



ARTS STRATEGY FOR THE ISLE OF WIGHT 2002-2007

This new strategy for arts development on the Isle of Wight has been agreed in 2001, following a review and local consultation and discussion. This process was supported by Southern Arts.



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Why is an arts strategy important?

We are using a broad and inclusive understanding of 'the arts': popular culture as well as high art, voluntary and amateur activities as well as professional.

The arts are not a minority interest. Large numbers of people take part in arts activities of one kind or another. National research has demonstrated a high level of support for the arts and a belief that they make a positive contribution to society.

The arts are important for their own value. They contribute to the quality of life and are an important area of cultural and leisure activities.

They are also important in helping achieve wider public policy objectives, and in supporting the Isle of Wight Council's central purpose of improving Island life.

For example, the arts have a role to play in:

- education, lifelong learning and youth work
- promoting community safety
- economic development, job creation and tourism
- planning and environmental policies.

The arts strategy will:

- create a local framework for arts provision and development on the Island
- provide a focus for a shared vision for arts provision
- help the Isle of Wight Council to be clear about its involvement in the arts, and
- help the Council achieve and demonstrate 'Best Value'.

In agreeing a strategy for the arts, we will:

- listen to people and respond to local needs
- promote equal opportunities for everyone
- strive for continuing improvement in our services
- advocate on behalf of the arts, to help people understand the value and benefits of an arts strategy
- provide strategic leadership, working in partnership with other organisations.

What do we want to achieve?

The **vision** is to ensure that the arts are a vital and dynamic element in enhancing Island life, and to help develop the artistic and cultural resources of the Island.

The Council's **policy** is to promote and develop arts provision of quality and originality, for the benefit of the people of the Island and for visitors.

We want to increase the number and range of people experiencing the arts, and to encourage the widest possible range of access to the arts.

We acknowledge the contribution the arts are making to the Isle of Wight's social and economic growth, and to reinforcing local distinctiveness. We will create opportunities for the arts to reinforce and add value to corporate strategies, including the local cultural strategy, educational development plan, and strategies for the built and natural environment.

We will work in partnership with the local community and with other agencies to carry out our policy.

What would we like to see in five years' time?

We would like to see:

- the arts strategy being integrated into the Council's corporate planning
- greater opportunities for artists in all media, and more people earning a living in the creative industries
- greater opportunities for children and young people to work with artists, enhancing the quality of children's arts and arts education
- better venues, more responsive to present-day needs and making better use of available resources
- more stability for the main independent arts organisations
- more consistent availability of high quality small and mid-scale touring performances.

We would like the Isle of Wight to have:

- a reputation for high quality and innovative art, crafts, design, media and digital arts
- the quality of the Island environment enhanced through public art
- a reputation as *Carnival Island*
- the quality of experience for visitors and residents enhanced by arts as a regular feature of the street scene.

Objectives

What this means in practice will include working towards the following objectives:

1. Better opportunities for regular access to high quality arts work, in response to local demand

Main themes:

- Consolidating the position of the key independent organisations, especially *Quay Arts*, *Platform One* and *Healing Arts*.
- Supporting the voluntary sector.
- Better programming of venues and events, with small-scale professional touring performances to community venues, and regular visits by mid-scale and larger touring companies.
- Rationalising the Council's theatres provision, and achieving best use of venue resources.

2. A stronger independent artists sector, for the creativity artists bring to the community and to gain the benefits of the cultural economy for the Island

Main themes:

- Raising the profile of Island artists and makers.
- Encouraging sustainable employment in arts, crafts, design, and digital arts and media.
- Encouraging the formation of an artists' co-operative or consortium, to promote artist-led initiatives.

3. Supporting community regeneration and social inclusion

Main themes:

- Focussing special initiatives in communities and neighbourhoods of greatest need.
- Better disabled access at public venues used for the arts.
- Supporting the Island's strengths in Carnival.
- Encouraging the use of arts in promoting healthy living.
- Creating opportunities for arts work with some Social Services client groups, including the elderly and people with special needs.

4. Helping raise educational aspirations and achievements

Main themes:

- Establishing artists-in-residence projects.
- Establishing an education/outreach post attached to *Quay Arts*.
- Making stronger links between professional artists and education.
- Promoting opportunities for young people to engage with creative popular culture and technology.
- Encouraging creativity and career opportunities in interactive and digital new media.
- Bridging the gap between school and adult opportunities.
- Using the arts as a route into learning for other ends, such as health promotion, adult literacy and basic skills.

5. Promoting the role of the arts in supporting tourism, in collaboration with Isle of Wight Tourism

Main themes:

- Developing an *Island Arts* brand, to represent high quality original contemporary art, crafts and design.
- Developing an *Island Arts and Crafts Trail*, to promote galleries, studios, and crafts centres.
- Developing *Open Studios* events at studios not regularly open to the public.
- Promoting the Isle of Wight's distinctive cultural venues, carnivals and festivals, and encouraging lively street art and entertainment.
- Promoting the Isle of Wight to year-round specialist niche markets.

6. Enhancing the distinctiveness of the Island environment, through public art and environmental art

Main themes:

- Developing pilot projects using public art in Council-led developments, and making stronger links with planners, so that the arts are used as a way of enhancing the quality of the built and natural environment.
- Promoting good practice in commissioning public art, debating and adopting a public art strategy, and implementing the Council's public art policy guideline.
- Securing support from private developments for public and environmental art initiatives where appropriate.
- Using the arts as a way of involving people in environmental projects.

7. Raising the profile of the arts, through the Council's leadership role

Main themes:

- Using the Council's budget for arts development to support the priorities in this strategy.
- Ensuring that the role of the arts is one of the central elements in the local cultural strategy, and is included within other Council service plans.
- Working towards more flexibility and longer-term planning and stability for organisations with a substantial role in arts development on the Island.
- Providing small grants for local organisations for new and innovative work or ways of involving people.
- Advising and helping with funding bids.
- Supporting capacity-building in both the professional and voluntary arts sectors.
- Meeting Best Value requirements.

Action plan

Officers have agreed a detailed action plan to help deliver a five year programme.

Priorities for the first year of the plan include:

1. preparing to renegotiate contracts with the Council-owned theatres
2. securing the future of the small-scale touring scheme *Moving On* and the associated artists' development programme when the Lottery-funded work comes to an end
3. planning the next phase of Carnival development
4. promoting the role of arts in environmental improvements and urban regeneration at Ryde, and helping secure the future of *Island 2000*
5. helping secure the future sustainability of *The Quay Arts Centre*
6. developing a pilot community arts project in Ventnor, with the Ventnor Botanical Gardens.

Priorities for later years will be set as part of an annual review.

Further information

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