

March 2010

Countybeacon

Making the Case for Culture



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CCN
County Councils Network

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CCNnews



CCN Launches Manifesto

At a lunchtime reception on 12 March, we launched the CCN Manifesto, which sets out our vision of a brighter future for local government and local communities. We are pleased to welcome at the launch a range of external colleagues and stakeholders, as well as councillors from most of our member authorities.

The Manifesto will be used to inform CCN lobbying activity as we move towards the next Parliament. An electronic copy can be downloaded from the CCN website; to receive a hard copy, please e-mail lisa.wood@lga.gov.uk.

CCN Council sets Work Programme for Coming Year

Also on 12 March, the CCN Council met to set the work programme for 2010/11. This sets out a number of key areas in which CCN will seek to influence policy towards local government in general and our member authorities in particular.

A copy is available on our website:
www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk

Council also approved the CCN budget for 2010/11, and heard from Terry Crossley, CLG Deputy Director for Pay, Workforce and Pensions, about the future of the Local Government Pensions Scheme.

New Look County Beacon

As you will see, we've made some changes to the look and feel of the County Beacon. We'd be keen to hear what you think of the new design; please e-mail Kevin Maddison - kevin.maddison@lga.gov.uk - with any feedback.

Cover image reproduced from **Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils' Cultural Strategy**. (Photo: Architects of Air) **For more information, please see p14.**

Making the Case for Culture

**Roy Clare, Chief Executive,
Museums, Libraries and
Archives Council**



Between them local and central government spend over two billion pounds in England on museums, libraries and archives annually.

We believe that it is money well spent, but we are all acutely conscious of the impending financial climate. Times are changing. Culture is not a special case and needs to demonstrate its worth afresh.

That is why the MLA is preparing to publish a prospectus for change, Sharper investment for changing times, which draws on best practice from councils across the country to help make the case for continuing investment.

We believe that museums, libraries and archives are essential for any local authority which wants to attract new business and tourism; make better places to live work and visit; improve the skill levels and educational attainment of local people; support social mobility; connect communities and strengthen engagement with democratic processes.

But we need to do more to get that message across to decision makers, nationally and locally, who may see the cultural sector as expendable at a time of spending cuts.

Our case is that museums, libraries and archives can help the country emerge from the impact of the worst recession since the 1950s. They are precious not only for local communities, but for the country's economy, heritage and world standing. Internationally important historic collections across the country, particularly outside the capital city, need to be properly protected and better accessed.

But that case will be all the stronger if, together, we aim for three things.

First, that museums, libraries and archives concentrate less on sustaining costly buildings and storing unseen objects, and more on opening up their fantastic collections of books, records and iconic artefacts for learning and enjoyment.

Second, that local government utilise the value of museum, library and archives services for wider purposes, innovating and integrating with other services, working across boundaries, and with public and private partners.

And third, that national government ensure the longer term funding and statutory framework in which councils, museums, libraries and archives can have the freedom, flexibility and stability to plan for far reaching change.

Ultimately we must ensure that the public - user, visitor, consumer and tourist – is in charge. Our vision is that people everywhere should be able to enjoy and learn from extraordinary resources, seamless services, and personalised help and information, whether in welcoming buildings or online.

With tighter finances and in changing social times, museums, libraries and archives need to deliver for modern consumers and for other public services, so they are sustainable, focused on services rather than buildings, embedded in local learning infrastructure, and able to provide 24/7 personalised service-on-demand. They need to be a key partner in delivering local outcomes. The principles behind Total Place fit well with this approach - service and budget planning should fit around the needs of the public, not the organisational structures of the public services.

Many councils can showcase greater collaboration across local boundaries; a more fearless approach to service mergers; new forms of governance; a willingness to support a more entrepreneurial approach in the sector; more strategic investment and the readiness to join forces in key areas, like digital, to provide better services for everyone.

The MLA is here to help: providing support and best practice advice; brokering partnerships nationally and across boundaries; targeting investment; researching and gathering evidence; and delivering national functions such as the museums Accreditation scheme, the Designation of outstanding collections, and the acceptance of iconic objects in lieu of tax.

Please contact us through our regional managers – details at www.mla.gov.uk/about/who/staff

Reaching new audiences: innovative library and archive service projects in North Yorkshire

The only English local authority to win funding in all three rounds of the Big Lottery / Museums Libraries and Archives Council programme 'Their Past Your Future 2' (TPYF2), North Yorkshire County Council has been working with its diverse user communities in new ways.

Young Offenders in Northallerton Prison, 'at risk' teenagers in Scarborough, and a wide cross section of the Catterick Garrison community: three very different groups have benefited from participation in the TPYF2 programme, taking inspiration from the study of past conflict to gain new skills, knowledge and confidence.

Led by staff from North Yorkshire County Council's Library Service and the County Record Office, all three project initiatives have benefited from the strength of local partnerships: district councils, educators, museums, radio stations, community welfare and youth organisations have given freely of their time and expertise.

The projects have proved their value, not only to the participants themselves, but also on the regional and national stage as examples of best practice and inspiration for future activity.

Skills development was strongly evident in the Northallerton young offenders' activities. Their project 'Changes in Society' looked at crime and punishment throughout history. The young men created an exhibition and made individual presentations to an invited audience, winning a formal qualification in presentation skills.

Intergenerational work was at the forefront in Scarborough's 'Conflict and Change' project, which captured living memories of the effect of World War II on the local fishing industry. As project participant Charles Kirkby (17) recalls: *"I found that there is very little difference between people, old or young and, for me, it's put a bit of faith back"*.

Catterick Garrison, the largest British Army base in the world, recently saw the opening of a brand new library located in a purpose-built army leisure centre. For the 'Behind the Wire' project, garrison residents of all ages - from primary school children to veterans - looked at the effects on families of conflict past and present: a



Above: Conflict and Change: Project participants on a trip to Eden Camp Second World War Museum, Malton.



Left: Changes in Society: Celebrating the successful young offenders' presentation (left to right): Andy, Paul, Ruth Rising (Project Leader), James, Karl, County Councillor Chris Metcalfe (Executive Member for Adult and Community Services), Sally Anderson (Deputy Mayor of Northallerton), Norman Griffin (YOI Governor), April Stephenson (YOI Education Officer), Mike, Shane.

sensitive issue, with many parents currently posted to Afghanistan.

County Councillor Chris Metcalfe, Executive Member for Adult and Community Services said: "Our strategy is to place North Yorkshire's Library and Archive Services at the very heart of our communities. These projects provide compelling evidence of the potential we all possess, to use our understanding of the past to help to build a better future".

All three projects have produced DVDs, and 'Behind the Wire' participants have written and performed a special song, available on CD. Video clips of the young offenders' project can be viewed at www.mylearning.org/gallery.asp?type=1&journeyid=511

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Warwickshire

County beacon

Libraries and Community Engagement Tackling the cultural divide in Warwickshire

Libraries have a long tradition of community engagement through culture. Warwickshire, like most library services, runs an endless stream of events and activities for all ages, from Rhyme Time sessions for pre-schoolers to online opportunities for 'silver surfers'.

In recent years the challenge has been to find new ways to engage with 'hard-to-reach' groups and add a cultural dimension to their lives in a non-preachy manner. Nowadays, we no longer assume we know what people should like and enjoy. Through our surveys, consultation and outreach activities, we do our best to find out what floats their boat.



Gruffalo and (Where's) Wally proved particular favourites during the Fantastic Fun With Words Festival in Autumn 2009

Narrowing gaps

There is a real north-south divide in Warwickshire, with industrial and former mining communities in the north and greener, more affluent areas further south.

Like other authorities, Warwickshire County Council is seeking to 'narrow the gaps' in society and the Library & Information Service plays its part. Partnership working, with organisations as diverse as the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Youth Offending Team, has been key to several successful L&IS projects.

Engagement can be stimulated by the built environment. Warwickshire has opened a new library in Camp Hill next to, and in partnership with, the Youth Service. The development is part of a major regeneration scheme for one of Warwickshire's most depressed and deprived areas.

Two of Warwickshire's 34 libraries are being redeveloped in 2010 to accommodate integrated on-site Children's Centres. The result of partnership working with the county's Early Years team, these should attract more young families into a cultural environment.

Special events offer opportunities for cultural engagement with non-library users and the wider public. 'Fantastic Fun With Words' is an annual two-week festival supported by the Arts Council. The 2009 festival staged 45 events featuring children's literary characters, authors and artists - with the emphasis very much on 'fun'.

During the 2009 festival a 'writer in residence' spent a day touring northern parts of the county on a mobile library. He encouraged customers to talk about reading, culture and life generally - past and present. His findings, in poetry and prose, will be published later this year.

Local history presents opportunities for cultural engagement with both older people and the young. Warwickshire's award-winning 'Working Lives' oral history project recorded reminiscences from people who worked in Nuneaton and Bedworth-based industries last century, making everything from knickers to Concorde's nose. 'Working Lives' is now available as a book, teachers' resource pack and online.

Getting them young

Getting them young is a priority. The Bookstart programme, promoted by Health Visitors, hands out 78 free packs for babies in Warwickshire every day.

Some children regard reading as something for school, not for pleasure. Warwickshire's annual Summer Reading Challenge promotes leisure reading during the school holidays - with countywide activities and incentives for four to 12-year-olds. Last summer's challenge took a fantasy theme, supported by arts and crafts events such as puppet and monster-making workshops. Challenge take-up is generally good, including in some of the county's most disadvantaged areas.

Boys of a certain age and all backgrounds can lose their appetite for reading. Partnership working is ongoing with Warwickshire schools on projects such as 'Book Ahead' and 'Boys into Books'.

A recent and successful library project, run in partnership with social care colleagues, promoted reading and culture amongst looked-after children.

Following a successful bid for funding from a local trust, Year 8 children from a Kenilworth school helped select library stock items including board, picture and talking books, and non-fiction titles. Following a further award from the Kenilworth Institute Trust Fund, pupils will select graphic novels and 'Play Away' (ipod-style talking books) for stock.

The future

Libraries will continue to play a vital and widening role in community engagement and cultural life. In Warwickshire, the aim is for libraries to offer a 'universal front door' for council and community services. At the same time, the emphasis will be on more outreach work, taking culture out to communities.

Contact

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Hertfordshire

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Hertfordshire Libraries: Young Traveller Learning Champions Project

Since April 2009 Hertfordshire Libraries, Culture & Learning (LCL) and the Achievement of Refugees & Traveller Team (ARTT) have been working in partnership on a project with young Travellers. The aim was to engage the young people in learning activities to improve their educational outcomes and also to encourage them to use libraries.

Fifteen young Travellers from around Hertfordshire aged 12-16 were chosen by ARTT to become Learning Champions. ARTT provided them each with a laptop for school and project work. These were presented at an event held at London Colney library in March where the young people and their families were invited to a talk by author Louise Doughty. Louise is from a Traveller family herself and made a significant impact on her audience at this initial event.

A team of Hertfordshire LCL & ARTT staff developed and facilitated several workshops in Welwyn Garden City library, Oxhey library and Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies. The young people discovered more about their heritage from photographs of their sites taken in the 1970s and were encouraged to take photographs to document their own lives. They used these to contribute to a public display for Gypsy Romany Traveller month and some visited Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies to create a Travellers page on the Making Memories community archive website. They attended a Comic Art Master Class and later used some of the skills they learned to design posters to promote libraries in their communities.

The workshops were followed by a programme of visits by smaller groups of the young people to their nearest libraries to meet local staff and learn more about the services on offer. Some have since returned independently to use these libraries and have encouraged other family members to visit too. On 9 December Louise Doughty returned to London Colney Library to speak to the young people and their families in celebration of their achievements.

A full evaluation of the project is currently underway but some outcomes are already evident. The four Learning Champions in Year 11 all sat and passed some GCSEs. One has continued to the Sixth Form and another has gone on to West Herts College. Teachers have commented on increased confidence and self esteem among the Learning Champions.

For more information, please contact

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Isle of Wight

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Campaigning on the Isle of Wight

Campaign! Make an Impact is a national project organised by the British Library in partnership with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, and local museum and archive services. Historical campaigns, such as the battle to abolish the slave trade, or obtain votes for women, are used to teach young people how they can run their own campaign on the issues that they feel passionately about today.

The Isle of Wight Heritage Service was one of the local bodies invited to take part, and the topic chosen has been the campaign to improve public health in the Island's towns in the Victorian era. Particular emphasis is placed on the measures put in place to combat the spread of cholera in towns such as Cowes and Newport between July and September 1849. The authorities in Cowes learnt that a boat from the United States of America moored off Weymouth had been refused permission to land its passengers, one of whom had cholera. The rumour was that the passengers would be disembarked in Cowes instead, and three senior members of the community went to

visit the local American Consul to dissuade him from this course of action.

In the nearby town of Newport four members of the Warren family from a single house in Bedford Row were buried in the space of four days. A father, grandmother, and two children aged 9 and 4 were the casualties, and this news must have sent shock waves through the town. At the time it was not known that cholera was transmitted by water, and it was feared that the disease spread through bad air. As a result the prosecutions of the borough magistrates were focussed in the right area, but on the wrong cause. The spotlight fell on the narrow lanes and courtyards in the towns where pigs were kept, prior to slaughter, by the local butchers. Attention, and the prosecutions, focussed on the keeping of blood and other matter on the premises with which to feed the animals. One witness William Guy reported "very often, when they have fed the pigs in the morning, bad smells have come into my House, so that my Wife has not been able to eat Breakfast. I have been very ill and my children have been ill."

Children in Year 7 will be shown the documents that relate to this incident at their local Record Office. For most it will be the first time that they have seen original material from the Victorian era that they have been studying. They will also go on a walk around Newport, so that they can get a sense of the narrow alleys and crowded living conditions in which cholera took hold. They will learn that it was poor sanitation, not bad air, that caused the crisis, and they will be able to see how concerned individuals can make things happen, as long as they keep their minds open about all the possible reasons for the problem that they are trying to tackle. Inspired by what they see, it will then be up to them to decide what issue they could apply similar principles to today.

For more information, please contact

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Bringing books to life. The Human Library – Gloucestershire County Council

The Human Library changes the whole idea of a traditional library: you don't borrow a book, you borrow a person. In the Human Library, books become people and reading becomes dialogue. Each Human 'book' has a story to tell – they can be borrowed for a session to talk about the chapters of their life.



The Human Library concept gives direct access to someone else's experience, or their particular perspective. It can be used to confront stereotypes and prejudices, to explore diversity, and to stimulate conversations that otherwise might not happen.

In Gloucestershire, we saw the value of the Human Library as a way to promote community cohesion and a better understanding of the people and groups who use our services, to colleagues in the county council. To achieve this, we targeted our event at councillors (as part of the new councillors' induction programme) and senior staff. Our aims were to promote the variety of services undertaken by the council's Community and Adult Care Directorate and to raise awareness of the needs and concerns of service users. We also wanted to promote the Human Library concept as a way of communicating with both service users and the general public. Finally it would give

service users an opportunity to tell their stories in their own words.

Ten "books" were recruited from the wide range of contacts available to staff in the working group. They included:

- Farhana, a community agent from the council's Village and Community Agents scheme, and one of the people that she supports
- Kevin, who attends a day centre for people with learning disabilities
- Michael, an adult learner turned volunteer

The books were given an outline of what their role would be and the opportunity to bring along a friend or supporter. They were all "buddied" with one of the event organisers, who answered their questions, arranged transport to the event where necessary and provided support and assistance on the day.

During the event, more than 20 councillors and senior managers from the council "borrowed" the human books. Some booked their sessions in advance while others dropped in on the day. Each "book" was borrowed for 20 minutes and the sessions took the form of an informal relaxed conversation.

Feedback from both the borrowers and the "books" was extremely positive. A senior manager said: "I would definitely recommend more events like this. The people that I met and the conversations I had with them were both humbling and inspiring. It really reminded me of why I do the job I do!"



One of the books, Michael, who became visually impaired three years ago due to optic nerve neuritis said:

"I was in hospital on and off for 12 months and basically, the only thing I could do was talk. I realised that everyone has a story to tell. This Human library format is so good because it gives people from all different walks of life a platform to talk and share their experiences"

Kevin said:

It was brilliant. They liked to listen to what I had to say; they had a laugh with me....I really enjoyed the two-way conversations about our lives"

Another said simply: *"Today, I had an identity."*

The next step is building on the success of the initial event. We are now working with a local specialist college for students with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties to help them host their own Human Library event.

For more information please contact:

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The Human Library website can be accessed at
<http://human-library.org>

Severn Project 2009 – An Opportunity or a Cost to Gloucestershire?

Can local authorities afford to subsidise the arts in these difficult economic times? Is promoting a major cultural project an opportunity? Or an unaffordable cost, something best deferred until the public spending squeeze eases? I would like to answer this question by means of a case study – Severn Project 2009, which Gloucestershire County Council, in partnership with Gloucestershire District Councils and a wide range of arts partners, promoted in summer 2009, engaging well over 10,000 people.

This major scale project was some three years in the making. In 2007, I was approached by my counterpart in Shropshire, Principal Arts Development Officer, Sue Goodwin. Would Gloucestershire like to partner Shropshire and 10 other local authorities along the length of the River Severn in a celebratory outdoor arts performance project, which aimed to use the arts to interpret the Severn? The partnership offer sounded attractive – an opportunity to be part of something bigger than we could achieve on our own, and to share the fundraising.

A very small Gloucestershire pilot project followed that summer. But it was enough to convince us of the

potential of the project to engage Gloucestershire people's passion for their place, and for the mighty river which is key to the county's identity.



By this time, Arts Council (our principal fundraising target) had introduced a ceiling of £100,000 on regional Lottery funding applications, and it was clear that we would need to fundraise for the Gloucestershire (South West) project separately from our West Midlands partners. Developing the Severn Project was a steep learning curve. This County Council had no history, nor I any experience, of promoting outdoor performances. The work needed fitting into a busy "day job" with a wide range of other responsibilities, and required championship in a sceptical Council climate. I owe a tribute here to our Artistic Directors, Desperate Men Theatre Company, and to the many arts agencies and partner County Council Cultural Services who formed our multi-agency partnership, which brought the project to fruition. Arts Council South West awarded us National Lottery funding worth £72,000 by Christmas 2008 – definitely the best Christmas present ever – and, with the appointment of Deborah Harrison as our project manager and marketer, we were off on a very tight schedule to plan, rehearse and deliver the project by June 2009. The project took the innovative form of commissioning a major new work by a nationally renowned writer, Alice Oswald, and using her extraordinary poem for voices, *A Sleepwalk on the Severn*, as the centrepiece of our artistic programme. *Sleepwalk* was adapted into a number of performances and interpretations through music, dance, street theatre, visual arts and heritage.

Six community choirs learnt and performed a challenging, jazzy song cycle by Pete Rosser, directly inspired by the poem. Musician Eddie Parker led workshops in five small primary schools, who relished this rare opportunity for curriculum enrichment. Gloucestershire Archives commissioned a family-friendly "roadshow" from actor John Bassett, dramatizing the River's history and heritage, which was enjoyed by 900 people. Gloucestershire Dance commissioned a new dance piece, danced by

professional and young dancers, beautifully integrated by our choreographer Marie-Louise Flexen. Taurus Voice Theatre Company toured a production of *Sleepwalk* to 15 village halls and other venues. Libraries themed their summer reading challenge around watery quests. Adult Education commissioned local charity Art Shape to deliver creative workshops to disadvantaged families.



The centrepiece of the project were our two free outdoor arts festivals at Tewkesbury and Lydney in June 2009, which together attracted an audience of 10,000 people, and from which we received fantastically positive feedback. Wire-walker Lindsey Kwabana provided a hair-raising climax to the Tewkesbury event by crossing the river on a tightrope, re-enacting the true story of one Harry Kingscote who drowned in the river.

So, to return to the question posed at the start of this article, was Severn Project an opportunity for Gloucestershire, or an indulgence?

- We fundraised a total of £115,000 inward investment into Gloucestershire through this project, for minimal County Council outlay.
- We delivered an ambitious community education programme which reached 1,259 participants, leaving a lasting legacy of skills. This public participation was at the heart of the project.
- Our two festivals had a significant impact in raising community and landscape awareness in the host towns, and helped to boost the local economies by bringing people and business into Tewkesbury and Lydney.
- Our 18 principal artists and companies benefited from significant creative and professional development opportunities, gaining exposure and forming new networks and partnerships.
- Our multi-agency, multi-artist partnership offered a case study of cross-service, cross-authority working, although it also presented challenges.
- Severn Project gained Inspire branding as part of the national Cultural Olympiad, significantly raising

Gloucestershire's cultural profile and initiating our engagement with London 2012. As project leader, I won BBC West's award as Cultural Olympiad Champion last year.

All of these outcomes are taken from an independent evaluation undertaken by the University of the West of England, Countryside and Community Research Institute, and available on request. Even better, we have a 10 minute DVD film of the project with interview footage of artists, participants and audiences at www.thisisvideo.co.uk/severn2009.htm, so you can see for yourself. An opportunity not a cost, surely?

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The Severn Project website has just been turned into a legacy site. Visit it at: www.severnproject.com

Cumbria

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See it Do it in Cumbria

See it Do it is a countywide campaign to encourage greater engagement in the arts. The campaign has been developed to help meet the national indicator NI 11, which sits as a local target in Cumbria's Local Area Agreement.

The campaign has two strands: the first being to raise the profile of the arts and make people more aware of what is available and what constitutes an arts activity; and the second is a longer term aim, to demonstrate the value of the arts to support wider social aims and build sustainable partnerships to address priorities in Cumbria's Community Strategy.

Cumbria has a resident population of about half a million, but one in seven of the UK's population also visits the county each year. Cumbria Tourism is clear that culture and the arts are what bring many people

to the county and actively promotes cultural tourism. A recent statistical analysis assessed current levels of cultural provision and a follow-up report has just been commissioned by Cumbria Tourism to find out exactly what the main drivers for visiting Cumbria are and the contribution of cultural tourism to Cumbria's economy.

Feedback from local people has shown they want more information about what is available and in response, www.seeitdoit.org.uk has been built into the County Council's culture website. The site uses the same database of information as Cumbria Tourism, to help people find out what's on and locate activities suited to their interests. It also allows individuals to book adult education courses and links to other related sites.



The See it Do it logo is about to be rolled out to district authority partners and arts organisations to increase brand awareness and encourage residents to be aware of the wealth of opportunities in their own area. Banners and stickers have been produced and See it Do it bookmarks are being distributed with library books across the county. What's On pages in Your Cumbria, the county council's residents magazine which goes into every household in Cumbria, have also been rebranded as See it Do it.

The longer term partnership activities have, to date, involved projects with adult social care to reach adults with learning disabilities, individuals with sensory impairment and older adults, and with Children's and Youth services to develop stronger networks to deliver cultural activities for children and young people. The national campaign, A Night Less Ordinary, has enabled many young people to receive free theatre tickets to major venues and rural touring programmes across the county. Headway is also being made through the county's Third Sector Network, to realise the full benefits of supporting the county's many voluntary and community groups. This work is in its early stages but partnership working in this and other areas is providing new and exciting ways to tackle issues across the vast, largely rural county.

Major outdoor arts activity, as part of the Olympic Legacy project, is enabling residents and visitors alike to engage with spectacular events outside the traditional arts venues. In the first year of the Lakes Alive programme 600 artists from across the world performed in Cumbria's spectacular landscape and more than 75,000 people attended the events, with a significant proportion of these being new visitors to Cumbria. Feedback has shown that those who would normally have little or no engagement in mainstream arts were much more strongly represented in the Lakes Alive audiences. In addition, it has been estimated that

the Lakes Alive season contributed an additional £3 million to the Cumbrian economy.

Cumbria County Council has also adopted See it Do it as part of its staff health and well being campaign. Employees have been able to take part in a summer creative challenge and meet arts practitioners at countywide health road shows. If public sector staff are active and creative, it is hoped that they will be more likely to appreciate the personal benefits of participation and to look for creative and innovative solutions to their own service delivery.



Work has also begun to build stronger relationships and channels of communication between Cumbria's LSPs and the wider arts sector. Additional capacity supported by Arts Council England will help to move this work forward over the next 18 months and to increase participation in the areas shown to have lower levels of engagement on the county's west coast.

The arts are a vital part of vibrant, active, caring and inclusive communities and it is our desire to enable more Cumbrian residents to take part.

Cherrie Trelogan,
Arts Participation Officer,
Cumbria County Council

For more information, visit the website:
www.seeitdoit.org.uk

Essex County Council: Promoting the County's Culture

Essex County Council is winning quite a reputation for itself for its work promoting the county's culture.

Last year saw the nationally acclaimed Jiangsu Festival take place, a 9 month partnership festival which celebrated Chinese culture, encouraged Essex residents to participate in culturally diverse events and aimed to create enduring economic links between Essex and the Jiangsu Province.



A range of events took place such as Eastmeetswest, a spectacular outdoor event in Weald Country Park with dance and music performances and fireworks. There was a visit from Little Red Flowers, a talented troupe of young Chinese performers who toured the county, wowing residents with their moves. And more hands-on activities included the Jiangsu Mastercrafts event, where traditional Chinese crafts like paper cutting were demonstrated.

A total of 355,946 people participated in the festival, which contributed £2.1 million to the local economy and created 25 full time jobs in the local area.

This year, Essex County Council received reward-grant government funding to run the ExploreCulture: OneWorld festival, a cultural extravaganza taking place in Essex between March and October 2010. Many Essex districts and boroughs, including Southend, have signed up to the festival, ensuring the festival will span

the entire county, offering all residents the chance to get involved and providing an excellent example of what can be achieved by partnership working.

Launching with the Essex Book Festival (EBF), ExploreCulture: OneWorld will see a range of inspirational cultural activity crammed into an eight month period, raising awareness of the region's cultural offerings and remembering the contribution that black and ethnic minority groups make to Essex culture.

In March 2010, when the festival explodes into being, Germaine Greer and Sarfraz Manzoor will get the debate on identity going during a panel debate chaired by BBC Essex's Dave Monk. Tickets cost £10/£8 concs and can be booked by calling the EBF Box Office on 01206 573948.



The culture-fest is also to feature Ganesh Festival on Shoeburyness beach and Maldon's Opera in the Orchard, as well as some new surprises such as African gospel in Chelmsford and the much-anticipated Global Gala in May. Keep a look out for further details.

ExploreCulture: One World aims to rejoice in the culture that's found on Essex's doorstep. Residents will be invited to share their versions of Essex, in a Chronicle and BBC Essex competition which highlights extraordinary facts about the county.

The festival will act as a cultural guide to what's on in the county, showcasing Essex venues and events and promoting what's on offer. A large part of the programme will emerge from partners around the county who will brand their activity ExploreCulture: One World Festival, benefitting from being a part of the festival and its wide marketing campaign.

A range of Essex County Council services have committed to the festival, with The Essex Sound Archive delivering a "How to Speak Essex" talk in venues around the county and Essex on Tour adding a World Music section to their tour.

ExploreCulture: One World Festival will also be a significant element of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad

programme, which in 2010 has the theme of 'Showcasing Essex'.

If you would like more information about

ExploreCulture: OneWorld Festival, please get in touch with **Belinda Farrell** on **01245 347456** or email **belinda.farrell@essex.gov.uk**.

Cheshire East

County beacon

Cheshire East Council: One for the Road

'**One for the Road**' is the 'umbrella' title for a programme of creative arts projects dedicated to road safety. The project was initiated by Crewe & Nantwich Borough Council's Cultural Development Team in 2006, and since April 2009 has been managed by Cheshire East Council along with partners Cheshire Fire and Rescue, Cheshire Constabulary, MMU Cheshire, and the Institute of Advanced Motoring, and sponsored by Halfords.

The project was used as a best practice model of how to safeguard young people using a multi-agency approach with the main aims being to raise awareness of safer driving and being a responsible passenger for the target age group 14-21. The project focused on seatbelt use, speeding, mobile phone use and drink driving.

The programme started with '**The Long Walk**', a hard-hitting play written and directed by freelance staff alongside MMU Cheshire third year Community Arts Students. With the dedication and passion from the emergency services we were able to gain an insight into Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) and the 'ripple effect' this has on a whole host of people. Very quickly we realised that an RTC doesn't just affect the families but

the emergency services too. We also spoke to local young people about their views. Again we realised that for this play to take effect it needed to be quite graphic and hard-hitting. Therefore we had an age limit of over 14 for the performance. This play toured 11 schools, colleges, universities and community groups with over 800 young people being exposed to it. The feedback was incredibly positive with 100% saying it HAD changed their attitude to car and road safety.

The second project was '**Shattered Lives in 0.7 of a Second**' - a visual arts exhibition and workshops targeted at young people. We realised that, by going into academic environments, we would miss a large percentage of young people who were at risk or not in education. Therefore we invited young people from The Youth Offending Team, Webbys Community Centre, Aspire Referral Project and Redsands into Crewe Fire Station for the day.

The young people were exposed to graphic advertisements and some experienced what it's like to be involved in an RTC as they were cut out of a car. Afterwards they designed a number of road safety posters with local visual artist Katherine Earp, which allowed us to witness, visually, what had made an impact on the young people. Katherine used the images to create a thought provoking, hard-hitting exhibition housed at Nantwich Museum using car bonnets, doors and other car parts as a canvas.



Through the success and positive feedback from both the play and exhibition it was obvious that a sustainable resource was needed. 'Bertie' and the accompanying education pack is a DVD inspired by the previous projects filmed by the British Youth Film Academy, based in Crewe and managed by Cheshire East Council's Arts, Heritage and Museums service and partnerships team. The production was largely funded by the Cheshire Safer Roads Partnership. Through consultation with residents of St John's Ward in Crewe, the film was developed to maximise the potential target audience and geographical impact.

Bertie was handed over to the Road Safety Team in early 2009 to continue the legacy. Since then the team have been busy promoting use of the film to a variety of organisations including schools, colleges, youth offending teams, local authority road safety teams, emergency services and driving instructors. The Road Safety Team has run a number of training sessions for educators within these organisations to enable them to run a Bertie presentation and workshop with groups and individuals they work with.

A group of driving instructors in the Cheshire East area has been involved in an innovative pilot project using Bertie with learner drivers under their tuition. Students are given the film to watch with a family member and then asked to complete a short evaluation asking them to consider the road safety issues and explore the concept that many crashes are preventable.

The project came about after a local driving instructor contacted the council's arts team to tell them how the attitude and driving behaviour of one of his students was completely turned around as a result of watching Bertie. The driving instructor concerned was on the verge of refusing to continue lessons with the student when one week he turned up for his lesson and was a changed person, listening to the instruction he was being given and driving more carefully. The driving instructor commented to the student about his vastly improved driving and asked what may have brought about such a dramatic change, to which the student replied, 'A lady from the council came to my school last week and showed us a film called Bertie. It made me realise that I need to start listening and taking my driving more seriously.'



If Bertie could produce such a result for one learner driver, it was worth trying to find out if it could be of similar benefit to others. The pilot project is due to finish at the end of February when it will be evaluated. So far feedback forms have been received from 50 students and their comments have been largely positive, with 32% explicitly saying how Bertie has personally reminded them of the importance of giving the road and driving their full concentration. The

longer term impact of Bertie will continue to be measured with a sample of these students over the next 12 months. This evaluation will look more deeply into the effects on attitude and behaviour to find out whether Bertie has made any lasting impression.

Since the launch of Bertie, nearly 3,000 people have participated in the project.

For more information, please contact:

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The DVD is available from Justine for use as an educational resource.

Shropshire

Countybeacon

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

At the beginning of 2009, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils embarked on a unique collaborative venture bringing together a variety of partners to create a new vision for the development of the cultural sector across the sub region.

Both councils place culture at the forefront of improving and developing the services they provide. Cultural activities are embedded throughout service delivery, contributing to priorities within for example Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care and Health.

The Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin was driven by the Cultural Consortium, which includes both councils, the Primary Care Trust, Community Safety, Children and Young People and the private and voluntary sectors.

The process adopted

The 'Visioning Day', our first consultation workshop focusing on the sub-region, was opened up to a broad range of individuals and organisations. Alongside the private and voluntary sector cultural organisations, partners joined us from council services such as Adult Social Care and Health, Children and Young People, Community Safety, Economic Regeneration and Tourism. We also sought the views of young people from Bishop's Castle Community College, including those living in isolated rural villages.

Six further community consultation workshops were held across the sub-region, providing the opportunity for small communities, including young people, to come together to give us their views, ideas and aspirations. An online survey of the public's participation in, response to, needs from and desires for culture collected the views of over 360 people. The process brought into focus the strong sense of identity felt by our communities – the connections they feel with where they live and the people they live among.

Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre (MHM), an award-winning strategic research consultancy, undertook the development of the Strategy alongside officers and members of the Cultural Consortium. By working with MHM, we benefited from working with the market leaders, and in doing so have gained access to a whole wealth of information that otherwise wouldn't have been accessible.

The research included:

- Over 40 interviews with chief officers from both councils, regional development organisations such as Advantage West Midlands, Arts Council and Museums, Libraries and Archive Council and the National Trust
- Reviewing the socio-demographic, environmental, economic and cultural profile of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin; the strategic context in which the two local authorities operate; current levels and profile of participation and non-participation and wider social trends
- A review of the economic impact of culture in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

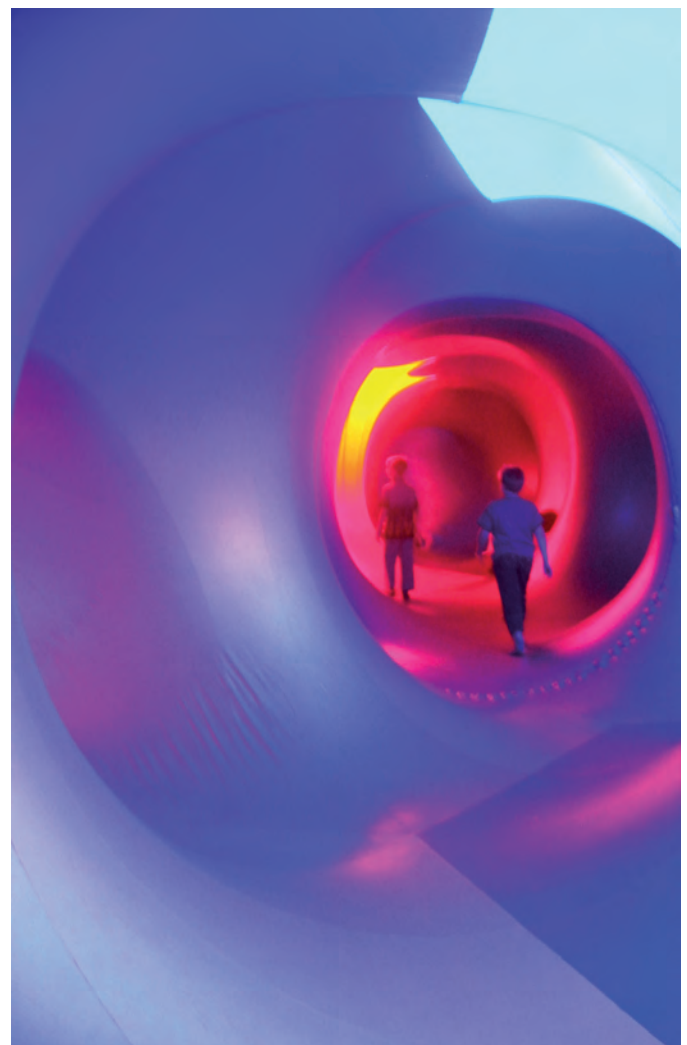
As a result of this thorough approach to research and development, in addition to the Cultural Strategy we have a Cultural Atlas of the sub-region, which includes detailed information and analysis that will be useful in the development and delivery of the action plan. This approach has also ensured that for the first time,

culture has looked at all aspects of leverage on cultural outcomes which would previously have been fragmented had all the key agencies and deliverers of services not been involved throughout the strategy's development.

Vision, Key Aims and Purpose of the Strategy

Our vision is for culture to inspire us all and to shape how we live, learn, work and play. The purpose of this strategy is to enrich the life of every resident and visitor. The Strategy has seven key aims. We want to:

- Improve health and well-being
- Think Green Live Green
- Provide cultural and creative learning
- Achieve regeneration and economic sustainability
- Build on our sense of place and a sense of identity
- Connect people, places and organisations
- Prove the value of culture



Architects of Air

What does this strategy do?

The Cultural Strategy:

- Provides evidence of the contribution that culture makes towards the economic, social and environmental well-being of communities within Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
- Suggests ways to build and strengthen cultural provision and activities by encouraging cooperation, collaboration and partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors in the provision of culture
- Paints a picture that wider regional and national agencies can understand in order for them to support culture in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

Portfolio holder for Culture and Leisure, Steve Charmley said, *"We want culture to be for everyone, everywhere. It is part of people's lives, where they live, work and play, and that's why it's important. This is a plan for engaging more people, more often and more deeply in culture."*

The Cultural Strategy was endorsed by Shropshire Council in January and will be launched by the Cultural Consortium in May 2010. It will be presented to Shropshire's Local Strategic Partnership in September 2010. The impact the cultural sector has on the Council's key priorities will ensure that its profile remains high within the work of both councils over the next 4 years.

For more information please contact:

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Increasing participation in Physical Activity in Shropshire...a different approach

The immediate question facing Leisure Services in the first year of the new Shropshire Unitary Council was which management model best fitted the needs of the county's leisure users of the future. But quickly we realised this was focusing more on a model and structures of delivery and not on the broader outcome of how the public sector can increase physical activity for Shropshire residents. It was falling into the common trap of looking at inputs and starting from the status quo, rather than looking at what the service is there to achieve - better physical and emotional well being for people.

"We were very keen to look at the bigger picture, to look at what we do and why we do it and to build on this," said Councillor Keith Barrow, Leader of the Council, *"we wanted to take a look at the whole and work with all providers rather than just our bit of the picture. Improving physical activity is high on our agenda and whilst we need to consider the economy and effectiveness of our services, that alone is not enough".*

Shropshire wanted to explore leisure services using techniques being developed through the Total Place approach. Through this review, the focus will be on maximising the contribution of the Council and its partners in achieving the real outcome for leisure - narrowing the gap in terms of participation and maximising the potential positive impacts on health inequality. This has been the starting point for the review.

"Participation levels across Shropshire vary" added Councillor Steve Charmley, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, *"whilst there is overwhelming evidence of the health benefits of being active, nearly 80% of all adults in Shropshire do not do enough, on a regular basis, to gain these benefits."*

The enormity of the task was apparent as the review was also to focus on improving the links to schools and the role they have to play, on club development, and for this increase in participation to be targeted at the more deprived communities across Shropshire.

"We wanted a practical review" stated Councillor Charmley, *"something that is grounded in the day to day experiences of Shropshire's people".*

The scope of the review approved by Cabinet in November 2009 focuses on four specific areas of physical activity which have been carefully selected - walking, swimming, cricket and rugby.

The review will consider what is on offer in Shropshire (the MAP) and will aim to capture the resources allocated towards enabling and encouraging participation in these areas (the COUNT) irrespective of who does it and will consider how this can be done differently (ACT). Our understanding of Customer Insight will also be enhanced via MOSAIC – so we can focus on the key issues for different groups in society in order to ensure a targeted approach.

The make up of the review team reflects the scope of the project with representatives from the County Sports Partnership, the PCT and the Private Sector playing a key role alongside council officers.

“This review will only deliver if we work with partners to develop a way forward” concludes Councillor Barrow. “In the context of increasing pressures on public expenditure, this review will help to identify where and how Shropshire Council and its partners can achieve maximum impact on achieving the outcome of physical and mental wellbeing. We will hopefully leave a legacy by creating a partnership culture and methodology and by encouraging commitment from partners to continue this work across other areas of physical activity”.

Whilst the review is still in its early stages, recommendations may lead to a rebalancing of priorities, a change of emphasis between outreach and centre based work and in how organisations might work together to plan and deliver local improvements.

By this we mean:

- The best use of resources that come into (and which are spent) in Shropshire; and
- The potential role of different sectors in different communities.

The review is expected to be completed by July 2010 and learning is being captured from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) who are both supporting the project. We want the review to help us develop our understanding of how Total Place can give us a fresh perspective on key challenges facing Shropshire. So managers, members and partners across the county will be keen to see the outcomes from our work and think about applying similar techniques in their fields.

For further information please contact:

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Staffordshire

Countybeacon

Engagement through Culture in Staffordshire: Two examples

‘Through Our Eyes’

The ‘Through Our Eyes project’ has been developed in partnership between Staffordshire Arts and Museum Service, Cannock Chase District Council and the Carers Association for South Staffordshire (CASS). The project aimed to consult with young carers creatively to highlight the needs and issues faced by them. The total project budget was £3000.

Young Carers are under the age of 18 and look after someone with a chronic/terminal illness, disability, mental health problem or an alcohol or drug addiction/dependency. Young Carers face issues around a lack of free time, leisure and recreational opportunities. They may struggle with school and homework, experience bullying and increased stress and anxiety due to the responsibilities they have at home.

How did the project work?

Up to 15 young people aged between 14 and 18 from across Staffordshire came together to work alongside

Stafford-based artist, Ruth Allen. Through two workshop sessions, the group discussed issues around their role as Young Carers, their own personal experiences and considered how to portray their role within the artwork itself. Then, by using printing and collage techniques, the group created a collaborative piece of stunning artwork which will be toured to venues across Staffordshire from September 2009, beginning at the Shire Hall Gallery in Stafford.

How was the work guided?

The involvement of CASS staff in the planning and implementation of this project has been fundamental. This has helped to steer the project and break down any barriers to approaching an arts-related project. The CASS Staff are extremely passionate about the work these young carers carry out and are aware of the benefits projects such as this can contribute to their health and well-being. It's a time for Young Carers to be themselves (e.g. an 11 year old or a teenager, not in a carer or parental role).

How were the young people involved?

As a group the young carers discussed their role and their personal experiences, and considered how to portray them within the artwork itself. The group considered relevant imagery which should be featured within the artwork and key words to highlight and express their frustrations and emotions.

What were the outcomes?

Over the two art sessions a collaborative piece of work was created displayed over three canvases. Following on from this process a book will be created to inform other organisations of the issues attached to the role of a Young Carer.

The artwork and the publication will be used to raise the profile of Young Carers and the challenges they face among other service providers and the wider public.

'Yes, We Have No Bananas!'

Staffordshire Arts and Museum Service, Staffordshire Libraries and Information Service and the School Improvement Division worked in partnership on this project based in Knutton, Staffordshire. This was an intergenerational project working with primary aged children and volunteers from the local community exploring ideas of citizenship and local identity through food and rationing on the Home Front and during the years immediately following World War II.

The aim was to work with communities that have been identified in the Locality Working agenda for Staffordshire to help to improve community cohesion and support community learning.

We worked with a Storyteller and costumed re-enactor in the school to deliver sessions which told the story of rationing and asked the children to develop stories and dramas around this theme. At the same time library staff worked with a group of local volunteers from the community and a storyteller, running a reminiscence session to record memories and stories from people who were children in Knutton during, or just after the Second World War.

We wanted to engage the local community through the project and form a basis for future work. Evaluation from the adult volunteers shows that we succeeded in achieving this. Most of the participants commented that they had enjoyed being a part of the project and would actively participate in any future projects that were run. One adult commented, *"It's fantastic to see children showing passion in learning in a fresh way. Their ideas and interpretation of the war stories really reflected strongly in the mini-drams they produced."*

A KS2 resource, "Yes! We Have No Bananas: Rationing and Austerity in Staffordshire during the 1940s and 1950s" was a key element of the project. A copy of the completed pack will be sent to every primary and middle school in the County. The resource is based on film of "The Woman from the Ministry" delivering her food demonstration and talking about rationing. A teacher's pack of lesson plans, activities and learning resources runs alongside this for use in the classroom.

In addition a further film of the project has been made which will be sent to the school and all the partners as a record of the work that has been undertaken. This can be used as an advocacy tool for each of the partners involved in the project and for dissemination purposes.

For more information on either of these case studies, please contact **Kate Whitworth**, Head of Staffordshire Arts & Museum Service: **01785 278112**; **kate.whitworth@staffordshire.gov.uk**.

Merstham Community Archaeology Project Interpretation Board for Albury Manor

Just behind the library in Merstham, near Redhill, is one of Surrey's best-kept secrets: the archaeological earthwork of Albury Manor. The rolling banks and ditches are the only reminder that on this ground once stood a grand house for the most important landowner in the area during the medieval period. The site is a scheduled ancient monument, and protected by English Heritage. However, there has never been anything on site to tell local people what fantastic history they have on their doorstep.

Merstham has been settled since pre Roman times and has a rich local history but in more recent times its beautiful countryside has been dissected by the M25 and the M23. Post World War II the original village had a substantial housing estate added to it with its own shops and amenities. The Surrey Strategic Partnership has identified Merstham as one of four high need areas of the county and a range of work is being undertaken by the county council and partners to regenerate the area.

Two years ago the area's community development officer approached the council's heritage service and asked them to get involved with local projects. The most recent of these has focussed on Albury Manor. Raven Housing Trust, the local social housing management company, granted funds to create an interpretation board for the site of Albury Manor. Surrey County Council's Heritage Lottery Funded Community Archaeologist has been working with various groups to find out more about the site, the house, the families who lived there, and about medieval life in Merstham.

Each group involved in the project has helped to design an exhibition panel on a topic, and from this the overall interpretation board for the site will be drafted. In addition the exhibition will tour local venues. So far the project has involved the following groups:

- **Merstham Workers Education Association** researched the origins of Albury Manor, which involved archive trips to Canterbury Cathedral, the National Archives and the British Library.
- **Merstham Guides** looked at Medieval food, and designed their panel on top of the moated site.
- Rubbings were taken of the historic brasses at **St. Katherine's Church**. The grave brasses relate to members of the families which once lived at Albury Manor. Photographs were taken of a stone lintel, which is said to have come from the chapel at Albury Manor.
- **Furzfield Primary School** visited the site, and looked into Medieval art.
- **Merstham Youth Forum** had a Medieval Feast night, and dressed up in costumes from the Surrey Arts Wardrobe for the occasion!
- **Route 4**, a group of year ten students who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion, based at the Oakley Youth Centre, participated in a 6-week 'Introduction to Archaeology' course. It involved looking into the history of Merstham, and measuring and recording the earthworks left behind since the buildings of the manor were demolished in 1750.



The board is due to be completed on site, and the exhibition will be on display in Merstham venues by Spring 2010. The community archaeology work in the area has proved a success in engaging with a wide range of residents and similar projects are being planned across the county.

To find out more about community archaeology in Surrey please take a look at www.surreycc.gov.uk/community-archaeology or contact **Abby Guinness** on **01483 518737**; email: education.scau@surreycc.gov.uk.

Central Bedfordshire celebrates Black History Month

In October 2009, Central Bedfordshire Council was proud to announce the launch of its first Black History Month.

Services from across the council came together to host a range of events designed to inform, inspire, educate and entertain local people about all aspects of Black History.

In previous years, services at legacy councils celebrated Black History Month separately. However, this time, with the creation of Central Bedfordshire, services across the council decided to host Black History Month together and provide a range of events and activities that residents from all backgrounds and ages could take part in.

The launch of Black History Month took place on 1 October 2009 at Dunstable Library. At the launch, The Community Choir performed traditional African singing and then two youngsters displayed their Urban Dance skills, while others showed off their Caribbean Carnival Costumes.

There was also the launch of a map of the world where residents from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage communities could pin-point where they are from. Each library will be displaying a map which will then be combined with others from the area to form a mural which will be displayed at the new library at Bedford Square, Houghton Regis.

Throughout the month, various other activities also took place at venues across Central Bedfordshire; these included:

- Arts Workshops
- Traditional Story Telling
- Traditional Singing Workshops
- Library Workshops
- Steel Drum Lessons

Schools across Central Bedfordshire also joined in with pupils taking part in African Music workshops. Here

they learnt all about the influence of black history on modern approaches to song writing.

Older music lovers were not left out either. They were taken on a journey through the history of music of black origin, courtesy of Central Bedfordshire's Library Service. A playlist of influential, traditional, ground breaking and modern black and Asian artists was made available to listen to via Central Bedfordshire Council's website.

Cllr Steve Male, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Skills said: "Central Bedfordshire Council values all our residents and Black History Month was a perfect opportunity to show how we can all get to know our neighbours from other cultural backgrounds.

"It also showed how Central Bedfordshire Council will be engaging with all communities through Libraries, Schools, Children's Centres, Arts Projects, Music Events and many other ways to enhance the education, lives and experiences of everyone living in Central Bedfordshire."



New artwork that depicts the cultural heritage of Central Bedfordshire has been installed at Houghton Regis Library

The final event, a concert at Redbourne Upper School, was attended by Richard Carr the new Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council in his first week in office. Richard then used Black History Month, during

staff road shows, as an example of the importance of council services working together: "The vibrancy and colour that greeted me when I dropped in on the concert was terrific. Communities in Central Bedfordshire had come together not only to celebrate their own cultures but also to give others some insight into their heritage. On the basis that ignorance is the enemy of cohesion, the events held during Black History Month provided residents with an opportunity to learn about people from different backgrounds in a way that was engaging and exciting".



An African Music and Dance class that was performed at many lower, middle and upper schools in Central Bedfordshire. This picture was taken at Aspley Guise Lower School

But the events of Central Bedfordshire's first Black History Month weren't just limited to the celebration in October. A specially commissioned artwork was created by interpreting maps from memory, of where parents, grandparents and even great grandparents of Central Bedfordshire residents came from, and this artwork was installed at the new Houghton Regis Library at Bedford Square in February 2010.

While being developed, many discussions emerged as to where certain buildings were, how things have changed over the years, and where certain roads led. The work was pulled together during three workshops held in libraries during Black History Month.

Stories continued around the theme of journeys, places, work and family history. This informed the

next step of applying the colours and pattern of flags important to our residents. It could be symbolic of a place where they lived, worked, or that has some family connection - past or present.

The final outcome was developed from these maps and represents the many nationalities and cultures that make up, and influence, our local community.

Cllr Steve Male, Central Bedfordshire's Portfolio Holder for Culture and Skills said: "Last October's Black History Month celebrated different cultures within Central Bedfordshire. This artwork allowed local people, working with the artist Wendy, to create a colourful reminder of the cultural heritage of Central Bedfordshire which will last for many years to come."

Artist Wendy Briggs said: "I was delighted to be involved in this project. It was a fantastic opportunity to work collaboratively with local people in the creation of an artwork. Their enthusiasm, knowledge and drawing skills were the key to its success. I hope many others will gain enjoyment from the paintings now they have been installed."

So what now? Well the teams are already discussing how Black History month can be improved in October 2010. Some of the activities that were put forward at meetings did not make it to the final stage as there was either not enough time or resources available. But they have helped serve as a template for what could be done in the future. There is the possibility that the next Black History month will involve many more partners such as local health services, volunteer groups and faith groups who can join with Central Bedfordshire Council and the local communities to continue to celebrate local heritage and culture.

Looking back, Black History Month was not just an exercise that helped bring communities together, it also helped bring together teams from the three legacy councils. This project had teams, who might not have met before, thinking about how the new unitary Central Bedfordshire could best work with its communities to create a culture which valued diversity.

For more information, please contact

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Live at the Apollo...

The Apollo Pavilion, an iconic piece of public artwork in Peterlee, County Durham, once looked destined for demolition. Marking a remarkable turn in fortunes, the pavilion recently underwent full restoration and the project is now in line for a 2010 Civic Trust Award.

Designed by acclaimed British artist Victor Pasmore in the late-1960s, the Apollo Pavilion was envisaged as a place to spark the imagination and inspire the community of a New Town housing estate.

Though the structure's abstract geometric forms made of cast concrete presented an uncompromising vision, it was the setting that caused local debate.

Spanning a small man-made lake closely surrounded by houses, all of which Pasmore was involved in helping to design, the pavilion became a focal point for vandalism and by the 1980s, local residents were campaigning for the structure to be demolished.

In 1998, an attempt to have the pavilion listed failed due to perceived local hostility, though four years later when the site received Grade II listing in the Register of Parks and Open Spaces, local residents called for a public meeting.

A crucial outcome of this was the formation of the Apollo Pavilion Community Association, tasked to work with the Council to find solutions that would gain general favour.

A feasibility study pointed the way to a proposed restoration and a programme of exhibitions and events were organised to begin building public support. With surveys showing 90% community backing, a working group was assembled to develop detailed plans leading to the submission of a grant application.

In July 2008, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £336,000 and by early in the New Year, the pavilion would find itself cocooned while a six-month programme of repair work got underway.

Comprehensive repairs were carried out to the concrete faces and the access staircase and recessed lighting reinstated, a task which involved core drilling through the whole structure to reconnect the electricity supply.

The surrounding site was also refurbished with extensive areas of cobbles requiring excavation and replacement. The only new elements introduced were CCTV cameras and visitor information panels to explain the historical and cultural significance of the site.



On July 12th, the artist's son John Pasmore visited Peterlee for the civic reopening and to give the Apollo Pavilion its intended name marked by a plaque, neither of which occurred when first completed in 1970.

Having been returned to its original condition, reaction to the restoration has been very positive. Seeing it lit up at night, something not witnessed for over thirty years, has become a particular topic of conversation and local pride.

Though it's just seven short months since completion, the absence of fresh graffiti bodes well for the future.

This is not something that is being left to chance, however. Durham County Council has put in place a ten-year management and maintenance plan, including an education and community programme.

Artists ranging from painters and sculptors, to poets, dancers and actors have been running projects with local schools and youth groups and a continuing programme of events held at the pavilion includes open-air concerts and theatre and dance performances by regional and visiting arts companies.

Seeing our built environment in a new and inspiring light is the gift Victor Pasmore set out to give to the people of Peterlee. After a long and sometimes difficult wait, that gift is finally beginning to be accepted.

For further information on the project, or to see whether we've won a Civic Trust Award (announced 12 March)

visit www.apollopavilion.info.

Robin Hood legacy assured at Sherwood Forest

Nottinghamshire County Council will build a brand new visitor centre at Sherwood Forest which will be open to the public in 2012.

Following a review of all of its major capital projects, the Council will be investing an initial £5.2 million from its capital programme for 2010/11 which will provide a new centre including a café, gift shop and a visitor experience that will both educate and entertain. The Council has already invested over £800,000 purchasing a new site for the centre.

Councillor John Cottee, Cabinet Member for Culture and Community, said: *"The new centre will be a vast improvement and a great attraction where visitors can enjoy refreshments, buy souvenirs, and learn all about the legend of Robin Hood before they explore the beautiful forest and its ancient oaks".*

Jennifer Spencer, interim chief executive at Experience Nottinghamshire said: *"Sherwood Forest is an iconic, world renowned destination so it's vital that we have a visitor centre to do justice to the legacy of Robin Hood and the historical forest itself. A visitor centre is the first port of call at any attraction so it's essential to create the best first impression to enhance the visitor experience; I'm confident the new one will do just that."*

The design and plans for the new centre are currently being developed and will be unveiled this summer. A planning application will be then made later this year with works beginning spring 2011 and completed by the following year. The current visitors centre will not close until the new centre is open and operational.

Bob White, Chairman of the internet-based World Wide Robin Hood Society was delighted with the County Council's commitment and said *"The global popularity of Robin Hood means that visitors to Sherwood Forest expect to find a modern information centre that enhances their experience of both the legend and the location. The confirmation that the new facility will be open in 2012 is great news and ensures people won't be disappointed."*

Previous plans for a visitor centre were costed at over £9million. However, following a review of the project, the plans have been revised and will no longer include conference and function space, which was not seen as a priority when the public were consulted last year, and a bridge crossing the B6304 that the public feared could result in anti-social activity and was unnecessary, with the other traffic-calming measures planned in its place.

Cllr Cottee continued: "We have cut back the costs, but not the quality. Visitors will be able to enjoy a modern visitor centre with great places to eat, buy gifts and learn all about Robin Hood and his famous home. Plus, we are looking at different designs that are modular, so that if we are successful in acquiring money from other funding streams the attraction can be further developed."

The new Hollywood movie about Robin Hood will be released later this year and the County Council is working with Nottingham City Council and Experience Nottinghamshire on a range of events for 2010 and on promoting Nottinghamshire to markets in the UK and overseas.



Councillor John Cottee said: *"We are looking forward to this year's celebration around the new Robin Hood movie but we also want to build a lasting legacy and are confident that the new visitor centre will provide a first rate experience for many years to come."*

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Making the Case for Culture



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