

A DRAFT ARTS STRATEGY FOR BLACKPOOL 2008-2012

1.0 Introduction

This paper sets out a draft Arts Strategy for your consideration and comments.

2.0 The Vision for Blackpool

The New Blackpool is a place where the arts are at the heart of delivering a vibrant, prosperous town with a high quality of life.

3.0 Why do we need an Arts Strategy for Blackpool?

- 3.1 Blackpool is going through the most substantial period of change in terms of physical and spiritual regeneration, not seen on a similar scale since the turn of the 20th century, when it was establishing itself as the premier seaside resort for everyone in society to enjoy and escape from their everyday lives.
- 3.2 It was skilled creative artists, designers, performers and entrepreneurs of the day that shaped the past success of the resort and its outstanding and unique cultural heritage. Blackpool needs to provide the right conditions for creative individuals and companies of all kinds to be able to contribute their skills in producing the vibrant new town of the future. Communities that are able to participate in the arts contribute to strong, healthy neighbourhoods where everyday life has gone beyond just surviving.
- 3.3 Sir Peter Hall, Chair of ReBlackpool's board, clearly demonstrates in his celebrated text *'Cities in Civilisation'* that all successful cities in history are places where a strong arts and cultural scene provide an essential key ingredient.
- 3.4 Blackpool's last Arts and Cultural Strategy was produced nearly a decade ago in 1999 and many things have changed. For example, creative industries and its importance to the strength of our national and regional economies were only just starting to be recognised.
- 3.5 Blackpool in partnership with the authorities of Fylde and Wyre is about to commission an umbrella Cultural Strategy for the Fylde Coast. The arts will obviously be a key strand of this. If Blackpool has started thinking about its priorities in terms of the arts and bringing together networks of key partners, it will be able to contribute in a more structured way and get better value from the Cultural Strategy process.
- 3.6 The existence and active implementation of an up-to-date Arts Strategy is one of the factors that a local authority is measured on in terms of performance under the Arts Council's Arts Checklist process. If we demonstrate our commitment to the arts through a strategy with clear

objectives we are more likely to attract regional and national investment into the town.

4.0 Why is the Council taking the lead on this?

4.1 The Council, being at the strategic centre of all the regeneration plans for Blackpool, is best placed to bring the wide range of different partners and our communities together to work on achieving agreed key goals. The Arts Service provides a team of officers with professional experience of working within the arts sector. Collaboration between the public and private sector will be essential to the success of the Strategy. Partnership working is the key to sustainability in terms of investment and developing a wider understanding and respect for the role of the arts in Blackpool.

5.0 Our Ambition for the Arts – *The Importance of the Arts to Blackpool*

5.1 Our ambition for the arts in Blackpool should be bold; Blackpool's local communities, businesses and visitors should not be deprived of the unique and wide-ranging benefits that the arts can bring to the town.

5.2 The arts should matter to Blackpool because:

- It is now well documented that the arts are a major contributor to regeneration and can act as a catalyst for economic growth.

Example

Gateshead Council has gained a national and international profile through its groundbreaking work in public art and for delivering a project the size of the 'Angel of the North'. Art has helped them to reclaim derelict areas such as Gateshead Quays. The £800,000 investment in the Angel and the credibility gained through delivering this project has led to a £600 million legacy. Gateshead can now also boast about the BALTIC, a converted flour mill and the largest contemporary art space outside London (securing £46 million in funding); The Sage building, a world class music venue on the Quays (securing £70 million in funding); and the Gateshead Millenium Bridge, the world's first tilting bridge (securing £22 million in funding).

- Plans for the regeneration of Blackpool such as the People's Playground already identify the arts as a key player and places the arts and culture at the heart of such development.

Example

It is the artists on the design team of 'The People's Playground' that are creating the 'wow' factor in the scheme such as the giant lizards and sand wasps, the comedy carpet, and the 'Northern Lights' phenomena. The new headlands will provide large-scale and state of the art equipped outdoor performance spaces with the spectacular backdrop of the sea and stunning sunsets for music, dance and festival events.

- The arts have a key role to play in the vision and design of our communities. Imaginative and pioneering artists have often worked in collaboration with education, regeneration, health and social exclusion to powerful effect.

Example

The artist, Matt Baker, has worked with the community in the infamous Gorbals area of Glasgow for the last 8 years to produce a range of powerful permanent and temporary art works, helping the community come to terms with the physical transformation of their neighbourhood.

- The arts don't work in isolation and are no longer about providing the entertainment for an intellectual 'elite'.

Example

The DCMS has recently noted the importance of amateur arts activity nationally. Margaret Hodge, MP, said 'We know from our Taking Part survey that nearly 70% of people in England attend and participate in a huge range of art activities from book clubs to amateur orchestras, from lace making to ballet and ballroom dancing'. This is reflected locally by the number of advice and funding enquiries received by the Arts Service from local community arts organizations. The Grundy mailing list reflects the spread of the local population interested in visiting arts venues, with nearly 1,000 households requesting to be added to the mailing list in the last 2 years.

- The arts provide a powerful force in helping individuals and communities to express their ideas and feelings about the challenges they face and provide opportunities for self-expression and personal growth.

Example

Participants involved in the 'Distinct Voices, Diverse Lives' screen writing and film making training course run in Blackpool, noted professional and personal development, skill enhancement and creative satisfaction.

- Creativity has intrinsic value and should be nurtured and encouraged in everyone.

Example

Evaluation from participants and community leaders involved in recent arts development projects in Blackpool such as 'Exploring Creativity' with Grass Roots Volunteers at Holy Trinity in South Shore, and 'The Creative Play Pilot' with Sure Start Families, stressed the enjoyment and inspiration gained through creative activity led by an experienced professional artist.

- The arts are at the heart of all flourishing communities and the arts can help them celebrate cultural diversity and pride in their identity.

Example

The Nottinghill Carnival is a world-class event celebrating Afro-Caribbean culture. An economic impact study in 2002 demonstrated that the Carnival generated £93 million and supported the equivalent of

3,000 jobs in delivering the event over one bank-holiday weekend every year in August. The Asian 'Mela' events in Preston and Blackburn are becoming increasingly popular and an opportunity for the wider community to appreciate and enjoy Asian culture.

- The educational value of the arts in providing a vehicle for physical, intellectual, emotional and lifelong learning has now been demonstrated through initiatives such as Creative Partnerships.

Example

A recent evaluation of the Creative Partnerships programme commissioned by the DCMS reported that schools involved in the programme could show clear evidence of pupils improving their achievements in literacy, numeracy and information and technology. For a small but significant number of pupils a Creative Partnerships programme represented a fresh start. In particular, opportunities to work directly in the creative industries motivated pupils and inspired high aspirations for the future.

- It is now well documented that the arts in healthcare settings can support a holistic approach to healing which promotes recovery as well as improving physical and cultural access to healthy living.

Example

The 3 year Invest to Save Arts and Health research project based at Manchester Metropolitan University has evaluated a number of arts and health projects in the north west and has clear evidence of how the arts have contributed to people's sense of well-being.

- The arts can encourage greater appreciation of Blackpool and contribute to public awareness of its unique heritage.

Example

The John Gay photography exhibition, depicting Blackpool in the 1950's, held at The Grundy in 2006, was one of the highlights of the year with many visitors wanting to purchase a copy of the film footage also on display.

- The arts play an important role in the national and local economy.

Example

Nationally, the creative industries outperform traditional sectors of the economy and are worth about 8% to the UK's Gross Domestic Product rate of 9% i.e. significantly more than the economy as a whole (currently running around 1%). In the North West the sector accounts for 5% of employment in the region, with 29% growth from 1995 to 2002 and a further 18% growth projected to 2010. The creative and digital sector in the North West is the largest outside London and the South East.

6.0 A Definition of the Arts

- 6.1 There is no definitive definition for the arts but a common definition is as follows:

that it includes but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance and 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 and 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.

- 6.2 The Arts Council of England supports all of the above as well as encouraging experimental and new practice in the arts in such areas as combined arts, carnival, and new media.

7.0 Arts Strategy Outline

- 7.1 An outline Strategy is presented below.

8.0 Strategic Context

8.1 National Strategic Context

- 8.1.1 The Department of Culture Media and Sport is the main relevant government department for producing national policy and funding streams for the arts. The relevant government agency that Blackpool Council works with to develop the arts in the town is the Arts Council of England. Arts development is not a statutory function of local government. However, the Government through research and publications recognises and strongly advocates the importance of arts and culture in delivering successful regeneration of our towns and cities i.e. DCMS publication '*Culture at the Heart of Regeneration*', June 2004.
- 8.1.2 The Arts Council is awaiting the outcome of the Government spending review and will find out in the autumn how much funding it can expect for 2008-2011. It will be a tight spending round, with many pressures on public expenditure.
- 8.1.3 Recent national research demonstrates that the arts are more popular than ever and attendance is at a 10 year high, with 76% of adults attending or participating in the arts. Along with the more established arts, carnival, street arts, circus, craft exhibitions and live music have all seen greater audiences.
- 8.1.4 During 2006-2008 ACE has launched a public value enquiry on the arts, the outcome of which will inform what they prioritise and what services they will offer in the future. ACE has also reviewed their partnership working arrangements with local authorities and from 2008 will be prioritising certain places for investment and support rather than spreading their investment across all authorities. Within the sub region

of Lancashire, East Lancashire and Blackpool are key places for ACE in terms of support.

8.2 North West Strategic Context

- 8.2.1 The key regional organisations that Blackpool works with in terms of the arts are the Arts Council of England North West; Government Office North West; North West Development Agency; Culture Northwest; and the North West Cultural Observatory.
- 8.2.2 Key North West plans that Blackpool needs to align with are: The Cultural Strategy for englandsnorthwest, July 2001 and Northwest Development Agency's Regional Economic Strategy 2006. The arts in Blackpool can and are playing a major role in contributing to the Economic Strategy's following key objectives: developing culture and image; developing the sense of community; improving the environment by providing a quality visitor experience and a quality physical environment; and investing in the creative industries as a growth sector.
- 8.2.3 This draft Arts Strategy has also taken into consideration ACENW's agenda for the arts in the North West (2006-2008) that has the following key themes: taking part in the arts; taking part through the creative use of technology; an action plan to increase attendance and participation from target groups such as economically disadvantaged communities; children and young people; the creative economy; vibrant communities; internationalism; and celebrating diversity.

8.3 Blackpool Strategic Context

- 8.3.1 The arts have a major role to play in contributing to the successful delivery of Blackpool's Masterplan, '*New Horizons*' to transform the town as a quality place to live in and visit and the strategic projects outlined in the recently produced Taskforce Paper. An Arts Strategy will ensure that this contribution is focussed and that the arts sector has a clear action plan to deliver on.
- 8.3.2 There is work to be done in terms of advocacy and integrating the arts into the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and the delivery of the key priorities set out in the Local Area Agreement. In the future, the Arts Council of England's funding is likely to be more clearly linked to LAA outcomes.
- 8.3.3 Blackpool's recently launched Visitor Economy Strategy makes reference for the need to embrace a 'Blackpool as One' philosophy. This approach will ensure the arts and cultural offer are equally valued and promoted by the town. The Arts Strategy can also ensure arts and culture is supporting the delivery of other key elements of this strategy including: Blackpool and its enduring brand strength by ensuring innovative arts programmes are integrated into the Keeping Blackpool

Alive festivals programme; surprising and delighting visitors; and investing in enterprise with the creative industries being a key area for investment.

8.4 Key Factors Affecting the Strategy

Some factors are likely to have a critical impact particularly in the short term. These include the following:

8.4.1 Public Expenditure Constraints

The development of this strategy is taking place at a time of continued government constraint on public expenditure. The Arts Strategy therefore should seek to achieve influence and financial leverage so that Blackpool can develop its role in supporting the arts without the prospect of significant additional funding to support new policy initiatives; it therefore places great emphasis on the development of partnerships and collaborations.

8.4.2 Impact of the National Lottery

The National Lottery, introduced in 1994, has led to the availability of new money for cultural projects through funding for arts, heritage and a range of 'good' causes. The Lottery represents a major opportunity to attract significant investment for Blackpool. However, the impact of the Government top slicing the various lottery programmes to provide support for the Olympics, being hosted in London in 2012, is now starting to affect the amount of available lottery funding for the arts.

8.4.3 Changes in the Practice and Consumption of the Arts

The Strategy should acknowledge that the way in which people relate to the arts is changing, due partly to social and economic changes and also to changes in culture, many of which are driven by technology. Proposals should therefore recognize the growing importance of the media and broadcasting sectors, the emerging potential of the Internet and other multi-media to create new methods of working in or accessing the arts.

9.0 SWOT Analysis

9.1 Strengths

New ambitious and growing Arts Service within Council

Grundy – recognised as an important player in the tourism package for Blackpool; delivering strong contemporary and historical exhibition programme; increasing reputation within the museum and gallery sector nationally. Also has strong relationship with Blackpool and Fylde College. Record of successful education projects with schools and recognised as a beacon of good practice with MLA.

Great Promenade Show – seen as exemplar public art scheme regionally and nationally; attracts wide local and external audiences; has provided the

quintessential new icon for Blackpool in the world's largest mirror ball and an image that is used constantly to demonstrate Blackpool's rising new star.

Amateur arts activity

Royal Ballet Company working with Bispham High School Arts College in Blackpool

Private sector dance and theatre schools

Local Music promoters, venues and bands i.e. established Summer Days Festival; and strong School Music Service

The Grand Theatre has a long history of strong support from its community as an important cultural centre

Building up of Youth Arts Award infrastructure

Networking Group in existence for Schools promoting the Arts.

9.2 Weaknesses

Audience Profile attending and participating in the arts i.e. age of audiences accessing venues such as The Grand; need for wider promotion and audience development

Lack of community arts infrastructure and history of community arts practice within neighbourhoods

Gaps in the provision of bespoke studio space for artists and craftspeople; dedicated education space at the Grundy; and community arts workshop space.

No art in the public realm specialist based within the planning department.

Blackpool has got to 'catch-up' with sub-regional competitors such as Preston, Lancaster and Blackburn in terms of developing its arts infrastructure.

Lack of co-ordination and joint-working within the arts sector in Blackpool.

9.3 Opportunities

Commissioning of a cultural strategy for the Fylde Coast

Creative Partnerships coming to Blackpool

Developing collaborations with Fylde and Wyre Councils

Potential to develop the Central Library site into bespoke arts education and community arts space and studios spaces for individual artists to complement Grundy as an option if new Central Library project goes ahead.

LEGI development of Lefton's building as a creative industries incubator space and investment in a dedicated Creative Industries Development Officer for Blackpool

Blackpool Museum of Contemporary Art – raising the profile of Blackpool as a venue on the international arts scene and strong enthusiasm from international artists to work in Blackpool

Tourism's Keeping Blackpool Alive, 365 programme

Building Schools for the Future coming to Blackpool

Council's New Arts and Health Development Officer post working in collaboration with the PCT

The People's Playground project for the central promenade

Grants for the Arts investment in a 2 year community arts programme with the seafront wards

Blackpool and Fylde College – more joint working; nurturing creative talent and encouraging young creative individuals to stay in the town

For artists to contribute to physical regeneration projects such as St. John's Precinct and the Talbot Gateway.

New Illuminations Degree course at Blackpool and Fylde College; Festival of Light projects with the Arts Service such as the illuminated art car parade event

Extended Schools agenda developing

Review of Grand Theatre

Possibility of Theatre Museum coming to Blackpool – joint working with Heritage sector

Offer for Blackpool to host 'Ghost Train' by Marisa Carnesky – like a fairground ride it features state of the art illusions, interactive digital media and haunting original soundtracks.

To establish a new community arts focussed organisation like Action Factory or Prescap.

9.4 Threats

Local Art Societies not attracting new younger members.

Lack of affordable venues in the town centre for the amateur groups to use and lack of display areas for community art.

Limited capacity and resources within arts sector.

Regeneration being delivered without considering the benefits of involving the arts and investing regeneration resources.

Schools being too fixed on national curriculum outputs to engage in arts/creative learning and new cultural experiences for their pupils.

Private sector does not want to engage with the public sector for the wider good of the town.

Complacency.

10.0 Key Themes for the Arts Strategy

10.1.1 A draft list of key themes with proposed actions and lead partners has been produced for wide consultation. The key themes suggested have been influenced by:

- The present perceived needs of Blackpool's arts sector;
- The opportunities currently presented through the regeneration plans for Blackpool with town centre redevelopment, housing renewal, and investment in community development;
- The national, regional, and sub-regional cultural, economic and social agendas and priorities i.e. the need to link to our Local Area Agreement themes and targets to access wider resources for the arts and to integrate arts development into priority mainstream areas.

The success of delivering on any of the key themes will be affected by partners willing to work together and capacity in terms of people and funding.

10.2 Theme 1: Strong and Vibrant Communities

Objective: to ensure the arts are playing a key role in developing strong and vibrant communities in Blackpool

Potential Actions	Potential Lead Partners
Identify and work with community groups to access funding and arts professionals with skills to deliver high quality projects.	BC Arts Service, Neighbourhood and Communities Team, and Voluntary Sector.
Use the Grants for the Arts funded Regeneration Arts Programme as a showcase for best practice in community arts to disseminate information on how to set up a project.	BC Arts Service with ACE and participating artists, arts organisations and community groups.
Increase access to information about funding opportunities for the arts through Council website; one to one surgeries and distribution of information to servicing organisations.	BC Arts Service with ACE
Develop the Creative Partnerships model in Blackpool's schools.	BC Children's Services with Arts Service and ACE
Undertake audit of training needs for Blackpool artists interested in undertaking community projects and explore practical	BC Arts Service with Blackpool and Fylde College and Lancashire Artists Network

ways of developing their skills.	
Work with Blackpool and Fylde College to introduce undergraduates through their professional development programme to working as community artists and making a living in Blackpool.	BC Arts Service with Blackpool and Fylde College
Develop the Youth Arts Award Scheme and the Artsmark Scheme for Schools in Blackpool as beacons of excellence.	BC Arts Service, Children's Services, ACE, Schools and wide range of other partners.
Grundy to build on work with Blackpool and Fylde College and the Open exhibition extending across the Fylde coast	Grundy with Fylde and Wyre BC and B & F College
Build Theatre Liaison Group across the Fylde coast to maximise potential from visiting companies and increasing audiences	BC Arts Service, Fylde and Wyre BC, Grand Theatre

10.3 Theme 2: Healthier Communities

Objective: for the arts to be an integral part of healthcare provision in Blackpool.

Potential Actions	Potential Partners
Review Arts and Health Officer role and impact at end of year one (June 2008) with a view to growing and sustaining the Arts on Prescription model.	BC Arts Service with Blackpool PCT
Approach contractors delivering major PCT new buildings programme in Bispham, South Shore and Whitegate Drive about involving artists in shaping the look and design of the buildings.	BC Arts Service with commissioning organisation Blackpool PCT; artists and local communities.
Support community arts projects where the arts are a tool for learning in terms of healthy lifestyles and well-being.	BC Arts Service, Neighbourhood and Communities Team, Youth Service, Children's Services, Community Learning Local Strategic Partnership through Local Area Agreement
Work with Parks Development Team on programme of artists' residencies to encourage more community use of their green spaces.	BC Arts Service with Parks and Heritage Services
Build Dance Development initiative across Fylde Coast applying learning from BOPS initiative	BC Arts Service with Fylde and Wyre BC, County and ACE

10.4 Theme 3: Creative Economy

Objective: to provide a comprehensive, quality infrastructure that nurtures and supports the growth of the creative industries sector in Blackpool.

Potential Actions	Potential Lead Partners
Commission creative industries strategy and action plan for Blackpool	BC Economic Development with Arts Service and Creative Lancashire
Review Blackpool's partnership with Creative Lancashire	BC Economic Development with Arts Service with Creative Lancashire
Continue and improve the Sizzle Creative	BC Economic Development with Arts Service

Industries network for the businesses and strengthen the creative industries forum for key Blackpool players involved in servicing and developing the creative industries	and Blackpool & Fylde College
Monitor and evaluate impact of Lefton's incubator space for digital businesses and disseminate learning	BC Economic Development with Arts Service
Explore ways of maximising the benefits to the creative industries in Blackpool by working with B & F College, University of Lancaster and UCLAN to access financial resources and world-class expertise	BC Economic Development with Universities and College
Bring 'Make Me' designer maker programme to Blackpool working with the Design Initiative from the north west	BC Arts Service, Economic Development, Private Sector, Design Initiative

10.5 Theme 4: The Visitor Economy

Objective: to ensure the value and power of the arts in attracting consumers is understood and that the arts are part of creating a stronger visitor economy for the town.

Potential Actions	Potential Lead Partners
Explore the idea of Blackpool delivering a contemporary art Biennale i.e. Venice and Liverpool, Beaufort in Belgium	Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool Museum of Contemporary Art, ACE, Beaufort Biennale, NWDA
Secure funding and work up delivery plan to host Marisa Carnesky's 'Ghost Train'	BC Arts and Heritage Services, Tourism, Economic Development, Blackpool and Fylde College ACE and NWDA
Explore and pilot the delivery of a high quality arts and crafts market in the town centre of Blackpool.	BIDS with BC Arts Service
Support the Grand Theatre in implementing the action plan set out in the business review of 2007	BC Arts Service, Grand Theatre, ACE
Commission an economic impact study of cultural tourism on the Fylde Coast	Fylde Cultural Consortium
Ensure economic impact of culture and arts tourism is evaluated through the Keeping Blackpool Alive impact study work	BC Culture and Communities with Tourism and NWDA
Explore potential for developing a cultural exchange programme with EU partners and accessing EU funding with a focus on the theme of circus and reinventing coastal heritage to attract the 21 st century visitor	BC with EU partners, NWDA, ACE
If the Theatre Museum goes forward the arts sector will prioritise putting live performance at the heart of the development	BC Arts and Heritage Service, performing arts sector

10.6 Theme 5: Place-making and the Public Realm

Objective: to ensure the arts are contributing to the physical regeneration of the town by helping to shape the identity of new places and spaces.

Potential Actions	Potential Lead Partners
Prepare a public art policy to guide commissioning practice across Blackpool and explore potential of appointing a public art specialist within the Council.	BC Arts Service with Planning and ReBlackpool
Host a major national place-making conference focussed on the regeneration of coastal resorts to attract local authorities, developers, designers and artists from across the country.	BC Arts and Heritage Services with ACE, NWDA and Ixia
Explore the opportunities for artists to be involved in all key master plan projects and practically how these opportunities would be delivered and managed i.e. Talbot Gateway	ReBlackpool with BC Arts Service, Planning and developers
Ensure the cost and practical delivery of maintenance is built into any commissioning programme.	BC with ReBlackpool and developers
Work towards artists being involved in the Building Schools for the Future programme learning from models such as Manchester	BC Children's Service with Arts Service and ACE
Deliver the People's Playground successfully	ReBlackpool with BC, and LDA
Explore new ways of involving guest designers and artists in the illuminations building on the success of Lawrence Llewellyn Bowen's commission.	BC Illuminations Dept with Arts Service, Economic Development, Blackpool and Fylde College and ACE

11.0 Implementation of the Arts Strategy and Monitoring

During the consultation period on the draft strategy we will look to identify key players who would bring different skills, experience and perspectives to overseeing the Strategy's delivery. An Arts Strategy Steering Group could potentially be established that clearly related to the proposed Fylde Coast Cultural Consortium.