



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

20 September 2023

Report of the Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage & Culture – C.Saunders

Matter for Decision.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Report Title:

Culture and Destination Strategies

Purpose of the Report:

This report is presented to Cabinet for adoption of Neath Port Talbot's first Culture and Destination Strategies. It also provides background to the Heritage Strategy which is presented under a different report.

Executive Summary:

This report outlines the background behind the Culture, Destination and Heritage Strategies, explains how they are interlinked and provides a framework for the Council and its partners in delivering on the Council's Wellbeing Objective 3 aims going forward. It also introduces a new festival idea that is in the early stages of development. The Culture and Destination Strategies are recommended for formal adoption by Cabinet, while the Heritage

Strategy which is in final draft will be recommended for further consultation as part of a separate report.

Background:

The Let's Talk Campaign demonstrated a clear public will to invest in and develop our Culture and Heritage sector. As a result, one of the 4 wellbeing objectives was set to specifically deliver on this area; *Our local environment, heritage and culture can be enjoyed by future generations.*

Consequently Culture, Destination and Heritage Strategies have been commissioned to provide the strategic narrative for this objective. They aim to provide a framework from which the Council, its partners and the wider community can be built upon to actively conserve, improve and enjoy our stunning natural environment, treasure the Welsh language and actively engage with the rich sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area.

All three strategies have been created with the wider policy context in view, particularly the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and are designed to ensure that both the seven goals and five ways of working of the act are embedded throughout the actions of both the Council and other stakeholders.

Following a procurement process Counterculture were chosen to deliver the Culture Strategy and Planning Solutions Consulting Ltd for the Destination Management Plan (Strategy). The Heritage Strategy has been drafted by the in-house team.

Each strategy is distinct, but all are connected. In summary:

1. *Culture Strategy.* Recognising the huge power of culture for economic growth, placemaking, health and wellbeing this strategy outlines the key strengths of Neath Port Talbot's cultural life, proposes key themes for the future and includes a detailed action plan to promote, develop and improve our collective cultural life. The Culture Strategy defines culture

widely to include arts, sport, and heritage, as well as giving consideration to aspects of culture which are part of other strategies (such as Welsh language and the development of the creative industries). Of the three strategies the Culture Strategy takes the widest view and is designed to ensure that culture, with all its many benefits, lies at the heart of our borough. The Culture Strategy has been drawn up with assistance from our consultants Counterculture, and included extensive stakeholder and public consultation.

2. *Heritage Strategy*. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund our Heritage Strategy aims to understand the area's heritage assets (many of which are owned by the Council), ensure that they are well managed through planning and conservation plans, maintenance programmes, positive relationships with heritage bodies, and celebrate and promote them to capitalise for both residents and visitors. Due to the funding arrangements this strategy is currently in draft and a separate report seeks authority to now consult on the proposals.
3. *Destination Management Plan*. The DMP is the key strategy and action for plan for the sustainable development of the visitor economy in Neath Port Talbot. It is a shared statement of intent from the Council and our partners (including the tourism sector itself) that analyses the local visitor economy, sets out our priorities for change and the roles of different stakeholders in delivering that change. It is designed to help co-ordinate a huge range of activities that, together, transform the quality of visitors' experience and the viability of visitor economy businesses so that tourism can be sustainable (financially and environmentally) and welcomed by our communities. The DMP has been drawn up through close consultation with the local tourism sector, strategic partners and local members through a series of workshops, interviews and online surveys. The DMP also aligns with Welsh Government's national strategy,

'Welcome to Wales; Priorities for the Visitor Economy 2020-2025.

Considerable effort has been made to ensure the timeline for the three documents align and the language and actions are consistent. Each of the three strategies stands alone, but they have been designed so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. There is a common design language across the three final documents to show that they are connected and there are a number of areas in which having all three documents will be a significant benefit to Neath Port Talbot.

Each of these strategies has been commissioned by Neath Port Talbot Council, but they are not solely for the Council. Although we are key, the ambitions of all three strategies can only be delivered in partnership with other stakeholders, both large and small. The strategies' key findings and action plans include not only things that the Council needs to do but also actions for the wider public, private, and voluntary sectors.

Discussions are ongoing with Swansea University for some help in designing the governance of the Culture Strategy with a 'Compact' style arrangement being the ambition. This will lever in strategic capacity and 'buy-in' from the key sectors including health, education, and industry. Under this model a high-profile chair would be recruited to represent and lead this work.

The Culture Strategy identifies the Borough's wealth of heritage assets (particularly from the industrial age, but also many earlier buildings and monuments) as of high value to residents, and of growing potential of the visitor economy. The Heritage Strategy will ensure that these assets are looked after effectively and used in ways that improve placemaking and boost our economy.

There is an important link between culture and the visitor economy. The DMP seeks to find ways to develop tourism sustainably without causing unacceptable burdens for residents. One key aspect of this is

the development of visitor attractions and events that enhance the lives of local people and are attractive to visitors: a key priority of the Culture Strategy Action Plan.

Once adopted by Cabinet a formal launch will be arranged, inviting partners to help us celebrate.

There is a general desire for early delivery on some of the strategy actions. Officers are currently working on bringing forward a new Comedy Festival, which builds on the Neath Comedy festival. The new festival would be scheduled for a ten-day period in September 2024 and aim to reach all parts of the County Borough. The three main venues would be used to anchor the festival with the very real ambition of taking shows to some of smaller venues in the more isolated communities. Themes such as open mic nights, Welsh language shows, & children's workshops would also be included. Plans are currently in the infancy, a small steering group is being formed and a budget being prepared.

The main costs of the festival are in programming and marketing, together with buying in a big act or two. The Council would be asked to underwrite the cost but with ticket income, and funding bids this should be limited. Over the next three years the aim is for the event to become self-sustaining and possibly move it into a CIC of some kind. Further details will be made available in due course.

Further to this the Shared Prosperity funded Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Events Fund (HCTE) has recently been launched. The HCTE fund offers strategic, small scale and events specific interventions which are designed to provide some of the funding resources required by the Council, our strategic partners, the voluntary sector and private sector organisations to deliver against Wellbeing Objective 3 and the detailed actions included within the Culture, Destination and Heritage strategies up to December 2024.

Financial Impacts:

Each of the three strategies have a series of actions that will all require funding of some kind. There is a working document sitting behind the Culture Strategy which identifies the main funding streams for each of the actions.

There are clear gaps in the staffing and expertise around the development of the cultural sector and also for events and festivals. A three-year business plan will be brought forward in the autumn for the leisure and culture services as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan which will identify some external funding and hopes to address the gaps. There are also gaps in the Heritage and Tourism teams, but these are currently filled using NLHF and SPF funding; a longer-term solution needs to be found.

There will also an opportunity to use the Cultural Partnership to create bids into funding bodies the Council is not currently able to access.

The Comedy Festival will require underwriting but as with the staffing element, officers are confident this can be contained within the three-year business plan for the wider services. Further details will be shared as the festival business case is built.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A full IIA has been prepared for each of the strategy documents and highlights the positive impacts the strategies will have on the protected characteristics. The actions to be delivered through the Culture Strategy and Destination Management Plan will have a positive impact across all areas assessed.

The Heritage Strategy requires more detail as a result of consultation, however at this stage it is not envisaged that this will have any negative impacts across the areas assessed.

The strategies transcend age and whilst the majority of respondents were between 30- 74 years old, culture by its definition transcends generations with actions within the plan that will involve all ages, from school children to people in care homes.

Race is also positively affected with one of the key themes being Welsh at heart specifically aimed at building on the foundations already laid through Welsh culture at places like Pontardawe Arts Centre, to promote a strong Welsh cultural offer, making it accessible, visible and relevant.

There are no negative impacts assessed as part of the IIA for any of the protected characteristics.

Given these are policy documents the main test will be in the actions contained in the action plan. Equality issues will be considered at all stages as these actions are developed.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

Given the nature of the strategy documents and the key themes within the Culture Strategy only positive impacts to our Valley communities is envisaged. This will be in the form of celebrating local heritage, driving economic prosperity, sustainably managing visitors and helping to celebrate local distinctions.

Workforce Impacts:

There are positive impacts with additional jobs being created within the Council and helping to drive economic prosperity within our communities.

Legal Impacts:

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

These strategies set out a framework that will in time, help reduce the Council's risk in terms of historic building and conservation management in particular.

Consultation:

Counterculture undertook an extensive consultation exercise for the Culture Strategy which has also been used to guide the Built Heritage Strategy.

This elicited 288 responses in total with the majority of people living in Neath Port Talbot and the methodology and results of the consultation are in attached in the appendices to this report.

The Destination Strategy was developed and co-produced by the tourism sector and its stakeholders through a series of workshops with the local tourism trade, local members and strategic partners in addition to online surveys and one to one interviews.

No further public consultation is planned for either the Culture or Destination Strategies. The Heritage Strategy, currently in draft will be circulated for wider consultation due to the statutory nature and funding arrangements for this specific piece of work.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet formally adopts the Culture and Destination Strategies (as detailed at Appendices A and B).

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable delivery of the Wellbeing Objective 3; Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three-day call-in period.

Appendices:

Appendix A	Culture Strategy
Appendix B	Destination Strategy
Appendix C	KKP report on leisure & sport
Appendix D	Consultation results
Appendix E	Integrated Impact Assessments

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