

Epping Forest District Cultural Plan 2020 – 2025

Our Council and Community Vision “Together making Epping Forest a great place to live, work, study and do business”

This strategy seeks to support this vision by enabling all residents and visitors to the District to access and participate in quality arts, heritage, and leisure activities. This will be achieved by;

Continuing to celebrate and provide a sustainable strong cultural offer for current and future residents and visitors
Championing increased partnership working between the Council and external partners to increase culture participation and access
Ensuring that cultural priorities are reflected in emerging plans and strategies
Working to ensure that the cultural offer in the district is inclusive and accessible to all ages, cultures, communities and abilities
Working collaboratively with education and health & well-being partners
Using cultural activity to support the economic prosperity of the district, including the visitor economy

Introduction

This strategy places the role of culture at the heart of the Council’s priorities in building a Stronger Place and Stronger Communities to enhance individual quality of life;

- It provides a framework for partnership working in arts, heritage, tourism, regeneration, community health & wellbeing, education, planning and events, to secure a cultural and creative landscape for generations to come and supports the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) directive that, *‘Everyone should be able to access and participate in the arts, heritage and sport no matter what their background or where they come from’*; and,
- It will ensure clear signposting for cultural activities in the district so that all residents and visitors can be aware of what’s happening and where, offering greater choice for people of all generations and backgrounds to participate across the district.
- Cultural activity is essential to a well-rounded education both in school and within the community, and so increased access to culture will give children, young people and others the creative skills to problem solve, express themselves and develop their self-esteem and confidence. (DCMS evidence shows that participation in arts, heritage and sport increases health and wellbeing through social mobility and enrichment of the lives of individuals).
- Investment in culture through supporting museums, libraries and other cultural resources has been shown to have positive economic outcomes for tourism and local businesses. The tourism and day-visitor potential of the district has not yet been realised and so increasing visitors and their economic spend to the district is one of the strategy’s priorities

This Cultural Strategy supports the Council and Community Plan outcomes through:

Stronger Communities:	Stronger Place:	Stronger Council:
Providing culture and leisure	Promoting retail, tourism and the visitor economy	Engaging with the changing needs of our customers

<p>Residents of all ages and backgrounds enjoy opportunities to participate in cultural and leisure activities which celebrate the character and heritage of our district.</p> <p>Enabling communities to support themselves Developing partnership working with the voluntary sector to help build capacity and resilience across the district, enabling communities to support themselves</p>	<p>A thriving sustainable tourism and visitor economy which seizes the opportunities of our towns and countryside, history and heritage, and enhances our businesses, communities and environment.</p>	<p>As our customer needs develop, we will change our approach to ensure we meet expectations and have services that are fit for customers</p> <p>Improving performance through innovation and new technology Adapting how we work and looking to future opportunities will help us provide high levels of customer service, improve access to services.</p>
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Links to other plans

National, regional and local priorities are accounted for and these are especially relevant to secure financial support from government and other agencies to help fund our work. But, it's important our strategy remains flexible and consultative to stay fresh and embrace new ideas, people and technologies. There will be an on-going review and continued consultation and evaluation to regularly inform the implementation of the strategy.

Where we are now

According to a 3-year Active People Survey commissioned by Arts Council England and published in 2016, 46% of the district's residents engage in arts activity as either participants or as audiences.

Our current cultural services have been strengthened by major capital developments funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England at the Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey. In terms of staff resources, the creation of a Community, Culture & Wellbeing Service for the Council has brought together a strong team with expertise to enable and support the cultural offer in the district.

The creation of the Visit Epping Forest Tourism Group has provided a platform to bring together and develop joint initiatives between the larger cultural venues and operators in the district. This is also supported by our annual Tourism Conference, which brings together a wide range of organisations including many linked to the cultural offer.

Alongside Epping Forest District Council's service there are many other cultural providers operating across the district. The Corporation of London manages Epping Forest and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority includes a large area of land and waterways across the western boundary of the district. The headquarters of the Scouts Association is at Gillwell Park and contains a historic archive of International importance. Essex County Council provides a network of public libraries across the district and hosts the National Jazz archive at Loughton library.

Other key cultural venues in the district include the Royal Gunpowder Mills in Waltham Abbey, North Weald Airfield and Museum, Epping and Ongar Railway, and Zinc Arts in Ongar.

Education providers with a focus on the cultural offer include the E15 Acting School and the New City College (formally Epping Forest College) in Loughton along with schools in the district offering a variety of cultural programmes.

Our district also has an extensive range of community and voluntary led cultural groups providing access to cultural engagement and this ranges from local history and archaeology societies, through to art clubs and galleries. There is an extensive network of dance groups, drama groups, cinema clubs and adult education provision by the U3A and adult education centers such as the Bedford House Community Association.

Cultural Strategy Survey

In developing this strategy, consultation was undertaken with a representative range of cultural organisations across the district and this included an online survey undertaken by residents and visitors to the district and face to face and with our community, culture & wellbeing partners.

Key findings of this survey were:

- The core age group of respondents were from the BeWell target market (working age adult market set out within EFDC's Health & Wellbeing Strategy)
- 82% of respondents had visited a museum or art gallery in the last six months
- Over half also visited a library
- Most people undertake cultural activities with family, friends or alone
- Over 91% of respondents want to find out more about heritage based activities
- 99% think culture is important
- 98% think culture plays a part in individual and community wellbeing

Culture and the Visitor Economy

As outlined in 'Nurturing Growth' the draft Economic Development Strategy for the district, the cultural offer plays a key role in the visitor economy. Worth more than £220 million it is a growing sector of the District's economy, increasing local opportunities for employment, particularly in entry level jobs, with 3,798 jobs supported.

A strong cultural offer is an important part of place making in creating vibrant and sustainable high streets. This has been recognized by government through the Heritage High Streets and Cultural Development Fund initiatives to support High Street resilience through supporting the creative industries and the cultural offer of our historic town centers.

The economic impact of culture is further recognised, with the economic contribution of UK museums, galleries, arts and libraries being £5.4billion in 2014. (DCMS The Culture White Paper, 2016).

Six Priorities for Cultural Growth

The following table outlines six priorities for cultural development within the District.

Cultural Priorities	How this will be achieved
Ensure that the Epping Forest District Council continues to celebrate and provide a sustainable strong cultural offer for current and future residents and visitors.	<p>Achieve the creation of a cultural hub in Waltham Abbey and encourage the growth of cultural clusters across the district to increase access to a wide range of cultural engagement opportunities.</p> <p>To ensure that culture opportunities can be taken forward by the Council's Local Plan and other development initiatives so that leisure activities are available for future residents.</p>

Champion increased partnership working between the Council and external partners to increase culture participation and access	<p>Create a framework to bring together existing cultural providers across the district</p> <p>Identify and Develop partnership funding to build capacity and pursue opportunities for investment into cultural programmes to support community wellbeing and economic development.</p> <p>Epping Forest District Council will actively seek to develop partnership projects across the district to increase awareness and access to the cultural offer.</p>
Cultural priorities are reflected in emerging plans and strategies	EFDC will identify funding opportunities and encourage a district wide strategic approach to maximize the role of culture in supporting community health and wellbeing and economic development.
The cultural offer in the district is inclusive and is accessible to all ages, cultures, communities and abilities	To introduce a district wide cultural festival to be held biannually at the EFD Museum and other venues across the district, Identify and support inclusive approaches to the cultural offer across the district.
The cultural offer is linked to education and well-being agendas	Expanding the success of the Council’s Health and Wellbeing networks by expanding and linking to cultural providers to maximize the role the local sector provides in supporting the district economy and community health and wellbeing. Develop the Epping Forest Creative Network to work with cultural education practitioners and providers to support access to a rounded and innovative cultural curriculum.
Support the economic prosperity of the district, including the visitor economy	Work to make the Epping Forest district more ‘visible’ regionally and nationally, trialing a branded district wide cultural festival weekend , which will combine heritage open days, exhibitions, art trail and advertised talks as a district package. Develop mechanisms to encourage and enable cultural groups to have a presence on the Visit Epping Forest website to promote their activities

How will we measure success?

We will design and implement different methodologies for collecting and evaluating information, but will consistently capture specific data throughout the life of the strategy including:

- Creative outputs and outcomes.
- Levels of investment.
- Levels of participation, audience reach and engagement.
- Press coverage, marketing and publicity.