

Enriching Our Lives - Wirral's Cultural Strategy

Public Summary Document

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Enriching Our Lives - Wirral's Cultural Strategy

Public summary document

Introduction

Background

'Culture' in its widest sense has so much to offer, bringing enjoyment and pleasure to thousands in Wirral, whether that be through walking by the coast or in the park, reading a book, visiting the theatre, attending a concert, playing football or going for a swim at the local leisure centre. Culture has important value in its own right, it is what we do out of choice and it can make a positive difference to our quality of life. 'Culture' helps to inform, educate and widen horizons. It can release impulses, creative, sporting or educative, that allow individuals, groups and communities to fulfil their potential.

Context

The Government is placing an increasingly important emphasis on the role of Cultural Services in the new millennium. In doing so all Local Authorities have been asked by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to produce a local cultural strategy by 2002 and which will be one of the National Performance Indicators for Best Value. Culture can also make a considerable contribution to the Council's corporate objectives and Wirral's community plan by encouraging people to become healthier, promoting social inclusion & interaction, engaging & involving communities, contributing to urban & rural regeneration and by enhancing & protecting the environment (see Appendix 1.0 for MBW Corporate Context). The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral is leading the development of the local cultural strategy.

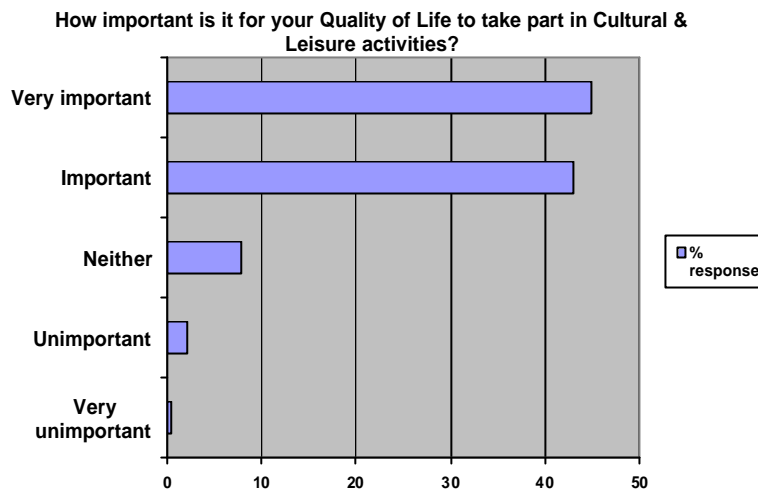
Cultural Strategy Development

'Enriching our Lives' has been developed through an inclusive process of consultation and partnership with: the general public, the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. In developing the Cultural Strategy there has been strong commitment and interest from all the sectors in working together in partnership to make a difference to the quality of life of all the people who live in, work in or visit Wirral.

Consultation

Wide consultation has already been undertaken with the public, council departments, key agencies and other public and private organisations throughout the Borough, Merseyside and the North West. In developing the Cultural Strategy the focus has been on the needs of the people of Wirral and for it to be relevant and meaningful this strategy is only the start of an ongoing communication process. The results of the consultation have formed the basis of the themes and priorities that need to be addressed.

The graph below highlights how important it is for the public's quality of life to take part in cultural and leisure activities. Over 88% said it was either important or very important to their quality of life to participate in cultural or leisure activities.



Time-scales and Review

This will be a five-year strategy with annual monitoring of the action plan and reporting via the annual reports. It will be kept 'live' throughout its life span through the action plan and by the ongoing process of consultation and through the steering group that will oversee the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the strategy.

Aims of the Cultural Strategy

'Enriching our Lives' – Wirral's Cultural Strategy outlines the cultural vision for the future, the themes and priorities that need to be addressed and sets out the cultural objectives. It suggests actions that should be taken to enrich people's lives now and in the future by Council departments and the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and shows how culture and cultural activities will contribute to the local, regional and national key policy areas.

Wirral's Cultural Strategy aims to;

- Develop services which are in touch with the people of Wirral, influenced by them and responsive to their changing needs and expectations.
- Develop policies, services and activities that address the national cross cutting agendas of public health, community safety, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, regeneration and lifelong learning and to address the local authorities corporate objectives.
- Improve access to culture and cultural activities for all people widening user base and persuading them to continue taking part.
- Inform people in a clear and positive manner about what is available, when, where and how they can participate.
- Offer value for money services, which are friendly, welcoming and measurable against published criteria.

Strategic Context

What do we mean by 'Culture'?

Culture means different things to different people but can be for the purpose of this strategy fundamentally defined as a 'way of life' and a 'sense of place'. Culture in its widest sense is integral to, and the product of, everyday life and is interwoven with the human spirit. Culture can therefore be broadly defined under two areas:

A way of life

- **Activities and attractions such as arts, sport, museums, parks, libraries, theatres, children's play and tourism**

Culture can be used as a tool for positive change, assisting with community development through sports and arts projects, contributing to economic progress through tourism and by promoting environmental responsibility through enhancing wildlife habitats. Culture and cultural activities are also about enjoyment and fun and have value in their own right. Other dimensions that enrich our lives and enhance our 'way of life' are:

- the performing and visual arts, media and broadcasting
- libraries and literature
- museums, art galleries, historical archives
- sport – facilities, events, spectating, developing, and participating.
- parks and green spaces
- children's play and community centres
- tourism festivals and attractions
- informal recreation, socialising
- commercial leisure, eating out, pubs and clubs

A sense of place

- **The local geography, coast and countryside, history, buildings, identity and character of the area.**

Culture in Wirral links the present, past and future and can bring communities together. Culture helps provide a common focus for particular audiences e.g. young people, older people, ethnic minority populations, and people with disabilities. Wirral's culture is also about relationships, shared memories, experiences and identity. It is about inherited and learned ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge. Other dimensions that contribute to a 'sense of place' in Wirral include;

- sense of community
- heritage and history
- built environment
- coastline and countryside
- individuality, identity and external image
- cultural diversity
- religious diversity

Cultural Vision

The cultural vision of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral and its Partners is:

To improve the 'Quality of Life' for people who live in, work in and visit Wirral through culture - by working towards:

- **A more accessible Wirral**
 - through providing activities and services locally, by improving transport to cultural activities, offering access to a wide range of cultural experiences at an affordable price and in safety. Ensuring that all sectors of the community have access to cultural experiences.

- **A more sustainable Wirral**
 - through promoting and developing tourism, encouraging inward investment through culture. Promoting volunteering, protecting & enhancing our heritage, coast & countryside and the general environment. Improving health and finding new ways of resourcing and sustaining activities and services.

- **Better communications in Wirral**
 - through marketing and consultation. Improving interpretation at cultural sites, celebrating and communicating the wealth of opportunities existing cultural activities, events and opportunities.

The above vision forms the base for the strategy's priorities and objectives.

Cultural themes

Six themes were identified and agreed during the consultation process and are areas in which much positive development is already underway. However, there is much more that has yet to be achieved if the quality of life for all the people of Wirral is going to improve.

A healthy Wirral

- Participating in cultural activities can make a significant contribution to improving health and physical & mental well being. Physical activity and exercise is recognised as one of the best ways to achieve health improvements along with reducing smoking and healthier eating. Wirral offers a vast amount of opportunities for physical activity at any level from competitive sport to gentle walking. These can all be done through the nine sports and leisure centres, six swimming pools, private health and fitness clubs, 14 woodland and links golf courses, 20 miles of coast line, 1,240 hectares of parks and open spaces, 112 outdoor sports pitches and 79 play grounds!

The importance of increasing physical activity has been through the development of Wirral's Physical Activity Strategy. This strategy has been commissioned by Health Links on behalf of the National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease

Health Promotion Partnership in Wirral. Wirral's Healthy Communities Partnership Project is delivered through the authority's Sport & Recreation section for its 17 partners. It aims to reduce the health inequalities across Wirral and improve the health of the most disadvantaged.

Health Links, Wirral's specialist health promotion service delivers many partnership projects aimed at promoting healthier lifestyles. Cultural activities feature strongly in their programmes ranging from: Health at Work, with several local events such as the Wirral start to the Liverpool to Chester Bike Ride and the Wirral 5km Corporate Cup. Health Links works closely with the authority's Sport and Recreation section through the Exercise and Lifestyle Centres. Primary Care professionals refer patients most at risk of coronary heart disease for intensive lifestyle changes utilising the authorities fitness suites. Walking for health is another scheme that has received funding and aims to get Wirral walking. Links with the schools are strong through Wirral's Health Promoting Schools scheme that will involve all schools by the end of 2002. Key themes address both physical and mental well-being for pupils, parents and staff

Healthier lifestyles are not just about activity, other cultural activities such as reading, relaxing, socialising and alternative therapies such as aromatherapy, reflexology and yoga, for example have enormous health benefits and contribute to mental well being. The Youth and Community service engage and educate the community on healthier lifestyle issues through luncheon clubs, a Breathe Easy club, Weight Watchers and various keep-fit initiatives.

Arts and Drama have also been used as a tool to promote the message of health. The Brook Advisory Service ran a 10 week project with an artist travelling around local communities on a 'love bus' promoting sexual health to teenage girls. The artist involved the girls in a ranges of creative activities based around the theme of 'love and romance'. Schools have also used local drama groups to address issues such as bullying, teenage pregnancy and attendance, for example, through the 'Pause for thought' production aimed at YR9 pupils as part of the Governments Teenage Pregnancy strategy.

Spotlight

- **The Pampering Gang**

The Pampering Gang is a project started by a group of local health workers in Birkenhead which received Health Action Zone funding from the Birkenhead Primary Care Trust and other partners. It is a 'pampering' group for mothers of children under five from the Tranmere/Laidside area of Birkenhead. Mothers come to the group for friendship, support and relaxation with the aims of improving mental health well being, self esteem, confidence and empowerment through choosing the activities that they would like to participate in such as massage, health & beauty treatments, aromatherapy, exercise, health information and reflexology etc.

The mothers have now taken ownership and are moving forward with the support of the Birkenhead Primary Care Trust and other partners. These include CHUC (Committed to helping to understand Children) who provide the mobile crèche, the Wirral Metro College – who have contributed through the health & beauty treatments and administration and Tranmere Alliance Community Project. The project is currently identifying other sources of funding to continue the good work and has been identified as an example of good practice by the Merseyside Health Action Zone.

Safety and engaging communities

- Having a sense of security while taking part in cultural opportunities is a factor that the people of Wirral rank highly in importance. The authority's parks and open spaces section has undertaken a review of safety in parks and is implementing a series of changes including; having rangers on site, thinning shrubbery, improving signage and interpretation. Merseytravel is also making travelling to and from cultural sites and activities safer by installing CCTV on all rail stations and some buses. All bus drivers are now in radio contact with a base. Night buses are also provided for people travelling to and from Liverpool.

Cultural activities can also be used as an effective tool in tackling issues of disaffection and crime. The authority's cultural services division is creating in partnership with numerous agencies an extensive Sports and Arts initiative that aims to reduce crime, improve health and increase employability through a number of schemes. This includes expanding the successful sports and arts nights held at Grange Road West Sports Centre to a further 8 sites. Y2K is an organisation also dedicated to providing activities that young people want, for example club nights that are drug and alcohol free. Arch is an organisation based in Birkenhead, provides support for those who are homeless and use drugs, they help them to control their habits and then ultimately aim for them to stop them using drugs. They do this through training and have successfully used arts courses as part of the rehabilitation process.

It is increasingly recognised that culture and cultural activities have great potential to empower citizens, creating active communities that feel they have a stake in and can make a positive contribution towards improving their quality of life. Groundwork Wirral works in partnership with the local community, and other partners on environmental, social and economic regeneration projects. They often use cultural activities as an approach to consulting with communities. At Prenton Dell and Ilchester Square in Birkenhead North they incorporated a mixture of art & leisure forms ranging from juggling, face painting and kick-boxing to willow weaving, bird-box making and hand on painting with an artist. As well as being highly enjoyable fun days, both events enabled landscape architects and project officers to interpret the ideas and suggestions from local people on how their immediate environment and quality of life might be improved.

Creating a sense of community is also important to improving quality of life for people. The authority's sports development section has community officers who work in the Tranmere and Birkenhead areas using sports as a medium to

encourage community spirit, employability and improve health. One of the key aims of the youth and community section is also community development, providing support to the various Joint Management Committee's responsible for the management and development of all the authority supported community centres.

Spotlight

- **Deeside Youth Initiative**

The Deeside Youth Initiative is a charity that works with socially excluded young people aged 12 –18 years old, who live in West Wirral. The project operates during the school holidays and was set up due to crime and disruption caused by a group of young people to a Council for Voluntary Services Playscheme.

The aims of the initiative are to provide a programme of challenging and interesting activities that also focuses on healthy living skills. The programme has proved successful in diverting young people away from criminal activities and antisocial behaviour.

The initiative has been funded through a variety of different grants and trusts with the majority of the running costs covered by the Merseyside Health Action Zone. Other agencies involved in funding include: Wirral Executive Community Safety Fund, Awards for All, Duchy of Lancaster, Sport England, CVS Community Health Grants and the Police's Youth Development Scheme.

Working towards social inclusion

- Achieving social inclusion means creating and providing opportunities that cater for all levels of ability and income. The authority provides the Wirral Passport Scheme that gives a reduction of up to 50 per cent to disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals who wish to take part in sporting activities at any time of the week and in any of Wirral's leisure facilities.

Opportunities for young people to participate in cultural activities are a priority, particularly for those with disabilities. Wirral's Play Council in partnership with the authority delivers specialised holiday programmes and an all year round playgroup for young people with disabilities. Wirral's Sports Development unit also provides opportunities for young people with disabilities and special needs to participate in cultural activities through the holiday sports and culture programmes, after school sports clubs, events and swimming lessons.

A partnership between Social Services and Cultural Services has helped increase access to sport and recreational activities for looked after children, via their health assessments. They have been offered five free activity sessions of their choice. The authority's Club 8 – 15 holiday sports sessions have also been made more accessible for children who are looked after through specific places being allocated to them. Special projects are also organised for young people at risk of social exclusion at St. James Library. A partnership through the library, social and youth

service's encourage local youths to visit the library one evening a week to take part in book and ICT skills appreciation.

With the help of Pathways funding Birkenhead 6th Form College has built an Arts and Media centre. Part of it's remit is to attract residents of Pathways areas onto courses run outside regular hours. Cultural courses are free for those residents and vary from guitar lessons to desktop publishing, languages to yoga and DJ-ing. Both the Wirral Metropolitan College and the Birkenhead 6th Form College encourage and enable people to access training and education in local areas through their Neighbourhood colleges and outreach sites. They have an agreement with each other not to duplicate provision which contributes to a wider distribution of sites and opportunities.

The Multicultural Centre supports the ethnic population in Wirral. As well as offering support and training within their own cultural groups they provide a variety of cultural activities such as Tai-Chi, youth club, Chinese school, Asian school and social groups. They are currently looking to expand their centre to incorporate space to enable them to support people into employment through skills training, empowerment, to develop the concept of a multicultural orchestra and other cultural activities as well as expanding their current services to the steadily increasing ethnic population.

The Wirral Cultural Diversity Group actively celebrate and promote cultural diversity through various events, the annual Wirral Multicultural Day promotes the arts, dance, music, craft and food from around the world. They have also successfully brought the MOD 'We Were There' exhibition to the Birkenhead Museum celebrating the involvement and history of the Black and Racial minorities in the services.

Spotlight

- **Masque Theatre Company**

The Masque Theatre Company is an initiative that uses drama to prepare young adults with a learning difficulty for employment. It also raises awareness with employers through performances that are written and performed by the young adults themselves.

Through support from Social Services the INCCCLUDE (Initiative of Creative Collaborative Links utilising Drama for Employment) run by Masque has won support under the European Commission's Culture 2000 funding stream and has had it's new premises provided by the European Regional Development fund.

Education and lifelong learning

- Wirral has a multitude of opportunities when it comes to lifelong learning and culture. Lifelong learning starts from birth and in the early years, the Education Department has a major role to play. The National Curriculum is packed with

culture from History to PE, from Citizenship to Drama, from Religion to Music, from Geography to ICT and from Art to English & Languages. Wirral's commitment to education and culture is reflected through many schools gaining specialist college status in subjects such as PE, Art, Languages and Technology. The library service also plays a pivotal role in supporting education and lifelong learning by providing a comprehensive library service with 24 libraries, including the schools library service and high tech ICT learning resource centres with over 300 PC's in Wirral's libraries.

Active Drama are a locally based and locally rooted drama group. They have a commitment to providing good quality accessible work to schools and museums that interpret our local history and historic environment. They are possibly unique in that they are a Theatre-in-Education company that interprets and enlivens history not literature. Their work contributes to literacy, numeracy, english, geography and most recently citizenship. The youth service also runs a youth theatre and involves young people in technical, theatre, dance, drama, music and creative arts. It works in-house with young people who come to the theatre and there are projects in youth clubs in and around Wirral.

Wirral's Learning Partnership contributes significantly to lifelong learning through adult education opportunities. Evening classes are available across Wirral in a variety of cultural activities, all contributing to the quality of life of the people of Wirral. There are simply hundreds of clubs, community groups, societies and private companies that offer cultural lifelong learning opportunities as well as providing social interaction and friendship. These range from historical groups to drama groups, from music lessons to dance lessons, from sports clubs to choirs.

Social Services also use cultural activities to encourage lifelong learning. The Sheltered Horticultural Enterprise works with adults with learning difficulties on horticultural projects in Royden and Central parks. The schemes are supported through the European Social Fund and local communities benefit through the renovation and upkeep of parklands, ponds and footpaths whilst the participants achieve skills and qualifications which can help them towards employment.

Cultural Services contribute significantly to lifelong learning. Wirral's arts and museums service also offers stimulating and interactive opportunities. Work in the museums is undertaken with all ages - from nursery children to retired groups (visits, talks and workshops) and to teacher training & professional groups. Rangers work closely with schools to improve understanding of the environment and develop projects linked directly to the National Curriculum. Sport is an excellent vehicle for educating the young and not-so-young in the disciplines of training, team work and commitment – all essential requirements for individuals to succeed in school, work and family life. Much of the time available in sports centres is allocated to learning new skills through teaching and coaching courses

Spotlight

- **Merseyside Youth Games**

The Merseyside Youth Games is the largest sporting event for young people in the region. During the youth games itself 2,500 young people, 500 from Wirral, participate in a variety of sports from Boccia to Water Polo and Cricket to Netball with over 30,000 young people taking part across Merseyside in trails and practices running up to the event.

The Youth Games, illustrates some of the effective sporting partnerships that Wirral has forged, especially with the other Merseyside boroughs of Liverpool, Knowsley, St. Helens and Sefton with Merseyside Sport, the organisation responsible for co-ordinating grass roots sporting activity across the county. The Youth Games has also allowed Wirral to expand the links with education through the delivery of sport in schools, and to consolidate partnerships with the many Governing Bodies of Sport in Britain.

The Merseyside Youth Games is an effective tool for drawing young people into a positive sporting environment, allowing them to see sport as an activity for life. Participants can look to the examples set by previous Wirral Youth Games competitors, such as tennis player Matt Smith or swimmer Sam Platt who have gone on to international level sport. Whether the young people have such aspirations, or simply want to enjoy their sport, involvement in the Wirral team offers them a host of sporting opportunities to continue in sport as part of their everyday life.

Regeneration and jobs

- **Regeneration aids a better quality of life and social prosperity in Wirral, and Wirral has an excellent reputation in attracting investment, jobs and grants. Large-scale events such as the annual guitar festival and jazz festivals and public arts projects, contribute significantly to the image of Wirral. Events feature strongly in Wirral with more than 50 major events each year including the Wirral show that attracts more than 250,000 visitors over two days and the Big Splash concert and Ballon festival in Birkenhead Park.**

The authority's Planning and Economic Development Department has been responsible for driving the majority of the large funded regeneration initiatives such as the Hamilton Quarter which was based around culture and cultural activities and the new Wirral Waterfront initiative. They also have responsibility for a series of one off projects such as the historic Warships and the city status bid. They co-ordinate and provide liason for all the national lotteries needs, co-ordinate conservation; historic and physical and run the Neighbourhood Renewal initiative which is providing new funding to five of the most deprived wards in Wirral.

Physical regeneration projects have improved quality of life through: improved living accommodation in some areas such as the Maritime Housing Development in Brunswick Mews in Birkenhead and the improvements to the Beechwood estate

through the Housing department. Europa Pools and Wirral's Tennis and Sports Centre developments were important elements in the regeneration of the Birkenhead and Bidston areas.

Through investment and support in emergent and growth businesses Wirral has a diversifying cultural economy. There are now galleries – CaJoBah, Gallery 71; multi-media companies – Rocket, Action Multimedia; restaurants – The Station, Pasha; theatre companies – Active Drama, Off-the-Ground; product designers – Born Solutions, Team-a-go-go; photographers – Red Pineapple; dress designers – The Dressing Room; film companies – Waterfront Films; magazines – The Buz, Footprints; live music venues – The Iron Door; recording studios – The Glass House, Moonman; stage and trussing suppliers for the entertainment industry – Tomcat. Pacific Road Arts and Exhibition Centre, a local authority run venue created from one of the waterfront dock buildings which has become an exciting new venue for the performing arts and other events.

The authority's Youth & Community Services division is at the 'sharp end' of the regeneration process – advising, consulting and supporting individuals and groups helping them to become empowered as active citizens and giving them the skills and confidence to play a role in informing the decisions that affect their lives. Social Services Hand Cart Ceramics venture, is run by adults with learning disabilities who produce an ever increasing range of individual and fine pots and ceramic wares that are sold to the public. Often demand out strips supply and the venture has moved from the Riverside Day Centre where it started to Liscard. There are plans to expand the concept creating real employment opportunities.

Euro Wirral based within the local authority was set up in 1992. It was conceived following discussions with the Wirral Investment Network which identified the need for a sustained marketing effort to promote – and enhance - Wirral's qualities. EuroWirral was the result, and from that time it has vigorously pursued clear aims:

- To put Wirral on the European map
- To develop a network of links throughout Europe and beyond
- To help business recognise the opportunities a wider Europe offers and;
- To help the people of Wirral understand the European ideal and learn more of its cultures and customs.

Wirral's programme of international links encourages better understanding of different cultures & traditions and creates the opportunity to share & discuss best practise through formal twinning schemes and other informal links. EuroWirral's activities are far reaching, they support business seminars, conferences and sporting & cultural events. Wirral's commitment to Europe has been recognised over the last 10 years by the council of Europe in Strasbourg and has been awarded the following prestigious awards:

- European Diploma
- Flag of Honour
- Plaque of honour

Spotlight

- **Hamilton Quarter**

The Hamilton Quarter SRB initiative has been a seven year programme with the aim to breathe life into the historic heart of Birkenhead through culture and tourism, making it an attractive place to work invest, live and enjoy free time.

A walk around the area today clearly demonstrates how successful the initiative has been:

- Nearly all the shops in the quarter have benefited from refurbishment.
- The Birkenhead Trail has become a must for visitors to Birkenhead with Taylor Street, Pacific Road Arts and Exhibition centre, the Wirral museum and the extended Tramway benefiting from Hamilton Quarter funding
- A wide range of historic buildings have been refurbished including the Antiques Triangle on Cross Street, Waterloo Buildings on Bridge Street and Hamilton Square, which has the largest group of grade 1 listed buildings in the country.
- The Quarter provided support for public art, creative businesses and major musical & theatrical events such as the Jazz and International Guitar Festivals and the Arts Vagen, a mobile arts facility able to support events both within the Hamilton Quarter and across the borough.
- 'Living over the shop' schemes, have brought desired residential accommodation back into use, increasing the number of people working in the Quarter. Educational and training programmes have been set up, including the 'Heritage Skills' initiative and support for school children visiting the museum sites within the Quarter.
- As a result of supporting and encouraging new businesses to the area, CaJoBah Gallery and Tea Room was established. Privately run by three sisters and based in Hamilton Square their thriving tea room lays host to local artists' work that is for sale and through the gallery offer a wide variety of arts and crafts courses open to the general public.

Protecting and enhancing the environment

- The authority has a key role in protecting Wirral's environment, it maintains 1,240 hectares of parks and open spaces, 56 per cent of which includes natural countryside, coastline, seven local nature reserves and nine sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The authority is also committed to delivering Wirral's Local Agenda 21 policy that includes cutting waste, promoting recycling, conserving water, protecting our environment and saving energy. The Parks and Open Spaces section is helping by working on a Bio-diversity action plan for Wirral which will identify valuable habitats and species and prepare plans to protect them. The first of these habitats is lowland heath, of which Wirral has some of the most important areas in North West England. Wirral also has the only local authority Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in the UK and its own Wildlife Rehabilitation Officer.

As befits an area almost surrounded by sea, great pride is taken in our bathing waters, and Wirral's beaches are some of the cleanest in the North West. They are regularly tested by the Environment Agency. Prestigious Seaside Awards from the Tidy Britain Group for beaches at West Kirby and Wallasey have also been retained.

There are several projects that have involved partnerships with the authority, Groundwork Wirral and other organisations. The Millennium cycle route was created in co-operation with local schools, businesses and the community to ensure as wide a user group as possible use the routes once they are complete. A community led approach to improving the environment was successful in Victoria Park Community Garden. An unsightly and contaminated Council Depot was transformed into a vibrant community garden with designs that were created in partnership with the local Tranmere community. The idea behind the project originated with the 'Friends of Victoria Park Group' and the aim was to create an accessible resource for the local community that they would feel a sense of pride and ownership over. The community garden is now open and feedback has been very positive.

The Space Garden was developed using funding from Hamilton Quarter and Littlewoods. A group of local residents in the Church Street area of Birkenhead, with support of staff from the Design Initiative, commissioned an artist to develop and implement a scheme to enliven a small playground in their area. The artist worked with local children and designed a play area based on space. Local children made mosaics of the planets, cast bronze aliens and the controls for the rocket. The feature was then installed turning a piece of scrub land in the corner of the playground into a lively and attractive place to play. The local residents learnt about the benefits of public art, and the local children got to experiment with mosaic making and bronze and have a play area they helped make. There has been little or no vandalism on the site three years later.

Cultural Services is conscious of its energy consumption, especially at the leisure centres that operate swimming pools, continual efforts to reduce water and gas consumption are made. Wirral has many important listed heritage buildings of which six have been restored as museums and are preserved by the authority for the benefit of future generations. These include Birkenhead Priory which is the oldest building on Merseyside, founded as a Benedictine Priory in 1150AD. The Heritage Lottery Fund has given approval for a grant of £6.8m as part of a £10.4m scheme to provide a visitor centre and restore historic features in Birkenhead Park (designated as a grade 1 listed landscape by English Heritage).

Spotlight

- **Bidston Moss**

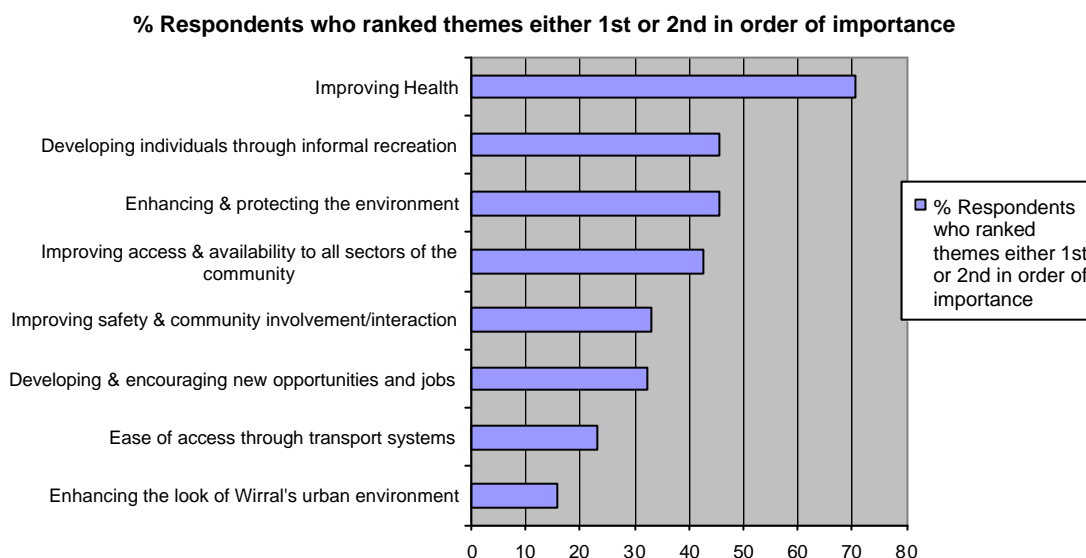
The Merseyside Waste Authority and Groundwork Wirral have been involved in the restoration of Bidston Moss from former landfill site to a site of green space and woodland park. There is an aim to open the site to the public by 2002 with a planned visitor centre and educational resource.

The project has involved the local residents and 'Friends of Bidston Moss' from the outset. The area has been transformed from an unsightly former landfill site to a valuable and attractive community green space.

The paths created on the site form an important link for the millennium cycle route across that particular part of Wirral. There are also many interesting new artwork features on the site, including the widely acclaimed summit feature 'The Stargazer'.

Themes and consultation

The graph below show one of the results of the public consultation exercise. The graph respondents were asked to rank the themes in order of importance in relation to cultural/leisure activities and opportunities. The results formed the basis of the themes highlighted above.



Cultural priorities and objectives

Cultural priorities

Three priority issues have been identified from the consultation undertaken as common to all the themes. These are also reflected in the cultural vision.

- **accessibility**
- **sustainability**
- **communication**

Cultural objectives

The objectives listed below offer scope for all council departments, the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to contribute to Wirral's culture and cultural activities.

Accessibility objectives

- a. Ensure that under-represented groups have the opportunity to fully participate in cultural activities.
- b. Listen to the cultural needs of the people of Wirral and empower them to assist in developing and expanding opportunities and services.
- c. Encourage development and provision of cultural activities and services locally for the people of Wirral.
- d. Improve physical access to cultural opportunities throughout the borough and remove other barriers to participation.
- e. Improve the sense of security for the people of Wirral so they can enjoy cultural activities in safety.

Sustainability objectives

- f. Identify different ways of funding and delivering culture and cultural activities, ensuring that they encourage personal and economic growth.
- g. Protect, conserve, manage and enhance Wirral's environment and heritage and encourage sensitive development for the benefit of future generations.
- h. Develop the use of cultural activities and culture to improve the health of the people of Wirral.

Communication objectives

- i. Promote, celebrate, improve and develop the way culture and cultural activities in Wirral and the North West are communicated to people across the borough.

Cultural flagship actions

If the Cultural Strategy is to be a success it is necessary to have an action plan that outlines what needs to be achieved, the time-scales and who has responsibility for implementation. An action plan gives focus and direction and allows for evaluation of the strategy. All of the proposed actions have been identified during the inclusive consultation process that has been undertaken so far.

In the shorter term several 'Flagship' actions have been identified and will be worked on as priorities. Each flagship action relates to one or more of the Cultural Objectives. The Flagship actions will be in the first instance led by or instigated by the local authority's Department of Education and Cultural Services but will only be successful if achieved through partnership on the widest scale. Some of these actions will be achievable within the first year of the strategy others will take longer. The Flagship actions are shown below:

We will:

- Review pricing structures to maximise usage of existing services for all people of Wirral. (A3)
- Map and audit all cultural activities and create a directory of cultural services to be included in the Wirral Community Services Directory. (A4)
- Create and resource a cultural forum involving key groups and relevant agencies/organisations and together plan, develop and promote future cultural opportunities. (B1)
- Create a cultural festival in 2003 with events developed by and based in the community. (C5)
- Review transport systems and pricing to cultural activities and identify opportunities for improving access through sustainable means. (D1)
- Identify with partners new approaches to engage disaffected & looked after young people through cultural activities for example the Sport & Arts initiative. (E2)
- Support the Liverpool City of Culture bid for 2008 by linking with initiatives and identifying opportunities for joint working across Merseyside. (F4)
- Advocate the use of creative design and community art in townscape planning to help enhance the urban landscape. (G3)
- Through the Heritage Lottery Fund bid, restore and renovate Birkenhead Park. (G5)
- Improve and market a network of public swimming, walking and cycling opportunities to promote healthier lifestyles highlighting the health benefits of swimming, walking and cycling. (H5)
- Create a positive marketing identity for and improve the promotion of Wirral's cultural facilities and services. (I6)

Cultural action plan

Below is a summary of other potential actions and includes the flagship actions shown above. A more detailed action plan with targets and deadlines is available in the background document

Accessibility

A. Ensure that under-represented groups have the opportunity to fully participate in cultural activities.

Actions will include:

- A1. Improve dissemination of information to under-represented groups
- A2. Work with social services and other partners to improve cultural opportunities for those with mental health problems.
- A3. Review pricing structures to maximise usage of existing services for all people of Wirral.
- A4. Map and audit all cultural activities and create a directory of cultural services to be included in the Wirral Community Services Directory.

Accessibility

B. Listen to the cultural needs of the people of Wirral empowering them to assist in developing and expanding opportunities and services.

Actions will include:

- B1. Create and resource a cultural forum involving key groups and relevant agencies/organisations and together plan, develop and promote future cultural opportunities.
- B2. Plan a programme of broad cultural consultation with the people of Wirral and co-ordinate with existing and planned consultation across the borough to avoid duplication.
- B3. Make links with existing groups and fora to promote Wirral's cultural strategy by appropriate representation at borough and regional groups.

Accessibility

C. Encourage development and provision of activities and services locally for the people of Wirral

Actions will include:

- C1. Identify areas of good practice and conduct a feasibility study to look at the scope of using school and community sites to provide cultural activities more locally; e.g. through the national Sport England space for sports and arts scheme.
- C2. Through partners and external funding develop opportunities for young people to participate in cultural activities as locally as possible.
- C3. Through partners and external funding develop opportunities for older people to locally take part in cultural activities.
- C4. Create a cultural festival in 2003 with events developed by and based in the community.

Accessibility

D. Improve access to cultural activities throughout the borough and remove other barriers to participation.

Actions will include:

- D1. Review transport systems and pricing to cultural activities and identify opportunities for improving access through sustainable means.
- D2. Review and improve local authority transport to cultural activities for looked after children, after school and during the holidays.
- D3. Examine the possibility of expanding the provision of childcare at cultural activities/sites.
- D4. In line with the DDA ensure that cultural activity venues and new developments/initiatives are fully accessible for people with disabilities and special needs
- D5. Implement access improvements to the Wirral Way.

Accessibility

- E. Improve the sense of security for the people of Wirral so they can enjoy cultural activities in safety.**

Actions will include:

- E1. Identify with partners new approaches to engage disaffected & looked after young people through cultural activities – for example the Sports and Arts initiative.
- E2. Look at new ways of enhancing the public realm and increasing the sense of security in Wirral.

Sustainability

- F. Identify different ways of funding and delivering culture and cultural activities, ensuring that they encourage personal and economic growth.**

Actions will include:

- F1. Review and identify potential opportunities for implementing cultural activities with partners and departments to maximise and consolidate resources within the borough ensuring Best Value.
- F2. Produce an annual Cultural Strategy report highlighting the positive benefits of cultural activities and culture and its potential for improving quality of life as a 'case for culture'.
- F3. Produce and implement a sustainable tourism strategy for Wirral.
- F4. Support the Liverpool City of Culture bid for 2008 by linking with initiatives and identifying opportunities for joint working across Merseyside.

Sustainability

- G. Protect, conserve, manage and enhance Wirral's environment and heritage and encourage sensitive and sustainable development for the benefit of future generations.**

Actions will include:

- G1. Support and implement the bio-diversity strategy.
- G2. Ensure that a conservation approach to historic buildings, sites etc. is adopted, through planning policy guidance.
- G3. Advocate the use of creative design and community art in townscape planning to help enhance the urban landscape.

- G4. Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park. Develop a regional waterfront park as a network of themed, jointly marketed and inter-linked sites across Merseyside.
- G5. Through the Heritage Lottery Fund bid, restore and renovate Birkenhead Park.

Sustainability

H. Develop the use of cultural activities and culture to improve the health of the people of Wirral.

Actions will include:

- H1. Undertake a feasibility study/pilot looking at how cultural activities can make a difference to improving the health of the workforce (including volunteers and carers).
- H2. Provide increased support and motivation to groups at risk of or recovering from poor health to access cultural activities.
- H3. Build on partnership work on health initiatives and identify suitable future joint projects and resources.
- H4. Through partners and external funding develop and promote culture as a tool for improving mental well being.
- H5. Improve and market a network of public swimming, walking and cycling opportunities to promote healthier lifestyles highlighting the health benefits of swimming, walking and cycling.

Communication

I. Promote, celebrate, improve and develop the way cultural activities and culture in Wirral and the North West is communicated to the people of the borough.

Actions will include:

- I1. Produce a marketing plan for Wirral developing opportunities such as the Golf Open and Wirral's coast.
- I2. Establish a Cultural Strategy steering group for the implementation, development and monitoring of the strategy.
- I3. Contribute to the development of the Community Plan.
- I4. Ensure that proper interpretation of cultural activity sites maximises enjoyment and lifelong learning.

15. Provide an easy mechanism where the people of Wirral and visitors can access information and provide feedback on the cultural assets of the borough.
16. Create a positive marketing identity for and improve the promotion of Wirral's cultural facilities and services.

Monitoring and review

Steering group

Fundamental to the Cultural Strategy's success is monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the actions. This will be undertaken by the cultural strategy steering group and the appropriate local authority committees.

Terms of reference

It is also important that the strategy reflects and is reflected in partners strategies and the Authority's own plans including the community strategy and corporate plan through Best Value. The terms of reference of the steering group and its purpose will be to demonstrate that:

- the objectives and actions are being implemented
- resources are available and that they are used wisely
- the diverse range of opportunities available in Wirral are developed
- the profile of and ways of communicating cultural activities and their benefits to the wider cross cutting agendas have been raised and expanded
- access to participation has increased
- new and existing initiative's have the ability to become sustainable
- the strategy contributes to the Council's Corporate Objectives.

Monitoring

Improvements will be measured through a variety of means including;

- The implementation of the action plan will demonstrate in the first instance the effectiveness of the cultural strategy.
- The strategy will also be influenced by both national and local performance indicators developed for individual service areas.
- Consulting on improvements will also assist in identifying future improvement.

Consultation

The ongoing consultation process for the cultural strategy will link with existing and planned consultation through the Authority's Best Value process.

Appendix i

Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Corporate Context

Wirral's cultural strategy will assist in fulfilling the council's nine corporate objectives, which in turn will contribute to the framework and development of a community strategy for Wirral. The community strategy will have a shared vision for the community reflecting local aspirations and recognising the potential for all sections of the community to contribute to ideas and resources. It will aim to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of Wirral. A local strategic partnership (LSP) is being developed and local area forums are being piloted to develop and deliver the community strategy. The cultural strategy will both be informed by and inform the community strategy. Culture and cultural activities will need to be reflected in relation to their ability to improve quality of life and in doing so contribute to the council's vision and corporate objectives as set out below:

The Council will seek to the best of its ability to create a safe, healthy, clean and crime free environment where every individual has the opportunity to:

- participate in good quality education and training
- seek and find employment
- live in good quality housing
- access the social and health care they may need
- access and obtain advice on any support they may be entitled to
- have access to leisure and cultural facilities and opportunities
- be treated with respect and dignity as they strive to reach their full potential as a human being

The Council has set out a number of key objectives which cross all departmental boundaries. These corporate objectives provide the framework for delivering the Authority's vision.

1. Protecting and Improving the environment
2. Encouraging employment and business opportunities
3. Supporting lifelong learning and Cultural opportunities
4. Helping improve the overall health of Wirral people
5. Helping to make Wirral a safer place to live and work
6. Ensuring that everyone has decent housing
7. Helping to support and protect vulnerable people
8. Ensuring an efficient and accessible transport system
9. Ensuring the delivery of effective and efficient services

Appendix ii – Links with corporate objectives chart - How Enriching Our Lives, Wirral’s Cultural Strategy links with Wirral Council’s Corporate Objectives and Central Government’s Key Policy Areas

Government Key Policy Areas	Wirral’s Corporate Objectives	Wirral’s Cultural Strategy Objectives
Environmental Sustainability	Protecting and improving the environment	Protect, conserve, manage and enhance Wirral’s environment & heritage and encourage sensitive development for the benefit of future generations.
Regeneration	Encouraging employment and business opportunities	Identify different ways of funding & delivering culture and cultural activities, ensuring that they encourage personal & economic growth.
Lifelong Learning	Supporting lifelong learning & cultural activities	Listen to the cultural needs of the people of Wirral & empower them to assist in developing and expanding opportunities and services.
Public Health	Helping improve the overall health of Wirral people	Develop the use of cultural activities & culture to improve the health of the people of Wirral.
Community Safety	Helping to make Wirral a safer place to live and work	Improve the sense of security for the people of Wirral so they can enjoy cultural activities in safety.
Regeneration	Ensuring that everyone has decent housing	The strategy supports the work of the Council in ensuring everyone has decent housing.
Social Inclusion	Helping vulnerable people who need support and protection	Ensure that under-represented groups have the opportunity to fully participate in cultural activities. Encourage development and provision of cultural activities and services locally for the people of Wirral.
Social Inclusion	Ensuring an efficient and accessible transport system	Improve physical access to cultural opportunities throughout the borough and remove other barriers to participation.
Modernisation	Ensuring the delivery of effective and efficient services	Promote, celebrate, improve and develop the way culture and cultural activities in Wirral and the North West are communicated to people across the borough.

Appendix iii – Wirral’s History and First’s

Introducing Wirral

Wirral is a peninsula of 60.35 square miles which lies between the estuaries of two rivers. It is an area of contrasts, with sandy beaches, a magnificent coastline, mountain views, country lanes, woodland and the peace of nature reserves, as well as thriving businesses, shopping centre, and a vibrant arts, culture and entertainment scene.

An anecdotal history...

Wirral was once an area of scattered fishing villages and farming hamlets, mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1085-6. Stone age man lived here, as did the Romans and later Norsemen. The Vikings of the North invaded our shores and left evidence of their settlement in place names such as Thurstaston and Thingwall, probably their local seat of government.

The oldest building in Wirral is Birkenhead Priory. At the end of the twelfth century, Birchen Head Priory, as it was then known, stood on a lonely headland of birch trees and it was from here that Benedictine Monks operated the first Mersey Ferry in 1330, after being granted a passage to Liverpool by a charter from Edward III. The original ferry service, now famous through the world, put Wirral on the map but it wasn't until the 1820's that steam-powered boats improved communication.

Wirral's first railway was planned by George Stephenson and built in 1840 connecting Birkenhead with Chester. This was the start of the growth of Birkenhead and Wallasey which became large towns, houses were also built at rock Ferry, New Ferry, Seacombe, Egremont and New Brighton around the extra terminals added to the expanding ferry service. In 1886 pioneering Victorian engineers were the first in the world to successfully tunnel a railway beneath a major river.

Another important industrial development was the birth of shipbuilding in Wirral in the 1820's when John Laird opened the Cammel Laird yard.

The western side of the peninsula was once an important port because of its closeness to Chester. Hundreds of years before Liverpool rose to fame as a port, ships would berth in the Dee, and as the Dee began to silt up, Dawpool, West Kirby and Hoylake provided a safe harbour.

Some “firsts” and other odds & ends

Mid-19th century until 1969: The One O’Clock Gun time signal was fired every day from a cannon at Morpeth Dock, Birkenhead, to enable instrument makers in Liverpool to set their clocks, chronometers and maritime instruments accurately.

1847; Birkenhead Park, designed by Joseph Paxton and the first public park in the world opened. It became the model for Central park in new York.

1853: Bromborough Pool Model Village established by Price's Patent Candle Company of London – one of the first model villages in the country. It was followed by in 1888 by the building of the industrial village of Port Sunlight, designed to house employees of

lever Brothers as part of Lord Leverhulme's philanthropic dream. The architect-designed village – in which no two pairs of houses are alike – now houses a heritage centre, information centre and the Lady Lever Art Gallery and Museum.

- 1856: Birkenhead became the first unincorporated borough to adopt the Public Libraries Act. Birkenhead Public Library –the world's first public lending library opened.
- 1858: The world's first ever steel vessel was built by Cammell Laird. The "Ma Roberts", was constructed for Dr Livingstone's Zambesi expedition to Africa.
- 1860: An American man, George Francis Train, inaugurated the first street railway. It ran between Woodside and Birkenhead Park entrance, and the trams were horse drawn. Also... the first British Tramcar factory was established in Cleveland Street, Birkenhead in 1862. It was owned by George Starbuck.
- 1879: The "Resurgam" (I shall rise again), built at Birkenhead, was the world's first steam powered working submarine.
- 1885: The 1st Amateur Golf Championship was held at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club in Hoylake. (The 100th returned to Hoylake in 1995 and it has just been announced by the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews that The Open Golf Championship is coming back to the famous Hoylake Links "in the near future". Founded in 1869, Royal Liverpool has hosted 10 Open Championships, the last over 30 years ago in 1967 when the Argentinian golfer Roberto de Vincenzo was the winner).
- 1888: The Mersey rail tunnel the first underwater rail tunnel in the world, opened. (In 1904 the Mersey railway was the first steam railway in the world to convert to electric traction).
- 1894: The Della Robbia Pottery was founded in Birkenhead by Harold Rathbone. It was an important part of the Art Nouveau movement in Britain.
- 1896: Birkenhead was one of the first places in Britain to show moving films.
- 1897: New Brighton Tower completed. A structure of 621ft (Blackpool Tower is 500ft), it stood until 1921 and was a great 'draw' for the seaside holiday crowds in the hey day of public transport.
- 1908: The boy scout movement was inaugurated by Sir Robert Baden-Powell in the YMCA building in Grange Road, Birkenhead. The first world Scout Jamboree was held in Arrowe Park, Birkenhead, in 1924.
- 1920: The first all-welded ship in the world – the Fullagar – was built at Camell Laid.
- 1931: The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was founded in Wallasey.
- 1962: The world's first scheduled passenger hovercraft service was inaugurated between Wallasey and Rhyl, North Wales.
- 1973: Wirral Country Park opened. The first Country Park in Britain.