



Title of report: Cultural Strategy 2019-29

Meeting: Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Report by: Culture and Leisure Lead

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

This report provides an overview of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-29, and to seek the views of the scrutiny committee on how priorities are being progressed.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) That the committee notes this report; and
- b) The committee considers the role of Herefordshire Council in delivering the priorities of the Cultural Strategy 2019-29.

Alternative options

1. The Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee has requested that this matter is considered, in order that the council can understand progress in delivering the Cultural Strategy 2019-29 and consider the role of the council in supporting the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP) to deliver on key priorities. There are no alternative options.

Key considerations

2. The Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-29 was developed by Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP). It was informed by in-depth local consultation, a three-month online survey, an Arts Council England-funded consultancy, and research into national and international good practice.

3. HCP is an independent consortium of arts, culture and heritage organisations, local government and businesses formed in 2018 with a shared vision to celebrate and grow Herefordshire's creative and cultural sector (see Appendix 1: Herefordshire Cultural Partnership for more detail on formation, constitution, board membership and funding). HCP is formally recognised by Arts Council England as one of 40 'cultural compacts' nationally.
4. HCP receives no direct funding from Herefordshire Council. The organisation has received £20,000 from Arts Council England (2021-22), £14,800 from Arts Council England (2022-23), £9,000 from a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) cultural grant award (2023-24) and £9,000 from a UKSPF cultural grant award (2024-25) to support the administration of the cultural compact.
5. Through Herefordshire Council's membership of the HCP and support for early projects such as Herefordshire's A Great Place (2018-21), the council had a central role in the development of the cultural strategy. The Culture and Leisure Lead and Museum and Art Gallery Lead are active Board Members.
6. The vision of the cultural strategy is: "For Herefordshire to be a culturally vibrant, prosperous and sought-after county in which to live, work and to visit. Hallmarks of the county will be its glorious landscape, its heritage and history, its diverse creative and cultural offer and its sense of ambition."
7. The cultural strategy has five priority objectives:
 - a. **A Great Place** - A resilient cultural infrastructure that makes Herefordshire a great place to live, work and to visit
 - b. **Children and Young People** - Listening to children and young people, and connecting them to culture and connectivity
 - c. **Cultural Economy** - Building and supporting vibrant creative enterprises
 - d. **Cultural Democracy** - The arts and culture are for everyone
 - e. **Cultural Tourism** - Raising Herefordshire's national and international profile.

(see Appendix 2: Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-29 for full strategy report)
8. The original priorities aligned with and supported the council's wider social, economic and cultural priorities as outlined in the Herefordshire County Plan 2020-2024.
9. Herefordshire Council endorsed the Cultural Strategy 2019-2029 on 15 October 2020 ([Decision - Endorsement of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029 - Herefordshire Council](#)). The core priority objectives have since directed the work of the council's cultural services, local arts organisations and strategic cultural development in the county.
10. The independence of HCP and the council's endorsement of the cultural strategy has allowed HCP to exploit large-scale cultural funding over the past five years to deliver significant county-wide arts projects (e.g. A Great Place 2018-21: £746,000; Our Place 2024-27: £730,000).
11. In 2025 HCP in partnership with Herefordshire Council decided to undertake a review of the cultural strategy at the mid-way point to ensure that the strategy still meets the needs of the creative and cultural sector in Herefordshire. The review would help to address any challenges the sector now faces, take advantage of new opportunities and put forward a renewed strategic approach to better support, grow and develop the sector. The review would allow HCP:
 - a. To reflect on and respond to external challenges that have faced the sector since 2019 such as COVID-19 and its lasting impact on the opportunities and earnings of cultural

organisations and practitioners, continuing constraints on council budgets, uncertainties about international trade in goods and services and the cost-of-living/ energy crisis.

- b. To better align with the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-28 and its priorities areas of People, Place, Transformation and Growth.
 - c. To draw on and complement the priorities of the new Destination Management Plan launched in 2025 by Herefordshire County BID.
 - d. To address the continuing uncertainty over the forthcoming Devolution settlement and potential for wider regional collaboration.
 - e. To account for changes in education funding and skills delivery.
 - f. To consider the changing needs of Herefordshire communities over the past five years.
 - g. To ensure full alignment to Arts Council England's Let's Create 2020-30 strategy and the recent consultation on Arts Council England's future role and funding capacity.
 - h. To take advantage of opportunities arising from measures and successes directed by the existing cultural strategy (e.g. significant development and £730,000 grant funding towards creative health programming, council success in securing £14 million in match funding for the new Museum and Library and Learning Centre, Hereford public art programme etc.)
 - i. To respond to research and data emerging from 'state of the sector' cultural reports commissioned by Herefordshire Council (see Appendix 3: Herefordshire Cultural Sector Review, August 2024).
12. Herefordshire Council assigned £10,000 UK Shared Prosperity funding to commission consultants The Fifth Sector Ltd to support HCP in making the necessary updates. The funding has supported consultation with Herefordshire arts organisations and sector leaders, public online sessions, workshops with regional cultural organisations, review sessions with Board members and the drafting of priority recommendations to incorporate in the new cultural strategy.
13. The review highlighted several successes delivered or achieved under each priority area (2019-2024). A selection is shown below:

A Great Place

- a. Herefordshire Cultural Partnership has been established as the lead cultural development body for the county. Considerable work has been undertaken to strengthen HCP governance including broadening board membership, developing a membership Terms of Reference, creation of an Equality Diversity Inclusion policy, and contracting financial management from Kinder Accountants. HCP is now recognised as one of 40 'cultural compacts' nationally by Arts Council England and an exemplar in a rural location.
- b. Major inward capital investment achieved for cultural assets through Stronger Hereford projects and Herefordshire Council match commitment (£14 million) to create a stronger and more resilient cultural infrastructure (e.g. Hereford Museum and Art Gallery, Shirehall Library and Learning Centre, StoryPoint Digital Hub, Powerhouse, Castle Green Pavilion etc.) and through the successful Heritage Action Zone scheme in Leominster.

- c. Stronger partnership working between Herefordshire Council and HCP on the delivery of coordinated county-wide projects, largescale funding bid applications to Arts Council England (e.g. Our Place creative health project 2024-27) and regional cultural development with key partners (e.g. neighbouring councils, West Midlands Combined Authority, Culture Central, Create Central and national arts organisations).
- d. Successful delivery of the Arts Council England / National Lottery Heritage Fund 'A Great Place' scheme (2018-21) which explored the power of culture and heritage to transform communities in Herefordshire. HCP administered 'go-and-see' bursaries, 'my place' cultural grants, workshops and training for practitioners, discovery labs for communities to try out creative activities and cultural apprenticeships to drive awareness, connectivity and growth in the sector.
- e. Successful partnership working between Herefordshire Council's planning and conservation team and cultural organisations on the delivery of the Public Art Programme 2024, and with the estates and markets team on the meanwhile use of land on Merton Meadow and High Town for cultural residencies and programming.
- f. Hereford Museum and Art Gallery has developed the 'Voices of the Wye' project celebrating local heritage, place and identity, 'Inside Out' which uses digital technology to bring hidden collections out of the store and will launch Museum on the Move taking heritage exhibits to rural areas in summer 2025.

Children and Young People

- a. Development of a new Digital Skills Centre at Hereford College of Arts (HCA) and Skills Hub at NMITE (New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering) as part of the Stronger Hereford portfolio to cement Herefordshire as a leader for arts, design and engineering education and support children and young people to develop their talent.
- b. Creative Connections (Arts Connect) and Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) are an integral part of the cultural strategy priorities and reported on at HCP board meetings.
- c. Abigail Appleton, Principal at HCA, has been invited to a government task team to input into policy around creative education nationally.
- d. The successful development of Rural Media's Point of View programme offering a platform for young people to be heard and to develop digital skills.
- e. Delivery of several co-production projects with local schools and colleges (e.g. public art programme) supporting children and young people to experience art and culture and gain insight into careers in the creative and cultural industries.
- f. Hereford Museum and Art Gallery has been selected by the Natural History Museum as part of its Fixing our Broken Planet initiative encouraging youth-led co-production activity on climate change and empowering young residents to engage with urgent global themes through local culture.
- g. HCP members have worked collaboratively to bring in international artists and works to Herefordshire to inspire the next generation and bring the best performances and exhibitions to the county (e.g. Yinka Shonibare at Hereford Cathedral, NoFit State Circus residency, international blacksmithing artists as part of Ferrous etc.).

Cultural Economy

- a. £1.25 million has been invested in the cultural sector as part of Herefordshire's UKSPF allocation between 2022-25. The UKSPF cultural programme covered a mix of grant schemes, sector studies, creative health projects and business advice designed to grow and develop the cultural sector in Herefordshire.
- b. From 2024-25 Mountain Perspective provided business consultancy advice and training to creative businesses to drive growth across Herefordshire's cultural sector. This included 70 one-to-one advice sessions, 12 group workshops and events, career advice sessions to final year students at HCA, and a Ladies Lunch network.
- c. Hereford Herd and Elevate 'business booster' networking events have been set up to support local people working in the creative industries.
- d. HCP and Herefordshire Council have worked closely with Herefordshire Business Board and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber to map local creative businesses (members of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber sit on the HCP Board). In 2024 Herefordshire Council commissioned a cultural sector study (see Appendix 3: Cultural Sector Report) to provide information on the resilience of the creative business base, the GVA of Herefordshire's cultural sector, and the make-up of the creative workforce to help inform local economic policy.
- e. Artlandish was founded as a pilot 'Empty Shops' project by Hereford Community Land Trust to host exhibitions, workspaces and activities across two venues in Hereford (Gomond St and Bloom:Space). The project received 3,823 visitors in the first 11 weeks of opening and has paved the way for more art on the high street initiatives.

Cultural Democracy

- a. Development of The Shire website [The Shire | The Shire](#) as a destination for information about the cultural sector in Herefordshire and the HCP.
- b. The award of £730,000 (inclusive £596,000 Arts Council England funding) for HCP's Our Place creative health project (2024-27) exploring how embedding arts and cultural creativity in our most deprived communities can support ill-health prevention, improve health and wellbeing and boost pride in place and rural identity. The project also includes intergenerational initiatives, peer learning programmes on creative health and creative health trials to inform national policy.
- c. New cross-sector wellbeing projects have opened up cultural programming to new audiences across Herefordshire and shown the power of creativity to support social and health issues (e.g. Three Choirs Festival music sessions at The Living Room for veterans and those with lived experience of homelessness, 'Men in Motion' sessions developed by 2Faced Dance and Herefordshire Mind is a weekly movement programme for men living with a mental health condition).
- d. Herefordshire museums service was selected as one of only 11 pilot museums for the national 'The Sensational Museum Project'. This project ensures that local participants are involved in co-creation and testing in how Herefordshire museums service becomes more inclusive, ensuring community input is valued and equality of access and inclusivity are at the forefront of the council's museum offer.
- e. Several 'on-the-ground' community networking groups have been established to ensure cultural practitioners and community groups are able to connect (e.g. Herefordshire Visual Artists Network (HVAN)).

Cultural Tourism

- a. Regular development sessions between HCP, Herefordshire Council and Herefordshire / Hereford BIDs have taken place to ensure the coordination of the cultural strategy and priorities with the development of Herefordshire tourism, the Destination Management Plan and county-wide marketing approaches.
 - b. Herefordshire Council commissioned an events and festivals study and tourism infrastructure resilience studies for Hereford and the market towns. Strategic recommendations and priorities informed updates to the new Destination Management Plan 2025-35.
 - c. Delivery of a strong programme of place-based events and festivals across the county that celebrate place, culture and identity (e.g. Ferrous, Applefest, Hay Festival, h-art etc.)
 - d. Reviewing and developing council-owned heritage assets (e.g. Old House through the Heritage Imagined project) improving the experience for visitors, making visits more engaging and increasing accessibility.
14. The process of updating the cultural strategy is ongoing and due to complete in early June 2025. The draft strategy and priorities will then be consulted on, tested and refined with Board members, cultural organisations and practitioners, sector leaders and Herefordshire Council from June-September 2025.
 15. Draft priorities establish the context of a 'Pro-Herefordshire Mindset' with priorities around Children and Young People, Creative Economy, Cultural Democracy, Cultural Tourism and a new priority area: Creative Health (see Appendix 4: Cultural Strategy 2025-29 Draft Priorities).
 16. Delivering the cultural strategy will rely on a collaborative approach from partners across different sectors. The document will include a new strategic action plan with measurable outcomes and identified roles and responsibilities of all partners in delivering the core priorities (developed and agreed in consultation).
 17. The expectation is that the updated cultural strategy is adopted by Herefordshire Council as the formal county cultural strategy.

Community impact

18. Culture plays a critical role in why people choose to live, work or visit Herefordshire. It drives the county's local economy; leisure and tourism offer; supports health and wellbeing; helps to develop new skills and bolsters pride in place. It is at the very heart of all communities across Herefordshire.
19. Cultural programming often provides the key interface for engaging wider rural areas, connecting people to place, and brokering access to local services beyond a cultural remit.
20. The Cultural Strategy 2019-29 was developed through consultation with local organisations, communities and groups across Herefordshire to ensure that the unique needs of the county were being met through its core priorities. A core priority of the original strategy is Cultural Democracy, ensuring the arts and culture are for everyone and aligning it with Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy 2020-30.
21. At the time of the production of the culture strategy, the then Council Plan 2020-2024 stated that: "We want culture and creativity to be part of our residents' everyday lives, whether by engaging with our many fantastic exhibitions and events; supporting the health and wellbeing agenda by recognising the significant social value that can come from cultural services such as

libraries and arts; or by increasing inclusivity by providing all our residents with more opportunities to benefit from our varied cultural activities. We are committed to working with the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership to ensure that Herefordshire continues to build on our many strengths and successes.”

22. The new Herefordshire Council Plan 2024–28 states that, as part of the Council's place objectives, we will: “Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit”.

Environmental Impact

23. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
24. The cultural strategy aligns well with the Council's [environmental policy commitments](#) particularly in terms of the commitment to: “Raise awareness of, mitigate against, and adapt to climate change impacts”, “Conserve the natural and historic environment of Herefordshire” and “Promote links between environmental sustainability, economic growth and wellbeing.”
25. New updates to the cultural strategy in 2025 will include a specific cross-cutting theme related to environmental sustainability, to acknowledge and reference the council's commitment to reach a thriving net zero-carbon and nature-rich Herefordshire by 2030.

Equality duty

26. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
27. The Cultural Strategy 2019-29 was an independent document prepared by Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and adhered to the organisation's own equality policies at the time of origination and reflected Herefordshire Council's Equality Policy and objectives.
28. The cultural strategy takes a positive view of equality with several examples included in the document. In the overview to the ‘What do we mean by culture?’ section on page 6, the strategy recognises ‘the need to increase participation and promote inclusion in cultural and creative activity’.
29. One of the main strands of the cultural strategy is ‘Cultural Democracy’, emphasising that the arts and culture are for everyone. One action listed is to ‘Address barriers to participation and improve access to arts and cultural experiences.’
30. ‘Inclusion and Diversity’ is one of the five cross-cutting themes of the cultural strategy as identified on page 26 of the document. This is used as the criteria for evaluating and developing projects by the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and across the wider county.
31. As this session considers high-level progress in the review and updating of the cultural strategy, and does not address the actual delivery of projects, it is not believed that it will have an impact on the council's equality duty at this stage. An equality impact assessment (EqIA)

will be carried out as part of cultural strategy development work, and the results shared with HCP.

Resource implications

32. As a background report for the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee, there are no direct resource implications to this paper.
33. HCP does not receive any funding from Herefordshire Council. £10,000 UKSPF funding was provided specifically in 2024-25 for consultancy work to support updates to the cultural strategy.
34. Herefordshire Council resource is provided through the Culture and Leisure Lead and Museum and Art Gallery Lead roles.
35. Any future Herefordshire Council funding or resources to support the delivery of cultural strategy priorities would need to be considered separately.

Legal implications

36. There are no legal implications with this report.

Risk management

37. The risks associated with the delivery of the cultural strategy are being managed in line with the council's risk management strategy. Relevant risks will continue to be monitored and managed through appropriate governance routes to ensure they are identified, recorded, and escalated where necessary to support delivery of the strategy's priorities.
38. The following are the primary risks in delivering the Cultural Strategy 2019-29:

Risk/ opportunity	Mitigation
There is a low risk of reputational damage as the Cultural Strategy is currently owned by an independent cultural organisation and stakeholders and the public may expect this to be owned by the council.	<p>The ownership of strategic cultural development by an Arts Council England cultural compact such as HCP is typical nationally. Herefordshire Council does not have sufficient internal resource or capacity to lead on cultural development.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council endorsed the Cultural Strategy 2019-29 in October 2020 and has an active voice in the development of county cultural priorities through its membership on the HCP Board. The expectation is that Herefordshire Council adopts the updated cultural strategy in 2025 as its countywide strategy.</p> <p>HCP's independence from Herefordshire Council has opened up additional potential funding avenues for culture which would not have been</p>

	there should the Council have led on cultural development.
Local stakeholders may not agree with the priorities identified in the strategy.	<p>Stakeholders, cultural organisations, other sector leaders, local government representatives, practitioners and the public were invited to sessions to develop the original Cultural Strategy 2019-29.</p> <p>A similar process has guided the updates to the cultural strategy. The final draft strategy will be consulted on, tested and refined following additional consultation with key stakeholders, partner sectors and representatives from the cultural sector.</p>
Funding may not be available for Herefordshire Cultural Partnership. They are dependent on other sources of funding to continue their operation and delivery of core strategic priorities.	<p>HCP has operated on external funding since 2021 and continued to deliver on its objectives without funding support from Herefordshire Council. Funding is sourced on an annual basis for the administration of HCP.</p> <p>The updated cultural strategy and action plan will provide a clear strategic rationale and evidence base to support future grant applications or approaches for funding.</p>

Consultees

39. The Cultural Strategy 2019-29 was developed through consultation with local organisations, communities and groups across Herefordshire to ensure that the unique needs of the county were being met through its core priorities. The priorities were informed by in-depth consultation with local government, cultural organisations, practitioners and other sectors, a three-month online public survey and research into national and international good practice.
40. The process to update the cultural strategy has included consultation with Herefordshire arts organisations and sector leaders, public online sessions, workshops with regional cultural organisations, discussions with Herefordshire Council officers and review sessions with Board members.
41. The Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and Herefordshire Council has a strong working relationship with and support from the Arts Council England regional lead and National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) relationship managers. Policy guidance from Arts Council England informed the original cultural strategy and has been incorporated into recent updates to strategic priorities.
42. Further consultation on the updated cultural strategy will take place once a final draft strategy is available for circulation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Herefordshire Cultural Partnership

Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-29

Appendix 3 – Herefordshire Cultural Sector Review, August 2024

Appendix 4 – Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2025-30 Draft Summary

Background papers

None

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 20/05/2025
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 21/05/2025
Legal	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 21/05/2025
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 20/05/2025
Procurement	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Risk	Paige McInerney	Date 20/05/2025
Approved by	Hilary Hall	Date 22/05/2025

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

HCP – Herefordshire Cultural Partnership

NPO – National Portfolio Organisation (funded by Arts Council England)

HCA – Hereford College of Arts

NMITE – New Model Institute of Technology and Engineering

UKSPF – UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Cultural Compact - A partnership between a variety of cultural organisations and stakeholders in a specific geographic area, like a city or region, aimed at supporting the local cultural sector and enhancing its contribution to development. Cultural compacts are an initiative originated and supported by Arts Council England from 2019.