

Appendix 2: Cultural Strategy Engagement

One to one discussions

One to one engagement was carried out with the following key cultural stakeholders:

- Marion Blockley – Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Group
- Lezley Picton – Portfolio Holder Culture & Leisure
- Sue Finnigan – Culture & Leisure Specialist
- Richard Parkes – Shropshire Youth Association
- Diane Walton – Upstart Projects
- Michael Lewis – Head, Shropshire Libraries
- Tim Jenkins – University of Chester (Head of Humanities)
- Marcus Halliwell – National Trust
- Jessica Kent – Arts for Health Lead, South Staffordshire & Shropshire Health Trust
- Beth Heath – Shropshire Festivals
- Laura Penman – Shropshire Tourism
- Alex Carson Taylor – Chair, Shropshire’s Great Outdoors Strategy Board
- Seb Slater - Executive Director, Shrewsbury BID
- Chris Child - Chief Executive, Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
- Gemma Davies - Head of Economic Growth, Shropshire Council
- Mandy Thorn - Chair, Marches LEP

‘World Café’ Workshop Report

Three ‘World-Café’ workshops were organised by consultants, FEI at different locations across the county:

Workshop 1 - Craven Arms Community Centre

Thursday 21 November 2019, 10.15 - 13.15

Workshop 2 - Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

Thursday 21 November 2019, 17.30 - 20.30

Workshop 3 - Wem Town Hall

Friday 22 November 2019, 10.00 - 13.00

This report provides details of the format and findings of the workshop events and consultation.

1. Format

World Cafes are flexible facilitation method that puts the community at the heart of conversations and creates a safe and flexible space for dialogue, conversation and comment. Developed as a participatory leadership tool, it works on the assumption that the ‘wisdom is in the room’ and is powered by what can be achieved by a small group of committed people around a table having a conversation.

The café was structured as four conversations:

- The People involved – Individuals employed in the sector, volunteers and audiences
- Places and Spaces – Where culture takes place
- Networks and Projects – Where the sector come together with each other and other sectors
- Resources, Training and Support – The support the sector gets and needs.

For each topic the groups considered four questions:

1. What happens already? Where is the good practice? What are the strengths? Who is doing good work?

2. Where are the gaps? What's missing? What could be done differently? What should we stop doing?
3. Who is involved? Who is taking part and who isn't? Who is supporting the sector? How can we work with other sectors? What can we do ourselves and where do we need more support?
4. Where do we want to be? Where do we want to be in 5-10 years? What does success look like for us? How do we want to be talked about outside the area?

In total 70 individuals took part in the workshops: 22 in Craven Arms, 29 in Shrewsbury and 23 in Wem.

2. Findings

2.1 Key points

The following were some of the key ideas that emerged through the workshops and wider engagement.

Leadership

- Leadership from Shropshire Council is needed to develop projects that transcend business-as-usual
- Links to regional opportunities – 2022 Commonwealth Games
- Potential for Tourism BID
- Must think big and quality and include provision for people to pay
- Culture should be embedded in all local place plans
- Vision needs to reflect the diverse quirky variety of what is on offer
- The strategy needs to be bold and inspiring

Volunteers

- The cultural sector is over-reliant on volunteers. The sector has difficulty in planning for succession as volunteers are ageing.
- Volunteers have greater responsibility (for festivals and events and venues) and require training to take these on.
- Many volunteers are still active and bring with them decades of expertise and experience but changes to retirement age and circumstances may change this in the future.

Audiences

- Shared audience data and development strategies are needed
- Changes in cultural tastes provides a challenge to existing organisations especially as traditional cultural education is diminished and new technologies affect the way culture is made.
- Many retired people can pay for tickets but there is a lack of free and affordable culture for families
- Cultural organisations need to help attract tourists

Places & Spaces

- Unique outstanding locations inside and outside that are well used and have strong local engagement
- Huge variety of places hosting different activities – problem is joining these up
- Churches are a good opportunity with some good practice happening (Ludlow)
- Lack of a large venue – for music etc?
- Do we need mobile venues?
- Not many spaces for young people to make or see culture
- Some venues have access and sustainability issues
- Can venues share assets, resources and information – what would an 'enabling network' of venues look like?

- Rural touring is successful and popular

Networks and Projects

- Inclusive and with a broad definition of culture
- Recognising Shropshire as a Cultural Destination
- Bring together dispersed populations and different partners
- Joining up activity – cultural programming and audience development
- Good for community building
- Promote working across county lines
- Collective fundraising and inward investment
- Mark the shift in role of council from delivery to strategy

Employment & Enterprise

- A sector skills plan is needed to encourage growth
- There is a lack of career opportunities in the sector. There are few paid and F/T opportunities.
- There is a lack of career advice for culture/ creative sector
- There are no creative apprenticeships
- How do we work more closely with university on retaining young people?

Skills development

- Business skills needed by the sector in fund-raising/ commercialisation
- Digital skills required to make better use of digital infrastructure
- Lack of facilities to learn skills and build networks
- How can we make Community Asset Transfer more effective – for example with wrap-round support and training?
- Outdoor and unusual spaces could be used more effectively but requires training

Digital

- What opportunities does digital offer – for example live streaming
- Communication needs to be improved so people know who is doing what
- Digital capacity needs to be developed to reach more people
- How do we encourage tech companies to be part of developing digital capacity and reach?

Advocacy/ Evidence

- Cultural strategy needs to help guide actions
- Festivals are strong but need support – and evidence
- More evidence needed to demonstrate value/ impact to new partners
- Greater involvement of health partners

Access

- Transport affects all aspects of the cultural sector – volunteering, jobs, attendance
- Overnight accommodation is an issue

Role of council

- Leadership
- Towards enabling to delivering
- Providing skills and business support
- Seed funding innovative ideas
- Join up Tourism and Culture

- Impact framework to encourage open data
- Levering potential space – un-used, under-used, planned

Other partners

- University is key and has made a big difference
- More work needed to engage schools, LEP, Parish Councils – needs evidence

Good Examples of distinctive working

- Social Prescribing
- Rural touring
- Shropshire Culture Consortium
- Wild Club

Sector role

- Community volunteer led and professional sectors need different support
- Better networking and sharing needed
- It needs to be more enterprising and commercially focused
- It needs to be more ambitious
- Community co-design is critical
- Solutions need to be co-designed with partners – for example to address mental health, young people

Useful Resources/ examples

- [Shropshire Rural Communities Charity](#) – provide advice and support to groups and individuals. Run a Wheels to Work scheme
- [Village Outreach](#) provides equipment for hire
- BID Shrewsbury Ambassadors <https://originalshrewsbury.co.uk/volunteer-ambassadors>
- Shropshire Community Directory
<http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/shropshire/cd/home.page>
- Shropshire Culture Consortium
- Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly
- Locality Convention: <https://locality.org.uk/events/convention/>

Steering Group Workshop

Cultural Strategy Steering Group

28 November 2019

Topic One: The People Involved

What happens already:

- Everything is happening at grass roots level
- NPO – limited crossovers
- County issue – lots of spaces under used.

Who is involved:

- Groups can be closed and cliquy - inequality in this?

Where are the gaps:

- Would we attend a big event coming in? or do we go out to get our culture?
- Can't think about access without wider issues

Where do we want to be:

- Content, communication and infrastructure
- Live streaming of events?
- Connectivity

Topic Two: Places and Spaces**What happens already:**

- Great outdoors
- Outdoors is important and unique
- It's got everything there
- Community spaces and local churches
- Lots of community culture - Am-dram

Who is involved:

- Joint communication – open data – exceptional at all levels and for all ages
- Missing serious sector skills plan
- Must get better with other sectors – use their languages
- Involving other sectors for example - Shrewsbury School – do they have cultural strategy?

Where are the gaps:

- We need to frame this conversation with resources
- Identify the interests they have – for example – the school wants a better place on its doorstep

Where do we want to be:

- Young people – charter with theatres and centres – free tickets at theatre – how do we make it accessible to young people.
- Make it exceptional then people will pay – if they can afford to

Topic Three: Networks and Projects**What happens already:**

- Cultural Consortium Shropshire
- Lots of festivals
- Lots of these projects are voluntary led
- Main festivals rely on money – ticket source
- If not volunteers – freelancers and SME

Who is involved:

- Mostly white middle class
- Volunteers
- Micro-businesses

Where are the gaps:

- Evidence base
- Proof of value
- Model to prove impact
- Lack of joined up-ness especially when it comes to sharing assets
- Lack of effective communication
- Support for volunteers
- Access for all

Where do we want to be:

- Diversity of cultural offer
- A better connected cultural sector and cross sector networks providing more and better inclusive cultural opportunities
- Building up trust and breaking down silos
- Real collaborative working – with tangible large-scale investment
- More understanding of what culture is and does
- More young people in the offer
- Meeting the needs of ageing population
- Having a clear view of the impact we are having

Topic Four: Resources and Support**What happens already:**

- Huge range of culture here
- Huge amount of funding – but how much goes to culture
- Business rates – we need to consider the impact of these
- Good business support/ growth hub, but does it engage with culture?
- Community capacity and assets – this is a real strength
- Community spaces and village hall – good spaces for us

Who is involved:

- Volunteers
- But people need to learn a living – can't 100% rely on volunteers
- Not diverse enough when we talk about culture – white m/c
- Redundant churches – opportunity? What about 'Champing'
- Council owned redundant buildings access and leases

Where are the gaps:

- Lack of collaboration – rural access
- Not one single point of information
- Young people – are a source of ideas and insight
- Diversity
- Funding and alternatives
- Paid roles – it's necessary to have some paid roles
- Venue maintenance and management – but training and planning is needed

Where do we want to be:

- The strategy should be bold and ambitious
- Digital solutions important for the rurality
- Independent Shrewsbury a good basis to build on
- Community asset transfers
- Sustainable single source of information
- Shropshire is niche and diverse

The group were asked two additional questions:

Why is Culture important?

- Culture is identity and about what place Shropshire wants to be
- It shapes who we are as people, and makes and shapes a place

- Sense of identity and belonging
- Makes people happy
- Culture is important to develop communities
- A sense of belonging
- Provides balance and opportunities for reflection
- A change of pace helps people think differently about different things
- A way of life
- Wellbeing, enjoyment, health
- Confidence building
- Sense of community
- Fun
- Enjoyment
- Confidence
- It feeds the soul
- We all do it whether we realise it or not
- It is part of us all and makes life worth living
- It attracts investment
- It is fun
- It shapes communities
- It regenerates
- It changes lives
- It is education
- It makes us feel better
- It improves lives by shaping social connections, making us feel better, skills development, tourism
- Quality of life
- Essential to health, wellbeing, quality of life

What do we want the strategy to do?

- We want it to be bold, surprising, challenging, off-kilter.
- Inspire creativity and attract investment and funding
- Attract investment
- Raise Profile
- Create joint vision and ambition
- Create an evidence base
- Create partnerships
- Bring about positive change
- Allow the sector to be taken seriously
- Give the sector a voice.
- Improve lives of people who have challenges – health education, loneliness, jobs, crime, obesity – through collaborations
- Improve accessibility and communication
- Promote high quality profitable sector
- Identify tangible achievable priorities
- Give powerful messages about the sector
- Have our impact and influence other LIS
- Set out a clear framework for culture which can be adopted as appropriate in communities and which can bring investment

- Provide a clear direction and tool for all Shropshire’s cultural organisations and communities to drive forward participation, skills development, income generation and health and wellbeing.
- Raise arts and culture up the county agenda

Online Surveys

Online Stakeholder Survey

39 responses

Online Workshop Survey

10 responses

1. Selected quotes:

1.1 Stakeholder Survey

The diverse landscape of the county creates a diverse cultural offer.

Historically it has served the needs and wants of the Shropshire audience - supply and demand - but it could be much more ambitious and thus have much more to celebrate and promote in order to attract more people to the area

The best kept secrets are the unlocked potential of our village halls and our historic churches.

We do pride ourselves on having a model of excellent and inclusive practice with regards to youth theatre.

Creative Conversations is a three-year project being led by Media Active and Arts Alive, in partnership with a number of organisations including Age UK, arts and cultural venues and Shropshire Providers’ Consortium members. The project is funded through the Arts Council Celebrating Age programme – it was the only project to receive funding in Shropshire. As part of project in May, there were eight performances of Curious Shoes (a dementia friendly performance) and a day of training for the sector

This is a rural county, so communities are accustomed to working in small groups and being self-sufficient.

(On whether culture can strengthen local communities) It already works in Ludlow. We have Friends of Ludlow Museum, Civic Society, History Research Group who takes tour around town, Slow Food, festivals using volunteers.

Shropshire has an active environmental campaigning network, independent whole foods suppliers, green party. Linked to the fact it appears to have a good percentage of culturally switched on people there is room here for something unique and important

What should the Vision be?

A vibrant cultural offer driven by local engagement in decision making, planning and delivery. More investment enabling hubs of Cultural activity accessible for everyone in the county

Shropshire would be a cultural destination, with a thriving, year-round, focused programme of events and activity, led by a consortium of key partners and supported by the diverse and exceptional groups and individuals working in the county.

For Shropshire's culture to be taken seriously and not seen as being the icing on the cake.

What do you want the strategy to achieve?

Collaboration and communication

To have a bold vision that engages wider with communities

Focusing attention, unlocking funding

1.2 Workshop Survey

I live near Oswestry, so my answers will reflect this. There is great cultural provision in and around Oswestry. Oswestry Library, Heritage Open Days, Kinoculture, Qube and many great small societies and organisations are doing fantastic work. They have a huge - astonishing - range of skills and expertise to draw on, from fine artists to community historians. By and large, the good work on the ground is being done by volunteers and committed enthusiasts.

There is less works between the educational establishments (schools, colleges, UCS etc.) and other cultural organisations than in some other parts of the country.

The most obvious group that isn't taking part are younger people. There is virtually no one under the age of 30 involved in professional cultural jobs, and they are almost non-existent among volunteers. This is not to say younger people aren't as interested - but they struggle to find the time and money required to support volunteer involvement. Working more closely with art and culture in education - colleges, universities and schools - as well as providing meaningful support (bursaries, etc) would help younger contributors make the transition from there into internships, jobs or even into volunteering. We need these people to be able to be involved if the sector is to survive.

Personally, I'd like to see Shropshire regarded as the Cultural Capital of the West Mids.

The people doing good work are exhausted and demoralized. They have become apathetic.

I'm a member of several art groups, a local archaeologist and a comics creator. I bring all of these things together in both my professional capacity as an archaeological illustrator and in my art and heritage volunteering. I can certainly be part of broader, county-wide cultural projects - arts festivals, heritage trails, library course programmes - but I can't also be a project manager, event coordinator and networker. Like many of my professional and volunteer colleagues, we are all willing to bring our specific cultural talents and skills to bigger initiatives - as long as we have help.

Cultural Strategy discussion with the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSA)

6 December 2019

Introduction

Shropshire Cultural Strategy Working Group (CSWG); a partnership of representatives of 16 organisations from across Shropshire's cultural sector, has commissioned FEI (Festivals & Events International) to help the sector develop a cultural strategy for Shropshire. The final Strategy will be focused around an ambitious, clear and deliverable vision.

The aim of the Strategy is to raise the profile and quality of culture across Shropshire. CSWG are seeking help with collating the existing evidence base and results from the consultation in 2017, by consulting with a broad range of stakeholders and developing a new draft Strategy for public consultation.

Consultation

The facilitation exercise was as follows:

We are interested in hearing your thoughts about all aspects of culture in the county:

- The people involved – Individuals employed in the sector, volunteers and audiences
- Places and Spaces – Where culture takes place
- Networks and Projects – Where the sector come together with each other and other sectors
- Resources, Training and Support – The support the sector gets and needs.

For each area we will ask you to think about 4 questions in terms of your experience of culture in Shropshire:

1. **What happens already?** Where is the good practice? What are the strengths? Who is doing good work?
2. **Where are the gaps?** What's missing? What could be done differently? What should we stop doing?
3. **Who is involved?** Who is taking part and who isn't? Who is supporting the sector? How can we work with other sectors? What can we do ourselves and where do we need more support?
4. **Where do we want to be?** Where do we want to be in 5-10 years? What does success look like for us? How do we want to be talked about outside the area?

Results

What's happening already?

Lots of voluntary and community activity

Lots of clubs- but can be intimidating to newcomers

Loads of things going on- music, dance, walks, boat trips, book festivals

Much Wenlock, Ludlow, Church Stretton

Community Connectors- but are they connected to micro organisations?

Culture of volunteering

Village halls, churches and community spaces- need to be supported to maximise use

Village halls- range of activities

Libraries

Children's activity- play schools/ mums & tots

Bowling

Wide range of activities for older people

Museums, theatre and venues

Shropshire is a county of festivals

Community centres are hubs
Volunteering gives people a sense of belonging
People support each other and improves the individual's wellbeing. Recognition that they are not on their own
Arts Alive
Local panto's
Music services
Party groups
Village Halls
Qube
Fringe and Festivals- festivals cost money but there are free activities in pubs
Park Runs
Quiz
U3A

Where are the gaps?

Some areas are less well catered for- the North?
Very difficult to find out what's available/ on unless you are in the know
Youth provision is not very diverse or multicultural
Accessibility- lack of public transport
Financial support for the most vulnerable
Support to access activities e.g. Cultural Buddies
More stuff to do
Greater resources- money, people, transport, equipment/ activity
Celebrate diversity/ intergeneration
Health- NHS
Co-ordination and marketing? "The Shropshire Brand"
School involvement
Barriers to participation- disabilities. People in criminal justice system
Transport- young people with disabilities problem with getting taxis who can serve them
Safety- people with learning disabilities don't always feel safe going out socialising
Young people feel excluded
Cost e.g. Theatre Severn hire costs
Linking people to groups
Social media- 'where to go' site for all activities
Buddies to welcome new members
Breaking isolation and barriers to joining established groups

Who is involved?

172 Indian nurses are coming to Shropshire (SATH)- opportunity for cross-cultural activity?
Lots of organisations- more collaborative approach in local places
Councils- 2 x Unitary, parish and town
Volunteers/ T&PCs
Experts
People who do
VCSA Organisations
Volunteers
Small scale performers
Health/ Public Health
Local people
Volunteers- gives people a sense of belonging

Volunteer organisations e.g. Care Farms- give people an opportunity to take part

Where do we want to be?

Celebrate local history

More encouragement to access 'self-care/ Culture'

Celebrate individual places- spotlight on a place for a month

Empower local community and provide incentives

Current offer- sustainable

Large well supported volunteer offer- more and younger volunteers, training/ support/ maintenance/ celebrate

Affordable

Perceptions- overcoming barriers for excluded groups

Seed funding available to respond to needs e.g. to put on events/ exercise groups

Recognition that not everything will be financially viable e.g. need to work in small groups

Need infrastructure to support volunteering

More community events

Link parish councils and medical practice

Discussion

Key aspects that came out through discussion in the group and with individuals:

- Need for joined up communication and marketing, using multi-media approach, targeted at difference audiences. Need a Shropshire-wide brand
- Lots of festivals- can be expensive but there are free carnivals and events and 'fringe' activities that are less expensive and need to be promoted
- Volunteering should be a theme in its own right in terms of giving people a sense of belonging
- Some people, especially those who are isolated and lonely, may not feel comfortable approaching new groups- a Culture Buddy system may help address this
- There is almost too much going on! How can this be better co-ordinated?
- There is a need for a new music venue that is reasonably priced in terms of hire and tickets- maybe on a profit share basis. Need to consult with musicians- no network currently.

Culture, Leisure and Tourism Services Away Day workshop notes

- 1- What are the main outcomes/Challenges/Success Criteria for the next 5 years?
 - Resolve storage at Hortonwood for Archives and Museum services
 - Develop digital preservation for archives
 - Develop Image Downloads on website for Archives and staff capacity to do this
 - Recognition of infrastructure as key to accessing our heritage – ROW infrastructure and all of the above
 - Better data capture on who are our customers and what do they need/want
 - Brand identity for Museums service as a destination for visits
 - Resolve the desire for community hubs at museums versus paid for facilities (The two are in opposition presently)
 - Develop a contemporary collection for archives and museums to keep the service relevant as our culture and heritage changes
 - Being aware of the need for tranquillity as well as commercial development
 - Funding is key- statutory issues still need to be addressed and some of our assets require significant investment above and beyond a balanced budget

- Better communication with the community
- Better understanding of community needs
- Improved relationships/ response from legal and finance colleagues to help facilitate commercial activity
- Improved diversity/ access to assets
- Securing the future of parks and sites by increasing income through a range of different site-specific approaches
- Working with colleagues in Planning to connect new green spaces with the wider landscape and work towards habitat connectivity and joined-up public open spaces for both wildlife benefits and benefits to people
- Continuing to make PROW accessible to all (there is likely to be an increasing need for accessible access to the countryside with the ageing population of Shropshire and the trend for the population to grow)
- Making sure that the work of volunteers is recognised and valued with the introduction of a more comprehensive Volunteer Policy and training programme for lead volunteers
- Better partnership working with other organisations
- Use our expertise in countryside and greenspace management to offer services to other organisations as a fee-earning service
- Consistency across facility operations - enhancing management information systems - fulfilling potential in terms of using customer data
- Successful implementation of re-branding
- Development of hub/community facilities
- Better use of technology - Instagram, Snapchat, advertising - modern culture
- Need to invest to develop - get the product right!!
- Digital strategy.
- Shared resources
- Inward investment
- Shared use of venues across the County
- County wide programming

2- How can the Cultural Strategy help address this?

- The Cultural Strategy can raise the profile of our services to partners and Shropshire Council senior staff and Councillors and demonstrate their value to Shropshire's economy and wellbeing
- The Strategy can demonstrate that managing our infrastructure (a, b, c, d & h above) is not an expensive liability, but key to the delivery of cultural activities and an opportunity to develop further activities.
- A Branded offer for the county could be developed to cover all services to give confidence in the offer we have.
- The strategy must be Shropshire Council Specific to lead to a commitment of their value from Shropshire Council senior staff and councillors. Partnership working is key to this, but specifically, infrastructure maintenance, is a council function that underpins all activities
- Raise awareness of the commercial imperative in the public sector to help people understand the issues
- Use the strategy as a community development tool- making sure the document is accessible and well designed
- Highlighting range of volunteering opportunities available

- Highlighting UCS and other educational opportunities- Ofsted are looking for local connections/ heritage/ history- need to help schools understand what is on the doorstep
- Low Carbon events/ activities
- Encouraging local purchasing- food, drink, arts and crafts
- Clear links to Marches VE Strategy/ Economic Growth/ Health and Wellbeing
- Must be inclusive and include minorities- building on sense of identity and belonging
- By making sure that staff are able to work in a joined-up manner. Encouraging staff to learn best practise from colleagues across Cultural Services. Benefitting from ideas such as cross-sites marketing/events
- Needs to be inter-generational
- Ensure groups consulted are appropriate
- Clear indication of use of digital technology

Music Independents Workshop 29.01.2020

Thinking about performers, venues, support, genres, promotion, audiences and economic returns:

What's going well at the moment and should continue

- More independent music venues
- More live music in the Quarry
- Increased diversity in audience
- Lots of performers – but are all working in silo
- Serendipitous
- Need to set up an informal network
- Vast supply of all genres
- Big venues work
- Smaller venues work
- Health and well-being events are going well – especially at The Hive
- Events in the Quarry
- Cycle competition, half marathon, mile run
- Book festival
- Outdoor market
- West Mids Showgrounds are being used more.
- University
- More bars than previous years

What are the gaps

- German market
- Support for young people for the creative industry
- Using / enhancing potential partners
- Big name acts coming to the area
- Music venues
- Cultural diversity in the OMH and Theatre Severn
- There used to be foreign language films at the OMH
- Link the canal to Shrewsbury
- Charles Darwin link
- A world class music festival – poss links to heritage and evolution of music
- Need to establish ways of communicating effectively between independent promoters
- A sounding board
- Lack of funding
- Lack of communication from Shropshire Council
- Conservatism / conservatism restricts what we can do

- Council and BID
- Far too much risk aversion
- Not enough grassroots
- Massive gap between grassroots events that are happening
- Accessibility
- Transport infrastructure
- Building access for people with additional needs
- Business costs – rates etc
- Sustainability for performers

How might these gaps be addressed?

- Better one to one relationships
- Latch onto similarities in each other and work together
- Nominate Sarah to organise a network and hold quarterly meetings
- Applying for funding as joint efforts
- Make more effort
- Sponsorship
- Collaborative festivals
- Foundations to invest in talent coming through long term
- Lack of affordable accommodation to make people stay and spend -investment needed
- Interlinking with other events in the West Midlands
- Create awareness – make Shrewsbury a more available tourist destination
- Use of social media for networking
- Mentors for musicians
- Better advertising, promotion and communication of events
- Evolution of music festival
- Look at Sheffield's model of operation with music – Tramlines festival in the city centre
- Public transport improvements
- Change parking times – back to 6pm and free parking
- Reduce business rates
- Encourage more businesses to open later

What are the barriers to doing this?

- Transport accessibility
- Noise management
- Parking
- Funding
- Noise complaints
- Access to venues – e.g. The Buttermarket and Theatre Severn – almost impossible
- More cheap hotels
- Later trains
- Shropshire Council
- Legislation – too aggressively enforced
- Funding
- Town Centre Association
- Time
- Lack of cooperation from others
- Need a workable structure – less bureaucracy
- Opposing ideas

- Shropshire Council always goes for the obvious solution – ie uses bigger companies. Sometimes we, as independents have more knowledge and experience than bigger organisations. Employ us – we want to work with you.

How can we work better together?

- A more open policy towards noise abatement orders within the town centre
- Make sure town centre residents and venues work together
- Stronger network
- Better communication
- Funding – look at what matches and align strategic priorities
- Working together
- Look at what the value is for people
- Time
- Pay people a real rate for the work they do – remove the “Pay to Play” element that exists

General discussion points:

- Culture is about evolving and taking on other people’s philosophies as well as our own.
- Culture is of an organic nature and does not feel clumsy.
- Innovation gets confused and often what people think of as innovation is just recycled ideas.
- Areas in need do not always get the funding that they need.
- There is a lack of support for culture in disadvantaged areas.
- We need to be allowed to demonstrate that risk is sustainable in the arts.
- There is a need for a central place for reporting issues.
- Shrewsbury is a University town now, but it does not feel as diverse as it should.
- Transport links are poor – given that we are a rural county.
- People need to be paid a living wage to be able to invest in leisure activities.
- Independent Shrewsbury.
- Shrewsbury needs an affordable venue – Theatre Severn and The Buttermarket are too expensive. Given that Theatre Severn is a flagship arts venue, it does not want to involve local independents - it is only about making money.
- We need to look at other local festivals and design one for Shrewsbury using our knowledge as independent music makers / promoters. Look at Focus Festival in Wrexham, Sensatoria in Solihull, London Remixed in Shoreditch.
- Come to us for our creative skills – independents can help around what to focus on in Shropshire.

Conversations with Children and Young People on Shropshire's Culture (as part of Cultural Strategy Consultation) Jan- Feb 2021

During January and February 2020, three consultation workshops were held in Shrewsbury, giving children and young people (CYP) the opportunity to feed into the development of the new Shropshire Cultural Strategy.

28 children and young people aged 7 to 19 from Shropshire Young Critics, Shropshire Youth Theatre (STY) and The Hive Youth Group, attended the workshops.

Children and young people discussed: what culture means to them; what cultural activities they take part in; why these activities are important to them; what other cultural activities they would like to see (a wish list), what are the barriers to engaging in cultural activity and what is it about Shropshire that makes it unique.

The young critics were in addition also asked to carry out a SWOT analysis on Shropshire's Culture (see below).

The children and young people were based predominantly in and around Shrewsbury, which is very much reflected in their answers.

All the children and young people are actively engaged in a range of cultural activities, are interested in culture (as are their families) and as a result have a broad view of what culture is, why it's important and where it fits in their lives.

The Young Critics Group in particular feel that the majority of Shropshire's cultural offer is aimed at and attracts older wealthy people, who they recognised as making up a huge proportion of Shropshire's demographic.

Despite taking part in and being aware of the range of cultural activities available to them, the older young people felt disconnected with the county and kept saying 'what is there for us?'

They clearly feel incredibly proud of the county and what it has to offer, particularly the countryside and natural assets. They benefit enormously by taking part in cultural activity and clearly articulated how good this made them feel. 'Releases feel good endorphins – uplifted, amazing, happy, exhilarated, energized, freedom, power.'

Cost, location and finding out about what's on offer were the main barriers to engagement for all the groups. The younger age group are reliant on their parents to tell them about activity and help them access it. The older age group are accessing cultural opportunities on their doorstep, so in walking and biking distance and occasionally use public transport when it's available. They don't want to spend any more than £5 to take part in an activity.

When the groups had found it difficult to access activity and experienced barriers, this resulted in them feeling excluded and that they don't belong.

Several of the group are keen to leave Shropshire as soon as they can. They are attracted to urban cities, which they feel have better job and university prospects and provide the more diverse and exciting lifestyle they want. They aren't sure if they would return to Shropshire.

All of the groups were very keen to see more spaces and venues across Shropshire that are for and managed by children and young people. Spaces where they feel safe, respected, they don't get moved on from, are welcomed and inclusive.

We will continue to involve and speak to a range of children and young people as the cultural strategy develops, including those who are less engaged in cultural activity.

In addition to the groups above, we will also be speaking to SEND Youth Clubs (through Shropshire Youth Association), families through Parent and Carers Council (PACC) and groups of children and young people directly engaged in programmes of work being delivered by cultural organisations.

Key collated findings:

What is culture – what does it mean to you?

Sport	Biking Rowing Swimming Sports centres Football Clubs (Shrewsbury Town FC)
Landscape / Outdoor Spaces	Environment Rural Distinctive Spaces The quarry The local park River Severn Distinctive Landmarks (buildings and in the landscape – sculptures)
Market Towns	Shrewsbury – like the look of the historic buildings
Art	Music Theatre Dance Films
Retail	Shops Independent Shops
Pubs	
Food & Drink	Food Festivals Independent restaurants
Events & Festivals	Flower show The fair in the quarry Folk festival Food festival Flower show Celebrations – fireworks, projection
Museums	
History	National trust Charles Darwin Shrewsbury Prison Prince Rupert & Lion hotel (Shrewsbury) Shropshire Myth & Legend – Ghost tours
Libraries	
Education	Learning about new ‘things’
Intrinsic to you as a person	Way of life Beliefs Equality Background Identify

	How people see places The way you dress The way you speak Travel
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What cultural activities do you take part in?

Sport	Gymnastics Cycling Roller-skating Horse riding Rock climbing Water sports on lakes and rivers Football – playing and supporting local football club Skateboarding Jump in – trampolining centre, Shrewsbury
Landscape / Outdoor Spaces	Going to the park Walking in countryside Walking the dog
Art	Dance Acting at amateur dramatics groups Attending workshops – arts and crafts Music – perform and see bands Theatre Cinema Flicks in the sticks Arts exhibitions
Retail	Shopping
Food & Drink	Cooking Eating out – particularly at independent cafes and fast food chains
Events & Festivals	Attend various local festivals – food & drink festivals, flower show, Kidsfest, fairs at quarry
Museums	Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery
History	National trust
Youth Provision	Attend youth club Attend activities run at the Hive

Why are these cultural activities important to you?

Participants were asked to draw around a body. They used the body to think about why the cultural activities they take part in are important to them. They discussed and identified what new skills they learn by taking part in the activity and where might this activity take them in the future (head); how taking part in the activity makes them feel (heart); who they are doing the activity with and who has organised the activity (hands) and how did they get to the activity (feet).

Head – what new skills do you learn and where might this activity take you in the future?	Heart – how does doing the activity make you feel?
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports activity – balance, co-ordination, improved fitness. • Knowledge and increased skills, particularly social skills, which leads to improved confidence. • Can lead to a new-found passion, which can be developed further in education, FE and as a potential career. • Provides opportunities to make connections with other people and organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Releases feel good endorphins – uplifted, amazing, happy, exhilarated, energized, freedom, power. • Provided space and time to socialise, which make them feel included, like they were part of something and that they were connected to a place. • Taking part got them out of the house, made them be more active • They felt love and pride
<p>Hands – <i>who are you doing the activity with and who’s organised the activity?</i></p> <p>Who with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family – parents, siblings • Neighbours, friends other like-minded groups and clubs (including online groups) • By themselves – particularly the activities like walking the dog <p>Who’s Organised it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries • Places like national trust • Leaders / coaches • Parents 	<p>Feet – <i>how did you get there?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park and ride • Car • Walking & running • Bus • Train • Cycling

What other activities do you want to see? What do you want to see more of? What’s your wish list

Types of Activity –

Venues – have an indoor and a sheltered outdoor space in each of the main market towns, that belongs to children and young people and which they can programme and manage themselves.

The space would be somewhere they feel safe, respected, they don’t get moved on from, feel welcome and is inclusive.

They are very keen to create a community for and set up by children and young people.

Within existing youth clubs and community spaces that children and young people are given the opportunity to programme them.

Music – particularly opportunities for children and young people to play their own music and venues where this can happen.

Film – spaces where there is an opportunity to screen their own films and more screenings of art house films.

Diversity of clubs - e.g. orienteering (opportunity to be outside and learn new skills) and aviation.

Retail – more independent shops and particularly clothing stores, selling designer and vintage clothes and book shops. Kilo clothes sales. More MacDonalD's and fast food chains where young people feel welcome.

Cost – more free activities and free entrance into venues, especially in museums and arts organisations. Where entrance or activity isn't free and can't be, that there are opportunities for subsidised places.

More investment and funding needed in general for cultural activity.

Access – the children and young people felt that a lot of space and venues were not accessible for them, they cost to enter, were open at inconvenient times, were aimed at an 'older' audience.

More types of organisation – more libraries and more books in the libraries and more storytelling museums.

Age – activity seems to be aimed at either children or older young people and there is a lack of provision for 10 to 16-year olds. Some of the group felt it would be better to look at a child's ability when designing an activity rather than their age.

This was particularly significant when children and young people were trying to progress through awards schemes, e.g. Arts Award, Duke of Edinburgh but weren't the right age.

Timing of Activity – more activities happening in the evening, during the school day, rather than being focused primarily at weekends.

Barriers to accessing cultural activity

Cost – activities were seen as being too expensive. A lot of young people felt for them to engage with an activity it had to be under £5.

Location – all the groups were hugely reliant on their parents driving them to activities, which made them feel less independent. Activity that was local or could be accessed via public transport is crucial.

Marketing & Publicity - difficult to always find out about what's on, what's available. Reliant on school, youth clubs, parents, word of mouth to share information. Older age group were using social media to access information but didn't know if they could always trust the content.

Activities need to be advertised more broadly, to reach a wider audience. Don't aim marketing at one market.

Age restrictions – too old or too young for an activity. This created a sense of feeling excluded within the groups and that they don't belong.

Time – this was particularly an issue for the home educated groups. A lot of activity happens in the evening, after school and at weekends. There isn't enough happening during the school day in the week.

Practitioners - finding people with the right skills to run workshops in subjects the young people are interested in is difficult e.g. metal workshops.

Activities are put on for them and not with them.

What makes Shropshire special and unique

Environment – the countryside and lack of built up areas and how peaceful and beautiful Shropshire is (countryside and buildings). Our natural assets such as the weir, river, parks, wildlife, caves.

The groups felt comforted by the space they lived in, they talked about it being safer than living in a city, not touristy, not busy and ‘down to earth’. They Shropshire as having an ‘atmosphere’ and a ‘feeling’.

Despite recognising this and clearly benefiting from it, they also felt like these were also the reasons why Shropshire was attractive to older people and could be seen as being boring for children and young people.

Range of activities – the opportunity to take part in a range of activities within a community and with your family. The younger children were particularly focused on particular activities they engaged in and which were a core fabric of their lives including - horse riding, ballet, music, library, walking (particularly dog walking), river sports, national trust properties (Attingham Park in particular), bowling and cinema.

SWOT – from group of Young Critics

<p>Strengths Lots of opportunities and range of artforms.</p> <p>Venues, eg Stop café /Dough & Oil are aimed at young people and appealing venues.</p> <p>Original Shrewsbury – offered opportunity for children and young people to take over social media.</p>	<p>Weaknesses Venues lacking - need more inspirational spaces for young people.</p> <p>Lack of real performance opportunities for young acts/bands.</p> <p>Not enough variety in music, particularly ‘younger’ music, new indie/art rock etc.</p> <p>Not diverse county and very white population.</p> <p>Very middle class, “boring”. Perception is that Shrewsbury is an older person’s town (eg OMH target audience for films and not experimental young films).</p>
<p>Opportunities Develop model of young leaders, explore skill set of older young people who can mentor younger people to support and invest in programme.</p> <p>Develop CCS (Culture Consortium Shropshire) Young Company, job descriptions – Co-Lab opportunities.</p>	<p>Threats Funding a programme.</p> <p>Time.</p> <p>Transport.</p> <p>Cost of accessing events, eg cinema is £11 p/ticket.</p>

Speed dating/networking with young people and artists / practitioners / venues / events organisers to find out what young people want – Co-Lab.

More one-off events that attract a niche group. Perhaps someone recognised as inspirational to young people/professional performer with workshop opportunity etc.

Venues/Cafes/shops to display and profile young people's work. Acoustic music events in cafés for young people (not pubs/bars, which aren't accessible to all young people).

Young people to have opportunity to make their own work and take on roles with responsibility attached to them.

Increase profile of museums and libraries to young people – film screenings, events, library after dark, take over days.

More diverse programme to attract different cultures.

Links to University.

Conversations with representatives from Protected Characteristic Groups (as part of Cultural Strategy Consultation) Jan-Feb 2021

During January and February 2021, online meetings and email conversations were held with ten representatives from five of the Protected Characteristic Groups in Shropshire. The meetings and email conversations were an opportunity to discuss the development of an Implementation Plan, for the Shropshire Cultural Strategy.

Meetings / Email conversations were held with:

- SEMA (Shropshire Ethnic Minority Alliance)– 3 representatives
- OMEGA – 2 representatives
- Shropshire Supports Refugees – 2 representatives
- DASH (Disability Arts Shropshire) – 1 representative
- Age UK – 1 representative

Email conversation only held with:

- Inter Faith Forum – 1 representative

The following groups were also approached:

- MIND – *no response*
- LGBTQ+1 / SAND (Safe Ageing No Discrimination CIC) – *interested in being involved, haven't yet been able to get a date to meet – 4 representatives*
- FRESH (Fairness Respect Equality Shropshire) – *no response*

SEMA (Shropshire Ethnic Minority Alliance), OMEGA, Shropshire Supports Refugees, DASH (Disability Arts Shropshire), Age UK and LGBTQ+1 / SAND (Safe Ageing No Discrimination CIC) have been invited to attend the Cultural Strategy working group meeting on 4th March.

The aim of the meetings / conversations was to discuss: What cultural activities your customers/users currently engage with (where do these take place, how are they funded, who leads the activity and how is it promoted); What barriers they experience to engaging with cultural activities, and What cultural activities they want/would meet their needs in the future.

All groups were interested in culture but engaged with and perceived it in very different ways. The organisations all delivered a cultural offer for their customers / service users / clients including; dance, poetry/writing, visual art, mentoring, walking for health, food, support groups (with an activity attached such as knitting, singing, art play) and education.

Age UK, Shropshire Supports Refugees and Inter Faith Forums programmes are primarily focused on engaging the whole family where possible in activity – this could include three generations of a family. DASH, is focused on individuals who have a specific interest in visual art and Shropshire Ethnic Minority Alliance in particular have an interest in Young People and education.

They all had a broad view of what culture is and the positive impact it has on people's lives. All highlighted that their customers / service users / clients traditionally do not engage in mainstream cultural opportunities and face barriers to accessing activity. This could be caused by cost, transport, accessibility (particularly those with disabilities), lack of confidence, racism and not wanting to visit certain venues, culture/heritage of the communities, trust in organisers, lack of interest in cultural offer available - white populist British culture – they don't see themselves reflected in it. When the groups had found it

difficult to access activity and experienced barriers, this resulted in them feeling excluded and less likely to want to try a cultural activity in the future.

All of the groups have struggled to engage their customers / service users / clients in culture during the pandemic. Some workshops, cultural opportunities have been delivered online over the last 12 months, but the uptake has been poor and the results not as positive as face to face interaction.

Despite facing challenges to accessing cultural opportunities, all the representatives said how important culture is in bringing communities together and using it as a tool to access and work with our most vulnerable people.

They all received requests for more cultural activity and were looking forward to when they would be a position, COVID-19 allowing to be able to programme in 'live' opportunities.

Key collated findings:

What cultural activities your customers/users currently engage with – *this became more of a discussion about what cultural programme the groups provided*

ARTS	Visual Arts Mentoring Programme for emerging artists Art Education Video / digital media Supporting artists in making funding applications – find a lot of the grant platforms inaccessible Artist training Singing groups – currently online via Zoom Reading groups – currently online via Zoom Adult ballet Craft group Artist talks Activity packs being sent in post Music – performing (e.g. wedding singer and sharing work via youtube channel) Multi-cultural day Art Summer School TV – soap operas from own country (Syria)
Sports	Football Walking football Walking for health Zumba Men's exercise class Mixed seated exercise class
Social / Support	Lunch Club
	Coffee morning
	Telephone conversations
	Chatterbox
	Craft and Chat
	Pen Pal Service – letter from Louise
	Food

	Celebrations based around life events – engagements, weddings, births, funerals etc.
	Happy to engage in cultural activity they feel comfortable with and that involves other members of their community.
	Cultural Faith visits to faith buildings
	Talks - travel talks, refugees, and Fair Trade
	Advice and support – marriage customs, childbirth and dress
Environment	Activities in partnership with Shropshire Wildlife Trust
	Gardening
	Walking – visiting outdoor spaces

What barriers they experience to engaging with cultural activities

Accessibility	<p>A lot of spaces in Shropshire are not accessible for people with disabilities – particularly those in wheelchairs. Particularly difficult in places like Shrewsbury when there are so many old buildings.</p> <p>Venues like Theatre Severn feel oppressive as it's so big.</p> <p>A lot of venues are too expensive to go into / buy tickets.</p> <p>Activities / venues not accessible by public transport.</p> <p>General cost of engaging in activity too high.</p> <p>Women won't go into cafes / public spaces – like to stay in each other's homes (Syrian refugees)</p>
Technology	<p>Many older people find online content inaccessible – don't have the skills to access it and to use the required technology.</p> <p>Being online for long stretches of time leaves them very tired.</p> <p>Programmes like Zoom are inaccessible for people with visual impairments.</p> <p>A lot of users / clients / user groups don't have access to the internet.</p>

	<p>Organisers having to work with very small groups to deliver sessions – it takes a lot of time to set up and support people through them.</p> <p>Don't have the right equipment – tablets / laptops etc.</p> <p>Don't like going online – mistrustful. Don't engage in social media and / or have limited access to social media.</p> <p>Need to offer different activities for men and women, as not all cultures will socialise / take part in things together.</p>
Health	<p>Some people can't physically leave their homes, as they have a chronic illness, disability and fear of falling.</p>
Inclusion	<p>It's not for me attitude – especially if something is different. Need a lot of support to get involved.</p> <p>Fear of racism and not being made to feel welcome in venues and spaces.</p> <p>Cultural venues and spaces are aimed at white, middle class, middle aged British and are not inclusive / welcoming.</p> <p>Don't want to raise their head above the parapet– want quiet, easy life.</p> <p>Only trust people who they know really well.</p> <p>Can feel awkward in our white British communities.</p> <p>Don't like having photos taken – very private, want to hide identities, particularly women (Syrian refugees).</p> <p>Face loneliness and are socially isolated – need a lot of support to get out of the house.</p> <p>Some struggle with communication itself.</p>
Marketing & Publicity	<p>Difficult to promote activity – a lot of users don't have access to email or use social media (generally older people).</p>
Cultural Offer	<p>Lack of diversity in cultural offer in the county. E.g. Cinemas and theatres the productions are rarely representative of</p>

	<p>Black and Brown and migrant communities, the sports centres and football clubs are sometimes risk spots for racially motivated incidents, and the sheer demographic whiteness of, say, Shrewsbury, makes for wary traveling for many.</p> <p>Attached to their own culture and are not particularly interested in embracing ours.</p>
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What cultural activities they want/would meet their needs in the future

- Accessible and affordable venue in the county for visual arts – exhibition space, artist studios
- Utilise the potential of the FlaxMill, particularly for visual arts
- Develop and deliver training programmes for older people, or those who struggle with technology
- Use IT volunteers in settings to offer support
- Use programmes like Otter on Zoom, which support people with disabilities and make it more accessible
- Ensure scribes join meetings to support people who are nero divergent
- Ensure tablets / equipment is readily available
- Activities need to be sustainable and cost effective – users will pay if they see the benefit and it's affordable
- Exercise based activity very popular – keen on idea of a day time disco – Age UK
- Keen to develop partnership with Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery – particularly for programmes of film, art, dance, music and reading – Age UK
- Deliver taster workshops / programmes so that people can 'have a go' before having to fully commit
- Need for more intergenerational work / opportunities in the future
- Need to more cultural diversity in the county
- Open conversation between different communities and the cultural sector, to help break down barriers, make Shropshire's cultural offer more inclusive
- Research
- Support the education system in Shropshire to become more diverse – language used, resources available, cultures explored – example of the 'Diverse Shells Project'
- Activities for families, particularly engaging children
- Activities focused around food
- Activities with a strong education focus – homework clubs, accreditation etc.
- Programmes which support mental health and well-being
- Training for volunteers to they can more effectively support a cultural offer
- Befriender scheme
- Training programmes for public and private organisations on topics such as discrimination, Black History, colonialism, and the like will be useful for building awareness in workplaces, schools, and among public services and interested individuals for the better embracing of all people in the county – being developed by Shropshire Ethnic Minority Alliance (SEMA)
- Activities such as music and food festivals, multicultural fun-days, and interfaith initiatives, as well as charitable activities, are the other main focuses of SEMA and many of our partner/friend organisations

