

Dorset Arts Trust: Culture and Tourism Development

Summary of Consultation March – June 2014

Dorset Arts Trust is leading the development of culture and tourism in order to contribute to the delivery of the Dorset Destination Management Plan, prepared by the Tourism Company and agreed by the Destination Management Organisation steering group in June 2014.

This paper summarises the findings of consultation which feeds into a Culture and Tourism Action Plan. The consultation involved:

- **Interviews with 33 people** from economic and tourism strategy delivery, tourism associations and business improvement districts, heritage and festivals;
- **Key findings of the Tourism Company's Enterprise Survey** from cultural organisations' responses;
- **Key findings of a survey of Dorset Arts Trust members;**
- **Main messages from a consultation session** with Dorset Arts Trust members.

The work was carried out by Jo Morland and Victoria Pirie on behalf of Dorset Arts Trust.

Interviews summary

Key: **bold text** = view expressed by more than one interviewee

1 Economy and Tourism Strategy and Delivery

1.1 General comments

- Strategically arts and culture are already part of the story;
- Arts and culture can appear insular and fragmented; caught up in their own concerns and not able to reach agreement;
- Landscape, environment and heritage are motivations to visit, art and culture are not necessarily an attractor, but are important once here.
- The importance of an effective Destination Management Organisation;
- Cultural and tourism businesses have a similar profile; most are small and undervalued politically and economically;
- Tourism businesses are frustrated by a lack accessible and joined up information on what to do/events;
- How to bridge the gap between tourism and creative industries?

1.2 Benefits of closer working between culture and tourism

- Better promotion and marketing of the cultural offer- pool resources and provide visitors with relevant information
- An effective Dorset events directory
- Joint advocacy
- Help integrate strategies and actions (including environment and economy)

1.3 Concerns

- Don't duplicate: need a strategic approach and action linked to the Destination Management Plan;
- Need to have a clear role and purpose;

- Complexity puts businesses off. Already 36 tourist organisations in [unitary authority]: avoid adding to the confusion.
- The challenge of local politics; and
- The challenge of narrow vision

1.4 Action

- Coordination of activity, especially around events in the widest sense- providing easily available info to visitors and industry
- Mapping events across the year- create stronger presence
- Interpretation- how to interpret/understand the cultural offer, language used can put visitors off. If people are not familiar with going to cultural events, they are less likely to participate
- Understanding the visitor's perspective and needs by placing ourselves in visitors' shoes: How do they see our offer
- Festival/culture research- who/where are attractor/value added cultural offers- who does what and is there a tipping point in a mass/cluster of value-added offer that becomes an attractor to visitors as opposed a single major attractor.
- Volunteer/guide training, changing our behaviour, telling the right stories

2 Tourism and Business Sector

Local Authorities, Tourism Associations and Business Improvement Districts

2.1 Main Findings

- Support for an initiative which will bring the two sectors together at strategic and grass roots level.
- Support for lead by Dorset Arts Trust (ie non local authority)
- The importance of connecting to a bigger strategic picture through the Destination Management Organisation and frustration at the current fragmented and variable approach by Local Authorities.
- Action not talk
- Action should support increasing the number, length of time and spend of visitors to Dorset.

2.2 Benefit of a Culture & Tourism Network

- **Bring the two sectors together / sharing / talking / mutual understanding / learning / less isolation, connections across the county**
- **Joint working (programming shows, developing outreach, packages, promotion)**
- **Help tourism to understand the arts offer and communicate effectively with the arts**
- **Single voice – one route to talk to the industry and conduit to Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership/Destination Management Organisation**
- **Improve the offer to visitors**
- Unlocking funding
- Event coordination – avoiding key dates (using Visit Dorset website and Tourist Information Centres to check dates/data. CMS allows users to scrutinise the database for dates)
- Managing differences- different perspectives on business and ways of working
- Raising profile of arts and crafts within overall offer
- More visitors, more guests, more visitor spend
- Another platform
- Tourism officers use events/angles to promote to the national/regional press.
- Achieve more/have added resources - staff, money, data
- Good to be on an e-list/newsletter – probably wouldn't attend meetings
- Join up e.g. what is the wider Dorset cultural offer for people staying in [the conurbation] and what can [the urban area] offer the county.

- Exchange ideas, share experiences and learn from each other.
- Develop the rural economy in a sparsely populated rural area.
- Feed into/complement initiatives by others

2.3 Concerns

- **Avoid duplication / fit in with existing structures (Destination Management Organisation), don't set up another website**
- **Not too much talk/meetings – EFFECTIVE ACTION!!**
- Partnerships should be long term not short
- Who would hold data/info; who would hold finance?
- Ensure there are the staff resources to maintain the partnership and achieve objectives
- Who is going to deliver?
- Needs to be relevant
- Not take sovereignty away from local destinations
- Familiarisation between sectors is a slower process over years - cannot be achieved simply by bringing people together at events
- Information overload and the main reason for keeping a focus on the [urban authority] tourism website

2.4 What do you want it to do?

- **Training to make businesses more economically viable, complementing other providers**
- A forum event for arts/culture events and organisers, to find common themes – only when arts sector is working together, then publicise to tourism businesses
- Have a clear remit
- Be realistic
- Promoting the area as one offer – whole of Dorset/Bournemouth/Poole
- Coordination, Share ideas / make links
- Progress joint programmes
- Lobbying conduit
- Publicity
- Support regeneration of town centres and bringing people into the town
- Need to explain to tourism providers simply and clearly what is in it for them/evidence and testimonials from other regions
- Culture and Tourism Network representative on Destination Management Organisation should be a cultural business
- Practical actions: quick wins
- Specialist pages on Visit Dorset website integrating common themes (eg visual arts events) so people can see the offer and coordinate their holiday packages
- Act as an information source on actors, street theatre, other arts skills to directly employ for events

2.5 What evidence would be helpful to you?

- **Evidence of impact of culture on people's experiences, encourages them to stay longer/ come out of season /visit again**
- **Economic value of tourism**
- People's behaviour once they are here
- Visitors staying at accommodation providers for events (as opposed to visiting the town)
- Impact of tourism on employment
- Penetration and impact of tourism, especially away from the coast
- Value of landscape in economic and wellbeing terms
- Testimonials from tourist providers in other areas – 'working with culture did this for me'

- Some baseline research re sustainable tourism initiatives – needs to be followed up for useful lessons/evidence
- Show something works elsewhere – hard facts
- Define the market and then promote to it
- Encouraging repeat visits
- Benchmarking with other towns in the county.
- Understanding visitors who come during the shoulder months
- Cross over - does arts/culture programming at one festival lead to attendance at other festivals?
- Impact of arts and culture on people's experience and desire to visit again.

3 Festivals and Heritage Organisations

3.1 Main Findings

- Joined up, year round promotion of places, events and activities that increases ticket sales, and visitor numbers/spend and has a cost benefit to organisations' marketing spend. Organisations can make informed decisions about where to invest marketing resources for the best return.
- Have an action plan and link to the wider strategy of the Destination Management Organisation. The current differences and fragmentation of the Local Authorities' tourism approach causes frustration.
- Keen to network: Meetings must be purposeful; Networking/keeping informed by e-newsletter

3.2 Benefit of a Culture & Tourism Network

- **Getting word about the festival out there – sell tickets**
- **Networking – knowing who exists and getting known to others. Combating isolation and isolated thinking by being in a room together**
- **Exchange of professional expertise/experience to improve visitor numbers**
- **Being part of a bigger picture – culturally and geographically. Widens horizons and makes best use of scarce resources**
- Easy way to reach a lot of new potential partners, and network with tourism providers
- Finding out about funding sources/shared applications
- Good to be on e-list
- Collaboration and shared projects – more likely to happen if joint
- Get a higher profile for the [organisation] inside Dorset as well as more widely and feed into the tourism offer of the different districts/boroughs of Dorset
- Add more arts input to the Festival
- Build bigger, better events
- Must link to Destination Management Organisation.

3.3 Concerns

- **Not keen on attending meetings/too many meetings**
- Actions – newsletters for information, meetings with a specific purpose
- Need doers not sayers- Dorset is not good at looking out and people can be negative about change.
- Tourism doesn't work in isolation and there needs to be more awareness amongst Local Authority transport and other departments about the impact of their plans on tourism.
- Balancing bringing people to enjoy Dorset and managing traffic, urbanisation and commercialisation.
- Branding Dorset in the wrong way.
- Culture shouldn't be seen as separate from tourism; cultural organisations should either see themselves as part of the tourism sector or not.

3.4 What do you want it to do?

- **Joint promotion/marketing – but needs strong purpose/direction based on sound evidence**
- **Develop packages with accommodation providers**
- **Keen to be part of coherent national offer / Thinking together how tourism sector might be grown by bringing together facilities/offer**
- **Linkages/networking with the art world (communication channel)**
- Attract coach parties to the festival and stay in the area for several days/go to other events
- Professional help with publicity; Promoting our event for us
- Make sure the festival is right for the area/attracts the right people
- Share understanding of audiences including need for sustained data collection
- Provide something sustainable and long lasting
- Be a source of information about artists/companies on tour which could be booked for the Festival and a central point for touring artists re opportunities in Dorset
- Information on funding sources (EU etc)
- Training specifically for outdoor events (Health & Safety, risk assessments first aid, public liability insurance)
- Clash calendar
- Connect to food offer
- Comment made with reference to how the Destination Management Organisation should be organised but could also apply to the Culture and Tourism network. Destination Management Organisation organise functions round the visitor:
 - Pre-visit
 - Transport
 - Staying in Dorset- accommodation etc
 - Visitor experience- activities etc
- An annual event where people can exchange ideas, share experiences and learn.

3.5 What evidence would be helpful to you?

- **Data showing where people come from in order to target national promotion activity**
 - **Understanding the value (or not) of printed publicity (compared with putting effort into editorial media)**
 - Directly comparative examples – museums of the same size/similar geographic area elsewhere
 - Survey to assess knowledge of [our organisation], how people want to use it, how it could be more user friendly, better known
 - Evidence for business people in the town that people come especially for the festival.
 - Up to date information about the Dorset visitor market, motivation, decision-making and holiday behaviour. Concern that available information is several years old.
 - Understand what media visitors use once in Dorset by the accommodation they use e.g. campers.
 - Metrics needed:
 - The visitor experience
 - Value for money
 - Total visitor numbers
 - Tourism spend
 - Tourism jobs
- Need to collect information in a cost effective and sustainable way across the tourism sector
- Visitor demographics

The Tourism Company Enterprise Survey

The Tourism Company's Enterprise Survey underpinned the development of the Destination Management Plan. The following summarises the responses from cultural organisations (24 responses):

- Most need more business all year round (62.5% in December up to 82.4% in April).
- 79% said an increase in income was essential or necessary.
- Major barriers to growth are lack of capital/finance (78%), economic uncertainty (50%).
- Most were very small businesses with 1-2 full time staff.
- In an analysis of aspects of tourism, ranked by the deficits between their importance and current performance in delivery, cultural organisations prioritised:
 1. clarity of roles between those involved in tourism marketing (4th in the overall survey).
 2. provision and promotion of arts, crafts and galleries (32nd overall).
 3. promoting public transport to visitors (11th overall).
 4. developing tourism opportunities offered by cruise terminals (9th overall).
- 80% agreed to promotion of Dorset by a county brand, 60% by the names of individual towns, and 87% by a range of 'days out' experiences.
- A third were willing to pay for membership of an organisation promoting Dorset and 47% to buy into campaigns

Dorset Arts Trust Survey

The purpose of the online survey of Dorset Arts Trust members was to find out members' attitudes to tourism and their current levels of tourism activity. 26 completed surveys were returned from 77 members (34% response rate)

Context

- The largest number of respondents work in music and arts development; followed by visual arts, performing arts and creative education/learning; and festivals.
- Almost two thirds of respondents report working in West Dorset, nearly a third report working in North Dorset or Weymouth and Portland, with lower levels for Bournemouth and Poole. The majority of responding organisations are based in West Dorset.
- Responding organisations are spread fairly evenly across the size range with annual income ranging from less than £20,000 to over £500,000 (19% - 27% of respondents in each income band).

Attitude to Tourism

Respondents have a positive attitude to tourism.

- Two thirds say that tourism is very important or important to their organisation/business and almost all of these want to develop it in the future.

Tourism Knowledge and Activity

Of the 15 organisations who say that tourism is very important/important and want to develop their visitor audiences (58% of all respondents):

- Just over half (53%) collect audience data regularly, through box office or, for outdoor events, through audience survey.
- But only 40% know the current percentage of visitors from outside Dorset in their audiences.
- Over half programme for visitors only once or twice a year, and a further quarter programme for visitors 3-5 times a year.

- More than three quarters promote to visitors through local Tourist Information Centres.
- Just over half use a local authority tourism website to promote to visitors. The most frequently used websites are Poole Tourism and Visit Dorset, used by a third of respondents each.
- Just over half work with a tourism organisation such as local authority/ tourism association and about half have working relationships tourism providers.
- Only a sixth of respondents use Trip Advisor.

Training

- Only one respondent gives ongoing Welcome Host training to staff, and one offers it very rarely.

Dorset Arts Trust Consultation: Tourism Benefits and Concerns

Benefits of tourism to your organisation

- Increase the diversity of audiences and attract new audiences.
- Joined up marketing communicating a more cohesive cultural offer leading to good and appropriate visitor support.
- Strengthen the promotion of outdoor events.
- Stimulate partnership working between the tourism and cultural sectors.
- Tapping into tourism training successes.
- Build the reputation of our organisations and the area – positive place making.
- Raise the profile of arts and culture and feed into bigger Dorset arts and culture strategy.
- Diversification of income streams.
- Conference tourism – destination for conferences and events, based in interesting arts organisations and with a supporting cultural programme.
- Opportunity for joined up arts commissions.

Concerns

- Concerns about the Destination Management Organisation structure, coordination and resourcing, and how that will work on the ground.
- Might have to spend a lot of time getting a plan that is sufficiently sensitive to our activities and not an over-complicated strategic plan.
- Potential strain on organisations' finances and resources, participating in planning and in joint promotional activity.
- Language around describing culture in a tourism context – accessibility versus dumbing down (both the art and how it is talked about).
- Seasonality – visitors and locals think that things shut in the winter. Some arts organisations run a reduced operation in summer.
- The cultural offer cannot operate in isolation – it needs complementary input from transport and food.

Consultation

Steering Group for Cultural and Tourism Development

Dorset County Council
Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Bridport Arts Centre

Interviewees/Consultees

Bridport and District Tourism Association
Borough of Poole
Bournemouth Borough Council
Bournemouth Coastal Business Improvement District
Bournemouth University Tourism Academic Group
Christchurch Borough Council and east Dorset District Council
Christchurch Food Festival
Christchurch Tourism Association
Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Dorset Destination Management Organisation Steering Group
Dorset History Centre
Dorset Local Nature Partnership
Dorset Museums Association
Dorset Rural Tourism Group
Dorset Wildlife Trust
From Page to Screen Festival
The Hardy Country Group
Lyme Regis Fossil Festival
National Coastal Tourism Academy
The National Trust
North Dorset District Council
Purbeck District Council
Purbeck Folk Festival
Purbeck Walking Festival
Shaftesbury and District Tourism Association
Sherborne Literary Festival
Sherborne Tourism Forum
Swanage and Purbeck Hospitality Association
Swanage Blues Festival
The Tank Museum
West Dorset District Council and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
Weymouth Business Improvement District
Wimborne Business Improvement District

Dorset Arts Trust

Arts in Hospital
Arts University Bournemouth
Activate Performing Arts
Arts and Health South West
Artseeker
Artsreach
Artwey
B Sharp
B-side Festival
Bournemouth Arts by the Sea Festival
Bridport Arts Centre
Bridport Museum
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Bournemouth University
Borough of Poole
Burr Projects CIC
Cadeleigh Creative
Caroline Barnes Ceramics
Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset
Coda Music Centre
Departure Arts
DIVA Contemporary
Diverse City London
East Dorset District Council
The Exchange
Folk South West
Forest Forge Theatre Company
Henry's Buttons
Holton Lee
Homestay and Adventure Breaks
Inside Out Dorset
The Kimmeridge Project
Landance
Lighthouse, Poole
Lyme Regis Fossil festival
The Marine Theatre
North Dorset District Council
Opera Circus
Pavilion Dance South West
Poole Museum
Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust
Purbeck Art Weeks
The Sculpture Hut, Portland
Satsymph
ScreenPLAY
Shaftesbury Arts Centre

Dorchester Arts
Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Museums
Adviser
Dorset County Arts Team
Dorset County Historic Environment Team
Dorset County Library Service
Dorset County Museum
Dorset Cultural Partnership
Dorset History Centre
Dorset Rural Music School
Dorset Visual Arts/Dorset Art Weeks

Sherborne ArtsLink
Sherborne House Arts
Soundstorm Music Education Agency
South West Artwork CIC
Southbourne Creative Hub
Walford Mill Crafts
Watershed PR
Wave Arts Education Agency
West Dorset District Council
West Mead Creative
Over ten individual artists and consultants