

A New Cultural Strategy for Hampshire ?

Discussion Document

Background

*Enjoying Hampshire – helping people make the most of living in and visiting Hampshire*¹ was adopted by the County Council as one of its core strategic document in 2003. Since then it has underpinned the development of the Council's cultural, sporting and recreational services and guided the approach to its growing cultural partnerships with other local authorities, government agencies and cultural institutions.

The strategy defined a set of unifying principles for the development of the Council's cultural services:

Stewardship – conserving and caring for the cultural heritage

Equality of access to cultural services

Increasing and broadening participation in cultural activities

Promoting inclusiveness in service provision

Supporting learning at all levels

Securing economic benefits from cultural activity

Valuing local distinctiveness and sense of place.

The strategy went on to create a vision for Hampshire in which the County Council and its partners would:

Support the preservation, conservation, development and promotion of Hampshire's cultural heritage

Enable forward looking, innovative and creative cultures to flourish in the county

Encourage affordable easy access to high quality cultural activities and facilities for all

¹ See <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/recreation-and-heritage/cultural-strategy.htm>

Facilitate the recognition and understanding of the history of Hampshire and its people, in the context of United Kingdom, European and world history

Ensure that learning opportunities offered by the cultural facilities and activities of Hampshire are fully utilised

Promote and encourage the sharing of the cultures of minority groups within the county, and

Ensure that cultural activity plays an increasing role in the economy of the county in a sustainable way.

No specific timetable was set for the review of the strategy's effectiveness and continuing relevance, but during 2006 limited consultation took place with a view to updating and revising it. However, it is now clear that significant developments during the last year at both the national and the local level need to be considered and assimilated.

Firstly, the County Council has reviewed and revised its own corporate strategy. Under the banner "*Looking after Hampshire, looking out for you*" clear priorities and specific targets have been set and a corporate business plan has been developed to support delivery.²

In the autumn of 2006 the government published *Strong and Prosperous Communities*³, its White Paper on the future of local government. This set out far reaching and ambitious proposals for the reform of the relationship between central and local government. More details emerged as the enabling legislation passed through its Parliamentary stages during this year. The central concept is the revitalising of Local Strategic Partnerships, led by local authorities, with responsibilities for producing new Sustainable Community Strategies delivered through Local Area Agreements negotiated with government. Existing performance management regimes (Comprehensive Performance Assessments etc.) would be replaced by a scaled down regulatory framework that would concentrate on the capacity of Local Strategic Partnerships to deliver improvements against the agreed local priorities.

At the same time, the County Council has been examining with other local authorities in the county how the existing two tier system of local administration (three tier in parished areas) could be improved. These discussions have been given added impetus by the publication of the Local Government White Paper. The "constitutional conversation" has explored the possibility of instituting a "Hampshire Senate" supported by a number of

² See <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/corporate-strategy-home/performance-plan>

³ Department for Communities and Local Government *Strong and Prosperous Communities – the Local Government White Paper* October 2006, Cm 6939-1

formally constituted county-wide strategic partnerships on key themes, including culture, leisure and sport.

The revision of *Enjoying Hampshire* was originally seen as a largely technical exercise. With these major developments over the last year, we have come to the conclusion that the County Council needs to carry out a more fundamental reassessment of its cultural policies in consultation with its partners.

The County Council is publishing this document as a first contribution to the debate about the future strategic direction for cultural services in the county. At this stage, we have not reached any definite conclusions and the document does not make any detailed proposals. We want to stimulate discussion of key concepts and come to a better understanding of the factors influencing the cultural life of the county. We then want to develop through further consultation a new cultural strategy that is relevant to current and future needs.

The discussion document is laid out in two main parts. The first is concerned with the understanding of key concepts. It moves from looking at various definitions of culture, through a survey of new concepts of cultural value to a suggestion that cultural entitlement might be a key principle of a new strategy. The second part reviews the specific factors affecting the future cultural life of Hampshire. A brief sketch of the special quality of Hampshire's cultural geography is followed by an outline of a range of demographic, social and economic factors that will affect the cultural life of the county over the coming years.

This document is concerned mainly with the role of public bodies and cultural institutions in the cultural life of the county, but we would also really like to hear the thoughts of anybody who has an interest in these issues. To help focus responses, a number of questions are posed at the end of each main section and we would particularly value your comments on these. The results of this consultation will be published at the end of the year.

Over to you...

What is culture?

Culture is a difficult word. It is loaded with all sorts of meaning.

For some people, culture is the essence of life -

"Culture is the process by which a person becomes all that they were created capable of being"

(Thomas Carlyle, philosopher)

"Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living"

(T S Eliot, poet)

But culture can easily provoke negative reactions -

"Whenever I hear the word culture, I reach for my pistol"

(Attributed to Hermann Goering, Nazi politician)

Lofty ideas and strong views are everywhere in discussions of culture, but do they really define it? Do we need to define it? Ideas about culture change over time and tracing these changes helps to unpick some of the difficulties and confusions.

According to Matthew Arnold, the 19th century English poet, critic and educationalist, culture is "contact with the best that has been thought and said in the world". It is "properly described as the love of perfection; it is the study of perfection". The prevailing 19th century and early 20th century understanding of culture as being concerned with aesthetics and the refinement of thought and artistic expression still has a powerful resonance. But this notion of "high culture" makes many people uncomfortable, resistant or downright hostile and is easily mocked. W S Gilbert, Arnold's younger contemporary, famously satirised the pretentiousness that can surround this concept of culture –

*"If you're anxious for to shine in the high æsthetic line as a man of culture rare,
You must get up all the germs of the transcendental terms, and plant them
ev'rywhere.
You must lie upon the daisies and discourse in novel phrases of your complicated
state of mind,
The meaning doesn't matter if it's only idle chatter of a transcendental kind.
And ev'ry one will say,
As you walk your mystic way,
"If this young man expresses himself in terms too deep for me,
Why, what a very singularly deep young man this deep young man must be!"*

(Bunthorne, the poet, in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*)

Over the last half century the “high culture” concept has been supplemented if not displaced by an equally powerful understanding coming out of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. This roots the idea of culture in the experience of people going about their everyday lives.

“I use the term culture to refer collectively to a society and its way of life or in reference to human culture as a whole... Culture involves at least three components: what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce. Thus, mental processes, beliefs, knowledge, and values are parts of culture.”

(John H Bodley, American cultural anthropologist)

Put another way:

“Culture is roughly everything we do and monkeys don’t”

(Fitzroy Somerset, 4th Baron Raglan, soldier and scholar)

So we find that modern dictionary definitions of culture embrace the traditional “high culture” concept and a newer and broader understanding of what culture is all about –

culture (noun)

- the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively; a refined understanding or appreciation of culture
- the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society; the attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group.

(from *The Oxford Dictionary of English (revised edition)*. Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005)

There is also a functional, bureaucratic definition of culture used in this country to identify the activities and institutions that currently fall within the competence of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in England (different approaches are taken by the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The “culture” part of the title refers specifically to the arts, architecture and design, museums and galleries, libraries, archives and the built and historic environment. But the ministerial portfolio also includes broadcasting and the creative industries, sport, tourism, gambling and horse racing, the national lottery and the licensing of entertainment venues and alcohol sales. All of these fall within a broader social definition of

culture. And why stop there? Surely culture can also cover the natural environment and our use of the land and natural resources. It also influences our attitudes to education, health and well-being and sharpens our sense of individual and community identity. So the notion of culture strays across administrative boundaries in Whitehall, county halls and civic offices to pervade all aspects of the public services. In this way, culture becomes the concern of all public servants, not just the cultural professionals.

But what stance should we take on this in Hampshire? If culture is to be understood in its broadest and most general sense, it can include any or all of these ideas and the implications for public bodies will be profound and far-reaching – and not just those parts of them that carry a “cultural services” label.

Culture is a difficult word. Because of this difficulty, the language we use can be confusing, obscure or completely impenetrable, particularly when we talk about the value of culture. But the idea of value has to be at the heart of any discussion about how public bodies use their resources. This issue is taken up in the next section of this document.

Questions for you –

1. Do we need a definition and shared understanding of culture and, if so, are the ideas set out in the consultation document useful?
2. Can you agree the following propositions:
 - Culture means something to everyone
 - Culture is always changing
 - Culture is inclusive not exclusive?

How do we value culture?

It isn't easy; some would say it's impossible! But culture plays a big part in most people's lives. A recent study by the European Commission⁴ found that, across Europe, nearly 80% of people think culture is important to them personally.

Our individual responses to cultural stimuli and the benefits we derive from them are personal and unique. People get something from looking at a Constable landscape or a Caro sculpture, but precisely what is that benefit and how do you place an objective value on it? How can you put a value on what a village community gets out of a show by the Strange Face Theatre Company or a Shoo Shoo Baby gig? How do you value the life-changing experience a struggling teenager has through a Creative Hampshire workshop? And these experiences aren't unique to the arts. People get profound personal benefit through engaging with museum and archive collections, through reading, through taking part in and watching sport, through their contact with the natural environment. What price these benefits? What price culture?

Nobody has a definitive answer to these questions, but our understanding of the value created by cultural experiences has been advanced considerably by the work of John Holden and his colleagues at the think tank Demos. He argues⁵ that we should recognise three fundamental types of cultural value:

Intrinsic – the value that derives from our individual intellectual, emotional and spiritual experience of culture; because of its individual nature it is almost impossible to measure and compare

Domain Field

For seven weeks through February and March 2005 Winchester's Great Hall hosted an exhibition of Antony Gormley's Domain Field sculptures presided over by Alfred Gilbert's bronze statue of Queen Victoria. Nearly 34,000 people visited the exhibition and many took the opportunity to record their impressions in the Hall's visitor book. Here is a small sample:

"It's so beautiful" "Spooky" "A wonderful vision" "Very sticky!!"

"I felt they were made of electricity" "Mesmerising – walking with ghosts!"

"Venue all wrong" "Loved the Gormley exhibition; ideal venue"

"Human, spiritual, moving – put Queen Vic in her place" "I like Queen Victoria"

"Beam me up Antony!"

⁴ *European Cultural Values (Special Eurobarometer 278)* TNS Opinion and Social, Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission 2007

⁵ *Capturing Cultural Value* John Holden, Demos 2004

Instrumental – the value that results from the collective social and economic effects of cultural experiences; frequent but imperfect attempts are made to measure this value in terms of outputs, outcomes and impacts

Activehearts

This project, which started as a pilot in 2003, takes high quality activities and performances into all 32 of Hampshire County Council's residential and nursing homes. Over 1,000 events are programmed each year including, professional performance, music participation, arts and crafts, words and rhyme, armchair exercise and reminiscence sessions. Continuous evaluation of the project has demonstrated the impact on the quality of life of residents.

"I've seen the magical effect your musical shows have on older friends – you are providing a vital service, making a real difference to the lives of the elderly people you reach out to during your performances. Long may it continue." Activity Coordinator, Bulmer House, Petersfield

Through a partnership with Southampton University, clinical research is helping to understand the physiology of this type of therapy.

Institutional – the value attaching to cultural institutions; this value is akin to the accounting concept of goodwill and is most clearly expressed where people say that an institution (a library, an art gallery etc.) has a value to them or their community even though they do not use it themselves

Save our Westy!

West End Arts Centre – the Westy – has provided an arts venue for people in Aldershot for two decades. It has a strong track record in spotting emerging talent on the rock scene. Earlier this year rumours began to circulate that the Westy was to be closed. The strength of local reaction against this was evident from the vigorous campaign mounted by the local newspaper and in a series of public meetings. Hampshire County Council has now postponed any decision on the future of the Westy until a full consultation on the available options has gauged local preferences.

The Westy is a very real and graphic example of high institutional value that goes beyond any conventional measures of attendance or audience.

Holden has gone on to explore how these different types of value are used and confused in conversations between the public, government (politicians and public servants) and cultural practitioners (individuals and institutions) about cultural issues⁶. His view is that, because of an increasing need to justify public expenditure in terms of measurable outputs and outcomes, too much emphasis is given to a dialogue that is couched almost exclusively in the language of instrumentalism. Thus the instrumental value of culture has come to dominate discussions and negotiations between politicians and public servants at national, regional and local levels, cultural institutions and cultural practitioners. The real but intangible benefit that comes directly from people's individual cultural experiences and the public "goods" created by cultural institutions is undervalued or ignored. Cultural policy becomes a closed conversation among supposed experts.

So, although the value people get from cultural experiences is direct, personal and unique, it is instrumental value that has become, almost exclusively, the currency of debates about public policy and, most critically, about the public funding of culture.

John Holden's stimulating arguments on cultural value are part of a general concern about the value created by public services. Concepts of "public value" have been explored and extended through research undertaken by the Work Foundation for a group of sponsors including the DCMS, Home Office, BBC, Metropolitan Police, London Borough of Lewisham and the Capita Group. The research team's final report on this work⁷ offers a framework for understanding public value and how public services and institutions should use this to increase the impact of what they do. The main conclusion drawn from this work is that the key to the creation of public value is an improved dialogue with people as citizens, rather than merely as consumers of services - an idea that is at the heart of John Holden's work on cultural value. He argues that this is the most productive way of re-establishing an appropriate balance between intrinsic, instrumental and institutional considerations.

These new conceptual understandings of cultural value and public value provided by John Holden and the Work Foundation are all very well and help to cut through the fog, but how much do we know about whether people in Hampshire value cultural experiences and use cultural facilities? And what do they think about the quality of what is on offer in the county?

The best and most comprehensive picture we have comes from surveys of Hampshire residents carried out by the polling organisation Ipsos MORI for the County Council⁸. The consistent picture that emerges from these surveys is that Hampshire has relatively high levels of participation in cultural activities

⁶ *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* John Holden, Demos 2006

⁷ *Deliberative democracy and the role of public sector managers -final report of the Work Foundation's public value consortium* Louise Horner, Rohit Lekhi and Ricardo Blaug, Work Foundation 2006

⁸ See the note at the end of this section for background on these surveys

and that services and facilities are generally highly regarded by users. But the picture is not uniform across the county or between different socio-economic groups. Hart and Rushmoor have significantly lower use and satisfaction ratings than other parts of the county. Participation in cultural activities and use of cultural services in the county is concentrated disproportionately in the 35 to 64 age group and among the more affluent. As might be expected, non participants are considerably less satisfied with what is on offer. The lowest satisfaction levels are expressed by non participants on low incomes. So, assuming that participation and satisfaction can be taken as proxies for value, not everyone in Hampshire is sharing in the benefits.

While the information coming out of these surveys is interesting and provides some sort of benchmark for certain aspects of culture in Hampshire, they are only a partial guide for future action. But we do get occasional glimpses of important currents in the attitudes and behaviour of people that demand responses from public bodies in the county. Here are two examples –

The Define Report

In 2005 Define Research and Insight undertook a study of attitudes towards public libraries among young people for the DCMS, Laser Foundation and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council⁹. This demonstrated very clearly the growing irrelevance of traditional library services to the lives of young people and that countering their negative perceptions is a major marketing task for libraries. But the report did hold out hope that libraries could re-engage with many young people if they develop a better understanding of lifestyle changes and become more fleet of foot in adapting services to their needs. The report then goes on to make practical recommendations on the changes libraries should make.

Gosport Discovery Centre

During the planning for the redevelopment of the town centre library in Gosport as the first of the County Council's Discovery Centres, qualitative research was undertaken among young people in the town on their perception of libraries and other cultural facilities in their area¹⁰. One of the most fascinating insights from this work was the identification of a need among young people for a communal place where they felt safe from some of the negative influences in their lives but which, at the same time, allowed them to express their independence. Many viewed the Discovery Centre as potentially offering them this safe environment. The Centre was designed with this in mind and results since opening suggest that young people increasingly see the Discovery Centre as a place for them.

⁹ *A Research Study of 14 – 35 year olds for the Future Development of Public Libraries*
Define Research and Insight 2005

¹⁰ *Research into young people's attitudes towards and usage of libraries and Discovery Centres*
Sian Butler, Hampshire County Council Recreation and Heritage Department 2004

One strong conclusion from our analysis of Hampshire's cultural landscape is that we do not have available to us enough of this type of high quality research designed specifically to help strategic thinking and guide policies. There is a critical need to develop and refine our research and intelligence capability– at the moment we are flying without radar!

Questions for you -

3. Do we need a definition and shared understanding of the value of culture and, if so, are the ideas set out in the consultation document useful?
4. Do you think we know enough about how people in Hampshire value culture. If not, what needs to be done and by whom?

Note on Hampshire Residents Surveys

Since 1999 Ipsos MORI has carried out biennial opinion surveys among adult residents of Hampshire. These involve face to face interviews with approximately 1,700 people for each survey exploring a range of issues including use of and satisfaction with the following categories of cultural services:

- Libraries and archives
- Heritage and museums
- Community centres
- Support for theatres, music arts and festivals
- Countryside sites including country parks
- Country footpaths and bridleways.

Statistical analysis of the survey results allows valid conclusions to be drawn about use and satisfaction at district level and identifies differences between various demographic groups.

Is there such a thing as a “cultural entitlement”?

The idea that there are fundamental human rights relating to culture and cultural expression is enshrined in various international conventions –

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

(Article 22)

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(Article 27(1))

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

(Article 31(1))

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

(Article 31(2))

Some countries, Sweden and Finland for example, have given these rights a constitutional and legal basis. In Britain there is no comparable legal status for cultural rights, although the Scottish Executive has considered and consulted on the possibility of placing cultural rights and entitlements on a statutory footing¹¹. In England, the DCMS's five year plan¹² for the period 2005 to 2010 makes a number of commitments to the public, including –

We will persuade more people (especially those at risk of social exclusion) to participate in culture, sport and physical activity by publicising the benefits and improving facilities.

We will make sure that everyone – particularly people from those groups who have not taken up opportunities in the past – has the option to take part in our rich cultural life.

We will improve sporting opportunities for children. We will also build a comprehensive offer to them on culture.

¹¹ *Scotland's Culture: Scottish Executive Response on the Cultural Review* Scottish Executive, 2006

¹² *Living Life to the Full* DCMS, 2005

There is clearly a growing recognition that people in this country should expect to enjoy a rich and fulfilling cultural life. But does this amount to an entitlement, in the same way that people expect that, as citizens, they are entitled to schooling, health care or fire and rescue services? Local authorities in other parts of the country are thinking along similar lines. South Tyneside Council, for example, has put culture at the centre of its Community Strategy¹³ and Local Area Agreement¹⁴.

"The cultural renaissance of the region is central to its regeneration... The Cultural Strategy sets out our ambition to put culture at the heart of regeneration."

(A Spirit of Change: South Tyneside's Community Strategy and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy South Tyneside Council, 2004)

We believe that the time is right to discuss the possibility of a cultural entitlement in Hampshire. But we are wary of a "top down" approach that leaves definition of this entitlement in the hands of narrow sectoral interests and cultural "experts". Our view is that any idea of a cultural entitlement for Hampshire should be rooted in an understanding of what Hampshire people need and want. But we have to accept that it will be difficult to generalise about this and be prepared to work within a context that recognises the diversity of Hampshire's people and places.

It is vital that local authorities, cultural agencies and cultural organisations pool their knowledge and find new ways of tapping into the experiences and aspirations of people in Hampshire. There is a clear link here to the conclusions reached in our consideration of the value of culture about the need for better information and more effective engagement with people as citizens. But this goes further in calling on all public bodies and cultural institutions in Hampshire to focus their attention on their conversations with people about the place of culture in their lives as individuals and in their communities.

Questions for you -

5. Is it legitimate to discuss the possibility of a cultural entitlement in Hampshire?
6. If so, how should that entitlement be defined and established?
7. What would be the implications for public bodies and cultural institutions of a cultural entitlement in Hampshire?

¹³ See http://www.southtyneside.info/search/tempDocuments/tmp_59373.pdf

¹⁴ See http://www.southtyneside.info/search/tempDocuments/tmp_60780.pdf

What's so special about Hampshire?

"Most writers claim for their 'copy-hold' that it is the choicest bit of our choice Homeland. This is a praiseworthy attitude. But not on this account, nor with any desire to cast aspersions on my fellow writers do I assert that Hampshire is the most perfect of English counties, and the most representative corner of England!"

(D H Moutray Read, *Highways and Byways in Hampshire*)

That was the appreciation of Hampshire by a popular topographical writer in the early 1900s and many people in Hampshire today share that view! But what makes Hampshire such a special place?

Hampshire lies at the heart of central southern England – a geographical fact that has influenced much of the history and culture of the county. Its borders stretch from Havant in the east to include the New Forest in the west; from the shores of the Solent in the south to within twenty miles of London in the north. One of the largest counties in England, it has a population of over 1.2 million people in the administrative county alone. Taking into account the cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, 1.7 million people live within Hampshire's borders.

The landscape of Hampshire is rich, varied and steeped in history. Its distinctive character has been shaped by centuries of human activity. The chalk uplands were cleared of forest in prehistoric times and have been grazed by sheep for millennia. The ancient woodland and lowland heath of the New Forest has survived through its appropriation to the Crown as a Royal hunting reserve - William Rufus met his untimely death hunting in the New Forest. The river valleys have been settled and farmed since Saxon times and the clear waters of Hampshire's chalk streams are internationally renowned for angling. The sheltered harbours of the Solent were the cradle of the British Navy – they are now a mecca for yachtsmen from across the world. With one National Park, one proposed National Park and four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Hampshire's landscape is exceptional by any standards.

Local materials – thatch, wood, flint, cob and locally made bricks – are blended in varying combinations in the vernacular architecture of the county and give Hampshire's villages and towns their special character. Other building materials had to be brought to the county and so were reserved for churches, castles and great houses. Winchester's Cathedral and Great Hall, Highclere Castle and the Vyne, to name but a few, are gems of Hampshire's historic architectural heritage. Today, outstanding contemporary architecture like Woodlea Primary School in Bordon or the TAG Aviation building at Farnborough Airport is making its mark on the built environment of the county.

Historically, Hampshire's life and culture has been shaped by many factors. Under Alfred the Great the artistic and intellectual flowering of the Saxon Kingdom of Wessex, with its focus in Winchester, rivalled that of the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne. In the 10th and 11th centuries Winchester Cathedral was in the mainstream of the political and cultural life of medieval Europe. Portsmouth, seventy five miles from London and a hundred miles from France, has played a major part in the nation's naval history and Southampton has been a gateway to Britain since Roman times. Aldershot is known as the home of the British Army and nearby Farnborough saw the pioneering of aviation in this country. History has bequeathed to Hampshire a unique legacy of castles, fortifications, great houses, historic ships, museum collections and archives.

Many people from outside the county picture Hampshire as a traditional and unchanging place, but it is, and has always been, a cosmopolitan and multi-racial society, at least in its cities and major towns. Because of its maritime and military history, the indigenous culture of Hampshire has absorbed many external influences through the comings and goings of people from across the world. Throughout the 20th century, international conflict, new political alliances and the retreat from Empire have brought willing and unwilling migrants to the county. Many have settled, adding something of their native cultures to the rich mix.

Energy at the local level, excellence and diversity are the three key characteristics that define cultural opportunities in Hampshire today. This is underpinned by solid foundations developed over many years through investment by local authorities, government agencies and the private and voluntary sectors.

Local authorities provide local libraries, museums, leisure centres, schools, theatres, small scale arts centres, playgrounds, etc. These facilities are backed up by an extensive network of community centres and village halls. Local authorities in Hampshire provide opportunities for countryside recreation through their management of country parks, countryside sites, footpaths and bridleways, long distance paths and cycle ways.

There is a strong infrastructure for sport and physical recreation provided through leisure centres, schools and voluntary sports groups, which offer opportunities at all levels of experience.

Hampshire is home to a wealth of artists, craftspeople, writers and musicians providing a reservoir of talent and a base for the cultural and creative industries, including media production, publishing and design.

The county's museums and archives collect, preserve, interpret and present the material evidence of Hampshire's culture, history and environment, including contemporary material. Hampshire Record Office is recognised as a centre of excellence and its archive is designated as being of national and international importance. These collections provide a fundamental platform for learning and research at all levels from individual enthusiasms, through curriculum based learning in schools to advanced scholarship.

Hampshire's culture is a unique and precious commodity. The care of the cultural heritage and the cultivation of new means of cultural expression that are relevant to the people of Hampshire today and in the future must be a concern of the County Council and its partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Questions for you –

8. What role do you think local authorities and other public bodies should play in preserving and conserving Hampshire's cultural heritage?
9. What role do you think local authorities and other public bodies should play in developing and promoting new types of cultural expression?

But things are changing

Hampshire is a special place, but it can't stand still. A wide range of pressures, trends and influences will affect the cultural life of the county over the coming years and decades.

Changing population¹⁵

The latest projections for the administrative county of Hampshire suggest that the population will grow to over 1.3 million by the middle of the third decade of this century – an increase of approximately 7%. This growth will not be evenly distributed across the county. The districts of Basingstoke and Deane, Eastleigh and Winchester are all expected to experience significantly higher growth than the average for the county. Fareham's population is expected to grow by 20% over this period. In contrast, the overall populations of East Hampshire and Hart will be static and those of Gosport and New Forest will show a small decline.

These projections are based on current plans for housing growth and do not take account of the government's latest proposals for accelerating the house building programme in the south east of England.

At the same time, the population will be ageing. Over the next two decades all districts, apart from Fareham and Winchester, will see a decline in the proportion of their populations who are under 16. In New Forest, the proportion of under 16s will drop by 22%. By contrast the proportion of over 65s will increase significantly. Currently around 17% of the county's population is of pensionable age. By 2026 this will have risen to 23%. By 2026 a third of the people living in New Forest district will be over 65.

These major demographic changes, compounded by migration between Hampshire and other parts of the UK and, increasingly, other countries, will have a profound effect on the cultural life of the county and the demand for cultural facilities and services. Our ability to predict the cultural impact of these changes is in its infancy.

¹⁵ The source for all figures quoted in this section is data and projections from Hampshire County Council Environment Department. These are summarised in its publication *The Demographic Future of Hampshire*, see: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/planning/factsandfigures/population-statistics/publications-and-reports/demographic-future-hants.htm>

Social and economic change

Hampshire and its culture is not immune to external influence. Proximity to London has always had a major impact on the life of the county. London has been an important market for Hampshire's farmers and growers for centuries. Now, large numbers of people commute to jobs in the capital on a daily basis. This gravitational pull is unlikely to diminish. It means that many people look to London for culture and leisure. Cultural institutions and services in Hampshire exist in an economy where there is strong competition from the metropolitan region. To compete, local cultural producers must trade on their distinctiveness and high quality. But will the weight of London stifle local provision?

And Hampshire feels the effect of wider social and economic trends. Globalisation of culture and economic activity brings strong new influences on the life of Hampshire people. National and international media and the internet continue to open up new channels for the exchange of ideas. Many cultural commentators have warned of the "homogenisation" of culture and the loss of local identity. This is linked to fears about the loss of social cohesion, the fragmentation of communities and the collapse of civic values. Is this the future for Hampshire?

Economic change is having an effect on the nature of employment. The development of a post industrial "knowledge economy" has put a premium on new skills based on information, creativity and innovation. The emergence of an "hour-glass economy", where jobs are concentrated at the higher and lower ends of the skill and knowledge spectrum, again emphasises the need for a different approach to education and learning. The South East England Development Agency's regional economic strategy¹⁶ emphasises the major role that cultural services can play in developing these new life skills. It also recognises the significant direct and indirect impact that the cultural and creative industries have on the economic prosperity of the region. This is the fastest growing sector of the regional economy and currently provides jobs for nearly 15% of the regional workforce. The indirect effects on the economy are equally important; the richness of cultural facilities coupled with an attractive natural and built environment provide a quality of life that currently gives the south east region a unique competitive advantage. Will this continue?

The level of funding of public services will have a continuing impact on cultural provision in the county. Government priorities in education, health and housing increase the pressure on local authorities and other public bodies to concentrate their finite resources in these areas. In this climate, cultural

¹⁶ *Regional Economic Strategy 2006 – 2016: A Framework for Sustainable Prosperity* South East England Development Agency, 2006 see: http://www.seeda.co.uk/RES/docs/RES_2006-2016.pdf

services must continue to demonstrate that they are a vital component in delivering wider social outcomes for learning, health, well-being and social cohesion. Can they do this?

Questions for you –

10. What factors do you think will have a significant impact on the cultural life of Hampshire over the next two decades?
11. What role do you think local authorities and other public bodies should play in shaping Hampshire's cultural facilities and services in the future?
12. Does Hampshire need a Cultural Strategy?