



DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY
CULTURAL STRATEGY

Dumfries and Galloway Council and its partners, including DG Unlimited, are creating a Cultural Strategy for our region. We want the Cultural Strategy to help unlock the potential of culture - by which we mean arts and heritage of all types - to make a positive difference to people's lives in Dumfries and Galloway. We will publish the Strategy once it has been considered by Dumfries and Galloway Council's Communities Committee in early Summer 2020.

Welcome to the Cultural Strategy newsletter for stakeholders of the Strategy.

Why did we engage?

We want to share with you the results of the engagement programme that took place between June and September 2019 relating to preparation of a new Cultural Strategy for Dumfries and Galloway. We were looking for feedback on the emerging Cultural Strategy vision and themes and also wanted to find out what barriers might be holding the cultural sector back from delivering more in relation to the themes; and what solutions would help overcome those barriers.



The engagement programme sought out the views of creative producers, the heritage sector and other cultural and creative professionals who make a living through creating, producing, maintaining and supporting culture in Dumfries and Galloway, as well as those who take part in culture in their free time. The Council and DG Unlimited also wanted to gather the views of people involved in other areas and sectors where culture might be able to support their work such as Health and Wellbeing, Education, Economic Development, Anti-Poverty and Inclusion.

Who took part?

434

people took part in the engagement programme, which included an online survey, Focus Groups, roadshows, discussion sessions and interviews.

255

people completed the online questionnaire, which was aimed primarily at people working or volunteering in arts and/or heritage in Dumfries and Galloway.

87

people attended 20 thematic and general Focus Group sessions held in Stranraer, Wigtown, Newton Stewart, Kirkcudbright, Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Annan and Langholm.

21

people representing organisations/services working in health and wellbeing, business and economy, youth work, inclusion, community development and education took part in non-cultural sector stakeholder interviews with Project Team members.

54

people took part in discussion groups, which included the Tackling Poverty Reference Group, the Youth Council, the Year of Young People Legacy Group and the Equalities Partnership.

17

people took part in discussions with Cultural Strategy Project Team members at Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway (TSDG) roadshows across the region.





Questionnaire Results

We were delighted that 255 respondents took the time to complete the Councils online survey regarding the Cultural Strategy.

Feedback from those who completed the questionnaire included the following key points:

- 86.45% agreed with the draft Strategy vision.
- Of the 100 comments received about the vision, 30% made suggestions on how the wording could be improved.
- Participants were asked to rank the draft themes in order of importance. The ranking was evenly spread, indicating that all six themes were considered equally important.
- Participants were asked what level of impact they thought the cultural sector is currently having on the draft themes. Results indicate that there is room for improvement across all themes.
- Asked for examples of good practice that deliver on any of the themes, participants offered over 70 examples from within the region, indicating that culture is already making a significant contribution
- Asked 'if you were asked to make improvements in the cultural sector to deliver any of the themes, what would they be?', there were 134 comments, of which the most frequently suggested improvements can be summarised as follows:
 - Making the most of the region's cultural assets
 - More funding and investment
 - Better marketing/publicity/signposting; and
 - More cultural activity in/for schools



Feedback from Focus Groups, Roadshows, Group Discussions and Interviews

Participants in Focus Groups, discussion groups and one-to-one interviews were asked what barriers were holding back culture in Dumfries and Galloway from having more of a positive impact on the draft themes, and what could be done to overcome these. High level analysis of the feedback to barriers and solutions indicates that the most significant areas for improvement could be presented as follows:

- Connectivity
- Communication
- Capacity

These will help us formulate the Action Plan for the Strategy.

Key Messages for the Cultural Strategy

Key messages from the focus groups, roadshows, group discussions and interviews are as follows:

Young People

- Closer working between cultural organisations and schools would give young people more access to arts and heritage learning resources in their local area
- More use of cultural activity in schools would contribute to the wider school curriculum
- Promoting the cultural sector as a viable career option for school leavers would widen the range of pathways available to young people

Economic Impact

- Increased access to funding from public and private sources would help make cultural organisations and businesses more financially sustainable
- Improved marketing and increased cross-sector collaboration would help promote the region's cultural assets and events to visitors
- More opportunities for young people to work in the cultural sector locally would give them reasons to stay in the region to live and work

Sense of Place

- Building on examples of good practice such as the Spring Fling Open Studios trail would help promote arts and heritage activity across the region
- Supporting communities to work together to develop and share best practice would help overcome the challenges of rural isolation
- Improving the marketing and promotion of the region's rich and diverse cultural offer is preferable to creating a regional cultural 'brand'

Health and Wellbeing

- Cultural activities that are more accessible in local communities and care settings would help overcome issues of geographic and rural isolation
- Increased awareness of the health benefits of taking part in cultural activity, closer working between the cultural and health sectors, and better promotion of what's available would increase participation in cultural activities and contribute to wellbeing
- More capacity within the cultural sector would enable arts and heritage providers to work more closely with the health/care sector, for example to deliver social prescribing.

Access and Inclusion

- New technology could help overcome the challenges of travel and transport across the region, e.g. by improving online access, support and information sharing
- More people acting as 'connectors', or 'cultural ambassadors', would encourage more people to get involved in arts and heritage activities
- Improved marketing, communications and joined-up programme planning across the cultural sector would raise awareness of what's available and encourage participation

Developing and Empowering Communities Through Culture

- Increased resources, including community 'connectors' would help develop and sustain cultural activity in communities
- Communities should be empowered to take more of a lead in creating and co-creating cultural activity
- Regular programmes of cultural activity in communities that build on local interests and 'stories' would help overcome perceptions that culture is 'not for me'



Many group discussion participants also told us that the wording of the vision and the themes should be changed to make them easier to understand, and some suggested that some of the themes were similar and could be combined.



Other issues

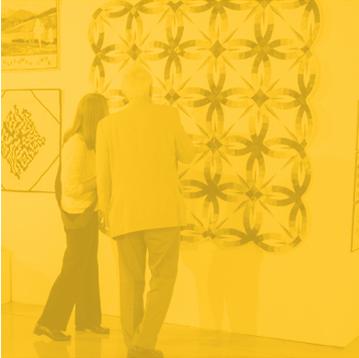
There were a number of other issues mentioned during group discussions and although they were not raised as frequently as the ones highlighted above, they were clearly of interest and importance to the cultural sector.

For example:



Impact – need for more, and better use of evidence and research on the social and economic benefits of the cultural sector

Leaders and training – more business support, networking opportunities and training to grow the region's own cultural leaders



Affordability – while some people felt the cost of accessing cultural activities was prohibitive, others felt that free activities contributed to low income levels for those working in the sector



Hospitality industry – hospitality infrastructure needs to be bolstered if it is to support an increase in cultural tourism e.g. more beds and extended opening hours for shops and places to eat.

Next Steps

The Cultural Strategy will use the feedback from the Engagement process to create a draft Cultural Strategy, which will be considered by the Council's Communities Committee in summer 2020.

If you would like to read the full Engagement Report associated with the preparation of a new Cultural Strategy for Dumfries and Galloway please click [here](#)

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