

Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing 2021-22

After a very challenging year it was great to see our venues able to open their doors again, with concerts and exhibitions at the Platform and the Storey, the Museums and Salt Ayre Leisure Centre picking up their pre-pandemic plans, the Visitor Information Centres fully operational. Our wellbeing alliances and partnerships have continued to meet regularly and respond to the food poverty and health inequity concerns, faced with the rising cost of living.

Events and festivals

- This year saw the return of many open air events and festivals. The Council invested in a stock of event-based equipment which has often been freely loaned to support over 20 festivals and events during the year, enabling them to be more Covid-secure.
- Attendance and participation at events such as Morecambe and Lancaster Pride, the Health Festival, Highest Point Festival, the Chinese New Year celebrations were high showing how ready we were to move on from Covid worries and lockdowns.
- In August the Lancaster Grand Prix Cycle Race took place, with cyclists leaving Williamson Park and covering nearly 100 miles of challenging hilly countryside. The Council organisation to see them safely out on the roads was tremendous and has ensured that the race will be coming back to Lancaster again this year. This time it will include women competitors.
- In November last year the Council, with partners the Dukes Theatre and Lancaster BID, saw the exciting and successful Light Up Lancaster, with its inventive, humorous and beautiful displays involving 70 artists. With over 55 000 visitors, the economic impact was an estimated £727 000. Light Up Lancaster was a runner up in the Love Lancaster Business Awards Visitor Attraction of the Year.
- The contribution of the Arts community, ably represented by Lancaster Arts Partnership, Morecambe Artist Colony, Lancaster Arts, Litfest, has been so impressive.

Our Museums

- The Museums recently completed a Disability Access project as part of their Equity & Inclusion work, with a full Disability Access Audit of our buildings and digital content for both those with a physical disability and those who are neurodivergent. This work will be supported by a Disability Advisory Group. It was funded largely through a £10,000 grant from Museum Development North West. One of the first actions was to purchase display light fittings to tackle the darkest areas in the museums.
- A £1,500 grant from Museum Development North West is paying for study visits to other museums and cultural organisations to view and share best practice.
- A joint application with Professor Alan Rice was successful for a creative practice PhD to investigate best practice engagement with two differing black histories – for Lancaster the slave and West India trades and for Morecambe the history of black entertainers. The PhD is funded by UCLan and has a value of about £60 000.
- The Museums continue to deliver strongly on their digital service with three successful Facebook pages for the City Museum, the Maritime Museum and the King's Own.
- On behalf of the City Council the Museum Development Manager has formed and is chairing an expert Archaeology Advisory Group to draw up a Research Framework for the Roman fort site at Vicarage Fields and Quay Meadow. The Framework will guide further archaeological investigation on the site to help Lancaster make more of this important heritage and community asset.
- There is joint work with Lancaster Civic Vision to establish a list of notable Lancaster women for the Society's Green Plaque scheme. The first Green Plaque went up in December.
- The History Detective Club, started during lockdown, continues to grow and has over 130 children as members.

Salt Ayre Leisure Centre

The Centre's decarbonisation project is now complete and it is fully functioning on air source heat pumps. New external LED lighting has been installed and glazing throughout the centre has been upgraded to maximise efficiencies.

Awards 2021-22, August to March

- SALC reached the finalist stages of the UK Active Awards for Regional club of the year (North)
- The Spa team reached finalist stages for Spa of the Year at The Professional Beauty Awards.
- The Health and Fitness and Spa Teams reached finalist stages at the Bay Business awards.
- The Spa team won Salon of the Year at The English Hair and Beauty awards.

Performance

- Income levels in key cost centres such as The Gym, Spa, Café and soft play have returned to those seen pre pandemic in 2019/2020.
- Membership levels for Health and fitness have returned to almost pre pandemic levels.
- Since September 2021 Over 2800 children have attended a Birthday party here
- Since September over 900 people have climbed the walls in Xheight indoor climbing.

Delivery of new Activities and Programmes

- New pre-school activities each week such as Baby Ballet, Reading Fairy, Baby Yoga and Baby baller football – a varied programme to encourage more footfall into the Centre.
- More clinics and space for the Community Midwives.
- Soft play sessions for Matilda's mission, who offer baby loss and child loss support meetings.
- Sessions on XHeight indoor climbing for 20 local primary schools.
- Support for the HAF programme, offering children from low income families the opportunity to take part in an exciting physical activity programme during the school holidays.

Wellbeing

- Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance continued to meet regularly. The CashFirst leaflet was produced, with detailed guidance to residents on ways to cope with on-going poverty or a sudden drop in income. The Alliance has been instrumental in exploring the best way to distribute money from the Household Support Fund to alleviate food poverty in the district, with support for Eggcup, the CAB and enhanced food deliveries to food clubs.
- The Lancaster Health and Wellbeing Partnership facilitated over £200k of funding from the population health investment fund to address health inequalities in the district through community led responses. The Council has been able to aid this work with some community covid support funding. Lancashire and South Cumbria Health Equity Commission is addressing ways to promote health equity in our area.
- Council initiatives to promote good health saw the commissioning with Ludus and More Music of a music and dance project with local primary schools on the history of vaccinations and how to keep safe: *The Alien Needs Our Help*.
- Changing Futures funding was received by the City Council to support individuals with multiple disadvantages, offering intense support to access support networks. This scheme is scheduled to last for 32 months and it is hoped to support over 1000 beneficiaries.
- As part of a bid to the Home Office, the Community Safety Partnership secured £19 000 funding to carry out improvements to the cycle track.
- Following a detailed needs assessment, the CSP identified the priorities for our district as anti-social behaviour, under-age drinking and suicide rates. Subgroups are being

formed to lead on these concerns, which will engage with local schools, in partnership with our Health colleagues and the local Police. A community Alcohol Partnership plan has been drafted. Excellent briefings were delivered by council officers and police on issues such as the spiking of drinks and domestic violence and abuse.

- As the Cabinet member on the Police and Crime Commissioner panel, I attended PCC meetings. In February the panel agreed to a precept of £10.00. One usage of this money will see an increase of 20 police officers to respond to incidents of domestic violence and abuse.

Lancaster City Council can be proud of its contribution to supporting and developing our caring, creative and innovative District. A personal big thank you to Anne Marie Harrison, Head of Economic Development, for her excellent support and challenging guided tours of Lancaster and Morecambe's arts and culture assets.

Cllr Sandra Thornberry
Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing