

Enriching Our Lives - Wirral's Cultural Strategy

- Foreword by Dave Christian
- 1. Executive summary
 - Background
 - Wirral's culture and culture activities
 - Themes, vision, priorities & objectives
 - Cultural flagship actions
- 2. Introduction
 - Background
 - Context
 - Functions of Wirral's cultural strategy
 - Development of strategy
 - Consultation
 - Time-scales & review
 - Aim of strategy
- 3. Strategic context
 - What is culture
 - Definition
 - Benefits/impact
 - Local context
 - Corporate links
 - Setting the scene & challenges for Wirral
 - Opportunities for Wirral
 - Regional & national context - links
- 4. Cultural life in Wirral
 - Introducing Wirral,
 - History,
 - Places of interest, facilities and activities
 - The wider picture
 - Consultation and process
- 5. Cultural Themes
 - Themes and consultation
 - A healthy Wirral
 - Safety & engaging communities
 - Working towards social inclusion
 - Education & lifelong learning
 - Regeneration & jobs
 - Protecting and enhancing the environment

- 6. Enriching our lives - Wirral's cultural strategy**
 - Cultural vision
 - Cultural priorities & objectives
 - Key players
- 7. Action plan**
 - cultural flagship actions
 - cultural action plan
- 8. Monitoring & review**

Appendices

- i. Links with corporate objectives chart**
- ii. Linkages between strategies & plans chart**
- iii. Strategy links document**
- iv. Service specific action plans**
- v. Funding opportunities chart**
- vi. List of organisations consulted**
- vii. Enriching our lives survey – April 2001 report**
- viii. SWOT analysis of themes**
- ix. Key player's chart**

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The Government has asked all Local Authorities to develop a Cultural Strategy by 2002 to:

- promote the cultural well being of the area
- advocate the benefits of cultural activities
- identify key priority actions and improvement

Wirral's Cultural Strategy has evolved through a process of consultation and review. Key steps along the way included:

- Wirral Now – public leisure survey
- Analysis of existing consultations available with reference to culture
- Interviews and presentations to organisations and groups
- Key stakeholder seminar/workshop

Consultation on the developed vision, themes, priorities and objectives was also undertaken through the summary draft prepared for public circulation. Flagship actions have been identified from this process as key targets for the strategy to implement.

1.2 Culture definition

As the term 'culture' can, in its broadest sense, mean so much to so many it is necessary for the scope of this strategy to have some boundaries. Therefore for the purpose of the strategy - culture has been defined as follows:

- **A way of life**

Activities and attractions such as arts, sports, museums, parks, libraries, theatre, children's play and tourism

- **A sense of place**

The local geography; coast & seascape – countryside & landscape, history, buildings, identity and character of the area.

1.3 Themes, Vision, Priorities and Objectives

The overarching themes identified for the strategy through the public consultation are as follows:

- A healthy Wirral
- Safety and engaging communities
- Working towards social inclusion
- Education and lifelong learning
- Regeneration and jobs
- Protecting and enhancing the environment

Wirral's **cultural vision** is:

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

- **A more accessible Wirral**
- **A more sustainable Wirral**
- **Better communications on Wirral**

The vision reflects the **cultural priorities** that evolved through the consultation on the themes:

- Accessibility
- Sustainability
- Communication

Eight **cultural objectives** have been developed and reflect the priorities

- Ensure that under-represented groups have the opportunity to fully participate in cultural activities.
- Listen to the cultural needs of the people of Wirral and empower them to assist in developing and expanding opportunities and services.
- Encourage development and provision of cultural activities and services locally for the people of Wirral.

- Improve physical access to cultural opportunities throughout the borough and remove other barriers to participation.
- Improve the sense of security for the people of Wirral so they can enjoy cultural activities in safety.
- Identify different ways of funding and delivering culture and cultural activities, ensuring that they encourage personal and economic growth.
- Protect, conserve, manage and enhance Wirral's environment and heritage and encourage sensitive development for the benefit of future generations.
- Develop the use of cultural activities and culture to improve the health of the people of Wirral.
- Promote, celebrate, improve and develop the way culture and cultural activities in Wirral and the North West is communicated to people across the borough.

1.4 Cultural flagship actions

Wirral has developed a number of cultural flagship actions that will be the focus for the strategy in the first few years. They will be reviewed annually and added too or amended as required. The Flagship actions will be, in the first instance, led by the Department of Education and Cultural Services of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral but will only be successful if achieved through partnership on the widest scale. Each action relates to a cultural objective:

- Review pricing structures to maximise usage of existing services for all people of. (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 and 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 National Heritage Lottery Fund, 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 Services facilities and services. (I6)

2.0 Introduction

2.1 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.

2.2 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 strategy by encouraging people to become healthier, promoting social inclusion and interaction, engaging and involving

communities, contributing to urban and rural regeneration and by enhancing and 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.

2.3 Functions of the Cultural Strategy

Below are the identified functions of Wirral's cultural strategy:

- To promote the cultural well being of Wirral
- To advocate the benefits of cultural activities to all
- To identify key priorities for action and improvement
- To provide a framework for partnership and to formalise existing links and cross sector work
- To give guidance to the council, other partners who provide leisure and culture and the general public in relation to policy direction of culture and cultural activities in Wirral.
- To stimulate and encourage voluntary and commercial sector cultural development in order to achieve the vision
- To reflect the cultural needs of customers, users and non – users of services in future policies and direction
- To act as a lever and rationale for gaining funding from external agencies, including:
 - national & regional funding
 - funding from sponsored agencies/trusts etc.
 - lottery funding
 - Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)
 - European Union funding (Objective 1)
 - private sponsorship
- To provide links with other plans and strategies of the authority & its partners, regional and national strategies to promote partnership and to facilitate change.

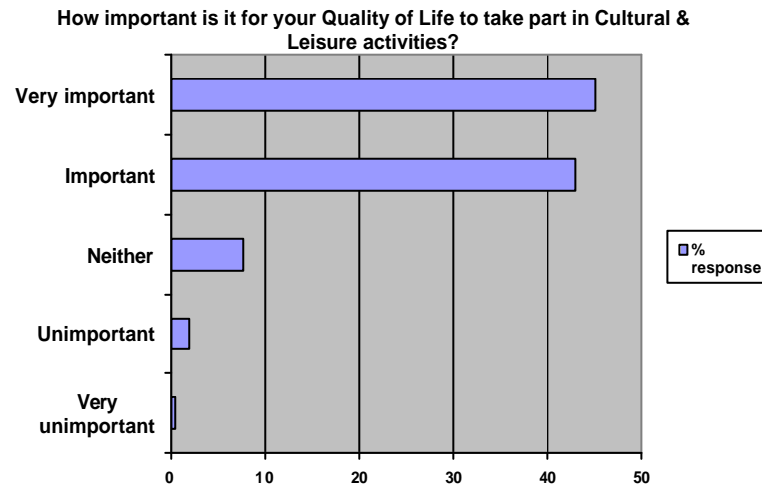
2.4 Cultural Strategy Development

'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 and visit Wirral.

2.5 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, vision, priorities and objectives of this strategy. For further information regarding the consultation process - see chapter four – Consultation and process.

The graph below highlights how important it is of 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



2.6 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.

2.7 Aim 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.

3.0 Strategic context

3.1 What is culture?

3.1.1 Definition

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 the 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/seascape and countryside/landscape, 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 also about inherited and learned ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge. Other dimensions that contribute to a 'sense of place' on Wirral include;

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

3.1.2 Benefits & impact of culture

Culture and cultural activities can make a unique contribution to increasing the quality of life of individual and communities. It can and does:

- bring stimulation and purpose to existence
- enable people to give full rein to self-expression
- bring people together and underpin communities
- enhance communication and understanding
- unlock creativity and problem-solving

Other valuable by-products of culture and cultural activities include;

- developing self-confidence and capacity in individuals and communities
- improving local identity and pride
- promoting interest in the environment
- providing positive solutions to problems presented by social exclusion
- enable people to imagine the future in positive and creative ways

(101 ways to develop a local cultural strategy – Bone & Mitchell 2000)

3.2 Local context

3.2.1 Corporate links

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

See Appendix i - Links with corporate objectives chart

3.2.2 Local links

Wirral's Cultural Strategy aims to assist numerous local initiatives and strategies from authority departments, organisations and other public bodies in the delivery of their objectives by linking action plans. These include: Wirral's Lifelong Learning Plan, Wirral Health Improvement Plan including Wirral Community Care Plan, Crime & Disorder Strategy, Education Development Plan, Economic Development Plan, LA21 Strategy and the Local Transport Plan. Appendix ii. & iii. demonstrates the scope of these links and the cultural strategy action plan reflects some of the ways in which culture and cultural activities can address both local, regional and national agendas. Some important national initiatives that are being delivered locally are mentioned in section 3.3.2.

See Appendix ii – Linkages between strategies & plans chart & **iii** – Strategy Links Document

Specific cultural services also link with the Cultural Strategy and elements of their strategies and service development plans/action plans are represented in this document. The services include: Sport & Recreation, Library Service, Arts & Museum service, Parks & Open Spaces, Youth service, Community services and Tourism.

See Appendix iv – Service specific action plans

3.2.3 Setting the scene & challenges for Wirral

Location & population

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral occupies the larger part of the Wirral Peninsula, with an area of 156.3 square kilometres and a population of approximately 326,620 (1999 Register General's mid-year population estimate). Wirral has a total electorate of 248,078. The peninsula on the north west coast of England is bounded by the River Dee, River Mersey, the Irish Sea and the Cheshire Plain. To the south east, its landward boundary is with the Borough of Ellesmere Port and Neston in the County of Cheshire. Wirral is the third largest metropolitan authority in the North West.

The principal industrial areas are located on the north east (Mersey) side of the peninsula, broadly along the line of the A41 corridor. Town centre shopping and commercial activities are situated at Birkenhead and Liscard in Wallasey. District centres are located at Heswall, New Ferry, Bromborough Village, west Kirby, Hoylake, Prenton (Woodchurch Road) and Moreton, with smaller local centres serving various communities throughout the Borough. Central Wirral is a

rural farming community with a few small hamlets. The western side of Wirral is Deeside, with the small towns of Heswall and West Kirby.

In terms of Government Regional Policy, Wirral lies within the Merseyside sub-region and holds Development Area status. Together with the local authority areas of Ellesmere Port and Neston and Chester, it makes up the local Travel to Work Area (TTWA). The local economy is spread over several sectors, including retail, manufacturing and tourism. The public, education and health sectors account for the largest share of local employment

The Areas Character

Over the last 30 years the economy in Wirral has seen great change. In particular the dock industry has suffered greatly with the growth in containerisation, reducing employment and making large sections of existing dock areas redundant. The decade of the 1980's and the early 1990's also saw the order book of the Cammell Laird shipyard decline until the firm was forced to close. From its peak of 16,000 workers at the end of World War 2, the workforce declined to fewer than 2,000 in 1990 as the yard headed for closure in 1993. However in the last ten years Wirral has begun to reverse these blows to its economy by building on its strengths and by tackling its social and physical dereliction.

During the Victorian era Wirral's coast also flourished as a tourist destination for example New Brighton, situated on the north east tip of the peninsula developed from a small town into a Victorian seaside resort for the growing numbers of workers from the industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Its attractions included an outdoor fairground with a tower similar, if smaller, to Blackpool Tower, a pier, one of the biggest ballrooms in Europe, a theatre, indoor funfair and numerous hotels. In the 1950s its outdoor swimming pool, covering some 4.5 acres, was the biggest in Europe and for a time the largest in the world.

Wirral's Challenges

Following are extracts from the 2000/2001 economic assessment. It sets the scene in terms of key economic, social and demographic features of the area highlighting some of the challenges Wirral faces and recognises that deprivation and unemployment are particularly serious problems in Wirral.

Population

- Wirral's population has declined to approximately 327,000 (1998 mid-year estimates) from recent levels of circa 331,000 (1991) and 333,000 (1995).
- Population forecasts imply that the decline will continue in the period to 2005/6.
- 30 per cent of Wirral's population is under the age of 25 and 17.5 per cent is over 65

Labour force

- 119,000 people are economically active from a population of approximately 326,500
- Unemployment is a significant problem in Wirral. Economic growth is currently only 1.2% compared with 2.4% in the North West and 3% in the rest of England.
- 25% of Wirral's workforce have no qualifications which not only affects the ability of individuals to secure employment, it also affects the competitiveness within Wirral
- Wirral also experiences higher than average levels of unemployment, higher than average numbers of long term unemployed and higher than average number of males unemployed.

Deprivation

- In terms of child poverty Bidston ranks as the worst in England, with seven out of ten children experience child poverty in the worst five wards –Bidston, Birkenhead, Tranmere, Seacombe and Leasowe. 29% of school pupils are in receipt of free school meals.
- Five wards are within the worst 5% (of 8,414) in England on the combined index of deprivation 2000.
- Three of the Borough's twenty two wards, Birkenhead, Bidston and Tranmere, consistently suffer from the highest levels of unemployment at rates which are significantly above the remaining wards.
- Thirteen of Wirral's 22 wards are within the worst 25% and contain 188,000 (57%) of the borough's population
- Approximately 66,000 residents live within the borough's 'Pathway' areas – Pathway areas are areas of social deprivation which qualify for ERDF Objective 1 funding.

Education

- The absence rate for primary schools is at the national average of 5.9%, but in secondary schools the rate is 9.6% compared to the national average of 8.9%
- Examination performances – primary education 74.4% on Key Stage 2 compares well with the national average of 71.9%, but those gaining five or more GCSE's at Grade C or above is 44.4% compared to 44.5% nationally.

Health

- Wirral has an ageing population, which has implications both for housing provision and service delivery as the number of elderly people increases.
- Twelve of Wirral's 22 wards are within the worst 10% in the country

Crime

- The number of reports of disturbances caused by juveniles is increasing. This is a major quality of life issue for Wirral residents as, whilst the majority of incidents are not crimes, they have a significant effect on people's lives. Police figures show that the number of report in 1995 – 7,568 incidents – 1997 had risen to 9,839.
- In line with the rest of England and Wales the recorded number of domestic burglaries and vehicle theft has declined from 20,239 in 1995/96 to 15,629 in 1997/98 in Wirral.

Economy

- Economic growth is below the national average.
- Only 7% of the total numbers of visitors to Merseyside come to Wirral.
- Birkenhead Town Centre, despite being the retail, leisure and commercial heart of the Borough, is not the first choice shopping destination for over 40% of Wirral's residents and experiences growing competition from Liverpool, Chester and Cheshire Oaks.

Source - Wirral's Economic Regeneration Strategy 2001 – 2010 (Figures from 1999)

3.2.4 Opportunities for Wirral

Wirral has been fighting the economic decline through various major regeneration programmes. Leisure and Cultural activities have benefited from these programmes and have formed important elements of the regeneration process. The Europa Pools development formed part of the regeneration of Birkenhead and the Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre made a contribution to the regeneration of Bidston, both projects were funded by the City Lands programme, the first major regeneration scheme to run in the UK funded by the government, that ran from 1992 – 1997 and brought £37.5million to Wirral.

Hamilton Quarter (SRB1) started in 1995, aims over a five year period to regenerate the historic heart of Birkenhead, centred on Hamilton Square. The Hamilton Quarter programme has been successful in diversifying the economy of the area, attracting more residents and visitors to the area and improving the image and perception of the town centre through improvements to the physical environment and by developing a critical mass of cultural, arts and leisure attractions. These include the annual International Guitar Festival of Great Britain and the Hamilton Jazz Festival.

Laidside (SRB2) focused on the Cammell Laid shipyard and the adjacent neighbourhoods of Tranmere and Rock Ferry. The focus on this SRB was to tackle problems of high unemployment and social exclusion. Improving leisure and recreation facilities has played a part in this programme. The New Wallasey regeneration programme (SRB3) has begun the process of regenerating the former borough of Wallasey. This includes the seaside resort area of New Brighton, and is encouraging development of tourism in the area. New Opportunities on Wirral (SRB4) focuses on tackling social

exclusion in seven communities in Wirral that have previously not been part of an SRB funded area. They have been successful in utilising community art as a way of consulting with communities and tackling some of the issues.

Wirral Waterfront is the latest programme that has been successful in securing SRB resources. Planned to run from 2000 to early 2007 the programme benefits from an investment of £20 million intended to fuel an investment programme of £140 million. The programme will concentrate its actions on the Birkenhead Pathways area and the Employment Corridor or Strategic Spatial Development Area. Expanding tourism in the area will form an important element of the programme, and has yet to be fully exploited despite Wirral's natural, historical and cultural assets.

The most recent funding opportunity is the Neighbourhood Renewal programme. Neighbourhood Renewal Wirral is one of 88 districts in England chosen, by the Government, to receive additional funding to improve service provision in its most deprived areas. The districts were chosen on the basis that they had at least one ward in the 10% most deprived in England. Wirral has six wards in the 10% most deprived. At a special conference in March 2001, it was decided that five wards (in the 5% most deprived in England) in Wirral would be targetted – Birkenhead, Bidston, Leasowe, Tranmere and Seacombe. The new funding is £11.4million spread over three financial years from 2001 – 2004. Broadly the government expects the new resource to help 'make a difference' in areas of major deprivation and to contribute to the achievement of 'floor targets' in addressing crime, education, health, housing and the physical environment and worklessness. Cultural activities will be used as a tool to help reach some of these targets in relation to improving health, reducing crime and increasing employability. The process requires the local community to be fully involved in identifying needs and priorities for their area and to have these reflected in the programmes.

There are other funding opportunities that have assisted in improving important cultural and historical features in Wirral. Heritage Lottery funding has been secured to the tune of £6.4million for Birkenhead Park for improvements and developments. Leasowe Lighthouse has also secured Heritage Lottery funding through a joint project between the Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse and the Council to safeguard the Lighthouse for present and future generations as it is an important feature and tourist attraction on the Wirral coast. Bidston Lighthouse has also secured Lottery funding through a joint venture between the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratories, Wirral Council, New Opportunities on Wirral (SRB4) and the Millennium Commission to repair the lighthouse and facilitate open day sessions for the general public. Projects aimed at improving health have also been successful in acquiring external funding support, for example, Wirral Healthy Communities Partnership Project provides a community health team to work in Pathway areas focussing on positive mental health, food and nutrition. The project is funded through Wirral Borough Council, New Opportunities fund (SRB4), Neighbourhood Renewal, Pentra, The Wirral & West Cheshire Community NHS Trust and the Heath Action Zone (HAZ).

Many other opportunities are available to enhance and develop cultural facilities but also opportunities exist for cultural activities to make a difference to the agendas of central government, the local authority, the public, private, community

and voluntary sectors. These opportunities are already being developed through partnerships and will continue to develop throughout the life span of this strategy. For a chart showing the major funding sources see Appendix iv.

See Appendix v – Funding Opportunities Chart

3.3 Regional & National Context

3.3.1 Regional Links

Wirral's Cultural Strategy does not stand alone, it has been developed carefully to link and complement the regional and national picture. The key agencies and strategies in the North West are the North West Development Agency's (NWDA) Regional Strategy and the North West Cultural Consortium's (NWCC) Cultural Strategy.

'A Strategy towards 2020' recognises the need to increase wealth and investment in the North West, within the principles of sustainable development. It aims to create a region which:

- Attracts and retains the skilled and talented
- Brings everyone into mainstream of community life
- Nurtures its environment, heritage and culture.
- Kindles creativity, innovation and competitiveness.
- Transforms its image.
- Strengthens its infrastructure.
- Is naturally on the short list for new investment

The NWCC's Draft Cultural Strategy links closely to Wirral's Key Cultural Priorities and Objectives. Their vision and aims are:

Culture and creativity are at the heart of individual and collective experience and well being. NWCC will be a strong, confident advocate for culture in the future of the north west. Together with our partners we will celebrate and enhance cultural opportunity and realise the social and economic aspirations of our region.

1. Culture enriches all aspects of our social and community life and we aim to:

- Help develop an infrastructure of activity and facilities across the public, voluntary and private sectors that ensures access to cultural opportunity is universal.
- Encourage an understanding of the importance of culture in all aspects of life in the north west, and ensure that provision is responsive to and respects diverse cultural needs.
- Support opportunities for learning about, sharing and understanding culture as part of belief, the quality of life and the framework for sustainability.

2. **Culture and creativity are central to economic prosperity and growth and we aim to:**

- Develop a sustainable cultural economy and build on the existing clusters of businesses in all parts of the region.
- Ensure that more of the region's citizens gain and sustain employment in the cultural industries through promotion and export, and the exchange of ideas, skills and products
- Ensure that there are opportunities for more of the region's citizens to gain (sustainable) employment in cultural industries.
- Promote the benefits of culture and creative innovation to businesses and visitors including the attraction of inward investment.

3. **Culture is what makes places distinctive, building on our inheritance and environment and our capacity for innovation, we aim to:**

- Promote the role of culture in enhancing self-esteem and community pride.
- Ensure that the region's rich inheritance and contemporary culture is central to the external image.
- Make culture central to the development of all aspects of our environment.

There are other important agencies that will both inform and be informed by Wirral's Cultural Strategy and offer support in achieving the objectives, these include; Sport England NW, NW Arts Board, English Heritage NW, NW Tourist Board and NW Libraries. There are also strong links with Merseyside agencies and strategies, appendix iii. Shows how Wirral's cultural strategy objectives can deliver many of these agencies aims and objectives. Appendix ii. Shows in chart form the links with local, regional and national strategies

See Appendix ii – Linkages between strategies and plans chart & iii Strategy Links Document

3.3.2 National Links

The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) is leading the development of Local Cultural Strategies and therefore Wirral's Cultural Strategy needs to reflect the DCMS's aims and objectives through its own objectives and the action plan. The DCMS states its aims and objectives as follows:

To improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, and to champion the creative leisure industries. The Department will:

- Work to bring quality and excellence in the fields of culture, media and sport.
- Make these available to the many, not just the few;
- Raise standards of cultural education and training;

- Help to develop the jobs of the future in the creative industries

The Department, in partnership with others, works to:

- Sustain and develop quality, innovation and good design; create an efficient and competitive market, including by removing unnecessary regulation and other obstacles to growth, so as to develop the tourism and creative industries; and promote Britain's success in the fields of culture, media and sport at home and abroad.
- Broaden access to a rich and varied cultural and sporting life and to our distinctive built environment; and encourage conservation of the best of the past.
- Develop the educational potential of the nations cultural and sporting resources; raise standards of cultural education and training; ensure an adequate skill supply for the creative industries and tourism.
- Maintain public support for the National lottery and ensure that money raised for good causes supports DCMS' and other national priorities.
- Promote the role of the Department's sectors in urban and rural regeneration, in pursuing sustainability and in combating social exclusion.

(DCMS Public Service Agreement 2001 –04)

Other Government-sponsored public bodies deliver the national policies and priorities, these include Sport England, the Arts Council for England and English Heritage. These agencies are important sources of support financial and other for local authorities as are the National lottery distributors such as the Heritage Lottery fund and the Sports lottery fund. The DCMS advocates the use of local cultural strategies as a powerful tool for leveraging funds from Lottery and other sources for projects that have a strategic value to an area.

There are many other Government initiatives that can have an impact on culture and also that can be delivered through culture, they include;

- Health Improvement Programmes
- Quality Protects Management Plans
- Community Safety Plans
- Local Transport Plans
- Education Development Plans
- National Strategy for Neighbourhood renewal
- Sure Start and On Track

Wirral's cultural strategy forms links with all these initiatives at a local level through the partnerships in existence and being developed. The Cultural Strategy will seek to ensure that culture and the cultural activities achieving the aims and objectives of these other initiatives are recognised, valued and developed.

See Appendix ii – Linkages between strategies and plans chart **& iii** Strategy Links Document

4.0 Cultural life in Wirral

4.1 Introducing Wirral; History, Places of Interest, Facilities and Activities

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 Vicenzo 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 Arrowse 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.

Places of Interest, Facilities & Activities

Introduction

Wirral is 60 square miles of contrasts and surprises. Lying between two rivers, Wirral peninsula has sandy beaches, spectacular sunsets, rugged mountain views and the peace of the nature reserves. Many people come back to Wirral year after year, lured by the magnificent coastline, panoramic views and quiet country lanes, woodland and heathland – so much wild beauty in such a small area. But Wirral is no quiet backwater – if you like to shop until you drop, or if art and culture's your thing, you'll find a vibrant and lively area, packed with plenty to see and do.

Coastline

Being surrounded on three sides by water Wirral's major asset is its coastline, with a combination of natural beauty, sandy beaches, fantastic sunsets, leisure pursuits and seaside towns. It is possible to walk and cycle around much of the Wirral coastline from the Mersey Estuary in the east, along the north coast and down the Dee Estuary in the west. From Wirral the view from the Mersey Estuary of Liverpool are spectacular, as are the wide expanses of the open Irish Sea vista of the north and the beautiful views of the Welsh Hills and mountains of Snowdonia and Flintshire to the west on the Dee Estuary. Most of the North Coast is accessible via Merseyrail – Wirral Line with stations at New Brighton, Wallasey Grove Road, Moreton & Meols, Hoylake and West Kirby.

Woodside & Hamilton Square - Birkenhead

Woodside, the river entrance to the centre of Birkenhead provides some of the best views of the Mersey and has a Mersey ferry terminal housing the tourist information centre. Woodside is the gateway to Hamilton Square and the rest of Birkenhead and with the Birkenhead Tramway, Heritage Trail, Wirral Museum and the Birkenhead Priory. Hamilton Square and the surrounding area was renovated through the Hamilton Quarter SRB 1 programme. Today there is a new eco bus service linking the ferries, bus station, shops and business centre. There is new accommodation with a growing resident community, new tourist attraction, creative industries and a buzzing night scene. Arts and culture are increasing and crime is dropping.

Seacombe

Further down the coast, Seacombe is the home to Mersey Ferries again with fantastic views of the Liverpool waterfront, complete with an aquarium and children's 'pirates' play park and café.

New Brighton

At it's most northerly point is the seaside resort of New Brighton – a popular place for day trippers with it's own seaside variety theatre, eight miles of promenade, amusement parks, golf, tennis, ten pin bowling and a 19th century naval fort.

Harrison Drive Promenade - Leasowe Bay

The promenade from New Brighton to Leasowe is broad and ideal for walking and cycling. It is a favourite with anglers or people just watching the ships coming in and out of the mouth of the Mersey. The main coastal promenade brings you to Leasowe sand dunes car park and a secluded bay where the tide leaves pools with crabs and shrimps. A boardwalk path through the dunes gives access to the Gunsite picnic area, a former anti-aircraft base.

North Wirral Foreshore

From the sea wall between Meols and Leasowe this section of coast comes alive with migratory birds throughout the winter. This is a nationally important conservation area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Dove point is a focal point for sailing enthusiasts with slipway facilities and moorings behind the East Hoyle Bank.

Hoylake

Hoylake, once a fishing village now a conservation area, has a sandy shore, pleasant promenades and wonderful views. Hoylake is also home to the famous Royal Liverpool Golf Club. Red Rocks also known as Bird Island can be reached from the promenade.

West Kirby

West Kirby is a popular beach destination, with a mile long promenade and boasts a marine lake with one of the fastest stretches of coastlines in Europe for dingy racing, sailing and windsurfing. From West Kirby the views of the Welsh Hills and Hilbre Islands – the internationally famous home to birdlife and seal colonies – are magnificent.

West Coast

Further down the west coast, on a sandstone ridge facing the Welsh Hills, the villages of Heswall, Irby and Caldy have sweeping views of the Dee Estuary. There are several points of access to the long quiet beaches of the west coast, with Wirral Country park offering a visitor centre and picnic facilities at Thurstaston.

Countryside

Wirral boasts over 1,240 hectares of parks and open spaces on 268 sites including country and ornamental parks, meres and the bird sanctuary of the Dee Estuary and the offshore island of Hilbre, with 112 outdoor sports pitches, 79 playgrounds and 1,758 allotments. Listed below is just a selection.

Bidston Hill

Sitting in 100 acres of woodland and heath. Bidston Windmill sits on top of the hill and is open regularly to the public. Nearby is the former lighthouse, Observatory and the Tom O'Shanter Urban Farm.

Heswall Dales Local Nature Reserve

Approximately 72 acres of rough heathland affording views across the Dee Estuary to the Welsh Hills. An important refuge for wildlife and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Hilbre Island Local Nature Reserve

Access on foot is restricted by tides, which surround the island twice daily for up to 6 hours. The island provides an important high-tide roost for wading birds during the winter and a temporary resting-place for migrating birds.

Wirral Country Park

Wirral Country Park includes the 'Wirral Way', a twelve-mile footpath with a separate horseride through out most of the park. The park affords splendid views of the Dee Estuary with access to the beach at various points between West Kirby and Heswall. Camping facilities are available and the main visitor centre is at Thurstaston.

Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve

Dibbinsdale is the largest remaining block of semi-natural woodland in Merseyside and has been relatively undisturbed since the Ice Age.

Eastham Country Park

Includes over 76 acres of woodland with a fine nature trail, unique views of the Mersey Estuary, a bear pit and the site of an ancient river crossing. An information centre, tea garden, toilets and parking area available.

Royden Park and Thurstaston Common Local Nature Reserve

Includes over 200 acres of heathland, woodland and amenity grassland. A site of Special Scientific Interest. There is a visitor centre at Royden Park.

Arrowe Country Park

400 acres that serve as both a Country Park and Urban Park, with a visitor centre, stream, lake and good fishing facilities, 18 hole golf course, 9 hole pitch and putt, tennis courts, bowling and putting greens.

Birkenhead Park

Was the first public park in the country and the model for the more famous Central Park in New York, USA. There are two lakes, the lower having a boathouse and an ornate 'Swiss Bridge'. Birkenhead Park has received Heritage Lottery Funding to restore it to its former glory.

North Wirral Coastal Park

This stretches 4.5 miles along Wirral's coast with the Irish Sea and bordering two 'links' golf courses, it has unrestricted views and superb sunsets.

Other Places of Interest

Dotted around Wirral are small villages, country lanes and generous helpings of woodland, heathland and open space – interspersed with major conurbations, residential estates and industry. A selection of other places of particular interest include;

Bidston Village

Bidston Village has appeared in records since Domesday. The church tower dates to 1520 and a church has stood on the site since the 12th century. A farmhouse in the village built in 1696 possesses a 17th century bread oven.

Eastham Village

Comprises of a collection of old cottages and twisting narrow streets. St. Mary's Church dominates the village, parts of which date back to the Norman period. There is a yew tree in the churchyard thought to be nearly 2,000 years old.

Port Sunlight Village & Brombrough Pool

Built in the late 19th century by Viscount Leverhulme, the village is set in gardens and wide tree-lined roads. The several hundred houses, church, shops, art gallery and museum make this model industrial village a beautifully preserved memorial to the foresight of its founder. The village is a regular winner of Britain in Bloom.

Thornton Hough Village

A collection of splendidly maintained half-timber houses; a village green, a church built in neo-Norman style and a smithy are just part of this beautiful village.

Willaston

Has a number of interesting buildings including a windmill, an old hall and 17th century cottages. These are centred about the village green and a waymarked Village Trail guides the visitor around the most significant sites.

Oxton Village

Oxton Village developed in the early nineteenth century around a hilly area above Birkenhead and has been designated a conservation area. The area boasts merchant and trader mansions to small cottages, many of which are classified as listed buildings. It is however the overall character of the area with its natural stone walls, pavements, trees and gardens that contributed to its status as a conservation area.

Sport & Leisure

Wirral is an ideal place for the sports person, with an abundance of sport and recreation facilities. Below are just some of the facilities and activities on offer;

Water-sports

Wirral can boast unrivalled opportunities due to its enviable three stretches of varied coastline and two marine lakes. Sailing, angling, power boating, windsurfing and all other water based activities.

Golf

Wirral is spoilt for choice when it comes to golf, four municipal golf courses serve Wirral together with ten private courses including the world famous Royal Liverpool Golf course at Hoylake. Wirral also has two golf driving ranges.

Sports & Leisure Centres

There are twelve leisure and sport centres available that incorporate eight swimming pools and an indoor cricket school. There are four municipal fitness suites with numerous other private fitness clubs based around the Wirral. These Sport & Leisure centres offer a variety of indoor sports activities and facilities. Wirral's Tennis and Sports Centre is a show case facility for tennis on the Wirral. Europa Pools offers fun for all the family with flumes and a wave machine.

Other Sports

Tranmere Rovers Wirral's home team is based in Birkenhead. The Council sponsor the 'home team' and is the only national league club to wear the name of its home town on its shirt. Birkenhead Park and New Brighton have top Rugby Union clubs while the cricket teams are of a high standard. There is over 500 sports clubs on the Wirral so there should be something for everyone from team games to individual sports Wirral offers enormous choice.

Arts & Entertainment

Wirral's arts and entertainment sector is buzzing with six museums, two art galleries, a Heritage trail and an extensive programme of first class concerts, exhibitions and festivals. Light and popular entertainment is delivered through the authorities eight public halls and four theatres as well as the enormous amount of private clubs and pubs. The council's 24 libraries provide reference and information services, computer suites and book picture and music lending services.

The Birkenhead Heritage Trail

Includes nine local attractions in and around Birkenhead, these are detailed in the Tourism and Events section below and includes the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum and the Wirral Museum & Hamilton Square Gardens.

Lady Lever Art Gallery

In Port Sunlight Village was built as a memorial to his wife by William Hesketh, first Viscount Leverhulme. Included in it's collections are one of the best assemblies of Georgian furniture outside London, 18th and 19th century paintings of the English school, English & Continental sculpture, a large and notable collection of 18th century Wedgwood ware, Chinese pottery and porcelain and English and Chinese enamels. The museum forms part of the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside group.

Theatres & Cinemas

Wirral newest theatre, Pacific Road doubles up as an arts, music and exhibition centre. The converted tram shed offer a unique venue and a varied programme of; theatre, classical music, folk, jazz, rock and comedy. The floral Pavilion, Wirral's municipal theatre in New Brighton, hosts variety shows and concerts featuring well known entertainers. The borough has three cinema complexes in Wallasey, Bromborough and an new Warner Brothers cinema in the centre of Birkenhead.

Ten-pin Bowling

Ten Pin Bowling is available in New Brighton and Bromborough.

Pubs & Clubs

The music and gig scene in Wirral is alive and kicking with something happening somewhere every night of the year with many pubs having regular live music nights! Many of the local bands have strong followings. The information is best obtained through the free listing magazine 'The Buz' and web site that is produced monthly and distributed across Wirral and Merseyside.

Festivals

Wirral host two major internationally renowned music festivals each year, namely the Hamilton Jazz Festival held in September and the International Guitar festival of Great Britain held in November. Birkenhead Park also hosts the 'Big Slash' festival of world music every June. More major events are included in the Tourism and Events section below.

Tourism & Events

Wirral is promoted as a visitor destination by the Tourism section of the council and EuroWirral locally, regionally and internationally in association with the British Tourist Authority (BTA), there is a tourist information centre and more than 50 major events are co-organised each year. Wirral offers the tourist, or resident a whole range of activities and facilities, the coast is one of the key attractions that brings visitors back year after year as highlighted above along with the countryside & sports facilities and the arts & entertainment scene all add up to a fabulous visitor experience. Below are highlighted some further attractions that make Wirral wonderful.

Mersey Ferries

The Ferry across the Mersey offers something for everyone. Linking Wirral to Liverpool across the water passengers can break their journey at Seacombe and at the Woodside Visitor Centre. The old booking hall of Woodside Ferry has been transformed. The 50-minute cruise comes complete with spectacular waterfront views and a lively informative commentary.

The Heritage Trail & the Hamilton Quarter

Incorporates the Woodside Visitor Centre and Pacific Road Arts & Exhibition Centre. Other attractions that form part of the Heritage trail include;

Shore Road Pumping Station; the home of the 'Giant Grasshopper' a working example of the giant steam pumps which were used to clear water from the Railway tunnel beneath the Mersey.

Egerton Bridge; Is a fine working example of a Birkenhead Bascule Bridge. It houses models and information about the Birkenhead Dock system, which opened in 1847.

Wirral Museum & Hamilton Square Gardens

Probably Wirral's most unique asset. Opened in 1887 by John Laird, Birkenhead Town Hall, now Wirral Museum, houses many fine collections relating to Wirral's history, including the model of Woodside as it was in June 1934, Cammell Laird Archive, Della Robbia Collection, Mayoral Silver Collection and much more. Hamilton Square Gardens were first developed in 1826 in one of the finest Georgian squares in England. They hold the town's World War 1 Memorial, John Laird Statue and the Queen Victoria Monument.

Birkenhead Priory & St. Mary's Tower

This Benedictine Monastery, established in 1150 AD, is the oldest building on Merseyside. Much of the original parts have been restored to their former stature. From the top of St. Mary's Tower there are views across Birkenhead to the Welsh Hills and across the Mersey to Liverpool.

The Birkenhead Tramway

The restored tramway runs from Woodside to the Old Colonial pub at the Taylor Street terminus. The Heritage Centre in Taylor Street houses a splendid collection of restored and part restored local buses and trams. Climb aboard a genuine Hong Kong tram for your journey or even a beautifully restored 1901 Birkenhead tram.

Historic Warships

Berthed at Corn Warehouse at East Float, Dock Road, Birkenhead is the county's finest collection of 20th century fighting ships. The frigate, HMS Plymouth and Submarine Onyx both played important roles in all aspects of the Falklands conflict. German U-boat U534 is also on display and makes an awe-inspiring sight silhouetted against the docks.

Williamson Art Gallery & Museum

A little way out of the centre of Birkenhead is this purpose built museum and gallery, which opened in December 1928. It houses a superb art collection with local and maritime history, including ship models. On display are Victorian oil paintings, pottery and porcelain, tapestries by Lee, English watercolours and a series of historical heritage exhibitions.

Voirrey Embroidery & Brimstage Hall

Voirrey Embroidery is one of the finest embroidery centres in Britain offers a range of courses and exhibitions as well as supplying everything for the enthusiast. Beautifully situated in the heart of rural Wirral. Brimstage Hall Was once the family seat of one of the richest and most important Cheshire families, the Domvilles. Coffee, crafts and farm produce shops are available in converted sandstone buildings.

Ness Boating Gardens

Although just outside Wirral's boundary Ness Botanic Garden forms part of the Wirral consortium of visitor attractions. It is a garden for all seasons and has been pioneers in the world of plants since 1898. Situated on the banks of the Dee

Estuary Ness Botanic Garden provides all year interest, beauty and something to enjoy. They also have a tea room, gift shop, garden centre, picnic area and children's adventure playground.

Max Spielmann Visitor Centre

This is the only fully operational photographic laboratory open to the public. Tour Guides take you on a tour of the laboratory explaining all the processes involved and can pick up photographic tips along the way. There is also a Digital Imaging Centre and a Factory Shop

Birkenhead Market

In the centre of Birkenhead is one of the oldest markets in the North West established in 1835 it has over 300 fixed stalls.

Events

Wirral hosts events through out the year from the small village fete to international Golf Championships, there is something for everyone. Some of the key annual events are highlighted below;

'Fun All Summer' New Brighton

Annual Wirral Coastal Charity Walk

New Brighton Carnival

Mersey River Festival

Birkenhead Priory Medieval fair

Wirral Corporate Cup

Balloons Across the Mersey

The Big Splash

Tranmere Show

Heswall Festival

Wirral Show

Liscard Alive

Wirral Festival of Golf

Hoylake RNLi Open Day

Euro Wirral Fit for Business Challenge

Euro Wirral Chinese Martial Arts Tournament

Hamilton Quarter Jazz Festival

Community Fireworks

International Guitar Festival of Great Britain

4.2 The Wider Picture

Introduction

Wirral's contribution to cultural assets is impressive however those who live in, work in and visit Wirral have a multitude of opportunities to expand their cultural experiences within the wider North West. All the consultation analysed for the strategy identified Wirral as an ideal place to live due to its location and so much culture, the cities of Liverpool, Chester and Manchester, the country side of the Peak District, the Lakes and North Wales and the coast. This section touches on the breath of cultural activities and facilities available in the surrounding areas of Merseyside and Cheshire but it is beyond the scope of the document to describe in any detail the facilities and activities available. This section aims to highlight the significant impact that the surrounding areas can have on the quality of life of those in Wirral. It also aims to mention some key events and initiatives that could have significant positive benefits to Wirral – namely the Commonwealth Games – Manchester 2002, the International Golf Open at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club in 2006 and Liverpool's European Capital of Culture bid for 2008.

Liverpool and Merseyside

For two centuries the world came to Liverpool in its role as one of the foremost commercial ports of the British Empire. Its maritime heritage is reflected today in the magnificent warehouses, docks, grand mansions, public buildings and company offices. Wirral residents contribute significantly to the economic base of Liverpool's theatres with over 60% of bookings being from the Wirral. Below is listed some of the most significant cultural assets and attractions:

- Home to the National Museums & Galleries with seven of the eight museums based in Liverpool and one in Wirral.
 - Liverpool Museum
 - Merseyside Maritime Museum
 - HM Customs & Excise National Museum
 - Museum of Liverpool Life
 - Walker Art Gallery
 - Sudley House
 - The Conservation Centre
 - Lady Lever Art Gallery

Liverpool also boasts:

- The Tate Liverpool

- The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
- Liverpool Mozart Orchestra
- Liverpool Empire Theatre
- Everyman & Playhouse Theatres
- Two stunning Cathedrals
- St. George's Hall – regarded as one of Europe's finest neo-classical buildings.

Merseyside hosts over 23 major festivals each year four of which are based on the Wirral, others include the Mersey River Festival in June and the International Street Festival in August.

Sport is the lifeblood of Merseyside and with two Premiership football clubs based in Liverpool (Liverpool & Everton) along with Tranmere in Wirral the area is never short of top class football action. The area is also home to the Martell Grand National steeplechase at Aintree and with over 40 golf courses across Merseyside, numerous road races, Rugby League Merseyside is definitely second to none for top class sport.

Liverpool is also a party city with music and nightlife, from clubs to pubs, restaurants to festivals the area has something to offer everyone. Wider afield in Merseyside, the Sefton coast stretches north to the elegant Victorian town of Southport and its 'Pleasure land' seaside fair.

Chester and surrounding areas

Further south the city of Chester contrasts as an ancient walled city on the banks of the Dee, offering a two-mile walk around the city walls and shopping in a historically aesthetic environment. Chester and the borough of Neston and Ellesmere Port have significant attractions and facilities that add to the quality of life in Wirral and in return Wirral residents contribute to the economic wealth of these attractions. A selection of these are:

- Chester City centre
- Chester Zoo – world renowned for its work in conserving animal species
- The Blue Planet Aquarium
- Cheshire Oaks, McArthur Glen Designer outlet shopping area
- Norton Priory Museum & Gardens
- Ness Gardens
- Delemere Forest
- Planetarium at the Jodrell Bank Science Centre.

North Wales contributes to the quality of life for the people in Wirral through its countryside, hills and mountains as well as its heritage and history. Flintshire offers culture in many forms and is home to the Clwyd Theatre Cymru in Mold.

Wider still Blackpool Pleasure Beach is Britain's most popular tourist attraction with over seven million people visiting in 1998. Manchester has a mass of cultural history and heritage, buildings, attractions and activities from football to music and shopping to the unique Lowry Arts Centre. After 2002 there will also be the legacy of the XVII Commonwealth Games.

The XVII Commonwealth Games 2002

From the 25th July – 4th August 2002 the world's largest family of nations comes together in Manchester for the XVII Commonwealth Games. For ten days, worldwide attention will be focused on these sporting drama played out in the Games' unique atmosphere of friendship and understanding.

There will be four elements to the games that will have positive benefits for the people of Wirral through the opportunity to be involved.

The first being the Games' themselves and the involvement from young people through the regional sporting games organised for 2002. Volunteers from Wirral will be involved through the volunteering programme.

Secondly every school in the UK will receive education packs there will be initiatives through the Youth Sports Trust's TOP link programme encouraging older pupils to develop leadership skills.

Thirdly the Spirit of Friendship Festival will run from March until August and coincides with Her Majesty The Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations. All Schools, youth clubs, community centres and libraries will be encouraged to become involved through out the festival.

Fourthly culture and the arts will be celebrated through theatres, museums, galleries, concert halls and the media throughout the UK. For local workshops to international festival the aim is to stimulate new audiences for the arts. Wirral will benefit in many indirect ways from the Games and have the added advantage of having the games nearly on its doorstep.

Liverpool's bid for European Capital of Culture 2008

From 2005, there is to be a new European Capital of Culture every year. This is a revival of the City of Culture programme which benefited Glasgow so much back in 1990. European Union Member states take it in turn to nominate a cultural capital, and it falls to the UK in 2008 – and Liverpool is one of the cities bidding for the title.

The Capital of Culture is seen as an ideal opportunity to celebrate the cultural accomplishments of Europe's great cities and to involve the community as a whole in that celebration.

It is also an opportunity for further development. Glasgow experienced substantial economic and social benefits during its period as the City of Culture. Liverpool's claim is strong and it will have knock on benefits to the other areas in Merseyside. Wirral is keen to become involved and will support the bid. The concept gives the whole of Merseyside an opportunity to focus on, celebrate and improve its cultural provision and diversity.

4.3 Consultation

Consultation has been fundamental to the development of the Cultural Strategy. The consultation that Wirral has undertaken has been in two separate phases. The first phase of consultation was undertaken from September 2000 – March 2001. The second phase from May 2001 – October 2001.

The initial phase of consultation was concerned with;

- Gaining information from individuals and communities about their patterns of use.
- Establishing the cultural needs of the community
- Learning about the public & partners views on services and activities
- Getting external viewpoints of the present performance of services
- Exchanging views with different groups about the value and importance of various services and activities.

(CLOA Good Practise Guide – Cultural Strategies 1999)

Several different forms of phase one consultation were undertaken before arriving at the Cultural Vision, Priorities and Objectives;

- An internal scoping exercise was undertaken, with the then Leisure Services Department, to determine the scope and time-scale for the strategy development. June 2000
- Wirral Now - Leisure & Cultural Survey December 2000 – A double page information exchange introduction to culture and cultural strategies plus a survey was sent to the general public through the authorities free supplement Newspaper – 'Wirral Now'. Specific groups were also targeted such as young people, older people, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.

Results from this survey formed the basis for the themes of the strategy and identified issues for further investigation. (See Appendix vi – Enriching Our Lives Survey results April 2001).

- An analysis of other consultation was undertaken to avoid duplication of questions and to cross reference/confirm some of the survey results. The research documents that have been taken into consideration and have influenced the development of the Cultural Strategy, contributed to identifying the priority issues and the cultural objectives include;
 - Best Value Performance Plan Survey - November 1999
 - LA21 – Quality of Life Questionnaire 2000
 - Wirral Housing Needs Survey 1999.
 - Wirral’s Crime & Disorder Strategy
 - SRB4 Community Arts consultation 2000
 - Quality of Our Coastal Towns 2000 Interreg II C
 - Birkenhead 2020 Strategy consultation 2000
 - Wirral’s Best Value Customer Satisfaction Survey January 2001
 - Sport & Recreation Best Value Review 2000
 - Parks & Open Spaces Best Value Review 2000

- A series of presentations and interviews were delivered to key organisations and groups to raise awareness of the Cultural Strategy and encourage involvement. Organisations involved in the presentation/interview circuit included;
 - Wirral Investment Network – subgroups EuroWirral & Regeneration
 - The Wirral Partnership
 - Chief Officers Association – Metropolitan Borough of Wirral
 - Tenants Federation
 - Council Departments – Chief Officers
 - Wirral Council for Voluntary Services
 - Wirral Advocacy Group
 - Wirral Multi-Cultural Centre
 - Age Concern
 - Wirral Waterfront – SRB6
 - Lairdside Community Trust
 - Chamber of Commerce

- A stakeholder seminar/workshop was held in March 2001, inviting key partners and interested organisations/groups from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. Over 60 delegates attended and contributed to identifying/confirming key

issues to be addresses under each theme. (See Appendix vii – SWOT Analysis of Themes). The results from the seminar confirmed many of the issues highlighted in the Leisure & Culture Survey and the other consultation listed above.

The Cultural seminar/workshop concluded the first phase of consultation for the strategy. The second phase included;

- Testing the provisional strategic Cultural Vision, Priorities and Objectives through consulting and circulating the Draft Summary Document to key private, public, voluntary and community sectors – May 2001. Responses were analysed and contributed to the final document.
- Presenting the draft summary document to the local authorities Select Committee for Cultural and Community Services – June 2001
- Forming a Cultural Strategy steering group to develop, complete and monitor the action plan and strategy – July 2001
- Circulating Background Document to key players for final comment – October 2001
- Adoption of Cultural Strategy by Wirral Local Strategic Partnership – October 2001
- Presenting completed document to Select Committee for Culture and Community Services – November 2001.
- Adoption of Strategy by Metropolitan Borough of Wirral - Cabinet - December 2001.

See Appendix vi – List of organisations consulted,
Appendix vii – Enriching our lives survey – April 2001 report and
Appendix viii – SWOT analysis of themes

5.0 Cultural Themes

5.1 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 it's 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 INCCLUDE (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 Mulitmedia; resturants – 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 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**

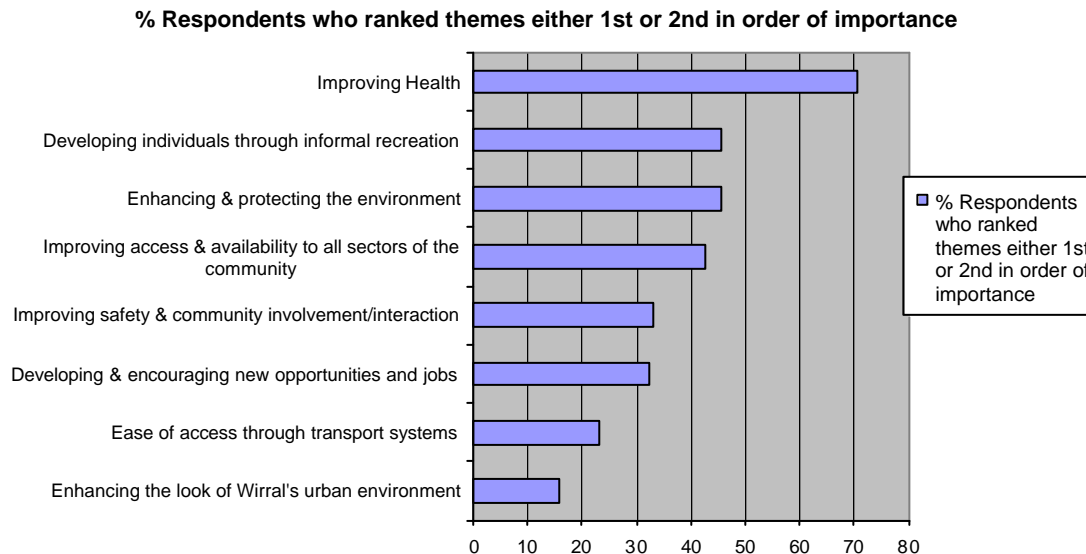
The Merseyside Waste Authority and Groundwork Wirral have been involved in the restoration of Bidston Moss from former landfill site to a site of green space and woodland park. There is an aim to open the site to the public by 2002 with a planned visitor centre and educational resource.

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 bases of the themes highlighted above.



6.0 Enriching Our Lives – Wirral’s Cultural Strategy

6.1 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 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.

6.2 Cultural priorities and objectives

6.2.1 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**

6.2.2 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.

6.3 Key Players

There are a vast collection of organisations, groups and individuals who valuably contribute to enriching the lives of those who live in, work in and visit Wirral through culture and cultural activities. Although too many to mention in this document it is important to acknowledge some key players. Below is a brief description of some of the organisations and groups involved in culture and cultural activities.

Public Sector

Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Department of Education and Cultural Services

The Department of Education and Cultural Services makes a significant contribution to culture and cultural activities, and is the department co-ordinating the development of the Cultural Strategy.

Schools Division

Lifelong learning in culture starts from birth and the education department has responsibility to develop this area from the moment that children join the education system.

Lifelong skills in music are developed through the Wirral Schools' music service. The learning of a musical instrument is available through a tuition scheme, and four Saturday morning music centres exist along with intermediate and senior ensembles. Some 3,000 children develop musical skills as part of the national Curriculum. Concerts are regularly given at local venues and as part of music tours to other countries in Europe.

The visual arts is an important feature of everyone's life and whilst at school, children are given opportunities to work with artists on special projects which often culminate in extensive exhibitions in local galleries. In addition, exam pupils enjoy the opportunity to experience an art study trip in various cities in Europe.

Foreign languages are taught as a foundation subject in secondary schools giving young people a unique opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Culture of countries outside their own. Languages offered include; Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Welsh, Russian as well as French, Spanish, German and Italian.

PE & Sport are a high priority for Wirral and opportunities are increasing through Sport England's National initiatives that are bringing £4million to Wirral. Some of these are two Sports Colleges, Space for sports and arts bringing new facilities to schools and communities, school sport co-ordinators raising the standards in PE and close the links with the sports development unit

Wirral is also fortunate in owning an Outdoor activity centre in the heart of Snowdonia – Oaklands – giving hundreds of Wirral children the opportunity to develop through outdoor education.

Youth and Community Services Division

In partnership with voluntary organisations, the youth and community services division runs 25 youth clubs, an outreach team and an outreach 'Kontaktabus', supports 22 community centres, two playbuses, they operate five all-year-round playschemes and one adventure playground. The services also runs: a response agency addressing youth issues such as housing, welfare, rights and drugs, a youth theatre, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme, a large programme of international exchanges and cater for over 6,365 children registered on holiday playschemes.

The youth service target age group is 13 –25 with a focus on 13 – 19 year olds with the community services section targeting 5 – 13 year old.

Cultural Services Division

The Cultural Services Division has a major responsibility for developing and providing services to those who live in, work in and visit Wirral. It is responsible for the following major service areas.

Parks and Open Spaces

Manage and maintain 1,240 hectares of parks and open spaces on 268 sites, 1,758 allotments, approx. 20 miles of coastline, 112 outdoor sports pitches and 79 playgrounds as well as providing a comprehensive ranger service, beach lifeguard service and maintaining four municipal golf courses.

Libraries, Information and Cultural Services

Provide 24 libraries, six museums, one art gallery, three theatres and 24 community computer suites in Wirral Libraries, nine of which are larger information technology training centres. Also provided are 8 public halls which are used for conferences, seminars, training and private functions.

Sport and Recreation

Operate nine leisure and sport centres, incorporating six swimming pools, four fitness suites and two marine lakes as well as providing a dynamic team of sports development officers and community development officers. They also jointly provide the delivery teams for Wirral Healthy Communities partnership Project, Exercise & Lifestyle Centres and the Walking for Health initiative.

Health Links

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Wirral Health Authority, Wirral & West Cheshire Community NHS Trust and the Merseyside Health Action Zone jointly fund Health Links. It aims to improve quality of life for all Wirral residents by reducing inequalities in health and providing realistic options for maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle. Projects include Exercise & lifestyle centres, smoking cessation, health promoting schools, Kids EXCEL, walking for health and health at work.

Department of Planning and Economic Development

All the Department of Planning and Economic Developments work impinges to some effect on the cultural life of the Borough particularly through the regeneration programme. The Planning section is responsible for development control including building conservation, building control such as sports grounds and licensing of public premises. This section is also responsible for the following areas below:

Tourism and Marketing including EuroWirral

This section aims to put Wirral on the International Map by promoting Wirral as a visitor, tourist and business opportunity through a programme of events and activities, working in partnership with the private sector providers. The section also supports and encourages the understanding of international links through education, cultural (including sport) and business programmes. They also provide the tourism information centre and co-promote more than 50 major events per year.

Conservation and Access

The department has both a conservation officer and a part time access officer. The conservation officer works closely with English Heritage and deals with some of the following: designation of conservation areas/ listed buildings, lottery & funding bids, repair and maintenance of historic buildings, design and conservation guidance to council departments and other organisations. The access officer advises and co-ordinates access to buildings across the authority in accordance with the DDA.

The Economic Development section covers Business advice and inward investment through Wirral Direct. In regeneration terms the department provides all the key teams, units and support that directs Wirral's regeneration effort. This includes all the SRB's mentioned in section 3 –opportunities for Wirral and the Special Initiative Team mentioned below:

Wirral's Special Initiative Team

The Special Initiatives Teams primary tasks are in ideas and concept generation particularly in support of the regeneration funding in the form of SRB's. The team is also responsible for the liaison and co-ordination of all national lottery needs, special projects such as the Historic Warships, and 'one off' requirements such as the City Status bid. They currently run the Neighbourhood Renewal initiative and is now responsible for tourism development in the Borough.

Other Local Authority Departments

Many other departments of the local authority contribute to the delivery of culture for example;

Engineers – Coastal erosion and transport/cycle routes/footpaths

Housing – Residents and tenants quality of environment/life

Construction Services – Repair and maintenance of cultural facilities

Finance – One Stop Shops information decimation

Social Services – Use culture extensively to improve the quality of life for clients

Property Services – Building design and physical access

Personnel & Policy – Promotions and communications

Solicitor & Secretary – Licensing of entertainment venues

Other public organisations

The Health authority and the Primary Care Trusts all value the role that culture plays in peoples quality of life. There are many joint health promotion initiative underway that promote healthier lifestyle of which Health links is the most prominent. The introduction of a physical activity strategy commissioned by the Health Authority shows the level of commitment to the benefits culture and cultural activities can offer for the health and well being of the nation. (Check!)

The Police and the probation services also recognises the benefits that culture and cultural activities can offer in terms of crime reduction. Wirral's crime and disorder strategy advocates the use of physical activity and many partnerships and joint working already exists. The probation service uses the outdoor environment and other cultural activities to encourage the development of self-esteem, team building and co-operation.

Community Sector & Voluntary Sector

The cultural life of Wirral embraces many cultural providers outside the local authority including a large number of amateur sector organisations. Often totally independent of any financial or other support from the local authority they contribute significantly to the cultural diversity of the borough. The range is remarkable and is indicative of the importance of cultural activity to the residents and various communities of Wirral. Organisations include as a taster: local history societies, amateur groups, local church groups, resident/tenants associations, music groups, civic societies, parent/teacher associations, writing circles, amateur operatic & dramatic societies, choirs, scouts, guides, boy's brigade, 'friends of' organisations, arts and crafts groups let alone the 350 sports clubs in Wirral.

The challenge is to recognise the contribution and ensure that access and communication continues to increase to allow a greater number of people to take advantage of what is available. Below is just a snap shot of a couple of groups and organisations involved;

Groundwork Wirral

Groundwork Wirral works in partnership with the local community, public sector and private sector on environmental, social and economic regeneration projects. Projects range from play area regeneration and arts based community consultation to waste minimisation education and ISO 14001 work with local businesses.

Strong emphasis is placed on inclusive projects where needs of the local community are the main driver for the activity. Environment is dealt with in its most holistic sense and quality of life issues are always the primary consideration.

The Faith Community

The Faith Community has always played a part in the spiritual and cultural life of the wider community, initially throughout history through playing its part in providing the ceremonial necessary for the changes which occur in every life time through baptism, marriage and at the time of death. In more recent years it has developed a wide range of social and supportive activities, providing space and opportunity for discussion and public debate. It has also become pro-active through the clergy and active lay people in discussion with the statutory authorities in the well being of the neighbourhoods in which it is placed.

In the Wirral the range of activities undertaken by the faith community are many and varied. These include family support programmes through parent and tots groups, play groups, scout and guide movement, counselling programmes, drug information and advice, further education programmes both formal and informal dancing and other social activities. Other activities include youth work, play schemes and in providing accommodation to other charitable organisations, for example AA and epilepsy support. Credit unions are also often based within Church premises.

Churches Together in Wirral

Churches Together in Wirral is a body which represents the Christian Churches across the Wirral borough area. An elected Executive made up of the Ecumenical Officers appointed by the main denominations, a representative of the Evangelical Churches and other interested parties, Churches Together in Wirral is the negotiating body for the statutory authorities. The Executive appoints representatives to the various committees to which they are invited, to enable the faith community to play a part in making the community in which it is based a better place in which all people may have the opportunity for wholeness of life.

There are examples for Church/Community links which already work well within the Wirral area these include, The Tranmere Community Project based at Tranmere Methodist Church; The Charing Cross Neighbourhood Centre based in the Centre of Birkenhead; The Family Centre based at Laird Street Baptist Church in Birkenhead; the work of the Roundabout Centre in the North End of Birkenhead linked with St, James Church; a coffee Drop-in based at Wallasey United Reformed Church; a Third World coffee shop at the Methodist Church in Heswall; other various activities including a Luncheon Club and Drop-in at Wirral

Christian Centre in Woodchurch Road Birkenhead. These are only a few of the countless examples of social and other activities which at present take place within the Church premises in the borough.

Wirral Multicultural Centre

The Wirral Multicultural centre was established in 1991 as a community centre for Wirral Ethnic Communities. Soon it was discovered that there was a need for other services such as social, health and training as well as a growing ethnic population currently just under 2%. The centre has now evolved to become a major agency in Wirral delivering all types of services to the communities it serves on behalf of the local authority, health authority and employment agencies, they also have close links with the police and other statutory agencies.

The Multicultural Centre is committed to equal opportunities and the elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination. They work to overcome the effects of past discrimination and remove barriers to equal access. The centre is governed by a Board of Directors and these are from the Asian, Chinese and Vietnamese communities and four local authority Councillors who are responsible for the provision of services to the communities i.e. social and community work, health and employment.

The success of the centre through the principle of all communities using the same building having access to a range of services and working in partnership. They are set to expand the building to offer other services in the future.

Private/Commercial Sector

Wirral is well catered for in terms of private facilities with three main cinemas, Mecca Bingo, two main shopping centres in Birkenhead and Liscard. Private health and leisure complex's and numerous small hotels and guest houses. Golf provision is impressive with 10 private golf courses including the famous Royal Liverpool Golf Course in Hoylake, which is planned to host the International Golf Open in 2006 for the first time in over thirty years. Wirral boasts two bowling centres, a go-kart centre, numerous pubs and clubs, Wirral's own radio station Buzz FM, the Wirral News Group and other local papers, cafes and restaurants and creative industries that all add up to a multitude of activities and opportunities. All these facilities are complemented by the broad scope of cultural activities and facilities available across Liverpool, the rest of Merseyside and the other neighbouring authorities of Neston and Ellesmere Port, Chester, Flintshire and beyond. Many of these 'wider picture' facilities and opportunities are mentioned in Chapter 4.

Through out Merseyside and Cheshire there are several key players that contribute greatly to the cultural well being of Wirral from Mersey Travel providing the transport systems to access the cultural sights to Mersey Tourism who with our own Tourism section promote the area nationally and internationally. The Mersey-Dee Alliance conduct a similar role through Cheshire. Merseyside Sport work very closely with all the Merseyside boroughs in developing sport across the county. They lead on national initiatives and organise the Merseyside Youth Games that acts as a successful development tool for sport in the area.

The creative industries sector in Wirral is small but growing. It encompasses music makers, writers, artists, crafts workers, theatre companies, dancers, jewellers and more. These people are determined to work locally, providing a service for local people as well as those further a field. Their energy and creativity puts live music in pubs, hand made vases on mantelpieces, children on the stage, poetry on pages, dresses on hangers, pictures on walls.

Although this is not a comprehensive list of partner organisations this are is evolving, there are also significant partnerships with in Wirral that will lead the direction of services and development of the area. The most significant being the Local Strategic Partnership which will incorporate other groups such as the Wirral investment Network and the Wirral Learning Partnership both of which make considerable contributions to culture and cultural well being.

Although there are many organisations and groups contributing to the cultural agenda on Wirral there are still problems and areas for improvements. Wirral has some of the most deprived areas in the country, this strategy hopefully will, through its objectives and priorities develop the areas that need most work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access the wealth of culture that already exists and to develop their own potential.

See Appendix ix – Key players chart

7.0 Action Plan

7.1 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)

7.2 Cultural action plan

Action Plan 2001 - 2006

What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
A. To ensure that under-represented groups have the opportunity to fully participate in cultural activities					
A1. Improve dissemination of information to under-represented groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Cultural Disability Access Guide • Ensure guide's to Wirral & other publications have adequate access information • Utilise Housing's Tenants & Residents association newsletter to disseminate information • Identify other avenues of communication with under-represented groups • Investigate the use of alternative language/presentation of information 	July 2002 On going 2002 - ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Services • Personnel & Policy • Key partners 		Existing & external
A2. Work with social services and other partners to improve cultural opportunities for those with mental health problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form partnership with Social Services & Health Authority & identify needs • Input into the Mental Health Strategy • Create opportunities for inclusion & access to facilities • Investigate the possibility of creating a cultural development post for mental well being 	From May 2002 BY End 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services • Health Authority • Cultural Services 		Existing & external
A3. Review pricing structures to maximise usage of existing cultural services for all people of Wirral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensively review the Wirral Passport Scheme – amend, re-launch and market. Investigate option of using consultants • Implement recommendations in DA's Report – Income & Charges for Leisure Services 	From March 2002 - 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Services • Partners • consultants 		Existing
A4. Map and audit all cultural activities and create a directory of cultural services to be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate information & liase with community resource Directory 	From Jan – May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Services • Youth & 		Existing

included in the Wirral Community Services Directory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management team Ensure that directory is kept up to date through community directory social business 	2002	Community		external
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
B. To listen to the cultural needs of the people of Wirral empowering them to assist in developing and expanding opportunities and services.					
B1. Create and resource a Cultural Forum involving key groups and relevant agencies/organisations and together plan, develop and promote future cultural opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold a launch seminar for the cultural strategy Involve all interested parties and invite to attend forum. Develop structure and implement 	By May 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Services CS Steering Group Partners 		Existing
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree annual consultation process for Cultural Services Ensure other Consultation's inform and are informed by the Cultural Strategy. For example; Wirral Health & Lifestyle survey Conduct specific consultation using a variety of methods to identify cultural needs and barriers to participation of specific groups; people with disabilities, looked after children, elderly, unemployed, ethnic groups, carers etc 	By Jan 2002 Ongoing Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education & Cultural Services Planning Health Links Groundwork Wirral Arts Service SRB 4 		Ground work Wirral Lottery NW Arts Board Neighbour hood Renewal Existing
B3. Make links with existing groups and fora to promote Wirral's Cultural Strategy by appropriate representation at borough and regional groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify groups to promote Cultural Strategy, e.g. Dee Estuary Forum, LSP, COMT Select appropriate officer representation identify whether time limited or longer term involvement Plan programme 	From Jan 2002 From Jan 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Services Partners 		Existing

What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
C. Encourage development and provision of activities and services locally for the people of Wirral.					
C1. Identify areas of good practise and conduct a feasibility study to look at the scope of using schools & community sites to provide cultural activities more locally; e.g. through the national Sport England space for sports and arts scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space for Sports & Arts NOF funding, implement and develop action plan Implement Specialist Sports College Status' Map Sport & Recreation facilities Maximise usage of existing leisure facilities Through Community Sports Development Officers work programmes Through Sports Development programmes 	<p>By End 2002</p> <p>From Sept 2001</p> <p>From Jan 2002</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Cultural Services Youth & Community Partners 		<p>NOF funding</p> <p>Sport England</p> <p>Existing</p> <p>ERDF</p> <p>HAZ</p> <p>Other external</p>
C2. Through partners and external funding develop opportunities for young people to participate in cultural activities as locally as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wirral Kids EXCEL started in Primary Schools, fitness initiative, provision of after school activity clubs Expand Kids EXCEL to leisure centres, community centres etc. Disability SDO's work programme Community SDO's work programme Active Communities programmes Wirral Healthy Communities (WHC) Provide a skateboard park in Eastham Complete the Playground improvement scheme Undertake Football pitch improvements – phase 1 	<p>From Sept 2001 – 2003</p> <p>By End 2002</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>By mid 2002</p> <p>By April 2004</p> <p>By mid 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Links Cultural Services Youth & Community Education 		<p>External</p> <p>Existing</p> <p>Existing</p> <p>Existing</p> <p>External/ Existing</p>
C3. Through partners and external funding develop opportunities for older people to locally take part in cultural activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify needs and opportunities to assist in developing themes identified in sections six & eight of the National service framework for older people in partnership Develop programmes with older 	<p>From Dec 2001</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services Cultural services Health Authority Groundwork Wirral 		<p>Existing</p> <p>External</p>

	<p>people and young people, with the aim of contributing and enhancing each other's cultural understanding and opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and safe chair exercises for older people in care establishments • Introduce Boccia as a activity for older people in care establishments • Create a 'comfort stop' strategy for cultural services facilities 	<p>From May 2002</p> <p>From 2001 – 2003</p> <p>By End 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral Healthy Communities & Age Concern • Cultural Services 		<p>External</p> <p>Existing</p>
C4. Create a cultural festival in 2003 with events developed by and based in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create sub group from C/S steering group to focus on festival • Develop programme & partners e.g. Cultural Diversity group, S. Wirral High School & other community groups • Implement Wirral Cultural festival year 2003 • Create festival legacy & links with Liverpool City of Culture Bid 2008 	<p>By Jan 2002</p> <p>From Jan 2002</p> <p>From 2002/2003 By July 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Cultural Diversity Group • Cultural Services • Community groups • Other partners 		<p>Existing</p> <p>External</p>
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
D. Improve access to cultural activities throughout the borough and remove other barriers to participation.					
D1. Review transport systems and pricing to cultural activities and identify opportunities for improving access through sustainable means.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Transport Plan Steering group identify issues and create action plan • Ensure that new developments continue to provide cycle routes, public transport infrastructure & cycle stands in car parks • Develop a strategy to link cycle networks with residential areas, recreational spaces, tourist attractions and other leisure facilities. • Continue the development of the B'head Tramway system which will 	<p>From mid 2002 – 2003</p> <p>From 2000 -</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineers • Planning & Economic Development • Education & Cultural Services • Groundwork Wirral • Cycle & walking groups • Personnel & Policy • Mersey Travel 		<p>Landfill Tax</p> <p>Sports Lottery</p> <p>Regional Coastal Park</p> <p>Mersey travel</p>

	include a cycleway & footpath between Conway Park & current terminus at Taylor St. depot	2004			
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
D2. Review and improve transport to cultural activities for looked after children, after school and during holidays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create time limited partnership group to identify resources and improve access 	From End 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Cultural Services • Social Services • Youth & Community Services 		External Existing
D3. Examine the possibility of expanding the provision of childcare at cultural activities/sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral Healthy Communities Partnership Project will provide up to 90 hours of childcare to reduce barriers to participation in healthy activities, e.g. exercise, weight Management, parenting, physical activity etc. • Investigate option for crèche facilities at libraries through ESF funding 2002+ • Review needs/consult public non users, identify issues and solutions 	From 2002 – 2004 From Sept 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Links • Cultural Services • Cultural Services 		External External
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liase with planning, access officer & WAD re. new facilities, businesses re. access to facilities • Liase with Wirral Waterfront – Access priority needed & design code. • Continue to implement building access improvements in line with Capital programme 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAD • Planning & Economic Development • Wirral Waterfront • Education & Cultural Services • Property Services 		Existing External
D5. Implement access improvements to the Wirral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral as a partner in the ERDF funded Quality of Coastal Towns Project funding from Interreg IIIb 	April 2002 – March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Cultural Services, Engineers to lead in partnership with QCT Merseyside Steering Group, Mersey Travel and Dee Estuary 		Dependent of success of QCT bid. 25% funding required from local sources. Education &

			Strategy		Cultural Services and Local Transport budget.
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
E. To improve the sense of security for the people of Wirral so they can enjoy cultural activities in safety.					
E1. Identify with partners new approaches to engage disaffected & looked after young people through cultural activities – for example the Sport and Arts initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource and Implement external funded Sports and Arts initiative Groundwork Wirral uses the arts as a means of engaging excluded groups in positive environmentally focused activities Through partnership employ a Cultural Inclusion officer for; looked after children, youths leaving care, youths at risk of entering care & young carers Identify how culture & cultural activities can assist in the delivery of Wirral's Crime & Disorder strategy. 	<p>From 2002 – 2003</p> <p>By May 2002</p> <p>From 2000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational & Cultural Services + other Partners Groundwork Wirral, Youth Service & Banardos 	Three aims' activities, training & fitness	Externally funded from variety of sources
E2. Look at new ways of enhancing the public realm and increasing the sense of security in Wirral.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Lighting strategy for Wirral Raise profile & awareness of rangers in public parks Review security in parks and implement and communicate changes Identify opportunities for improving safety & security at cultural events, activities and sites. 	<p>By end 2004</p> <p>By end 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineers Cultural Services 		Existing
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
F. Identify different ways of funding & delivering culture & cultural activities ensuring that they encourage personal & economic growth.					
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a youth & culture group to identify opportunities for closer and joint working Produce a cultural service's funding strategy, promoting a proactive 	<p>From Jan 2001</p> <p>By End 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Cultural Services Youth & Community Planning & 		Existing External

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approach to external funding Raise the standard of quality and delivery of cultural activities through a programme of staff training and development; Joint Training Programme. Courses related to Health & Cultural Activities. Contributed too by and available to partner organisations. Encourage take up of courses by WBC staff Implement IIP & Key issues Complete & implement the Museum Service and Heritage Trail Business Plan 	<p>From 2001 – 2005</p> <p>From 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Health Links 		
F2. Produce an annual Cultural Strategy report highlighting the positive benefits of cultural activities and culture and it's potential for improving quality of life as a 'case for culture'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Links Annual report to be incorporated in Education and Cultural Services Annual Report. Produce Annual report for the Cultural strategy 	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually From March 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Links Education & Cultural Services 		Existing
F3. Produce and implement a sustainable Tourism strategy for Wirral.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and implement opportunities for sustainable or wildlife tourism Develop & write strategy 	<p>By Mid 2002</p> <p>By July 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & Economic Development Cultural Services 		Existing
F4. Support the Liverpool City of Culture bid for 2008 by linking with initiatives and identifying opportunities for joint working across Merseyside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve links – Develop & identify links & opportunities 	<p>From March 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Services Planning & Economic Development 		Existing
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
G. To protect, conserve, manage and enhance Wirral's environment and heritage and encourage sensitive and sustainable development for the benefit of future generations.					
G1. Support and implement the Bio-diversity strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide funding to help purchase land &/or to enter into management agreement with Landowners Develop & produce plan 	<p>By April 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Services 		Existing

What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
G2. Ensure that a conservation approach to historic buildings, sites etc. is adopted through planning policy guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop planning policy guidance • Draw assistance from English Heritage • Create a design planning policy guidance for new build in the authority. 	By mid 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & economic development • Property services • Construction Services • Cultural Services 		Existing English Heritage
G3. Advocate the use of creative design and community art in Townscape issues to help enhance the urban landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A41 Employment Corridor Enhancement Strategy • Birkenhead 2020 strategy 	From 2001 – 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwork Wirral • SRB6 • WMBC • Engineers • Merseytravel 		SRB6 WMBC
G4. Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park. Develop a regional waterfront park as a network of themed, jointly marketed and interlinked sites across Merseyside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a partnership led by Wirral, Liverpool, Sefton with support from Mersey Partnership, Dee Estuary Strategy, Mersey Basin Campaign, Mersey Strategy, MerseyTravel, National Trust, NWDA , English Heritage and RSPB to jointly promote, market and develop a Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park • Projects to be processed under 4 themes; Mersey Port, Estuary Management & development, Leisure & Tourism and Infrastructure dev. & regeneration • Produce a coastal strategy which recognises the importance of Wirral's coast in improving the quality of life of the people of the borough. 	From Dec 2001 By End 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral & Mersey Partnership to lead • Cultural Services • Planning & Economic Development 	Co-ordinated promotion and project implementation including improvements to access & tourism facilities.	Partnership of ERDF, Objective 1, NWDA funds, Heritage Lottery Funding, private sector funding and contributions from Partner organisations Existing
G5. Through the Heritage Lottery Fund bid restore and renovate Birkenhead Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pending Heritage Lottery funds – implement restoration plan in consultation with the public & interested groups 	By end 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services • Partners 		Heritage lottery fund Existing

What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
H. Develop the use of cultural activities and culture to improve the health of the people of Wirral.					
H1. Undertake a feasibility study/pilot looking at how cultural activities can make a difference to improving the health of the workforce (including volunteers & carers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit existing provision to avoid duplication • Implement a Health At Work consultation among workforce • Review of health related work place policies 	<p>By End 2002 By End 2002</p> <p>By end 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMBC & Healthlinks • Personnel, Health Links & Cultural Services + other agencies • Personnel, Health Links & Cultural Services + other agencies 		HAZ Existing
H2. Provide increased support and motivation to groups at risk of or recovering from poor health to access cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and expand Healthy Living Centres and the Exercise & Lifestyle Centres • Introduce and expand 'Walks for Health' – low level exercise introduction sessions • Develop exercise and lifestyle clubs for clients leaving referral. 	<p>From 2001 – 2006</p> <p>2001 – 2006</p> <p>2001 – 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Links & Cultural Services • Health Links & Cultural Services • Health Links & Cultural Services 		External Existing
H3. Build on partnership work on health initiatives and identify suitable future joint projects and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of Healthy Living Centre partnerships • Develop walking initiatives • Identify other projects, funding and resources • WHC to promote minimum four food & health projects in it's life time 	<p>From 2001 – 2006</p> <p>From 2000 - 2004</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Links • Cultural services • WHC & it's partners 		External Existing External
H4. Through partners and external funding develop and promote culture as a tool for improving mental well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to the mental health strategy & physical activity strategy • Identify partnerships and develop plan • WHC to provide detailed action plan for promoting positive mental health 	By Jan – April 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services • Health Links • Health Authority • Education & Cultural services • WHC 		External Existing External

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify funds & employ a swimming development officer Liase with user groups and transport plan to develop programmes and promotional material Implement & develop walking initiatives 	By End 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Links Cultural services Education Youth & community Social services Health authority WHC 		External Existing
What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
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					
I1. Produce a marketing plan for Wirral developing opportunities such as the Golf Open and Wirral's coast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate communications group to co-ordinate PR & Marketing, develop corporate strategy BV communication review BV Tourism review Create sub marketing strategy for Education & Cultural Services Identify ways to ensure culture and cultural activities are reported in the media Link health related reports Campaigns in press and media to the provision/access of cultural services Develop the role of the Education & Cultural Services PR officer Departmental communications group to co-ordinate PR & marketing 	By end 2003 From Mid 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive Personnel & Policy Planning & Economic Development Education & Cultural services Social services Health Links 		Existing External
I2. Establish a Cultural Strategy steering group for the implementation, development and monitoring of the strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish group & support 	By Mid 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural services & partners 		Existing
I3. Contribute to the development of the Community Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through representation at the Area Forum days Through adoption of the strategy by the Local Strategic Partnership 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education & Cultural services 		Existing

What	How	When	Who	Result	Resource
14. Ensure that proper interpretation of Cultural activity sites maximises enjoyment and lifelong learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of coastal interpretation facilities on Wirral but particularly at West Kirby, Thurstaston and along the Wirral Way. Wirral as a partner in the ERDF funded QCT project. Key link to the proposed Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park 	From May 2002 – March 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Cultural Services, Engineers to lead in partnership with QCT Merseyside Steering Group, Mersey Travel and Dee Estuary Strategy 		Dependent on success of QCT bid. 25% funding required from local sources, mainly Wirral
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with 'one stop shops' • Web site development and links with Merseyside/NW information • Residents and Tenants Association News letters • Maximise the use of the Wirral Website to promote, inform and communicate culture in Wirral. • Cultural Strategy & related documents on intranet & internet • Develop site to market & promote Wirral 	By mid 2002 By end 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel & Policy • Education & Cultural services • Housing 		Existing
16. Create a positive marketing identity and improve the promotion of Wirral's cultural facilities and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new corporate branding for Cultural Services • Implement & Launch 	By mid 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services 		Existing

8.0 Monitoring and review

8.1 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.

8.2 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 Plan 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

8.3 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.

8.4 Consultation

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