

Celia Smith – Flying Swifts

Creative Corsham Strategy
2017 – 2022

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Executive Summary

Historically, Corsham has had a long-held reputation for the Arts. The Bath Academy of Art was based in the town for 40 years; there is the architectural significance of the historic High Street; the Pound Arts Centre; Bath Spa University returning to its Corsham Court campus and Corsham Court itself. But does that reputation still hold true and, if so, what does that mean in the 21st century? The research behind, and creation of, the Creative Corsham Strategy seeks to answer that question. It also looks to the future with an ambitious five-year vision 'To grow and celebrate cultural and creative activity in Corsham' and considers how the strategy will play its part within the themes of the Town Council's Strategic Plan: Managed Development, Destination Corsham, Alive with Centres of Excellence, Open to Business, Safe and Healthy Community, and Integration.

The Creative Industries survey, undertaken in June/July 2016, gathered 40 responses. While not wholly indicative of the creative industries in the area, the survey revealed that:

42% of respondents describe themselves as 'Independent Artists', while 35% work in a 'Commercial Creative or Cultural Business'

67.5% are professional, with 12.5% as semi-professional, 12.5% as 'other' and 7.5% consider themselves to be hobbyists.

40% work in the Visual Arts sector; 30% in Arts and Antiques

87.5% employ fewer than five people, with 55% as sole traders

Both the survey and the workshop for respondents to discuss the results acknowledged Corsham's arts infrastructure and its recognition as having a strong creative industry sector. It was felt, though, that this recognition is understated and Corsham is in danger of losing its creative appeal to other areas.

Using the findings and the desk-based research involved in producing the strategy, a five-year (2017-2022) Action Plan has been produced that ensures an element of creativity and culture within every theme of Corsham Town Council's Strategic Plan. For example, within Destination Corsham it is proposed to develop a 'Creative Corsham' brand identity; to make the most of shared marketing opportunities and to enable a varied arts event programme.

The overall mission of the Creative Corsham Strategy is to champion and support the role of culture in Corsham and to focus partners, resources and energy upon the delivery of the Action Plan. It will also enable Corsham Town Council to work with partners and the community to create positive and lasting change.

THE VALUE OF ARTS AND CULTURE TO PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR EVIDENCE REVIEW

SOCIETY

We celebrate the diversity of our national identity

1 BILLION
Global viewers of the London 2012 opening ceremony

68% of UK viewers said it made them proud to be British

PARTICIPATION IN ARTS AND CULTURE CAN:

- contribute to community cohesion...
- make communities feel safer and stronger...
- ...reduce social exclusion and isolation
- Students who study arts subjects are more employable and more likely to stay in employment

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Arts and culture illuminates our lives from stretches our emotional world and breaks us out of complacency

Arts and cultural interventions can have a positive impact on specific health conditions such as dementia, Parkinson's and depression

ALMOST 60% of people are more likely to report good health if they've attended a cultural place or event in the last 12 months

Levels of subjective wellbeing are generally reported to be higher amongst those with higher arts and culture engagement

ECONOMY

10 MILLION visits to the UK in 2011 involved engagement in arts and culture representing almost half of all tourists

£12.4 BILLION Aggregate turnover of businesses in the UK arts and culture industry (2011)

£13.9 MILLION The impact on Kent's economy of the Turner Contemporary at Margate led to in its first year

£753.8 MILLION The additional income Liverpool's Capital of Culture year generated for the local economy in 2008

EDUCATION

SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS engaged in arts and culture are twice as likely to volunteer in the community and are 20% more likely to vote as young adults

In 2011 there were **337,297 learning sessions** in arts and cultural venues, and **11,093 school performances** took place by our funded organisations

78% of children's performance levels in core subjects improved in the first year of In Harmony, a programme of daily music activity for every pupil

Children from low income families who take part in arts activities at school are **three times more likely to get a degree**



For references and more information, check out our new publication 'The value of arts and culture to people and society - an evidence review' online:



artsCouncil.org.uk/evidence-review



@ace_national



/artscouncilofengland

Introduction

Since the beginning of January 2016, Corsham Town Council has, as part of its Strategic Plan, been working to develop a cultural strategy. For the purpose of that strategy we define 'culture' as museums and art galleries; art centres, theatres and libraries; music, dance, visual arts, film, digital media and photography; literature and poetry; architecture, design and the built environment; independent shops and artisan food. Also included within that definition are the Creative Industries, described by the Government's 2001 Creative Industries Mapping Document as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS). In Corsham and the surrounding area there are a vast number of businesses and individuals who specialise in the arts, music and film production and digital media or provide services such as architecture, advertising, marketing and design and web and software development.

The Creative Industries are now widely recognised as a driver of UK jobs, innovation and growth. According to statistics from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), their Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2014 was £81.4 billion, making up 5.2 per cent of the UK economy.¹ In 2015, they accounted for 1.9 million jobs.² Creative industries GVA grew by 8.9 per cent between 2013 and 2014 – almost twice as fast as the economy as a whole, while creative industries jobs grew by 5.5 per cent (compared with 2.1 per cent in the UK workforce) (Nesta, 2016).

Culture is integral to everyday life. It contributes to the economy, to a sense of place and enables people to work, learn, play and create together. It forms a significant part of the tourism industry, adds variety to the employment base and supports local suppliers. It enriches education and improves the well-being of individuals and the whole community, both physically and mentally. It provides vital opportunities for communities to build bridges, to come together, build an identity and share unique experiences. Culture makes life better.

The value of arts and culture to society has long been debated. We know that arts and culture play an important role in promoting social and economic goals through local regeneration, attracting tourists, the development of talent and innovation, improving health and wellbeing, and delivering essential services. These benefits are 'instrumental' because art and culture can be a means to achieve ends beyond the immediate intrinsic experience and value of the art itself (Arts Council England, 2014)

Culture no longer simply means being familiar with a select list of works of art and architecture, but the accumulated influence of creativity, the arts, museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage upon all our lives. When we talk about our 'cultural sectors', we are referring to an extraordinary network of individuals and organisations, that together preserve, reflect and promote who we are as a nation, in all our rich diversity (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2016)

Corsham has, historically, been known as a centre for culture and creative excellence. Bath Academy of Art was based in the town for 40 years. There is the architectural significance of the historic High Street, with its excellent independent retail offering; the landscaped green spaces; the formidable Pound Arts Centre; Bath Spa University returning to its Corsham Court campus and Corsham Court itself. Corsham has a reputation for the Arts, but what does that mean in the 21st century, and does it still hold true?

Alongside desk-based research, those working locally in the cultural and creative industries were sent a survey, the results of which have been core to developing our vision. The survey reached over 90 artists, creative professionals, businesses and organisations and resulted in two workshops to explore the profile, dynamics and development needs of the Creative Industries sector in Corsham and the wider area. The research also highlighted that, in the South West, the Creative Industries have played an important role in delivering growth and sustaining overall prosperity. They have also played a formative role in shaping a new, progressive identity for the region, driving regeneration and creating a higher-skilled, higher value economy as well as adding credibility to inward investment and place-branding activities.

For Corsham and its wider area, the research findings indicate that there is a danger of its historic creative appeal being lost to those places that have, to date, taken a stronger and more progressive approach to support cultural and creative industries, for example: Bristol, Stroud, Trowbridge and Frome. Additional factors such as the high cost of property, poor travel infrastructure and under-developed relationships with local schools and Bath Spa University introduce factors that might reduce the appeal, and compromise the creative dynamism, of Corsham in the future. A complacent and passive approach is, therefore, not an option, hence this Creative Corsham Strategy.

The strategy, as well as being delivered through a pragmatic action plan that includes both that which Corsham Town Council directly controls and opportunities to work in partnership, also builds on the Town Council's Strategic Plan. It will be a factor to consider within all the

Plan's strategic themes: *Managed Development, Destination Corsham, Alive with Centres of Excellence, Open to Business, Safe and Healthy Community and Integration.*

We look forward to working closely with individuals, community groups, creative businesses and arts organisations so that we can make Corsham a vibrant cultural centre – because culture makes life better.



Our Vision

Informed by the recent survey and workshop, Corsham Town Council Creative Corsham Strategy sets out an ambitious five year vision from 2017: *'To grow and celebrate cultural and creative activity in Corsham, so that by 2022 the town and local area is regionally recognised as a centre of excellence in the Arts and Creative industries, and to develop our cultural assets to make a real difference to the economy of Corsham and the surrounding villages, to the lives of the people who live here and to those who work and visit here.'*

Our Mission

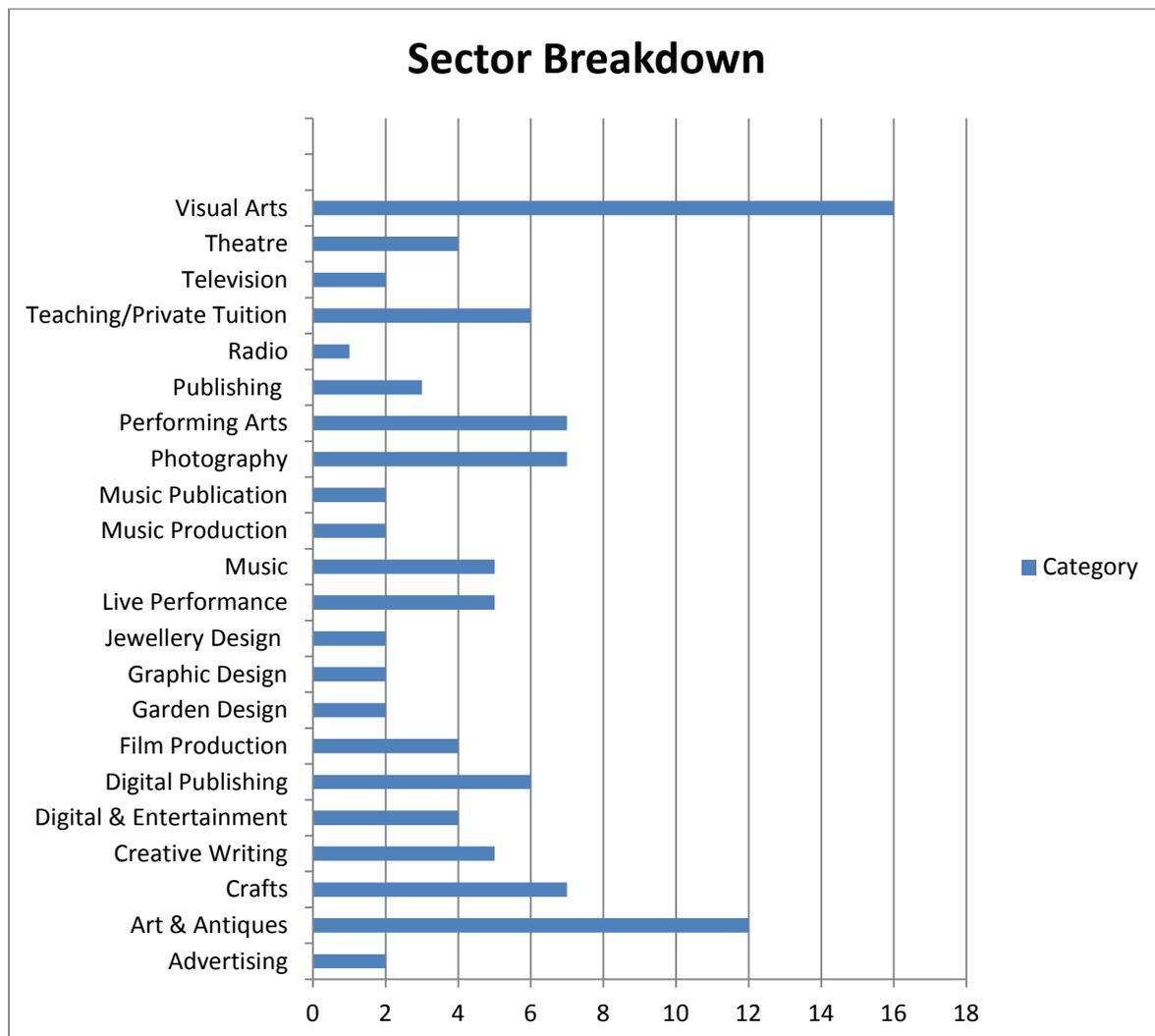
To champion and support the role of culture in Corsham and to focus partners, resources and energy upon the delivery of an action plan that identifies the priorities for development of culture and the Creative Industries for Corsham.

With a focus on collaborative working and achieving long term goals, the Creative Corsham Strategy will enable Corsham Town Council to work with partners and the community to create positive change.

The Creative Corsham Strategy sets out Corsham Town Council's plans to move towards this ambition. It is a five year strategy that will be reviewed annually, until 2022, when a comprehensive review will be undertaken.

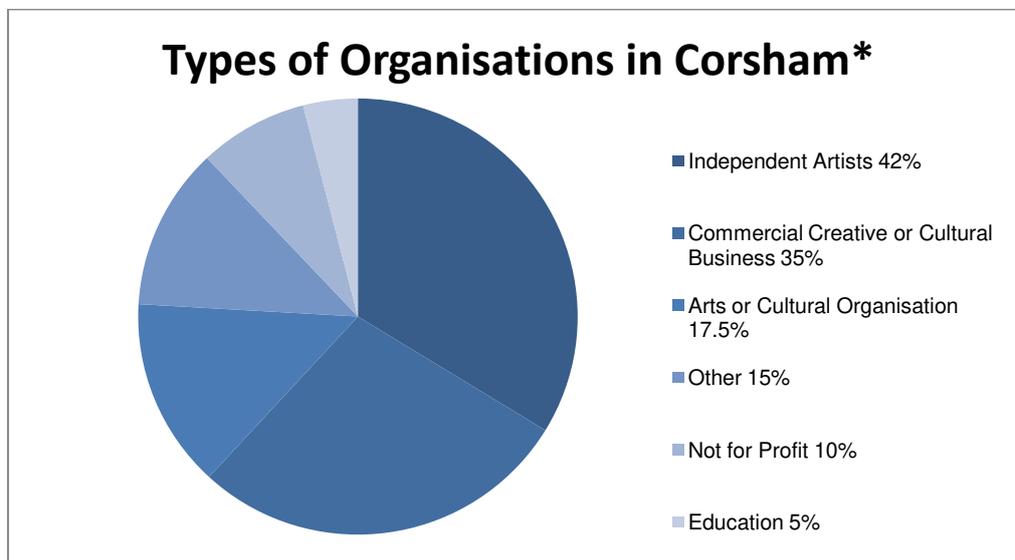
Creative Corsham Industries Survey

The recent Corsham Town Council survey had 40 participants which, while providing interesting results, should not be considered wholly indicative of the creative industries in the Corsham area. However, it has provided us an insight into which sectors require further investigation and analysis. Some respondents also classed themselves as multiple categories. This graphic below illustrates a breakdown of the core activities of the local creative practitioners who took part.



However, we do know the significant digital infrastructure which exists in Corsham does give us a unique advantage in the South West as a centre for creative excellence. The Creative Strategy will provide an opportunity to further explore how to develop and capitalise this sector. This has also been recently evidenced by SWLEP as outlined below, reinforcing the importance and possibilities that lie ahead for Corsham.

Investment by the military over the last century has generated exceptional commercial opportunities which have driven innovation. A unique ICT infrastructure has built up around Corsham where the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the private sector have invested heavily in secure communications and data storage. Corsham is home to a growing cluster of digital industries as well as the most secure cloud data centre and electrical supply in the country. There are also strong links with the 100,000 Whole Genome Project and secure Government communications. As 'big data' and cyber security become even more important in the digital economy nationally and internationally, the economic potential of this infrastructure to create a leading digital economy cluster is evident (SWLEP, 2016).



*Some respondents class themselves as multiple categories of organisation

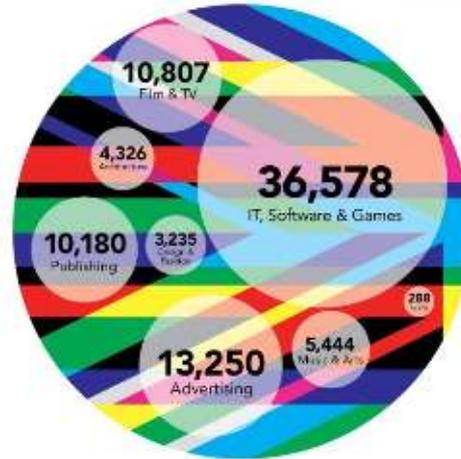
Looking at the bigger picture of the creative industries in the UK provides an insight into the value and economic impact of the sector nationally. The Gross Value Added (GVA) of the UK creative industries was estimated to total £84.1bn in 2014, equivalent to almost £10 for every hour. Between 1997 and 2014, the GVA of the creative industries had increased by almost 6 per cent each year, compared with the rest of the UK economy which has grown its GVA at an average of 4.3 per cent a year during the same period.

The UK creative economy comprises jobs in the creative industries and creative jobs which are in non-creative organisations (e.g. design or marketing teams within manufacturers). It comprises an estimated 2.9m jobs or 1 in 11 of all UK jobs. The South West is the third highest region in the country for employment in the creative industries.

The UK Creative Industries



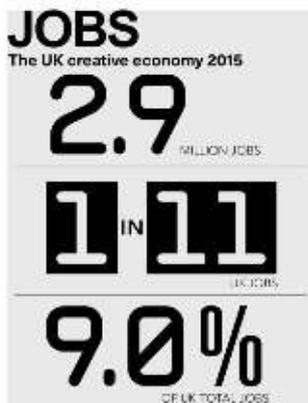
GVA of UK Creative Industries 2014 (£m) Total **£84.1bn**



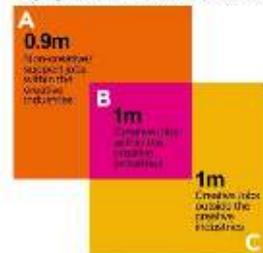
Annual Change in GVA 1997-2014



www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk
Source: DCMS Creative Industries Economic Estimates, January 2015



Employment in the UK creative economy



Total **2.9m** jobs in the creative economy

creative economy = **A+B+C**
creative industries = **A+B**



www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk
Source: CREATIVESTATISTICS 2015

The recent Cultural and Creative Survey and subsequent workshops acknowledged that there is a good arts infrastructure and ecology of arts organisations and that Corsham is recognised as having a strong cultural creative industry sector. It is also stated, however, that this relative success was ‘understated’ and that Corsham was in danger of losing its creative appeal to areas of the South West that had been more aggressive in their approach to the creative industries and culture-led regeneration.

The survey and workshop discussion suggested that Corsham needs to diversify its creative industries, introduce a younger demographic and establish visible and high profile hubs for sector activity that encourage collaboration, trade and innovation. We are also aware that Corsham might lack a distinctive creative narrative, which in turn makes it less attractive to would-be incoming creative businesses. This also means existing businesses are less able to benefit from a 'Corsham brand' and wider sectors such as retail and tourism do not have a contemporary story based on creative production to sell. The town's cultural offer is integral to the future success of the visitor economy.

Arts and culture can create additional spending by tourists in two ways. Some visit the UK primarily to visit arts and cultural attractions, while others take part in arts and cultural activities during trips that are made for other purposes, potentially extending trips and generating additional spending as a result. We estimated total spending by visitors to the UK that was directly motivated by the arts and culture amounted to at least £856 million in 2011 (Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2016).

Wiltshire welcomed some 17.7 million day visitors in 2015, with an estimated spend of £668 million, and the sector employs nearly 29,159 people (Visit Wiltshire, 2016).

There are difficulties to be overcome if the Town Council is to realise its ambition, but we believe that, in partnership, there is much more that can be done to make Corsham a vibrant cultural centre in the next five years.

Corsham's Cultural Assets

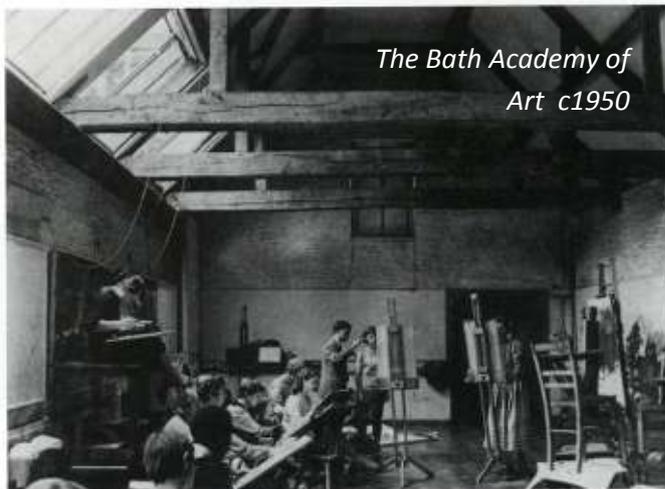
Corsham Court, a Saxon Royal Manor, and home of the Methuen Family, is based on an Elizabethan house dating from 1582. It houses, in the 72-ft long Picture Gallery designed by Capability Brown, a celebrated collection of Old Master paintings, including works by Van



Susie Brooks

Dyck, Filippo Lippi, Reynolds and Romney. The Gallery, along with the other State Rooms, features furniture designed by Chippendale, John Cobb and the Adam Brothers. Corsham Court also boasts stunning gardens and parkland, again designed by Capability Brown, and a 13-acre lake. The house has featured as a location in Stanley Kubrick's awarding-winning film *Barry Lyndon* and Merchant Ivory's *Remains of the Day* (1993), and also in the BBC adaptation of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (2008).

The former **Bath Academy of Art** opened at Corsham Court in 1946. Lord Methuen - the



artist Paul Ayshford - established the Academy at his home when he was President of the Royal West of England Academy. Additional annexes in Bath, and at Beechfield House, incorporated a residential college for art teachers and Bath School of Art that had been in existence since 1852. The Academy rapidly gained a reputation as a centre for excellence.

Over the years, its staff and alumni included sculptors Bernard Meadows and Kenneth Armitage, painters William Scott, Terry Frost, Peter Lanyon, Adrian Heath, Howard Hodgkin, Anthony Fry, Martin Froy, Peter Potworowski, Claes Oldenburg, Richard Hamilton, Jim Dine, Gillian Ayres and Robyn Denny. The establishment of a Research Centre for Arts Education funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation resulted in the Academy receiving national and international recognition. The Academy at Corsham closed in the mid 1980s following changes in art and higher education, and returned to Bath, where it became part of Bath Spa University. Bath Spa University returned to Corsham Court in 2008 with their Postgraduate Centre.

The Pound Arts Centre based in Corsham, provides quality arts activity in Wiltshire; an arts hub with three artists' studios; Corsham Festivals which hosts two four-day festivals in June and November and Rural Arts Touring, which comprises the rural touring schemes Rural Arts Wiltshire and Rural Arts Gloucestershire. Pound Arts has impact in the region that it serves by supporting



Susie Brooks



Publick Transport: We are Bronte

artists, audiences, community initiatives, schools, local businesses, and all manner of other communities. Their work is characterised by variety, diversity, inventiveness, imagination, skill and social responsibility. They are a community resource as much as they are an arts centre.



Michael Rosen at the 2016 Blue Sky Festival



The Peacock Arts Trail was established in Corsham in 2013 with the aim of promoting the arts in Corsham and North-West Wiltshire. The Trail includes Corsham, Box, Yatton Keynell, Chippenham, Kington Langley and Holt.



Victoria Jarman



The Arts Trail provides, every other year, the public with nine days of open studios and galleries, giving artists and public the opportunity to meet each other, and for artists to show their work to the public, and network with other local artists.

Delivering Creative Corsham

The Creative Corsham Strategy 2017-2022 sets out plans to grow Corsham's creative economy by making Corsham a welcoming and cooperative host to the creative workforce. This will be achieved via three main strategic strands detailed below.

Corsham Town Council can be a real driver and aggregator for the overall Corsham economy with a balanced and innovative approach to the Creative Industries.

1. Develop Network Activity: Collaboration and Exchange

- It is necessary for Corsham to build on the success of the survey and subsequent workshops to encourage collaboration among artists and creative businesses and organisations and develop an annual programme of creative industries network and event activities. This should involve a curated mix of artists, creative businesses and organisations, cultural and skills/training activities.

The lack of networking could also create risks for these clusters. For instance, the economic geography literature suggests that under-networked clusters tend to pay in the longer term, because they struggle to access rapidly the information required to detect and adapt to new and disruptive trends. Creative networking is also a way to build a sense of community, and a shared voice, that can help creative clusters raise their visibility, potentially attracting investment and collaboration from the outside, and helping build a more supportive policy environment (Nesta, 2016)

This would see greater strategic coordination for networking across the Creative Industries sector and enable the sector to address many of the challenges it faces (such as the lack of connections to the wider economy in Corsham and under-developed collaboration between sub-sectors). There are five main strategic imperatives that could be addressed through an enhanced network approach:

- **Distinctiveness and place-making:** The network would provide a channel through which the Corsham Creative Industries sector could be more centrally plugged-in to the wider agendas of the town and surrounding areas. This includes providing new opportunities for Creative Industries in social entrepreneurship and community/education projects, cross-over projects with other sectors - particularly developing links with independent retail and food.
- **Grow the creative ecology:** Through developing joint Creative Industries and arts/culture projects through the existing programme of festivals, training activities and market-making. This would open up opportunities for collaboration across

different creative sectors, develop progression routes for practitioners and workers and support and nurture the freelance economy. Freelancers and the self-employed are an existing strength and a growing part of Corsham's creative economy. Currently there is very limited support for freelancers who can feel isolated (especially those in rural areas). The network would encourage peer-to-peer networking (digital and face-to-face), and focus on growing supply chains and markets.

- **Develop connections to the wider economy:** The low visibility of the sector means that many Corsham-based businesses and public sector organisations do not realise they exist or the value they can deliver. The opportunity here is to create dedicated, brokered opportunities for dialogue and relationship building - through existing business groups and the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership - creating a clear way for creatives to (collaboratively) reach different markets.

Creative clusters don't just consist of businesses and workers however, they are made up of other important local institutions such as universities and business networks too. Measuring these institutions can help policymakers identify a wider set of strengths and weaknesses in the ecosystem, and design suitable interventions (Nesta, 2016)

- **Build connections with schools, FE and HE:** Creating links to Bath Spa University and Wiltshire College with a Corsham presence - would boost the town's creative profile and provide new opportunities for creative businesses – e.g. through training and skills and events. Additionally, building progression routes and connections with young people through schools and FE (including apprenticeships and work-related learning), would help to position Corsham as a place that enables emergent creative talent to participate and flourish in the local economy. There are also opportunities to more effectively lever capacity and expertise – such as by creating a hub for rehearsal, performance and micro creative businesses.

Nurturing the skills of the next creative generation: Marginalisation of creative subjects in the curriculum, insufficient specialised training for teachers and lack of consistent careers advice can mean many young people – and their parents – are discouraged from following a creative path. Young people should be able to study a fusion or combination of creative, technical, scientific and entrepreneurial subjects. The education system should support creativity by promoting STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths) and not just STEM (Create UK).

2. Market-Making: Develop a Sector Signing and Branding Exercise

- A key finding of our research and consultation is the lack of a clear identity and brand narrative for Creative Corsham and the absence overall of the Creative Industries in formal and informal brand and communication campaigns of the area (e.g. for tourism and inward investment). Put simply, without a stronger, sharper profile, opportunities for sector growth will be under-realised. Moreover, without an approach that positions the creativity and cultural vitality of Corsham at the heart of the overall 'story', then the area will fail to leverage the true value of its creative and cultural assets.
- We recommend that Corsham Town Council works with the sector to co-create a new signing and branding exercise for Creative Corsham and for the role of creativity in making the area special and distinctive. This is essential if the network activities outlined above are to have their desired effect, and it is vital if the area is to make the most of its creative and cultural assets and fulfil its potential across different sectors.

There are three main strategic imperatives here:

- **To work with a consortia of local creatives to co-develop a new brand identity for Corsham's Creative Industries sector.** This should be sufficiently expansive to incorporate the diversity of activities – from digital media to performing arts and expressive of the unique character of the area, its talent and creative offer.
- **To co-develop an overall signage and branding campaign for Corsham as a whole – with the Creative Industries operating as the 'attack brand' for the area.** This should make direct links to the future development of the town centre, tourism and inward investment agendas. It should avoid empty 'creative Corsham' rhetoric and be expressive of the range of activities underway in the area and how/why the area is a welcoming and creative host for a rich mix of creative, cultural and knowledge-driven activities.
- **To accelerate brand development and animate the qualities of the Creative Industries sector via a set of communication and market-making activities.** This could include:
 - An annual creative festival for Corsham – showcasing the area's strengths in production and making links to the retail and tourism sectors. These should strengthen local networks, introduce market opportunities in other sectors and bring opinion-forming creatives from the South West and elsewhere to engage with local talent.

- Targeted outward missions to the South West (and perhaps a national trade opportunity for a consortia of firms). These should be sector-driven and focus on specific market opportunities.
- Leadership for wider 'Made in Corsham' activities, staging events and giving personality to any county-wide branding exercises. A 'Created and Made in Corsham' approach would add value here. This could include annual awards for the sector – including new talent awards (as a way of supporting pathways from education to the sector) and the ongoing promotion of specific businesses to promote the character and personality of the sector.

3. Place and Planning: A Creative Corsham Hub

- This is the priority recommendation for the Creative economy of Corsham. Developing a physical 'hub' (or hubs) for the creative sector in Corsham could provide the cornerstone for the future development and growth of the creative economy in the area. By 'hub', we mean a space which provides a mix of flexible workspace – from desks by the day or week to small offices; a home for networking events and a place for informal and formal mentoring and business support. This would be very much a part of the wider networking and branding/signage activities. However, there is a real need for a full feasibility and demand-side study here before any significant resources are invested in any preferred hub option.

The creative industries display a strong tendency to concentrate in a small number of locations. In doing so, they form creative clusters – agglomerations of creative businesses and workers that collaborate and compete with each other. This geographical proximity has important advantages: creative businesses are able to tap into a critical mass of creative workers, access clients, and collaborate and share information with one another (Nesta, 2016).

The overriding rationale for the Hub(s) is it makes manifest the area's ambitions to have a growing and dynamic creative sector. It will do this by:

- Providing a nexus for creative individuals, many of whom are freelancers; providing opportunities for peer-to-peer networking and the development of local markets and supply chains
- Helping to tackle the lack of appropriate and affordable space for creatives and cultural organisations in the area through the provision of new workspace

- Developing a centre for cultural production in the town – with the potential to connect with the centres of cultural consumption (e.g. in retail)
- Providing an aspirational and public face for the notion of Corsham as a town which values the importance of culture and creativity as a driver of economic growth and continual improvement for the area
- Offering a platform for direct links to the education sector – e.g. project space, rehearsal space etc

These spaces have provided essential support to artists and makers and their developing careers, providing a home to this growing and vibrant creative sector. Such creative spaces and communities have also been shown to have a wider economic and social value, helping to regenerate areas by stimulating local business growth and attracting inward investment and infrastructure development without, in the main, disenfranchising local incumbent communities (Arts Council England, 2016).



Bristol Engine Shed, Creative Hub

Challenges and Opportunities in Corsham

Our research shows that a real opportunity exists for the Creative Industries to flourish as part of a more holistic approach to planning, economic development, creative strategy, education and place-making. Indeed, a successful Creative Industries sector is dependent on Corsham more effectively leveraging its overall assets. For example, a successful town centre of the future will involve a mix of independent shops, cultural spaces, production and consumption activities, and a focus on the niche, distinctive and excellent (as exemplified in the recent Portas Review on the Future of our High Streets). Corsham has a head start here, but future success is not guaranteed – and creative businesses are already looking elsewhere to towns that have made radical steps to invigorate their town centres.

Moreover, creative businesses are not just attracted to dynamic, distinctive places: they can play a central role in shaping such places. In other words, some of the major challenges for Corsham – such as how to close the prosperity gap between different communities, how to regenerate areas of the town centre, how to reinvigorate the old Mansion House site, or how to increase connectivity with rural parts of the area – can each have a Creative Industries dimension to how they are addressed.

There is additional urgency here with the proposed redevelopment of the Mansion House as the Corsham Digital Mansion. This means an emergent creative hub that had the potential to lead the regeneration of the Pickwick Road area as well as to add to the wider energy and distinctiveness of Corsham may be lost. The challenge now for the area is to find ways to ensure these businesses and organisations stay in the area and do so in a way that makes it clear such activities are cherished in Corsham and positioned at the heart of overall strategies in economy and planning.

A stronger, more diverse and more confident Creative Industries sector can help to provide overall balance to the economy; it can operate as an attractor to other sectors and it can give Corsham additional energy and distinctiveness which is so critical for sectors such as retail.

A vibrant cultural offer includes opportunities for all to take part in inspirational creative activities. Participating in creative activities can boost self-esteem and self expression, and broaden horizons and ambitions. It can unlock potential at any age, and develop skills that can result in employment opportunities or entrepreneurial activity. Creative learning can often benefit those for whom mainstream training is not appropriate.

For many, culture is an avenue for civic participation and volunteering, allowing people to give something back to their community.

Summary

The Role of Corsham Creative Strategy in Corsham Town Council's Strategic Plan

Corsham Town Council's Strategic Plan set out the following vision for Corsham as *'a place where people want to be' - alive with centres of excellence; open to business; and providing an integrated, safe, healthy community built on a foundation of managed development.*

The vision for Corsham has six strategic themes, all of which can be enhanced by the inclusion of the Arts and Cultural assets which already exist in the area with a collaborative, creative and sustainable approach as outlined in this Creative Corsham Strategy.

- 1. Alive with Centres of Excellence is about bringing people and groups together to achieve more than can be accomplished individually. It means sharing knowledge, skills and experience in a creative way for the benefit of the community.**

As this Creative Corsham Strategy emerges the Town Council's relationship with both the Peacock Arts Trail and Pound Arts should evolve and adapt as both these stakeholders and their activities grow and flourish. The Town Council might adopt a more supportive approach with a strong emphasis on community arts development to develop Corsham as a Centre of Excellence and significantly raise the profiles of these important stakeholders in the South West.

The Town Council could also lend its support to the Corsham Creative Market, which routinely showcases local talent and attracts visitors and artists, positively contributing to Corsham's creative industries reputation. With the Town Council's commitment to arts development and working closely with relevant stakeholders and community groups, a programme of events should emerge alongside or separate to the cultural events and activities already existing in the town.

The Town Council should develop a relationship with local artists and meet them frequently, to develop an awareness of local talent and provide a space to facilitate discussion and possible collaborative opportunities - potentially through an Artist's Cafe once a month/quarter, moving around to different relevant locations within the town e.g. Town Hall, Pound Arts, BSU and Springfield Campus. The Town Council should have a bigger involvement in the Peacock Arts Trail, with increased funding and support – it is already providing exhibition space at the Town Hall for the autumn 2017 Trail.

The Town Council should consider including an arts aspect to all community events and exhibitions, in particular site-specific responses to really engage and inspire the wider community. Corsham Town Council should look to invest in the development of the arts using an online network similar to Creative Bath. Processes for funding opportunities, specifically for the cultural and creative industries, should be evaluated if continuing importance is given to **Alive with Centres of Excellence**.

- 2. Destination Corsham is about putting Corsham 'on the map'. The intention is to make the town welcoming and attractive to residents, visitors, students and businesses. It will include promoting the town not just locally, but to others who might not know about all that Corsham has to offer. The Town Council is keen to encourage more events that will bring tourists to the area and help the local economy.**

It is vital that we broaden Corsham's cultural offer and develop a 'Creative Corsham' brand identity across both the emerging creative and tourism sectors as previously alluded to in the 2015 Visit Corsham Destination Marketing Plan. We should nurture our existing cultural assets in an attempt to further raise our profile in a challenging tourism market 'distinguishing ourselves in a region with a lot of natural and architectural beauty and many other market towns with arts, cultural and retail aspirations'.

We should make the most of shared marketing opportunities which highlight our strongest USPs to build upon our reputation and encourage visitor numbers achieved by working closely with Peacock Arts Trail, Pound Arts and Visit Wiltshire in a coordinated approach - 'support the coordination and promotion of quality events in town that strengthen the local culture, arts and heritage, and promote leisure activities' (Visit Corsham, Destination Marketing Plan – Executive Summary, 2015).

With an engaging, varied and quality arts event programme showcasing the best local talent, it will be easy to maintain and further build relationships with local media e.g. the fantastic BBC coverage in the build up to Emma Leith's yarn installation for the 'Above and Beyond' WW1 exhibition in October 2016.

- 3. Open to Business is about making the most of the broad spectrum of employment opportunities that Corsham has to offer and exploring and exploiting the pipeline from school to workplace. Work will be done to gain a better understanding of what existing and potential businesses and employers**

are looking for and sharing that information with others who can make good use of it.

Corsham Town Council strives to attract new creative businesses to the area, whilst encouraging businesses to continue to operate and grow here, with supported initiatives such as a regular creative industries forum, with an appropriate programme of events, training and business support. Effective partnerships should be developed with SWLEP and the Careers and Enterprise team at Bath Spa University in order for the Town Council to facilitate these forums.

In alignment with the strategic objective to create routes from higher education to local employers with a strong emphasis on technology, it is necessary to form effective partnerships with The Corsham School and local businesses. These routes to employment can be further examined through working closely with the Centre for Creative Computing at Bath Spa University's Corsham Court Campus, in particular the Creative Technologies and Enterprise MSc programme.

Creating a significant cultural and creative presence on the High Street will help to create a vibrant independent retail environment, firstly working with Pound Arts to examine the best ways in which this can be achieved and secondly developing a creative hub with proximity to the town centre. Corsham Town Council can also work with the Corsham Creative Market and the Martingate Centre to organise seasonal pop-up opportunities. The Town Council could broaden the yearly retail and business benchmarking research to include the creative industries to assess the impact the emerging sector has on the town.

- 4. Managed Development is about having a say in how Corsham develops. This can mean promoting desirable changes, such as improving the transport system and increasing the variety of affordable shops, or resisting unwelcome changes which are likely to have a significant negative impact on the Town.**

The Mansion House site has been highlighted in the survey as a site with potential to provide workspace and exhibition space. Its proximity to the town is perfect for establishing a strong cultural and creative presence within the town itself, creating another centre of excellence within the town with a separate identity to the Pound.

There is an enthusiasm to develop a sculpture trail which meanders through the town centre and outwards to the surrounding settlements ideally showcasing the area's finest Bath Stone. Subsequently from the Creative Corsham Strategy, a Public Art

Strategy would allow Corsham Town Council to consult on new developments, for a cohesive sculpture trail with locally relevant and nationally renowned art – to create an understanding of place and people, for the benefit of the community and visitors; making Corsham a leading edge Public Art destination in the South West. This should be done in conjunction with the Public Realm Study and Destination Corsham to look at the value of art in place-making and the social impact of integrated public art and also its impact on tourism. It is imperative that the quality of the sculptures is enduring in presence and/or time to create an overall impact on people and a distinctive sense of place, whilst considering the need to construct the trail over time.

- 5. Safe and Healthy Community is about improving access to activities and opportunities for older people; improving access to activities for young people; supporting and enabling better sports provision; researching local healthcare needs, and working in collaboration with the Police on community safety issues.**

Corsham Town Council believes that increasing the number of people who experience and contribute to the Arts is good for society. Sharing cultural experiences brings communities together to better understand the social impact of the arts and culture. By adopting the Creative Corsham Strategy and championing local talent, demonstrating a strong emphasis on arts development as being integral to what we do, we can inspire learning and participation in the Arts.

- 6. Integration is about integration of all parts of the community, but has particular emphasis on growing the town's relationship with the MOD and Bath Spa University. It will include research into the needs of those major local employers and making sure they form a strong part of Corsham life.**

Creative clusters don't just consist of businesses and workers, they are made up of other important local institutions such as BSU, the MOD and business networks too. We can obtain relevant and purposive data which measures these institutions and their impact on Corsham, which can help the Town Council identify a wider set of strengths and weaknesses in the our Creative Industries ecosystem and enable us to design suitable interventions when needed.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corsham Town Council’s Strategic Plan: Alive with Centres of Excellence

Alive with Centres of Excellence is one of the six themes of the Strategic Plan (2014-2018) and the overall strategy has the aspiration “Corsham – a place where people want to be”.

The three main **aims** are:

- To enhance Corsham as a recognised Centre of Excellence for the Arts, creative and cultural activity.
- To establish Corsham as a Centre of Excellence for different sectors, e.g. independent retail.
- To establish a forum to encourage collaboration between stakeholders.

The **objectives** from those aims are to:

- To encourage collaboration between the Arts, creative and cultural stakeholders.
- To promote and celebrate our local Arts, creative and cultural sector through the press and social media.
- To encourage events and activities that engages the local community.
- To uses this enhanced activity to promote Corsham as a Centre of Excellence for diverse sectors.

The **actions** from those objectives are to:

- Produce list of initial target sectors and their stakeholders.
- Establish quarterly forums for different sectors in Corsham, e.g. independent retail, community groups and associations, sports clubs – provide refreshments and facilitation to encourage networking and engagement.
- Encourage collaborative activities and projects to emerge from stakeholder forums with priority access to funds and Town Council facilities.
- Identify the number of existing local groups and clusters of activity which have the potential to contribute towards Corsham as a Centre of Excellence.
- Identify existing spend on each sector and redesign processes and messaging around funding applications from those sectors.
- Develop a regular newsletter/website/social media presence for a collected ‘what’s on guide’ to local events,
- Establish contacts with local Press and their arts/events editors.
- Produce a list of stakeholders, e.g. The Pound, Bath Spa University, schools,

Right Angle Picture Framing, Corsham Art Society, the Peacock Arts Trail and Springfield Campus.

- Creating a survey of Arts, creative and cultural group and event awareness in the town – circulate via social media and hard copies to groups.
- As sectors emerge, research resources of funding and support locally, nationally and from the EU, to which stakeholders can be directed.

The possible **challenges** to these actions are:

- Identifying and inviting both appropriate sectors and the relevant stakeholders to the appropriate forum.
- Persuading the stakeholders that the forum has value.
- Altering existing processes to accommodate prioritising collaborative projects over single-stakeholder applications.
- Making sufficient funds available for an increased number and scale of applications.
- Identifying other sources of funding and communicating the information to others.

The **measures used to evaluate** Corsham being established as a Centre of Excellence include:

- Number of collaborative grant applications received and events held.
- Number of events receiving local, regional and national Press coverage.
- Surveying awareness of existing activities and support and resources available before and after forum activities.
- Number of activities that successfully attract external funds beyond the Town Council.
- Participation in forum.

Appendix 2 – Corsham Creative Industries Survey and Workshop Results

Our aim is to develop a 'centre of excellence' –with a local, regional, national reputation for the scale and quality of our local Creative Industries. We don't hold all the levers - inevitably some challenges are very individual, and some powers (e.g. business rates) are out of our hands. But how do we build a better eco-system that supports creativity?

So this is what the recent creative industries survey told us about Corsham:

Types of Organisation*

42% Independent Artists

35% Commercial Creative or Cultural Business

17.5% Arts or Cultural Organisation

15% 'Other'

10% Not for Profit

5% Education

*Some respondents class themselves as multiple categories of organisation.

Nature of Work

67.5% Professional

12.5% Semi-Professional

12.5% 'Other'

7.5% Hobbyist

Sector

40% Visual Arts

30% Art & Antiques

17.5% Crafts, Photography, Performing Arts

15% Digital Publishing, Teaching & Private Tuition

12.5% Creative Writing, Live Performance, Music

10% Digital & Entertainment Media, Film Production, Theatre

7.5% Publishing

5% Garden Design, Graphic Design, Jewellery Design, Music Production, Music Publication, TV

Business status

87.5% Fewer than five people

55% Sole Traders

60% Turning over less than £50K per annum

65% Not VAT registered

Roughly a third of respondents had been running for less than five years

Another third had been running between five and 15 years

The final third had been running for over 15 years

Broad spectrum of ages targeted

Going outside of Corsham for business/professional development e.g. training and skills.

Corsham's Strengths and Weaknesses:

Strengths:

1. The Pound
2. Scale of local talent
3. Location (both close to other places, pleasant aspect)
4. The Peacock Arts Trail
5. Tradition/Associations with Bath Academy of Arts/Bath Spa University

Weaknesses:

- 1, Disconnectedness
2. Lack of marketing
3. Lack of workspace
4. Lack of exhibition space
5. Empty shops

Questions:

What are the issues and challenges for growing a creative business in Corsham?

1. Infrastructure - Lack of transport links and high speed broadband
2. Business and professional development – lack of networking opportunities and funding
3. Not enough festivals and events in the town
4. Lack of publicity and marketing of the Creative Industries in the area
5. Lack of a Creative Hub – Work space, exhibition and retail space, poor connectivity with other creative hubs/towns in the South West

How could we improve our offer? (Inspiration, validation, support, enabling growth)

1. Work/studio/exhibition space – ideally in a Creative Hub
 2. Networking – Links to other creative hubs/towns
 3. Create an online Creative Industries Network
 4. Provide more opportunities/projects for people of all ages/backgrounds to increase participation in the Arts
 5. Creative Industries Co-ordinator
 6. Improve and build upon our existing festival programme
 7. More funding opportunities
- For working in Corsham as a Creative practitioner/business
 1. Work/studio/exhibition space
 2. Networking opportunities
 3. Transport links
 4. Marketing and Advertising
 5. Increase in footfall
 - For visitors to Corsham to experience Creative practice
 1. More publicity, advertising and sign-posting
 2. More tangible outcomes in-line with the CTC's strategic aims to establish Corsham as a destination
 3. Better connectivity to other creative hubs/towns
 4. More cohesive programming of events throughout the town
 5. Increased visual presence of the Creative Industries within the town

- For providing creative education and activities
 1. Supported collaborations between artists and education facilitators
 2. Develop a strong partnership between the Corsham School and Bath Spa University
 3. More workshops, events, training opportunities for artists and wider communities
 4. Publicity and marketing

Specific opportunities:

- Mansion House
- Peacock Arts Trail
- Community Creativity Fund
- Corsham Creative Market

Appendix 3 – SWOT Analysis of Corsham as a Centre of Cultural and Creative Excellence

Strengths

- Pound Arts
- Local Talent – number of artists and businesses in the creative industries
- Location – proximity to Lacock, Bath, Bristol etc
- Peacock Arts Trail
- Independent Retailers
- Tradition and heritage of the arts in Corsham from Bath Academy of Art and Design to Bath Spa University
- Monthly Corsham Creative Market
- Historic High Street
- Architectural significance of the town centre
- Corsham Arts Society and other community groups
- All the Pretty Things
- Volunteers
- Sense of community
- Springfield Campus
- Natural environment
- Diverse range of creative talent
- Film location opportunities
- Corsham Bookshop

Weaknesses

- Lack of consultation between developers and Corsham Town Council
- Independent Retailers
- Lack of superfast broadband
- Lack of footfall
- Lack of awareness of the local Creative Industries
- A sense of disconnectedness
- Lack of identity
- Lack of a creative hub
- Lack of marketing/promotion
- Lack of affordable workspace
- Lack of performance space
- Lack of exhibition space
- Lack of collaboration
- Empty shops
- Martingate
- Pound Arts
- Lack of association with other cultural locations
- Lack of networking opportunities
- Lack of visibility of artists and creative professionals etc
- Lack of investment
- Lack of an Arts Coordinator
- The Corsham School – lack of community involvement
- Bath Spa University – lack of community involvement
- Poor transport links and train station
- Lack of Corsham Town Council
- Corsham Creative Market
- Volunteers
- No Creative Strategy
- High rents
- Corsham Court
- Corsham Arts Society
- Springfield Campus (opening hours, facilities)

Opportunities

- Database/forum for artists and creative professionals
- Creative events programme
- More/bigger events
- Pound Arts – developing a partnership
- Produce more targeted marketing material and promotion to specific groups
- Outdoor Performance Space
- Public Realm Study
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Managed Development
- Destination Marketing Plan
- Film Location
- Corsham Town Council to use local artists more on community projects
- Collaboration opportunities
- Martingate improvements
- Working closer with Independent Retailers
- Develop Creative Corsham USP
- Networking opportunities – artists cafe
- Emerging Cultural and Creative Strategy
- Designated Gallery
- Arnold House
- Free parking
- Investment
- The Corsham School
- Corsham Creative Market
- Bath Spa University
- Public Art Strategy
- Develop links to other cultural locations and creative towns
- Town Hall as a prospective exhibition space (display boards) eg. Peacock Arts Trail
- Develop an Arts Coordinator position
- Railway Station
- Develop a Creative Hub
- Peacock Arts Trail – develop relationship
- Corsham Digital Mansion
- Develop a coordinated social media presence and website
- Springfield Campus
- Local arts for wellbeing community groups

Threats

- Pound Arts – funding cuts
- Investment – if cut
- Lack of volunteers
- Reorganisation of Bath Spa University
- Other cultural locations –competitions
- Uncoordinated approach to public art by developers
- Lack of relationship with Creative Industries professionals and businesses

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