
TEES VALLEY CULTURE PLAN UPDATE

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Nick Wallis,
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Ada Burns, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report asks Members to support the recommendations in the Tees Valley Unlimited Culture Group Task and Finish report and to note recent cultural activity in Darlington.

Summary

2. The Local Enterprise Partnership, Tees Valley Unlimited, set up a Task and Finish Group to explore the contribution that arts and culture can make to the region's economic growth. The work focussed on three themes, the role of culture in creating a positive sense of place, in enhancing social inclusion, and in growing jobs and businesses.
3. The subsequent report, which is attached at **Appendix A**, was agreed by the Leadership Board of Tees Valley Unlimited in the summer, launched at an event at Teesside University's Forge in Darlington, and is now being considered by the five constituent Councils.
4. As a consequence of the work, a stronger role for culture is embedded within the Devolution Deal, and an intention to apply to be UK City of Culture 2025 was announced in July 2015. This ambition is linked to a wide understanding of the significant opportunity which the 200th Anniversary of the Stockton Darlington railway poses for the region to present an ambitious and innovative face to the outside world. There has been significant support for this ambition and for the view that culture can drive economic growth, support efforts to improve social inclusion and contribute to business growth.
5. The next step – implementation of all of the recommendations will require leadership and the development of an appropriate governance model and allocation of resources. Work is underway to identify what capacity already exists and what resources may be required to maximise opportunities leading up to and including 2025.

6. Darlington has played a significant role within the Task and Finish group and the model of Creative Darlington is held up as a positive example of ambition for culture within a challenging financial environment. In October 2015 One Darlington promoted a successful Assembly event focused on Darlington's "Culture of Ingenuity".

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Members:
 - (a) Support the recommendations in the Tees Valley Unlimited Task and Finish Group report attached at Appendix A.
 - (b) Ask the Health and Well-Being Board to consider the evidence base for arts interventions to address health inequalities.
 - (c) Note that further work is underway and will form part of the MTFP process to understand current capacity and resource requirements to support implementation.

Reasons

8. The recommendations is supported as the work of the Task and Finish Group aligned with the vision for culture within Darlington and the work of Creative Darlington partnership will help in furthering the cultural ambitions for Darlington.

**Ada Burns
Chief Executive**

Background Papers

Tees Valley Unlimited Task Finish Group Combined Report 14/07/15

Ada Burns : Extension 5813

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications in this report.
Health and Well Being	The report notes the evidence that arts programmes can have in tackling health inequalities and exclusion..
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	There are no specific diversity implications in this report.
Wards Affected	The report applies to all Darlington Borough Council wards.
Groups Affected	The recommendations within the report on addressing social inclusion relate to groups affected by worklessness, poor health and mental ill health
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	Not an Executive decision.
Urgent Decision	Not an Urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	All outcomes.
Efficiency	No significant impact on efficiency anticipated. The proposed 2025 and Tees Valley cultural report recommendations can be addressed within the existing Council structure.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

9. Darlington and the Tees Valley have seen considerable success in addressing the cultural agenda in recent times. The approach developed in the wake of the closure of the Arts Centre has received national attention and both the Chair and Chief Executive of the Arts Council have spoken positively about the Council's determination to sustain a vibrant cultural scene against a backdrop of severe cuts in funding.
10. Since 2012 Darlington has supported the growth of the Festival of Thrift to a national award winning festival (Observer Ethical Award, Arts and Culture), and worked with Darlington for Culture to promote Darlington Arts Festival.
11. Darlington Borough Council has supported Theatre Hullabaloo in securing capital funding from Arts Council England for the Hullaballoon, expected to open in 2017, and secured Heritage Lottery Fund to progress plans to restore Darlington Civic Theatre. Creative Darlington has worked in partnership with Teesside University to progress research and stage a national conference on social enterprise in the creative sector to The Forge in Darlington and with One Darlington to progress an Assembly event focused on our culture of ingenuity.
12. In July 2025, Tees Valley announced an intention to apply to be UK City of Culture in 2025, one of the recommendations within the Tees Valley Culture Task and Finish Group report. Bidding for UK City of Culture status will help put places on the map, and can help the Tees Valley to promote confidence around our cultural assets and ambitions. The indicative timescale for the 2025 UK City of Culture application process would see applications expected to be submitted around 2021.
13. In addition it should be noted that many of Darlington's cultural objectives and those within the Tees Valley report are sympathetic to the Case for Culture report developed by the North East Cultural Partnership (of which Darlington is a member) and launched at Durham Cathedral, July 2015.

Next Steps

14. The Tees Valley Councils and TVU have commissioned a short piece of work following the report launch to explore and scope the capacity currently supporting cultural activity, and the governance and resources required to fully implement the ambitions within the report, and in particular the proposals related to 2025. Lessons from other areas that have successfully and unsuccessfully bid for City/Capital of Culture awards are also being gathered to inform the plans ahead.
15. Other recommendations related to collaboration on programming and marketing can be delivered from within existing resources and the existing networks of Council officers involved in cultural activity are working together to implement these.

16. The recommendations within the theme around social inclusion are felt to be of particular interest to commissioners of health and public health interventions and it is therefore recommended that the Health and Well Being Board schedule an agenda item on this element of the report.

Financial Implications

17. It is likely that the creation of an independent governance structure and the development of a strong application by the Tees Valley to become UK City of Culture 2025, in addition to other recommendations within the report, will require resources to be allocated by Darlington Borough Council alongside other partners in due course, but these are not yet known.
18. The Council has significantly reduced its funding for cultural activity and faces severe pressures within its Medium Term Financial Plan. However the capacity audit being undertaken across the Tees Valley will help to inform a view on resources, together with discussions following from the Devolution Deal on the role that the Arts Council can and should play to support activity within this region.

Consultation

19. There were two events initiating and bringing to a conclusion the Task and Finish group work. In addition the leads for the three workstreams engaged widely with local authorities, business, arts organisations, FE colleges, Teesside University, and various stakeholders, to inform the development of recommendations within the Tees Valley report.