counterculture

Cyngor Abertawe
Swansea Council

Swansea's
Culture Strategy 2026-2031

CULTURE WITH PRIDE, CREATIVITY WITH PURPOSE

Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU

Funded by
UK Government



Contents

1. Overview 3
2. Background and Context 5
3. Welcome to Swansea! 7
4. Our Vision and Mission 12
5. Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities 14
6. Our Delivery Plan 24
7. Measuring Success 36



1. Overview

Culture, the deep-rooted identity and customs of our communities, is a powerful force for social and economic good. Culture shapes our identity and strengthens social connections. Cultural experiences improve mental and physical health, build resilient communities and help tackle poverty and inequality. Investment in culture stimulates the local economy, creates opportunities, attracts visitors and supports inclusive growth.

Working with a wide range of partners and through public consultation, Swansea Council has developed an ambitious new Culture Strategy for the whole city and county of Swansea – embracing the Welsh language, arts, creative industries, events, tourism, sports, physical activity, wellbeing, libraries, archives and heritage. We have not tried to define culture, but to show what cultural activities, projects, events and approaches can deliver for arts, creative industries, sports, events and tourism - for Swansea and its people.

The strategy's main goals are to strengthen Swansea's unique cultural identity, boost local pride, engage communities, support growth, enable learning and aspiration and improve inclusion, health, and wellbeing. These goals will be achieved through a shared vision, mission and five-year Delivery Plan.

The City and County of Swansea has an amazing range of people, groups and organisations who deliver great experiences to residents and visitors.

But we want more.

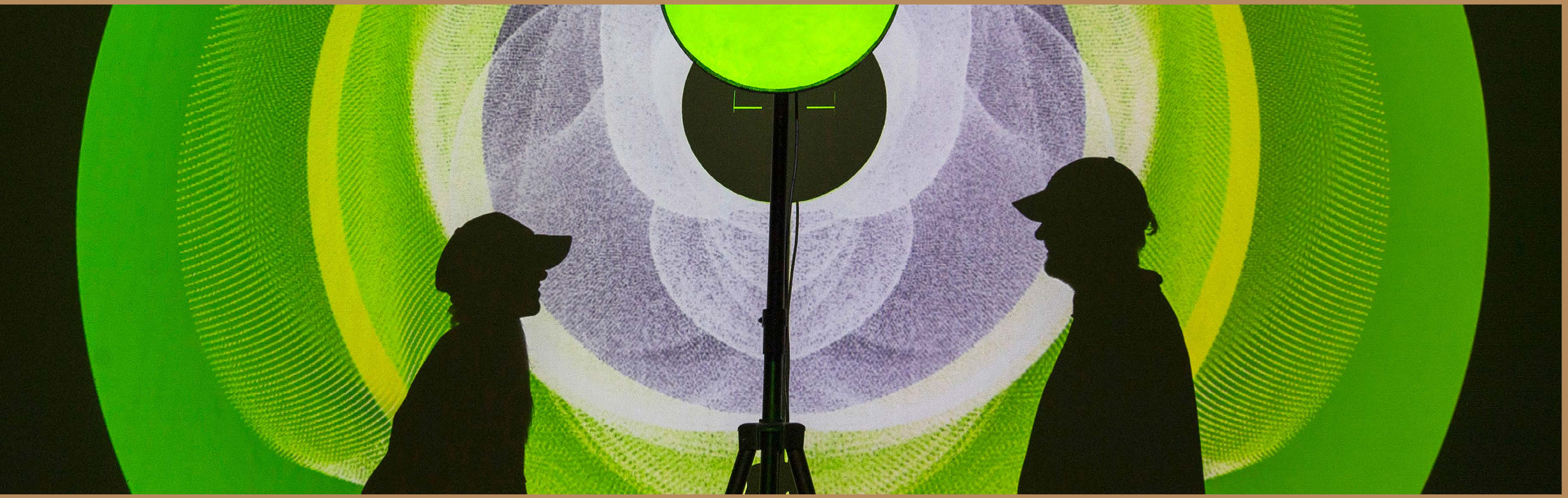
This Culture Strategy is designed to amplify what our people are already doing, to enable everyone to participate in sports, to unlock access to nature, to protect creativity from short-term pressures, to give our communities and organisations a shared direction, and to help unlock funding and spaces.

Our Culture Strategy builds on work done over the past decade to develop city-wide strategies and our two UK City of Culture bids. This strategy refreshes that work to consider lessons learned, our current context and our priorities for the next five years.

This strategy isn't a 'Council Strategy' – it is for everyone who lives in, works in or visits Swansea. So, whenever you see 'we' and 'our' those aren't just references to the Council; they refer to all the people and organisations who work together across Swansea to create a cultural offer we can all be proud of.

Councillor Rob Stewart
Leader, Swansea Council

Martin Nicholls
Chief Executive, Swansea Council



2. Background and Context

How we produced the Culture Strategy

In November 2024, Swansea Council commissioned cultural strategists, Counterculture, to support the process of creating a Culture Strategy. The aim was to create a strategy that sets out a clear direction for culture in the city and county-wide, delivered by the Council working alongside organisations across Swansea.

The Counterculture team started by reviewing all the relevant existing policies, strategies, plans, data and reports, to make sure we are building on existing evidence and supporting agreed national and local priorities – such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Welsh Government's Priorities for Culture and Swansea's Local Development and Placemaking Plans.

Counterculture then did additional research to understand the current size and make-up of Swansea's cultural sector, creative economy, communities and visitors. This work helped us understand Swansea's current cultural identity, strengths, assets, our shared vision for the future and the collective commitment needed to bring that vision to life.

Interviews and workshops were held with over 100 people to get a deeper understanding of the challenges facing public bodies, educational institutions, housing associations, the arts, creative businesses, sports clubs, community groups and other organisations. These insights helped us shape a clear, shared plan to strengthen the way in which culture can make everyday life better for people in Swansea and support our wider wellbeing goals.

To ensure that this is truly a strategy for the whole City and County of Swansea, and that it engages with culture in all its forms, the team also talked to the public to hear their views. Over 400 people from across Swansea responded to an initial bilingual survey, which was available both online and offline.

Counterculture's team attended events including *Pupil Voice, Croeso 2025* and *It's Your Swansea* and spoke to people there. They also held workshops to capture ideas and insights from diverse groups and communities, asking people why they were interested in the new Strategy, what areas of culture they were involved in, how they would describe Swansea's cultural identity, what makes them proud and what aspects of the cultural offer across Swansea they would like to change or improve.

Developing a good strategy is all about listening. To be sure that the team had heard and understood, the Council led a further public survey inviting feedback on a summary of the emerging strategy. Most people (over 80%) agreed with the proposed vision, mission, aims and objectives for the Strategy, but there were also suggestions for improvement. All of these were carefully considered, and they have helped shape this final version.



3. Welcome to Swansea!

Our history

People have made their lives here for over 30,000 years. Today over 250,000 people call our vibrant city, rolling countryside and dramatic coastline 'home' – and that population is growing (up from 239,000 in 2011) and becoming more diverse. We're also home to passionate professional and amateur sports clubs, vibrant theatres, inspiring galleries, fascinating museums, beautiful parks, innovative creative businesses, great music venues, thousands of years of heritage and some of the world's best beaches.

Named by the Vikings (*Sveinn's ey* – Sveinn's island) and the Celtic Britons (*Aper Tyui* – Mouth of the Tawe) we grew slowly as a market town and a strategic link between Wales, England and Ireland – until metals transformed Swansea. Thanks to our port, coal supply and access to global trade routes, Swansea became "Copperopolis," the world's leading centre for smelting copper. With ore shipped in from as far away as Chile and Australia our population exploded and heavy industry reshaped our landscape, economy and culture. Today, historic sites such as the Hafod Copperworks, which is currently undergoing significant restoration and regeneration, tell the important story of this industrial heritage.

Swansea today

Over the last 75 years our economy has transitioned towards services, knowledge and health with major employers including Swansea University, Admiral, BT, Virgin Media and the DVLA. Our visitor economy is also a major strength with 4.67m people visiting in 2024, generating an economic impact of £658m and supporting 5,410 full-time jobs. Visitors are drawn by the same things that make Swansea a great place to live and work – our stunning beaches, coastal and countryside trails, water sports, heritage attractions and events.

Swansea's cultural life is rooted in our history and celebrates contemporary creativity. Museums, galleries and performance spaces give space to tell our stories, while festivals, music venues and community arts projects bring energy to our streets and venues throughout the year. Singleton Park, Clyne Gardens, city-centre markets and waterfront promenades are important gathering places for residents and visitors.

As well as our great strengths we also face challenges in Swansea, with GDP per person 23% lower and unemployment nearly 50% higher than the UK average. Over 22% of our residents identify as disabled, we have a growing older population (21% over 65) and there are significant differences in life-expectancy between those who are best and worst off.

Our cultural identity

Swansea - Culture with pride, Creativity with purpose

Swansea's cultural identity is shaped by a rich blend of heritage, creativity and resilience. Our story is one of connection: to a proud industrial past, to our multi-cultural present, to our Welsh language and traditions and to our wonderful natural heritage as the city on the sea, with dramatic landscapes from the Gower Peninsula to Swansea Bay.

Swansea embraces culture at every scale, from grassroots music venues, galleries, performance spaces and sports clubs to landmark buildings and institutions such as the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, National Waterfront Museum, Swansea Museum, the Swansea Bay Sports Park and Swansea Arena. We are passionate about making sure everybody feels included and we recognise the massive contribution made by individuals and organisations to our sense of community pride and belonging.

Our vibrant programme of events and festivals celebrates inclusivity, community and internationalism – from Croeso to food festivals, from Swansea Pride to major sporting events, outdoor concerts, parades and the Christmas lights' switch-on. Our libraries, archives and heritage sites, many of them free-to-enter, work hard to make culture part of people's everyday life, to preserve our collective memory and to inspire future generations.

The glorious 'blue and green' spaces of Swansea are widely loved; they don't just define our landscape but are also living stages for festivals, sports and community life, and they are a vital source of wellbeing for residents and visitors.



Swansea has its challenges too — like making sure people in communities that face barriers (whether that's money, travel or confidence) can get to and enjoy cultural events and activities. We also want to keep our Welsh stories, literature and language thriving, and look after our green spaces, community buildings and public places. We believe the best way to face these challenges is by working together, using Swansea's welcoming, creative and collaborative spirit to help people, ideas and culture flourish.

What people say

What is Swansea's culture?

Our public survey asked people what three words they would use to describe Swansea's culture to someone who had not yet visited. People associate Swansea with creativity, a welcoming atmosphere and a varied and vibrant cultural life. The less positive perceptions – a sense of underappreciation, lack of investment and untapped cultural potential – are exactly the issues this Culture Strategy seeks to address.

What makes people proud?

People are incredibly proud of Swansea's cultural heritage, arts scene, community spirit and the resilience of its people. When we asked young people this question at a *Pupil Voice* workshop at the National Waterfront Museum, they highlighted Swansea's history and Welsh heritage. They described the city as welcoming and friendly, celebrated its diverse community and spoke with pride about its beaches, scenery and natural landscape.

What needs to change?

Although people recognise the great efforts made by a range of organisations and institutions, the public believe that Swansea's cultural offer suffers from a lack of investment and recognition, resulting in huge, untapped potential. Some expressed frustration with what they saw as a tendency to focus too heavily on some aspects of the past (such as the legacy of Dylan Thomas) and with a perceived lack of support for certain aspects of culture.

People have lots of positive suggestions including revitalising the cultural scene by enhancing affordability and accessibility, investing in local talent, increasing the variety of what is on offer and improving aspects of Swansea's cultural infrastructure. People emphasised the importance of supporting grassroots initiatives, celebrating Swansea's unique heritage and making cultural events more sustainable and community driven.

Young people saw a strong connection between their cultural experiences and a clean, safe and vibrant city centre with 'everyday' tasks such as reducing litter, pollution and potholes coupled with more explicit cultural interventions such as creating more green spaces, street art and events.

Both English and Welsh speakers are keen to make Welsh a more integral part of our cultural landscape. People want discovering and using Welsh to be accessible, playful and integrated into everyday life, and for there to be respect for the many different languages spoken across Swansea.

All these themes and priorities reflect the views of our cultural organisations and institutions and reinforce our determination that a distinctive, affordable and accessible cultural offer should be a priority.

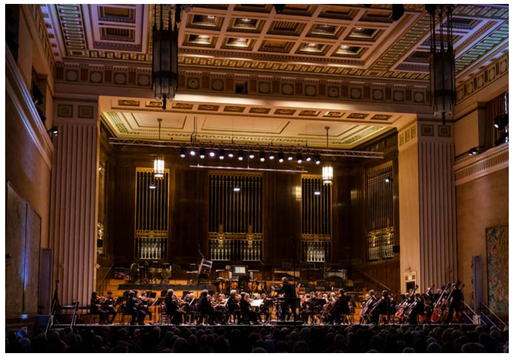
Our cultural assets

Swansea has amazing cultural assets! Previous generations have left a superb legacy of buildings and outdoor spaces to complement Swansea's natural beauty, and in recent years we have built or restored several great spaces.

Here are some examples of the different types of cultural spaces you'll find across Swansea – from large institutions to small grassroots venues – just a snapshot of the variety of places where culture comes to life.













Top left – Dylan Thomas Exhibition
Top right - Singleton Park
Middle left - Brangwyn Hall
Middle right – Amy Dillwyn Park, Copr Bay
Bottom left - Hafod Morfa Copperworks
Bottom right – Swansea Grand Theatre



4. Our Vision and Mission

What do we mean by culture?

Culture, as defined by Welsh Government, extends far beyond the arts. It includes the Welsh language, heritage, historic environment, identities, stories and sense of place (*cynefin*), as well as the everyday experiences, social connections and community life that shape wellbeing. Culture belongs to everyone, touches all policy areas and plays a vital role in individual and collective wellbeing, inclusion, education, economic development and community resilience.

Our vision

Swansea will be a place where culture helps people, communities and businesses flourish, and where partners work together to achieve shared aims and objectives.

Our mission

Our mission is to unlock the full potential of culture to shape a thriving, healthy and distinctive Swansea.

Our strategic themes

1. Improving lives and communities
2. Telling the Swansea Story
3. Amplifying local voices, businesses and talent
4. Enabling learning and aspiration
5. Unlocking growth and renewal

Our five-year objectives

Over the next five years we will:

1. Support Swansea's arts, cultural and creative industries as vital to economic growth, enriching lives, supporting wellbeing and making Swansea a distinctive and attractive place to live, work and visit.
2. Develop and promote diverse cultural events that meet the needs of local communities and attract visitors, supported by innovative and collaborative approaches to destination marketing.
3. Promote greater participation in sport, physical activity and wellbeing by giving everybody better access to facilities and programmes for their recreation, health and wellbeing.
4. Enhance the role of libraries and archives in community services, education and engagement.
5. Preserve and promote local heritage to strengthen cultural awareness and historical education.



5. Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

Objective 1

Support Swansea's arts, cultural and creative industries as vital to economic growth, enriching lives, supporting wellbeing, and making Swansea a distinctive and attractive place to live, work and visit.

What is the best that Swansea currently has to offer in terms of arts, culture and creativity?

People who responded to our survey strongly recommended Swansea's art galleries, museums, historical sites and cultural venues.

What arts, cultural or creative opportunities would people like to see more of in Swansea?

There is evidence of a strong local desire to grow the arts, cultural and creative scene, with an emphasis on improving accessibility and diversity through increasing opportunities for local talent, live performances, and low cost and free events. People who responded to the public survey wanted to see increased investment in Swansea's arts and cultural offerings, with a focus on supporting local artists and creatives, creating more opportunities for live performances, ensuring all residents can access venues, programmes and events, and celebrating the city's heritage. People would also like to see a more coordinated and financially sustainable cultural environment, with better infrastructure and creative spaces, and improved funding opportunities for artists, creatives and small organisations. Our consultation work showed that all partners and our community want to achieve this.

What else did we learn from our research and consultation?

Through surveys, literature review, conversations, workshops, interviews and discussions, we identified some key issues and opportunities facing the arts, cultural and creative industries sector in Swansea. Our Delivery Plan (see section 6) is designed to help us make the most of the opportunities and address some of the current challenges facing the sector:

- **Industry Gaps:** Swansea's creative sector is dynamic and growing, with around 3,200 people employed across nearly 380 PAYE and VAT-registered businesses. Like other areas of the UK the sector is dominated by micro-businesses and early-stage ventures, with fewer medium-sized and larger companies in key growth areas such as content, visual arts, music and theatre. Strategic investment would be a major opportunity to address this gap — helping the sector scale, retain talent and increase the economic value of creativity in Swansea.
- **Talent Development:** Swansea benefits from two strong universities, a high-quality FE college, and a growing range of sector-led training opportunities, offering solid foundations for young people interested in careers in the arts, cultural and creative industries. There is now a significant opportunity to strengthen local progression pathways—linking education, industry-ready skills and experience, and the growth of sustainable creative businesses. Enhancing these pathways would help build both English and Welsh-language talent pipelines and unlock the full economic potential of Swansea's creative economy.

- **Access to Funding:** In recent decades, arts, culture and the creative industries have relied heavily on public funding, but Swansea is now well-placed to diversify and grow its investment base. Working with creative businesses to strengthen their models and scale their activity, there is an opportunity to build a stronger pipeline for investment. Strong partnerships already exist locally, and by extending these relationships to national organisations and networks, the city can broaden its reach, attract further investment and accelerate the growth of its creative economy.
- **Rebuilding Footfall and Growing Audiences:** Like many towns and city centres across the UK, Swansea has been affected by wider shifts in how people spend their time, with national declines in evening footfall and changing audience habits. The opportunity now is not only to support existing audiences to return more frequently, but to reach and understand people who rarely or never attend grassroots gigs, theatre, comedy or other live events. Swansea already hosts a wide range of cultural activity and by improving the visibility and accessibility of both English and Welsh-language experiences, the city can broaden its appeal and attract new audiences.
- **Strengthening Identity and Confidence:** Although culture and the creative industries are thriving in many ways, wider narratives and external perceptions have sometimes meant that Swansea's strengths are not showcased as confidently as they could be. We have an opportunity to be bolder in telling our stories, celebrating what we have to offer and supporting venues, creative professionals, creative businesses and associated organisations to align behind a shared narrative in whichever language they choose. We believe this can shift perceptions, grow pride in local talent and position Swansea more strongly on the national and international stage.
- **Sustaining a Full Venue Ecosystem:** Swansea benefits from a healthy mix of grassroots, mid-sized and larger venues but, like many places across the UK, these spaces are under pressure from shifting audience behaviours, rising costs and declining national public sector support. Grassroots venues, which are essential for developing new talent, are particularly exposed to these wider trends, while mid-sized and larger venues face increasing difficulty balancing financial pressures with artistic ambition. A thriving creative sector depends on a resilient ecosystem of performance and exhibition spaces, and when any part becomes vulnerable, opportunities for artists and audiences decrease. Our focus is to help performing and visual arts venues adapt, remain viable and continue nurturing local talent and cultural growth.
- **Implementing a Strategic Approach to Public Art:** Public art provides Swansea with a powerful opportunity to express its cultural identity, animate public spaces and strengthen the city's appeal to residents and visitors. While a strategy is now being developed for SA1, public art commissions across the wider city have historically emerged in response to specific developments or funding cycles. This reflects UK-wide trends rather than a lack of local ambition, but by moving towards a more coherent and proactive approach, Swansea can better integrate public art into regeneration, placemaking and city branding. A city-wide strategy would enable new commissions to be more impactful, better coordinated and reflective of a distinct creative identity — positioning Swansea as a leader in innovative, meaningful public art.

Objective 2

Develop and promote diverse cultural events that meet the needs of local communities and attract visitors, supported by innovative and collaborative approaches to destination marketing.

What else did we learn from our research and consultation?

- Holidaymakers across the UK see Wales as a rural destination providing outdoor and heritage experiences – more likely to be associated with 'scenic countryside and villages' and 'wilderness and nature' than with 'cities and large towns.'[1]
- Roughly one third of Swansea's 4.67m visitors in 2023 stayed overnight – a higher proportion than most destinations; but day visits have been growing faster since 2022.[2]
- The market is typically couples or families with around half (47%) coming from Wales. South West England is also an important source of visits (14%).
- 74% of visitors to Swansea are repeat visitors. This underlines the area's enduring appeal which lies primarily in scenery, beaches and walking.
- The average length of stay in Swansea was 4.8 nights in 2022, compared to a UK average of 3 nights, which shows the relative strength of Swansea's offer.[3]

What are Swansea's local priorities?

Swansea's key priorities for the visitor economy are set out in Swansea's Destination Management Plan (DMP). Developing distinctive experiences was a top priority for 2023-2026; a stronger offer outside summer; economic and environmental sustainability; and improving partnerships. Other DMP priorities identified included a stronger positioning and narrative that articulates the cultural proposition; making more effective use of events to drive awareness of Swansea; developing our reputation as a visitor destination; and greater collaboration between tourism and cultural organisations for mutual benefit. Once the current DMP draws to a close, existing market and marketing research will be reviewed to inform the priorities and themes of the next Destination Management Plan (2027–2030), alongside consideration of how governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements should evolve to align with the Culture Strategy.

Key Challenge

The key challenge for tourism is raising the profile and reputation of Swansea as a visitor destination. Presenting Swansea's cultural offer in destination marketing can help do this through amplifying reputation, building interest and providing compelling reasons to visit.

Events are a key element of Swansea's cultural offer and provide that immediate reason to visit. To ensure this happens, sufficient resources will be required for high-quality bilingual marketing of those events.

1 Visit Wales, Tourism Market Demand Report – UK June 2022.
2 STEAM Summary 2023. City & County of Swansea.
3 Swansea Council Visitor Survey 2022. Visit England Domestic Overnight Trips Annual Report 2022.

Objective 3

Promote greater participation in sport, physical activity and wellbeing by giving everybody better access to facilities and programmes for their recreation, health and wellbeing.

What is the best that Swansea currently has to offer in terms of sports, health and wellbeing?

Responses to our survey demonstrated the rich variety of Swansea's natural and built assets that contribute to people's health and wellbeing. As well as our many natural spaces – beaches, woods and bays – people highlighted landscaped outdoor spaces such as parks and gardens, and major investments including swimming pools and sports stadiums.

What sports, health and wellbeing opportunities would people like to see more of in Swansea?

There was a big emphasis in our survey responses on creating a wide range of sports, health and wellbeing activities that are accessible to more people. People wanted to see more 'beginner-friendly', community-focused and affordable activities, as well as improved facilities and more reliable public transport that will help people access opportunities. People also highlighted opportunities for more use of Swansea's beaches and green spaces to promote people's health and wellbeing without compromising unspoiled natural landscapes.

What else did we learn from our research and consultation?

- **Shared goals:** There was a high level of similarity between the priorities articulated by the public through the consultation exercises and the ambitions and desires of the wide range of institutions, organisations, coaches, freelancers and artists who were consulted. Themes of affordability, inclusivity and a shared vision for a high-quality cultural offer for all, came through strongly in all strands of our research and consultation.
- **Improving Sport and Wellbeing Facilities:** There is clear public demand for the Council and others to build on existing work such as that with Sport Wales and National Governing Bodies of sports to enhance opportunities and improve facilities. Continuing to improve changing facilities and to improve grass and synthetic pitches will significantly enhance access and inclusivity. Partnership working is critical and consideration of sport and health need to continue to be embedded in major projects such as the Civic Centre and Hafod Morfa Copperworks Projects.
- **Sport and Community:** A wide variety of community buildings and open spaces in Swansea are important for residents' health and wellbeing, hosting health and exercise activities such as Pilates. These venues provide accessible spaces for physical activity and have a significant impact, so it is important that we support and maintain them. Swansea Council is trying to increase community ownership by facilitating the leasing of facilities to sports clubs and organisations. This initiative presents significant potential benefits, as shown by the over 40 community buildings already run by volunteers.

- **Sport and Culture:** We need to explore and develop a range of opportunities to better integrate sports with cultural events and activities. These could include locating sporting events at or near heritage venues, telling the stories of Swansea's sporting heritage in a range of venues and digitally, enabling people to access sports equipment through libraries, and programming cultural and sporting events in a complementary way. The Sport and Health team will continue to collaborate with national and local partners to explore and expand existing opportunities for the community to engage in activity. Key examples include working with Public Health Wales to deliver the National Exercise Referral programme, with Swansea Bay University Health Board on the Cardiac Rehab programme and delivering introductory activity sessions alongside the Ageing Well team in the shared collaborative space in the city centre.
- **Key Challenges:** Short fixed-term project funding is common but makes it difficult to plan for the long term and can limit opportunities for development and growth. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to sport and physical activity provision that can meet the needs of all ages and demographics. Ensuring opportunities are accessible, relevant and welcoming to a wide range of communities, including minority communities and people with additional needs, requires sustained engagement, strong partnerships and sufficient capacity to understand and respond to different needs.

  Financial pressures present a further challenge. Rising rents, staffing costs and utility bills pose significant risks to the viability of clubs and facilities of all sizes and can affect the cost and availability of sports and outdoor activities. At the same time, wider cost-of-living pressures mean that affordability is becoming an increasing barrier to participation, with many people having to make difficult choices about how they spend their household budgets.
- **Volunteering:** Volunteers play a vital role across Swansea. They support health and wellbeing for others through organising sports clubs, coaching players and managing teams where they are critical to the success of sport and physical activities. Volunteers also find significant benefits to their own wellbeing as they serve our communities by volunteering in community centres, libraries, faith organisations, food banks, and as friends of museums and parks - and in many other places! We need to celebrate and support them by continuing and improving active recruitment, targeted training opportunities, and awards and recognition. Collaborating with European cities for volunteer exchanges, involving Ward councillors as ambassadors and strengthening partnerships with local councils, schools and community organisations could further support volunteer efforts across Swansea.



Objective 4

Enhance the role of libraries and archives in community services, education and engagement.

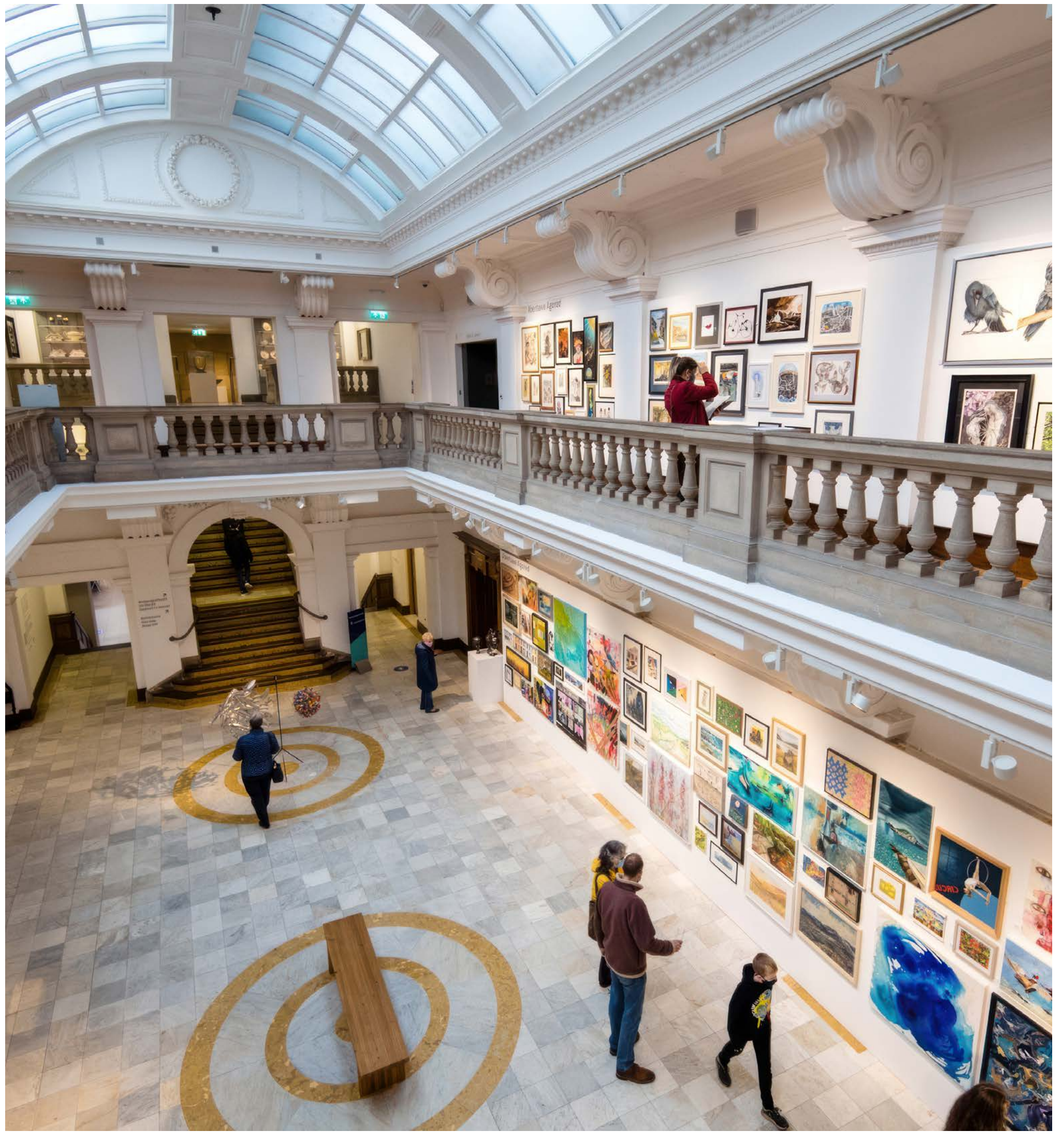
What did we learn from our research and consultation?

- **Public Libraries:** Swansea Council takes seriously its obligation under the 1964 Libraries Act to "provide a comprehensive and efficient library service", with seventeen libraries across Swansea. A comprehensive Libraries Service Plan is in place, setting out the Vision and Mission of the Library Service.[4] Libraries are amongst the most visible and well-loved public buildings. Swansea's are well-distributed across the city and county, creating opportunities to host a wide range of cultural activities. Because the Libraries Service has limited resources to deliver activities in its libraries, developing effective partnerships with other organisations, who can make use of these spaces, is essential to re-imagining libraries as cultural hubs. We need to continue to take opportunities to work with partners to deliver arts activity in local libraries (e.g. temporary exhibitions, displays, workshops, book groups, readings), which is a great way to reach audiences who rarely or never travel into Swansea city centre. Swansea's new city centre community hub, Y Storfa, opened in December 2025, positioning library services on the high street, and creating better access and collaboration between libraries and other public services. Swansea Council and its partners must learn from Y Storfa which services really complement each other and how these benefits can be delivered in other locations.

- **Further Libraries and Archives:** As well as Swansea's public libraries there are library facilities for the city's students and (through the Libraries Together Passport Scheme) for other residents at Swansea University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The Richard Burton Archive (Swansea University), South Wales Miners' Library and West Glamorgan Archive (located at Y Storfa) provide valuable access to historical and contemporary records, cement our historical identity as a place and are invaluable for researchers, as well as residents and families seeking to understand more about their own family history. Our library and archives institutions are committed to collaboration and cross-institution initiatives are in place, with more proposed. In particular, West Glamorgan Archive Service, a joint repository and service for the people of Neath Port Talbot and Swansea, regularly presents talks, in person and digital opportunities for visitors and residents to uncover records and historical artefacts. Working across community centres, schools and universities, the team provide a structured entry point to uncovering and understanding heritage and the evolution of our communities and city.

4 Swansea Libraries Service Plan 2023/24-2026/27. Available at https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/14645/Swansea-Libraries-service-plan.

- **Libraries and Culture:** The Council's Fusion programme officer delivers arts activity to people in socially and economically deprived areas. Partnerships with a range of local groups will be important to ensure this provision reaches those who would benefit from it most. Libraries have huge potential to host networks of artists and creatives, and to serve as accessible venues for grassroots cultural activities. Swansea Council is keen to play a facilitative role as this develops. Library staff are a key resource for signposting people to a wide range of other cultural activities, so they need to be aware of key activities and events across the city and regularly updated on information platforms. Swansea Council's new Library Management System provides a very large dataset, including emails, of people interested in cultural activities across Swansea, which is potentially a significant marketing opportunity for a wide range of cultural events and activities.
- **Libraries and Health:** There are opportunities to partner more effectively with healthcare providers to raise awareness of the existing "Reading Well" scheme which provides books on prescription and is effective and well-received, but which could have significantly greater uptake.
- **Libraries and Welsh Language:** eBooks, magazines and newspapers all provide opportunities for Welsh Language literacy, but work is needed across Wales and internationally to ensure that the financial model for digital is sustainable for libraries, publishers and authors.



Objective 5

Preserve and promote local heritage to strengthen cultural awareness and historical education.

What do we mean by heritage?

Our objectives for heritage are informed by Welsh and UK policy and stakeholder consultation and take a broad view of heritage, as both tangible and intangible heritage that supports local people and the visitor economy, and embraces innovation, partnership and sustainability in management and interpretation. Swansea's heritage goes beyond its many wonderful buildings and monuments and includes our archives, museum collections, use of the Welsh language and the collective culture and memories of our residents.

What is the best that Swansea currently has to offer in terms of history and heritage?

There were a lot of different suggestions in response to the public survey, reflecting Swansea's wide range of historical sites covering ancient, classical, medieval, and modern history, and places where the wider social history of our place is uncovered – including archives and museums.

Swansea Museum, West Glamorgan Archive Service, the National Waterfront Museum, Local Studies and the Dylan Thomas Centre all provide opportunities for residents and visitors to learn more about the industrial and social history of Swansea and Wales. Swansea Museum is recorded as the 'oldest museum in Wales' and provides an accessible, visitor-friendly glimpse into the social structures of Swansea and how individuals' experiences of exploration, learning and science shaped the social and industrial heritage of Swansea. There are several groups and activities that promote learning and research and regular exhibitions and events to celebrate key moments in history and notable characters that shaped Swansea. A 'blue plaque' scheme honours individuals and events of national and global importance, to create a visual record of the city's history associated with its buildings and public realm.

What heritage activities would people like to see more of in Swansea?

People want to increase public understanding of and engagement with Swansea's local history, culture and notable figures. In common with other areas of cultural activity people are keen to make heritage accessible and inclusive, both through mechanisms like pricing and opening hours, and in the content of the material presented. There was enthusiasm for showcasing Swansea's literary and industrial history, but also for improving the conservation of and access to heritage sites, using digital technology and innovative events to engage a wider audience. People also highlighted the importance of preserving historical sites, promoting Welsh culture and creating educational opportunities for all ages. The Dylan Thomas Exhibition has regularly won the Family Friendly Museum Award and hosts workshops and activities for schools, refugees and young writers, utilising the legacy of Dylan Thomas as a route to understanding our own place in the world through creative expression.

What else did we learn from our research and consultation?

- We have a rich natural and built heritage with almost all our top-rated attractions across multiple platforms being beaches, castles, woods and parks. National Trust and Cadw both have significant land and property holdings, along with the Council and voluntary sector and private owners.
- There has been significant progress on the ambitions of the Great Place Scheme (2018) to revitalise the Hafod Morfa Copperworks with some of the site already back in use and planning permission having recently been granted for the next phase related to the Engine Houses. Significant works to the Morriston Tabernacle have helped towards the ambition of a strong heritage corridor linking Morriston and Hafod, re-engaging communities with their heritage.
- The Council's heritage buildings at risk policy has resulted in notable successes, particularly with repurposing some of the larger, high-value assets in the city centre including the Palace Theatre (co-working, business and skills support, event spaces and community café) and the Albert Hall (food court, accommodation, workspace and events).
- Maintaining a strong pipeline of projects that are close to 'shovel ready' is critical given the opportunistic nature of lots of public sector funding for heritage. The use of UK SPF funds to deliver feasibility work and develop plans (such as at White Rock Industrial Heritage Park) is an important part of this approach.
- There has been success, through the Y Storfa project, in the ambition to draw together the County's various libraries and archives, with the West Glamorgan Archives, South Wales Miners' Library and Swansea Central Library all located at Y Storfa alongside community exhibition and event spaces for talks and presentations, free of charge.
- There have been extensive public realm improvements, particularly around the new Arena, with better paving, lighting and wayfinding all contributing to enhanced appreciation of the historic environment, though it is widely recognised that there is more to be done, particularly to cement Swansea's maritime heritage as a key part of the city's image and appeal.
- As in many parts of Wales and the UK, the heritage sector operates within a fragmented system of governance, decision-making and delivery. This makes long-term planning and partnership working challenging but also highlights the opportunity to create a more coherent, collaborative and strategic approach for Swansea.
- There is strong demand from residents and visitors for us to tell stories of Swansea through buildings, collections and intangible heritage in ways that are stimulating and accessible.

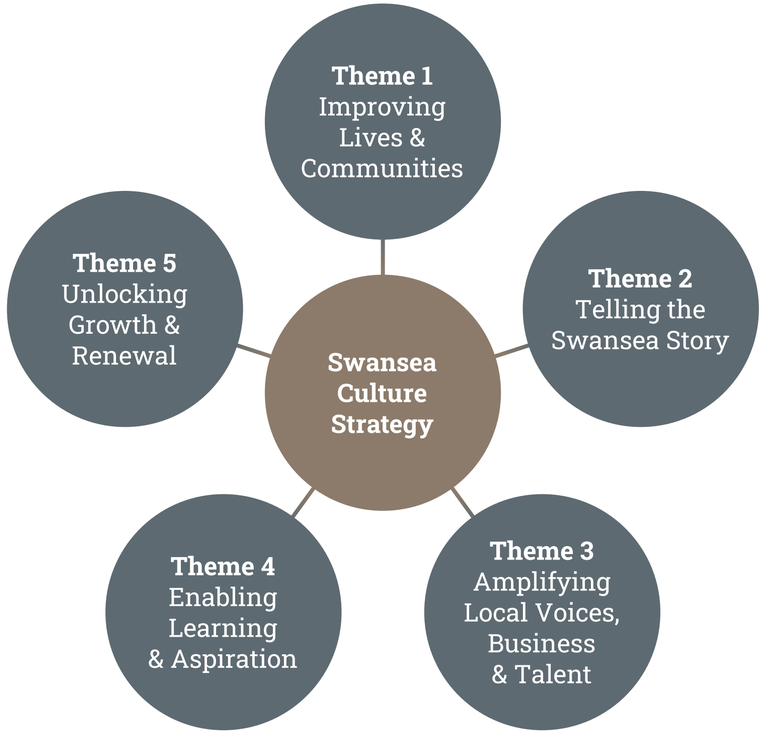




6. Our Delivery Plan

What is it and why do we need it?

Our Delivery Plan explains the actions we will take over the next few years to implement the Culture Strategy. It sets out what we will do, how those tasks will be broken down, who will take responsibility for them, and the governance structures we will put in place to ensure there is clear responsibility for implementing the Culture Strategy. The Delivery Plan has been shaped to overcome the challenges and leverage the opportunities within Swansea's cultural ecosystem. It considers how culture is already making a meaningful difference and where coordinated action over the next five years can have the greatest impact.



Our strategic themes

Our five strategic themes highlight the main cross-cutting trends identified throughout the consultation and research. They illustrate what communities value, disclose the priorities set by stakeholders in Swansea and point to areas where culture can create enduring benefits based on the evidence. They also respond to national policy drivers, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as well as regeneration and economic policy frameworks.

The themes are:

1. The role of culture in **improving everyday life and community wellbeing.**
2. The importance of telling the **Swansea story** linked to identity, heritage and language.
3. The need to amplify **local voices, businesses and talent.**
4. The value of culture as a driver of **learning and aspiration.**
5. The opportunity for culture to support **growth,** regeneration and **renewal.**

Each theme captures a strategic area where collective ownership and coordinated action are needed - and where culture has the potential to create significant positive change.

Our strategic aims and priorities

Strategic Theme	Strategic Aim	Five-Year Priorities
Theme 1: Improving Lives and Communities	The Council and its partners will make culture a priority, to improve people's lives and communities. People will feel more included and connected, and culture will support their health and wellbeing.	• Expand the range of cultural events and experiences across Swansea, improving their quality, diversity, accessibility and relevance. • Encourage and improve access to cultural activities and spaces, including facilities that meet community needs and opportunities for volunteering, participation and community-led initiatives.
Theme 2: Telling the Swansea Story	Culture will strengthen our sense of identity and pride in place – connecting people to Swansea's stories, languages, landscapes and heritage.	• Promote Swansea nationally and internationally by telling the story of its places, people, communities and businesses. • Better connect Swansea's cultural assets and heritage sites to create more memorable experiences. • Digitise Swansea's heritage collections and use digital and non-digital storytelling to connect people with them. • Put mechanisms in place that help people and communities care for heritage buildings and spaces.
Theme 3: Amplifying Local Voices, Businesses and Talent	Culture will celebrate what makes Swansea unique, amplifying local voices and talent across the city and region.	• Celebrate and showcase local creative, sporting and business talent. • Develop a resourced programme of community engagement opportunities.
Theme 4: Enabling Learning and Aspiration	Culture will enable learning and aspiration, building talent and skills from early years to adulthood.	• Strengthen and grow the skills and experience of people who work and volunteer in and across the key sectors of the Culture Strategy. • Maximise the potential of libraries as spaces for knowledge, learning and community cohesion.
Theme 5: Unlocking Growth and Renewal	Culture will support economic and environmental renewal, through culture-led regeneration, tourism, green spaces and enterprise.	• Grow Swansea's creative and cultural economy by connecting its workforce, educators, innovators, businesses, public services and creative organisations to create a sustainable cluster. • Grow Swansea's visitor economy by strengthening its cultural reputation and cross-sector partnerships. • Protect and support grassroots cultural infrastructure.

Delivering through partnership and shared vision

A healthy cultural ecosystem is built on connected systems - where organisations, people, services and communities work effectively together, sharing activities, skills, audiences, technology and spaces. Eight such systems consistently appeared in our findings:

- Artistic and creative practice and production
- Libraries, archives, learning and literacy
- Heritage, placemaking and storytelling
- Outdoor events and spaces
- Sport, physical activity and wellbeing
- Tourism and destination marketing
- Community inclusion and participation
- Place marketing and cultural identity

These systems also correspond with the main strands of Swansea's cultural ecosystem. There is already significant collaboration and network-building between and across these strands, but there are also gaps and leadership needs.

To build on existing strengths and address those gaps and needs we have formed Strand Partnership Groups, each representing a distinct but connected part of Swansea's cultural ecosystem. The aim of each Strand Partnership Group is to:

- Bring together stakeholders who enable, understand and have expertise in that area
- Support shared planning, resourcing and problem-solving
- Provide specialist insight into delivery
- Ensure that actions are led by the people and organisations with the right expertise and relationships
- Avoid duplication and strengthen strategic alignment



Strand Partnership Groups

Group	Purpose	Responsibilities
Arts and Creative Industries	To lead the development of Swansea's cultural and creative industries (CCI) sector by supporting artists, creative practitioners, arts organisations and creative businesses.	Creative content, commissioning, programming, CCI sector growth and talent pathways including the Creative Swansea network.
Libraries, Archives and Learning	To connect people with knowledge, learning, heritage and community identity through Swansea's library and archive network and promote its role in digital inclusion and lifelong learning.	Learning, literacy, digital inclusion, heritage collections and community knowledge.
Heritage, Places and Stories	To champion Swansea's heritage, identity and placemaking by connecting cultural heritage assets, historic environments and community storytelling.	Heritage partnership, cultural identity, placemaking, trails, interpretation and storytelling.
Outdoor Events and Spaces	To manage, enable and regulate outdoor events and spaces so that both commercial and community-based cultural events can take place safely, successfully and in the right locations.	Events delivery, logistics, licensing, safety, activation planning and operational coordination.
Sport and Health	To increase participation in sport and active lifestyles across Swansea, improving physical and mental wellbeing and celebrating Swansea as a city of sport.	Participation, health and wellbeing programmes, active communities, inclusive facilities and the progression from amateur to professional sport.
Tourism and Destination Marketing	To strengthen Swansea's visitor economy through integrated marketing, itineraries, experiences and sense of place – showcasing Swansea's cultural assets and experiences.	Destination marketing, tourism product development, market research, visitor experience, itineraries and PR, cultural tourism and brand alignment.
Communities, Inclusion and Participation	To ensure that everyone in Swansea – across all communities, identities, ages and backgrounds – has equitable access to culture.	Participation, equitable access, community engagement, youth voice and inclusive practice.
Place Marketing	To celebrate and amplify Swansea's identity by telling the city's story through the experiences, creativity, heritage and achievements of its people and communities. This means weaving together narratives from the arts, creative industries, heritage, sport, business and tourism to build a coherent and compelling sense of place that strengthens the pride and visibility of Swansea's people and communities.	Place brand storytelling, community-led narratives, marketing alignment, profile raising, place campaigns, coordination with destination marketing and economic development, leveraging partnership marketing assets and partnership networks.

Culture Strategy governance

Our Culture Strategy is underpinned by a governance model that is designed to be transparent, collaborative and accountable. Year one will include a focus on structuring this governance with appropriate internal and external representation, operating at three levels:

a) Strategic Oversight

A cross-sector Culture Strategy Group will maintain our vision and mission, monitor progress on delivery, align the Strategy with wider Council and partner priorities, and ensure decisions reflect the cultural, social and economic needs and ambitions of Swansea.

b) Strand Partnership Groups (Delivery Leadership)

Each Strand Partnership Group will lead delivery in its area of expertise.

These Groups bring together:

- Council teams
- Cultural institutions
- Educational institutions
- Businesses and industry
- Community organisations
- Practitioners and freelancers
- National bodies and funders

The Groups will ensure actions are developed collaboratively, grounded in practical insight and delivered through shared ownership.

c) Delivery Networks and Project Teams

Within each Strand Partnership Group are the individuals, services, organisations and working groups who deliver specific programmes, commissions, projects, events or initiatives.





Our Action Plan

Our Action Plan translates our strategic themes and five-year priorities into clear, high-level areas of work where coordinated effort can have significant impact. The Action Plan will be implemented through the Strand Partnership Groups. Each Group will develop further detail including:

- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Timelines, milestones and resource needs
- Links and dependencies between strands
- Alignment with existing activity and strategic priorities
- Performance indicators, monitoring and reporting arrangements
- Methods to embed bilingualism, inclusion and community input

Through this process, the Strand Partnership Groups will translate evidence-based plans into coordinated, practical actions ensuring that our Culture Strategy is implemented collaboratively and in a way that reflects Swansea's strengths, needs and ambitions.

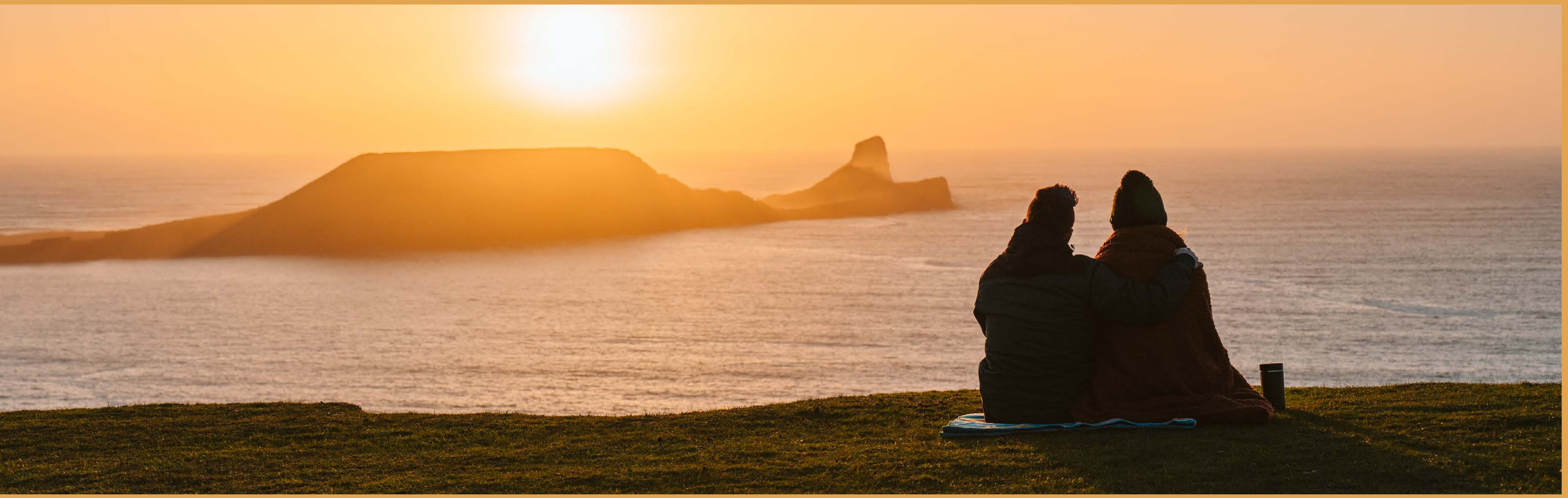
AP No	Action	Delivery Steps	Responsibility	Strategic Aim(s)
AP1	Develop a county-wide commissioning and programming framework	Establish shared governance and a cross-sector commissioning group	Arts and Creative Industries Group	Amplifying Local Voices and Talent
		Review current activity and create common principles, tools and transparent processes		
		Develop a forward-look calendar and identify co-commissioning opportunities		
		Align commissioning with Creative Swansea, talent development and skills pathways		
AP2	Support artists, freelancers, venues and businesses through Creative Swansea	Provide access to networking events, peer connections and cross-sector meet-ups	Arts and Creative Industries Group	Amplifying Local Voices and Talent
		Offer practical business support including training and skills development and signposting to opportunities		
		Promote creative individuals and businesses through the Creative Swansea website, directories, social media and sector showcases		
		Improve access to commissions, collaborations and sector programmes across the region		
		Share resources, guidance and tools that strengthen resilience, visibility and professional practice		
AP3	Grow our cultural and creative industries	Develop a coordinated approach to business support for the cultural and creative industries	Arts and Creative Industries Group	Amplifying Local Voices and Talent, Unlocking Growth and Renewal
		Expand access to affordable creative workspaces, studios and digital production facilities		
		Strengthen incubation and enterprise pathways for creative entrepreneurs		
		Support volunteering, work experience, placements and apprenticeships within creative organisations		
		Improve sector-wide access to finance, grants and investment opportunities		
		Facilitate cross-sector collaboration between creative businesses, venues, Further and Higher Education institutions, and digital industries		
		Pilot new business models for venues, organisations and freelancers to support income diversification and sustainability		
		Promote innovation and experimentation across creative sub-sectors including digital, screen, design and performing arts		
		Create regular opportunities for networking, showcasing and knowledge exchange		
		Use Creative Swansea to share opportunities, commissions, tenders and sector intelligence		
		Improve the marketing, visibility and brand positioning of Swansea's creative economy		
		Support growth of the independent cultural and creative industries sector through coordinated infrastructure and support		

AP No	Action	Delivery Steps	Responsibility	Strategic Aim(s)
AP4	Strengthen talent pathways	Map skills gaps and needs across creative, cultural and technical roles	Arts and Creative Industries Group	Amplifying Local Voices and Talent, Enabling Learning and Aspiration
		Inspire and inform young (i.e. school age) talent to consider careers and pathways into the cultural and creative industries sector		
		Align the Further Education and Higher Education curriculum with the needs of the cultural and creative industries sector		
		Create clearer progression routes into employment, including production, project management and curatorial roles		
		Expand mentoring, residencies, placements and paid development opportunities		
		Embed students and emerging creatives into the local ecosystem through real project experience		
		Develop structured approaches to volunteering, work experience and apprenticeships		
		Ensure major venues and cultural organisations have access to a consistent and diverse talent pipeline		
		Promote Swansea as a desirable place to study and build a creative career		
		Support collaboration between education providers, employers and Creative Swansea to strengthen pathways		
AP5	Enhance digital inclusion across Swansea	Expand digital skills sessions in libraries and hubs and strengthen existing digital volunteer arrangements and Fusion Cultural Community project opportunities	Libraries, Archives and Learning Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Provide device access, free Wi-Fi/broadband and assist with digital support at library and archive venues		
		Link with early years/community hubs and groups for targeted outreach		
AP6	Increase literacy and lifelong learning participation through culture	Expand opportunities to develop literacy skills across libraries and in communities including working with schools and other community organisations	Libraries, Archives and Learning Group	Improving Lives and Communities, Enabling Learning and Aspiration
		Provide access to learning at library and archive venues		
		Work with early years teams, other Council services and partners to reach residents who face barriers to learning		
		Increase awareness of available digital resources and free learning opportunities		
AP7	Improve access to heritage collections	Prioritise digitisation of high-demand collections	Libraries, Archives and Learning Group	Improving Lives and Communities, Enabling Learning and Aspiration
		Grow oral history capturing community voices		
		Align library and archive web presence to improve access		
		Adopt a shared or partnership-based digital preservation approach across Swansea's library and archive sector		

AP No	Action	Delivery Steps	Responsibility	Strategic Aim(s)
AP8	Create a Swansea Heritage Partnership	Establish a Heritage Partnership Group	Heritage, Places and Stories Group	Telling the Swansea Story
		Include volunteer-led and professional organisations		
		Link in planning and conservation expertise		
		Provide guidance for Friends Groups		
		Host knowledge-sharing sessions		
AP9	Deliver place-based interpretation and trails	Create a county-wide trails dataset	Heritage, Places and Stories Group	Telling the Swansea Story
		Improve wayfinding and accessibility of existing trails		
		Develop new trails using digital interpretation		
		Coordinate cross-sector storytelling		
AP10	Embed placemaking into regeneration schemes	Embed public art within regeneration schemes	Heritage, Places and Stories	Telling the Swansea Story, Unlocking Growth and Renewal
		Connect assets through signage and digital content		
		Use empty shops for cultural pop-ups		
		Align culture more closely with transport and active travel partners		
AP11	Strengthen Swansea's reputation for events	Establish sector-specific Events and Grassroots Music Partnership Boards to implement the recommendations of the 10-year Events Strategy and Music Friendly City Audit and ensure they are embedded in partner strategies across stakeholders at local, regional and national levels	Outdoor Events and Spaces	Unlocking Growth and Renewal
AP12	Improve event safety and operational coordination	Review and refresh licensing guidance and Safety Advisory Group (SAG) processes	Outdoor Events and Spaces Group	Unlocking Growth and Renewal
		Provide clear toolkits for event organisers		
		Improve operational planning across Swansea with partners to ensure environmental and economic sustainability		
AP13	Support inclusive and accessible events	Develop, adopt and share inclusive good practice standards for event organisers to use	Outdoor Events and Spaces Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Co-design accessible formats with communities		
		Remove participation barriers with venues and partners		

AP No	Action	Delivery Steps	Responsibility	Strategic Aim(s)
AP14	Increase participation in sport and physical activity	Analyse national and local datasets to identify low participation groups that may require additional support to overcome barriers and become active	Sport and Health Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Co-design targeted interventions, including pilots with communities to help remove and overcome the barriers to participating in sport and physical activity that are identified in the evidence base		
		Highlight good news stories and explore opportunities to scale-up successful interventions citywide and elevate Swansea as a 'City of Sport'/ 'Active City'		
AP15	Strengthen the environments and experiences where sport and physical activity take place and raise awareness of the opportunities for participants and volunteers	Work in collaboration with partners to map key indoor and outdoor facilities and spaces, such as parks, where sport and physical activity take place and develop an infrastructure plan across key sports and activities, identifying priorities for future support and investment	Sport and Health Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Explore and create a single online hub or portal for sporting, recreational and health activities that will raise awareness of Swansea's offer to residents and visitors		
		Partner with community clubs, national governing bodies, education, third sector organisations and Council services to deliver inclusive sport, physical activity and volunteering opportunities that support Swansea becoming an 'Active City'		
		Use the Swansea Sports Awards to showcase participants, clubs, volunteers and interventions that contribute towards an 'Active City'		
AP16	Support the sporting pathway from grassroots to performance	Define and display the route from amateur to professional sport for key sports and activities across the city and identify the partnerships and collaborations involved	Sport and Health Group	Enabling Learning and Aspiration
		Collaborate with key partners like National Governing Bodies of Sport, Universities, schools and community clubs to ensure there are opportunities for all to access the sporting pathway of their choice at the appropriate level		
		Raise awareness and signpost opportunities of support for participants and volunteers to progress through their chosen sport or activity		
AP17	Create a joined-up visitor marketing plan	Share key market and marketing intel with stakeholders, align key messages to priority personas, and establish a shared resource of content, imagery and digital assets with agreed criteria	Tourism and Destination Marketing Group	Telling the Swansea Story, Unlocking Growth and Renewal
AP18	Strengthen cultural tourism experiences	Work with the sector to develop and package trails, itineraries and bookable products for consumer and PR opportunities	Tourism and Destination Marketing Group	Enabling Learning and Aspiration, Unlocking Growth and Renewal
		Continue to enable greater collaboration between providers and businesses throughout the year		
		Use marketing personas to reach new audiences with new products and experiences		

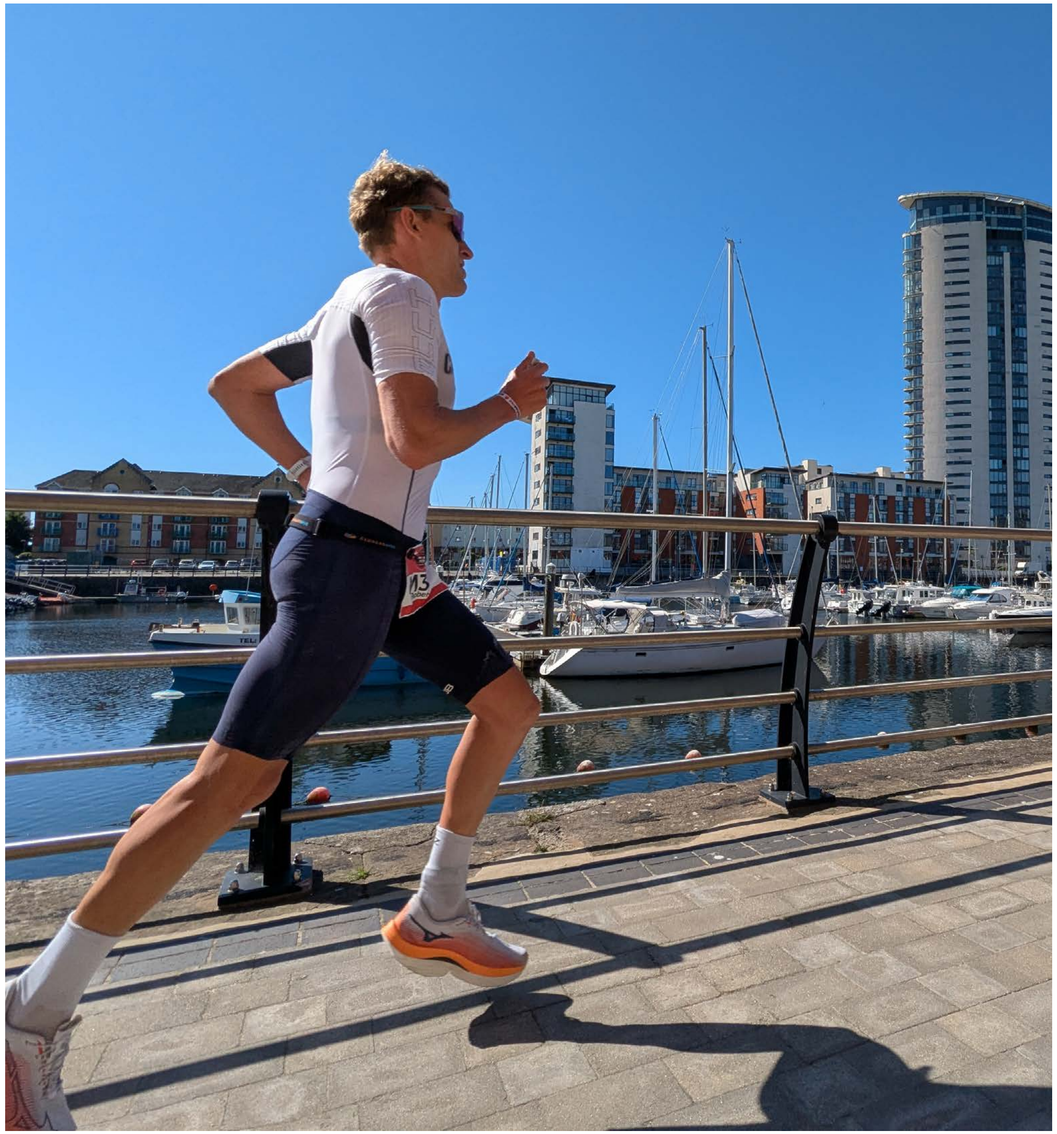
AP No	Action	Delivery Steps	Responsibility	Strategic Aim(s)
AP19	Enhance Swansea's place brand	Facilitate workshops to help define the 'Swansea Story'	Tourism and Destination Marketing Group	Telling the Swansea Story
		Position the destination as one that aligns culture at the heart of its marketing proposition		
		Publish open-source guidance for digital interpretation of the Swansea Story		
AP20	Deliver a community engagement framework	Establish a resourced community engagement framework	Communities, Inclusion and Participation Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Involve young people directly in programming		
		Create local participation routes and feedback loops		
AP21	Improve equitable access	Define volunteer roles and training pathways	Communities, Inclusion and Participation Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Develop Y Storfa as a volunteering hub		
		Review collections for representation and access		
AP22	Strengthen inclusive practice	Set equity standards across culture, sport and heritage	Communities, Inclusion and Participation Group	Improving Lives and Communities
		Deliver inclusive practice training		
		Embed inclusion checks in programme planning		
AP23	Create a shared performance and monitoring framework	Create outcome-based evaluation tools	Culture Strategy Group	Cross-cutting
		Align with national KPIs where useful		
		Share project-level insights across strands		
AP24	Strengthen Strand Partnership Group governance and operations	Stand up/refresh governance groups for strands	Culture Strategy Group	Cross-cutting
		Schedule regular meetings and updates		
AP25	Develop a workforce and skills plan for Swansea's cultural sector	Run sector-wide skills audits	Culture Strategy Group	Cross-cutting
		Deliver targeted training and succession planning		
		Celebrate excellence through awards and recognition		
AP26	Strengthen Swansea's place marketing and storytelling	Align culture, heritage, sport and tourism marketing around a shared, bilingual Swansea story that strengthens identity and pride in place	Place Marketing Group	Cross-cutting



7. Measuring Success

The Culture Strategy Group will monitor progress on delivery of the five-year objectives against clear targets and milestones, as set out in agreed action plans. An annual report will be published, summarising achievements, challenges and learnings from the past year and how these will inform future planning and delivery.

An evaluation framework will also be developed in year one, setting out how longer-term outcomes and impacts will be measured. This will include quantitative measures such as participation levels and economic data alongside qualitative insights obtained from surveys and case studies. It will draw on, and align with, existing local and national monitoring frameworks (e.g., Swansea Council, Welsh Government).



Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU
Funded by
UK Government

counterculture

Cyngor Abertawe
Swansea Council