

Presentation at the Culture Durham Meet 2018, 22nd November 2018

Roger Kelly, Chair of Culture Durham Partnership

Introduction

Good afternoon everybody and, on behalf of the Culture Durham Partnership Board, welcome to the Culture Durham annual Meet.

Thank you Canon for your kind welcome and generosity in providing this glorious venue for our event. Durham Cathedral has, in the past, been voted the nation's favourite building and I'm sure many of us share that opinion or at least completely understand why. It is the pinnacle of cultural heritage in the county and it is a real privilege to be here this afternoon. We hope that, along with our programme today it provides inspiration for wonderful cultural activity in the county for the coming years.

We are delighted to see so many cultural practitioners and organisations here today. Our programme has been designed to highlight forthcoming opportunities, spark ideas, explore the art of the possible, learn about how others have worked collaboratively and experience some of our cultural heritage first hand. More of that later.

First I would like to update you on what the partnership has been doing over the past year.

Refresh of Vision and Action Plan

After two years of working on the delivery of our vision and action plan the partnership board decided that it was time to review and refresh the document. We agreed that the vision was still relevant but that the priorities needed to be honed for 2018 to 2020. It builds on work carried out since 2016, what we have learned in that time and it is a response to our evolving cultural environment; it illustrates the Partnership's sharpened focus.

Both the original vision and action plan and the refresh document are both on our website www.culturedurham.org.uk and hard copies will be available in the Cultural Exchange Market Place later this afternoon.

To summarise, key priorities are: advocacy of the importance of culture to our economy and regeneration; marketing and reputation; and audiences and programme.

The most pressing actions for the partnership over the next 2 years include:

- Working more closely with the County Durham Economic Partnership, the North East Culture Partnership and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership on the growth of our culture offer, the cultural ambition of the county and addressing skills gaps;
- Promoting the opportunities presented by the arts and creative industries as potential careers for young people;
- Coordinating responses to major funding opportunities to secure additional external resources for development and delivery of collaborative projects, both cultural assets and activities;
- Collaboratively coordinating programmes and promotion of cultural venues and activities across the county;
- Celebrating good work and best practice;
- Identifying new ways working with NECP and NELEP to promote the county's outstanding heritage and excellent cultural offer, aligning with the region as a place to live and invest;
- Greater digital sharing of information about each other's organisations through digital channels
- Taking forward our education priorities in discussion with the County Durham Cultural Education Partnership;
- Explore the potential for joint ticketing;
- Developing audience diversity;
- Learning from work on engaging local communities carried out by East Durham Creates and Northern Heartlands to increase engagement in and audiences for cultural activity in the county;
- Scope out the value of and possibility of county level collaborative work and continue collaboration at a regional level through NECP to increase our international cultural and heritage profile and audiences;
- Exploring ways to increase accessibility to cultural collections within the County, following on from developing the greater understanding of our audiences;
- Developing local audiences in communities across the County.

This is an ambitious agenda but it is important to maintain and grow the vibrancy of our county. And we hope it will increase the contribution our sector makes to the social and economic wellbeing of our residents. Keep an eye on our website and ensure you are signed up for our email newsletters so that you can stay up to speed on how you can be involved.

New Board Members

In response to the changing cultural landscape of the county and our priority of developing work in communities across the county, we are pleased to welcome the East Durham Trust, Northern Heartlands, Redhills and Raby Castle to the Board. This better reflects the cultural life of the county and it also gives us greater scope to share learning and best practice.

Events Forum

Our events forum has been formed and is developing ideas for collaborative and themed promotion and activity.

Cultural use of chapels and community heritage buildings

Northern Heartlands is taking forward as a pilot one of our earlier actions by developing exhibitions in local chapels. We see this as an excellent way of taking visual art/performance/music into communities while at the same time developing new life for heritage buildings which are at risk of underuse.

Our sister partnership, the County Durham Cultural Education Partnership is taking forward excellent work with schools in sharing best practice, notably through the Creative Learning Week in July, and also development of a network of cultural lead governors across schools in the county who will advocate the importance of creativity in the class-room and learn from what is happening in other schools to circumvent reduced funding for arts education.

Cultural Development Fund

We collaborated to submit a bid for the Cultural Development Fund in the summer. Although the bid was unsuccessful, as a partnership we worked well together towards a common goal – that of addressing skills gaps identified by cultural venues seeking to fill positions. We are exploring how far we can take this work forward without external funding but also readying ourselves in the event of resources becoming available in the future.

2018 events

2018 has seen many exciting events and activities across the county – in some ways this is nothing new – our cultural life is burgeoning, rich and vibrant. There is something for everybody and it is to be celebrated. These rolling images illustrate only a few of the highlights of the year.

Locomotion - Tim Peake's Soyuz Capsule was on display at Locomotion at the start of the year and proved a huge draw, quadrupling the normal number of visitors for January. The Flying Scotsman visited Locomotion in July and attracted over 27,000 visitors in its three week stay. It is hoped to bring this most iconic of locomotives back in summer 2019. And the annual Steam Gala was held at Locomotion in late September. The theme for the celebration was the 50th anniversary of the end of steam on the main line and the guest engine was Oliver Cromwell, a Britannia class locomotive that was used to pull the last passenger service. Visitors were given a special certificate based on a poster found in the NRM Collection as a souvenir.

Raby Castle activities have included an Orchid Show, a Classic Car Show, Outdoor Theatre – Romeo and Juliet and Twelfth Night - and Room on the Broom Walks for families.

Durham Cathedral was deservedly awarded prestigious RIBA regional and national awards this year for Open Treasure, a wonderful programme of concerts including the Hubert Parry centenary concert in partnership with Durham University and Durham Music Service, an exhibition on mining history, the North West Tower was opened for tours for the first time, and Holocaust Memorial Day and the World War 1 Armistice were marked with talks, exhibitions and of course, services.

North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty exhibited the William Smith 1815 original geological map at the Bowlees Visitor Centre, thanks to Arts Council England funding has worked with children on invertebrates and has commissioned a new sculpture from Steve Messam which will be displayed in 2019.

Cobweb Orchestra's exciting development is a new Ludworth Group which performed for the first time in July in St Cuthbert's Church, Shadforth. Other concerts by Cobwebbers have included the Cobweb Cabaret

Ensemble at Ushaw, the Elvaston Ensemble at St Mary's Church, Shincliffe in June – with a follow-up performance on 14th December and this coming Saturday the Cobweb Chamber Orchestra will be playing in Penrith.

The Auckland Project – launched the impressive Auckland Tower in October, has a new exhibition in the Mining Art Gallery – Breaking Ground: Women of the Northern Coalfields which opened in October and runs to 24th March. It started work with community artists of all ages in October on a collaborative artwork as part of the national Big Draw in October, led by artist and illustrator, Laura Brenchley.

Durham County Cricket Club – hosted a spectacular concert by Simple Minds, the Pretenders and K.T.Tunstall in August. And of course, Richard will be talking more about the exciting news that Riverside is hosting 3 Cricket World Cup matches next year.

East Durham Creates – continues to do incredible work with the local community. A group of young people from Trimdon Station Community Centre have been working with internationally recognised photographer Mary Turner to curate and organise an exhibition of her body of work 'Dispossessed', which came runner - up in the Fotoawards. Dispossessed is a photography project taken about East Durham and the effects the mine closures still has on the communities that live there today. The exhibition 'No More Nowt Happens' opens on 30th November and runs to 3rd December. Earlier this month BBC Slam Poet winner Jess Green who is a friend of and works closely with East Durham Creates joined the East Durham Trust Conference to launch our new Women's Centenary project and perform her poem Held Back by Nicky Morgan. And 'If These Walls Could Talk', the programme of arts workshops continues to provide opportunities for local people to be involved in creative activity.

Bowes – one of this year's highlights at Bowes has been the stunning Catwalking exhibition of fashion photography which continues until 6th January. To Serve King and County: Exploring the Role of Teesdale in World War 1 continues until 3rd March. Over the summer the exhibition of Quentin Blake illustrations, The BFG in Pictures enthralled children and adults alike. The Jonathan Yeo exhibition of images of cosmetic surgery, 'Skin Deep', was fascinating and beautiful but at the same time disturbing. And of course, Lux Mundi, the light installation by Alexandra Carr which was launched at our Culture Durham Meet 2017, was on display over the Bowes stair case until late February.

Beamish – held its first Stargazing and astronomy event in January. In February half term it put on the exhibition, Queens of the Machines: Women at War, commemorating the work of women during the First World War. And it won a North East Business Award for Tourism and Hospitality and a Visit England Accolade for Best Told Story. Of course, the usual fantastic range of concerts, festivals and events continued to entertain us all throughout the year.

Durham County Council events included Brass in July, the Book Festival in October, at the new Gala Gallery exhibitions of Matisse Lithographs and currently a selection of Sir John Tenniels illustrations from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There will be on display in the from Saturday 17 November - Sunday 13 January 2019. Following the launch of the Louise Plant's Ps in a Pod in Seaham last year the sculptures have visited Bishop Auckland and Hamsterley Forest before being given a long term home in Wharton Park.

The Forge – has developed a new project around the story of Alexander Barrass, a new theatre piece called Year of Wonders and won the Journal Culture Awards best event of the year 2018 at the journal culture with Defiant Requiem.

TIN Arts – fantastic inclusive dance performances included Best Foot Forward and The Last Place at the Gala Theatre, Slide at St Leonard's Catholic School, Durham, FUSE at Bishop Auckland Town Hall, performances at Includfest, Hunting the Unicorn at Stockton Riverside Festival. Hunting the Unicorn was included in the Barcelona Time Out as one of the top ten shows to see at the Fira Tarrega Festival 2018 George Williams, long-time dancer with TIN Arts, has reached the finals of the National Lottery Awards with his solo dance piece WIRED. TIN will be celebrating its 20th anniversary next year so watch this space for more exciting events.

Durham Creatives, funded by Business Durham, is a free programme, which helps artists and creative entrepreneurs by delivering practical workshops commercialising their activity, with subjects such as finance, marketing, patent protection and selling online, as well as personal mentoring and has recently held a residential Festival of Creativity at Ushaw which generated some amazing work.

Ushaw – Ushaw had a busy programme which has included exhibitions of Tomoaki Suzuki contemporary sculptures, Frank Henry Mason's naval art, a jazz festival, Kathryn Tickell and Northern Sinfonia amongst many more.

This afternoon's programme – has been designed to flag up new opportunities and to inspire. Steve Howell from Durham County Council will brief you on plans for County Durham Year of Culture 2019 and Richard Dowson from the Durham County Cricket club will pick up on the specific opportunities presented by the Cricket World Cup. Eliot Smith and Jo Coupe will tell you about how they have responded to some of the opportunities which have arisen with partner organisations and through Durham Creatives programmes. Ross Forbes will tell you about the exciting developments at Redhills.

We will then move into the cloisters for the Cultural Exchange Market Place where you will be able to explore collaboration opportunities with partner organisations. Tea and coffee will be available at this point. Then we will then have the opportunity for a complimentary viewing of Open Treasure.

After this we will move over to the University for tours of Bishop Cosin's Library and the Exchequer, followed by a drinks reception in the Courtyard Café at Palace Green Library.

We hope that you enjoy and benefit from the afternoon.

I should also like to thank the cathedral and the university for their generosity in hosting the event for us today. What a wonderful and inspirational location our World Heritage Site provides us with. Many thanks to Jane Shaw of Durham Creatives for the work she has put in to making this event happen. Thank you to all our wonderful speakers. And thank you to all of you for attending.