

Hereford City of Culture 2021: bid summary document

Introduction

Hereford offers a remarkable opportunity to bring City of Culture to a truly rural city for the first time. Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP) is spearheading our cultural transformation, leading the City of Culture bid, and giving a voice to the hidden rural minority overshadowed by the national cultural focus on major urban centres.

We are currently at a critical point in Herefordshire, culturally, economically, and socially. The new university opening in 2019 will bring young people and much needed investment to Hereford, with an engineering and technology curriculum to complement Hereford College of Arts.

Our *Great Place* programme is enabling us to share cultural conversations across the whole community, particularly engaging with young people and hard to reach groups. A new Cultural Strategy provides a ten-year vision for culture, encompassing creative businesses, voluntary organisations and the wider community. The emerging Herefordshire Destination Plan gives us a blueprint for sustainable tourism, sharing the best of our beautiful countryside, and local food and drink. This is an unrepeatable moment in our cultural journey: Hereford is uniquely placed to be City of Culture 2021. Now is the time and we have #thewellyforit,

Our area

The City of Hereford is bidding on behalf of the whole of Herefordshire: it lies at the heart of the fourth most rural and sparsely populated county in England. The fundamental partnership with the market towns of Leominster, Ross on Wye, Kington, Bromyard and Ledbury can be traced back over many centuries. The population of Herefordshire is around 200,000, with 58,000 living in Hereford, 40,000 in the market towns, and the rest in dispersed communities. Whilst Hereford can be perceived as being remote, we do not consider ourselves isolated. One of our partner organisations, Hay Festival, is located in a town that famously sits astride the Welsh border.

Overall vision

Our vision is very simple:

“For Hereford and its intensely rural hinterland to be internationally recognised as a beacon for inspirational arts and culture and a county in which people of all backgrounds are proud to live, work and visit”

Impact

We are making great strides through HCP, coming together to lead the development of our City of Culture bid, the destination plan and other initiatives to link with partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors. Our new cultural strategy, being developed by Create Partnerships, has mapped our current cultural offer, and is providing an exciting ten-year blueprint.

Winning City of Culture will transform the fortunes of the whole county, not just the city at the heart of the bid: a city leading on behalf of towns, villages and hamlets, representing a new model of cultural regeneration suited to rural and small city environments. While NMiTE - Hereford's new University and the first university to be created in the UK for almost half a century - will be focused on Engineering and Technology, it is committed to a STEAM agenda.

We have particular challenges about education, training and employment that becoming UK City of Culture will help address. We still suffer from a low wage economy, and there are pockets of intense poverty with individuals facing multiple and complex life challenges: we will address this issue through commitment to inclusion and participation.

Our bid responds to ex-migration of young people through an emphasis on cultural entrepreneurship, digital skills and support, volunteering, higher education development, student community participation, student orientated retail and services and enhanced night time economy.

As a small sparsely populated county, we have a low profile: a comprehensive marketing campaign and digital first strategy will put Hereford as a city and county on the national and international map.

Our programme

We draw inspiration for our programme from the agricultural year, yet looking forward to use of digital technology: *from Pastoral Dream to Digital Green*. Four interconnected subthemes will inform the development of the multiple elements of the programme: Lightness and Darkness, Roots and Fruits, Maps and Borders and Full STEAM ahead.

Our Cultural Strategy will include a comprehensive creative digital strategy, and social media and marketing strategy, complementing Herefordshire Council's digital transformation and digital first strategies. Our web portal will act as resource, exhibition platform, news, features and review channel, and archive and legacy space. We will focus on schools to contribute digital content, addressing a digital skills shortage, and encouraging community participation.

Our management and leadership

In a county where financial resources are scarce, we have long known that it is important that we all work together and cooperate to deliver cultural activities. We are unique in that our bid is led by HCP, made up of voluntary, private and public organisations, including Herefordshire Council. The council is a key partner and is wholeheartedly backing Hereford 2021, with a motion to support the City of Culture bid approved at full Council on 12 December 2014, with funding and officer resources being contributed towards the bid.

A number of working groups have helped map existing cultural activity and develop ideas for the bid, focussing on a number of key assets to test and illustrate their potential impact. The groups met on a regular basis to provide the initial information and support for our existing cultural assets, and reported to the board to inform the development of our bid and the Cultural Strategy. We have carried out extensive discussions with a wide range of organisations, locally, regionally and nationally. To further widen our consultation and engagement to prepare for City of Culture, Rural Media is the lead agency and responsible body managing *Herefordshire's a Great Place* on behalf of HCP. Through an ambitious programme comprising research, events, activities, evaluation and dissemination the project will put culture at the heart of economic and social policy development, connect and strengthen cultural organisations and networks.

Our Legacy

We are taking an ambitious view of our legacy and considering it at an early stage of our planning for 2021. We will ensure the continuing benefits which result from City of Culture activities are maintained, as HCP was set up to oversee the wider strategic direction for culture in the county, and will remain in existence after the City of Culture programme is completed in 2023. As further resources become available, either as the result of fund-raising or through the development of more sustainable business models, we will investigate how we can use third parties to take on a long term legacy role for particular elements of the scheme, with support from HCP taking overall responsibility for legacy.

