
A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

Report by Corporate Transformation and Services Director

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

19 February 2015

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to recommend support for a Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders, and to agree the Council's role in delivering the Strategy in partnership with cultural sector stakeholders and businesses.**
- 1.2 The Scottish Borders has to compete to attract visitors, businesses, inward investment and in-migration. Culture has a central role in enhancing the region's competitiveness – through promoting a distinctive regional identity, creativity in business, employability and community entrepreneurship. A rich and varied cultural calendar will help to attract new residents and retain or draw back young people as well as enhancing the appeal of the Scottish Borders for inward investment and business relocation. The Strategy is one way of giving the cultural sector the means to shape the future of culture in the Scottish Borders for the greater benefit of all.
- 1.3 In September 2013, Scottish Borders Council (SBC), with financial support from Creative Scotland, commissioned a Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders. The commission was developed by a team of consultants under the direction of Noble Openshaw Limited (NOL).
- 1.4 The brief set out a clear central task for the Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders as a whole, and not just for SBC:

“A cultural strategy for the Scottish Borders will establish shared priorities that will drive collaborative work across organisations and sectors and make it possible for us to contribute successfully to wider regional agendas and key national strategies.” The brief also stressed the primary importance of developing the Cultural Strategy through a process of wide consultation across the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders including key national and regional public bodies. Over a three month period, NOL carried out a consultation exercise, completing the research in February prior to producing the final Strategy in March 2014.
- 1.5 Following the production of the Strategy, a draft Action Plan was prepared in consultation with the Creative Arts Business Network (CABN) Project Manager and presented to Creative Scotland in July 2014. The action plan is based on the themes of the strategy and potential partners have been identified. Creative Scotland welcomed the draft Action Plan. Using the Strategy as a guide, the Arts Development Team have been working with Creative Scotland and as a result have secured Creative Scotland grants to support creative learning both in an outwith schools and establish a rural touring network.

- 1.6 To achieve its Vision, the Strategy sets out four key aims supported by specific recommendations: Better Communication, Improved Connectivity, Valuing the Sector and Empowering the Creative Community. As part of "Improved Connectivity", the Strategy recommends establishing a Cultural Forum for the Scottish Borders and a Cultural Support Unit to work with the Forum. It is proposed that this Unit be provided by SBC's Creative Arts Business Network (CABN) to:
- (a) Enable and support partnerships and collaborative working
 - (b) Provide a secretariat to the Forum
 - (c) Act as "traffic manager" to signpost individuals and organisations developing new projects and initiatives to the best sources of information, advice and training.
- 1.7 The core Strategy concludes by connecting its recommendations to the priorities of SBC's Corporate Plan 2012/13 to 2017/18 and the 2013 Single Outcome Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership.
- 1.8 Whilst NOL acknowledge that SBC should be the "*prime mover*" in facilitating the Strategy's recommendations, it notes it cannot do so alone, and the cultural sector as a whole requires a route by which it can be a crucial part of monitoring, and shaping, the Strategy's implementation. To address this, NOL have produced an Action Plan which outlines how the Strategy's recommendations can be implemented.
- 1.9 The Strategy has been welcomed, and well received, by the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders, is widely quoted and continues to inform funding applications from Borders-based organisations to external sources including Creative Scotland and Trusts and Foundations. The Strategy was recently referenced by Jura Consultants in the detailed business case for a new visitor centre for The Great Tapestry of Scotland. The Strategy will inform the strategic direction of any new organisation tasked with delivering SBC Cultural Services.
- 1.10 A Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders can be accessed at <http://sbcculturalstrategy.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/sbc-strategy-v-12-2-final-with-sbc-typos.pdf>

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 I recommend that Council:-

- (a) Approves the Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders; and**
- (b) Agrees that SBC Cultural Services takes a leadership role in implementing the Cultural Strategy towards implementation by providing the Cultural Support Unit, via the Creative Arts Business Network, as recommended in the Strategy.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The need for a Cultural Strategy and associated delivery plan has been highlighted in a number of landmark reports, for example EKOS' 2012 profile of the 'Creative Sector in the South of Scotland' which strongly emphasised:

"... a need for a clear strategy for the development of the arts and creative industries at the South of Scotland level as there is an opportunity to combine resources and realise a greater vision for the sector." In addition, Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and Creative Scotland have been in discussion about a 'Place Partnership', which promises investment in the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders. Creative Scotland has been clear that this investment will need to be guided by an overarching strategic plan and framework. As a result, a Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders was commissioned by SBC with financial support from Creative Scotland.

- 3.2 The brief for the Cultural Strategy emphasised that the Strategy would be for the Scottish Borders, and not for one agency or partnership, and that it should consequently be developed from broad consultation, across the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders and with key national and regional public bodies.
- 3.3 Noble Openshaw Limited (NOL) were successful in their bid for the commission to produce the Cultural Strategy.

- 3.4 For the purposes of the Strategy, NOL define culture as:

- (a) All forms of the arts, including film, and forms using new technologies
- (b) Heritage, including museums, the built environment, traditions and other forms of 'intangible cultural heritage', libraries and archives
- (c) The creative industries, including 'creative services' such as design and marketing.

That wide definition brings substantial parts of the Council's provision into the scope of the Strategy: all of Cultural Services, and significant elements of Economic Development, Schools and Social Work Services.

- 3.5 NOL have produced a Strategy which they aim to be:

"visionary, broadly based, and long term (which) represents the issues ... discussed, and offers broad principles and recommendations for development which can be widely adopted, from national agencies to local voluntary groups and individual artists."

- 3.6 **Creative Arts Business Network (CABN)**

- a) Key to implementing and delivering the Cultural Strategy is the role of SBC's Creative Arts Business Network (CABN) which sits within the Arts Development Team. Based at Heart of Hawick, CABN provides dedicated support to individuals, businesses and groups working in the creative industries (music, literature, film, dance and drama) including specialised training and support, networking opportunities, funding advice and a grant scheme for Visual Artists and Crafts Makers.
- b) The origins of CABN can be traced back over 10 years; however support for the sector from SBC was not in place until 2009 when funding was secured on a year by year basis from external sources including LEADER (European funding programme) and Creative Scotland and matched with small amounts of core departmental budgets. The funding allows for a Project Manager, Clerical Assistant and programme activities.

- c) In 2014 CABN secured a three year grant from Creative Scotland's Place Partnership Programme. In calendar year 2014 the funding level was 100% of agreed costs. For calendar years 2015 and 2016, Creative Scotland are providing 50% of costs with SBC providing the balance. From 2017 the full costs will be met by other sourced grants and by SBC. These costs can be accommodated within the existing budgets.
- d) The value of CABN has been highlighted in previous reports to SBC's Economic Development Group. Throughout NOL interviews and consultation meetings for the Cultural Strategy, they were met with unanimous support for the work of CABN and consultees openly acknowledged the value and importance of those services available to the wider creative community. The Strategy states that "*CABN has shown how a small, lightweight unit can, through a clear purpose and good leadership, deliver benefits far beyond its apparent reach.*"

4 STRATEGIC FIT

4.1 Of the eight priorities in SBC's Corporate Plan 2012/13 to 2017/18, six are directly supported by the recommendations of the Cultural Strategy. The six relevant priorities are outlined below, followed by an illustrative recommendation for each of the priorities.

- (a) **Corporate Priority 1** Encouraging sustainable economic growth
Cultural Tourism Initiative – bringing tourism providers and people involved in cultural activities together to grow audiences and increase overnight stays across the Scottish Borders and throughout the year.
- (b) **Corporate Priority 2** Improving attainment and achievement levels for all our children and young people, both within and outwith the formal curriculum
Actively involving Young People in Culture - a more integrated approach to involving young people in culture, from pre-school to post-education e.g. through the Scottish Borders Creative Learning Network which champions creativity, the arts and culture in schools and communities within the overarching context of the Curriculum for Excellence.
- (c) **Corporate Priority 4** Building the capacity and resilience of our communities and voluntary sector
Establish a Cultural Forum for the Scottish Borders – an inclusive and representative Forum, to support the implementation of the Cultural Strategy, acting as a voice for the cultural sector and placing culture at the centre of plans and policies for the Scottish Borders. This would include planning for our cultural resources, for example the history, heritage, traditions and geography, as well as our buildings, natural heritage and the diversity of the skills and talents of people in our local communities.
- (d) **Corporate Priority 5** Maintaining and improving our high quality environment
Cultural Diversity – a commitment amongst public agencies to promote the cultural diversity of the region – its very different geographies; the distinct identity of its communities; and to valuing equally the historical, the traditional and the contemporary.

- (e) **Corporate Priority 6** Developing our workforce
Developing Leadership – the emergence of new leaders who can stimulate and develop opportunities within the cultural sector, fostered and supported through training, networking and information sharing.

- (f) **Corporate Priority 7** Developing our assets and resources
Tourism Promotion – fully representing the rich reality of Scottish Borders culture, both traditional and contemporary, in tourism promotion, and in place making initiatives for individual communities and for the Scottish Borders as a whole.

The recommendations above will be further developed during the planning and operational phases of the Strategy.

5 THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

- 5.1 The consultants headline the Strategy with a statement about the vitality of the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders:

“Despite its small and scattered population, the Scottish Borders has a cultural richness and diversity that can stand comparison with any other rural region in the UK, and not a few urban ones too. Not only are its history, traditions and built heritage of exceptional depth and quality, but it is home to an increasingly dynamic, ambitious, and internationally aware creative community. Its unique Border status gives it a special role to play in Scotland’s national identity.”

- 5.2 NOL begin the Strategy with a Profile of the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders in the form of an essay ‘Unweaving the Tweed’. It has been chiefly informed by in-depth conversations with individuals (in small groups and in open meetings) who are engaged in and shape the cultural scene in the Scottish Borders as well as by extensive desk research augmented by online surveys and questionnaires.

- 5.3 The profile is followed by the Strategy proper which draws out six key themes and triggers for action. These are:

- (a) Visibility NOL recommend a more co-ordinated approach to cultural tourism and a more confident, assertive promotion of the valuable work of SBC’s Cultural Services and their ongoing contribution to key strategic priorities.
- (b) Connectedness NOL highlight a leadership role for SBC “both in working with national and regional agencies and in partnering, supporting and guiding the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders.”
- (c) Sustainability NOL highlight “a vital need for short-term, bridging support” pointing to how “CABN has shown (that) a small, lightweight unit can, through a clear purpose and good leadership, deliver benefits far beyond its apparent reach.”
- (d) Traditions NOL recommend “a more integrated and holistic approach to the heritage of the region ... to work together (to) strengthen current offerings, augment the use of existing resources and facilitate collaboration and growth with education and tourism sectors.”
- (e) Ambition and Quality NOL reinforce the significant place and value of the creative industries to the Scottish Border’s economy. They recommend that new businesses born from the region’s rich textile heritage continue to be supported, and at the same time other creative businesses are nurtured to grow and blossom.

- (f) Unity and Diversity The lack of a single dominant centre in the Scottish Borders – a Dumfries or an Inverness – can lead to a challenging sense of entitlement i.e. that a given community may feel it has a right to retain, or aspire to, its own museum, festival or cultural venue. NOL suggest this cannot be addressed by applying rigid guidelines; what is required is an ongoing process of dialogue and negotiation.

6 AIMS

- 6.1 Out of the Strategy NOL have produced four headline Aims, each of which has a number of recommendations. Crucially, NOL recognise that “some of these are directed to SBC as the commissioning body, but most require partnership and cooperative working by national and regional agencies, other sectors and – above all – by cultural organisations, groups and people across the Scottish Borders.”
- 6.2 **Aim 1 : Better Communication**
- (a) Cultural Gathering – for those active across the cultural sector, a major cultural gathering held at least every third year to exchange ideas and develop collaboration, combined with training opportunities and briefings on regional and national policy.
- (b) Tourism Promotion – fully representing the rich reality of Scottish Borders culture, both traditional and contemporary, in tourism promotion, and in placemaking initiatives for individual communities and for the Scottish Borders as a whole.
- 6.3 **Aim 2 : Improved Connectivity**
- (a) An inclusive and representative Cultural Forum for the Scottish Borders –to support the implementation of the Cultural Strategy, acting as a voice for the cultural sector and linking with regional and national agencies, for example Creative Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland, Education Scotland, VOCAL (National Association for Culture & Leisure Managers), Arts & Business Scotland and local and voluntary groups and organisations.
- (b) Cross-Border Collaborations - drawing on models that already exist to create a mechanism for fostering and supporting more, and more effective, cross-Border collaborations, for example the South of Scotland Visual Arts & Crafts Awards scheme in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council, Crossing Borders annual Art Trail and Borderlands.
- 6.4 **Aim 3 : Valuing the Sector**
- (a) Support the demonstration of Social and Economic Returns - demonstrating how cultural facilities, activity and groups deliver excellent social and economic returns on investment.
- (b) Cultural Tourism Initiative – bringing tourism providers and people involved in cultural activities together to grow audiences and increase overnight stays across the Scottish Borders and throughout the year.

6.5 **Aim 4 : Empowering the Creative Community**

- (a) Community Planning Partnership – integrating the role of culture within Community Planning Partnership processes and policies, and in future Single Outcome Agreements including contributing to the development of the national framework “How Good is Our Culture and Sport” (HGIOCS) which supports continuous improvement in culture and sport to recognise and evidence its wider contribution - a framework that is now included within Learning Community Inspections.
- (b) Developing Leadership – the emergence of new leaders who can stimulate and develop opportunities within the cultural sector, fostered and supported through training, networking and information sharing.

6.6 The Strategy has been welcomed, and well received, by the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders, is widely quoted and continues to inform funding applications from Borders-based organisations to external sources including Creative Scotland and Trusts and Foundations. The Strategy was recently referenced by Jura Consultants in the detailed business case for a new visitor centre for The Great Tapestry of Scotland. The Strategy will inform the strategic direction of any new organisation tasked with delivering SBC Cultural Services.

7 **NEXT STEPS**

7.1 Whilst NOL acknowledge that SBC should be the “prime mover” in facilitating the Strategy’s recommendations, it cannot do so alone, and the cultural sector as a whole requires a route by which it can be a crucial part of monitoring, and shaping, the Strategy’s implementation. NOL have addressed this by suggesting the following set of actions:

Action	Rationale	Responsibility
Establish Cultural Strategy Forum	The Forum will be a broad-ranging, inclusive and representative partnership that will oversee the delivery of the Strategy, acting as a voice for the cultural sector, and linking with comparable bodies in other sectors, such as Tourism and Health & Wellbeing.	SBC Cultural Services/CABN
Set up Cultural Support Unit	The Unit will be a secretariat to the Cultural Strategy Forum, supporting information and intelligence gathering and acting as ‘traffic manager’ to signpost individuals and organisations developing new projects and initiatives to the best sources of information, advice and training.	SBC Cultural Services/CABN
Establish a Concord of Agencies	It is proposed that SBC takes a lead role in establishing a Concordat for the Cultural Strategy, a broad-based agreement amongst public sector and voluntary/third sector agencies to support the aims of the Strategy and its underlying principles, and to be involved in the delivery of a Borders wide Action Plan.	SBC Cultural Services

Produce Cultural Services Development Plan	Cultural Services aims to finalise its own Development Plan by the end of June 2015 clearly demonstrating which elements of the Action Plan it can prioritise and deliver directly and where it will facilitate and enable others to implement the recommendations of the Strategy.	SBC Cultural Services
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7.2 Following the production of the Strategy, a draft Action Plan was prepared by Cultural Services and presented to Creative Scotland in July 2014. The action plan is based on the themes of the strategy and potential partners have been identified. Creative Scotland welcomed the draft Action Plan. Using the Strategy as a guide, the Arts Development Team have been working with Creative Scotland and as a result have secured Creative Scotland grants funds to deliver the proposed actions as follows:

- (a) Theme – Creative Learning - developing new and cultural initiatives in schools, lifting the profile of creativity within the context of Curriculum for Excellence. This area of work, funded by the Creative Scotland/ Education Scotland Creative Learning Network, provides hosted events between teachers, lecturers, artists and businesses, delivering professional learning. It is linked to the Wood Commission, funding research projects which demonstrate how creativity and employability skills can be developed, acquired and supported.
- (b) Theme – Creative Learning - strengthening the evidence base for the scope, scale and impact of creative activity amongst children and young people. Via Voice of My Own (VOMO), an Arts Programme Review Board has been established which aims to build a supportive environment to nurture enthusiasm and talent, stimulate creativity and innovation through youth led arts activity and empower young people. The VOMO Project Team have been working on an ambitious funding bid for the past 3-6 months and are awaiting confirmation of an funding application to Creative Scotland for £100,000 to deliver this area of work through digital media and establishing a local Web TV station. In addition to this VOMO secured £50,000 in October 2014 to delivered tailored training and accreditation in areas of deprivation and social disadvantage to enable young people to progress into further education, training and employment.
- (c) Theme – Rural Touring Network - bringing together local promoters – primarily the theatre venues in the Scottish Borders and programming and supporting volunteer led village hall committees, local theatre companies and touring companies. Arts Development in partnership with Heart of Hawick secured £20,000 in September 2014 to firmly establish a rural touring network for the Scottish Borders to attract more high quality performances to the area. The Rural Touring Network was launched in January 2015.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

Key to SBC's ability to support the recommendations of the Cultural Strategy is the continued funding of CABN, as it is CABN that will in large part provide the resource to undertake the necessary work. As mentioned in paragraph 3.6 above this funding has been secured - initially by grant support from Creative Scotland and then incrementally by the provision of core SBC budget. There are no additional budget pressures linked to CABN's role in supporting the roll out of the Action Plan.

8.2 Risk and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to support the Strategy could put the Place Partnership investment at risk	Support the Cultural Strategy by refocusing and reprioritising the core work of CABN, and encouraging a set of deliverables and milestones aligned to Place Partnership
Failure to support the Strategy will result in a loss of goodwill from the cultural sector and potentially adverse media coverage	Seek SBC and partner support for the Strategy, and refocus resources to be based on delivery of key aims
Impact on funding applications from both SBC and external cultural organisations if SBC is seen not to support the Strategy	Support the Strategy, based on prioritisation of deliverables, and further develop relationship with aligned funding bodies, mainly Creative Scotland

8.3 Equalities

One of the underlying principles of the Strategy is that Culture should be available to all. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and it is anticipated there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in the Strategy or this report.

8.4 Acting Sustainably

A number of key principles on which the Strategy has been developed are based on acting sustainably. These are:

- Culture Supports Economic Growth and Tourism
- Culture Strengthens Communities
- Culture Promotes Innovation
- Culture is Crucial to Shaping the Future of the Scottish Borders.

8.5 Carbon Management

There is no impact on the Council's carbon emissions of doing what is proposed.

8.6 Rural Proofing

The Rural Proofing Checklist has been applied to the Cultural Strategy and it is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in the Strategy or this report.

8.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 The Chief Financial Officer, Monitoring Officer, Chief Legal Officer, Clerk to the Council, Director Strategy and Policy, Chief Officer Audit and Risk, and Chief Officer HR have been consulted on the contents of this report and their comments incorporated in the final report.
- 9.2 Key to the production of the Cultural Strategy was an extensive consultation exercise across the cultural sector in the Scottish Borders including key national and regional public bodies. Details of the consultation process is included in Section 7 of the Strategy.

Approved by

Corporate Transformation and Services Director

Signature:

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Background Papers: "A Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders", Noble Openshaw Ltd and commissioned by Scottish Borders Council, March 2014.

Previous Minute Reference:

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