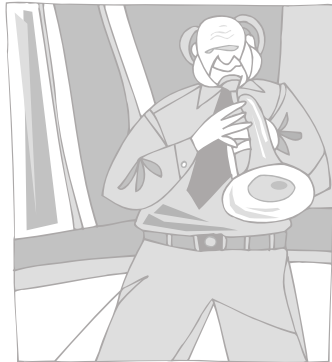
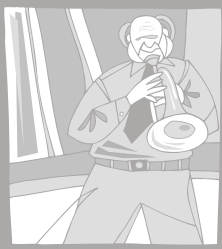


Theme 12: Culture & Heritage

A Sustainable Future
for the South West



The Regional Sustainable Development Framework
for the South West of England



Theme 12: Culture & Heritage

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Headline Indicator:

The net loss of historic / cultural assets.

Setting the Scene

Culture is about people and their lifestyles, and about the environment in which they live. Culture encompasses the arts, religion, the historic environment, film, television and other broadcast media, creative activities (design, publishing, crafts, architecture, interactive software, etc), museums and galleries, libraries and education. Ethnicity and origin are fundamental elements of culture: the cultural diversity of race, creed, law, language and custom. People born of a place, of a time, of a circumstance, have a right to be valued for who they are, as well as valued for the cultural diversity they represent and can bring to benefit all of society. Culture should not be a divisive or elitist thing.

People define heritage by the value they attach to places, ideas, activities and artefacts. Heritage nurtures individual and collective identities and provides knowledge, inspiration, security and delight. Heritage inherited from the past is the foundation of contemporary cultural life, upon which we create the heritage of the future. Our collective inheritance includes social injustice, exploitation and degradation of people and their environments. Appreciation of our heritage should prevent us repeating the mistakes of the past.

The South West is recognised for its high quality of culture and heritage - for its creative abilities past and present. These attributes relate to both rural and urban interests, which should not be segregated: the region encompasses hugely-important town and city cultures, as well as a rich diversity of countryside cultures. Thus, historic houses, churches and abbeys, parks and gardens, ancient monuments, patterns of land use and enclosures, vernacular buildings of cob, indigenous stone and timber, and a wealth of creative talent, are all key parts of the cultural

'scene'. The region is endowed with exemplars of cultural life - the Tate at St.Ives, Dartington Hall, Parnham, the various Museums and Galleries (10 of which have been designated as having collections of national importance) - all dedicated to the protection and interpretation of the best of the past and the best of the present; and to the promotion of the best of the future.

These assets all contribute to the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the region, and are crucial to the value attached to places by individuals and communities, residents and visitors alike. The South West is recognised internationally for its culture and heritage, yet within the region there is great importance attached to local distinctiveness. Political and administrative aspects of regionalisation must recognise local distinctiveness as a fundamental basis of the region's qualities and attractiveness. Cultural diversity is a prize asset. The culture and heritage sector of the regional economy supports over 10% of all jobs in the South West and accounts for over 10% of the GDP. Visitors spend in excess of £5 billion. The region contains the largest concentration of historic sites in the country, with 88,000 listed buildings, 7,000 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and over 200 registered museums attracting 5 million visitors each year. The South West receives twice as many tourists as any other English region.

Individual well-being depends on a healthy mind and a healthy body. Physical and intellectual access to the cultural and heritage resources of the region should be available for all - be it through library facilities in every community, or practical involvement in cultural and conservation projects. Our vision is that every aspect of local distinctiveness will be identified and awarded significance in land use and strategic planning at regional and local levels; and will be sustained by appropriate development and conservation programmes, for art and music, education and heritage.

What are the opportunities for improving sustainability?

There are four key opportunities to sustain culture and heritage interests in the South West:

Promoting local distinctiveness and a sense of place.

The South West's great strength is its myriad of strong local identities, based on discrete communities such as the Forest of Dean, the Levels and Moors, West Penwith, as well as cultural groups in towns and cities such as Bristol or Plymouth. Emphasising the distinctiveness of place in the South West, where there are huge differences and contrasts, makes economic sense. Traditions, customs, language, dialect all form an important part of this distinctiveness, which can be protected through the community planning process.

Protecting, enhancing and celebrating landscapes and townscapes.

The landscape (influenced over centuries by people, their customs, land use and building traditions) is the region's greatest cultural asset. It is the context for a high quality of life, a critical reason why people settle, work, invest in and visit the South West. Likewise, the region's towns are fantastically rich in their architectural and social history and strong in their support of contemporary cultural activities. The physical fabric of town and country requires sustenance - through continuation of appropriate use and specific conservation measures.

Securing the active involvement of individuals and communities.

Different groups and individuals in society place different values on the region's assets. To sustain the richness of the South West's cultural heritage, the whole community should be able to play an active role in protecting and enhancing their cultural assets. This requires inspirational

leadership and easy access to support structures. Social life in the South West is comprised of thousands of voluntary groups - active in conservation, arts, music, welfare, education - many operating with no financial or technical support other than from within their own resources. Community activities such as the Severn Revels (Forest of Dean), wassailing (West Somerset), barrel rolling (Ottery St.Mary), carnival (Bridgwater and Somerset towns) or Atlantic gig racing (Cornwall), deserve recognition and support. Libraries can play a key role in enabling individual and group activities - they deserve more support.

Ensuring there is no net loss of our culture and heritage.

The South West's cultural heritage must not be exploited and degraded for profit. We must enhance this asset, not decrease it: we can revitalise degraded places and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The regeneration of "derelict" land must recognise the value of such sites as local 'wildspace', as industrial relicts, as places where communities have their roots. Architecture that is unsympathetic to its surroundings is all too frequent. Stewardship of museum and archive collections is a key issue to ensure survival of the region's important cultural assets.



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What are the objectives for improving sustainability in the South West?

Objective	Examples of how it might be achieved	Links to potential partners and processes
Encourage increased access to, and participation in, cultural activities across the SW, capitalising on the latest developments in ICT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Incorporate cultural aspects into community plans, with a focus on encouraging communities to define what they value in their locality 2 establish a region-wide cultural award scheme for local communities, that enables local action. 3 provide resources for parish/community councils to lead on local distinctiveness. 	<p>Local Cultural Strategies have to be prepared by all Local Authorities by 2002.</p> <p>Countryside Agency Village Appraisal scheme, Common Ground's Parish Maps scheme</p> <p>South Western Regional Library System</p>
Ensure the South West remains a region of diverse and distinct cultural landscapes and townscapes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 protect historic buildings, designed landscapes and gardens, archaeological monuments, cultural landscapes, industrial archaeology. Establish a comprehensive system of support for conservation in rural and urban environments. 	<p>English Heritage Local Management Agreements, Conservation Areas, National Park Management Agreements, etc</p>
Endow the region's creative capabilities and maximise their social and economic benefit.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Incorporate cultural-led area regeneration into the Coastal and Market Towns initiative 2 Support broad range of cultural activities - through sponsorship, endowment, etc. 	<p>South West Arts, South West Museums Council, South West Tourism, English Heritage, Countryside Agency, SRB, HLF, etc</p>



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