

VECTIS FIRST

Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy 2004-8

Fun, Challenge, Activity and Interest for All

Consultation Draft

A strategy to support the development of cultural diversity and opportunity for Islanders and Visitors

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Contents

1. Introduction to Vectis First
2. The Strategic Context for the Cultural Strategy
3. Celebrating the Island's Cultural Assets
 - *The Physical Environment at the Heart of the Island*
 - *The Broad Range of Cultural Facilities & Opportunities on the Island*
4. Strategic Themes of the Strategy
 - *Sustaining and Promoting the Island's Environment and Heritage*
 - *Encouraging Lifelong Learning, Healthy Lifestyles and Social Cohesion*
 - *Engaging Young People*
 - *Developing All-Year-Round Tourism*
 - *Maintaining and Improving Cultural Facilities and Opportunities*
 - *Improving Information, Communication and Co-ordination*
5. Implementing and Monitoring The Cultural Strategy

APPENDIX 1 - Action Plan Framework

APPENDIX 2 – Research and Consultations

1. INTRODUCTION TO VECTIS FIRST

Vectis First - Fun, Challenge, Activity and Interest for All

Vectis First is the title of the Isle of Wight's *first* Cultural Strategy. It is a strategy to support the development of cultural diversity and opportunity for Islanders and visitors. The title *Vectis First* reflects the historical roots of the Island and the premier position held by the quality of its natural landscape. These, amongst other values, mean that those who are Islanders by birth, newcomers to the community or visitors to the Island put the Isle of Wight first on their list!

Such is the cultural diversity of the Isle of Wight that it truly offers first-rate fun, challenge, activity and interest for all.

Importance of the Cultural Strategy

This is the Consultation Draft of the Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy. The Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has recommended that all local authorities should put in place a cultural strategy. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to submit a Local Cultural Strategy, local authorities are obliged to report under Best Value Performance Indicators on whether they have adopted such a strategy.

A number of key strategies have been adopted on the Isle of Wight since the initial research for this Cultural Strategy commenced. The most significant of these are 'Island Futures' (The Isle of Wight Community Strategy 2002-2012) and the Council's Corporate Plan 2002-2005. This Strategy also links with wider regional and national objectives, including those of the Government Office for the South East, the South East England Development Agency and DCMS.

It is essential therefore that this Cultural Strategy complements and supports these broader strategies. This too is consistent with DCMS priorities.

What is Culture

Culture means different things to different people. In the past 'culture' has been more readily associated with 'high' arts and drama but in fact it embraces all that we do for fun, relaxation and socialising – a broad spectrum of interests to live more fulfilled lives. Culture not only has material dimensions, activities and interests, but also values. Culture can be summarised as the distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or group. Culture is about people fulfilling their potential and broadening their horizons. Culture is therefore about people, places and community and embraces buildings, landscape, food, language beliefs and traditions. All of these aspects make up the "the way of life" on the Island.

In keeping with DCMS guidelines this strategy embraces the following spheres of activity:

- The performing and visual arts, crafts, media and film
- Museums, artefacts, archives and design
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- The built heritage, architecture and archaeology
- Sports events, facilities and development

- Parks, open spaces, landscape, the coast, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- Children's play, playgrounds and play activities
- Tourism, festivals and attractions
- Informal leisure pursuits

The Purpose of the Strategy

An important purpose of the strategy is to celebrate the cultural life of the Island and provide a strategic framework that will help to sustain and develop the Island's cultural assets and values for the benefit of both residents and visitors. A Cultural Strategy cannot create a perfect world, nor hope to address all the strategic or practical issues across the Island's Cultural Scene. However the Strategy should, for example, assist in developing partnerships, raising and targeting resources and increasing cultural opportunities for all on the Island. Additionally, the Strategy will assist the Council in its role on the cultural scene.

The Thematic Approach Adopted

A feature of this Strategy is the thematic approach, with six major themes adopted. These themes have evolved from the research and consultations undertaken and reflect the very broad cultural scene on the Island. However they provide a focus on some of the 'big levers', which if pulled, are likely to have a favourable influence on the cultural scene in the short and longer term. Selected objectives and a framework of actions have been developed to come to bear on these important levers.

The Isle of Wight Council's Role in Cultural Activities

The Council plays an important, but not exclusive, role in providing cultural opportunities and influencing cultural values. This role is fulfilled by a number of Council departments but most significantly by Community Development & Tourism. In parallel with the development of this Strategy, the Council's Community Development, Tourism and Wight Leisure Best Value Reviews have been undertaken. It has been important to ensure synergy between these reviews and the Cultural Strategy. This is reflected in the Strategy sharing common aims and objectives with Community Development, shared use of the extensive community research and an inter-relationship between the Action Plans of each.

Ownership of the Strategy

The Isle of Wight Council has facilitated this Strategy, through extensive consultation. However it is planned as the 'Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy' to provide an overall framework for all those on the Island with an interest in its cultural life. A range of organisations and interests working in partnership will achieve implementation of the Strategy.

The Strategy Development Process

The Strategy has been based on an extensive public consultation process, which has been conducted over a 2-year period. This has included a wide range of methods, including public meetings, MORI polls, questionnaires, and focus groups (**Appendix 2**). During the summer of 2003 a final phase of strategic consultations were undertaken with a range of Council officers and members, and interested parties from other public, voluntary and private organisations. An overriding conclusion from all the consultations and research is that a more planned and structured approach is needed to cultural activity on the Island. At the same time, it became clear that organisational structures should not get in the way of cultural activities, but rather should facilitate development.

Aims and Objectives of the Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy

The objectives of the Cultural Strategy were set out in 2001 and fed into the production of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Island's Community Strategy "*Island Futures*". They were also adopted for the Council's Community Development service. The over-arching aim and objectives for the Cultural Strategy are: -

AIM:

"To enhance the quality of life of Isle of Wight residents through the provision of cultural experiences and opportunities and the development of cultural values; and to use cultural activities and values to assist in underpinning the Island's tourism industry"

OBJECTIVES:

A. Promote Personal Development

Provide people with opportunity to realise the full potential of their creative skills and abilities

B. Develop Young People

Encourage young people to be fully involved with the community and vice versa

C. Strengthen Communities

Reinforce neighbourhood networks through their sense of identity to achieve common goals

D. Promote an Inclusive Society

Ensure that every individual on the Island has the opportunity to participate fully in Island life

E. Protect and Develop The Islands Cultural and Environmental Resources

Secure the protection of the Island's heritage and natural and built environment and raise awareness of their importance to the well being of the Island's communities

F. Promote Economic Development and Tourism

Contribute to the development of economic prosperity on the Island through the creation and attraction of cultural investment, especially in the tourism sector, which draws its primary strength from the cultural services

G. Make Communities Safer

Encourage participation in cultural activities as a constructive use of leisure time and as an alternative to boredom and anti-social behaviour

H. Promote Physical Health and Mental Well Being

Encourage the uptake of physically and/or mentally stimulating activities as a route to staying healthy and providing a foundation for a full and active life

2. THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

Demographic Contrasts of the Island

The demographic profile is significant in terms of the cultural strategy. The Island has a population of 132,731 at the 2001 Census. The Isle of Wight has a disproportionate number of elderly people with 26% of adults being of pensionable age, compared to the national average of 18%. Children (15 and under) form 18% of the population and over 20% of the adult population is single.

Economic and Social Factors Have a Bearing on Cultural Activity

The Isle of Wight is an area of contrasts. Many of the general characteristics of The South-East Region are reflected in the Isle of Wight. Whilst the region is heavily populated, there are few large urban centres to generate major facilities on the scale of large cities elsewhere. The island, as the region, is far more rural than popularly imagined, masking some of the difficulties arising from limited access to facilities and poor transport links.

Overall the South-East Region is sometimes seen as an area of great affluence, where cultural needs are less problematic. The economic well being of a good proportion of the population disguises problems of deprivation in certain locations. Economically the Island's GDP is only 67% of the UK average. 15 of the 48 Island wards are in the worst 20% of the most deprived areas nationally.

Cultural activity and values cannot be divorced from the social and economic fabric of society.

National, Regional and Local Strategies

National, regional and local strategies provide a valuable context for the Island's Cultural Strategy and have contributed later in the Strategy to the adoption of Themes for this Cultural Strategy.

DCMS Strategy

The strategic priorities of the DCMS are of particular relevance to the Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy. The DCMS Strategic Plan (2003 – 2006) identifies four strategic objectives. These are: -

I. SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

As a key strategic priority, the DCMS Strategy seeks to *'enhance access to a fuller cultural and sporting life for children and young people giving them the opportunities to maximise their talents to the full.'*

II. SOCIAL INCLUSION

The DCMS Strategic Plan seeks to *'open up institutions to the wider community to promote ... social inclusion.'* The target of increasing 'take up' by new users from priority groups is supported by targets to increase new visitors to museums, libraries and increase sports participation.

III. LIFELONG LEARNING

'Opening up institutions to the wider community to promote lifelong learning...' is a priority of the DCMS Strategic Plan.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An objective of the DCMS Strategic Plan is to '*maximise the contribution which the creative and leisure industries can make to the economy*'.

The Cultural Cornerstone - Strategy of The South East Cultural Consortium

Representing key cultural agencies, the strategy presents a co-ordinated cultural strategy for the region with five key challenges supported by fourteen objectives. The theme of *developing young people* is highlighted.

Strategic challenges relating to young people include 'The Challenge of Learning' and the 'Challenge of Inclusion'. The Cultural Cornerstone supports this priority in seeking to utilise culture to support a reduction in the 'gap' between the region's most deprived wards and the rest of the region. This is particularly relevant to the Isle of Wight.

Raising educational achievement levels, contributing to quality of life and understanding regional cultural sector skills and training needs are specific objectives of the Strategy. In particular, the role of museums, libraries and archives are recognised as providing important support for lifelong learning.

The Cultural Cornerstone highlights the contribution leisure industries have made and will make to regeneration. Of particular relevance are actions to support the regeneration of seaside towns, rural areas and promoting the role of culture within economic development.

Island Futures - The Community Strategy for the Isle of Wight

The first Community Strategy for the Isle of Wight, produced by the Local Strategic Partnership, identifies seven key themes for the Island. The Community Strategy provided the context for the revised Council Corporate Plan.

Developing learning and skills is a key theme of the Community Strategy. The cultural services can have a role to play in helping to address key issues of academic achievement levels, as well as promoting a good quality of life to help to recruit to key positions where skill shortages currently exist.

Links with Agenda 21 Strategy

The Isle of Wight Council's Agenda 21 Strategy offers much synergy with this Cultural Strategy, given that both see the quality of the natural environment as central to life on the Island.

The Research and Consultation Context

The extensive consultation process reflected that Islanders have a strong sense of identity and 'belonging' and have pride in their Island. It also revealed that the Island has a strong and broad array of clubs and organisations on the cultural scene. Responses highlighted that there was a generally high degree of satisfaction with the existing range of cultural facilities and opportunities. There was significant value placed on the beauty and other natural assets of the Island. However this was not necessarily reflected in a full recognition of the value of these assets for cultural activities, including tourism. This is consistent with experience elsewhere, where being familiar and close to an asset diminishes an objective assessment of its value. Alongside this there was a discernible commitment to further improving the Island's cultural life.

The Financial Context

The financial context for this Strategy in 2003 is largely governed by three overriding factors.

- 1. In recent years there have been severe capital and revenue pressures and constraints on the Isle of Wight Council, the principal provider and facilitator for cultural facilities and opportunities.*
- 2. Since the mid-90's Lottery funding has been a principal source of capital for some projects in the cultural field (Millennium, Lottery Sports, Arts Lottery and Heritage Lottery Funds). On the Isle of Wight, Dinosaur Isle and Ventnor Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre are Millennium Lottery funded projects, West Wight Sports Centre received a Lottery Sports Grant, Quay Arts an Arts Lottery Grant and Brading Roman Villa received a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant for a major new building in 2003. However, the reduced sales of Lottery tickets will lead to increased competition for more limited Lottery funds in the future.*
- 3. Government funding, including regeneration initiatives, increasingly involves bidding on a competitive basis. The relationship between regeneration schemes and cultural provision to meet social and economic needs therefore needs to be articulated clearly.*

The Cultural Strategy is not necessarily predicated on the need for additional funding. It seeks to influence priorities in the better use of existing resources and identify processes that will ensure that any additional revenue or capital funds are used to greatest effect on the cultural scene.

3. CELEBRATING THE ISLAND'S CULTURAL ASSETS

The Island's Cultural Assets Reflect Diversity at Every Corner

The Isle of Wight has a rich diversity of cultural assets. This diversity is reflected in its physical environment, its history and heritage and its cultural facilities and activities.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE HEART OF THE ISLAND

- The physical environment of the Island is primarily –
 - ◆ The natural environment (Earth History - landscapes, geology, palaeontology)
 - ◆ The built environment (including past and present human structures and buildings e.g. towns and villages)
 - ◆ The historic environment (this embraces the material remains of human actions within the landscape and environment of the past – archaeology)

The physical environment of the Island provides an immense wealth for recreation and tourism. It also offers interest and activity for many professionals and volunteers on the Island. Thus conservationists, rural planners, archaeologists, geologists, palaeontologists, historians and archivists all have an active interest in the Island's physical environment. Historians, librarians and archivists work with historic documents and man-made artefacts to make the past accessible and interesting to the general public.

An Outstanding Natural Environment

In 1963 about half of the Island was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), mostly in the South and West, but with five parcels stretching across the whole land area, in total around 189 square kilometres. It also includes around half of the coastline including all of the Heritage Coast.

Centuries of land management have shaped the existing landform to create today's landscape. When comparing the Island with other protected landscapes, it is clear that it is unusual in that it is fragmented. The combination of this variety with the maritime influence has produced the special feel of the IOW AONB. The grand chalk cliffs and rolling downs, muddy creeks and estuaries, lush green pastures and trees and hedgerows share the same designation. It is this very variety which has made the Island of national importance, and highlights the need for its integrated management, both inside and outside of the designated area.

What makes a landscape important for each individual is a very personal and subjective emotion. However it is quite clear that landscapes have always evoked deep feelings. The landscape also has importance economically, directly in terms of food and timber production, and for minerals and waste. Indirectly it is essential for tourism and underpins the quality of life of all who live and work upon the Island. Although there are dominant and unique elements of the landscape on the Isle of Wight, like the undercliffs or chalk cliffs, the diverse underlying geology and resulting landform and soils, have produced a rich and varied landscape.

There are two designated Heritage Coasts on the Isle of Wight; Tennyson which runs along the South Coast and Hamstead in the North West, including Newtown.

Tennyson Coast includes the famous, spectacular and iconic chalk stacks of 'The Needles', high chalk cliffs, deep wooded 'chines' and landslip areas cut in the clay and sand beds below the chalk. With its changing rock and landforms, it is a coast not only of varied beauty but also one of great scientific interest, protected by SSSIs. Due to its accessibility and unique nature, it is an 'Intensive' Heritage Coast area with considerable pressures from recreation and tourism, particularly during the Summer season.

Hamstead is a 'remote' Heritage Coast dominated by the shallow, drowned estuary of Newtown River. It is the haunt of terns and curlews and many birds over-winter on the remote expanses of salt marsh and mudflats. The low clay and limestone cliffs are remarkably rich in fossils of an age found nowhere else in Britain. Much of Hamstead Heritage Coast is a National Nature Reserve, which visitors are encouraged to explore using natural trails.

The Island is also famous for its Chines, the remains of ancient river valleys, now mostly small gullies leading down to the sea. The term "chine" is only used on the Isle of Wight and parts of Dorset and Hampshire. As the walls of the chines and cliffs of the south coast of the Isle of Wight are so unstable and erode continually, the strata is clearly visible. Chines are therefore very important for their fossil records, their archaeology and the unique flora and fauna for which they provide shelter. There is also some fascinating folklore attached to the chines because of their history with local smuggling, fishing and shipwrecks.

The Built Environment reflects History

The Island also has a built environment that adds to its cultural diversity. There are many famous buildings and historic remains that reflect the Island's long and fascinating history. The remains of significant Roman houses in Newport and Brading attract many visitors. English Heritage's Osborne House, with its strong connections with Queen Victoria, is a major attraction, as is Carisbrooke Castle. In addition to its countryside property, The National Trust has the Old Battery at The Needles and Bembridge Windmill.

The spread of town and village settlements across the Island also reflects cultural diversity. There is a strong sense that cultural identities are rooted in very small communities with many activities based in these scattered localities. There are many listed buildings and conservation areas on the Island

The Historic Environment Tells Us Much More About the Past

The pre-eminent quality of the remains of human actions in the past means that the Island has much to offer the archaeologist, both professional and enthusiast.

Recording and Presenting the Past

The high quality of all these elements of the physical environment, and the interest they generate, provide significant material for historians, librarians, museum curators, archivists and researchers. The island has taken advantage of this with a number of longstanding and new public buildings, which offer public access to the artefacts and facts of the past.

Historic Island

The Island's history spans four centuries. It stretches from the Beaker people who arrived Around 1900 BC (so called because of their distinctive pottery) to the Romans who arrived in 43 AD (named the island Vectis and stayed for four centuries) and then through Saxon and Mercian rule. Christianity arrived in 686 AD and after two centuries of peaceful life the Danes arrived in 897 AD. Their visits for 'burning and killing' went on for over 100 years so the Islanders lived in constant fear.

In the Middle Ages at the time of the Norman Conquest, William the Conqueror granted overlordship of the Isle of Wight to his relative William FitzOsbern who began the construction of a castle at Carisbrooke. The Island passed to the De Redvers family in 1101 and was then sold to Edward 1 in 1293.

During the Hundred Years' War, the Island, like much of the south coast, became a target for marauding French. Concern about the French attacks is shown in the frequent modifications made to Carisbrooke Castle's defences in the 14th Century.

In the Tudor & Stuart period the strategic importance of the Island increased with the development of Portsmouth as a permanent naval base. Henry VIII accordingly built additional fortifications on the island. During the reign of Elizabeth 1, the Island was again threatened by invasion, this time from Spain.

At the outset of the Civil War in 1642, the Parliament assumed control of the Island and retained their control throughout the conflict.

In the nineteenth century the Island was transformed by the coming of the railways. Queen Victoria took advantage of the island's new accessibility by using Osborne as her retreat. Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin & Ventnor expanded from fishing villages to fashionable resorts.

Admiral of the Fleet, the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, became Governor of the Island in 1965. In 1972 the Island gained full status under the Local Government Act and Earl Mountbatten was also appointed the Island's first Lord Lieutenant. Since his death in Ireland in 1979, the Island has been without a governor.

Island Heritage

The Island has a rich history, a physical environment of national significance, a maritime history borne of a varied coastline and historic properties of stature, the Island's present-day residents have gained a valuable heritage.

THE BROAD RANGE OF CULTURAL FACILITIES & OPPORTUNITIES ON THE ISLAND

The richness of the Isle of Wight's cultural diversity is reflected in the provision of an estimated 380 leisure and visitor centres and attractions on the Island by public, private, not-for-profit and voluntary organisations.

Both English Heritage and The National Trust are active on the Island, with Osborne House and The Needles Old Battery respectively representing notable interests.

The island has five indoor sports and leisure facilities and 16 outdoor facilities, half of which are available all year round. Island residents, visitors, schools, businesses, clubs and groups all use these facilities.

Arts and theatres are supported across the Island. The principal facilities are Ryde, Shanklin, Apollo and Trinity Theatres, together with Quay Arts and Medina in Newport.

There are more than 250 parks, gardens and open spaces on the island, together with 35 playgrounds and 1100 public seats. 64 miles of coastline are managed, and there are 11 miles of award winning beaches.

Ventnor Botanic Garden consists of 22 acres of maintained garden containing 8000 plant species, plus a plant production facility and visitor centre. Residents, visitors, researchers, schools and businesses all use the Garden.

The Library Service has 11 static and 2 mobile libraries and records over a million visits per year (the fifth highest per capita among unitary authorities). The Service provides a broad range of services, activities and events for adults and children including reading groups, a literature festival, support for local community activity, lifelong learning and free internet access.

The Museums Service runs 4 public museums, including the very popular Dinosaur Isle, which all together attract 120,000 visitors a year. 5,500 school children and other groups visit the museums each year, as well as national and international researchers. The Service also gives advice to the 25 museum related organisations on the island. The Museums Schools Service provides teaching support for the 150 school classes that visit Carisbrooke Castle Museum each year, in addition to outreach activities, loan of materials, curriculum support and teacher advice to the Island's schools.

The Record Service acquires and stores historic documents relating to the island, and makes it available for public use by the island's residents, national and international researchers, charities, solicitors and councils.

The Library, Museums and Records Services all have vitally important roles to play in enabling the Island community to capitalise on its natural assets.

The School's Music Service provides tuition to pupils, and helps introduce new musical activities and experiences to young people. They also manage the IOW Music Centre, which attracts 380 students per week.

Branstone Farm provides teaching support for the 250 visiting classes, in addition to outreach activities to the Island's schools.

In addition to the provision of physical facilities, the School's Music Services and Branstone Farm both provide curriculum support, advice and training for teachers of local schools. Also, the use of sports and art in the advancement of social and economic regeneration and development is promoted by the Arts Development and Theatres Service, and the Sport and Recreation Development Service.

There are also a host of events on the island each year, running into the hundreds and ranging from Cowes Week to small parish events. Many of the events are organised by voluntary organisations, of which there are a very large number, spanning all aspects of cultural activity.

Cultural Facilities, Events and Traditions

The Isle of Wight has a rich diversity of 'attractions' for all resident and visitor interests: -

SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS AND SITES INCLUDE:

Osborne House
Carisbrooke Castle
Dinosaur Isle
Ventnor Botanic Garden
Blackgang Chine
Medina Theatre
Quay Arts
Apollo Theatre
Ryde Theatre
Shanklin Theatre
Trinity Theatre
Smallbrook Speedway
Heights Leisure Centre
Medina Leisure Centre
Waterside Pool
IW Steam Railway
IW Libraries
Guildhall Museum
Brading Roman Villa
Newport Roman Villa
Archaeological Centre, Clatterford
Planet Ice
Cineworld
West Wight Sports Centre
Fairway Sports Centre and Track
Appuldurcombe House
Northwood House and Park
Dimbola Lodge Museum
Needles Battery

MAJOR ISLAND EVENTS INCLUDE:

Rock Island/ IOW Music Festival
IW Cycling Festival
IW Walking Festival
Skandia Cowes Week
Garlic Festival
Whiteair - Extreme Sports Festival
Powerboat Festival
All Island Carnivals
Old Gaffers Festival
Round the Island Yacht Race
Show
Observe House Classical Prom

TRADITIONS

The Isle of Wight has a world famous tradition for Yachting, with Cowes Week as the pinnacle. Carnivals have been a tradition on the Island since the late 1800's and Ryde Carnival is now an extremely impressive event.

4. STRATEGIC THEMES OF THE STRATEGY

The Cultural Strategy Recognises Both the Island's Physical and Human Characteristics

The Cultural Strategy takes account of both the physical and human characteristics of the Island. This Strategy celebrates the Island's cultural assets including a superb physical environment. The very nature of being an Island has a significant bearing on many practical aspects of the Island's cultural life.

The Strategy also highlights a number of the Island's human factors that influence cultural opportunity and activity, including -

- ❖ the narrow economic base, dependent upon a highly seasonal tourism industry
- ❖ low wages and high benefit dependency
- ❖ comparatively high unemployment
- ❖ a high proportion of retired yet a significant proportion of young people

Key Issues from the Overall Cultural Context

The key issues for the cultural strategy that emerge from the contextual summary and wide consultation include: -

- Balancing the needs and interests of young people and the retired
- Recognising the common priorities within the key strategies now underpinning Island life
- Capitalising fully on the Island's major asset – its physical environment
- Acknowledging the importance of tackling access and inclusion to make cultural opportunities widely available
- Linking cultural activity to lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles
- Strengthening sustainable tourism activity
- Addressing cultural facility deficiencies on a priority basis

A Planned and Structured Approach to Cultural Development

A more planned and structured approach to cultural activity and development is required on the Island. This Strategy has placed emphasis on devising a framework that will help in this respect. The IOW Council Annual Action Plans are now contributing to such an approach, given the Council's significant role in cultural activities. At the same time it is important that organisational structures do not get in the way of cultural development.

The Cultural Strategy provides a framework for future actions and a focus on those issues which affect or can make the most impact on the Island's cultural life. From the cultural context set out, and the extensive research and consultations, six important Themes have emerged for adoption in the Cultural Strategy.

The Strategy has been structured so that under each of the six Themes is a series of key objectives that provide the basis for priorities within each Theme. These objectives are linked to a framework of important related actions. These actions can be implemented by partnerships of the key agencies and interests that are involved in the delivery of cultural opportunities and activities on the Isle of Wight.

The objectives and actions listed are not intended to be prescriptive in terms of the policies of key agencies, rather policy relevant, having regard for the Island's Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan.

The six Themes adopted are: -

- A. Sustaining and promoting the Island's Environment and Heritage**
- B. Encouraging Lifelong Learning, Healthy Lifestyles and Social Cohesion**
- C. Engaging Young People**
- D. Developing all-year-round Tourism**
- E. Maintaining and improving Cultural Facilities and Opportunities**
- F. Improving Information, Communication and Co-ordination on the Cultural Scene**

A. SUSTAINING AND PROMOTING THE ISLAND'S ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Sustaining and promoting the Island's Environment and Heritage is not only a key strategic theme but also the backbone of this Cultural Strategy. Almost all the recent major, strategic documents acknowledge the significance of the Island's natural assets and heritage. However the assets and the human interests and activities which flow from them are inevitably taken for granted to some extent. Familiarity and a degree of Island insularity have lessened the appreciation of these significant assets, not only for residents but also in the increasingly competitive visitor market.

The Cultural Strategy seeks to highlight not only the importance of a wide range of specialist interests served by the Island's environment but also the interaction these interests can have with social, educational and health issues.

The research and consultations told us that: -

- 93% of residents visit beaches and esplanades. And 92% visit the countryside, over half of these at least once a week. There is high public satisfaction with these opportunities and parks & gardens, and access to them.
- The top 3 aspects for tourists were the outstanding natural scenery, the beaches, and the peace and quiet.
- There is a desire for all parts of the Island to have local heritage centres.
- The built heritage, including archaeology, is considered the most overlooked area of culture and in need of more support.
- It was suggested that the public needs to be more aware of the history of the Island and its environment.
- There is a desire to ensure that cultural development is diverse and rooted in local identity and interest.
- The idea of parking charges was generally supported, as it would encourage the use of public transport.
- The IWC need to provide a greater range of cultural activities and interests regarding the historic environment of the island.
- The IOW branch of the National Federation of Sea Anglers sees the continuous loss of sections of the coastline to development as a major problem.

OBJECTIVE 1

To recognise the significance of the environmental assets bestowed upon the Island and to conserve and sustain these assets for the benefit of current and future generations

- Ensure that there is cohesion between all agencies responsible for the guardianship of the Island's natural assets and those concerned with utilising these assets for the cultural and economic advantage of the Island
- Give a high priority and profile to sustainable activities and transport on the leisure, recreational and tourism fronts and develop better data on which to assess sustainable initiatives

OBJECTIVE 2

To develop a greater understanding and involvement of the public in the conservation and interpretation of the Island's physical environment

- encourage interest in the Island's rich and diverse environment as part of developing lifelong learning and continued activity through retirement
- highlight the role played by the Library Service especially through the Local Studies Collection and People's Network
- place importance on supporting voluntary organisations which provide opportunities for pursuing a lifelong interest in the Island's environment

OBJECTIVE 3

To interpret the Island's broad history and heritage, embracing all the specialist interests that are generated, for the beneficial interest of residents and visitors

- ensure that, as far as possible, equal importance is placed on the range of services and interests operating across the physical environment, including archaeology and the built environment
- strengthen the role played by tourist information centres as one 'stop-shop' reference points for initial public information on the Island's assets and heritage
- examine the potential for developing a field studies or environmental centre that could be related to the rich diversity of the Island landscape and contribute to attracting new visitors to the Island

OBJECTIVE 4

To give greater importance and publicity to the natural beauty of the Island, and the many and varied interests which flow from it, in order to enhance local cultural life and the tourist economy

- Consider the various specialist interests that emanate from the natural environment (e.g. rambling, birdwatching, palaeontology, geology, archaeology), examine the ways in which they are organised and operated for both residents and visitors and review their future potential
- Enhance the way in which the natural beauty and specialist interests on the Island are used to attract visitors, in a domestic and international market where there are increasingly diverse niche markets to target

B. ENCOURAGING LIFELONG LEARNING, HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND SOCIAL COHESION

The Cultural Strategy seeks to ensure that the role of cultural activities is widely acknowledged and those involved in the provision of such activities are seen as important partners in addressing a wide range of community issues. Cultural activity plays a major part in the overall welfare of individuals and communities, impacting on physical, intellectual and emotional well being. There is an increasing need to nurture sound principles of citizenship in young people, encourage lifelong learning to cope with ever-evolving employment and social scenes and develop patterns of healthy lifestyles.

The research and consultations told us that: -

- It was considered that cultural activities and services could promote adult learning and bring benefits.
- For most people, lack of time is the key issue in explaining why they do not spend more time taking part in leisure activities.
- More effort needs to be put into promoting walking as an all year round activity
- Most adults asked felt that the IWC should be responsible for providing their preferred leisure activity/facility.
- The 2 most popular leisure activities that people would like to do more of in the future were swimming and keep fit/yoga.
- Only 21% had taken part in vigorous activity in the past week.
- There is a need for more integration of sport with community safety, education, regeneration, health and tourism. Also between commercial and voluntary sectors.
- Lifelong learning needs to be embraced more within the museum environment, and there should be the creation of an education strategy that involves all the museums.
- Need more opportunities for families to learn together.

OBJECTIVE 5

Raise the profile and benefits of cultural activity with the principal key agencies concerned with community life

- establish a strategic forum between cultural interests and the key agencies responsible for health, education, social and police services to enable a regular dialogue on common interests
- continue to identify and pursue potential initiatives which can enable cultural activities to contribute to safer and more stable communities

OBJECTIVE 6

Strengthen the role played by the Education and Community Development Directorate and other Council Directorates in fostering lifelong learning development through cultural activities

- Improve the practical links between the Council's range of community development disciplines, including parks and gardens, libraries, museums, arts and sport; adult and community learning and youth and community services
- Work with the Local Learning Partnership (including the Tertiary Strategy Group, Adult & Community Learning Group and the Management Group) to identify the most practical opportunities for new links between cultural activities and lifelong learning, including the development of some pilot initiatives which can supplement existing schemes

OBJECTIVE 7

Promote public interest in a range of interests and activities on the Island which can provide the focus for learning opportunities, social development and lifelong interests

- Examine how adult and community learning can link with and take advantage of the wealth of interests that emanate from the Island's natural environment and the broader cultural scene
- Use the cultural assets of the Island, and their learning opportunities, as an attractive promotional vehicle to engage members of the community in lifelong learning, especially for the development of skills and creativity (e.g. horticultural skills and landscape & art initiatives)

OBJECTIVE 8

Recognise the significant contribution that cultural activities can make to the social and physical well-being of the community

- ensure effective links between the key agencies involved in health and social care and those concerned with cultural activities
- sustain and develop practical initiatives that encourage active physical and mental lifestyles (e.g. GP referral schemes and gymnasium fitness monitoring initiatives)

C. ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

This Strategy highlights the importance of providing support to children and young people in their quest to achieve their potential. This is an important role in any society and should be another cornerstone of the Cultural Strategy. The activities embraced by the Cultural Strategy provide the means by which young people demonstrate their progress in skill acquisition and develop their understanding of themselves, their peers and their environment. These can range from sport, the arts, music, film, dance and drama to walking cycling, and on to history, geology, archaeology and palaeontology.

It is important to maintain, and increase wherever possible, opportunities for young people to participate in a wide range of cultural activities. This enables young people to identify an activity that they enjoy and in which they can excel. This develops their confidence and helps them to use the acquired social skills in different situations.

Positive play experiences for young children can lay important foundations. Introductory experiences of a range of activities and interests for 5-12 year-olds are invaluable. Many young people are unaware of their talents because they have not been fully exposed to the opportunity to try a new game or activity, play a musical instrument or develop a special interest.

Allowing for changes in priorities and interests amongst teenagers, the Strategy includes recognition for current trends in youth culture, especially with regard to fashionable activities and music. It is also important that the transition from junior and youth activities to adult level is well supported, especially in club and society situations. There is much evidence that this is a point at which there is a loss of participation and interest.

The research and consultations told us that: -

- It was very strongly felt that cultural activity could help develop young people and bring benefits.
- Younger people are more likely to take part in 'active' pursuits such as sports.
- There is a low public satisfaction with children's play activities and facilities for young people.
- Nearly half of people asked wanted to see more facilities/activities for young people and at reduced rates.
- There is a demand for more family focused activities at weekends.
- A large venue is needed for music gigs and entertainment
- When asked what would make them use the public transport systems on the island more often, most people said lower ticket prices for the buses, and more places to reach on the Island line trains.
- Expense was the most important reason given to explain why young people don't take part in more leisure activities.
- A third of groups classified their members as 'male and female adults'. Only 7.5% were 'Male and Female young people'.
- A quarter of people asked were dissatisfied with the provision of activities/facilities for young people on the island, and this was the area that was seen as most needing action

OBJECTIVE 9

Develop increased responsiveness by, and co-ordination between, key agencies and organisations, including cultural facilities and education and youth service interests, in providing opportunities for young people to experience a broader range of cultural activities

- Pursue initiatives where young people can become more interested in their Island's assets and heritage, through interaction between the youth service, schools, colleges, Family Learning Service and Connexions with specialist activities (e.g. archaeology, palaeontology, libraries, museums and archives)
- Ensure that all agencies, public facilities and voluntary organisations capable of offering cultural activities and opportunities are positive and pro-active in responding to young people and their participation

OBJECTIVE 10

Adopt a modern approach to the needs of young people that is informed by success and good practice both on the Island and elsewhere

- Recognise the realities and importance of contemporary youth culture and the implications for the provision of opportunities
- Pursue the adoption and implementation of a Children's Play Policy that recognises the fundamental right of every child to play opportunities and the importance of play to child development and community life
- Provide a basis within planning policy for the provision of appropriate children's play and recreation space within new housing developments and ensure existing deficiencies in the provision of children's playgrounds are addressed in a planned and community-based fashion
- Support the roles and acknowledge the views of the Island's Youth MP and new Youth Council, as a means of communicating effectively with young people on cultural issues and involving them in decision making.

OBJECTIVE 11

Recognise the significant limitations to the cultural activities of young people that result from the cost and poor service of public transport in the evenings and at weekends

- Evaluate new initiatives undertaken to improve access and where appropriate support other schemes
- Establish localised cultural activities wherever possible to minimise the need for public transport
- Examine the possibility of community-based initiatives that provide alternative solutions to public transport (e.g. local community car sharing, voluntary drivers and Parish supported local minibus services)

OBJECTIVE 12

Continue existing, successful cultural schemes for young people and take advantage of a wide range of national schemes that seek to support the involvement and development of young people

- Continue to support Sport England initiatives, especially those which closely involve the education service and offer good funding potential (e.g. Active Sports Partnership, TOPS Programme and Specialist Sports College status)
- Ensure continued support for the Schools Music service and Family Learning service
- Recognise the value of a range of existing arts-based development initiatives and support structures and funding applications that can extend their impact on young people
- Seek to extend the range of introductory opportunities available to young people across the cultural spectrum, with an emphasis on the 10-13 and 17-19 age groups
- Pro-actively promote lifestyle alternatives to anti-social behaviour and encourage programmes that tackle issues around community safety

D. DEVELOPING ALL-YEAR-ROUND TOURISM

Tourism is identified as an integral part of a cultural strategy. The priority for Island tourism at present is for improved strategic direction and effective policy development. The high season of the school summer holidays is very busy, with many hotels fully booked. Value-for-money family holidays represent a high proportion of this high season business. The high season is very short and there is no significant strength to the Spring or Autumn shoulder periods. Creating sustainable tourism development is therefore a priority.

The research, consultations and development of this Cultural Strategy have identified that the cultural assets of the Island are not being used to greatest effect in the competitive visitor market. Considerable growth has taken place in the domestic marketplace for short breaks to 'interesting places'. There is a clear opportunity to exploit the Island's assets to incrementally develop significant levels of cultural tourism, which will address the development of all-year tourism.

Cultural tourism can provide a good counterweight to the traditional family, seaside holiday. The benefits of all-year-round tourism to the local economy can be significant, not just in increasing business volume. More hotels would be able to operate for longer seasons or all-year, leading to more local part and full-time posts across the hotel and attractions sector.

Making tourism more sustainable requires cohesion between the interests of businesses, visitors, the community and the environment.

The research and consultations told us that: -

- The most popular source for information for tourists to the IOW is a Tourist Information Centre, followed by the Internet.
- When visiting the IOW, most tourists use the beach, visit attractions and go for a walk. Approximately half visit country pubs and visit historic houses/gardens.
- The top 3 aspects of the IOW for tourists were the outstanding natural scenery, the beaches, and the peace and quiet. The worst aspects were the weather and the journey.
- The Island has the potential to be promoted as an all year destination for walking
- More major attractions are needed to encourage tourism on a year round basis.
- The island needs a large venue for bands and functions.
- It is important to promote the island as a destination for many leisure sports.
- It was felt that if there were more geology based talks, shows and outside activities, more tourists would be attracted to the island.
- Nearly three quarters of existing visitors to the IOW have children between the age of 0 – 15 years old
- Only 3% of non-visitors to the IOW would consider going there for a holiday.
- The best perceived aspect of the IOW by non-visitors is the beaches, followed by the scenery, although 16% did not know which aspect was the best.

OBJECTIVE 13

Fully exploit the Islands assets by developing Cultural Tourism as a major feature of the Island's all-year-round offer to visitors

- Seek an industry-wide consensus on the potential for cultural tourism and the raising of the Island's profile in this sphere of tourism
- Fully analyse the characteristics of the Island's many natural and heritage assets to identify the strength and weaknesses of the activity and interest holiday offer on the Island
- Develop a full understanding of the domestic and international cultural tourism market and responses to market needs that have been successful
-
- Analyse the market potential for a range of specialist interest and activity holidays on the Island
- Identify potential capital initiatives for appraisal and potential partnership funding which could significantly increase the Island's out-of-season offer (e.g. interpretative facilities which capitalise on the world fame of Cowes and the island's general profile in the sailing world)

OBJECTIVE 14

Prepare a marketing strategy and action plan to promote the island as cultural tourism destination

- Based on a recognition that the island is "a special place" in terms of its cultural tourism potential, prepare a marketing strategy and implementation plan which identifies priority niche markets (both by interest and geographical origin) and methods of interfacing with those markets
- Identify Island activity and interest packages that can best be exploited to strengthen the Spring and early Autumn seasonal 'shoulder' periods and those suited to selective winter short-breaks
- Consider design and branding issues arising from the adoption of cultural tourism as a major plank of Island Tourism

OBJECTIVE 15

Capitalise on the Island's success and expertise in event presentation and management

- Use Events wherever possible to increase visits to the Island outside of the high season (e.g. *Christmas on the Island*)
- Organise an annual events planning forum in October for all event organisers in order to exchange ideas and information, co-ordinate an annual events calendar and ensure the most effective contribution to community life and the Island's economy
- Explore the potential for the island to establish a 'Centre of Excellence' for Festival and Special Event Management

OBJECTIVE 16

Highlight the social and economic benefits that accrue from all-year-round Tourism

- Involve the accommodation sector in working towards strengthening the seasonal 'shoulder periods', with a view to higher levels of local, all-year employment
- Seek financial support from major commercial players for pilot initiatives in the development of all-year-round culture tourism and gain the wider support of the Island business community

E. MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING CULTURAL FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Isle of Wight has a great wealth of cultural facilities and opportunities across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. In comparison with many other local authorities of similar population and geographic size, the Isle of Wight has better provision across the cultural scene, whether it is libraries, museums, theatres, sports centres or visitor attractions.

In a period of scarce capital resources and pressure on revenue budgets, sustaining key strategic cultural resources is a main priority. This requires careful husbandry and on-going re-evaluation of priorities. The rationalisation, refurbishment or extension of facilities or the development of new ones requires very careful appraisal, having regard for both capital and revenue implications.

Opportunities need to be provided on the Island at two levels. Local doorstep provision is important, both for children and youths in terms of play and recreation provision, and for adults in the form of village halls and community centres. At the strategic level key facilities, such as sports centres, libraries and museums, can only be provided on the basis of a single Island building (e.g. Dinosaur Isle) or in key town locations (e.g. libraries).

Facilities are the infrastructure that underpins the provision of cultural opportunities. However the delivery of such opportunities is dependent upon people! Therefore, whether it is professional staff in public, private or voluntary organisations or volunteers in clubs or societies, their skills, knowledge, training and enthusiasm will determine both access to, and enjoyment of, cultural experiences.

The research and consultations told us that: -

- There is a need to extend leisure opportunities to improve the quality of life.
- Public transport to cultural facilities and events needs to be improved.
- Improvements to museums are greatly in demand.
- Arts Development on the Island should be better supported.
- 21% of groups/organisations do not have a sufficiently qualified administrative support or managers to extend their activities.
- More recognition of horse riding/eventing as an important sport on the island is needed, with an increase in facilities and funding.
- 49% of groups felt that lack of facilities is a problem.
- It is thought that the range of cultural facilities and activities on the Island is good, although more could be done to encourage their use such as decreasing prices, especially for the young, and increasing public transport access.
- Island theatres need re-organisation and more funding.

OBJECTIVE 17

Place importance on the sustainability of existing facilities, wherever appropriate, in a climate of scarce capital resources for new investments

- Sustain and improve village halls and community centres to ensure doorstep provision for existing and future local community activities

- Prepare an asset register of the Island's cultural facilities with a practical profile of each facility, including strengths, weaknesses, cultural impact and value for money
- Ensure that cultural activity is given due consideration and priority in major regeneration schemes

OBJECTIVE 18

Optimise the cultural benefits from any capital investment in new, extended or refurbished facilities

- Prioritise potential new capital investment schemes and options, including those for minority activities, to match available public and private funding resources, including grants
- Support and encourage arts, sports and similar development units, the Adult & Community Learning Group, Library, Museums and Records Services and other agencies and voluntary organisations in seeking and gaining grants for facility development funds for local or strategic priorities
- Ensure a good understanding across the cultural scene of capital funding sources and monitor the Island's success from, and share of, grant funding to inform future applications

OBJECTIVE 19

Place great importance on development activities across the cultural scene that introduce residents, especially young people, to new activities and interests

- seek to ensure introductory and development opportunities are provided across a broad range of cultural activities and made widely known
- put in place development strategies which provide pathways for continued involvement and interest in cultural activities and equity of opportunity (e.g. arts and sports development plans and Adult & Community Learning Strategic Plans)

OBJECTIVE 20

Improve the management and operation of cultural facilities and activities wherever possible

- Further develop the skills and abilities of professionals employed on the cultural scene to raise standards of access, audience development, education links and marketing
- Provide support and training opportunities to not-for-profit and voluntary organisations, including support for the recruitment of new volunteers, that will assist them in providing cultural activities

F. IMPROVING INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CO-ORDINATION ON THE CULTURAL SCENE

One of the strongest issues to arise from the consultations was the importance of improving information, communication and co-ordination on the cultural scene. This was not just an issue for the public, but also for professionals. There are three levels at which improvements can be effected.

Firstly at the voluntary club and society level there is a need to ensure improved co-ordination with voluntary organisations. This is both to provide encouragement and support and improve the flow and quality of relevant information.

At the professional level, the focused interest of individuals and specialist sections, many organisational changes, new Government policies and initiatives and a range of new Island strategies have created risks of fragmentation. That fragmentation can lead to both strategies and initiatives being implemented in isolation, without achieving the desired benefits of crosscutting public services or key agencies. Improved briefing across the professional interests is needed to minimise such risks.

At an overall level there would be considerable benefit in developing a greater understanding of the Island's wider cultural scene amongst all key participants, professional and voluntary. Whilst this is not an easy task, some important steps can be taken to harness interests and energies more effectively. This will be important, for example, in developing cultural tourism.

The research and consultations told us that: -

- Voluntary organisations would like more support from the IOW Council, including a newsletter/information service.
- There is demand for the creation of a central database of yearly events.
- Better communication between organisations is needed.
- There is a need to encourage partnership between different leisure interest groups.
- 45% of people felt that the IOW Council keeps the public fairly well informed about its services and benefits.
- IOW should consult more with clubs/organisations to find better ways of doing things.
- 47% of groups would like more help on how to access funding, and a quarter wanted more support and guidance from IWC.
- Nearly everyone asked was most influenced in his or her view of the Council by the Isle of Wight Press. Other popular sources of information were Isle of Wight radio, Wight magazine, and friends and neighbours.
- People would most like to have more information on reasons behind Council decisions, followed by information on the services and benefits the council provides.

OBJECTIVE 21

Ensure good co-ordination and consultation within and across specific voluntary sectors of the cultural scene

- Map the existing voluntary and trust sector network on the cultural scene to clarify the variety of roles and interests
- review the existing methods of co-ordination and consultation and identify gaps and opportunities for improvement

OBJECTIVE 22

Improve public access to information about the cultural scene and opportunities for individuals and groups

- Produce a cultural activities contact guide for the public, with key contacts within the IOW Council and other key agencies to contribute to the accurate direction of enquiries about cultural facilities and activities
- Publish a fully comprehensive annual Events Calendar for residents and visitors
- Optimise the use of the Library Service and the many public arts, leisure and museum buildings and attractions as an important vehicle for public information

OBJECTIVE 23

Improve the quality of communication and co-ordination between the very wide range of statutory, public, not-for profit and voluntary organisations that operate in the cultural field and across the Island

- Develop an all-embracing Cultural Forum for the Island to ensure the most effective partnership of all parties interested in the cultural life of the Island
- Organise an annual Cultural Forum Conference and Exhibition which draws together every island interest and organisation across the cultural scene
- Identify the key sectors comprising the Forum and having shared interests e.g. attractions, accommodation, events, etc. (including existing trade and specialist organisations) that can potentially form sector divisions of the Forum
- Improve cross-cutting communication across the various sections of the Isle of Wight Council that have an active involvement in the cultural scene

OBJECTIVE 24

Use this Strategy to inform members of the community of the Island's cultural scene and its potential for them, and assist statutory and non-statutory organisations in their own planning

- use this Strategy as a means of supporting the work and plans of strategic agencies (e.g. AONB's Management Plan)
- ensure that specific and compatible strategies are in place to address key components of the cultural scene (e.g. arts, sport, museums, events, environmental management) and distribute these strategies in summary format to all relevant interests
- publish the final Cultural Strategy in an attractive, user friendly format and distribute widely
- establish a representative monitoring group to prepare an Annual Action Plan and review implementation of the Strategy

5. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Cultural Strategy provides a framework to inform and influence a wide range of strategic and operational issues. It is structured to be valid for a five-year period from full adoption in 2004.

The Strategy should assist in presenting the case for cultural activities to support community life and economic growth and in guiding priorities in a period when resources for maintaining and developing cultural opportunities are under severe pressure. Implementation of the Strategy should also be aided by the production of an Annual Review and Action Plan. These should be undertaken and prepared by a broadly representative working group, co-ordinated by the Council. Implementation of specific, agreed actions would be undertaken by a variety of agencies and organisations working in partnership.

Appendix 1 sets out the Strategy Themes, Objectives and Action Framework together with suggested partners and estimated timescales in tabulated form. The framework of suggested actions has focused on priorities that link with many existing strategies, and therefore not all necessarily represent onerous additional tasks.