

# Evolution, Revolution & Innovation

A Cultural Strategy for Shropshire  
and Telford & Wrekin



Evolution, Revolution & Innovation:  
A Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

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Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council



# Foreword

Culture is something which matters deeply to all of us. It affects everybody's quality of life and is the foundation upon which many jobs in the tourism and leisure industries rely.

Those of us who live and work in this wonderful county know that we are fortunate that Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin possess such a fantastic range of cultural assets, from first-class leisure and sporting facilities such as Lilleshall National Sports Centre, to superb theatres including The Place and the new Theatre Severn, along with marvellous countryside and spectacular scenery, not to mention the Birthplace of Industry, the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site.

I am, therefore, delighted to recommend to you this new Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. It has been developed through a unique collaboration between elected members and council officers of both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, along with key individuals and stakeholders from the cultural sector. Most of all though, it represents the views of the people of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and their priorities for the county in which they live, work, learn and enjoy their leisure time.

This Cultural Strategy seeks to set out the priorities for cultural development over the years to come, and the ways in which culture needs to be firmly embedded in all our planning and development. The Strategy also sets out the ways in which we can release the full potential of culture to drive our economic sustainability and our long-term community well-being, making Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin both a great place to live and a rewarding place to visit.

Steve Miller  
Chairman, Cultural Consortium for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

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# 1 Executive summary

This strategy presents Shropshire Council's and Telford & Wrekin Council's joint vision for culture in the sub-region for the period 2009 – 2014 and beyond. It is intentionally a joint strategy designed to celebrate our shared connections and ambitions.

## **What do we mean by culture?**

At one level, 'culture', is about places to go and things to do. It includes arts, sports, libraries, reading, museums, heritage, archaeology, archives, architecture, crafts, children's play, parks, open spaces and green networks, countryside recreation, leisure, tourism and the cultural and creative industries.

But culture is also much more than this. It is also about:

- Our sense of identity – as individuals and as a society – the connections we feel with where we live and the people we live among
- Our spiritual, intellectual and emotional characteristics
- Our traditions, beliefs and values

In short, it is about what makes us distinctive and how we choose to express this at community or individual level.

## **Our vision**

We want culture to inspire us all, to shape how we live, learn, work and play and to enrich the life of every resident visitor in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin by helping us:

- Celebrate who we are and where we live
- Connect with other people and places
- Celebrate the diversity of the people of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
- Be healthy
- Learn creatively
- Work better
- Have fun

The strategy celebrates the values that many people have told us they most associate with Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin: that it is authentic, independent, real, hand-crafted and green.

### **Why have a Cultural Strategy?**

The simple answer is because we believe culture is good for us as individuals and beneficial to the communities we live in. We know that culture makes a real difference to people's lives. It can thrill and inspire people. It makes us feel we belong, gives us a sense of who we are, where we've come from and what we want to be. Culture is a catalyst. It can make us healthier – mentally and physically. Culture helps us learn: for fun, for our education and for our work, in new and creative ways. Culture broadens our horizons. It connects us to other people: locally, regionally, nationally and internationally and helps us celebrate those connections and diversity. Culture is very good for us economically, creating jobs, attracting tourists and helping us create vibrant and engaging places to live, work and play. A Cultural Strategy will help us to ensure that we coordinate our efforts and achieve the best possible results for the good of everyone in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

### **Whose Strategy is it?**

The Strategy will not only serve the local authorities. It embraces a partnership approach between Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council and the private and voluntary sectors. The Strategy has been developed by the new sub-regional Cultural Consortium whose members represent culture, regeneration, health, equality and diversity, safer communities and young people. The Consortium has been set up to promote the cultural industries and tourism regionally and nationally, and to create opportunities for economic growth in this sector.<sup>1</sup> The strategy will enable the cultural sectors of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin to make strategic connections with regional strategies including the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy, West Midlands Economic Strategy, and with national Non-Departmental Public Bodies such as Arts Council England, Sport England and Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

### **What we want to achieve**

The model on the following page summarises the Cultural Strategy.

We have seven key aims. We want to:

1. Improve health and wellbeing
2. Think Green and Live Green

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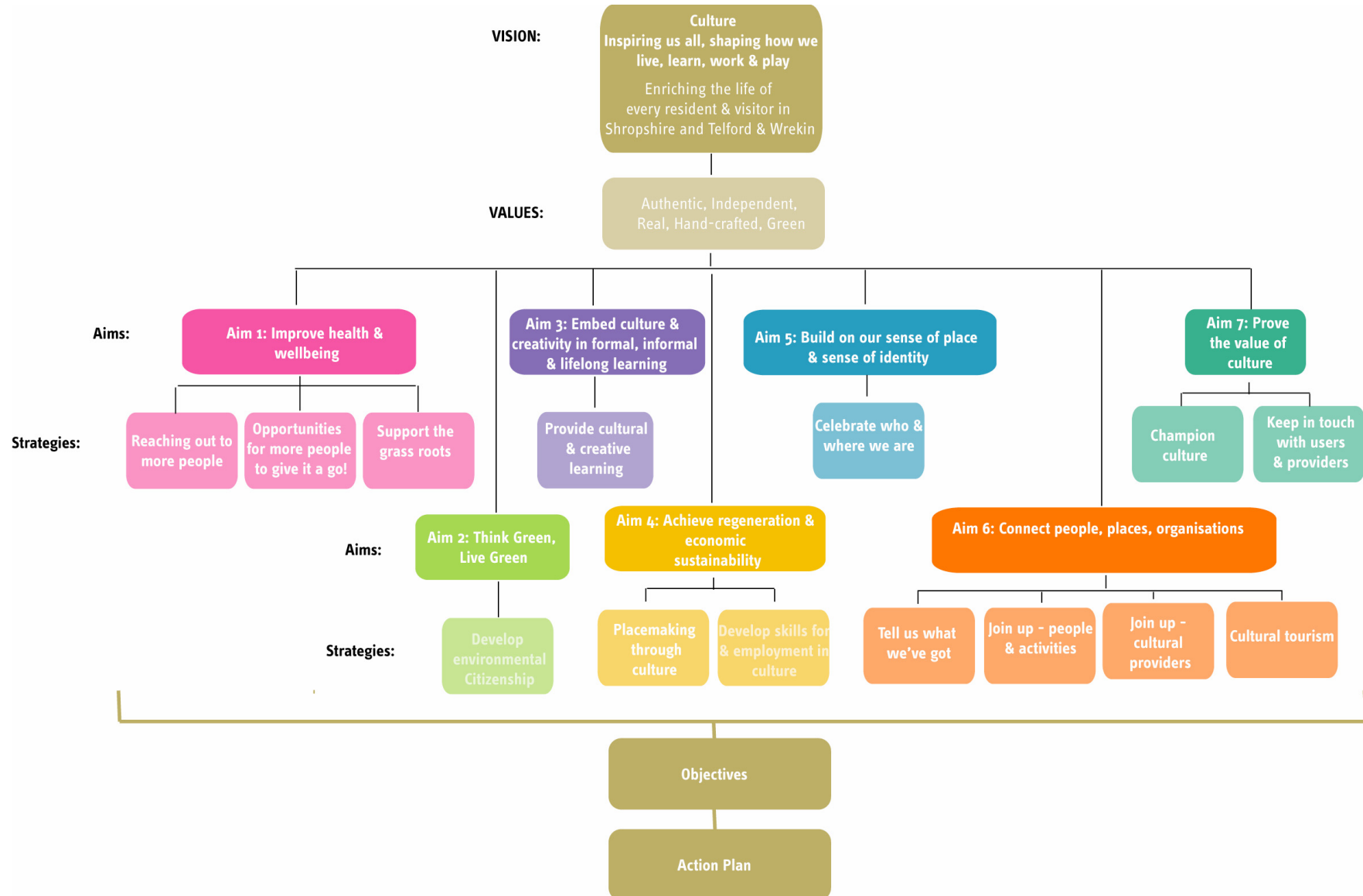
<sup>1</sup> A list of Cultural Consortium members is appended.



3. Provide cultural and creative learning
4. Achieve regeneration and economic sustainability
5. Build on our sense of place and sense of identity
6. Connect people, places and organisations
7. Prove the value of culture.

We plan to achieve these aims through the individual strategies identified for each aim.

# Summary Strategy









## 2

## About this strategy

This document presents a vision and strategy for culture across the sub-region of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin for 2009 to 2014 and beyond.

The strategy has been developed by the new sub-regional Cultural Consortium whose members represent culture, regeneration, health, equality and diversity, safer communities and young people. The consortium has been set-up to promote the region's cultural industries and tourism, regionally and nationally and to create opportunities for economic growth in this sector.<sup>2</sup> This means the strategy will not only serve the local authorities. It embraces a partnership approach between Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin councils and the private and voluntary sectors.

### Why now?

This strategy has been developed now because:

- There is increasingly close partnership working across this sub-region.
- Shropshire Council became a unitary authority on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009<sup>3</sup>, alongside the current unitary authority of Telford & Wrekin.
- There is increasing evidence of the value of culture's contribution to overall quality of life and the part it can play in other linked policies and strategies, including education, regeneration and health.
- The current Cultural Strategies for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are either at or near their end.

### What does this strategy do?

The Cultural Strategy:

- Presents a shared vision and strategy for culture across the sub-region of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
- Highlights the key cultural assets in the sub-region and levels of engagement

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<sup>2</sup> A list of Cultural Consortium members is appended.

<sup>3</sup> Shropshire Council has brought together the six authorities of Shropshire County Council, Shrewsbury & Atcham, North Shropshire, Oswestry, Bridgnorth and South Shropshire

- Provides evidence of the contribution that culture makes towards the personal, community, economic, social and environmental well-being of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
- Suggests ways to build and strengthen cultural provision and activities
- Encourages cooperation, collaboration and partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors in the provision of culture
- Paints a picture that wider regional and national agencies can understand in order for them to support culture in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
- Provides a plan for engaging more people, more often and more deeply in culture.

### **How it was developed**

A significant amount of research and consultation throughout 2009 has informed the development of this plan. This included:

- Reviewing the socio-demographic, cultural, environmental, economic and cultural profile of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin; the strategic context in which the two local authorities operate; current levels and profile of participation and non-participation and wider social trends.
- Workshops and interviews with representatives from a range of cultural and partner organisations to develop the vision and plan
- Consultation with young people from the sub-regions who attended workshops
- A survey of the public's participation in, response to, needs from and desires for culture to which over 360 people responded
- A review of the economic impact of culture, in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

### **Reading this document**

This document presents:

- The background to and context for the strategy
- The distinctive identity and profile of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin which informs the strategy

- A summary of the cultural assets which exist and current levels of engagement in cultural activities
- The benefits of culture to individuals and society
- The vision and objectives which the strategy is working to
- The broad strategies through which the vision and objectives will be achieved
- A working action plan for each Council which presents key areas for development and actions to realise the Strategy's objectives

A pictorial summary of the strategy is presented on page 7.

### **Related documents**

#### **Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Cultural Atlas**

This is a comprehensive review of the socio-demographic, environmental, economic and cultural profile of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin; the strategic context in which the two local authorities operate; current levels and profile of participation and non-participation and wider social trends.

#### **Summary of consultation work with children young people**

This is a piece of desk research that examines and presents the key findings of recent consultation with young people both at a sub-regional level and nationwide level.





# Tonight's Program

Channel	Time	Program
BBC 2	12.30	ITV Lanchester News (T) (S)
BBC 2	1.30	Today with Dave and Mel
BBC 2	2.30	Make Me Perfect Put
BBC 2	3.30	Countdown with Gerry (T) (S)
BBC 2	4.15	Deal or No Deal
BBC 2	5.00	Richard & Judy with presenters Alan Carr and Justin Lee Collins (T) (S)
BBC 2	6.00	The Simpsons Homer's funniest moments (T) (S)
BBC 2	6.30	Hollyoaks (T) (S)
BBC 2	7.00	Channel 4 News
BBC 2	7.30	30 Minutes
BBC 2	8.00	Monday

12.55 ER News

1.00 The Big Breakfast

1.30 The Big Breakfast

2.00 The Big Breakfast

2.30 The Big Breakfast

3.00 The Big Breakfast

3.30 The Big Breakfast

4.00 The Big Breakfast

4.30 The Big Breakfast

5.00 The Big Breakfast

5.30 The Big Breakfast

6.00 The Big Breakfast

6.30 The Big Breakfast

7.00 The Big Breakfast

7.30 The Big Breakfast

8.00 The Big Breakfast

# 3

## Who we are: past, present and future

The Cultural Strategy acknowledges and celebrates the distinctive identity of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. It reflects the profile, needs and aspirations of local people. It looks to the future, taking into consideration emerging cultural, social and leisure trends.

### 3.1 What makes Telford and Wrekin, 'Telford & Wrekin'?

#### Identity

Telford & Wrekin is thought of as younger than Shropshire, owing to the creation of Telford as a new town in 1968. However, the borough also includes several small market towns that pre-existed this: Wellington, Dawley, Donnington, Madeley, Oakengates, Ironbridge and Newport<sup>4</sup>. These historic market towns each have their own unique identity steeped in heritage, from Saxon settlements to centres of mining and industrial manufacture. Telford & Wrekin also has a strong sense of industrial heritage from Ironbridge Gorge and its designation in 1986 as a World Heritage Site.

Telford & Wrekin offers urban living in a green environment with a significant rural hinterland. People enjoy the more urban shopping and leisure experiences afforded by Telford, but also appreciate its greenery, which includes a network of hedgerows, canals, meadows, some 400 acres of ancient semi-natural woodland and other open spaces, including the 170-acre Telford Town Park. These create a natural landscape unique at the time to new town development, one which achieved international recognition and pioneered the way forward for new towns elsewhere<sup>5</sup>. The people of Telford & Wrekin also benefit from world-class sporting facilities such as Lilleshall National Sports Centre, the proudly supported local football team AFC Telford United and leisure opportunities such as Telford Ice Rink, TCAT Super Dome and indoor facilities, in addition to the sub-region's history of joint-use sport and learning communities.

#### Location

Telford & Wrekin neighbours Shropshire to the west and the Black Country to the east. Wolverhampton is within 25 minutes drive and Birmingham within 40 minutes. This location means that Telford & Wrekin is seen as a 'green gateway' to Shropshire. Telford has a

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<sup>4</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Telford & Wrekin', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 5)

<sup>5</sup> [www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)



good transport network owing to its proximity to the M54, which connects the town to the wider West Midlands region, as well as a direct train service to London.

### **Natural environment**

While 84% of the 167,000 population live in Telford itself, 72% of the land area of Telford & Wrekin is made up of rural areas. Telford itself is also significantly 'green', with 40% of the town's land area comprising green and open spaces.

### **Population**

Telford & Wrekin's population of 167,000 is predicted to rise by a further 24% by 2026 to 206,600. Telford is a named Growth Point<sup>6</sup> that will see significant growth in jobs and housing over the next 15 years. Telford's population is younger than the regional average, with 32.9% of the population aged under 25<sup>7</sup>. However, as with national trends, the population is ageing, with 18% of the population estimated to be over 65 by 2026, increasing from 14% in 2008<sup>8</sup>. The Black and Minority Ethnic population, at 5.2% is lower than the regional average of 11.3%, but higher than Shropshire's 1.2%<sup>9</sup>.

Telford & Wrekin council support over 2,700 disabled service users, most of whom are over 75 years old<sup>10</sup>, but also includes nearly 650 users living independently aged 18 – 64, and just under 550 aged 65 – 75.

30% of Telford & Wrekin's population has either a learning disability, moderate or serious physical disability, mental health disability or limiting long-term illness. It is predicted that this proportion will increase to 32% by 2025<sup>11</sup>. As with Shropshire, the proportion of residents aged 65 or over with a long-term illness is set to increase significantly, in Telford and Wrekin's case by 60% by 2025.

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<sup>6</sup> Growth Point status means that Government and local partners agree the potential for growth, and are committed to working together to ensure that growth will be sustainable, realistic and affordable, with a key focus on housing.

are locations that are supported by Central Government to encourage sustainable growth, with a key focus on housing.

<sup>7</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Telford & Wrekin', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 27)

<sup>8</sup> 'Telford and Wrekin Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Annual Public Health Report 2009: Executive Summary', Telford & Wrekin Council, Telford & Wrekin NHS (2009: 7)

<sup>9</sup> 'Telford & Wrekin Key Facts and Figures', Telford & Wrekin Council: (2008)

<sup>10</sup> 1,530 service users are aged 75 or over, this figure includes frailty and temporary illnesses for which they use services, not just those registered disabled

<sup>11</sup> Statistics obtained from [www.pansi.org.uk](http://www.pansi.org.uk)



## Health

Health is generally good, with longer than the national average life-expectancy. Obesity levels are high, with 18.7% of residents obese compared to 15.8% regionally. Smoking levels are also high, with 26.1% of the population smoking, compared to 21.9% regionally<sup>12</sup>. Every year there are on average 1,300 deaths before the age of 75 (650 in both men and women) in Telford and Wrekin with cancer being the most common cause (accounting for one-third of premature deaths) and cardiovascular disease being the second most common cause (accounting for almost one-quarter)<sup>13</sup>.

National figures suggest that drug misuse is increasing with 10.1% of adults having used one or more illicit drug within the previous 12 months in 2008/09 compared to 9.6% in 2007/08. The proportion of NHS admissions due to drug poisoning has also increased by 10% nationally between 2006/07 and 2008/09, however in Telford & Wrekin the number of NHS admissions due to drugs poisoning has actually decreased by nearly a quarter over the same time period.

Within Telford & Wrekin the number of teenage pregnancies per 1,000 girls aged 15 – 17, whilst higher than the national rate of 41.7, has decreased by 23.9% over the last 10 years, from 64.2 in 1998 to 48.9 in 2007.

## Education

Educational attainment is lower than the regional average. 60.3% of pupils gained 5 or more GCSEs A\*-C in 2007-2008, compared to 64.1% regionally, although this result represents an increase from the result in 2006/07 when 55.2% of Telford & Wrekin pupils gained 5 or more GCSEs A\* - C<sup>14</sup>. The proportion of NEETS (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) has risen by 0.2% in Telford & Wrekin between 2007 and 2008 when an estimated 9.9% of 16 – 18 year olds were classified as NEETS, which is above the average for the West Midlands region of 7%<sup>15</sup>. In addition, the sub-region has a smaller proportion of 16 and 17-year olds in education than the West Midlands and national average, 77% compared to 82% both regionally and nationally<sup>16</sup>. 44% of Telford & Wrekin residents have a

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<sup>12</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Telford & Wrekin', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 32)

<sup>13</sup> 'Telford & Wrekin Joint Strategic Needs and Assessment', Telford & Wrekin NHS (2009: 23)

<sup>14</sup> 'DCSF: GCSE and Equivalent results in England 2007/08

<sup>15</sup> '14 – 19 Reform: NEET data', Department for Children, Schools and Families: [http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single)

[19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single)

<sup>16</sup> 'Learning Skills Council Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin – Key Statistics 2009/2010' (2009: 10), [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/LSC13369-07\\_shropshire\\_A4\\_v03\\_s3.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/LSC13369-07_shropshire_A4_v03_s3.pdf)

Level 3 qualification<sup>17</sup> or over, just under the regional average of 45% and national average of 49%. Just under one-quarter have a Level 4 qualification<sup>18</sup> or above – again lower than both the national and regional averages<sup>19</sup>.

Telford & Wrekin council maintain 57 primary schools, 13 secondary schools, 4 special schools and 26 nursery schools and classes across the sub-region.

Adult and lifelong learning is provided by Telford & Wrekin Council's Life Long Learning and Family Learning services, the Workers Education Association, New College and TCAT. A total of 2,405 learners are on courses provided by Telford & Wrekin Council across these institutions and services in 2008/09. In addition 2,906 learners are on non local-authority funded courses at TCAT.

## Deprivation

The borough has some significant pockets of deprivation. Ranked the 113<sup>th</sup> (out of 354) most deprived Local Authority area in England, the borough also has 6 areas that are in the top 10% most deprived nationally<sup>20</sup>. Telford & Wrekin is a low-crime area compared to similar parts nationally. Overall crime levels in Telford & Wrekin from 2003/04 to October 2009 have fallen by 43% and Telford & Wrekin has fewer notifiable offences per 100 people (8.4) compared to the region as a whole (9.5)<sup>21</sup>. During this time violent crime rates, domestic burglaries and vehicle crimes have all fallen, in contrast the rate of racially aggravated crime has risen by 200%<sup>22</sup>. Although overall crime levels are declining locally, the reality does not match public perception. For example, 60% of residents in Telford & Wrekin feel unsafe after dark<sup>23</sup>, and this will have an impact on the cultural choices residents make, particularly in relation to evening events.

## Economy

Economically, Telford & Wrekin experienced an average annual growth rate of 4.6% between 1995 and 2005<sup>24</sup>. Although more recent

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<sup>17</sup> Level 3 qualifications encompass several qualifications such as A-Levels, AS Levels, National Diplomas and Level 3 NVQs.

<sup>18</sup> Level 4 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education and include Level 4 Professional Diplomas and City & Guilds Licentiatehip.

<sup>19</sup> 'Learning Skills Council Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin – Key Statistics 2009/2010' (2009: 10), [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/LSC13369-07\\_shropshire\\_A4\\_v03\\_s3.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/LSC13369-07_shropshire_A4_v03_s3.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> 'Telford & Wrekin Key Facts and Figures', Telford & Wrekin Council: (2008)

<sup>21</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Telford & Wrekin', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 33)

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> '2009 Telford & Wrekin Crime Safety Survey', First Quarter

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*: 31

data suggests unemployment rose by 28.5% between 2007 and 2008, overall unemployment, at 5.7% is still lower than the national average of 5.9%<sup>25</sup>. The registered number of businesses grew at a rate of 2.5% per year between 1994 and 2007, compared to 1.4% regionally. The knowledge economy is a particular area of growth<sup>26</sup>.

In 2009 average gross weekly earnings in Telford & Wrekin were £398.70 and are below average for the West Midlands region (£441.50) and England overall (£489.80)<sup>27</sup>. Weekly earnings have seen a decrease in the sub-region of -5.7% between 2008 and 2009. Certain groups, such as disabled people and women, experience greater pay inequalities. For example, nationally, half of all disabled people were found to have incomes below half the average of the general population in 2000<sup>28</sup>. In Telford & Wrekin women earn on average £200.40 less per week than men, although this is less pronounced than the national gender pay gap of £227.70.

Recent Job Seekers Allowance claimant figures reveal that more young people are out of work, with the proportion of claimants aged 18 – 24 in November 2009 at 9.9%, an increase of 2.9% from the previous year and above the national average of 7.9%<sup>29</sup>. Such increases will have obvious impact on the ability of young people to engage in cultural activities due to the costs associated with such activities.

## Tourism

Telford & Wrekin attracted over 1.5m visitors in 2005. The majority, around 80%, come on day visits, but a significant proportion (20%) stay overnight. Of those who stay overnight, 46% are on holiday, 27% are visiting friends and relatives and 26% are on business. The total value of tourism in Telford & Wrekin was estimated to be £104m in 2005. Although more recent data is unavailable, the overall number of visitors to the sub-region is likely to have increased since 2005, as indicated by visit figures from key attractions. For example, the Telford International Convention Centre, as one of the UK's top 10 event venues, attracts over half a million business visitors each year alone<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site attracts between 750,000 and 1 million leisure visitors each year.

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<sup>25</sup> 'Telford & Wrekin Key Facts and Figures', Telford & Wrekin Council: (2008)

<sup>26</sup> 'Telford & Wrekin – key facts and figures', Sustainability Group (2008)

<sup>27</sup> 2009 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings:

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_labour/ASHE-2009/2009\\_res\\_la.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_labour/ASHE-2009/2009_res_la.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> 'Enduring economic exclusion: disabled people, income and work', Burchardt, T (2000: 18)

<sup>29</sup> 'Youth Claimant Rates by regions and Local Authority (November 2009)':

<http://www.wmro.org/standardTemplate.aspx/Home/OurResearch/Recessionmonitoring/Latestemploymentandunemploymentdata>

<sup>30</sup> 'Sub-Priority 3: Promoting the Area as a Business and Tourism Destination', Telford & Wrekin Council









## **What makes Shropshire, 'Shropshire'?**

### **Identity**

People living in Shropshire tell us that what they appreciate is its distinctive greenness, tranquillity, authenticity and independence. They feel a deep sense of ownership of its natural landscape, diverse geology and biodiversity. They feel that the more relaxed way of life in Shropshire is in tune with the landscape's natural rhythms, tranquillity and greenery. They are conscious of its rich history as the borderland between England and Wales and its contribution to the Industrial Revolution. They enjoy its market towns where independent retailers sell locally-made and handcrafted goods. They benefit from a rich sporting heritage with the town of Much Wenlock celebrated as the original home of the modern-day Olympics, and with top-range facilities such as Shrewsbury Sports Village, the proudly supported local football team of Shrewsbury Town and a rich amateur-level range of sports clubs. They enjoy all of this being celebrated through the diverse range of cultural activity on offer.

### **Location**

Shropshire is England's largest inland county. Surrounded by six other counties, Shropshire shares its borders and identity with Wales to the west, Herefordshire and Worcestershire to the south, Cheshire to the north and Staffordshire and the Black Country with its urban conurbations of Wolverhampton and Birmingham a short distance to the east. The county has fast access to the national road network via the M54 motorway, and good access by train due to Shrewsbury being a rail network hub. Transport and communication links between rural areas within the county however are significantly more limited.

### **Natural environment**

More than a fifth of Shropshire's landscape is within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Shropshire has some of the most diverse geology in the world and significant natural assets such as the Shropshire Hills, the North Shropshire Meres and Mosses, the Ellesmere Glacial Lakes, and the River Severn Valley. Such treasures are acknowledged as the county's greatest asset<sup>31</sup>, with Shropshire's distinctive landscape defining the sub-region. Shropshire has recently been recognised as a significant remaining area of tranquillity by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Shropshire Core Strategy: Policy Directions, Shropshire Council (2009: 10) [http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning.nsf/viewAttachments/EWET-7UVHQ6/\\$file/core-strategy-policy-directions.pdf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning.nsf/viewAttachments/EWET-7UVHQ6/$file/core-strategy-policy-directions.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> 'Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008 – 2018', Shropshire County Council (2008: 12)

## Population

Shropshire is rural and sparsely populated. From a total population of 290,900, just under a quarter live in Shrewsbury. 63% of the population live in urban areas and 36% live in rural villages and hamlets, and dispersed dwellings in the wider countryside. Shrewsbury is a named Growth Point<sup>33</sup> that will see substantial increases in housing and jobs over the next 15 years. The other main market towns of Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Market Drayton, Ludlow and Whitchurch are much smaller than Shrewsbury and together contain about 20% of the total population<sup>34</sup>. The sub-region has a population density of or 235 persons per square mile<sup>35</sup>. This compares to the national figures of 1,015 persons per square mile.

The population is increasing. It is expected to grow by a further 16% by 2031, an increase that highlights the subsequent need for extended cultural services. In 2001, the Black and Minority Ethnic population of Shropshire was 1.2% of the total population. This is significantly below the national figure of 9% and regional figure of 11%<sup>36</sup>. The vast majority (89%) of Shropshire residents were born in England<sup>37</sup>.

Shropshire has an ageing population; the number of people aged 45 to retirement age increased by 25% from 1991 – 2007<sup>38</sup>. Much of the population growth is estimated to be people aged 60 and over<sup>39</sup>. In contrast, the number of people aged 16 – 29 has fallen by 18%. In 2005, children made up 18.4% of the population of Shropshire<sup>40</sup> compared to 19.3% nationally<sup>41</sup>.

32% of Shropshire's population has either a learning disability, moderate or serious physical disability, mental health disability or limiting long-term illness. It is predicted that this proportion will increase to 34% by 2025<sup>42</sup>. The proportion of residents aged 65 and over within a limiting long-term illness is projected to see a significant

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<sup>33</sup> Growth Point status means that Government and local partners agree the potential for growth, and are committed to working together to ensure that growth will be sustainable, realistic and affordable, with a key focus on housing. are locations that are supported by Central Government to encourage sustainable growth, with a key focus on housing.

<sup>34</sup> 'Shropshire Core Strategy: Issues and Options; [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

<sup>35</sup> 'Population and Migration – mid year population estimates', Shropshire Council: <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/factsfigures.nsf/open/56DF4B7295A052EA80256CB700507117>

<sup>36</sup> 'Shropshire Profile 2007', Shropshire Sustainability Group, Shropshire County Council (2007: 25)

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> 'Shropshire Profile 2007', Shropshire Sustainability Group, Shropshire County Council (2007: 25)

<sup>39</sup> 'State of the Countryside – 2008 report', Rural Communities Commission (2008: 19)

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*

<sup>41</sup> 'Key Population and Vital Statistics', Office for National Statistics (2005: 93)

<sup>42</sup> Statistics obtained from [www.pansi.org.uk](http://www.pansi.org.uk)

increase, rising by 56% in 2025 and reflective of Shropshire's ageing population.

## Health

Health is generally good with longer than the national life-expectancy and above average numbers of people adopting healthy lifestyles<sup>43</sup>, although obesity levels are around 2% above national average<sup>44</sup> and differ according to area, with people living in the most deprived areas having significantly higher rates of obesity<sup>45</sup>. The most common causes of death are circulatory disease and cancer<sup>46</sup>.

Whilst national figures suggest that drug misuse is increasing, as with Telford & Wrekin, for Shropshire the proportion of NHS admissions due to drug poisoning has decreased – in Shropshire's case this was by 26% between 2006/07 and 2008/09 whilst nationally figures actually increased by 10% over the same time period<sup>47</sup>.

Within Shropshire the number of teenage pregnancies has dropped from 32.6 pregnancies in every 1,000 girls aged 15 - 17 in 2006 to 31.7 in 2007 which is considerably below the national rate of 41.7.

## Education

Shropshire Council maintains 133 primary schools, 22 secondary schools and 2 special schools, in total attended by over 38,000 3 – 18 year olds<sup>48</sup>. Educational attainment is high, with 68% of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE's at A\*-C in 2007/2008, compared to 64.1% regionally<sup>49</sup>. Just over half of Shropshire residents have a Level 3<sup>50</sup> qualification or over, higher than the regional and national average (45% and 49% respectively) and over one-third have a Level 4 qualification<sup>51</sup> or above, significantly higher than the regional average of 26% and national average of 30%<sup>52</sup>.

The proportion of NEETS (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) has risen by 0.7% in Shropshire between

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<sup>43</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Shropshire', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 27)

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*: 28

<sup>45</sup> 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment' Shropshire NHS (2008: 15)

<sup>46</sup> (*ibid*:

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/health-and-lifestyles/drug-misuse>

<sup>48</sup> [www.shropshire.gov.uk/schools.nsf/open/F7C89A7EC4F6441A80256C78004A6634](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/schools.nsf/open/F7C89A7EC4F6441A80256C78004A6634)

<sup>49</sup> 'DCSF: GCSE and Equivalent results in England 2007/08

<sup>50</sup> Level 3 qualifications encompass several qualifications such as A-Levels, AS Levels, National Diplomas and Level 3 NVQs.

<sup>51</sup> Level 4 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education and include Level 4 Professional Diplomas and City & Guilds LicentiateShip.

<sup>52</sup> 'Learning Skills Council Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin – Key Statistics 2009/2010' (2009: 10), [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/LSC13369-07\\_shropshire\\_A4\\_v03\\_s3.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/LSC13369-07_shropshire_A4_v03_s3.pdf)

2007 and 2008 when an estimated 5.2% of 16 – 18 year olds were classified as NEETS<sup>53</sup>. Despite this increase, Shropshire still has below the average proportion of NEETS for the West Midlands region.

In terms of Adult and Community Learning, there are 3,289 learners for the academic year 2008/09 attending courses across the county at various community and school based locations. Courses range from tasters to short and longer courses and include 'Family Learning', courses which are designed to help families improve their skills so that they are more confident in supporting their children's learning and 'Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities' (NLDC), bespoke learning arrangements to help learners in deprived areas re-engage with learning and improve their skills. In addition, many learners are engaged in more informal courses via, for example, U3A groups and volunteer groups.

### **Deprivation**

While Shropshire is relatively prosperous overall, there are pockets of rural deprivation, particularly in the North<sup>54</sup>. Rural isolation poses deprivation issues, not least in terms of provision of sports facilities and access to arts and cultural opportunities, for all age groups.

Crime levels are significantly lower than the regional average, with 30 crimes reported per 1000 population compared to 45 regionally<sup>55</sup>. In terms of anti-social behaviour and youth crime rates, fewer children and young people in Shropshire become involved in the criminal justice system than in most other areas and when they do carry out offences, fewer of them are taken into custody and many fewer reoffend<sup>56</sup>.

### **Economy**

The most recent estimate of total Gross Value Added for Shropshire in 2008 is just under £4bn, up from £2.35bn in 1995, an average annual growth of 5.4%, much of which is in the service sector, which accounted for 85% of growth between 1995 and 2004<sup>57</sup>. At the same time, the knowledge economy is declining in terms of overall employment compared to regional and English averages<sup>58</sup>. In June

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<sup>53</sup> '14 – 19 Reform: NEET data', Department for Children, Schools and Families: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single>

<sup>54</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Shropshire', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 22)

<sup>55</sup> 'Crime Barometer', Local Futures (2008)

<sup>56</sup> 'Shropshire's Area Assessment', One Place:

<http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/infobyarea/region/area/areaassessment/pages/localpriority.aspx?region=55&area=398&priority=3652>

<sup>57</sup> 'West Midlands Regional Economic Assessment Shropshire', West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008: 6)

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*: 12

2009, the unemployment rate in Shropshire was 2.9%, compared to 5.4% for the West Midlands overall. Over the previous 12 months, unemployment rose by 108% compared to 79% for the West Midlands.<sup>59</sup>

In 2009 average gross weekly earnings in Shropshire were £475.00, higher than the average for the West Midlands region (£441.50) and slightly lower than the average for England (£489.80)<sup>60</sup>. Unlike Telford & Wrekin, weekly earnings have actually increased between 2008 and 2009 by 9%. However, the gender pay gap is more significant in Shropshire than Telford & Wrekin and indeed nationally, with men earning on average £294.60 more than women per week.

Recent Job Seekers Allowance claimant figures reveal that the proportion of claimants aged 19 – 24 increased by 1.8% between November 2008 and November 2009 to 6.6%. This figure however, remains lower than the regional average of 10.6%<sup>61</sup>.

### **Tourism**

Shropshire's tourism offer centres on its natural and historic environment. In 2005, 10.6m visits were made to Shropshire of which 9.3m (88%) were day visits and 1.3m involved an overnight stay<sup>62</sup>. 44% of day visits were to towns and 56% to the countryside. The total value of tourism was estimated to be £561m in 2005.

## **3.3 The changing context**

Society doesn't stand still. Research that looks at social and leisure trends to see what the future might be like identifies the following trends:

- In an economic downturn people stay closer to home for their leisure activities and spend less. Consumers are more discerning and look for value for money in an increasingly competitive cultural and leisure market.
- Value-for-time is also important so when people are willing to pay, demand for full day out activities increases.

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<sup>59</sup> Employment and Labour Market, June 2009 at [www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire/factsfigures.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire/factsfigures.nsf)

<sup>60</sup> 2009 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings:

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_labour/ASHE-2009/2009\\_res\\_la.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_labour/ASHE-2009/2009_res_la.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> 'Youth Claimant Rages by regions and Local Authority (November 2009)':

<http://www.wmro.org/standardTemplate.aspx/Home/OurResearch/Recessionmonitoring/Latestemploymentandunemploymentdata>

<sup>62</sup> 'Tourism Facts' Shropshire Tourism: [http://www.stmem.com/tourism\\_facts.htm](http://www.stmem.com/tourism_facts.htm)



- Tourists take holidays at home rather than abroad and some forgo holidays in favour of multiple days out from home.
- The UK short-breaks market is steadily growing.
- Leisure that is related to wellbeing is rising as people become increasingly keen to look after their physical fitness and mental health. This is something that is also being pushed up the Government's agenda with initiatives such as free swimming and strategies such as 'Be Active, Be Healthy' (2009).
- Increased desire for self-improvement through learning as illustrated by increased take-up of life-coaching, evening classes, learning holidays and book clubs.
- There are more older people and more who want to stay fit, active and involved in society and Central Government now has a specific strategy, 'Building a Society for all Ages' (2009) addressing the ageing population and how Government and non-governmental organisations can work together to help older people live longer, healthier and more active lives<sup>63</sup>.
- People are increasingly seeking to live in rural or semi-rural environments due to a perception that this will offer a more tranquil and authentic way of life.
- Workers increasingly desire flexible working patterns and work-life balance in order to have more personal and family time.
- A stronger green conscience is emerging as people become more aware of the impact of climate change and the need to protect the environment.
- There is a stronger desire for authenticity with people being more concerned about the provenance of goods, buying local and fairtrade.
- Changing media technologies from the radio and television broadcast model which communicates from one person to many, to the many-to-many more decentralised and self-controlled technology offered by digital technology and the internet.
- Rise of rights: increasingly cultural experience is seen as an individual's right rather than a privilege and this has led to a strong focus on equality of access and encouraging participation. Local authorities are now required to meet equality and diversity obligations under the Single Equality Scheme in accordance with the three public equality duties of race, disability and gender.

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<sup>63</sup> 'Building a Society for all ages', HM Government (2009)

- The London 2012 Games offers Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and unparalleled opportunity to use culture to support our economy and to grow participation, especially given that the village of Much Wenlock is widely recognised as the birthplace of the Olympian Games and inspiration behind the modern Olympic movement.



## 4 Cultural assets and involvement

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin both have extensive cultural provision and above average engagement in many cultural activities.

### 4.1 Provision and participation

#### **Libraries and archives**

Libraries are important. The role of the public library is to enrich the lives and meet the aspirations of local people and communities. Whilst providing a universal service, a diverse and often targeted programme delivers a reading experience. This is the unique cultural offer of the public library service. Libraries help build a sense of local identity and, through working with others, enable a wide range of cultural activity to be enjoyed by new audiences.

Use of libraries is increasing in both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. Around half of all adults visit libraries and while Shropshire has slightly above regional average use, Telford has slightly below average usage, but is successfully attracting priority groups.

Around 5% of the population use archives and there is significantly increasing interest in both family and local history.

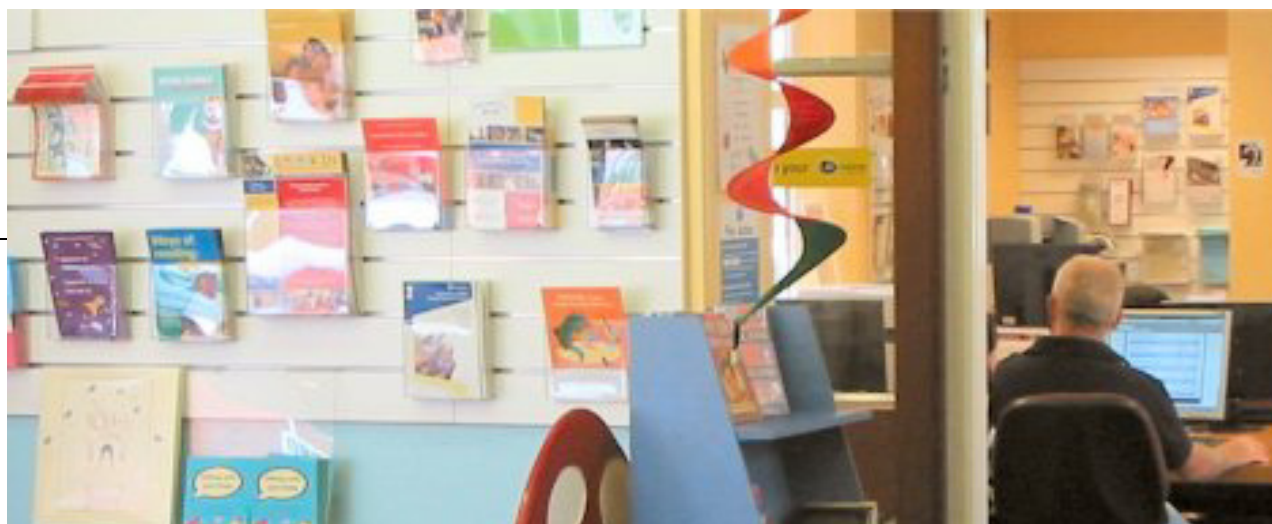
The sub-regions have benefited from increased joint-agency work through initiatives such as the National Year of Reading 2008 and events such as Shrewsbury's Children's BookFest and the North Shropshire Book Festival which included storytelling walks, author visits to schools and projects in which young people chose book stock for libraries at Centre North East, Centre North West and Market Drayton Youth Centre. In the last three years Telford has promoted increased participation among children and young people via its new Telford Book Award which is part of Telford Culture Zone. In partnership with Telford NHS, Telford Libraries have hosted an on-line health check services for babies and teenagers and their Books on Prescription service has developed as a health initiative. In addition, successful co-location of Telford libraries into the Theatre @ The Place and Hadley Learning Community herald the development of more co-located services, for example, through Sport and Learning Communities.

#### **Museums and heritage**

Museums and heritage assets are strong in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. The proportion of people in Shropshire who visit museums is, at 53.8%, higher than regional average of 49%, while in Telford & Wrekin it is lower, at 46.1%.



Ironbridge Gorge is one of only 28 World Heritage sites in the UK, attracting close to a million visits a year. The Ironbridge Gorge Museums attract around half a million visits a year, and latest figures suggest that the number of visitors is increasing steadily. In 2009 the Pontcysyllte Canal, built by Thomas Telford and situated in the north west of Shropshire spanning across into north east Wales, was also awarded World Heritage status. Another asset of the Ironbridge



English Heritage manages 16 properties across the sub-region including Wroxeter Roman City which was recently commended for its high quality of educational services and facilities, achieving a Sandford Award<sup>65</sup>. The National Trust manage a further 10 sites including Carding Mill Valley, attracting 250,000 visits a year<sup>66</sup> and Attingham Park with 217,000 visits.<sup>67</sup> While nationally around 70% of adults attend at least one type of historic environment site in any year, the figure for the West Midlands is lower at 66%. People from rural areas are more likely to visit (77%) than those living in urban areas (68%). In the West Midlands, a lower proportion of people from priority groups visit historic environment sites than nationally.<sup>68</sup> A key barrier to visiting these sites is lack of vehicle access.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the above there are a number of small volunteer-led museums and heritage attractions throughout the sub-regions such as Bishop's Castle Heritage Centre and the Llanymynech Heritage Area.

### **Arts**

Shropshire has a significantly higher proportion of people (46.3%), attending or participating in arts more than three times in the past 12 months than the regional average of 41%, while the proportion in Telford is slightly lower, at 37.4%<sup>70</sup>. Shropshire has prioritised engagement in the arts, adopting NI11<sup>71</sup> (engagement in the arts) as one of its Local Authority Agreement indicators with an improvement target of 3.1% by 2010/11.

Strong performing arts venues exist in the new Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford College of Arts and Technology, the Performing Arts Space at Hadley, and future Sport and Learning Communities<sup>72</sup> which the public will be able to use as venues and performance spaces, such as Abraham Darby Performing Arts Academy. There are also examples of multi-use centres such as the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre which combine a visitor centre with gallery exhibition space, a library and has outdoor performance space.

Shropshire has strong festivals and events provision, which both engage large numbers of people and attract inward investment. These include Shrewsbury Summer Season, The Shrewsbury Folk Festival; The Festival at the Edge, celebrating Shropshire's rich

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<sup>65</sup> 'English Heritage annual report 2008/09' (2009: 3)

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.cardingmillvalley.org.uk/?page=41>

<sup>67</sup> [http://www.alva.org.uk/visitor\\_statistics/](http://www.alva.org.uk/visitor_statistics/). Figures for 2008

<sup>68</sup> Taking Part, 2005-2006

<sup>69</sup> Attending heritage sites: A Report for English Heritage, CEBR, 2007

<sup>70</sup> Results taken from "Informing Change" Arts Council England (2007: 16, 72)

<sup>71</sup> NI 11 is one National Indicator of 198 that can be chosen by Local Authorities for their Local Area Agreements.

<sup>72</sup> Sports and Learning Communities are part of Telford & Wrekin Council's Borough Towns Initiative and will bring together schools, children's centres, health, sports, arts and leisure for the benefit of children, young people and families.

storytelling tradition; the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Festival and the Clun Green Man Festival. The Severn Project led by Shropshire Council built on the strength of the festivals and events sector and brought together a partnership of Local Authorities along the River Severn, delivering 9 days of activities and reaching 27,000 people. Festivals and events are also one of the growth priorities in the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy<sup>73</sup>.

Both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have a variety of initiatives aimed at encouraging people who don't currently participate in the arts to become involved. Examples include Shropshire Council's 'Seen it, Done it, Got Creative' awareness campaign promoting arts across the sub-region; the Project Group, an organisation working with individuals in touch with mental health services; Qube a centre and exhibition space in Oswestry, working with members of the community marginalised through age, health, disability or rural isolation; and DASH (Disability Arts in Shropshire) - a disability arts user-led organisation. In Telford & Wrekin, examples include Oakengates Theatre at The Place working with Sure Start to break down barriers to participation in the arts for families and Telford & Wrekin Council's Arts Team working with Telford NHS on a user-led initiative, Towers Above, a creative arts mental health project. Another highly successful initiative, Arty Party, was set up by the Arts Team as a project group to deliver creative arts activities for adults with learning difficulties. The initiative has recently been awarded funding to develop as a third sector organisation and a junior version – Kreative Kidz – has now been developed. In addition, the Arts Team's work with young NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), young offenders and looked after children has led to national recognition through the Beacon programme.

### **Sport and Leisure**

Sport is a strength in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, illustrated by the range of initiatives designed to increase engagement and the cross sub-regional working exemplified by the Energize County Sports Partnership which works with both Councils to support clubs, sports coaches and young people, and organises major events such as the Ellesmere Triathlon and Youth Games. 22.4% of adults regularly participate in Shropshire and 19.9% in Telford & Wrekin compared to 20.1% in the West Midlands region. Volunteering in sport is particularly strong, with 5.8% volunteering in Shropshire and 4.8% in Telford & Wrekin, compared to 4.7% regionally.<sup>74</sup> Telford & Wrekin Council has prioritised adult participation in sport, adopting the National Indicator NI8 (adult participation in sport and active recreation) as one of its Local Authority Agreement indicators with an improvement target of 24% by 2010/11. Child obesity is also a priority with the Council also adopting NI 56 as a national indicator, aiming to

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<sup>73</sup> West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy', Advantage West Midlands (2008: 28)

<sup>74</sup> Figures taken from Active People Survey 3 2008 – 09. Regular participation means at least 3 weekly sessions of moderate exercise per week; volunteering as at least 1 hour's sports volunteering per week

reduce the proportion of obese year 6 school pupils to 17.7% by 2010/11. Participation has significantly increased for school pupils, with 91% of pupils in Telford & Wrekin participating in 2 hours or more of sport a week and 89% in Shropshire, compared to 85% nationally.

The sub-regions have strong community sport and physical activity provision through a network of over 450 clubs and organisations. It also has some outstanding facilities, for example Lilleshall National Sports Centre, Shrewsbury Town Football Club's Prostar Stadium, Shrewsbury Sports Village, Telford Ice Rink, AFC Telford, TCAT Sports Academy and the Welti Tennis and Leisure Centre. These facilities enable top class sporting events to take place within Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, for example the England vs. Norway women's football international.

Shropshire Council owns 21 leisure facilities across the sub-region's market towns, attracting more than 2 million visitors each year. 3 of Shropshire's leisure centres are 'Quest' accredited (Sport England's UK quality scheme for sport and leisure). The Shrewsbury Sports Village is host to a number of major events each year and a centre for both sporting excellence and local community endeavour. Recent investment will see new centres at Much Wenlock, Oswestry and Church Stretton open in 2010.

Two major initiatives have been recently introduced: free swimming for everyone over 60 and under 18 and the 'Passport to Leisure' scheme which entitles anyone who is financially disadvantaged and who meets certain criteria to a 50% discount off the cost of all independent activities within leisure centres.

Telford & Wrekin council own nine leisure facilities which include swimming pools, sports halls, health and fitness gyms (including the only Inclusive Fitness Initiative<sup>75</sup> registered site in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin), an ice rink, ski & snowboard centre and golf centre. The Council leisure facilities are 'Quest' accredited, with four being highly commended. Approximately 1.3million community visits are made to these leisure facilities per annum. In addition to community use, many of the facilities accommodate schools' usage. Community use of the facilities continues to increase and, in particular, usage by target groups such as women, the over 60s and disabled people has increased significantly over recent years.

The Council operates the 'Flex card' scheme, which offers preferential rates on numerous leisure activities at all Telford & Wrekin Council leisure facilities. The card is free to all Telford &

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<sup>75</sup> The Inclusive Fitness Initiative is a programme that supports the fitness industry to become more inclusive, catering for the needs of disabled and non-disabled people alike. Through a range of projects and products, the initiative has supported facilities across England.



Wrekin residents. The Council also offers free swimming to all residents over 45 and under 19 years until April 2011.

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have strong historic links to the modern Olympics through the legacy of William Penny Brookes of Much Wenlock, and the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will generate a lot of interest and therefore opportunities for the area. Four venues have been selected as 2012 training grounds creating key opportunities to inspire further participation through links with the London 2012 Olympics.

### **Countryside Recreation**

Our landscape is a unique cultural asset. Exploring it opens doors to history, geology, wildlife and to the sources of inspiration for many writers.

Uniquely, the countryside combines its own direct appeal whilst providing inspiration to a wide spectrum of other cultural activities. The Shropshire landscape is inseparable from this wider contribution. It has inspired A E Housman, Mary Webb, Wilfred Owen, E M Forster, D H Lawrence, Malcolm Saville and Bruce Chatwin. Housman's 'quietest places under the sun' and 'blue remembered hills' have done more than any other lines to create positive attitudes to Shropshire and to increase awareness of the county.

Shropshire provides extensive access to the countryside for recreation. There are over 5,500 kms of rights of way and nearly all have a story to tell. They are the historic routes of trade, to work and school, to market and church, to fords and mills. They link 50 hill forts, 19 castles, Bronze Age stone circles and the mines and quarries of the area's industrial past. Shropshire has 10,000 hectares of open access land, significant long distance walking trails, bridleways and cycle routes. 34 nature reserves and 150 parks, play areas, recreation grounds and country parks are managed by Shropshire Council alone.

The high quality of Shropshire's green spaces is recognised nationally with three parks currently holding the Green Flag Award, with more planned for the coming years.

Recent significant investment in Shropshire's rights of way has resulted in improvements in every parish in the county and over 80% of routes being "easy to use".

Telford & Wrekin, while more urban, is still significantly 'green', with 900 individual rights of way totalling over 360 kms of path<sup>76</sup> and four Borough parks, including the significant Telford Town Park, which

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<sup>76</sup> 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Study', Telford & Wrekin Council (2007: 19)

attracts over 1 million visitors a year. In Telford, green and open space accounts for 40% of land area<sup>77</sup>.

Access to the countryside is vital to tourism. Shropshire Tourism identifies that 2.9 million visitors per year carry out some sort of walking activity while in Shropshire, and there is a definite demand for enhanced access between the natural environment and urban areas. Natural England suggests that much of the use made of the countryside and rights of way is for 'gentle' purposes such as ambling, dog-walking and enjoying the scenery, with only 17% being for serious walking<sup>78</sup>. Shropshire Council research suggests that after walking for recreation, cycling and horse riding are the most popular countryside pursuits<sup>79</sup>.

The physical and mental health benefits of people undertaking exercise in the countryside are well proven. Walking is an activity that is freely available to everyone.

### **Youth and play provision**

Provision of youth services and play areas are important issues. Young people in Shropshire have themselves identified that there are 'not enough things to do for young people, like regular music nights or venues for young bands'<sup>80</sup>. Consultation conducted by Play England in 2008 found that parks and green spaces are very important to children and young people – these are where the great majority of children say they play and want to play<sup>81</sup>. This is true for some older children and young people locally who want opportunities to socialise in safe open environments without being pushed towards structured youth provision<sup>82</sup>.

In Shropshire, children and young people have been involved in identifying their needs and making decisions themselves about spending on provision, e.g. on play and parks/open spaces, and corporate spending on swimming centres and transport facilities, through mechanisms including the interactive Youth Summit arranged by and held with young people in North Shropshire in 2007<sup>83</sup>. In Telford & Wrekin, consultation through the Young People's Forum, Telford Culture Zone project and web site, Youth Zone website and Find Your Talent Youth Delivery Group has identified gaps in

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<sup>77</sup> 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Study', Telford & Wrekin Council (2007: 3)

<sup>78</sup> 'Natural England Open Access Annual Monitoring Report 2007', Natural England (2008: 9)

<sup>79</sup> Over 90% of responses to 2005 survey selected walking for recreation followed by 12% for cycling and 10% for horse riding: 'Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008 – 2010', Shropshire County Council (2008: 20)

<sup>80</sup> 'So Get This', the Speaking Out Group (2004: 14)

<sup>81</sup> '11 Million', Play England (2008: 25)

<sup>82</sup> '11 Million', Play England (2008: 25)

<sup>83</sup> NYA / LGA / DCFS; 'Positive Activities and developed budgets: survey findings; interactive Youth Summit 2007 DVD available through Shropshire Children Services Participation Team or Principle Rural Policy Officer

provision, and consistently reflects the views of young people on the Council's leisure and cultural service delivery.

Shropshire is investing over £1 million in play areas as a Playbuilder<sup>84</sup> authority. Playbuilder funding, from the Department of Children, Schools and Families, together with Big Lottery Fund investment and contributions from housing developers will result in many new and improved outdoor play opportunities for the county's children.

Community sport and physical activity clubs are an important part of youth services provision. Volunteering in sport, in particular to support youth sport, is the largest volunteering activity in the country. In July 2007, the Government announced a new sporting initiative for young people commonly referred to as the 'five hour offer'. This included funding for up to five hours of sport per week for all children and young people, including two hours within the curriculum, and three hours for young people aged 16-19.

Community sports clubs play a vital role in reaching this target, and generally children in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have access to a good network of high quality sports clubs. A self-assessment exercise coordinated by Energize Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, the County Sports Partnership, in June 2009 showed that children and young people had access to between 2.9 and 4.1 hours of sport and community clubs a week, the highest being in South Shropshire.

The Government increasingly recognises the benefits of providing places to go and things to do for young people. One key benefit is a subsequent significant decrease in anti-social behaviour and numbers of youths offending. For example, The Home Office's Youth Crime Action Plan, launched in 2008, places an emphasis on extended cultural opportunities for young people as a way of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. This plan involves increased commitment to ensuring that young people can participate in a range of positive activities via initiatives such as 'Open Drive', which provides activities when they are most needed, and expanding the provision of youth centres at times when young people are likely to offend, including Friday and Saturday nights. Integrated Youth Support Services take the lead on such provision both in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin alongside key stakeholders including leisure services, the police and third sector community groups.

Another example of the Government's commitment to cultural activities for young people is the cross-departmental programme 'Positive Activities for Young People'. This initiative was launched in 2003 in response to growing numbers of youth crime. The Government's recent 10-year youth strategy 'Aiming high for young

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<sup>84</sup> Playbuilders is a Play England initiative which supports local authorities in investing in play and adventurous play spaces. The programme is a major part of the National Play Strategy, launched in April 2008.

people' aims to build on the success of Positive Activities for Young People 'to enable Local Authorities to commission year-round intensively supported provision for the most disaffected young people'<sup>85</sup>. A successful example of an activity that is part-funded through the Positive Activities for Young People fund is Telford's Got Talent, a talent show organised by a team of young people working with the Council's Arts Development team that was first launched in 2006. A new version of the talent show, Telford's Talent, is due to take place in 2010.

## **Tourism**

Approximately 12.2m tourists visit Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin each year. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has already prompted national and international interest in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin as a whole, and Much Wenlock in particular. The area has featured on a number of television programmes around the world, and this visibility will only increase in the run up to the Games, with a resultant increase in visitor numbers. Consequently, Much Wenlock will be a vitally important asset over the coming years.

In terms of business tourism, the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy sees conferences and exhibitions as a major market growth opportunity. Whilst strongly focused on Birmingham, Telford International Centre is identified as a key venue. The strategy also suggests that a competitive edge can be created in this market by adding value through exploitation of strong leisure brands of the region that convey world-class culture.<sup>86</sup> Ironbridge, as a World Heritage Site, is clearly key to this offer, as are the links with countryside and heritage attractions throughout Shropshire. The West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy identifies three other growth opportunities that relate to both general and business tourism. Culture and heritage is acknowledged as playing a critical role in the regional economy by contributing to quality of life, place making, the image of the West Midlands region and local pride. Events and festivals are viewed as a key part of delivering an authentic experience and a significant driver in the growth of the short breaks market. There has been a huge growth in events and festivals over the last 10 years - 40% of all visitors to the UK take part in an event or festival during a short break to the UK<sup>87</sup>. In addition, food and drink are viewed as being increasingly significant in the West Midlands' tourism offer, following on from the success of Ludlow becoming a food and drink destination.

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<sup>85</sup> 'Aiming High for Young People', HM Treasury, Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007: 44)

<sup>86</sup> 'West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy', Advantage West Midlands (2008: 20)

<sup>87</sup> 'West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy', Advantage West Midlands (2008: 26)



## Creative Industries and the Cultural Sector

The cultural sector<sup>88</sup> is of growing importance in the West Midlands' job market. Between 2003 and 2007, the numbers employed in the creative sector grew from 133k to 160k, and in 2007 8.7% of the total West Midlands workforce was employed in the creative sector, a growth of 20.6% from 2003 and a significantly higher increase than any other region in England<sup>89</sup>.

Between 2003 and 2007, the total number of employees in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin in the cultural sector has fluctuated. After a peak of 15,000 employees, the number in Shropshire has declined to 13,000 in 2006, remaining steady into 2007 and representing 5.3% of the total workforce. Telford & Wrekin also experienced a decline in the total number employed in 2006 but has since seen significant growth, with 3.4% of the total workforce (amounting to 8,400 people) employed in the sector in 2007<sup>90</sup>. From 2004 – 2007, Telford & Wrekin had the largest proportional increase in cultural employees in the West Midlands, second only to the Dudley sub-region. Shropshire was home to 6.9% of the West Midlands' cultural businesses in 2007 and Telford & Wrekin home to 2.9%.

The sub-region has particular strengths in visual arts, crafts and design and a growing pattern of festivals, all of which have been identified by the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy as key areas for tourism growth, as mentioned above<sup>91</sup>. The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site in particular has been identified as an area where investment in the creative industries will pay dividends.

For the visual arts sector, actual growth will depend in part on the motivations of the individual creative producers. Research in 2006 suggested that the crafts and visual arts sector had not yet developed the profile or size to need workspace provision but that there was demand for sector development support in the form of networking,

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<sup>88</sup> The definition of the cultural sector broadly follows the DCMS's definition of culture and encompasses visual art, performance, audio-visual, books and press, heritage, sport and tourism

<sup>89</sup> State of the Region Update Report: Culture Dataset, West Midlands Regional Observatory (2009). These figures are significantly lower than the previous estimates contained in the Regional Cultural Observatory's document 'Growing the Cultural Economy in the West Midlands' (2007). These differences are due to changes in Standard Industrial Classifications going from 4-digit categories to more detailed 5-digit categories. The 5-digit level data has allowed for a much tighter definition of cultural sector activity meaning that the impact of the cultural sector can be isolated more effectively and results will appear significantly lower than 4-digit figures previously published.

<sup>90</sup> State of the Region Update Report: Culture Dataset, West Midlands Regional Observatory (2009)

<sup>91</sup> 'West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy', Advantage West Midlands (2008: 24 – 29)

meeting, exhibition, collaboration opportunities and business support spaces.<sup>92</sup>

For the sport sector, the drive to increase sports participation, and the quantity and quality of sports facilities, together with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, offer a huge opportunity for the entire West Midlands economy. The combined effects of these drivers will propel the sports industry to over 2% of regional employment.

### **Volunteering**

The voluntary sector is particularly strong in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, and responsible for a significant proportion of cultural activity within the sub-regions.

The public agencies in Shropshire have worked well to develop links with the various voluntary and community sector agencies across the county<sup>93</sup>. For example, Shropshire Council's Community Working Team is an important resource for voluntary organisations, providing support and funding advice and the Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly, set up in 2007, enables agencies to work more closely together to influence the development of priorities and targets. Numbers of volunteers involved in delivering cultural activities supported by the local authority have been increasing steadily, from 1,955 in 1006/07 to 3,141 in 2008/09.

Levels of volunteering in Telford & Wrekin also appear to be growing. The Volunteer Centre in Telford has reported a significant increase in enquiries from potential volunteers, registering 683 enquiries in 2007/08, a figure which increased to 1,719 in 2008/09. The centre has over 200 organisations that it puts in touch with people wanting to volunteer, and 25% of all its volunteering activity is related to the arts and culture.

As well as having significant positive impacts on community cohesion and engagement, volunteering is also a route into cultural engagement and potential employment for harder-to-reach groups.

### **Who doesn't engage and why?**

At the same time there are key groups of people who are *less* likely to attend or participate in cultural activities. Overall, these groups are most likely to include older people, ethnic minority communities including migrant workers, people with a limiting disability, longer-

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<sup>92</sup> 'Creative workspace provision in and for the Rural Regeneration Zone', Advantage West Midlands (2006: 55)

<sup>93</sup> 'Shropshire's Area Assessment', One Place:  
<http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/infobyarea/region/area/areaassessment/pages/localpriority.aspx?region=55&area=398&priority=3656>

term unemployed people, those in lower socio-economic groups and people in rural areas.

There are many reasons why some people don't participate in culture, including:

- A perception that culture is elitist and 'not for them', a lack of confidence in engaging and a fear that they might feel 'out of place'
- Limited local provision, particularly in more rural areas
- Transport limitations. For some people there is simply no public transport, it doesn't go to the right places at the right times, it is not accessible for disabled people, or is unreliable and expensive. This means that certain people such as those living in rural areas without access to a car or disabled people can face particularly acute problems
- Financial barriers including the cost of transport and the cost of participation, particularly for young people, disabled people and people on low incomes
- Lack of digital access through, for example, limited reach and quality of broadband, which is increasingly seen as a social and economic disadvantage<sup>94</sup>
- Perceptions that public spaces and public transport, particularly in the evenings, may be unsafe
- Low-cost or taster activities which are provided for a limited time period and then not sustained
- Limited awareness of the full range of what is on offer and how to get involved

Lack of childhood engagement - those who did not experience cultural activities as children are significantly less likely to engage as adults<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> 'Digital Britain', DCMS, BIS (2009: 52)

<sup>95</sup> 'Taking Part', DCMS (2006)







## 5 Why is culture good for us?

Culture has many benefits, individual, social and economic. It contributes to our sense of identity and inspires us to develop as individuals. It provides reasons for us to come together as a society and to celebrate our diversity and shared connections. It helps us create vibrant places in which to live, work, play and visit. It helps us learn and creates jobs.

### Individual benefits from culture

- Widens our world view, helping build our capacity for understanding and navigating the world<sup>96</sup>.
- Helps us form our identity – to appreciate who we are and where we are from, giving us a sense of place and feeling of community.
- Provides appreciation of our own position within society, a benefit that is particularly valuable to marginalised groups where culture can be a voice for an excluded group of people.
- Encourages creative thinking which helps people work through problems, traumas and issues<sup>97</sup>.
- Plays an important role in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals in a variety of ways.<sup>98</sup>
- Participation in sport and physical activity has obvious and well-documented physical benefits to the individual, but physical activity can also make people feel better, helping with anxiety and depression and reducing stress<sup>99</sup>.
- Play is recognised as a 'vital ingredient of a happy and healthy childhood, supporting children's physical, emotional, social and educational development'<sup>100</sup>.
- People who live nearer to green spaces tend to be more active, less obese and to live longer.<sup>101</sup> Recent NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) guidelines for health professionals

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<sup>96</sup> 'Public value and the Arts in England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate', Arts Council England, Catherine Bunting (2007: 13)

<sup>97</sup> 'Encyclopaedia of Creativity', Mark Runco et al (1999: 253)

<sup>98</sup> 'Arts Health and Wellbeing' Arts Council England (2007: 4)

<sup>99</sup> 'Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008 – 2018', Shropshire County Council (2008: 46)

<sup>100</sup> 'The Play Strategy', DCSF (2008: 5)

<sup>101</sup> 'Be active, Be Healthy', Department of Health (2009: 40)

highlighted the mental health benefits to older people of guided walks in the natural environment<sup>102</sup>.

- Provides us with a 'feel-good' factor – it's fun!

### **Social benefits from culture**

- Stronger communities: cultural participation and activities can form an empowering focal point around which people gather together.<sup>103</sup> Volunteering also plays a crucial role in helping to build a cohesive society, connecting people to their towns and communities, and combating social exclusion<sup>104</sup>.
- Community involvement and cohesion: people participating in cultural activities are 20% more likely to know 'many people' in their neighbourhood and 60% more likely to believe that 'many of their neighbours can be trusted'<sup>105</sup>.
- Intergenerational relations: culture gives young people and older people the opportunity to get together more often, enabling them to find out how much they have in common and improve understanding of needs and aspirations<sup>106</sup>.
- The voluntary arts sector: according to the DCMS, 'the voluntary arts sector is embedded in the grassroots of local communities and has a complex impact on developing vibrant and inclusive communities - the sector plays an important role in sustaining cultural traditions and developing new artistic practice'<sup>107</sup>.
- Active citizenship: culture provides opportunities for individuals to express themselves in a civic manner, and cultural activity has been employed throughout history to support and articulate political agendas, seen, for example, in the counter-cultures of the 1960s and the civil rights movement.
- Empowerment: the Government's recent White Paper 'Communities in Control – Real People, Real Power' espouses the

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<sup>102</sup> 'Be active, Be Healthy', Department of Health (2009: 40)

<sup>103</sup> 'A Passion for Excellence – an improvement strategy for culture and sport', DCMS (2008: 8)

<sup>104</sup> 'Volunteering: social glue for community cohesion?' Kearney, J, Centre for Voluntary Action Studies (2004)  
[http://www.ivr.org.uk/Institute+of+Volunteering+Research%2fVA+Documents%2fVA5\\_2%2farticle3\\_kearney.pdf](http://www.ivr.org.uk/Institute+of+Volunteering+Research%2fVA+Documents%2fVA5_2%2farticle3_kearney.pdf)

<sup>105</sup> Taking Part, DCMS, 2006

<sup>106</sup> Interactive Youth Summit DVD, Shropshire Children Services Participation Team (2008)

<sup>107</sup> 'Our Creative Talent: the voluntary and amateur arts in England', DCMS (2008: 10)

importance of communities being empowered to take part in decisions around cultural provision and spending<sup>108</sup>.

- Safety: 70% of young people believe that a lack of provision for positive activities leads to more youth crime<sup>109</sup>.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour: provision of leisure facilities for young people can reduce anti-social behaviour. Recent Audit Commission research suggests that sport and leisure can engage young people, attracting those at highest risk of anti-social behaviour into more intensive developmental projects. Preventive projects are shown to be cost effective: a young person in the criminal justice system costs the tax payer over £200,000 by the time they are 16, but one given support to stay out costs less than £50,000.<sup>110</sup>
- Satisfaction with local area: participation in cultural activity is linked to 10% more people being satisfied with where they live.<sup>111</sup>
- Respect: Around 80% of people believe that participating in sport teaches respect for others and increases people's involvement in community activities<sup>112</sup>.
- Diversity: cultural activity helps us to define and celebrate diversity and in doing so constructs a harmonious society, promoting understanding, acceptance and respect between different cultures and marginalised groups, and providing a shared space for celebrating our differences<sup>113</sup>.

### **Economic benefits from culture**

- Creative economy: over the past decade, the creative economy has grown twice as fast as the rest of the economy and now accounts for 7.3% of GDP, contributing £60 billion per year to the British economy and employing two million people<sup>114</sup>.
- Employment: In 2007, the cultural sector<sup>115</sup> in the West Midlands accounted for 10.1% of all regional employment, 14.5% of all

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<sup>108</sup> 'Communities in Control', Department of Communities and Local Government (2008)

<sup>109</sup> MORI (2002), as cited in 'A Passion for Excellent', Department for Media, Culture and Sport (2008: 8)

<sup>110</sup> 'Tired of Hanging Around', The Audit Commission, 2009

<sup>111</sup> Internal analysis of Taking Part Survey Data, DCMS, 2007

<sup>112</sup> MORI research (2004)

<sup>113</sup> DCMS 'What we do': [http://www.culture.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/arts/4073.aspx/](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/arts/4073.aspx/)

<sup>114</sup> 'Creative Britain – New Talents for the New Economy' DCMS (2008:6)

<sup>115</sup> Culture is defined by Culture West Midlands as 'the arts, sport, heritage, parks and green space, play and the creative industries'

businesses in the region and 12.5% of total regional Gross Value Added, from a turnover of nearly £18 billion per annum<sup>116</sup>. 5.3% of the workforce in Shropshire is employed in the cultural sector and 3.4% in Telford & Wrekin<sup>117</sup>.

- Leverage: The sub-regions have several flagship cultural venues and developments that have attracted significant amounts of leverage funding, including:
  - a £12m refurbishment of Blists Hill which attracted £10m of funding from Advantage West Midlands
  - the redevelopment of the Mere at Ellesmere, which obtained over £1.1m of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, over £530,000 from the European Regional Development Fund and £100,000 from Advantage West Midlands via the Market Towns Initiative
  - the Music Hall Museum and Art Gallery development which has attracted £1m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £200,000 from the EU Objective 2, £125,000 from Shrewsbury Growth Point and £100,000 from Arts Council England
  - the Darwin Memorial Geo Garden and Quantum Leap, which has attracted over £120,000 funding from a combination of Natural England and Arts Council England, as well as major corporate sponsorship from Aggregate Industries who provided £150,000 in design materials
  - the 2005 refurbishment of Oakengates Theatre into The Place, a £1.4m project which attracted just under £300,000 of funding from the European Regional Development Fund
  - investment in play with Shropshire Council being awarded £2million in 2009 from the Big Lottery Fund and Department of Children Schools and Families' Playbuilder Programme to refurbish or develop 22 play areas across the County over the next two years.

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<sup>116</sup> 'Growing the Cultural Economy in the West Midlands' Culture West Midlands (2007: 1)

<sup>117</sup> State of the Region Update Report: Culture Dataset, West Midlands Regional Observatory (2009)

- Image: Culture West Midlands<sup>118</sup> believes that the strength of the cultural sector, and the unprecedented opportunities for growth, make it a key component of the regional economy<sup>119</sup>.
- Productivity: participation in cultural activity improves individual physical and mental well-being, which subsequently contributes to improved productivity for the region's economy<sup>120</sup>. A new TUC guide suggests that the biggest lifestyle gains for workers can be made through policies that promote work-life balance and through provision of access to gyms, cycling, healthy eating and health surveillance<sup>121</sup>.
- Volunteering and skills development: the cultural sector provides significant volunteering opportunities for individuals, which provide training, skills development and employment opportunities.<sup>122</sup> For vulnerable individuals, volunteering may provide a route into paid work, building confidence and skills bases. In the English voluntary arts sector alone, an estimated £48.9m of value is generated in the West Midlands.

### Urban regeneration

- Sense of place: culture's input into regeneration can significantly affect "sense of place", leading to strengthened communities, creativity and visitor economies. This is the role planned for the Southwater Development in Telford which will have a 'cultural hub', encompassing the Town Park, a new learning and media centre, a virtual gallery, new performance space, leisure pool and a refurbished ice-rink to broaden the retail and residential appeal during the daytime and evening.<sup>123</sup>
- Increased tourism: Liverpool's stint as European Capital of Culture in 2008 highlighted the significant impact arts and culture can have on regeneration. 77% of first-time visitors during the year

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<sup>118</sup> This regional cultural consortium disbanded in March 2009 and the West Midlands Cultural Observatory has superseded its role of data and intelligence gathering for the cultural sector.

<sup>119</sup> 'Growing the Cultural Economy in the West Midlands' Culture West Midlands (2007: 1)

<sup>120</sup> 'Growing the Cultural Economy in the West Midlands' Culture West Midlands (2007: 14)

<sup>121</sup> 'Research and Trends', TUC: [http://www.tuc.org.uk/work\\_life/tuc-12800-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-12800-f0.cfm)

<sup>122</sup> 'Our Creative Talent: the voluntary and amateur arts in England', DCMS (2008: 45)

<sup>123</sup> 'Southwater a new development at the heart of Telford', Transforming Telford (2007: 7)



were influenced by the Capital of Culture status when deciding to visit.<sup>124</sup>

- Sustainable community provision: Telford & Wrekin's new initiative, aligning sport and leisure with the Council's proposals for Building Schools for the Future (formally known locally as Campus Telford & Wrekin) – has created a series of Sports and Learning Communities across the Borough. Each sports and learning community includes a range of accessible and affordable facilities and services and, where possible, links to plans for the regeneration of the Borough's towns. There are also a number of sports and learning communities which are currently being developed by the Council in conjunction with partners including AFC Telford United, Telford College of Arts & Technology (TCAT), Lawn Tennis Association, Shropshire Basketball and other local sports clubs and National Governing Bodies for Sport.

### Rural regeneration

- Digital inclusion: DEFRA acknowledges the role that broadband Internet infrastructure plays in enterprise within rural economies: '[increased broadband access] may provide a new incentive for entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses in rural areas, though this may also depend on how quickly the infrastructure and market develops for higher bandwidths in rural areas'<sup>125</sup>. In addition, the State of the Countryside 2007 report highlights that whilst broadband access in rural areas has improved significantly since 2005, it lags behind urban areas in terms of higher broadband speeds<sup>126</sup>.
- Rural creative industries: DEFRA's strategy also proposes a new creative vision and partnerships for the rural sector that are designed to deliver economic regeneration, environmental sustainability and social inclusion whilst helping communities to manage the radical changes taking place in the rural landscape<sup>127</sup>.
- Cultural attractors: The Ellesmere Sculpture initiative is a grassroots organisation that has grown out of a three-year transnational European touring sculpture exhibition. This includes development of The Ellesmere Sculpture Map, a major arts

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<sup>124</sup> (2009: 6)

<sup>125</sup> 'Rural Strategy 2004', DEFRA (2004: 64)

<sup>126</sup> 'State of the Countryside', Commission for Rural Communities (2007: 32)

<sup>127</sup> 'Investing in Rural Creativity: New Rural Arts Strategy', Littoral Arts Trust (2005: 1)

initiative, which it is hoped will have a long-term regenerative impact on the town and its environs.<sup>128</sup>

- Rural multi-use centres: these centres provide valuable services to rural areas, acting as a hub of sustainable activity such as the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre which contains a gallery, visitor centre, crafts showcase, local history centre, library, café, giftshop and information centre, Qube in Oswestry, a charity community centre which has gallery space, runs workshops, training courses and outreach programmes, the Severn Centre, a community focused not for profit development in Highley which houses extensive sports facilities, meeting and conference rooms, ICT suites, a library and childcare facilities and SpArC in Bishop's Castle, a sport and arts centre that combines a range of facilities including a theatre, swimming pool, squash courts and art exhibition space.

## Tourism

- Rural tourism: the importance of rights of way and wider countryside access to the UK's tourism appeal is nationally recognised in the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs Rural White Paper, which describes the countryside as an 'enormous recreational asset, with its high quality landscape, fresh air, open space and tranquillity'<sup>129</sup>. Nationally, experts estimate that the rural tourism industry is worth around £15 billion to the economy<sup>130</sup>. In Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, with 12.2m visitors a year, the visitor economy is worth £665m per annum.<sup>131</sup>
- Sports tourism: this involves travelling to take part in or to observe sport, and is becoming an increasingly frequent reason for travel. The expansion and improvements in televised sport have increased interest in live sporting events and made athletes aware of events around the world. In addition to tourists citing sport as the prime reason for their travel, there are many others who choose destinations based partially on the availability and range of activities on offer, or because of the image of a place where sport and activity adds to the local colour (the sight of sailing boats on a lake for example).

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<sup>128</sup> <http://www.ellesmeresculpture.co.uk/about.html>

<sup>129</sup> As cited in 'Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008 – 2018', Shropshire County Council (2008: 57)

<sup>130</sup> 'Financial Boost for UK Rural Tourism':

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/tourism/default.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/tourism/default.aspx)

<sup>131</sup> [http://www.stmem.com/tourism\\_facts.htm](http://www.stmem.com/tourism_facts.htm)

Growth opportunities: The West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy (2007) highlights four key growth opportunities in relation to tourism, all of which are of significant relevance to Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin:

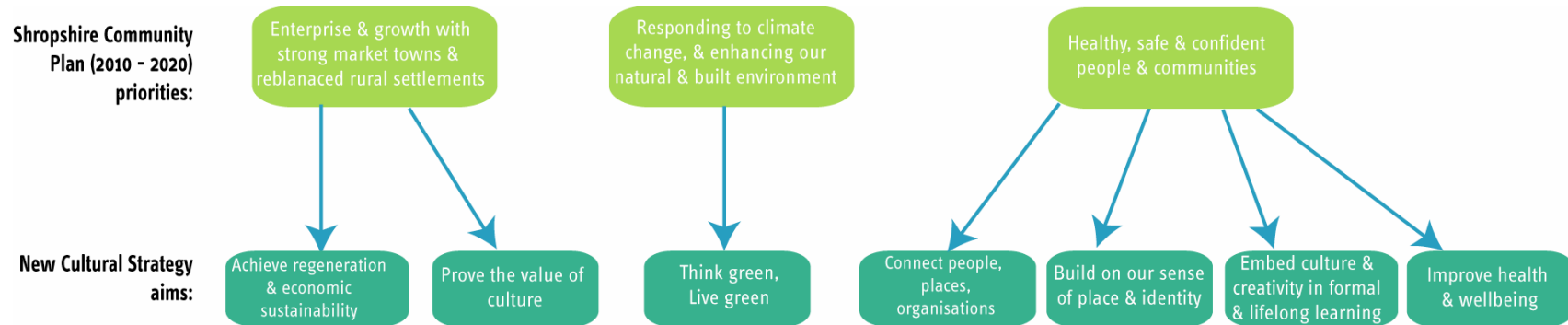
- Conferences and exhibitions – the conference and exhibition sector is estimated to be worth £6.6bn to the regional economy and supports 104,000 FTE jobs. In 2005, conferences and exhibitions attracted nearly 14m visitors and delegates to the West Midlands.
- Culture – theatre and classical music alone are worth £216m to the West Midlands. Culture is a key driver for overseas visitors - 1 in 5 cite culture as their prime motivation for visiting. It is one way to communicate authenticity and distinctiveness - something that visitors are increasingly seeking.
- Events and festivals – major sporting and cultural events in the region generated an additional £390m in 2005 supporting approximately 7,400 jobs. Events and festivals provide an opportunity to introduce new visitors to the region and encourage out-of-season visits.
- Food and drink – Money spent on eating out has risen by 102% in the last 10 years, and there is an increasing recognition that food and drink is not only part of the visitor experience but can be an important factor in choosing one destination over another. Ludlow is a prime example of how to realise this potential.

The new £3m food academy at Harper Adams, which opened in December 2009 and is funded by Advantage West Midlands, will greatly contribute to the region's potential for developing its reputation of food and drink.

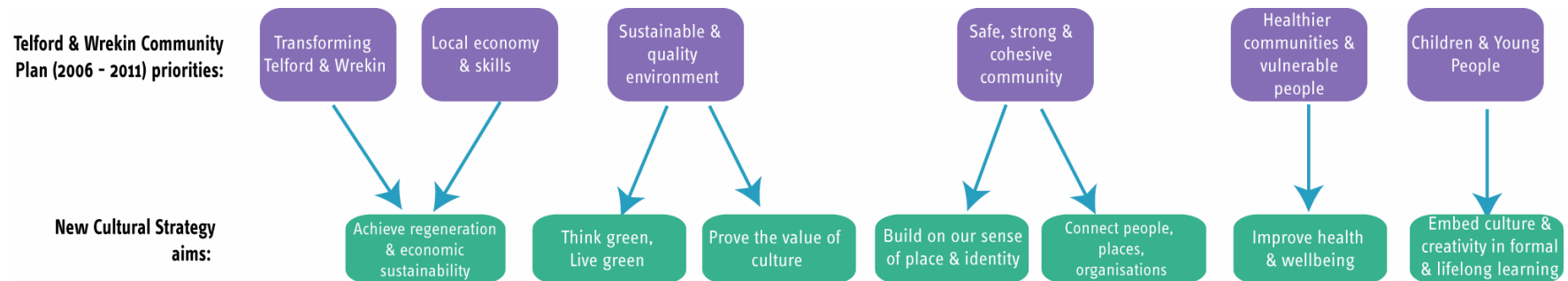
## 5.1 Strategic context

Local Authorities such as Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council are not required to provide or fund cultural activities – they choose to because they know how much it contributes to people’s quality of life. As such the cultural sector has to make a strong case for the funding of culture by proving its contribution to central and local government agendas. The models below illustrate how the cultural strategy contributes to the overall aims of the local authorities as expressed in the Local Area Agreements.

### Shropshire



### Telford & Wrekin



There have been changes in Telford & Wrekin Council priorities that have emerged in the final stages of this strategy's development, and these changes will impact on the status and delivery of the new Cultural Strategy. The new Telford & Wrekin Council priorities are:

- Active Lifestyles
- Community protection and cohesion
- Housing regeneration and prosperity
- Supporting people
- Children and young people
- Efficient community focused council
- Environment and rural areas

The fact that culture and leisure have been recognised at this level for the first time in the form of the active lifestyle priority is a significant endorsement for the new Cultural Strategy's active implementation in Telford & Wrekin.



## The wider strategic context

In drawing up this cultural strategy, a variety of previous and current sub-regional strategies were taken into account, alongside joint sub-regional strategies and region-wide strategies, as illustrated in the diagram below.









## 6 Issues and opportunities

This is a proactive strategy, which harnesses culture to inspire people and to enrich their lives.

To achieve this, we recognise that the strategy should build on where we have come from, embracing the evolution of our unique landscape, geology and biodiversity and reflecting our revolutionary industrial history. But it is not enough to simply celebrate the past. The strategy must also celebrate who we are and what we do now, making a difference to our lives today. And it must look ahead, recognising emerging demographic, social and leisure trends so that culture helps shape our lives in future.

From all the research and consultation undertaken, the following have emerged as important issues and opportunities for the strategy to address.

### **A broad definition of culture**

Participation in cultural activity is often constrained by perceptions that cultural activities are for the few not the many. The strategy must address this issue by broadening people's awareness of what culture is and by describing culture in accessible terms.

### **Greater and wider engagement in culture**

The strategy needs to prioritise the participation of those key groups of people who don't currently participate in cultural activities by addressing the barriers that hinder their involvement. This should include a specific focus on the needs of younger and older people, disabled people, people of BME origin, migrant workers, people in rural areas, and people of lower social grades, all of whom participate less than other groups. It should also include recognition of the pockets of rural deprivation in North Shropshire and higher levels of deprivation in Telford & Wrekin.

### **Growing and ageing population**

Both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have named Growth Points, with certain areas expected to significantly increase their populations over the next 15 years. This will lead to increased demand for culture and cultural activities. At the same time people are living longer and this ageing population will require an increasingly targeted and bespoke cultural offer.

### **More widespread and collaborative provision of culture**

People want a spread of provision across the sub-region, particularly in rural areas, so that people feel they have local access to culture. An holistic focus on cultural provision should be adopted, embracing collaboration and partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors. This should include greater recognition of and support for grassroots providers and activities, support for cultural champions and catalysts where they exist or emerge within communities, and building on the high level of active participation, particularly in sport, arts and cultural sector volunteering.

### **Embrace the green agenda**

The evolution of Shropshire's landscape and bio-diversity together with Telford's development as one of the greenest new towns, means that the sub-region already has a strong green positioning. There is scope to embrace this further and for it to become a distinctive feature of the sub-region's cultural agenda. This includes harnessing the emerging green conscience to develop greater environmental awareness and responsibility, further exploration of the potential for developing a unique higher education specialism through a University of the Environment, and for initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of culture. Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are also well placed to address the emerging tourism trends of more 'at home' holidays, the increasing short breaks market and for activity and wellbeing tourism.

### **Cultural and Creative Learning**

There are significant opportunities to strengthen engagement with and use of culture in both formal and informal learning. The strategy needs to ensure that cultural providers engage with these opportunities and with particular initiatives including the Positive Activities for Young People agenda, the Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto, the increased participation age from 2013 onwards and the Building Schools for the Future programme.

### **Increased emphasis on health and wellbeing**

Increasingly, the Government is recognising the value offered by health initiatives and launched a new health strategy in 2009 entitled 'Be active, be healthy'. This new strategy is supported by various initiatives such as the Change4Life campaign, which aims to promote a 'lifestyle revolution', helping people to 'eat well, move more and live longer'<sup>132</sup>. Various activities take place under this umbrella campaign, for example Bike4Life, which organises mass-participation bike ride events and Swim4Life, which enables local authorities to offer free

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<sup>132</sup> [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH\\_104254](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH_104254)

swimming to young people and senior citizens. This drive in health and fitness will only be strengthened by the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012.

### **Celebration of values: authentic, independent, real, hand-crafted and green**

These are the values that people ascribe to Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. The strategy should ensure that these are used to articulate a sense of identity and place and to encourage engagement of residents and visitors alike by building on the increasing desire for authentic, local, handcrafted, fairly traded goods, food and drink.

### **The cultural and creative industries as economic drivers**

The strategy must reflect the potential of the cultural and creative industries in economic development by supporting the development of skills and employment in these sectors.

### **Cultural Tourism**

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are not as well-known to the outside world as they deserve to be. The Cultural Strategy should address this by developing a more strategic approach to cultural tourism, and strengthening the cultural tourism offer and its promotion, giving people more reasons to stay longer and to return. There are particular opportunities around the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the associated Cultural Olympiad and the strong fit with the growth opportunities identified in the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy, including events and festivals, culture, conferences and exhibitions, and food and drink.

### **Communicating and connecting with users**

People told us that Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin actually have a wealth of cultural provision but that information about what is available and where and how to access it is not as easily accessible as it could be. There are opportunities to provide more coordinated and comprehensive information on places to go, things to do and how to become involved, particularly in engaging with changing media technologies and associated communication trends.

### **Prove the value of culture**

Those who provide and engage with cultural activities in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are powerful advocates of its impact on their lives. They feel however that there is a need to shout louder and stronger about the value of culture to people's fundamental quality of life, in order to ensure continued provision and funding of cultural activities.



### **Reduced Government spending on culture**

The Government's 2009 budget announced that the Department for Media, Culture and Sport will have to make £168m in savings over the next three years, and that £4m will be cut from Art Council England's budget 2010 – 2011<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup> 'The arts and the 2009 budget – good news', *The Guardian*, 22/04/2009: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2009/apr/22/arts-policy-budget>







## 7 Vision, values and aims

### **Vision**

Our vision is simple.

We want culture to inspire us all, to shape how we live, learn, work and play and to enrich the life of every resident visitor in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin by helping us:

- Celebrate who we are and where we live
- Connect with other people and places
- Celebrate the diversity of the people of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
- Be healthy
- Learn creatively
- Work better
- Have fun

### **Values**

The cultural strategy celebrates the values that many people have told us they most associate with the sub-region of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, which is that it is:

- Authentic
- Independent
- Real
- Hand-crafted
- Green.

### **Aims**

We have seven key aims we want to achieve through this Cultural Strategy. These are to:

1. Improve health and wellbeing

2. Think Green and Live Green
3. Provide cultural and creative learning
4. Achieve regeneration and economic sustainability
5. Build on our sense of place and sense of identity
6. Connect people, places and organisations
7. Prove the value of culture.

These aims will be achieved through a series of strategies and objectives which are described in the following section.







# 8

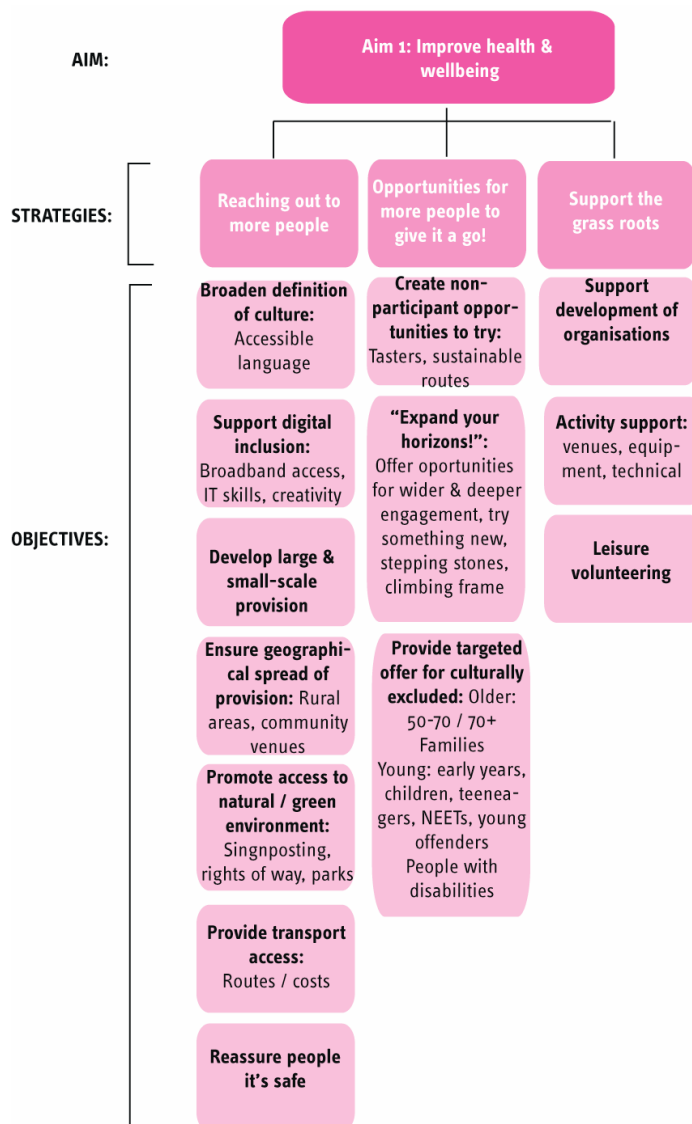
## How we will achieve our vision

During the consultation workshops members of the public suggested ways in which the seven aims could be achieved.

These ideas have now formed a range of *strategies* - different ways through which we intend to realise the vision and aims of the Cultural Strategy.

In this way we can be confident that the Cultural Strategy is delivered in way that works for both our rural and urban communities.

### 8.1 Aim 1: Improve health and wellbeing



There is significant evidence that participation in cultural activities leads to improved physical and mental health and an enhanced sense of overall well-being. We want culture to help improve our physical health and mental wellbeing. We will do this by:

### **Reaching out to more people**

We will reach and engage as many people as possible in cultural activities by offering cultural provision in different ways, in different places and at different scales, through:

- Raising awareness of the broad range of activities included under the 'Culture' banner, and using accessible language to describe culture, making sure that it is inclusive and that everyone is aware of the cultural opportunities on offer
- Promoting and supporting digital inclusion, particularly in rural areas, through greater access to, and improved consistency and quality of, broadband
- Providing activity that is both small and large-scale
- Offering geographically spread provision, particularly in rural areas
- Providing transport access so that public transport limitations don't prevent participation
- Making use of facilities for community use, e.g. rural schools, church halls, community and village halls and green spaces
- Continuing to reassure people that transport and the public realm are safe environments.

### **Opportunities for more people to Give It A Go!**

We will create opportunities for people to try new cultural activities or to deepen or maintain their involvement, and pro-actively encourage this participation by:

- Creating sustainable opportunities for non-participants to sample different cultural activities at little cost to themselves
- Helping people expand their horizons by providing stepping-stones to help people move onto more frequent or deeper involvement
- Developing pro-active, targeted campaigns for key groups including 'younger' older people (aged 50-70), 'older' older people (70+), early years and children, young people, particularly those not

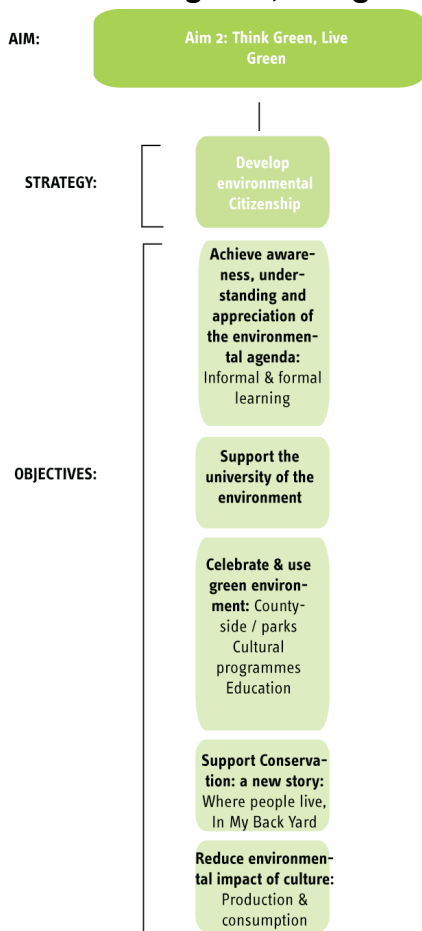
in education, employment or training, young offenders or those at risk of offending, families, disabled people and people of BME backgrounds.

**Support the Grassroots**

We will ensure that as much culture is delivered as locally as possible by supporting grassroots and third-sector organisations to provide activity. This sector is well established in Shropshire but needs greater development in Telford & Wrekin. We will do this by:

- Advising on organisational set-up, development, management and funding of grassroots cultural organisations and activity
- Providing support for delivery of activities through access to venues, equipment and specialist support
- Supporting leisure volunteering programmes and those who champion culture in local areas.

**8.2 Aim 2: Think green, live green**



We want to actively involve people in moving towards living in a more sustainable way, one that is concerned about the wider social and environmental impact of the way we live, including our cultural activities. We want to ensure that our cultural activities embrace and celebrate the natural rhythms of the landscape. We believe that not only is this a necessity in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin but that it can become a defining characteristic and that this can be achieved through:

**Develop environmental citizenship<sup>134</sup>**

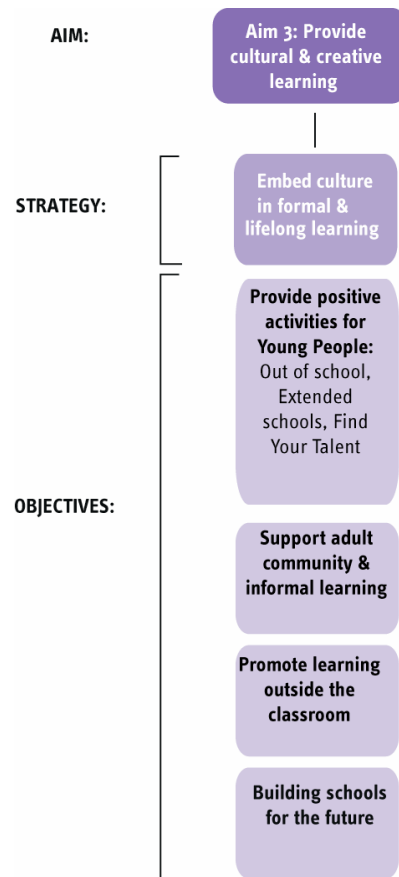
We will do this by:

- Changing the definition of conservation from being something that happens *to* green spaces at one-step removed from our daily life, to something that embraces all parts of our life and starts in our own back yard
- Raising awareness, understanding and appreciation of the environmental agenda and how people can take individual action, through both formal and informal learning
- Placing the environmental agenda centre-stage in our learning activities through the creation of a University of the Environment
- Celebrating and using the natural environment as a subject, resource and location for education and cultural programmes
- Reducing the environmental impact of culture, in terms of both its production and consumption
- Exploring how cultural and leisure spaces can be used to support better biodiversity management
- Supporting the development of Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site as a green tourism leader and one of the world's most sustainable World Heritage Sites
- Supporting volunteering within the countryside.

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<sup>134</sup> <http://www.environmentalcitizenship.net/what.html>

### 8.3 Aim 3: Embed culture and creativity in formal, informal and lifelong learning



We want culture to be an integral part of education and learning, whether this is in support of the National Curriculum or for personal enjoyment. Not only do we want people of all ages to be able to learn about culture, we also want culture to help us learn in inspiring and creative ways. We will do this by:

#### **Provide cultural and creative learning**

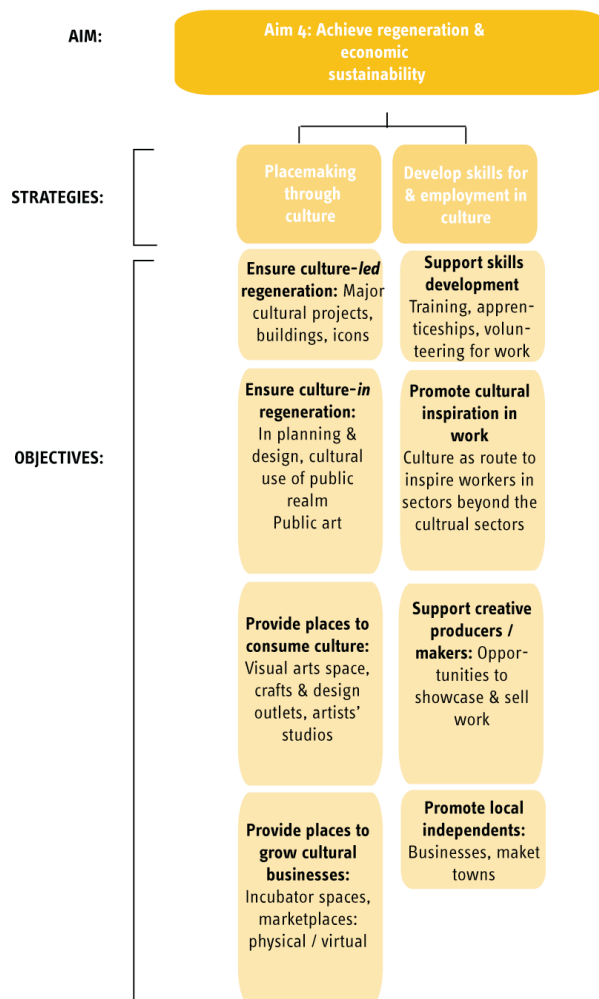
This will involve:

- Working with formal education providers to ensure that they make best use of cultural organisations and creative methods within their on-site teaching at all levels, including early years, primary, secondary and FE, and in the Building Schools for the Future programme.
- Encouraging cultural practitioners to extend their work to educational settings



- Embracing DCSF’s Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto<sup>135</sup> to help us encourage educational institutions to use off-site cultural facilities and develop partnerships with culturally diverse organisations
- Involving young people in positive activities and out-of-school learning through the Extended Schools network, Find Your Talent and other initiatives
- Ensuring a strong and wide cultural offer in lifelong learning across all sectors of the community.
- Increasing the focus on young people and their involvement in the cultural and creative industries in light of the participation age being increased to 18 from 2013 onwards.

#### 8.4 Aim 4: Achieve regeneration and economic sustainability



<sup>135</sup> www.lotc.org.uk

We want culture to create inspiring places to live, work and play and to help us develop and sustain skills for employment and jobs. We will do this by:

### **Placemaking through culture**

- Pioneering major culture-*led* regeneration projects
- Culture-*in* regeneration - ensuring that culture is embraced in all regeneration to help create culturally vibrant buildings and public spaces
- Consideration of additional visual arts, crafts and design exhibition spaces.

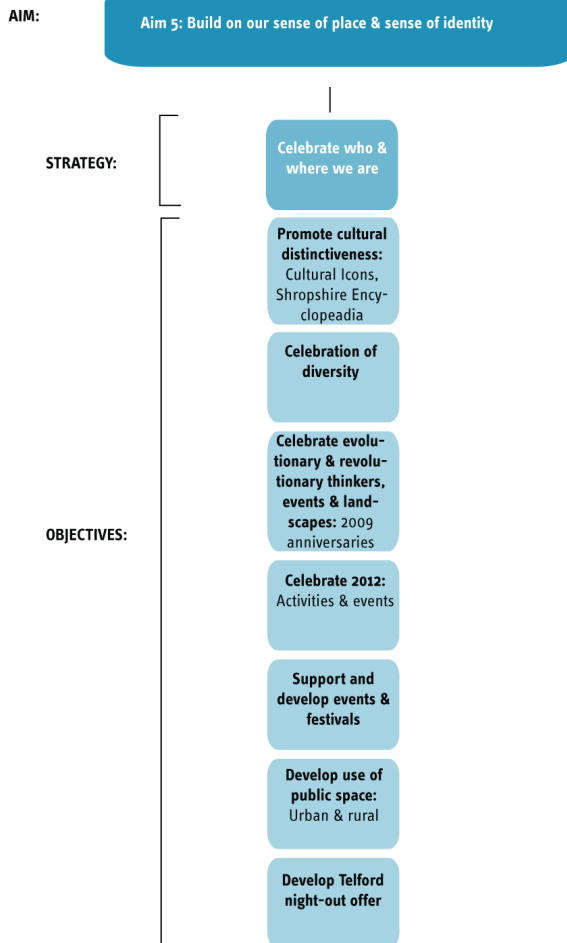
### **Develop skills for and employment in culture**

Sustaining and developing employment in the cultural and creative industries through:

- Development of cultural sector skills through training, apprenticeships, volunteering and continuing professional development for existing practitioners
- Providing physical and virtual marketplaces for producers to showcase and sell local products including visual arts, craft, design and food
- Supporting cultural entrepreneurialism by providing support to and promotion for local independent cultural sector businesses and market towns
- Developing programmes of cultural inspiration for the wider workforce
- Reviewing the need for incubator spaces for cultural and creative practitioners and businesses
- Ensuring all diverse communities are included at all levels through proactive engagement and partnership of marginalised groups and their organisations.



## 8.5 Aim 5: Build on our sense of place and sense of identity



We want culture to help us know and celebrate the character and spirit of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and for us to feel a sense of belonging to where we live and the people we live among. We will do this by:

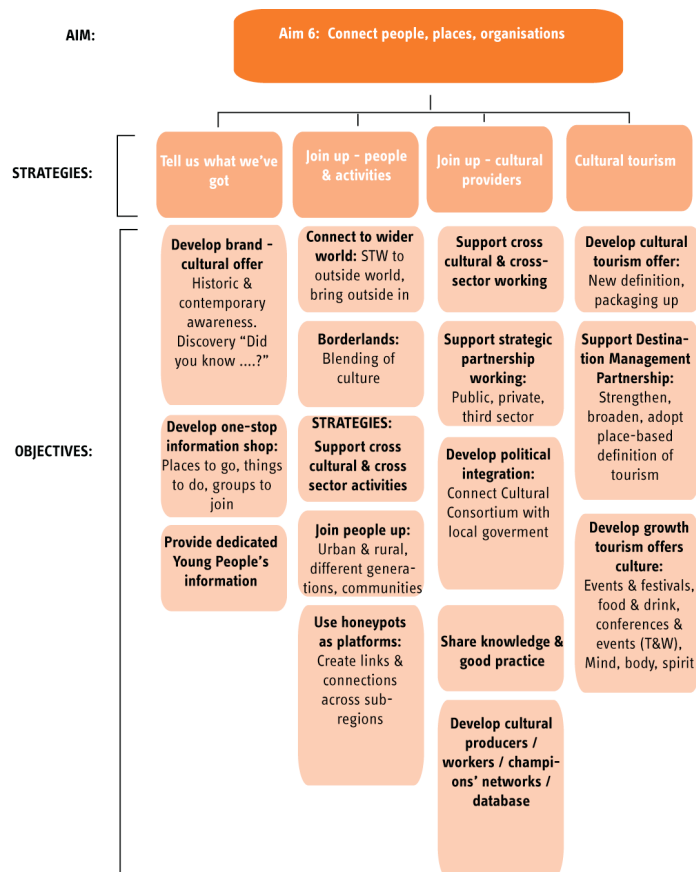
### **Celebrating who and where we are**

We will develop and support the wide range of events, activities and festivals which already exist, and develop new ones to celebrate the cultural distinctiveness of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, including:

- A good night out – developing a night-time cultural offer, particularly in Telford & Wrekin
- Evolution and the natural landscape. Our landscape, geology and biodiversity and our current relationship with it

- Industrial innovation, revolutionary thinkers and the influences on today, building on the Celebration of Imagination 2009. The anniversaries of Darby, Darwin and Penny Brookes
- Shropshire’s Welsh border history and territory
- Artistic and literary icons and traditions, including A. E. Housman and Wilfred Owen, while celebrating contemporary creativity
- Sporting traditions and heroes, past and present; Shropshire as the birthplace of the modern Olympic movement and our involvement in London 2012; Webb, the first Channel swimmer
- The diversity of the people who have settled and live here.

## 8.6 Aim 6: Connect: People, Places and Organisations



We want to bring people together to experience culture, to develop partnerships between groups and organisations to deliver culture and to connect Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin with the world beyond. We will do this by:



### **Tell us what we've got**

We will inform people about and inspire them to engage in culture, by:

- Building the cultural 'brand' by telling the stories, past and present, of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, along the lines of "Did you know..."
- Creating a one-stop information source which will offer comprehensive information on places to go, things to do, groups to join and how to do this, building on and linking with existing sources
- Creating a dedicated young people's information source building on the strengths of Culturezone and Youth Zone in Telford
- Using the continuing investment of the DCMS / Museums Libraries and Archives Council's Renaissance in the Regions programme through Ironbridge Gorge Museums to engage new audiences in museums, heritage and the wider cultural offer.

### **Join up people and activities**

We will use cultural activities to bring people together, from different parts of the world, different local areas, different communities, and different age groups. We will do this by:

- Creating cultural programmes and activities which link Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin with the world beyond
- Using honeypot attractions and activities to signpost and spin people off to other places and activities e.g. Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Theatre Severn, Ironbridge Gorge Museums.

### **Join up Cultural Providers**

We will facilitate the delivery of more culture with a greater impact by working in partnership. We will do this by:

- Encouraging cross-cultural working and enabling this work to be sustained
- Develop programmes with cross-sector partners including for example: health, children's and young people's services
- Continued engagement in regional and national partnerships, and cultural partnerships including the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council's Renaissance programme for museums

- Making strong connections between the Cultural Consortium and third and private sector facilitators and providers to ensure culture is delivered strategically and holistically
- Connecting the Cultural Consortium more effectively with local government, particularly the parish and town councils, through the Shropshire Association of Local Councils
- Sharing knowledge and best-practice throughout the sector
- Building a database of cultural and creative organisations and practitioners as a resource for people creating partnerships and developing initiatives.

### **Cultural Tourism**

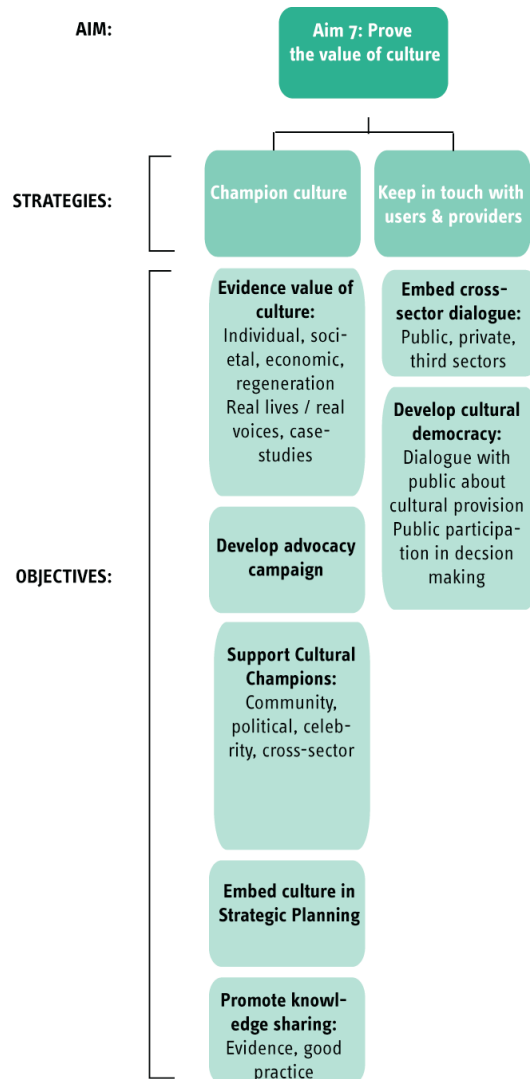
We will strengthen the approach to cultural tourism overall and position culture strongly within sub-regional tourism strategies by:

- Developing an approach to cultural tourism based on sense of place and identity rather than on visitor attractions
- Working with Tourism West Midlands and the Destination Management Partnership to develop a more strategic and holistic approach to cultural tourism engaging a wide range of providers
- Prioritising the cultural tourism growth areas identified and supported by the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy<sup>136</sup>, including festivals, food and drink and, for Telford & Wrekin specifically, conferences and events
- Developing a “Mind, Body, Spirit Wellbeing” tourism offer embracing the combined strengths of the natural environment and cultural offers
- Developing environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism offers
- Packaging-up cultural offers to provide a more holistic offer beyond the current attraction lists, to encourage people to engage more deeply or widely; and to stay for longer and to return
- Promoting access through, for example, identifying disabled-friendly venues, events and accommodation.

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<sup>136</sup> ‘West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy’, Advantage West Midlands (2008)

## 8.7 Aim 7: Prove the Value of Culture



We want to make sure that culture is valued both by those who engage with and those who fund culture. We also want to make sure that people take part in discussions and contribute to decision-making about cultural provision. We will achieve this by:

### Championing Culture

We will champion culture by:

- Gathering evidence of its impact on a range of individual, societal and economic agendas and providing real-world, real-life stories which illustrate the impact of culture in participants' own words
- Developing cultural champions who advocate for culture at a strategic level, local authority Heads of Service and leaders of cross-sector partner organisations

- Embedding culture in strategic planning within the councils, particularly Telford & Wrekin
- Creating community cultural champions who advocate for, and encourage participation in, culture at a local level, including decision-influencers and celebrities
- Disseminating knowledge about the impact of culture

### **Keep In Touch with users and providers**

We will keep in touch with those who fund and provide culture in the sub-regions and those who engage with culture by:

- Ensuring that the Cultural Consortium has a cross-sector focus, embracing the public, private and voluntary sector funders and providers
- Giving the public a voice in what culture is provided and the opportunity to respond to service provision through an on-going formal feedback mechanism.





## 9 Action Plan

The Cultural Strategy will be delivered through the co-ordination and refocusing of resources within local government and the private and voluntary sector. The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Cultural Consortium will monitor the delivery of the Cultural Strategy action plan and advocate for the cultural sector regionally and nationally. The Consortium will represent the sub-regions in funding bids to regional and national funding opportunities.

This strategy recognises that there is already a significant amount of cultural provision, activity and engagement in both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. It also recognises that there are different strengths and weaknesses in culture in the two areas, therefore a different action plan has been developed for each area. The action plans are a broad framework of new activities planned to deliver against the objectives of the new strategy. Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils will work together with the private and voluntary sectors to develop a more detailed action plan including timescales.

The model below illustrates some of the key cultural providers within Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and key strategies that will continue to be involved in delivering culture and achieving the aims of the Cultural Strategy in each area.

# Examples of Key Cultural Providers in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin



## 9.1 Areas for Development - Shropshire

Areas for development outlined below were drawn up following a review of current activity within Shropshire that contributed to each of the new cultural strategy's aims. Areas for development have been identified where there are currently low levels of activity contributing to the cultural strategy's strategies and objectives.

### 9.1.1 Aim 1: Improve health & wellbeing

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Broaden the definition of culture: Position Paper to be issued to key stakeholders and partners	Cultural Consortium	Sept 2010
List of principles to act as foundations of strategy	Cultural Consortium	March 2011
Develop co-ordinated LAA Physical Activity action plan responding to Shropshire 'Be Active, Be Healthy' audit	Shropshire Physical Activity Alliance	March 2010 & annually refreshed
Work with National Governing Bodies of Sport to improve the capacity of sports clubs and enable them to cater for adult returners / beginners	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service Energize STW, working with partners	From Jan 2010
Maximise community engagement and involvement through working closely with community development	Shropshire Council Community Working Team	Ongoing

colleagues		
Increase participation in physical activity by developing and delivering the leisure facility strategies, the Countryside Access Strategy and the Shropshire Play Strategy	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service	Ongoing

### 9.1.2 Aim 2: Think Green, Live Green

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Reduce environmental impact of culture: Appoint an environmental champion to work with cultural providers	Cultural Consortium	March 2011
University of the Environment – ensure strong links with the cultural sector and cross-partner working	Shropshire Council Assistant Director, Culture & Leisure	March 2014
Celebrate & use green environment: Development of the Playbuilder Programme and more informal play areas	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service	2009 - 2011
Work closely with planning authorities to ensure that NICE guidance (on cost-effectiveness of promoting an active environment) is utilised within the built environment	Shropshire Physical Activity Alliance	From Jan 2010
Reduce the amount of carbon emissions related to cultural	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor	2014

activity by 35%	Recreation Service	
Parks and countryside sites to support the delivery of the Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service	Ongoing

### 9.1.3 Aim 3: Provide cultural and creative learning

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Learning outside the classroom: Develop closer links between learning outside the classroom initiatives and children and young people's services	Shropshire Council Children & Young People's Service	Ongoing
Positive activities for young people: Launch an advocacy campaign to involve more young people in arts and festivals	Shropshire Council Arts and Festival Development Service	March 2012
Positive activities for young people: Provide work experience training and mentoring opportunities for young people in the arts and festival sector	Shropshire Council Arts and Festival Development Service	March 2012
Positive activities for young people: Provide employment and training opportunities for young people through coach development programmes; develop a sports coaching network	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service Energize STW, working with partners	Ongoing
Positive activities for young people: Develop young people's	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor	Ongoing



skills in countryside and land management skills through apprenticeship schemes, work placements and volunteering	Recreation Service	
Co-ordinate the community delivery of a '5-hour sporting offer' for children and young people	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service Energize STW, working with partners	From Jan 2010
Work with wider third sector and volunteering agencies to promote volunteering within sport and physical activity	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service Shropshire Physical Activity Alliance and	From Jan 2010

#### 9.1.4 Aim 4: Achieve regeneration and economic sustainability

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Culture- <i>in</i> regeneration: Develop a public art strategy	Shropshire Council Arts and Festivals Development Service	March 2012
Develop an Arts Strategy 2011-2015	Shropshire Council Arts Service	March 2011
Places to consume culture: Development of a visual arts facility within the Music Hall development	Shropshire Council Business Development Manager, Culture & Leisure	March 2014
Places to grow cultural	Shropshire Council	March

businesses: Continue to support cultural businesses and review the need for further demand and skills development via a joint scoping study across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin	Economic Regeneration and Arts and Festivals Development Service	2012
Cultural inspiration in work: Explore the potential positive contributions of cultural activity to the local workforce and develop appropriately	Cultural Consortium	March 2012
Develop and delivery against the Shropshire Indoor Leisure Facility Strategy	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation	By March 2010
Develop and delivery against the Shropshire Playing Pitch Strategy	Shropshire Council Leisure & Outdoor Recreation	By July 2010
Culture- <i>in</i> regeneration: Develop a green space strategy	Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Service working with planners	March 2014
Deliver the Shropshire Regeneration Prospectus, Shropshire Council's local investment plan and LDF implementation plan which identifies key issues, opportunities and projects through which the Council aims to work with its partners and achieve regeneration	Shropshire Council Working with partners	Ongoing
Support culture and leisure's contribution to implementing the Tourism Strategy for Shropshire	Shropshire Council Culture and Leisure Services	Ongoing

### 9.1.5 Aim 5: Build on our sense of place and sense of identity

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Celebrate who and where we are: Build on the work to broaden the definition of culture	Shropshire Council Arts and Festival Development Service	Ongoing
Identify local priority sports and opportunities that are aligned with aspirations of National Governing Bodies of Sport – as listed within STW Sports Facility Framework	Energize STW, with partners	From Feb 2010
Support the delivery of the Shropshire Interpretation Strategy, 'Sharing the Best of Shropshire'	Shropshire Council Culture and Leisure Services and partners	Ongoing
Celebrate who we are: Develop a volunteering strategy and programme of support	Shropshire Council Culture and Leisure Services	March 2014
Develop a cultural advocacy campaign to raise awareness of culture: 'this is culture', 'have a go!' (c.f aim 6)	Shropshire Council Culture and Leisure Services	March 2011

### 9.1.6 Aim 6: Connect people, places and organisations

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
One-Stop information shop: Development of a One-Stop Shop for Information (expansion of	Shropshire Council Business Development	March 2014

Discover Shropshire)	Manager, Culture & Leisure	
Assess and develop how the Cultural Consortium promotes strategic partnership working and more effective networking within the private and third sectors, and how this is integrated within the Local Authorities	Cultural Consortium	March 2012
Sharing knowledge of good practice: Exploring the most effective way of sharing knowledge of good practise	Cultural Consortium	March 2014
Develop cultural tourism offer: Build on the full range of the cultural offer within the sub-regions; explore the potential for more 'packaging-up'; and develop a more active relationship with the Destination Management Partnership in order to embed cultural tourism within their priorities	Cultural Consortium	March 2014
Encourage a greater level of joined-up working between Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils	Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council	Ongoing

### 9.1.7 Aim 7: Prove the value of culture

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Evidence value of culture: Further	Shropshire Council	March

develop evaluation tools and embed these within activities	Culture and Leisure services	2014
Cultural Champions: Explore the potential for developing and supporting Cultural Champions within the wider community	Cultural Consortium	March 2011
Cultural democracy: Ensuring that public consultation is facilitated regularly, particularly in relation to the key actions of the Cultural Strategy's Action Plan	Shropshire Council Culture and Leisure services	Ongoing
Undertake outcome based review of Physical Activity within Shropshire	Shropshire Council	By July 2010

## 9.2 Areas for Development – Telford & Wrekin

The below areas for development were drawn up following a scoping activity that identified the level of current activity within the Telford & Wrekin sub-region that contributed to each of the new cultural strategy's aims. The areas for development have been identified where there are currently low levels of activity contributing to the cultural strategy's strategies and objectives.

### 9.2.1 Aim 1: Improve health & wellbeing

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Broaden the definition of culture: Position Paper to be issued to key stakeholders and partners	Cultural Consortium	Sept 2010
List of principles to act as foundations of strategy	Cultural Consortium	March 2011



Support the grassroots: Development of strategy to support Grassroots volunteers in leisure and culture	Shared Leisure Commissioner / Culture Commissioner	March 2014
Work with National Governing Bodies of Sport to improve the capacity of sports clubs and enable them to cater for adult returners / beginners	Energize STW, working with partners	From Jan 2010

### 9.2.2 Aim 2: Think Green, Live Green

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time- scale
Reduce environmental impact of culture: Appoint an environmental champion to work with cultural providers	Cultural Consortium	March 2011
Celebrate & use green environment: Development of the Playbuilder Programme and more informal play areas	Parks & Recreation	Ongoing
Work closely with planning authorities to ensure that NICE guidance (on cost-effectiveness of promoting an active environment) is utilised within the built environment	Shropshire Physical Activity Alliance and Telford & Wrekin Physical Activity & Sport Board	From Jan 2010

### 9.2.3 Aim 3: Provide cultural and creative learning

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Learning outside the classroom: Develop closer links between learning outside the classroom initiatives and children and young people's services	Telford & Wrekin Council Creative Arts Team in Children & Young People's Service	Ongoing
Positive activities for young people: Launch an advocacy campaign for Creative Arts Team Children and Young People	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	March 2012
Developing a sports coaching network for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin	Energize STW, working with partners	Begin work April 2010
Co-ordinate the community delivery of a '5-hour sporting offer' for children and young people	Telford & Wrekin Council Energize STW, working with partners	From Jan 2010
Work with wider third sector and volunteering agencies to promote volunteering within sport and physical activity	Shropshire Physical Activity Alliance and Telford & Wrekin Physical Activity & Sport Board	From Jan 2010

### 9.2.4 Aim 4: Achieve regeneration and economic sustainability

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Culture- <i>in</i> regeneration: Develop	Telford & Wrekin	March 2012

a public art strategy	Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	
Culture- <i>in</i> regeneration: strengthening culture within priority planning around public realm and regeneration	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	Ongoing
Places to consume culture: Supporting the Southwater Development and forging links with its visual arts, media and learning centre	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	March 2014
Places to consume culture: Further facilitating sport and learning communities by increased number of sports and multi-use / community-led venues building on the success of developments such as the Tennis Centre at Hadley	Telford & Wrekin Council Leisure Commissioner	March 2014
Places to grow cultural businesses: Continuing to support cultural businesses and reviewing the need for further demand and skills development via a joint scoping study across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin	Telford & Wrekin Council Economic Regeneration and Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	March 2012
Cultural inspiration in work: Explore the potential positive contributions of cultural activity to the local workforce and develop appropriately	Cultural Consortium	March 2012

Develop and delivery against Telford & Wrekin's Sports Facilities Strategy	Telford & Wrekin Council	March 2014
Develop and delivery against the Telford & Wrekin Playing Pitch Strategy	Telford & Wrekin Council	March 2014

### 9.2.5 Aim 5: Build on our sense of place and sense of identity

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Telford night-out offer: Develop Telford's night-out offer within the context of the Southwater Development	Telford & Wrekin Council Economic Regeneration and Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	
Events & festivals: Sustain existing events and develop future events and festivals	Telford & Wrekin Council Arts Development Team	Ongoing
Celebrate who and where we are: Building on the work to broaden the definition of culture, develop a cultural advocacy campaign to raise awareness of culture: 'this is culture', 'have a go!' (c.f Objective 6)	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	March 2012
Identify local priority sports and opportunities that are aligned with aspirations of National Governing Bodies of Sport – as listed within	Energize STW, with partners	From Feb 2010

STW Sports Facility Framework		
Recognise advocate for and support the contribution of cultural activities to achieving NI 5, overall / general satisfaction with local area	Arts & Culture Development with other Council Services	Ongoing

### 9.2.6 Aim 6: Connect people, places and organisations

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Dedicated young people's information: Development of a One-Stop Shop for Information, with a particular focus on youth provision	Telford & Wrekin Council Creative Arts Team and Integrated Youth Arts Teams in Children & Young People's Service	March 2014
One-Stop information shop: Investigate linking information sources and how best to connect to Shropshire	Telford & Wrekin Council Public Information Office	March 2014
Assess and develop how the Cultural Consortium promotes strategic partnership working and more effective networking within the private and third sectors, and how this is integrated within the Local Authorities	Cultural Consortium	March 2012
Sharing knowledge of good practice: Exploring the most effective way of sharing	Cultural Consortium	March 2012



knowledge of good practise		
Cultural producers / workers networks / database: Develop the network, hold networking meetings to support the database and create opportunities	Telford & Wrekin Council Arts Development	Sept 2010
Develop cultural tourism offer: Build on the full range of the cultural offer within the sub-regions; explore the potential for more 'packaging-up'; and develop a more active relationship with the Destination Management Partnership in order to embed cultural tourism within their priorities	Cultural Consortium	March 2014
Improve local networking opportunities amongst organisations interested in increasing participation in sport and physical activity	Energize STW	By March 2011
Work with local media and providers to identify ways of co-ordinating public information about sport / physical activity opportunities	Energize STW	From Jan 2010
Encourage a greater level of joined-up working between Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils	Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council	Ongoing
Join up people: Recognise advocate for and support the contribution of cultural activities to achieving NI 1, the percentage of	Arts & Culture Development with other Council Services	Ongoing

people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area		
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### 9.2.7 Aim 7: Prove the value of culture

Action	Driver / responsible officers / stakeholder	Time-scale
Evidence value of culture: Work towards developing evaluation tools and embed these within activities	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	March 2014
Cultural Champions: Develop Cultural Champions at a senior level within Telford and Wrekin Council who will generate and disperse evidence proving the value of culture	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	March 2014
Cultural Champions: Explored the potential for developing and supporting Cultural Champions within the wider community	Cultural Consortium	March 2014
Cultural democracy: Ensuring that public consultation is facilitated regularly, particularly in relation to the key actions of the Cultural Strategy's Action Plan	Telford & Wrekin Council Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Public Information	Ongoing

## 10 Measuring our success

We have no doubt that culture makes a significant difference to people's lives. It inspires us, improves our health, helps us learn, creates jobs and attracts tourists to visit us. To ensure that cultural activities are recognised, supported and funded, we not only need to believe in the difference it makes, we also need to prove the value of culture.

This will involve gathering evidence of the cultural, social, economic and environmental impact of culture on both individuals and communities. There is much secondary evidence of this value, which can be drawn upon, but we also need to undertake primary research to ensure that we provide robust and quantified evidence of impact, which is specific to Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

This evidence has to illustrate the impact of the full range of cultural activity on both individuals and communities, and importantly, show how culture contributes to Shropshire Council's and Telford & Wrekin Council's Local Area Agreements, and the National Indicators by which the Local Authorities measure achievement of their plans.

This evidence will be gathered by all those involved in providing cultural activities, monitoring their activities and undertaking research with a representative sample of users across the full range of cultural activities on a regular basis.

Shropshire Council has already led the way in this, in its development of the Value of Culture Framework, which agreed top-line performance indicators and provided a toolkit to help cultural organisations measure how cultural activities contribute to people's knowledge, skills and confidence, sense of physical or mental well-being, employability and sense of community belonging. This framework is being developed further to enable the success of the cultural strategy to be evaluated.



# 11 Appendices

Photography by Sabine Hutchinson, Jim Ozanne

## 11.1 Cultural Atlas

Available at [link to be supplied in final version]

## 11.2 Shropshire Cultural Consortium membership

Anne Taylor, Director of Business & Investment, Transforming Telford  
Chris Child, Sports Partnership Manager, Shropshire Council  
Sian Kerry, Director, Arts Alive  
Ali Quarrell, Mythstories Museum of Fable  
Kal Parkash, Diversity Officer, Shropshire Council  
Martin Stephens, Principal Youth Officer, Shropshire Council  
Psyche Hudson, Arts & Culture Manager, Telford & Wrekin Council  
Steve Miller, Chief Executive The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust  
Sue Goodwin, Head of Arts and Development, Shropshire Council  
Tom Currie, Safer Communities Strategic Unit Manager, Telford & Wrekin Council  
Vicki Pike, Senior Health Improvement Manager, Neighbourhood, Older People and BME, Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust  
Laurel Roberts, Director, Qube, Oswestry

## 11.3 Definition of terms

We have tried to use plain English in writing this strategy but just in case there are some terms that aren't self-explanatory, we've included some definitions here.

### **Cultural Tourism**

Tourism that focuses on the culture, and cultural environments including landscapes of the destination, the values and lifestyles, heritage, visual and performing arts, industries, traditions and leisure pursuits of the local population and host community. It can include attendance at cultural events, visits to museums and heritage places and mixing with local people. It should not be regarded as a definable niche within the broad range of tourism activities, but encompasses all experiences absorbed by the visitor to a place that is beyond their own living environment. (ICOMOS, 2002).



**Play**

Play can be defined as 'freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child' (NPFA, 2000, as quoted in DCMS, Play and Exercise in Early Years, 2008) or 'what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons' (DCMS, Getting Serious About Play, 2004).