

Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-2019

Rich heritage – great future

FOREWORD

“.....Running water is favourable for day dreams and a strong tidal river is the water of mine”

Charles Dickens 1812 - 1870 writing in the Uncommercial Traveller about the River Medway

Medway is a new place. Born in 1997 from Local Government Reorganisation but founded on the great history and cultural identity of the towns that make it, and named after its river that is its reason for being. The largest settlement outside of London in the South East of England, the River Medway winds through it and connects the individual elements; it is as central to the place today as it was in the times of Dickens and long before.

Upstream Rochester was founded by the Romans in the 1st century at the lowest crossing point. With its combination of Norman Castle, second oldest Cathedral in the land and traditional high street, its heritage defines its identity and thriving cultural offer centred on the 13th century heritage and numerous literary and Dickensian connections. It is the natural heart of one of the largest free event and festival programmes in the country.

Downstream is Chatham and its mighty Historic Dockyard, the most complete of the Age of Sail in the world, now a thriving maritime heritage-led cultural site, home to ships, boats, galleries and national collections of art and objects. Close by, Gillingham is gateway to world class sporting facilities at Medway Park and to one of the largest urban green spaces in the South East, the Great Lines Heritage Park, which provides a green lung and magnificent event opportunities.

Chatham itself is re-emerging as **Medway's** true centre. Focused on the river, enjoying unprecedented investment, it offers an opportunity to become the modern and youthful heart of Medway as it comes of age during the lifetime of this strategy.

However, investment, buildings and history do not make a vibrant **place**. It is people, communities and common purpose that create the most inspiring places. Large places, like Medway, are actually defined by the mix of diverse, traditional and new cultures where there is a commitment to work cohesively to ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. **Medway** is blessed with diverse communities, rich heritage, an outstanding natural environment and a cultural life that when encapsulated, should be celebrated as an asset to be proud of. This strategy commits to working together to maximise the value of the very special offer here.

This strategy is the culmination of a great partnership effort by those representatives of **our cultural life** who have come together with **Medway Council** to ensure that the abundance and diversity of cultural offering here is embedded at the heart of everything that happens.

Our Collective vision is that:

Medway is both a modern place but one with an identity, a heart and a soul that reflects the history, our communities and our people, whatever their interests. Our communities will be enriched and wellbeing enhanced through intellectual and physical engagement in cultural activity. In so doing it will also make us distinctive and attractive to visitors, placed firmly on the cultural map of the UK, and offering prosperity in every aspect of life.

Welcome from Cllr Howard Doe

Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Medway Council

Medway is a changing and vibrant place, with a rich history and an exciting future. It is the largest urban area in the southeast outside London and a national priority area for regeneration; the driving force behind this is our cultural offer.

From our magnificent historic buildings, proud naval heritage, award winning parks and green spaces to state of the art sporting facilities and more than 30 days of free festivals every year – our vibrant cultural scene defines Medway's identity, revitalises the hearts of our town centres and establishes a sense of pride in the Medway.

Our rich cultural offer also generates economic prosperity and employment opportunities through our higher and further education facilities and the growth of the creative and tourism industries – which in turn attracts new business, talent and investment to the area. It also brings many wellbeing benefits – by bringing our communities together and helping to tackle social isolation, as well as promoting healthier, more active lifestyles.

The Medway Cultural Partnership works together to preserve and develop all that makes Medway an attractive place to live, work, study and visit. It aims to encourage participation, to attract inward investment and support Medway's continued regeneration.

Much has been achieved in Medway since the previous Cultural Strategy was published in 2009. This next version sets out our plans for working together to build on those successes, to capitalise on some pivotal new developments on the horizon, and further transform Medway, promoting our vibrant cultural offer.

Welcome from Mark Little

Chair of the Cultural Partnership

I count myself a lucky person. This is for a number of reasons which include my family, my job, the friends and colleagues that I spend time with but also the view from my office window at The University for the Creative Arts on the top of the Fort Pitt hill overlooking the Medway. It's an extraordinary view. Not just because it is beautiful - and it is - but because it encompasses a panorama of history that is perhaps unrivalled in the British Isles. From the Norman splendour of the castle keep and cathedral, across the Chatham Lines to the historic dockyard where the keel of HMS Victory was laid, to Dickens youthful home, Eastgate House and the French Hospital and on to the gleaming modern buildings of Chatham quays and the various high tech start up companies nestled among those businesses with a longer pedigree - both the rich heritage and map of the future that characterise modern Medway are laid out before us. Medway is all of this - tradition and culture; future and community.

The Medway Cultural Strategy has been built in the recognition that culture, community, history and well being are all part of a dynamic and sustainable economy. The organisations, groups and individuals that have participated in the project are already engaged in building the future in Medway. This future embraces a culture of inclusion and adventure, of fun and seriousness, and of course, you.

This is a future that can't be built without you - I'm sure that you will find something that will stimulate, challenge and encourage on these pages - come and join us!

Medway, our place

Medway is a thriving place with a growing population of more than 260,000 people. It is a priority area for regeneration and is undergoing considerable transformation, with many developments underway and still more on the horizon.

With its a unique combination of rich history, a vibrant and buzzing cultural scene, and state of the art sporting, leisure and education facilities, Medway is an up-and-coming place to live, to work, to study and to visit.

Medway has:

- Fast transport links between the capital and the Channel ports, and frequent fast train services to London, linking Medway to St Pancras International in an average of 35 minutes and Ebbsfleet International in around 17 minutes

- More than 30 days of free festivals and over 650 events each year, more than any other area in the southeast
- A growing tourism sector currently worth £290 million – around 7% of the local economy - attracting 4 million visits a year and accounting for around 6000 jobs*
- The Historic Dockyard – where Nelson’s flagship HMS Victory was built and the world’s best-preserved dockyard and defences from the age of sail
- Universities at Medway bringing together four universities, and now home to 12,000 students
- MidKent College, the largest further education establishment in Kent, offering some of the best vocational training facilities in the country
- World-renowned connections with one of English literature’s greatest writers, Charles Dickens
- Heritage Rochester, with Britain’s second oldest cathedral, the tallest and finest Norman castle in the country and traditional high street
- Medway Park, an £11million regional centre of sporting excellence
- 7 green flag awarded parks and green spaces
- Successfully hosted national and international sporting events including the Modern Pentathlon World Cup, the Modern Pentathlon European Championships, the British Transplant Games and the Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup – as well as the first ever National Armed Forces Day.

* *Cambridge Economic Impact Study 2012*

Medway – our future

Medway is a place that is rooted in powerful history but also forward-focused and developing. Increasing investment and regeneration in Medway is already seeing a number of major developments come to fruition, and our cultural strategy will play a vital part in supporting further growth and inward investment.

Up to 3,500 jobs will be created through the Chatham Waters project, a new £650 million mixed-use development site which will include a hotel, 950 homes, 40,000 square metres of commercial space, a hotel and performance space at the 26 acre Chatham Docks site in Gillingham.

Medway already has excellent train links from the capital and Europe, and the new £26 million Rochester Rail Station provides an exciting opportunity to

create a sense of arrival including a performance space, while promoting all that the area has to offer visitors.

A little further afield, London Paramount is due to open at Swanscombe in 2019 following £2 billion of investment, with the creation of around 27,000 jobs and a predicted 15 million visitors a year. With its excellent transport links to the site, Medway is perfectly placed to cultivate the appropriate skills to fill the jobs that it will offer, and to create complementary hotel provision that will encourage more overnight visits to Medway and promote the area as a growing film and TV location.

The countdown to the Olympic Games in Rio is an important milestone in the continuation of Medway's Sporting Legacy. Much has already been achieved here following the success of the London Games, and we will continue to invest in new programmes to inspire people of all ages to enjoy an active lifestyle and provide a pathway for talented young people to develop and succeed in sport.

The River Medway is central not only to the area's history but also its regeneration. As well as uniting our communities, it is also an important resource that can be used to drive inward investment and regeneration for our area, and attract more visitors. For these reasons the River is at the heart of our plans to work together to unlock Medway's full potential – increasing connectivity between our tourist attractions, enabling more commercial and leisure use and supporting river taxis and pleasure craft.

We are proud of our connections with Charles Dickens and the fact that so many people, places and buildings here inspired so many of his great works. We aim to celebrate these connections even further, encompassing the rural areas around Medway which he loved so much, as well as developing events to acknowledge the legacy of his creativity. The expected development of Gad's Hill as an international visitor attraction will bring still further opportunities to attract visitors to the many places in Medway that inspired Dickens and to our twice-yearly Dickens festivals.

A number of major cultural projects will come to fruition during the next five years; among these are:

The completion of Hidden Treasures, Fresh Expressions at Rochester Cathedral, a £5.6million Heritage Lottery funded project to create an exhibition space within the medieval crypt, which will display a wealth of historical artefacts currently hidden from public view, including the Textus Roffensis, viewed by the British Library as a 'national-treasure'.

Eastgate House, Rochester's magnificent grade one listed townhouse will re-open to the public following a major £2 million Heritage Lottery Funded project to conserve the building for future generations and improve visitor access.

The completion of Command of the Oceans – an £8.75 million project which will showcase the story of the Historic Dockyard’s world-class naval and military history and extensively redevelop some of its earliest features.

The Country’s only Huguenot Heritage Centre will be established in Rochester, as a result of a £2m HLF funding scheme, to celebrate Medway’s rich cultural ties.

Medway will also mark a number of significant events and commemorations, including the anniversary of the Siege of Rochester Castle in 2015 and in 2017, Medway in Flames will be a series of major events commemorating the 1667 Dutch Raid on Upnor Castle, known as the Battle of Medway in Holland.

These landmark events will enable us to enhance our cultural offer even further, by providing exciting opportunities to take part, celebrating our heritage and attracting visitors to the area.

Our strategic priorities

This strategy continues to adopt the four strategic priorities set out in the 2009-14 Medway Cultural Strategy given their successful establishment and development, and fit with the Department for Culture, Media and Sports mission statement and priorities. Medway’s four Strategic Priorities are:

Strategic priority – Stewardship

Preserve, interpret and enhance Medway’s heritage, green spaces and public realm for the enjoyment and benefit of current and future generations.

Strategic priority – Engagement

Increase active engagement and satisfaction with cultural activities to increase quality of life, providing the essential place making for the significant regeneration that is taking place in Medway.

Strategic priority – Contributing to Economic Prosperity

Harness and foster the creative talent within Medway and maximise the opportunities the universities and further education, tourism, creative sector and cultural offer create for Medway’s economy.

Strategic priority – Health and Wellbeing

Increase active participation to address obesity, mental and spiritual health, promoting active minds, bodies and lifestyles and seeking to address social isolation.

The Medway Cultural Partnership

Artists

Arts Council

Canterbury Christchurch University

Chatham Historic Dockyard

English Heritage

French Hospital

Gillingham Football Club

Icon Theatre

Ideas Test

Kent Architecture Centre

King's Rochester

Medway Council

Nucleus Arts

Rochester Cathedral

Royal Engineers Museum

University for Creative Arts

University of Greenwich

University of Kent

STEWARDSHIP

Looking after our heritage, green spaces and public realm

Introduction

Medway's rich heritage, parks and green spaces help define the area as an attractive place to visit, live, work and study. They enhance our sense of wellbeing, help link us to our roots and underline our sense of cultural identity. They also contribute to the regeneration of our urban and rural areas, creating an attractive setting for modern life and attracting inward investment.

When residents were asked which elements of Medway's Cultural offer are most important to them, 71% of respondents cited parks and open spaces, and 58% cited historical buildings – while among 16-24 year-olds, 100% of respondents considered parks and green spaces to be the most important*.

Satisfaction with heritage and greenspaces remains consistently high and measured by the Tracker Survey, with results in the 80s% and 90s%.

Medway has secured over £30 million of investment in its major heritage sites and buildings during the past five years with significant investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund. As well as delivering on those projects, we will develop further plans to ensure that our heritage sites and green spaces are sustainable in the long term, and that the enormous benefits they bring can be enjoyed by residents and visitors for generations to come.

We will also continue to support Medway's communities to help people become more actively involved in the preservation, enhancement and understanding of their heritage, green spaces and public realm, so that these places become more resilient, well maintained, well visited, a source of community pride and an important contributor to the area's economic prosperity.

**Medway Citizens Panel 2014*

Our key achievements

- No.1 Smithery at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham – through a unique partnership between the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, the National Maritime Museum and the Imperial War Museum, this Scheduled Ancient Monument has been fully restored as a venue for world-class maritime collections previously not accessible to the public
- The first phase of the refurbishment of The Guildhall Museum in Rochester, one of the finest 17th century civic buildings in the county, through the Opening The Doors Project, with improved

access, new gallery, reception and the restoration of historic features.

- Green Flag (a stretching, national quality measure, similarly to Blue Flags for beaches) accreditation secured at 7 sites Riverside Country Park, Capstone Farm Country Park, The Vines, Hillyfields Community Park, Broomhill Park, Gillingham Park, and The Great Lines Heritage Park
- Over £3 million secured in play areas across Medway with over 60 play areas improved (out of 80) as part of ongoing rolling programme
- More than 54,000 volunteer hours secured in supporting our greenspaces and heritage sites. The number of people involved in volunteering through Friends groups increased by 59% between 2012 and 2014 **
- Secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a £2 million project to establish the UK's first Huguenot Heritage Centre within the Medway Visitor Information Centre complex.
- Secured funding of £8.75 million for the Command of the Oceans, a nationally significant scheme at the Historic Dockyard in Chatham (including £4.5m from Heritage Lottery Fund). The extensive scheme will secure the repair and preservation of a range of the Historic Dockyard's Scheduled Ancient Monuments and its 18th century Ship's Timbers archaeological find
- Secured Heritage Lottery funding of £1.2 million for the £2 million renovation and conservation project for Eastgate House in Rochester, a nationally significant Grade I listed house in the heart of Rochester High Street, built in the 16th century
- Secured funding of £5.6 million, including £3.55 million from Heritage Lottery Fund, for the Hidden Treasures Fresh Expressions project at Rochester Cathedral. The project which will create an exhibition space within the medieval crypt, enabling the display of a unique collection of historical artefacts currently hidden from public view.

***Medway tracker survey 2013/14*

Our ambitions

Our plans for further development and preservation of our heritage sites and green spaces include:

- Delivering Heritage Lottery Funded schemes for Eastgate House (£2million), Command of the Oceans scheme at the Dockyard (£8.75million), the Crypt project at the Rochester Cathedral (£5.6 million), Huguenot Heritage Centre (£2 million)
- Development of Eastgate House Gardens, along with Eastgate House and the Dickens Chalet, as a cultural quarter in Rochester for use by the whole community
- Command of the Heights – a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the Great Lines Heritage Park, including the reinstatement of the ditch at Chatham Riverside, forging greater connections with the River, linking to the Great Lines Heritage Park and supporting the development of a city square / public space
- Command of the Campaigns – a Heritage Lottery Funded bid to develop the libraries and archives of the Royal Engineers Museum
- Undertake the next significant phase of development for the Guildhall Museum increasing gallery space and enabling greater footfall
- Working with English Heritage, further develop the offer at Rochester Castle, increasing visitor numbers
- Developing a vision for the future of Temple Manor a 13th century house belonging to the Knights Templar within the Temple Waterfront regeneration proposals
- Establishing a new Family History Centre, enabling Medway's Archives to be relocated
- Continuing to promote Ranscombe Farm, described by David Bellamy OBE as "Medway's Miracle", to open up to new visitors
- Developing Upnor Castle which was built in 1559 as a gun fort on the orders of Queen Elizabeth I to protect her warships at anchor as part of wider regeneration proposals for the area
- Developing a strategy to unlock the potential of the Hoo Peninsula, incorporating the RSPB reserve, Cliffe Woods Country Park and Grain Coastal Park, given the area's significance as a SSSI site and internationally important wetlands.

ENGAGEMENT

Enhancing our quality of life, shaping the place where we live

Introduction

Medway offers a wide range of cultural activities, with more than 30 days of free festivals and 650 events every year – that's more than anywhere else in the South East outside London.

In addition to contributing to the local economy and helping to make Medway an attractive place to live, our cultural events and activities can help to revitalise the hearts of our communities and offer unlimited opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved, and to attract and nurture local talent.

The importance of cultural events to Medway residents is evident – with 81% believing it is important that the council financially supports cultural activities in Medway*, while customer satisfaction with Medway's events and festivals has increased steadily to 95%**.

Taking into account what people have told us about our services and the ambitions of the cultural partnership, we intend to increase awareness of Medway's cultural activities and events through a wider range of channels. We will also broaden our festivals and events offer still further to commemorate significant dates and anniversaries, develop opportunities for volunteers of all ages and backgrounds to get involved, and support creative talent, providing pathways to employment.

**Medway Citizens Panel 2014*

***Medway Tracker survey 2013/14*

Our key achievements

- Medway's outstanding festival offer has been enhanced through the addition of Under Siege, the River Festival, the English Festival, Armed Forces Day and the Medway Festival of Music. Our free festivals are now attended by more than 350,000 people each year
- Launched Medway's Community Hubs programme, leading the way in bolstering our town centres, by providing further investment in our libraries and increasing the range of services and activities available to residents in the hearts of their communities
- 222,000 people engaged in arts outreach programmes in 2013

- Delivered Medway's first Mela, a multi-cultural celebration of Medway
- Held Culture and Design Awards, celebrating the creative talent Medway has to offer.

Our ambitions

- Increasing awareness of our cultural offer and activities through a Medway-wide online calendar, increased use of social media, through the Big Screen in Chatham town centre, and high visibility screens in libraries, community hubs, the Visitor Information Centre and at our major events and festivals. Maximising the potential free wifi / website access will bring
- Continuing the Community Hub programme, with Strood Community Hub opening in early 2015 and a Neighbourhood Community Hub in Twydall
- Establishing a Cultural Quarter in Rochester around Eastgate House and Rochester Community Hub
- Further development of The Central Theatre to create improved street front presence in Chatham High Street and supporting the night time economy, as well as increasing engagement with the arts
- Encouraging greater use of the River – supporting the development of river taxis, piers, sailing and further developing the annual River Festival
- Continued development of the Creative People and Places Programme, supporting local creatives and communities to access funded opportunities to increase participation in the arts
- Continuing to promote culture and celebrate success through the Medway Culture, Design and Tourism Awards
- Broadening our festivals and events offer further to commemorate significant dates and anniversaries:
 - 2015: 800 years since the signing of Magna Carta and the Siege of Rochester Castle, and the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo
 - 2017: Medway in Flames: events commemorating 350 years since the Dutch Raid on Upnor Castle

- Establish a 'youth offer' pulling together the wide range of activities for young people to enjoy, particularly over the summer, including free swimming for under 16s, workshops, sports camps, Under Siege and Rock School
- Continue our volunteering programme to increase engagement with greenspaces, heritage and libraries, contributing to social inclusion.

CONTRIBUTING TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Supporting the creative sector and tourism industry

Introduction

Medway is at the heart of a rapidly growing business innovation corridor between London and continental Europe. It is a growth city, developing strategically located regeneration sites for employment and housing.

The cultural, tourism and creative industries are among the fastest growing in the country, and are major drivers in attracting new talent to the area and fuelling the local economy. In Medway the creative and tourism sectors combined account for 15% of the local economy. Tourism alone is now worth £290million and 4million visits per year, and around 6,000 jobs.

Medway has a flourishing higher education sector, a key contributor to Medway's Cultural Strategy. We are one of the few places nationally where there are four universities, and in MidKent College we have the largest further education facility in Kent.

We will continue to support Medway's economic development through further fostering the creative talent in Medway, supporting creative industries through provision of work and retail space, continuing to expand learning provision, encouraging graduates to study and work in Medway and helping to establish career pathways in the creative, tourism and leisure industries.

The national picture:

- Around a third of the 2 million jobs created in the UK since 2010 have been in tourism and hospitality
- Creative industries are outperforming all other sectors of the UK economy
- Employment in the creative industries sector has increased five times faster than the national average*
- Nationally, the creative economy accounted for 2.55 million jobs, or one out of every 12 jobs in the UK in 2012.

**figures released by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport*

Our key achievements

- Developed the Destination Management Plan (Tourism Strategy) 'Celebrating World Class Heritage' together with the Cathedral, Dockyard, Visit Kent and the industry through the Medway Tourism Association. The Plan sets out an action plan for the delivery of a range of key projects, which will enhance Medway's appeal as a visitor destination
- Launched the Explore Medway Tourism Bus – attracting more than 3000 passengers in its first year
- Established the Christmas Markets at Rochester Castle
- Supported the creative sector in Medway by facilitating the establishment of creative workspaces:
 - Project 161, Rochester; Kent's first co-working community and participatory workspace
 - Sun Pier House in Chatham, an arts and creative complex at the heart of plans to regenerate the High Street between Chatham and Rochester
 - Pop shop in Chatham High Street allowing local artists to display and sell their work as well as running workshops and business support programmes
- Nucleus Arts Riverside Creative Hub in Chatham
- Secured grant funding of £600,000 from The Coastal Communities Fund, for the Creative High Street project, which supports the development of creative industries based between Chatham Waterfront and Rochester Riverside
- Launched Recreate, a cross border project to support economic regeneration, development and job creation through creative enterprises, transforming vacant commercial and cultural spaces into a network of studios and workspaces for creative entrepreneurs, graduates and artists.
- Reinstated a landing pontoon and walkways at Sun Pier, providing better access to the pier and river, opening up possibilities for more river traffic and further unlocking development of the Chatham Waterfront and regeneration of the town centre.

Our ambitions

- Delivering against the Destination Management Plan; creating a more joined up visitor experience between key sites, developing the potential of the river, encouraging investment in visitor facilities and developing an 'attract and disperse' strategy to encourage longer day visits and short breaks
- Maximising the opportunities London Paramount will bring to Medway through increased visitor numbers, complementary hotel provision and building the skills locally to fill the employment opportunities that will be created. It is estimated that around 27,000 jobs will be created
- Promoting Medway as a growing film and TV location with a growing number of creative professionals, magnificent historic and natural backdrops, and easy transport links to the capital
- Further celebrating our Dickens connections in the wider Medway and rural areas, establishing 'Dickens Country'
- Delivery of the Chatham Waters project on 26 acres of land at Chatham Docks. Up to 3,500 jobs to be created through a new £650 million mixed-use development site which will include retail units, exhibition, performance and event space designed to attract many new visitors to Chatham and benefit the wider area.
- Establishing a "city centre" area around Chatham Waterfront and supporting the town's evening economy with projects including improved lighting around historic buildings such as The Brook Theatre and St Johns Church, development of the frontage of The Central Theatre and the installation of a big screen to support events at Chatham Waterfront
- Establishing a Creative Quarter around Sun Pier House, supporting professional development for creative practitioners and students
- Conversion of the redundant railway arches at Bath Hard Lane in Chatham through funding from Coastal Communities Fund. This will provide creative workspaces, improve access to Sun Pier House and provide training support for unemployed people through an Art for Work Programme, aiming to create 134 jobs and 240 training places over two years
- Maximising the opportunities the new Rochester railway station will bring to Medway and creating a sense of arrival for visitors, including a performance space at the station

- Further support our universities and MidKent College to grow, attract and retain students, helping to establish career pathways in key industries
- Securing further investment in our piers to provide easy access to the waterfront and increase connectivity for commercial and tourism use, including river taxis, waterbus and tourist boat services.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Taking part, staying active, keeping well.

Introduction

All aspects of culture can have a long-term beneficial impact on health and wellbeing, from participation in sporting and leisure activities to engagement with heritage, arts, festivals, theatres and libraries.

Culture and leisure activities are widely recognised as having an important role to play in helping to tackle the health burden created by unhealthy lifestyles and physical inactivity.

Adult social care is facing major challenges with increasing numbers of people needing support with conditions that seriously reduce their quality of life. Taking part in accessible, affordable cultural activities or contributing as a volunteer can play a major role in supporting independent living and combating loneliness – which is recognised as a factor in accelerating cognitive decline and memory problems.

Medway has a higher percentage of public sports facilities than anywhere else in the southeast*, and a varied programme of cultural activities enjoyed by people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Participation in sport in Medway has continued to rise steadily to 33.5% in 2012/13 – the highest for five years**. In fact, almost three quarters of Medway residents now enjoy physical activity, and just over half want to get more active. The vast majority (85%) of residents who use a leisure centre use one inside Medway. ***

We aim to work closely with the public health sector, voluntary groups and all our cultural providers to offer even more opportunities to as many people as possible to take part and stay involved in enjoyable cultural activities throughout their lives.

**Active Places Power 2014*

***Active People Survey 2012/13*

***Medway Citizens Panel 2014*

Our key achievements (2009-2014)

- Medway Park, our regional centre of sporting excellence, received more than 750,000 visits in 2013

- Hosted the Modern Pentathlon World Cup, Modern Pentathlon European Championships, the British Transplant Games and Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup
- Launched the Medway Sporting Academy, a groundbreaking scheme that identifies and nurtures Medway's most talented young sports people and the Mini Youth Games, our flagship inter-schools sports programme
- Launched Medway's Sporting Legacy Programme, capitalising on the success of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games by investing in further development at Medway Park and delivering a wide range of new projects, events and activities to inspire people of all ages and abilities to enjoy healthy lifestyles. This includes:
 - The annual Medway Festival of Sport featuring more than 50 events across 70 days, from community, school and mass participation events to national and sporting events. The festival involves around 12,000 local people and more than 100 volunteers.
 - The On Your Marks programme designed specifically for newcomers and those returning to exercise, aimed at breaking down barriers and supporting community participation in sport.
 - The Road to Rio Schools programme created to benefit all primary school children, using sport, and specifically the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic games to develop educational opportunities for children.
 - Free swimming for under 11s and over 60s, extended to under-16s in 2014. The scheme is now enjoyed by more than 100,000 people a year.
- More than 120 volunteers signed up to the Medway Sporting Ambassadors programme, providing opportunities for people of all ages play a vital role in the delivery of sports projects and access sports specific grants and training
- Entered into a groundbreaking partnership arrangement with King's Rochester over the running of the Stirling Centre, a £500,000 investment that has now generated 85% community use. The initiative has been described by the Sports Minister Helen Grant as "trailblazing"
- Launch of Arts Inclusive, an innovative programme delivered by Nucleus Arts in collaboration with Medway's Public Health Team. Aimed at encouraging people at risk of social exclusion to take part in motivational and creative art workshops. Almost 100 people have benefited from taking part in these activities including people with

disabilities, young people at risk of offending and those being home schooled.

- Launch of EDNA (energise, dance, nourish, art), a pilot project funded by NKLAAP and Kent County Council to evaluate the benefits dance and arts activities can have on health and wellbeing for older people in Medway and Gravesham, resulting in participants reporting physical improvement with improved quality of life and social benefits.
- Friends Groups actively involved in supporting and maintaining our green spaces, heritage sites and public realm, including Medway Archives, The Friends of Eastgate House, The Friends of the Guildhall Museum, Libraries groups and our sporting ambassadors, helping to address social isolation.

Our ambitions

- Further delivery of the Sporting Legacy programme
- Maximising the opportunities the Olympic Games in Rio 2016 will bring for Medway
- Strood Sports Centre refurbishment worth £1.9million
- Continue with our mass participation events – Medway Mile, Big Splash and Big Ride and deliver against £2.5 million of funding for improved cycling routes and infrastructure heralding a major infrastructure and promotion for cycling in Medway
- Further initiatives to help combat social isolation. Arts Development Team work in collaboration with Medway's Public Health Team
- Build on Art Inclusive project and further develop EDNA project
- As part of the Medway Festival of Music, seek to promote and develop singing and choirs
- Work with the Halpern Foundation and Sydney De Haan Foundation to deliver a research project to explore the value of music and the arts in improving health and wellbeing among groups at risk of social isolation
- Develop a programme of Park Sports, offering a range of physical activities across our greenspaces.