

# **VIBRANT SHROPSHIRE**

Independent by nature

## **2021-2031**

Cultural Strategy for Shropshire

Developed in partnership by





# Contents

Introduction	4
Unique Shropshire	6
Shropshire’s cultural offer	9
A snapshot of Shropshire	10
The importance of culture	12
Impact of the coronavirus pandemic	14
Other considerations	16
What is culture?	17
Vibrant Shropshire	19
Summary of our key priorities and Overarching themes	20
Who will we focus on?	22
Our priorities	26
How will we measure success?	40
Cultural strategy working group	44
Image credits	46

# Foreword

**Unprecedented.** Not a word that’s usually bandied around much but 2020, after all, was an ‘unprecedented’ year. In February 2020, Shropshire was hit by the worst flooding in 20 years, with residents and businesses evacuated from Shrewsbury and Ironbridge following two severe danger-to-life flood warnings. Then came the first coronavirus lockdown. From 23 March 2020, all non-essential organisations were closed, including cultural venues, leisure, hospitality and retail. After that the world changed for all of us as other lockdowns followed.

With the UK also leaving the European Union, this cultural strategy for Shropshire comes at a challenging time.

Culture has been, more than ever, accessed online and through the TV, and outdoor spaces have become a lifeline for many. There are also unprecedented opportunities. With the lockdowns, we’ve had the time to reflect on what happens next, both as individuals and cultural providers.

We’ve set out ambitious aspirations for the development of culture in Shropshire for residents and visitors to the county. This follows extensive consultation with a broad range of people involved in culture and other sectors, across Shropshire and beyond, and has been developed in partnership with organisations from across different sectors.

Our strategy lays out Shropshire’s cultural priorities for the next ten years. For those wanting more detail, the strategy should be read along with the supporting documents outlined in the appendices at the end. We’re really excited to develop a three-year implementation plan in collaboration with a cultural partnership, bringing the strategy’s priorities to fruition. More details are outlined below.

**Lezley Picton, Leader of Shropshire Council**

# Introduction

Welcome to Vibrant Shropshire, the cultural strategy for the unitary area of Shropshire. This document sets out the ambition and strategic priorities for the cultural sector for the next ten years.

It was developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders, through the Cultural Strategy Working Group, the membership of which is shown at the end of this document. It follows one-to-one consultation with sector leaders, three workshops with individuals representing the wider cultural sector, which were held in Craven Arms, Shrewsbury and Wem, discussions with young people and those representing disadvantaged groups, and public consultation.

The results of this engagement, the public consultation and an equality and social inclusion impact assessment are shown in the appendices, along with a strategic review, which highlights national, regional and local priorities across a range of sectors. These have all been used to inform the development of this strategy.

An independent cultural partnership will be formed to develop the implementation plan, setting out the actions and investment across a range of partners for the next three years. This will be a working document, and reports will be published that set out progress against the priorities.



# Unique Shropshire

Shropshire is a unique and diverse county, with a rich blend of natural, industrial and social heritage.

We have a diverse and flourishing natural environment. The variety of geology in Shropshire is unequalled in any area of comparable size in Britain, or indeed the world, and inspired the world-renowned geologist, Roderick Murchinson, which means that Shropshire place names are known globally and used by geologists across the world. Geology and the natural environment also inspired the county's most famous son, Charles Darwin, who was born and went to school in Shrewsbury.

Almost a quarter of the county is designated as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Almost a quarter of the county is designated as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and we have three national nature reserves. We also have internationally important wetland sites, special areas of conservation (of European significance) and many sites of special scientific interest. Shropshire has the third longest rights of way network in the country, including long-distance

paths such as the Shropshire Way and Offa's Dyke Path National Trail, and national cycle routes.

Being on the border between upland Wales and lowland England, Shropshire has had a complex and turbulent history. This fascinating past is reflected in a wealth of archaeological sites of all types and periods, and in a rich collection of archives. The fascinating heritage of the Industrial Revolution is recognised in the two world heritage sites that partly fall within the Shropshire unitary area: The Ironbridge Gorge and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal, along with The Flaxmill Maltings, the world's first iron-framed building, paving

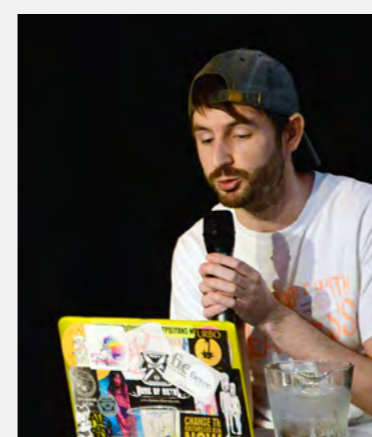
the way for modern skyscrapers. Shropshire also has the third highest number of listed buildings and registered parks and gardens in

the country, and over a hundred conservation areas.

There are many museums and heritage attractions, including RAF Museum Cosford, Severn Valley Railway, Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Ludlow Castle, Shrewsbury Castle, Attingham Park, Dudmaston Hall, Oswestry Hillfort, Carding Mill Valley and the Long Mynd.



Above: The Flaxmill Maltings, Ditherington, Shrewsbury, Late 19th Century. © Shropshire Archives. Inset: Artists impression of the Flaxmill redevelopment.



Libraries form important hubs in the heart of communities, as do the many town and village halls, sports facilities and leisure centres. Significant sporting facilities include a 10,000-seat stadium, which is the home of Shrewsbury Town Football Club, Ludlow Racecourse and Lilleshall National Sports Centre.

Cultural vibrancy flows across Shropshire, from the distinctive county town of Shrewsbury with its major cultural assets, including Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery and Shrewsbury Market, to its sixteen market towns, each with fascinating culture and heritage, active cultural communities and distinctive stories to tell.

Farming diversification has nurtured a high-quality artisan food and drink sector, which in turn supports a highly independent retail and leisure offer for residents and visitors supported through food markets and food festivals.

Bordering Wales, with good connections to major cities in the north, south, west and the Midlands, Shropshire has an enterprising and independent spirit that manifests in higher than average numbers of small businesses and self-employed people, and strong arts, music and creative industries, heritage, leisure and visitor economies - many with potential for growth. There's a rich diversity of arts provision, in particular visual arts and theatre, and the county is home to both locally and nationally significant organisations, venues and festivals supporting local artistic talent and attracting national and international artists. There's also a vibrant community events and festivals programme, with hundreds of regular cultural activities in Shropshire's annual events calendar, engaging large numbers of people and attracting inward investment.

There are six Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) in Shropshire: Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust, Arts Alive, the Association of Independent Museums, DASH (Disability Arts Shropshire), Meadow Arts and Pentabus Arts, all of whom are making a significant impact.

There's also a vibrant cultural community, with many dedicated volunteers driving a rich and varied culture offer across the entire county. The county has a proportionately higher older population than the national average, which contributes to the strong and highly skilled volunteer base. This also presents some longer-term challenges around health and wellbeing. There are established programmes of work, organisations and partnerships supporting young people, but more could be done to facilitate younger people's engagement with culture as audiences, participants, leaders and makers. In a largely rural county, access to culture is a challenge for many, but a high level of digital connectivity and growing digital capacity bodes well for new ways to make and access culture.



# Shropshire's cultural offer



For a comprehensive and interactive map of Shropshire's Cultural assets please visit:  
[https:// shropshire.maps.arcgis.com](https://shropshire.maps.arcgis.com)

## Facts and figures

Shropshire is a rural county, which is sparsely populated and with a higher than average ageing population, fewer young people and very low cultural diversity compared to the rest of England.

Most residents have a good quality of life and rate their life satisfaction highly, but there are pockets of disadvantage spread across the county, which are likely to increase following societal impacts of the pandemic.

More details about the local community can be found on the council's website.

**51** museums and heritage attractions



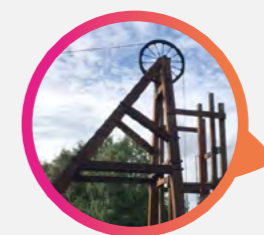
Over **400** sports facilities and leisure centres



**50miles**

of canals that link the Midlands with mid- and northeast-Wales

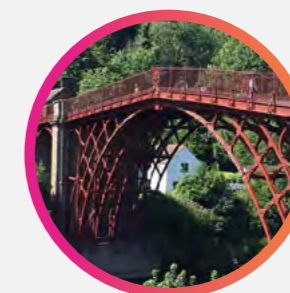
**3rd** highest number of listed buildings (6,906) and registered parks and gardens (30), and fourth highest number of conservation areas (127)



**23%** of the county is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty



**14** internationally important wetland sites



Part of **2** world heritage sites

**5** Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) in Shropshire: Arts Alive, Association of Independent Museums, DASH (Disability Arts Shropshire), Meadow Arts and Pentabus Arts. These bring in an annual investment of £815,285



**7** special areas of conservation (of European significance)

**11** of the 12 geological periods found in Shropshire



**107** sites of special scientific interest

**21** libraries



Over **3,600** miles of rights of way



**A snapshot of Shropshire**

# The importance of culture

The cultural sector (creative industries, tourism, and sport and leisure) supports around 15,000 jobs (15,750 when sole proprietors are included) through 1,380 organisations, and generated a value in gross value added (GVA) terms of an estimated £432m in 2018. This means that at least 12% of employment in Shropshire can be classed as cultural, with the sector contributing around 7% to the overall economy. Businesses are predominantly small, and self-employed enterprises are common.

This includes a strong visitor economy sector, which is forecast to grow by 74% in Shropshire between 2012 and 2036, taking the GVA to £367m. Despite a reduction in employees in creative industries over the past few years, this sector is forecast to grow even more strongly over the time period, by 174%, generating £331m by 2036, generating employment opportunities in higher value, professional jobs. The value of the natural and historic heritage offer is significant, with the economic return of visits to the environment estimated to be £100m per year. These are therefore important sectors for the local economy and should be supported going forward.

Before the pandemic there were over 13 million visitors a year to Shropshire, but the county ranked 40th out of the 50 most visited counties in the UK, and the spend per trip was around £10 per person per trip

Before the pandemic there were over 13 million visitors a year to Shropshire

lower in Shropshire than the national average. This means that there's potential to grow the market, even without increasing the number of visitors.

Culture is important to local people as well as visitors, with 70% of Shropshire residents visiting the natural environment at least once a week in 2018/19, which had increased by around 39% since 2009/10. More than half of Shropshire residents had attended an event, performance or festival in 2018/19, in line with the national average; 72% had attended an arts event, participated in an arts activity or visited a museum or gallery, and 36% had used a public library service. Sports and leisure are also important, with 61% of adults in Shropshire being physically active and achieving the recommended 150 minutes or more per week.

More information about the importance of culture can be found in Appendix 1- The Cultural Sector in Shropshire: Key Metrics. March 2021.

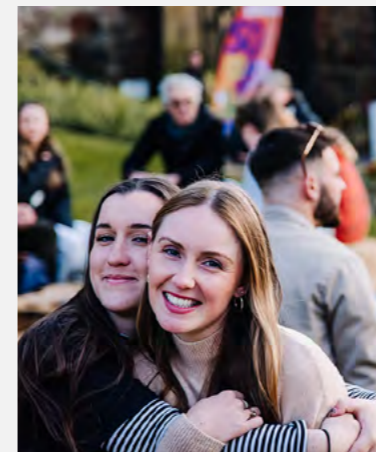




## Impact of the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has had far reaching consequences, which will influence the delivery of priorities over the period of this strategy. Impacts have affected people's physical, mental and financial wellbeing, and restrictions have also caused societal changes, some of which may not revert to pre-pandemic norms once restrictions are relaxed. Impacts include addressing increasing inequality across society, and needs can be summarised as:

- Increased support for social isolation and mental ill health
- Increased support for the unemployed
- Support for businesses and the self-employed
- Prioritisation of scarce public funding
- Support for those falling behind in education, increasing inequality for the most disadvantaged
- Increased need for online resources and entertainment
- Support for the digitally excluded - 50% of over 75s, 30% of 65-74-year-olds and 2% of households with children don't have access



There's a real need to have fun and resume activities that make people happy and connected, and to improve quality of life. This is reflected in the priorities of this strategy.

The increase in homeworking, a growing number of people moving to Shropshire to improve their quality of life and unemployment mean that cultural activities closer to home will be important, and this will include a focus on activities outside Shrewsbury.

However, the coronavirus pandemic has reinforced the importance of culture in our lives and has helped accelerate online streaming of cultural activities, encouraged new ways of working and has helped break down barriers to engagement by using new technology. The challenge is to harness these positive aspects, whilst addressing some of the issues outlined above.

## Other considerations

The Integrated Care System aims to join up primary and preventative health and care approaches to increase health and wellbeing. The role of culture in this needs proactive consideration as the new system is developed.

The impact of leaving the European Union on tourism and other cultural sectors has yet to be realised, due to the coronavirus lockdown. This will emerge within the next few years and will impact on the actions needed in the implementation plan.

Over the lifetime of this strategy there are some other potential initiatives, which, if introduced, could impact on how we see and get involved in culture, including:

- The introduction of 5G and 6G connectivity
- The development of game-changing new technologies
- Potential for the introduction of 'universal basic income'
- Potential for the introduction of reduced working hours, such as a four-day week

As it's difficult to predict when, or indeed if, these will be introduced, and the impact they'll have if they are, this cultural strategy will be reviewed after five years, and amended to take account of circumstances at that time. In the meantime, the three-year implementation plan will be a working document that can be updated as necessary to take advantage of new opportunities or address new concerns.



## What is culture?

At one level, 'culture', is about those special places to go and things to do that attract and inspire visitors, both local and from further afield. Culture includes arts and crafts, museums, heritage, history, archaeology, geology, architecture, open spaces, countryside recreation, sport, play, hospitality, cafés and restaurants, pubs, visitor attractions and locally produced food and drink. It's that unique blend of experiences that gives a place its own sense of spirit and identity.

Culture is also about much more than this. It's about what's special to us as a community and as individuals. It can characterise:

- Our sense of self – by developing our spiritual, intellectual and emotional wellbeing and connection to others
- Our sense of place – and the way we feel about places to make them somewhere we want to live, work and visit
- Our sense of purpose – by connecting us to traditions, beliefs, values and shared stories

It's about what makes Shropshire special and impacts on every aspect of our lives, strengthening the economy, aiding health and wellbeing, and valuing and caring for the environment.



# VIBRANT SHROPSHIRE



## **Vibrant Shropshire - independent by nature**

### Our vision

By 2031, Shropshire's vibrant culture will be inspiring more people, both local communities and visitors alike, to explore, create, be active and enjoy themselves. It will enhance lives and nurture the environment for all our futures.

### Our shared cultural ambition

In ten years, our ambition is to create a place where extraordinary and everyday cultural experiences are a source of inspiration for all. We want the importance of culture to quality of life, health and wellbeing, and the economy reflected in happier and healthier communities, and for cultural venues and activities to lead the way for climate and environmental change mitigation.



# Summary of our key priorities

Several key priorities have emerged as instrumental to the development of a vibrant, healthy, prosperous culture for residents and visitors to Shropshire. Their implementation will be phased over the next ten years.

- Enjoy** Using culture to support people to be active, happy, healthy and connected
- Create** Culture better supports the growth of the local economy and creates more opportunities to earn a living
- Explore** Delighting and surprising visitors and residents with independent, authentic experiences
- Live** Harnessing ‘ownership’ and pride in local places for the benefit of all
- Nurture** Shropshire’s high-quality natural landscapes are valued and enhanced for future generations
- Innovate** Driving innovation, including digital development, to enhance cultural experiences, improve physical and intellectual access and tackle social isolation
- Connect** Forge strong partnerships to drive forward our shared cultural ambition

# Overarching themes

We developed a number of overarching themes to help ensure the key priorities address Shropshire’s core challenges:

- Climate and environmental change mitigation** – Everyone needs to do their bit to address the climate and environment emergency to ensure a happier and healthier future for all. Culture can help us engage with these challenges creatively together
- Developing volunteers** – Supporting volunteers by promoting good practice, providing opportunities for training and development and recognising their achievements
- Young people’s skills and learning** – Engaging young people in all of our priority areas and providing clear pathways into all of the cultural sector
- Marketing and communication** – Ensuring that there’s a joined-up marketing and communication strategy to promote greater joint working and reach new audiences

These priorities will be addressed through the development of a three-year implementation plan, which will be agreed and monitored by an independent Cultural Partnership for Shropshire to be set up in 2021. The plan will reflect the ‘we will’ headings under the key priorities below, and be reviewed annually by the partnership.

## Who will we focus on?

Culture is for everyone and we'll ensure that it's accessible to as many people as possible.

Shropshire has a higher than the national average older population, which offers advantages in terms of skills, expertise and a good volunteer base, but presents longer-term challenges around health and wellbeing. As a largely rural county, access to culture for all can be a challenge in Shropshire, and this will need to be addressed through this strategy. We also need to do more to facilitate younger people's engagement with culture as audiences, participants, leaders and makers.

We'll work with Shropshire children and their families, young and older people, public sector and community organisations to make sure that cultural activities are available to everyone.

Cultural diversity will be supported and encouraged. We'll embrace the 'creative case for diversity', ensuring the cultural offer in the county is diverse and inclusive, reflecting a wide range of influences and

practices. This will not only help enrich our programmes, but also address challenges and opportunities in audience development, public engagement, workforce and leadership, and collections development in museums. We'll also work collaboratively to make cultural activities more accessible to people with special needs.

Shropshire is valued for its authentic experiences and off-the-beaten-track vibe...

The visitor economy in Shropshire was growing prior to the coronavirus pandemic, and we expect the county to be well placed to benefit from local visitors once restrictions allow. Shropshire is valued for its authentic experiences and off-the-beaten-track vibe, and independent visitors of all ages will be targeted in the future.

We'll ensure that awareness of Shropshire's rich vibrant culture grows, and more visitors are attracted from wider catchments. Visitor experiences, products and services will be developed, and we'll work with arts, creative and heritage businesses to help them innovate, grow and thrive.





# OUR PRIORITIES

# Our priorities

# ENJOY

## Enjoy

Using culture to support people to be active, happy, healthy and connected

Culture makes us feel good, and there's growing evidence that it can also help prevent, manage and treat a range of public and individual health problems. This is already happening in Shropshire - from supporting mental health in young people and adults to volunteering in nature and creating regular events for families affected by dementia to read, sing or dance together. Play is an important concept, which can be actively incorporated in activities to aid happiness and health. We want to ensure that the county's cultural sector helps young and old, and everyone in between.



## We will...

- Help deliver health and wellbeing programmes, including the Integrated Care System, social prescribing, exercise on referral, physical activity and mental health initiatives, working in partnership with the NHS and other health and care providers
- Collaborate with young people and those who work with them, to ensure countywide inclusion in culture for young people
- Continue to develop family and school programmes at key cultural venues and sites to foster an active love of culture from an early age
- Develop more intergenerational activity
- Invest in and support cultural hubs to increase the opportunity to take part in culture across the county
- Better understand and respond to the aspirations of under-represented groups in Shropshire and help address cultural diversity, including through schools
- Encourage the inclusion of play within cultural activities, including through training and support for organisers
- Transform leisure provision in Shropshire, so that there's a more joined-up, commercial approach that works with local communities for the benefit of all
- Develop 'taster' sessions so that people can have a go before having to commit
- Support and provide training for volunteers, including befriending initiatives to help those who are more isolated build confidence
- Develop and deliver a library transformation strategy for Shropshire, maximising the positive impact of library services in the heart of our communities
- Develop marketing that promotes activities to local markets
- Encourage more local action on climate change

"It's great to feel happy – participating in cultural activity, going out, joining in gives you a good feeling"

Consultee, Shropshire Culture workshop



## Create

Culture better supports the growth of the local economy and creates more opportunities to earn a living

Culture is made by people. Our principle is to support the people who make and look after our culture and to develop new talent for future generations. Shropshire has award-winning visitor attractions, internationally recognised heritage locations, a vibrant independent arts, crafts, leisure and retail offer and a renowned foodie culture. For Shropshire to thrive the focus will need to be on investment and funding for those businesses and professionals that make up the county's cultural economy, which will include the development of products, services and experiences for residents and visitors alike.

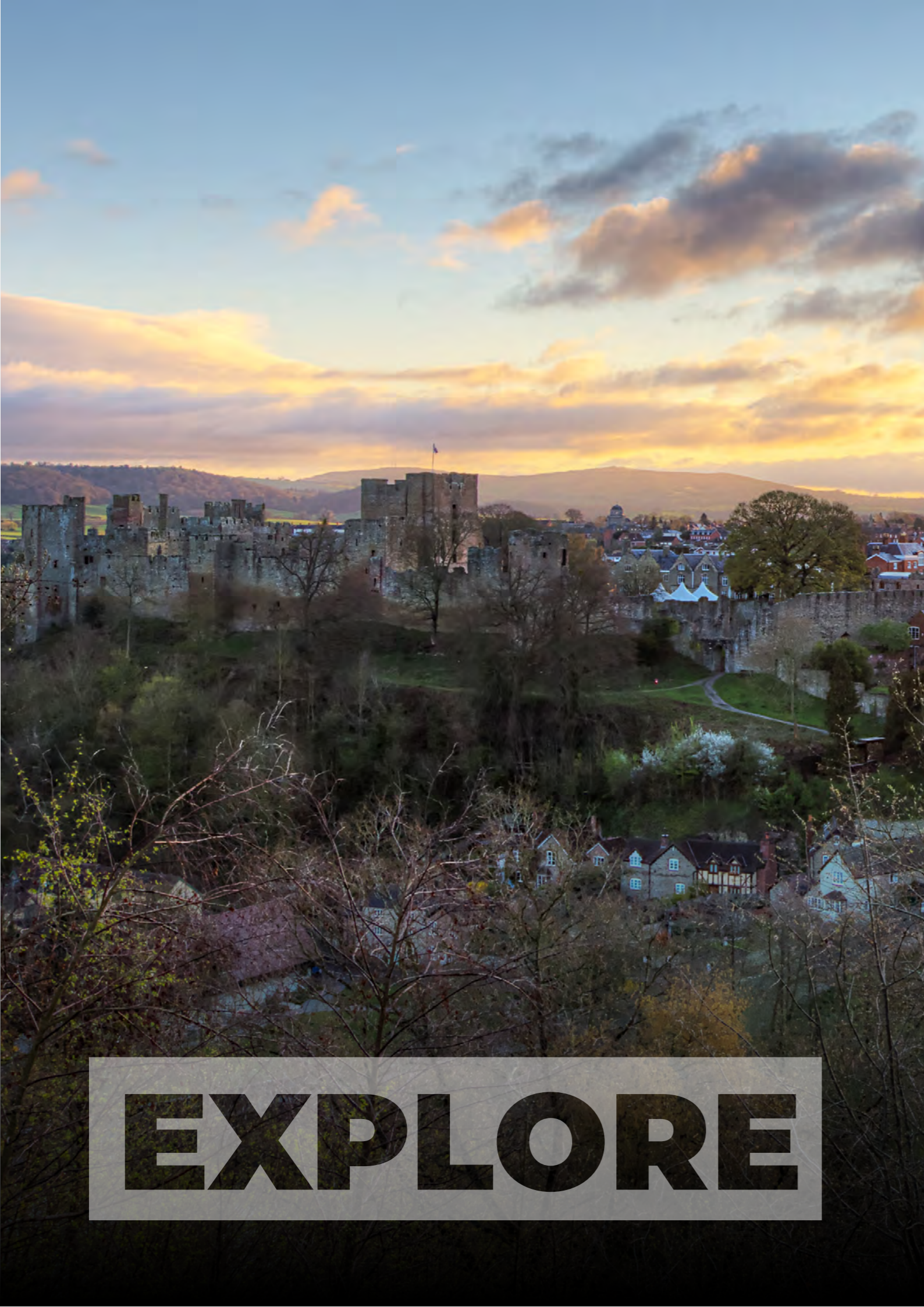
"There's a wealth of creativity in the region - a lot of self-starters who have moved here as well as creative locals. Often the more rural, the more creative - simply because they've had to be more inventive with their resources!"

Consultee,  
Shropshire Culture Workshop

### We will:

- Support new and existing cultural organisations in the sector, working with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and business improvement districts
- Develop stronger links to professional practice, including research with University Centre, Shrewsbury
- Help businesses gain support through recovery funds, the Shared Prosperity Fund and other relevant funding
- Provide training programmes for cultural organisations to support innovative and sustainable practices – commercially, environmentally and technologically
- Explore affordable, flexible co-working space in key locations
- Nurture new talent through opportunities for volunteering, work placements and apprenticeships, developing pathways into the cultural sector
- Better understand the value of volunteering in supporting economic and social outcomes
- Encourage climate change mitigation as an integral part of business development





## Explore

Delighting and surprising visitors and residents with independent, authentic experiences

Culture inspires, delights and surprises us. It's an expression of shared human experience seen through the distinctive lens of a particular place. There's a strong cultural tourism market in Shropshire, with a huge variety of things to see and do. These drive high levels of local engagement and are much loved by Shropshire people. We also recognise that much more could be done to attract visitors from elsewhere to explore all that the county has to offer.

### We will...

- Agree branding, marketing and a new narrative for the county, which promotes Shropshire as a cultural destination for local, national and international visitors
- Encourage joint promotion of local cultural activities that celebrates variety and diversity, linked to sustainable transport and digital access
- Commission new research into the visitor economy to better understand performance and customer needs
- Develop a 'destination management plan' for the county
- Investigate the development of a tourism business improvement district or tourism action zone
- Encourage a more sustainable approach to tourism, including behaviour change, nature recovery approaches, energy efficiency, and carbon off-setting
- Encourage the development of more outdoor adventures and experiences
- Develop experiences based on influential Salopians and what they represent, including Charles Darwin, Mary Webb, Eglantyne Jebb and many others
- Promote artisan producers of local food and drink through markets, festivals and business support
- Get behind national events and initiatives which could benefit the whole county, for example the Commonwealth Games and the Platinum Jubilee in 2022

## Live

Harnessing 'ownership' and pride in local places for the benefit of all

The most successful places have a strong 'sense of place' forged through distinctive natural and built environments and the interactions of people with them, and with each other. In other words, 'culture makes place'. Shropshire has a wealth of cultural assets and activities across its towns and villages, with a strong foundation in its rich heritage and rural traditions. There is huge potential for people-led place-shaping, supported by creative communities and businesses, which will make Shropshire more attractive for inward investment.



### We will...

- Encourage cultural diversity by providing opportunities for more communities and communities-of-interest
- Support the successful delivery of place plans, including the Oswestry Heritage High Street project and Shrewsbury Big Town Plan
- Explore opportunities for re-purposing heritage buildings with local communities, for example for creative workspace and music venues, catering to different tastes
- Investigate possible restoration and re-purposing of nationally important cultural assets, for example Shrewsbury Castle and Mount House, Darwin's birthplace
- Increase accessibility to cultural attractions and activities
- Create a network of community cultural hubs across the county, building on existing hubs such as libraries and community buildings, and help ensure good transportation, access and facilities
- Focus on low-cost activities in local areas to engage more people
- Investigate having indoor and sheltered outdoor spaces that belong to children and young people which they can programme and manage themselves, including the provision of music and film
- Ensure existing venues are energy efficient and accessible
- Contribute to the development of a new active travel plan for Shropshire
- Develop more sustainable transport options, including electric buses
- Support venues of all sizes to be environmentally sustainable

"The best kept secrets are the unlocked potential of our village halls and our historic churches."

Consultee,  
Shropshire Culture workshop





# NURTURE

“Shropshire has an active environmental campaigning network, independent whole foods suppliers, green party. Linked to the fact it appears to have a good percentage of culturally switched on people there is room here for something unique and important.”

**Consultee,  
Shropshire Culture workshop**



## Nurture

Shropshire's high-quality natural landscapes are valued and enhanced for future generations

Shropshire's natural assets are some of the most magnificent in the country. They're supported by strong local partnerships and have global recognition. These assets give us the opportunity to focus on nature recovery and climate change mitigation, alongside ongoing habitat management and public engagement. Following the coronavirus outbreak, the importance of our outdoor spaces has been reaffirmed.

### We will....

- Develop and promote sustainability and nature as a core part of the Shropshire destination brand
- Use culture to foster an active love of nature that helps more people engage with the environment in a sustainable way
- Help ensure the Shropshire Hills AONB is recognised for its high-quality environment, and supported so that this is sustained and enhanced
- Work with Natural England on the successful introduction of the new environmental land management schemes.
- Continue to ensure that schools and young people engage with and learn from the natural environment
- Develop habitat conservation and enhancement projects for key sites, including in towns
- Safeguard key sites as local nature reserves
- Publish sustainability guidance for venues of all sizes, backed up by a support and training programme
- Develop nature recovery plans

## Innovate

Driving innovation, including digital development, to enhance cultural experiences, improve physical and intellectual access and tackle social isolation

In the early 18th Century, the Industrial Revolution was built on Shropshire's innovation, resources and entrepreneurial spirit. Today's cultural practitioners can embrace the fourth industrial revolution in how they shape products and services and engage with people. Social media, live streaming and the possibilities of virtual and augmented reality all came to the fore during the coronavirus lockdown months in 2020. There are a good number of tech companies in the county and excellent connectivity in most areas, which together present a great opportunity for Shropshire to develop its capacity, profile and reach, and open up new income streams for culture.

Other opportunities for innovation will be welcomed, learning from good practice elsewhere in the country and across the world.

### We will...

- Embed digital knowledge in the cultural sector through better engagement with creative tech companies to develop new cultural experiences
- Develop digital capacity through events and training programmes for cultural participation
- Use technology to make sites more accessible to encourage greater use by those with specific needs
- Present culture in a way that is relevant and exciting for new audiences
- Increase digital capacity of staff, volunteers and audiences
- Ensure that there is fit-for-purpose digital connectivity across the county, including the introduction of 5G
- Make more IT equipment and support available, for example through libraries
- Develop a network of young creatives and others to consider innovative, ground-breaking, new approaches



# INNOVATE



"Shrewsbury is becoming a base for co-working and creative enterprise being driven by both private and social enterprises"

Consultee, Cultural Workshop

# CONNECT

"Personally, I'd like to see Shropshire regarded as the Cultural Capital of the West Mids"

Consultee,  
Shropshire Culture workshop



## Connect

Forge strong partnerships to drive forward our shared cultural ambition

Culture is about connecting people. Existing partnerships bring together organisations to agree shared ambitions and priorities that help shape the landscape of culture in Shropshire. There's also a strong tradition of effective collaboration and partnership working. There is, however, a need to establish a dedicated partnership to develop and deliver the cultural strategy.

### We will...

- Develop an independent cultural partnership, which brings together a range of cross-sector interests to help deliver this cultural strategy
- Develop relationships with key sector partners and networks in health, diversity, the economy and the environment
- Develop a community forum for grassroots cultural organisations to network and share practice, including 'friends' groups – and connect this to the work of the cultural partnership
- Develop a core 'place' proposition - a major county-wide project that delivers the cultural strategy and enables employment of paid, professional staff
- Develop a 'cultural compact' with ACE and partnership agreements with National Lottery, Sports England and others
- Develop a framework to create better data about how culture impacts positively on economy, health and wellbeing and the environment
- Explore the development of the partnership into a 'cultural trust' to enable greater fundraising and protection of assets.
- Develop strong partnership with national and regional organisations, such as the British Museum.

# How will we measure success?

A detailed evidence base has been commissioned to build the foundation for this cultural strategy. This provides a good snapshot of where we're starting from.

## It includes national data from:

- Visit Britain - day visits and overnight stays
- MENE data - visits to the natural environment and environmental attitudes
- Active Lives survey - child and adult engagement with arts and culture, sport and volunteering
- Lottery investment - amount of funding invested in the county
- Health profile - health of the population
- ONS survey - levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction

## We'll monitor the local data we hold on:

- Numbers of unused/underused buildings
- Energy and water monitoring

## We'll conduct local research on progress to date, including the numbers and locations of:

- Creative businesses and cultural enterprises, including charities and CICs
- Cultural venues and workspaces
- Festivals

## We will also work through the Cultural Partnership to develop a local framework of indicators to include:

- Investment in environmental change mitigation projects
- Visitor numbers to key destinations
- Number of volunteers
- Number of children and young people involved
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Investment and finance metrics





## Delivery and ownership

This strategy has been adopted by Shropshire Council and was supported by a range of strategic partners through the Cultural Strategy Working Group.

An independent cultural partnership will be set up in 2021 to guide the delivery of this strategy, whose purpose will be to lead place-based development of culture, connecting the cultural sector with other key sectors such as health and the economy, creating opportunities for engagement and enabling collaboration with partners.

The strategy will work alongside the individual business plans and artistic ambitions of the cultural sectors, the strategic plans of key stakeholders such as Arts Council England and Historic England, and Shropshire Council's corporate plan.

Delivery of the strategy will adapt and respond to local, regional, national and international policies to ensure the vision and priorities remain valid.

A three-year implementation plan will be developed by the cultural partnership, setting out detailed activity under each of the key high-level priorities. The plan will be published online and be a live document.

The vision and key priorities of the strategy should also be viewed alongside plans from other stakeholders, in particular the Marches LEP Local Industrial Strategy, Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy, Shropshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Energize, the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan, the Actively Improving Lives Strategy, the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy and Arts Council England – 'Let's Create' Strategy.

## Resources

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on society is likely to be felt for the lifetime of this strategy.

Given the ongoing local authority funding pressures, the development of culture in Shropshire can't be reliant on council revenue funding. For the strategy to be delivered, we'll need to work collaboratively with the private sector, charitable donations and grant-giving bodies on innovative funding and investment models. Funding sources may include Arts Council England cultural development and investment funds, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the DCMS Tourism Action Zone and the potential development of a tourism or cultural improvement district, alongside opportunities for business sponsorship, environmental, social, governance (ESG) investment, planning gain, carbon off-setting and a range of other funding.

The effective fundraising activity of volunteers, 'friends' groups and place-based working has and can continue to play an important part in this.

This will require a true partnership approach to share and grow staff resources, reducing competition for funding and minimising duplication of effort.

### Appendices:

**Appendix 1:** Vibrant Shropshire Evidence Base March 2021

**Appendix 2:** Vibrant Shropshire Community Engagement Results

**Appendix 3:** Vibrant Shropshire Public Consultation Feedback Report

**Appendix 4:** Vibrant Shropshire Strategic Review

**Appendix 5:** Vibrant Shropshire Equalities and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment

# Cultural strategy working group

**Arts Council England:**  
Creative and Performing Arts, Museums, Libraries.  
Alison Vermee

**Caring for God's Acre:**  
Museums, industrial archaeology, built heritage, conservation, designed landscapes and regeneration.  
Harriet Devlin

**Culture Consortium Shropshire and Shropshire Council Arts Development:**  
Cultural activities for young people and schools, specialising in the arts.  
Alexa Pugh

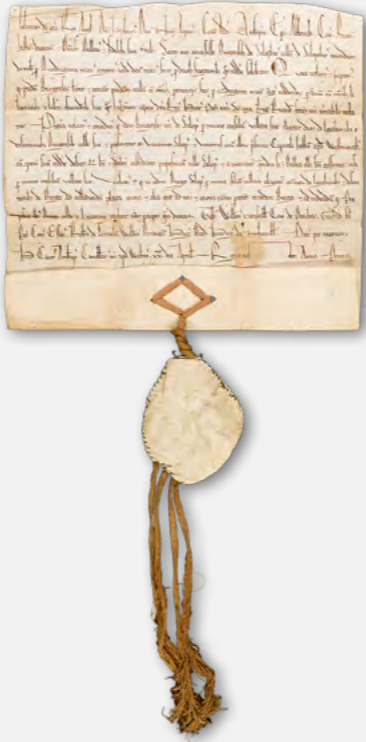
**Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin:**  
Sports and leisure.  
Chris Child

**Health and Wellbeing Board:**  
Health and wellbeing.  
Susan Lloyd

**Historic England:**  
Historic buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments.  
Bill Klemperer

**Local Enterprise Partnership/ Landau:**  
Economic growth, employment and young people.  
Sonia Roberts

**Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Group:**  
All aspects of culture and heritage, focus on people.  
Marion Blockley



**National Trust:**  
Historic buildings, special landscapes, outdoor activities.  
Marcus Halliwell

**Natural England:**  
Natural heritage.  
Mike Robinson

**Rural Services Network:**  
Rural communities.  
Cecilia Motley

**Shropshire Council:**  
Culture, Heritage, Leisure, Libraries, Outdoor Activities, Shropshire Hills AONB.  
Cllr Lezley Picton  
Communities.  
Cllr Gwilym Butler  
Culture Leisure and Tourism.  
Sue Finnigan and Clare Featherstone

Shropshire Libraries.  
Michael Lewis

Insight and Intelligence.  
Tom Dodds

Economic Growth, Place, Planning and Shrewsbury Programme.  
Sarah Hughes and Tim Pritchard

**Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board:**  
Outdoor activities, country parks, Rights of Way.  
Alex Carson-Taylor

**Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership:**  
Cultural and natural heritage.  
Phil Holden

**Shropshire Wildlife Trust:**  
Natural heritage and outdoor activities.  
John Hughes

**University of Chester:**  
Culture and Humanities  
Prof. Tim Jenkins

# Image credits

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**Page 2:** Sleeping on the South Shropshire Hills.

**Page 5:** 'Thinking Path' by Shirley Chubb (2004) at Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery.

**Page 7:**  
**Top:** The Flaxmill Maltings, Ditherington, Shrewsbury, Late 19th Century. © Shropshire Archives.  
**Inset:** Computer-generated impression of the regenerated Shrewsbury Flaxmill. © Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.  
**Top left:** Mother and child in a Shropshire Library.  
**Bottom left:** DASH Disability Arts, Shropshire.

**Page 8:**  
**From top to bottom**  
- Face Painting at Shrewsbury Folk Festival.  
- Pentabus. Photo © Helen Maybanks.  
- Volunteers working to maintain Shropshire Woodland.  
- DASH - A spot of drawing from the International Photography Exhibition at Midlands Arts Centre.

**Page 13:** 'Love the Shropshire Hills' Photo © Ben Osborne.

**Page 14-15:** Oil to the Fort, Photos © Birgitta Zoutman.

**Page 16-17:** A walk across the Shropshire Hills. Photo © Mike Hayward.

**Page 18:**  
A child throwing paint at the Lingen Davies charity 5km Ruby Run, Shrewsbury. Photo © Jenny Stevenson.

**Page 20-21:** Cyclists on The Portway, The Long Mynd. Photo © Simon Whaley.

**Page 23:** Pentabus Arts, 'Into The Unknown'. Photo © Jorge Lizdale.

**Page 24-25:** 'In The Hands of Boys' dance project, at RAF Cosford. Photo © Mark Anderson.

**Page 26:** A volunteer at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery.

**Page 29:** Fire Stage at Ludlow Food Festival. Photo © Ashleigh Cadet.

**Page 30:** Ludlow from Whitcliffe at sunrise, Photo © Jon Hodgson.

**Page 32:** 'The Listening Experience' cultural night, May, 2018, hosted at Itadaki-zen on Fish Street. Photo © Alex Holmes-Brown.

**Page 33:** Wem Town Hall.

**Page 34:** Wild ponies on the Long Mynd, Photo © Philip King.

**Page 35:** Brown Moss, one of fourteen internationally important wetland sites in Shropshire. Photo © Dan Wrench.

**Page 36:**  
**Top:** Digitisation of historic documents at Shropshire Archives. Photo © Shropshire Council.  
**Bottom:** 'Hello World' by Thompson and Carighead (2014) at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery.

**Page 37:** A child explores Shropshire using virtual reality. Photo © Shropshire Council.

**Page 38:** Map of Market Drayton, c.1800, from the collections at Shropshire Archives reference 1096/1. Photo © Shropshire Archives.

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**Page 41:** Heyday arts activities at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery. Photo © Shropshire Council.

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**Page 43:** Ceramic workshop at Coalport China Museum. Photo © Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust.

**Page 44:** Charter of King John, 1200. Photo © Shropshire Archives, ref: 3365/3.

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