



ARTS STRATEGY

**South Gloucestershire Council Committee Approved in 1998.
Updated 2001 for public consultation.**

ARTS STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

“Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life”

Picasso

Aims of the Arts Strategy

The aim of the Arts Strategy is to enable groups, organisations and individuals involved in the arts to work effectively and creatively with each other in developing diverse opportunities for involving local people in quality arts activities and creative expression.

The Arts Strategy believes that the arts should touch everyone's lives and be a part of our work, leisure, education and environment.

The Arts Strategy values the arts and the benefits which they bring to the social, economic and environmental life of South Gloucestershire and wishes to encourage the development of the cultural industries, recognising that the cultural sector plays a significant role in providing jobs and economic benefits to the area.

This strategy document offers a brief picture of South Gloucestershire arts scene in a regional and national context and looks at some of the emerging trends in the arts locally and beyond. There are common policy issues, which could be addressed in a strategy for the arts endorsed and delivered by all relevant sectors.

Why an Arts Strategy for South Gloucestershire?

As a local authority, South Gloucestershire Council has the role of developing a strategy for the arts to guide the work of its officers and members and to set priorities for funding and other forms of support. This Arts Strategy will form part of the Council's Cultural Strategy which in turn will complement the Council's Guiding Principles and Corporate Values.

The process of developing an Arts Strategy owned and driven by a diversity of partners was initiated through a programme of consultation, events and meetings with the voluntary and professional arts sector. The Arts Strategy achieved Committee approval in 1998. This Strategy has been updated to reflect the changes and developments in the arts infrastructure of South Gloucestershire, the region and nationally.

The Arts Strategy is a strategy for South Gloucestershire NOT merely for South Gloucestershire Council. The Council recognises the arts are developed, delivered and supported by a diversity of groups from the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors. The Council is well placed to utilise its position and resources towards drawing in these key partners to maximise the opportunities for development of a broad range of quality arts and for the development of arts infrastructure. These developments will be in line with identified priorities in the Arts Strategy. This strategic approach will aim, over the coming years, to invite key partners into a programme of co-ordinated initiatives in response to identified issues and needs.

Resources

The Council, like most Councils, has limited resources. If any financial support is required from the Council for any aspect of this Strategy, it will need to be identified and agreed by Members or officers in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations prior to any commitment to a scheme.

SETTING THE SCENE

What do we mean by “The Arts”?

The following is taken from the National Arts and Media Strategy (NAMS) 1994.

The term “the arts” includes but is not limited to music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution and exhibition of such major art forms, and the study and application of the arts to the human environment.

It is vital to ensure that an inclusive approach to the arts in South Gloucestershire is maintained and that all artforms are encouraged and represented.

South Gloucestershire - the Local Context

South Gloucestershire Council is a Unitary Authority responsible for the duties and services delivered elsewhere in the country by district and county councils. There is a small dedicated Arts Development Team within the Community Services Department. However, a number of other services within the Council also actively initiate, promote and encourage arts activities, notably within Education and Lifelong Learning, the Youth Service, the Library Service, Community Development and Area Working, Community Sport and Leisure DSO, Heritage and Museums Service, Planning, Engineering, Chief Executive and Corporate Resources.

The geographic area of South Gloucestershire is a very diverse district, surrounded by cities of nationally recognised culture in Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham and Cardiff. It contains a significant rural fringe, older urban city fringe towns, historic urban neighbourhoods, historic market towns, small older settlements which have grown considerably in recent years and significant commercial, retail and communication features.

South Gloucestershire boasts a thriving amateur arts scene and an impressive spread of local community projects and festivals, most of which have a strong arts and crafts element. However, the area is particularly lacking in local dedicated arts spaces. This has led to a range of exciting approaches, ensuring that the arts take place in non traditional settings, leading to widespread activity in a range of areas and artforms, offering events and diverse cultural experiences for the communities of South Gloucestershire.

There is also a lack of professional groups based in the area. However, many professional arts organisations based in Bristol and further afield have developed close working relationships with the Council and communities of South Gloucestershire and deliver services negotiated through project funding, Grant funding and Commissioned Services.

South Gloucestershire has also been particularly proactive in developing Public Art and Percent for Art in the area, capitalising on inward investment through voluntary developer contributions. This has developed into a range of projects and approaches, recognising the value of Public Art in enhancing our environment and developing a sense of place/ pride of place with communities. This work has encouraged the development of the view that Public Art in South Gloucestershire is an open, free and accessible Gallery for everyone to explore, be challenged by and enjoy.

This Strategy also recognises the importance of the Arts in delivering the Council's Corporate Values and Guiding Principles.

ARTS STRATEGY FOR SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The aim of the Arts Strategy is to enable groups, organisations and individuals involved in the arts to work with each other to develop diverse opportunities for involving local people in quality arts activities and creative expression.

Key Principles

Drawing from the consultation period and the national, regional and local trends within all sectors we have identified three guiding principles and seven key areas which require action to develop arts provision in South Gloucestershire.

The three Key Principles are:

⇒ **SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES**

⇒ Arts initiatives should enable communities to take more control over the wider social, environmental, economic or policy issues, in order to support and sustain the diversity of community life.

⇒ **EQUALITY OF ACCESS**

⇒ Arts initiatives should strive to enable participation from all members of a community and interest groups within those communities, recognising that people may be denied access to the arts for a variety of reasons.

⇒ **ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE**

⇒ Arts initiatives should strive for quality and artistic excellence in both process and product. This should apply equally to amateur and community, professional and voluntary cultural projects and activities.

Each of the seven areas for action should hold these three Guiding Principles as overarching aims.

The Seven areas are:

1. Information Training and Employment.
2. Quality Arts where you are and whoever you are.
3. Cultural Distinctiveness and Diversity.
4. Education and Learning.
5. Facilities and Resources.
6. Arts and the Built Environment.
7. Artist and Artform Development.

1. Information Training and Employment

The Arts Strategy values the arts and recognises the benefits which they bring to the social, economic and environmental life of South Gloucestershire. It seeks to encourage the development of the cultural industries, recognising that the cultural sector plays a significant role in providing jobs and economic benefits to the area.

South Gloucestershire's arts community responded well to the Arts Strategy Consultation process. A major identified need from the consultation from all sectors was for up to date relevant information and networking. The Arts Development Newsletter continues to grow in circulation and has proved an invaluable tool in disseminating information, including new opportunities for groups and individual artists.

Objectives

- A. To publish and disseminate an Arts Newsletter with information on arts infrastructure and opportunities from organisations, groups, practitioners, events, funding, training, resources and activities.
- B. To develop other ways of providing information in different formats (i.e. published, e mail and the development of a link from the main South Gloucestershire Council website) and use appropriate methods of disseminating that information to providers and users of arts services.
- C. To develop training opportunities which allow those with common interests to share information and experiences and explore opportunities for showcasing work within South Gloucestershire.
- D. To promote access to and develop creative projects within the business, training and employment sector, especially recognising the aspirations of young people.
- E. To work in partnership with a range of Artists, ensuring that they are well informed of creative and training/ developmental opportunities.
- F. To develop, in consultation with Artists, a Good Practice Guide for groups and organisations wishing to work with artists in delivery of their work and to disseminate this information widely.

Potential Partners: Local Authority, Amateur and Professional Arts Groups and Organisations, Educational Organisations, South West Arts, Town and Parish Councils, Property Developers, Artists, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, South West Arts Marketing.

2. Quality Arts Where You Are and Whoever You Are

This Strategy recognises that the arts can touch everyone's lives and be an important part of our work, education, environment, play and leisure.

It also recognises that the arts are extremely effective in promoting social inclusion by breaking down physical, economic, social, cultural and educational barriers. Disenfranchised or socially excluded sections of the community can fully participate in arts and cultural life when effective partnership work encourages and enables access. These communities differ from place to place and good use can be made of existing networks and partnerships to develop quality services.

The Guiding Principles of SUSTAINABILITY, ACCESS and EXCELLENCE bear particular relevance in enabling the communities of South Gloucestershire to play an active role in, be challenged by, enjoy and improve the quality of their lives through opportunities for quality arts activities and creative expression.

A web of good amateur arts provision and an impressive spread of local community festivals (many of which have a strong arts and crafts element) exist in South Gloucestershire because of the diverse nature of the district and the lack of local dedicated arts spaces.

Ongoing arts projects and activities have centred on particulars of place or interest groups. This form of programme will continue to be developed to enable and strengthen community identity and involvement and the quality of experience for participants and audiences.

Objectives

- A. To create, develop and deliver quality arts services offered by Professional and Amateur Arts organisations through working in partnership, throughout South Gloucestershire.
- B. To work in partnership with Promoters in South Gloucestershire and develop the range and quality of arts activities and events through support, information, training, inward investment and marketing with a range of Strategy partners including Razzle (Rural Touring Arts group), The Ridings Arts Centre, Thornbury Arts Festival, Community Festivals and other Arts Facilities as they develop.
- C. To work in partnership with local and regional professional arts organisations and develop arts provision across all artforms in close consultation and liaison with communities; e.g. communities of locality or interest -old and new communities, rural communities, Young People, Minority and Ethnic Communities, Disabled People, Older People.
- D. To develop culturally diverse arts services, which promote positive images of Minority and Ethnic groups and enable them to share their culture with the wider community.
- E. To promote and create innovative projects which are in non-traditional spaces.
- F. To further develop participative and performance based Dance for under 5's, young people, adults and older people across South Gloucestershire.
- G. To enable Festivals and local arts events to strive for excellence and equality of access in their programmes.
- H. To maximise the opportunities offered by national and regional initiatives and programming opportunities such as the Bristol City of Culture bid and explore opportunities for joint working with neighbouring councils.

Potential Partners: Local Authority, Community Festivals, Grant Aided Organisations (Razzle, The Ridings Arts Centre, Thornbury Arts Festival, Professional Arts Groups – Bristol Area Dance Agency, Poetry Can, Picture This Moving Image), The Health Sector, Town and Parish Councils, Community Groups and Voluntary Sector organisations wishing to develop arts as part of their work – Children’s Playlink, South Gloucestershire Asian Project, The Asian Arts Agency, The Afrikan Caribbean Arts Forum, Artists, South West Arts, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, South West Arts Marketing, Bristol Old Vic, Watershed Media Centre, Arnolfini.

3. Cultural Diversity and Local Distinctiveness.

This Strategy recognises the important role the arts play in enabling people to celebrate their cultures and share them with the wider community

The South Gloucestershire district is an area of local distinctiveness and diverse communities. The Arts Strategy recognises that the district of South Gloucestershire is made up of many smaller, vibrant communities, often self identified by their cultural pursuits. There is much to be gained from developing cultural identities and ‘Pride of Place’ for South Gloucestershire as a whole. Many communities, organisations and businesses have expressed the desire to participate in quality arts projects, which celebrate local distinctiveness.

Objectives

- A. To ensure that arts play a central role in the development and implementation of the Cultural Strategy and to celebrate Cultural Diversity, including places of cultural significance in order to promote a positive South Gloucestershire identity for people who live in, work in and visit South Gloucestershire.
- B. To develop Arts and Crafts trails and other marketing /Internal Tourism Publications to promote the cultural distinctiveness of communities and to support the development of Heritage Trails and other initiatives.
- C. To encourage the development of sustainable Community Festivals.
- D. To encourage the development of Arts/ Culture Plans within Town and Parish Councils, Schools and Colleges and Community organisations that reflect their own priorities within the framework of this Strategy.
- E. To ensure cultural community activities are introduced into new communities and can have the opportunity to flourish by planning in suitable sustainable, accessible facilities and resources where budgets allow.

Potential Partners: Local Authority Cultural Strategy Group, Tourism organisations, Community groups, Town and Parish Councils, Community Festivals, Business Community, Schools, Artists, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, South West Arts Marketing, South West Arts, Grant Aided Organisations (Razzle, The Ridings Arts Centre, Thornbury Arts Festival), Professional Arts Groups – Bristol Area Dance Agency, Poetry Can, Picture This Moving Image, Community Groups and Voluntary Sector organisations wishing to develop arts as part of their work – Children’s Playlink, South Gloucestershire Asian Project, The Asian Arts Agency, The Afrikan Caribbean Arts Forum, Bristol Old Vic, Watershed Media Centre.

4. Education and Learning

This Strategy recognises the vital contribution the arts make to the development of the creative, physical, social and intuitive intelligences of children, young people and adults in schools, colleges and Life Long Learning and Community Education Initiatives.

It also recognises the important role the arts can play within all educational settings, both formal and informal, enabling participants to learn new skills, develop self-esteem and improve the quality of their lives.

The Library Service offers valuable resources through the lending of music scores, playsets and multiple copies of books to promote reading groups. South Gloucestershire Council Library Service has combined with three other Councils in an innovative project to employ a Reading Development Worker who works across all four authorities. The Libraries also offer opportunities to access information on-line. Culture Online will enable more people to access the arts online and could be a catalyst for them to become actively involved in the arts within their community.

The Education Service centrally has supported arts development groups, established European arts projects and co-ordinated a schools' dance association. The Music Service creates opportunities for learning and participation in a wide range of music activities in schools across South Gloucestershire. South Gloucestershire has a strong commitment to arts in the curriculum as an important factor in the development of creativity and social skills in young people.

Community Development is pursuing arts activities in partnership with the Library and Information Service, the Youth Service and Play organisations and groups. There is a recognised need for all sectors to be able to work effectively together to avoid duplication and address gaps; to make a more flexible, creative approach to learning and education at the point of entry from the consumer. The professional arts sector has a good record of using arts in schools either in residencies, inset or workshops to support the curriculum, and schools' involvement in arts projects within their communities. The Bristol Old Vic's Education Department's work in schools contributes significantly to the personal and social development of children and young people on a range of issues including drug awareness.

Objectives

- A. To ensure that educational establishments play an active role in training and other opportunities and initiatives.
- B. To investigate shared community arts use of school, college and other education sector resources with relevant partners.
- C. To promote schemes which bring Artists into schools or shared schools/community ventures.
- D. To ensure that educational establishments are included in circulation of information including the Arts Newsletter, Training initiatives and Funding Opportunities/Initiatives (Artsmark etc).
- E. To investigate and develop ways to encourage mentoring, training, out of hours study and other opportunities that give children and young people greater access to the arts.

Potential Partners: Education Service, Life Long Learning, Community Education and Early Years Partnership, The Schools Music Service, The Library and Information Service, The Youth Service, Children's Playlink, Artists, Business Community, Professional and Amateur Arts organisations (Travelling Light Theatre, Bristol Old Vic, Bristol Area Dance Agency, Poetry Can, Picture This Moving Image), Connexions and other initiatives, Artists in Schools Agencies – CLA, Glos., Daisy, Spaeda, Government Agencies, Colleges.

5. Capital and Revenue Facilities and Resources

This Strategy recognises that capital and revenue facilities and resources are important to the development of quality arts across South Gloucestershire.

The potential to develop quality arts infrastructure through local arts facilities is immense. There has been a demonstrable community demand for facility development supported by the authority but initiated by the voluntary sector in a variety of locations across South Gloucestershire.

Several capital bids to the Arts Lottery Schemes failed for a variety of reasons. It is essential that any future developments focus on effective and thorough consultation with the wider community and on the needs and aspirations of these communities. It is also essential that any future bids are approached in a pragmatic way, responsive to realistic audience figures and proposed programming.

With capital / building based facilities, a move towards shared use of facilities may be an important way to realise some of the objectives below. There are a number of organisations interested in developing arts facilities, including proposed arts centres and facilities in Thornbury, Kingswood Foundation Youth Arts Village and Kingswood Heritage and Arts Centre.

With revenue based resources it is important that shared approaches to projects are developed with a number of partners, to ensure the best possible use of scarce resources and sustainability.

With all proposed developments, suitable funds need to be identified. However, Arts Lottery and other funding opportunities are limited and any applications may well be in competition with each other. Successful developments in some areas may mutually exclude developments in other areas. There is scope to explore joint usage of new community facilities for example with Town and Parish Councils, with Libraries, Community Halls and other organisations.

Arts funding has suffered from under investment for some time. Funding opportunities including Awards for All and the Regional Arts Lottery Programme and Trusts and Charities are limited and projects can only rely on being awarded small amounts.

Major public arts investment from developers is also vital in developing arts facilities. Opportunities to work with developers and involve communities in the artistic process must be capitalised upon, where possible.

This Strategy identifies criteria which will enable quality proposals to be developed and progressed without creating social or artistic imbalance.

If any financial support is required from the Council for any aspect of this Strategy, it will need to be identified and agreed by Members or officers in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations prior to any commitment to a scheme.

Objectives

A. That proposed developments of arts facilities be supported, subject to each scheme meeting the following criteria:-

- a) Criteria set by South West Arts, The Arts Council and Arts Lottery Initiatives.
 - b) Demonstrate a commitment to in-depth and representative consultation ensuring that bids do not conflict with other local plans or interests and that they reflect community needs and aspirations.
 - c) Sustainability.
 - c) Demonstration of commitment to artistic excellence.
 - d) Equality of access, both physical and social.
 - e) Addressing through consultation, programmes and projects any identified special interests of audience or participants.
- B. To generate inward investment in the arts by pursuing appropriate opportunities where possible.
 - C. To disseminate information concerning the Disability Discrimination Act to all venues and promoters and to support them in ensuring equality of access for all.
 - D. To encourage bids from Schools to develop and demonstrate evidence of current community arts development and extra curricular activities.
 - E. To encourage consortium bidding for smaller capital refurbishment or upgrading projects.

Potential Partners: Local Authority, Voluntary Building based organisations and their current or potential users (Kingswood Foundation, Kingswood Heritage Museums Trust, The Ridings Arts Centre), Amateur and Professional Arts Groups and Organisations, Village Hall Associations, Educational Organisations, South West Arts, The Arts Council, Lottery Initiatives, Town and Parish Councils Property Developers, Artists, Private Sector Developers, Funding sources.

6. Arts In the Built Environment and Planning.

This Strategy recognises the aims of the Percent For Art Policy, namely:

- To promote a high quality and well designed environment of value to those who live in, work in or visit the area.
- To promote public involvement in the arts and the environment.
- To promote artistic activity and create new artwork which is accessible to everyone.

South Gloucestershire has a well-developed programme of Public Art, supported by the following infrastructure and policy:

- i) Public Art and Percent for Art priorities within the Local Plan.
- ii) A diverse range of quality work commissioned in partnership with a variety of organisations, companies and communities.
- iv) Recognition of the importance of involving Artists in design teams, encouraging design teams to strive for quality design, integrating artworks, and site specific developments.
- v) A range of Parish and Town Councils, Organisations and schools employing public artworks to enhance their environment.
- v) An integrated approach to Public Art throughout the development of Emerson's Green.
- vi) An active and developing database of artists who have experience of working in different ways (Public and Community Artists) within South Gloucestershire.

Objectives

- A. To ensure the continued presence of Public Art and Percent for Art policy within the Local Plan.
- B. To disseminate the Developing Public Art Pack and encourage coherent and creative public art inclusion into all major new developments.

- C. To develop Arts and Crafts Trail leaflets and a series of Public Art Postcards to encourage exploration of Public Art works.
- D. To involve Artists at all levels of public art initiatives and to recognise the importance of involving artists in design teams, encouraging design teams to strive for quality integrated artworks and design in developments.
- E. To audit and document existing pieces, including the development of a maintenance schedule for all Public Art features.
- F. To use effective channels and networks to give and receive information to artists and potential commissioners.
- G. To be aware, through national, regional and local Public Art networks, of training opportunities or policies that exist in all sectors.
- H. To work in partnership with local media to promote the benefits of Public Art.
- I. To recognise that Public Art is a mechanism, not an artform in itself and consider both permanent and temporary Public Art (including digital or temporary installations, environmental art, community led projects, landscaping, signage and street/open space furniture, issue based projects and traditional artforms) as valuable in the development of arts across South Gloucestershire.
- J. To work with other Councils (including Unitary Authorities) to develop Public Art Infrastructure, Policy and Initiatives.

Potential Partners: Local authority (Planning, Engineering and Development Control Teams, Community Open Spaces Service, Education, Agenda 21, Environment & Conservation Teams), Artists, Colleges & UWE, Public Art South West, Developers, Avon Community Forest, Community Representatives, Unitary Authorities, Town & Parish Councils, Bristol Legible City Initiative, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, South West Arts Marketing.

7. Artists and Artform Development

This Strategy recognises the importance of the role artists play in our society

Within South Gloucestershire there has been genuine community enthusiasm for working with professional artists in amateur or community projects. These projects include Community Festivals, Community Arts projects, Razzle, Pride of Place, Public Art projects and Year of the Artist projects.

There is a very healthy amateur performing and visual arts sector, in many cases working to a very high standard.

The development of Dance has been significantly enabled through the formation of the LEAPS & BOUNDS cross-sector dance group. This group has overseen the programme of free taster sessions in Leisure Centres, a number of Dance Residencies for adults and young people and is seeking to develop a Dance Co-ordinator's post.

Other artforms need development and there has been a clear need voiced by Festival committees, schools and other consultees to involve more professional artists in arts and non-arts initiatives and projects.

Many of these artists are based outside the district boundaries. The Arts Strategy recognises the importance of developing policies which encourage both amateur and professional artists to locate within the district and also recognises the importance of training and developing artists who can work with people in their locality.

There is also an opportunity to develop practice and projects that do not rely on using dedicated arts buildings as a base. There is a chance to explore and develop artforms such as new technology and public arts, which do not require a set location, which can be challenging and ‘cutting edge’.

Objectives

- A. To work in partnership with a range of Artists, ensuring that they are well informed of creative and training/ developmental opportunities.
- B. To encourage and enable Festivals, Schools, Community Events and others to introduce professional arts and artists into their programmes.
- C. To develop Circus and other performance and community based artforms in South Gloucestershire.
- D. To identify and pursue appropriate funding opportunities/ resources to develop artists work and artforms within the district.
- E. To work with local bodies such as community groups, neighbourhood groups and Town & Parish Councils when developing local arts facilities to ensure artist and artform development.
- F. To develop, in consultation with Artists, a Good Practice Guide for groups and organisations wishing to work with artists in delivery of their work and to disseminate this information widely.
- G. To explore with artists, the private sector and the voluntary sector the possibilities of developing artist's communities, studios or retail opportunities for artists.

Potential Partners: Artists, South West Arts, Local Authority, Community Festivals, Grant Aided Organisations (Razzle, The Ridings Arts Centre, Thornbury Arts Festival), Professional Arts Groups (Bristol Area Dance Agency, Poetry Can, Picture This Moving Image), Town and Parish Councils, Community Groups and Voluntary Sector organisations wishing to develop arts as part of their work – Children’s Playlink, South Gloucestershire Asian Project, The Asian Arts Agency, The Afrikan Caribbean Arts Forum, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, South West Arts Marketing.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

How will it be monitored?

The Arts Team will monitor projects and initiatives on an individual basis to ensure that they contribute to the aims of the Arts Strategy. The introduction of Commissioned Services will allow easier monitoring and evaluation of key work funded by South Gloucestershire Council.

We will use the Newsletter to keep partners informed of developments and encourage feedback. Where appropriate we will include questionnaires and surveys to explore particular issues.

It is important that contributors to and participants in the Strategy do not remain static, and that the objectives and action plans are publicised widely.

‘It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process.’

Henry James to HG Wells.