

FLOURISHING CULTURE

The Northern Devon Culture Strategy

WHAT CULTURE MEANS IN NORTHERN DEVON

Culture means different things to different people. For some it is a welcoming and enriching avenue to explore creative expression, for others it's a word that conjures up feelings of elitism, uncertainty and exclusion. There are many that claim to not care for it at all, until you probe a little further and find they have a healthy interest in the live music scene at their local pub.

And that's what makes it so hard to define. None of us really know what culture means to our counterparts. It's personal to each and every one of us. From garden shed dwellers tinkering away with a pile of reclaimed wood, to critically acclaimed print artists utilising their local church hall to make and create masterpieces, from those that find meaning and expression through the land, sharing stories, food, skills and traditions, through to those that feel invigorated by an early morning surf before heading to work.

What we know is that every person, no matter of age, background, ethnicity, religion or financial situation has the right to experience, participate in and enjoy cultural activity, in whichever way they choose to perceive it. It is not something that should feel scary or inaccessible, it shouldn't be laughed at or scorned; instead every last seedling of creativity, no matter how mighty or small, should be cultivated, treasured and celebrated.

When we talk about culture in this strategy, we are including the heritage that surrounds us, in museums and our built environment, as well as our daily activities and traditions and the creativity, interpretation and expression these inspire in all our lives.

VISION

In the next 5 years, Northern Devon will be locally and nationally recognised as a place where creativity thrives in unison with its landscape and communities.

Northern Devon will be a place where all forms of culture are nurtured and celebrated.

Our region's creativity, rooted in our identity, heritage and environment, will be as breathtaking as our beaches, wild like our seas and as divergent our landscapes.

The expressions of our culture will be reflective of all that live here, honouring our past traditions, whilst creating a platform for our dreams of the future.

It will be a place where creativity thrives, where all voices are heard and where communities use culture as a vehicle for change and action.

CONTEXT

Cultural People & Places

An audit carried out for this strategy suggests there are at least 43 venues where arts and heritage events are regularly taking place, including galleries, museums, theatres and live music venues. Given this does not include the large number of informal venues that play a vital role in cultural consumption across the region such as village halls and pubs this is likely to be an underestimate.

Ranging from large venues such as the Landmark Theatre in Ilfracombe and Queen's Theatre in Barnstaple, through local arts centres such the Plough Arts Centre in Great Torrington to micro-museums or social clubs putting on occasional live music nights, this infrastructure provides a vital web for cultural activity regionally.

Museums and Heritage

The heritage offer of Northern Devon is supported by a large number of local museums including 11 accredited by Arts Council England. Many of these are sustained by local volunteers and coordinated by the local authority, as well as a number of independent and commercial museums that range from local history to special interest museums to tourist attractions.

Heritage is integral to Northern Devon's region's tourism industry with visitors drawn to major heritage destinations like Clovelly as well as the area's historic towns boasting over 4,500 listed buildings and 300 scheduled monuments.

Artists and Freelance Creatives

Northern Devon has an abundance of artists, makers and creative freelancers. The Artmakers network has identified at least 400 artists and makers operating in the region, ranging from internationally recognised to early career as well as creative freelancers across other artforms and the creative industries.

The variety and richness of makers and creators alone blurs the lines between art, craft and manufacturing, from nationally recognised artists such as Merlyn Chesterman to contemporary ceramicist Taz Pollard through to instrument makers and surfboard designers.

Creative Industries

Northern Devon boasts a number of innovative creative industry companies in the fields of immersive media, advertising and design. Film is also an emerging sector of potential

importance to the region, with Northern Devon being used as a filming location for productions such as A Very English Scandal, Netflix's production of Rebecca and Aquaman 2.

There are an estimated 345 creative and cultural industries businesses operating in the region employing around 1,250 people or 1.81% of total employment in Northern Devon. This is notably under the sector size for Devon (2.54%) and well below the national proportion of 4.57%.

Culture in the Community

Alongside large successful commercial festivals like OceanFest and respected arts festivals like Barnstaple's Theatrefest and the Appledore Book Festival, there is an undercurrent of distinctive traditional local celebrations like the Hunting of the Earl of Rone in Combe Martin, the Pilton Green Man Festival, Clovelly Herring Festival and the Turning of the Devil's Stone in Shebbear, usually volunteer run and continuations of traditions that provide key anchors to the cultural life of places year on year.

Such festivals demonstrate a wider trend of informal and voluntary cultural activity whilst organisations like Sunrise Diversity show how culture and creativity are providing pathways to welcoming new arrivals to the area and connecting local identities with global cultures.

Culture and Landscape

The relationships between environment, culture and art are deep and intertwined in Northern Devon. It is perhaps unsurprising given the exceptional characteristics of the surrounding natural landscape that is recognised as a UNESCO designated Biosphere.

Many of Northern Devon's conservationist, environmental and nature organisations also directly overlap with cultural activity. The Biosphere Foundation and UNESCO designation were defined by a concept of landscape that embraces people, culture and ways of life. Whilst organisations like Quince Honey Farm, Courage Copse Creatives and Rosewater Hall regularly host events that integrate cultural activity into environmental education and awareness.

Deprivation & Health

In Northern Devon, people in the most deprived communities can expect to die 15 years earlier than those living in the most affluent ones. Factors that influence this are wide ranging and complex, including quality of housing, income, education, access to healthy food, social isolation and access to quality local services. One Northern Devon has

been formed in recognition that many of these challenges are inherently place-based rather than clinical. Arts and culture play an important role in tackling some of these issues, including isolation, self-confidence and mental health.

Youth, Education & Skills

Like many rural and coastal areas, Northern Devon faces challenges in the retention of young people. Under 24 year olds make up 24% of the population compared with 31% nationally and there is a significant drop-off in numbers at the 18+ stage suggesting many young people move away from Northern Devon either for employment, study or work.

A number of factors, ranging from lack of education opportunities including no university, to low wage prospects (average weekly earnings of £518 are the lowest in Devon) and high cost of living (median house prices in North Devon have risen 46% in 10 years). However, our consultation with young people found that cultural perspectives may also be playing a significant role.

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CULTURE IN NORTHERN DEVON

HEADLINES:

- Creative Industries contribute £82 million GVA to the Northern Devon economy, creating 1250 jobs
- Heritage is worth an estimated £96.6 million to the Northern Devon tourism sector
- 45 Arts Organisations employing 125 people
- £86.5 million personal wellbeing value derived from people regularly attending cultural events in Northern Devon
- 56,566 people in Northern Devon are estimated to participate in some form of creative arts activity at least 3 times a year
- 80% of visitors to Northern Devon do so to experience its natural landscape
- 96,415 estimated visits per year to accredited museums supported by 550 volunteers
- Surfing has a value of £52.1 million to Northern Devon per year

MEASURING OUR ACTIONS

Northern Devon’s cultural sector already brings enormous value to the region, from direct economic impact, to social and wellbeing benefits, to the way it helps uplift town centres and attract tourism.

Communicating not only the value culture brings, but also the potential benefit it can offer if enhanced is crucial, both for making the case for additional investment in culture, and for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the sector over time.

Below are measurable goals for the future and the value that achieving them will bring to Northern Devon.

Goal	Current Metric	Ambition	Output
Increase the number of people attending more than 3 arts and culture events or venues per year	25.9% of people in Northern Devon	30% of people in Northern Devon	£13.3m in individual wellbeing value per year
Increase the number of people participating in more than 3 arts and culture events per year	33.9% of people in Northern Devon	38% of people in Northern Devon	£10m in individual wellbeing value per year
Reduce the number of people attending no arts and culture activity per year	38% of people in Northern Devon	33% of people in Northern Devon	£5m in individual wellbeing value per year
Increase the number of people doing a creative activity			
Increase the number of people in rural locations accessing high quality arts and culture	Baseline data to be found: Targeted surveys of rural areas will benchmark this	10% increase	Increased wellbeing value
Increase the number of people in deprived areas accessing high quality arts and culture			
Increase the diversity of			

Goal	Current Metric	Ambition	Output
people (by class, ethnicity, accessing high quality arts and culture			
Increase the average projects level of per head funding from ACE Projects Grants and NLHF	£6.12 - 5 year annual average 2015-2020	£8 per head	£1.76m additional earned income catalysed by public investment
Increase the proportion of creative industry employment in Northern Devon	1.81% of total Northern Devon employment	2.54% of total Northern Devon employment	£32.75m GVA uplift
Increase the percentage of artists and makers accessing business support	25.7%	45%	£450,000 GVA improvement
Increase the total floorspace of creative workspaces	Survey required of current creative workspace infrastructure	Benchmark ambition based on survey	3.3% improvement in surrounding property values over 5 year period
Increase the number of young people represented on cultural boards and decision making bodies	Survey of participating cultural organisations needed	5	Leadership skills and diversity of cultural offer
Increase the percentage of young people taking art, design and performing arts subjects at A-Level or further education	Survey of secondary schools and colleges	15%	Larger creative workforce to support the creative economy
Increase the number of followers of Northern Devon cultural organisations on social media	Survey of ND Cultural Partnership organisations	20% increase	£25 per 1,000 followers per post in marketing value

Goal	Current Metric	Ambition	Output
Lower collective carbon footprint of board members of the Northern Devon Cultural Partnership	Gather from Northern Devon cultural partnership using Julie's Bicycle Creative Green Tools	20% reduction	£75 per tonne in improved air quality
Increase the number of national and international cultural partners delivering work in Northern Devon	Gather baseline levels from participating Northern Devon culture partnership members	20% increase	Raised national profile

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In order to successfully deliver the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy it is vital that organisations and individuals come together with a shared vision for the region, committing to dedicating time, resources and knowledge to broadening and deepening the cultural provision of the area.

North Devon and Torridge local authorities, as commissioners of the Northern Devon Culture Strategy, have a key role to play, leading on the formation of a Northern Devon cultural partnership that creates a space for balanced and broad representation of the cultural sector and beyond, enabling multiple perspectives to be heard and valued.

- **Identify** a balanced and diverse group of organisations to initiate the formation of a Northern Devon cultural partnership.
- **Define** the core vision, principles, values and behaviours that will sit at the heart of the way in which the Northern Devon cultural partnership operates.
- **Facilitate** regular meetings of the Northern Devon cultural partnership board, which focus on supporting knowledge sharing, coordination of policy and the prioritisation of shared initiatives across the network based on the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy.
- **Initiate** a Northern Devon cultural partnership action plan, based on the recommended actions from the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy with assigned responsibility, timelines and resources.
- **Establish** working groups and forums, as needed for delivery, oversight and expert guidance.
- **Formalise** the partnership, once a balanced and active partnership board has been established. Work together to identify the most appropriate structure and formalise the partnership as an autonomous body with independent trustees, the capacity to fundraise and earn income and support a core staff which can deliver the executive responsibilities for the partnership.
- **Resource** seed funding for the first three years of the establishment of the Northern Devon cultural partnership, ensuring that the partnership board has the time to build the capacity for self-financing.
- **Evolve** - As the cultural scene of North Devon and Torridge develops so should the Northern Devon cultural partnership. Creating an organisational culture of

inquisitiveness, innovation and self-reflection is critical to ensuring that the partnership doesn't reinforce traditional power structures and narratives, but instead promotes open conversation, forward facing action and transparent decision making.

FLOURISHING CULTURE: KEY THEMES & ACTIONS

EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE

Create the conditions for local people to make and experience culture that expresses their connection to the local environment in the places they live.

CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS

Ensure Northern Devon culture is embedded in regional, national and international networks that expand the reach of its borders, whilst bringing cutting edge culture and knowledge into the region.

PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPES

Recognise the interdependent relationship between people, culture and the environment through cultural activity that acts on the climate crisis.

OUR CULTURAL HUBS

Develop cultural investment plans for our major towns, reclaiming the public realm and uses vacant spaces to fuel culture.

NAVIGATING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Use culture to break down the distance between people, both physical and social, by spreading cultural opportunities across Northern Devon.

A CULTURE OF CARE

Put culture at the heart of community wellbeing and maximise its potential to improve our people's mental health.

NURTURING THE FUTURE

Champion the youth voice in Northern Devon whilst actively developing pathways to creative opportunities and sustainable creative careers.

MAKING CULTURE VISIBLE

Collectively celebrate and promote Northern Devon culture so that it is a source of pride to local people and attractive for people who visit.

EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE

Create the conditions for local people to make and experience culture that expresses their connection to the local environment in the places they live.

The Northern Devon landscape can only be described as an all-encompassing treat for the senses. From the rolling, woodland encased hills and cultivated pastures through to the picturesque sea fronts and imposing sand dunes, the variety of surroundings, habitats and communities is rich and invigorating. The significance of this landscape, both natural and human is recognised through its UNESCO Biosphere designation

Moulded by centuries of land use and natural processes, the culture of Northern Devon has both shaped and been shaped by the landscape. From the village fairs steeped in tradition and local folklore, through to the ever-growing surfer community that can be found catching a wave along the coast, the connection between creative expression and the landscape is integral to the identity of Northern Devon culture.

Made By and With Communities

Support a cultural ecosystem that local people have the power to shape and direct. Enabling everyone in Northern Devon to decide what culture is, who makes it, where it happens and who experiences it.

ACTIONS:

Work alongside Arts Council England to develop a shared understanding of cultural democracy in Northern Devon, identifying opportunities to test community decision making practices at both regional and organisational levels.

Refine community decision making processes, relinquishing more power and agency to the community over time by actively promoting and incentivising the integration of cultural democracy into the everyday practices of cultural organisations across North Devon and Torridge.

The Outdoor Arts Capital of the U.K.

Place Northern Devon at the cutting edge of outdoor arts, embedding culture into the landscape and bringing creativity to people's doorsteps.

ACTIONS:

Develop a shared vision which positions Northern Devon as the Outdoor Arts capital of the UK by building local capacity, mapping existing assets, identifying opportunities for growth and encouraging productive partnerships with national touring organisations.

Utilise existing assets such as public community events, public realm spaces in urban areas and well-known rural attractions to develop and grow the opportunities for platforming and commissioning Outdoor Arts.

Launch a biennial festival that celebrates the diversity of Northern Devon landscapes and cultural activity, creating opportunities for bespoke large scale commissions.

CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS

Ensure Northern Devon culture is embedded in regional, national and international networks that expand the reach of its borders, whilst bringing cutting edge culture and knowledge into the region.

As well as being a key driver of strategic growth within the Culture sector, partnership working plays a vital role in developing a diverse and distinctive cultural offer.

From 'Hefted', which was performed in North Devon Theatres and produced through the collaboration between Beaford Arts and Multistory, to Red Herring and The Burton's collaboration on 'Seeds of Hope', there are already fantastic examples of collaborative practice between organisations in Northern Devon.

Ensuring that these connections reach beyond Northern Devon is vital. Communities of interest that share challenges and opportunities in different geographical locations are becoming a key factor in the development of international cultural policy. Plugging in to activity outside of the region and cultivating connections beyond the borders, ensures that the best of UK culture also feels welcomed into Northern Devon.

National Cultural Partnerships

Strengthen the relationships and partnerships between Northern Devon cultural organisations and the rest of the UK.

ACTIONS:

Utilise the North Devon ACE Priority Place status to leverage relationships with national organisations to bring cultural activity into the region and to increase the opportunities for creative practitioners in Northern Devon.

The Cultural Biosphere Network

Utilise the 'UNESCO Biosphere Reserve' status to seek out collaborations and cultural co-commissions with the World Network of Biosphere Reserves that celebrate the uniqueness of the landscapes whilst sharing best practice and knowledge.

ACTIONS:

Bring together cultural and environmental partner organisations with the North Devon Biosphere Reserve to explore the opportunities for utilising the World Network of Biosphere Reserves to initiate collaborative, cross sector projects.

Broaden and deepen the conversation around the collaborative potential of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and the culture sector by hosting a dedicated conference in Northern Devon to discuss, debate and share best practice across sectors and across borders.

PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPES

Recognise the interdependent relationship between people, culture and the environment through cultural activity that acts on the climate crisis.

Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it is happening even more quickly than we feared. No corner of the globe is immune from the consequences of climate change, however the unique ecosystem of Northern Devon makes it particularly susceptible to threat.

The pressures facing the natural environment are already impacting Northern Devon and the climate crisis is being felt at a hyper local level, placing communities and traditional ways of life under threat.

Culture is an avenue through which these complex issues can be explored; it's a tool for championing local conversations and climate education, yet can also be utilised to build connections to places across the world facing similar pressures, in turn inspiring action both locally and globally.

Take Action on Climate Change

We have been told unequivocally; the science is clear, we are facing an unprecedented global emergency. Make a stand as the Northern Devon cultural sector and take action on climate change.

ACTIONS:

Forefront the climate crisis conversation through the formation of a dedicated Culture & Environment forum within the Northern Devon cultural partnership that seeks to identify priority areas and activities that link the cultural and environmental agendas of the region.

Collectively develop a joint statement and action plan that commits to environmentally responsible practices, measurement, accountability and advocacy within the Northern Devon cultural sector.

Review and renew the environmental commitments made by the Northern Devon cultural partnership on a two year basis.

Disrupt the Climate Conversation Using Culture

Utilising the natural assets of Northern Devon and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, develop and commit to cultural commissioning that supports, disrupts and progresses the plight of the environmental sector in the region.

ACTIONS:

Form close partnerships with the environmental sector and identify key environmental issues that culture can be utilised to support, disrupt and progress.

Working cross-sector, co-commission cultural programmes that address environmental issues in a brave and ambitious way, with an emphasis on broadening and deepening the conversation, placing education and volunteering at the forefront.

Aim to place North Devon and Torridge as national and international leaders in the field of environmentalism and culture, drawing on the region's outstanding natural assets and diverse cultural practices.

OUR CULTURAL HUBS

The towns of Northern Devon have particularly vital roles to play in the creation of a thriving cultural ecosystem across the region.

Town Cultural Investment Plans

There has rarely been a more opportune time for culture to have a seat at the top table of town centre regeneration. Culture is the main focus of Mission 9 within the Levelling Up White Paper, “By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.” Of the 105 successful Round One Levelling Up Fund projects across the UK, 54 included an element of cultural spend and 24.79% of total spend on the fund was allocated towards culture.

Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe have each entered or formulated bids for high street or town centre regeneration funds that included proposals for cultural activity. Whilst these proposals had mixed success, they provided valuable foundations for cross-sector conversations about the integration of culture within regeneration and economic development objectives for each place.

It is important that towns are not simply reactive in their approach to the cultural development of their towns. Strategic funds should be seen as opportunities to unlock key projects within a wider strategy rather than discrete projects that stand alone.

The cultural sector needs to bring together town partners from town centre management, property, business and community to formulate an integrated set of aspirational projects. These can allow towns to match projects to the most suitable funding opportunities and collectively push for change at local and regional government level, rather than trying to devise projects to meet the requirements of funds as they come available.

Culture and the Public Realm

From well-worn footpaths travelled by knowing feet through to expansive gardens visited on balmy, summer days, or parks to kick a football around, the public realm provides a plethora of backdrops for a range of creative interventions. It is the familiarity and accessibility of these spaces that makes them integral to a diverse and inclusive cultural offer.

Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe all boast a range of public spaces that should be looked upon as extensions to the existing (and future) cultural offer, providing further platforms from which the community can exhibit their creativity.

Using spaces in this way not only assists in the visible uplift of a place and the showcasing of local talent, but also breaks down barriers to culture for those who may not feel confident in entering a traditional cultural venue. It provides a gentle nudge into the unknown, bereft of expectation, yet full of opportunity.

Whilst both the Torridge Council website and the North Devon Council website provide comprehensive information regarding council-owned land that is available for events, there is opportunity to expand and develop this to attract and support further cultural activity within the public realm.

Utilising Vacant Spaces to Fuel Culture

For the last century our town centres and high streets have been defined by retail. Shops have shaped what our town centres look like, how we think of them and how they generate value.

However, with the rapid growth of the internet age, along with broader economic pressures this picture is rapidly changing. Online shopping now accounts for 36% of all retail sales and its market share is accelerating as generations become more accustomed to shopping online for a greater variety of things. As a consequence of this and deeper structural issues, retail vacancies were up to 14.1% at the start of 2021.

Navigating how to use the spaces left over by retail, as well as other town centre assets is one of the main challenges facing towns across the country. For many landlords, accustomed to passively managing their properties, they are still inclined to wait, in the hope that new occupiers will eventually emerge or residual land values will allow them to sell off or redevelop properties as time wears on.

However, the case is becoming clear that towns have to start more actively managing underused properties in order to protect the overall financial resilience of their places. The high street is moving from a retail economy, based on products, brands and sales, to an attention economy, based on footfall, critical mass, dwell time and experiences.

In this landscape, culture is a critical tool, something that can attract people into town centres, capture their attention, keep them engaged and generate activity throughout the day that makes town centres viable for other businesses.

Creative Meanwhile is a must for any town centre.

NAVIGATING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Use culture to break down the distance between people, both physical and social, by spreading cultural opportunities across Northern Devon.

Northern Devon boasts a diverse and rich landscape, yet the navigation of its terrain can be challenging, time consuming and costly. Participation in cultural activity is undoubtedly impacted by location and accessibility, with many reliant on intermittent public transport or the ability to drive as a means to getting around.

Major towns such as Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe and smaller towns such as Torrington, Holsworthy and South Molton provide a range of cultural activity and infrastructure that are vital hubs for surrounding rural communities.

However, whilst these cultural spaces can have a significant impact on surroundings, they are not accessible to all, leaving a space for culture to spread across the region via networks and nodes in villages, towns and communities.

A Cultural Geography

Create a large and established network of community assets across Northern Devon, bringing high quality and affordable cultural activity within easy travelling distance of every person in the region.

ACTIONS:

Map community assets in rural areas that have the potential to host cultural activity, ensuring an even distribution throughout Northern Devon wherever possible.

Build a network of community assets and cultural partners that together can provide a diverse and accessible cultural offer across rural communities in Northern Devon, test bedding, developing and growing rural touring projects.

Formalise the rural touring network as an independent organisation capable of self sustaining.

Digital Opportunities

Develop and establish mechanisms that enable the transmission of cultural activity across the region via digital technology.

ACTIONS:

Identify what type of cultural activity already happening in Northern Devon would be suitable for live streaming; the organisations and individuals who produce it; and the capacity building required to expand live streaming opportunities throughout the sector.

Build a network of live stream venues and live stream a diverse and experimental programme of cultural events that reflect the broad offer of culture in Northern Devon.

Collectively develop a cultural programme created specifically for digital distribution, attracting regional, national and international live stream producers to share work within Northern Devon and beyond.

A CULTURE OF CARE

To be added

MAKING CULTURE VISIBLE

Collectively celebrate and promote Northern Devon culture so that it is a source of pride to local people and attractive for people who visit.

Whilst 160,000 people call Northern Devon home, over 6 million people visit the region every year, creating a significant audience pool for cultural activity.

At present, its stunning landscapes, surfer lifestyle and breathtaking coastline sit at the forefront of the regional offer, however it is clear that Northern Devon has a strong and distinctive cultural brand as well, boosted by an independent spirit, a strong connection to place and areas steeped in heritage and history.

To truly unlock the full potential of Northern Devon as a place to live, work, play and visit, it is imperative that the stories that sit behind the region's distinctive cultural DNA are shared both locally and with the wider world.

It is time to celebrate the richness of the cultural offer, to shout about the spirit and tradition that makes Northern Devon so special and to shine a spotlight on the plethora of makers, creators and doers that the region boasts.

Northern Devon Cultural Identity

Develop a distinctive identity and marketing framework that supports Northern Devon in showcasing and celebrating local creative expression; inspiring future generations of creators, the development of local audiences and recognition from across the globe.

ACTIONS:

Create a cultural brand that is owned by Northern Devon; identify who you are and the story you want to tell.

Develop a website where culture from across Northern Devon can be celebrated to its fullest, whilst collaborating with regional partners and networks to cross promote cultural activity.

Develop a clear marketing strategy that communicates to global audiences and supports the long-term cultural goals of the region.

NURTURING THE FUTURE

Champion the youth voice in Northern Devon whilst actively developing pathways to creative opportunities and sustainable creative careers

Northern Devon is recognised as a fantastic place to live, with people from across the country choosing to move there in search of a better quality of life. However, the cost of living and the rising price of property, combined with low wages and precarious employment, make it a difficult place to build a future, particularly for young people.

With limited higher education, there is a regular outflow of young people from the area. This has not only contributed to a gradually ageing demographic, but has also impacted the cultural DNA of the region, where historically social customs and traditions have been passed through communities and generations

A lack of agency to secure a future affects all people; young and old and it is imperative that residents of Northern Devon feel that it is a place where they can not only build a meaningful career but also actively participate in the unique life and culture that the region has to offer. Understanding that the sharing of skills and knowledge is not a one way street is paramount to this and key to development of a thriving cultural offer.

Amplifying Youth Voice

Commit to increasing the representation of young people in cultural decision making. Plug in the sound equipment, run the sound check and ready the stage so that young people can make a stronger, louder and braver sound than ever before.

ACTIONS:

Proactively make space for the youth voice in the cultural sector, ensuring that it is not just heard, but is embedded in decision making on a practical and strategic level throughout the region.

In partnership with young people, develop a network for young creatives in Northern Devon that has the capacity to advocate for shared needs, facilitate creative career development support and initiate creative projects.

Commit to ensuring that young people are proactively encouraged into roles of cultural delivery and power, such as cultural commissioners and project management.

Develop the Talent Pipeline

Enhance the quality of creative and cultural education by providing support for schools and opportunities for young people to gain direct experience with creative practitioners.

ACTIONS:

Bring together young people, education professionals and cultural sector partners to develop a Northern Devon cultural curriculum that supports young people to explore paths into creativity that aren't currently accessible within the school environment.

Explore formal mechanisms to facilitate work experience and training, focusing on opportunities targeting young people between 15 - 24 years old.

Explore less formal mentoring systems for individual makers and creatives in the region, pairing people who have skills to share with others who desire to learn and develop.

Supporting Creative Careers

Make it easier for people to pursue creative careers by embedding good practice; including fair pay initiatives, local contracting incentives, maker visibility and business support.

ACTIONS:

Support local talent by promoting fair pay, signposting to business support schemes and prioritising local workers for local work.

Bring together venues and producers to create a 'Made in Northern Devon' brand to promote locally crafted products, circulating them for sale across the region.

Prioritise shared creative workspace and co-working facilities for a diverse range of creative industries focusing on new developments and under-utilised heritage assets in urban areas.

CONCLUSION

Flourishing Culture sows the seeds for how a connected cultural sector, working in partnership across public, private and third sectors, can achieve a thriving, sustainable and impactful cultural offer in Northern Devon.

Achieving this vision is the work of more than any single organisation. If you haven't been involved as of yet and would like to be part of ensuring this strategy becomes a reality then please email: **INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS**