

A Cultural Strategy for East Sussex County Council



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Background

Introduction

East Sussex County Council’s Cultural Strategy was first published (online) in 2001. The six themes of the strategy were developed through a series of workshops, these brought together representatives from arts, cultural and community groups throughout East Sussex, elected members and staff from each of the County Council departments.

The action plan is a practical one, designed to point up the ways in which arts and cultural actions are helping to meet targets across all the core services of the County Council, to monitor and challenge these and to develop new ones.

Many of the original targets have now been reached and others have become a regular part of service delivery. 2007 will be the last year of the strategy in its current form as culture becomes more firmly embedded in the far reaching community planning process and in the Local Area Agreement.

The climate and landscape for arts and culture has changed and is continually changing and there will be renewed emphasis on building and consolidating partnerships; providing further and better opportunities for participation and tackling barriers; enhancing the role of volunteers and sustaining what has been achieved.

The National Framework

In 2001 The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) asked each local authority to develop and publish a Cultural Strategy to advocate the value and importance of culture to the community and ways that it could deliver on the main local agendas.

The strategy also provides the essential context for the assessment of bids for external funding.

The Local Government White Paper to be published in Autumn 2007, '*Creative Communities, new drivers for regeneration, empowerment and Community Cohesion*' will provide a new framework for partnerships, funding and assessment.

The Regional Framework

Culture South East, a consortium of all the region's cultural agencies published '*The Cultural Cornerstone – A Strategy for the Development of Cultural Activity and its Benefits in the South East*'. (Available from their website culturesoutheast.org.uk)

This sets out six challenges to be met by the authorities and organisations that will make the strategy into a reality. These are; Inclusion, Excellence, Learning, Recognition, Partnership and Coherence, and Support.

The themes of the East Sussex strategy echo these challenges and set out some of the ways in which they can be met.

Since then Culture South East has worked to integrate culture firmly into development and strategic plans for the region.

The Local Picture

Each of the Districts and Boroughs in East Sussex has cultural targets to help meet priorities for safer, healthier and more prosperous communities, as do the Local Strategic Partnerships. These are reflected in the Local Area Agreement. The County Council's cultural strategy is delivered through the Council Plan and Departmental Plans. The community planning process is the mechanism which will bring all these plans together. The East Sussex Arts Partnership is made up of all five Districts and Boroughs in East Sussex, the County Council and Arts Council England South East who work together to meet local priorities through arts events which people can get to, enjoy and take an active part in. Eastbourne Borough Council has recently achieved Beacon Status nationally for its delivery of culture to hard to reach groups in the community.

The European Dimension

A large number of cultural projects have been set up under the Interreg programme and new links with organisations in France have been established. More cultural collaborations are planned as part of the new Interreg Programme.

The County Council has developed a European Strategy which seeks to identify potential European partners and funds.

Profile of East Sussex

East Sussex is a County rich in natural beauty.

Its history traces the evolution of the modern world. It is the birthplace of technological developments, systems of governance and political thought. The landscape and coastline of East Sussex have long been a source of inspiration for naturalists, environmentalists, artists and writers. The people of Sussex have been characterised by independence of thought and 'will not be druv'.

East Sussex has areas of outstanding natural beauty: the South Downs, the High Weald and the coastline. It also has market towns, prosperous villages, areas of rural and urban deprivation, smaller resorts striving for a new economic role and lively and diverse coastal towns full of challenges and possibility.

Cultural projects are contributing to plans for regeneration, economic development and tourism.

Economic and population profile

In the region of 496,700 people live in East Sussex. One in four is above pensionable age. It has the highest proportion of very elderly residents of any English county (over 75, over 85 and over 90). The picture is gradually changing, with the proportion decreasing locally as it increases nationally. The contribution of older artists, active sports participants, officials, volunteers and audiences in East Sussex is significant and important.

The population of the county is projected to grow by 7.6% over the 25 years to 2026, and much of this growth is amongst those over pensionable age, as the post-war baby-boomer generation reaches retirement.

Gross Value Added (GVA) measures the overall value of goods and services produced in the economy. At £10,758, the GVA per head in East Sussex is only 70% of the UK average for 2002, the lowest of all county and unitary areas in the mainland South East and also 36% below the regional average.

In 2005 average wages were lower than elsewhere in the South East (except the Isle of Wight) and lower than the national average. The Indices of Deprivation 2004, measured deprivation at a sub-ward geography called Super Output Area (SOA).

Thirteen SOAs in East Sussex; twelve in Hastings and one in Eastbourne are among the 10% most deprived SOAs in England.

At 2.1% the unemployment rate in East Sussex (December 2005) remained higher than that for the South East (1.5%). Within the county, Hastings has the highest unemployment rate at 3.5%, and 24 wards in the county have rates equal to or above the national average. Rural communities face increasing challenges and deprivation.

Cultural activities are seen as crucial in regenerating deprived and isolated communities, helping to build individual self-esteem, community pride and respect, unlocking latent skills, enhancing employment prospects and encouraging involvement, learning and enterprise.

The position of creative industries in East Sussex

East Sussex is predominantly a small firm economy with 87% of firms employing 10 or fewer people. Cultural Industries, Cultural Tourism, professional Sports and Arts organisations in general fit this pattern.

Of a total of 2,066 companies in East Sussex, creative industries made up 1,000, of which 480 were IT/Web related, 81 multi-media, 135 promotional, 246 printing and publishing, 49 engineering design. In addition to these areas the economic impact of festivals, theatres, galleries, visitor attractions, sports venues, artists and designer/makers is currently being assessed by The South East England Development Agency.

The creative industries come near the top of Britain's earnings and export market at £115.5bn, employing some 1.3million people nation-wide. Creative industries are currently growing at twice the rate of the economy as a whole.

The lack of infrastructure to support major industries and their likely impact on the environment makes the encouragement of small specialist firms crucial to the economy of East Sussex.

The Vision

What we want to achieve

East Sussex is a place in which creative and active people choose to live and work. There are already encouraging signs that creative companies of all kinds, including internet design, publishing and production companies, are relocating here from London as well as individual creative practitioners. East Sussex has the natural assets and the people to grow and prosper in these areas. The challenge is to provide the supporting infrastructure.

Because of its natural and cultural assets East Sussex, as a place, should lead the way in providing the natural home for sustainable cultural tourism; evolving creative companies; professional and voluntary sports and arts events of exceptional quality; workshops, studios and creation centres. East Sussex County Council can help to provide opportunities for, and encourage everyone who lives works or studies in East Sussex to take an active part in its cultural life. It can champion the role of volunteers in the arts, sport and conservation and find ways to enhance their experience. East Sussex can be a place where people live happy and fulfilled lives in secure employment with opportunities for active, healthy and enjoyable leisure pursuits.

The goal of this strategy is to extend that possibility through creative learning in schools, increased opportunities for participation, nurturing the growth of cultural industries, by providing information and training opportunities and by sustaining and conserving what is valued.

How we hope to achieve it

In the twenty first century East Sussex County Council will work towards ensuring that all its citizens can play an active part in shaping, enjoying and creating its culture. To that end cultural objectives will be identified and developed in the plans of each of the County Council's departments. This means that the importance of our culture and those aspects of living in East Sussex that are most valued will be reinforced through the delivery of our core services.

The County Council cannot achieve this alone. We will work with our partners to help to ensure that sustainability, excellence and innovation are at the heart of what we strive to do. Working with the Districts and Boroughs and other local partners to create a strategic framework for the County as a whole and mesh with those of neighbouring authorities and the work of the regional Cultural Consortium.

Challenges

All East Sussex County Council Services have a cultural dimension with potential for development.

- Partnership working is essential to the delivery of most cultural targets.
- Emphasis on core services may mean there will be less cross-departmental working. This is the area in which culture often sits.
- Some of the benefits of culture are difficult to quantify in a resource driven climate
- The value of arts and culture to regeneration and economic growth has yet to be quantified in an East Sussex context.
- The Strategy is a living document which has to take account of new developments including, for example, the proposal to create a National Park, the new Higher Education provision in the East of the County and the Hastings E City initiative.

The scope

Culture in this context means enjoyment of and access to:

- the countryside
- the built heritage
- activities and events including festivals which bring communities together
- life long opportunities for learning
- the public realm
- archives
- the arts, including literature
- sports.

The six themes

Each of these themes is underpinned by the aspiration to achieve the best quality in provision and the greatest access for all.

Theme 1 - Promotion

It is important to point up what is distinctive and special about East Sussex, particularly within the large and very diverse South East Region. It is essential that East Sussex is represented nationally, regionally and sub regionally when arts and culture are discussed. It should be made clear why East Sussex it is a good place to live and work in and to visit.

Opportunities for building on and expanding the range and quality of what is on offer should be identified and exploited. This can be done by:

- working through the East Sussex Economic Partnership to maximise inward investment into the county and to participate in regional initiatives where it is advantageous to do so
- informing East Sussex organisations about available sources of funding and to encourage the development of bids
- playing a committed role in supporting the development of the Arts in the County through the East Sussex Arts Partnership. This is made up of all the Districts and Boroughs in East Sussex, the County Council and Arts Council England South East.
- offering training opportunities for Festivals, small venue promoters and other arts providers
- ensuring that East Sussex is represented at regional and national level in discussion related to cultural matters
- promoting the use of the written and recorded heritage for learning, cultural enrichment and giving a sense of personal and community identity
- exploiting County Council IT developments, especially the county website to promote culture and cultural activities
- promoting Cultural events in Libraries
- hosting the post of East Sussex Museum Development and Access Officer, promoting the work of museums throughout the county and maximising inward investment into those museums
- promoting woodlands and wood-use through the annual Woodfair
- promoting the Countryside sites that we manage
- producing publications which encourage walking and cycling
- promoting and celebrating the County's heritage, townscapes and landscapes
- developing and promoting opportunities provided by the Music Service
- providing support and training to ensure a creative curriculum in schools
- working with Creative Partnerships Hastings and East Sussex to nurture creative learning in schools

Linking County Council Strategies

- [ICT strategy](#)
- [Adult Learning Plan](#)
- [SEDE Business Plan](#)
- [Learning Journey Strategy](#)

Theme 2 - Conservation

By valuing culture in all its forms this generation can help to pass on what it holds dear to future generations. In a county of which 67% is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty there is a need to balance use for recreation and cultural activities with its conservation and to make it accessible to all. This can be achieved by:

- encouraging the development of a Heritage Strategy for East Sussex
- continuing to ensure that the county's written and recorded heritage is preserved for current and future generations
- supporting the preservation of museum collections through hosting the post of Museum Development Officer
- creating and maintaining long distance paths and trails
- continuing to manage sites owned by the County Council for conservation, public access and recreation
- continuing to provide information, advice and practical assistance to the public, landowners and parish councils about countryside management and access issues, including information about rights of way
- continuing to provide urban design advice on major development proposals
- creating, managing and providing access to local studies information in libraries.

Linking County Council Strategies

- [Structure Plan](#)
- [Management plans for individual sites](#)
- [Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#)

Theme 3 - Employment

Creative people enjoy living and working in East Sussex and the first signs of a trend towards small-scale London-based creative companies relocating here are beginning to be seen. In addition artists and designer/ makers who once found a natural home in Brighton are moving further along the coast to Hastings and Bexhill where property is cheaper. All the Districts and Boroughs are including culture in their plans for regeneration, urban renewal and economic development. This is fertile soil in which to grow creative and Hi-tech industries, to develop cultural quarters, enterprise hubs and creation centres, to expand the economy and create jobs. Cultural initiatives promote high spend tourism in an effective way. Creative professionals are needed in all Hi-tech companies and they wish to live and work where culture is valued.

Early ambitions set out in the Culture Strategy to secure a new Higher Education Institute in the East if the County and phase two approval for a media centre and enterprise gateway for Hastings have been achieved with the opening of the new University Centre in Hastings and the Media Centre. Employment in creative industries can be supported by:

- providing opportunities for work experience and traineeships in Countryside management
- offering a wide range of training opportunities in the fields of archaeology and museums in Sussex through the East Sussex Archaeology & Museums Project
- with Sussex Connexions providing information, advice and guidance to young people on training and employment opportunities
- engaging in the development of the 14 – 19 curriculum including vocational opportunities related to cultural field
- targetting new learners and disadvantaged groups using the medium of enrichment activities
- working with East Sussex Learning Partnership and Sussex Learning & Skills Council to develop education and training opportunities relevant to the needs of business, individuals and the community
- supporting a range of initiatives to help vulnerable and socially excluded people achieve skills, and access services and opportunities to engage in paid and voluntary employment
- providing a range of formal and informal learning opportunities in library settings
- providing access to careers information – resources and surgeries
- providing access to Learndirect courses
- supporting primary Schools in developing pupils’ economic understanding in accordance with Every Child Matters
- promoting effective community and business links in Primary curriculum.
- working with Creative Partnerships, Hastings and East Sussex and Rhythmix to place professional creative practitioners into schools and other learning environments
- offering opportunities to develop research skills through the East Sussex Records Office
- exploring opportunities for high value sector development in East Sussex, including the creative industries sector.

Linking County Council Strategies

- [Economic Development Statement](#)
- [Education Development Plan](#)
- [Welfare to Work Joint Investment Plan](#)
- [East Sussex Primary Learning Entitlement](#)

Theme 4 - Participation

Participation in cultural activities promotes relationships between groups and individuals, bringing a sense of belonging and of self worth. Shared memories and experiences foster understanding and a sense of identity for groups and communities. Active participation in sport and the arts by young people raises self-esteem and is shown to reduce levels of youth offending. Opportunities for actively enjoying cultural activities should be fostered near to where people live and be made accessible to all, especially those in rural and hard to reach communities by:

- through the East Sussex Arts Partnership developing opportunities for professional arts activities to take place in rural and outlying locations
- through the Library Service developing projects, events and activities to promote reading and writing, working with readers and writers groups, local and national organisations
- through the East Sussex Arts Development Partnership, providing county-wide opportunities for participation in Spoken and Written Word events through the Word County programme
- widening access to the county's written and recorded heritage through ICT and other initiatives and by encouraging volunteers
- by offering free access to the Internet and other ICT applications through the People's Network available in Libraries and the ESCC Mobile Office
- continuing to provide opportunities for volunteers to work with the Countryside Management Team
- continuing to provide opportunities for active engagement in dance through the Dance! East Sussex programme
- continuing participation in East Sussex Countywide Sports Development Partnership
- continuing to support the Young People's Inclusive Sports Festival
- through the East Sussex Arts Development Partnership supporting the annual festival of Young People and Contemporary Culture – Access All Areas
- ensuring a cultural dimension is included in the various 'voice of young people' initiatives
- by using sport and the arts to further community safety initiatives
- using Arts and Culture and the enjoyment of the Country-side in the promotion of Life-long Learning and Healthy Active Lifestyles for Older people
- increasing the number of young people receiving instrumental or vocal tuition through the East Sussex Music Service by 10% each year. Currently 6,000 pupils take part.
- increasing the number of young people taking part in Saturday morning music school, county groups and wider ensembles by 10% each year. Currently 2,000 pupils take part.
- in partnership with Rhythmix offering breadth of musical genre and increased participation by working in youth settings as well as schools and colleges
- through the key stage two Widening Opportunities programme developing whole class instrumental teaching in primary schools
- through the Support for the Arts grants programme encouraging bids to external sources of funding for arts projects
- Encouraging wider participation in music- making by all members of the community through the East Sussex Music Service, Music for Everyone initiatives.

Linking County Council Strategies

- Facing the Sporting Challenge a County-wide strategy for the development of Sport in East Sussex
- Local Transport Plan
- East Sussex Music Service – Maintenance and Development Plan
- Older People's Involvement Strategy.
- East Sussex PE and School Sport Strategy
- Local Area Agreement
- Learning Journey Strategy
- East Sussex Primary Learning Entitlement
- SEDE business plan

Theme 5 - Life Long Learning

Learning is a process of active engagement with experience; it is what helps people to make sense of the world and to enjoy what it has to offer. It may involve an increase in skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes and capacity to reflect. Effective learning may lead to new developments and cultural growth. This process can be encouraged through:

- continuing to offer training opportunities for volunteers involved in arts promotion.
- continuing to provide access to archival learning materials and by extending this through ICT and other initiatives, including working with partners in the educational and cultural sectors.
- promoting life-long learning opportunities in museums through hosting the post of Museum Development Officer.
- providing educational activities for children through the countryside management team teaching them about their environment and how to look after it.
- promoting the Healthy School Standard and through support enable schools to work towards the Physical Activity Gold Standard.
- continuing the Active Schools programme and promoting SportsMark (currently 80% of secondary schools in East Sussex have attained SportsMark)
- promoting ArtsMark, the Arts Council initiative, which encourages review and evaluation of arts in schools
- providing support and encouragement for the development of specialist performing arts, visual arts and sports colleges. There are currently three with Sports College status, and four with Performing Arts status
- providing support and guidance for a further two East Sussex secondary Schools to achieve specialist sports college status.
- developing a countywide Sports College Strategy to support existing specialist schools to add sport as their second specialism
- continuing through the East Sussex Music service to offer opportunities for adult learners and family learning. By supporting the East Sussex Community Choir, by continuing membership of county groups to the age of 23, building relationship with musicians in the community including brass bands.
- investigating how the Citizenship curriculum can contribute to the cultural strategy

- provide an enriching Gifted and Talented Summer School
- extend opportunities provided by Out of School Hours Learning and the Children's University.
- through the Library Service providing access to Learn Direct courses.
- offering support and training to develop life long learning skills through the Primary Curriculum
- promoting the arts in the Primary Curriculum.

To ensure effective learning:

- Use arts and culture and the enjoyment of the countryside in the promotion of life long learning and Healthy Active Lifestyle initiatives for Older People

Linking County Council Strategies

- [Early Years Plan](#)
- [East Sussex Music Service Maintenance and Development Plan](#)
- [Adult Learning Plan](#)
- [Children and Young People's Plan 2006 -2008](#)
- [East Sussex PE and Sport Plan](#)
- [Strategy to promote the learning journey in Primary Schools](#)
- [East Sussex Primary learning Entitlement](#)

Theme 6 - Infrastructure

Infrastructure includes both buildings and facilities and networks. The challenge is to help to meet changing expectations and the need to upgrade facilities to meet rising standards for access. An infrastructure for the cultural development in East Sussex would be aided by:

- creating a cultural strategy for East Sussex as a whole through the Community Planning process
- encouraging the development of incubation units with links to research facilities
- seeking ways to assist in the creation of workshops and studios
- maintaining and developing library buildings and two mobile libraries
- seeking opportunities to work in partnership to provide communities with new library facilities
- by providing the mobile County Council Office with access to library services, ICT learning opportunities and council services
- working with partners to develop and fund a new Record Office for East Sussex to ensure that the County's written and recorded heritage and access to it is secured for the future
- maintaining and developing community information networks
- supporting and encouraging bids to improve facilities and access
- valuing and encouraging imaginative use of the built heritage
- supporting schools and other organisations wishing to improve their sports facilities for use by the wider community

- develop the website for the PE and School Sport Service that will share good practice, provide guidance and information for the residents of East Sussex
- through the East Sussex Music Service by maintaining good relationships in key performance spaces throughout the County
- by meeting the access standards outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act.

Linking County Council Strategies

- [Local Transport Plan](#)
- [Legal and Community Services Land and Buildings Strategy](#)
- [Asset Management Plan](#)
- [ICT Strategy](#)

Highlights

Here is a changing selection of examples of how the six themes of the Cultural Strategy are being met. They have been chosen to be representative of other similar activities in the County both within County Council Services and Partner organisations.

Promotion

Paths to Prosperity

A series of 45 circular routes has been selected based on pubs, teashops and villages together with some new routes to promote woodlands and wetlands creating a strategic network of paths across the whole of East Sussex.

Word County

A seasonal publication listing spoken and written word events across the County and a new programme of activity that brings professional writers and local communities together.

Mobile County Office

The office visits rural locations with on board services that include collection and reservation of library books, free internet access and a tutor providing basic IT courses.

Art in Public Places

A publication celebrating recent Public art initiatives and artists' commissions in East Sussex.

Commissioning a new play

An outdoor production for family audiences was enjoyed by a total of 3,000 people in rural locations across the County.

Updating the website

Organisations and groups can now upload and promote their own events on the County Council website.

The East Sussex Youth Orchestra

Ours was the first Youth Orchestra invited to play at the Pablo Casals International Music festival in Barcelona as part of the orchestra's tour of Northern Spain.

Conservation

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

The County Council's Local Nature Reserve at Rye Harbour has used generous grants from the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund and the EU Life Nature fund to create large areas of new reed beds, islands and wetland for rare birds and other wildlife. The reserve attracts more than 150,000 visitors each year so new paths and hides have been created. An artist's commission has resulted in SoundBench where visitors can sit and listen to an especially composed musical score which uses natural sounds.

New Historical Records Centre

The Project Board and partnerships are in place, a site identified and initial funding secured for a New Historical Records Centre for East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

Employment

University Centre Hastings

A dream when this strategy was first drawn up the University Centre Hastings now offers degree and other courses in partnership with five regional Universities and Hastings College of Arts and Technology.

The De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill

Having undergone major restoration and refurbishment the Pavilion offers a range of professional development opportunities for artists and networking and business advice for designer makers alongside its outstanding exhibition, live performance and education programmes.

Express Yourself Gallery

Giving artists who have experienced mental health problems the opportunity to show their work alongside other artists and providing paid employment for gallery staff. This social enterprise has been created in Hailsham through a partnership including The Hailsham Trust, the County Council and the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust responding to a local initiative.

Creative Partnerships Hastings and East Sussex

A multimillion pound investment by the Department of Culture Media and Sport and the Department for Education and Science to develop creative thinking, teaching and learning skills in schools through partnerships with creative professionals. The aim is to raise aspirations, academic achievement and open up career path options for young people.

Participation

School Sports Partnerships

East Sussex was the first county in the South East to have all its schools in membership of a Schools' Sports Partnership and participating in its programme. All schools have exceeded national targets for participation in Physical Education and Sport.

Beacon Status for providing access to culture by hard to reach groups

Eastbourne Borough Council has gained beacon status nationally for its provision of cultural opportunities for hard to reach groups through its Towner on the Town programme. A model of working which will inspire county-wide approaches.

Access All Areas

The County's first Festival of Youth Art was held in the autumn over three days at the De La Warr Pavilion. This East Sussex Arts Partnership initiative gave young people from across the county the opportunity to showcase their work, take part in and run workshops, and watch professional performances. Young people are currently taking part in projects towards the next Festival in October 2007.

Exploring East Sussex

7,000 participants have taken part in guided walks across the county including specialist walks for people with disabilities and new walkers from minority communities.

Life Long Learning

Inspiring Learning in Galleries

East Sussex is hosting one of only three clusters in a national programme to investigate learning in Museums and Galleries. The En-quire programme brings together Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, the De La Warr Pavilion, the Towner Art Gallery, Creative Partnerships Hastings and East Sussex with neighbouring Fabrica and the University of Sussex.

Specialist performing arts, media and sports colleges

Two new schools have recently gained specialist status making a total of five for visual, media and performing arts and three for sport. 75% of primary schools have attained ArtsMark.

Infrastructure, including Networks

New Cultural Centre for Eastbourne

Funded by the Arts and Heritage Lottery Funds and Eastbourne Borough Council the centre has been purpose built to re-house the Towner Art Gallery collections, provide temporary exhibition space of the highest standard as well as education and community spaces and conference exhibition space.

Ouse Estuary, Newhaven

A nature Reserve created through the Ouse Estuary project to provide flood storage and wildlife and landscape compensation for a new business park and road. The reserve attracted more than 42,000 cycle trips and at least as many walkers over the past 12 months.

Sports and Arts Spaces

New spaces for Sports and the Arts in five primary schools with shared use for local communities have been created and £3.6 million spent on new PE and Sports facilities in secondary schools.

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

A new link building funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Hastings Borough Council has been created to improve visitor facilities and provide upgraded physical access.

Library Network

A major programme to upgrade and modernise the library network has been put in place, including the building of an award-winning new library in Lewes.

East Sussex Arts Partnership

Formed in 2004 the partnership brings together all the Districts and Boroughs in East Sussex, the County Council and Arts Council England South East. It raises funding for and promotes programmes to bring communities across East Sussex opportunities to work with professional artists and performers.