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# **WARWICK DISTRICT CREATIVE FRAMEWORK**

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A collaborative strategy for creative sector growth

2020 - 2025

**ENGAGEMENT  
VOICE  
PATHFINDING  
PLACE MAKING  
INNOVATION**

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# FOREWORD

## **Why does Warwick District need a Creative Framework?**

Warwick District's creative sector is vibrant, varied and fundamental to the economy of the region. Our creative industries support the wellbeing, engagement and ambition of the district's residents. Our impressive cultural assets and events programmes attract visitors to our towns and a strong creative infrastructure entices highly skilled people to relocate here to work.

The district is home to a significant amount of creative organisations and has many of the necessary elements to become a world class creative cluster. Yet this has never been pursued through a dedicated growth strategy. While we are entering an exciting period of opportunity for the creative sector of the district, there are also warning signs that its growth might be beginning to slip backwards.

Given the significant strengths of the district's creative sector and the range of unique opportunities arising in the West Midlands over the next few years now is the right time to launch this framework. A refreshed enthusiasm and momentum has been building in the region's creative communities for several years which is becoming increasingly energised as the opportunities presented by Coventry City of Culture in 2021 and the Commonwealth Games in 2022 approach.

This document, Warwick District's first ever Creative Framework, is the outcome of engagement with a wide range of creative organisations over more than six months. It is intended to offer a collective vision for our creative communities to coalesce around and provide participative ways for them to shape and influence how the sector is defined in the future. It highlights how the sector contributes to the identity and prosperity of the district, identifies opportunities for collaboration and proposes ways in which stakeholders might support our creative industries to continue to grow.

The approach of developing a collaborative "framework" has been chosen deliberately. A framework can provide a clear narrative and define the key objectives of stakeholders without being too prescriptive. It is the intention that this framework will be flexible in adapting to changes and responding to fresh opportunities as they arise.

This framework seeks to introduce a coherent, collaborative approach across the sector, Council and funding bodies. It is ambitious but does not set the bar too high or attempt to mobilise a new wave of unrealistic initiatives. Rather, it attempts to celebrate and build upon the incredible work that has already been undertaken over recent years and to enable stakeholders the flexibility and autonomy to co-create a set of clear objectives to deliver going forward.

The Creative Framework has been shaped by a range of evidence, but evidence underpinned by the vision and aspirations of local creative businesses, individuals and organisations who are already doing remarkable work to grow the thriving creative environment that we are all so proud of.

## **Why Warwick District Council?**

The Council has an established history of supporting the growth of creative industries based in the district, particularly the gaming and arts sectors, and it is fortunate to have extensive, long lasting relationships with a range of creative organisations. These relationships have been further developed through the formation of the 'Vision for Leamington Town Centre' and involvement in the Leamington Creative Quarter including previous investment in a games-specific incubation centre (26HT), the

Creative Arches and Spencer Yard. This previous experience, combined with the consultation and research underpinning this framework, has helped the Council to form a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the area's creative sector.

Warwick District Council acknowledges the importance of the creative sector in fulfilling its economic and social goals. The Council is itself a major contributor to the sector and continues to deliver its own programme of activities from its impressive cultural facilities and open spaces. It is also the landlord for many creative businesses across the district, provides grant funding and offers development support to cultural organisations. The Council is closely involved with driving forward strategic initiatives (for example, Leamington's Creative Quarter and the Commonwealth Games 2022) that have the potential to do most to seize the opportunities and address the challenges outlined in this Framework.

Therefore, the District Council, rather than other equally capable agencies, is uniquely placed to drive the development and implementation of a growth strategy for the creative sector within the district.

However, the Council has limited resources and there will be continued pressure upon public sector budgets, so there are limits to how much it can achieve in isolation. The strength of the district's creative sector will always lay with its skilled, passionate creative community, and it is they who must collectively own and develop this framework. The role of the Council is to provide support by listening to its needs, connecting the various sub-sectors, enabling, and facilitating growth. The Council can also offer long term oversight of the framework which will ensure the survivability of its aims through changes of policy and management within the various creative organisations and stakeholders.

For the outcomes of this framework to be achieved it will require all of the creative community, from across all its sub-sectors, to engage and to work together to deliver its common goals. Therefore, collaboration is the defining characteristic of this growth strategy. However, without action now these collaborations are unlikely occur spontaneously. Significant change and growth will require a catalyst and initially our creative community is looking to Warwick District Council to be that spark.

# THE BIG PICTURE

## Warwick District profile

Situated within 'Shakespeare's County' of Warwickshire in the West Midlands, Warwick District includes the towns of Warwick, Royal Leamington Spa, Whitnash and Kenilworth. The current population is approximately 140,000 and a large proportion lives in the district's villages and rural areas, many of which are Green Belt. The population is expected to grow rapidly over the next 10 years, to 177,119 in 2029, as the recently adopted Local Plan has allocated sites for 16,700 new homes, designed in part to address the overspill from neighbouring Coventry.

The district is a largely affluent area with a well-educated demographic and house prices higher than the national average. However, in contrast there are also pockets of deep deprivation in both Royal Leamington Spa and Warwick. Deprivation linked to education and skills is a particular issue, with three areas ranked within the top 10-20% most nationally deprived, and a further three in the top 20-30%.

The district is bordered to the south and west by Stratford-On-Avon District, to the east by Rugby Borough and to the north by Solihull and the city of Coventry. Positioned at the centre of the UK, the district has excellent road and rail links providing easy access to the whole country. There are major routes across the area including the M40 providing direct access to London and indirect links to the north-west via the M6 and M5 respectively, as well as links to the north and east. There are also excellent rail services to the rest of the West Midlands and London.

Warwick District has the largest population in the county and the population density of 4.9 people per square hectare is the second highest in Warwickshire and above national/regional averages. The population grew over the ten years from 2001 to 2011 by over 9%, a faster rate than England and Wales and the West Midlands and second only to Rugby in the county.

The district enjoys well-preserved heritage and architecture, which contribute to making it an attractive place to live, work and visit. With a rich cultural heritage, the district is home to the popular tourist attractions of Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle, as well as several museums. The district has been successful in achieving the prestigious Green Flag award in recognition of its outstanding parks and green spaces. Royal Leamington Spa has also achieved a Purple Flag award, acknowledging the excellent night-time management of the town centre. Both Kenilworth and Royal Leamington Spa were recently ranked in the top five of places to live in the Midlands as part of The Sunday Times' 2019 Best Places to Live in Britain list.

## The national and regional context

### The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has an international reputation for innovative ideas, flair, talent and imagination which comes from the combination of our rich cultural heritage and cutting edge creative companies. In recent years the creative industries have gained increasing attention from central government as their significance to the UK's wider economy became clearer during the last recession. Exports from the UK's creative industries have grown faster than exports from other UK industries, with creative services exports increasing by 21% to £32.7 billion in 2017.

In November 2018 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) reported that the creative industries contributed £101.5 billion to the UK economy in 2017, an increase of 53.1% since 2010 (£66.3 billion). Based on current trends, the

creative industries are expected to deliver close to £130 billion Gross Valued Added (GVA) by 2025 and it is anticipated that approximately one million new jobs could be created by 2030.

Prompted by this unprecedented bloom of the creative sector, when compared to the rate of economic growth in the UK over the same period, the Government released a raft of measures designed to further amplify this success.

As part of the Government's Industrial Strategy, nine new Creative Clusters across the UK have already benefitted from £80 million in funding to boost innovation by part-funding research partnerships between universities and industry. They aim to increase the use of digital technologies to improve audience experience in the screen and performance industries, and shorten production times in the design industry.

There has also been a £20 million expansion of a Cultural Development Fund to encourage creative and cultural growth outside London and to give regional towns and cities the opportunity to invest in creative, cultural and heritage activities that lead to economic growth and productivity.

In 2016 the Government published the first White Paper for culture in fifty years. The paper examined the UK's cultural sectors and the important part they play in our economy and society. As well as highlighting the contribution that culture makes to economic growth and job-creation, the paper also evidenced the intrinsic, enriching value of culture as well as the social value and culture's ability to improve educational attainment and help people live healthier lives.

It is now universally recognised that investment in culture not only has immense economic value but also a wide range of benefits that touch all our lives every day. There is mounting evidence of the tangible impact that culture and creativity has upon education, community cohesion and health and wellbeing.

### **Coventry & Warwickshire**

Culture and tourism is one of seven key priorities for Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP), acknowledging the value of the region's cultural capital in supporting the tourism industry. These cultural attractions generate a significant contribution to the region's economy and further help to make Coventry and Warwickshire a desirable place in which to live, work and study. They also create jobs with an estimated 40,000 people employed in the region's tourism industry. CWLEP investment focuses on connecting public spaces, improving transport links and developing skills in the tourism and culture sector.

Shakespeare's England, is the destination management organisation for the region – incorporating Warwickshire, Birmingham Airport, Bicester Village and Coventry. Shakespeare's England is a leading visitor destination and brand in the UK. The marketing and promotion of the area ensures that it is front of mind for visitors choosing their next day visit, short break or longer holiday. The internationally significant home of William Shakespeare, including the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Royal Shakespeare Company, draws 4.9 million people to Stratford-Upon-Avon every year. Warwick has high brand awareness in the West Midlands region (3rd behind Stratford and Birmingham) with Warwick Castle being an attraction with particularly high recognition.

Warwickshire County Council have recently adopted their new Heritage and Culture Strategy 2020 – 2025. The purpose of the strategy is to create the conditions to enable a thriving, innovative and creative heritage and culture sector in the county. The intention is to empower the heritage and culture sector to support the county council in transforming the way their services are designed and delivered for the benefit of all who live, work and visit Warwickshire. Warwickshire County Council is preparing to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the City of Culture coming to the

region in 2021. It has invested £1 million into the project and has a place on the board of the Coventry City of Culture Trust.

### **Coventry City of Culture 2021**

The City of Coventry has won the title of UK City of Culture for 2021. The Coventry City of Culture trust is currently working on a programme of activity and events for 2021, which will be announced in Autumn 2020. The City of Culture will bring large-scale spectacle, music, dance, theatre and poetry as well as more intimate, celebratory cultural and heritage experiences in every area of the city. The impact will be felt across the region, as levels of cultural tourism are expected to rise dramatically during the year. An evaluation of the impact of the City of Culture year upon the last city to hold the title, Hull, has shown that it acted as a catalyst for creative place making and culture-led regeneration. Approximately 800 new jobs were created in the Hull's visitor economy and cultural sector, a direct result of investments totalling £219.5 million in the cultural and visitor infrastructure.

### **Birmingham 2022**

Following on from the City of Culture year, Birmingham will host the Commonwealth Games in the summer of 2022. This will be the largest sporting event in the UK following the 2012 Olympic Games that were held in London. Leamington Spa will host the lawn bowls and para-lawn bowls competition in Victoria Park. The last time that the games were hosted in the UK it added an extra £390 million to Glasgow's economy and produced around 1,200 jobs annually, attracting 690,000 visitors with a global TV audience of over 1.5 billion viewers. Hosting the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham will have a hugely positive impact across the wider West Midlands region. Alongside the sporting events runs a cultural programme which celebrates the power of art to bring people together and make connections across the UK and the Commonwealth.

### **Higher Education**

There are two universities located in and around Warwick District. Although the majority of the campus is located outside of the district, the number of Warwick University students living in Leamington Spa has tripled in 15 years, rising from 1,600 to 5,200. The University of Warwick is home to the largest multi-platform Arts Centre outside of London. Coventry University is a leading provider of applied creative and cultural undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

The Universities of Warwick and Coventry are supporting the local creative economy through their cultural and creative partnerships. They have specific ambitions for graduate retention and gain in Leamington Spa and Coventry. They are also actively pursuing Industrial Strategy and other funding to support growth in digital creative and cultural partnerships.

The University of Warwick also has plans for digital and creative incubators and shared workspaces in Leamington Spa, starting with a collaboration with the 1 Mill Street project - a new community focused workspace and venue in 'Old Town' created specifically for the needs of start-ups and fast growing small businesses.

## **Defining creativity**

Warwick District Council has previously developed Arts strategies and Culture & Heritage strategies (the last dedicated Arts strategy expired in 2013). However, these have all been focused on one sub-sector of the creative industries and ignored the interconnectivity of the wider sector, therefore underrepresenting its impact and the common challenges. Warwick District has never had an overarching creative strategy which embraces all of the creative sector.

This Framework has taken the approach of including all of the creative industries as described by the DCMS' definition of creativity, including the community and voluntary sector. The Creative Industries are defined in the government's 2001 Creative Industries Mapping Document as "*those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property*". These include:

- **Crafts**
- **Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography**
- **Museums, Galleries and Libraries**
- **Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts**
- **Advertising and Marketing**
- **Architecture**
- **Design: Product, Graphic and Fashion**
- **IT, Software and Services (including game design)**
- **Publishing**

## **The District's creative sector**

Warwick District's creative sector has much to celebrate – with particular strengths in video game design, performing arts, design, visual arts and cultural festivals – all of which tangibly enhance quality of life and attract people to the area to live, work and visit.

It is estimated that 40% of Warwickshire's creative businesses are located in Warwick District. Royal Leamington Spa, in particular, has a very high concentration of creative firms and employment, especially the sub-sectors of design, the performing arts, advertising and software design. Leamington Spa has a rich history of design and innovation – be it a leader in automotive design, abstract art or developing camouflage designs in World War II.

### **The District's Creative Economy**

The creative sector makes a significant contribution to the local economy. The creative industries contributed a little under half a billion pounds of GVA to the economy of Warwick District in 2017.

Employment in the district's creative economy supports approximately 12,975 jobs, which is significantly larger than other key sectors in the district including retail, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing. Overall, employment in the creative industries in the district increased by 9% between 2015 and 2017. Creative workers also directly impact upon the wider economy and 70% of those in creative occupations work outside the creative industries (for example – graphics designers working for Jaguar Land Rover in the car manufacturing industry). This is a much higher proportion than in Coventry (55%) or Coventry and Warwickshire (58%).

The district's cultural offering is an important driver for the local visitor economy. Tourism brings over 3.8 million people to the district each year with a combined spend of over £282.6 million, sustaining 6.3% of local employment. While visiting heritage sites and castles is by far the main reason for visiting Warwickshire, the wrap-around cultural offer of the district is also very important in sustaining this.

The creative and digital community combined with excellent transport connections to the capital are a key driver for inward investment to the district – attracting more businesses to the area. Therefore, it is clear that the creative economy plays fundamental role in the prosperity of the district.

## **Digital Creatives**

The global video games industry is an economic and cultural success story. Approximately 130 of the UK's best games businesses are based in the West Midlands – notably clustered in and around Leamington Spa. With an established history in game development spanning 30 years, the local area can call upon a uniquely skilled talent pool drawn here by the presence of key industry names including Codemasters, Playground Games, SEGA and Ubisoft.

When Nesta published *The Geography of Creativity in the UK* (2016) Leamington Spa was placed at 17th in a ranking of growing creative clusters across the UK. This placed a town in the district higher than any other creative cluster in the Midlands. This impressively high ranking for Leamington Spa was primarily driven by its thriving games sector. The presence of a games industry cluster in Leamington Spa and its branding as 'Silicon Spa', makes the district well-known nationally and even internationally as an innovative, creative town.

With over 2,500 employees across 83 studios, Silicon Spa is the third largest games cluster in the UK. This equates to well over 10% of the total games development employment in the country.

Leamington Spa town centre is also home to a high concentration of world class creative digital, marketing and communications agencies, all serving some truly impressive international brands. In an area of three square miles creative work is produced for the likes of Microsoft, Rolls-Royce and Disney along with media companies such as the BBC and Studio Canal.

Creative digital agency Fish in a Bottle create innovative digital products that engage audiences and create meaningful connections. Their recent projects range from creating an immersive and interactive 360 tour of artist Ai Weiwei's show for the Royal Academy of Art's through to designing mobile app games for Peppa Pig and SpongeBob Squarepants.

Made by Sonder is a content and digital experience marketing agency based in Leamington who has a diverse range of clients including Visa, Triumph Motorcycles, Speedo, Berghaus, and the British Heart Foundation.

The strengths of the district in performing and visual arts, as well as games, are perhaps already widely known but its strengths in other parts of the creative industries should not be overlooked. There are, for example, 120 design enterprises based in the district.

## **Freelance Workers**

The success of the creative sector in the district is largely built on microenterprises and freelancers. 94% of creative sector enterprises in the district are micro (employing nine or less people) and 17% of creative sector workers are freelance. At the same time, there are also some substantial organisations within the district's creative sector. Five enterprises in the IT, Software and Computer Services sector employ over 50 people.

## **Performing Arts**

Warwick District has key strengths in performing arts, with two organisations, Motionhouse and Live & Local, holding National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status with Arts Council England. Others, from Playbox Theatre to Armonico Consort, the Loft to Heartbreak Productions, Leamington Music to Talisman Theatre and Arts Centre, and more besides, make up an impressively rich and varied performing arts sector.

Theatre venue provision within the district is also remarkable. In addition to the Royal Spa Centre in Leamington Spa, there are numerous small theatre spaces including the Bridge House Theatre (Warwick School), Loft Theatre (Leamington Spa), Priory Theatre (Kenilworth) and Talisman Theatre and Art Centre (Kenilworth).

There is also a number of high quality live music venues in the area including Warwick Hall (Warwick School), The Assembly (Leamington Spa), the Royal Pump Rooms (Leamington Spa), and Leamington Town Hall (Leamington Spa). Large scale open air popular music concerts take place regularly at Warwick Castle, on the lawn beside the lake. Arguably the district's churches are some of the area's most heavily used performance venues, with smaller live music and choral recitals often occurring every week.

Furthermore, the Playbox Theatre Company has its innovative theatre venue, Dream Factory, in Warwick, where it works specifically with young people. It was founded with the aim of creating an artistic environment in which all children and young people flourish. For over 30 years, it has facilitated the artistic development of young people in the district and, through international collaborations, across the globe.

The international touring contemporary dance-circus company Motionhouse has been based locally in Leamington for over 30 years. It tours full-length theatrical productions to major theatres across the UK and internationally. Their flexible outdoor productions tour to festivals and non-theatre spaces across the world. They also have a strong educational and training programme at their studio at Spencer Yard in Leamington Spa. The Artistic Director of Motionhouse Kevin Finnan MBE was Choreographer and Movement Director for the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

Motionhouse is one of two NPOs in the district, with the other being Live & Local. This is a not-for-profit arts organisation working with a network of voluntary groups across Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. Its professional team is based in Warwick and provides practical support and advice by helping volunteers to choose shows for rural venues, as well as by co-ordinating the bookings, subsidising performances and helping them to attract an audience.

Critically acclaimed choir and instrumental ensemble Armonico Consort is based in Warwick and entertains audiences across the country with its concerts, recordings and projects. Central to Armonico Consort's work is an education programme, AC Academy, that reaches 15,000 children a year across the UK through its in-school Choir Creation Scheme and after-school AC Academy Choirs in partnership with music hubs.

Warwick Folk Festival has established itself as a highlight on the British music calendar, attracting people from across the UK and beyond. Live music and dance are programmed at the Warwick School site and around Warwick town centre, with a free concert and dancing in Market Place. It also features workshops, storytelling, and theatre as well as a real ale & cider festival, wine bar and craft market. The festival runs over 4 days in July and has a daily capacity of 5,000.

Heartbreak Productions, based in Spencer Yard, Leamington Spa, has been touring open-air theatre, across the UK and Ireland, since 1991. They collaborate with actors, designers, composers and crew to create exciting experiences for audiences. There is also an educational dimension to their work, with the Heartbreak Hub meeting locally on Saturday mornings during term time. This provides training in acting to students aged 5 to 18 years-old.

Leamington Music was launched in July 2006, and aims to maintain Leamington Spa and the district as a musical centre dedicated to promoting excellent classical music. As well as a packed programme of concerts throughout the year, it organises the

Leamington Music Festival and, working with Warwickshire Music, takes musicians into schools across the county of Warwickshire.

The district's performing arts sector also has a wide and varied amount of community choirs and orchestras, dance classes and stage schools, and amateur theatre groups.

In addition to performing arts being a strength of the district, many organisations deliver extensive educational and youth engagement activities. The district, consequently, is a place that sees art and culture as being important to its future.

### **Visual Arts**

Leamington Studio Artists (LSA), located at East Lodge in Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa supports the incredibly high number of artists that are based in the district. The galleries at East Lodge, which also features artist's studios, are open to the public. It aims to foster and increase public interest, awareness and appreciation of the visual arts. The membership of LSA includes artists working in a wide range of media- painters, ceramicists, photographers and jewellers.

It is entirely run by volunteers and boasts significant achievements, including instigating Art in the Park, an annual, free, arts festival based in Jephson Gardens, since 2014 and which attracts 40,000 visitors. The LSA have also published and distributed its high quality journal, Art Space, since 1998.

Since 2000, Warwickshire Open Studios has been helping visual artists and designer makers across Warwickshire connect with art-lovers who enjoy, buy, commission and participate in their work. During the annual Open Studios Summer Event, over 300 artists, many of which are based in Warwick District, open their homes and studios to the public.

There are also numerous commercial and community galleries across the district where artists can exhibit and sell their work.

### **Heritage**

In addition to Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle, there are numerous heritage assets in the district – such as Baddesley Clinton and Stoneleigh Abbey and Country Park in Kenilworth, which has been inhabited since 1154 when King Henry II granted the lands to a community of Cistercian monks. The Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick is one of the best preserved examples of medieval courtyard architecture in England and is now a charity supporting ex-servicemen.

Warwickshire County Council operates the Market Hall Museum, a 17th century landmark in the heart of Warwick. Recently refurbished with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the museum tells the story of Warwickshire and attracted 78,977 visitors in 2018/19.

St Johns House, a Jacobean mansion located in the town of Warwick, has a history spanning almost 900 years and attracted 6,279 visitors in 2018/19. These visitors all came via organised school groups, as the museum is not open to the general public. Separately, however, St Johns House is also the home of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment of Fusiliers Museum.

### **Festivals, Public Spaces and Events**

The district benefits a huge range of exceptional public spaces, including Jephson Gardens, Victoria Park, the Pump Room Gardens and Newbold Comyn in Leamington Spa, St Nicholas Park and Priory Park in Warwick and Abbey Fields in Kenilworth, which covers 68 acres and features a swimming pool (both indoors and outdoors), a lake, a children's play area and heritage trails. All of these high quality green spaces help to facilitate cultural and creative, outdoor events.

There is a busy events programme in the district with over 135 planned outdoor events occurring annually in town centres. BID Leamington (Business Improvement District) are highly engaged in creating and delivering cultural events and projects (for example, the Lantern Parade and Leamington Food & Drink Festival) which enhance the town centre and attract footfall. They are instrumental in supporting many of the festivals and events that occur every year. There are numerous well-established cultural events taking place across the district, from maker's markets, carnivals, vintage fairs, and Comic-Con through to Kenilworth Arts Festival, Leamington Music Festival, Warwick Folk Festival, Warwick Words History Festival and Art in the Park.

Royal Leamington Spa's Art in the Park festival is a free curated arts festival that showcases, promotes and provides live demonstrations from over 280 visual artists and craftspeople in Warwickshire and the Midlands. The programme includes live music, dance and theatre from the creatives based in district alongside nationally and internationally renowned companies. The festival takes place over a weekend in early August in the beautiful surroundings of Jephson Gardens. The festival has grown exponentially in recent years, becoming a flagship event for the region's creative community. It now attracts over 40,000 people over the course of the weekend, generating an estimated £1.78 million additional economic activity for Leamington Spa.

Kenilworth Arts Festival is ten days of events, workshops and exhibitions, held in different venues around the historic town of Kenilworth. The festival brings together award-winning, internationally-acclaimed writers, musicians and visual artists from around the country, transforming everyday spaces into intimate arts venues and offering one-off live experiences to audiences.

Warwick Words History Festival is a week-long festival of history and the written and spoken word taking place across the historic town of Warwick every October. Storytelling sessions and writing workshops for both children and adults have featured strongly in the festival's programme.

This impressively broad range of high quality arts festivals attracts a great deal of community support, both in terms of attendance and in helping to deliver them. The widespread support for volunteering shown by the creative sector reflects a robust ethic of volunteering within the district and makes a significant social contribution.

### **Creative Talks and Networking Events**

Now in its second year, Interactive Futures is a large gaming expo based in the district that showcases the latest developments and opportunities in the gaming industry. It brings together the UK's games community, games enthusiasts, the next generation of games designers, and creative powerhouses. The event highlights key issues facing the industry, shines a light on career opportunities and provides a chance to try out the best of the games created in Leamington Spa – home to industry leaders including Playground Games, Codemasters and SEGA.

TEDx Leamington Spa is an annual local, self-organised event that brings people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TED Talk videos and live speakers combine to spark deep discussion and connection. TED is a non-profit organisation devoted to 'Ideas Worth Spreading', usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or fewer) delivered by leading thinkers. The TEDx event is run entirely by a team of dedicated volunteers, many of whom are themselves creative professionals. Leamington Spa is one of the most watched UK TEDx events online.

Creative Mornings is an international initiative of creative talks and networking events. Each month, early on a Friday morning, attendees gather in cities around the world to enjoy fresh coffee and an array of breakfast foods while they listen to a guest creative speak on a predetermined theme. Volunteer hosts and their team members

organize local chapters that celebrate a city's creative talent and connect like-minded, creative individuals. Speakers are selected by each chapter based on a global theme. Just like TEDx, all of the talks are filmed and published to the Creative Morning's website for people across the globe to enjoy. Usually franchised to cities, Leamington Spa is the only town in the world to have successfully bid to have its own Creative Morning chapter.

PechaKucha's 20x20 presentation format restricts speakers to showing 20 chosen images, each for 20 seconds only. In total speakers have just 400 seconds to tell their story, with visuals guiding the way. PechaKucha means "chit chat" in Japanese. Three million people have attended PechaKucha events worldwide. PechaKucha Leamington is incredibly popular and has a loyal following of attendees and speakers.

### **Warwick District Council and the Creative Sector**

The Council supports the cultural sector through its grant giving function – allocating, in addition to guidance and support, total grants of £23,850 to arts organisations working in the district in 2018/19.

As well as supporting the district's cultural infrastructure with grant funding and development support the Council also owns and operates several key cultural facilities including the Royal Spa Centre which is the district's only professional theatre. A medium size receiving house, it delivers a programme of theatre, drama, comedy, film and community events in its 667-seat main house and 188-seat studio theatre and cinema.

The Royal Pump Rooms in Leamington is a cultural and tourist attraction with services including Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum, Leamington Library and various event spaces. The Council's Arts team are also responsible for Leamington Spa Town Hall, which has a mixture of tenants and has hireable spaces for community events and performances.

Within the context of the district's creative landscape the council's own cultural facilities are flourishing and have a significant impact - having one of the largest reaches in the area – attracting approximately 565,000 annual attendances to a programme of over 1,000 arts events (a varied mix of performances, exhibitions, workshops, film screenings and functions). Approximately 54% of attendees – just over 300,000 – travel from outside of the district.

The Council has had long term aspirations to develop a Creative Quarter for Leamington Spa in order to support the thriving creative economy, regenerate the area and support communities in the 'Old Town' area of Leamington Spa. South of the river, this is the oldest part of the town, and the earliest bath houses were established in the area then known as Leamington Priors. As the town grew in the 19th century, investment, and the centre of prosperity, moved north of the river. Areas within Brunswick ward in particular became amongst the most deprived in the district, and across Warwickshire. This led to a number of regeneration initiatives focussing on the Old Town area including a major project with government funding which took place in the early 2000's. Furthermore, the Council has a number of land and building assets in this area, and it is keen to explore whether and how it could use these to support regeneration.

Complex Development Projects (CDP) was appointed as the Council's regeneration partner in late 2017. CDP is a well-established development and regeneration company with a particular knowledge of, and expertise in, working with creative industries. CDP operates nationally but has carried out a number of schemes in Coventry including Electric Wharf and Fargo Village. CDP has strong links both with the Historic Coventry Trust (of which Ian Harrabin, the Managing Director of CDP, is Chairman) and the Coventry City of Culture team.

Since its appointment CDP has worked on the development of the Masterplan for the Creative Quarter. The purpose of that document is to demonstrate how the Council and its partner can develop a long term strategy to deliver the aspirations for the Creative Quarter which were expressed in the Council's Regeneration Brief.

## **Key challenges facing the sector**

Nationally, the UK has seen high growth in the creative economy, especially creative design and digital businesses. It is a sector which has shown remarkable resilience during the financial downturn, with clusters strengthening cities and town centres. However, it is also a sector which is still falling short of fulfilling its potential. Creative businesses are not growing as quickly or to the scale that they could, talent retention and attraction is a continual challenge.

When compared with similar parts of the UK Warwick District suffers from a lack of workspace, specialist support and investment. Many of the same features that make the district such an appealing place to live and start a business also work against the development of grow-on workspaces. Premises costs and rental prices are high, our towns are relatively small with close knit communities and they have bountiful green, open spaces and waterways. This, together with an ambitious house building plan and its historic, protected architecture, means that there is a shortage of suitable town centre brownfield sites that are able to be developed for workspace.

When consulted about the challenges and weaknesses of the sector in the district, creative organisations underlined the poor availability of suitable premises – with 40% of respondents indicating that this is a major barrier for the development of their businesses or practice. Many are already outgrowing the space available and actively, albeit reluctantly, looking to relocate out of the district.

This next key weakness identified was the perceived lack of business networking opportunities. Also referenced were poor broadband quality and a lack of access to talent and skills. Many creative businesses are struggling to attract suitable talent to the area – in an increasingly competitive market. The district's profile is also not as prominent or attractive to creative talent as it should be, when compared with the competition. The district's creative sector is multifaceted, vast and on the whole lacks interconnection.

The creative sector also feels strongly that there has been a string of missed opportunities recently – where the sector has not been championed as well as it might have been and the value-adding role of the district's creative industries has been under-exploited.

During the development of this growth strategy a set of exciting opportunities have been identified by the sector, each of which can, with the right mix of partners and a collective sense of purpose, deliver direct value to the local economy.

## **Current creative engagement**

The district has a highly civically and socially engaged population, who might be described as "traditional culture vultures", which has the benefit of creating large audiences for local cultural events and activities. It also creates a large pool of volunteers with which to help create and deliver them.

A report by Kate Organ Associates, 'Warwick District Council & The Arts' commissioned by the Council in 2015, identified that Warwick District has a lively, diverse and high quality local arts scene and a population that is one of the UK's most actively engaged in the Arts as practitioners or audiences.

A further report by the Audience Agency, commissioned by the Council in 2016, also identified that Warwick District has an unusually high proportion of culturally engaged residents - comparable to the typical demographic of a large city. 40% of the district's population are 'highly engaged' with the Arts and regularly attend cultural events. Only 12% of the population of Warwick District are classified as typically 'hard to engage', who rarely engage in cultural activity - which is well below the national average.

However, it is clear that the majority of residents seek fulfilment from larger, high profile, high-quality cultural events by travelling to urban environments, such as London or Birmingham. There is an appetite for an increase in cultural activity in the district, which is reflected by the high level of support for existing events and new initiatives.

# THE CREATIVE FRAMEWORK

## The purpose of the framework

This Creative Framework for Warwick District underlines the value of creativity to our community. It is also a clear commitment to stimulate the growth of the district's creative sector. In order to achieve that it seeks to introduce a coherent, collaborative approach across the sector, Council and funding bodies. It offers a collective vision for our creative communities to coalesce around and provide participative ways for them to shape and influence how the sector is defined in the future.

The framework highlights how the sector contributes to the identity and prosperity of the district, identifies opportunities for collaboration and proposes ways in which stakeholders might support our creative industries to continue to grow.

The framework attempts to celebrate and build upon the incredible work that has already been undertaken over recent years and to enable stakeholders the flexibility and autonomy to co-create a set of clear goals and deliverables going forward.

The aims of the framework are to:

- **Strengthen the drivers of creative sector activity**
- **Grow the downstream benefits of the creative sector**
- **Seize the opportunities open to the creative sector**
- **Address the weaknesses of the creative sector**
- **Help the district be a creative place to live, work and visit**

## The role of Warwick District Council

Warwick District Council acknowledges the importance of the creative sector in fulfilling its economic and social goals and is therefore committed to this framework.

The role of the Council within the framework is to provide support to the creative sector by recognising its needs, connecting the various sub-sectors, enabling, and facilitating growth. The Council can also offer long term oversight of the framework which will ensure the survivability of its aims through changes of policy and management within the various creative organisations and stakeholders.

Warwick District Council will continue to play a part in the district's creative fabric on a local and regional level. It will embrace the sector's ambition and will work with partners to unlock the potential of the creative industries.

The Council shall:

- a) Increase opportunities for residents and visitors to be inspired by, experience and participate in high quality creative activities and events by continuing to invest in and develop its own cultural facilities, open spaces and events programmes
- b) Identify opportunities and challenges, assist with setting direction and maintaining oversight of progress towards goals by using this framework
- c) Continue efforts to attract national and regional investment in the district's creative sector and support external fundraising for projects and initiatives
- d) Move forward with delivering strategic initiatives such as Leamington's Creative Quarter and the Commonwealth Games
- e) Provide a strong evidence base for what works, why and what impact is being achieved
- f) Advocate for the creative sector on a local, regional and national level and promote its benefits

## Who the framework is for

It is hoped that this framework shall enable creative individuals, freelancers, and organisations based or working within the district to use it for fundraising, advocacy and project planning – in order to make the district a place where the creative industries can flourish and thrive.

## Stakeholders

This framework does not seek to duplicate the efforts of other relevant agencies, including Warwickshire County Council or CWLEP. It intends to complement these efforts to ensure that the creative sector of the district achieves its full potential to fulfil the economic, social and cultural ambitions of local people.

Organisations with a role to play within the framework are:

<b>Higher Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The University of Coventry</li><li>The University of Warwick</li><li>Warwickshire College Group</li></ul>
<b>Local Authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Warwick District Council</li><li>Warwickshire County Council</li><li>Royal Leamington Spa Town Council</li><li>Warwick Town Council</li><li>Kenilworth Town Council</li><li>Whitnash Town Council</li></ul>
<b>Business / Inward Investment / Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Leamington BID</li><li>Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership</li><li>Royal Leamington Spa Chamber of Trade</li><li>Warwick Chamber of Trade</li><li>Kenilworth Chamber of Trade</li><li>Shakespeare's England</li></ul>
<b>Funders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Arts Council England</li><li>Heritage Lottery Fund</li></ul>

## A creative sector compact

It is important that the sector takes ownership of the mechanisms for creative collaboration within the district, rather than this being entirely the responsibility of the Council.

As a first step towards delivering the objectives of this framework it is the intention to develop a creative sector 'Compact' to provide strategic, visible leadership for the district's creative industries as a collective. The compact shall bring together local

partners with the passion to make things happen and a shared interest in maximising the growth of the sector who will champion the civic role of culture and creativity.

This leadership group will work together to create an action plan to deliver the priorities of the framework. Compact partners will potentially include representatives from across the creative sector, business, universities, local authorities, voluntary sector and CWLEP.

Members of the Compact will pledge to align their focus with the goals of the Creative Framework, seek to unlock new resources for projects, encourage the development of partnerships which could attract new forms of public and private investment, ensure effective coordination with stakeholders and communicate closely with the sector. In the early stages it is expected that the Compact will explore ways in which the benefits of major regional events such as Birmingham Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture can be maximised.

It is hoped that over time the Compact will become the lead advocate for the cultural and creative industries sector in relation to local, regional, and national policy.

The Council shall work with partners to establish the most appropriate model / vehicle for the Compact, coordinate the formation of the Compact, help to confirm its scope, terms of reference and membership, support its meetings, and establish an initial work programme – as well as being an active member of the Compact itself.

## **A forum for the creative sector**

In addition to leadership, it was also identified that there is a need for a new method of connectivity and communication within the sector itself. It is the intention for the Council to facilitate a cross-sector, inclusive 'creative forum' which will connect the various creative industries and help to steer and inform the Creative Framework. This platform shall guide work of the Creative Compact, the Council and other strategic partners in its approach to sector support.

The forum will be a means of testing ideas and new initiatives, connecting organisations and identifying opportunities including new clients and work streams, training and professional development, funding, residencies, and new projects.

This will be an open, self-selecting group of those organisations with an interest in the success of creativity in Warwick District.

## **Methodology**

### **BOP Impact study**

The starting point for this framework was in the spring of 2019 when BOP Consulting were appointed by Warwick District Council to carry out an impact study of the district's creative sector. BOP is an established, international consultancy specialising in culture and the creative economy.

BOP carried out the study between April and July 2019. As part of their research an online survey was sent to over 400 creative businesses and organisations in the District. The survey generated an overwhelming response, which serves as an indication of how engaged the sector is.

BOP also facilitated consultative workshops on behalf of the Council which were attended by representatives of various creative organisations, artists and stakeholder groups including Leamington BID, Warwick University, CWLEP, and Warwickshire County Council.

Desktop research, analysis and the local context was provided by Professor Jonathan Neelands and Professor Stephen Roper of Warwick Business School.

The Council have used much of the insight and research from the impact study as the basis for this framework. The final report made four key recommendations to the Council:

- **For the District Council to develop and implement a growth strategy for its creative sector**
- **To consider the development of a Creative Sector Compact for Warwick District**
- **To move ahead with the Creative Quarter**
- **To utilise Creative Sector Compact and Creative Quarter to support collaboration**

### **Further Consultation**

The impact study report was published in full and circulated widely amongst the sector and stakeholders. A series of follow-up, face-to-face consultation sessions with the Council's Arts team then took place with over 40 creative organisations and individuals in order to discuss the specifics of the report's findings and further inform the priorities of this framework.

### **Timescales**

The duration of the Creative Framework is aligned with the District Council's own political cycle and will be adopted between 2020 – 2025. This also aligns the timeframe of the framework with that of Warwickshire County Council's Heritage and Culture strategy, which runs until 2025.

This period encompasses both the Coventry City of Culture year in 2021 and the Commonwealth Games in 2022, as well as their legacy years.

This framework has been designed to be flexible and it is expected that this growth strategy may need to adapt and evolve in the future. The Council will therefore review the framework on an annual basis.

### **A vision of the future**

This framework is a collaborative strategy aimed at accelerating creative sector growth and maximising its impact upon Warwick District. Its focus is on forming partnerships to achieve the district's immense potential and securing our cultural and creative landscape for generations to come.

***By 2025 Warwick District will have an established reputation as a thriving creative cluster of national significance and be known for its distinctive blend of rich cultural heritage and cutting edge creative companies.***

***Residents will feel pride in their local area and be inspired by shared cultural experiences which celebrate the dynamic, innovative character of the district.***

***In five years' time Warwick District will be experiencing the positive economic and social benefits of creative regeneration. Our thriving, interconnected creative sector will play a crucial role in the prosperity of the area and support the ambition of Warwick District being the first choice for people to live, work, and visit.***

## Strategic themes

Five priorities (or 'strategic themes') have emerged from discussions in wide-ranging sector consultation and through research. These five strands form the core of the Creative Framework and seek to focus its objectives into actions:

- **Engagement**
- **Voice**
- **Pathfinding**
- **Place making**
- **Innovation**

### ***Creative Engagement***

It is a priority to:

**Improve the quality of life for all residents of Warwick District by diversifying the variety of cultural experiences and artistic programmes; to increase opportunities for people to participate in, and be inspired by, high quality creative activity.**

Engagement with culture and the work of the creative industries can help us connect with others in our community, leading to increased social cohesion. It can generate civic pride, confidence and ambition and ultimately improve health and wellbeing.

There are currently segments of the district's diverse community who do not engage with cultural activity in the district and do not have the opportunity to express their own identity through their chosen form of creativity.

The majority of district's population is highly engaged with culture but a high proportion regularly travels outside the district, to London or Birmingham, to seek out and engage with 'experiential', high quality cultural events.

Key Actions:

- Support grass-roots, community-led cultural activity in hard to reach, high priority communities that delivers social and health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Provide opportunities for residents to get involved, participate and create – particularly through volunteering schemes.
- Encourage cultural organisations and venues based in the district to programme ambitious, high quality, inclusive events which are immersive and provide inspiring experiences that exceed expectation and provide escapism and enjoyment.
- Promote the use of the contemporary arts and innovative digital tools to engage with the district's heritage and tell its stories.

### ***Creative Voice***

It is a priority to:

**Raise the district's national and regional profile as a high quality 'creative cluster' and articulate the offer locally to residents, visitor's, investors and business - advocating how it contributes to health and wellbeing, society and the economy.**

It is extremely challenging for self-employed practitioners and smaller organisations (particularly cultural and community organisations) to promote their work.

The district's profile is not as prominent or attractive to creative talent as it should be. The strengths and distinctiveness of the district's offer must be communicated better in order to attract creative professionals and businesses looking to relocate to the area.

Key Actions:

- Create a fresh narrative that showcases, celebrates, and promotes the district's vibrant creative industries. Raise the profile and reputation of the district as a significant 'creative cluster' and position the area as the place that innovative, creative businesses and workers should want to relocate to.
- Champion the creative industries and promote their social, economic and intrinsic benefits. Build an evidence base for the impact of creative sector locally, by putting in place robust research and evaluation to support this Creative Framework.
- Coordinate marketing resources and collectively promote creative organisations, heritage and cultural assets, activities and events to consumers. This may include a comprehensive 'creative what's on' that promotes a monthly calendar of events and activities or a cultural map.
- Create a new online 'portal' which displays content about creative people, businesses and opportunities as well as providing residents with information about events in their area so they might learn more about where they live.
- Better promote the district's offer as a cultural destination and develop new high quality tourism products. This may include building on the flourishing festival economy by introducing a new major festival.

## ***Creative Pathfinding***

It is a priority to:

**Improve co-ordination and awareness of opportunities by fostering a culture of collaboration and communication.**

**To support creative organisations to be sustainable and financially resilient and increase levels of inward investment.**

**To attract and nurture exceptional talent and to become a place where creative practitioners are welcomed and supported to build sustainable careers.**

On the whole, (with a few notable exceptions) the creative organisations working in the district are focussed on delivering their own core activity and are not engaged with the work of others within the sector. There is perceived to be a lack of capacity for networking among creative professionals in the area. However, the sector has stressed the potential benefits of networking to their businesses- through collaborations, partnerships or shared marketing strategies. This is particularly relevant to freelancers and self-employed practitioners who desperately require connections to the industry and access to potential clients.

There is a comparable lack of external investment and grant funding for projects in the district. Arts Council England investment in the district is at relatively low levels, despite a wide variety of activity that requires development and financial support. There is a lack of the necessary skills and experience in bid writing and a lack of awareness of potential funding opportunities.

It is challenging to encourage the large creative student population to base their professional practice in the District after they graduate. There is not enough

engagement with higher education from the local creative industries and graduates are unfamiliar with the potential routes they could take into the sector.

It is becoming increasingly challenging to recruit the necessary talent into the area, as competition from other 'creative clusters' and cities becomes increasingly attractive.

Key Actions:

- Support efforts to draw more investment and funding into the area for creative projects. Consider pooling shared resources that increase the likelihood of successful funding bids from the district (for example delivering workshops that advise projects on funding bids, or keeping experienced bid writers on a retainer).
- Support existing networking events and facilitate new initiatives to bring together different parts of the cultural and creative industries to share ideas, expertise and build a common vision. This should include a focus on innovation and best practice for creative organisations and businesses. Deliver an annual creative "symposium" every year, to evaluate the progress of the Creative Framework, share ideas and plan for the future.
- Better promote the opportunities available to the district's creative sector. For example – calls for work, new projects, vacancies and development opportunities. Create a portfolio of spaces, services, resources and a database of creative organisations in the district which individuals, organisations and community groups can utilise.
- Investigate the feasibility of developing a creative 'hub' in the district. Creative hubs have become a new way of organising creative economy innovation and development. Hubs offer smaller scale creative businesses the opportunity to aggregate with others in order to access crucial resources such as tools, specialist services, or inspiration to help develop projects and businesses.
- Work with universities to deepen their support for the creative sector in District and increase graduate retention in the area.

## **Creative Place Making**

It is a priority to:

**Incorporate culture and creativity into the way we design and use our public spaces and use the creative sector to revitalise and enhance our town centres; to protect, preserve and grow our historic architecture, heritage and cultural venues.**

Culture significantly contributes to a sense of identity, ownership and belonging. The district's high quality open spaces are places where people can enjoy and participate in cultural events or meet formally and informally to study, relax and develop or exchange ideas. The more these spaces are used the more attractive and welcoming they become as centres of community.

More creative sector activity, especially the games sector, happens in Leamington Spa than elsewhere in the District. There is a need to ensure that growth of the creative sector is balanced and experienced as something that benefits the whole District, not just certain sectors (e.g. games) and places (e.g. Leamington Spa).

Cultural organisations and creative businesses alike strongly underline the lack of available space in the district for their operations. This issue was raised in the context of music venues, studio space, offices, art exhibition space, rehearsal rooms, and storage spaces. A lack of suitable space is a major barrier for majority of creative

businesses - with many already outgrowing the space available and actively looking to relocate out of the district.

It was also suggested that the district lacks a suitable creative space where practitioners and audiences can meet, discuss and create collectively.

Key Actions:

- Support the use of non-traditional settings and accessible outdoor spaces, maximising the use of public spaces for creative activities which bring communities together.
- Celebrate and build upon the concentration of successful cultural and creative-tech industries based in Royal Leamington Spa but ensure that the benefits radiate outwards and impact across the wider district.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a creative industries hub and incubator with shared resources and equipment. More shared spaces where independent creative practitioners can work together to create new work.
- Investigate the feasibility of using 'meanwhile spaces', pop-up spaces in retail, shop-front venues in town centres, as temporary spaces to showcase the work of creatives. Ensure that creative organisations are provided with information on vacant properties and ownership, creating a database of available properties and approaching landlords to seek their consent to add their properties to the database.
- Harness the benefits the creative sector for regeneration. Deliver the Leamington Creative Quarter to provide new creative spaces and nurture cross sector interaction.
- Develop a public arts policy should act as a 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' document to guide the contribution made by new development schemes.

## **Creative Innovation**

It is a priority to:

**Attract innovative companies to the area and encourage existing innovators to use their skills and knowledge to introduce new ways of thinking and address challenges within the sector; to tangibly connect the 'digital' strength of the district with cultural organisations to create original ways of engaging with creativity.**

Innovation is increasingly driven by non-technological factors such as creativity, design and the convergence of different activities and platforms.

The Higher Education sector is central to the innovation potential of the district with its mix of research, experimentation and collaborative activities. Increasingly, as universities 'open up' to deliver closer partnerships with industry, and as they seek to deliver local economic impact alongside a set of research and teaching outcomes, they can be to the forefront on an innovation agenda very much dependent on creativity and the creative industries.

Key Actions:

- Seek to increase the amount of cultural activity that is captured, created, produced, shared and archived through digital technologies and platforms, and support partnerships which will enable more people to access this activity.
- Influence arts and cultural businesses to collaborate across the more commercially driven parts of the sector.
- Work with universities to deepen their support for the creative sector in District.

- Explore potential funding streams to support the growth in digital creative and cultural partnerships and commission new work from across different art forms, to develop programming and reach audiences.
- Explore how digital technology can transform delivery, experiences and business models of how culture is produced and experienced.
- Encourage inward investment for innovation, entrepreneurial development and fundraising