

Report from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Culture and Tourism

FOOD, DRINK AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Culture and Visitor Economy team has been working with colleagues to finalise plans for the 2020 Food, Drink and Music Festival, which was announced on 25 February.

Following the media announcement, promotion of ticket sales began for the evening concerts, headlined by OMD, Echo & the Bunnymen and The Coral. The event (4-6 September) is expected to attract even more people than 2019 for its combination of music with the free and family-friendly daytime offer. Sponsors and partners have been given opportunities to support, and an expression of interest has been released to food traders.

The 2019 event attracted 30,000 people across the weekend and drew hugely positive feedback from traders, residents and visitors from outside Wirral.

HMS PRINCE OF WALES VISIT

Officers have worked closely with Culture Liverpool to ensure residents and visitors to Wirral have the best possible experience during the arrival and departure of HMS Prince of Wales in Liverpool.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS

Two events were organised to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, on Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January 2020.

The Mayor, Councillors and local stakeholders joined members of the public at a tree planting ceremony at Birkenhead Park. Later in the afternoon, 75 lanterns were lit around the pool in Port Sunlight at a well-attended and sensitive memorial event.

2020 CULTURE PROGRAMME

The Culture and Visitor Economy team are, as we speak, finalising plans for the 2020 Culture programme, which will be 'bookended' by the River Festival in May and November's River of Light event.

Plans will be shared with Councillors, cultural partners, supporters and stakeholders at an engagement evening on 26 March, showcasing highlights for 2020 which have developed as an extremely positive legacy of 2019's Borough of Culture year.

DESTINATION MARKETING

In January the Visitor Economy team integrated the Visit Wirral digital channels and started some much-needed work on visitwirral.com website content.

The addition of pages about Wirral's parks, walks and open spaces, plus links through from social media led to a 38% increase in page views and a 25% increase in website users in January alone.

Increased digital engagement and profile is part of Wirral's wider destination marketing activity. The Visitor Economy team is also working with Liverpool City Region colleagues to ensure Wirral benefits from city destination marketing initiatives.

VOLUNTEERING FAIR

Wirral's first Volunteering Fair – focusing on creative, cultural, heritage and leisure opportunities, was held at Birkenhead Town Hall on 27 January with representatives from 25 organisations.

It was organised by the volunteer coordinators of the Culture team, in conjunction with Community Action Wirral, with support from BBC Radio Merseyside, Voluntary Arts England and Up for Arts. 135 people attended, and organisations were positive about the number of volunteers recruited – praising the friendly atmosphere and calling for similar events.

HEARTS FOR THE ARTS

In addition to receiving various awards towards the end of 2019, Wirral's Borough of Culture was shortlisted for a Hearts for the Arts Award, organised by the National Campaign for the Arts.

While it did not win the Best Arts Initiative category, the team received extremely positive feedback including this comment from Chair Sam West:

'Wirral Borough Council should feel proud. They have made great strides in putting arts and culture at the heart of people's lives, and it is being noticed and appreciated in their communities and elsewhere. The highlights video is a marvel. [...] It's easy to see that WBC are making their citizens happier and healthier through this admirable work.'