

Council of Ministers Paper No: 2020/429

End of Year Three of National Development Strategy for Culture and the Arts Progress Report

Introduction

The Action Plan that accompanies the National Development Strategy for Culture and the Arts 'Arts, Culture and Creativity for Everyone' outlines actions which should be achieved or started in Year Three by the Isle of Man Arts Council and Culture Vannin. This third annual report gives a summary of actions achieved and in progress submitted to the Council of Ministers and includes an update to Year One and Two actions.



Summary

Throughout 2020 we have seen the world around us change beyond recognition, but one remarkable thing that has shone out like a beacon of hope has been the true value of arts, and creativity. Arts, culture, creativity and community are fundamental to our well-being, both physically and mentally, they entertain and educate, and they offer a much needed distraction. How we support creative work and the Creative Industries nationally and internationally going forward will be crucial. This report will repeatedly turn to the importance of pivoting quickly, of the need to embrace technology, to build virtual communities, to connect us all, to move forward positively.

The Strategy and action plan is a living document and its flexibility has been tested this year, more than ever, by the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic. The board members of both Culture Vannin and IOM Arts Council reacted quickly and positively in testing times to reimagine and create new programmes including IOM Arts Council's **Home is Where the Art Is, Covid-19 Emergency Resilience Funding** and Culture Vannin's two rounds of **#treisht2020 creative projects**.

There is still a need for private funding for culture and the arts, but the global epidemic has put pressures on budgets everywhere. Artists and cultural practitioners have shown themselves to be at the heart of community, producing exceptional work under tremendous pressures.

Our planned Year 3 actions required some adaptations, but there has been good progress for most:

1) Celebrate the importance of arts and culture to our UNESCO Biosphere status

We were successful with a bid to the *bona vacantia* fund for a series of projects in order to support delivery of the strategy and to celebrate our UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man status. During the year, we advertised and selected an innovative sustainable design for a shelter at Conrhenny, and started the process of advertising for an exciting arts project celebrating a sense of place in Ramsey through public art with our 'creative toilets' design brief.

Culture Vannin's graduate intern, Sarah Mercer, created a series of Biosphere-inspired projects under the banner Mann's Green Footsteps, including the Manannan's Charms web-based app <https://manannanscharms.im/> which appeals to families and young adults in particular, and Island Utopias, a beautiful film where artists gave their creative responses to words collected in oral history interviews about people's view of their ideal Isle of Man in the future. We will talk more about this internship later in the report.

The IOM Arts Council have launched their Creative Toilets project in partnership with Ramsey Commissioners, with the selected location being the public toilets in Market Square. This project will bring creativity to people in an everyday setting, complementing regeneration and creating a perhaps surprising visitor attraction. Public art, and mural art in particular, has been proven to immortalise a strong sense of identity of an area, enhancing uniqueness and character and encourages people to view land and seascapes in new ways.

The aims of the project are:

- To design and complete a series of internal and/or external murals that create a sense of connection with the town of Ramsey - this connection should be able to echo with residents of the town and tourists alike.
- To create a unique and recognisable landmark in the town that will become part of the culture for the future, demonstrating the connection between culture and the arts and well-being and the environment.
- To celebrate the land and seascape of Ramsey and its sense of place. The theme is "Ramsey, aquatic and marine"

Submissions close on 16th October 2020.

We supported Biosphere related projects through our grant-giving, too, grants which enabled the community to express their own ideas about living within a Biosphere. Grant awards amplify the effect of money awarded as the benefit of expertise and volunteer hours is factored in.

2) Establish a mark of excellence for arts and culture organisations

Throughout 2018 and 2019 demands on funding have grown with IOMAC funding requests exceeding beyond £1million in 2019, far exceeding the annual budget of approximately half that amount. Culture Vannin's annual budget for grant awards is regularly requested or outstripped at each and every quarterly board meeting. Undoubtedly, more awards to deserving applicants, to both bodies, would have been made had funding allowed.

Recognising these demands and the challenges being faced to support events and organisations who apply for support on an annual basis, the IOM Arts Council began discussions in January to create a programme that could offer confirmed funding but which would also act as a mark of excellence over a 4 year period. Tentatively named "the National Culture Portfolio" the initial discussions centred around a proposal that acknowledged events, venues and organisations considered essential to the Isle of Man's creative calendar would be recognised as National Portfolio Organisations "NPO" and guaranteed funding on a tiered basis would be offered for a period of 4 years to aid security for the funding recipients. NPO status would also act as a mark of excellence for such recipients.

Discussions were subsequently suspended due to the lockdown period and brought back to the Council at their last meeting in September 2020 for further development.

Culture Vannin continued to support well-established festivals and events with ring-fenced grants, to ensure that the cultural calendar is supported in a way that allows for future-planning, in order to benefit all parts of the Island's visitor economy, building confidence in the exceptional volunteer-run events which are crucial to our cultural identity.

3) Engage with the health sector and not for profit organisations to promote ways to wellbeing through creative activity

In the autumn of 2019, Emma Callin, Head of Villa Gaiety and the Arts and Jane Corkill, Arts Development Manager met with Dr John Snelling of the Primary Care Directorate and Julie Bennion, Specialist in Mental Health Improvement to begin discussions regarding the development of creative activity for mental health. Once again, lockdown stopped any further active progression.

Lockdown brought an acute awareness of the value of arts, culture and creativity within the community, not only for educational and entertainment purposes but for wellbeing and mental health. The IOM Arts Council **Home is Where the Art Is** project featured local artists and creatives, both professional and amateur, showing how the arts and creativity had been beneficial to them during the extraordinary lockdown situation. A different video was released every day during May, and saw expressions of the value of the arts in many creative ways, notably Ruby Biscoe-Taylor's song, "Gorse", Molly Bowman's expressive dance "I'm Lonely", Beth Louella's arts works for NHS key workers and Rebecca Cooil's dancing in her garden highlighting her isolation "A single star". The project gained over 85,000 views via social media and many positive responses.



Gorse by Ruby Biscoe-Taylor

I went outside - the first time today
I've been hiding away
The air was sweet with the smell of the gorse
on the hill

I think summer's here cos the sky is clear
But the doors are closed and our lives
postponed
Are you close to tears?
Is it weeks or years?

In my chest I feel it tighten
We're uncertain, we're all frightened
Are you lonely, miss your mother?
Hold out hope for when it's over

I've never felt quite so exhausted
Most days I just lie in bed
But the sun shines bright through my
window and I cannot
sleep

So I'll make my bed and get dressed instead
Open up my door like I would before
And the gorse smells sweet
It floats down the street

In my chest I feel it tighten
We're uncertain, we're all frightened
Are you lonely, miss your mother?
Hold out hope for when it's over

Hold out hope for when it's over
Hold on tight until it's over
Tired and lonely and not quite sober
Hold out hope for when it's over



Isle of Man Arts Council funding continued to support creatives providing support and wellbeing within the community such as the Secret Stitch Sewing Bee at the Jurby Community Centre, which has provided company and creativity for a group of ladies, some of whom are isolated by their health, physical or mental or by widowhood, for example.

The Isle of Man Arts Council have also provided extra-ordinary **Covid 19 Resilience Funding** for creatives within the community who have re-aligned their offering in the current unprecedented circumstances. The development of online dance lessons and art classes, for example, not only helped creative businesses to survive, but provided a valuable creative and artistic outlet for participants, benefitting their physical and mental wellbeing and it is expected that this will continue to develop as the world changes around us.

Knowing the benefits of music and singing, the IOM Arts Council continues to support the IOM Government Staff Choir which has seen a large post-lockdown influx of new members.

Culture Vannin developed a series of projects entitled **#treisht2020** (treisht means hope, trust or confidence in Manx) in response to the urgent need to provide projects for cultural and creative self-employed workers during the public health situation. Both the sense of purpose and the financial reward that projects and commissions would bring were considered essential in keeping people actively engaged with Manx culture and, in some cases, small businesses open. Many of the projects proved important for the well-being of the creators as well as those who could enjoy their creations.

Funding came from repurposed grants from cancelled events as well as from development budgets, showing a great responsiveness in pressing times. Work in progress (below):



Board Members also expressed an interest in someone documenting the lockdown photographically, so Phil Kneen, who had started his own project, was approached and agreed to partner with Culture Vannin. Phil was in a unique position as he was able to capture images safely, close to his vehicle, while he worked as a delivery driver.



Two rounds of **#treisht2020** projects were advertised and awarded, with the results of each uploaded for people to enjoy online. We are excited about the number of projects that will support Manx Studies in schools, Manx language teaching and promotion, Manx music education, as well as contributions of an artistic and cultural nature with community resonances.

In terms of grants relating to well-being and health, Culture Vannin made an award to the DHSC for the creation of a Nelly Brennan garden, which will celebrate the contribution of the heroine of the Isle of Man cholera outbreaks in the early 19th century and first Matron of the 1839 Hospital and Dispensary.

- 4) Promote participation in an Achievement Award for the Arts and other schemes &**
- 5) Support a Leadership Training Programme specific to and delivered in partnership with the creative and cultural sector**

Development deferred due to lockdown. The time for the development of these is not now – we have to answer the pressing needs of our Island, and of our creative practitioners and communities.

6) Promote and identify support and funding for a creative apprenticeship programme

From September 2019 to September 2020, Culture Vannin's graduate intern, Sarah Mercer, was given the opportunity to develop Biosphere inspired projects relating to Manx culture. Under the umbrella **Mann's Green Footsteps** www.culturevannin.im/footsteps/about.html the projects involved collaborating with communities around the Island to record how our society, jobs, hobbies and personal identities are changing, thinking about our Biosphere status, about climate change, and about visions of an ideal future. During the year, the outbreak of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown meant that the projects had to adapt and change. In addition to the Manannan's Charms app, a stunning film entitled Island Utopias was created by recording oral history interviews with people about their experiences of lockdown and their hopes for the future. Visual artists took those words and created an artistic response to each theme, making a time-lapse film of their work. With an original score referencing Manx music, the film was launched at the Erin Arts Centre in September to a full house. The film will be made available to community groups and will be published online as a way of reaching as wide an audience as possible. The internship reminded us of the freshness of ideas of our Island's youth, and the hope and confidence we can have in our future.

The IOM Arts Council intern, Olivia Savage will be joining the team late October 2020 and she will be developing projects with the Arts Team and it is hoped that she will also work to develop art for wellbeing, particularly focussing on the teenage demographic.

7) Explore partnerships with digital innovators

The impetus to explore digital and online delivery of arts and culture was stronger than ever during lockdown. Just as the business world turned to online delivery, communication and creation, the creative cultural world did the same. From online musical collaborations such as the Ellan Vannin Children's Choir: www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2696932753966080 and Manx National Anthem in Manx: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILMULtULWkU to online music tutorials, narrated books and new digital images: www.culturevannin.im/resources/treisht-2020-projects-647532/ there was so much to enjoy, and so much for creative and cultural practitioners to create. We will continue to upload the finished digital projects from **#treisht2020**, and the month-long **Home is Where the Art Is** projects are still being enjoyed, for example this stunning poetry film from Janet Lees, recently also shortlisted for this year's Ó Bhéal Poetry-Film competition. The shortlist was chosen from 288 entries received from 49 countries once again bringing the Isle of Man to an international audience: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcGgzLrU_Qo

Lockdown meant that Culture Vannin's Manx lessons and conversational classes had to move online, enabling participation from Manx speakers and learners around the world. What surprised us was the willingness for people in Australia to get up in the middle of the night to engage in Manx conversation and lessons! Others joined from North America, reinforcing links with the diaspora. On a more practical note, having lessons online proved convenient for people who didn't want to drive at night, and reignited a passion for the Isle of Man and its culture in those who found themselves working in the UK, Ireland or beyond. We will continue to look at a blended delivery of online and real life classes as a result.

Summary of Year Three Actions:

Celebrate the importance of arts and culture to our UNESCO Biosphere status	GREEN
Establish a mark of excellence for arts and culture organisations	AMBER
Engage with the health sector and not for profit organisations to promote ways to wellbeing through creative activity	AMBER
Promote participation in an Achievement Award for the Arts and other schemes	RED
Support a Leadership Training Programme specific to and delivered in partnership with the creative and cultural sector	RED
Promote and identify support and funding for a creative apprenticeship programme	GREEN
Explore partnerships with digital innovators	GREEN

Update of Year Two Actions:

Develop new arts engagement programmes	GREEN
Develop new cultural engagement programmes	GREEN
Take arts activities into communities	GREEN
Take cultural activities into communities	GREEN
Participation in the International Edinburgh Cultural Summit	AMBER
Explore potential to attach cultural and artistic programmes to international sporting events at which the IOM is represented	GREEN

Update of Year One Actions:

Review Communications	GREEN
Engagement Survey	BLUE
Audit alternative sources of arts/culture funding	BLUE
Establish Legacy Bursary Charity	BLUE
Investigate a Government Indemnity Scheme	AMBER
Celebrate the importance of arts and culture to our UNESCO Biosphere status	GREEN
Investigate potential for international representation and exchange	GREEN
Establish a national quality brand for IOM creative products	AMBER
Open a cultural centre at St John's	BLUE
Launch Manx Language Strategy	BLUE
To support DESC delivery of Manx curriculum	GREEN
Develop Manx cultural awareness programmes for business	BLUE
Provide opportunities for lifelong learning	BLUE
Representation at Department for Enterprise Creative Industries stakeholder group	BLUE
Support island-wide opportunities for live screening of arts events	BLUE

Colour coding:

GREEN: Project progressing to plan

AMBER: Project may need assistance in the future; currently handling within the project team but management team: be aware

RED: Escalation: project team need help to resolve a problem

BLUE: Action is completed or superseded and has been closed