

MEDWAY'S CULTURAL STRATEGY

2014-2019





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M E D W A Y O U R P L A C E

Culture is important to Medway for many reasons.

It shapes the collective identity of our five towns and sets Medway apart as an attractive and dynamic place to live, work, study and visit – a place that is drawing growing interest regionally, nationally and internationally.

Culture makes our place unique. Where else will you find such a vibrant combination of rich history, proud naval heritage, world-renowned connections with Charles Dickens, inspiring green spaces, state-of-the-art education and sporting facilities, a buzzing arts scene, and more than 30 days of free festivals and events every year – and all within easy reach of the capital and the gateways to Europe?

Culture creates opportunities. A thriving network of creative communities have their roots deep in the heart of Medway, and many more are making it their home, from a vast student population pursuing careers in the cultural sector to artists, musicians, actors, sportspeople, volunteers and ambassadors, innovators and educators.

It also helps to improve wellbeing and quality of life, bringing our communities together and helping to tackle social isolation - as well as promoting healthier, more active lifestyles.

But culture isn't just a "nice to have". It also brings hard-edged economic benefits. The creative and tourism sectors account for around 15% of Medway's economy and both are flourishing here, creating a magnet for attracting new business and inward investment.

Medway is the largest urban area in the southeast outside of London and a national priority area for regeneration. Our cultural offer is driving that regeneration forward.

Medway's Cultural Strategy sets out our plans to work together to build on our successes, to capitalise on some pivotal new developments on the horizon, and further transform Medway as the destination for culture, heritage, sport and tourism.

It aims to be a catalyst for change, developed by Medway's Cultural Partnership, but very much supported by extensive research and consultation with our residents and creative communities.



Councillor Howard Doe
Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Medway Council

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Stewardship

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

Engagement

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

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.

Wellbeing

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



MEDWAY'S CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

From heritage to sport, art, design, theatre and music, Medway's Cultural Partnership represents the privileged custodians that are working to safeguard and grow the richness and intensity that is the experience of Medway.

Fashion designers, digital entrepreneurs, artists, craftspeople, dramatists, musicians, sportsmen and women, historians and poets all contribute among so many others to making Medway one of the liveliest and most exciting cultural hotspots in the UK and consequently an extraordinary place to live and work.

From the Norman splendour of the castle keep and cathedral, across the Great Lines to the Historic Dockyard where the keel of HMS Victory was laid, to Dickens' youthful home and on to the gleaming modern buildings of Chatham quays and the high tech start up companies nestled among those businesses with a longer pedigree - Medway is all of this - tradition and culture; future and community.

Medway's Cultural Strategy has been built by the Partnership working closely with Medway Council 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!



Mark Little
Chair of Medway's Cultural Partnership
Executive Dean, UCA Rochester





STEWARDSHIP



LOOKING AFTER OUR HERITAGE, GREEN SPACES AND PUBLIC REALM

Our key achievements

- No.1 Smithery at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham
- Refurbishment of The Guildhall Museum in Rochester
- Green Flag accreditation secured at 7 sites
- More than £3 million invested in play areas across Medway
- More than 54,000 volunteer hours secured in supporting our greenspaces and heritage sites.
- Secured Heritage Lottery Funding for a £1.5 million project to establish the UK's first Huguenot Museum
- Secured total funding of £8.75 million for the Command of the Oceans scheme at the Historic Dockyard in Chatham
- Secured Heritage Lottery Funding for a £2 million project for the renovation and conservation of Eastgate House in Rochester
- Secured total funding of £5.6 million for the Hidden Treasures Fresh Expressions project at Rochester Cathedral.



OUR AMBITIONS

- Delivering Heritage Lottery Funded schemes for Eastgate House (£2million), Command of the Oceans at the Dockyard (£8.75million), the Crypt project at Rochester Cathedral (£5.6 million), Huguenot Museum (£1.5m)
- Development of Eastgate House Gardens, along with Eastgate House and the Dickens Chalet
- 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
- Relocating Medway's Archives to widen and enhance the offer
- Continuing to promote Ranscombe Farm, described by David Bellamy OBE as "Medway's Miracle", to open up to new visitors
- Developing Upnor Castle, built in 1559 as a gun fort on the orders of Queen Elizabeth I to protect her warships at anchor, as part of the wider regeneration proposals for the area
- Developing a strategy to unlock the potential of the Hoo Peninsula, together with 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

Our key achievements

- More than 30 days of free festivals and events every year, one of the largest free festivals and events programmes in the country
- Our free festivals are now attended by more than 350,000 people each year
- Medway's Community Hubs programme – investing in our libraries and town centres
- 222,000 people engaged in arts outreach programmes each year
- Delivered Medway's first Mela, a multi-cultural celebration of Medway
- Hosted Culture and Design Awards, celebrating the creative talent Medway has to offer
- Hosted the country's first ever National Armed Forces Day.



OUR AMBITIONS

- Increasing awareness of cultural activities across Medway online, through increased use of social media, the Big Screen in Chatham town centre, and through high visibility screens in libraries, community hubs, the Visitor Information Centre and at our major events and festivals. Maximise the potential free wifi 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 support the night time economy, and increase 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 promotion of Ideas Test, supporting local creatives and communities to access funded opportunities to increase participation in the arts
- Continue to promote culture and celebrate success through the Medway Culture, Design and Tourism Awards
- Broadening our festivals and events offer to commemorate significant anniversaries, including:
 - 2015: 800 years since the sealing of Magna Carta and the Siege of Rochester Castle, and the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo
 - 2017: Medway in Flames: commemorating 350 years since the Dutch Raid on Upnor Castle
- Establish a 'youth offer', pulling together the wide range of activities offered for young people, including free swimming for under 16s, workshops, sports camps, Under Siege and opportunities for funded projects offered through Ideas Test
- Continue our volunteering programmes to increase engagement with greenspaces, heritage and libraries, contributing to social inclusion.





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PROSPERITY

SUPPORTING THE CREATIVE SECTOR AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

Our key achievements

- Development of the Destination Management Plan (Tourism Strategy) 'Celebrating World Class Heritage'
- Launched the Explore Medway Tourism Bus – attracting more than 3000 passengers in its first year
- Launched the Dickens Country Experience bus tour, which sold out in its first season
- Established the Christmas Markets at Rochester Castle
- Workspaces established to support for Medway's creative sector
- Sun Pier House in Chatham, at the heart of regeneration plans for the High Street between Chatham and Rochester
- Supported the pop up shop in Chatham High Street – a showcase for local artists and facility for workshops and business support programmes
- Supported Nucleus Arts Creative Hub in Chatham
- Supported Recreate, a cross border project to support economic regeneration, development and job creation through creative enterprises
- Reinstatement of a landing pontoon and walkways at Sun Pier, providing better access to the pier and river.



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 in 2020, 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'
- Supporting the delivery of the Chatham Waters project 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 of historic buildings such as The Brook Theatre and St John's Church
- Establishing a Creative Quarter around Sun Pier House, supporting professional development for creative practitioners and students, and providing workspace and exhibition opportunities
- 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.





WELLBEING



TAKING PART, STAYING ACTIVE, KEEPING WELL

Our key achievements

- 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 Medway's Sporting Legacy Programme, capitalising on the successes of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- The annual Medway Festival of Sport featuring more than 60 events across 70 days
- Free swimming for under 16s and over 60s - now enjoyed by more than 100,000 people a year
- Groundbreaking partnership arrangement with King's School Rochester over the running of the Stirling Centre, a £500,000 investment that has now generated 85% community use
- Launch of Arts Inclusive, delivered by Nucleus Arts - encouraging people at risk of social exclusion to take part in motivational and creative art workshops
- Launch of EDNA (energise, dance, nourish, art), a pilot project to evaluate the benefits dance and arts activities can have on health and wellbeing for older people
- Friends Groups actively involved in supporting and maintaining our green spaces, heritage sites and libraries.



OUR AMBITIONS

- Further delivery of the Sporting Legacy programme, maximising the opportunities the Olympic Games in Rio 2016 will bring for Medway
- £1.9 million refurbishment of Strood Sports Centre
- 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 advance for cycling in Medway
- Develop a programme of Park Sports, offering a range of physical activities across our greenspaces
- Further initiatives to help combat social isolation: Arts Development Team work in collaboration with Medway's Public Health Team and grass roots cultural organisations
- As part of the Medway Festival of Music, seek to promote and develop singing and choirs
- Work with the Sydney De Haan Foundation to deliver a research project to explore the value of culture, music and the arts in improving health and wellbeing among groups at risk of social isolation.





MEDWAY'S CULTURAL STRATEGY
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