

1. Introduction

This report summarises East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) work in the area of Culture and Tourism from April 2021 to November 2022 and provides some examples of the standout achievements of the two sectors.

During this period ESCC has undertaken a step change in these two areas of work, in particular: allocating £205k to support the tourism sector between 2021/22 and 2023/24; investing in the governance refresh of Culture East Sussex (CES); supporting the development of the Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative (SVEI) and appointing a Culture and Tourism Project Coordinator to manage the growth in this area of work.

2. Culture

2.1 Culture East Sussex (CES)

CES was established in 2013 to oversee the delivery of the East Sussex Cultural Strategy. To date, it has been an informal board. To support a more ambitious role for the board, it was judged necessary to introduce a robust governance model, addressing equality, diversity, transparency and access and raising the profile of Culture East Sussex. Subsequently ESCC invested in a governance review which is in the process of being implemented. This includes the refresh and recruitment of board membership and the publishing of newly agreed values, vision, mission, aims and objectives.

This governance review will underpin the introduction of a Cultural Priority Pipeline of projects. This pipeline will be developed in an open and transparent way and will assist in the identification of investment-ready propositions, to maximise success when funding opportunities arise. The form which will be used to gather initial information has been tested, a sub-group is in place and the pipeline will be launched in January 2023.

Fundraising: ESCC has submitted Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) 2 and CDF 3, both were unsuccessful. It is partly with this in mind that we have developed the Cultural Priority Pipeline to increase our chances of future success.

There is a maturing collaboration with Public Health, delivering the "Everyday Creativity" project during the Pandemic in partnership with Culture Shift and a range of freelancers, and more recently collaborating on the design of the proposed Turner Prize wrap-around programme (subject to funding outcomes).

ESCC and CES have supported the work of Sussex Modern who have successfully delivered a South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) contract for visitor economy recovery in partnership with Visit Kent and Visit Essex. More recently they have been working with Lewes District Council (LDC), South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and Plumpton College on a UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) supported project to develop Sustainable Wine Tourism. Outputs include: building a global wine tourism brand; readying cultural and wine estate destinations for growth; developing guidance for the introduction of Electric Vehicle charging points and building an investment plan to deliver optimal growth. A project extension has enabled Sussex Modern to undertake the development of a Sussex Wine Tourism Strategy. This process has brought together Sussex Modern and the Sussex Visitor Economy Industry Group (see below).

Towner Eastbourne has secured the hosting of the Turner Prize in 2023. ESCC has provided funding towards hosting the prize and the wrap-around marketing as well as supporting the development of a £500k bid to Arts Council England for Place Partnership funding to enable a wrap-around programme of activities to take place and share the benefits of this once in a lifetime opportunity (outcome pending). As part of this programme the Culture and Tourism team have facilitated partnerships with Skills East Sussex, Public Health and Children's Services.

Arts Council England has made its once in every three year announcement of its National Portfolio Organisation awards, this is for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26. There has been a significant shakeup nationally with investment moving away from London. Whilst other areas lost out, East Sussex saw a 25% increase in investment with cultural organisations securing £2.75m per annum, equating to £8.3m over the three years. The organisations to benefit from this investment are:

- Project Art Works in Hastings
- Hastings Contemporary
- De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill
- Glyndebourne, Lewes
- Towner Eastbourne
- Hastings-based Home Live Art
- Devonshire Collective in Eastbourne
- Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

Devonshire Collective in Eastbourne, a cultural and community organisation, and Hastings Borough Council-run Hastings Museum and Art Gallery are new to the Portfolio. The successful organisations have gone through a rigorous application process, providing a detailed three-year business plan, plans for how they will work with their local community, how they will uphold diversity and inclusion, how they will adopt or improve their environmentally responsible practices and how they will maintain excellent standards in programming. Whilst the overall picture is a very positive one, it is important to note that there was also some disappointment with a number of unsuccessful bids in East Sussex.

2.2 South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN)

ESCC continues to support the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's (SELEP) South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN).

In partnership with Kent County Council (KCC), work has progressed on the SELEP Open Workspace Plan with the development of a Masterplan and the development of the Creative Opportunity Zones concept.

England's Creative Coast was delivered in 2021 with De La Warr Pavilion, Towner Eastbourne and Hastings Contemporary. The programme was delayed by the Pandemic, and in a year where visitor volume was just over half of the norm, the programme delivered 422,000+ in-person engagements, achieving £1.9m of economic impact for the region. A significant amount of press was achieved including: Condé Naste listed England's Creative Coast as one of the Best of 2021 Cultural Festivals in the UK; National Geographic highlighted ECC as one of Seven of the Best Coastal Family Adventures in the British Isles and featured it in their top 21 best places in the World; i-news listed ECC as one of the best new things to do across the UK in their Days out near me; Suitcase listed ECC as one of 21 UK Destinations to visit; Time Out listed ECC as one of The UK trips we'll book in 2021; and The Observer Critics chose ECC as one of the best art shows for 2021 as part of the grand reopening. 15% of ECC visitors stayed overnight for an average of 3 nights,

generating around 136,000 bed nights, and it is estimated they spent around £14.5m locally.

A consortium of partners submitted a successful bid to the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Create Growth Programme, securing one of only six awards of £1.275m for three years to area partnerships across the UK (no match funding requirement). Businesses within the areas awarded the funding will also be able to access a share of £7m grants/loans/equity shares. The Consortium is led by Kent County Council and includes: ESCC, Essex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Medway Council, Basildon Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, Screen South, Wired Sussex, Creative UK, Creative Estuary, Essex University's Angels@Essex and University of Kent. The programme will build on the legacy of South East Creatives.

The Create Growth Programme (CGP) targets Intellectual Property-rich micro and Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and comprises three workstreams: an intensive business support programme designed to make businesses better placed to access finance, particularly investor finance; development of national and regional angel investor capacity with the aim to build viable networks of investors more attuned to creative industry investment opportunities in the future; and the distribution of £7m of additional finance, available to businesses in the six shortlisted areas.

Eligible businesses will be pre-scale up with the potential for high growth and our targeted sub sectors based on our review of data/evidence, which are:

- Film, TV, Video, Radio & Photography
- Design & Designer Fashion
- Music, Performing & Visual Arts
- CreaTech, Augmented Reality (AR) Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (XR) and Gaming

2.3 East Sussex Arts Partnership (ESAP)

ESAP offers £500 grants to match fund Arts Council England (ACE) Project Grants on a quarterly basis. This programme is managed by ESCC on behalf of the East Sussex Arts Partnership which is made up of the District and Borough Councils who make an annual contribution to the fund. In 2022/23 ESAP is also offering a one-off opportunity to apply for £1,000 grants on the theme of "Is it Art?". Grants will match fund ACE project grants with a specific requirement that the projects are designed to complement the Turner Prize coming to Eastbourne.

2.4 The Friday Email

Circulated on a weekly basis, ESCC Culture and Tourism team, working with our External Funding team, provides a shortcut summary of information on cultural opportunities and information. The content is business to business focussed and includes funding opportunities, industry intelligence and relevant data sources to support funding applications and business planning, as well as identifying ongoing support on offer (funding and HR support for example) and a guide to existing creative networks in the county. The mailing list contains 300+ contacts and grows each month. The mailing list is only open to East Sussex based freelancers and organisations but requests to join the list come in from across the country, reinforcing our reputation as a county who is supportive of the creative sector.

3. Tourism

3.1 Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative (SVEI)

In 2020, at the peak of the Pandemic, the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) asked ESCC, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council to form a response group to

address the plight of the visitor economy. This collaboration has now matured into the Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative (SVEI).

Initial scoping activity of the Sussex Visitor Economy sector was undertaken by Blue Sail Consulting, headline findings included:

- £5 billion of impact and 74,000 FTE jobs - the same size as Iceland's tourism economy and two thirds that of Wales
- 62 million visitors
- Staying visitors account for 11% of visits and 50% of spend
- Overseas visitors account for 2% of visits and 19% of spend
- 65% of survey respondents who identified as 'non-visitors' to Sussex had in fact visited; they just were not aware they had been in Sussex
- 96% of visitors and 84% of non-visitors think Sussex offers what they are looking for

At the same time as this report was being developed, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published the Tourism Recovery Plan which addresses sector recovery, world class product development, the challenge of achieving Net Zero and climate action, rebuilding event and business tourism, improving productivity, improving accessible tourism and building back international tourism.

Having analysed the evidence base and taken into account future strategic and industry trajectories, Blue Sail produced a Vision and a series of recommendations for Sussex which SVEI have since developed into priority activities. The current priority activities are:

- i. The formation of the Sussex Visitor Economy Industry Group (SVEIG): chaired by the CEO of Brighton and Hove Museums and previously Area Director South East for Arts Council England, Hedley Swain - the group operates in an advisory capacity to the SVEI.
- ii. Market Segmentation and Sussex Story development: SVEI have worked with Blue Sail Consulting to define the key market segments that Sussex should target in the short and medium term to ensure sustainable tourism growth based on high spend, and high value products. ESCC are now leading the procurement of a company to create a compelling Sussex story and identity, better equipping us to take Sussex to national and international markets. In addition to this the SVEI is working collaboratively with the lead partner Lewes District Council on the UK Community Renewal Fund with the delivery partners on the sustainable wine and cultural tourism programme (see above).
- iii. Sussex Meeting, Incentives, Conference and Events (MICE) development: to stimulate a step change in our investment proposition we are building on the Sussex proposition through a product audit to establish opportunity; creating an identity for the Sussex proposition, enabling us to effectively promote the Sussex offer to conference organisers and agencies, underpinned by the Sussex-wide visitor offer and story to create a point of differentiation between seemingly similar destinations.
- iv. Increase the Sussex positioning in the sector and with national bodies: responding to business and stakeholder appetite for a joined-up approach across Sussex. Position Sussex with Visit Britain/Visit England, to influence national policy and improve fundraising potential.

The national Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Review was published in September 2021. It recommends a three-tier structure with tier one organisations providing an umbrella function for existing DMOs. In the light of the national Destination Management Organisation (DMO) review, the SVEI is working with partners across the county to align Sussex with the review recommendations. These recommendations include the development of regionally organised and stronger partnerships among the public, private and community sectors.

4. Summary

The headline achievements in these sectors are attributable to the sector businesses themselves. ESCC's contribution is one of strategic development, influence, facilitation and co-ordination amongst and on behalf of these sectors. Whilst the cultural and tourism sectors are separate, there are significant overlaps between the two areas of work in East Sussex, because our cultural and heritage offer is a significant part of our draw for tourists and many of our stand-out cultural organisations are also tourism destinations. Bringing together these two areas of work in one team has and will continue to increase our effectiveness as ESCC works to support the East Sussex Culture and Tourism economies for the future.

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