



TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 November 2021

REPORT TITLE:	BIRKENHEAD CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR: REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the development of a Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, commissioned in support of the Council's ambitious regeneration plans.

The Culture and Heritage Strategy will contribute directly to a number of objectives in the Wirral Plan 2021-2026:

- **Inclusive Economy** – Deliver the Economic Strategy 2026; Deliver the Birkenhead 2040 Regeneration Framework; Deliver regeneration enabling strategies; Deliver the Community Wealth Building Strategy
- **Safe and Pleasant Communities** – Ensure Culture and Learning is embedded in the heart of communities

The content of this report affects all Wards within the Borough but has particular relevance for Birkenhead Wards in respect of the Culture and Heritage Strategy for the town

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Endorse the draft Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead; and
- (2) Request the Director of Regeneration and Place to bring a further report for approval of the final strategy.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure that Elected Members support the vision and priorities outlined in the draft Strategy and agree with the next steps for finalising the strategy, i.e.:
- Working with partners and stakeholders to agree roles and actions, including via a work planned for the end of November
 - Further engaging with creatives and communities to secure support
 - Final approval and launch of strategy in early 2022

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options considered were to not produce the Strategy. However, the requirement for this Strategy has been clearly identified as a key enabler for the delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and will be critical in ensuring that culture-led regeneration is delivered in partnership and with community involvement.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As previously reported to Committee on 21st January 2021, a Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead has been developed in support of the Council's ambitious regeneration plans. This work has been undertaken by Counterculture LLP, an organisation with extensive experience of producing similar strategies, working closely with Council officers.
- 3.3 The aim of the Culture and Heritage Strategy is to harness these opportunities, bringing together cultural partners and creative communities to ensure projects are co-designed and that they incorporate community wealth building approaches. It will also provide a framework for partners to work together to develop the creative skills and talent which are so evident in the borough. The strategy will also be critical to underpinning key initiatives which impact on the borough as a whole, such as the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture status which Wirral will hold again in 2024. A significant number of the priorities in the Strategy will be developed with reference to Wirral wide activities both to ensure that opportunities benefit creatives and communities across the borough wherever possible and to maximise the limited resources available.
- 3.4 The draft strategy is presented as **Appendix 1** to this report. In respect of timescales, the Committee is requested to note that the long-term vision in the Strategy is aligned to the Birkenhead 2040 Framework but with an initial 5 year delivery timeframe (2021 – 2026) which is aligned to both the Wirral Plan and Economic Strategy. The overarching themes and high level priorities set out in the draft Strategy are summarised in **Table 1**.

Table 1 – Draft Strategy Themes and Priorities 2021 - 2026

Strategy Theme	Priority		This priority is about...	Key Projects and Activities
Theme 1 Destination Birkenhead: Place, Space, Experience	1.1	Develop a visitor destination offer that does justice to Birkenhead's unique assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making Birkenhead's town centre and waterfront more attractive as places to make and experience culture ▪ Mobilising the business community to plug gaps in residential, retail, hospitality and leisure offers ▪ Working with partners in the wider City Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eureka! Mersey, opening in 2022 ▪ Transport Shed ▪ International Battle of the Atlantic Centre at Woodside and public realm improvements ▪ Exploring partnership opportunities for major events ▪ Liverpool City Region Destination Marketing Programme
	1.2	Improve local connectivity, wayfinding, and visitor experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving wayfinding and connectivity to and between Birkenhead's culture and heritage assets, e.g., with imaginative signage schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town Deal Waterfront Animation and Connectivity project ▪ Public Realm Design Guide (currently in development) ▪ Exploring opportunities to link existing and new culture and heritage assets through trails and programming (e.g., Leftbank Soundtrack, Birkenhead Park 175th anniversary in 2022) ▪ Liverpool City Region public art and placemaking opportunities
	1.3	Implement the new vision and strategy for Birkenhead's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connecting existing museums and galleries into the wider future plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wirral Museums Service Strategy (currently draft)

		great museums and galleries	for Birkenhead to maximise opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnering with transformational regeneration projects which will enhance Wirral's museums and galleries offer such as Transport Shed, Waterfront Animation and Connectivity (which includes funding for the Priory) and Woodside Levelling Up project ▪ Exploring programming opportunities, e.g. Borough of Culture 2024
1.4	Find creative uses for existing spaces as well as creating exciting new ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Repurposing underused heritage, retail and community buildings and encouraging meanwhile use to create permanent change ▪ Working with Liverpool Film Office to promote film and TV production ▪ Working with key heritage organisations such as Conversation Areas Wirral and Wirral History and Heritage Association to ensure heritage and conversation assets are managed appropriately ▪ Demonstrating how creative sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dock Branch Park ▪ Transport Shed ▪ Future Yard ▪ Argyle Street Creative Hub 	

			infrastructure projects can lead sustainability and innovation in design	
	1.5	Enhance Birkenhead's public spaces and cultural offer through ambitious, strategic creative programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building on Borough of Culture in 2019 and looking ahead to 2024 ▪ Working with City Region organisations to bring signature events to Birkenhead ▪ Accessing funding for creative programming, e.g., street art and commissions, ensuring local artists benefit wherever possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liverpool City Region Cultural Compact and City Region partnerships ▪ Birkenhead Park 175th anniversary ▪ Borough of Culture ▪ Left Bank Collective (including Future Yard, MAKE)
Theme 2 Creative People and Cultural Communities	2.1	Develop stronger links between talent, skills, and opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building networks within the creative and cultural sector and improving connectivity between creative talent, skills, infrastructure, and audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working
	2.2	Improve access to funding and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making maximum use of regional and national support schemes, e.g., working with Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund to facilitate funding workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working
	2.3	Strengthen education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximising the opportunities for learning linked to regeneration projects and building links between education and training and providers and local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working

			<p>creative businesses, to encourage career pathways. This will include developing curriculum opportunities, for example building on the best practice approaches already being undertaken by Wirral Met and developing the role of Wirral's Local Creative Education Partnership (LCEP).</p>	
2.4	<p>Get communities on board through inclusive action and engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making best use of culture and heritage to help the borough build back following the pandemic. This will be achieved by working with stakeholder groups, including representatives of voluntary sector organisations and residential and minority communities, and collaborating with Public Health and other partners to maximise opportunities for creativity to be reflected in wellbeing programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working 	
2.5	<p>Use art to define different neighbourhoods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working proactively with property developers, encouraging, and supporting them to include culture and heritage in their plans, using art to define 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working 	

			neighbourhoods and differentiate postcodes	
Theme 3 Mobilising Stakeholders and Resources	3.1	Build local capacity and mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The local authority facilitating action to deliver the priorities in the strategy through partnership working which builds on existing relationships and develops new ones, involving decision-makers and experts from across the public, private and voluntary sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working
	3.2	Adopt a coordinated regional approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with regional partners to develop place-shaping funding bids linked to culture and heritage which reflect local strengths and provide opportunities to deliver real outcomes for people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be further developed through partnership working

3.6 The draft Strategy at **Appendix 1** has been developed against the backdrop of a constantly changing landscape given the delivery of the Birkenhead regeneration programme at pace and funding success for culture and heritage infrastructure projects, including the Town Deal and more recently the Levelling Up Fund from which the Council has secured £19.6m to transform the outdoor public spaces along Woodside's waterfront and help towards upgrades of the existing U-Boat Story attraction and replacing the ageing Ferry Landing Stage. The draft Strategy reflects the latest position in relation to culture and heritage infrastructure projects and other activities wherever possible. The Strategy is underpinned by a detailed evidence base report produced by Counterculture LLP earlier in the year. This evidence base report is being refreshed given more recent developments to inform further work on the Strategy and action planning with stakeholders and communities.

3.7 In line with the draft Strategy, officers are currently working to ensure the opportunities presented by the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework have input in respect of culture and heritage. As an example of the joint working referenced in the document, officers are collaborating proactively across directorates to develop a

programme for 2022 which will include Birkenhead Park's 175th anniversary celebrations.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 A funding strategy focusing on accessing grants and other sources of funding is being developed in line with the theory of change model set out in Appendix 1. In setting the budget for 2021/22, £620k budget was permanently removed as a saving. This was in recognition of the Council's financial challenge and the need to set a legally balanced budget. A small budget of £50,000 remained and is available to support development and engagement activities associated with the implementation of the strategy. This is particularly important to harness external funding to support the implementation and delivery of the Strategy and the achievement of its outcomes. A further budget of £15,000 is available specifically for heritage activities. Funding for the Destination Marketing programme referenced in the report is subject to a separate report to Committee.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The culture and heritage work programme is currently being delivered within existing staffing resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 No risks have been identified pertaining to this report. However, it should be noted that the delivery of the Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy will have an associated risk register.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders and partners to produce the draft Strategy. Whilst the majority of those consulted are based in, or working in, Birkenhead, perspectives from wider Wirral stakeholders have also been captured. Those engaged include:

- Elected Members
- Wirral Council officers involved in culture/heritage or related areas
- Stakeholders involved in culture and heritage infrastructure projects and the wider regeneration programme
- Organisations with a relevant national or regional remit (e.g., Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) and other strategic partners (e.g., culture, heritage, education organisations)
- Local heritage attractions, conservationists, enthusiasts, and societies
- Creative and cultural businesses and organisations
- Individual artists, musicians, performers, writers, and producers

- Individuals and organisations working with specific groups or communities, e.g., young people, older people, vulnerable people, BAME / faith communities
- Relevant networks and forums covering Birkenhead or wider Wirral (early years, schools, residents, creative and digital sector)
- Other stakeholders in the wider Wirral area

8.2 Further opportunities for consultation are being built into finalising the Strategy and developing action plan.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being produced alongside the action plan for the strategy and will be available on publication of the final strategy. Relevant consultation and engagement has been undertaken and will continue (see section 8 above).

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Strategy will provide a mechanism for promoting creative and innovative approaches to sustainable design and practice in the delivery of culture and heritage infrastructure projects.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Strategy will promote local employment and training opportunities in culture and heritage, support community development and resilience through culture and heritage activities as well as providing a focus for using creative and innovative approaches to sustainability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy

Please note that this PDF file may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact janemorgan@wirral.gov.uk if you would like this document in an accessible format.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Extensive background papers pertaining to the development of the draft Strategy are detailed in the evidence base report which is being refreshed to inform further work on the Strategy and action planning with stakeholders and communities. These include international, national, regional, and local policy and strategy documents relating to culture and heritage.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Tourism, Communities, Leisure and Culture Committee	21st January 2021