

ARTS POLICY AND STRATEGY REVIEW

**A report for Halton Borough Council
by Garry Churchill**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This is an Executive Summary of a review of Halton Borough Council's arts policy and strategy. It is a qualitative review, based on consultation with staff and service users, and an independent appraisal of the work of the arts service. The recommendations are those of Garry Churchill as an independent consultant and are offered for consideration by the Arts Development Team and the Borough Council to help in planning future delivery of arts development in Halton.

The purpose of the report is:

- to recognise and commend good practice
- to understand the relationship between arts development work and the Council's wider corporate objectives
- to identify areas for service development and improvement
- to suggest areas where cross-service working can be strengthened
- to help the Arts Development Team in developing their action plan and business plan for the next phase of arts development work in Halton.

Overview

The Borough of Halton has some important strengths in the arts, including its award-winning venue The Brindley, the successes of the enthusiastic and dedicated arts team in encouraging so many people to take part in the arts in different ways, the role of the arts in local schools and increasingly with younger children in the Children's Centres, and in the growing contribution by independent artists and practitioners attracted to work here.

Interest in the arts has undoubtedly grown since the Borough Council had the confidence and vision to create The Brindley. Nevertheless in an area without a strong local tradition of taking part in the arts, with relatively sparse public transport links across the Borough in the evenings, and the river crossing even now seen as a barrier by some people, there is a continuing challenge in encouraging people to have the confidence to find out what they're good at and what they might become interested in.

While the value of arts and culture in contributing to the quality of life is increasingly understood and accepted, there are still many people who have unequal opportunities to enjoy taking part in and experiencing the arts. The challenge – and the reward – for the Borough Council is to support an arts development programme which encourages people to develop their creativity, and in doing so to achieve some of the other community benefits, as outlined in this report.

Policy

In renewing its arts strategy the Borough Council's aspiration is that:

- the value of arts and culture will be recognised right across the work of the Council
- the importance of arts and culture as a key driver of the quality of life will be acknowledged in corporate strategies

- the Council will support and encourage high quality arts activities which have integrity, and in which imagination, originality and innovation are valued.

The policy of the Council is to develop and support opportunities for everybody in Halton:

- to be able – and encouraged – to take part in and experience high quality arts activity, and
- to be able to share in the social, educational and economic benefits which the arts can offer.

This policy is delivered not only through the Arts Development Team and the work of The Brindley, but also through other services including schools and other services for children and young people, libraries, and the parks and countryside service.

Strategic themes

The arts strategy will:

1. contribute to **community health and well-being**, through arts projects in health-care settings, arts development activities with specific target groups (such as older people) and promoting healthy lifestyles through dance.
2. contribute to **urban renewal and regeneration**, through managing The Brindley as a creative focus for the Borough, through outreach and neighbourhood projects which contribute to community regeneration, and through developing a strategic approach to public art so as to promote sense of identity and pride of place and contribute to the quality of design.
3. support **employment, learning and skills** in the creative sector, through building local talent and nurturing the growth of the independent artists sector and independent arts groups.
4. contribute **opportunities for children and young people**, through formal and informal learning opportunities and a range of participatory arts activities.
5. contribute to **a safer community**, through arts projects which animate the community and promote community cohesion, diversionary programmes for children and young people, and arts projects which contribute to strategies to counter drug and substances misuse or which tackle specific issues of offending behaviours.
6. provide **leadership** and develop **partnerships**, through maintaining and developing a strategic framework for the arts in Halton, developing internal partnerships and collaborations with services of the Council and developing external partnerships and collaborations with other agencies.

The strategy sets out the workstreams to be implemented to deliver each of these themes, and the improvement outcomes that will be expected.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This section introduces the report and summarises the national and regional context.

1.1 Introduction

This report is the outcome of a review led by consultant Garry Churchill, commissioned by Halton Borough Council, to consult widely across those involved with the arts in the Borough, with service users and with other Council services, and to provide an independent external perspective to help the staff of the Arts Development Team in drawing up a revised policy and strategy to guide their work over the next few years.

Following the introduction this report includes:

- Part 2 – a review of arts activity and provision in Halton
- Part 3 – an updated arts policy and strategic themes and objectives
- Part 4 – the strategy to enable the improvement outcomes to be achieved.

An Appendix includes:

- Proposals for supporting creative industries development
- A summary of national and regional policy for the arts
- Summary of user group consultation comments
- List of consultations.

An Action Plan, not included within this report, has been prepared to guide the delivery and implementation of the strategy set out in this paper.

We are grateful to all who took the time to discuss the arts in Halton and contribute to this review – including all those listed at Appendix 4 – but especially to Sue Davies, Cultural Services Manager, and her colleagues in the arts team Claire Bigley, Ruth Bates (until May 2008), Martin Cox and Louise Hesketh.

1.2 What do we mean by 'the arts'?

The arts are understood within this strategy to encompass:

- the **performing arts**, including music, dance, drama and other performance
- the **visual arts**, including crafts and public art
- the **literary arts**, including literature, poetry, reading, writing and the spoken word
- **media arts**, including film, video, broadcasting, digital creativity and the creative use of communications technology, such as creating material for use on social networking sites.

1.3 National and regional policy for the arts

Overall national policy for the cultural sector is led by the **Department for Culture, Media and Sport** (DCMS). The Department's aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries. DCMS aims to maximise the contribution the arts sector makes to its strategic priorities of:

- children and young people
- communities
- the economy
- delivery.

Most of DCMS's support for the arts is channelled through **Arts Council England**, which works "to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives".

'*Great art for everyone*' is the Arts Council's new national strategy for 2008-2011, with specific priorities for:

- digital opportunities
- contemporary visual arts
- children and young people
- the four-year Cultural Olympiad which began in September 2008 leading up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012.

Arts Council England North West will be producing a regional edition of the plan, outlining key initiatives and addressing how they will deliver the mission in this region. Between 2008 and 2011 the regional office will be supporting 110 arts organisations in the region with an investment of £72 million over three years; none of these is however based in Halton. Local arts projects can potentially apply to the recently revised Lottery-funded Grants for the Arts open access funding programme, for which about £5m is available annually in the North West.

Further information on national and regional policy on the arts is attached as Appendix 2.

PART 2: REVIEW

This section provides an overview commentary on the arts on Halton.

2.1 Overview: Arts provision in the Borough

The main **strengths** are:

1. The Brindley, as a focal point for arts activity across the Borough
2. the arts development team, and the passion, integrity, commitment and resourcefulness which they bring to their programme of work
3. the role of the arts in the Borough's schools and increasingly in the Children's Centres, with the educational value of the arts firmly on the agenda of the Children & Young People's Service
4. the way in which many other Council services use the arts, in partnership with the arts team, as a way of helping them deliver their services
5. the growing contribution of independent practitioners, many of whom have been drawn here by the leadership of the arts team and The Brindley
6. the commitment by the Borough Council to using the arts as one of the means by which the quality of life is improved for all residents, contributing to corporate objectives such as educational aspiration and achievement, health and well-being and urban renewal.

The main **weaknesses** are:

1. the relatively small and under-developed scale of professional arts activity other than that directly managed or supported by the Council
2. limited inward investment in the arts, and a limited range of independent partners, meaning there is a considerable dependence on the continuing support of the Borough Council
3. a dependence on artists and arts organisations from further afield to complement the contribution made by locally-based artists
4. limited availability of suitable venues other than The Brindley, especially for specialist facilities such as dance and film/video/media work
5. limited involvement in the creative industries, with a small-scale presence locally, although there is scope for stronger links with the further education sector and for help through business support initiatives.

The strategy will build on the existing strengths, and seek to make progress in addressing some of the perceived weaknesses.

The work of the arts development team has enabled many people to take part in creative activities, and the bold stroke of setting up The Brindley has provided an enormous boost to local cultural opportunities, but this needs to be understood within a local context of relatively low levels of other professional arts activity.

While Halton Borough Council is ambitious and determined to improve opportunities for local people, it is constrained by the relatively small size of the Borough, and a degree of weakness caused by the physical division by the River Mersey.

2.2 Commitment by the Borough Council

Within Halton Borough Council there is understanding and support at both political and management levels for the role of culture. There is a recognition that the arts provide opportunities to achieve a range of corporate objectives. However there are some people within the Council who feel that they do not know enough about the work of the arts team, which has perhaps been rather modest in drawing attention to its achievements.

For example, there have been arts projects which have involved some of the young people who are typically difficult to engage through more traditional approaches, such as projects addressing domestic violence, binge drinking and teenage car crime. Dance projects have been supported through the Healthy Living Programme. It is reported that murals in subways have reduced vandalism.

***Ten Green Bottles** was a project led by Arcane Dance Company, which devised and toured workshops and performances to secondary schools highlighting the dangers of binge drinking. The project was funded by the Drugs Action team, the Healthy Living Programme and Halton Strategic Partnership.*

One recent neighbourhood project used graffiti art to promote community engagement by young people:

"Young people in Runcorn had something to spray as they took up graffiti lessons on the Palace Fields estate.

*"Budding Banksys interested in honing their street art skills enjoyed the two-week **graffiti art workshop** backed by Riverside Housing, Arena Housing, Four Estates, Halton Borough Council's Neighbourhood Management Project and Area Forum.*

"Liverpool-based Zap Graffiti taught the skills of street art to around 13 youngsters ranging from ages seven to 13 during the summer holidays. They also learned about the history of graffiti and the positive and negative aspects of street art.

"Children from the four estates of Palace Fields, Murdishaw, Hallwood Park and Halton Brook initiated the project when they put forward suggestions about how to tackle illegal graffiti in the area in the form of a DVD film shown to bosses from Runcorn's neighbourhood services.

*"Mark Browne, community initiatives officer for Riverside Housing, said 'There has been a very positive response from the local community to the completed artwork. It really does brighten up the area. And because local kids have produced the art themselves we're hoping that other youngsters will take pride in it to make sure that it's not defaced.'*¹

¹ Source: www.24dash.com, social housing and public sector news website.

2.3 The Brindley

Since its opening in 2004 The Brindley has been a great success from a number of perspectives:

- it has raised aspirations and become symbolic of a confident future for the Borough, winning awards and raising the reputation of Halton across the region and beyond
- it has provided a creative focus for the Borough, and a focus for audience development
- the venue itself is generally liked by users and is one of the best venues of its scale in the North West region
- arts development work and professional performances and exhibitions are well integrated, so the venue is much stronger than in places where the venue and the arts development work are separated
- the programme serves many different market niches while maintaining an integrity in the originality and quality of work it presents
- it has created new audiences through its programme offering and participatory events
- the wide range of classes and workshops provide structured opportunities to take part regularly for children, teenagers and older people
- the 'Open' project encourages new participation and has opened up new opportunities for people
- there is some evidence that it is beginning to attract audiences from further afield who are attracted by the programme, the venue itself and its location, and its attractiveness as an alternative proposition to attending large scale venues in Liverpool or Manchester.

Several people who were consulted declared that "The Brindley is the best thing that has happened to Halton".

At the same time it is clear that:

- there is a continuing reluctance by some people in the Borough, especially from the north bank of the river, to travel to Runcorn
- access by public transport, while excellent during the day from all parts of the Borough, is limited in the evenings
- there is a continuing challenge in raising the profile of the venue locally and regionally.

While The Brindley is a magnificent achievement, it is not possible for one single venue to meet all the Borough's needs. In particular:

- *there is a continuing demand for a more informal music venue and for rehearsal spaces*
- *any plans for managed workspaces or artists' studios for fledgling creative industries would need to be developed at other locations*
- *there will continue to be a need for arts activities distributed around the Borough in community locations for people who are unable or reluctant to travel to The Brindley.*

2.4 Arts development work

The Borough has a team of arts development officers who command respect from service users, artists and practitioners and external stakeholders for their commitment and integrity and are well connected with regional and national developments in their fields. They are experienced, imaginative, creative and resourceful, and have initiated a wide range of work for many different target user groups. User comments on the team are overwhelmingly positive (see Appendix 3). Core services including advice, information, support of voluntary and professional artists and arts groups, grants schemes and help in securing funding from other sources are all highly valued.

The work of the arts development team is well integrated with the programming of workshops, classes, performances and exhibitions at The Brindley, while still having a distinct identity through a range of collaborations and off-site projects. With specialisms in dance, drama and music the current team offers a range of expertise and contacts, and all the current officers have extended beyond their own core strengths to cover other areas of work.

Although some local authorities have moved away from the model of having an arts team based around areas of artform expertise, in favour of the posts being structured around the target user groups, there is no reason why the present model should not continue to serve Halton well given that the officers as a team focus on the Council's corporate priorities, and this will be more explicit in a new strategy with a renewed focus on outcomes.

Now that the venue has become well established there is the opportunity for the arts team to give more attention to development work which takes place in other locations, such as children's centres and community centres, although there are few other specialist spaces, and other Council venues are often under pressure for space or availability. With recent market research data available, it will be possible now to plan specific targeted interventions in neighbourhoods or localities where it is clear that there are flat spots or low levels of participation.

2.5 Other Council services

The Arts Development Team has excellent links across many other Council services, providing advice and contacts to services which use the arts as part of their delivery. Much of the collaboration is however informal or even casual, with other services not always sure of what the Arts Development Team can offer or of the limitations of the Arts Development Team, which occasionally gives rise to a degree of misunderstanding.

It would be desirable to consider how better sharing, information exchange, collaboration and forward planning could be put in place but without another tier of meetings which would be burdensome for all concerned.

- **Schools and Children's Centres:** The Borough has the highest proportion of schools holding the *Artsmark* award of all local authorities in England. This is a remarkable achievement and reflects the support available, led by the Arts Education Development Officer. It is evidence that both arts teaching in the curriculum and the provision of extra-curricular activities is meeting the standards of this nationally accredited scheme.

Schools in the Borough have benefited from the work of professional artists and practitioners enriching the opportunities they provide, through projects such as writers' residencies and workshops by dance artists. They are networked through the Arts Education Network.

The arts team has growing links with the children's centres, providing expertise and advice on professional practitioners for activities such as early years dance and movement programmes and helping facilitate dance projects.

Arts programmes with early years children are emerging and with the new national Early Years Framework there will be opportunities for more planned and structured use of activities such as dance and movement, arts and crafts and music. However if the programmes in children's centres continue to develop they would need more support from the arts team which may present difficulties in terms of capacity.

- **Youth work:** Arts activities are not at present strongly embedded in youth work, despite the interest in the **H208 Festival of Youth Culture**, and there is scope to strengthen the 'cultural offer' to children and young people especially with the Government's goal (now being piloted in ten places across England) of ensuring that five hours of cultural activities, including sports and arts, should be available in and out of school to all young people.
- **Parks:** Arts events are used as one of the ways of animating the Borough's attractive parks, open spaces and countryside sites, with arts as part of community events and artists engaged to encourage participation and use of the sites through activities such as music, theatre, circus skills and pottery workshops.
- **Libraries:** Many library initiatives promote reading, writing, poetry and literature, such as the events for the **National Year of Reading, National Storytelling Week** and other activities. Libraries are used as venues for reading groups and for arts activities such as exhibitions at Kingsway and elsewhere, regular classes in writing at Halton Lee and in arts, crafts and media at Widnes, and with the expected use of the newly refurbished community space at Halton Lea library. Arts form one of the strands of opportunities in adult learning, with a range of courses at Kingsway and other venues.

- **Splash:** Out-of-school programmes of diversionary activities for children and young people have included some arts activities, such as the making of a CD which emerged from a DJing and rap project.
- **Community Centres:** Most of the centres are used for some community-based arts activities, especially for activities organised by local groups. Murdishaw for example is one of the venues for the *Fit 2 Dance* programme, and Ditton has an extensive range including also painting, pottery, dance and drama. The community centres provide a channel for reaching people who may not be users of The Brindley, through the local contacts, expertise and resources of the centres, especially for initial engagement.

There has been a pattern through the Touring Network of using some of the community centres as venues for small-scale professional touring performances but this has been inconsistent. The centres would like to have more programmed events and more arts development activities but there are constraints on scheduling flexibility because of the regular weekly events at the centres. Meanwhile better communications are needed across the Borough so that the activities of the community centres are more generally known. Although there is some demand for locally based performances the Borough Council would find it difficult to resource these in addition to using the specialist facilities at The Brindley.

- **Social Services:** The contribution that the arts can make to providing high quality experiences for people receiving social care is increasingly understood. A current initiative is a proposed pilot project to be commissioned as part of social care for adults with dementia, in partnership with local community groups, the Library service and perhaps jointly with a neighbouring local authority.
- **Drugs Action Team:** There is a history of arts collaborations, such as Ten Green Bottles (page 8) and recently a DVD project about overdose prevention, entitled 'High Risk' and made with service users from Ashley House.

2.6 External partnerships

The arts service is well connected locally and across the region. The individual officers are active in various professional fora which gives them a national context for their work.

- **Regional and Sub-regional:** Halton has links with Arts Council England at a regional level and with the Merseyside authorities through membership of the Merseyside Arts Partnership. From April 2009 there may be fresh opportunities for alliances on specific issues with the two new unitary Cheshire authorities as well as with those unitary boroughs such as Warrington.

- **Health:** The Merseyside Arts Partnership is focusing on a co-ordinating role for arts and health work across Merseyside as an inter-authority initiative, supported by Arts Council. One of the objectives is to develop a strategic influence with the Primary Care Trusts.

Locally the PCT in Halton (and St Helens) has supported some issue-based arts work and there has been a history of projects, but these have not together been systematically evaluated for their impact and have not so far been strategically embedded within the health sector although some projects are continuing.

*The **Scribes and Scribblers** creative writing group was initially set up to help people who were suffering from long term illness and were frequent attendees at GP surgeries. The group is now autonomous and meets regularly at The Brindley. It has published several volumes of writing including 'Worsley to Top Locks' with the support of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.*

***Time for Me** is a project for women with mild to moderate post-natal depression, set up by the arts team with the health visitor service, and now run in partnership with Sure Start, health workers and the Children's Centres.*

***Recharge** is a project for people over 50 suffering from limiting conditions and long term illness, and aims to reduce isolation through talking part in arts activities. The project continues on a largely self-managing basis with support from Healthy Living staff.*

Recent research and proposals prepared for Halton Borough Council include the recommendations that there should be a renewed dialogue with the Halton and St Helens PCT and with the Healthy Living Programme, and that the possibility of setting up a part-time Arts for Health post be explored. The consultants' view was that "*Halton Borough Council Cultural Services cannot be the sole driver of Arts for Health programmes, and all arts for health related work should be jointly developed with a strategic partnership and shown to be delivering on the strategies for well-being and health development across the borough*"².

- **Heritage:** There are good arts links with Norton Priory Museum and Walled Gardens. There may be scope to develop links in future with the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre.

***Norton Priory** regularly works with artists and uses arts-based activities to help animate the site and as part of its community programmes in partnership with many different groups such as Age Concern, Day Centres, Children's Centres and others. Artists were engaged for example to work on a project about perceptions of disability through the ages. Creative writing has formed part of a programme for 'gifted and talented' young people devised with the schools curriculum advisers. There are weekly painting classes.*

Norton Priory provides a temporary exhibition space, which is in great demand, and includes exhibitions curated by artists and with international work. There are also artists working on the site, with the Kitchen Gallery, an independent project sited in the Walled Garden, raku ceramics in the Mushroom House, and artists' studios.

The Arts Development Team works closely with the staff of Norton Priory including contributing to the Heritage Access project, advising on arts projects and collaborating as partners.

² Source: *A Framework Report for the Delivery of Arts for Health in Halton 2008 onwards*. Nicky Duirs and Phil Burgess, May 2008.

2.7 Independent practitioners

- **Support for professional artists:** Artists and practitioners have been attracted by the excellent facilities at The Brindley and the supportive and encouraging environment promoted by the arts development team. Practical assistance with issues such as rehearsal space, marketing of events and links with schools has helped develop the viability of a professional freelance career for a number of artists and groups including Arcane Dance Company and Halton Actors in Residence (HAiR).

The artistic reputation developed regionally and nationally by groups such as HAiR's performance at the Kendal International Women's Festival has reflected positively on Halton and contributed to an external perception of it as a Borough where artists and their work are nurtured and can flourish. There is potential for growth in the small but emergent independent arts sector, such as through the Loose Project.

*The **Loose Project** has its origins as a music collective in 1996/97. It has been building the case for an informal music and rehearsal venue, which they had identified as a gap since the closure of the Queens Hall and the Queens Hall Studio when The Brindley opened in 2004.*

Plans have been developed to re-open the Studio as a music venue and also as a base for Feedback magazine and other arts and community organisations. In 2008 with the support of the Borough Council £600,000 was secured from the Big Lottery Community Assets Fund.

It is planned to open in June 2009.

- **Networking:** The artists and practitioners who live or work in Halton tend to know each other informally but are not necessarily well-networked together – there is no direct equivalent of the Halton Sports Partnership, although there is now a Cultural Partnership and there are some sector groups such as the visual artists' collective Markmakers (which has about 17 members, all professional practitioners). The views of those we have consulted suggest there is perhaps not a strong enough range of professional practitioners across the arts to develop an artists' forum at present, but there is scope to encourage networking and information flows through electronic communications.

*This might include reviving the dormant **Raw Arts website** (www.rawcreativity.co.uk) as a platform and showcase for local independent practitioners, to strengthen its value as a resource, and linked to a regular e-circular to channel information, news, commissioning opportunities etc. The Raw Arts website will be complemented by the planned Cultivate website of the Halton Cultural Partnership which will provide an opportunity for local groups to have a profile.*

- **Support for voluntary sector arts groups:** Local voluntary sector arts groups are supported and encouraged by the Council including using the facilities at The Brindley where appropriate, such as by the Halton Music Society, a voluntary group that promotes professional classical music recitals. There is no strong desire from this sector though for improved networking or demand for more active interventions by the Borough Council. As noted above, the website planned by the Halton Cultural Partnership will give space for local groups to have a profile.

- **Building a career in the creative industries:** While the encouragement and advice of the arts team has been valued it is clear that there are few other sources of practical support for those wishing to develop a career in the creative industries. Moves to establish more opportunities for music training and accreditation are to be welcomed. There is scope for Riverside College to develop stronger links with the arts infrastructure of the Borough, given its role in offering courses to post-16 year olds in performing, visual and media arts.

Riverside College provides education for most of the 16+ age group in Halton. There are A level and BTEC courses in a wide range of arts and media subjects. Advanced courses include a foundation diploma in art and design (with Chester University) and a foundation degree in theatre, applied drama and creativity, which started in September 2008 (with Edge Hill University).

Specialist facilities include a drama studio, dance studio, recording studio and rehearsal spaces, and some use is made of The Brindley for public performances and events such as the launch in June 2008 of its own record label Indie Fire.

There are approximately 150 students per year taking Vocational Performing Arts courses and 100 taking Vocational Visual and Media Arts, as well as A level students. The College holds an industry week to promote links with the creative industries. There is scope for more regular dialogue between Riverside College and the Halton Arts Development Team and for stronger working links.

2.8 Constraints and opportunities

The role of local authorities in the arts is discretionary, not mandatory, and therefore the arts tend to be vulnerable, especially when budgets are under pressure. However an arts strategy which both responds to and stimulates local need and demand is essential as part of the community leadership role of local authorities.

The arts are intrinsically valuable, and this has been reaffirmed in recent statements by both Arts Council England and by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, after a decade in which the arts have been promoted largely for their instrumental benefits in delivering some of the great policy themes such as social inclusion, educational progress and economic development. The arts policy needs to recognise both the value of facilitating access to high quality arts provision for all people in the borough, and the importance of utilising the opportunities presented by the arts to help achieve other things.

Local authority arts services vary widely, because unlike most other local government services they are not highly specified by central government. They are therefore an opportunity to build on local strengths and characteristics, and to make a strong contribution to distinctiveness of place. This very diversity has however made it difficult to establish national performance indicators, which do justice to the wide variety of approaches.

Some **general constraints** on local authority arts services include:

- the continuing restrictions on local authority finances and the need to find 'efficiency' savings year on year
- the priority being given in use of Lottery funds to planning for 2012 and the Olympics

- the relative weakness nationally for the arts, compared with other cultural services, in terms of an under-developed performance measurement framework, reflecting the great diversity of approaches across the country.

Some **specific constraints** having a local effect include:

- despite its acknowledgement of the value of the arts Halton Borough Council is a relatively small authority with many pressing demands on its budgets
- the independent arts sector in the borough is small and relatively fragile
- the limited investment in Halton by the Arts Council, following the expiry of the funding towards the Brindley, with no regularly funded organisations in the borough, and Arts Council three-year spending plans fixed for 2008-2011
- the challenge of securing the sustainability of work of proven value when fixed term project funding expires.

There are also significant opportunities for developing the arts during the next few years, including:

1. For **young people**:

- interest by the Arts Council in promoting the *Artsmark* award to schools³, and the *Arts Award* as an accredited award for young people's individual achievements⁴
- interest by Government in promoting the concept of 'cultural entitlement' for all young people
- the chance to build on strong and growing interest in dance development, especially with young people
- the opportunity to develop a more coherent policy for youth arts as Halton develops an integrated approach to supporting young people.

2. For **the wider community**:

- opportunities to use arts activities in social care situations such as in improving the quality of life of older people
- opportunities through the arts to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities or health or mental health issues
- opportunities to build on the important role of volunteers on whom the organisation of so many community activities depends.

3. For investment in **the physical infrastructure**:

- scope to incorporate public art into major new capital investments, especially with infrastructure projects such as Widnes Waterfront, Runcorn Canal Quarter and the £390m Mersey Gateway new bridge
- opportunities arising through the ambitious *Building Schools for the Future* programme, with an estimated £90-100m for Halton (as part of Wave 6 of the BSF programme), with the chance to influence conceptual thinking about the community role of new schools as well as arts interventions in their design.

³ As noted earlier, Halton has an outstanding record of achievement in the number of local schools gaining the *Artsmark* award.

⁴ The Brindley is an approved centre for the young people's *Arts Award*, and the officers in the Arts Development Team have had training as assessors. A pilot project will see a number of young people working for the Bronze level award by April 2009.

2.9 Building on current achievements

The arts matter, to the people of Halton and to the Borough Council, for the contribution they make to social, educational, economic and environmental aspects of quality of life.

With an increased emphasis for local authorities on *outcomes*, rather than *outputs*, the next phase of arts development in the Borough will need to establish more consistent evidence about *impact* and *'value added'*, especially in helping to achieve:

- **equality**, with the arts contributing to efforts to 'close the gap' and raise the level of aspirations and achievements
- **cohesion**, building sense of place and contributing to pride of place, helping to unify the Borough despite its different neighbourhood traditions, and improving the cultural opportunities available to all people living here.

PART 3: ARTS POLICY

This section sets out an updated arts policy and strategic themes for discussion by Halton Borough Council.

3.1 The purpose of a policy and strategy

The arts policy and strategy provides a framework to assist in achieving the Council's overall mission and corporate objectives. The policy and strategy is intended to guide future planning and allocation of resources and to assist in negotiations both internally and with external partners.

An Action Plan has also been drawn up providing more detail about proposed implementation, and allocations of staff and financial resources are agreed in the internal Service Plans and individual Work Plans.

A more user-friendly summary of the policy and strategy will be prepared for a wider public including for use on the Council's website and for other public information and advocacy purposes.

3.2 The corporate policy context

The Borough Council's **vision** is that:

"Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality, sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods".

The Council's **key priorities**, as set out in the Corporate Plan, are:

1. a healthy Halton
2. Halton's urban renewal
3. employment, learning and skills in Halton
4. children and young people in Halton
5. a safer Halton
6. corporate effectiveness and business efficiency.

These provide a **framework for the arts strategy** through the following themes, reflecting the Council's key priorities:

1. a healthy community
2. urban renewal and regeneration
3. employment, learning and skills
4. arts opportunities for children and young people
5. a safer community
6. leadership and partnerships

with a focus throughout on **improvement outcomes**.

3.3 Aspiration and Policy

The Council's **aspiration** for the arts is that:

- the value of arts and culture will be recognised right across the work of the Council, both through the work of the Arts Development Team and through other services
- the importance of arts and culture as a key driver of the quality of life will be recognised and represented in corporate strategies
- the Council will support and encourage high quality arts activities which have integrity, and in which imagination, originality and innovation are valued.

The **policy** of the Council is to develop and support opportunities for everybody in Halton:

- to be able – and encouraged – to take part in and experience high quality arts activity, and
- to be able to share in the social, educational and economic benefits which the arts can offer.

This policy is delivered through key services provided by the Arts Development Team:

- strategic leadership of arts development across the Borough
- partnerships with professional and voluntary sector providers, regional bodies and other agencies
- managing The Brindley and its programme, including outreach, as the Borough's flagship arts venue
- commissioning, managing or supporting arts development work
- providing information, advice, support and networking to the arts sector, other services of the Council and to external partners
- a grants scheme for funding community arts projects and development work.

Arts are also provided or facilitated through other Borough Council services including:

- libraries
- schools, children's centres, the work of the curriculum advisers and other services for children and young people
- parks and countryside.

3.4 Strategic themes and objectives

The strategic objectives are grouped around six themes, with clear objectives and a focus on outcomes:

Theme	Objective	Outcomes
1. A healthy community	To contribute to community health and well-being through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arts projects in health-care settings arts development activities with specific target groups (such as older people) promoting healthy lifestyles through dance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More use of social and cultural approaches as an alternative to medical or pharmacological interventions. Engaging new users and increased participation by target groups. Increased participation in activities such as dance.
2. Urban renewal and regeneration	To contribute to urban renewal and regeneration through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing The Brindley as a creative focus for the Borough and for its role in wider community regeneration outreach and neighbourhood projects which contribute to community regeneration developing a strategic approach to public art, to promote sense of identity and pride of place and contribute to the quality of design and urban renewal/regeneration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability and viability of The Brindley. Increased participation in target neighbourhoods. Environmental and public realm improvements.
3. Employment, learning and skills	To support employment, learning and skills in the creative sector through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> building local talent nurturing the growth of the independent artists sector and independent arts groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building and a stronger independent sector. Economic benefits with the growth of a sustainable pool of arts organisations and artists.
4. Arts opportunities for children and young people	To contribute opportunities for children and young people through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formal and informal learning opportunities a range of participatory arts activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation by children and young people. Increased aspirations and achievements.

continued...

<p>5. A safer community</p>	<p>To contribute to a safer community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arts projects which animate the community and promote community cohesion • diversionary programmes for children and young people • arts projects which contribute to strategies to counter drug and substances misuse • arts projects which tackle specific issues of offending behaviours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined-up approach to reaching target audiences, working with other services to focus on identified priority areas. • Increased community cohesion. • More positive attitudes and reduced anti-social behaviour by young people.
<p>6. Leadership and partnerships</p>	<p>To provide leadership and develop partnerships through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining and developing a strategic framework for the arts in Halton • developing internal partnerships and collaborations with services of the Council • developing external partnerships and collaborations with other agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective application of people and financial resources to achieve strategic outcomes. • Effective partnerships internally and externally including the arts having a voice in the LSP.

The specific workstreams to support these objectives and achieve these outcomes are set out on the following pages.

PART 4: STRATEGY

This section sets out more detail about the strategies to deliver on each of the themes.

4.1 Theme 1: A healthy community

The arts service will contribute to community health and well-being through:

- arts projects in health-care settings
- arts development activities with specific target groups such as older people
- promoting healthy lifestyles through dance.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- more use of social and cultural approaches as an alternative to medical or pharmacological interventions
- engaging new users, through increased participation by target groups
- increased participation in activities such as dance.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Arts and health**, including:
 - More arts projects in partnership with the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (such as a recent video project devised by young people with The Brindley).
 - Take part in sub-regional initiatives through the Merseyside Arts Partnership to develop arts and health work as an inter-authority initiative, supported by Arts Council.
 - Explore the scope for establishing a part-time co-ordinator to develop arts in health opportunities in partnership with the PCT.
 - Explore further collaborations relating to the key priorities of mental health, ageing, young people's issues (including teenage pregnancy, sexual health and drugs awareness), men's health and training for arts and health staff.
2. **Active lifestyles**, including:
 - Offer a range of youth dance programmes.
 - Maintain the dance development programme, at The Brindley, at off-site locations and with other services e.g. Children's Centres.
 - Continue to develop programmes such as Fit 2 Dance and Years Ahead projects (for the over 50s).
3. **Audience development**⁵, including:
 - Devise and implement joint initiatives with Sports Development (the Active People survey provides data on areas of low take-up).
 - Devise and implement specific initiatives to encourage first-time audiences at The Brindley.
 - Devise and implement specific initiatives to engage more young adults, including different marketing aimed at the needs of different age groups.

⁵ **Note:** 'audience development' means engaging people in activities as participants as well as audiences, at The Brindley and at other locations, with the objectives of involving new users, from a broader range of people, and of attracting more frequent and varied participation by people who are already users.

- Devise and implement specific initiatives to encourage new involvement through arts development outreach projects.
- Further develop joint projects with libraries and with e.g. The Reader Organisation (at Liverpool University).

4. **2012 Olympics:**

- Work with other services and authorities and the North West Olympics Co-ordinator to develop a cultural programme related to the 2012 Olympics.

4.2 Theme 2: Urban renewal and regeneration

The arts service will contribute to urban renewal and regeneration through:

- managing The Brindley as a creative focus for the Borough and for its role in wider community regeneration
- outreach and neighbourhood projects which contribute to community regeneration
- developing a strategic approach to public art, to promote sense of identity and pride of place and contribute to the quality of design and urban renewal/regeneration.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- sustainability and viability of The Brindley as a creative focus
- increased participation in target neighbourhoods
- environmental and public realm improvements.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **The Brindley**, including:
 - Carry out market research (specific and local, not generalised) to understand the views of users and non-users, to help shape audience development strategies.
 - Use market research data (e.g. ACORN data and findings of Active People survey) to target people in areas where there are currently low levels of participation.
 - Promote the venue more strongly beyond the Borough both to enhance the reputation of the Borough and to help the venue's sustainability by contributing to earned income.
 - Audience development work (as Theme 1.3).
2. **Outreach work**, including:
 - Devise and implement development work, with other cultural services in the borough, through specific interventions in neighbourhoods or localities where there are low levels of participation, e.g. the 'super output areas' identified in the work on Neighbourhood Management (such as the pilot project in the West Bank area of Widnes).
3. **Public art**, including:
 - Work to achieve a strategic influence with the Council's Environment Department (which includes Planning, Economic Regeneration, Major Projects and Highways); this may include the possibility of a specialist post on a part-time or freelance basis to provide expert advice.
 - Advocate for the adoption and implementation of the Planning Guidance Note and Commissioning Guide.
 - Seek to influence the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme with conceptual thinking about the community role of new schools as well as arts interventions in their design.
 - Seek to influence major infrastructure projects such as Widnes Waterfront, Runcorn Canal Quarter, the Mersey Gateway new bridge and new health facilities planned for the Borough.

4.3 Theme 3: Employment, learning and skills

The arts service will support employment, learning and skills in the creative sector through:

- building local talent
- nurturing the growth of the independent artists sector and independent arts groups in the Borough.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- capacity building and a stronger independent sector
- economic benefits with the growth of a sustainable pool of arts organisations and artists.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. Supporting professional and voluntary **artists and practitioners**, including:
 - Continue to offer a small grants and a small training grants programme.
 - Offer advice and assistance to artists, for example (i) to young bands, linking them to other sources of support and to promoters, and assist initiatives such as Loose Music and the Queen's Hall Studio project, and (ii) to visual artists and crafts makers and link them to other sources of support and to venues.
 - Improve networking for artists and arts groups, specifically by reviving and re-launching the Raw Arts website, and extending its range as a platform and showcase for local independent practitioners, to strengthen its value as a resource, including as a source of information to assist other Council services, providing a directory of artists and arts groups (with supporting information such as examples of work undertaken and names of independent referees). Complement this with a regular e-circular to practitioners to channel information, news, commissioning opportunities etc.
 - Strengthen support for the voluntary sector through the development of a DVD and website by the Cultural Partnership to make the voluntary sector more visible.
 - Build on existing links with neighbouring initiatives e.g. Cheshire Artists Network and Open Studios for the benefit of local artists and venues.
2. Supporting the **creative industries**, including:
 - Develop signposting and advice on progression routes.
 - Consider strategic alliance with agencies (such as ACME or CRISP) or with other local authorities, to counter the limited capacity.
 - Develop more formalised links with Riverside College: to collaborate on structured and planned workshops and artists' residencies, placements and practical experience to help local students considering a career in arts, crafts or media work, including technical support work; to facilitate opportunities for more advanced students to gain experience in working on community projects; and to maintain more regular contact between arts team and college staff, contributing the arts team's knowledge of the industry and the arts professions.
 - Offer work experience and mentoring for emerging artists and practitioners.
 - Look at possible opportunities through Building Schools for the Future to establish creative studios which could host artists in schools and act as incubator spaces for emerging creative businesses.

4.4 Theme 4: Arts opportunities for children and young people

The arts service will contribute opportunities for children and young people through:

- formal and informal learning opportunities for children and young people
- a range of participatory arts activities for children and young people.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- increased participation by children and young people
- increased aspirations and achievements.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Early years** work, including:
 - Develop the role of the arts team as a resource able to provide specialist advice to staff in CYPANs and the Children's Centres, and advising them on use of artists who are potentially available to deliver work.
 - Work through CYPANs and the Children's Centres to reach families with family learning and inter-generational work.
2. Supporting **education**, including:
 - Develop the role of the arts team as a resource able to provide specialist advice to curriculum advisers, headteachers and schools, advising them on use of artists who are potentially available to deliver work, contributing to CPD and INSET for teachers, and supporting the work of the Arts Education Development Officer in encouraging schools to apply for the *Artsmark* award and helping them to meet the standards of the programme, especially in areas such as dance where support is especially needed.
 - Plan workshops, residencies, exhibitions and performances which support schools' curricular needs, and the needs of the new Diploma in Creative and Media Studies, both through the programme of The Brindley and through links with artists and arts organisations.
3. Supporting **youth arts**, including:
 - Help to develop a Council-wide Youth Arts Policy as a statement of entitlement and service availability, working with the integrated Youth Service and with young people.
 - Work with the Borough's other cultural services towards the 'five hour offer' and the extended school day.
 - Pilot projects to promote the Young People's *Arts Award* as an accredited award, with the Positive Activities group.
 - Develop further opportunities through which young people can devise their own programming, building on the experience of H208 which included work run and managed by young people.
 - In response to young people's interest, develop film/video/media work, both at The Brindley and in conjunction with venues such as Riverside College with specialist facilities and equipment, and at new school buildings planned through BSF as part of wider community use and access.
 - Support proposals to establish a dedicated youth facility in Widnes which could increase the creative opportunities available to young people in the northern part of the borough.

4.5 Theme 5: A safer community

The arts service will contribute to a safer community through:

- arts projects which animate the community and promote community cohesion
- diversionary programmes for children and young people
- arts projects which contribute to strategies to counter drug and substances misuse
- arts projects which tackle specific issues of offending behaviours (such as vehicle crime).

Improvement outcomes will include:

- a joined-up approach to reaching target audiences, working together with other services to focus on identified priority areas
- increased community cohesion
- more positive attitudes and reduced anti-social behaviour by young people.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Community engagement**, including:
 - Support neighbourhood projects which promote a sense of local community.
 - Reach non-committed audiences through community animation projects in parks, open spaces and public spaces in town centre locations.
 - Assist community centres in their work of engaging local communities, including off-site and outreach work such as events, projects and community learning initiatives.
 - Discontinue attempts to provide a borough-wide Touring Network but make specific provision for rural communities (such as Prestonbrook) by buying into the Cheshire touring circuit.
2. **Diversionary programmes** for children and young people, including:
 - Devise and implement projects which promote positive images and roles for young people.
 - Devise and implement projects which tackle specific offending behaviours e.g. vehicle crime by young people.
 - Integrate arts and creative activities into Splash programmes to offer out-of-school creative opportunities.
 - Continue to offer out-of-school creative opportunities for children and young people at The Brindley.

Arts projects in partnership with the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team and with the PCT (see Theme 1) will also contribute to the theme of a safer community.

4.6 Theme 6: Leadership and partnerships

The arts service will provide leadership and develop partnerships through:

- maintaining and developing a strategic framework for the arts in Halton
- developing internal partnerships and collaborations with services of the Council
- developing external partnerships and collaborations with other agencies.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- effective application of people and financial resources to achieve strategic outcomes
- effective partnerships internally and externally including the arts having a voice in the LSP.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Advocacy**, including:
 - Consistent advocacy and profile-raising by the arts team.
 - Implement an improved website.
 - Promote and encourage artistic quality and integrity through the work of the arts team and their imagination, originality and innovation.
 - Work on evidence systems and PIs to ensure that impact and outcomes can be demonstrated and communicated.
2. **Working together internally**, including:
 - Ensure that the contribution the arts make to achieving corporate objectives is recognised in e.g. LAA.
 - Further development of cross-service working, and with improved planning mechanisms.
 - Develop the arts team's offering as an in-house consultancy resource including sharing information, contacts, ideas and advice with other services.
 - Develop the working relationships with the four CYPANs.
3. **Working together externally**, including:
 - Play an active role in Merseyside Arts Partnership and ensure Halton is able to benefit from sub-regional initiatives.
 - Explore the potential for links with other nearby local authorities, e.g. St Helens, for joint work on e.g. health, creative industries and in other areas where co-operation or joint action would be beneficial to Halton.
 - Maintain and develop the relationship with Arts Council England North West.
 - Maintain and develop the links with other regional and national networks, support structures and professional bodies.
 - Support Norton Priory Museum in its ambitious expansion plans which will offer enhanced arts opportunities as well as strengthening the Borough's heritage offer.

APPENDIX 1: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Introduction

As part of this review we were asked to consider the growth potential of the creative industries sector and to make some suggestions about what an appropriate and realistic role would be for Halton Borough Council.

Context

The creative industries are a growing sector of the economy:

- The creative economy accounts for over 7% of UK employment⁶.
- Creative employment has grown strongly over the long run – by 3.2% p.a. from 1981 to 2006, compared with 0.8% p.a. for the broader UK economy⁷.
- Self-employment and small businesses are characteristic of much of the sector: for example, in the designer fashion, the film, video and photography and the music and performing arts industries, small UK owned firms (0-9 employees) make the most significant contribution to turnover and employment⁸.

Creative Industries Partnerships

In the North West, digital and creative industries are one of the development priorities set out in the Regional Economic Strategy. Arts Council England has worked with the North West Development Agency and other partners to build a network of three new Creative Industry Partnerships:

- in Cheshire (CRISP – www.cheshire.gov.uk/arts/arts_creative.htm)
 - in Lancashire (Creative Lancashire – <http://www.creativelancashire.org>)
- and also in Cumbria, working alongside the established industry agencies of:
- ACME on Merseyside (www.merseysideacme.com) and
 - Creative Industries Development Service (CIDS) in Manchester (www.cids.co.uk).

However in terms of regional planning, Halton and some of the other unitary authorities fall outside the remit of sub-regional bodies covering either Merseyside, Lancashire or Cheshire, and are not covered by one of the sub-regional creative industries development agencies.

Competitive advantages and disadvantages in Halton

The creative industries tend to gravitate towards larger cities, for the benefits of critical mass, larger pool of skilled workforce, more support structures, wider choice of physical infrastructure, and access to markets.

⁶ Source: *Beyond the creative industries: Mapping the creative economy in the United Kingdom*. Peter Higgs, Stuart Cunningham and Hasan Bakhshi. NESTA, 2008.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Source: *Creative Industry Performance: A statistical analysis for the DCMS*. Frontier Economics, London, 2007.

Halton's main advantages in developing creative industries include:

- The Brindley as a focal point for creative practitioners and cultural activities in the Borough
- the support of a dedicated team of arts development officers with artform specialisms, an advantage not shared by many of the neighbouring authorities
- a range of opportunities for freelance and commissioned work supported by the Borough Council.

There are also some aspects of the local economy, which could be turned to Halton's advantage in building a cluster of creative industries:

- the older parts of the town centres include low cost buildings which could potentially be adapted to become affordable managed workspaces or studios
- Halton is generally a low cost area
- there are excellent communications to Liverpool and Manchester.

There is potential, demonstrated by the high level of interest amongst young people (see the note in Part 2 about arts courses at Riverside College), and by the small but growing number of practitioners returning or relocating to Halton attracted by opportunities at The Brindley and in arts development, community and education work who find the context in Halton more supportive than in some other areas.

However the Borough does not have an economic development strategy focus on creative industries as a specific growth area, and is not covered by one of the sub-regional creative industries development agencies.

Potential to support Creative Industries in Halton

Within available resources, action that could be led by the Council includes:

1. Information and advice:

- 1.1. Provide information and advice to practitioners and would-be practitioners, both on the website and through individual surgeries.
- 1.2. Compile and circulate an occasional newsletter (only by e-mail) to artists and practitioners to inform them of news, opportunities, commissioning opportunities, freelance work opportunities etc., and information on who to contact in various services and other bodies.
- 1.3. Advise and support independent projects, which aim to increase opportunities for practitioners, such as the Loose Music Collective in its plans to develop the Queen's Hall Studio as a music venue, rehearsal space and base for independent practitioners.

2. Training and skills development:

- 2.1. Support local artists and practitioners through mentoring and shadowing opportunities, working with and alongside more experienced workers.

- 2.2. Develop more formalised links with Riverside College including:
- help develop placements and work experience for local students considering a career in arts, crafts or media work, including technical support work
 - facilitate opportunities for more advanced students to gain experience in working on community projects
 - maintain more regular contact between arts team and college staff, contributing the arts team's knowledge of the industry and the arts professions
 - Riverside College to become an active member of the Halton Cultural Partnership.
- 2.3. Assist emergent groups by providing discretionary low cost access to rehearsal facilities and technical support at The Brindley.

3. Promotion and marketing:

- 3.1. Refresh and promote the currently dormant *Raw Arts* website (www.rawcreativity.co.uk) to extend its range as a platform and showcase for local independent practitioners, to strengthen its value as a resource, including as a source of information to assist other Council services, providing a directory of artists and arts groups (with supporting information such as examples of work undertaken and names of independent referees).
- 3.2. Profile locally based artists and practitioners through use of website and directory to make it easier for other Council services (e.g. Children and Young People's Service) and for independent agencies to contact them so that they could be considered for freelance or sessional work.
- 3.3. Work with Norton Priory Museum to promote the availability of the studios, exhibition opportunities and supporting facilities on that site.

4. Employment opportunities:

- 4.1. Engage locally based artists and practitioners to work on arts projects in the Borough, through the arts team and also in schools, youth work, early years work and other settings.
- 4.2. Promote opportunities for artists, crafts makers, photographers and film/video workers to show their work at The Brindley, libraries and other public venues.
- 4.3. Commission new work such as choreography, stage works, music and visual arts, crafts, and media work, for The Brindley and other settings.

5. Specialist interventions:

- 5.1. Consider the cost and potential benefits of either (i) buying into an existing creative industries support structure, such as ACME or CRISP, or (ii) commissioning a joint programme with one or more neighbouring authorities (e.g. Warrington).

APPENDIX 2: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY FOR THE ARTS

DCMS

Overall national policy for the cultural sector is led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Department's aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

DCMS aims to maximise the contribution the arts sector makes to the strategic priorities of Children and Young People, Communities, the Economy and Delivery.

Specific aims are to:

- broaden access for all to a rich and varied artistic and cultural life
- ensure that the artistic activity we fund aspires to be world class
- ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop artistic talent and to achieve excellence in the arts
- develop the educational potential of all the nation's artistic and cultural resources
- raise standards of artistic and cultural education and training
- ensure an adequate skills supply for the arts and cultural sectors
- reduce the number of those who feel excluded from society, by using the arts.

Objectives for the period 2008-2011 are:

- Opportunity: encourage more widespread enjoyment of culture, media and sport
- Excellence: support talent and excellence in culture, media and sport
- Economic impact: realise the economic benefits of the Department's sectors
- Olympics: deliver a successful and inspirational Olympic and Paralympic Games with a sustainable legacy.

In February 2008 DCMS, in partnership with BERR and DIUS, published *'Creative Britain: New Talents for a New Economy'*, a strategy document for the Creative Industries, which sets out 26 commitments through which the Government will take action to support the creative industries. The creative industries are seen as an important growth area nationally and regionally.

National initiatives

Some recent and current initiatives and opportunities, which may potentially impact on Halton, include:

1. The **'Five Hour Offer'**: plans announced by Government in February 2008 that all children should be offered at least 5 hours of high quality arts and culture per week both in and outside of school (the *'Find Your Talent'* project), to be piloted initially in ten locations (in the North West these are Bolton Borough Council and the 'Liverpool City Region' Partnership serving three Merseyside neighbourhoods).

2. **Youth Dance:** a strengthened commitment to youth dance, with the appointment of the dancer and choreographer Wayne McGregor, to be the Government's first Youth Dance Champion, the publication in 2008 of a national Dance Review which set out ambitions to increase young people's participation in dance, an audit of dance in schools, and an expanded role for Youth Dance England. Government is committed to increasing access to dance for more young people, both in and out of school.
3. **The National Performance Framework:** the launch in March 2008 of '*A Passion for Excellence: an Improvement Strategy for Culture and Sport*', published by the Local Government Association, outlining a framework for improvement in the cultural sector in local government to support the development of the National Performance Framework.
4. The **Cultural Olympiad:** a £40 million fund to support cultural, artistic, educational and sporting activities among young people and communities across England leading to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has been launched.
5. **Voluntary arts:** an enhanced interest by the Department for Culture Media and Sport in amateur participation in the arts, with the release in July 2008 of the findings of the first ever national survey of amateur arts groups across England.
6. **Creative Partnerships:** Creative Partnerships, the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, is being rolled out more widely and some schools in Halton will now be participating in the programme.

Arts Council England

Arts Council England works "to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives". With new leadership nationally, and following the publication early in 2008 of the report '*Supporting excellence in the arts – from measurement to judgement*', commissioned by the Secretary of State for Culture from Sir Brian McMaster, the Arts Council has reviewed its national and regional priorities. '*Great art for everyone*' is the Arts Council's new national strategy for 2008-2011.

Specific national priorities are:

1. **digital opportunities**, including research, strategic innovation and capacity and skills-building
2. **visual arts**, to strengthen the contemporary visual arts including a national network of venues and development agencies providing high-quality visual art programmes, which includes enhancing Liverpool's reputation as a visual arts centre of excellence, both nationally and internationally
3. **children and young people**, with opportunities to experience high quality arts, to develop their own artistic skills and cultural understanding and to encourage the development of their other talents
4. the Olympic and Paralympic Games, including the four-year **Cultural Olympiad** which began in September 2008 leading up to the Games in 2012.

Arts Council England North West will be producing a regional edition of the plan, outlining key initiatives and addressing how they will deliver the mission in this region. ACENW works with the NWDA and other agencies to support the

development of the **digital and creative industries**, which are one of the development priorities, set out in the Regional Economic Strategy.

Investment plans for the next three years were announced in February 2008, with the North West regional office supporting 110 arts organisations in the region with an investment of £72 million between 2008 and 2011. A newly revised Lottery-funded Grants for the Arts open access funding programme was launched in May 2008, with about £5m available annually in the North West.

Amongst specific contributions to the work of local authorities are:

1. The Arts Council is involved in supporting the development and delivery of **Local Area Agreements**, including supporting the development of performance indicators. Engagement with the arts is recognised as contributing to cohesive communities within the new performance indicator framework (NI11).
2. Arts Council also publishes two national datasets broken down to LAA level that can be used for local targets: **Young People's Arts Awards**, an accredited award for individual young people recognising their efforts in the arts, and **Artsmark**, an award to schools based on their delivery of both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities in the arts.

Culture Northwest

The regional cultural consortium, established in 1999, has been a research, networking and advocacy organisation, working strategically through collaboration to champion the role of culture across the region and to build and drive the Regional Cultural Strategy.

Specific priorities in the current action plan are:

- establishing the North West as an international leader
- building citizenship through culture
- driving health improvement through cultural activity
- encouraging and enhancing partnerships across the region
- driving awareness of regional distinctiveness
- maximising cultural contributions to life-long learning
- building capacity within the cultural sector

Amongst current initiatives which impact on Halton are:

1. Culture Northwest is leading the regional programme for the Cultural Olympiad.
2. Culture Northwest works in partnership with local authorities on Regional Commentaries and Local Area Agreements to advocate the benefits of culture.
3. The Northwest Culture Observatory brings together resources to build the evidence base of evaluation and research.

However the (then) Culture Minister Margaret Hodge announced in July 2008 that the regional cultural consortia are to be wound up by March 2009, and that there will be a duty on the regional offices of the four key cultural sector support bodies (Arts Council, Sport England, English Heritage and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council) to collaborate on regional cultural policy and planning.

APPENDIX 3: CONSULTATION WITH SERVICE USERS

Service users were consulted for their views on what the arts service offers and their experiences as users. This was done on the basis of individual responses being non-attributable but contributing to an overview report. This is presented here.

Advice

People thought it was straightforward and easy to find out what help and advice was available, by phone and by literature.

"Very professional. Helped open up new ideas for me."

One artist commented of an officer:

"Such energy and enthusiasm... always a joy to work with [X]"

Support

Service users have benefited from practical support. This has included people being helped to develop initial ideas into fully formed projects.

One commented:

"I don't have a career in the arts but The Brindley has been very supportive in my personal artistic development mainly via Open and in the writing competitions it runs"

Another commented that support and encouragement from the arts officers had

"raised my profile as a person involved in all aspects of amateur drama production"

"[X] has worked really hard to develop the professionalism of local artists and has supported them and advocated them outside of the Borough."

None of those consulted had sought or received any help or support from Business Link in trying to develop the business aspects of their work as artists or practitioners.

Exhibitions at The Brindley

Artists who have exhibited at The Brindley were notably warm in their praise for the venue and for the support they had received.

"It gave me a personal boost and now that I have started freelance again it has provided me with a good piece for my portfolio. The Brindley were very generous both in terms of support and via an arts board funding bid."

"Extremely useful – one of the few good galleries in Cheshire."

*"A perfect place to show the work. It gave my confidence a boost."
"A fantastic job – well displayed."*

"A more professional venue than some others in the sub-region – one of the best non-city venues, with a high profile."

"Showing at The Brindley was extremely useful. It is one of the few good galleries in the Cheshire area that promotes a professional approach to venue, presentation, press coverage etc."

Marketing

The view was expressed by some users that marketing is under-invested and therefore potential is not being fully realised.

"Events do not seem to be advertised widely in Runcorn and Widnes... people often say they weren't aware of anything being on e.g. Halton Poet of the Year."

"Maybe publicity could reach out a bit wider."

"Maybe afforded a larger budget for advertising in local press. A lot of emphasis is on internet access (which is good)... but more publicity would be useful."

The point was made that events are not widely advertised, and that not everyone has ready access to the internet, or is accustomed to using the internet as a primary source of local "what's on" information. It is understood however that local paid-for advertising is not necessarily an effective use of limited resources and is not necessarily effective in broadening the audience.

At this stage in The Brindley's development it could be helpful to have the advice of an independent marketing expert to consider how to make best use of limited financial and human resources while trying to achieve the broader audience development objectives.

Appreciation

There was considerable appreciation for the work of individual officers.

"[Officer X] is a real jewel in Halton's crown and they are extremely lucky to have such an experienced and dedicated member of staff."

"The team were very open to new ideas and taking a risk... They presented the work in a professional way and helped at every step."

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF CONSULTATIONS

Halton Borough Council

Elected members:

- Cllr John Swain, Executive Board member and Chair of the Cultural Partnership

Cultural and Leisure Services:

- Howard Cockcroft, Operational Director, Cultural and Leisure Services and Community Safety

Arts Team:

- Sue Davies, Cultural Services Manager
- Claire Bigley, Drama Development Officer
- Ruth Bates, Dance Development Officer
- Martin Cox, Music Development Officer
- Louise Hesketh, Visual Arts Development Officer

The Brindley: venue staff

- Claire Jones, Venue Manager
- Pat Kershaw, Administration Manager
- Graeme Scragg, Technical and Production Manager
- Peter Bentham, Marketing/Sales and Information Manager

Community Development Team:

- Nicola Goodwin, Community Development Manager
- Lynda Holland, Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator
- Ian Atherton, Community Centres Manager
- Pauline Sinnott, Senior Community Development Officer
- Ditton Community Centre: Ken Neale, Centre Co-ordinator
- Murdishaw Community Centre: Mark McGinchey
- Grangeway Community Centre:

Sports Development:

- Sue Lowrie, Sport and Recreation Manager

Library Services:

- Paula Reilly-Cooper, Library Services Manager
- Janette Fleming, Reader Development Officer

Education:

- Ann Brian, Arts Education Development Officer
- Gill McGough, Advisory Teacher for Dance and PE/Sports
- Elaine Mullen, Extended Schools Development Worker (Widnes area)
- Val Armor, Service Delivery Manager (CYPAN4), and Angela Nicol, Play Development Worker, Children and Young People's Area Network (CYPAN4)
- Rebecca Tandy, Early Years Consultant
- Roger Harrison, Headteacher, St Gerard's RC Primary School (and Small Schools Arts Cluster)
- Paul Langford, KS2 Consultant for Literacy
- Dave Williams, Head of Halton Youth Service (Connexions)
- Andy Page, Education Business Partnership Manager

Other services:

- Ian Grady, Head of Strategic Policy and Partnership
- Richard Rout, Performance Management Officer
- Aileen Dunn, Substance Misuse Advocacy Manager, Drugs Action Team
- Ian Collins, Parks and Countryside Service
- Bill Morton, Parks and Countryside Service
- Stacy Murray, Adult Learning & MIS Team Leader, Adult Learning & Skills Development, Economic Regeneration

User groups and artists

- Arcane Dance: Jo Rhodes
- Alexis Butterworth, freelance dance artist
- Halton Actors in Residence: Louise Nulty and Jacky Pilton
- Ruth Spencer, freelance dance artist
- Markmakers (visual arts group): Claire Weetman
- Halton Cultural Partnership: meeting 7 July 2008
- Scribes and Scribblers (4 members, leader Evelyn Hayes)
- Steffan Jones-Hughes, artist
- Ian Bellard, artist
- Shaun Smyth, artist
- Beth Barlow, artist
- Roy Hayes, artist
- Loose Music Collective: Jaki Florek (e-mail)
- Centre 8 (11 members)
- Fit 2 Dance (3 members)
- Halton Youth Theatre (16 members and parents)

Other organisations and individuals

- Ian Banks, Public Art Consultant
- Nicky Duirs, Arts & Health Strategy Consultant
- Norton Priory Museum: Ellen Fenton, Learning & Community Manager
- Riverside College: Gary Lamb, Manager, Creative and Performing Arts; Maxine Mealey, Programme Area Leader, Creative Arts; Daniel Brady, Programme Area Leader, Vocational Performing Arts
- Arts Council England North West: David Gaffney, Officer, Regional Partnerships

