

Title of report: Hereford Public Art Strategy

Meeting:	Cabinet Member Briefing
Meeting date:	1 August 2024
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure
Report by:	Culture and Leisure Lead
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Summary

To consider and agree the recommendations arising from the Hereford Public Art Strategy developed as part of the Hereford City Centre Improvements (HCCI) public art programme.

Recommendation

That:

- a) **Herefordshire Council supports the strategic vision for public art as outlined in the Hereford Public Art Strategy; and**
- b) **Supports six strategic objectives outlined to achieve the public art vision for Hereford, namely on the themes of commissioning, advocacy, funding, engagement, maintenance and expansion.**

Alternative Options

1. Do nothing. Public art management remains ad hoc as it is now – this is not recommended due to the overwhelming success of the HCCI public art programme in Hereford and potential opportunities highlighted in the strategy report.

Background

2. The Hereford Public Art Programme – Art + People + Place - was commissioned in partnership with art consultants Studio Response as part of the £6 million Hereford City Centre Improvements (HCCI) project. £243,000 capital funding was assigned to the art programme. The overall project aimed to refurbish the historic core of Hereford through investment in the streetscape, landscaping and public realm and was funded jointly by the council and Marches LEP.
3. The project was the first formal large-scale public art programme developed by Herefordshire Council, inviting 16 artists from across the country to transform Hereford's urban environment. The commissions were awarded to internationally and nationally renowned artists, many of

whom are based in Herefordshire or the West Midlands region. The project launched in April 2024.

Key Considerations

4. The HCCI Public Art Programme presented a unique opportunity to explore public art in the city and understand the opportunities and challenges of developing projects of this kind. A pilot Hereford Public Art Steering Group (HPASG) was formed to shape the vision for the programme. The group was a collaboration of organisations, artists, students, businesses, civic stakeholders, planners and heritage advisors who met on a monthly basis to direct the new artworks and offer advice on commissioning, development and installation throughout the process.
5. Studio Response was also commissioned by Herefordshire Council to produce a Hereford Public Art Strategy to establish clear recommendations for the development of the council's strategic approach to public art in the future. Currently there is no consistent approach to public art commissioning and curation in the city. As a result, artworks are commissioned on an ad hoc basis and there is no official body in place to determine whether an artwork is deemed appropriate for the Hereford cityscape. There is also no county-wide public art strategy.
6. The aims of the commission was to:
 - a. Create a strategic document informed by practical, real-time experience learnt from the pilot Hereford Public Art Programme.
 - b. Set out a clear and consistent vision for public art in Hereford.
 - c. Establish short and medium term strategic recommendations for Herefordshire Council to consider and implement to support public art development.
 - d. Engage artists, residents and other partners with the cultural developments in their city and encourage partnership-working with a range of stakeholders to diversify and strengthen public art in Hereford.
 - e. Improve the process for new art commissioning and collaborative, place-based creative practice for temporary and permanent artworks.
 - f. Provide policies and guidance regarding the development, implementation and maintenance of public art in Hereford.
7. The Hereford Public Art Strategy puts forward six strategic objectives to achieve the new public art vision for Hereford, before the potential to expand county-wide:
 - a. **Commissioning** to improve the practice of commissioning and developing public art in Hereford.
 - Develop a Public Art Policy and toolkit for developers, public art commissioners, artists and planners.
 - Develop new partnerships and communication channels with Herefordshire artists to inform them of new commission opportunities.
 - b. **Advocacy** by establishing a Hereford Public Art Steering Group (HPASG) who can oversee and periodically refresh public art in the city and guide policy.
 - Formalise the HPASG and agree membership.
 - c. **Funding** to improve the funding base for commissioning public art.
 - Identify Section 106 and other funding opportunities, and potential locations, for public art programmes.
 - d. **Engagement** by improving public engagement so that locals and visitors can explore our city's creativity.
 - Work with Hereford City Council to update the current register of Hereford's public artworks and to make it publicly available.
 - Improve interpretation and captioning for existing artworks and heritage.
 - Explore partnership engagement projects with local partners and organisations.
 - Work with local schools, colleges, universities and communities to develop a consistent way of engaging with them on public art programmes.

- e. **Maintenance** to ensure new and existing artworks have a clear maintenance programme.
 - Identify areas for improved efficiencies in maintaining artworks through a review of current maintenance plans and contractual arrangements.
 - Review current arrangements regarding maintenance, upkeep and decommissioning of artworks.
 - f. **Expansion** by implementing a wider public art strategy that reaches all parts of Herefordshire.
 - Following the successful endorsement and integration of the Public Art Strategy in Hereford city look to expand and broaden the reach of the strategy to the whole of Herefordshire.
8. The movement of the HPASG out of the pilot phase and into the mainstream is a key objective of the strategy. Initial tasks include the drafting of the terms of reference for the Steering Group followed by a recruitment process for the group. The Council will need to work through its ongoing contribution to the HPASG, but this can initially be directed by the Culture and Leisure Lead role and engagement with the group.

Community impact

9. The project would enable a new strategic vision for public art in Herefordshire that encompasses community, health and wellbeing, place-making, and public realm infrastructure improvements. It meets the 'Place' objective of the Council Plan 2024-28, the core objectives of the Big Economic Plan 2050 and Local Masterplan vision.
10. The 2022 LGA Cornerstones of Culture: Commission on Culture and Local Government report highlights the power of cultural programmes to: 1) promote civic pride and change perceptions about a place, contributing to improvements in wider social and economic outcomes, 2) to support our national economic recovery, the growth of the wider commercial creative economy and levelling-up economic inequalities, 3) help to address educational and skills inequalities and challenges around social mobility and 4) challenge health inequalities and the impact of loneliness.
11. The resultant work within this report will have a direct impact on the lives of local people through the provision of more consistent public realm art programmes.

Equality duty

12. Herefordshire Council has both a moral and a statutory obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to reflect the needs of its diverse population and workforce, and this is a requirement in everything it does, which includes: providing services, purchasing and procuring services, recruiting and retaining staff, working in partnership with other organisations, and engaging with our communities.
13. When starting out on a new public art project an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) should be carried out early in the planning, development or review of any activity. This will help ensure that equality is placed at the heart of everything and the project supports fairness, access and inclusion. EIAs should be carried out in a proportionate manner, so an EIA for a major infrastructure project should be more comprehensive than that for a small policy change.
14. Equality Impact Assessments would be used in this context to:
- Ensure involvement of people with different characteristics, either as artists or as audience.
 - Help open up the artist commissioning process in a fair, transparent and inclusive way.

- Help open up the project development to new groups in an accessible and inclusive way.
- Enable us to make adjustments in the planning stage, to make artworks suitable for all users.
- Consider accessibility due to geographical or other locational barriers.
- Identify and remove barriers which might stop people accessing artworks, engaging with them, or getting the best from them.
- Understand the need for alternative formats or access platforms – whether physical or digital.
- Demonstrate that, regardless of social identity or protected characteristics, prejudice will not be tolerated in any aspect of the project development, theme, output or process.
- Consider how the public artwork will be interpreted, promoted and captioned.
- Consider how the public artwork will be evaluated in the future and change acted upon in a meaningful and measurable way.

Appendices

None

Background papers

HCCI Art + People + Place Public Art Strategy_ Studio Response 2024

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

None