



Exeter City  
Arts and Media Strategy  
2008 - 2012

November 2008

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Exeter is a vibrant and successful city with a strong retailing and commercial sector and a well developed arts and cultural infrastructure. The City has a first class University with around 12,000 students and a growing science and innovation sector. Exeter is a successful visitor destination attracting around 1.58m day visitors and 383,000 staying visitors a year. The estimated 30-minute drivetime catchment for the City has a total population of 448,000. Exeter is ambitious and forward-looking and has set out its ambition in the *Exeter Vision*.

*Exeter Vision restates the city's mission statement – "to enhance Exeter as the regional capital and to work in partnership to improve the quality of life for all people living in, working in and visiting the city" - its determination to be the regional capital of the South West, and to achieve "a confident city providing employment, services, and cultural and leisure opportunities to people both in the city and surrounding areas".*

Since the adoption of the Vision there have been significant developments, including a 200% growth in use of Exeter airport and the relocation of the Met Office to the City. This has spurred it on to develop its reputation as a centre for science and knowledge. Other developments are the completion of the landmark Princesshay retail area; major capital investment in the Northcott Theatre and Exeter Phoenix (the City's arts centre); and the commencement of a major £16.5m refurbishment and development of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (attracting £9.4m of HLF Lottery funding), an important regional Hub museum.

The buoyant economy and housing market up to 2008 stimulated the local economy bringing increased prosperity to the City, while the status and success of The University of Exeter brings further kudos and benefits and attracts increasing student numbers. Exeter has been identified as a Growth Point, which brings with it some specific benefits and roles and will significantly increase the local population. Current growth plans include an additional 15,000 homes within the City (in addition to major housing growth close to the City in East Devon) and possible major re-developments in the City Centre around the former Debenham's store and bus station.

The arts and media are an important contributor to the life of Exeter and have a key role to play in supporting the City's aspirations and enhancing its status as a regional capital in both economic and cultural terms. Exeter City Council has a firm

commitment to supporting and developing arts and media activity and, with support from other partners, it has been instrumental in establishing an impressive and broad range of cultural provision and in sustaining an infrastructure of arts organisations and venues which contribute to Exeter's cultural vibrancy. It is currently undertaking the re-development of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

An audit and review of arts and media provision was undertaken in 2006/7 and this review provides an opportunity to build on that work by focusing on the strategic needs and aspirations of the City, looking forward initially to the next four years, but with a longer term vision of where the City aims to be in terms of arts and cultural provision in 10-20 years time, and how it might move towards that.

At the heart of this review is the Exeter's aspiration to become a unitary authority and its regional cultural capital status, identifying its vision for arts and media as part of the broader corporate and community aspirations for the City, so that arts and media and the creative industries are placed firmly within the corporate agenda, Community Plan and Local Area Agreement and contribute to the growth and prosperity of the City. The City's cultural provision plays a critical role in defining the City, creating a sense of place and identity. Creating this identity and sense of place is a shared responsibility for the City's cultural providers, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Final decisions on unitary status will be made by Government in 2009. Though a vitally important issue for the City and County, by itself the local government structure will not change the strategic importance of Exeter as a cultural centre regionally, and for the County and adjacent parts of Somerset and Dorset. This strategy therefore aims to position Exeter as the fulcrum of arts and cultural provision in Devon and the wider region and to identify the measures required to take forward the City's arts and media provision and development and to achieve the City's aspirations.

## **1.2 Aims**

The aim of this report is to provide a city-wide review of the arts and media strategy 2004-2006; to identify the progress which has been made; to consider the changes which have occurred in the City and the external environment; and to produce a revised strategic framework and action plan that will take arts and media development in the City forward until 2012. The aims of the review were to assess:

- The national, regional and local context for the strategy
- The corporate strategic framework and how arts and culture contribute to corporate aims and objectives and the Community and Cultural Strategies

- The current position of the arts in Exeter

and to develop:

- The strategic priorities in relation to the economic health and growth of the City as a regional cultural centre
- Agreed strategic priorities and revised objectives
- A three-year action/operational plan with recommendations on funding and resources
- A suggested framework for continuous assessment to contribute to continuous improvement and Best Value.

### **1.3 The Strategy Process**

The strategy process involved a review of the strategic aims and priorities identified in the 2004 – 2006 arts and media strategy and the 2007 audit in the context of the range of current policies and priorities of the City Council and other stakeholders in the County, regionally and nationally. A range of documentation was reviewed, including Corporate policies and plans.

A process of consultation has been undertaken with staff in several Council services and departments (e.g. Economic Development, Tourism, Planning, Leisure and Museums) and with arts and festivals staff. A series of consultation meetings and discussions took place with key arts organisations and partner agencies (e.g. funded arts organisations, venues, Devon County Council, The University of Exeter, Exeter College, Arts Council England South West) and with the voluntary and community sector through one to one meetings and a group consultation meeting co-ordinated by Exeter Arts Council.

A list of people consulted is attached as an appendix to this report.

## 2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The strategic framework for this arts and media strategy is established by the Community Plan for Exeter, Exeter Vision, and by a number of other national, regional and local policies, including:

The Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Development Strategy 2008-2013

The Exeter Cultural Strategy

*Planning for Our Future*, the Exeter Corporate Plan

The Regional Cultural Infrastructure Strategy, '*People, Places and Spaces*'<sup>1</sup>

National Government policy as set out by the DCMS, including '*Creative Britain, New Talents for the Economy*'<sup>2</sup>

Arts Council England's *Agenda for the Arts* and other policies

*A better place to be* the regional cultural strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES),

The Regional Creative Industries Strategy (SWRDA)

South West Screen Business Plan, *A Changed Landscape and a New Approach*

The Draft Devon Local Area Agreement 2008-2011

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

and Integrated Regional Strategy *Just Connect*.

*More Creative Lives*, the arts policy for Devon

The Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Development Strategy 2008-2013 highlights key characteristics of the local economy:

- Exeter's economy is dominated by the service sector
- Whilst the city population is relatively low (119,600),<sup>3</sup> the close proximity of other urban centres and villages creates a sizeable market to Exeter's advantage. The Exeter TTWA (Travel to Work Area) population in 2001 (excluding Torbay) was 288,350<sup>4</sup> and is predicted to rise by about 30% by 2026.
- In recent years, Exeter has had a very buoyant economy which has put pressure on land availability for new development, particularly in the centre.
- Devon loses more graduates than any other county; partly due to the impact of very high house prices
- Conference trade has been particularly busy in Exeter but the City lacks a facility for over 300 people except when the University facilities are available

<sup>1</sup> *People, Places and Spaces - A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy for the South West, Consultation Draft April 2007*, (Culture South West, Exeter, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> *Creative Britain, New Talents for the Economy, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, (London, 2007)*

<sup>3</sup> ONS Mid 2006 estimate

<sup>4</sup> *Exeter Employment Study, Atkins, March 2007*

- Exeter seems to lack redundant buildings which can be converted into Creative Industries centres
- Walk and cycle have been developed and offer opportunities for public art, although this has been largely community rather than iconic.
- Exeter appears to have a lower rate of entrepreneurial activity than other locations.

The strategy priorities are:

- ICT (Information Communications Technology)
- Professional and Business Services
- Biotech and Medical Services
- Environmental Technology
- Small scale advanced engineering
- Tourism
- Knowledge-based public sector activities
- Arts and creative Industries

*Note: certain changes have occurred since the strategy was produced; for instance the economy has entered a downturn. The diversity of the population is also changing with its recent growth.*

The South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) Corporate Plan, 'What Next' sets out the development priorities for the region. It places particular importance on 'Creating successful places', based on key centres, and on investing in areas where investment will have the greatest impact in support of growth, adapting to change and sustainability. 'Place-making' is now a key regional policy objective and Exeter is identified as one of six regional centres that have economies that are of significance beyond their administrative boundaries and which function as sub-regional economic drivers.

In working to support new enterprise and business growth, SWRDA has identified tourism and the creative industries as priority areas. The Regional Cultural Infrastructure Strategy, *People, Places and Spaces*<sup>5</sup> developed by the Regional Cultural Consortium, also identifies the key role of Exeter as one of ten 'planning areas for culture' providing sub-regional centres for cultural development.

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<sup>5</sup> *People, Places and Spaces - A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy for the South West, Consultation Draft April 2007, (Culture South West, Exeter, 2007)*

The DCMS *Taking Part* survey<sup>6</sup> analyses participation levels in the arts. It found that:

- 67% of all adults had attended an arts event
- Theatre events were attended by 25.5% (the highest type of attendance)
- 53% of adults had participated in an arts activity.

The South West of England has the highest levels of participation nationally.

*Creative Britain*,<sup>7</sup> emphasises the importance of creativity and the creative industries within the UK economy, which contributes £60 billion a year, accounting for 7.3% of the British economy, and recommends that Britain needs to '*recognise the growing success story that is Britain's creative economy and build on that.*' It identifies a number of ways in which Local Government can support the sector, including providing flexible business, studio and rehearsal space; protecting and developing exhibition and performance spaces; developing links between universities and creative businesses; promoting festivals and events; and encouraging local networks and projects supporting the development of creative talent.

A new national initiative has recently been launched to increase levels of participation in the arts, in line with the Government's *Taking Part* agenda. Government is also concerned to increase opportunities for young people to experience the arts and media. It has recently announced a new £25 million '*Find Your Talent*' scheme, part of the Government's ambition to give young people in England the chance to experience high quality arts and culture. This will complement existing schools arts education initiatives and the policy that everyone, whatever their background, gets the chance to experience and participate in the arts for the first time, both in and outside of school.

Arts Council England has recently announced its revised policies for the period 2008 – 2011. There are five overriding national objectives:

- Excellence - high quality art and arts experience
- Reach - more people attending and taking part in the arts
- Engagement - more opportunities for people to get involved with arts
- Diversity - arts that reflect the diversity of contemporary England
- Innovation - artists have the freedom and are challenged to innovate

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<sup>6</sup> *Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport, Annual Report 2005/06, Edited by Aust, Rebecca & Vine, Lisa (DCMS, London, May 2007)*

<sup>7</sup> *Creative Britain, New Talents for the Economy, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, (London, 2007)*



The Plan also identifies four development priorities for the next three years, which are to:

- Use digital technology to connect with audiences in new and exciting ways
- Improve the reach and effectiveness of visual arts provision
- Make sure children and young people grow up with a strong sense of the possibilities the arts give them
- Realise the opportunity offered by the London 2012 Olympics to enrich the artistic life of the nation

Underlying the above is a renewed emphasis on arts organisations developing sustainability and reducing their reliance on public funding. The recent Arts Council funding review has resulted in a revised and reduced portfolio of regularly funded organisations. Furthermore, reductions in Arts Lottery funding will mean a more competitive funding environment with fewer project awards available. As a result, arts organisations are being encouraged to identify alternative sources of funding and develop more sustainable business models.

Arts Council England South West is a key funder of several of the City's main arts organisations and is working to develop a South West cultural programme that complements the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games to ensure that the region secures an art 'dividend' as part of the cultural legacy of the games.

The Regional Cultural Infrastructure Strategy, '*People, Places and Spaces*<sup>8</sup>', identifies the key role which should be played by regional centres, and identifies a set of regional priorities which the partners believe contribute significantly to the cultural life of the region. Alongside these the partners have devised 10 'Planning Areas for Culture' at the sub regional level based on the groupings of the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns. Exeter is one of the ten Planning areas for Culture.

South West Screen is a key partner for Exeter City and supports film and media development through two main funding streams, one strand of which is Lottery funds delegated by the UK Film Council. The first strand supports cultural production and audience development; and the second, from SWRDA, supports film and media business and skills development. South West Screen's funding programmes are designed to:

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<sup>8</sup> *People, Places and Spaces - A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy for the South West, Consultation Draft April 2007, (Culture South West, Exeter, 2007)*

- Build the capacity for growth of the film, TV and digital content industries in the region
- Drive innovation and the sector's understanding and adoption of changing technologies
- Support the development of individual and professional creativity and talent
- Increase access to moving image by enabling more people to make, show, see and discuss it.

The agency supports Exeter Phoenix and Animated Exeter, has worked closely with Spacex on joint commissioning and exhibition programmes, and has working links with The University of Exeter.

### **3. KEY ISSUES**

#### **3.1 Placing Arts and the Creative Industries at the Corporate Centre**

The City Council recognises the important role of the arts and media in providing access to cultural provision for the local population and in supporting the local economy by promoting Exeter as a visitor destination, contributing to environmental and public realm improvements and assisting the case for inward investment. Also of key significance is Exeter's role as one of the region's ten 'Planning Areas for Culture' as set out in the Regional Cultural Strategy, and the need to commit to supporting further arts and cultural development as a key strand of corporate policy.

The Council has worked in close partnership with a variety of partners, including regional agencies (Arts Council England South West, SWERDA, Culture South West); the arts and media sector including Exeter Arts Council; individual arts and media organisations; the voluntary sector; and with the Higher and Further Education sectors to build Exeter cultural infrastructure and ensure that it is sustainable.

The challenge for the City over the next five years, particularly in the context of unitary government, should that be the preferred option, will be to ensure that the role of arts and media in delivering the Exeter Vision is permeated across the corporate agenda and reflected in the full range of policy and aspirations for the City so that the Council can work with other partners to support growth in the creative sector.

Exeter has bold aspirations: to become the regional capital with a top ten University. If it is to achieve this then the level of aspiration in the arts and cultural sectors will need to match its high economic aspirations. This means identifying the areas where provision and opportunity is lacking and ensuring that arts and culture is fully integrated across service areas and placed at the heart of regeneration and development programmes.

Within the context of a unitary authority, it will be essential to create close synergies between arts and cultural services and other departments and policy areas, including Planning (in relation to public art, major development and environmental schemes and the urban planning context); Education (in relation to arts in schools, informal learning opportunities and Higher Education); Leisure and Museums (including reaching out into local neighbourhoods and addressing the health agenda); Libraries (in reaching local communities and supporting literature development); Social Services (in targeting disadvantaged groups and individuals); and in Economic

Development (including opportunities to support creative industries development and supporting tourism).

The 2006/7 Arts and Media Audit found that there was a better level of engagement between independent arts and media organisations and City Council services, including Tourism, Economic Development and Planning in order to achieve greater recognition of the potential benefits of the creative industries. Continuing this dialogue and partnership will be of critical importance.

The Council's relationships and partnership with external providers (including key arts and media organisations) and funders will also be crucial in sustaining and supporting the City's cultural infrastructure and provision, and taking forward the cultural agenda. This will include recognising the potential for increased diversity and multi-cultural enrichment in response to the increased diversity in the population. A strong corporate policy approach will assist the Council in developing joint initiatives and support arrangements for the arts and media sector so that coherent approaches to future policy can be formed.

### **3.2 The Arts Infrastructure**

The City's arts infrastructure consists of its major arts venues and galleries; its key professional and amateur creative arts and media organisations; its arts agencies, including Exeter Arts Council; a range of venues and providers using occasional spaces, including Exeter Cathedral, The University of Exeter and other Higher and Further Education providers; and its resident arts and media agencies based on the City.

The City already makes use of a variety of spaces for live arts events and activities; it has a strong music scene and a pub theatre for instance. It also has a portfolio of public art works located around the City centre and a variety of interesting public spaces suitable for hosting live arts events and sited works.

However, *Exeter Vision* has identified some of the challenges for the sector.

- *Other than the Cathedral and museum there are no venues or events of national significance.*
- *A critical mass of cultural activity needs to be reached*
- *The evening economy is under-developed and lacks sufficient information and public transport support*

- *There is no high quality central multi-purpose venue for conferences, performances etc.*

Supporting a successful and vibrant arts economy and helping to maintain the arts infrastructure needs joined up working. Issues such as signage to and for venues; public transport; and parking are all crucial to the arts economy, and the Council can play a key role in ensuring that a supportive environment for cultural provision and consumption is created.

### 3.2.1 Live Arts Venues

The City has a number of key venues funded by the Council and Arts Council England. It also operates the Exeter Corn Exchange, a 700-seat proscenium-arched, flat-floored civic hall which is used for a variety of live arts and entertainment. The Cathedral, University campus facilities and voluntary sector-run spaces add to the range of facilities available. The basic arts infrastructure of the City has not changed significantly since 2004, though there have been improvements to some venues, particularly the Exeter Corn Exchange and Exeter Barnfield Theatre .

**Exeter Phoenix** is now a flourishing arts and media complex with a 210-seat studio theatre (accommodating up to 450 standing), a number of studio-based performance spaces (including the 90-seat cabaret-style Voodoo Lounge) and providing a range of contemporary theatre dance, music, film and media and exhibitions. It also provides a base for an extensive programme of workshops classes and other participatory activities and houses a media centre, a small number of business incubation units and creative workspace rented by independent arts and media agencies. The centre is exploring further facility developments as the demand for space grows. Parts of the building boy included within the last capital scheme will also require refurbishment.

Following the negotiations over possible removal of Arts Council funding in 2007/8, the **Exeter Northcott Theatre** has now secured three-year Arts Council England funding and is re-launching itself as a producing and receiving venue presenting an annual programme of 5-6 in-house productions and toured in work, as well as hosting local festival events. The Theatre has re-structured internally and presented a Christmas family show in December and January 2008/9. Its main in-house production programme will open in September 2009.

The Northcott will be working to reach a wider range of audiences and operate creatively and efficiently to retain its revenue funding beyond the current three-year

period (the level of local support for the Theatre testified by the fact that 27,000 people signed a petition supporting it). The new Chief Executive appointed in 2007 is now working to re-establish the Theatre and re-build its audience. The Northcott continues to present an annual summer Shakespeare production in the grounds of Rougemont Castle.

**The Exeter Corn Exchange** (formerly St George's Hall) is a 500-seat flat-floor hall with end on stage and is programmed as a venue primarily for live entertainment by Exeter City Council and hired out for a range of social and community uses. The Hall is situated at first floor level above the market hall in a somewhat obscured location. Visiting companies have included the Moscow City Ballet and English Touring Opera and there is a regular comedy club and live band programme.

**The Exeter Barnfield Theatre** is a 287 seat theatre and is the home of Exeter Little Theatre Company. The venue is run by an independent trust and used by a variety of amateur and community groups. It also presents a limited programme of professional theatre, music (including jazz) and events and hosts regular classes and activities. There is also a small studio space.

Other venues include **Exeter Cathedral** which is used occasionally for orchestral concerts and choral works; facilities in schools and colleges; **Riverside Leisure Centre** which has been used for large-scale music promotions; and a number of music venues in pubs and clubs in the City, including **the Cavern**, the City's main rock venue. There are also venues outside the City, **Westpoint County Showground** and Powderham Castle, both of which promote well-known bands attracting large audiences. Westpoint is reputed to be the largest concert venue south of Birmingham.

The City also has a variety of community, educational and informal spaces which are valuable resources, particularly dedicated facilities on school sites which are often under-utilised for community use.

The 2004-2006 arts and media strategy identified the potential need for a new multi-purpose venue for the City. Exeter has two spaces seating 460-500 (Northcott and Corn Exchange) capable of presenting professional work and two smaller spaces (Phoenix and Barnfield Theatre), but it lacks a purpose-built large-scale live arts venue capable of accommodating professional touring work. This function is however provided within the geographic County by Plymouth Theatre Royal.

Its current venues have constraints: in the case of the Northcott its location; and as regards the Corn Exchange the very limited facilities and nature of the venue. The Great Hall has a capacity of 1,818, but also lacks backstage facilities. The Barnfield Theatre would benefit from capital investment.

At some stage in the city's future, a reappraisal of its venues is likely to be necessary. In particular a new and larger venue to accommodate the programme being presented at the Corn Exchange would enable the City to gain access to a wider range of touring arts and entertainment than is currently available and to present a more regular programme of popular music. The lack of a sizeable conference venue remains of concern.

The future pattern of work to be presented at the Northcott is still being determined, but will include some toured in work alongside a reduced programme of home production. The relationship between the Northcott and Corn Exchange programmes will therefore need to be monitored. The City would also benefit from more and better studio theatre spaces.

In the current and medium term financial climate opportunities to create new arts facilities are likely to be scarce, though they might possibly arise as part of commercially-driven City Centre re-developments. Should such an opportunity arise, it would be important to consider any proposals holistically and to review the whole range of live arts facilities in the City with a view to rationalising provision and maximising the use of resources.

### **3.2.2 The Visual Arts and Crafts**

Exeter has historically had an active visual arts sector, stimulated historically by the former Exeter College of Fine Art and Design and Fine Art Department of Plymouth University (now re-located to Plymouth), and the community of visual arts students and graduates resident in the City. This has, in turn, led to initiatives to develop spaces and facilities for the visual arts and contributed to the creation of Spacex, Exeter Phoenix and other less formal spaces for the visual arts.

**Spacex** is Exeter's contemporary art space and presents and curates new work by regional, national and international leading artists. Spacex is of regional and national significance in the presentation, production and commissioning of contemporary art both on and off-site and for its exemplary education and outreach programme.

Spacex is Devon's flagship art space for contemporary art and, with no other provision of its type between Bristol (Arnolfini), and Cornwall (Newlyn and Tate St. Ives), provides a key service to the people of Devon and surrounding areas. However, its location is off the main pedestrian routes and inhibits its ability to attract high numbers of casual visitors.

The SpaceX building also accommodates a small number of artists workspaces (managed separately). Arts Council England South West considers SpaceX to be of major importance to the region and particularly adept at working in partnership with key organisations nationally to maximise public engagement with its programme.

*"Spacex is now nationally acclaimed for the quality of its exhibitions and off-site events and commissioning of new work from artists with international standing.... SpaceX is increasingly recognised for its ability to engage a wide range of audiences through its approach to curating artists' commissions, as well as through its exemplary education programme."* (Arts Council England South West).

**Exeter Phoenix** is a key player in providing spaces for exhibitions and supporting local and regional artists. Its galleries have recently been expanded and it is able to present up to five exhibition simultaneously, but it still lacks the standard of security of SpaceX and is unable to present major touring exhibitions. Its exhibition programme therefore complements SpaceX and provides access to facilities for local and regional artists. Exeter Phoenix is however developing a strong national and international programme, and hosts the highly successful Exeter Contemporary Open Exhibition, attracting high quality applications from across the country.

**The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery** a part of the South West Regional Hub and attracts up to 250,000 visitors a year. It presents a programme of temporary exhibitions including historical work and some contemporary visual art. It takes touring exhibitions from major national museums and galleries, including the British Museum, V&A, and National Portrait Gallery. The Royal Albert Memorial Museum houses an internationally important ethnographic collection and its fine and applied arts collections are also strong.

RAMM has successfully worked with visual artists to interpret its collections for new audiences, an area of great potential for RAMM. The Museum is currently undergoing a major re-development which will provide it with three temporary exhibition spaces, some of which will be able to accommodate exhibitions of the highest standard. When complete, the new space will be the biggest temporary exhibition venue in the South West.



**Exeter Open Studios** is an annual event set up by Exeter City Council and handed over to independent management in spring 2008. The event involves over 60 artists at around 30 venues and is presented as part of the autumn festival. Exeter Artspaces is now involved in supporting the event which operates on very low levels of public subsidy. A key issue for the event is its proximity in the calendar to the Devon Open Studios event and achieving sustainability.

**Exeter Artspaces** created an artist studio complex providing 23 workspaces accommodating up to 30 artists and makers. It established that there is a need for studio space and created a group of artists and makers committed to maintaining studio provision in the City. The original studios were located in a vacant industrial building on a short term lease and have now re-located to Exeter Castle.

**The University's Northcote House Gallery** has two exhibitions annually, featuring regional, national and international artists e.g. Sir Terry Frost, Bridget Riley and Lucien Freud. The Forum will provide further exhibition space for the city, as it will be open to all. The newly-formed Queen's Art Studio and Gallery exhibits art work by University students.

There are a number of commercial galleries in the City, including Red House Gallery, the Turner Gallery, and Polka Dot Gallery (which specialises in contemporary crafts). There is also exhibition space in Exeter Central Library (which attracts 740,000 visits per annum).

**Exeter Visual Arts** is an informal consortium of four of the above (The Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World; Exeter Phoenix; SpaceX; and The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery) established to coordinate activity and promote the visual arts. The consortium is currently working on a joint initiative to develop a major themed exhibition linked to the Exeter Festival for 2010.

**Double Elephant Print Workshop** promotes and delivers high quality visual arts practice and is based in Exeter Phoenix where it operates as a not for profit community resource, providing facilities for artists and running training and workshop programmes.

Exeter has an extensive range of **Public Art**, with work sited around the City Centre and on walkways, including several recently commissioned pieces of work within the Princesshay retailing area, and a prestigious collection of work with 24 sculptures located on the Exeter campus, including works by Barbara Hepworth and Paul Riley. There is an established Sculpture Trail open to all visitors, with iPod accompaniment..

The University of Exeter has a Curator of Fine Art, committed to art exhibition and practice on both the Streatham, Exeter and Tremough, Cornwall campuses.

Exeter Healthcare Arts also runs a public art and exhibitions programme. The City has a variety of open spaces which present many opportunities for integrating visual arts work in public locations.

The City Council has a public art strategy and encourages developers to include public art commissions within capital schemes, using Section 106 funding where possible. There has been discussion about the possibility of creating a series of landmark public art works at the gateways to the City and the City has many spaces which might be used either for public art commissions or arts and crafts events. A major new commission will form part of the University's Forum development.

In addition to City-based provision there are important visual arts and crafts facilities in relatively close proximity to the City. Bovey Tracey Contemporary Crafts Fair is of national significance and the Devon Guild of Craftsmen which runs it is developing a region-wide remit. The Centre for Contemporary Art in the Natural world at Haldon Forest Park 5 miles outside the City is a leading visual arts agency in the region and works in collaboration with City organisations.

The South West Academy has struggled, since its inception 8 years ago, with lack of a designated public space. The Annual Open Exhibition, together with the annual Schools Exhibition, all held at various venues, attracts significant numbers of visitors from regional locations.

The visual arts and crafts sector is well established in Exeter with three balanced exhibition venues, an open studios event, a range of public art and recent workspace developments. Despite this there are weaknesses:

- The re-location of the Plymouth University Art Faculty, including its Fine Art degree course, which will stem the direct flow of graduates into the City
- The poor location of Spacex
- The limited amount of coordination in the past, which is being now beginning to be addressed through EVA
- The difficulty in creating and sustaining artist workspace due to the high cost of property
- The low profile of the visual arts within the Exeter Festival programme.

Exeter is well placed to build on its strength in the visual arts but it will need to achieve greater coordination and impact in visual arts development if it is to make a major impact and attract the additional resources which it needs. The City has to match its aspirations in the visual arts with its broader aspirations and to find ways, in partnership with the arts funding system and private sector when the wider economic circumstances are more conducive, of investing in the visual arts to raise its public and regional profile.

This might be achieved by developing more joined up programmes, a stronger visual arts dimension to the current festivals programme, possibly leading to a dedicated visual arts event or festival bringing together visual arts agencies and programmes.

It might also consider a number of landmark visual arts projects designed to promote the City as a vibrant contemporary place and adopt a more strategic approach to the integration of public art in public spaces, including on cycleways and walking routes, at key visitor destinations and locations and at public buildings. (There has been some joint working between the City and County Councils in relation to public realm developments). All of the above would of course be dependent on identifying new funding or income streams.

The City (public and private sectors) could aim to embark on a programme of commissioning of work by artist of national and international standing to build on its existing portfolio of public art and place Exeter on the national map in terms of visual arts practice. For instance, it might host a major national exhibition (Anthony Gormley) or commission a major site-specific piece of work as part of the summer festival. This would build on existing programmes, such as its public art works and the recent installation of Heavitree Arch, a major artwork located in a local centre on a key route into the City Centre and partly funded by s106 monies.

At the same time the Council and its partners could identify ways of sustaining the community of local artists and makers by supporting workspace developments, providing opportunities for artists to exhibit work in the City as part of festivals and other events and working with the sector to promote visual arts and crafts to a wider audience.

### **3.2.3 Creative Production**

Exeter has a number of independent theatre and dance companies which produce work in the City and tour to other venues in the region and further afield, including Theatre Alibi (an Arts Council revenue funded client); Reflex (a dance company based at Exeter Phoenix); Wolf and Water; Fan Club, a young dance company operating out of Exeter College. The Exeter Northcott is a major producer of new work and Phoenix Media Centre, in partnership with South West Screen, plays a key role in supporting independent film and media production.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is an important partner, supported by the City Council and Arts Council England to present its series of 12 concerts and associated educational work at the Great Hall. The Orchestra attracts large audiences, playing to 92% in the Great Hall (capacity 1,818). The Exeter Concert Series is the Orchestra's most successful and sells more tickets than the Bristol Concert Series. Developments on the University campus (see note above about campus changes).

The amateur arts sector is also involved with creative production and Exeter Arts Council plays a key role in channelling grant aid provided by the City Council to individual professional arts practitioners and in support of creative projects. In the visual arts the City's Galleries and visual arts agencies support creative production and media production is supported by Exeter Phoenix and independent media producers.

Recent initiatives include the creation of a studio venue for new work, Theatre Upstairs at the Globe, which presents the development and presentation of new writing and rehearsed readings of new plays in a pub function room.

The challenge for many independent companies and individual practitioners is to secure the resources necessary in order to sustain their creative work. The City's main arts venues and organisations have a role to play in supporting the independent sector, by providing access to resources and opportunities to present work, and there are successful collaborations (between Theatre Alibi and the Northcott for instance).

However, the sector is fragile and the reduction in Arts Lottery funding, allied to a more difficult economic climate, is adding to the uncertainties for creative practitioners. The solution where possible as the economy recovers is the creation of a buoyant arts economy in which arts and media is fully integrated into a variety of other programmes (social, linked to community development and work with disadvantaged groups); educational (both in schools and through informal learning programmes), economic (including via support for the creative industries); and environmental (through public art and other interventions in the public realm). This

could produce new opportunities for creative practitioners to generate income from work within other programmes, and with increased opportunities for making, promoting and selling creative products.

The 2004-6 Arts and Media strategy identified the need to improve the quality and diversity of arts and media activity in the City. While there have been measures to address this, including widening the programmes in arts festivals, this should continue to be an objective as part of the City's support for creative production and within presentation programmes.

### **3.2.4 Film and Media**

The main development in the sector since the last arts and media strategy has been the creation of a new multi-screen cinema, opened by Vue Cinemas in the centre of the City. This now complements the programme of Exeter Picture House, which provides the opportunity for audiences from Exeter (and outlying areas) to watch a wide range of titles; and Exeter Phoenix, the work of Phoenix Media Centre, and Exeter Film Society. Phoenix Media supports film production and houses the 'Black Box', air-conditioned studio which is available for production, performance, screenings and installations.

Phonic FM, is a new radio station run by Exeter Community Radio Ltd. and based in the basement of Exeter Phoenix. It is almost unique in the country for its specific focus as a station that supports the cultural activity of the city and exists as a training ground for those seeking skills and careers in radio broadcast and production; as an important outlet for musicians and other artists; and as a useful marketing tool for cultural organisations and promoters in the city.

The University is also a valuable film and media resource. There is a strong body of Visiting Professors and Fellows in the worlds of film, broadcasting, theatre and digital media who work closely with students and staff at the University, and give University-organised public lectures and performances in Exeter, at the University, Picture House and Exeter Phoenix. The Bill Douglas Centre offers a unique resource of artefacts and research materials in the history of film and popular culture, and mounts joint exhibitions and talks with local and regional museums. The University runs Film Studies degree programmes and research centres, and the Centre for Intermedia is engaged in international interdisciplinary collaborative research.

Within the Secondary schools sector, the City has a Specialist Media College, Isca College. RAMM is also involved with a major digital media project.

The *Animated Exeter* Festival has grown into a significant regional event, supported by South West Screen and with an extensive education programme extending opportunities to engage with animation to many young people in particular. It adds to the City's media offer and links with other provision.

There is considerable potential for growth in the film and media sector which needs to be considered within a broader strategy to support the creative industries in Exeter, and in line with regional economic priorities. Film and media, including the software and computer games industry, are key sectors for the UK economy and link well into Higher Education and the technology sector.

In addition to identifying ways of supporting the sector through existing business support channels and funding, there is potential for a stronger partnership with Further and Higher Education providers, Phoenix Media and independent production and training providers in the provision of training, research and skills development. Film and media students from the University of Exeter already have strong links with Phoenix Film and Media Centre.

Film and media development fits well with the priorities of the Regional Development Agency's Creative Industries Strategy and plays an important part in the regional economy, including attracting production activity into Exeter City (the City Council's Marketing Team has already been successful in this area), which helps to support the local film and media sector.

*£40 million in inward investment was brought to the region through location filming in 2006, and 'film tourism' looks set to bring increasing numbers of visitors to the region.*<sup>9</sup>

Film & Media is a strong and growing sector and Exeter (there are said to be 150 media-based businesses in the City) and should be recognised as a Media Hub by South West Screen and the RDA. However, more research is required to quantify and strengthen the sector. The re-development of the Media Centre at Exeter Phoenix would help to focus the activity and output of the sector.

Film and media are key elements of the creative industries and must be part of an integrated partnership approach to supporting creative industries.

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<sup>9</sup> *SWERDA Creative Industries Strategy, June 2007*

### 3.2.5 Literature

Devon County Library Service is involved with literature development and collaborated with Exeter Phoenix in November 2007 to present the Exeter Storyworks Festival, a one-off celebration of stories for children and their families which took place over three days with events at Exeter Phoenix and in the Central Library.

The University has a Centre for Creative Writing and Arts, and runs a successful series of postgraduate degree programmes and undergraduate courses on creative writing. It also hosts internationally-known writers, directors and actors in a public programme, funded until recently by Arts Council England. It boasts nationally distinguished fiction, poetry and screen writers e.g. 2008 Man Booker-shortlisted Philip Hensher. It also boasts a Centre for South West Writing, featuring events and workshops focussed on the major archives of South West writers housed in the University Library.

### 3.2.6 The University of Exeter

**The University of Exeter** is a key player in the arts and media across a range of areas (as indicated above) and is an important strategic partner for the City Council and arts sector. The University owns the buildings of Exeter Northcott Theatre, located on the University campus, and operates the **Great Hall**, which is the City's main venue for orchestral concerts presenting the annual season of twelve concerts by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

It has a range of facilities linked to its academic programmes, including theatre and dance studios, production facilities and two exhibition spaces. The Lemon Grove, managed by the Guild of Students, can accommodate in excess of 700 and presents a programme of rock and popular music.

The University also has a dedicated exhibition space in the Institute of Arab & Islamic Studies, which represents major potential for using the arts to raise awareness of Islamic issues. The University's Centre of Genomics in Society, Egenis, has successfully forged links with Exeter City through its contemporary visual arts programme, and Café Scientifique held at Exeter Phoenix.

'The University has established an Arts and Culture Task and Finish Group to refine and develop its vision for the University's cultural strategy and is generally mindful of its national and international positioning, but specifically within the City of Exeter and the environs of its Cornwall campus, as well as the wider South West region. It has also appointed an Arts and Culture Development Fellow to expedite this strategy.

It is planning to spend £45m on the creation of a new central area, the Forum, to be located adjacent to the Great Hall and University Library. The arts and culture elements of the Forum (due to open 2012) are being discussed and developed in conjunction with the architects of the scheme, and will promote the best of the University's and region's arts and culture in terms of visual, dramatic and media performance, and music production. Car parking on campus is being redesigned to allow shuttle buses to move visitors to campus more easily than at present.' This may have an impact on attendees to the concert series and the Northcott.

The University has a strong desire to be involved closely in the development of the arts and media in Exeter, in particular through collaboration, strengthening strategic partnerships, and developing wider access to arts and culture activities throughout the City. These are central tenets of its own Arts and Culture strategy. For the University, a stronger cultural profile will enhance its international reputation, thus increasing global staff and student recruitment into the campus and City.

### **3.2.7 The Cultural Quarter**

The creation of an Exeter Cultural Quarter has been identified within the Exeter Vision and the development of Exeter Phoenix as a major arts and media centre and current re-development of RAMM will both contribute to achieving this ambition. Devon County Council has plans to re-develop its Central Library, which sits at the heart of the Quarter. This will present an opportunity to link the above facilities more effectively with retailing sector and to provide an improved public realm. Exeter Phoenix also has plans for a further phase of development to create a new media centre and extend its media facilities.

The County Council aims to re-create the Library as a cultural centre with a wider range of facilities, including exhibition space and lecture/small event facilities; however it has no plans at present to create a major performance venue. The final piece of the Cultural Quarter jigsaw, Exeter (Rougemont) Castle, now lies outside the public sector in commercial ownership, and may prove more difficult to include within the Cultural Quarter concept.

The Central Library re-development may be the key to unlocking the Cultural Quarter development and it is important that the scheme is developed in partnership with the City Council, Exeter Phoenix and other partners in the Quarter so that opportunities to improve the public realm, to create more coherent and attractive walkways and public spaces.



Plans to create new facilities (exhibition, performance, lecture, and film exhibition facilities in particular) should be considered in relation to the existing facilities and the future plans of key partners (e.g. Exeter Phoenix), to provide a coherent facilities strategy for the whole Quarter which avoids duplication and identifies the potential for sharing facilities. The inclusion of business incubation space should be considered in any development.

The cultural Quarter's outdoor spaces, Northernhay Gardens, Rougemont Gardens and the new amphitheatre that will be created as part of the Museum re-development, are all important present and future locations for cultural activity, including the Northcott's summer Shakespeare season and Big Screen in the Park.

The decision on unitary status and future structure of the Library Service will be a determining factor for the Library development. Devon County Council has indicated that would be prepared to invest up to £10m in a new library development, subject to resources being available.

### **3.2.8 Spaces and Facilities**

The City has an assortment of informal spaces and facilities, ranging from Exeter Cathedral to public open spaces, pubs and community halls, which are, and can be used for arts and media activities. These present new opportunities for engaging with new audiences: through open-air concerts and events appealing to less traditional audiences, including more multi-cultural events; through community-based activities; by integrating the arts into celebratory events; and by commissioning and presenting new visual arts work in the public realm. Ensuring that the potential for arts and media usage is considered in developing policies and plans for spaces and facilities in the City helps to maintain them as a valuable part of the arts infrastructure.

### **3.3 Festivals and Events**

The Regional Cultural Strategy<sup>10</sup> identifies the key role of festivals in the region.

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<sup>10</sup> <sup>10</sup> *People, Places and Spaces - A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy for the South West, Consultation Draft April 2007, (Culture South West, Exeter, 2007)*

*'Major events, including festivals, that develop audiences and increase participation, are considered a significant aspect of supporting cultural infrastructure in the South West, as part of an integrated approach to events development.'*

Exeter now has an established portfolio of festivals and events which are professionally-managed and bring a range of high quality professional arts and media programme into the City. The festival programme brings the cultural sector together involving partnership between the City Council, the City's major arts venues and agencies and other external funders and consists of:

**Exeter Summer Festival** – with a largely professional programme of varied artforms, including classical and popular music; dance, theatre, comedy and celebrity events.

**Exeter Autumn Festival** – consisting largely of amateur and community events and providing an opportunity for local groups to showcase their work with the help of effective promotion and without being in direct competition and overshadowed by higher profile professional performers.

**Animated Exeter** – is an annual animation film festival started in 1999 and aimed at children and young people. The festival was developed and is run by Exeter City Council which is seeking to find ways of making it independent.

**Vibraphonic** – is a multi-cultural world/alternative music festival presented by music promoters in the City in partnership with the City Council. The festival presents music from different genres, including jazz, world, new music and young people's music (e.g. hip hop, drum, soul, blues, reggae).

**Exeter Open Studios** – visual arts event involving over 60 artists and 30 venues.

**Exeter Respect** - the city's annual celebration of diversity.

The festivals programme is diverse, is an asset to the City, appeals to a variety of audiences, and provides the City with increased cultural diversity in the visual and performing arts which encourages social cohesion and understanding.

All of the festivals fulfil a function. For instance, the Animated Exeter Festival has been effective in engaging young people and links well into media work at Exeter Phoenix and the University. It has established itself as an important regional event and also reaches beyond young people, with its careers day, industry panels, public screenings and other events. The festival is seen by South West Screen as having

the potential to provide national profile for the City and ultimately for the region and is structured so that it works with both local audiences and participants while also attracting people from further afield.

The Exeter Open Studios Festival supports the visual arts and crafts sector and promotes visual arts. Vibraphonic targets a younger music audience and provides the City with a festival event in the spring (March). The Summer Festival contributes to the City's visitor attractions while the Autumn Festival provides an opportunity for the amateur and community sector to celebrate its work.

The City has reviewed its festivals provision and made changes in recent years, but there remains a continuing need to appraise the rationale for the festivals programme. None of the festivals are of major national significance, though the Exeter Summer Festival programme includes some high profile performers and clearly attracts an audience from a wider catchment than the City; and Animated Exeter has a regional and national profile.

However, if the priority for the City is to support the tourism economy and promote the City, it has to be questioned whether the current portfolio of festivals is the most appropriate for that function and offers the required level of regional and national impact. There is another issue: resources. Major festivals of regional or national significance are expensive. However, if they are of sufficient scale and status, and really promote the City to the wider world, they may also attract significant levels of sponsorship in addition to sizeable income from ticket sales.

The challenge with regard to festivals is to be clear about the rationale of each event, and how it contributes to the Council's aims and those of its partners; and to position those which are intended to promote the City and attract visitors at the right level while maintaining other festivals to extend the range of arts provision available to the City's residents and engage local people. If Exeter wishes to present itself as the regional capital, then a major festival of national standing and profile would make a significant contribution to that goal but would also require major investment. However in the short to medium term the resources required will be difficult to secure

(Alternatively the City could develop a highly distinctive portfolio of festivals, such as *Animated Exeter*, each of regional or national significance.

The City Council is seeking to move away from hands-on delivery of festivals to a more partnership, enabling approach, and is looking to adapt the pattern of festivals and events to ensure that they are resourced at an appropriate level, possibly

involving some festivals moving to a biennial format. It is also considering new structures for the coordination and management of festivals that could involve closer partnership with the City's major arts and media agencies.

A key aim of possible changes to the management and delivery of the festivals programme would be to maximise the resources available, including by attracting new external funding, and to ensure that the City Council was able to provide the festivals programme with more support at the strategic level, rather than through direct operational control.

As part of this continuing appraisal of the festivals programme, consideration should be given, should opportunities arise, to developing a festival of regional and possibly national standing in partnership with the private sector and as a key strand of its economic and cultural development programme. The Summer Festival might form the basis for this; alternatively a new festival might be created addressing a gap in the festivals market in the region.

The city has a variety of outdoor spaces which can accommodate outdoor events, including the Castle, Cathedral Green, Quayside, and Princesshay retail area. There is considerable potential to develop site-specific events and performances linked to the annual calendar or major celebrations, building on the street work presented within the summer Festival. This might include bringing street arts companies of national standing to the City (e.g. Walk the Plank, Avanti Display, international companies) to devise major events. This might also lead to a more events-based approach to work in the public realm which could prove more effective in supporting the City Centre economy.

### **3.4 The Creative Industries**

*'The Creative Industries sector is broad - some 89,000 people work directly in this sector with a further 55,000 working in creative occupations outside the 'pure' sector in the region. Nationally the whole sector contributed 8% of the UK's GVA and is growing faster than the rest of the economy. The region has major strengths and opportunities in key parts of the sector.'*<sup>11</sup>

The creative industries are those industries that are based on individual creativity, skill and talent. They are also those that have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property. The creative industries sector has been defined by Government to include advertising, architecture, the art and antiques

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<sup>11</sup> SWERDA Creative Industries Strategy, June 2007

market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio.

The importance of the sector in terms of the UK economy and employment has grown in recent years as traditional industry has declined and new streams of employment are explored. The sector embraces some of the UK's most successful and innovative areas of economic activity including, for instance, the popular music and film industries, the development of software and new media and television and radio.

Government recognises the role which the creative industries can play in the UK economy and in providing new opportunities for employment in the post-industrial era, and it would be possible to link creative industries development in Exeter with other employment and business support measures, the provision of workspace, business skills and marketing training, support for new retailing, joint marketing and promotional initiatives for instance.

Phoenix Media Centre is now a key player in supporting the film and media sector and digital arts in the City, providing workspace, exhibition and production facilities, a base for independent production companies, commissions of new work; and training and other support for the sector. Phoenix also has links with The University of Exeter and works to encourage graduates to remain and develop careers in film and media in the City. The success of the centre has already led to plans for a further development to meet the level of need for film and media facilities and support.

Exeter Art Spaces is an example of how the creative sector can work together to support creative production, through the provision of workspace for artists and makers. Future developments in studio provision could involve linking production with retailing, exhibition and other activities (as is the case at the Brewery in Cirencester which combines crafts workshop space with retailing or at the Bovey Tracy Contemporary Crafts Fair for instance).

*'Britain is a creative country and our creative industries are increasingly vital to the UK. Two million people are employed in creative jobs and the sector contributes £60 billion a year – 7.3 per cent – to the British economy. Over the past decade, **the creative sector has grown at twice the rate of the economy as a whole and is well placed for continued growth as demand for creative content – particularly in English – grows.**'*

*'The vision is of a Britain in **ten years' time where the local economies in our biggest cities are driven by creativity**, where there is a much expanded range of*

*creative job opportunities in every region with clear routes into creative careers from local schools and colleges, and where every young person believes they have a real choice to use their talents in a creative capacity. It is a vision of creativity as the engine of economic growth for towns, cities and regions. It's also a vision of dynamic, innovative, successful creative businesses providing prosperity and fulfilling job opportunities right across the country.*<sup>12</sup>

Other estimates of the scale of the sector produced by Government include.<sup>13</sup>

- *In the summer quarter of 2006, **creative employment totalled 1.9 million jobs.** This comprised just over 1.1 million jobs in the Creative Industries and almost 800,000 further creative jobs within businesses outside these industries.*
- *Total creative employment increased from 1.6m in 1997 to 1.9m in 2006, an **average growth rate of 2% per annum**, compared to 1% for the whole of the economy over this period.*
- *Around two-thirds of the businesses in the Creative Industries are contained within two sectors; Software, Computer Games and Electronic Publishing (53,500 companies) and Music and the Visual & Performing Arts (28,300 companies).*

Exeter has most of the necessary ingredients for developing a lively and successful creative industries sector: an active community of arts and media practitioners (including those working in community settings); a University with arts courses producing a flow of graduates; a developed arts infrastructure with key organisations in the performing, and visual arts; a growing media sector linking with the University (which has supported graduates to enter the sector with seminars and other activities); a developing new technologies and knowledge sector; and a healthy tourism industry providing potential buyers of creative products.

However, it also faces challenges: the loss of the Plymouth University Fine Art Degree course will reduce the number of visual arts graduates in the City (though Exeter College is expanding its range of Foundation degrees which will help to compensate); the high cost of property and pressure on development sites in the City makes it difficult to find affordable workspace; low levels of graduate retention; and the competition from Plymouth and Bristol with greater access to regeneration funding.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Creative Britain, New Talents for the Economy', Department for Culture, Media and Sport London, 2008)

<sup>13</sup> Creative Industries Economic Estimates, Statistical Bulletin October 2007, DCMS (London 2007)

The creative industries are no longer considered the preserve of our major metropolitan areas. New facilities, in Caernarvon, North Wales, Lincoln and provision in other cities and towns (e.g. Farnham, Cirencester) have illustrated that the creative industries are now becoming a visible economic sector in places where they previously had a low profile.

The development of a creative industries sector in Exeter and involving partnership between the City Council, South West Screen, Phoenix Arts and Media Centre, Exeter Art Spaces, other key arts and media agencies and providers, the Higher and Further Education sectors and independent producers, should now be a natural aspect of a comprehensive arts and media strategy.

There are five main areas where development needs to be supported:

- Through the provision and creation of workspace, including dedicated artists studios (as at Exeter Artspace) and incubation units for digitally-based businesses
- By supporting the production and presentation of work, including commissioning public art and via visual and media exhibition facilities and opportunities (including via Animated Exeter)
- By creating new work and distribution opportunities (e.g. commercial sound and video production, education and community programmes)
- With training and business development support in partnership with Phoenix
- and through other joint measures to support the development of the sector, including for instance, working strategically with The University of Exeter and linking University programmes with other activity, undertaking research into the sector and promoting it within the local economy.

### **3.5 Arts in the Community**

Exeter has a strong amateur and voluntary arts sector and the grant aid channelled through Exeter Arts Council is a valuable source of funding for amateur and community groups, as well as supporting projects by arts practitioners and emerging companies and organisations and encouraging greater cultural diversity. The Autumn Festival now provides a showcase for work produced by the community, and other festivals, Animated Exeter for instance, also offer participatory and educational projects as part of their event programmes.

The City's revenue funded arts and media organisations, as well as RAMM, are all involved in taking participatory opportunities into the community and education

settings, and the provision of education and outreach programmes is a key element of the annual programmes agreed with the City Council and other funders.

The City Council, through its community development and play programmes, supports art in the community, including via specific programmes and projects (the Art Guy, Scrapstore, holiday schemes etc.). The Living Here programme also incorporates music, literature, art and design, photography and theatre and is fully community based, and funded externally.

The primary focus in previous arts and media strategies has been on work taking place in the City Centre and within established events and venues. Work within Exeter's neighbourhood communities has been supported via the education and outreach programmes of the revenue funded organisations, including the Wren Trust which undertakes participatory music projects with disadvantaged groups in the City and works in community facilities and schools in estates and areas experiencing social exclusion.

Magic Carpet undertakes work with people with disabilities, carers and other vulnerable groups at Exeter Phoenix and in community facilities and has secured funding for its projects from a variety of grant giving trusts. Exeter Healthcare Arts supports arts programmes within the health sector, including working with Primary Care Trusts and GP practices and work which promotes positive health. There is no dedicated community arts organisation in the City.

Dance in Devon the County dance agency based at Phoenix, has undertaken work in partnership with Exeter City Council (Arts and Events and Play) and a variety of other agencies in the City, working with several disadvantaged groups and securing funding from non-arts sources, including Exeter Youth Offending Team; CEDA; Connexions; and the Devon Community Foundation.

The renewed Government and Arts Council England focus on participation in the arts and media arises largely in response to the continuing need to engage a wider constituency and audience with the arts and to extend opportunities in the arts to a broader range of people, including deaf people and people with disabilities (up to 10% of the population), elderly people and disaffected young people.

There is also a need for Exeter's arts opportunities to reach out to its resident communities at local level so that engagement with the arts is more easily achieved and the arts are integrated more fully into community life and linked with other programmes to combat social exclusion and community development.



There is undoubtedly scope to extend the range of work taking place within community, health and educational settings and to access funding related to community and education programmes in support of this work. The City Council's Community Development Team is involved in piloting and setting up new ways of engaging local communities and views participation in the arts as a valuable way of reaching out to communities.

To date, arts provision within community development programmes has tended to incorporate local organisations and individuals and there have been very limited linkages with the City's main professional arts agencies or the Council's own arts development programmes. There is considerable scope for stronger partnerships between the arts sector and community development programmes operating at neighbourhood level.

### **3.6 Arts and Learning/ Arts and Young People**

The City's professional arts organisations undertake a wide range of education and learning support programmes and work with adults, children and young people, including outreach programmes. Spacex, RAMM and the Northcott all run well-established and successful education and outreach programmes which involve working with a variety of participants, including within formal education settings.

For instance, Spacex has been involved in three major research programmes run through *engage* over the last three years as part of the education programme. *engage* is the lead organisation for gallery education in the UK and in 15 countries worldwide, promoting access to and enjoyment of the visual arts through gallery education. The programmes include: *Watch this space* (focussing on increasing school visits to galleries); *en-vision* (focussing on young people's involvement in galleries); and, currently, *en-quire* (a research project into the learning benefits of gallery education jointly run by *engage* and the Arts Council).

Spacex is the lead organisation for *en-quire* in the south west. The project links four galleries (Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, Plymouth Arts Centre, Spacex and Thelma Hulbert Gallery), and twelve artist/artist educators and six secondary schools.

Phoenix Arts and Media Centre hosts a wide assortment of education programmes and now has a dedicated education officer forging links with other arts agencies and

taking work out into the community. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra undertakes an annual education programme linked to its concert series.

DAISI, the arts education agency for Devon and Torbay-based in Exeter, supports and encourages creativity through the arts within the whole school community and arranges arts education projects for schools in the City, including Devon Youth Theatre and the Devon Youth Dance Company, which meet regularly in the City. Dance in Devon is also an active provider of opportunities to participate in and learn about dance.

The University of Exeter delivers academic programmes in film, media, literature, the performing and visual arts and is a focus for creative activity. It supports the Northcott Theatre and is involved in a variety of activities for young people, sometimes providing space for activities and other support to professional arts and media organisations. The University has a Director of Music, and a very active and interactive music programme which puts on performances at different venues on campus and within the city (also see 3.2.1 above).

Exeter College is a tertiary college providing an extensive range of pre-degree foundation level arts and media courses, including several Foundation degrees (e.g. television production) for up to 14,000 students (of which 9,000 are full-time). It currently has around 1,200 students studying on its art and design courses (including 120 studying foundation level art and design) and a further 1,000 on media and performing arts courses. From September 2009 it will launch a new Music Academy; new music and dance courses; and a new Creative and Media Diploma. The College is also runs an arts management course and is planning a new Community Arts Foundation Degree.

The College uses a variety of facilities in the city for exhibitions, media activities and performances and hosts its own annual arts festival. It is keen to develop stronger links with the City's arts and media sectors and to engage more actively with the City's festivals.

Despite the array of tertiary and pre-degree level courses, the lack of a Fine Art degree and/or Fine Art college is a major issue for the visual arts in the City and with regards to the wider development and contribution to the creative industries and cultural sector in Exeter.

There are also opportunities for young people to participate in drama via Cygnet Training theatre which operates the New Theatre, Exeter, a training studio located

close to the city centre. Founded in 1980, Cygnet has since grown into a full-time training company and operates as one of the Conference of Drama Schools 22 Schools and offers courses in Acting, Musical Theatre, Directing and Technical Theatre training, and has an on-going link with the Theatre Royal, Plymouth, where the Cygnet Company performs.

Another valuable resource is The Xcentre, which works with homeless, vulnerable and excluded young people and operates a fully equipped recording studio, professional film cameras, an IT suite and a suite of Mac's with design software. We specialise in delivering training through creativity, be it film-making or song-writing, photography or web-design.

Young people are provided with opportunities to participate in the arts both within the formal education sector (there is one Specialist College in the City, ISCA, which is a specialist media college) and through community based initiatives and projects, linked to Animated Exeter, work by the Wren Trust and others. The Arts Education Service of Devon County Council runs both the Devon Youth Theatre and the Devon Youth Dance Company, which meet regularly in the City and participate in the City's festivals. Both the City and County Councils are supporting arts education and youth arts activity, but without any coordination.

Despite a great deal of arts and media activity taking place, work with young people is fragmented. There is no arts event bringing together the arts education sector or young people's art in the City, though the Autumn Festival provides an opportunity for showcasing and exhibiting work. Improved networking between the various strands of arts education and youth arts activity will be the key.

There is an opportunity to build on the City's young people's arts by creating more formal networks for communication and exploring ways of increasing the impact of the work, possibly by coordinated events and greater advocacy for the work.

### **3.7 The City Council – Role and Responsibilities**

Exeter City Council is an active supporter and developer of the arts and media and in addition to its financial support for the key arts organisations and venues, its grant aid channelled through Exeter Arts Council, and its direct operation of festivals and events, it has initiated new festivals and events, worked at strategic level to encourage the private sector to develop public art within development schemes, introduced the arts into community and play programmes, promoted arts and media

through its tourism marketing and developed the Exeter Corn Exchange as a venue for live arts and entertainment.

It has worked to widen access to the arts through its service level agreements with revenue clients, which emphasise the importance of taking work out into the community and partnership with the education sector. The move to unitary status (whichever way that goes) will provide new opportunities to bring together the work of agencies currently funded by Devon County Council and Exeter City Council and to coordinate arts programmes in education and the community more effectively.

The City Council has supported the arts strongly within its work in promoting and supporting the tourism sector, and raising the profile and image of Exeter. It has recognised the value of the arts in animating the City Centre and revitalising public spaces, supported major and other capital projects to improve arts and media facilities particularly at the Exeter Northcott, the Exeter Corn Exchange and the Exeter Barnfield.

The Council has long recognised that it will need to attract other sources of funding if it is to sustain the range of festivals and activities in the City, continue to support its arts infrastructure and respond to and support new initiatives. It has therefore been moving to more of an enabling role by placing some of its festivals into independent management where possible.

It now has to consider the best ways of securing the resources for arts and media development in the City in order to achieve its stated cultural aspirations. If it can develop projects and programmes of sufficient stature and regional/national profile, then it may be able to secure the additional funding it will require from other sources, including the private sector, through sponsorship; national and regional regeneration and funding agencies; the National Lottery and charitable bodies; the Cultural Olympiad; and through the maximisation of income generation. This is of course more difficult in the short term.

If it is to achieve this it will need to ensure that it has the necessary dedicated arts and media officer time and support to operate strategically and develop external partnerships and funding streams. It will need to consider how it can achieve this alongside its demanding programme of direct operation of festivals and events.

### **3.8 Sustainability and Growth**

The arts and media sector in the City continues to have a heavy reliance on public sector and grant funding. According to the 2006/7 arts and Media Audit, around 50% of income comes from public and grant sources. The 2004-2005 Arts and Media Strategy identified concerns about the sustainability of funding and the position with regard to public sector funding has not improved since then.

Some of the City's smaller and newer arts and media organisations have relied heavily on time-limited project funding from a variety of sources and, in some instances have survived for over twenty years on this. Government funding, and indeed much charitable sector funding, targets work with disadvantaged or specific minority groups and it has become increasingly more difficult to secure funding for creative production and the touring and presentation of work.

If the City's arts and media sector is to grow and respond to its changing demographics, its funding base will need to continue to diversify and new forms of income generation will need to be developed. There are models already in operation in the City. Operating more business-oriented models of development is inevitable and any measures which can be taken in supporting the sector in achieving sustainability should be pursued, within the context of creative industries support and development.

Exeter has a growing commercial sector and a rapidly growing population. The arrival of the Met office and new science and technology businesses provides an opportunity to engage the private sector more with arts and cultural provision. Furthermore, the promotion of Exeter as a vibrant place in which to live and do business, with an innovative cutting edge, could be well supported by an enhanced programme of contemporary arts commissions and site specific events supported by the private sector if of sufficient scale and ambition.

If the public and private sector share Exeter's aspirations, it is essential that a partnership is created which encourages private sector investment in the development and enhancement of the City's cultural offer and can attract new and additional funding from regional and charitable agencies. Arts and Business is located in Exeter and could be a valuable partner in linking with the private sector.

#### 4. STRATEGY AIMS AND PRIORITIES 2008-2014

The principle aim of the Arts and Media Strategy remains that of contributing to Exeter City Council's mission, as set out in the *Exeter Vision*, of securing Exeter's status as the regional capital of the South West, and to work in partnership to improve the quality of life for all people living in, working in and visiting the City. The Exeter Corporate Plan 2007-2010 aims 'to ensure that Exeter is recognised as a dynamic and innovative regional city.' A key aim of this strategy is to provide a framework for achieving that aim in the arts and media.

While the strategy has a strong focus on the role of Exeter City Council, it is a strategy for the City (whatever the local government arrangements are to become) and will only be achieved through partnership between the City Council, the arts and education sectors, the private sector, with key regional agencies and with other stakeholders in Exeter's growth and prosperity.

##### 4.1 Strategic Priorities for Arts and Media

Arts and media are now accepted as key areas for development in achieving the strategic aspirations of the City Council as set out in the *Exeter Vision* and endorsed in other local and regional economic and cultural strategies, including the Regional Spatial Plan. The Regional Economic Strategy identifies Exeter's pivotal role and includes sector priorities in the creative industries.

The Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Development Strategy 2008-2013 emphasises the importance of the City's cultural assets and festivals and its 'role as a lively, animated meeting place, the centre for business meetings, conferences, dining, arts experiences, retail, entertainment, festivals and learning.

This Arts and Media Strategy acknowledges the continuing importance of the arts, media and the creative industries in creating a successful economy and supporting the tourism sector. It also addresses the need to support cultural production, including individual artists and creative practitioners, and the greater emphasis being placed on encouraging wider participation in the arts by Government and Arts Council England.

The Strategy sets out eight key objectives which build on and develop the strategic objectives of the 2004-2006 Arts and Media Strategy. It addresses the City's aspirations as a regional capital and acknowledges the changes which have occurred in the external landscape since the last strategy was produced and the change of

focus in national and regional policy. It has a set of tasks to be undertaken aimed at moving the City towards its goals as a regional capital, but which recognise the resource implications of the Strategy and set a realistic agenda for growth and development.

This strategy endorses the invaluable contribution which the arts make to quality of life, personal development, education and social inclusion. It aims to engage all of Exeter's communities, geographic and groups for whom access to the arts may be more difficult, by extending access to the arts to more people from a wider range of backgrounds, and creating more opportunities for people to experience a broader and more culturally diverse range of arts provision in their daily lives.

In particular it identifies the important strategic role of the City Council needs to play in taking forward arts and media development and in forging new partnerships.

## **4.2 Strategic Objectives**

In the light of the current economic climate and the tight constraints on Local Authority finances, it will be essential for the City Council, arts sector and its other partners to work closely in identifying resources to support development. Equally important will be prioritising the allocation of resources by investing in areas of provision and development which will have greatest impact, which will support the creative sector in developing sustainable business models, and which extend access to the arts and media by widening participation and reaching those people for whom access is the most difficult.

There are eight strategic objectives.

1. The City Council should adopt a corporate policy approach to arts and media development which places the arts and media at the heart of the City's corporate ambitions and matches the City's level of aspiration
2. To develop and strengthen the arts and media infrastructure and support and encourage innovation and creative production in the City
3. To develop further the City's portfolio of arts and media festivals and explore opportunities to create a festival of regional/national significance
4. To support creative industries growth and development
5. To develop access to arts programmes and opportunities within community settings to encourage greater participation and involvement with the arts and media by residents of Exeter

6. To work through partnership with relevant agencies and partners to provide more opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, and young people in particular, to engage in arts education and learning programmes
7. To work strategically in developing new partnerships and funding for the arts
8. To work with the arts and media sector and other partners to develop new models of sustainability and generate new income and funding sources.

These strategic objectives support the City's aspirations to become a regional capital and cultural centre (as identified in *People, Places and Spaces*), and provide a framework for contributing to the economic and cultural growth and prosperity of the City, whilst also addressing the need to engage a wide diversity people actively in the arts; increasing participation levels in line with the Government's NI11 indicator for Local Authorities and the arts; and supporting creative production and the City's community of artists and arts practitioners.

They embrace Arts Council England's new priorities:

- Excellence - high quality art and arts experience
- Reach - more people attending and taking part in the arts
- Engagement - more opportunities for people to get involved with arts
- Diversity - arts that reflect the diversity of contemporary England
- Innovation - artists have the freedom and are challenged to innovate