDC/SG S College/ Create Gloucester - ershire	12 months	4	A training and awareness programme for cultural organisations is in place.

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12.	Produce and deliver a heritage skills development plan (indicative budget £20k)	<p>This plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help ensure opportunities are presented to access a greater awareness of heritage skills. - Raise the profile of creativity in the sector. - Creating a network of opportunities for people to develop and train in heritage skills. Raising awareness of traditional skills which are being lost. - Enhance collaboration with organisations working in field of heritage skills 	Panel/S DC	12 months 24 months completed	6	<p>Programme of skills development established /completed.</p> <p>Further activity is planned and sustainable.</p>
13.	Creation of forum for the sector (indicative budget £10k)	This forum, aligned to communication, should be a place for regular, discussion, awareness raising with each other and SDC. The Forum can be initially supported by SDC	Panel	6 months	2	<p>Mailing/communication list established</p> <p>Meetings scheduled and held.</p>

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