

## **Culture Cumbria**

### **Board Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

#### **Update on Strategy Development**

The development of the strategy for Culture Cumbria alongside the development of the sector action plan for Cumbria Vision has been a frustrating process. The questions and answers in appendix 1 may throw some light on what has been happening.

Encouragement will also be found in the letter (Appendix 2) from Roger Liddle (Chairman of Cumbria Vision) inviting comments on the very recently published sector strategy plans. The letter and the web link in it explain how comments can be made. Given the timetable for responses (closing 5<sup>th</sup> September) there is no opportunity to bring a draft response from CuCu to a Board meeting. It is suggested that NJ and EC prepare a draft response from the board and circulate it by email for comment.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **It is 9 months since we filled in a form about cultural projects in the county. We have heard nothing yet what is going on?**

Timescales have slipped considerably since the expressions of interest process began. In September 2007, Cumbria Vision submitted the Cumbria Sub-Regional Action Plan (SRAP) 2008-2011 to the North West Development Agency (NWDA). The SRAP is list of all the projects within the county seeking NWDA funding in the coming 3 years (although it is renewed on an annual basis). In the SRAP, the Culture Cumbria Strategy was listed as a priority project, and had the original plan come to fruition, by January 2008 the NWDA would have agreed which projects they were interested in funding and a formal application procedure could begin in time to meet the start of the 2008-2009 financial year. In order to have a solid strategy put together to meet this timescale, we therefore undertook the expression of interest procedure late in 2007.

Unfortunately, the timescale for 'agreement' of the SRAP was pushed back for various reasons, with the result that it was June 2008 before we received confirmation that the NWDA would not be seeking to fund the Culture Cumbria project, at least in the 2008-2009 financial year. The reasons for this are manifold, but predominantly that the NWDA is facing significant reductions in the amount of funding it receives from HM Government, with the result that there is very little 'headroom' left within the appropriate budgets for new projects, once existing commitments are accounted for.

### **Why is there such a delay? It doesn't help struggling organisations like us.**

A combination of factors has come into play that has impacted on the timescale. Over the past 6 months, Regional Development Agencies across the country have been given a range of new roles and responsibilities, not least of which is the role of managing body for European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), that was formerly the responsibility of Government Offices.

The adoption of these new roles, combined with a reduction in budgets and the need to ensure that Regional Development Agency and ERDF funding is properly aligned, has resulted in unavoidable delays in finalising Sub-Regional Action Plans in the North West.

Both the NWDA and Cumbria Vision appreciate that this delay and uncertainty over funding arrangements has caused difficulties, particularly in the cultural sector which faces other challenges, not least through reducing Arts Council funds and the Northern Rock affair, however the systems that have been put in place during this hiatus should ensure that the SRAP in future years is finalised within a much shorter timescale.

### **So is it still likely that there will be some cash available?**

We hope so!!! – NWDA have indicated that the Culture Cumbria project is not currently a funding priority, but the board of Cumbria Vision, and particularly the chair Roger Liddle, are in vigorous negotiations with the NWDA regarding the merits of projects coming forward from Cumbria. The Cultural Economic Strategy is marked as a key priority within our existing Sub-Regional Action Plan and will continue as such in the 2009-2010 version currently under preparation. As such we will be making a particularly strong case with the NWDA to support the bid. This success of this is, of course, subject to a number of factors – Regional funding priorities, budget allocations and of course the level of economic benefit that the Cultural Strategy can offer.....

### **Our project has changed a lot since we filled in the form can we re-submit?**

By all means – The expressions of interest exercise has always been informal, and the Cultural Development Strategy is still evolving. We will also welcome new projects.

### **So what is your best guess of the timetable at the moment?**

The 2009-2010 Sub-Regional Action Plan (with the Cultural Development Strategy listed as a priority) will be submitted by Cumbria Vision to the NWDA in ..... Submission will be followed by an ongoing period of negotiation. We do not yet have a timescale for finalisation of next year's SRAP, but it should be within a much shorter timescale than this year's version.

Should the NWDA indicate that they are interested in supporting Culture Cumbria, we would then need to go through a formal application process. This can take up to 10 months, but with prior negotiation, we would anticipate that this timescale would be considerably reduced. It is therefore feasible that funding could be available for the start of the 2009-2010 financial year, but it could equally not be until 2010-2011. We will keep stakeholders updated as soon as further information becomes available.

### **Are there any reasons to be cheerful in all this?**

Digital, Cultural and Creative industries are still considered to be one of the 6 key sectors in the Cumbrian economy, and Cumbria Vision will continue to advocate on behalf of the sector at regional and national levels. Increasingly, Regional Development Agencies are being required to reflect local and sub-regional priorities in their funding decisions, and hence we will have an increasingly powerful voice in the future. Furthermore, with the growing strength of Culture Cumbria as a voice for the Cultural sector and a develop cultural economic strategy, we can demonstrate strategic leadership and consensus in all funding bids.

### **Festivals, events, creative industries, cultural organisations why are they all being treated differently? We are often one and the same body.**

Largely because of different ways these 'sectors' impact on the economy - 'Digital and Creative Industries' is treated as a key sector by the NWDA because of the large concentration of businesses within the region, and their current potential for growth in profitability and employment. 'Culture' itself is not treated as a key sector *per se* but it is recognised that it brings increased visitor revenues, and contributes to the overall appeal of the region as a place to live, work and invest. Therefore there

are no specific budgets for cultural activity within the NWDA, but the Tourism and Marketing departments are interested in supporting cultural activities where they can demonstrate economic benefits. Cumbria Vision do recognise that, particularly in Cumbria, there is significant cross over between the two 'sectors', and for that reason the two are combined within our Strategic Action Plan for Digital, Cultural and Creative industries.

In terms of events and festivals, Cumbria Vision sees them as clearly fitting within the remit of Culture Cumbria. We anticipate that in future, strategic direction for funding of events will come via CuCu. In the meantime, the County Council are going ahead with their bid to the NWDA for continuation of their Events and Festivals fund; This stems from a desire to secure ongoing funding for events with the minimum time gap following the expiry of the previous E&F fund; including events within the CuCu strategy development would have resulted in an increased time lag.

Dear Colleague

### **Cumbria Vision: Strategy Action Plans 2008, Consultation Period**

Cumbria Vision is pleased to announce the commencement of the consultation period on the Strategy Action Plans which sit beneath Cumbria's Economic Plan (previously published October, 2007 and revised in 2008).

To underpin the Economic Plan, we have produced 12 strategic action plans, 6 of which relate to Cumbria's priority industry sectors and 6 to interconnected cross cutting themes:

- Energy & Environmental Technology
- Tourism
- Specialist Manufacturing
- Food & Drink
- Digital, Cultural & Creative
- Outdoor Sport, Recreation & Leisure
- Employment, Education & Skills
- Rural and Agriculture
- Business & Enterprise
- Housing
- Connectivity
- Sustainable Communities\*

\*(Feedback from consultation so far indicates that Sustainable Communities is a fundamental issue which should guide the delivery of the whole Economic Plan. It is therefore proposed that this be incorporated into the body of the Economic Plan rather than be a separate Strategic Action Plan).

The purpose of these Strategy Action Plans is to bridge the gap between the strategy as outlined in the Economic Plan and the delivery of the actions which will be outlined in the next Sub-regional Action Plan (Due for release in December 2008). Each document accordingly takes a long term view when seeking to provide clarity and strategic prioritisation to an otherwise 'wish-list' of projects and programmes.

These Strategy Action Plans contain the key actions which we think will ensure delivery of the Economic Plan. Crucially, as a result of the current consultation, subsequent prioritisation of the key actions within each action plan will form the lynchpin for the projects proposed in the Sub-regional Action Plan.

These Strategy Action Plans represent work in progress. They attempt both to look up to 20 years ahead and at the same time to provide, where possible and evidenced, hard targets and economic impact over the next 10 years. The Strategy Action Plans thus begin to describe a future Cumbria and show, through aspiration, what the spatial impact of the Economic Plan could be across the 4 distinct delivery areas in the county; Barrow, Carlisle, West Coast, South Lakes & Eden

Whilst these Strategy Action Plans take account of existing Cumbrian strategies, they also canvass new aspirations for future economic growth. Each document is therefore deliberately challenging and ambitious, yet remains non-prescriptive in nature.

The plans attempt to identify the complex linkages and inter-relationships between our strategies for each of priority industry sectors. In parallel they assess what would be the combined impact of these sectoral aspirations on key cross-cutting themes, for example, how the spatial patterns of growth may necessitate the provision of appropriate housing, connectivity, employment land etc. The intention is to open up debate on whether current strategies are consistent with likely patterns of development in terms of employment, skills, infrastructure and the like, if we were to grow in accordance with our aspirations.

In drafting these Strategy Action Plans a significant amount of consultation debate has already taken place with interested parties. We are now seeking a wider range of views from Cumbria's businesses,

farmers, voluntary organisations and community bodies as well as individual members of the public who wish to comment.

Whilst all comments are welcome, we would appreciate, in particular, comments which will aid the prioritisation of the key actions. For example: What do you think would or would not work? Where should we be focussing most of our attention? What key actions would achieve the greatest results: or alternatively, which would bring little benefit?

To help you formulate your responses we have produced a comments sheet which can be downloaded from our website at: <http://www.cumbriavision.co.uk/template.asp?l1=1&l2=1161>.

We have also created an email address at [consultation.response@cumbriavision.co.uk](mailto:consultation.response@cumbriavision.co.uk) to which we request you direct your response. To aid us in the collation of responses there is a response form for each individual Strategy Action Plan, and we ask that you organise your comments accordingly.

The consultation period will end at 17.00 on Friday, SEPTEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> The Board of Cumbria Vision will then hold a series of meetings with different sectors across the County to discuss the outcome of the consultation.

We very much hope you will take part in this consultation exercise and thank you in advance for your constructive comments.

Roger Liddle  
Chairman – Cumbria Vision